MORMON CHURCH SUPPRESSES BOOK OF COMMANDMENTS
Deseret Book Store Ordered Not to Sell Wilford Wood's Reprint of the Book of Commandments

The following is an account of how the Mormon Church tried to prevent us from obtaining the photocopies necessary for the printing the Book of Commandments, and also how the Mormon Church is now trying to suppress Wilford Wood's reprint of it.

About the Book of Commandments

In 1833 the Mormon Church published the revelations that had been given to the Church by Joseph Smith in a book entitled the Book of Commandments. However, the Church was unable to print as many of the Book of Commandments as they had planned because the printing press was destroyed by a mob. In 1835 the revelations were again printed, and the name of the book was changed to the Doctrine and Covenants. New revelations were added, and many of the previous revelations were revised.

The Book of Commandments contains 65 of Joseph Smith's revelations and according to a student at Brigham Young University there have been 2,812 words changed, added, or omitted in these same revelations as published in the Doctrine and Covenants today. Because of this fact the Mormon Church Historian feared that someone would reprint the Book of Commandments and reveal the fact that these changes have been made.

David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, made this statement concerning the changes that have been made in the revelations:

Some of the revelations as they now appear in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants have been changed and added to. Some of the changes being of the greatest importance as the meaning is entirely changed on some very important matters; as if God had changed his mind a few years after he gave the revelations, and after having commanded his servants (as they claim) to print them in the "Book of Commandments;"

(Letter written by David Whitmer, published in the Saints' Herald, February 5, 1887)

Poorest Reprint

In an article entitled "Mormon Bibliography," published in the Brigham Young University Studies, Spring-Summer 1964, Chad J. Flake of the Brigham Young University stated:

Undoubtedly the poorest reprints on Mormon subjects are those printed by the Modern Microfilm Company. Although these seem to be as expensive as any mentioned above, the quality of the printing bears no comparison. An interesting comparison can be made

(Continued on page 2)
A photograph of Chapter 28 of the Book of Commandments; also a photograph of the same revelation, published as section 27 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Notice that over 400 words which are underlined have been added to the revelation as it appears in the Doctrine and Covenants.
We visited the Brigham Young University on a Saturday prior to the time Chad J. Flake wrote this letter. If the student assistant had received the instructions that Mr. Flake speaks of, he broke the rules because he made photocopies of the first 41 pages of the Book of Commandments for us. He apparently did not realize the importance of what he was copying, for he asked us why we wanted photocopies of that old book.

When the Church Historian’s Office found out that we had obtained these photographs, they immediately sent word to the Brigham Young University to keep us from obtaining any more photocopies of these rare documents. Consequently, when we wrote to the Brigham Young University asking for the remaining pages of the Book of Commandments, Chad J. Flake answered as follows:

We are unable to send you a photocopy of the Book of Commandments. We were supplied this copy by the Church Historian’s office for the use of our patrons but not for photoduplication or other forms of publication. (Letter by Chad J. Flake, dated April 11, 1961, see page 1)

We appealed to William E. Berrett (Vice Administrator of the Brigham Young University), and he wrote directly to the Church Historian’s Office. In a letter dated May 5, 1961, he wrote a letter to us in which he stated that the Church Historian’s Office would “not permit” photocopies to be made of the Book of Commandments (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 70). On June 1, 1961, we wrote directly to Joseph Fielding Smith, the Church Historian, and he answered as follows:

Private records are sacred to the individual. Copies of the Book of Commandments are rare. Perhaps you could obtain a copy from some book collector.

Of course, Mr. Smith knew that we would not be able to obtain an original as it would cost thousands of dollars.

The Church Historian’s Office could have provided us with nice clear photocopies, however, they were unwilling to help in any way and did everything they could to prevent the publication of the Book of Commandments.

Wilford Wood’s Reprint

Wilford Wood (this name should not be confused with the name Wilford Woodruff) has also published the Book of Commandments and the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants (under the title of Joseph Smith Begins His Work, vol. 2) by the photo-offset method, and as Mr. Flake says, it is an excellent reprint. He has also reproduced the first edition of the Book of Mormon, under the title of Joseph Smith Begins His Work, vol. 1.

A few months after our reprint of the Book of Commandments came out, Wilford Wood published his reprint of the Book of Commandments.

The Mormon Church was apparently not as worried about his reprint as they were about ours, for the Deseret Press (the Church press) did the printing, and it was advertised in the Salt Lake papers. We tried to advertise our copy but were refused permission. One of the employees at the newspaper agency told us that the reason the book could not be advertised was that the preface we included in the front of the book was “too controversial.” He indicated the preface was controversial because it told that the revelations had been changed and that the Mormon Church had suppressed the Book of Commandments.

Since Wilford Wood’s reprint did not tell that the revelations had been changed, the Church did not try to suppress his book at that time. Instead they promoted it and allowed him to display his original copy of the Book of Commandments in the window of the Deseret Book Store (that is the Church book store). The leaders of the Mormon Church evidently felt that by using this reverse psychology they could make the Mormon people believe that they were glad that the Book of Commandments had been reprinted. Since Mr. Wood’s reprint did not tell the revelations had been changed, the Church leaders evidently felt that they were safe as long as members of the Church did not compare it with present editions of the Doctrine and Covenants. It appears, however, that members of the Church did compare the two editions and found that many changes had been made. On October 9, 1964, a man reported to us that the Deseret Book Store had refused to sell him copies of Joseph Smith Begins His Work, vols. 1 and 2. On October 10, 1964, Sandra Tanner went to the Deseret Book Store and asked the clerk concerning these books. The clerk, supposing she was a Mormon, said, “President David O. McKay won’t let us sell that anymore.” The clerk went on to say, “We’ve had several people leave the Church because of those books. The priest and ministers of the other churches are using these books to confuse people. Because of the confusion we can’t sell them anymore. President McKay has taken them out of circulation.”

On October 13, 1964, Wesley P. Walters (a minister in Illinois) wrote to the Deseret Book Store, requesting copies of Joseph Smith Begins His Work, vols. 1 and 2. He had been recommending these books to libraries throughout the nation. He had informed the librarians that they could buy these books at the Deseret Book, but when he wrote to them himself they answered, “these two books are no longer available.” (See a photograph of this letter on page 1.) This letter would lead a person to believe that these books are out of print, however, this is not the case.

As we stated before, the Deseret Press (that is the Church press) did the printing on these books, however, Bookcraft distributes them. Since the Mormon Church does not own Bookcraft they will not be able to stop the circulation of these books at other stores besides the Deseret Book Store unless Wilford Wood gives his consent, or unless they buy them all up. The Modern Microfilm Co. will continue to sell them as long as they are available.

First Vision

The Mormon Church claims that in 1820, when Joseph Smith was 14 or 15 years old, that he was visited by God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. The evidence indicates, however, that this
story was made up at some later date. Joseph Smith did not publish the story until 1842, some 22 years after it was supposed to have occurred. The “first published consecutive account of the origin of the Church” (published in 1834-5) contained nothing concerning a vision in 1820. This account was written under the “personal supervision” of Joseph Smith, and stated that it was only an angel that appeared to Joseph Smith in 1823 when he was 17 years old. No mention is made of a vision prior to this. In our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*, we show that even Joseph Smith’s own brother did not accept the story that God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ appeared to Joseph Smith in 1820 (see pages 124-125).

Recently Wesley P. Walters has drawn our attention to a sermon by William Smith given June 8, 1884. In this sermon he claims that it was only an angel that appeared when Joseph Smith was 18 years old. He stated:

> It will be remembered that just before the angel appeared to Joseph, there was an unusual revival in the neighborhood. . . . My mother attended those meetings, and being much concerned about the spiritual welfare of the family, she persuaded them to attend the meetings. Finally my mother, one sister, my brothers Samuel and Hyrum became Presbyterians. Joseph and myself did not join; I had not sown all my wild oats. . . . it was at the suggestion of the Rev. M____, that my brother asked of God. He said, “Ask of God.”. . . Accordingly he went and bowed in prayer to God. While he was engaged in prayer, he saw a pillar of fire descending. Saw it reach the top of the trees. He was overcome, became unconscious, did not know how long he remained in this condition, but when he came to himself, the great light was about him, and he was told by the personage whom he saw descend with the light, not to join any of the churches. . . . You should remember Joseph was but about eighteen years old at this time, too young to be a deceiver. (The Saints’ Herald, vol. 31, no. 40, page 643)

Dr. Hugh Nibley, of the Brigham Young University, makes this comment concerning William Smith:

> If William Smith and Oliver Cowdery give confusing accounts of the first vision, we must remember that the Prophet knew from the first that those men were not to be trusted with too much information. . . . Were such men to be trusted with a full account of the first vision before it was officially given to the world? (Improvement Era, November 1961, pages 868-869)

It certainly seems strange that Joseph Smith could not trust his own brother with an account of the First Vision, if such a vision really occurred.

### SHADOW or REALITY?

The following are comments we have received in the mail concerning our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*

Your work on “Mormonism Shadow or Reality” reflects research worthy of a Thesis for PhD—Congratulations. (Letter from California)

I have enjoyed reading your new book & enclosed is a check for 10 copies & I hope you have a great sale for them. . . . I feel this book ought to get into the hands of the people. It answers the questions they need to know. (Letter from Wyoming)

I have received the book. . . . It is a marvelous edition. (Letter from California)

We have had the joy of pointing a man to Christ . . . He was about to be baptized into Mormon Church & had been well indoctrinated but said he wanted to be sure! Your book proved invaluable. Better than ALL the others together, he said!! (Letter from Ireland)

If you are interested in a copy of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* the price is $5.00 ($4.50 if ordered before November 15).

### T.V.

Jesus once asked:

> Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will give him a serpent? (Matthew 7:9-10)

It would appear that in America today that many parents are giving their children stones instead of bread. The following appeared in the *Salt Lake Tribune* for Monday, October 26, 1964:

A still-secret report charges there is a conclusive link between crime and violence in television shows and juvenile delinquency, it was learned Sunday.

The report has been signed by a majority of the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency headed by Sen. Thomas J. Dodd (D-Conn.). . . . the subcommittee reported it found “on the basis of expert testimony and impressive research evidence, that a relationship has been conclusively established between televised crime and violence and antisocial attitudes and behavior among juvenile viewers.”

In another section of the report, the subcommittee said in its view, “the excessive amount of televised crime, violence and brutality can and does contribute to the development of attitudes and actions in many young people which pave the way for delinquent behavior.” (*Salt Lake Tribune, October 26, 1964*)

### Psalm 82:3

“Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy.”

### Orphans

Jesus said:

> For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: . . . Then shalt the righteous answer him, saying, Lord when saw we thee an hungred, and gave thee drink? Or when saw we thee a stranger, and ye took me in: Or when saw we thee naked, and clothed thee: . . . And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. (Matthew 25:35-40)

Nearly five years ago we heard of an organization called World Vision. We have found that it is a non-profit organization with orphanages in 19 countries caring for more than 20,000 orphans. Each orphan has a sponsor who contributes $10 a month for his support (food, clothing, home, schooling, etc.). Since Korea alone has an estimated 50,000 orphans one can see the great need for more sponsors.

It certainly has been a blessing to us to help some of these sweet little ones who would never have known a home or decent food without the wonderfull work of World Vision. We feel they are doing a tremendous job. World Vision has recently built a children hospital in Seoul, Korea, with room for 150 sick children. They also help operate a children’s wing of the Presbyterian Hospital in Taegu and other facilities throughout the country. (World Vision is a non-denominational missionary endeavor.)

Each sponsor can exchange letters with his child (the letters are translated into English before they are forwarded to the sponsor). We would like to share with you a few comments from the letters we have received.

An orphan boy, Lee Han Kook, writes:

> I received your birthday gift of $1.00 with all my heart and bought 1 pair of underwear with the money. When I wear these underwear, I feel as if you hug me tightly with both of your arms. I was over-whelmed by your love and shed tears.

In another letter he writes:

> I was so happy to receive your card . . . I will work diligently like an ox and will try to be a mild boy like a rabbit. I suppose you will be glad, if I become such a boy.

Of his family he says:

> My mother and father are not living. I wandered about the streets until I was brought to this home through the police.

He, like so many others, would have had no hope for a happy future without the help of such groups as World Vision.

If anyone is interested in knowing more about World Vision they can write—

World Vision
Box 0
Pasadena, California

### NEW BOOKS

**Brigham’s Destroying Angel.** Photomechanical reprint of 1904 edition of Bill Hickman’s confessions. Price: $3.00


**John Whitmer’s History.** Written by one of the eight witnesses to the Book of Mormon. Very revealing. Price: $1.50

**View of the Hebrews**, by Ethan Smith. Photo reprint of 1825 edition—also the parallels by B. H. Roberts. Price: $4.00


(10% off on above prices until November 15)
10% SALE ‘til May 5th

Almost a year ago we decided to make Modern Microfilm Co. a full-time business. Since that time we have had much to encourage us, but we have also had several setbacks. An operation has set us back almost a thousand dollars, as well as caused the loss of about a month’s time. In spite of these discouragements we have been able to continue. This has been made possible because of our customers. We certainly owe our continued existence as a company to their faithful support. Of the many hundreds of checks sent by our customers, we have never received a bad one. We feel that this is a very good record, one which our customers can be proud of.

At a time when things looked bad financially we had a 10% sale, and because of the faithful support of our customers we were able to continue. At this time we are going to have another sale, and we are optimistic that this sale will bring similar results. If we are able to continue this work, we hope to print several books which will be helpful to students of Mormonism. We have the masters ready to print the History of Joseph Smith by his mother (this is the book Brigham Young tried to destroy), and all we lack now is the money to buy the paper to print it on. We are also interested in printing a book showing all the changes that have been made in the Book of Mormon, and also a book showing the changes in Joseph Smith’s revelations. These are but a few of the many books we will be able to print if our customers continue to support us as they have in the past.

This sale begins when our customers receive this notice and it will continue until May 5.

A special price list is enclosed which shows the price for each book with the 10% discount already deducted.

To avoid confusion the sale does not apply to any order placed prior to the time this paper is received.

Millennial Star

We have just completed printing volumes 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the Millennial Star. Since volume 1 has already been printed, this will mean that the first 5 volumes will now be available. (This is a photomechanical reprint of an early Mormon publication.)

We will take them to the binders as soon as we receive a sufficient number of orders. They will have the same type of binding (black buckram) that was used on the Times and Seasons.

This is a limited printing (only 250 of each volume) and we can make no guarantee that there will be another printing when these are gone.

This printing in these volumes is clear and readable, and they will be of great interest to the student of Mormonism.

After placing order allow a few weeks for delivery.

Times and Seasons

This is a photomechanical reprint of an early Mormon publication. Although our book list has a price of $42.00 for all 6 volumes of the Times and Seasons, we wish to change this price to $37.50, and for those who order before May 5, while the 10% sale is still on, the price will be only $33.75.

Changes in Joseph Smith’s History

Since printing the book, Changes in Joseph Smith’s History, we have received new information which may be of interest to our readers.

In change number 464 (Changes in Joseph Smith’s History, page 87) we show that many words have been deleted concerning the story of Joseph Smith’s death. In the History of Joseph Smith, as published in the Millennial Star, the following appeared:

... he fell outward into the hands of his murders, exclaiming, “O Lord my God!” He fell partly on his right shoulder and back, his neck and head reaching the ground a little before his feet, and he rolled instantly on his face.

From this position he was taken by a man who was barefoot and bareheaded, and having no coat, his pants rolled up above his knees, and his shirt sleeves above his elbows. He set Joseph against the south side of the well curb, which was situated a few feet from the jail, when Col. Levi Williams ordered four men to shoot him. They stood about eight feet from the curb, and fired simultaneously. A slight cringe of the body was all the indication of pain visible when the balls struck him, and he fell on his face.

The ruffian who set him against the well curb now gathered a bowie-knife for the purpose of severing his head from his body. He raised the knife, and was in the attitude of striking, when a light, so sudden and powerful, burst from the heavens upon the bloody scene (passing its vivid chain between Joseph and his murderers), that they were struck with terror. This light, in its appearance and potency, baffles all powers of description. The arm of the ruffian that held the knife fell powerless, the muskets of the four who fired fell to the ground, and they all stood like marble statues, not having the power to move a single limb of their bodies.

The retreat of the mob was as hurried and disorderly as it possibly could have been. Col. Williams Hallooed to some who had just commenced their retreat to come back and help to carry off the four men who fired, and who were still paralyzed. They came and carried them away by main strength to the baggage waggons, when they fled towards Warsaw.

Dr. Richards’ escape was miraculous; ... (Millennial Star, vol. 24, page 487)

When this was reprinted in the History of the Church, vol. 6, pages 618-619, three hundred and seven words were deleted:

... he fell outward into the hands of his murderers, exclaiming, “O Lord, my God!”

Dr. Richards’ escape was miraculous; ...

After telling of this change we made this statement:

Apparently the Mormon Historians felt that this story was too unbelievable; therefore it was deleted.

At the time we statement we did not realize that the Mormon Historian B. H. Roberts had repudiated this story in his Comprehensive History of the Church (this is not to be confused with the History of the Church mentioned above which was edited by B. H. Roberts). In the Comprehensive History of the Church B. H. Roberts stated:

(Continued on page 2)
One of our readers has sent us some very interesting information which relates to this change. He stated:

Smith claimed that the word “Mormon” was formed from the Egyptian word “mon” (which he said meant “good”) and the English word “more” contracted to “mor” (together meaning “more good”). How can this be when there is no Egyptian word “mon” which means good. Even if there were such an Egyptian word, how could it get combined with an English word here on the American continent sometime before 400 A.D.? The English language did not develop until the middle ages and was totally unknown in the ancient middle east.

In a letter dated April 1, 1965, the same man writes:

I might add a few words about Smith’s definition of the word “Mormon”... the part I had reference to has been omitted from the present Church History, so I understand. While in the graduate department at Johns Hopkins University I made it a point to ask Dr. William F. Albright if there were any Egyptian word “mon” meaning “good”, or anything resembling it with such a meaning. Dr. Albright is one of the world’s leading authorities on the ancient near east and understood and offered courses in Egyptian. He assured me there was no such word. I wrote Dr. Sperry about this problem and he assured me he had “no off-the-cuff answer” for this problem (see letter enclosed). At the time Smith gave his definition Champollion was just working out the system of Egyptian hieroglyphics, so as far as Smith knew no one could contradict him. However, it should have been obvious, even without a knowledge of Egyptian, that an Egyptian word could not be combined with an English word and appear here in America (since it’s used in the Bk of Mormon) before 400 A.D., when there was no English language until centuries later.

Perhaps some of our readers would like to comment on this problem.

Threats From Mormon Apostles

In our last mailing list we sent a photograph of letters written by the Mormon Apostles Mark E. Petersen and LeGrand Richards. In these letters the Apostles threatened to sue us. Since sending this page out we have received two interesting letters from our readers. One man, who has been through law school, made this statement in his letter to us:

I just got a copy of your handbill giving the threats from Apostles Petersen and Richards. If ever I saw a bluff Mark E. Petersen’s letter is one. . . . Now just what could his attorney do by calling on you? And if Petersen is ignorant about what you have published concerning him as he implies, just what would be the point in having his attorney call on you? If you answer him you should ask him some of these questions and also ask him if he is not aware, with all his legal knowledge, that truth is a complete defense to libel.

When they start fearing the truth, their position is beginning to become precarious. Your good work is beginning to tell. Good luck and more power to you.

Another man wrote directly to LeGrand Richards and Mark E. Petersen and sent a carbon copy to us. In this letter he stated:

I am today in receipt of photostats of letters you each wrote to a publisher in Salt Lake City, threatening him with a lawsuit if he published certain documents. . . . These letters you wrote are such amazing and amusing attempts to bluff that I could not refrain from commenting on them. For certainly no one with even the most elementary smattering of
common sense could be led to believe that you would be so ignorant as to institute legal action in such a situation even if you were certain of winning your case, getting many thousands of dollars in settlement, and succeeding in suppression of the published documents.

The reason I am so sure of this is that a lawsuit would result in the very publication, in much magnified and publicized extent, of the very things you are trying so desperately to suppress. They would then receive much more publicity and much more scrutiny and study than this publisher could otherwise dare to hope for.

... I must at least give you credit for having better sense than to proceed to carry out this ridiculous threat. However, should I be so fortunate as to be mistaken in that conclusion, and you do bring suit against this fine publisher, I hereby pledge myself to contribute from my own meager funds, $100 toward his defense—and to exert whatever energies I can toward bringing this entire matter to light, in the firm conviction that such an action would tend to lessen the stranglehold the church has on this brainwashed and dominated area.

It is interesting to note that Mark E. Petersen has returned from Europe to attend conference. Although conference is held only 14 blocks from Modern Microfilm Company, Mr. Petersen has not called on us. Apparently Mr. Petersen’s statement that “legal action will be instituted” against us amounts to nothing but a threat.

Hundreds of copies of the sheet containing the Apostle’s threats to sue us were circulated at the conference of the Mormon Church, and other than the fact that one man said he would have us arrested, there was no trouble.

We are very anxious to have the sheet containing the threats of the Mormon Apostles widely circulated, and we will provide copies free to those who wish to help us distribute them.

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**Continued Suppression**

In the first number of the *Salt Lake City Messenger* we furnished proof that the Mormon Church leaders are trying to suppress the photo-offset reprint of the Book of Commandments and the first edition of the Book of Mormon (these books are sold under the title *Joseph Smith Begins His Works*).

Although the Deseret Book Store (that is the Church bookstore) was ordered by the Church leaders not to sell these books, we stated that since the Mormon Church does not own Bookcraft that they could not stop the distribution of these books from that company. Recently, however, we were surprised to learn that Bookcraft was asked by the Church to remove these books from its list of books available. We also understand that Bookcraft has complied with the request and removed these books from the list. This does not mean that the Church has completely stopped the sale of these books, however, it is another step in that direction.

Modern Microfilm Company will try to supply these books as long as they are available.

The reason the Mormon Church is trying to suppress these books is that Joseph Smith’s revelations and the Book of Mormon have been changed since they were first printed.

Wilford Wood, the man who had these books reprinted, was very disturbed by the fact that the Church was trying to suppress his books. When we told him that the Church was trying to suppress his book, he wrote us a letter in which he stated:

> I would like to know if you would permit me to use your letter to show it to President McKay or those responsible for stopping the sale of the book at the Deseret Book Company... anyone who is hurt from the original story of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the foundation of the Church upon which it is built will have to pay the consequences for pretending to love the Prophet Joseph Smith and working against him.

We understand that Wilford Wood met with the President of the Church but was unsuccessful in his attempt to get the restrictions removed from the sale of his book.

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**None of Self and All of Thee**

Oh, the bitter shame and sorrow
That a time could ever be
When I let the Saviour’s pity
Plead in vain, and proudly answered,
“All of self and none of Thee.”

Yet He found me; I beheld Him
Bleeding on the accursed tree;
Heard Him pray, “Forgive them, Father,”
And my wistful heart said faintly,
“Some of self and some of Thee.”

Day by day, His tender mercy,  
Healing, helping, full and free,  
Sweet and strong, and, oh, so patient,  
Brought me lower, while I whispered,  
“Less of self and more of Thee.”

Higher than the highest heavens,  
Deeper than the deepest sea,  
Lord, Thy Love at last has conquered;  
Grant me now my soul’s desire,  
“None of self and all of Thee.”

—Theodore Monod  

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**SHADOW OR REALITY?**

We have received the following comments concerning *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*

Since seeing you folks last I’ve had time to evaluate you book: “Mormonism, Shadow or Reality?” In the five years I’ve been engaged in a special study of the Mormon faith I can say your work is the most thorough I’ve run across. Congratulations!

(Letter from California)

I have enjoyed *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*...  
Your book... is one of the best, if not the best, I have ever read and I hope that it will be widely read, especially by students and other writers.

(Letter from Missouri)

I am enjoying your book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* to the fullest.  
I am enjoying recommending it to all seekers of the truth, L.D.S., and otherwise.

(Letter from Utah)

May I extend a word of congratulation on your book on Mormonism whose revised edition I have recently obtained from the Utah Evangel Press. It will be invaluable to all those studying the Mormon system and I expect to refer to it many times in the years ahead.

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**Not I**

Not I, but Christ  
Be honored, loved, exalted;  
Not I, but Christ  
Be seen, be known, be heard;  
Not I, but Christ  
In every look and action;  
Not I, but Christ  
In every thought and word.  
—Anonymous
The Book Brigham Young Tried to Destroy

In the October, 1845 Conference of the Mormon Church, Lucy Smith announced that she had finished writing her book concerning the history of her son Joseph Smith. In 1853 Orson Pratt (the Mormon Apostle) published this book in England. In 1854 the Mormon newspaper, the Deseret News, recommended Lucy Smith’s book, Joseph Smith the Prophet:

Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith, the Prophet, and his Progenitors for Many Generations: by Lucy Smith, mother of the Prophet.

This new and highly interesting work should be possessed by all saints who feel in the least degree interested with the history of the latter day work. Many facts which it contains, and never before published, are of great importance to the world, and the work constitutes a valuable acquisition to the libraries of the saints. (Deseret News, November 16, 1854)

By the year 1865, however, Brigham Young (the second President of the Mormon Church) was trying to suppress the use of this book by the Mormon people:

The President then made some remarks on the book entitled “Joseph Smith and his Progenitors,” requesting those who had copies to let him have them, and receive value for them if they desired it. (Deseret News, June 21, 1865)

In the Millennial Star for October 21, 1965, Lucy Smith’s book was severely condemned by the First Presidency of the Mormon Church:

Happening lately, while on a preaching trip to Cache Valley, to pick up a book which was lying on a table in the house where we were stopping, we were surprised to find that it was the book bearing the title, on the outside, of “Joseph Smith, the Prophet;” . . . . Our surprise at finding a copy of this work may be accounted for, by the fact of our having advertized some time ago that the book was incorrect, and that it should be gathered up and destroyed, so that no copies should be left; and, from this, we had supposed that not a single copy could be found in any of the houses of the Saints.

. . . . It is sufficient to say that it is utterly unreliable as a history, as it contains many falsehoods and mistakes. We do not wish such a book to be lying on our shelves, . . . . we, therefore, expect . . . . every one in the Church, male and female, if they have such a book, to dispose of it so that it will never be read by any person again. If they do not, the responsibility of the evil results that may accrue from keeping it will rest upon them and not upon us.

. . . . Many of the Saints may not know that the book is inaccurate; but those who have been instructed respecting its character, and will still keep it on their tables, and have it in their houses as a valid and authentic history for their children to read, need rebuke. It is transmitting lies to posterity to take such a course, and we know that the curse of God will rest upon every one, after he comes to the knowledge of what is here said, who keeps these books, for his children to learn and believe in lies.

We wish those who have these books to either hand them to their Bishops for them to be conveyed to the President’s or Historian’s Office, or send them themselves, that they may be disposed of; and they will please write their names in the books, with the name of the place where they reside, and if they wish to hand them over without pay in return, state so; and if they wish to get pay for them, state whether they desire it applied on Tithing, or wish the value returned in other books. (Millennial Star, vol. 27, pages 657-658)

After Brigham Young ordered the first edition of Lucy Smith’s book to be destroyed, he decided to change it and put out another edition. Joseph F. Smith stated:

Subsequently, a committee of revision was appointed by President Young consisting of President George A. Smith and Judge Elias Smith, cousins of the Prophet, men personally familiar with the family and thoroughly conversant with Church history. They were instructed carefully to revise and correct the original work throughout, which they did, reporting their labors to President Young to his entire satisfaction. (History of Joseph Smith by his Mother, 1954 edition, Introduction)

Elias Smith, who was a member of the “committee of revision” wrote the following in his journal under the date of May 2, 1866:

Wednesday 2 got through with the session of court today as soon as I could and the remainder of the day or some part of it I spent at the Historian’s office assisting George A. Smith—Church Historian—in the revision of a book written by Lucy Smith mother of the Prophet Joseph and by some mistake misunderstanding or other consideration published in England in [blank space] as the history of “Joseph the Prophet” which was [word illegible] suppressed by the “First Presidency,” in consequence of certain errors that had been in [word illegible] in the work. It has been resolved by President Young to revise and republish it and my servises have been solicited in the revision of the book or manuscript (Journal of Elias Smith, microfilm copy at the Utah State Historical Society)

When Brigham Young told the “committee of revision” to “revise and correct” this book, he did not mean to put in footnotes where there was an error (as any honest historian would do) but rather to make actual changes in the text.

In comparing the first edition of Lucy Smith’s history (that is the edition Brigham Young tried to destroy) with the edition printed in 1954, we have found that 436 words have been added, 1,379 words have been deleted and 220 words have been changed. This is a total of 2,035 words.

SUBSEQUENT EDITION

Joseph Smith’s History, by his mother. This is a photo reprint of the original 1853 edition (the book Brigham Young tried to destroy). Contains a 15-page introduction by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. This introduction explains how the book was suppressed by Brigham Young, and also how the Mormon leaders changed it in later editions. Plastic binding. PRICE: $4.00 — 2 for $7.00 — 5 for $15.00 — 10 for $24.00.

Senate Document 189. Photo reprint of the “testimony given before the judge of the fifth judicial circuit of the State of Missouri on the trial of Joseph Smith, Jr., and others for high treason, and other crimes against that State.” Gives very interesting testimony on the Danite band. Very revealing. Plastic binding. PRICE: $1.50 — 3 for $4.00 — 5 for $6.00 — 10 for $9.00.


NEW BOOK

No time for God?
What fools we are, to clutter up
Our lives with common things
And leave without heart’s gate
The Lord of life and Life itself—
Our God.

—Norman L. Trott

Special Offer
Reg. $7.00
All 3 for $6.00
If Ordered Before
June 20, 1965
added, deleted or changed without any indication. In addition, 736 words have been deleted with the omissions properly indicated.

On page 101 of the first edition Lucy Smith described the Urim and Thummim:

I knew not what he meant, but took the article of which he spoke into my hands, and upon examination, found that it consisted of two smooth three-cornered diamonds set in glass, and the glass were set in silver bows, which were connected with each other in much the same way as old fashioned spectacles. He took them again and left me, . . .

In the 1954 reprint (page 104) her description of the Urim and Thummim has been deleted:

I knew not what he meant, but took the article of which he spoke into my hands and examined it. He took it again and left me, . . .

On page 107 of her book Mrs. Smith stated that she could see the glistening metal of the breast-plate; in the 1954 edition of this book this statement has been removed. She also makes a statement concerning the value of the breast-plate which has been deleted.

On page 225 of the first edition Lucy Smith stated:

Here I shall introduce a brief history of our troubles in Missouri, given by my son Hyrum, before the Municipal Court, at Nauvoo, June 30, 1843, when Joseph was tried for treason against the state of Missouri:

In the 1954 reprint (page 259) this has been changed to read:

Here I shall introduce a brief history of our troubles in Missouri, given by my son Hyrum, when Joseph was before the Municipal Court, at Nauvoo, June 30, 1843, on a writ of Habeas Corpus:

On page 216 of the first edition Lucy Smith told of the arrest of her husband:

He was taken for marrying a couple; and as Esquire Cowdery, and the mob, did not consider that he was a minister of the gospel, they disputed his having the right to perform this ceremony, and so fined him the sum of three thousand dollars, and, in case he should fail to pay this amount forthwith, he was sentenced to go to the penitentiary.

The Mormon Historians evidently felt that Lucy Smith told too much. In the 1954 reprint (page 248) 57 words were deleted, and 4 words added:

He was taken for marrying a couple without being licensed.

In the first edition (page 216) Lucy Smith continued the story as follows:

Luke Johnson bustled about pretending to be very much engaged in preparing to draw writings for the money, and making other arrangements, . . .

In the 1954 reprint (page 248) this has been changed to read:

Luke Johnson bustled about, pretending to be very much engaged in drawing the bonds and in making arrangements, . . .

On page 216 of the first edition Lucy Smith continued:

The first opportunity that offered itself, he went to Hyrum, and told him to take his father into a room, which he pointed out to him, and, said Johnson, “I will manage to get the window out, which will set him at liberty to jump out, and go where he pleases.” Mr. Smith and Hyrum, who had been together all the time, then retired from the company, who were kept from following them by Luke Johnson, who told the mob, that the prisoner had gone to consult about raising the money. In this way they were stilled, until Mr. Smith, help of Hyrum and John Boynton, escaped from the window.

In the 1954 reprint (page 248) many words have been deleted, and others have been changed:

The first opportunity that offered itself, he went to Hyrum and told him he would take his father into a room, which he pointed out, and, said Johnson, “I will manage so that he can get out, which will set him at liberty to go where he pleases.” In this way he escaped, by the help of Hyrum and John Boynton, from the window.

Many other changes have been made in this book, however, lack of space prevents us from mentioning them in this issue.

It has been a hundred years since Brigham Young ordered the first edition of Lucy Smith’s book destroyed, and since that time it has become quite rare. We are happy to announce, however, that a collector of rare Mormon books has allowed us to use his copy of the first edition, and that we have made a photomechanical reprint which we are now selling for $4.00 each. The quantity prices are: 2 for $7.00 — 5 for $15.00 — 10 for $24.00. This book has a plastic binding, and it also includes a 15-page introduction which we have written showing many of the changes and facts concerning the suppression of this book. This should be very interesting to all students of Mormonism.

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Have you been trying to serve God by halves or some other fraction?
God asks total commitment.

—Selected

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CUT THEIR THROATS

David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, stated as follows:

In June, 1838 at Far West, Mo., a secret organization was formed. Doctor Avard being put in as the leader of the band; a certain oath was to be administered to all the brethren to bind them to support the heads of the church in everything they should teach. All who refused to take this oath were considered dissenters from the Church and certain things were done concerning these dissenters, by Dr. Avard’s secret band. (An Address to All Believers in Christ, by David Whitmer, pages 27-28)

Mormon historians admit that the Danite band did exist, but they are unwilling to admit that Joseph Smith was connected with it. William E. Berrett (Vice President of the Brigham Young University) stated:

Such a band as the “Danites” did exist, as historians affirm; . . . The organization had been for the purpose of plundering and murdering the enemies of the Saints. (The Restored Church, 1956 edition, pages 197-198)

Dr. Hugh Nibley, of the Brigham Young University, admits that the Danites did exist, but he claims that Joseph Smith was not responsible for them. David Whitmer, however, claimed that Joseph Smith and Sydney Rigdon were responsible. In an interview, which was published in the Kansas City Daily Journal, David Whitmer stated:

. . . they issued a decree organizing what was termed the “Danites, or Destroying Angels,” who were bound by the most fearful oaths to obey the commandments of the leaders of the church. The Danites consisted only of those selected by Smith and Rigdon. They threatened myself, John Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery and Lyman Johnson with the vengeance of the Danites . . . (Kansas City Daily Journal, June 5, 1881)
It is very interesting to note that Orson Hyde, one of the Twelve Apostles in the Mormon Church, became very upset at Sydney Rigdon after Joseph Smith’s death, and accused him of teaching murder when the Mormons were in Far West. The following statement by Orson Hyde appeared in the Mormon newspaper, the *Nauvoo Neighbor*:

Elder Rigdon has been associated with Joseph and Hyrum Smith as a councillor to the Church, and he told me in Far West that it was the imperative of the Church to obey the word of Joseph Smith, or the presidency, without question or inquiry, and that if there were any that would not, they should have their throats cut from ear [to] ear. (Nauvoo Neighbor, December 4, 1844)

This was a very damaging admission to make. Since Sydney Rigdon was a councillor to Joseph Smith in the First Presidency, it would be almost impossible to believe that Joseph Smith was not aware of what was going on.

There is a great deal of evidence to show that Joseph Smith approved of the Danite band. We have just finished making a reprint of a book which should throw a great light on this subject; that is, *Senate Document 189*, 26th Congress 2nd Session. Showing the testimony given before the judge of the fifth judicial circuit of the State of Missouri, on the trial of Joseph Smith, Jr., and others, for high treason, and other crimes against that State. This book has a plastic binding and will sell for $1.50 each. The quantity price are: 3 for $4.00 — 5 for $6.00 — 10 for $9.00.

Juanita Brooks stated:

Some of the Danite leaders had turned state’s evidence; others had scattered. (*On the Mormon Frontier, The Diary of Hosea Stout*, vol. 1, Introduction)

Sampson Avard was one of the Danite leaders that turned state’s evidence. He stated:

Sampson Avard, a witness produced, sworn, and examined on behalf of the State, deposed and saith: That about four months since, a band, called the Daughters of Zion, (since called the Danite band,) was formed of the members of the Mormon church, . . . I consider Joseph Smith, jr., as the prime mover and organizer of this Danite band. The officers of the band, according to their grades, were brought before him, at a schoolhouse, together with Hiram Smith and Sidney Rigdon: the three composing the first presidency of the whole church. Joseph Smith Jr. blessed them, and prophesied over them: declaring that they should be the means, in the hands of God, of bringing forth the millenial kingdom. It was stated by Joseph Smith Jr., that it was necessary this band should be bound together by a covenant, that those who revealed the secrets of the society should be put to death . . . Instruction was giving by Joseph Smith, jr., that if any of them should get into a difficulty, the rest should help him out; and that they should stand by each other, right or wrong. This instruction was given at a Danite meeting, in a public address. (*Senate Document 189*, pages 1 and 2)

John Corrill testifies as follows:

I was afterwards invited to one of these meetings, where an oath, in substance the same as testified to by Dr. Avard, was administered. The society was ultimately organized into companies, and captains of tens and fifties were appointed. I took exceptions only to the teaching as to the duties of that society, wherein it was said, if one brother got into any kind of difficulty, it was the duty of the rest to help him out, right or wrong. At the second, or at least the last meeting I attended, the Presidency, (to wit: Joseph Smith jr., Hiram Smith, and Sidney Rigdon,) and also George W. Robertson, was there. (*Senate Document 189*, page 12)

John Cleminson testified as follows:

John Cleminson, a witness, produced, sworn, and examined, in behalf of the State, deposed and saith: Some time in June, I attended two or three Danite meetings; and it was taught there, as a part of the duty of the band, that they should support the presidency in all their designs, right or wrong; that whatever they said was to be obeyed, and whoever opposed the presidency in what they said, or desired done, should be expelled from the county, or have their lives taken. The three composing the presidency was at one of those meetings; and to satisfy the people, Dr. Avard called on Joseph Smith, jr., who gave them a pledge, that if they led them into a difficulty he would give them his head for a foot-ball, and that it was the will of God these things should be so. The teacher and active agent of the society was Dr. Avard, and his teachings were approved of by the presidency.

Speaking of a Danite meeting, Reed Peck testified:

I was present at one meeting when the officers of the society were presented and introduced to the presidency, each officer receiving a blessing from them. Avard stated that he had procured the presidency to come there, to show the society that what he had been doing was according to their direction or will; and while there, the presidency approved of Avard’s course in the society. (*Senate Document 189*, pages 17 and 18)

Burr Riggs testified as follows:

Mr. Rigdon said that the last man had run away from Far West that was a going to; that the next man who started, he should be pursued and brought back, dead or alive. This was put to a vote, and agreed to, without any one objecting to it. He further said, that one man had slipped his wind yesterday, and had been thrown aside into the brush for the buzzards to pick, and the first man who lisped it should die. (*Senate Document 189*, page 30)

William W. Phelps and many others testified in this investigation. There are 47 pages to testimony which is very revealing.

We have also reproduced another book which tells some things concerning the Danite band. The name of the book is *Mormonism Exposed, Being a Journal of a Residence in Missouri for the 28th of May to the 20th of August, 1838*, by William Swartzell, published in 1840. This is also in a plastic binding and sells for $1.50.

In the book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* we have included much information on the Danite band and the doctrine of blood atonement. As yet, however, we have not included a sermon by Jedediah M. Grant (who was a member of the First Presidency in the Mormon Church) which was printed in the Mormon paper, the *Deseret News*, on July 27, 1854. Since most of our readers have not seen this sermon before, we will quote from it in this issue:

“‘What disposition ought the people of God to make of covenant breakers’ . . . I say what ought such a people to do with covenant breakers? ‘Why,’ says one, ‘forgive them to be sure.’ Very good, but what else ought they to do? What does the Apostle say? He says they are worthy of death . . . I am inclined to believe his decision was a correct one.

Then what ought this meek people, who keep the commandments of God do unto them? ‘Why’ says one, ‘they ought to pray to the Lord to kill them.’ I want to know if you would wish the Lord to come down and do all your dirty work . . .

Then there was another odd commandment—The Lord God commanded them not to pity the person whom they killed; but to execute the law of God upon persons worthy of death. This should be done by the entire congregation showing no pity. I have thought there would have to be quite a revolution among the Mormons, before such a commandment could be obeyed completely by them. The Mormons have a great deal of sympathy. For instance, if they can get a man before the tribunal
administering the law of the land, and succeed in getting a rope round
his neck, and having him hung up like a dead dog, it is all right; but if
the Church and Kingdom of God should step forth and execute the law
of God, O! what a burst of Mormon sympathy it would cause. I wish we
were in a situation favorable to our doing that which is justifiable before
God, without any contaminating influences of Gentile amalgamation, laws,
and traditions, that the people of God might lay the axe to the root of the
tree, and every tree that bringing not forth good fruit might be hewn down.

“...What! do you believe that people would do right and keep the law
of God, by actually putting to death the transgressors?” Putting to death
transgressors would exhibit the law of God, no difference by whom it
was done; that is my opinion.

You talk of the doings of different governments, the United States
if you please. What do they do with traitors? ... Do traitors to that
Government forfeit their lives? ... But people will look into books of
theology, and argue that the people of God have a right to try people
for fellowship, but they have no right to try them on property or life. That
makes the devil laugh, saying, I have got them on a hook now; ... But
if the Government of God on earth, and Eternal Priesthood, with the
sanction of High Heaven, in the midst of all his people, has passed
sentence on certain sins when they appear in a person, has not the people
of God a right to carry out that part of his law as well as any other portion
of it? It is their right to baptize a sinner to save him, and it is also their
right to kill a sinner to save him, when he commits those crimes that can
only be atoned for by shedding his blood. If the Lord God forgives sins
by baptism, and there is another law that certain sins cannot be atoned
for by baptism, but by the shedding of the blood of the sinner, ... We
would not kill a man, of course, unless we killed him to save him ... If
you shall thus advance, and then turn and trample the holy commandments
of God under you feet, and break your sacred and solemn covenants,
and become traitors to the people of God, would you not be
worthy of death? I think you would.

Do you think it would be any sin to kill me if I were to break my
covenants? ... Do you believe you would kill me if I broke the covenants
of God, and you had the Spirit of God? Yes; and the more Spirit of God
I had, the more I should strive to save your soul by spilling your blood,
when you had committed sin that could not be remitted by baptism.

In the book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? we show that some of
the most powerful sermons on blood atonement were preached by
Brigham Young himself.

I'M WARNING YOU

Several years ago we were sitting in the office of the Mormon Apostle
LeGrand Richards, when he threatened us as follows:

I'm warning you! Don't start anything against this church!

Since that time people have asked us such questions as: “Do you
have a gun to protect yourself?” or “Do you have fire insurance on your
equipment?” One man stated: “I would like to see you succeed, but I
know they will burn you out.”

Fortunately, the Mormon leaders have not tried to destroy our press
(as they did the Nauvoo Expositor), nor have they sent the Danites in the
night (as Brigham Young used to do). Except for a few treating to sue or arrest
us, and one man who threatened to punch Sandra “in the nose,” things
have been rather peaceful. The Church has not used violence against us,
as many people thought they would, but instead they have used silence
as their chief weapon against us. But why silence? Is it our sincere belief
that the Church leaders have no satisfactory answers to the charges of
fraud and deceit that we have brought against them, and therefore they
have used the “silent treatment” on us. This treatment seemed to work
fairly well for the first few years, however, it is becoming less effective as
time goes on. Many members of the Church are beginning to wonder why
the Church leaders are so silent. Our mailing list is growing constantly,
and there seems to be more interest than ever before. We are beginning
to receive a great deal more of help from members of the Church who are very
disturbed with the way their leaders have used deceit to preserve the
image of the Church. Some have offered to help us obtain microfilms and
photocopies of rare documents, and others have given us information
which will be very helpful to us.

One man spent a great deal of time trying to find an addressing
machine to help us put out our mailing list faster. After finding the proper
machine, he paid half the cost of it. This will be a great help to us.

We hope to receive many new names for our mailing list, the
Messenger is sent free to those on our mailing list.

LETTERS

“Thank you sincerely for sending the revised edition of your excellent
work on Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? I am amazed at the tremendous
amount of work and research it represents.

“You have done the community an excellent service in making this
material available. I wish you every success in your difficult work.”

(Letter from Utah)

“I want to commend you on your Changes in J. S. History: it is a
great piece of work.” (Letter from Illinois)

“Inclosed please find my order for four more of your very stimulating
books. I thoroughly enjoy them and hope you continue. I have a great
many of your publications and will not be satisfied until I have them all ...

“My I congratulate you on your research and your ability to ferret
out these many materials. I don’t know how you do it, especially when
you meet with so much opposition. Keep up the good work.” (Letter
from Arizona)

“Could you send me 15 more copies of the advertisement for your
book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? ... At the seminary I posted
the ad for your book & also a list which the students could sign. I got 30
names of people who want the book.” (Letter from Minnesota)

OUT OF PRINT?

In the first issue of the Messenger we proved that the Mormon Church
leaders are trying to suppress Wilford Wood’s photo-offset reprint of the
first edition of the Book of Commandments, Doctrine and Covenants
and Book of Mormon. We reproduced a letter from the Deseret Book Store
in which the following statement appeared:

Thank you for your letter ordering Joseph Smith Begins His Work
Vol. 1 & 2 by Wilford Wood. We are sorry to inform you that these two
books are no longer available.

We also quoted an employee of the Deseret Book Store as saying:

“President David O. McKay won’t let us sell that anymore.” The same
employee also stated:

“We’ve had several people leave the Church because of those books.
The priest and ministers of the other churches are using these books to
confuse people. Because of the confusion we can’t sell them anymore.
President McKay has taken them out of circulation.

The reason the Mormon Church is trying to suppress these books
is that the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith’s revelations have been
changed. On May 8, 1965, we called the Deseret Book Store on the phone
to find out if they were still suppressing the sale of these books, and
also to find out if they were giving the same reason for not selling them.
The answer was that they are “out of print.” Of course, this statement
is completely untrue. In a letter dated October 27, 1964, Wilford Wood
stated: “There are plenty of books, both volumes and always will be.”

Modern Microfilm Company will continue to sell these books as
long as they are available to us.

It would be very interesting if a large number of our readers would
write or phone the Deseret Book Store concerning the suppression of these
books. Their address is 44 East South Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah, and
their phone number is 328-8191.
The Mormon Historian Joseph Fielding Smith has claimed that there is no truth in the statement that there have been thousands of changes in the Book of Mormon. He was reported as saying the following at the fall conference of 1961:

During the past week or two I have received a number of letters from different parts of the United States written by people, some of whom at least are a little concerned because they have been approached by enemies of the Church and enemies of the Book of Mormon, who had made the statement that there have been one or two or more thousand changes in the Book of Mormon since the first edition was published. Well, of course, there is no truth in that statement.

. . . there was not one thing in the Book of Mormon or in the second edition or any other edition since that in any way contradicts the first edition, . . .

Now, these Sons of Belial who circulate these reports evidently know better. I will not use the word that is in my mind. (Improvement Era, December 1961, pages 924-925)

In the book, Answers to Gospel Questions, vol. 2, Joseph Fielding Smith made the following statement:

It is astonishing to what length the enemies of the Church will go in order to attempt to prove the Book of Mormon false. . . .

There were bound to be some typographical errors in the first edition, and perhaps an omission of a word or two. . . . A careful check of the list of changes submitted by these critics shows there is not one change or addition that is not in full harmony with the original text. Changes have been made in punctuation and a few other matters that needed correction, but never has any alteration or addition changed a single original thought. (Answers to Gospel Questions, vol. 2, pages 199-200)

In a new book which we have just finished printing, 3,913 Changes in the Book of Mormon, we prove that Joseph Fielding Smith is the man who is not telling the truth. There have been thousands of changes made in the Book of Mormon, and they are not in harmony with the original text. For example, on page 303 of the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon this statement appears:

. . . ye, I know that he allotteth unto men, yea, decreeth unto them decrees which are unalterable, according to their wills, . . .

In the 1964 edition [Alma 29:4] 8 words have been deleted:

. . . ye, I know that he allotteth unto men according to their wills, . . .

In the first edition, page 87, this statement appears:

. . . the mean man boweth down, . . .

In later editions [2 Nephi 12:9] this has been changed to read as follows:

. . . the mean man boweth not down, . . .

On page 200 of the first edition of the Book of Mormon we read as follows:

. . . king Benjamin had a gift from God, whereby he could interpret such engravings; . . .

In modern editions this has been changed to read:

. . . king Mosiah had a gift from God, whereby he could interpret such engravings; . . . (Book of Mormon, Mosiah 21:28)

A change has been made in the First Book of Nephi, evidently in an attempt to strengthen the Mormon claim that baptism was practiced by the people in the Old Testament. This verse is taken from Isaiah 48, and appears as follows in the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon:

Hearken and hear this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the Lord, . . . (Book of Mormon, 1830 ed., page 52)

In modern editions seven words have been added:

Hearken and hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, or out of the waters of baptism, who swear by the name of the Lord, . . . (Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 20:1)

Four important changes were made in the second edition of the Book of Mormon concerning the Godhead. One of the most significant changes was made in 1 Nephi 13:40. It was stated in this verse that the purpose of the Nephite records was to make known that Christ is the Eternal Father. In the first edition we read as follows:

. . . These last records, . . . shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is the Eternal Father and the Savior . . . (Book of Mormon, 1830 edition, page 32) (Continued on page 2)

Bible Study

We are now holding a Bible study in our home at 1350 S. West Temple, every Thursday at 8:00 pm. Everyone is welcome. Remember that Jesus said that a man must be born again:

Jesus answered and said unto him, verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

NEW BOOK

3,913 Changes in the Book of Mormon. This is a photomechanical reprint of the original 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon with all the changes marked. Contains a 16-page introduction by Jerald and Sandra Tanner which proves that the changes are not in harmony with the original text.

Joseph Smith stated that when he and the witnesses went out to pray concerning the Book of Mormon, a voice spoke from heaven telling them that the translation was correct:

. . . we heard a voice from out of the bright light above us, saying, “These plates have been revealed by the power of God, and they have been translated by the power of God. The translation of them which you have seen is correct, and I command you to bear record of what you now see and hear.” (History of the Church, by Joseph Smith, vol. 1, pages 54-55)

In spite of this statement, the Mormon leaders have made thousands of changes in the Book of Mormon. In the preface to 3,913 Changes in the Book of Mormon we show that some of the changes were made as late as 1920.

We feel that all students of Mormonism will want this book because it clearly shows the changes that have been made and the deceptive methods used by the Mormon leaders to cover up these facts. Plastic binding.

Price: $5.00 — 2 for $9.00 — 4 for $15.00 — 10 for $30.00.
In later editions the words “the Son of” have been added:

... These last records, ... shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior. ... (Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 13:40)

It is interesting to note that even the signed statement by the eight witnesses to the Book of Mormon has been altered. In the 1830 edition (last page) it read:

... that Joseph Smith, Jr. the author and proprietor of this work, has shewn unto us the plates.

In the 1964 edition it reads:

... That Joseph Smith, Jun. the translator of this work, has shewn unto us the plates.

In the first edition of the Book of Mormon, page 31, the following appears:

... neither will the Lord God suffer that the Gentiles shall forever remain in that state of awful woundedness ...

In later editions, [1 Nephi 13:32], this has been changed to read:

Neither will the Lord God suffer that the Gentiles shall forever remain in the awful state of blindness ...

On page 260 of the first edition the following statement appears:

Behold, the Scriptures are before you; if ye will arrest them, it shall be to your own destruction.

In modern editions, [Alma 13:20], this has been changed to read:

Behold, the scriptures are before you, if ye will wrest them it shall be to your own destruction.

A similar mistake is found on page 336 of the first edition:

... some have arrested the scriptures, ...

In modern editions, [Alma 41:1], this has been changed to read:

... some have wrested the scriptures, ...

We could go on listing the changes, but this should be sufficient to give the reader an idea of what will be found in the book, 3,913 Changes in the Book of Mormon. This is a book we have spent months in preparing, and we consider it to be one of our largest and most important projects. We feel that this book will of great interest to our readers.

MORMONISM—Shadow or Reality?

It may interest our readers to know that we have sold five times more copies of the book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? than any other book we have printed. The response by those who have read the book has been very encouraging.

Myron J. Houghton made the following statement in a review published in the North Star Baptist:

For a single book which is comprehensive, effectively presenting and refuting Mormonism, this book is the best yet. (North Star Baptist, June-July, 1965 issue, page 26)

The Utah Christian Tract Society made this comment in their newsletter:

This publication by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, who are former Mormons, is by far the most comprehensive and best documented book on the Mormon system and contains more authentic material and information than any other book of which we are aware. It has 430 pages plus 87 reproductions of pages from rare, suppressed L.D.S. books, also reproduced letters from Mormon “authorities.” Two Mormon Apostles have threatened lawsuits. This book sells for $5.00 and is worth every penny of it. For the person who desires a thorough presentation of Mormon history, doctrines and practices, this book is a “must.” (Newsletter for May-June, 1965, vol. 5, number 4, published by the Utah Christian Tract Society)

This comment appeared in the Utah Evangel:

There is no better book than Tanner’s Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? (one of our best sellers). (Utah Evangel, vol. 13, number 2, September 1965)

A minister in Utah made the following comment in a letter to us:

I certainly admire your courage and loyalty to the truth in publishing such a book, which, no doubt will be the means of turning many from darkness to light.

A member of the Mormon Church made the following comment in a letter to us:

Perhaps by way of interest, I might mention that I had studied deeply into our history and doctrine before coming upon your materials, ... It’s my opinion that your book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? if widely read by Mormons and Non-Mormons alike, would do more harm to the church than any other volume published in the last 50 to 75 years. It could almost tear the Church apart. Your approach is novel; you’ve used our own history and doctrine, and your quotations are accurate. (Letter from Arizona, dated July 28, 1965)

JOSEPH SMITH’S STRANGE ACCOUNT OF THE FIRST VISION

In a letter which we received from California the following statement appeared:

... today we received the two copies of Strange Account of the First Vision ... This will surely deal a great blow to the origin of the Mormon system. I just wonder how they will try to “explain it away!”

We feel that this is one of the most important documents which we have printed on Mormonism, and if it were to have a wide circulation we feel that it would surely deal a great blow to the origin of the Mormon system.

The price of this book is $1.50. The quantity prices are as follows:
3 for $4.00 — 5 for $6.00 — 10 for $9.00.

MESSENGER AND ADVOCATE

This is a photomechanical reprint of the complete (three volume) set of the Messenger and Advocate which was printed by the Mormon Church in the years 1834-1837. These books will be of great interest to all students of Mormonism because they deal with a very important period in Mormon history. The printing is clear and readable, and they are bound in black buckram. The price is $19.50 for the set of three volumes.
3,913 Changes in the Book of Mormon

A Photo Reprint of the Original 1830 Edition of The Book of Mormon With all the Changes Marked

By Jerald & Sandra Tanner
On page 26 of the first edition of the Book of Mormon these words appear: "... by the people; yea, the Everlasting God, was ..." In modern editions of the Book of Mormon this has been changed to read: "... by the people; yea, the Son of the everlasting God was ..." (Book of Mormon, 1964 ed., 1 Nephi 11:32). Notice that the words “the Son of” have been added into the middle of this verse.

The photograph above is taken from the original handwritten manuscript of the Book of Mormon, which is in the Church Historian’s Library in Salt Lake City, Utah. The arrow to the side points to the line in which the words in question appear. These words read as follows: "... by the people yea the ever lasting God was ..." Notice that the words “the Son of” do not appear. The arrow above points to the place where the words “the Son of” would have to be inserted to bring the manuscript into conformity with the 1964 edition of the Book of Mormon. Since these words do not appear in the manuscript, this proves that the Mormon leaders have deliberately changed the Book of Mormon. This photograph also proves that the Church Historian Joseph Fielding Smith has deceived his people concerning the changes in the Book of Mormon, for in his book, Answers to Gospel Questions, vol. 2, he made the following statement: “A careful check of the list of changes submitted by these critics shows there is not one change or addition that is not in full harmony with the original text. Changes have been made in punctuation and a few other matters that needed correction, but never has any alteration or addition changed a single original thought” (Answers to Gospel Questions, vol. 2, page 200). The photograph above proves that Joseph Fielding Smith’s statement is absolutely untrue.

While this photograph is not too readable, a clear and readable photocopy is owned by Wilford Wood, who helped in obtaining the manuscript for the Mormon Church.
Negroes In The Priesthood

Bob Phillips states that there are at least sixty descendants of Elijah Abel in the Mormon Church. At least forty of these live within a radius of 100 miles of Salt Lake City, and, of course, some of them hold the Priesthood and are doing missionary work for the Church. Elijah Abel had six daughters, therefore many of his descendants do not have the name "Abel." Some of their children were apparently adopted into "white" families in Utah. It is evident, then, that some members of the Mormon Church who believe they are "white" are in reality part Negro.

In the book, Joseph Smith’s Curse Upon the Negro, we devote six pages to Elijah Abel, his descendants and other Negroes who have held the Priesthood in the Mormon Church.

The book has a plastic binding and will sell for $2.00 a copy. The quantity prices are: 2 for $3.50 — 5 for $7.00 — 10 for $12.00 — 20 for $20.00.

LACK OF FUNDS

Although we have sold many more books this year than we did last year, we still find ourselves in need of funds. In order to keep going last year we had to take out three additional loans. To meet the payments on these loans and our other necessary expenses we have to sell almost fifty dollars worth of books every day.

We have plans for several projects which we consider to be extremely important, however, we will need a good deal of money to carry these plans into effect. We owe one company over $1,400 for paper, and we must bring this balance down before charging any more paper with them. In order to raise the money we need we have decided to have another 10% sale on all our books and to sell gift certificates.

We hope that these two ideas will bring in the money that we need to continue this work in an effective manner.

10% SALE

This sale begins when our customers receive this notice, and it will continue until December 31, 1965.

A special price list is enclosed which shows the price of each book with the 10% discount already discounted.

To avoid confusion the sale does not apply to any orders placed prior to the time this paper is received.

GIFT CERTIFICATES

GIVE MODERN MICROFILM BOOKS FOR CHRISTMAS

We have now printed gift certificates for those who wish to give Modern Microfilm books for Christmas, birthdays, etc. These certificates will be honored for the purchase of any books in stock at Modern Microfilm Co. The person who receives the certificate can either come to our store or send in his order by mail. We will send a book list and an order form for their convenience in ordering the books of their choice.

We will give a 10% discount on all gift certificates ordered before December 31, 1965. For example, if you were to order a $5.00 gift certificate you would only send $4.50. Below is an example of how you would fill out the order form to receive two gift certificates (one for $10.00 and one for $5.00). The quantity prices are: 2 for $3.50 — 5 for $7.00 — 10 for $12.00 — 20 for $20.00.

--- ORDER FORM ---

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After receiving this chart we began to search through the records in the Genealogical Society, which is owned by the Mormon Church, to see if we could confirm the statement that Elijah Abel’s descendants have been ordained to the Priesthood. With the help of Bob Phillips we were able to find information that proves that the Negro blood in the Abel family has not prevented some of them from holding the Priesthood. We have obtained a photograph of Elijah Abel’s grandson’s ward membership record which proves that he was ordained to the Priesthood. This photograph is included in a new book we have just finished printing entitled, Joseph Smith’s Curse Upon the Negro.
Mormon leaders deleted Parley P. Pratt’s statements concerning polygamy. The Mormon Church, however, filled the void by adding 123 words. In the 1965 edition, page 164, 341 words have been deleted. It now reads as follows:

In the 1965 edition, page 29 of the first edition this statement appears:

Jesus Christ, a little babe like all the rest of us have been, grew to be a man, and “received a fulness of the glory of the Father, and he received all Power, both in heaven and on earth; and the glory of the Father was restored with the priesthood of the Saints of this age. Strict laws were also given and diligently taught . . .”

Hundreds of other words concerning the doctrine of polygamy have also been deleted without any indication. On page 29 of the first edition this statement appears:

Jesus Christ, a little babe like all the rest of us have been, grew to be a man, and “received a fulness of the glory of the Father, and he received all Power, both in heaven and on earth; and the glory of the Father was restored with the priesthood of the Saints of this age. Strict laws were also given and diligently taught . . .”

In the 1965 reprint, page 37 this has been changed to read:

Jesus Christ, a little babe like all the rest of us have been, grew to be a man, and “received a fulness of the glory of the Father, and he received all Power, both in heaven and on earth; and the glory of the Father was with him, for he dwelt in him.”

Notice that the Mormon leaders have completely rewritten this statement by Parley P. Pratt.

In chapter 5 which is entitled “Keys to the Mysteries of the Godhead,” Parley P. Pratt did not have anything to say concerning the Holy Ghost. The Mormon leaders, however, filled the vacuum by adding 123 words.

There are many other important changes which we do not have room to mention here, however, we have obtained photocopies of the original 1855 edition and have made a photomechanical reprint of it with all the changes marked. This book has a plastic binding. The price is $3.00 a copy. The quantity prices are 2 for $5.00 — 5 for $10.00 — 10 for $18.00.

--- Henry K. Burton

CHANGES IN THE KEY TO THEOLOGY

Dr. Hugh Nibley, of the Brigham Young University, claims that Joseph Smith’s teachings “are so well-knit and perfectly logical that they have never had to undergo the slightest change or alteration during a century in which every other church in Christendom has continually revamped its doctrines” (No, Ma’am, That’s Not History, pages 57-58). On page 61 of the same book Dr. Nibley stated:

The gospel as the Mormons knew it sprang full-grown from the words of Joseph Smith. It has never been worked over or touched up in any way, and is free of revisions and alterations.

In a book we have just finished printing, Changes in the Key to Theology, we show that Dr. Nibley’s statement are completely false. The Mormon leaders not only change the doctrines of the Church, but they also change their books to make it appear that no doctrinal changes have been made. For example, in 1855 Parley P. Pratt published a book entitled, Key to the Science of Theology. Two years after this book was printed Parley P. Pratt (who was an Apostle in the Mormon Church) was assassinated at Van Buren, Arkansas. The Church, however, has continued to reprint his book; in 1965 the Deseret Book Co., which is owned by the Mormon Church, printed the “Ninth Edition.” We have compared the 1965 reprint with the original 1855 edition and have found many important changes.

Some of the most important changes are concerning the doctrine of polygamy. Today the Mormon leaders do not teach the doctrine of polygamy, but in 1855, when Parley P. Pratt wrote this book, polygamy was an accepted practice and doctrine of the Mormon Church. In the first edition of this book Parley P. Pratt defended the practice of polygamy. The 1883 edition (which was printed 26 years after his death) included this defense of polygamy. Sometime between 1883 and 1965, however, the Mormon leaders deleted Parley P. Pratt’s statements concerning polygamy. In the first edition the following statement appeared:

The principal object contemplated by this law, is the multiplication of the children of good and worthy fathers, who will teach them the truth, and train them in the holy principles of salvation. This is far preferable to sending them into the world in the lineages of an unworthy or ignorant parentage, to be educated in error, folly, ignorance and crime.

The peculiar characteristics of the blessings included in the Everlasting Covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their lineage, was the multiplicity of their seed, and the perpetuity of the royal, priestly and kingly power in their lineage.

To assist in carrying out and fulfilling this covenant, good and virtuous women were given to their faithful Prophets, rulers, and wise and virtuous men; and, as it was said of the four wives of Jacob, “These did build the house of Israel.”

While peculiar blessings and encouragements were given to a good and faithful man, and to his wives and children; while they were honored of God, and respected by all who knew them; while the father of a hundred children was had in greater honour than the hero of a hundred battles, adultery, fornication, and all unlawful intercourse was strictly prohibited, and even punished by the strictest laws—the penalty of which was death.

A daughter of Israel, who, by prostitution, was rendered unworthy, or unqualified for the duties of a virtuous wife and mother, was considered unfit to live. While the male who would thus trifle with the fountain of life, and contribute to render a female unworthy to answer the end of her creation, was also condemned to death.

Strict laws were also given and diligently taught . . . (The Key to Theology, 1855 ed., pages 163-164)

In the 1965 edition, page 164, 341 words have been deleted. It now reads as follows:

. . . restored with the priesthood of the Saints of this age. Strict laws were also given and diligently taught . . .

In the 1965 reprint, page 37 this has been changed to read:

Jesus Christ, a little babe like all the rest of us have been, grew to be a man, and “received a fulness of the glory of the Father, and he received all Power, both in heaven and on earth; and the glory of the Father was with him, for he dwelt in him.”

Notice that the Mormon leaders have completely rewritten this statement by Parley P. Pratt.

In chapter 5 which is entitled “Keys to the Mysteries of the Godhead,” Parley P. Pratt did not have anything to say concerning the Holy Ghost. The Mormon leaders, however, filled the vacuum by adding 123 words. Parley P. Pratt had much to say concerning the Holy Spirit in Mormon theology the Holy Spirit is considered to be separate from the Holy Ghost, but the Mormon leaders evidently did not like what he said, for they have deleted hundreds of words.

Bible Study

We are now holding a Bible study in our home at 1350 S. West Temple, every Thursday evening at 8:00 pm. Everyone is welcome.

For God has not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. (1 Thessalonians 4:7)
The leaders of the Mormon Church have always found it very hard to accept criticism. In 1844 a newspaper was established in Nauvoo, Illinois, entitled the Nauvoo Expositor. This paper was opposed to Joseph Smith practicing polygamy and running for the office of President of the United States. After the Nauvoo Expositor had published its first number, the City Council met at this meeting Phineas Richards stated that he "was for making a short work" of the Nauvoo Expositor. Joseph Smith, who was the mayor, ordered the press destroyed. In the History of the Church, vol. 6, page 432, this statement is attributed to Joseph Smith:

The Council passed an ordinance declaring the Nauvoo Expositor a nuisance, and also issued an order to me to abate the said nuisance. I immediately ordered the Marshal to destroy it without delay. . . .

About 8 p.m., the Marshal returned and reported that he had removed the press, type, printed paper, and fixtures into the street, and destroyed them.

Vilate Kimball, wife of Heber C. Kimball, described the destruction of the Nauvoo Expositor as follows:

June 11th. Nauvoo was a scene of excitement last night. Some hundreds of the brethren turned out and burned the press of the opposite party. (Letter written by Vilate Kimball, published in the Life of Heber C. Kimball, page 350)

In Utah, on October 7, 1868, George Q. Cannon, who became a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church stated:

Yet we, for years have had in our city [Salt Lake City] a paper which publishes, if possible, more abominable lies about us and our people than were published by the "Nauvoo Expositor," for the abatement of which Hyrum Smith said he was willing to die. We have not noticed it; we have suffered it to go on undisturbed. But the times has come for us to take this matter in to consideration. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 12, page 292)

The Mormon Church had its own newspaper in Utah entitled the Deseret News. In 1870, however, a newspaper was established which was later to be known as the Salt Lake Tribune. The Mormon historian Joseph Fielding Smith quoted the historian Whitney as stating:

“The Nauvoo Expositor was holy writ compared with the Salt Lake Tribune.” It had been justly said of this sheet that it was “brought into the world to lie and was true to its mission.” (Essentials in Church History, page 548)

The Mormon leaders did not destroy the Salt Lake Tribune, however, they were gradually able to make it shift its emphasis from anti-Mormon to pro-Mormon. As one man explained it, the Salt Lake Tribune was “baptized” into the Mormon Church. The Tribune has now become a tool of the church. An employee of the Tribune stated that the suppression of news and the special favors shown to the Mormon Church made him “sick.”

While residents of Salt Lake City have two large daily newspapers (the Salt Lake Tribune and the Deseret News) neither one of these papers will report the news if it is unfavorable to the Mormon Church. The following is an example of the way the news is suppressed in Salt Lake City: On December 27, 28 and 29, 1965, the New York Times ran a series of three articles on the Mormon Church. Both newspapers in Salt Lake refused to print these articles. The Deseret News claimed that it did not print the articles because it was not a member of the Associated Press News Service. The Salt Lake Tribune could not offer this excuse since it is a member of the Associated Press. Instead, a man in the editorial department stated that the activities of the Mormon Church were “sufficiently” covered and there was no need to pick up these articles from the New York Times. The following are a few excerpts from the New York Times articles written by Wallace Turner:

SALT LAKE CITY — The great socio - economic - theo - cratic organization that built this city has entered a period of ferment.

Within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—more commonly known as the Mormon Church—the liberal intellectuals are hungry as never before for avenues of discussion. Some of them will start a magazine soon for a outlet.

For many of these liberals the paramount question is the church’s attitude on Negroes, who are permitted to become members but cannot attain to the priesthood open to all other male members or become church officers.

At the other end of the doctrinal spectrum, some conservatives are causing concern by taking to polygamy—a practice officially discarded by the church 75 years ago—for which they are excommunicated. . . .

The problem of polygamy—for half a century a cardinal principle of Mormonism—has taken a number of members out of the church. One expert estimates that as many as 30,000 men, women and children live in families in which polygamy is practiced.

COLONY IN ARIZONA

Many live in and near Salt Lake City. Hundreds are concentrated in an isolated Arizona town, Colorado City. Others are scattered through the mountain West and in Mexico. . . .

Only by excommunication can a person leave the church. This may be had for the asking, but few ask, even when disenchanted with their religion.

Three officers were appointed to the editorial department, and run a small printing operation here that distributes such things as anti-Mormon books that have been out of print and pamphlets attacking the validity of the “Book of Mormon” as a divinely revealed work.

Mrs. Tanner is a great-granddaughter of Brigham Young she was holding a great-great-grandchild of the Mormon leader on her knee as she said:

“Even when I had decided in my mind that I did not believe the ‘Book of Mormon’ any longer, it was months before I could say it aloud.” (New York Times, December 27, 1965, pages 1, 18)

In a second article Wallace Turner stated:

SALT LAKE CITY—If George Romney runs for the Presidency of the United States his candidacy will produce button-popping pride among his coreligionists in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—the Mormons.

It would also focus attention on the church’s theologically oriented prejudice against Negroes—among whom there are about six million voters.

Since a Negro cannot become a priest, he cannot, in the Mormon view, be one of the elite in the after-life. And he cannot hold any position in the L.D.S. Church beyond simple membership. He is figuratively relegated to the back pew.

(Continued on page 4)
REED PECK MANUSCRIPT

While browsing through the books at James Wardle’s extensive library on Mormonism, we came across a book with the title, *The Reed Peck Manuscript*. Upon examination we found that it contained photocopies of a handwritten document written in 1839 by Reed Peck. We found this document to be extremely interesting because of the information it contained concerning the Mormon war in Missouri and the Danite band.

After reading this manuscript, we felt that it should be made available to the general public. Upon further investigation we found that Lu B. Cake had printed the entire manuscript in 1899, and that it was in the public domain.

We have now printed this entire document following the original manuscript faithfully with regard to spelling and punctuation.

On page 9 and 10 (of our printing) Reed Peck made this statement:

Some time previous to this secret meetings had been held… ignorant of the nature of these meetings I attended one about the last of June and heared a full disclosure of its object—Jared Carter Geo W. Robinson and Sampson Avard, under the instruction of the presidency, had formed a secret military society, called the “daughters of Zion” and were holding meetings to initiate members. The principles taught by Sampson Avard as spokesman were that “As the Lord had raised up a prophet in these last days like unto Moses it shall be the duty of this band to obey him in all things, and whatever he requires you shall perform being ready to give up life and property for the advancement of the cause. When any thing is to be performed no member shall have the privilege of judging whether it would be right or wrong but shall engage in its accomplishment and trust God for the result.”

It is not our business or place to know what is required by God, but he will inform us by means of the prophet and we must perform. If any one of you see a member of the band in difficulty in the surrounding country contending for instance with an enemy, you shall extricate him, even if in the wrong; if you have to do with his adversary as Moses did with the Egyptian put him under the sand and both pack off to Far West and we will take care of the matter ourselves. No person shall be suffered to speak evil or disrespectfully of the presidency. The secret signs and purposes of the society are not to be revealed on pain of death… The blood of my best friend must flow by my own hands if I would be a faithful Danite should the prophet command it. Said A. McRae in my hearing “If Joseph should tell me to kill VanBuren in his presidential chair I would immediately start and do my best to assassinate him let the consequences be as they would be…”

On page 13 of the *Reed Peck Manuscript* we find the following concerning John Corrill’s failure to obey a revelation:

John Corrill observed to a person in Far West that he did not “think it his duty to unite with the firm and that he had no confidence in the revelation that required it” Joseph Smith and S Rigdon learning that he had made this observation, chid him severely for his rebellion in the presence of several persons. Smith said to him “if you tell about the streets again that you do not believe this or that revelation of several persons Smith said to him “if you tell about the streets again that you do not believe this or that revelation I will walk on your neck sir” at the same time smiting his fists to evince his great rage. He talked of dissenters and cited us to the case of Judas, saying that Peter told him in a conversation a few days ago that himself hung Judas for betraying Christ. He also said “if you do not act differently and show yourself approved you shall never be admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven—I will stand at the entrance and oppose you myself and will keep you out if I have to take a fistsy cuff in doing it”.

B. H. Roberts, the Mormon Historian, admitted that Sidney Rigdon (who was a member of the First Presidency) preached a sermon in which he inferred that the “dissenting brethren” should be “trodden under the foot of men.” Reed Peck made this statement concerning this sermon:

…S. Rigdon took his text from the fifth chapter of Matthew “Ye are the salt of the earth but if the salt have lost its savour wherewith shall it be salted, it is henceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and be trodden under foot of men.” From this scripture he undertook to prove that when men embrace the gospel and afterwards lose their faith it is the duty of the Saints to trample them under their feet. He inferred the people that they had a set of men among them that had dissented from the church and were doing all in their power to destroy the presidency laying plans to take their lives & c., accused them of counterfeiting lying cheating and numerous other crimes and called on the people to rise en masse and rid the county of such a nuisance. He said it is the duty of this people to trample them into the earth and if the county cannot be freed from them any other way I will assist to trample them down or to erect a gallows on the square of Far West and hang them up as they did the gamblers at Vicksburgh and it would be an act at which the angels would smile with approbation. Joseph Smith in a short speech sanctioned what had been said by Rigdon, though said he I don’t want the brethren to act unlawfully but will tell them one thing Judas was a traitor and instead of hanging himself was hung by Peter, and with this hint the subject was dropped for the day having created a great excitement and prepared the people to execute anything that should be proposed. (*The Reed Peck Manuscript*, pages 6 and 7)

Dr. Hugh Nibley, of the Brigham Young University, claimed that Joseph Smith did not know anything about the Danites. Reed Peck, however, claimed that the First Presidency knew about the Danite Band:

At a meeting for the organization of the Danite Sampson Avard presented the society to the presidency who blessed them and accepted their services as though they were soon to be employed in executing some great design. They also made speeches to the society in which great military glory and conquest were represented as awaiting them,… (*The Reed Peck Manuscript*, page 11)

There are many other interesting incidents that Reed Peck relates in this book. We feel that those who are interested in the subject of Mormonism will have a great interest in this book. This book has a plastic binding. The regular price would be $2.00 a copy, if you were to buy this in the bookstores. Our special price during this 10% sale is $1.80. The quantity prices are: 2 for $3.15 — 5 for $6.30 — 10 for $10.80.

LETTERS

BY

ORSON SPENCER

We have just completed a very limited (only 140 copies) reprint of the *Letters of Orson Spencer*. This is a photomechanical reprint of the 1891 edition. On page 207 of this book Orson Spencer states:

Do not tartle, sir, if I should tell you that monogamy, or the one-wife system, adopted throughout Christendom, is a very defective system. It does not answer the demands of society, and it is altogether inferior to the Patriarchal system of polygamy, as introduced by God himself.

The Mormon leaders now claim that the Father and the Son appeared to Joseph Smith when he was fifteen years old. Orson Spencer, however, stated that Joseph was seventeen when the “designs of heaven were first made known to him” (*Letters of Orson Spencer*, pages 25). On page 75 of the same book Orson Spencer states that it was only an “angel” that appeared to Joseph Smith.

This book will be of interest to those who are collecting early Mormon publications. This book has a plastic binding and will sell for $3.00 in the bookstores. Our special price during this 10% sale is $2.70. The quantity prices are: 2 for $4.50 — 5 for $9.00 — 10 for $16.20.

Bible Study

We are now holding a Bible study in our home at 1350 S. West Temple, every Thursday evening at 8:00 pm. Everyone is welcome.

*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* (2 Timothy 2:15)

*But he said, Yea rather; blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.* (Luke 11:28)
We wish to thank all those who placed orders during our 10% sale. One man gave us a gift of $20 which was greatly appreciated and came at a time when it was really needed.

Unfortunately, however, we did not receive the money that we needed to continue this work in an effective manner. For this reason and others we have decided to continue the 10% sale and to sell out all of our books (with the exception of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?: Joseph Smith’s Strange Account of the First Vision and Joseph Smith’s Curse Upon the Negro). It is very possible that these books will never be printed again, and this may be your last chance to get them. If we are not able to reprint these books at a later date, some of them will probably become collectors items and be worth a good deal of money. It is very possible that the Mormon Church will try to buy up these books; therefore, we hope that our customers will buy many of them and keep them out of the hands of the Church. We know of one book (which was critical of the Mormon Church) that was considered a failure at the time it was printed. As we understand it, however, the Church bought up many of the copies, and it is now a collectors item and is worth $35 to $50 a copy.

At any rate, a person would probably not go wrong in buying a large supply of Modern Microfilm books at the 10% discount. It would certainly help us to pay off many of our bills.

We are including a special price list which gives the prices with the 10% discount already deducted and also shows how many copies of each item we had left when we took inventory January 1, 1966. Some of the books will probably sell out fast; therefore, it would be wise to place your order immediately!

OUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

We hope that by selling these books we will be able to pay off our loans, and, if it is possible, to keep our equipment. We hope to spend some time in research and writing, and also to continue the Salt Lake City Messenger. After that the Lord may call us to some other work, or we may even continue Modern Microfilm Co. on a part time basis. Be this as it may, we feel that our work has been very effective. We have received much help and encouragement from members of the Mormon Church. For instance, a student at the Brigham Young University (the Mormon Church’s University) wrote us a letter in which he stated:

I consider myself obligated to you for not only your books but for the way in which my life and ideas have undergone a radical change for the better. . . .

I can do nothing too overtly to help you until I graduate for lack of funds, fear of some kind of reprisal like dishonoreishment or excommunication which would or might foul up my graduation from BYU. But what I can do I do. I think I have been moderately successful in advertising your work and publications to my friends who are much of the same opinions as myself. If I can do anything else for you please ask. (Letter from a student at the Brigham Young University, dated December 18, 1965)

Several men who have served on missions for the Mormon Church have taken a real interest in our work. One man (who had recently returned from a mission for the Church) claimed that he has completely lost faith in the Mormon Church and is considering entering the ministry in another church.

Besides receiving much help from members of the Mormon Church, we have received a great deal of help from those who are working with the Mormons. A minister in Idaho wrote us a letter in which he stated:

I ordered your masterful work - Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? and I think that it is the most outstanding book that I have seen. I have already recommended it to others and will continue to do so. (Letter dated December 22, 1965)

We have many people on our mailing list who have written or will be writing books, pamphlets and theses on Mormonism. We feel that it has been a very important part of our work to supply these writers with source material. This material will help them to present a more complete picture of Mormonism to their readers. One man who will be writing on the subject of Mormonism sent us a letter in which he stated:

About a week ago I was asked . . . to teach one class session on Mormonism in the Polemics class. . . . yesterday, when I taught the class, everyone came away very enthusiastic. Among other books and literature which I brought to class, I also brought and promoted your book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? which in my thinking has become a classic in its field.

Well, I must close. You have, through the literature and letters, created an enthusiasm in me to keep one pursuing the area of Mormonism. (Letter dated January 8, 1966)

INFORMATION THAT MUST BE MADE AVAILABLE

We feel that some of the most important information concerning Mormonism has yet to be printed. For instance, we have access to a microfilm of a handwritten document which was dictated by Joseph Smith which, we feel, will absolutely prove that Mormonism is false. At the present time the only thing that prevents us from publishing this document is the lack of money to buy the paper to print it on. The Mormon leaders have suppressed this document for 130 years, but we feel that it must be made available. Also we have a great deal of information concerning the Book of Mormon, the Temple Ceremony, blood atonement, the Danites, changes in Mormon publications, polygamy, the Book of Abraham, suppression of the records and many other subjects which we would like to make available to the public.

Our ability to make this information available hinges on how well we are able to sell the present material.

A VERY HARD WORK

Many people have told us that they would pray for our work. This is very encouraging to us because we realize that we could not have made it this far without God’s help, and we will need His help if we are to continue.

A man who worked at a publishing company in Salt Lake City told us that his company seldom prints less than 3,000 copies of a book at one time. He also stated that if they printed less than 3,000 the price of the book would go up to $10 a copy, and that they would not even consider printing less than 1,000 copies at a time. At Modern Microfilm Co. we have never printed more than 500 copies of a book at one time. On one of our latest books (Letters of Orson Spencer) we printed only 140 copies. We have had to reprint our large book on Mormonism at least ten different times. To make small printings like this takes a great deal of time. Most publishers would not even consider printing such small quantities, however, we have been forced to do this because of our lack of capital. For this reason we have had to work long hours. Many nights we have not quit working until 11 or 12 o’clock at night.

Actually, we should have had at least $10,000 to start this work, but we began with almost nothing. We had to borrow 250 of the 300 dollars that we needed for a down payment on a microfilm camera.

When we found that it was possible to make masters to print from a microfilm, we looked at an “offset” printing press. Since the price was almost $2,000, we were rather reluctant to buy it. We decided that if our income tax refund came the next day we would use it for a down payment. The next day the refund arrived in the mail, and this was the beginning of a long uphill battle. But even though the work has been hard and the hours long, we feel that our time has been well invested. One man who lives in California wrote us a letter in which he stated:

This is to compliment you on your outstanding and interesting work and also the excellent Salt Lake City Messenger.

Another man, who lives in Utah, wrote:

Keep up the work. Your efforts are the most inspiring and noble thing I have yet encountered.

Whether Modern Microfilm continues or not, we feel that our time has been well spent.
In the third article Wallace Turner stated: "live." (to have less importance in modern society than they did in pioneer days.

Another is the constant round of religious activities that seem are unable to reconcile their learning with their religion.

members at great cost, in the belief that "the glory of God is intelligence"—

elsewhere, point to three basic reasons that members fall away.

involves the church's practice on Negroes. He

members of the L.D.S. Church. It is a fundamental reason given by many for their decision to stop attending church.

However, there are many others who equally oppose the church practice but who stay to continue the fight to force some change. One of these is Dr. Sterling McMurrin, provost of the University of Utah. . . .

Dr. J. D. Williams, professor of political science at the University of Utah, is another who objects to the church's practice on Negroes. He is a member of a stake council and has been a bishop, the chief officer of an L.D.S. ward . . . .

For some in the community of Mormons, the change is inevitable. But it is generally considered that it will not be made at one stroke but will come gradually.

The church moves slightly toward the Negro all the time. Proselyting is heavy now in Brazil, where many persons of mixed Negro blood live and where many such have undoubtedly been taken into the priesthood.

However, sometimes the church missionaries have been required to go to new priests and tell them they no longer may perform their priestly function—that research has shown they have Negro ancestry. Orders for this come from Salt Lake City.

The church will identify only one Negro who was ever a priest. He was Elijah Abel, an undertaker in Nauvoo, Ill.—and a good friend of Joseph Smith, the founder.

In the extensive Mormon records there is a statement made in 1879 by Zebedee Coltrin, the white Saint who said it was he who annointed Mr. Joseph Smith, the founder.

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In the extensive Mormon records there is a statement made in 1879 by Zebedee Coltrin, the white Saint who said it was he who annointed Mr. Joseph Smith, the founder.
Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar suppressed for 130 years now comes to light. This document proves that Joseph Smith did not understand ancient Egyptian and that the Book of Abraham was a work of his imagination!

In the year 1835 the Mormon people purchased some Egyptian mummies and rolls of papyrus. Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet, made this statement concerning the papyrus:

...I commenced the translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt, etc., —a more full account of which will appear in its place, as I proceed to examine or unfold them. Truly we can say, the Lord is beginning to reveal the abundance of peace and truth. (History of the Church, vol. 2, page 236)

The Book of Abraham was published in 1842 and is now found as a part of the Pearl of Great Price (one of the four standard works of the Mormon Church).

Unfortunately, the original papyrus roll from which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham was lost. Joseph Smith did, however, include three drawings in his Book of Abraham, and also gave a translation of much of the material which appeared on these drawings.

In the year 1912 F. S. Spaulding sent the facsimiles from the Pearl of Great Price to a number of the most noted Egyptologists. These Egyptologists examined the facsimiles and Joseph Smith's interpretation of them and declared that his interpretation was fraudulent. Letters from these Egyptologists are published in the book, Joseph Smith, Jr., as a translator, 1912, by F. S. Spaulding, D.D. On page 23 of his book F. S. Spaulding reproduces a letter from Dr. A. H. Sayce of Oxford, England. In this letter Dr. Sayce stated:

It is difficult to deal seriously with Joseph Smith's impudent fraud...Smith has turned the Goddess into a King and Osiris into Abraham.

Dr. W. M. Flinders Petrie of the London University stated:

To any one with knowledge of the large class of funeral documents to which these belong, the attempts to guess a meaning for them, in the professed explanations, are too absurd to be noticed. It may be safely said that there is not one single word that is true in these explanations. ...None but the ignorant could possibly be imposed on by such ludicrous blunders. (Joseph Smith, Jr., as a translator, page 24)

Dr. Arthur C. Mace, Asst. Curator, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Dept. of Egyptian Art, stated:

I return herewith, ... the "Pearl of Great Price." The "Book of Abraham," it is hardly necessary to say, is a pure fabrication...Joseph Smith's interpretation of these cuts is a Farrago of nonsense from the beginning to end. Egyptian characters can now be read almost as easily as Greek, and five minutes' study in an Egyptian gallery of any museum should be enough to convince any educated man of the clumsiness of the imposture. (Joseph Smith, Jr., as a translator, page 27)

Rev. Prof. S. A. B. Mercer, Ph.D., Western Theological Seminary, Custodian Hibbard Collection, Egyptian Reproductions, stated:

3. That the author knew neither the Egyptian language nor the meaning of the most commonplace Egyptian figures; neither did any of those, whether human or Divine, who may have helped him in his interpretation, have any such knowledge. ...the explanatory notes to his fac-similes cannot be taken seriously by any scholar, as they seem to be undoubtedly the work of pure imagination. (Joseph Smith, Jr., as a translator, page 29)

The magazine section of the New York Times for December 29, 1912, carried this headline:

MUSEUM WALLS PROCLAIM FRAUD OF MORMON PROPHET

Under this headline appeared several pictures, one of which proves that the hypocephalus reproduced as Facsimile no. 2 in the Pearl of Great Price (supposed to have been drawn by Abraham) is in reality nothing but one of the "magical discs" which were placed under the head of a mummy. The picture shows a hypocephalus from the collection in the Berlin Museum which is almost identical to the one found in the Pearl of Great Price. Below is a photograph of this hypocephalus on the left side of the one found in the Pearl of Great Price.

In 1913 Dr. Samuel A. B. Mercer wrote a letter in which he claimed that Joseph Smith would not get more than zero in an examination on Egyptology:

All the scholars came to the same conclusion, viz: that Smith could not possibly correctly translate any Egyptian text, as his interpretation of the facsimiles shows. Any pupil of mine who would show such absolute fraud (Continued on page 2)

10% SALE WILL END JUNE 30, 1966

We have decided to continue the 10% sale until June 30, 1966. The following books have sold out: Temple Mormonism, Selected Changes in the Book of Mormon, Race Problems as They Affect the Church, The Golden Bible and A Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints.

Several of the other books have almost sold out. Since we do not plan to reprint many of these books, this may be your last chance to get them.

The book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? continues to be our biggest seller. We have now sold over 4,000 copies. A reader from Pennsylvania wrote us a letter in which he stated:

Some time ago you sent us...Mormonism—Shadow or Reality...we did not realize the great significance of this amazing and revealing book...That account you give, from Utah Church records, on the Manifesto, chapter 16, page 226, is terrific...This one chapter, alone, is worth the price of the book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality. (Letter dated January 20, 1966)

Millennial Star

We have just finished printing volumes 6 and 7 of the Millennial Star. These volumes are photo-reprints of an early Mormon publication. We will take them to the binders as soon as we receive a sufficient number of orders. This is a very limited printing (only 250 of each volume), and they may never be reprinted. The printing in these volumes is very clear and readable, and they will be of great interest to the student of Mormonism.

Although these volumes will sell for $7.00 each in the bookstores, we will give a special price to those who will order them before June 30, 1966. We will sell these two volumes for $10.80 (this is $6.00 a volume with 10% deducted). The price for all 7 volumes will be $37.80.
ignorance of Egyptian as Smith does, could not possibly expect to get more than zero in an examination in Egyptology.

The science of Egyptology is well established as any one knows who is acquainted with the great Grammar of Erman a 3rd Ed. of which appeared in 1911.

I speak as a linguist when I say that if Smith knew Egyptian and correctly interpreted the facsimiles which you submitted to me, then I don’t know a word of Egyptian, and Erman’s Grammar is a fake, and all modern Egyptologists are deceived. (Improvement Era, vol. 16, page 615)

In the Utah Survey for September, 1913, Dr. Mercer wrote:

In the judgment of the scholarly world, therefore, Joseph Smith stands condemned of self-deception or imposition. (Utah Survey, September 1913, page 36)

Time magazine, November 3, 1952, recognized Samuel A. B. Mercer’s work in the Egyptian language:

Born the very year that the pyramids were discovered, soft-spoken Samuel Mercer has spent a lifetime studying ancient languages. He has specialized in cuneiform and hieroglyphics, has compiled grammars in Assyrian, Ethiopic and Egyptian, written a definitive study of the tablets of Tell el-Amarna, been professor of Semitic languages and Egyptology at the University of Toronto. Since 1946 he has devoted his full time and energies to working on the pyramid texts. (Time, November 3, 1952, page 66)

After reading this article LaMar Petersen wrote a letter to Dr. Mercer in which he stated:

Recently at the Salt Lake Public Library I read your analysis of the Book of Abraham controversy in the Utah Survey Magazine for September 1913. Imagine my surprise upon laying down the Survey and picking up Time Magazine for November 3, 1952 to find the article on page 66 telling of your latest work in the translation of Egyptian hieroglyphics.

Would you mind telling me if in the intervening thirty-nine years since 1913 you have altered your opinion in any way concerning Joseph Smith’s purported translation of the facsimiles appearing in the Book of Abraham? (Letter by LaMar Petersen to Dr. Mercer, December 16, 1952)

In a letter dated February 19, 1953, [copy of the letter in next column] Dr. Mercer replied that he had not changed his mind concerning Joseph Smith’s purported translation:

I do indeed remember my work on the “Book of Abraham,” although it is many years now since I have had occasion to think much about it, although I am sure that my views on the subject have not changed, because the question of translation was so clear-cut. (Letter by Dr. Samuel A.B. Mercer to LaMar Petersen, February 19, 1953)

Marvin Cowan, a Baptist missionary working among the Mormons, was told by different Mormons that the pamphlet by F. S. Spaulding was out-dated and that the Egyptologists today would probably give a different opinion concerning Joseph Smith's translation. After obtaining the names of prominent Egyptologists from the Smithsonian Institute, he sent them the facsimiles from the Pearl of Great Price along with a letter in which he asked if the Egyptian language was “completely decipherable,” also if the facsimiles enclosed were “true Egyptian writing or characters?” He also asked if Joseph’s explanations were “true interpretations of the pictures if they are Egyptian” and if the explanations are incorrect, “what do the three pictures mean?”

To date he has received two replies. In a letter dated March 16, 1966, John A. Wilson, Prof. of Egyptology at the University of Chicago, stated:

We have had previous occasion to comment on the illustrations in Joseph Smith, “The Pearl of Great Price.” Two or three documents are in question as the two oblong illustrations show pictures from the Egyptian Book of the Dead. Whether this is one papyrus or two is immaterial. In illustration No. 1 the god Anubis is preparing a mummified body on a bed. The head of the god has been miscopied as human and should be that of a jackal. Beside the head of the mummy there is a flying bird which represents the Egyptian’s soul. Under the bed there are four jars into which the soft inner parts of the body were placed by the ancient Egyptians. Figure 3 is even more common, showing the dead Egyptian led into the presence of the god Osiris for judgment as to his moral character in life. In these the hieroglyphs have been very sketchily copied, and probably could have been read on the original.

Figure 2 is a round disk made of cloth and jesso to be placed under the head of a mummy in the late period of Egyptian culture (after 900 B.C.). It shows the scenes customarily on such magical protection for the dead. In this the hieroglyphs can in part be checked and do correspond to those on such pieces as known in various museums. In fact the name of the dead appears as the same as that of Shishak in the Bible.

From the standpoint of the Egyptologist the explanations given with these illustrations are incorrect. The Egyptian language on such documents is decipherable and has appeared in translation in various books. If these copies were more accurate, one could probably read connected texts from them. (Letter from Prof. John A. Wilson, University of Chicago, March 16, 1966)

In another letter dated March 22, 1966, Richard A. Parker, of the Dept. of Egyptology, Brown University, stated:

(Continued on page 3)
To answer your questions: (1) The ancient Egyptian language can be called completely decipherable. There are some words in the vocabulary whose specific meaning is still undetermined but there are very few whose general meaning remains uncertain. We can read almost any text with a high degree of confidence.

(2) (a) The pictures you sent me are based upon Egyptian originals but are poor or distorted copies. Many of the hieroglyphs are recognizable but so many others have been so poorly copied that the illustrations cannot be read. (b) The explanations are completely wrong insofar as any interpretation of the Egyptian original is concerned. (c) Number 1 is an altered copy of a well-known scene of the dead god Osiris on his bier with a jackal-god Anubis acting as his embalmer. The four jars beneath the couch are four canopic jars with the heads of a human, baboon, jackal and falcon. The bird over Osiris is a ba or soul-bird. There are many variation of this scene in Egyptian monuments.

Number 2 is what we call a hypocephalus with scene and extracts from chapters of the Book of the Dead. It was placed on the mummy and buried with it. There are many examples of these.

Number 3 is a poor copy from a scene from some funerary papyrus in which the dead person is conducted by the goddess of truth and another unknown figure into the presence of Osiris seated on his throne with presumably Isis standing behind him. The hieroglyphs are so badly copied that nothing can be made out but this also is a very common scene.

(Letter by Richard A. Parker, Dept. of Egyptology, Brown University, March 22, 1966)

JOSEPH SMITH’S EGYPTIAN ALPHABET

For 130 years the Mormon Church has suppressed a document which absolutely proves that Joseph Smith did not understand the Egyptian language. This document is known as the “Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar.” In the month of July, 1835, Joseph Smith recorded the following in the History of the Church:

The remainder of this month, I was continually engaged in translating an alphabet to the Book of Abraham, and arranging a grammar of the Egyptian languages as practiced by the ancients. (History of the Church, vol. 2, page 238)

After Joseph Smith’s death the “Egyptian Alphabet” was brought to Utah. Little was known about the “Egyptian Alphabet” until the year 1935. James R. Clark, of the Brigham Young University, stated:

Your author was from 1932 to 1936 a student of Dr. Sperry’s at Brigham Young University and was in “on the ground floor” of this research with Dr. Sperry. This included our “discovery,” with the assistance of A. William Lund, assistant Church Historian, in February, 1935 of Joseph Smith’s translation of Abraham’s Alphabet and Grammar to accompany his (Abraham’s) record which we discussed in Chapter 8. (The Story of the Pearl of Great Price, by James R. Clark, page 156)

Dr. Sidney B. Sperry, of the Brigham Young University, made this statement concerning the “Egyptian Alphabet”:

I went up to the Church of Historian’s office and lo and behold we found this old Egyptian grammar in the archives of the Church. . . . I am amazed even to this day how we managed to persuade the Church authorities to let us bring the Egyptian grammar down here to the B.Y.U. to have Dr. Hales photograph it for us. Here is the book. You will notice it says, “Egyptian Alphabet.” (Pearl of Great Price Conference, December 10, 1960, page 7 of 1964 ed.)

Dr. Sperry anticipated that the “Egyptian Alphabet” would help the Mormon Church to “answer more specifically the accusations that had been made by the Egyptologists who had made their pronouncements upon the material supplied by the Reverend Mr. Spaulding of Salt Lake City.” Instead of helping the Mormon leaders to answer the “accusations” made by the Egyptologist, the “Egyptian Alphabet” has turned out to be a source of embarrassment for them. James R. Clark stated that he was not in favor of submitting the “Egyptian Alphabet” to scholars:

Many people have asked me, “Well, why don’t they submit the grammar and alphabet to scholars?” Well, my answer is this, that the Prophet didn’t complete it. They have already disagreed with him, most of the scholars, on his translation. I’m wondering if there would be any change in their approach to it now to what it has been, and so I’m not personally in favor of submitting it. . . . I’m not in favor of re-opening the question. I’m in favor of doing what we’ve done with the Book of Mormon. Let the thing keep rolling and depend on our testimonies of the gospel. (Prophets and Problems of the Pearl of Great Price, B.Y.U., page 75)

Although the Mormon Church Historian’s Office has the original document and also a microfilm copy, members of the Mormon Church have been required to get special permission from Joseph Fielding Smith, Church Historian, to even see the microfilm. In one instance they even denied that they had such a document.

On December 10, 1960, Sidney B. Sperry was asked if the “Egyptian Alphabet” could be published:

Question: Why not publish the Egyptian grammar?
Answer: Well, I do not know whether the Church authorities would let us do it now or not. (Pearl of Great Price Conference, B.Y.U., page 9 of 1964 ed.)

Although the Mormon leaders have done their best to prevent it, microfilm copies of the “Egyptian Alphabet” have leaked out of their control. A copy of this film was sent to the British Museum. In a letter dated December 22, 1965, I. E. S. Edwards, Keeper of Dept. of Egyptian Antiquities, British Museum, made this statement concerning the “Egyptian Alphabet”:

I am writing rather belatedly to acknowledge the receipt of the film of the Mormon documents which you sent me recently.

I have looked at all the documents and I can only say that they reinforce, in my view, the opinion which I expressed in my letter to you of 11th November. The commentary, such as it is, shows that the writer could not possibly have understood ancient Egyptian. They simply do not deserve serious study.

Thus we see that the “Egyptian Alphabet” proves that Joseph Smith did not understand Egyptian and that the Book of Abraham is a work of his own imagination. We feel that a person does not have to be an Egyptologist to see that Joseph Smith’s “Egyptian Alphabet” is not authentic. For instance; a person has only to compare the Egyptian system of counting as found in the Encyclopaedia Britannica Junior, 1953 ed., page 350, with Joseph Smith’s purported system of counting found on page “G” of the “Egyptian Alphabet.” The real system of Egyptian counting does not resemble the system we use in America today, but Joseph Smith’s purported system looks almost like our own.

You will notice that in Joseph Smith’s system the numbers 1, 4, 5, 7 and 8 are almost identical to our numbers. The number 9 looks like our 9 written backwards. The number 10 looks like our 10 except that it is written backwards with a small cross through the one. Below is an actual photograph of part of Joseph Smith’s purported system of Egyptian counting:
Dr. Sidney B. Sperry, of the B.Y.U., admits that Joseph Smith’s system is not the conventional system of Egyptian counting:

Now, I might point out that this Egyptian counting shows that we are not dealing with Egyptian in the conventional sense. For example, here, counting from one up to ten. (Dr. Sperry counts, reading from the book the Egyptian words.) Now that counting, so far as I am aware, is not used in conventional Egyptian. (Pearl of Great Price Conference, B.Y.U., page 8 of 1964 ed.)

Included in the “Egyptian Alphabet” are photographs of the original manuscript of the Book of Abraham. This manuscript contains the text for the Pearl of Great Price, Book of Abraham 1:4 to 2:6. These photographs are very revealing for they show how many English words were translated from each character. In looking over the characters we find that in one instance one set of characters makes 71 words in English, another set makes 170, and still another set makes 234 words. One simple looking character makes 76 words in the Book of Abraham. Below is a photograph of this character set to the side of the words it makes in the Book of Abraham 1:13 and 14.

13 It was made after the form of a bedstead, such as was had among the Chaldeans, and it stood before the gods of Elkenah, Libnah, Mahmackrah, Korash, and also a god like unto that of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.
14 That you may have an un-derstanding of these gods, I have given you the fashion of them in the figures at the beginning, which manner of figures is called by the Chaldeans Rahleenos, which signifies hieroglyphics.

Notice that the purported Egyptian character is not much more complex than our letter E, yet it makes 76 words in English. These 76 words are composed of 334 letters. Now, it is really possible to imagine that one character (almost as simple as the English letter E) could be translated to make 76 words containing 334 letters?

Below is an actual photo of the Book of Abraham manuscript. Notice the large amount of English words which come from the small number of Egyptian characters. This is published in the Pearl of Great Price, Book of Abraham 1:29-31.

A Mormon, who had done missionary work in the Mormon Church and was very interested in several languages, told us that when he saw the Book of Abraham manuscript and the number of words that were translated from each character, it absolutely destroyed his faith in Joseph Smith’s work as a translator. From then on he knew that the Book of Abraham was a fraud.

**EGYPTIAN ALPHABET NOW AVAILABLE**

We are now happy to announce that we have printed Joseph Smith’s “Egyptian Alphabet” and that it is now available to the general public. This document not only contains Joseph Smith’s purported translation of many Egyptian characters, the purported system of Egyptian counting, part of the Book of Abraham manuscript, but also an Egyptian drawing which Oliver Cowdery called “one of the greatest representations I have ever seen upon paper, or a writing substance.” Oliver Cowdery stated that this drawing was taken from the papyrus roll known as the “Book of Joseph.” Also included is a photograph of an actual piece of papyrus which may be part of the “Book of Abraham” or the “Book of Joseph,” and a drawing of the hypocephalus reproduced as Facsimile No. 2 in the Pearl of Great Price. This drawing is different in many respects from the printed version.

We feel that this document will absolutely prove that Mormonism is false.

**JOSEPH SMITH’S EGYPTIAN ALPHABET & GRAMMAR AVAILABLE IN TWO EDITIONS**

*The small edition* contains photographs of all the Egyptian characters and drawings with the English words typed out for easy reading. This edition does not contain photos of all the handwriting in the manuscript but does have typed copies of all the handwritten pages. The regular prices on this edition will be: $3.00 — 2 for $5.00 — 5 for $10.00 — 10 for $18.00. THE SPECIAL PRICES, IF ORDERED BEFORE THE 10% SALE ENDS JUNE 30, 1966, will be as follows: $2.70 — 2 for $4.50 — 5 for $9.00 — 10 for $16.20.

*The large edition* contains all of the above material plus actual photographs of every page. In this edition the reader will not only see photos of all the Egyptian characters, but also photos of all the English writing (as written by Joseph Smith and his scribes). The regular prices on this edition will be: $5.00 — 2 for $9.00 — 4 for $15.00 — 10 for $30.00. THE SPECIAL PRICES IF ORDERED BEFORE THE 10% SALE ENDS JUNE 30, 1966, will be as follows: $4.50 — 2 for $8.10 — 4 for $13.50 — 10 for $27.00.

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**From SINGING IN THE RAIN**

**Bible Study**

We are now holding a Bible study in our home at 1350 S. West Temple, every Thursday evening at 8:00 pm. Everyone is welcome.

With my whole heart have I sought thee:
O let me not wander from thy commandments.
Thy word have I hid in mine heart,
that I might not sin against thee.

Psalms 119:10-11
20% SALE ON ALL BOOKS

We were planning on ending the 10% sale on June 30th and going back to the regular prices. Unfortunately, however, things have taken a turn for the worse. We had arranged with a loan company for a loan of $1,300. We had agreed with them on the terms and everything was set up, but at the last minute they changed the terms making them so oppressive that we could not sign the contract. Since the majority of people in Utah are opposed to our work, we do not know where to go to borrow money.

While we feel that money could wisely be invested in our company, many of the people here would like to see our company fold. Since we do not know of any bank which is in favor of our work we feel that it is almost futile for us to try to borrow money in this city.

(Perhaps some of our customers might be interested in investing in our company. We would be willing to sign a promissory note and pay 8 percent interest. For instance, on a loan of $1,000 we could make a monthly payment of $48.34 for two years. This would give the investor $160 in interest at the end of that period. The more capital we have at this time the greater will be our chances of success. If you are interested in investing in our company at these terms write to us and we will make the necessary arrangements.)

We are very low on capital at the present time, and while we do not fear bankruptcy, we are rather concerned that one of us will have to hold an outside job. This would greatly reduce the amount of literature we could turn out. We have been working on a book for two years which, we believe, will be one of the most revealing books ever written on the subject of Mormonism. We hope to have this book out before too long, but if one of us has to get a regular job it will cause a long delay. Since we feel that this is by far the most important work we have yet attempted, we have decided to have a 20% sale on all of our books. We hope by this means to bring in enough money to finish this book soon.

The 10% sale which we had earlier in the year was a tremendous success and we have been able to continue full time up to the present time. We want to thank those who helped us at that time. If the 20% sale is a success we will be able to pay off most of our equipment and bring out the new book in a few months.

Remember we do not plan to reprint many of the books on our list. This may be your last chance to get them! With a 20% reduction in price this is the time to get those books you have been thinking about.

A special price list is enclosed which shows the price of each book with the 20% discount already deducted.

Although this sale will not end until August 31, 1966, it would be to your advantage to place your order early to insure getting the books of your choice.

NEW BOOK

David Brewer has just completed his thesis, “Utah Elites and Utah Racial Norms.” This thesis has been accepted by the University of Utah in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

This important study of the Negroes’ chances of obtaining equality in Utah is very revealing. David Brewer shows very plainly that the “Mormon church, which prevails in Utah, does not accord religious equality to Negroes” (page 160).

Dr. Brewer interviewed a number of the General Authorities of the Mormon church and found most of them “strongly opposed” to civil rights for the Negro. He also found that they were opposed to any change in the church’s Negro policy (a policy which prohibits Negroes from holding the Priesthood).

SPECIAL PRICE $3.96

This book will sell for $4.95 in the bookstores, but if ordered from us during this 20% sale the price will be $3.96. A MUST for your library.

A WORK OF THE IMAGINATION

In the April 1966 issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger we announced that we had printed a document entitled “Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet & Grammar.” This document was suppressed by the Mormon Church for 130 years because it proves that Joseph Smith did not understand ancient Egyptian and that his Book of Abraham was a work of his own imagination.

I. E. S. Edwards, Keeper of the Dept. of Egyptian Antiquities at the British Museum, examined a microfilm copy of the original document, and in a letter dated December 22, 1965, said that “The writer could not possibly have understood ancient Egyptian.” Some time later a gift copy of the printed document was sent to him in a letter dated June 9, 1966, he acknowledged receipt of the document and again denounced Joseph Smith’s work as fraudulent. Below is a photo of that letter.

Dear Sir,

It was very kind of you to send me a copy of Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar which has been the subject of previous correspondence between us.

Perhaps it is needless to say that the book is largely a work of imagination and lacking in any kind of scientific value. One of the plates does not even contain ancient Egyptian writing but Arabic. The whole document reminds me of the writings of psychic practitioners who are sometimes sent to me.

I shall place it in our main library where it may be useful for reference.

Yours truly,

I. E. S. Edwards

All of our readers should have a copy of Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar. This book is available in two editions.

Small Edition — contains photos of all the Egyptian characters and drawings with the English words typed out for easy reading. Reg. $3.00 — Special — $2.40 — 2 for $4.00 — 5 for $8.00 — 10 for $14.40.

Large Edition — contains all of the above material plus actual photos of EVERY PAGE. In this edition the reader will not only see photos of all the Egyptian characters, but also photos of all the English writing (as written by Joseph Smith and his scribes). Reg. $5.00 — Special — $4.00 — 2 for $7.20 — 4 for $12.00 — 10 for $24.00.

Bible Study

We are now holding a Bible study in our home at 1350 S. West Temple, every Thursday evening at 8:00 pm. Everyone is welcome.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel. I see it as the very power of God working for the salvation of everyone who believes it, both Jew and Greek. I see in it God’s plan for imparting righteousness to men, a process begun and continued by their faith.

(Romans 1:16-17 — J. B. Phillips translation)
**TIMES AND SEASONS**

While this sale lasts you can buy a complete set of the *Times and Seasons* for $30.00. After this sale is over if there are any copies of the *Times and Seasons* left we plan to raise the price to $47.50 a set. Be sure to order your set now. We do not plan on reprinting these volumes.

**STILL WAITING**

Many of our customers have been waiting to receive bound books. The binder has informed us that he ran out of black buckram used in the binding operation but will receive more soon. He plans to have the books done in a week or two. We are sorry for the delay.

?? ? CAN YOU HELP US ?? ?

We are doing research concerning the “Book of Joseph” and Oliver Cowdery’s “Defense.” We wonder if any of our readers have information that would help us with these matters. We are very interested in knowing if Wilford Wood is the man who turned the manuscript of the “Book of Joseph” over to the Church, and how can the authenticity of the typed copies be determined? We will keep your name confidential if you will help us with these matters.

**MORMONISM—Shadow or Reality?**

In an article published in the *Church of God Evangel*, page 8, April 18, 1966, Charles Beach, Professor of Languages, Lee College, made the following statement concerning the book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality*:

> In a letter dated April 19, 1966, a man from California wrote:
> 
> ...I ordered 30 copies of *Mormonism* on March 28 ... I cannot keep up with the orders now ... please send as soon as possible via fast motor freight (or whichever way is best) 100 copies of *Mormonism* ... I sell them 10 and 20 at a time now.
> 
> Another man, from Utah, wrote us a letter in which he stated:
> 
> Would you please send me one copy of the book “Mormonism.” I have read a borrowed copy and think it is probably the most informative book on Mormonism I have seen.
> 
> The regular price for *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* is $5.00 a copy, but the special price during this 20% sale is $4.00 — 2 for $7.20 — 4 for $12.00 — 10 for $24.00.

***SURPRISE!!!***

Imagine our surprise to see the following published in the letters to the editor, Sunday issue of the *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 26, 1966.

Books on Church Recommended

Editor, Tribune: This is in response to L. M. Montgomery’s letter of June 21, headed “Discrimination in Hiring.” Mr. Armstrong wanted to know what is an “Upstanding LDS Man.” I suggest he read “Mormonism,” by Gerald Tanner, and “Latter-Day Saints in the Modern Day World,” by William J. Whalen.

PAT HAMMAR

Kearns, Utah

Is the *Salt Lake Tribune* becoming more liberal or was this printed by mistake? It should be remembered that this is the same paper that refused our ad on the *Book of Commandments* because they said it was too controversial!!!

**MYTH - MAKERS**

Dr. Hugh Nibley has published a book entitled, *The Myth Makers* in which he states that “the whole structure of anti-Mormon scholarship rests on trumped-up evidence ... it is high time to take a new look at a pack of story-tellers who have been getting away with too much for too long” (*The Myth Makers*, Foreword).

While this may be true of some anti-Mormon books, the Mormon leaders themselves have been responsible for a great deal of myth-making. For years we have claimed that they changed the history and suppressed important documents; now one of their own members admits that this is the case. Frances Lee Menlove, a Mormon psychologist, wrote the following in an article for *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*:

But the story of Joseph Smith, the early Church, the hegira across the plains, and the consequent establishment of Zion is more than just history. It is the story of God directing His People to a new Dispensation. Perhaps because the history is so fraught with theological significance, it has been smoothed and whittled down, a wrinkle removed here and a sharp edge there. In many ways it has assumed the character of a myth. That these courageous and inspired men shared the shortcomings of all men cannot be seriously doubted. That the Saints were not perfect nor their leaders without error is evident to anyone who cares to read the original records of the Church. But the myths and the Myth-Making persist. Striking evidence for this is found in the fact that currently one of the most successful anti-Mormon proselytising techniques is merely to bring to light obscure or suppressed historical documents. Reading these historical documents arouses a considerable amount of incredulity, concern, and disenchantment among Mormons under the spell of this mythological view of history. That individuals find these bits and pieces of history so shocking and faith-shattering is at once the mael of fundamentalistic heresies and an indictment of the quasi-suppression of historical reality which propagates the one-sided view of Mormon history.

The relevance of this to honesty is obvious. The net result of mythologizing our history is that the hard truth is concealed. It is deception to select only congenial facts or to twist their meaning so that error or delusion is preserved or pretend that the Church exists now and has existed in a vacuum, uninfluenced by cultural values, passing fashions, and political ideologies.

There are other temptations to public dishonesty in the Church, temptations to use pretense and distortion to forward the work of the Church. This is the dishonesty of the missionary who presents only those facts or arguments which tend to support his purpose or who takes a scripture out of context or distorts its meaning a little to add to the evidence marshalled for the point he is making. Invoking a higher law or greater truth can also be a form of dishonesty. This occurs when someone’s views are suppressed or historical manuscripts censored, not because they are false but because they might cause dissension or disturb the faithful.

... Another motive behind some kinds of public dishonesty is the belief that the naked truth would be harmful to the simple believer. The assumption here is simply that the believer remains better off with his delusion intact, that faith suffers when it bumps into reality. The reasoning of those who distort or suppress reality or alter historical manuscripts to protect the delusions of the simple believer is similar to that of the man who murders a child to protect him from a violent world. (*Dialogue*, “The Challenge of Honesty,” Spring 1966, pages 49-50)

**EMBARRASSING?**

Ralph W. Hansen (the man who refused us photocopies when working as manuscript librarian of the B.Y.U.) has written the following concerning Modern Microfilm Co. in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1966, page 154:

> Microfilms, Xerox and other forms of photo-duplication have made possible inexpensive reproductions of out-of-print or rare books and newspapers. As far as the L.D.S. Church is concerned, such photo-publications are a mixed blessing. Gerald Tanner of Modern Microfilms (Salt Lake City, Utah) has used photo-publications to reproduce early Church and anti-Church works in wholesale lots. Mr. Tanner’s object is to embarrass the Church to which he at one time gave allegiance. His reproductions are often as weak as his motives for doing them.
Orson Pratt’s Troubles

Orson Pratt was ordained an Apostle in the Mormon Church on April 26, 1835. Because of his many writings, speeches and missionary work, Orson Pratt has been referred to as the “St. Paul of Mormonism.” In the year 1874 he was appointed as Church Historian. He died on October 3, 1881. Although Orson Pratt is recognized as one of the most influential early Mormon leaders, he had some serious problems with the other leaders.

One of Orson Pratt’s biggest problems was over the doctrine of polygamy. The Mormon writer Ivan J. Barrett stated:

His most trying difficulty was over the introduction of plural marriage, and yet when he fully understood it he became its foremost advocate. He arrived home from England in July 1841, and had not been informed by the Prophet or any Church official that plural marriages were being contracted. Rumors and his wife’s accusation of the Prophet of God wanting to take her (Orson’s wife) as his spiritual wife, shocked and affected the mind of Orson Pratt for over one year estranging him from the Prophet Joseph Smith. He was so agitated by what he had heard that at times he contemplated suicide. (More Remarkable Stories of How We Got the Revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants, by Ivan J. Barrett, Extension Publications, Brigham Young University, page 40)

The Mormon writer T. Edgar Lyon stated:

At the time Orson Pratt returned to Nauvoo . . . he had not been informed . . . that plural marriages were being contracted. When he heard the rumors afloat in the city, he was naturally astonished, but when his wife told him that during his absence, Joseph Smith had attempted to seduce her, he was greatly agitated. (Thomas Edgar Lyon, “Orson Pratt—Early Mormon Leader,” M.A. Thesis University of Chicago, June, 1932, pages 26 of typed copy)

On page 28 of the same thesis, T. Edgar Lyon stated:

The Mormon writer T. Edgar Lyon gave us this information:

Ebenzer Robinson, an associate editor of the Times and Seasons, said Pratt was found five miles below Nauvoo, in a state of frenzy, sitting on the bank of the Mississippi River.

His fellow Apostles then took up his case and endeavored to win back his allegiance to the Prophet. Brigham Young’s Journal has this entry, for August 8, 1842:

On July 15, 1842, Orson Pratt was reported as “missing.” The following is recorded in Joseph Smith’s history:

Friday, 15 — It was reported early in the morning that Elder Orson Pratt was missing. I caused the Temple hands and the principal men of the city to make search for him. After which, a meeting was called at the Grove, and I gave the public a general outline of John C. Bennett’s conduct. (History of the Church, vol. 5, pages 60-61)

Under the date of August 29, 1842, Joseph Smith wrote:

Orson Pratt has attempted to destroy himself, and caused almost all the city to go in search of him . . . . And as to all that Orson Pratt, Sidney Rigdon, or George W. Robinson can do to prevent me, I can kick them off my heels, as many as you can name; I know what will become of them. . . . to the apostates and enemies, I will give a lashing every opportunity, and I will curse them. (History of the Church, vol. 5, pages 138-139)

NEW BOOKS

ORSON PRATT’S WORKS, a photomechanical reprint of the original 1851 edition. Contains the controversial pamphlet “The Great First Cause” which the Mormon people were ordered to destroy. Also contains the discussion John Taylor held with the ministers in France, in which he denied that the Mormons believed in polygamy, although he had six wives at the time. Also contains the pamphlets Divine Authority, The Kingdom of God, Remarkable Visions, New Jerusalem, Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon, a reply to “Remarks on Mormonism” and Absurdities of Immaterialism. Also contains facsimiles of the “Kinderhook Plates.” This book will be bound in buckram. The quality of the printed is very good. This is a very limited reprint (only 300 copies printed). Get yours while they are still available. Price: $7.00.

PAMPHLETS BY ORSON PRATT, a photomechanical reprint of a series of eight pamphlets by the Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt. This book contains the controversial pamphlet “The Holy Spirit,” which the Mormon people were ordered to destroy. Also contains: The True Faith, Water Baptism, Spiritual Gifts, Necessity for Miracles, Universal Apostacy, and Latter-Day Kingdom. The quality of the printing is excellent, and it will be bound in black buckram. This is a limited reprint of only 300 copies. Get yours while they are still available. Price: $6.00.

NOTE—These book are at the binders and will be mailed to our customers as soon as he is finished with them.
Salt Lake City Messenger Issue 9

Assisted by Elders H. C. Kimball and Geo. A. Smith, I spent several days laboring with Orson Pratt, whose mind became so darkened by the influence and statements of his wife, that he came out in rebellion against Joseph, refusing to believe his testimony or obey his counsel. He said he would believe his wife in preference to the Prophet. Joseph told him if he did believe his wife and follow her suggestions, he would go to hell.

But Pratt was not convinced, even though the Prophet had threatened him with hell and on August 20th, Brigham Young recorded: “. . . Brother Orson Pratt was cut off from the Church.” The notice of his excommunication was not given the usual widespread publicity, however, and he continued to reside in Nauvoo, again occupied with teaching duties.

A meeting of citizens of Nauvoo was held July 22, 1842, and Joseph Smith said that “The object of the meeting was to correct the public mind relative to false reports put in circulation by Bennett and others, . . .” (History of the Church, vol. 5, page 70). A resolution was passed by the assembly which stated that Joseph Smith was a good, moral and virtuous man. Joseph Smith’s history, as it is published today, assures us that this resolution was adopted by a unanimous vote:

This resolution was adopted unanimously by the numerous assembly. (History of the Church, vol. 5, page 70)

In doing research on Joseph Smith’s history, however, we found that the word “unanimously” was interpolated into the text, and that it did not appear in Joseph Smith’s history as it was first published in the Millennial Star. In the Millennial Star this statement read a follows:

. . . which resolution was adopted by the numerous assembly. (Millennial Star, vol. 19, page 615)

Further research in the Mormon newspaper, The Wasp, has revealed the fact that the Mormon leaders made this change to cover up the fact that Orson Pratt and one or two others voted against the resolution. In the July 23, 1842, issue of The Wasp we read as follows:

Resolved — That, having heard that John C. Bennett was circulating many base falsehoods respecting . . . Joseph Smith, we do hereby manifest to the world that so far as we are acquainted with Joseph Smith we know him to be a good, moral, virtuous, peaceable and patriotic man, . . .

A vote was then called and the resolution adopted by a large concourse of citizens, numbering somewhere about a thousand men. Two or three, voted in the negative.

Elder Orson Pratt then rose and spoke at some length in explanation of his negative vote. (The Wasp, July 23, 1842, page 3)

Orson Pratt and his wife later returned to the church. According to John J. Stewart, Orson Pratt “became chief spokesman for the Church in defense of the principle of plural marriage” (Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet, page 180, footnote 21). His wife, on the other hand, became a bitter enemy to polygamy. According to T. Edgar Lyon, Orson Pratt was not able to convince her that polygamy was from God.

In 1886, over forty years after the events in Nauvoo, Sarah Pratt still maintained that Joseph Smith had tried to seduce her:

It was in this way that I became acquainted with Dr. John C. Bennett. When my husband went to England as a missionary, he got the promise from Joseph that I should receive provisions from the tithing-house. Shortly afterward Joseph made his propositions to me and they enraged me so that I refused to accept any help from the tithing house or from the bishop. Having been always very clever and very busy with my needle, I began to take in sewing for the support of myself and children, and succeeded soon in making myself independent. When Bennett came to Nauvoo Joseph brought him to my house, stating that Bennett wanted some sewing done, and that I should do it for the doctor. I assented and Bennett gave me a great deal of work to do. He knew that Joseph had his plans set on me; Joseph made no secret of them before Bennett, and went so far in his impudence as to make propositions to me in the presence of Bennett, his bosom friend.

You should bear in mind that Joseph did not think of a marriage or sealing ceremony for many years. He used to state to his intended victims, as he did to me: “God does not care if we have a good time, if only other people do not know it.” He only introduced a marriage ceremony when he had found out that he could not get certain women without it. I think Louisa Beeman was the first case of this kind. If any woman, like me, opposed his wishes, he used to say: “Be silent, or I shall ruin your character. My character must be sustained in the interest of the church.” (Mormon Portraits, by Dr. W. Wyl, 1886 ed., pages 61-62)

Further information concerning this matter will be found in a forthcoming book entitled Joseph Smith and Polygamy, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner.

T. Edgar Lyon claims that this incident concerning polygamy destroyed Orson Pratt’s chances of becoming President of the Mormon Church. He claims that because of his excommunication Orson Pratt lost his seniority. T. Edgar Lyon states that “Had he not lost his seniority, at the death of Brigham Young in 1877, he would have been next in line for the presidency of the Church” (Thesis on Orson Pratt, page 30, footnote 2). Strange as it may seem, however, Joseph Smith’s history, as it was originally published, seems to show that Orson Pratt was not legally cut off and that he was restored to his former “standing” in the quorum of the Twelve. When Joseph Smith’s history was later reprinted three very important changes were made concerning Orson Pratt’s restoration to the quorum of the Twelve Apostles. In Joseph Smith’s history as first published in the Millennial Star, vol. 20, page 423, we read:

I told the council that as there was not a quorum present when Orson Pratt’s case came up before them, that he was still a member—that he had not been cut off legally, and I would find some other place for Amasa Lyman, to which the council agreed.

In the History of the Church, vol. 5, page 255, this was rewritten to read a follows:

I told the quorum: you may receive Orson back into the quorum of the Twelve and I can take Amasa into the First Presidency.

In the Millennial Star, vol. 20, page 423, Joseph Smith said:

. . . ordaining Orson Pratt to his former office and standing in the quorum of the Twelve.

When this was reprinted in the History of the Church, vol. 5, page 256, two words were deleted:

. . . ordaining Orson Pratt to his former office in the quorum of the Twelve.

In the Millennial Star, vol. 20, page 518, Joseph Smith said:

. . . I had restored Orson Pratt to his former standing in the quorum of the Twelve Apostles, . . .

In the History of the Church, vol. 5, page 264, this has been changed to read:

. . . I had restored Orson Pratt to the quorum of the Twelve Apostles, . . .

It would appear from the way Joseph Smith’s history was first printed that Orson Pratt did not lose his seniority and that he should have become president of the Mormon Church. The changes in Joseph Smith’s history evidently were made to cover up this fact. John Taylor, who became the third president of the Mormon Church, was not ordained to the Apostleship until December 19, 1838. Orson Pratt had been ordained to that office more than three years before; therefore, if he was restored to his “former standing in the quorum of the Twelve Apostles,” he should have been the third president of the Mormon Church.

Although Orson Pratt was finally able to accept the doctrine of plural marriage, he again ran into trouble when Brigham Young announced the Adam-God doctrine. On April 9, 1852, Brigham Young stated:
Everyone Welcome!

We are now holding a Bible Study in our home at 1350 S. West Temple, every Thursday evening at 8:00 pm. Everyone is welcome. This is not connected with any particular group or church. Attendance is open to everyone — there are no obligations connected with attendance. The scripture lesson is given by Sandra Tanner.

We feel that the answers to life’s problems can be found in the Bible if we are willing to study it and apply its teachings to our lives. We have found the words of the Psalmist to be true:

Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore. (Psalm 16:11)

We agree with John, who wrote:

Dear friends, let us love one another, because love if from God. Everyone who loves is a child of God and knows God, but the unloving know nothing of God. For God is love and his love was disclosed to us in this, that he sent his only Son into the world to bring us life. The love I speak of is not our love for God, but the love he showed to us in sending his Son as the remedy for the defilement of our sins. If God thus loved us, dear friends, we in turn are bound to love one another. Though God has never been seen by any man, God himself dwells in us if we love one another: his love is brought to perfection within us. (1 John 4:9-12, New English Bible translation)

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Now hear it, O inhabitants of the earth, Jew and Gentile, Saint and sinner! When our father Adam came into the garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial body, and brought Eve, one of his wives, with him. He helped to make and organize this world. He is Michael, the Arch-angel, the Ancient of Days! about whom holy men have written and spoken—he is our Father and our God, and the only God with whom we have to do. Every man upon the earth, professing Christians or non-professing, must hear it, and will know it sooner or later. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 1, page 50)

Joseph Lee Robinson, in his journal and autobiography (this is the journal that the apostle LeGrand Richards tried to prevent us from seeing), stated that he feared that apostle Orson Pratt would apostatize because of this doctrine:

Oct. 6th attend Conference, a very interesting Conference, for at this meeting President Brigham Young said thus, that Adam and Eve, were the names of the first man and woman, of every Earth that was ever organized, and that Adam and Eve were the natural father and mother of every spirit that comes to this planet, or that receives tabernacles on this planet, consequently we are brothers and sisters, and that Adam was God, our eternal Father, this as Brother Heber remarked was letting the cat out of the Bag, and it came to pass, I believed every word . . . our Beloved Brother Orson Pratt told me he did not believe it he said he could prove by the scriptures it was not correct. I felt very sorry to hear professor, Orson Pratt say that, I feared lest he should apostatize. . . .

Orson Pratt also disagreed with Brigham Young’s doctrine that God himself continues to progress in knowledge and perfection. Brigham Young taught:

We are now, or may be, as perfect in our sphere as God and Angels are in theirs, but the greatest intelligence in existence can continually ascend to greater heights of perfection. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 1, page 93)

Wilford Woodruff stated:

God himself is increasing and progressing in knowledge, power, and dominion, and will do so, worlds without end. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 6, page 120)

Orson Pratt, however, taught that the Gods were not progressing in knowledge:

The Father and the Son do not progress in knowledge and wisdom, because they already know all things past, present, and to come. . . . Now we wish to be distinctly understood that each of these personal Gods has equal knowledge with all the rest; there are none among them that are in advance of the others in knowledge; though some may have been Gods as many millions of years, as there are particles of dust in all the universe, yet there is not one truth that such are in possession of but what every other God knows. They are all equal in knowledge, and in wisdom, and in the possession of that truth. None of these Gods are progressing in knowledge; neither can they progress in the acquirement of any truth.

98. Some have gone so far as to say that all the Gods were progressing in truth, and would continue to progress to all eternity, and that some were far in advance of others: but let us examine, for a moment, the absurdity of such a conjecture. . . . Have we any right to say that there is a boundless ocean of materials, acting under such Superior laws that none of the Gods to all ages of eternity can be able to understand them? We should like to know what Law Giver gave such superior laws? . . . This is the great absurdity, resulting from the vague conjecture that there will be an endless progression in knowledge among all the Gods. Such a conjecture is not only extremely absurd, but it is in direct opposition to what is revealed.

99. We shall now show from the revelations given through Joseph, the Seer, that God and his Son, Jesus Christ, are in possession of all knowledge, and that there is no more truth for them to learn. . . . (The Seer, pages 117-118)

Brigham Young openly differed with Orson Pratt on this issue. In a sermon delivered in the Tabernacle on January 13, 1867, Brigham Young stated:

. . . Brother Orson Pratt, has in theory, bounded the capacity of God. According to his theory, God can progress no further in knowledge and power; but the God that I serve is progressing eternally, and so are his children: they will increase to all eternity, if they are faithful. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 11, page 286)

J. M. Grant, a member of the First Presidency, made this statement concerning Orson Pratt’s teachings about the Gods:

. . . Orson Pratt lariatted out the Gods in his theory; his circle is as far as the string extends. My God is not lariatted out. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 4, page 126)

It is very interesting to note that the Mormon Church is still divided over this issue. Joseph Fielding Smith, who is now a member of the First Presidency, has sided with Orson Pratt, declaring that God does not progress in knowledge:

False notions about God’s progression. It seems very strange to me that members of the Church will hold to the doctrine, “God increases in knowledge as time goes on.” . . . Where has the Lord ever revealed to us that he is lacking in knowledge? That he is still learning new truth; discovering new laws that are unknown to him? I think this kind of doctrine is very dangerous. . . .

Will God destroy himself? I cannot comprehend God in his perfection having to spend time discovering laws and truth he does not know. Such a thought to me is destructive, not progressive. Should there be truth which God has not discovered, when may he discover it, and like a chemist who mixes certain elements and blows himself up, when will the Almighty find some hidden truth or law which will shatter all? Is there not a danger that some other personage may discover some greater truth than our Father knows? If such could be the case, what would become of God? (Doctrine of Salvation, vol. 1, pages 7, 8 and 10)

In volume two of Doctrine of Salvation, Joseph Fielding Smith states:

Our Father in heaven is infinite; he is perfect; he possesses all knowledge and wisdom. (Doctrine of Salvation, vol. 2, page 34)

One of Orson Pratt’s most serious disagreements with Brigham Young was over the book, Joseph Smith the Prophet. This book was written by Joseph Smith’s mother, Lucy Smith. Joseph F. Smith claimed that Orson Pratt published this book without the consent or knowledge of Brigham
Young. Brigham Young evidently felt that the book was too revealing, for he ordered the first edition to be destroyed. In the Millennial Star for October 21, 1865, Lucy Smith’s book was severely condemned by the First Presidency of the Mormon Church:

Happening lately, while on a preaching trip to Cache Valley, to pick up a book which was lying on a table in the house where we were stopping, we were surprised to find that it was the book bearing the title, on the outside, of “Joseph Smith the Prophet.” . . . Our surprise at finding a copy of this work may be accounted for, by the fact of our having advertised some time ago that the book was incorrect, and that it should be gathered up and destroyed, so that no copies should be left; and, from this, we had supposed that not a single copy could be found in any of the houses of the Saints.

. . . It is sufficient to say that it is utterly unreliable as a history, as it contains many falsehoods and mistakes. We do not wish such a book to be lying on our shelves; . . . we, therefore, expect . . . every one in the Church, male and female, if they have such a book, to dispose of it so that it will never be read by any person again. If they do not, the responsibility of the evil results that may accrue from keeping it will rest upon them and not upon us . . .

Many of the Saints may not know that the book is inaccurate; but those who have been instructed respecting its character, and will still keep it on their tables, and have it in their houses as a valid and authentic history for their children to read, need rebuke. It is transmitting lies to posterity to take such a course, and we know that the curse of God will rest upon every one, after he comes to the knowledge of what is here said, who keeps these books for his children to learn and believe in lies.

We wish those who have these books to either hand them to their Bishops for them to be conveyed to the President’s or Historian’s Office, or send them themselves, that they may be disposed of; and they will please write their names in the books, with the name of the place where they reside, and if they wish to hand them over without pay in return, state so; and if they wish to get pay for them, state whether they desire it applied on Tithing, or wish the value returned in other books. (Millennial Star, vol. 27, pages 657-658)

This book was later changed and reprinted by the Mormon Church leaders, even though Joseph Smith’s mother had died. There were 2,035 words added, deleted or changed without any indication.

The Mormon leaders were evidently very upset with Orson Pratt, for they ordered other works published by him to be destroyed. In the same article as quoted above the First Presidency stated:

When we commenced this article, we did not think of extending our comments beyond the work already alluded to. We consider it our duty, however, and advisable for us to incorporate with this which we have already written, our views upon other doctrines which have been extensively published and widely received as the standard and authoritative doctrines of the church, but which are unsound. The views we allude to, and which we deem objectionable, have been published by Elder Orson Pratt . . . We do not wish incorrect and unsound doctrines to be handed down to posterity under the sanction of great names, to be received and valued by future generations as authentic and reliable, creating labor and mistakes. We do not wish such a book to pick up a book which was lying on a table in the house where we were staying, to be gathered up and destroyed, so that no copies should be left; and, from this, we had supposed that not a single copy could be found in any of the houses of the Saints.

. . .

The Seer, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles wrote another article in which they stated:

There are great and important truths connected with the eternities of our God and with man’s existence past, present and future, which the Almighty, in his wisdom, sees fit to conceal from the children of men. The latter are evidently unprepared to receive them, and there could be no possible benefit accruing to them, at present, from their revelation. It is in this light that we view the points of doctrine which we have quoted. If they were true, we would think it unwise to have them made public as these have been. But the expounder of these points of doctrine acknowledges that he has not had any revelation from the heavens in relation to them, and we know that we have had no revelation from God respecting them, except to know that many of them are false, and that the publication of all of them is unwise and objectionable. . . . The last half of the tract entitled “The Holy Spirit,” contains excellent and conclusive arguments, and is all that could be wished; so also with many of his writings. But the Seer, The Great First Cause, the article in the Millennial Star of October 15th, and November 1, 1850, on the Holy Spirit, and the first half of the tract, also on the Holy Spirit, contain doctrines which we have felt impressed to disown, so that the Saints who now live, and who may live hereafter, may not be misled by our silence, or be left to misinterpret it. Where these objectionable works, or parts of works, are bound in volumes, or otherwise, they should be cut out and destroyed; with proper care this can be done without much, if any, injury to the volumes. (Millennial Star, vol. 27, pages 662-663)

Many members of the Mormon Church did destroy Orson Pratt’s works as their leaders asked them to do.

Quite recently a student at the Brigham Young University (the Mormon University) told us that the library at B.Y.U. had refused to give him photocopies of Orson Pratt’s “The Great First Cause.” They told him that they would give him copies of a few pages but not the entire document. They claimed that it would violate copyright restrictions. Now, as far as we have been able to determine, there was no copyright on “The Great First Cause,” and even if there had been a copyright, it would have expired more than sixty years ago. The student was aware of this fact and stated that he was leaving the B.Y.U. because of the narrow-mindedness he found at that school.

Within the Mormon Church there has been great interest in Orson Pratt’s books. Eugene Wagner has reprinted The Seer by the photo-offset method. This is a very good reproduction, bound, and is available from Modern Microfilm Co.

Fortunately, James D. Wardle has obtained copies of Orson Pratt’s other two books. These copies are complete (the controversial pamphlets “The Holy Spirit” and “The Great First Cause” have not been “cut out and destroyed”), and he has kindly consented to allow us to reproduce them.

The book, Orson Pratt’s Works, is especially interesting because it contains the discussion John Taylor had with the ministers in France, in which he denied that the Mormons believed in polygamy, although he had six wives at the time.

DIALOGUE

The new magazine, Dialogue, A Journal of Mormon Thought, appears to be a success. Last month it was given national publicity in Time Magazine. In an article entitled “For Ruffled Believers” the following appeared:

Unquestioning belief rather than critical self-examination has always been the Mormon style. Breaking with this tradition a group of young Mormon intellectuals, . . . have brought out Dialogue, . . . Dialogue has opened its pages to criticism from nonbelievers . . . it represents something so unusual in Mormonism that one church leader has ominously declared: “Dialogue can’t help but hurt the church.” Nonetheless, Dialogue’s growing subscription list now stands at more than 3,000, and its editors insist that Mormonism has nothing to fear from self-appraisal. (Time, August 26, 1966, page 59)

For subscription information write: Dialogue, P.O. Box 2350, Stanford, California, 94305.
Wallace Turner, former Pulitzer Prize winner and correspondent for the New York Times has now completed a book entitled The Mormon Establishment. This book will probably be one of the largest selling books concerning Mormonism since Fawn Brodie’s No Man Knows My History. In fact, the following statement by Fawn Brodie appears on the jacket of Wallace Turner’s book:

It is a courageous book . . . he is not afraid of attacking bigotry where he finds it, even in a highly respected and respectable church. He has cut through much of the secrecy that enshrouds the power of Mormon leadership, and exposed the structure with clarity and objectivity, as well as a perceptive regard for the overpowering impact of Mormon history on the present.

In our opinion, this book will deal a heavy blow to the foundation of the Mormon Church. While Mr. Turner is very fair with the Mormons and even goes out of his way to bestow praise where it is due, he is very critical of certain doctrine and practices, such as the Mormon doctrine concerning the Negro, the doctrine of polygamy and the interference of the Mormon leaders in politics. We feel that this book is very well written and extremely accurate.

At Modern Microfilm Company we have a very special interest in Wallace Turner’s book. In this book Wallace Turner devotes about eight pages to our work and Modern Microfilm Co. This will, no doubt, give a great boost to our work, and will probably be our greatest opportunity to get the public acquainted with our work.

Some of our readers will probably remember that Wallace Turner is the reporter who interviewed Hugh B. Brown, a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, in 1963. In this interview Hugh B. Brown was quoted as saying:

“We are in the midst of a survey looking toward the possibility of admitting Negroes,” said Hugh B. Brown, one of the two counselors serving President David O. McKay in the First Presidency of the Mormon Church.

“Believing as we do in divine revelation through the President of the church, we all await his decision,” Mr. Brown said.

Mr. Brown, a 79-year-old former attorney, said he believed that if the change were made, it would be a doctrinal revision for Mormonism of a magnitude matching the abandonment of polygamy in 1890. (New York Times, Western Edition, June 7, 1963)

After this article appeared in the New York Times, Hugh B. Brown claimed that he was misquoted. In his new book, Wallace Turner shows that Hugh B. Brown was not misquoted and that the Mormon Church’s own press representative had “approved” the quotes attributed to him (see The Mormon Establishment, pages 258-261).

In December of 1965 the New York Times ran a series of three articles concerning the Mormon Church which were written by Wallace Turner. These articles were very well written and very revealing. Although newspapers throughout the country ran these articles, the newspapers in Salt Lake City refused to print them. The Deseret News claimed that it did not print the articles because it was not a member of the Associated Press News Service. The Salt Lake Tribune could not offer this excuse, since it is a member of the Associated Press. A man in the editorial department of the Salt Lake Tribune stated that the reason they did not print these articles was that they felt that the activities of the Mormon Church were “sufficiently” covered and that there was no need to pick up these articles from the New York Times. In the January, 1966 issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger we told of the suppression of these articles by the newspapers in Salt Lake City. After quoting some from these articles we stated:

Although the Mormon leaders may be able to control the newspapers in Salt Lake City and keep them from printing articles such as these, we feel that the time will come when they will have to face these problems. They will not be able to keep their people in the dark forever! (Salt Lake City Messenger, January, 1966, page 4)

When we made this statement we had no idea that Wallace Turner would come out with a book on Mormonism. We know that Mr. Turner was very disappointed that the Mormon people in Salt Lake City could not read the articles he had written concerning them, but now that he has written a book there is no way that the Mormon leaders can stop their people from reading it. We feel that the time has now come when the Mormon leaders will have to face the truth. Their methods of silence and suppression are not going to be sufficient to keep their people in the dark. The light must break through, and we feel that Wallace Turner’s book will do much towards bringing light to a people who have been kept in the dark by their leaders.

Wallace Turner claims that “the most serious problem facing the LDS church today is the Negro question.” Wallace Turner “devotes two chapters to the burning issue of the Mormon doctrine on the inferiority of Negroes.” On page 244 of his book, Wallace Turner states:

So the ultimate effect of this aspect of LDS doctrine is as racist as anything asserted by the Theodore Bilbos and Robert Sheltons in the bigoted corners of the southern states . . . the LDS church actually is one of the most influential organs of racial bigotry in the United States. All the imposing list of wonderful and truly praiseworthy things about this tremendous and impressive institution help to conceal this ugly corner of its theology.

Concerning the Book of Abraham, which is the basis for the Mormon doctrine of discrimination against the Negro, Wallace Turner states:
The foundation on which this whole doctrine of Negro exclusion is based is in the clause or so in the Book of Abraham. Yet, of all the works attributed to Joseph Smith, this one is the most thoroughly denounced by the scholarly world. . . . The church has reproduced some copies of the hieroglyphics which the Prophet Joseph said he translated. The reproductions are accompanied with detailed statements of what the Prophet said the hieroglyphics show. It was almost as if the invitation were being extended to scholars to denounce the work. This they have done with gusto. . . . I am convinced by very simple direct evidence that the Book of Abraham is a spurious translation. (The Mormon Establishment, pages 232-233)

On pages 234-239 of his book, Wallace Turner gives the information which convinced him that the Book of Abraham is a “spurious translation.” Wallace Turner’s book is filled with interesting information. It has 12 chapters and 343 pages. The following are the chapter headings:

The Holy City by the Dead Sea
The Angel Moroni, the Farm Boy, and the Book “Zion Will Be Built”
“One Tenth of Their Interest Annually”
Divisive Forces at Work
Origins and Importance of Polygamy
Polygamy Today—Rejected by Saints
The Anti-Negro Doctrine
Will the Negro Doctrine Change?
The Church in Politics
George Romney—Latter-day Saint
The Rightists and the LDS Church

The price is $6.00 a copy. We sold 20 copies of The Mormon Establishment the first two days we had it. Order your copy TODAY!

MORMONISM—Shadow or Reality?

In his book, The Mormon Establishment, Wallace Turner states:

The Tanners operate as the Modern Microfilm Company. They specialize in copying books and documents that are out of print, or have been suppressed in one way or another, but that bear on the history and doctrine of the LDS church. When I talked with them, they had thirty-one titles for sale. The best seller was Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? prepared by them jointly. They had sold about 3000 copies. (The Mormon Establishment, page 156)

Wallace Turner also stated:

The Tanners masterwork, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? is an intricate weaving of arguments from many sources against the fundamental precept of the Saints’ doctrine—that Joseph Smith, Jr., was a prophet of God and that his production of the Book of Mormon, the revelations set down in Doctrine and Covenants, and further writings in the Pearl of Great Price represented the fruits of divine inspiration.

. . . . .

With the Tanners the church today finds itself faced by its own organization that does so much good throughout the world. The name of this organization is World Vision. World Vision is a nondenominational religious organization which seems to be devoted to helping the needy people of the world. World Vision supports more than 21,000 needy children in 20 countries. They send food, clothing, and medicine to needy areas throughout the world. They have just opened a new relief project in India where many people are starving to death.

We feel that many of our readers will be interested in helping an organization that does so much good throughout the world. For only $10 a month you can support an orphan (the cost is $15 a month in Viet Nam). This money pays for the food, clothing, schooling and other needs of each child. Each sponsor can exchange letters with his child (the letters are translated into English before they are forwarded to the sponsor). What a joy it is to help those who are in need, instead of spending our money for selfish reasons. For only $4 you can provide a pair of crutches for the needy in Viet Nam, or you can help to buy a wheelchair for those who have lost their legs in the conflict.

The Apostle James said:

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. (James 1:27)

For further information write to the address below.

WORLD VISION, INC., BOX O, Pasadena, California 91109

Everyone Welcome!

We are now holding a Bible study in our home at 1350 S. West Temple, every Thursday evening at 8:00 pm. Everyone is welcome. This is not connected with any particular group or church. Attendance is open to everyone—there are no obligations connected with attendance. The scripture lesson is given by Sandra Tanner.

We feel that the answers to life’s problems can be found in the Bible if we are willing to study it and apply its teachings to our lives.

For where envying and strife is, ther is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. (James 3:16-18)
In the preface to his new and fascinating biography, *Orrin Porter Rockwell: Man of God, Son of Thunder*, Harold Schindler states:

> For those members of my church who may feel that I have wrongly opened forbidden doors, I offer these words by the late Brigham H. Roberts, assistant church historian, scholar, and member of the First Council of The Seventy:

> We need not follow our researches in any spirit of fear and trembling. We desire only to ascertain the truth; nothing but the truth will endure; and the ascertainment of the truth and the proclamation of the truth in any given case, or upon any subject, will do no harm to the work of the Lord which is itself truth. . . .

> *(New Witnesses For God*(Salt Lake City, 1909) vol. III, page 913)

> —Harold Schindler

> October, 1966

In writing his book on Orrin Porter Rockwell, Harold Schindler has brought to light an ugly chapter in Mormon history. Mr. Schindler does not take a Mormon point of view, neither does he take an anti-Mormon position, but looks at Orrin Porter Rockwell in a scholarly and objective manner.

On June 11, 1878, the *Salt Lake Tribune* stated that it was estimated Orrin Porter Rockwell had “participated in at least a hundred murders for the Church, none of which he ever divulged” (*Orrin Porter Rockwell; Man of God, Son of Thunder*, page 9).

The Mormon writer Nicholas Van Alfen, on the other hand states:

> He killed many men. But these cases were always in the performance of his duty as an officer. Notwithstanding the many attempts of Porter’s critics to slander him, there is not a single proof of his ever having taken a life wantonly. (*Porter Rockwell—The Mormon Frontier Marshal*, by Nicholas Van Alfen, 1964, page 93)

Harold Schindler does not go to either of the above extremes but instead he tries to find the real history of Mr. Rockwell. Mr. Schindler has spent many years researching documents, journals, manuscripts and rare books. The result is a book which can be relied upon.

According to Mr. Schindler’s research, Orrin Rockwell was born on June 28, 1813. He was one of the first to join the Mormon Church. In Missouri Rockwell joined the dreaded Danite band. The Mormon writer William E. Berrett states that the Danites were organized for the “purpose of plundering and murdering the enemies of the Saints” (*The Restored Church*, 1956 ed., page 198). He is, however, unwilling to admit the Joseph Smith had anything to do with the Danites.

Harold Schindler devotes a great deal of space to the Danite band. He quotes from journals, manuscripts, and other sources to establish the fact that the Danite band did exist and that Joseph Smith probably was responsible for its existence. On page 44 of his book, Mr. Schindler states:

> One of the great controversies surrounding the Sons of Dan concerns the question of whether or not Joseph knew and approved of its existence prior to the society’s public exposure in November, 1838. The point is relevant because if his denial of such knowledge are true, it marked the only occasion in Orrin Porter Rockwell’s life when he strayed from the dictates of the church by entering into an unauthorized doctrinal venture. His close relationship and devoted obedience to the prophet makes it inconceivable that he would have failed to inform Joseph of the Danites. Even so, the prophet’s absolute grip on the church precludes the possibility that Avard could have carried out an undertaking of such magnitude in secrecy. Finally, the argument presents itself that the prophet probably encouraged the concept, since it played a dual role of preventing a recurrence of the Kirtland rebellion by uncovering potential apostates immediately while at the same time protecting the Mormons against their Gentile enemies.

After the Mormons had been driven from Missouri by order of Lilburn W. Boggs, governor of the state, they literally hated the man. Mr. Schindler states:

> About this time Joseph angrily prophesied that Lilburn Boggs would “die by violent hands within a year.” And in a fit of pique he added that Governor Carlin would die in a ditch. (*Orrin Porter Rockwell*, page 72)

On May 6, 1842, an attempt was made on the life of Lilburn W. Boggs. The Mormon writer John J. Stewart stated:

> Unfortunately for Joseph, the Mormons and mankind generally, Boggs recovered despite three bullet wounds in the head and neck. (*Joseph Smith—The Mormon Prophet*, 1966 ed., page 171)

(continued on page 2)

**NEW BOOKS**

**ORRIN PORTER ROCKWELL; MAN OF GOD, SON OF THUNDER**, by Harold Schindler. (See description of this book above.) This book is published by the University of Utah Press. The printing and art work are attractively done, and we feel that you will be proud to have it in your library. Price: $7.50

**ON THE MORMON FRONTIER: The Diary of Hosea Stout, 1844-1861**, edited by Juanita Brooks. Dale L. Morgan, a noted historian, states that the diary of Hosea Stout is “. . . one of the most magnificent windows upon Mormon history ever opened . . .” While Hosea Stout was a very prominent Mormon, he did not hesitate to make entries in his diary which are very embarrassing to the Mormon Church today. We feel that his journal contains proof that the Mormon leaders approved of violence and that Brigham Young taught that Adam is the only God with whom we have to do and the father of Jesus. The footnotes by Juanita Brooks are excellent. It is published by the University of Utah Press. Comes in two volumes — 769 large pages. Price: $17.50 a set.

**THE MORMON ESTABLISHMENT** by Wallace Turner. Mr. Turner, former Pulitzer Prize winner and correspondent for the *New York Times*, discusses such controversial subjects as: the anti-Negro doctrine, polygamy and Mormon interference in politics. Price: $6.00
John Whitmer, one of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, wrote a history of the Church in which he states:

As soon as the Lord gave Smith and the church favor in the eyes of the people among whom they lived, and began to prosper them and many began to gather to Nauvoo, Smith and the leaders began to exercise their hatred to those whom he called his enemies. He hired a man by the name of Porter Orrin Rockwell (who was one of the Gadianton band of whom I heretofore spoke) to go and murder a man by name of L. W. Boggs who had been elected governor by the people of the state of Missouri; but was not governor at the time Smith sent him to commit this crime. Boggs resided at independence, the place appointed for the land of Zion, yea, the New Jerusalem; so Rockwell went to Independence, and at night he went to the house of Boggs and shot him through the window; but he recovered. Rockwell was caught and put to jail, and I believe he was tried by a jury of inquest, but was not sufficient testimony to condemn him though it is a well-known fact that he was hired by Smith to kill Boggs. (John Whitmer’s History, chapter 21)

Although Harold Schindler does not definitely state that Orrin Porter Rockwell was guilty of the attempted assassination, he does bring out the fact that Rockwell was in the area and that he was using an assumed name:

Therefore, in February of 1842 when Orrin Porter Rockwell gathered up his family to visit Independence so that Luana, eight months pregnant with their fourth child, could be with her parents, Bennett, so he says, was not surprised at Joseph’s explanation that Rockwell had gone to “fulfill prophecy.” Once in Independence Rockwell set out to find work . . . Since Jackson County settlers still harbored a hatred for Mormons, Rockwell used an assumed name while in the area; he called himself Brown. (Orrin Porter Rockwell, page 73)

On page 75 and 76 of the same book, Harold Schindler states:

Outside the house a crowd had quickly gathered at first report of the murder attempt and now numbered nearly two hundred persons; one of the spectators searching the spot where the gunman had stood found traces of footprints in the mud, and in a partially-filled puddle he discovered a gun. Sheriff Reynolds studied the firearm carefully, . . . Reynolds surmised the recoil of such a heavy charge had kicked the pistol from the gun’s grasp, and failing to find it in the rain, the assassin had fled. While the sheriff mulled these thoughts in his mind, a storekeeper named Uhlinger recognized the weapon as one stolen from his shop.

“I thought the niggers had taken it, but that hired man of Ward’s—the one who used to work with the stallion—he came to in look at it just before it turned up missing!” the storekeeper said.

Grateful for a genuine lead, Reynolds began looking for the hired hand, “to ask some questions,” but the man was nowhere to be found. It was not long before the sheriff determined that Mr. Brown, the suspect, was Orrin Porter Rockwell.

On page 80 of the same book, Mr. Schindler states:

If Rockwell did fire the fateful shot, it would appear the decision was of his own making; he had no love for Boggs, and in Rockwell’s eyes the man had sinned against the church in ordering the expulsion of the Saints from Missouri. It also is possible Rockwell felt he was performing a religious duty as a member of the priesthood in fulfilling Joseph’s prophecy.

In footnote 27 on page 82, Harold Schindler states:

Much has been written of Boggs’ true feeling in regard to the attempt on his life. Mormon writers suggest the former governor had made a number of Gentile enemies, so many in fact, that to insinuate the church was to blame was typical of his bigotry. Even though the controversy over the near assassination will never be resolved, one thing can be stated as a certainty—Boggs sincerely believed his attacker was a Mormon. In 1846 when he journeyed west, he confided to his traveling companions that he understood the Saints were headed in the same direction and confessed he feared for his life because they had made an earlier attempt to kill him.

It is said that the Mormon prophet, Joseph Smith, promised Orrin Porter Rockwell that if he “would never cut his hair he would never die at the hands of his enemies” (Orrin Porter Rockwell—The Mormon Frontier Marshall, page 41).

At one time Joseph Smith had Orrin Porter Rockwell run a bar for him. Harold Schindler states:

Here, too, Joseph had plans. In a city where liquor was controlled by the mayor, what better business to be in than tavern-keeping? As a matter of fact, Joseph mused as he glanced at Rockwell’s shoulder-length hair, Nauvoo could also use a barbershop. If the two enterprises were combined, the operator of such an establishment would surely make money, especially since the prophet could not hope to accommodate every visitor to the city at his new Mansion House barroom. The idea appealed to Rockwell, and it suited Joseph’s plans as well. (Orrin Porter Rockwell; Man of God, Son of Thunder, page 110)

Joseph Smith’s son related the following:

About 1842, a new and larger house was built for us. . . Father proceeded to build an extensive addition running out from the south wing toward the east.

At any rate, it seemed spacious then, and a sign was put out giving it the dignified name of “The Nauvoo Mansion,” a house destined to become quite famous and interesting in its day. Mother was to be installed as landlady, and soon made a trip to Saint Louis . . .

When she returned Mother found installed in the keeping room of the hotel—that is to say, the main room where the guests assembled and where they were received upon arrival—a bar, with counter, shelves, bottles, glasses, and other paraphernalia customary for a fully-equipped tavern bar, and Porter Rockwell in charge as tender.

She was very much surprised and disturbed over this arrangement, but said nothing for a while . . . she asked me where Father was. I told her he was in the front room . . . Then she told me to go and tell him she wished to see him. I obeyed, and returned with him to the hall where Mother awaited him. “Joseph,” she asked, “what is the meaning of that bar in this house?” . . . “How does it look,” she asked, “for the spiritual head of a religious body to be keeping a hotel in which is a room fitted out as a liquor-selling establishment?”

He reminded her that all taverns had their bars at which liquor was sold or dispensed . . .

Mother’s reply came emphatically clear, though uttered quietly: “Well, Joseph, . . . I will take my children and go across to the old house and stay there, for I will not have them raised up under such conditions as this arrangement imposes upon us, nor have them mingle with the kind of men who frequent such a place. You are at liberty to make your choice; either that bar goes out of the house, or we will!”

It did not take Father long to make the choice, for he replied immediately, “Very well, Emma; I will have it removed at once”—and he did. (The Saints Herald, January 22, 1935, page 110)

After Joseph Smith’s death Orrin Porter Rockwell took another man’s wife. Harold Schindler states:

Prior to his arrest in 1843 on charges of assault on Governor Boggs, Rockwell had taken up residence in a tavern operated by Amos Davis, a Nauvoo Legion captain. It was this officer’s wife of whom Rockwell had become enamored. How long the affair had been blooming is not a matter of record, but he did acknowledge the ladies publiccy early in December of 1845. Because of his notoriety the matter did not pass unnoticed. Said The Warsaw Signal of December 10:

O. P. Rockwell—This delectable specimen of humanity, . . . the assassin of Governor Boggs, has taken to himself a wife—not his own wife, for be it remembered that he cast off the woman that law regarded as his wife long since; but he has appropriated to himself the wife of Amos Davis. It is generally the case that when a wife leave her husband to live with a seducer, they elope
and settle in a place where they are not known; but there is no necessity for such a step in the Holy Nauvoo. So fashionable is it for the Heads of the church to appropriate the wives of other men to their own purposes, that it is regarded as no crime for one man to steal the companion of his neighbor and live with her in open unconfessed adultery. What a beautiful moral code is Mormonism!

... Davis did not depart from Nauvoo, a display of courage which placed him in a delicate and dangerous position, for one morning there appeared at his door the person of Mrs. Davis—in company with Rockwell. The astonished tavern keeper gawked in disbelief as his wife casually gathered together her belongings; Rockwell stood to one side and conspicuously inspected the trigger mechanism on his pistol. Scarcely had the couple closed the door on the hapless husband than word of the incident flashed through the streets of the city. (Orrin Porter Rockwell; Man of God, Son of Thunder, pages 148-149)

After Joseph Smith’s death Brigham Young became the leader of the Church. Among other things, Brigham Young is remembered for having taught that it was sometimes necessary to kill a person to save his soul. On one occasion he stated:

This is loving our neighbor as ourselves; if he needs help, help him; and he wants salvation and it is necessary to spill his blood on the earth in order that he may be saved, spill it. Any of you who understand the principles of eternity, if you have sinned a sin requiring the shedding of blood, except the sin unto death, would not be satisfied nor rest until your blood should be spilled, that you might gain that salvation you desire. That is the way to love mankind. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 4, page 220)

Harold Schindler quotes Brigham Young as making this statement concerning those who did not belong to the Church:

They shall reverence and acknowledge the name of God and His priesthood, and if they set up their heads and seek to introduce iniquity into this camp and to trample on the priesthood, I swear to them, they shall never go back to tell the tale. (Orrin Porter Rockwell, page 163)

Harold Schindler tells how the Mormons murdered the Aiken Party in 1857. From the evidence which he presents, it would appear that Orrin Porter Rockwell and several others were involved in the murder of these men. On page 270 of his book, Mr. Schindler states:

The Californians had no way of knowing that a messenger had been dispatched by the wagonmaster alerting the Nauvoo Legion to their presence. Within hours, the unsuspecting travelers were arrested by men of Lot Smith’s command in Weber County. Their property confiscated, that gamblers were hustled off to Ogden for questioning. Next morning the prisoners were turned over to Colonel Chauncey West for transfer to Great Salt Lake City, where they were confined in the Tithing Office as spies. Mormons not assigned to Legion units in the field were rotated on guard duty over the six men until church authorities could reach a decision in their case.

On page 274-276 of the same book, Mr. Schindler states:

Twenty years later, when Sylvanus Collett was on trial for his life (charged with the murder of John Aiken), two Mormons, Joseph Skeen and his son, William, both took the witness stand and testified that Collett had told them the whole story of the Aiken Party. . . . Troubled by the gossip Skeen asked Collett about it and was told that he (Collett) had been an escort to the Aiken party from the north, they having been delivered over to Rockwell . . . and himself, with the order to make away with them. The Skeens, father and son, agreed in substance that Collett gave the sign, the son saying it was Rockwell) each of the four men in the escort, having selected a victim in advance, slipped a bar of iron from his sleeve and struck his man on the head. . . . Collett missed (his) man,” William Skeen told the court. In fact, he said, Collett was being badly beaten until Rockwell pulled a revolver and, firing across the campfire, shot Collett “man in the back. The wounded Californian lurched, fell into the brush, and escaped in the darkness. The bodies of the two Aikens and the colonel were thrown into the river; Tom Aiken and Richard were dead, but the icy water apparently revived John Aiken, who crawled to shore and made his was to Nephi.

... At any rate, after the two wounded men were patched up and put to bed in Foote’s hotel, Mrs. Frances Cazier, who had watched the drama with interest, noticed Rockwell and three others enter town after dark. Next morning she was standing in the doorway of her home adjacent to the Tithing Office and saw Rockwell sitting inside with several other men. At Collett’s trial she testified she heard a voice say: “Boy, you’ve made a bad job of it; two got away. Nephi won’t be trusted with another job.”

Fourteen-year-old Alice Lamb listened to a conversation between several Nephi residents in which the return of Aiken and Wright was discussed and a decision made to lure the two men to another spot and “there to make away with them.” Meanwhile, other people in Nephi were hearing and seeing things they would be asked about twenty years later. Guy Foote and Reuben Down had occasion to pass the Tithing Office corral; there they saw horses and pack animals belonging to the Aiken Party.

Four or five days after the two survivors had made their appearance in Nephi, they felt able to travel. . . . Shortly before they rode out of the settlement, Rockwell and several men were seen heading north.

The events of the next few hours remain much of a mystery, but William Skeen swore that Collett had boasted of ambushing Wright and Aiken at a place called Willow Creek, eight miles from Nephi. (Orrin Porter Rockwell; Man of God, Son of Thunder, pages 274-276)

Mr. Schindler goes on to tell that the Mormons attempted to murder another member of the Aiken Party “Near Point of the Mountain.” He escaped with “only bruises,” however, and came back to Great Salt Lake City. According to Bill Hickman, Brigham Young called him into his office and told him to murder the man who had escaped. Harold Schindler states:

Bill Hickman, fresh from a murder himself, enters the picture at this point. Told that “the boys have made a bad job of trying to put a man away,” Hickman says he was ordered to find Jones and “use him up.” . . . Hickman claims he and a man named Meacham took up their vigil near the springs . . . Hickman fired point-blank at Jones, the bullet smashing into his head . . . The body was dumped into a shallow ditch along a fence line, and the spot was marked with a white rag. Then, said Hickman:

We returned to the city to Gen. Grant’s, as per agreement, and found him at home with Gen. Kimball, O. P. Rockwell, and somebody else whose name I do not recollect now. They asked if all was right, and I told them it was. They got spades, and we all went back, deepened the ditch, put him in and buried him, returned to Grant’s, took some whisky, and separated for the night. The next day Kimball and I went to Brigham Young’s, told him that (Jones) was taken care of, and there would be no more stink about his stories. He said he was glad of it, (Jones) was the last one of the Aiken’s party, of whom there has been considerable said. I never saw until I saw him in the wagon that evening.

With the last spadeful of dirt on “Honesty” Jones’s body, five members of the Aiken Party had been murdered. (Orrin Porter Rockwell; Man of God, Son of Thunder, pages 278-279)
Even Nicholas Van Alfen, whose book is written in defense of Orrin Porter Rockwell, has to admit that he sometimes took the law into his own hands:

One cannot resist the conclusion that Porter nourished a growing hatred and an attitude of revenge against the type of man that characterized lawlessness and brutality. He became a peril to them because at times he was his own court, judge and executioner. (Porter Rockwell—The Mormon Frontier Marshal, pages 47-48)

On page 65 of the same book we find this statement:

John F. Everett, an old timer of Springville, Utah, knew Rockwell personally. Mr. Everett praised Porter highly but criticized him because too often he did not bother with the courts. If a man stole a horse and had to be chased a hundred miles, it was not likely that the thief would be brought in alive.

Harold Schindler tells that the U.S. marshal, P. K. Dotson, “held a warrant for Rockwell’s arrest on murder charges.” He was unable to arrest Rockwell, however, and in a letter to Judge John Cradlebaugh he stated:

I have received from you certain warrants of arrest against many persons, in your Judicial district, charged with murder, including on against J. D. Lee, John Highby (a bishop), Hoyte (his counselor), and thirty-six others, for the murder of one hundred and nineteen men, women and children, at Mountain Meadows, also one against Porter Rockwell, John A. Wolf, president of the Seventies . . . for the murder of the Aiken Brothers and two others; . . .

I regret to inform you that it is not in my power to execute any ofthese processes, I have made repeated efforts by the aid as well of the military, as of the civil posse, to execute the warrants last alluded to, but without success. So great is the number of persons engaged in the commission of these crimes, and such the feelings of the Mormon Church, and the community in their favor, that I cannot rely on a civil posse to aid me in arresting them . . . . (Orrin Porter Rockwell; Man of God, Son of Thunder, pages 292-293)

The following statement concerning Rockwell appeared in the Salt Lake Tribune:

Brutal in his instincts, lawless in his habits, and a fanatical divottee of the Prophet, the commands of this gloomy despot he received as the will of the Lord, and with the ferocity born of mistaken zeal, he grew to believe that the most acceptable service he could render the Almighty, as Lear expresses it, to “kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!” He killed unsuspecting travelers, whose boot was coveted by his prophet-master. He killed fellow Saints who held secrets that menaced the safety of their fellow criminals in the priesthood. He killed Apostles who dared to wag their tongues about the wrongs they had endured. And he killed mere sojourners in Zion merely to keep his hand in.

. . . The Danite Rockwell retired from the avenging business, and for some years past has been extensively engaged in raising horses and cattle. But the recollection of his evil deeds haunted him, and conscience preyed upon his soul like the undying worm. To gain escape from this fiery torment he sought the intoxicating bowl, and whenever he appeared in the streets of Salt Lake it was generally in the character of a vociferating maniac. (Salt Lake Tribune, June 11, 1878, as quoted in Orrin Porter Rockwell, page 363)

There can be little doubt that Orrin Porter Rockwell did have a drinking problem. Harold Schindler quotes Elijah Averett as saying:

Porter Rockwell was along for a bodyguard to Brigham, and while at Pipe (Springs) on the way back Port got rather drunk, and as they left Pipe Brigham and the driver of the team were sitting in the front seat looking solemnly ahead and Port was shouting and waving his hat . . . . (quoted in Orrin Porter Rockwell; Man of God, Son of Thunder, page 356)

Nicholas Van Alfen stated:

The extent of Porter’s drinking in later years and all the accompanies it must have been frowned upon by Brigham Young and the Church people as a whole . . . . It seems that Porter was given special leniency. Old timers could still remember Rockwell riding up and down Main Street in Salt Lake City yelling like a wild Comanche as he lashed the signs on the stores fronts. Only Porter could get away with it. (Porter Rockwell—The Mormon Frontier Marshal, pages 153-154)

Orrin Porter Rockwell was held in full fellowship by the Church, and in 1873 he was sent on a mission. He died in 1878. At the time of his death he was awaiting trial for the murder of the Aiken party. The Salt Lake Tribune stated that “the gallows was cheated of one of the fittest candidates that ever cut a throat or plundered a traveler” (Orrin Porter Rockwell; Man of God, Son of Thunder, page 362). The Apostle Joseph F. Smith, on the other hand, paid tribute to Orrin Porter Rockwell. Harold Schindler states:

Nearly a thousand persons filled the Fourteenth Ward assembly rooms on June 12 for Rockwell’s funeral. Joseph F. Smith, a member of the Council of Twelve Apostles, delivered the eulogy. Elder Smith said: “He had his little faults, but Porter’s life on earth, taken altogether, was one worthy of example, and reflected honor upon the Church. Through all his trials he had never once forgotten his obligations to his brethren and his God. (Orrin Porter Rockwell; Man of God, Son of Thunder, page 364)

We feel that Harold Schindler has done a tremendous job in researching and writing about the life of Orrin Porter Rockwell. All of our readers should have a copy of this fine book. It is published by the University of Utah Press. The workmanship on this book is beautiful! We feel that you will be proud to have it in your library. The price is $7.50 a copy.

Everyone Welcome!

We are now holding a Bible study in our home at 1350 S. West Temple, every Thursday evening at 8:00 pm. Everyone is welcome. This is not connected with any particular group or church. Attendance is open to everyone—there are no obligations connected with attendance. The scripture lesson is given by Sandra Tanner.

“But if it is at all possible for you, take pity upon us and help us.” “If it is possible,” said Jesus. “Everything is possible to one who has faith.” “I have faith,” cried the boy’s father: “help me where faith fails short.”

(Mark 9:22-24, New English Bible Trans.)

DON’T PROCRASTINATE!

Another one of our books, Revealing Statements by the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, has SOLD OUT. If you are interested in any of the books on our list, it would be wise to place your order immediately! It is very possible that many of these books will never be printed again. Therefore, this may be your last chance to get them! These books would make good Christmas presents.

PROBLEMS IN MORNON TEXT

In our opinion LaMar Petersen’s booklet, Problems in Mormon Text, is one of the best works on the subject on Mormonism. Mr. Petersen has been doing research on Mormonism for over twenty years, so he is well qualified to write on this subject. Moreover, he has a very scholarly and honest way of dealing with his materials. We have a great deal of respect for Mr. Petersen, and we must admit that his constant help and encouragement have had much to do with the success of Modern Microfilm Co. His booklet, Problems in Mormon Text, and other research he has done have had a real effect upon our lives and upon our work.

The Mormon leaders have never been able to answer Mr. Petersen’s book; therefore, they have chosen to ignore it. However, John Blackmore (who was General Church Historian of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) did see the value of Mr. Petersen’s booklet, and in a letter dated February 24, 1958, he stated:

I thank you for the two books Problems in Mormon Text. I find that the contents of your book and the interpretations of the text, demand a revaluation of the incidents of our religious theories and practices.

All of our readers should have a copy of Mr. Petersen’s booklet, Problems of Mormon Text. The price is only $.60.
We are very happy to announce that we have now completed the new book, Joseph Smith and Polygamy. This book contains a very detailed study of the Mormon doctrine of plural marriage.

We can only present a small portion of the material here, but the book itself is filled with new and important information concerning the subject of polygamy.

To begin with, the Mormons believed in monogamy. The Book of Mormon (which was published in 1830) stated that:

...David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord. (Book of Mormon, page 111, [Jacob 2] verse 24)

In 1843, however, Joseph Smith gave a revelation which states the following:

Verily, thus said the Lord...you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, justified my servants...David and Solomon,...as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines—...

David's wives and concubines were given unto him of me,...

(Doctrine and Covenants, section 132, verses 1 and 39)

Notice that the revelation states that David and Solomon were justified in their polygamous practices, whereas the Book of Mormon states that polygamy is an abominable practice. When the Mormon Apostle LeGrand Richards was asked concerning this contradiction, he stated:

Your fourth question:...explain Jacob, 2:23-27 compared to D. & C. 1[3]:2:1. In one place it said it was “abominable” and the other “justified.”

I am afraid I can’t adequately reconcile these two statements. If the one in Doctrine & Covenants 131:1 had omitted the names of David and Solomon, then I think I could reconcile the two statements. (Letter from LeGrand Richards to Morris L. Reynolds, dated July 14, 1966)

The Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe made this statement concerning Joseph Smith:

It is nothing short of miraculous that the enemies of Joseph Smith, who have resorted to almost every untruth about him, have seldom charged him with sex immorality. No woman’s name was ever linked, slyly, with his. He was so clean morally that even those who hated him and his doctrine most did not venture to accuse him of moral wrong. (Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth, 1951, page 228)

In the book, Joseph Smith and Polygamy, we show that nothing could be further from the truth. For instance, Oliver Cowdery, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, accused Joseph Smith of having a “dirty, nasty, filthy affair” with a girl by the name of Fanny Alger. The Mormon writer Max Parkin made the following statement in his thesis for the Brigham Young University:

...the charge of adulterous relations “with a certain girl” was leveled against Smith by Cowdery in Missouri in 1837; this accusation became one of the complaints the Church had against Cowdery in his excommunication trial in Far West, April 12, 1838. In rationalizing Cowdery’s accusation, the Prophet testified “that Oliver Cowdery had been his bosom friend, therefore he entrusted him with many things.” (Conflicts at Kirtland, 1966, page 166)

Although the Mormon leaders denied that they were living plural marriage, they continued to add new wives to their families. Joseph Smith even asked for other men’s wives. In a sermon delivered in the Tabernacle in 1854, Jedediah M. Grant (second counselor to Brigham Young) stated:

When the family organization was revealed from heaven—the patriarchal order of God, and Joseph began, on the right and on the left, to add to his family, what a quaking there was in Israel. Says one brother to another, “Joseph says all covenants are done away, and none are binding but the new covenants; now suppose Joseph should come and say he wanted your wife, what would you say to that?” “I would tell him to go to hell.” This was the spirit of many in the early days of this Church.

What would a man of God say, who felt aright, when Joseph asked him for his money? He would say, “Yes, and I wish I had more to help to build up the kingdom of God.” Or if he came and said, “I want your wife?” “O yes,” he would say, “here she is, there are plenty more.”

Did the Prophet Joseph want every man’s wife he asked for? He did not. If such a man of God should come to me and say, “I want your gold and silver, or your wives,” I should say, “here they are, I wish I had more to give you, take all I have got.” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 2, pages 13-14)

In his book, Mormon Portraits, Dr. Wyl stated:

Joseph Smith finally demanded the wives of all the twelve apostles that were at home then in Nauvoo...That Joseph did demand and obtain the wives of the twelve, is proved beyond doubt by irrebuttable testimony. But there is further proof from a very high authority. Jedediah Grant, Brigham's counselor, said in one of his harangues...Do you think that the Prophet Joseph wanted the wives of the twelve that he asked for, merely to gratify himself? No; he did it to try the brethren. But if President Young wants my wife, or any of them, he can have them, etc...Vilate Kimball, the first wife of Heber C. Kimball, was a good, pure woman, she was better than her "religion," though a slave to it in a manner. She loved her husband, and he, not yet developed as the brute he later became, loved her, hence a reluctance to comply with the Lord's

(continued on page 2)

NEW BOOKS

JOSEPH SMITH AND POLYGAMY, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. This book contains a very detailed study of the Mormon doctrine of plural marriage. (See description of the book above.) It is bound in plastic binding and sells for $3.75. The quantity prices are: 2 for $6.50 — 5 for $12.50 — 10 for $22.50.

ORRIN PORTER ROCKWELL: MAN OF GOD, SON OF THUNDER, by Harold Schindler. Mr. Schindler has spent many years researching documents, journals, manuscripts and rare books. The result is a book which can be relied upon. Printed by the University of Utah Press. Price: $7.50

ON THE MORMON FRONTIER: The Diary of Hosea Stout, 1844-1861, edited by Juanita Brooks. Dale L. Morgan, a noted historian, states that the diary of Hosea Stout is "...one of the most magnificent windows upon Mormon history ever opened..." While Hosea Stout was a very prominent Mormon, he did not hesitate to make entries in his diary which are very embarrassing to the Mormon Church today. We feel that his journal contains proof that the Mormon leaders approved of violence and that Brigham Young taught that Adam is the only God with whom we have to do and the father of Jesus. The footnotes by Juanita Brooks are excellent. It is published by the University of Utah Press. Comes in two volumes — 769 large pages. Price: $17.50 a set.

THE MORMON ESTABLISHMENT by Wallace Turner. Mr. Turner, former Pulitzer Prize winner and correspondent for the New York Times, discusses such controversial subjects as: the anti-Negro doctrine, polygamy and Mormon interference in politics. Price: $6.00
demand that Vilate should be \textit{consecrated} like the moveable property of the other “Apostles.” Still, Joseph was to them a prophet, and therefore the act might be right in him though simply damnable in any other man. They thought the command of the Lord must be obeyed in some way, and a “proxy” way suggested itself to their minds. They had a young daughter only getting out of girlhood, and the father apologizing to the prophet for his wife’s \textit{reluctance} to comply with \textit{his desires}, stating, however, that the act must be right or it would not be counseled—the abject slave of a father asked \textit{Joe if his daughter wouldn’t do as well as his wife}. Joe replied that she would do just as well, and the Lord would accept her instead. The half-ripe bud of womanhood was \textit{delivered over to the Prophet.} (\textit{Mormon Portraits}, by Dr. Wyl, 1886, pages 70-72)

The fact that Joseph Smith asked for Heber C. Kimball’s wife is verified in the book, \textit{The Life of Heber C. Kimball}, written by the Mormon Apostle Orson F. Whitney:

Before he would trust even Heber with the full secret, however, he put him to a test which few men would have been able to bear.

It was no less than a \textit{requirement for him to surrender his wife, his beloved Vilate, and give her to Joseph in marriage!}

The astounding revelation well-nigh paralyzed him. He could hardly believe he had heard aright. \textit{Yet Joseph was solemnly in earnest.} His next impulse was to spurn the proposition, and perhaps at that terrible moment a vague suspicion of the Prophet’s motive and the divinity of the revelation, shot like a poisoned arrow through his soul.

But only for a moment, if at all, was such a thought, such a \textit{suspicion} entertained. He knew Joseph to well, as a man, a friend, a brother, a servant of God, to doubt his truth or the \textit{divine origin of the behest he had made}. No; Joseph was God’s Prophet, His mouth-piece and oracle, and so long as he was so, his words were as the words of the Eternal One to Heber C. Kimball. His heart-strings might be torn, his feelings crucified and sown asunder, but so long as his faith in God and the Priesthood remained, heaven helping him, \textit{he would try and do as he was told}. Such, now, was his superhuman resolve.

Three days he fasted and wept and prayed. Then, with a broken and a bleeding heart, but with soul self-mastered for the \textit{sacrifice}, he led his darling wife to the Prophet’s house and presented her to Joseph.

It was enough—heavens accepted the sacrifice. The will for the deed was taken, and “accounted unto him for righteousness.” Joseph wept at this proof of devotion, and embracing Heber told him that was all that the Lord required. He had proved him, as a child of Abraham, that he would “do the works of Abraham,” holding back \textit{nothing}, but laying all upon the altar for God’s glory.

The Prophet joined the hands of the heroic and devoted pair, and then and there, by virtue of the sealing power and authority of the Holy Priesthood, Heber and Vilate Kimball were made husband and wife for all eternity. (\textit{Life of Heber C. Kimball}, by Orson F. Whitney, pages 333-335)

Ann Eliza Young made this statement:

Joseph not only paid his addresses to the young and unmarried women, but he sought “spiritual alliance” with many \textit{married} ladies who happened to strike his fancy. He taught them that all former marriages were null and void, and that they were at perfect liberty to make another choice of a husband. The marriage covenants were not binding, because they were ratified only by Gentile laws. These laws the Lord did not recognize; consequently all the women were free.

\textit{...}

One woman said to me not very long since, while giving me some of her experiences in polygamy: “The greatest trial I ever endured in my life was living with my husband and deceiving him, by receiving Joseph’s attentions whenever he chose to come to me.”

\textit{...}

Some of these women have since said they did not know who was the father of their children; \textit{...} (\textit{Wife No. 19}, by Ann-Eliza Young, 1876, pages 70-71)

The Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe admitted that Joseph Smith was sealed to married women, but he claimed that they were not to be his wives until after death. Patty Bartlett Sessions, the wife of David Sessions, however, made it very clear in her private journal that she was married to Joseph Smith for both “time” and “eternity”:

I was sealed to Joseph Smith by Willard Richards Mar. 9, 1842, in Newel K. Whitney’s chamber, Nauvoo, \textit{for time and all eternity}. . . . I was after Mr. Session’s death sealed to John Parry for time of the 27th, March, 1852, GSL City. (\textit{Private Journal of Patty Bartlett Sessions}, quoted in \textit{Intimate Disciple, Portrait of Willard Richards}, by Claire Noall, 1957, page 611)

The fact that some members of the Mormon Church were worried that someone else would take their wives is evidenced by a speech that Brigham Young gave on February 16, 1847. In this speech he stated:

There is another principle that has caused considerable uneasiness and trouble (E.I.) the idea of some men having \textit{more wives than one}. Such tremendous fear takes hold of some that they don’t know how to live and still they can’t die, and begin to whisper and talk around saying, I am actually afraid to go on a mission for fear some man will be sealed to my wife, or when they return home some will be babbling about you don’t know but what you have got another man’s wife. For my part some say I am afraid to speak to a young woman for fear that she belongs to somebody else or for fear somebody else wants her (others deny the faith as they think, but they never had any), and say that it is all from the devil and so on. . . . but those that suffer fears and jealousy to arise in their bosoms either back right out or get to be mighty righteous and for fear that they are sleeping with \textit{some other man’s wife} they kick up a broil at home and perhaps abuse their companions through jealousy, then go to some woman that does not understand which is right or wrong and tell her that she cannot be saved without a man and he has almighty power and can exalt and save her and likely tell her that there is no harm for them to sleep together before they are sealed then go to some clod head of an elder and get him to say their ceremony, all done without the knowledge or counsel of the authority of this church. \textit{...} . . . I was to say to the elders you now have the liberty to build up your kingdoms, one half of them would lie, swear, steal and fight like the very devil to get men and women sealed to them. They would even try to pass right by me and go to Jos. thinking to get between mine and the 12. Some have already tried to use an influence against me, but such jealousies and selfishness shall be stopped and if the brethren do not stop it I will blow it to the four winds by making them all come and be sealed to me and I through my father, and all this church to Jos. (Sermon by Brigham Young, quoted in \textit{Journals of John D. Lee}, 1846-1847, edited by Charles Kelly, 1938, pages 79-80)

There were all kinds of strange marriages under the Mormon plural wife system. According to Fawn Brodie, Joseph Smith married “five pairs of sisters” and “Patty and Sylvia Sessions” who were “mother and daughter.” The fact that Patty and Sylvia Sessions were mother and daughter is verified by the Mormon writer Claire Noall:

Sylvia Lyon, Patty’s \textit{daughter} and the \textit{wife} of Windsor J. Lyon, was already sealed to Joseph. This afternoon she was to put \textit{her mother’s hand in the Prophet’s.} (\textit{Intimate Disciple}, by Claire Noall, page 317)

L. John Nuttall, a prominent Mormon, told that John Taylor (who became president of the Mormon Church) promised his own sister that she could be sealed to him in the event that she could not be reconciled to continue with any of her husbands:

Monday Feb. 25, 1889.

\textit{...} Agnes Schwartz & her daughter Mary called this morning to see Prest. Woodruff, on her family matters which he promised to write to her about. She said that her brother John the late President John Taylor had told her some 30 years ago that if she could not be reconciled to continue with any of her husbands she might be sealed to his brother William or himself and she now wanted to be sealed to him. This is a very curious proceeding & which I dont understand. (Journal of L. John Nuttall, vol. 2, pages 362-363, taken from a typed copy at the B.Y.U.)
L. John Nuttall does not relate what happened, but if the sealing actually took place, John Taylor, according to Mormon doctrine, will find himself married to his own sister in the resurrection.

Heber C. Kimball, who was a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, stated:

It would be as easy for the United States to build a tower to remove the sun, as to remove polygamy or the Church and kingdom of God. (Millennial Star, vol. 28, page 190)

Federal laws were passed against the practice of polygamy, and the Mormons found themselves in a real dilemma.

By the year 1888 many people were suggesting that the church have a new revelation which would suppress the practice of polygamy. Some friends of the church wrote an epistle stating that polygamy should be suppressed. They wanted the Mormon leaders to submit it to the people as if the leaders had written it themselves. The Mormon leaders rejected this proposal, but the fact that Wilford Woodruff had the epistle read before the “council of apostles” shows that he was desperate for a solution to the church’s predicament. L. John Nuttall recorded the following in his journal under the date of December 19, 1888:

Wednesday Dec. 19, 1888.

... This evening I attended a meeting of the council of apostles at the President’s office... The communication which Prest Woodruff handed to me last night was presented by Bro Woodruff who asked me to read it. I did, then by request read it again. The youngest member was then asked to speak his views in brief and as continued until all had spoken the brethren were very emphatic in opposing or accepting such a measure. They felt it had not come from the right source. Did not offer even as much as a mess of potage for the relinquishment of our religion. If we gave up one portion we would be required to give up all. could not accept. (Journal of L. John Nuttall, vol. 2, page 329 of typed copy at Brigham Young University)

The next day (December 20, 1888) L. John Nuttall made this statement in his journal:

Thursday Dec. 20, 1888

... This evening I attended a meeting of the council of apostles at the President’s office... The communication which Prest Woodruff handed to me last night was presented by Bro Woodruff who asked me to read it which I did, then by request read it again. The youngest member was then asked to speak his views in brief and as continued until all had spoken the brethren were very emphatic in opposing or accepting such a measure. They felt it had not come from the right source. Did not offer even as much as a mess of potage for the relinquishment of our religion. If we gave up one portion we would be required to give up all. could not accept any such documents nor their proposition. I felt glad that I was of the same mind. (p. 296)

In spite of the fact that the Mormon Church leaders taught that plural marriage could never be stopped, in 1890 Wilford Woodruff issued the Manifesto, which was supposed to stop the practice of plural marriage. The Mormon leaders promised to obey the law of the land, but many of them broke their promises. Very few people realized to what extent the leaders of the Mormon Church had broken their promises, until they were called to testify in the “Proceedings Before the Committee of Privileges and Elections of the United States Senate in the Matter of the Protests Against the Right of Hon. Reed Smoot, a Senator from the State of Utah, to Hold His Seat.”

Joseph F. Smith, who was the sixth President of the Mormon Church, admitted that he had continued to live in polygamy after the Manifesto and that he was violating both the laws of the land and the laws of God:

The Chairman. And in not doing it, you are violating the law?
Mr. Smith. The law of my state?
The Chairman. Yes.
Mr. Smith. Yes, sir.
Senator Overman. Is there not a revelation published in the Book of Covenants here that you shall abide by the law of the State?
Mr. Smith. It includes both unlawful cohabitation and polygamy.
Senator Overman. If that is a revelation, are you not violating the laws of God?
Mr. Smith. I have admitted that Mr. Senator, a great many times here. (Reed Smoot Case, vol. 1, pages 334-335)

Walter M. Wolfe, who was at one time professor of geology at Brigham Young College, claimed that the Apostle John Henry Smith stated that the Manifesto was only a trick to beat the devil at his own game:

Mr. Wolfe. There was a meeting in the Brigham Young Academy, in Provo, Utah, that was addressed by B. F. Grant, a brother of Apostle Heber J. Grant. At that meeting Apostle John Henry Smith was present.
The Chairman. On what date was that; what year?
Mr. Wolfe. I don’t remember the year. It was in the late nineties, probably.
Mr. Carlisle. It was after the manifesto?
Mr. Wolfe. Yes, sir; it was after the manifesto. On my way home I walked several blocks with B. F. Grant and Apostle Smith and on the way we were talking about the conditions existing, and President Smith used these words to me: “Brother Wolfe, don’t you know that the manifesto is only a trick to beat the devil at his own game?” (Reed Smoot Case, vol. 4, page 13)

Walter M. Wolfe also gave this testimony:

Mr. Carlisle. Now, you may proceed to state what you know about Ovena Jorgensen and about her having contracted a plural marriage with somebody after your knowledge of her, after you became acquainted with her.
Mr. Wolfe. In the summer of 1897 I was in Colorado. On my return, at the beginning of the school year, I found that Ovena Jorgensen was not in attendance. She returned to school some time during the month of October. Shortly after her return she came to my house and asked me privately. She said: “Brother Wolfe, I have something that I must tell you, the reason why I have been late coming back to school. I have been married.” I said: “Not in polygamy.” She said: “Yes, sir, in polygamy. I have married Brother Okey.”

The Chairman. What year was that, professor.
Mr. Wolfe. This was in October, 1897.
Mr. Worthington. That she told you this?
Mr. Wolfe. This is her story to me.
Mr. Worthington. I say, it was in October, 1897, that she told you?
Mr. Wolfe. Yes, sir. I asked her how it had happened, and she said that some years before she had gone into service at the house of this man Okey; that he had loved her and she loved him. He had asked her to marry him and she had declined, saying that it was impossible on account of the manifesto, but she had promised that she would marry no one else. Mr. Okey visited President Woodruff several times, I should judge from her conversation, and each time was refused his request that he marry that girl. In August, 1897, Okey and the girl went together to see President Wilford Woodruff, and they laid the case before him. He brushed them aside with a wave of his hand and said he would have nothing to do with the matter, but referred them to President George Q. Cannon. George Q. Cannon asked if the girl had been through the Temple and received her endowments. They told him no. He said that that must be done first and then he would see as to the rest of it. They went through the Temple and the girl received her endowments. Then they were given a letter by President George Q. Cannon to President Ivins, of the Juarez Stake, and they went to Mexico.

The Chairman. Who was this letter to?
Mr. Wolfe. President A. W. Ivins, or the Juarez Stake.
The Chairman. Mexico?
Mr. Wolfe. Mexico; yes, sir. They went to Mexico, and there the girl told me the marriage ceremony was performed, and they returned to Utah.
Mr. Carlisle. This statement that you have made is the statement she
made to you?

Mr. Chairman. You say they were given a letter to the president. What
do you mean by that? what President?
Mr. Wolfe. President Ivins. The Mormon Church geographically is divided
into stakes very much as the States of the Union are divided into counties.
(Reed Smoot Case, 1906, vol. 4, pages 10-11)

Stanley S. Ivins, the son of Anthony W. Ivins, told us that his father
received instructions after the Manifesto to perform marriages for time
and all eternity outside of the Mormon Temples. He was sent to Mexico
and was told that when the First Presidency wanted a plural marriage
performed they would send a letter with the couple who were to be
married. Whenever he received these letters from the First Presidency,
he knew that it was alright to perform the ceremony.

Stanley S. Ivins confirms the fact that his father, Anthony W. Ivins,
did perform the marriage ceremony mentioned above and that he recorded
this fact in his record book. Stanley Ivins also stated that Walter Wolfe’s
testimony concerning this marriage hurt the church’s image so much that
the First Presidency of the Church sent Anthony Ivins a letter requesting
him to go back to Washington, D.C. and give false testimony before the
Committee on Privileges and Elections of the United States Senate. The
First Presidency of the Mormon Church actually wanted him to lie under
oath and state that he did not perform the ceremony. Stanley Ivins stated
that his father refused to go back to Washington, D. C. and lie about
the marriage, even if Walter Wolfe’s testimony did damage the image of the
Church.

The book, Joseph Smith and Polygamy, contains many other
interesting things which we do not have room to discuss here. It contains
information concerning the spiritual wife doctrine, the John C. Bennett
book, the Nancy Rigdon affair, the Sarah Pratt affair and also the Martha
H. Brotherton affair. Also included is a list of 84 women who may have
been married to Joseph Smith.

— IMPORTANT LETTER —

On November 9, 1966, LaMar Petersen wrote a letter to the
Manuscript Editor of Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought. About
half of this letter was printed in volume 1, number 4, page 9.

We feel that this letter is rather important, and therefore we are
publishing it in its entirety:

Dear Sir,

This is intended not so much a critique of James Allen’s “the
Significance of Joseph Smith’s First Vision in Mormon Thought” in
the autumn issue of Dialogue as a commendation. Generally Mr. Allen
has been forthright and factual in his enumeration and study of source
materials relating to this subject. To those in the L.D.S. Church nurtured
on the familiar words of the Vision as found in the Pearl of Great Price
and various other Church annals, the additional information here presented
may be surprising, and to some disturbing. However, many of Dialogue’s
readers are likely to agree with the thought expressed by P.A.M. Taylor
on page 110: “secrecy does more harm to the Church’s reputation than
could result from any disclosures from the archives.”

Mr. Allen is evidently not seeking to impose a dogmatic interpretation
of the Vision but rather to juxtapose the accounts for easy comparison and
analysis. He rightly notes that belief in the Vision is cardinal in the faith of
the Saints, that it is the fulcrum upon which modern-day revelation rests.
This being so it is the more important that nothing pertinent be omitted.

In the editors’ preface to the autumn issue it states that portions of
two early accounts by Joseph Smith of his First Vision are here printed “for
the first time.” This is an error. Modern Microfilm Company of Salt Lake
City, Jerald and Sandra Tanner proprietors, published one of these accounts
(the one referred to by Mr. Allen on page 39 as having been written “about
1833”) more than a year ago in a work entitled Joseph Smith’s Strange
Account of the First Vision. Mr. Tanner informs me that more than 600
copies of this book have been sold to date. The statement credited to Levi

Edgar Young on page 4 and 14 of the Tanner work may have had a direct
bearing on the emergence of the so-called 1833 document and they pose
an important question in relation to Mr. Allen’s statement on page 35, “few
if any who saw it realized its profound historical significance.” Though
Mr. Young was not sure of the date his description of the document fitted
what has been revealed. His statements were first published in an earlier
Tanner work, Changes in Joseph Smith’s History (January 1965) and
provoked considerable discussion at the time.

Inasmuch as some who have written about the First Vision emphasize
the importance of the identification of the personages as the Father and the
Son (see for example Hugh Nibley, “Censoring Joseph Smith’s Story,”
Improvement Era) Mr. Allen would have done well to point the lack of
such identification is such standards as the Orson Pratt Remarkable Visions,
the Wentworth Letter, and the Daniel Rupp account. These testaments are
often used as source for the belief that Deity did indeed visit the youthful
Prophet in the Grove, but it so happens that while the inference may be
there, direct testimony is lacking.

It would have been an aid to the reader in evaluating the First Vision
documents if the writer had referred to the incidents leading to the Vision
as recorded in two prime accounts: (a) by Oliver Cowdery in the Messenger
and Advocate in 1834-5 and (b) by Joseph Smith in the Times and Seasons
in 1842. The motivation to prayer, the quest for guidance, the events
leading to the appearance of a personage, or personages, are sufficiently
similar as to cause confusion in the mind of the reader. Mr. Allen might
have commented upon the parallels and differences and attempted some
clarification. Many serious students of Mormonism feel that this [is]
a problem which has gone begging for 120 years. One has only to note
the references to the First Vision by Church Authorities in the Journal
of Discourses to see that a review is needed. (See 1:299; 2:171, 196-7;
18:239; 20:167; 21:308; 25:157.) Compare also Deseret News, May 29,
1852, page 1, column 1, with History of the Church, vol. II, page 312,
ed. B. H. Roberts.)

One page 34 Mr. Allen says: “Perhaps the closest one may come to
seeing a contemporary diarist’s account of the story is in the journal of
Alexander Neibaur, which is located in the Church Historian’s office.”
It should be noted that such journals are not open for public inspection.
Several researchers have been denied access to this particular journal,
including the donor. (This is according to a letter from Hugh Nibley to
Jerald Tanner, photostat of which appears on page 23 of Tanner’s book,
Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? (Salt Lake City 1964).

Sincerely yours,

LaMar Petersen

Everyone Welcome!

We are now holding a Bible study in our home at 1350 S. West
Temple, every Thursday evening at 8:00 pm. Everyone is welcome. This
is not connected with any particular group or church. Attendance is open
to everyone—there are no obligations connected with attendance. The
scripture lesson is given by Sandra Tanner.

Come to me, all of you who are weary and over-burdened, and I will
give you rest! Put on my yoke and learn from me. For I am gentle and
and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30 Phillips Modern English Trans.)

ALMOST SOLD OUT!

We have just completed taking inventory and find that many of our
books have almost sold out. For instance, there are only five copies of
one of our publications left. There are only 18 copies of another left.
Another has only 27 copies, and another has 66. Two publications are
down to 88 copies.

Several people have asked how many sets of the Times and Seasons
we have left. We find that we have only 25 complete sets.

Since we do not plan to reprint many of these books, this may be
your last chance to get them!
Sometime ago we announced that we were working on a book which we felt would be one of the most revealing works ever written on the subject of Mormonism. Because of a lack of money and time we have not been able to do much on this work. We now have a plan, however, which we feel will enable us to get this work out. Since it is such a large work, it will have to be printed in several volumes. We have now written part of volume one, and we are ready to start printing. It will entitled The Case Against Mormonism. We feel that it is our largest and most important work.

We are asking our readers to pay for volume one in advance so we can start printing right away. We will mail the sheets out as they are printed. We will try to send at least 20 printed sheets at a time. Volume one will contain 100 or more 8 1/2 by 11 inch sheets, which will contain a lot of information.

We are very anxious to see these pages preserved; therefore, we are including a top quality vinyl loose-leaf binder with 19 rings (most binders have only 3 rings) the pages will be punched and our readers can put the pages in the binder as they arrive.

These loose-leaf binders sell retail from General Binding Corp. for over $3.00 a piece but we plan to get them in quantity at a much lower price.

We have now written part of volume one, and we are ready to start printing. It will entitled The Case Against Mormonism for only $4.95. The loose-leaf binder will be large enough to hold several other volumes. In these volumes we will deal with many new subjects. We can only present a very small portion of the material here.

IS ALL WELL IN ZION?

In 1966 Wallace Turner, former Pulitzer Prize winner and correspondent for the New York Times, published his book The Mormon Establishment. In this book Mr. Turner shows that the Mormon Church is facing several serious problems. Fawn M. Brodie, author of No Man Knows My History, has called this a “courageous book.” At the same time Mr. Turner’s book was published another book appeared, entitled The Latter-day Saints: The Mormons Yesterday and Today. This book was written by Robert Mullen, a former editor of Life Magazine who now “runs a world-wide public relations agency.” Although Mr. Mullen claims to be a non-Mormon, the book is obviously written in defense of the Mormon Church. John Cogley, of the New York Times, reviewed both Mr. Turner’s book and Mr. Mullen’s book in an article entitled “Where the Saints Have Trod.” In this review he stated:

The Mullen book smacks of the “authorized” account, with just enough mildly unfavorable material to make it credible to modern critical readers. Not surprising, Mr. Mullen, a Washington public relations professional, has been retained by the Church of Latter-Day Saints. Mr. Turner is a New York Times correspondent, who has made a study of the church’s teachings and regards the Mormons as a “fine people” but finds some of their doctrines repellent.

Forty-eight pages of the Turner book, for example, are devoted to what the author terms the Mormon’s “anti-Negro doctrine.” Mr. Mullen glides past the same doctrine in one-half of a compound sentence: “The Mormon theology has taught that the Negro race is not eligible for certain priesthood activities, although Negroes are welcome as Church members . . .”

Mr. Mullen’s book traces the familiar history . . . The story as history is endlessly fascinating. Unfortunately though, Mr. Mullen is too obvious about avoiding the “back corners” of Mormonism to put the Gentile reader wholly at ease. His swift passing over of issues that might possible embarrass the church is all too evident all too frequently. Even his choice of words to describe the few discredifying incidents he tackles appears to have been made with Madison Avenue forethought.

Mr. Turner filled in what Mr. Mullen avoided, but at times perhaps a bit too eagerly. Mr. Turner is a skilled, experienced reporter. . . . It is known that Mr. Turner’s earlier newspaper accounts of the Mormon dilemmas upset some in the church hierarchy. It does seem not altogether coincidental, then, that these two books should be turning up at the same time. (New York Times, Book Review Section, October 23, 1966, page 4 and 22)

One area in which Robert Mullen’s book is way off is that concerning the effectiveness of the Mormon missionary program. He claims:

Ten years later, 1962, the number of missionaries had almost quadrupled to 11,768 and the number of converts for the year was listed at 104,841.

In the years since, these figures have stabilized at about 12,000 missionaries and upward of 180,000 converts a year. But the interesting figure to many non-Mormon church people is the figure of average converts per missionary. This has risen in the past decade and a half from under four per missionary to above nine!

This reveals that the acceleration is not due merely to an increase in missionary numbers, but even more significantly is due to an improvement in missionary effectiveness. It is a point of immense interest to other denominations, faced with the desire for more members. (The Latter-day Saints: The Mormons Yesterday and Today, page 225)

While it must be admitted that the Mormon missionary effort has been very effective, it has not been nearly as successful as Mr. Mullen would have us believe. If Mr. Mullen had stated that the Mormon missionary program is bringing in 80,000 converts a year, instead of 180,000, he would have been much closer to the truth. Below are two charts showing the number of full-time missionaries from 1961 to 1965 (the figures were not yet available for 1966). These figures were taken from the Church Section of the Deseret News and from the Conference Reports.
When the number of converts began to drop the excuse given was that there were less full-time missionaries. While it is true that there were less missionaries in 1963 and 1964 than there were in 1962, there were more missionaries in 1965 than any other year. There were 1,725 more full-time missionaries in 1965 than there were in 1961, and yet there were less converts. There were more full-time missionaries in 1965 than there were in 1962, and yet there were 33,379 less converts!

In 1959 the Mormon missionaries brought 23,026 people into the Church. In 1960 they brought in 48,586. This was an increase of 100%. In 1961 they brought in 88,807 converts. In 1962 Henry D. Moyle, a member of the First Presidency, felt that they would “record another 100 per cent increase.” The following appeared in the Deseret News:

In his publicly expressed view, President Henry D. Moyle of the First Presidency, who, under the assignment of President David O. McKay, directs the great world-wide missionary effort of the Church, feels 1962 will record another 100% increase as did 1961. (Deseret News, Church Section, December 30, 1961, page 4)

In order to meet Mr. Moyle’s prediction, the missionaries would have needed to bring in over 170,000 converts in 1962. Instead they brought in 115,834. Still, this was a good increase. A minister reported that when he called the Church and asked for the number of converts for 1962, the man in the Missionary Department read the number and then stated that they would soon be bringing in a million converts a year. The next year after this prediction was made, the number of converts dropped to 105,210. In 1964 it was predicted that 100,000 converts would be brought into the Church:

Constant march of LDS missionaries to all parts of the world will maintain its high tempo in 1965 with a total of approximately 100,000 converts expected by the end of 1964.

. . .

Preaching the Gospel and baptizing of converts has been on a steady upward trend since the first missionaries started their march . . . in 1830. (Deseret News; Church Section, December 26, 1964)

Instead of bringing in the 100,000 converts, the figures dropped to 93,483. The next year (1965) the number of converts again fell off. That year they brought in only 82,455 converts.

SKYSCRAPERS

In 1960 the Mormon Church leaders announced some fantastic building plans. These plans would almost make a person think that the Mormon leaders believed that they would be bringing in a million converts a year. The headline of the Deseret News for October 7, 1960 read: “Pres. McKay Opens Conference; Vast Building Plans Disclosed.” In the article which followed these statements were made:

A dramatic multi-million dollar building program for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which will make sweeping changes on the administrative square and on Temple Square, was disclosed Friday. The program, covering a period of many years, calls for:

—Erection of a 38-story office building on the administrative square bordered by State, South Temple, Main and North Temple Streets.
—Construction of a modernistic 11-story Archives Building on the northeast corner of the intersection of Main and North Temple Streets.
Larger Annex
—Building a larger and more functional Temple Annex building that will provide 91,000 square feet of space.
—Addition of a 17 story annex to the Hotel Utah . . .
Church Building Committee Chairman Wendell Mendenhall said demolition of the buildings that will be razed—many of them well-known landmarks—should begin next spring.
He could not give an estimate of the amount of time that will be required to complete the project, but observed that “it will take years.”
A plaza with a fountain will be centered in the block behind the new Administration Building.
A reflecting pool on an axis across Main Street from the Temple will mirror the historic building.

To tower 500 feet above ground level, the new office building will be the first structure on the block to go up, Mr. Mendenhall said.
It will be erected on the northeast corner of the block, . . .
Mr. Mendenhall said the skyscraper will provide more than a million square feet of office space, with 30,000 square feet on each floor.
Plans for an observation tower atop the proposed 38-story Administration Building are tentative. Building Office spokesmen said telescopes may be installed for viewing the Salt Lake Valley from atop the building.
He said that the building, when completed, will have extra space for expansion.
. . .
It will require about 20 elevators, Mr. Mendenhall said.
. . .
The new Archives Building will house the Church Historian’s offices and library, the archives and library of the Genealogical Society.
The building will be of steel and concrete construction, and will provide approximately 400,000 square feet of office space, . . .
Construction of the Archives Building may begin in approximately a year to 15 months, Mr. Dunn said. (Deseret News, October 7, 1960, page 1 and 10A)
The site for the Archives Building was cleared, however, instead of the building going up, the site was made into a parking lot.

In an article published in the Deseret News, November 17, 1962, we find that the 38-story building was again cut down this time to 25 stories. No explanation appeared in the article as to why the building was to be smaller:

These old school buildings have been torn down to make way for the new 25-story Church Administration building and huge half-block subterranean parking area.

In 1966 Wallace Turner gave this report in regard to the progress of this building:

The building was started. The great underground garage has been completed. It includes the foundations for the twenty-five-story building. But as this is written, the plans for the building itself seem to have been shoved into a drawer somewhere. The roof of the garage is being covered with dirt for lawn, and the bare metal of the steel supports for the walls of the building are being treated against corrosion, since they stick up about three feet above the concrete of the garage roof. **The plans are at a standstill.**

But in typical Mormon fashion, the top leaders of the church speak of a "progression of plans for the building. The work is moving forward." Hugh B. Brown, the first counselor to President McKay, insisted that the office building was being constructed according to plan. (The Mormon Establishment, by Wallace Turner, pages 115-116)

The Mormon leaders will, no doubt, put up a building, but even if it is 25 stories, it will certainly not be according to the original plan.

The skyscraper in New York which, according to Newsweek, was supposed to be finished in 1965 has not even been started. On February 9, 1967, we called the Building Department of the Mormon Church. After talking with four different people, we were unable to find out anything concerning this building except that the plans had not even been drawn up!

The proposed Genealogical Research Center (which was expected to be "the largest genealogical research center in the world") was supposed to have been started in 1962, but according to a statement given by an employee of the Genealogical Society of February 9, 1967, the plans are at a standstill. He felt that when the 25-story Administration Building was completed, the Genealogical Society would move into it.

The Mormon writer John J. Stewart assures us that "Today the LDS Church is in excellent financial condition, having one of the greatest incomes of any private organization in the United States. More than a million dollars per day in tithing and other funds pour continuously into its treasury" (Joseph Smith The Mormon Prophet, 1966, page 183).

If the Mormon Church is in such excellent financial condition, why have they not gone forward with their "vast" building plans? Actually, it is almost impossible to find out the true financial condition of the Church because the Mormon leaders will not make this information available. Under such a system it would be very easy for someone in authority to walk off with some of the funds or for the Mormon leaders to make bad investments without the membership of the Church being aware of it. We feel that it is wrong for a church to keep this information from its people.

**FALSE SCRIPTURE**

Wallace Turner stated:

The foundation on which this whole doctrine of Negro exclusion is based is the clause or so in the Book of Abraham. Yet, of all the works attributed to Joseph Smith, this one is the most thoroughly denounced by the scholarly world. . . . I am convinced by very simple direct evidence that the Book of Abraham is a spurious translation. (The Mormon Establishment, pages 232-233)

In The Case Against Mormonism we hope to bring forth a lot of new information upon this subject.

In 1966 one of the world’s greatest Egyptologists Dr. Labib Habachi visited Salt Lake City. The Mormon leaders entertained him and even published an article about him in the Church Section of the Deseret News. This article called him an “Egyptian Expert.” On the next page is a photograph of this article as it appeared in the Deseret News, Church Section, March 12, 1966.
The following are some of the other subjects we hope to deal with in these volumes: the Temple Ceremony, changes in the Temple Ceremony, proof that the Book of Mormon is a product of the 19th century, the failure of the bank that was established by revelation, the truth about Robert C. Webb, bogus money, the book that disappeared, the Mormon Battalion, treason, the Inspired Revision of the Bible, the 1826 trial of Joseph Smith, the principle of Adoption, the Church Law Observation and Enforcement Committee, the secret Council of 50 and its attempt to destroy freedom in America, the Mormon wars in Missouri and Utah, David Whitmer’s little-known revelation, many cases of stealing and killing in the name of the Lord, and hundreds of other important subjects.

We also hope to include hundreds of photographs of rare Mormon documents and publications. In short, we feel that this will be the most revealing work ever written on the subject of Mormonism. We are asking our readers to pay for volume one in advance. The pages will be mailed as they are printed (we will try to mail at least 20 pages at a time.) We are including a top quality vinyl loose-leaf binder to preserve and protect the pages. The price for volume one of The Case Against Mormonism (including the loose-leaf binder) is $4.95. The quantity prices are: 2 for $8.95 — 4 for $14.95 — 10 for $29.70. Please include your zip code as the Post Office requires this on all packages.

A PERSONAL GOD?

To all those who will send us their address and zip code we will send a FREE COPY of Is There a Personal God? This is a 56-page pamphlet by Jerald Tanner. We would like to have all of our readers have a copy of this pamphlet. Please write for your free copy today.

THE MORMON ESTABLISHMENT

We have now sold over 250 copies of Wallace Turner’s book, The Mormon Establishment. Mr. Turner is a former Pulitzer Prize winner and correspondent for the New York Times. We feel that this is an excellent book of Mormonism. Mr. Turner discusses such controversial subjects as; the anti-Negro doctrine, polygamy and Mormon interference in politics. The price is $6.00. The quantity prices will be 2 for $10.95 — 10 for $49.50.

ON THE MORMON FRONTIER: The Diary of Hosea Stout, 1844-1861, edited by Juanita Brooks, printed by the University of Utah Press. Two volumes — 769 pages. Price: $17.50


ORRIN PORTER ROCKWELL: MAN OF GOD, SON OF THUNDER, by Harold Schindler. This is a book which can be relied upon. Printed by the University of Utah Press. Price: $7.50

This may be YOUR LAST CHANCE

We are sorry to report that another book, Why Egyptologists Reject the Book of Abraham, has sold out. Some of the other books are almost gone; therefore, this may be your last chance to obtain them, as we do not have plans to reprint them.

Everyone Welcome!

We are now holding a Bible study in our home at 1350 S. West Temple, every Thursday evening at 8:00 pm. Everyone is welcome. This is not connected with any particular group or church. Attendance is open to everyone—there are no obligations connected with attendance.
THE MORMON KINGDOM

In working on our new book, The Case Against Mormonism, we have decided that we have so much material that it will be necessary for us to write still another book. This book will be entitled The Mormon Kingdom. (At the end of this article we will explain how our readers may obtain this work.) Because of the limited amount of space we can only present a very small portion of the material here.

A TREASONOUS PLAN?

In the Preface to his new and fascinating book Quest For Empire, The Political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty in Mormon History, Klaus J. Hanson states:

... the idea of a political kingdom of God, promulgated by a secret “Council of Fifty,” is by far the most important key to an understanding of the Mormon past.

On page 24 of the same book, we find the following statement:

Certain non-Mormons, curiously enough, seem to have known more about the political ambitions of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young than most faithful Latter-day Saints.

In the year 1838, Thomas B. Marsh, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles in the Mormon Church, left the Mormons and made an affidavit in which he stated:

The plan of said Smith, the Prophet, is to take this State, and he professes to his people to intend taking the United States and ultimately the whole world. This is the belief of the Church, and my own opinion of the Prophet’s plans and intentions. (Affidavit of Thomas B. Marsh, as printed in A History of the Latter-day Saints in Northern Missouri from 1836 to 1839, by Leland Gentry, Brigham Young University, 1965, page 414)

Not long before his death, Joseph Smith formed a secret organization known as the “Council of Fifty.” The Mormon writer John J. Stewart states:

... the idea of a political kingdom of God, promulgated by a secret “Council of Fifty,” is by far the most important key to an understanding of the Mormon past.

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Klaus J. Hanson makes this statement concerning members of the “Council of Fifty”:

... members of the Council of Fifty, like the Freemasons, donned special robes in their private ceremonies, and “offered up” secret signs. (Quest For Empire, Michigan State University Press, 1967, page 56)

On page 64 and 65 of the same book Klaus Hanson states:

Secrecy at times went so far that papers accumulated during a meeting were burned at the close of the session. ... Ultimately, ... the whole world would be aware of the existence of the Council of Fifty. In fact, it is difficult to see how it could have been otherwise, since world government was to be one of the Council’s primary missions.

The Mormon writer J. D. Williams made this statement:

And in the case of the Grand Council of the Kingdom, the Church obviously contemplated far more than “giving advice.” Believed to have been organized in March, 1844, the Grand Council (or “Council of Fifty”) was to be the government of the Kingdom of God (which Kingdom was not the Church but the ultimate governing body for all mankind). The Council was composed of two non-Mormons and forty-eight to fifty Mormon high priests. ... The picture is one of a secret government, responsible not to the governed but to ecclesiastical authority, which will provide benign rule for all people, without election. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer, 1966, pages 47-48)

The Mormon Apostle Orson Hyde once stated:

What the world calls “Mormonism” will rule every nation. Joseph Smith and Brigham Young will be the head. God has decreed it, and his own right arm will accomplish it. This will make the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 7, page 53)

John Taylor, who became the third President of the Mormon Church, made this statement:

We do believe it, and we honestly acknowledge that this is that kingdom which the Lord has commenced to establish upon the earth, and that it will not only govern all people in a religious capacity, but also in a political capacity. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 11, page 53)

Heber C. Kimball, who was a member of the First Presidency, made this statement in 1859:

And so nations will bow to this kingdom, sooner, or later, and all hell cannot help it. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 7, page 170)

On another occasion Heber C. Kimball prophesied:

And the President of the United States will bow to us and come to consult the authorities of this Church to know what he had best do for his people.

You don’t believe this. Wait and see. ... (Journal of Discourses, vol. 5, page 93)

JOSEPH SMITH ORDAINED KING

Thomas Ford, the Governor of Illinois, made this statement a few months after Joseph Smith’s death:

It was asserted that Joseph Smith, the founder and head of the Mormon Church, had caused himself to be crowned and anointed King of the Mormons: ... (Nauvoo Neighbor, January 1, 1845) (Continued on page 2)

THE CASE AGAINST MORMONISM

A large number of our readers have ordered The Case Against Mormonism, volume one, in advance and are receiving the pages as we print them. A man in Illinois wrote: “Your new production came today. You are still doing a great job. Keep it up.” One group ordered ten copies, and when we sent out the binder and first printed pages, they ordered eighteen more.

We feel that this will be the most revealing work ever written on the subject of Mormonism. We are asking our readers to pay for volume one in advance. The pages will be mailed as they are printed. We are including a top quality vinyl loose-leaf binder to preserve and protect the pages. The price for volume one of The Case Against Mormonism (including the loose-leaf binder) is: $4.95. The quantity prices are 2 for $8.95 — 4 for $14.95 — 10 for $29.70.

ANOTHER BOOK SOLD OUT

We are sorry to report that another book, The Elders’ Journal, has sold out. Some of the other books are almost gone; therefore, this may be your last chance to obtain them. We do not have any plans to reprint them. Please do not order books that are marked sold out.

SPURIOUS?

Even though B. H. Roberts (who was the Assistant Mormon Church Historian) accepted the “Defense” as the work of Oliver Cowdery, we have found some material that seems to show that it may have been spurious. We have made a study of this matter and have prepared a pamphlet entitled A Critical Look—A Study of the Overstreet “Confession” and the Cowdery “Defense.”

While this may not be of much interest to our general readers all those who are writing or who are making a detailed study of Mormonism should be familiar with this work. The price is 50¢ for one copy — 5 for $2.00 — 10 for $3.00.
William Marks, who had been a member of the secret “Council of Fifty,” admitted in 1853 that Joseph Smith had been ordained to be a king before his death:

I was also witness to the introduction (secretly) of a kingly form of government, in which Joseph suffered himself to be ordained a king, to reign over the house of Israel forever; which I could not conceive to be in accordance with the laws of the church, but I did not oppose this move, thinking it none of my business. (Zion’s Harbinger and Bancemy’s Organ, St. Louis, July, 1853, page 53)

According to Dan Jones, Wilson Law heard Joseph Smith say that “the kingdom referred to was already set up, and that he was the king over it” (History of the Church, vol. 6, page 568-569).

The Mormon writer Klaus J. Hanson, who wrote his master’s thesis on the “Political Kingdom of God” at the Brigham Young University, made this statement:

The scriptures indicated that Christ would rule as king over the kingdom of God. Smith took this idea quite literally and thought it only logical that he, as predecessor of the Savior, should enjoy certain prerogatives of royalty. Consequently, shortly before his death, the prophet apparently had himself ordained as “king on earth.” Brigham Young, upon his arrival in the Salt Lake Valley, likewise reportedly had this ceremony performed in the Council of Fifty . . .

The title of king may have been a metaphor, but the power deriving from the office was not. In this respect it is especially important to recall that Smith held his political office by divine right and not by popular sovereignty. However metaphorical these royal pretensions may have been, Smith apparently knew that they were so potentially dangerous as to be entrusted only to the initiated. (Quest For Empire, pages 66-67)

In his master’s thesis, Klaus J. Hanson tells that George Miller, who had been a member of the “Council of Fifty,” admitted the Joseph Smith was ordained to be king:

Rumors implying that the Prophet assumed royal pretensions are somewhat substantiated by George Miller who stated on one occasion that “In this council we ordained Joseph Smith as King of earth.” (“The Theory and Practice of the Political Kingdom of God in Mormon History, 1829-1890,” Master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1959, typed copy, page 114)

In Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Klaus J. Hanson frankly admitted:

...Joseph Smith did start a political kingdom of God and a Council of Fifty; He was made King over the organization; . . . (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer, 1966, page 104)

The Mormon Apostle Parley P. Pratt made this statement:

This Priesthood, including that of the Aaronic, holds the keys of revelation of the oracles of God to man upon the earth; the power and right to give laws and commandments to individuals, churches, rulers, nations and the world; to appoint, ordain, and establish constitutions and kingdoms; to appoint kings, presidents, governors or judges, and to ordain or anoint them to their several holy callings, also to instruct, warn, or reprove them by the word of the Lord. (Key to the Science of Theology; 1855, page 66)

JOSEPH SMITH FOR PRESIDENT

In 1844 the “Council of Fifty” decided to run Joseph Smith for the presidency of the United States. Klaus J. Hanson states:

... the Council of Fifty, while seriously contemplating the possibility of emigration, also considered a rather spectacular alternative, namely, to run its leader the presidency of the United States in the campaign of 1844 . . . Smith and the Council of Fifty seem to have taken the election quite seriously, much more so, indeed, than both Mormons and anti-Mormons have heretofore suspected. (Quest for Empire, page 74)

The Elders of the Church were actually called to electioneer for Joseph Smith. Brigham Young made this statement at a special meeting of the Elders, April 9, 1844:

It is now time to have a President of the United States. Elders will be sent to preach the Gospel and electioneer. (History of the Church, by Joseph Smith, vol. 6, page 322)

At the same meeting, Heber C. Kimball made this statement:

We are going to arrange a plan for Conferences, and we design to send Elders to all the different States to get up meetings and protracted meetings, and electioneer for Joseph to be the next President. (History of the Church, vol. 6, page 325)

Some Mormons have claimed that Joseph Smith was not serious in his attempt to run for the presidency. Klaus J. Hanson, however, makes this statement:

... the Council of Fifty decided to send all available elders on missions to campaign for Joseph Smith and to preach Mormonism at the same time . . . In the privacy of the Council of Fifty, Smith clearly viewed his candidacy more seriously than in public . . . Smith’s own care in keeping the true purposes of his candidacy secret indicates that he knew that the public at large would treat him as demented if it learned of his actual hopes; but this realization also reveals that he at least knew what he was doing. . . .

If Smith had not believed his election in 1844 to be a possibility, why did he enlist the entire manpower of the church in a quixotic venture? (Quest For Empire, pages 78-79)

The attempt by Joseph Smith to become President was evidently a treasonous plot to bring the United States Government under the rule of the Priesthood. Klaus J. Hanson stated:

But what if, through a bold stroke, he could capture the United States for the kingdom? The Council of Fifty thought there might be a chance and nominated the Mormon prophet for the Presidency of the United States. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Autumn, 1966, page 67)

Joseph Smith was apparently planning to reign as a king over the people of the United States. George Miller, who had been a member of the “Council of Fifty,” made this statement in a letter dated June 28, 1855:

It was further determined in Council that all the elders should set out on missions to all the States to get up an electoral ticket, and do everything in our power to have Joseph elected president. If we succeeded in making a majority of the voters converts to our faith, and elected Joseph president, in such an event the dominion of the kingdom would be forever established in the United States; and if not successful, we could fall back on Texas, and be a kingdom notwithstanding. (Letter written by George Miller, dated June 28, 1855, as quoted in Joseph Smith and World Government, by Hyrum Andrus, Salt Lake City, 1963, page 54)

Instead of going to Texas the Mormons settled in the Great Salt Lake valley. Hyrum Andrus admits the Smith and “even considered the alternative of establishing the Saints in the capacity of an independent nation, should all other alternatives fail” (Joseph Smith and World Government, page 60). Klaus J. Hanson stated:

Although the Council of Fifty never fully realized its goal of establishing the Kingdom of God as a separate nation in the Great Basin, it ceaselessly worked in that direction for as long as it seemed possible. . . . Although Brigham Young apparently realized in 1847 that it was impossible to cut the political threads with the United States in the near future, he did his best to render those threads as thin and weak as possible. As a result, the Council of Fifty launched the State of Deseret at a time when it was in absolute political control of the Great Basin, . . . The fact is that the Mormons had migrated to the Rockies precisely for the purpose of setting up their own government, . . . (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Autumn, 1966, pages 68-69)

On September 6, 1857, Hosea Stout recorded the following in his journal:

President B. Young in his Sermon declared that the thre[al]d was cut between us and the U.S. and that the Almighty recognized us as a free and independent people and that no officer appointed by government (sent to [crossed out]) should come and rule over us from this time forth. (On the Mormon Frontier. The Diary of Hosea Stout, edited by Juanita Brooks, vol. 2, page 636)
THE KINGDOM IN UTAH

In a footnote on page 200 of Klaus J. Hanson’s book, Quest For Empire, we find the following:

Former Bishop Andrew Cahoon, whose father Reynolds Cahoon had been a member of the Council of Fifty, testified in 1889: “The King of that Kingdom that was set up on the earth was the head of the Church. Brigham Young proclaimed himself King here in Salt Lake Valley before there was a house built, in 1847.”

Perhaps Heber C. Kimball was referring to this when he said:

The Church and kingdom to which we belong will become the kingdom of our God and his Christ, and brother Brigham Young will become President of the United States.

(Voices responded, “Amen.”)

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

You don’t believe that; but I can tell you it is one of the smallest things that I can think of. You may think that I am joking; but I am perfectly willing that brother Long should write every word of it; for I can see it as naturally as I see the earth and the productions thereof. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 5, page 219)

The historian Hurbert Howe Bancroft made this statement concerning an incident that happened on July 24, 1857:

All eyes turned at once to Brigham . . . Gathering the people around him, he repeated the words uttered ten years before, prophesying even now that at no distant day he would himself become President of the United States, or dictate who should be President. (History of Utah, photomechanical reprint of 1889 edition, page 505)

The early Mormons accepted Brigham Young as their dictator. On April 6, 1862, Brigham Young stood before the Mormon people assembled in the Salt Lake Tabernacle and made this statement:

As formerly, I present myself before you this morning in the capacity Providence has lead me to occupy, acknowledged and sustained by you as the dictator, counsellor, and adviser of the people of God. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 9, page 267)

Heber C. Kimball made this statement:

President Young is our governor and our dictator. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 7, page 19)

On another occasion he stated:

. . . we look up to President Young as our leader, Prophet, and dictator. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 2, page 222)

On August 13, 1871, Brigham Young boasted:

I sometimes say to my brethren, “I have been your dictator for twenty-seven years—over a quarter of a century I have dictated this people; that ought to be some evidence that my course is onward and upward.” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 14, page 205)

Under the dictatorship of Brigham Young the Mormon people had very little freedom. John Taylor, who later became the third President of the Mormon Church, stated:

Was the kingdom that the Prophets talked about, that should be set up in the latter times, going to be a Church? Yes. And a State? Yes, it was going to be both Church and State, to rule both temporally and spiritually. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 6, page 24)

On another occasion he stated:

We used to have a difference between Church and State, but it is all one now. Thank God, we have no more temporal and spiritual! (Journal of Discourses, vol. 5, page 266)

The Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt remarked:

Ours is an Ecclesiastical Church, and an Ecclesiastical State. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 8, page 105)

Klaus J. Hanson makes this statement about the Mormon Kingdom:

Church and kingdom thus had come full circle. For the most part, they were separate in theory only. Ultimately, no distinction could be drawn between the two. The priesthood that controlled the church also controlled the state. (Quest of Empire, page 36)

On pages 137-138 of the same book, Klaus J. Hanson gives us this interesting information:

An examination of Utah territorial legislatures from 1851 to 1896 reveals that not until the 1880’s, when the influx of Gentiles into the territory in large numbers began to crack Mormon hegemony, did the Council of Fifty lose its political influence. . . .

Since church members followed the advice of the hierarchy in matters both spiritual and temporal, the Council never had any difficulty in assuring election of its candidates. Nominations were made by leading church authorities; absence of the secret ballot assured that only the most recalcitrant would dare oppose the official slate. Stanley S. Ivins, in a study of eighteen annual elections from 1852 to 1870, observed that “of the 96,107 votes cast, over this 18 years period, 96 per cent went to the regular candidate. And if the known Gentile ballots are eliminated, the percentage rises to 97.4.” Casting a vote in opposition to approved candidates was severely frowned upon, but was not in and of itself grounds for disciplinary action. Running for political office without church approval, however, was a much more serious matter. In the Mormon colony of San Bernardino, California, B. F. Grouard and F. M. Van Leuven were disfellowshipped simply because they ran for political office against other church members nominated by the authorities, who, incidentally, also happened to be members of the Council of Fifty. Another case of willful opposition to the political counsel of church leaders occurred in 1854. One of the candidates nominated as representative for Salt Lake County in the legislature, Albert P. Rockwood, had incurred the dislike of a group of voters, who nominated a candidate of their own, Stephen H. Hales, in opposition. According to John Hyde, Jr., a Mormon apostate, Hales obtained the majority; “Stephen Hales was accordingly sent for by Brigham, who gave him a severe reprimand for daring to allow his name to be used as an opponent of ‘the church nomination.’” Hales was compelled to resign, and Rockwood seated instead. The most important fact of this incident, apparently unknown to Hales and his supporters, and to Hyde, was that Rockwood belonged to the Council of Fifty.

Brigham Young became the governor of the territory, and Heber C. Kimball boasted that all the members of the Legislature in Utah held the Priesthood:

It is the best legislative body there is upon the face of the earth, because they hold the Priesthood, and there is no person there only those who hold it—the leading men of Israel. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 6, page 129)

The Mormon people were taught to all vote one way, John Taylor stated:

In political matters we are pretty well united. At our elections we generally vote as a unit. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 11, page 355)

Brigham Young was very opposed to democratic elections. On April 8, 1871, he remarked:

This is the plant or tree from which schism springs; and every government lays the foundation of its own downfall when it permits what are called democratic elections. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 14, page 93)

In 1853 Dr. Bernhisel was chosen as a delegate to Congress in the Mormon Tabernacle. Brigham Young stated:
If we wish to make political speeches, and it is necessary, for the best interest of the cause and Kingdom of God, to make them on the Sabbath, we do it. . . .

Brother Kimball has seconded the motion, that Doctor Bernhisel be sent back to Washington, as our delegate. All who are in favor of it, raise your right hands. (More than two thousand hands were at once seen above the heads of the congregation.)

This has turned into a caucus meeting. It is all right, I would call for an opposite vote if I thought any person would vote. I will try it, however. (Not a single hand was raised in opposition.) (Journal of Discourses, vol. 1, page 188)

In The Mormon Kingdom we hope to be able to give a very detailed study of the Mormon struggle for power. Volume one will deal with the Mormon Church in New York, Missouri and Ohio. In other volumes we hope to deal with the Church in Illinois and in Utah. We feel that this will be a very important work and that all of our readers should have a copy.

We are asking our readers to pay for volume one in advance. The pages will be mailed as they are printed (we will try to mail about 20 pages at a time). Volume one will contain at least 100 pages. The pages will be 8 1/2 by 11 inches; therefore, they will contain a lot of information. We are including a top quality vinyl loose-leaf binder to preserve and protect the pages. The price for volume one of The Mormon Kingdom (including the loose-leaf binder) is $4.95. The quantity prices are: 2 for $8.95 — 4 for $14.95 — 10 for $29.70.

**A TESTING TIME?**

The following statement appeared in an article in Time Magazine:

Outwardly secure and successful, the unique religion created by Joseph Smith and carried to Utah by Brigham Young is none the less at a testing time. Much as in the churches of mainstream Christianity, Mormonism is being prodded out of its old ways by a new generation of believers who temper loyalty to the faith with a conviction that its doctrines need updating. Worried about the relevance of Mormonism, some of them are all but openly critical of the policies fostered by the church’s venerable, conservative hierarchy. . . . The doctrine most under fire within the church is the traditional teaching that Negroes, the cursed sons of Cain, are not eligible for the priesthood, . . . Williams [J. D. Williams] calls it “un-Christian and theologically unsound,” says that the teaching “looks so anachronistic that it engenders hostility in the world around us.”

Interior Secretary Stewart Udall, a Mormon who describes himself as “deeply troubled by the issue,” says that the church’s policy “is like granting citizenship and saying ‘you can’t hold office.’” (Time, April 14, 1967, page 104)

Paul Hughes, publisher’s consultant of Reveille Magazine, wrote an article in which he stated:

George Romney has precipitated a crisis in the Mormon Church that may well rank with the plague of the locusts, and this time there are no providential gulls in sight.

As a liberal Republican aspiring to the presidency, Romney can point to a commendable civil rights record during his governorship in Michigan. As one of the Latter-day Saints, Romney is compelled at the same time to point to a church which officially sanctifies race prejudice and which declares today, as it has for over a century, that people with black skins are inferior creatures because that’s just the way the Lord wants them.

This may eventually fragment Romney into warring halves. More important, it could trust the Mormons, who have always referred proudly to themselves as a “peculiar people,” completely outside the pale of American life. There is, however, a third threat which is not nearly as well known: Interior tensions, accelerating now for many years, may shatter the church beyond all redemption. . . . the Mormons themselves do not know exactly how they painted themselves into this suffocating corner. They quote vague traditions. They refer to conflicting scriptural justifications. They consult their highest officers, and the truth is that they don’t really know, either. (The Oregonian, Portland, Oregon, April 2, 1967)

In the last Messenger we showed that the Mormon Church has had a steady decline in the number of converts from 1962 to 1965. The figures for 1966 are now available (see charts in next column). They show that the decline has continued in spite of the fact that there were more full-time missionaries than ever before.

With the number of converts decreasing and the dissatisfaction within, the Church is truly facing a crisis.

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**R.L.D.S. CHURCH**

Unfortunately, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has refused to provide us with information which is vital to the research we are doing. We have letters dating back to 1961 from them and will be forced to print them unless they immediately notify us of a change of policy.

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**A PERSONAL GOD?**

To all those who will send us their address and zip code we will send a FREE COPY of Is There a Personal God? This is a 56-page pamphlet by Jerald Tanner. We would like to have all of our readers have a copy of this pamphlet. Please write for your free copy today.

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**Thankful**

A couple in Missouri has given us a great deal of financial help. It came at a time when we really needed it, and we are very thankful to them and to the Lord for laying our work upon their hearts.

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**Everyone Welcome!**

We are now holding a Bible study in our home at 1350 S. West Temple, every Thursday evening at 8:00 pm. Everyone is welcome. This is not connected with any particular group or church. Attendance is open to everyone.

*Who among you is wise or clever? Let his right conduct give practical proof of it, with the modesty that comes of wisdom.*

James 3:13 — The New English Bible
The Mormon Apostle LeGrand Richards made this statement:

> On the morning of a beautiful spring day in 1820 there occurred one of the most important and momentous events in this world's history. God, the Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to Joseph Smith and gave instructions concerning the establishment of the kingdom of God upon the earth in these latter days. (A Marvelous Work and a Wonder, 1966, page 7)

Joseph Smith published this story in the Mormon publication, *Times and Seasons*, in 1842. The following is the description of the vision as written by Joseph Smith:

> ... there was in the place where we lived an unusual excitement on the subject of religion. It commenced with the Methodists, but soon became general among all the sects in that region of country, indeed the whole district of country seemed affected by it, and great multitudes united themselves to the different religious parties, ... I retired to the woods ... It was on the morning of a beautiful clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty ... I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, ... When the light rested upon me I saw two personages (whose brightness and glory defy all description) standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name, and said, (pointing to the other) “This is my beloved Son, hear him.” ... I asked the personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right, ... I was answered that I must join none of them, for they are all wrong, and the personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt, ... He again forbade me to join with any of them: and many other things did he say unto me which I cannot write at this time. (Times and Seasons, vol. 3, pages 727-728, 748-749)

To the Mormon people the First Vision is extremely important. They use this story to prove that God and Christ are two distinct personages and that they both have a body. In other words, they use it to prove that God, Himself, is only an exalted man. George Q. Cannon, who was a member of the First Presidency, made this statement in 1883:

> This revelation dissipated all misconceptions and all false ideas, ... The Father came accompanied by the Son thus showing that there were two personages of the Godhead, ... Joseph saw that the Father had a form; that He had a head; that He had arms; that He had limbs; and He had feet; that He had a face and a tongue. ... (Journal of Discourses, vol. 24, page 372)

**STRANGE ACCOUNTS**

The Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe made this comment concerning Joseph Smith’s First Vision:

> The First Vision of 1820 is of first importance in the history of Joseph Smith. Upon its reality rest the truth and value of his subsequent work. Professed enemies of Joseph Smith and his work, have felt themselves helpless in their efforts to destroy the reality of the First Vision and have said little about it. (Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth, page 19)

For years the Mormon leaders have publicly maintained the Joseph Smith told only one story concerning the First Vision. Preston Nibley made this statement: “Joseph Smith lived a little more than twenty-four years after this first vision. During this time he told but one story—....” (Joseph Smith the Prophet, 1944, page 30).

At the very time that Preston Nibley made this statement the Mormon leaders were suppressing at least two accounts of the First Vision, which were written prior to the account which Joseph Smith published in the *Times and Seasons*.

Levi Edgar Young, who was the head of the Seven Presidents of Seventies in the Mormon Church, told LaMar Petersen that he had examined a “strange” account of the First Vision and was told not to reveal what it contained. After hearing LaMar Petersen’s account of his interview with Levi Edgar Young, we wrote to Joseph Fielding Smith, the Mormon Church Historian, enclosing $1.00 and asking for a photocopy of this “strange” account. Unfortunately, this letter was never answered, and we had almost given up hope of ever seeing this document. To our great surprise, however, two “strange” accounts have now come to light. The first appeared in the thesis, “An Analysis of the Accounts Relating Joseph Smith’s Early Visions,” by Paul R. Cheesman. Mr. Cheesman was a student at the Brigham Young University—a Mormon university. He evidently wrote his thesis in rebuttal to statements we had made concerning the First Vision in our writings. Although he tries to support the First Vision story, he has reproduced a document dictated by Joseph Smith himself which not only proves that he did not see the Father and the Son in 1820, but also casts a shadow of doubt upon his entire story of the origin of the church. This document was reproduced in Appendix D of Mr. Cheesman’s thesis.

James B. Allen, Associate Professor of History at Brigham Young University, made this statement concerning the document:

> One of the most significant documents of the period yet discovered was brought to light in 1965 by Paul R. Cheesman, a graduate student at Brigham Young University. This is a handwritten manuscript apparently composed about 1833 and either written or dictated by Joseph Smith. It contains an account (Continued on page 2)
of the early experiences of the Mormon prophet and includes the story of the first vision. While the story varies in some details from the version presently accepted, enough is there to indicate that at least as early as 1833 Joseph Smith contemplated writing and perhaps publishing it. The manuscript has apparently lain in the L.D.S. Church Historian's office for many years, and yet few if any who saw it realized its profound historical significance. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Autumn, 1966, page 35)

The “strange” account of the vision reads as follows:

. . . a pillar of light above the brightness of the sun at noon day come down from above and rested upon me and I was filled with the Spirit of god and the Lord opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord and he spake unto me saying Joseph my son Thy Sins are forgiven thee, go thy way walk in my statutes and keep my commandments behold I am the Lord of glory I was crucified for the world, that all those who believe on my name may have Eternal life behold he won't lie in sin at this time and none doeth good no not one they have turned aside from the gospel and keep not my commandments they draw near to me with their lips while their hearts are far from me and mine anger is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to bring to pass that which hath been spoken by the mouth of the prophets and apostles behold and lo I come quickly as it was written of me in the cloudy clothed in the glory of my Father . . . (“An Analysis of the Accounts Relating Joseph Smith’s Early Visions,” Master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, by Paul R. Cheesman, May, 1965, page 129)

Notice that in this account Joseph Smith said, “I saw the Lord,” whereas in the printed account he said, “I saw two personages.” This is definitely a contradiction. In the first account Joseph Smith told that the Lord said he was “crucified for the world.” This would mean that the personage was Jesus Christ. Therefore, we see that Joseph Smith did not include God the Father in his first account of the vision. James B. Allen stated:

In this story, only one personage was mentioned, and this was obviously the Son, for he spoke of having been crucified. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Autumn 1966, page 40)

Paul R. Cheesman tries to excuse this by saying:

As he writes briefly of the vision, he does not mention the Father as being present; however, this does not indicate that he was not present. (“An Analysis of the Accounts Relating Joseph Smith’s Early Visions,” page 63)

This explanation by Paul Cheesman does not seem reasonable. Actually, in the first account Joseph Smith quotes the Lord as saying more words than in the printed account. Why would he not mention the most important part of the story?

If God the Father had appeared in this vision, Joseph Smith certainly would have included this information in his first account. It is absolutely impossible for us to believe that Joseph Smith would not have mentioned the Father if He had actually appeared.

The only reasonable explanation for the Father not being mentioned is that Joseph Smith did not see God the Father, and that he made up this part of the story after he dictated the first manuscript. This, of course, throws a shadow of doubt upon the whole story.

Although Mr. Cheesman evidently wrote his thesis in defense of Joseph Smith’s story of the First Vision, by including the “strange” account he has probably done more to destroy the story than he could ever imagine. It not only shows that Joseph Smith was a deceiver, but it also shows that the Mormon leaders have been suppressing vital information from their people.

After this “strange” account came to light, a Mormon Seminary teacher told us that there was still another account of the First Vision which the Mormon leaders were suppressing. To our great surprise, this second account was published in the Autumn, 1966, issue of Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought. Although this magazine is published by Mormons, it has “no official connection” with the Mormon Church, and therefore the Mormon leaders cannot dictate what can or cannot appear in this publication. This account appeared in an article by James B. Allen, Associate Professor of History at the BYU, and bishop of the BYU Sixteenth Ward. Mr. Allen made this statement concerning the document:

Another document of almost equal importance has recently been brought to light by a member of the staff at the Church Historian’s office. It is located in the back of Book A-1 of the handwritten manuscript of the History of the Church (commonly referred to as the “Manuscript History”). . . . In short, it is almost certain that the document in the back of the book comprises the original notes from which the “Manuscript History” was later compiled, and is actually a daily account of Joseph Smith’s activities in 1835, as recorded by a scribe. The importance of the manuscript here lies in the fact that the scribe wrote down what Joseph Smith said to his visitor, and he began . . . with an account of the first vision. Again, the details of the story vary somewhat from the accepted version . . . . (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Autumn, 1966, pages 35-36)

On page 40 of the same article, James B. Allen quotes from the document:

We being wrought up in my mind respecting the subject of Religion, and looking at the different systems taught the children of men, I knew not who was right or who was wrong but considered it of the first importance to me that I should be right in matters of so much moment, matter involving eternal consequences.

Being thus perplexed in mind I retired to the silent grove and there bowed before the Lord, under a realising sense (if the Bible be true) ask and you shall receive, knock and it shall be opened, seek and you shall find, and again if any man lack wisdom, let of God [sic] who giveth to all men liberally & upbraideth not. Information was what I most desired, at this time and with a fixed determination to obtain it. I called on the Lord for the first time in the place above stated, or in other words, I made a fruitless attempt to pray. My tongue seemed to be swollen in my mouth, so that I could not utter, I heard a noise behind me like some one walking towards me, I strove again to pray, but could not; the noise of walking seemed to draw nearer; I sprang upon my feet and looked around, but I saw no person, or thing that was calculated to produce the noise of walking. I knelted again, my mouth was opened and my tongue loosened; I called on the Lord in mighty prayer. A pillar of fire appeared above my head; which presently rested down upon me, and filled me with unspeakable joy. A personage appeared in the midst of this pillar of flame, which was spread all around and yet nothing consumed. Another personage soon appeared like unto the first; he said unto me thy sins are forgiven thee.

He testified also unto me that Jesus Christ is the son of God. I saw many angels in this vision. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Autumn, 1966, pages 40-41)

Earl E. Olson, who is now the Assistant Church Historian, has confirmed the fact that James B. Allen has accurately reproduced this document. In a letter dated October 26, 1966, he stated:

The quote which you referred to in your letter of October 21 pertaining to Joseph Smith’s first vision which is recorded in Book A-1 of the Documentary History appears in the issue of Dialogue on page 40. We have compared the account in Dialogue with the original recording as we have it here and find that it is identical word for word and has been accurately copied. (Letter from Earl Olson, to W. P. Walters, dated October 26, 1966)

In this account of the First Vision there is absolutely nothing to show that the personages were God and Christ. The statement, “He testified also unto me that Jesus Christ is the son of God,” would seem to show that the personages were not the Father and the Son. If Joseph Smith had intended to show that the personage who spoke was Jesus, he probably would have said something like this: “He testified also unto me that He was the Son of God.” On the other hand, if he would probably have said something like this: “He testified also unto me that Jesus Christ was His Son.”

Joseph Smith’s statement that the second personage did not appear until after the first contradicts the version that he later published. In the published version he stated that “when the light rested upon me I saw two personages, . . .”

As if this was not bad enough, he states there were “many angels in this vision.” Neither of the other versions indicated that there were “many angels.”

Now we have three different accounts of the First Vision, and every one of them is different. The first account says there was only one personage. The second account says there were many, and the third says there were two. We would, of course, expect some variations in any story told more than once, but we feel that there are so many variations in Joseph Smith’s story and they are of such a nature that they make it impossible to believe.
NO REVIVAL IN 1820

In Joseph Smith’s published account of the First Vision he tells that a revival was taking place in his neighborhood at the time he had his vision. This would mean that the revival was going strong in the spring of 1820. Joseph Smith states that “great multitudes united themselves to the different religious parties” at the time of this revival. The Mormon writer Preston Nibley stated that there are “several accounts of the religious revival which took place at Palmyra in the spring of 1820” (Joseph Smith the Prophet, 1944, page 21). We have checked the references which Preston Nibley gives and have found them to be spurious (see The Case Against Mormonism, page 111-112). Mr. Nibley gives two references from a publication which are supposed to refer to the 1820 revival. We have found, however, that these references do not refer to a revival in 1820, but rather to one in the years 1824-25. These references have been found in the Wayne Sentinel under the date of March 2, 1825.

In briefly looking over the Palmyra Register (the local newspaper) we have found no evidence of a revival in Palmyra in 1820. Wesley P. Walters, of Marissa, Illinois, whom we consider to be one of the best authorities on Mormon history, had made a very thorough study of the revivals in Palmyra and vicinity and has come to the conclusion that there was absolutely no revival in 1820. In a letter to us dated July 6, 1966, Wesley P. Walters states:

In the light of the historical records of the day, it is clear to see that there was no revival in either Palmyra or in its immediate neighborhood in the year 1820, in either the Methodist, Baptist or Presbyterian churches. To maintain such an idea is to fly in the face of every piece of contemporary historical information. In fact, Smith could hardly have chosen a poorer year in which to locate his revival story. All the churches in all the denominations seem to have been in a slump and barely struggling to maintain their existence.

Wesley Walters has written an article entitled, “New Light on Mormon Origins From the Palmyra (N.Y.) Revival.” This article will be published in the near future. Mr. Walters has kindly given us permission to quote from his manuscript. In this manuscript he states:

… the point at which one might most conclusively test the accuracy of Smith’s story has never been adequately explored. A vision, by its inward, personal nature, does not lend itself to historical investigation. A revival is a different matter, especially one such as Joseph Smith describes, in which “great multitudes” were said to have joined the various churches involved. Such a revival does not pass from the scene without leaving some traces in the records and publications of the period. In this study we wish to show by contemporary records that the revival, which Smith claimed occurred in 1820, did not really occur until the fall of 1824. We also show that in 1820 there was no revival in any of the churches in Palmyra or its vicinity. In short, our investigation shows that the statement of Joseph Smith, Jr. can not be true when he claims that he was stirred up by an 1820 revival to make his inquiry in the grove near his home. (“New Light On Mormon Origins…” typed copy, pages 1-2)

The Mormon historian B. H. Roberts claimed that both Rev. Stockton and Rev. Lane were present at the revival, which he claims occurred in the spring of 1820:

… the Reverend Mr. Stockton of the Presbyterian church was the leading spirit… The Reverend Mr. Lane of the Methodist church preached a sermon on the subject, “What church shall I join?” He quoted the golden text of James—“… The text made a deep impression on the mind of the Prophet. (A Comprehensive History of the Church, 1930, vol. 1, pages 51-53)

Wesley Walters, however, shows this could not have occurred in 1820:

The records, however of both the Presbyterian and Methodist churches, to which Mr. Stockton and Mr. Lane respectively belonged, make it clear that neither of these men were assigned to the Palmyra area until 1824. Rev. Benjamin B. Stockton from March 4, 1818 until June 30, 1822 was serving as pastor of the church at Skaneateles, N.Y. While he did visit Palmyra for a speech to the youth missionary society in October 1822, the Palmyra newspaper still describes him as “Rev. Stockton of Skaneateles.” The earliest contemporary reference to his ministering in the Palmyra area is in connection with a wedding November 26, 1823, just a week after Alvin Smith’s death. Following this date there are several references to his performing some service there, but he was not installed as pastor of the Presbyterian Church until February 18, 1824. It is in this latter year, 1824, that Rev. James Hotchkin, in cataloging the revivals that occurred in the churches of Geneva Presbytery, writes, under the heading of the Palmyra church, that “a copious shower of grace passed over this region in 1824, under the labors of Mr. Stockton, and a large number were gathered into the church, some of whom are now pillars in Christ’s house.”

In the summer of 1819 Rev. Mr. Lane, whom Mormon writers have correctly identified as Rev. George Lane, was assigned to serve the Susquehanna District in central Pennsylvania, over 150 miles from Palmyra. He served this area for 5 years and not until July of 1824 did he receive an appointment to serve as Presiding Elder of the Ontario District in which Palmyra is located. This post he held only until January of 1825 when ill health in his family forced him to leave the ministry for a while. Any revival, therefore, in which both Lane and Stockton shared, as the accounts of Oliver Cowdery and William Smith both indicate, has to fall in the latter half of the year 1824, and not in the year 1820.

An even more surprising confirmation that this revival occurred in 1824 and not in 1820 has just recently come to light. While searching through some dusty volumes of early Methodist literature at a near-by Methodist college, imagine our surprise and elation when we stumbled upon Rev. George Lane’s own personal account of the Palmyra revival. It was written, not at some years distance from the event as the Mormon accounts all were, while the revival was still in progress and was printed a few months later. Lane’s account gives us not only the year 1824, but even the month and date. By the aid of this account, supplemented by numerous additional references which we shortly thereafter uncovered, we are able to give nearly a month-by-month progress report on the spread of the revival through the community and surrounding area, and it was indeed an outstanding revival. (“New Light On Mormon Origins From The Palmyra (N.Y) Revival,” typed copy, pages 4-5)

The Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe maintained the Palmyra was “swept in the winter and spring of 1820 by a religious revival” (Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth, page 1). He claimed that Reverend Lane took part in this revival. On page 22 of this book he stated that Oliver Cowdery “in his letters confirms the story of Reverend Lane and the date of his work in Palmyra.”

Actually, Oliver Cowdery did not confirm the date as 1820. Instead he insisted that the correct date should be “1823” (see his letter in the Messenger and Advocate, vol. 1, page 78). In footnote 10 on page 22 of his book, Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth, John A. Widtsoe stated:

Reverend Lane himself confirms the dates of the revival. It was in 1820, not 1823.

Notice that John A. Widtsoe gives no source for this statement. When Wesley P. Walters wrote the LDS Church Historian’s office asking for documentation of the Apostle Widtsoe’s statement, he received a letter from Lauritz G. Petersen, Assistant Librarian. In this letter Lauritz Petersen stated:

The letter that you sent to Mr. Earl Olson was handed to me to answer. I checked all the footnotes or found the footnote[s] for Mr. Widtsoe’s book on Joseph Smith.

The reference made by Mr. Widtsoe on page 22 in n. 10 could not be verified. I asked Mr. Widtsoe not to insert it in the book, but he did anyway. (Letter from Lauritz G. Petersen, Assistant Church Librarian, to Wesley P. Walters, dated December 7, 1824)

From this it would appear that the Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe used deception in order to try to prove that the revival occurred in 1820. Wesley P. Walters shows beyond any question that the revival did not start until 1824:

By September 1825 the results of the revival of Palmyra had become a matter of record. The Presbyterian church reported 99 admitted on examination and the Baptist had received 94 by baptism, while the Methodist circuit showed an increase of 208. Cowdery’s claim of “large additions” and Joseph Smith’s statement that “great multitudes united themselves to the different religious parties” was certainly no over-statement.
When we turn to the year 1920, however, the “great multitudes” are conspicuously missing. The Presbyterian Church in Palmyra certainly experienced no awakening that year. Rev. James Hotchklin’s history records revivals for the church as occurring in the years 1817, 1824, 1829, etc, but nothing for the year 1820. The records of Presbytery and Synod give the same picture. Early in February 1820 Presbytery reported revivals at Geneva (summer 1819), and Junius 1st and Cayuga (“lately”) all a considerable distance from Palmyra, with “prospects of a revival” at Canandaigua and Phelps, 15 and 25 miles distant. While the “effects” of these revivals were reported in September 1820 as continuing, the remainder of that year and the next showed “no distinct mention of a revival,” “no special revival in any of our congregations,” “no general revivals of religion during the year.” Since these reports always rejoice at any sign of a revival in the churches, it is inconceivable that a great awakening had occurred in their Palmyra congregation and gone completely unnoticed.

The Baptist Church records also show clearly that they had no revival in 1820, for the Palmyra congregation gained only 5 by baptism, while the neighboring Baptist churches of Lyons, Canandaigua and Farmington showed net losses of 4, 5 and 9 respectively. An examination of the figures for the years preceding and following 1820 yields the same picture of no revival so far as the Baptist Church of the area is concerned.

The Methodist figures, though referring to the entire circuit, give the same results, for they show net losses of 23 for 1819, 6 for 1820, and 40 for 1821. This hardly fits Joseph Smith’s description of “great multitudes” being added to the churches of the area. In fact the Mormon Prophet could hardly have picked a poorer year in which to place his revival, so far as the Methodists were concerned.

Another significant omission lies in the area of the religious press. The denominational magazines of that day were full of reports of revivals, some even devoting a separate section to it. These publications carried over a dozen glowing reports of the revival that broke out at Palmyra in the winter of 1816-1817. Likewise, the 1824-1825 revivals is covered in an equal number of reports. These same magazines, however, while busily engaged in reporting revivals during the 1819 to 1821 period, contain not a single mention of any revival occurring in the Palmyra area during that time. It is unbelievable that every one of the denominations affected by a revival such as Joseph Smith described as happening in 1820 could have completely overlooked the event.

The only reasonable explanation for this massive silence is that no revival occurred at Palmyra in 1820.

. . . We believe that the firmness of the revival date as the fall of 1824, the features of Smith’s story as fitting only that date, and the absence of any revival in the year 1820 are established beyond any reasonable doubt, and will force upon Mormon writers a drastic re-evaluation of the foundation of their church. (“New Light on Mormon Origins From the Palmyra (N.Y.) Revival,” typed copy, pages 8-10 and 15)

In a summary to his study, Wesley P. Walters stated:

Shall we suppose that Prophet Smith really had a vision as he claimed but that his mind had merely become fuzzy on the date of the happening? Since the revival is a matter of historical record and that date can’t be changed, will it help any to move Smith’s vision to the spring of 1825 instead of the spring of 1820? We believe not. Smith claimed that he was told about the Book of Mormon plates September 21, 1823. This was his second vision. If we move his first vision to the spring of 1825, however, then he would already know about the plates before he ever asked for heavenly guidance. The only way, then, to make his story hang together would be to reshuffle all of his dates. This, however, would completely change the character of his story. Instead of being the naive boy of 14, he would in 1825 be a young man of 19 who in less than a year had found himself a married man. Such a change would only emphasize more clearly that he must have fabricated his story out of whole cloth.

Joseph made his great mistake when he tried to alter the course of history by moving a whole revival back some 4 years. This defect places his entire movement upon a crumbling foundation. For our part we agree that “life is too short to follow something false, when we can follow what is true” (Richard Evans). We urge all to find in Christ alone “the way, the truth and the life.”

In The Case Against Mormonism we devote 43 pages to Joseph Smith’s First Vision. All of our readers should have a copy of this book. See the front page for further information.

A PERSONAL GOD?

To all those who will send us their address and zip code we will send a FREE COPY of Is There a Personal God? This is a 56-page pamphlet by Jerald Tanner.

FRAUDULENT ACTS

The Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe made this statement concerning Joseph Smith:

No reliable evidence of dishonesty has yet been uncovered. There is no evidence that he at any time attempted to escape his financial obligations. Instead, the evidence is that he sought to meet every honest obligation.

For example, after leaving Kirtland where his life was in jeopardy, he made a list of his creditors and the amount owed each. That was the method of an honest man. There was no subterfuge. . . . Sooner or later, his honest debts were paid. (Gospel Interpretations, page 141)

Now, while it is true that Joseph Smith made a list of his creditors, he apparently did not intend to pay them, for in 1842 he tried to take out bankruptcy. The Mormon writer John A. Stewart states:

In summer of 1842 he had reluctantly availed himself of the bankruptcy law passed by Congress, to dispose of a staggering debt load, . . . (Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet, page 183)

Shortly after Joseph Smith petitioned to be declared a bankrupt, John C. Bennett published his book, History of the Saints. In this book he charged that Joseph Smith fraudulently transferred some of his property to others to avoid losing it. J. Butterfield, United States Attorney for the District of Illinois, saw John C. Bennett’s charges printed in the Sangamo Journal on July 15, 1842. He felt that an investigation should be made to see if Bennett’s accusations were true. Joseph Smith and four others had signed a promissory note to the United States Government for $4,866.38 in 1840 which they had not paid off. Therefore, Butterfield proceeded to Nauvoo to make his investigation. After making the investigation, he wrote a letter to C. B. Penrose, Solicitor of the Treasury, in which he stated:

Upon my arrival at Nauvoo I made a very full examination into the transfers of property made by Joseph Smith upon the eve of his application for the benefit of the said act, and I succeeded beyond my expectations; I found that after the passage of the Bankrupt Act, and after he had contracted the debt upon which the judg’t. in favor of the United States was rendered against him, he made voluntary conveyances of real estate of an amount much more than sufficient to satisfy the judgement to his wife and to his infant children and friends, without any consideration whatever: I found that all the statement made by Gen’l Bennett in relation to Joseph Smith’s fraudulent transfers of his property were true; and that there were several other fraudulent conveyances not mentioned by him. . . . I shall be ready to establish such fraudulent acts on the part of Joseph Smith as will prevent his discharge. (Letter by J. Butterfield, U.S. Attorney for the District of Illinois to C. B. Penrose, Solicitor of the Treasury, dated October 13, 1842, found in the National Archives of the United States, Records of the Solicitor of the Treasury, Record Group 206, microfilm copy)

The attempt to stop Joseph Smith was successful, for on August 6, 1844, Butterfield wrote Penrose a letter in which he stated: “I defeated Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet from obtaining the benefit of the Bankrupt Act.” Since Smith died in 1844, the matter was not settled until after his death. In a “Reference Service Report” from the National Archives, dated September 23, 1963, we find that a judgment “was rendered against the widow of Joseph Smith and 104 other defendants . . . in which the decree of the court was satisfied by sale of the defendant’s lands.”

For many years anti-Mormon writers have accused the early Mormon leaders of fraud, treason, stealing, counterfeiting, murder and many other crimes. We have made a very thorough study of these charges, and, like Butterfield, we have succeeded beyond our expectations. In our work, The Mormon Kingdom we will deal with all of these subjects. See the front page for further information concerning this work.

Everyone Welcome!

We are now holding a Bible study in our home at 1350 S. West Temple, every Thursday evening at 8:00 pm. Everyone is welcome. This is not connected with any particular group or church. Attendance is open to everyone.
Paul Hughes, publisher’s consultant of Reveille Magazine, wrote an article in which he stated:

George Romney has precipitated a crisis in the Mormon Church that may well rank with the plague of the locusts, and this time there are no providential gulls in sight.

... interior tensions, accelerating now for many years, may shatter the church beyond all redemption. (The Oregonian, Portland, Oregon, April 2, 1967)

Two of the most serious problems facing the Mormon Church today are the Negro question and the question of the authenticity of the Book of Abraham. These two issues could very well “shatter the church beyond all redemption.”

In the year 1835 the Mormon people purchased some Egyptian mummies and rolls of papyrus. Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet, made this statement concerning the papyri:

...I commenced the translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt, etc.,—a more full account of which will appear in its place, as I proceed to examine or unfold them. Truly we can say, the Lord is beginning to reveal the abundance of peace and truth. (History of the Church, vol. 2, page 236)

The Book of Abraham was published in 1842 and is now found as a part of the Pearl of Great Price (one of the four standard works of the Mormon Church).

For a long period of time the Mormon leaders claimed that the original papyri were burned in the Chicago fire. On November 27, 1967, however, the Deseret News announced:

NEW YORK — A collection of papyrus manuscripts, long believed to have been destroyed in the Chicago fire of 1871, was presented to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints here Monday by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Included in the papyri is a manuscript identified as the original document from which Joseph Smith had copied the drawing which he called “Facsimile No. 1” and published with the Book of Abraham. (Deseret News, November 27, 1967, page 1)

Even though the papyri were lost for a number of years, Joseph Smith included three drawing in his Book of Abraham and also gave a translation of much of the material which appeared in these drawings.

In the year 1912 F. S. Spalding sent the facsimiles from the Pearl of Great Price to a number of the most noted Egyptologists. These Egyptologists examined the facsimiles and Joseph Smith’s interpretation of them and declared that his interpretation was fraudulent. Letters from these Egyptologists are published in the book, Joseph Smith, Jr., as a Translator, 1912, by F. S. Smith was not able to translate Egyptian and that the Book of Abraham was a work of his own imagination. What the Mormon leaders claimed were the writings of Abraham and Joseph in Egypt turn out to be nothing but parts of the Egyptian Book of the Dead. Very revealing. Price: 50¢ — 3 for $1.00 — 10 for $3.00 — 20 for $5.00.

NOW BACK IN PRINT!

For a number of months we have been sold out of the book, Why Egyptologists Reject the Book of Abraham. We are now happy to announce, however, that it is back in print. Although it has not been our policy to reprint books that have sold out we have received so many requests for this particular book that we felt that it had to be reprinted. Because of the recent papyri find and the articles by Hugh Nibley in the Improvement Era, this book has become even more significant. It contains photomechanical reprints of Joseph Smith, Jr., as a Translator, by F. S. Spalding, D.D. and Joseph Smith as an Interpreter and Translator of Egyptian, by Samuel A. B. Mercer, Ph.D.

Price: $1.50 — 3 for $4.00 — 5 for $6.00 — 10 for $9.00.

SPECIAL ON “CASE” & “KINGDOM”

Our two major works are entitled, The Case Against Mormonism and The Mormon Kingdom. A reader from Canada made this statement in a letter to us:

Allow me first to congratulate you for both The Mormon Kingdom and The Case Against Mormonism. I must confess that I had my doubts that you would be able to surpass your efforts in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? but I can assure you that these doubts have been dissipated. Your discussion of “The First Vision” alone in The Case Against Mormonism justifies the investment.

Now that we have completed volume 1 of The Case Against Mormonism, we are selling it in plastic binding for $2.95 — 2 for $4.95 — 5 for $9.95 — 10 for $17.70.

We have also completed 112 pages of volume 2 of The Case Against Mormonism. This volume deals primarily with the Book of Mormon. In order to receive the pages as they are printed the reader must have the vinyl loose-leaf binder. To receive these two volumes and the loose-leaf binder the customer would normally pay $7.90. We are having a special, however, and if these two volumes are ordered before March 31, 1968, the reader will receive both volumes and the binder for only $6.95.

We have completed 82 pages of the first volume of the Mormon Kingdom. The normal price for volume 1 (including the vinyl binder) is $4.95, but if it is ordered before March 31, 1968, the price will be only $3.95.

* * NEW BOOKS * *

The Mormon Papyri Question, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. A 28-page pamphlet dealing with the recent discovery of the Mormon papyri. Proves that Joseph Smith was not able to translate Egyptian and that the Book of Abraham was a work of his own imagination. What the Mormon leaders claimed were the writings of Abraham and Joseph in Egypt turn out to be nothing but parts of the Egyptian Book of the Dead. Very revealing. Price: 50¢ — 3 for $1.00 — 10 for $3.00 — 20 for $5.00.

The Negro in Mormon Theology, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. A 58-page pamphlet. Most important material which appeared in Joseph Smith’s Curse Upon the Negro is included in this pamphlet. Also contains new material. Alvin R. Dyer’s speech, which was “not” meant for the investigator, is printed in full. Price: 50¢ — 3 for $1.00 — 10 for $3.00 — 20 for $5.00.

Spalding, D.D. On page 27 of this pamphlet we find the following statement by Dr. Arthur C. Mace, Asst. Curator, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Dept. of Egyptian Art:

I return herewith, . . . the Pearl of Great Price. The “Book of Abraham,” it is hardly necessary to say, is a pure fabrication . . . Joseph Smith’s interpretation of these cuts is a farrago of nonsense from beginning to end. Egyptian characters can now be read almost as easily as Greek, and five minutes’ study in an Egyptian gallery of any museum should be enough to convince any educated man of the clumsiness of the imposture. (Joseph Smith, Jr., as a Translator, page 27)

In 1964 we reprinted F. S. Spalding’s pamphlet in a work titled Why Egyptologists Reject the Book of Abraham. Wallace Turner, a correspondent for the New York Times, examined this work and came to the following conclusion:

. . . I am convinced by very simple direct evidence that the Book of Abraham is a spurious translation. (The Mormon Establishment, by Wallace Turner, 1966, page 233)

In 1966 we published Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar—a document which the Mormon leaders had suppressed for 130 years. This work was submitted to some of the world’s top Egyptologists. These Egyptologists examined Joseph Smith’s work and denounced it as fraudulent.

The Mormon leaders have tried to ignore the criticism of the Book of Abraham and Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and to pretend that they have no problems. We predicted that the time would come when they would have to face their problems. Perhaps that time has now come.

The January 1968 issue of the Improvement Era, a Mormon publication, announced:

Recent challenges that question the authenticity of many statements in one of the standard works of the Church, the Pearl of Great Price, have reopened an old discussion . . . Brother Hugh Nibley, . . . presents in this fascinating series some of the material that must be considered in the reappraisal of certain Egyptological aspects of the Pearl of Great Price for which the time is now ripe. (Improvement Era, January 1968, pages 18-19)

In the first article Dr. Nibley makes this statement concerning our photo-reprint of the Spalding book:

The recent reissuing of Bishop Franklin S. Spalding’s little book, Joseph Smith, Jr., as a Translator, though not meant to revive an old discussion but rather to extinguish any lingering sparks of it, is nonetheless a welcome invitation, or rather challenge, to those who take the Pearl of Great Price seriously, for long experience has shown that the Latter-day Saints only become aware of the nature and genius of their modern scripture when relentless and obstreperous criticism from the outside forces them to take a closer look at what they have, with the usual result of putting those scriptures in a much stronger position than they were before. We have all neglected the Pearl of Great Price for too long, and should be grateful to those who would now call us to account.

In this introductory study we make no excuse for poking around among old bones, since other have dug them up to daunt us; but we should warn them that if they insist on bringing up the ghosts of the dead, they may soon find themselves with more on their hands than they had bargained for . . . it is others who have conjured up the ghostly jury to testify against the Prophet; and unless they are given satisfaction, their sponsors can spread abroad, as they did in Bishop Spalding’s day, the false report that the Scholars have spoken the final word and “completely demolished” (that was their expression) for all time the Pearl of Great Price and its author’s claim to revelation. (Improvement Era, January, 1968, pages 18-19)

We have been asked if we are going to prepare an answer to Dr. Nibley’s articles. That answer is that we intend to deal at length with his accusations in a later volume of The Case Against Mormonism. In the meantime, we have prepared a pamphlet by Dr. Nibley and other members of the church. This pamphlet is entitled The Mormon Papyri Question. In it we show that Egyptologists have not changed their minds and that the discovery of the original papyri proves beyond all doubt that Joseph Smith did not understand ancient Egyptian.

THE MISSING HEAD

Egyptologists have always claimed that Joseph Smith was in error when he interpreted Facsimile No. 1 as an idolatrous priest trying to sacrifice Abraham on the altar. They feel that this is a picture from the Egyptian of the Dead, and that it is in reality the god Anubis preparing a mummified body. In a letter dated March 16, 1966, John A. Wilson, Professor of Egyptology at the University of Chicago, stated:

In illustration No. 1 the god Anubis is preparing a mummified body on a bed. The head of the god has been miscopied as human and should be that of a jackal. Beside the head of the mummy there is a flying bird which represents the Egyptian's soul. Under the bed there are four jars into which the soft inner parts of the body were placed by the ancient Egyptians.

Richard A. Parker, of the Dept. of Egyptology at Brown University, made a similar statement in a letter dated March 22, 1966:

(c) Number 1 is an altered copy of a well known scene of the dear god Osiris on his bier with a jackal-god Anubis acting as his embalmer. The four jars beneath the couch are four canopic jars with the heads of a human, baboon, jackal and falcon. The bird over Osiris is a ba or soul-bird. There are many variations of this scene in Egyptian monuments.

After the papyri were turned over to the Mormon Church by the Metropolitan Museum, Marvin Cowan sent pictures from the Deseret News to these same Egyptologists and asked if the photographs of the original papyri would cause them to change their opinion. In a letter dated January 5, 1968, John A. Wilson, Prof. of Egyptology at the University of Chicago, stated:

. . . as far as I am concerned I see pieces of two or possible three different papyri and every one of them looks like a traditional Book of the Dead.

Mr. Cowan asked Dr. Parker these questions concerning the papyrus Joseph Smith reproduced as Facsimile No. 1 in the Book of Abraham:

1. On page seven of the enclosed article is a picture of the papyrus from which Joseph Smith drew facsimile #1. (a) Would you still say this is the god Anubis preparing a mummified body? (b) Do you see anything in the picture that would change what you previously told me?

In a letter dated January 9, 1968, Dr. Parker replied:

1. (a) Yes.
   (b) No

John A. Wilson also continued to maintain that the picture showed “Anubis and the corpse” (Letter dated January 5, 1968).

Thus we see that the Egyptologists have not changed their opinions regarding this matter.

A century ago the French Egyptologist Theodule Deveria claimed that the Mormons had altered the scene shown as Facsimile No. 1 in the Book of Abraham. In 1912 Dr. Albert M. Lythgoe, head of the Department of Egyptian Art of the Metropolitan Museum, made a similar charge:

Dr. Lythgoe took up some of the slight discrepancies in the Mormon pictures from the Egyptian originals. He expressed the wish that he might see the original papyri that the Prophet Smith translated or a photograph of it, instead of drawings made from it. In the first of the Mormon figures the god Anubis, bending over the mummy, was shown with a human and a strangely un-Egyptian head, instead of the jackal’s head usual to such a scene. And a knife had been drawn into the god’s hand. (New York Times, Magazine Sect., December 29, 1912)

Samuel A. B. Mercer stated:

It has, indeed, been questioned whether the head on figure 3 is genuine. A question has also been raised as to the genuineness of the knife in the hand. These questions are quite legitimate in the light of our knowledge of Egyptian art. (The Utah Survey, vol. 1, no. 1, September, 1913, pages 18-19)

In 1966 the Egyptologist John A. Wilson and Richard A. Parker still maintained that the scene found in Facsimile No. 1 had been altered.

R. C. Webb (whose real name was J. C. Homans) wrote in defense of the Mormon position. At the time he wrote his book, the original papyrus from which Facsimile No. 1 was drawn was not available. Therefore, he was able to criticize the Egyptologists for claiming that alterations had been made. Now
that the papyrus has been located, the entire picture has changed. The Mormon position has been considerably weakened because the portions of the papyrus which have been in question—i.e., the parts that would have contained the head of Anubis and the knife—are missing! (See photograph on front page, taken from the Deseret News, November 27, 1967)

Dr. Aziz S. Atiya, the man credited with finding the Mormon papyri at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, stated that “the head had fallen off, and I could see that the papyrus was stuck on paper, nineteenth century paper. The head was completed in pencil, apparently by Joseph Smith, . . .” (Improvement Era, January 1968, page 13).

As we have shown, the Egyptologist John A. Wilson made this statement to Marvin Cowan in 1966: “The head of the god has been miscopied as human and should be that of a jackal” (Letter dated March 16, 1966). When Mr. Cowan sent the photograph of the original papyrus to Mr. Wilson, he replied:

Finally, you want to know about the embalming scene and I am comforted to see that the standing figure has no head. I am sure that it never had a human head, as all of these illustrations show an animal head. In Ryerson, Pl. XLVIII, the vignette for B.D. 151 shows the jackal-god Anubis bending over a couch, with his hands on a recumbent human figure. (Letter from John A. Wilson, dated January 5, 1968)

**BOOK OF THE DEAD**

In a letter to Grant Heward, I. E. S. Edwards, Keeper of the Department of Egyptian Antiquities at the British Museum, made this statement concerning the Mormon papyri:

It is not my intention to belittle the gift of the Metropolitan but it should be remembered that this papyrus has really no antiquarian value. Any Book of the Dead of so late a date is corrupt and there is no need to try to solve the corruptions because earlier texts lacking many of the errors exist. (Letter dated December 20, 1967)

Evidently the Mormon leaders are now willing to concede that part of the papyri belong to the Egyptian Book of the Dead. On December 2, 1967, the L.D.S. Church Section of the Deseret News carried this statement:

The other papyri in the gift include conventional hieroglyphic and hieratic Egyptian funerary texts. Such papyri, including the Book of the Dead, were commonly buried with Egyptian mummies. (Deseret News, Church Sec., December 2, 1967, page 7)

Now that the Mormon leaders have admitted that at least part of the papyri are from the Egyptian Book of the Dead, they have placed themselves in a very precarious position. One of the drawings on the papyri was previously identified by the Mormons as part of the “Book of Joseph.” This book was supposed to have been written by Joseph in Egypt thousands of years ago. In the next column is a photograph of this portion as it appeared in the Deseret News, November 27, 1967.

Notice that the snake appears to be standing on legs. This portion is very important, for Oliver Cowdery, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, claimed that this drawing appeared in the “Book of Joseph.” In a letter published in the Messenger and Advocate (a Mormon publication) in 1835, Oliver Cowdery stated:

Upon the subject of the Egyptian records, or rather the writings of Abraham and Joseph, . . .

The language in which this record is written is very comprehensive, . . . The serpent, represented as walking, or formed in a manner to be able to walk, standing in front of, and near a female figure, is to me, one of the greatest representations I have ever seen upon paper, or a writing substance; . . . Enoch’s Pillar, as mentioned by Josephus, is upon the same roll. . . . The inner end of the same roll, (Joseph’s record,) presents a representation of the judgement: . . . (Messenger and Advocate, vol. 2, pages 234 and 236)

The statements by the early leaders of the Mormon Church place the present-day leaders in a very difficult situation. If they continue to maintain that this drawing is part of the “Book of Joseph,” they will be expected to furnish proof that it was written by the Israelites. Also, a translation of the Egyptian writing next to the drawing must relate to the creation or the early history of man rather than to Egyptian funerary texts. If, on the other hand, the Mormon leaders admit that it is from the Egyptian Book of the Dead, they will cast a shadow of doubt on Joseph Smith’s work.

In a letter to John A. Wilson, Professor of Egyptology at the University of Chicago, Marvin Cowan asked this question: “2. Mormon sources claim that the papyrus showing a snake walking on two legs toward a man is the ‘Book of Joseph’! Do you agree?” John A. Wilson replied:

You ask about one of the illustrations which shows a walking snake. It is just above three other illustrations all of which occur in regular order in late Books of the Dead. Papyrus Ryerson (about 500-200 B.C.) and Papyrus Milbank (about 350-100 B.C.) both in the Oriental Institute, published by T. George Allen, (“The Egyptian Book of the Dead,” Chicago, 1960), with the texts here noted on Plates XXIV-XXV and LXVIII.

In each papyrus, vignette of a man with a stick, facing a column—vignette for Book of the Dead, Chapter 72.

In each papyrus, next vignette in order shows a man with a stick, facing a column—vignette for B.D. 73.

In Ryerson only, next vignette in order shows a man with a stick, facing a column—vignette for B.D. 74.

In each papyrus, next vignette shows a bird with a sceptre projecting from its back—vignette for B.D. 75. (Letter from John A. Wilson to Marvin Cowan, dated January 5, 1968)

Thus we see that the Mormon leaders are confronted with a serious problem. To claim that it is the writings of Joseph is to challenge the science of Egyptology, but to admit that it isn’t amounts to discrediting Joseph Smith’s work.

We hope to deal at great length with these matters in a later volume of The Case Against Mormonism. In the meantime, we have prepared a 28-page pamphlet entitled, The Mormon Papyri Question. This pamphlet contains a great deal of information which we do not have room to include here. The prices are: 50¢ each — 3 for $1.00 — 10 for $3.00 — 20 for $5.00.

**Everyone Welcome!**

We are now holding a Bible study in our home at 1350 S. West Temple, every Thursday evening at 8:00 pm. Everyone is welcome. This is not connected with any particular group or church. Attendance is open to everyone.

**A PERSONAL GOD?**

To all those who will send us their address and zip code we will send a FREE COPY of Is There a Personal God? This is a 56-page pamphlet by Jerald Tanner.
Just as we were ready to print this paper, we received word that Dr. Hugh Nibley, who is supposed to be the Church’s top authority on the Egyptian language, had repudiated Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar. This rumor has now been confirmed.

In 1966 we published Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar. This document was submitted to some of the world’s top Egyptologists. These Egyptologists denounced it as a fraud. In fact, I. E. S. Edwards, Keeper of the Dept. of Egyptian Antiquities at the British Museum, said the Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar was “largely a piece of imagination and lacking in any kind of scientific value.” (See photograph of this letter in The Mormon Papyri Question.)

When we heard that Dr. Nibley had repudiated this document we could hardly believe it, for Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar, was supposed to have been the very key to the translation of the Book of Abraham. Yet, strange as it may seem, we find the following statements by Dr. Nibley in the Brigham Young University Studies:

Which brings us to the subject of Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Grammar, because a surprising number of people have recently undertaken studies of that remarkable work. This writer, however, has never spent so much as five minutes with the Egyptian Grammar, and does not intend to unless he is forced to it. When parties in Salt Lake procured and reproduced photographs of this document, they advertized it with the usual sensationalism as a “Hidden Document Revealed. Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar suppressed for 130 Years Now Comes to Light. This document proves that Joseph Smith did not understand Egyptian and that the Book of Abraham was a work of his imagination!” Joseph Smith never pretended to understand Egyptian, nor that the Book of Abraham was a work of his scholarship: if this document as advertized proves anything it is that some people will go to any length of skulduggery to make a case out of nothing. For if the so-called Alphabet and Grammar were meant as an inspired communication it would have been published as such, not “hidden” or “suppressed for 130 years.” It was hidden and suppressed for the same reason that Brigham Young’s laundry lists are hidden and suppressed, because it was nobody else’s business. Let us allow Joseph Smith at least for the time being the luxury of a moment of privacy, of a little speculation on his own there on his hands and knees in the front room of the Mansion House, with papyri spread out around him on the floor. The fact that he kept his notes strictly to himself’s evidence enough that they were his own private concern and were never meant as a message to the Church.

This is a very important point. The whole attack against the Book of Abraham in the past has been based on the perfectly false principle that whatever a prophet does must be of a supernatural nature and whatever he says must have the authority of scripture, and that hence if a prophet ever betrays the slightest sign of human weakness or any mortal limitation he must necessarily be a false prophet. . . . The sectarian world has never been able to see how it is possible to have revelations and still learn by trial and error: If a prophet ever betrays the slightest sign of human weakness or any mortal limitation he must have the authority of scripture, and that hence if a prophet ever betrays the slightest sign of human weakness or any mortal limitation he must necessarily be a false prophet. . . . 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Dr. Hugh Nibley, who is supposed to be the Mormon Church’s top authority on the Egyptian language, made this statement:

... a few faded and tattered little scraps of papyrus may serve to remind the Latter-day Saints of how sadly they have neglected serious education ... Not only has our image suffered by such tragic neglect, but now in the moment of truth the Mormons have to face the world unprepared, after having been given a hundred years’ fair warning. (Brigham Young University Studies, Winter, 1968, pages 171-172)

Recent developments with regard to Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Papyri have demonstrated the truth of Dr. Nibley’s statement. Since the day the Metropolitan Museum of Art presented the papyri to the Church, the Mormon leaders have made one mistake after another until they have painted themselves into a corner, and truth now demands that they repudiate the Book of Abraham and renounce the anti-Negro doctrine contained in its pages.

The fall of the Book of Abraham has been brought about by the identification of the piece of papyrus from which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham. Below is a photograph of the fragment.

The identification of this fragment as the original from which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham has been made possible by a comparison with Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar—a document published by Modern Microfilm Co. in 1966. Dr. James R. Clark, of the Brigham Young University, gives us this information:

... there are in existence today in the Church Historian’s Office what seems to be two separate manuscripts of Joseph Smith’s translations from the papyrus rolls, presumably in the hand writing of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery; ... One manuscript is the Alphabet and Grammar ... Within this Alphabet and Grammar there is a copy of the characters, together with their translation of Abraham 1:4-28 only. (The Story of the Pearl of Great Price, Salt Lake City, 1962, pages 172-173)

The Mormon leaders were either not aware of the fact that the gift of papyri included the fragment which was the basis for the text in the Book of Abraham, or they hoped no one else would notice it. The following statement appeared in the Mormon paper, Deseret News: “As far as has yet been determined, the papyri do not contain any of the original material translated as the Book of Abraham itself” (Deseret News, November 28, 1967). Before publishing photographs of the papyri, the Brigham Young University Studies had advertised that they were going to print pictures of the Book of Abraham Papyri. When the photographs appeared there was an apology which read:

Our calling them the Book of Abraham Papyri in some of our advertisements did not reflect the official Church identification which is the present title we use: The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri. We regret the error. Ed. (page 179)

The Mormon publication, Improvement Era, February, 1968, contains color photographs of the papyri. The fragment of papyrus from which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham is found on page 41—the very last photograph. It is labeled: “XI. Small ‘Sensen’ text (unillustrated).”

All of the first two rows of characters on the papyrus fragment can be found in the manuscript of the Book of Abraham that is published in Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar. Grant Heward has done further research regarding this matter. He has copied the characters from pictures of another manuscript of the Book of Abraham at the Brigham Young University. This manuscript goes further than the one in the “Alphabet and Grammar.” Mr. Heward has found that the characters on this manuscript continue in consecutive order into the fourth line of the papyrus. This would bring the text to Abraham 2:20 in the Pearl of Great Price. If Joseph Smith continued to translate the same number of English words to each Egyptian character in the chapters which followed, then the text for the entire Book of Abraham is probably contained on this one fragment of papyrus.
THE DILEMMA

In 1966 Grant Heward, a man who had done missionary work for the Mormon Church, prepared a paper in which he criticized Joseph Smith’s translations of the Egyptian language. He distributed his paper at the April, 1967 Conference of the Mormon Church. On June 21, 1967, he was excommunicated from the Mormon Church. This was probably one of the greatest mistakes the Mormon leaders have ever made. Mr. Heward has continued his study of the Egyptian language. He was able to identify the name of the mummy mentioned in the Mormon papyri. Henry G. Fischer, Curator of Egyptian Art at the Metropolitan Museum, confirmed the identification in a letter dated December 8, 1967:

It is very astute of you to have recognized the name of the original owner of some of the papyri that have recently been given to the Latter Day Saints. Your copies are very good indeed, both of the woman’s name and that of her father. (Letter from Henry G. Fischer to Grant Heward, dated December 8, 1967)

Mr. Heward has carefully examined the piece of papyrus that has been identified as the source of the Book of Abraham, and he feels it is probably a part of the Egyptian “Book of Breathings.” The following information concerning the “Book of Breathings” is given by Sir E. A. Wallis Budge:

Of special interest among the works which were popular in the Ptolemeic and Graeco-Roman periods, and probably later, is the “Shai en Sensen,” or “Book of Breathings.” In this composition we find ideas and beliefs which were derived from the Book of the Dead, . . . (Book of the Dead, An English Translation . . . of the Theban Recension, . . . New York, 1951, Introduction, page xvii)

It is very interesting to note that Dr. Nibley has already labeled the fragment of papyrus Joseph Smith used as the basis for the Book of Abraham as “XI. Small ‘Sensen’ text (unillustrated)” (Improvement Era, February 1968, page 41).

One of the meanings of the Egyptian word “sensen” is breathing. It is written in hieratic as follows: 

The reader will find the word “sensen” on the fourth line of the papyrus identified as the original used by Joseph Smith as the basis for the Book of Abraham. This word is used as a part of the title “Book of Breathings.” Below is a photograph of a small portion of the text from the “Book of Breathings” compared with a portion of the papyrus Joseph Smith used for the Book of Abraham. The reader will note the striking similarity between the two. The portion on the right is taken from the Papyrus of Kerasher, British Museum, No. 9995. The portion on the left is taken from the fourth line of the papyrus Joseph Smith used in his production of the Book of Abraham.

The reader will note that Joseph Smith used less than four lines from the papyrus to make 51 verses in the Book of Abraham. These 51 verses are composed of more than 2,000 English words! A person does not have to be an Egyptologist to know that it would be impossible to translate over 2,000 words from a few Egyptian characters. Common sense tells us that this would be absolutely impossible. Therefore, it is obvious that Joseph Smith’s Book of Abraham is a spurious work.

The Mormon leaders are now confronted with a very serious problem. If they maintain that the fragment of papyrus contains the story found in the Book of Abraham they will find themselves challenging the science of Egyptology. Many members of the Mormon Church want to know the truth concerning the Book of Abraham especially since it is the source of the anti-Negro doctrine. It has been rumored that Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought (a publication that is not controlled by the Mormon leaders) is going to publish the translations in Dialogue. A lot of questions have to be answered in this business. . . .

NIBLEY RETREATS

Although Dr. Nibley is still trying to maintain that the Book of Abraham is authentic, it is obvious that he is retreating from many of the positions that the Church previously held regarding this matter.

Mormon writers used to claim that Joseph Smith understood the Egyptian language and that his “Egyptian Alphabet” was the very key to the translation of the Book of Abraham. Dr. Nibley, however, now maintains that Joseph Smith did not understand the Egyptian language and that his “Egyptian Alphabet” is worthless:

Which brings us to the subject of Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Grammar, . . . This writer, however, has never spent so much as five minutes with the Egyptian Grammar, and does not intend to unless he is forced to it . . . Joseph Smith never pretended to understand Egyptian, nor that the Book of Abraham was a work of his scholarship: . . . (Brigham Young University Studies, Winter, 1968, page 176)

In a letter dated February 8, 1968, Dr. Nibley stated:

Joseph Smith played around with Egyptian documents, but by his own admission he was only trying to read them. We tell about this in the forthcoming Era for March. A lot of questions have to be answered in this business. . . .

The wonderful thing about these papyri is that they raise so many interesting questions. You want the answers all at once, but that would spoil all the fun. (Letter dated February 8, 1968)

To begin with the Mormon leaders claimed that Joseph Smith had the very original papyri which Abraham and Joseph wrote upon. Egyptologists, however, claimed that the facsimiles proved the papyri were of a later date. Dr. Nibley tries to bring the Church’s position into line with the opinions expressed by Egyptologists by stating:

The commonest objection to the authenticity of the Facsimiles is that they are of too late a date to have been drawn by Abraham. But Joseph Smith never claimed that they were autographic manuscripts or that they dated from the time of Abraham. (Improvement Era, February, 1968, page 20)

Dr. Nibley is certainly wrong about this matter. Joseph Smith did claim that they were autographic manuscripts. Josiah Quincy claimed that Joseph Smith told him the following:

“That is the handwriting of Abraham, the Father of the Faithful,” said the prophet. “This is the autograph of Moses, and these lines were written by his brother Aaron.” (Figures of the past as quoted in Among the Mormons, pages 136-137)

In 1840 Joseph Smith was quoted as making this statement:

“These ancient records,” said he, “throw great light on the subject of Christianity . . . I will show you how I interpret certain parts. There,“said
Joseph Smith claimed that the two rolls of papyrus which the Mormons purchased in 1835 contained the writings of Abraham and Joseph:

I commenced the translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt, etc., etc. (History of the Church, vol. 2, page 236)

Egyptologists claim that all Joseph Smith had was papyri containing Egyptian funerary texts or portions of the Book of the Dead. Now that the original papyri has been located the Mormon leaders are almost forced to admit that at least part of it is from the Book of the Dead.

One of the pieces of papyrus that has been located contains a drawing of a snake standing on legs. In 1835 the Mormon leaders identified this as being from the “Book of Joseph.” In fact, Oliver Cowdery (one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon) claimed that “The serpent, represented as walking, or formed in a manner to be able to walk, standing in front of, and near a female figure, is to me, one of the greatest representations I have ever seen upon paper, or a writing substance; etc.” (Messager and Advocate, vol. 2, page 236). The Mormons evidently considered the drawing of the serpent on legs to be of importance, for a copy of it was included in Joseph Smith’s “Egyptian Alphabet.” At a Pearl of Great Price Conference, held on December 10, 1960, Dr. Sidney B. Sperry, of the Brigham Young University, displayed the drawing of the snake on legs and stated: “Here Eve is apparently talking to the serpent. Notice, the serpent is on legs!” (Pearl of Great Price Conference, December 10, 1960, 1964 edition, page 8)

In the Mormon Papyri Question we stated:

If the Mormon leaders continue to maintain that this drawing is part of the “Book of Joseph,” they will be expected to furnish proof that it was written by Joseph in Egypt. . . . If, on the other hand, the Mormon leaders admit that it is from the Egyptian Book of the Dead, they will cast a shadow of doubt on Joseph Smith’s work. (Mormon Papyri Question, page 17)

Evidently the Mormon leaders have chosen to “cast a shadow of doubt on Joseph Smith’s work,” for in the Improvement Era, February, 1968, they admit that the drawing of the snake on legs is “from the Book of the Dead” (page 40). Dr. Nibley was asked if the papyri contained the Book of Joseph, he replied:

If the papyri contain any of the Book of Joseph it is not a part that has been translated. (Letter dated February 8, 1968)

We wonder how far the Mormon leaders can retreat on this issue without admitting that the Book of Abraham is a spurious work.

We have been doing research with regard to the authenticity of the Book of Abraham for a number of years and feel that we have found some very important material. We were planning on presenting this material in a later volume of the Case Against Mormonism, but because of the importance of the papyri find and the discussion concerning this matter we have decided to begin work on it immediately. Therefore, the remaining pages (112 are now completed) of volume 2 of the Case Against Mormonism will be devoted to this subject. We feel that all of our readers should have a copy of this work so that they can receive the pages as they are printed. The regular price for volumes one and two (which includes a beautiful vinyl loose-leaf binder) is $7.90. At the present time, however, we are having a special. If the two volumes are ordered before April 30, 1968, the price is only $6.95.

SMOKE SCREEN

Even though the papyri were lost for a number of years, Joseph Smith included three drawing in his Book of Abraham, and also gave a translation of much of the material which appeared in these drawings.

In 1912 F. S. Spalding sent the facsimiles from the Pearl of Great Price to a number of the most noted Egyptologists. These Egyptologists examined the facsimiles and Joseph Smith’s interpretation of them and declared that his interpretation was fraudulent. Letters from these Egyptologists are published in the book Joseph Smith, Jr. as a Translator, by F. S. Spalding.

Dr. Nibley seems to feel that by attacking Spalding and his book he can create a great smoke screen to cover up the fact that he is not able to defend Joseph Smith’s translations of the Egyptian language. Dr. Nibley has been extremely unfair in this attack. He even criticizes F. S. Spalding for the Church’s dishonesty. Speaking of the facsimiles that Spalding sent to the Egyptologists, Dr. Nibley states:

. . . the miserable copies that Bishop Spalding circulated among his jury of experts made a very poor impression, and their raw clumsiness was in every case attributed to the Prophet himself. . . . It makes all the difference in the world what particular text a scholar has to work with, as a comparison of the recently discovered original of Facsimile 1 with the copies of it that Spalding sent to the critics should make clear to anyone. (Improvement Era, February, 1968, pages 20-21)

Because Dr. Nibley does not make this matter clear, the reader would get the impression that Spalding altered the copies that he sent to the Egyptologists. Now, what was it that Spalding sent to the Egyptologists anyway? It was the Pearl of Great Price—the official publication of the Church—which contains the facsimiles. After Dr. Arthur C. Mace (Assistant Curator, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Department of Egyptian Art) examined the facsimiles, he wrote a letter to Spalding in which he stated:

“I return herewith, under separate cover, the Pearl of Great Price. The ‘Book of Abraham,’ it is hardly necessary to say, is a pure fabrication.” (Joseph Smith, Jr. as a Translator, page 27)

This statement proves that it was the Church’s printing of the Pearl of Great Price which was submitted to the Egyptologists. Dr. James R. Clark, of the Brigham Young University, states that it was the “1907 printing” of the Pearl of Great Price that the Egyptologist examined. (Story of the Pearl of Great Price, page 61)

Now, why should Dr. Nibley make a point out of the fact that Spalding submitted “miserable copies” to the Egyptologist, when it was the Mormon leaders themselves who made the changes and alterations in the facsimiles? Isn’t this being very unfair?

In the Brigham Young University Studies Dr. Nibley admits that the facsimiles which the Church now publishes in the Pearl of Great Price are not accurate:

The Pearl of Great Price itself admirably illustrates the issue. The facsimiles now in use are extremely bad reproductions, far inferior to the first engravings published in 1842. Am I, then, as a member of the Church bound to consult the present official edition and that only, and regard it as flawless, bad as it is, because it is the official publication of the Church? (Brigham Young University Studies, Winter, 1968, page 177)

We are glad that Dr. Nibley has made this statement, for it is certainly the truth. But, we ask, why did he not include it in his article in the Improvement Era? As his article stands in the Improvement Era the reader would get the impression that F. S. Spalding made the changes, whereas the truth is that the Mormon leaders are responsible.

Actually, accurate copies hurt the Church’s position more than they help it. In the Mormon Papyri Question, page 8, we show that photographs of the original papyrus from which the Mormons copied Facsimile No. 1 have been submitted to Egyptologists, and they have denounced it in the same manner that the Egyptologists did in 1912. Because of Dr. Nibley’s distortions of the truth and because of a large demand we have reprinted the book Why Egyptologists Reject the Book of Abraham. This book contains F. S. Spalding’s work, Joseph Smith, Jr. as a Translator, and Joseph Smith as an Interpreter and Translator of Egyptian, by Samuel A. Mercer, Ph.D. Price: $1.50 — 3 for $4.00 — 5 for $6.00 — 10 for $9.00.

Everyone Welcome!

We are now holding a Bible study in our home at 1350 S. West Temple, every Thursday evening at 8:00 pm. Everyone is welcome. This is not connected with any particular group or church. Attendance is open to everyone.

A PERSONAL GOD?

To all those who will send us their address and zip code we will send a FREE COPY of Is There a Personal God? This is a 56-page pamphlet by Jerald Tanner.
CONTENTS OF PAPYRUS

In our work Case Against Mormonism we plan to have a great deal of information concerning the papyri which have recently been presented to the Mormon Church. We hope to have pictures and translations of these papyri. In the meantime, Grant Heward has given us a rendition of a portion of the papyri for publication in this Messenger. Even though this is just a rough rendition, it will give the reader a good idea of what is contained in the papyri.

Mr. Heward has given us this statement to publish with his rendition of the portion which deals with the subject “Transforming into a Swallow”:

The difficult choices of hieroglyphic rendering from the hieratic were many times made easier by careful comparison with hieroglyphic texts of two Books of the Dead papyri as well as fragments from four coffin texts. My English rendering was guided by the translations made of the two papyri. This rough English rendition was completed February 26, 1968.

Below, on the left side of the page, the reader will find a photograph of the papyrus which deals with this subject. Since the papyrus was cut or broken off in the middle of the text, it was necessary to put part of another photo with it to complete the text. These photographs are found in the Improvement Era, February 1968, page 40E and 40F.

On the right side of the page the reader will find that Grant Heward has transcribed the hieratic text into hieroglyphs. Alan Gardiner gives this explanation for this procedure:

Individual hieratic hands differ as all handwriting is apt to differ; for this reason Egyptologists, before translating a hieratic text, habitually transcribe it into hieroglyphs, just as the modern printer sets up a modern author’s manuscript in type (Egyptian Grammar, by Alan Gardiner, third ed., page 10).

Mr. Heward’s rendering of this text is as follows:

Transforming into a Swallow

Here begins the spells for making transformations:

The spell for making the transformation into a swallow. . . . The Osiris daughter Min, justified, born to Neshonsu, justified, says: I am a swallow, I am a swallow. I am that scorpion, the two daughters of Ra. Hail, gods with sweet aroma. (Hail) flame, that comes out of the horizon. Hail you in the city. I have brought the keeper from the midst of his domain. Give your hands. Let me pass the days in the flames of purification. I have advanced with a message. I have come holding the report. Open up to me. How shall I tell what I have seen? I am like Horus, governor of the boat, when the right side of his father was given him. Set, that son of Nut, was under the fetters he made of Osiris. He who is in Sehem (inspected) me. I stretch out my arms over Osiris. I have advanced for the examination. I came to speak. I am he that goes to be judged — I come forth magnified at the gate of Nebeder. I am purified at the great Uaret. I have put away my wickednesses. I have put away utterly my offences. I have put away all the taints of evil that concerns me upon the earth. I have purified myself. I have made myself like God. I completed the journey. I am like you. I have come forth by day. I have advanced on my legs. I have attained mastery over my way. . . . God of light, I know the hidden roads and the gates of Sehet Aaru. I live there. I, even I have come, I have overthrown my enemies upon the earth, although my body is a wrapped mummy.

If this book be known by the deceased, he shall come forth by day from Khert-Neter, and he shall go in (again) after he hath come forth. If this spell is overlooked (by the deceased), he shall not go in again after he hath come forth (and he) shall not know (how) to come forth by day.

Mr. Heward does not claim that his rendition is perfect, and it may be that a few changes will be made at a later date. However this may be, it is obvious that the papyri contain only Egyptian funerary texts and have nothing to do with Abraham or Joseph as the early Mormon leaders taught.

A false balance is abomination to the Lord: but a just weight is his delight.
(Proverbs 11:1)
PAPYRI NOT ABOUT ABRAHAM

In the year 1835 the Mormon people purchased some Egyptian mummies and rolls of papyrus. Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet, translated a portion of the papyrus and published it under the title “The Book of Abraham.” This book is now found as part of the Pearl of Great Price—one of the four standard works of the Mormon Church. For a long period of time the Mormon leaders claimed that the original papyri were burned in the Chicago fire. On November 27, 1967, however, the Deseret News (a Mormon newspaper) announced:

“A collection of papyrus manuscripts, long believed to have been destroyed in the Chicago fire in 1871, was presented to the Church . . . by the Metropolitan Museum of Art . . . Included in the papyri is a manuscript identified as the original document from which Joseph Smith had copied the drawing which he called “Facsimile No. 1” and published with the Book of Abraham. (Deseret News, November 27, 1967, page 1)

After the discovery was announced many members of the Mormon Church felt that Joseph Smith’s work had been vindicated. Dr. Hugh Nibley, however, warned his people that there was trouble ahead. On December 1, 1967, the Daily Universe, published at the Brigham Young University, reported these statements by Dr. Nibley:

“The papyri scripts given to the Church do not prove the Book of Abraham is true,” Dr. Hugh Nibley said in an academics office-sponsored assembly Wednesday night. “LDS scholars are caught flat footed by this discovery,” he went on to say. According to Dr. Nibley, Mormon scholars should have been doing added research on the Pearl of Great Price years ago. Non-Mormon scholars will bring in questions regarding the manuscripts which will be hard to answer because of lack of scholarly knowledge on the subject.

In the speech delivered primarily on the attitude of Brigham Young on education, Dr. Nibley said worldly discoveries are going to “bury the Church in criticism” if members of the Church don’t take it upon themselves to become a people of learning. . . . Mormons ought to know as much or more as others, “but they don’t;” Dr. Nibley said, quoting Brigham Young. (Daily Universe, Brigham Young University, December 1, 1967)

Although these are strange words to be coming from the man whom the Mormon leaders have chosen to defend the “Book of Abraham,” they are certainly the truth.

In the last issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger we stated that since the day the Metropolitan Museum presented the papyri to the Church, “the Mormon leaders have made one mistake after another until they have painted themselves into a corner, and truth now demands that they repudiate the Book of Abraham and renounce the anti-Negro doctrine contained in its pages.” We also stated that “the fall of the Book of Abraham has been brought about by the identification of the piece of papyrus from which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham.” On the second page of the same Messenger we stated that “Mr. Heward has carefully examined the piece of papyrus that has been identified as the source of the Book of Abraham, and he feels that it is probably a part of the Egyptian ‘Book of Breathings.’”

We can now announce that Grant Heward’s identification was correct, and that the papyrus fragment which Joseph Smith called the “Book of Abraham” is in reality nothing but a part of the “Book of Breathings.” One of the most noted Egyptologists in the world had confirmed the fact that it is part of the “Book of Breathings.” His statement will be published at a later date. E. A. Wallis Budge has given us this information concerning the “Book of Breathings”:

Of special interest among the works which were popular in the Ptolemaic and Graeco-Roman periods, and probably later, is the “Shai en Sensen,” or “Book of Breathings.” In this composition we find ideas and beliefs which were derived from the Book of the Dead, . . . (The Book of the Dead, An English Translation of the Chapters, Hymns, Etc. of the Theban Recension, With Introduction, Notes, Etc., New York, 1951, page xlviii)

A TRANSLATION

Many important things have occurred since the publication of our last Messenger. One of the most significant, however, is that Dee Jay Nelson, a Mormon philologist, has made a translation of the Mormon Papyri and was unable to find anything concerning Abraham. We have published Mr. Nelson’s work under the title The Joseph Smith Papyri—A Translation and Preliminary Survey of the Ta-shert-Min and Ter Papyri.

Mr. Nelson examined the original papyri fragments with Dr. Nibley at the Brigham Young University. He was given photographs by special permission of N. Eldon Tanner (a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church) before they were published in the Improvement Era. After completing his translation, Mr. Nelson contacted us and asked if we wanted to print it. We felt honored, but we asked him why he did not have the Church print it. He replied that his translation came out unfavorable for the Church, and he felt that they would not print it. He stated that Dr. Nibley seemed to be stalling, and he felt that his people should know the truth about the papyri. Therefore, he decided to let us publish his findings.

REJECTED

After we had finished the printing on Mr. Nelson’s book we decided toadvertize it in the papers in Salt Lake City. On April 1, 1968, we submitted the following ad to the Newspaper Agency Corporation:

“The Joseph Smith Papyri”
A Translation & Preliminary Survey
BY DEE JAY NELSON

Price: 75¢
3 for $2.00 — 5 for $3.00 — 10 for $4.50

Modern Microfilm Co.
Box 1884 — Salt Lake City, Utah 84110
Utah mail orders add sales tax — we pay postage

They accepted our money, and we were given the understanding that the ad would appear in both the Deseret News and the Salt Lake Tribune on April 6, 1968. The ad did appear in the Tribune, but on April 3, 1968, the Deseret News informed us that they had decided not to run the ad. We tried to discuss the matter with N. Eldon Tanner, a member of the First Presidency, but he refused to give us any help with regard to this matter. It would appear, then, that the Mormon leaders are not willing to let their people know both sides of this issue. Dr. Hugh Nibley claims that it is the non-Mormons that are not willing to print both sides of the issue. Speaking of Spalding’s work on the Book of Abraham, Dr. Nibley states:

And in the discussion that followed, the Mormons proved their good faith and sincerity by printing in the pages of the Improvement Era the letters of Bishop Spalding and his supporters. . . . There was no such dialogue in the non-Mormon periodicals in which Dr. Spalding published, including his own Utah newspaper, The Utah Survey; in spite of his constant protests of impartiality and intellectual integrity, only his own and like opinions ever appeared there. (Improvement Era, January, 1968, page 21)

While it may be true that publications controlled by the Mormon Church allowed some dialogue fifty years ago, it is certainly not true today. The fact that the Deseret News will no even allow us to advertize Dee Jay Nelson’s book proves that the Mormon leaders do not want their people to know the truth about the papyri.
NOTHING ABOUT ABRAHAM

As we indicated above, Mr. Nelson was unable to find any mention of Abraham or his religion in any portion of the papyri. He found the names of many pagan gods who were worshipped by the Egyptians but nothing concerning the God of Abraham. He classifies the fragment which has been identified as the source of the Book of Abraham as part of the “Ter Papyri” and states that it is part of the “Book of Breathings”:

The Ter Papyrus is a copy of a work which was particularly popular in Ptolemaic and Roman times and was completely unknown before about 600 B.C. On the Ter Fragment No. 1 the name of the work appears twice, in column 1, line 5 and in column 2, line 7. Its name again appears on Fragment No. 2 (the smaller of the two fragments) in column 1, line 4. In ancient times it was called the Shait en Sensen, or Book of Breathings. The essence of the religious philosophy behind its contents was the restoration of life and breath to the dead. (The Joseph Smith Papyri—A Translation and Preliminary Survey of the Ta-shert-Min and Ter Papyri, by Dee Jay Nelson, Salt Lake City, 1968, page 36)

On pages 40 and 41 of the same book, we find these statements:

This piece is clearly a part of the same papyrus as the other unillustrated fragment. It is a part of the Ptolemaic text known as the Shait en Sensen or Book of Breathings. This fact is established by the appearance of the name of the book in column 1, line 4.

1. This papyrus is a traditional copy of the Shait en Sensen, Book of Breathings and is of a late origin. It most probably was written in the Ptolemaic Period (after 332 B.C.). Both Fragments are damaged to the extent of at least half of their original area. (The Joseph Smith Papyri, pages 40-41)

It is interesting to note that Dee Jay Nelson and Grant Heward did their work independent of each other, yet they both concluded that the fragment of papyrus that has been identified as the source of the Book of Abraham is in reality a part of the “Book of Breathings.”

In the last Messenger we included a rendition by Grant Heward of a portion of the papyri. Mr. Heward’s rendition showed that it was a “spell for making the transformation into a swallow.” Dee Jay Nelson came to the same conclusion. His translation begins: “Spell for transforming one’s self into the form of a swallow” (The Joseph Smith Papyri, page 16).

One portion of Mr. Nelson’s book that is very interesting is his translation and comments concerning the fragment of papyrus which is reproduced as Facsimile No. 1 in the Book of Abraham. Joseph Smith claimed that this was a representation of an idolatrous priest trying to sacrifice Abraham on an altar. Dee Jay Nelson, however, shows that it is in reality the god Anubis preparing a mummified body:

This fragment bears the original vignette from which the cut for Facsimile No. 1 in the Pearl of Great Price, Book of Abraham was made. It is badly damaged. . . . On the backing paper the missing part of the body and arms of the person on the bier and the shoulder and head of the standing figure have been crudely sketched in. This was presumably done by Joseph Smith or certainly by some individual in the Nineteenth Century. . . .

This scene is intimately familiar to me. I have seen it many times. As a matter of fact, in one temple alone, located at Denderah, thirty seven miles north of Luxor are twenty nine wall bas-reliefs representing Osiris lying upon a lion-headed bier which exactly resembles the one on this papyrus fragment. Five of these even show him with one leg raised above the bed. Two of them also show a jackal-headed god standing near the foot of the bier (behind it) facing the head. One of these has the following similarities. I should say, precise equivalents:

1. The bier has a lions head and an upturned tail.
2. A person is lying on the bier, face up.
3. The hands of the reclining person are held above his face, palms downward (the sign of grief).
4. The reclining figure has his right leg somewhat elevated.
5. A dark figure stands near the foot of the bier facing the head of the couch.
6. A hawk-headed bird (ba) hovers over the reclining figure.

This scene of Anubis embalming Osiris is often seen in copies of the Shait en Sensen, Book of Breathings. An example is the Book of Breathings Papyrus of Kerasher now in the British Museum. . . .

Summary concerning the Ter Papyrus Fragment No. 3

1. This fragment bears the original illustration from which the cut for Facsimile No. 1, Pearl of Great Price, Book of Abraham was made. Its identification is undeniable.
2. The fragment is badly damaged.
3. This vignette is typical of scenes from the Shait en Sensen, Book of Breathings, showing Osiris lying dead upon his funeral bier in the process of being embalmed by the jackal-headed god, Anubis.
4. The illustration is of the type popular in the Ptolemaic Period after 332 B.C. The corrupt hieroglyphic text is also typical of this era.
5. The hieroglyphic bookhand characters used in the vertical columns are poorly formed, sometimes written backwards and a basic and often unusual spelling is used.
6. The fragmentary text names the gods Min, Khensu, Anubis and Osiris. It also states that the hawk hovering over the head of Osiris is the ba or soul. (The Joseph Smith Papyri, pages 41-43 and 45)

We do not have room here to include Dee Jay Nelson’s translation of the text, but his summary should be sufficient to convince the reader that the scene has nothing to do with Abraham.

Speaking of all the papyrus fragments turned over to the Mormon Church by the Metropolitan Museum, Mr. Nelson states:

The Ta-shert-Min Papyrus (10 fragments) is a copy of a typical late period funeral text known as the Per em Heru or Book of the Dead and the Ter Papyrus is a copy of the Shait en Sensen or Book of Breathings. (The Joseph Smith Papyri, page 5)

Thus it appears that the Book of Abraham has no historical basis and that it is a work of Joseph Smith’s imagination.

The reader will remember that Grant Heward was excommunicated from the Mormon Church for criticizing the “Book of Abraham.” We do not feel, however, that they will excommunicate Mr. Nelson because he is a nationally known explorer naturalist. He is a member of the Adventurers Club and has given lectures on the Dead Sea Scrolls. In 1957 he was invited by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion to make the first motion picture of the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is very unlikely that the Mormon leaders will excommunicate such a man.

The Joseph Smith Papyri—A Translation and Preliminary Survey of the Ta-shert-Min and Ter Papyri, is a 48-page booklet which is filled with important information concerning the Mormon Papyri. We highly recommend it. The prices are: 75¢ each — 3 for $2.00 — 5 for $3.00 — 10 for $4.50.

DR. NIBLEY EVADES THE ISSUE

The Improvement Era, April, 1968, contains a short article by Dr. Hugh Nibley trying to discredit our last issue of the Messenger and attempts to explain why he has wasted four issues of the Improvement Era criticizing Bishop Spalding’s pamphlet and has not dealt with “the new problems” regarding the papyri:

The first draft of this series of articles was written some years before the Church came into possession of the recently acquired papyri, and had already been slated to appear in the Era when big news broke. They were never meant as an examination of the new evidence, though they do provide a necessary approach to it. Since the new problems could not be dealt with instantly, and the preliminary material was already at hand, it was decided to release the historical background material while working on the other. . . .

The criticism of the Pearl of Great Price, like those of the Book of Mormon, have always had a weakness for instant solutions. As soon as anyone starts putting a long equation on the blackboard or begins to demonstrate the steps in the solution of an involved problem these students cry out, “Never mind all that—you are just stalling; give us the answer!” They would prefer to have the teacher say, “Students, I am a mathematician, and the answer is zero because I say so. Class dismissed.” This has been the ingratiating method of the Pearl of Great Price critics from the beginning. . . .

As an example of how complicated the issues can become, we call attention to the March 1968 issue of a privately but widely circulated news sheet, “The Salt Lake City Messenger,” announcing in characteristically sensational headlines “The Fall of the Book of Abraham.” At last!
The publishers of the news sheet were kind enough to provide the reader with a demonstration of their Egyptology at work, in the form of a transcription and translation by a Mr. Heward of a section of one of the LDS papyri. The picture of a swallow on the fragment makes it possible for even the rankest amateur like this writer to spot at once the corresponding passage in Budge’s much-publicized translation as Chapter 86 of the Book of the Dead. The student who takes the pains to compare Budge’s translation of Ani, Mr. Heward’s purported translation of the LDS fragment, and the LDS fragment itself will soon discover that Mr. H. is not translating the LDS fragment at all, but simply paraphrasing Budge. The papyrus of Ani and the LDS fragment are much alike, but they are far from identical, and whenever the two differ it is the text of Budge that Mr. H. translates, in the language of Budge, and not the LDS manuscript, which he claims to be reading. Space will not allow here the presentation of the many passages in the translation in which this is glaringly apparent.

This is another example of a principle that has been only too fully illustrated in Pearl of Great Price criticism, namely, that it is easy to fool the public on matters of which the public knows nothing. No one is more eager than this writer to get out of the critical Slough of Despond and start discussing the wonderful discoveries that are now casting a strange new light on the Book of Abraham. But before we can do that, we must deal with a lot of preliminary questions that others have raised. — H.N. (Improvement Era, April, 1968, pages 65-66)

Before we say anything about Dr. Nibley’s accusation against Grant Heward, we should point out that he has side-stepped the main issue. Our argument that the Book of Abraham has fallen was based primarily upon the fact that the original fragment of papyrus from which Joseph Smith “translated” the Book of Abraham has been located (see photograph in the Salt Lake City Messenger, issue 17, page 1). The translation concerning the swallow of course provides evidence that Joseph Smith did not have the writings of Abraham or Joseph of Egypt since it is a part of the Book of the Dead, but the main issue is that the original papyrus fragment which Joseph Smith used as the basis of the Book of Abraham has been located. Our contention is that this fragment is part of the Egyptian “Book of Breathings” and has nothing to do with Abraham. Now, unless Dr. Nibley can translate this fragment and prove that it contains the writings of Abraham as they appear in the Pearl of Great Price, then the Book of Abraham is a spurious translation. We do not believe that Dr. Nibley can do this, and we feel certain that this is the reason he has side-stepped the real issue.

Now, concerning the accusation against Grant Heward: Dr. Nibley states that “whenever” the LDS fragment and the papyrus of Ani differ Mr. Heward follows “the text of Budge.” This accusation is certainly untrue, for if Mr. Heward had only followed the text given by Budge he would not have been aware of the fact that there are two persons mentioned in the first part of the spell. E. A. Wallis Budge gives this rendering of the first part of the chapter as it appears in the papyrus of Ani:

The Osiris Ani, whose word is truth, saith:—I am a swallow, [I am] a swallow. (The Book of the Dead, The Hieroglyphic Transcript of the Papyrus of Ani, the Translation into English and an Introduction by E. A. Wallis Budge, New York, 1960, page 521)

Grant Heward, however, renders the first part of the LDS fragment as follows:

The Osiris daughter Min, justified, born to Neshonsu, justified, says: I am a swallow, I am a swallow. (Salt Lake City Messenger, issue no. 17, page 4)

Dee Jay Nelson—who we must remember did his work independent of Grant Heward—gives this rendering to the LDS fragment:

To be said by Osiris Ta-sheret-Min, who is true of work, daughter of Nes-Khensu, who is true of word.

I am a swallow, I am a swallow. (The Joseph Smith Papyri, page 16)

It should be obvious from this that Dr. Nibley’s accusation is without foundation. Notice that Dr. Nibley claims that he could furnish “many” passages to prove that Mr. Heward was not reading the LDS fragment, yet he states that he does “not” have room to include them in his article. We feel that if Dr. Nibley is going to make such a serious charge he should furnish his own translation of the fragment and point out the places where Grant Heward is in error.

IS DR. NIBLEY QUALIFIED?

In a letter to the editor of the Deseret News, Julian R. Durham stated:

There has been some comment regarding the recently discovered Book of Abraham papyri, that the Church submit them to the foremost scholars in the field of Egyptology. . . .

Today the papyri are in the hands of one of the best qualified Egyptologists in the world. Hugh Nibley, a foremost church scholar who has demonstrated on an intellectual basis the capabilities of Joseph Smith in language studies. (Deseret News, December 27, 1967)

There are a number of reasons why we seriously doubt that Dr. Nibley is “one of the best qualified Egyptologists in the world.” To begin with, Dr. Nibley has only given us a very small “demonstration” of his “Egyptology at work.” It appears in the Brigham Young University Studies, Winter, 1968:

This fragment, which has been badly fitted together like some of the others, belongs to the same roll as the other hieratic papyri, as is apparent from recurring elements of the owner’s name, that appears a number of times in full in the other fragments . . . Which may be “translated” as something like “The Osiris daughter of Min, true of word (or justified, deceased, triumphant, etc., i.e. tested and found true and faithful), declared blessed (as a dead person, the word being written merely by a stroke, since the proper hieroglyph was considered magically dangerous), belonging to Khons (or in the company of Khons, the moon-god), justified.” Or, simply as a name something like Taimin Mutninessikhoum.

Dr. Nibley’s work is used in a short article in the Improvement Era:

The writings on the recently recovered fragments show that all of these Book of the Dead papyri belonged to the lady Taimin Mutninessikhoum. (Improvement Era, February 1968, page 40)

Dee Jay Nelson makes this statement concerning Dr. Nibley’s work:

On page 40 of the February 1968 issue of the Improvement Era is a brief article describing color photographs of the new papyrus fragments. The article names the beneficiary for whom one of the papyri was written. She is called, “the lady Taimin Mutninessikhoum.” I presume that this name was supplied by Dr. Hugh Nibley. It is incorrect. . . . Dr. Nibley, whom I know to be a skilled and capable scholar, has inadvertently combined the names of the beneficiary of the papyrus and her mother. . . . Taimin Mutninessikhoum is a transliteration combining the name Ta-sheret-Min with the connecting phrase meaning “daughter of,” mes en and Nes-Khensu (the mother’s name). This error was quite natural, particularly considering that the connecting phrase, mes en is abbreviated whenever it appears in the Ta-sheret-Min Papyrus. Ta-sheret-Min and Nes-Khensu are the correct transliterations. I have been substantiated in my transliteration by several of the world’s most renowned Egyptian philologist (mentioned by name in the introduction to this study) though in small variations even they did not agree exactly. One rendered the names Tai-shery-Min and Nes-Khonsu and another transliterated them Ta-sheret-Men and Nes-Khensu. I find no argument with either. Both scholars were examining poor hand-copied versions of the names which appear in one of Joseph Smith, Jr.’s notebooks (done in the 1830’s).

Everyone Welcome!

We are now holding a Bible study in our home at 1350 S. West Temple, every Thursday evening at 8:00 pm. Everyone is welcome. This is not connected with any particular group or church. Attendance is open to everyone.

A PERSONAL GOD?

To all those who will send us their address and zip code we will send a FREE COPY of Is There a Personal God? This is a 56-page pamphlet by Jerald Tanner.
The so-called Metropolitan Papyrus Fragments came to my attention several months after I consulted with these experts and serve to substantiate my original findings. (The Joseph Smith Papyri, page 48)

The reader will note that Grant Heward recognized that the papyri mentioned both the daughter and one of her parents. If Mr. Heward is “the rankest amateur” and only followed the translation of Budge, how was he able to recognize the two names?

We feel that since Dr. Nibley combined the two names into one, he cannot be considered “one of the best qualified Egyptologists in the world.”

There is another fact that should be considered in this matter: Dr. Nibley had had photographs of the original papyri for about two years. We have a copy of a letter from an Egyptologist which is dated August 27, 1967. In this letter we find the following statement:

In the summer of 1966, Prof. Nibley showed me enlargements of the photographs; they had been obtained by a third party and passed on to Prof. Nibley, who was evidently interested in purchasing the papyri, which included the embalming scene reproduced (with many imaginative restorations since the original is badly damaged in the PGP [Pearl of Great Price]) . . . There is no question that they are late (probably Roman Period) MSS of the Book of the Dead and similar funerary literature, and Prof. Nibley, who had already had the time to study the photographs, had identified several chapters of the BD [Book of the Dead] . . .

Now, if Dr. Nibley is “one of the best qualified Egyptologists in the world,” why has he not completed a translation of all the papyri. He has had two years to work on it. Dee Jay Nelson completed his “Translation and Preliminary Survey” in less than two months. Grant Heward also did his work on the text concerning the swallow in less than two months. Dr. Nibley, however, has had the papyri for about two years and has given us nothing but the name Taimin Mutninesikhouso, which is in reality two separate names.

In the February, 1968, issue of the Improvement Era we find this statement:

With our readers, the staff of the Improvement Era will be looking forward with eager anticipation to additional developments in this fascinating story, and to the unfolding of the meaning of the hieroglyphics and illustrations on these valuable manuscripts as they are given by Dr. Nibley in his articles.

The March issue of the Improvement Era appeared, but Dr. Nibley chose to still remain silent concerning the meaning of the Egyptian writing. It is in this issue that we find the statement:

The first draft of this series of articles was written some years before the Church came into possession of the recently acquired papyri. . . . Since the new problems could not be dealt with instantly, and the preliminary material was already at hand, it was decided to release the historical background material while working on the other. . . . The critics of the Pearl of Great Price . . . have always had a weakness for instant solutions. (Improvement Era, April, 1968, page 65)

Dr. Nibley’s attempt to explain why he has not unfolded the meaning of the “hieroglyphics and illustrations” may satisfy those who do not know the facts concerning this matter, but those who are aware that he has had photographs of the papyri for about two years find his explanation rather ridiculous.

In a letter dated February 8, 1968, Dr. Nibley claims that he has translated some of the papyri:

The papyri are not difficult to translate, and two of my professors at Chicago have agreed to translate them. Last month in the presence of witnesses I made a translation of some of the papyri which has been duly dated and notorized, so that when my betters (and they are infinitely my betters) come out with their translation you can see whether I am totally inept or only nearly so. (Letter dated February 8, 1968)

We do not feel that “one of the best qualified Egyptologists in the world” would follow such a procedure. Instead of having his translation “dated and notorized” Dr. Nibley should have published it in the Improvement Era.

It is interesting to note, that the translations which Dr. Nibley’s professors at Chicago are working on were not requested by Dr. Nibley or the Church leaders. It was the editors of Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought (a publication that is not controlled by the Mormon Church) who requested the translations.

From the evidence given above it appears that Dr. Nibley is not really qualified to deal with the papyri, and the Mormon leaders made a serious mistake when they turned the whole matter over to him.

THE MOMENT OF TRUTH

Dr. Hugh Nibley has made this statement:

. . . a few faded and tattered little scraps of papyrus may serve to remind the Latter-day Saints of how sadly they have neglected serious education. . . . Not only has our image suffered by such tragic neglect, but now in the moment of truth the Mormons have to face the world unprepared, after having been given a hundred year’s fair warning. (Brigham Young University Studies, Winter, 1968, pages 171-172)

It appears that Dr. Nibley himself is unprepared and that he has no real answers to give his people. We have shown that the original papyrus fragment Joseph Smith used as the basis for the Book of Abraham has been identified and that this fragment is in reality a part of the Egyptian “Book of Breathings.”

It contains nothing concerning Abraham or his religion, and it cannot be used to support the anti-Negro doctrine. Truly, this is the moment of truth for the Mormon people. Stewart L. Udall, who is Secretary of the Interior, has made this statement concerning the anti-Negro doctrine:

We Mormons cannot escape persistent, painful inquiries into the sources and grounds of this belief. . . . This issue must be resolved . . . It must be resolved because we are wrong and it is past the time when we should have seen the right. A failure to act here is sure to demean our faith, damage the minds and morals of our youth, and undermine the integrity of our Christian ethic. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer, 1967, pages 5-6)

Stewart L. Udall’s words might be applied with equal force to the Book of Abraham which is the real source of the anti-Negro doctrine.

We plan to deal at great length with the Book of Abraham in our work, The Case Against Mormonism. This work will contain photographs and vital material concerning the fragments of papyrus which have been turned over to the Mormon Church. We feel that this will be our most important work and we hope that all of our customers will order it. We have completed 112 pages of vol. 2 (dealing with the Book of Mormon) and will mail out the remaining pages concerning the Book of Abraham as they are printed. The regular price for volumes one and two (which includes a beautiful vinyl loose-leaf binder) is $7.90. At the present time, however, we are having a special which we are extending until May 31, 1968. If the two volumes are ordered before that day the price is only $6.95. We only have a limited number of binders with printing on the outside, and the ones we order in the future will probably not have this printing because the price has been raised.

** NEW BOOKS **

The Joseph Smith Papyri — A Translation & Preliminary Survey, by Dee Jay Nelson. A 48-page booklet which contains a translation and vital information concerning the Mormon Papyri. This work proves that the papyri have absolutely nothing to do with Abraham. Although this booklet is written in a very scientific and unemotional manner, the Deseret News would not allow it to be advertized. We highly recommend this booklet. Price: 75¢ — 3 for $2.00 — 5 for $3.00 — 10 for $4.50.

The Mormon Papyri Question, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. A 32-page pamphlet dealing with the recent discovery of the Mormon papyri. Proves that Joseph Smith was not able to translate Egyptian and that the Book of Abraham was a work of his own imagination. What the Mormon leaders claimed were the writings of Abraham and Joseph in Egypt turn out to be nothing but parts of Egyptian funerary texts. Very revealing. Price: 50¢ — 3 for $1.00 — 10 for $3.00 — 20 for $5.00.

The Negro in Mormon Theology, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. A 58-page pamphlet. Most important material which appeared in Joseph Smith’s Curse Upon the Negro is included in this pamphlet. Also contains new material. Alvin R. Dyer’s speech, which was “not” meant for the investigator, is printed in full. Price: 50¢ — 3 for $1.00 — 10 for $3.00 — 20 for $5.00.

PAPYRI PROVE BOOK OF ABRAHAM UNTRUE

It was just a little over six months ago that the Metropolitan Museum of Art presented to the Mormon Church a collection of papyri which once belonged to Joseph Smith. Before this transaction, it was generally believed that this collection had been completely destroyed in the Chicago fire of 1871.

Joseph Smith had used part of the papyri as the basis for a work he called “The Book of Abraham.” He claimed that Abraham had written this book on papyrus thousands of years ago. In 1842 he published his translation of this book, and the Mormon people accepted it as scripture. It is now published as a part of the Pearl of Great Price—one of the four standard works of the Mormon Church.

When the Mormon leaders announced that the papyri had been found, many members of the Church felt that Joseph Smith’s work had been vindicated. Those who knew the most about the situation, however, advised their people to be cautious. Dr. Sidney B. Sperry, of the Brigham Young University, stated: “...as members of the Church we ought not to overrate the importance of this discovery” (Newsletter and Proceedings of the Society for Early Historic Archaeology, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, March 1, 1968, page 8). Dr. James R. Clark gave a similar warning on page 8 of the same publication:

I agree with that point of view, Dr. Sperry. If there is anything we should stress here tonight, it is that conclusions should not be drawn at this point. We might even set ourselves up as a committee of three to serve as a warning voice to alert members of the Church to the great danger of claiming too much at this stage. The new materials have not yet been studied, and it would be better to reserve judgment for a time.

Dr. Hugh Nibley, who is supposed to be the Mormon Church’s top authority of the Egyptian language, warned his people that there was trouble ahead. On December 1, 1967, the Daily Universe, published at the Brigham Young University, reported this statement by Dr. Nibley:

“The papyri scripts given to the Church do not prove the Book of Abraham is true,” Dr. Hugh Nibley said in an Academics Office-sponsored assembly Wednesday night. “LDS scholars are caught flat footed by this discovery,” he went on to say. (Daily Universe, Brigham Young University, December 1, 1967)

In an article published in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Dr. Nibley stated:

When I first saw photos of the papyri I made myself disagreeable by throwing a great deal of cold water around. For publicity they were great, and as far as I can see their main value is still in calling the attention of Latter-day Saints to the existence of scriptures which they have studiously ignored through the years. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer 1968, page 102)

A Devastating Blow

While Dr. Nibley and a few others may have realized that the papyri could not be used to prove Joseph Smith’s work true, they evidently were not aware of the devastating blow that the papyri were about to deal to the “Book of Abraham.” Within six months from the time the Metropolitan Museum gave the papyri to the Church, the Book of Abraham had been proven untrue!

At first the Mormon leaders were only willing to admit that one fragment of the papyri had any direct connection with the Book of Abraham. This was the piece that has the picture found on Facsimile No. 1 in the Pearl of Great Price. The following statement appeared in the Mormon paper, Deseret News: “As far as has yet been determined, the papyri do not contain any of the original material translated as the Book of Abraham itself” (Deseret News: November 28, 1967).

In the Salt Lake City Messenger for March, 1968, we announced that the “piece of papyrus from which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham” had been located among the papyri. We quoted Dr. James R. Clark, of the Brigham Young University, as stating that Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar contained two separate handwritten manuscripts. These manuscripts contain the text of part of the Book of Abraham, and they show the Egyptian characters Joseph Smith used to make this text. In the same Messenger we furnished photographic proof that these characters were taken from the fragment of papyrus which the Improvement Era labeled: “XI. ‘Sensen’ text (unillustrated)” (Improvement Era, February, 1968, page 41). The evidence which we presented could not be refuted, and Dr. Nibley has now had to admit that the “Sensen” text is related to the Book of Abraham.

He began breaking the news in the Improvement Era:

...the presence on the scene of some of the original papyri, including those used by the prophet in preparing the text of the Book of Abraham and the Facsimiles with their commentaries, has not raised a single new question, though, as we shall see, it has solved some old ones. (Improvement Era, May, 1968, page 54)

Dr. Nibley made this admission in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought:

**NEW BOOKS**

Is the Book of Abraham True?

By Jerald and Sandra Tanner. A 23-page pamphlet which proves beyond all doubt that the Book of Abraham is a spurious translation. This pamphlet contains some of the latest and most important information ever compiled on this subject. It shows how Grant Heward found the key to the Book of Abraham text in Papyrus No. 3284 which is located in the Louvre in France. Price: 50¢ — 3 for $1.00 — 10 for $3.00 — 20 for $5.00

The Joseph Smith Papyri — A Translation & Preliminary Survey, by Dee Jay Nelson. A 48-page booklet which contains a translation and vital information concerning the Mormon Papyri. This work proves that the papyri have absolutely nothing to do with Abraham. Although this booklet is written in a very scientific and unemotional manner, the Deseret News would not allow it to be advertised. We highly recommend this booklet. Price: 75¢ — 3 for $2.00 — 5 for $3.00 — 10 for $4.50.

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At a meeting held at the University of Utah on May 20, 1968, Dr. Nibley admitted that the “Sensen” fragment seemed to supply the characters for the Book of Abraham:

Within a week of the publication of the papyri students began calling my attention, in fact, within a day or two, I think it was Witorf [?], called my attention to the fact that, the very definite fact that, one of the fragments seemed to supply all of the symbols for the Book of Abraham. This was the little “Sensen” scroll. Here are the symbols. The symbols are arranged here, and the interpretation goes along here and this interpretation turns out to be the Book of Abraham. Well, what about that? Here is the little “Sensen” because that name occurs frequently in it, the papyrus, in which a handful of Egyptian symbols was apparently expanded in translation to the whole Book of Abraham. This raises a lot of questions. It doesn’t answer any questions, unless we’re mindreaders. (Speech given by Hugh Nibley, University of Utah, May 20, 1968)

In the Salt Lake City Messenger for March, 1968, we stated that Grant Heward felt that the piece of papyrus Joseph Smith used as a basis for his “Book of Abraham” was in reality a part of the Egyptian “Book of Breathings.” His identification has now been confirmed. Dee Jay Nelson, a Mormon philologist, who worked independently on the Joseph Smith Papyri, came to exactly the same conclusion. He made this comment concerning this fragment of papyrus:

1. This papyrus is a traditional copy of the Shait en Sensen, Book of Breathings and is of a late origin. It most probably was written in the Ptolemaic Period (after 332 B.C.) (The Joseph Smith Papyri — A Translation and Preliminary Survey of the Tu-sheret-Min and Ter Papyrus, by Dee Jay Nelson, Salt Lake City, 1968, page 41)

Two of the most prominent Egyptologists in the United States have also confirmed this identification. John A. Wilson, who is Professor of Egyptology at the University of Chicago, made this statement:

Document D is a related mortuary text of late times, the so-called Book of Breathings, in a hieratic hand coarser than that of Document B. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer, 1968, page 68)

Richard A. Parker also confirmed the fact that what Joseph Smith claimed was the Book of Abraham was in reality the Book of Breathings. The editors of Dialogue stated:

Richard A. Parker is the Wilbour Professor of Egyptology and Chairman of the Department of Egyptology at Brown University. His primary interest is in the later stages of Egyptian language and history. He remarks that the Book of Breathings is a late (Ptolemaic and Roman periods) and greatly reduced version of the Book of the Dead. No comprehensive study of it has yet been undertaken and no manuscript has yet been published adequately. He would provisionally date the two Book of Breathings fragments in the Church’s possession to the last century before or the first century of the Christian era. . . . (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer, 1968, page 86)

The editors of Dialogue persuaded Dr. Parker to translate “the important ‘sensen’ text.” His translation reads as follows:

1. [. . .] this great pool of Khonsu
2. [Osiris Hor, justified], born of Tayhebyt, a man likewise.
3. After (his) two arms are [fast]ened to his breast, one wraps the Book of Breathings, which is
4. with writing both inside and outside of it, with royal linen, it being placed (at) his left arm
5. near his heart, this having been done at his
6. wrapping and outside it. If this book be recited for him, then
7. he will breath like the soul[s of the gods] for ever and

The reader will see that Richard Parker’s translation bears no resemblance to Joseph Smith’s purported translation of the same text. Thus we see that the Book of Abraham has been proven untrue because the original papyrus contains no reference to Abraham or his religion. Richard Parker translates only 83 English words from this text, whereas Joseph Smith’s rendition contained thousands of words.

Dr. Hugh Nibley had a copy of Richard Parker’s translation before it appeared in Dialogue and in a speech delivered May 20, 1968, he stated:

. . . Professor Parker has translated that controversial little thing called the “Sensen” papyrus, the little section, that text that matches up with some of the Book of Abraham.

Strange as it may seem, Dr. Nibley admits that Richard Parker is “the best man in America” for this particular text, and that he did a “nice” job:

. . . here is Parker’s translation of the “Sensen” papyrus. . . . Parker being the best man in America for this particular period and style of writing. And Parker agreed to do it and he’s done it. So it’s nice. . . . it will be available within a month. I’m sure, in the next issue of the Dialogue. (Speech by Hugh Nibley, University of Utah, May 20, 1968)

It is now becoming rather obvious that Dr. Nibley is unprepared to deal with the problems related to the translation of the Book of Abraham, and that he has no real answers to give his people. In an article published in Dialogue, he stated:

Since the Sen-Sen business makes very little sense to anybody, while the Book of Abraham makes very good sense, one might suppose that Smith could have produced the latter without any reference to the former—that he could have written the Book of Abraham more easily, in fact, without having to bother himself with those meaningless squiggles. But if the Sen-Sen symbols are explicable, why does he use them at all? His only purpose would have been to impress others, but he keeps the whole operation strictly to himself and never circulates the Sen-Sen papyrus as he did the Facsimiles. And why on earth would he fasten on this particularly ugly little piece and completely bypass the whole collection of handsome illustrated documents at his disposal? Did he really think he was translating? If so he was acting in good faith. But was he really translating? If so, it was by a process which quite escapes the understanding of the specialists and lies in the realm of the imponderable.

No one has begun to look into the Sen-Sen problem seriously. . . . Today nobody claims that Joseph Smith got his information through ordinary scholarly channels. In that case one wonders how any amount of checking along ordinary scholarly channels is going to get us very far. (Dialogue, Summer, 1968, page 101)

When Dr. Nibley spoke at the University of Utah, May 20, 1968, he admitted that if Joseph Smith was “really translating the papyri” he did it in a way that is unknown to Egyptologists:

By what process could the Book of Abraham have been squeezed out of a few brief signs? Nobody has told us yet. Was Joseph Smith really translating the papyri? If so, it was not in any way known to Egyptology. Was he then merely pretending to translate them? But he never really put these symbols forth as his source. He published the facsimiles, but these always remained among his private papers. These were not for circulation. He’s not pretending to be doing anything here. He’s not seeking to impress anyone at all. Nobody knew about this little work he was carrying on. He never published them as he did the facsimiles. Did he really need these symbols? This is a funny thing. Are they actually the source upon which he depended? Well, if he really depended on them, he must really have been translating them. But, you say, he couldn’t possibly have been translating. Could he have used this as a source at all? These questions arise. If he was merely faking, of course, pretending to be translating them, well, he wouldn’t need the Egyptian text at all. Yet he used one, and he used it secretly. Why would he secretly make use of a text he didn’t need at all? This was just a nuisance, really, all these symbols. He’s not pretending to be doing anything here. He’s not seeking to impress anyone at all. It doesn’t answer any questions, because that name occurs frequently in it, the papyrus, in which a handful of Egyptian symbols was apparently expanded in translation to the whole Book of Abraham. According to this theory, he could have produced the latter without any reference to the former—that he could have written the Book of Abraham more easily, in fact, without having to bother himself with those meaningless squiggles. But if the Sen-Sen symbols are explicable, why does he use them at all? His only purpose would have been to impress others, but he keeps the whole operation strictly to himself and never circulates the Sen-Sen papyrus as he did the Facsimiles. And why on earth would he fasten on this particularly ugly little piece and completely bypass the whole collection of handsome illustrated documents at his disposal? Did he really think he was translating? If so he was acting in good faith. But was he really translating? If so, it was by a process which quite escapes the understanding of the specialists and lies in the realm of the imponderable.

No one has begun to look into the Sen-Sen problem seriously. . . . Today nobody claims that Joseph Smith got his information through ordinary scholarly channels. In that case one wonders how any amount of checking along ordinary scholarly channels is going to get us very far. (Dialogue, Summer, 1968, page 101)
FACING REALITY

In an article written for the Brigham Young University Studies, Dr. Nibley stated:

It has long been known that the characters “interpreted” by Joseph Smith in his Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar are treated by him as super-cryptograms; and now it is apparent that the source of those characters is the unillustrated fragment on which the word Sen-Sen appears repeatedly. This identifies it as possibly belonging to those writings known as The Book of Breathings, though that in turn is merely “compilations and excerpts from older funerary spells and burial formulas.” (Brigham Young University Studies, Spring, 1968, page 249)

While Dr. Nibley is willing to admit that the “Sensen” text contains the characters Joseph Smith used in his Book of Abraham manuscript and that this text may be from the Book of Breathings, he is not willing to face reality and admit that the Book of Abraham is a forgery. He is willing to admit that the Richard Parker has made a “fine” translation of the “Sensen” fragment, but he is unable to face the implications of this translation. Dr. Nibley has now gone so far as to claim that the “Sensen” text may have a second meaning unknown to Egyptologists:

…you very often have texts of double meaning… it’s quite possible, say, that this “Sensen” papyrus, telling a straightforward innocent little story or something like that, should contain also a totally different text concealed within it… they [the Egyptians] know what they’re doing, but we don’t. We don’t have the key. (Speech by Dr. Hugh Nibley, University of Utah, May 20, 1968)

In the same meeting Dr. Nibley was asked “if the key to this concentrated language is not had by Egyptologists, do we have any hope of having the Book of Abraham ever translated?” Dr. Nibley replied: “I don’t know. That’s an interesting thing. We don’t know what may turn up in another manuscript, or something like that.”

We feel that Dr. Nibley is guilty of deception when he claims that the Mormon Papyri may have a second meaning unknown to Egyptologists. This is about as ridiculous as claiming that the world is flat in this day of space travel. When Marvin Cowan asked Professor Richard Parker if that papyrus could have a second meaning, he replied that he knew of “no Egyptologist who would support such a claim” (Letter from Richard Parker, dated January 9, 1968).

It is becoming very obvious to many people that Dr. Nibley is just stalling. He has no answers to give his people, and he is doing his best to make the issue as confused as possible. In the speech he gave at the University of Utah he made this statement concerning his critics:

…why are they in such a hurry for rushing to judgement? What’s all the hurry about? People say I keep dragging my feet; of course I have been dragging [my feet]. There is no hurry here. Professor Atiya says, “Learn to be patient with the Egyptians.”

Evidently, Dr. Nibley wants us to forget about the papyri, and judge the Book of Abraham by its similarity to a number of old apocryphal writings. He states:

… it is folly to come out with a verdict about the Book of Abraham until we have studied fully and carefully the great and growing corpus of ancient Abrahamic literature, even if it takes us years to get through it; … the Book of Abraham itself is a book of legends about Abraham which can only be tested in the light of other such legends, which can at least give us hints as to whether Joseph Smith was making it all up or not. … the Abraham literature is of course a great hodge-podge of stuff coming from many different centuries. But because of the ways in which legends and traditions were swapped around, with very ancient and authentic bits sometimes turning up in the most unlikely places, often buried in bushes of nonsense, we cannot escape the obligation of reading everything. … Let’s not get ahead of the game, or overlook any possibility that there might be something there after all … it is just possible that there are things that might be said in favor of the Book of Abraham. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer, 1968, pages 102-105)

It appears that Dr. Nibley wants us to ignore the evidence which the “Sensen” fragment furnishes and wait for years while he searches through “bushels of nonsense” and “legends” hoping that he may find something that may be used as evidence for the Book of Abraham. Such a suggestion is absurd. What better evidence could there be than that furnished by the original text? To ignore this evidence is to ignore the truth entirely. The evidence is very clear. The Book of Abraham is a spurious translation. It has no historical basis, and it is plain that it is a work of Joseph Smith’s imagination! Truth now demands that the Mormon people repudiate this book and the anti-Negro doctrine that is contained in its pages.

We have prepared a 23-page booklet on this subject entitled, Is the Book of Abraham True? In this booklet we go into these matters in far greater detail than we have room to do here. We urge all of our readers to order it. We feel that it contains some of the best material we have ever compiled. Price: 50¢ — 3 for $1.00 — 10 for $3.00 — 20 for $5.00.

NIBLEY ENDORSES NELSON’S WORK

In the last Messenger we told that Dee Jay Nelson, a Mormon Egyptologist, was given photographs of the Mormon Papyri by special permission of N. Eldon Tanner (a member of the First Presidency) before they were published in the Improvement Era. Mr. Nelson translated the papyri, but he felt that the Church leaders would not print it. Therefore, he turned his work over to us for publication. On April 1, 1968, we submitted the following ad to the Newspaper Agency Corporation:

THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPYRI
A Translation & Preliminary Survey
BY DEE JAY NELSON

Price: 75¢
3 for $2.00 — 5 for $3.00 — 10 for $4.50
MODERN MICROFILM CO.
Box 1884 — Salt Lake City, Utah 84110
Utah mail orders add sales tax — we pay postage

The Salt Lake Tribune ran the ad, but the editor of the Deseret News informed us that they would not run it. We asked N. Eldon Tanner if he did not feel a moral obligation concerning the matter. He replied that he did not. We asked the editor of the Deseret News why the ad was rejected. He stated that he did not believe it was a correct translation. He claimed that he had a conversation with Dr. Nibley concerning Nelson’s work, and that Nibley had told him that he did not believe the translation was correct.

If Dr. Nibley made the statements that the editor of the Deseret News attributed to him (and we have no evidence that he did, other than this man’s word), he seems to have now changed his mind. Dr. Nibley wrote the following for the Brigham Young University Studies:

The publication to the Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri has now begun to bear fruit. Two efforts at translation and commentary have already appeared, the one an example of pitfalls to be avoided, the other a conscientious piece of work for which the Latter-Day Saints owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Dee Jay Nelson. … This is a conscientious and courageous piece of work … Nelson

Everyone Welcome!

We are now holding a Bible study in our home at 1350 S. West Temple, every Thursday evening at 8:00 pm. Everyone is welcome. This is not connected with any particular group or church. Attendance is open to everyone.

A PERSONAL GOD?

To all those who will send us their address and zip code we will send a FREE COPY of Is There a Personal God? This is a 56-page pamphlet by Jerald Tanner.
A REAL DIALOGUE

In the Spring of 1966 a group of Mormons published the first issue of a publication entitled, Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought. The editors of this journal claimed that they would present both sides of an issue, but we were rather skeptical and felt the they might eventually be controlled by the Mormon leaders and become like the Improvement Era. We felt that they would not accept an article from us. This spring, however, we worked with Grant Heward and prepared an article which we submitted to them. This article included some material which we have never printed before. In this article we produced photographic proof that Facsimile No. 2 of the Book of Abraham was altered before it was first published. We could hardly imagine that they would print this article since it dealt such a devastating blow to the authenticity of the Book of Abraham. To our great delight, however, they published it in the Summer 1968 issue. We understand that they printed 8,000 copies! This will reach many of the Mormon people who do not read our Messenger.

Just before the article appeared, one of the editors wrote us a letter in which he stated: “Actually it’s hard for me to believe that we’re actually going to publish your article. . . . I think that you can’t really say that we aren’t a forum anymore. At least, we’ve tried hard to move in that direction.” We must admit that the editors of Dialogue have made a courageous move in the last issue. They have given us a chance to present our views, and they have allowed Dr. Nibley to make a rebuttal. This is certainly fair. We must admit that this is a real dialogue. More important than this, however, is the fact that they have submitted photographs of the papyri to some of the most qualified Egyptologists in the world and have printed their translations and interpretations concerning the papyri. We must congratulate them for this move. It shows both honesty and courage.

We plan to sell copies of this particular issue (Summer 1968), since it contains so much material which is related to our work. The price for this issue is $2.00 for each copy. We cannot give any discount to dealers, and those who want back issues will have to write directly to the publishers.

MORE HARM THAN GOOD?

After the papyri were presented to the Mormon Church they were “turned over to Dr. Hugh Nibley, . . . for further research and study” (Improvement Era, January 1968, page 13). On page 19 of the same issue we were assured that Dr. Nibley “is eminently qualified for the project he has undertaken.” In the February issue of the same publication we were told that Dr. Nibley was going to unfold “the meaning of the hieroglyphics and illustrations on these valuable manuscripts” (Ibid., page 40-H). Dr. Nibley gave a “demonstration” of his “Egyptology at work” which was printed in the Brigham Young University Studies. This was a rendition of a name that appeared in the papyri. Dr. Nibley’s rendition was accepted by the Improvement Era:

The writings on the recently recovered fragments show that all of these Book of the Dead papyri belonged to the Lady Taimin Mutninesihonsu. (Improvement Era, February 1968, page 40)

It soon became obvious that Dr. Nibley had made a mistake. Dee Jay Nelson stated that Dr. Nibley’s work was “incorrect.” He showed that Nibley had “combined the name of the beneficiary of the papyrus and her mother . . . Taimin Mutninesihonsu is a transliteration combining the name Ta-sheret–Min with the connecting phrase meaning “daughter of,” mes en and Nes-Khensu (the mother’s name) (The Joseph Smith Papyri, page 48).

John A. Wilson also rendered this as two different names: “Document B is a Book of the Dead composed for a lady named Ta-sheret–Min (‘the Daughter of the god Min’) born to the lady Nes-Khonsu . . .” (Dialogue, Summer, 1968, page 71). Richard A. Parker also rendered this as two separate names (page 87).

After Dr. Nibley made this mistake, he seemed to give up the idea of unfolding “the meaning of the hieroglyphics and illustrations.” He has written the following in the Brigham Young University Studies:

We have often been asked during the past months why we did not proceed with all haste to produce a translation of the papyri the moment they came into our possession. Well, for thing others are far better equipped to do the job than we are, and some of those others early expressed a willingness to undertake it. But, more important, it is doubtful whether any translation could do as much good as harm. (Brigham Young University Studies, Summer, 1968, page 251)

It would appear, then, that Dr. Nibley was not qualified to give a translation of the papyri. If it had not been for Dialogue, Dee Jay Nelson, and Grant Heward we would still be in the dark concerning the meaning of the papyri. Dr. Nibley has had the papyri down at the B.Y.U. for six months, yet he has not given us a translation. Strange as it may seem, this is the same man who mocked the Egyptologists of 1912 for not taking Joseph Smith’s work seriously: “If such individuals could not take the thing seriously, they should have turned the assignment over to others who would be willing to do so if only for the sake of argument” (Improvement Era, April, 1968, page 66). We feel that Dr. Nibley’s words fit his own situation. If he “could not take the thing seriously,” why did he not turn “the assignment over to others who would be willing to do so?” Why did John A. Wilson and the other Egyptologist have to work from photographs while Dr. Nibley kept possession of the papyri?

PRAY FOR US

We are very thankful for those who have been praying for us and for our work. The Lord has really been blessing the work. The developments with regard to the papyri have been nothing short of miraculous. Many people’s eyes have been opened to the truth by this matter. With the Lord’s help we hope to see even more results. Please continue to pray for us.

A DELAY

Because of the importance of the papyri we have spent a great deal of time studying the Egyptian language and religion. Although this will help us in our writing concerning this subject, it has caused a delay in our two works, The Case Against Mormonism and The Mormon Kingdom. So far we have completed 112 pages of vol. 2 of The Case Against Mormonism, and hope to be mailing out more pages soon. This work will contain our best material concerning the Book of Abraham. The price for volumes one and two is $7.90—this includes a beautiful vinyl loose-leaf binder. We have completed 84 pages of the first volume of The Mormon Kingdom. This work sells for $4.95.
The Mormon Prophet David O. McKay made this statement in a letter dated November 3, 1947:

I know of no scriptural basis for denying the Priesthood to Negroes other than one verse in the Book of Abraham (1:26); however, I believe, as you suggest, that the real reason dates back to our pre-existent life. (Mormonism and the Negro, by John J. Stewart and William E. Berrett, Part 2, page 19)

Although the President of the Mormon Church could use this verse from the Book of Abraham in defense of the Church’s anti-Negro doctrine in 1947, today the Mormon leaders find themselves faced with a serious problem, for the Book of Abraham has been proven to be a spurious work. Wallace Turner wrote the following in the New York Times:

San Francisco, July 14 — Papyrus fragments about 2,300 years old have created bitter wrangling among intellectuals of the Mormon world. The argument is theological and archeological, but it could turn sociological by undermining the scriptural basis for the Mormon’s discrimination against Negroes.

Since the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York gave the fragments to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints last November, the ancient documents have reopened old disputes about the divinity of the inspiration of Joseph Smith Jr., the Mormon Prophet.

The papyri are part of an Egyptian scroll acquired by the Mormons in 1835 and translated by Smith as the Book of Abraham, one of the Mormons’ sacred works.

It had been assumed for decades that all of the original papyri were destroyed in the Chicago fire. The discovery last year that 11 papyrus fragments in the Metropolitan Museum had been involved in the production of the Book of Abraham was an electrifying event for Mormon intellectuals. . . .

The attack has come from within the Mormon community, from scholars who were born into Mormonism but who no longer believe. Most of the 2.5 million Mormon church members have paid scant attention.

Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, now in its third year as the single nonchurch-controlled publication aimed at Mormons, devotes a section of its summer issue to examining the papyri controversy. The editors are devout Mormon scholars.

But one article in Dialogue was written by two heretics notorious to the church establishment in Salt Lake City. They are Jerald Tanner, who left the church several years ago, and Grant S. Heward, recently excommunicated.

They maintain that one of the fragments, when compared with the Smith manuscript of the Book of Abraham, shows this:

“Joseph Smith apparently translated many English words from each Egyptian character. The characters from fewer than four lines of the papyrus make up 49 verses of the Book of Abraham, containing more than 2,000 words.”

They argue that “the Egyptian characters cannot conceivably have enough information channels (component parts) to convey the amount of material translated from them.”

The church’s answer, also in Dialogue, came from Dr. Hugh Nibley, a faculty member of the church’s Brigham Young University.

In the working paper used by the Prophet Joseph, Dr. Nibley wrote, the Egyptian symbols were only headings. “Today nobody claims that Joseph Smith got his information through ordinary scholarly channels,” he said. (New York Times, Thursday, July 5, 1968)
Dee Jay’s research in Egyptology began . . . when he was discharged from the U.S. Submarine Service. After making a superficial study of ancient languages in the States he decided to add some dimension to his scant knowledge, so he traveled as a stoker in the black bunkers of a freighter to Egypt where he attached himself to the fallahin crew of Hussein Ibrahim, excavation foreman working under Zakaria Goneim, at Memphis. The late Zakaria Goneim was for many years keeper of antiquities at the Necropolis of Saqqara. Dee Jay studied three forms of the ancient language under this famous Egyptian Egyptologist. . . . His studies have taken him several times to Europe and six times to the Middle East where he has conferred with experts . . . His discoveries inspired King Farouk to present him with a small collection of Egyptian antiquities which he has added to over the years.

Reed Neuberger gave this information which was published in the Montana Arts, vol. 20, no. 1, page 21:

Dee Jay Nelson is an internationally-known lecturer on archaeological and natural history subjects and has presented just over 4,000 lectures in four countries and 46 states . . .

In the past ten years the Nelsons have made six trips to the Middle East to film historic relics and to conduct archaeological excavations. Two of these have been in Egypt, one at Giza and the second at Saqqara. Among their discoveries were a set of bronze plates inscribed with ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics dating from about 1,400 B.C. These are now a part of their own private collection of antiquities.

Mr. Nelson, an Egyptian philologist by avocation, reads, writes and speaks ancient Egyptian, being skilled in reading hieroglyphics, hieratic and Coptic. His original researches include the first translation of the “The Egyptian Book of Life, . . .”

Mr. Nelson has become a nationally known explorer naturalist. He is a member of the Adventurers Club and gives lectures on the Dead Sea Scrolls. In 1957 he was invited by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion to make the first motion picture of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Since Dee Jay Nelson is an Elder in the Mormon Church, he has taken a great deal of interest in the Book of Abraham. At that time he had only the Facsimiles in the Book of Abraham with which to work.

Dr. Hugh Nibley, of the Brigham Young University, learned of Mr. Nelson’s abilities and felt that he would be “enormously useful to the Church.” On January 4, 1968, Mr. Nelson visited with Dr. Nibley at the Brigham Young University and examined the papyri. Dr. Nibley agreed that Nelson should translate the papyri and sent a note to N. Eldon Tanner (a member of the First Presidency) stating that “it would be a good idea to let Prof. Dee J. Nelson have copies” of the papyri. After completing the translation, Mr. Nelson contacted us and asked if we wanted to print it. He felt that Dr. Nibley seemed to be stalling and that his people should know the truth about the papyri; therefore, he decided to let us publish his findings.

Evidently the Mormon leaders did not want their people to know the truth about the papyri, for the Church’s newspaper, Deseret News, would not allow us to advertise Mr. Nelson’s translation. Strange as it may seem, however, Dr. Nibley gave his endorsement to Mr. Nelson’s work:

The publication of the Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri has now begun to bear fruit. Two efforts at translation and commentary have already appeared, the one an example of pitfalls to be avoided, the other a conscientious piece of work for which the Latter-day Saints owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Dee Jay Nelson. . . . This is a conscientious and courageous piece of work . . . Nelson has been careful to consult top-ranking scholars where he has found himself in doubt. He has taken the first step in a serious study of the Facsimiles of the Pearl of Great Price, supplying students with a usable and reliable translation of the available papyri that once belonged to Joseph Smith. (Brigham Young University Studies, Spring, 1968, pages 245 and 247)

Dr. Nibley also stated: “It would now seem that the Latter-day Saints are being pushed by force of circumstances through the door they have so long been reluctant to enter. And to Mr. Dee Jay Nelson goes the credit of being the first to make the plunge” (Brigham Young University Studies, Spring, 1968, page 254).

Dee Jay Nelson’s plunge into the study of Egyptology and the Book of Abraham, however, has forced him to reject the book. After many years of study, Mr. Nelson has come to the conclusion that the Mormon Church must give up the Book of Abraham. In a letter dated July 13, 1968, he stated:

I have been swamped lately by letters and long distance telephone calls from troubled people. Almost every one of them asks if I really believe that the Book of Abraham is untrue and each seems almost pleadingly eager for me to defend it. To each I have said that I do not believe it.

Mr. Nelson informed us that in one week he “received 33 letters and 19 long distance calls about the Book of Abraham and the papyri.” Previous to this he had counted 40 letters in a “two month period.” Even though Mr. Nelson has been busy answering questions, he has completed two new books which show why the Mormon Church must repudiate the Book of Abraham. These books are entitled, The Joseph Smith Papyri, Part 2 and Joseph Smith’s “Eye of Ra,” A Preliminary Survey and First Translation of Facsimile No. 2 in the Book of Abraham.

In the Introduction to The Joseph Smith Papyri, Part 2, Mr. Nelson states:

My views are as sympathetic to the Latter-day Saints Church teachings as they can be without compromising the accepted and proven principles of Egyptology . . . I find myself standing precariously between two poles. Truth will triumph in the end.

IDENTIFICATION CORRECT

In the Salt Lake City Messenger for March, 1968, we stated: “The fall of the Book of Abraham has been brought about by the identification of the piece of papyrus from which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham.”

Dee Jay Nelson confirms the fact that the piece of papyrus Joseph Smith used as the basis for his Book of Abraham is among the papyri which the Metropolitan Museum gave to the Mormon Church in November of 1967. He states:

What do the newly discovered “Metropolitan Papyri” have to do with the Book of Abraham? The original ancient Egyptian text from which Joseph Smith “translated” the Book of Abraham has been found! A substantial part of it can be seen in column 1 (right hand) on the smaller Hor Sensen Papyrus Fragment (unillustrated) . . .

DIALOGUE

The Summer 1968 issue of Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought contains a great deal of interesting information on the Mormon Papyri. Besides translations of the Papyri by top Egyptologists (John A. Wilson and Richard Parker), this issue contains an article by the R.L.D.S. Church Historian Richard P. Howard. Also included is an article by Grant Heward and Richard Parker, a rebuttal by Dr. Hugh Nibley.

Because this issue contains so much material which is related to our work we have decided to sell it. The price is $2.00 for each copy. We cannot give any discount to dealers, and those who want back issues will have to write directly to the publisher.
How do we know that Joseph Smith “translated” the Book of Abraham from column 1 of the Hor Sensen Fragment No. 1? Joseph Smith tells us that it is so in the most positive of ways by supplying a list of the ancient characters and attaching to it the “translation.” This list of characters, though crudely copied, precisely matches the first two lines of hieratic characters in column 1 on Hor Papyrus Fragment No. 1. Joseph Smith’s character list and the attached “translation” is found in the notebook entitled Grammar and Alphabet of the Egyptian Language. Before the disclosure that the Joseph Smith Papyri had been found in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, I had succeeded in identifying the characters accompanying Joseph Smith’s “translation” as traditional hieratic and had, in spite of the poor quality of the copy, identified several individual characters, but it was Grant Wether who later pointed out to me that the characters drawn by Joseph Smith in the left hand margin of the Grammar and Alphabet were the same as in the Original Hor Sensen text. The fact is indubitable. The “translation” starts on page 3 of the Grammar and Alphabet and almost exactly matches the published version of the Book of Abraham beginning with Chapter 1, verse 4 and ending with Chapter 2, verse 5. We can be absolutely sure that Joseph Smith intended the “translation” to match the characters written down the left margin because beginning on page S (there is some inconsistency in his page numbering) he again lists the characters in the margin and repeats the “translation” almost word-for-word. The groups of marginal characters are in each instance represented by the same “translations.” If the characters were irrelevant and independent of the “translation,” as some have suggested, they would not have been so meticulously placed and identically oriented in each of the two “translations.” This fact proves without a doubt that the “translation” relates to the marginal characters and to no others. (The Joseph Smith Papyri, Part 2, pages 13-14)

A FALSE TRANSLATION

In The Joseph Smith Papyri, Part 2, Dee Jay Nelson devotes 10 pages to the “Sensen” text and proves beyond all doubt that Joseph Smith’s “translation” of it—i.e., the Book of Abraham—is completely false. On page 14 he states:

Let us compare a portion of Joseph Smith’s Grammar and Alphabet Book of Abraham “translation” with a traditional translation. The words which I have marked Nos. 5 and 6, according to Joseph Smith read, “Now after the priest of Elk Kee nah was smitten that he died there came a fulfilment of those things which were spoken unto me concerning the land of Chaldea, that there should be a famine in the land; and accordingly a famine prevailed throughout all the land of Chaldea and my father was sorely tormented because of the famine, and he repented of the evil which he had determined against me, to take away my life: But the records of the fathers even the patriarchs concerning the right of priesthood the lord my God preserved in mine own hand; Therefore a knowledge of the beginning of creation and also of the planets, and of the stars, as it was made known unto the fathers, have I kept even unto this day.” This is a substantial “translation” (130 words) to be represented by 4 perfectly normal hieratic characters which any trained Egyptian philologists transliterate MS N (mes en) and mean “offspring of” or “born of.” Word No. 7 is the personal name of the mother, T3Y - Hbyt (Tai-Khebit), yet Joseph Smith tells us that these precise characters mean, “And I shall endeavor to write some of these things, upon this record, for the benefit of my posterity that shall come after me. Now the Lord God caused the famine to so sore in land of Ur insomuch that my brother died: but Terah my father yet lived in the land of Ur of the Chaldees. And it came to pass, that I Abram took Sarai to wife and Nehor my brother took Melkah to wife who was the daughter of Haran” (85 words). Compare these two parts of Joseph Smith’s “translation” with the Book of Abraham, Chapter 1, verse 29 through Chapter 2, verse 2.

On page 16-17 of the same book, Mr. Nelson states:

It was determined by a careful count that in current printed editions of the Pearl of Great Price, Book of Abraham, Chapter 1, verse 4 through Chapter 2, verse 5 there are precisely 1,125 English words. These were derived from 46 margin characters accompanying the two Grammar and Alphabet “translations.” This last figure is only approximately correct. . . If 46 is the correct number, the ratio of English words to Egyptian characters is 25 to 1. I have never heard of a written language, ancient or modern, which was this compact. Is this ratio realistic? It is possible to convey simple thoughts with a veritable mountain of words. I was sure that the message in the “translation” could be expressed more simply and this might make the ratio more feasible. To test this theory a computer was what I needed so I went to the Landa Data Center in California and put my problem to them. They agreed to program a computer to the task of calculating the mathematical possibility that the first two lines of column 1 of the Hor Sensen Fragment could produce the required minimum number of words to convey the message in the Book of Abraham, Chapter 1, verse 4 through Chapter 2, verse 5. The machine used was a Sigma 7 multi-use time sharing environment computer manufactured by the Scientific Data Systems Corporation, Los Angeles, California. I asked the operator to simplify the thoughts in the 1,125 word Book of Abraham “translation” without sacrificing any of the basic meanings. The computer answer was 482 words which means that each Egyptian character is supposed to translate into just over 10 English words. The ratio is still fantastic though we have given Joseph Smith’s claim the benefit of the doubt by reducing the English “translation” to its simplest form. This 10:1 ratio includes the proper nouns in the Book of Abraham. Between Chapter 1, verse 4 and the of Chapter 2, verse 5 there are 65 of them. These contain approximately 296 English vocabables excluding those least audible connecting vowels. The only reasonable way to represent proper names in a translation is transliterate them. The name of the god Mahmackrah has 10 letters representing 7 vocabables and it is repeated three times in the “translation.” Shagreel, a proper name with 8 letters, has 6 vocabables. Elkenah [has] 5 vocabables and it is repeated in the 33 verses five separate times. The 46 marginal Grammar and Alphabet characters can not duplicate the vocabables in the proper names in the “translation” and even if they could that would leave 1,060 words unaccounted for.

A SECOND MEANING?

Dr. Hugh Nibley, the Mormon apologists, has gone so far as to suggest that the “Sensen” text may have a second meaning unknown to Egyptologists:

. . . you very often have texts if double meaning . . . it’s quite possible, say, that this “Sensen” papyrus, telling a straight forward innocent little story or something like that, should contain also a totally different text concealed within . . . they [the Egyptian] know what they’re doing, but we don’t. We don’t have the key. (Speech by Dr. Hugh Nibley, University of Utah, May 20, 1968)

Dr. Nibley states that Joseph Smith treated the characters as super-cryptograms:

It has long been known that the characters “interpreted” by Joseph Smith in his Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar are treated by him as super-cryptograms; and now it is apparent that the source of those characters is the unillustrated fragment on which the word Sen-Sen appears repeatedly. This identifies it as possibly belonging to those writings known as The Book of Breathings, though that in turn is merely “compilations and excerpts from older funerary spells and burial formulas.” (Brigham Young University Studies, Spring 1968, page 249)

Dee Jay Nelson shows that Dr. Nibley’s suggestion that the Sensen text might have a “different text concealed within it” is absolutely ridiculous:

Some say Joseph Smith did not translate the literal meaning of those two Hor Sensen lines but rather the crypto-meaning. This is not even remotely possible. Cryptograms invariably had meanings allied to the literal meanings. In any case, the complex idea in Joseph Smith’s “translation” outnumber the elements in the hieratic characters which could contain the cryptogram code. It is mathematically impossible to express the total complexities of Joseph Smith’s “translation” with the characters involved. (The Joseph Smith Papyri, Part 2, page 14)

A PERSONAL GOD?

To all those who will send us their address and zip code we will send a FREE COPY of Is There a Personal God? This is a 56-page pamphlet by Jerald Tanner.
In the book, *Joseph Smith’s “Eye of Ra.”* Dee Jay Nelson shows that what Joseph Smith claimed was the Book of Abraham was in reality a pagan text which was written more than a thousand years after the time of Abraham:

Biblical experts believe that Abraham lived sometime around 1800 B.C., but the calligraphy, spelling and contents of the Hor Sensen Papyrus give every indication that it was not written until nearly the time of Christ (possibly shortly after). Egyptologists believe that the Sensen texts (Book of Breathing) were not even composed until about the Seventh Century B.C. There are inconsistencies here. To compound the divergency, the traditional translation of the Sensen funerary text deals with matters unrelated to the subject matter of Joseph Smith’s “translation.” I have read several publications by learned members of the Church who insist that the papyrus found in the Egyptian catacomb was not actually written by the hand of Abraham but that it was a copy of an original work by him. I can not read this meaning into the statement which I repeat for your consideration . . . “Translation of the Book of Abraham written by his own hand upon papyrus and found in the catacombs of Egypt.” Even if one concedes to the viewpoint that the papyrus possessed by Joseph Smith in the early Nineteenth Century was a copy and not the original, one is faced with the unmistakable fact that this ancient document deals with pagan gods and pagan beliefs without mentioning Abraham or anything even remotely associated with him. I have already given reasons why it is unlikely that a hidden message or cryptogram is in this text. Certainly it could not convey such an irrelevant account as is contained in the Book of Abraham. The title of this longer manuscript is quite explicit in stating that this “translation” which Joseph Smith did had been taken from “writing(s)” which were “upon papyrus.” This leaves no doubt as to where the Book of Abraham message reposed. The specific papyrus referred to is the Hor Sensen Papyrus which had been “found in the catacombs of Egypt.” If we accept Joseph Smith’s claims we are forced to the conclusion that the Hor Sensen Papyrus in addition to conveying a normal Book of Breathing message also tells in cipher a part of the history of Abraham. If the many other papyri which have been found inscribed with this text contain the same coded history of Abraham and he was the author of the first of these from which all others were copied this would be very real condensation of the ancient Patriarch because religious meanings of the Book of Breathing (Sensen) are as pagan as can be and flaunt religious practices which were most abhorrent to Abraham. (Joseph Smith’s “Eye of Ra,” page 25)

To be well informed about the papyri question the reader should have both of Dee Jay Nelson’s new books, *The Joseph Smith Papyri, Part 2,* and *Joseph Smith’s “Eye or Ra.”* We highly recommend both these books.

**RIDICULOUS IDEAS!**

After we published the last issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger we received the following letter:

I’ve read your articles and in spite of everything you said I testify I know the Book of Abraham is the Word of God. If I was President McKay I would order that Grant S. Heward be assassinated.

In a letter dated July 20, 1968, this same man stated: “God knows I don’t really want the murder of Mr. Heward.” Instead, he had another solution. He felt that the President of the Church should order that the papyrus be destroyed:

I’ve come to the conclusion that the manuscript found was not the manuscript the Prophet Joseph Smith used. I think it is a forgery to force the Church to give the Negroes the Priesthood. If I was President McKay I would have the manuscript destroyed.

We do not feel that this man is typical of the Mormon people. In fact, his letters show evidence that he is not a well-adjusted person. Nevertheless, his thinking concerning the Book of Abraham is somewhat similar to that of many other Mormons. They would not go so far as to suggest that the papyrus or Grant Heward be destroyed, but they feel that the Book of Abraham is the “Word of God” and that any evidence to the contrary must be ignored. Dr. Nibley’s suggestion that the papyrus might have a second meaning is almost as ridiculous as the idea that it is a “forgery.” And his suggestion that we ignore the evidence furnished by the papyrus and judge the Book of Abraham by its similarity to a number of old apocryphal writings is preposterous. The Mormon people cannot afford to wait for “years” while Dr. Nibley searches through these old “legends.” Now is the time to face this problem. The evidence furnished by the original papyrus is very clear. The Book of Abraham is a spurious work. It has no historical basis, and it is plain that it is the work of Joseph Smith’s imagination! Truth now demands that the Mormon people repudiate this book and the anti-Negro doctrine contained in its pages.

**WHICH WAY TO HAPPINESS?**

J. B. Phillips made this statement concerning the sad condition of the world:

The diagnoses of the world’s sickness (and, therefore, of the individuals who comprise the world) is that the power to love has been wrongly directed. It has either been turned in upon itself or given to the wrong things. The outward symptoms, and the results, of this misdirection are plainly obvious (at least in other people) in what we call “sin” or “selfishness.” The drastic “conversion” which God-become-Man [Christ] called for is the reversal of the wrong attitude, the deliberate giving of the whole power to love, first to God, and then to other people. Without this reversal He spoke quite blantly of a world doomed to destruction. (*Your God Is Too Small,* page 121)

Myron Augsburger wrote:

True love cannot be expressed for things, for things only serve personal ends and affections for things is turned inward and is closed and selfish. Love for a person is outgoing and genuine as it cares to share relationship rather than to use the person . . . Only the born-again person knows the transformation of divine love through the indwelling Spirit, and can express a measure of the love that Jesus commanded toward both friends and enemies. . . . The evidence that one has been delivered from the selfishness of sin is the expression of Christian love. The Christ-indwelled person is a disciple of the inner life, one whose motive is the glory of his Lord. (*Plas Living,* pages 25, 26, 27 & 45)

**SPECIAL OFFER ON “CASE”**

Our most important work on Mormonism is entitled, *The Case Against Mormonism.* In this work we have covered such subjects as: changes in Mormon publications, changes in Joseph Smith’s revelations, Joseph Smith’s First Vision and the Book of Mormon. We plan to have a great deal of information concerning the papyri and the Book of Abraham. In fact, we have already completed 32 pages on this subject.

The first volume is now finished, and we have completed 144 pages in the second volume. The remaining pages will be mailed out as soon as they are completed. To receive both these volumes and a vinyl loose-leaf binder the customer would normally pay $7.90. We are having a special, however, and if these two volumes are ordered before October 15, 1968, the price will be only $6.95.

**ORDER TODAY!**

Another book, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre,* has sold out. This makes 21 publications which are no longer available. Since we have no plans to reprint these books they have become collector’s items and will become more valuable as time goes on. For instance, the book 3,913 *Changes in the Book of Mormon,* originally sold for $5.00, but there are a number of people today who would be willing to pay $25.00 to obtain a copy.

A number of our books are almost sold out; therefore, this may be your last chance to order them. PLACE YOUR ORDER TODAY!

+ Donations +

A number of people have made donations to help us in our work. We are always glad to receive these, but we should probably warn our readers that they cannot be deducted from their income tax.
From the very first day that the Metropolitan Museum presented the papyri to the Mormon Church, the Church leaders were willing to admit that the drawing which Joseph Smith used for Facsimile No. 1 in the Book of Abraham was among the manuscripts. They were reluctant to admit, however, that the fragment of papyrus from which Joseph Smith “translated” the text for the Book of Abraham itself was among the collection. In the Salt Lake City Messenger, March 1968, we pointed out that the fragment of papyrus which Dr. Nibley labeled “XI. Small ‘Sensen’ text (unillustrated)” was the fragment Joseph Smith “translated” the Book of Abraham from. Below is a photograph of the right side of this papyrus.

Illustration No. 1 — A photograph of the right side of the fragment of papyrus from which Joseph Smith “translated” the Book of Abraham.

In the Improvement Era, May 1968, Dr. Nibley admitted that the papyrus Joseph Smith used “in preparing the text of the Book of Abraham” had been located. At a meeting held at the University of Utah, May 20, 1968, Dr. Nibley stated:

Within a week of the publication of the papyri students began calling my attention . . . to the fact that, the very definite fact that, one of the fragments seemed to supply all of the symbols for the Book of Abraham. This was the little “Sensen” scroll. Here are the symbols. The symbols are arranged here, and the interpretation goes along here and this interpretation turns out to be the Book of Abraham.

This fragment of papyrus has now been translated by three different Egyptologists, and they have all come to the conclusion that it is in reality an appendage to the Egyptian “Book of Breathings” and has nothing to do with Abraham or his religion. Therefore, the Book of Abraham has been proven to be a spurious work.

When the Improvement Era published photographs of the papyri in the February 1968 issue, we were told that Dr. Nibley would unfold “the meaning of the hieroglyphics and illustrations on these valuable manuscripts” (page 40-H). Eight months have passed and Dr. Nibley still has not unfolded the meaning “of the hieroglyphics and illustrations.” Finally, in the November 1968 issue Dr. Nibley admits that he does not intend to deal with the “Sensen” papyrus which Joseph Smith used as the basis for his Book of Abraham. Instead, he intends to deal only with the Facsimiles:

From the very beginning this writer has been rightly accused of an almost callous unconcern for the newly located papyri (all except that one matching Facsimile 1) as evidence for or against the authenticity of the Book of Abraham . . . in the following articles we are going to discuss only the Facsimiles and the interpretation thereof, passing by in silence those writings which do not belong to the Book of Abraham, even though that book may have been the end product of a process in which they had a part . . .

For those who wish to attack or defend the Pearl of Great Price, there is quite enough material contained in the facsimiles to keep things lively for some time to come, without having to wrangle about hypothetical claims while the clear-cut claims of the facsimiles go unheeded. (Improvement Era, November 1968, pages 36-38)
FALSIFICATION PROVEN

Even though we will not accept Dr. Nibley’s suggestion that we ignore the “Sensen” text, we feel that a very good case could be made against the Book of Abraham on the basis of the facsimiles alone.

Although the original of Facsimile No. 2 has not been located, the papyri that have been found prove beyond all doubt that the drawing which appears in the Book of Abraham has been falsified. Evidently the original disk which Joseph Smith had was damaged. Portions of it were either unreadable or they had fallen away, and when the Mormons made the woodcut for Facsimile No. 2, they falsely inserted writing from the papyrus which was not on the original disk. The fact that part of the original was either missing or damaged is proven by a drawing which appears in Joseph Smith’s *Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar*. This drawing was suppressed for 130 years. The reader will find a photograph of this drawing in Illustration No. 2 shown above. Notice the missing areas on this drawing. In Illustration No. 3 the reader will find a photograph of Facsimile No. 2, as it was first published in the *Times and Seasons* in 1842. Notice that the missing areas have been filled in.

Grant Heward has been convinced for some time that Facsimiles No. 2 contains portions that have been falsified. He finally came to the conclusion that the damaged or missing areas around the edge of Facsimile No. 2 had been filled in with hieratic characters. (This is supposed to be written in hieroglyphic characters.) Working on this theory he made an astounding discovery. He found that the characters had been copied from the same piece of papyrus Joseph Smith used as a basis for the text in the Book of Abraham (see Illustration No. 1 on first page). One group of characters from line two of the “Sensen” fragment was copied twice along the edge of Facsimile No. 2. The characters which follow were taken from line 3. The remaining characters were probably taken from line 4, but they are poorly copied. The readers will see that Mr. Heward was correct by comparing the characters in Illustration No. 3.

At the time Grant Heward was making his discovery concerning the characters that were inserted around the outer edge, we were examining Facsimile No. 2 and found the word “Sensen” written in Figure 14 (Joseph Smith assigned numbers to different portions of the disk). A more careful check revealed that the entire name of the “Book of Breathings” had been written in Figures 14 and 15. These characters were taken from the fourth line of the fragment which has been identified as the one used for the Book of Abraham text (see Illustration No. 2 shown above).

It also appears that the area at the top of Facsimile No. 2 showing a god in a boat was evidently copied from the fragment of papyrus which Dr. Nibley labeled “IV. Framed (‘Trinity’) papyrus” (see Illustration No. 2).

After carefully examining this evidence we worked with Grant Heward and prepared an article which was published in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1968, pages 92-98. In the face of the documented proof which we presented, Dr. Nibley maintains that Facsimile No. 2 has not been falsified:

> Then too, we must recognize that there are sections of hieroglyphic text in Facsimile 2 that present-day Egyptologists read without too much trouble: since these legible portions are found to be correct and conventional Egyptian, it is perfectly plain that nobody has falsified or jumbled them, as was charged. That is to say, whenever the text can be checked, everything is found to be in order. (*Improvement Era*, September 1968, page 74)

We feel that Dr. Nibley is deliberately misrepresenting the facts with regard to this matter. It is plain for anyone to see that everything is not in order. The Mormon Egyptologist Dee Jay Nelson states:

> An article entitled “The Source of the Book of Abraham identified” by Grant S. Heward and Jerald Tanner which appeared in the summer issue of *Dialogue* (page 92), pointed out that several hieratic passages from the Hor Sensen Papyrus had been copied onto the right hand portion of Facsimile No. 2 which appears in printed editions of the Book of Abraham . . . It also demonstrated in an excellent illustration that part of line 4 of column 1 on the same Hor Sensen Fragment had been copied onto the right hand ends of each of those three horizontal lines which are designated on Facsimile No. 2 as Figs. 13, 14 and 15. I critically examined these claims and found that they were absolutely correct . . . I am convinced that hieratic did not appear upon the original ancient article because those areas upon which this type of script is written precisely agree with those areas which have been left blank on the hypocephalus ink drawing . . . The places where the hieroglyphic writing ends and hieratic begins on printed copies of Facsimile No. 2 are precisely the same as the places where the hieroglyphic writing ends and blank spaces appear on the . . . drawing. I believe that Joseph Smith, Mr. Reuben Hedlock (the engraver) or one of Smith’s associates copied the characters from the Hor Papyrus onto the woodcut master to fill the areas which were damaged and unreadable on the original hypocephalus. These amulets are very fragile and subject to damage . . .

Why did Joseph Smith copy parts of the Hor Sensen Papyrus and the so-called Book of Abraham characters upon a printed cut of an irrelevant and pagan object such as the hypocephalus represented in Facsimile No. 2? The fact that he (or an associate) did so is inescapable . . . (Joseph Smith’s “Eye of Ra,” by Dee Jay Nelson, pages 22, 23 and 25)

Facsimile No. 2 was reconstructed in a very peculiar way. First, areas that are blank in the drawing in the “Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar” have been filled in with characters and drawings from other documents. Second, line of hieratic and hieroglyphic writing are joined together in a strange way—
introducing foreign and unrelated thoughts. Third, to add to the confusion, the hieratic writing is inserted upside down in relation to the hieroglyphic text on the same lines.

The information which we have presented shows beyond all doubt that Joseph Smith did not have any idea of what the Egyptian language or drawings were all about. He did not even seem to know when the Egyptian writing was upside down. The most serious indictment against him, however, is that he falsified the documents and made many imaginative additions to the drawings.

Dr. Hugh Nibley claims that Joseph Smith cannot be held responsible for mistakes in the Facsimiles:

First of all, Joseph Smith did not draw the Facsimiles; they were the work of a professional wood engraver, Reuben Hedlock, . . . Some critics have noted that some of the numbers that have been added to Facsimiles 2 are upside down, and have again assumed that Joseph Smith put them that way; but as R. C. Webb points out, “There is no evidence before us that Smith is responsible for it.” (Improvement Era, February, 1968, page 20)

While Joseph Smith cannot be held responsible for charges made after his death, he is certainly responsible for the falsifications that were made when the Book of Abraham was first published in 1842. Actually, Joseph Smith was the editor of the Times and Seasons at the time the facsimiles were printed. Under the date of March 4, 1842, we find this statement in his history:

During the forenoon I was at my office and the printing office, correcting the first plate or cut of the records of Father Abraham, prepared by Reuben Hedlock, for the Times and Seasons, . . . (History of the Church, vol. 4, page 519)

Under the date of March 4, 1842, we find this entry in Joseph Smith’s History:

Friday, 4. — At my office exhibiting the Book of Abraham in the original of Brother Reuben Hedlock, so that he might take the size of the several plates or cuts, and prepare the blocks for the Times and Seasons; and also gave instruction concerning the arrangement of the writing on the large cut, illustrating the principles of astronomy; with other general business. (History of the Church, vol. 4, page 543)

The “large cut” refers to Facsimile No. 2 because it was printed “in double page size” in the Times and Seasons.

Joseph Smith’s statement that he “gave instructions concerning the arrangement of the writing” on this cut becomes much more significant now that we know that portions were added from other documents. Thus we see that Joseph Smith would have been aware of the falsifications made in the Facsimiles, and therefore he stands responsible for the fraudulent reconstruction.

**FACSIMILE NO. 1**

Egyptologists have always claimed that Joseph Smith was in error when he interpreted Facsimile No. 1 as an idolatrous priest trying to sacrifice Abraham on an altar. They feel that this is in reality the god Osiris on a couch who is attended by the god Anubis. A century ago the French Egyptologist Theodule Deveria claimed that the Mormons had altered the scene shown in Facsimile No. 1. In 1912 Dr. Albert M. Lythgoe, head of the Department of Egyptian Art of the Metropolitan Museum, made a similar charge:

Dr. Lythgoe took up some of the slight discrepancies in the Mormon pictures from the Egyptian originals. He expressed the wish that he might see the original papyrus that the Prophet Smith translated or a photograph of it, instead of drawings made from it. In the first of the Mormon figures the god Anubis, bending over the mummy, was shown with a Human and a strangely un-Egyptian head, instead of the jackal’s head usual to such a scene. (New York Times, Magazine Sect., December 29, 1912)

The Mormon leaders denied that alterations had been made, but now that we have the original papyrus their position has been considerably weakened because the portions of the papyrus that have been in question are missing (see Illustration No. 4).

Dr. Aziz S. Atiya, the man credited with finding the Mormon Papyri, stated that “the head had fallen off, and I could see that the papyrus was stuck on paper, nineteenth century paper. The head was completed in pencil, apparently by Joseph Smith, . . . (Improvement Era, January 1968, page 13).

Dr. Hugh Nibley has stated that the papyri “were in excellent condition when Joseph Smith worked with them.” He claims that Facsimile No. 1 was damaged after the woodcut was made for the Times and Seasons.

(Continued on page 4)

**VOL. 3 — ‘CASE AGAINST MORMONISM’**

We will soon begin printing the third volume of The Case Against Mormonism. The pages will be mailed out as they are printed (probably about 20 or more at a time). Volume 3 will be filled with new and important information concerning Mormonism. Some of this material represents years of research. In order to receive the pages as they are printed the reader must have a ring binder to keep the pages in. For those who have already ordered the other volumes and have the binder the price for vol. 3 will be $2.95. We realize, however, that some of our readers have not ordered the first two volumes or the binder. Therefore, we are giving a special price to those who order all three volumes at this time. The usual price for the three volumes and the binder (this is a top quality vinyl loose-leaf binder) is $10.85, but if they are ordered before December 15, 1968, the price will be only $8.95.

**A PERSONAL GOD?**

To all those who will send us their address and zip code we will send a FREE COPY of Is There a Personal God? This is a 56-page pamphlet by Jerald Tanner.
We feel that there is a great deal of evidence to show that the papyri were damaged when Joseph Smith obtained them. In 1837, just two years after Joseph Smith obtained the papyri, William S. West made this statement:

There were records torn by being taken from the roll of embalming salve which contained them, and some parts entirely lost, but Smith is to translate the whole by divine inspiration and that which is lost, like Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, can be interpreted as well as that which is preserved. (A Few Interesting Facts Respecting the Rise, Progress and Pretensions of the Mormons, as quoted in Pearl of Great Price Conference, 1964 ed., pg 55)

This statement shows that the papyri were not “in excellent condition” at the time Joseph Smith worked with them.

In a desperate attempt to save the Book of Abraham, Dr. Nibley has claimed that “an old portrait” of Joseph Smith’s mother proves that Facsimile No. 1 has not been altered. In Illustration No. 6 the reader will see a photograph of this portrait. Dr. Nibley makes this comment concerning it:

... evidence that Facsimile 1 has been honestly reproduced is found in an early independent copy of it by an artist (very probably non-Mormon) who was using it for purely decorative purposes and without the intention of proving anything. It is to be found in an old portrait of Lucy Mack Smith, the Prophet’s mother.... The picture was located by President Joseph F. Smith and Preston Nibley in a farmhouse near Nauvoo.

In 1942 President George Albert Smith, ... visited a relative, Salisbury Smith, ... Mr. Smith took the brethren to a farm near Carthage to see “Aunt Clara,” the 83-year-old daughter of Lucy, the youngest daughter of Lucy Mack Smith. She showed them a picture of her grandmother, ... She refused to part with the picture but allowed the brethren to have it photographed, ... In the portrait the artist has decorated the wall space behind his subject with her most prized possession—the original of Facsimile 1. ... there can be no doubt that it is the original papyrus hanging on the wall, ... Mrs. Smith would certainly not have gone to the expense and trouble of framing, and then have proudly displayed, a printed copy of no value whatever (they existed by the thousands) while she still had the original in her possession. The artist, ... has given us a rapid, fairly accurate, and unbiased sketch of what the papyrus looked like before it was damaged. It matches our printed reproductions, and not the proposed restoration. (Improvement Era, September 1968, pg 78)

Even though the photograph Dr. Nibley included in the Improvement Era was not clear, there were a number of reasons for believing that it was not a drawing of the original papyrus. To begin with, the portrait does not include the four lines of hieroglyphic writing found at the sides of the original papyrus (see photograph of original papyrus in Illustration No. 4). Dee Jay Nelson made this interesting observation:

The fragile nature of the ancient papyrus would not have allowed the sides to be folded under without breaking them. The original fragment could not have otherwise been framed as it is seen in the portrait. (Letter dated September 15, 1968)

A close examination of the photograph published in the Improvement Era revealed that numbers were present on the drawing. Dee Jay Nelson stated:

I examined the half-tone Era print under a low power microscope and found that even through the screening of the photograph one can distinguish numbers designating the various elements and that these numbers appear exactly in those locations where they are found upon this Facsimile in printed editions of the Book of Abraham. The numbers 2, 8 and 11 are the most definite. On a photograph ... rather than a half-tone print they should be even more evident. This indicated that it is a print hanging on the wall and not the original papyrus fragment.

Although we were convinced that numbers were on the photograph which appeared in the Improvement Era, we felt that it would be hard to convince others since the reproduction was so unclear. We felt that a good photograph of the original portrait would prove Dr. Nibley’s argument untrue.

Michael Marquardt began to do research with regard to this matter. His findings were sent to Wesley P. Walters (who has done so much for us in the past). Wesley Walters continued to do research with regard to this matter and finally found the original portrait in the possession of Charles W. Boyd in Chicago, Illinois. Wesley Walters has photographed this portrait and has allowed us to use it in the Salt Lake City Messenger. The reader will find this in Illustration No. 7. (We will probably have additional photographs in The Case Against Mormonism, vol. 3.) The reader will see that the numbers which appear in the published version of the Book of Abraham (see Illustration No. 5) are visible in this photograph. They appear in exactly the same places as on the printed version. The numbers which are most obvious are: 1, to the right of the bird’s head; 2, under the knife; 3, to the left of the standing figure; 7, on the second jar from the left; 8, between the first and second jar; 9, on the crocodile; 11, below the mouth of the crocodile.

Since these numbers do not appear on the original papyrus (see Illustration No. 4) and were added to the printed copies to explain the drawing, this could not possibly be a drawing of the original papyrus. Thus we see that the statement that this is the “original Papyrus hanging on the wall” has been proven untrue.

In The Case Against Mormonism, vol. 3, we will have a great deal of material concerning the falsification of the facsimiles.

**WORDS OF CHRIST:**

**I tell you the truth:** no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again. (John 3:3)

**I am the way, I am the truth,** I am the life; no one goes to the Father except by me. (John 14:6)

**From the inside, from a man’s heart, come the evil ideas which lead him to do immoral things, to rob, kill, commit adultery, covet, and do all sort of evil things; deceit, indecency, jealousy, slander, pride, and folly—all these evil things come from inside a man and make him unclean.** (Mark 7:21-23)
The Mormon Church leaders now claim that the church has almost 3,000,000 members, and they predict that if they continue to grow at the same rate they will have 10,000,000 members by 2000 A.D. (Deseret News, Church Section, October 21, 1967, page 1)

One Mormon wrote: “As a Mormon I am impressed with the tremendous growth of the Church. I understand that our membership will soon reach 3 million. I note with interest that while most other churches are floundering and drifting, the Mormon Church seems to be on course and as a result is a very successful religion. By 1975 we will probably be one of the five largest churches in America. As far as I know, the only problems the Church has are those associated with rapid growth.”

Is All Well in Zion?

While the growth of the Mormon Church has been rather impressive, we do not feel that this makes them “on course” or shows that there are no problems except those associated with rapid growth. Actually, there are very serious problems which the Mormon leaders must face if they continue to send missionaries throughout the world. The LDS missionary is supposed to tell each prospective convert that God has spoken from heaven and restored the true Church of Christ to the earth. After this he proceeds to tell the contact that his church is false. In fact, the handbook used by the missionary tells him that the contact must reach this conclusion: “There was a complete apostasy and my church is false.” In fact, the handbook used by the missionary tells him that the contact must reach this conclusion: “There was a complete apostasy and my church is false” (A Uniform System for Teaching Investigators, published by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, August 1961, page 9).

If God had actually spoken from heaven and established the Mormon Church, we would not object to this attack upon the contact’s religion, but there is convincing evidence that no such revelation has been given.

In fact, the very revelations upon which the LDS Church is based, i.e., the Book of Mormon, Pearl of Great Price, and the Doctrine and Covenants, can now be shown to be man-made.

Plagiarism

The Book of Mormon was supposed to have been translated from ancient gold plates by Joseph Smith, yet we have found that it quotes from the Westminster Confession which was not written until 1646 A.D. (see our Case Against Mormonism, vol. 2, pages 71-73). We have also shown a number of parallels between the Book of Mormon and the Wayway Sentinel, a newspaper in Joseph Smith’s area. On pages 107-108 of our Case Against Mormonism, vol. 2, we show that a statement which was supposed to have been made by Lehi almost 600 years before the time of Christ, quotes from the works of William Shakespeare, who was not born until 1564 A.D. Below is a comparison of the statement in the Book of Mormon with the words of Shakespeare:

2 Nephi 1:14

... from whence no traveler can return;

Shakespeare

... from whose bourn no traveller returns... (Hamlet, Act 3, Scene 1, as quoted in Commentary on the Book of Mormon, vol. 1, page 237)

The Mormon apologist Sidney B. Sperry, made this comment:

In fairness to critics, and in anticipation of future discussions of the problem, we wish to call attention to a particular word used in the quotations by both Lehi and Shakespeare, . . . The word we have in mind is “traveller.” It stands out like a sore thumb as far as Lehi is concerned. . . .

We are led to the conclusion that the only word that Joseph Smith might have put into Lehi’s mouth from Shakespeare, assuming he was exposed to the lines from Hamlet, is “traveller.” (The Problems of the Book of Mormon, 1964, pages 128-129)

Even though Dr. Sperry admits that the word “traveller” might have been “put into Lehi’s mouth from Shakespeare,” he states that it “would be very difficult to prove that Joseph Smith was familiar with the works of Shakespeare; it would be especially difficult to prove that he was acquainted with the Bard’s work at the time he made his translation of the Book of Mormon” (Problems of the Book of Mormon, page 124).

Although we have shown that “Shakespeare’s works, 10 vols.” were sold at the Wayway Bookstore in Joseph Smith’s neighborhood (Wayway Sentinel, January 26, 1825), we now have a much better idea of where Joseph Smith might have found these words. In 1825 Josiah Priest published a book in Albany, N.Y., entitled The Wonders of Nature and Providence Displayed. Rev. Wesley P. Walters has sent us a photograph of an original copy of this book containing a sticker showing that it belonged to the “Manchester Library.” This is very interesting because, according to Joseph Smith’s own story, he lived in “Manchester” (Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith 2:3). Mr. Walters also found that library records show that this book was checked out by a number of people during the year 1827. Therefore it was well known in the area of Palmyra and Manchester.

The interesting thing about this book is that it contains a story which quotes the words of Shakespeare. In quoting these words, however, they are in the wrong order, and this makes the end of the quotation almost identical to that in the Book of Mormon.

2 Nephi 1:14

... from whence no traveler can return;

Wonders of Nature

... from whence no traveller returns. (The Wonders of Nature and Providence Displayed, 1825, page 469)

NEW BOOK — A Translation & Study of Facsimile No. 3 by Dee Jay Nelson. Mr. Nelson has devoted a great deal of time to Facsimile No. 3 in the Book of Abraham. He realizes that he could be excommunicated from the Mormon Church, but he feels that the truth must be made known. This pamphlet contains many drawings. Price: 75¢
Because of this quotation we feel that there must be a relationship between these two books, and this is strengthened by a number of other important parallels. The Book of Mormon teaches that the Indians are the descendants of a group of Hebrews who came to America. The Wonders of Nature and Providence, Displayed (published five years before the Book of Mormon) contains “proofs that the Indians of North America are lineally descended from the ancient Hebrews” (Wonders, page 297).

Josiah Priest’s book contains a great deal of information about the Indians. It is interesting to note that Josiah Priest’s book speaks of the “isthmus of Darien” and uses the words “narrow neck of land.” These same words are found in the Book of Mormon. Below is a comparison:

**Ether 10:20**

... the narrow neck of land, by the place where the sea divides the land.

**Wonders of Nature**

... a narrow keck of land is interposed between two vast oceans. (page 598)

There are other important parallels which we hope to present in our work, The Case Against Mormonism.

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**Temple Ceremonies**

In past issues of the Messenger we have shown that the anti-Negro doctrine comes from the Book of Abraham, and that the translation of the papyri by Egyptologists has destroyed the basis of this doctrine. The translation of the papyri may have other serious effects upon the doctrines of the Mormon Church. The Mormon writer Hyrum L. Andrus, for instance, claims that Joseph Smith obtained “essential elements” of the LDS Temple Ceremony from the papyri:

Evidence indicates that Joseph Smith obtained the essential covenants, keywords, etc., of the temple ceremony from the writings of Abraham. (See Facsimile No. 2 figures 3 and 8.) ... Having obtained essential elements of this ceremony from the writings of Abraham, he then organized them into a formal ceremony, ... (God, Man and the Universe, 1968, page 334)

Now that it is plain that the papyri were nothing but pagan documents, Mormons must look elsewhere for the origin of these ceremonies. We feel that at least part of the Temple Ceremony came from Freemasonry.

Although the temple ceremonies are secret, several exposures have been printed. Temple Mormonism, Its Evolution, Ritual and Meaning, published in 1931, is supposed to be one of the most accurate accounts.

When we compared the temple ritual with the Masonic ceremony we were astonished by the similarities. For instance, the “five points of fellowship” are almost identical. In the Mormon ceremony we find the following:

The five points of fellowship are given by putting the inside of the right foot to the inside of the Lord’s, the inside of your knee to his, laying your breast close to his, your left hands on each other’s backs, and each one putting his mouth to the other’s ear, in which position the Lord whispers: Lord— “This is the sign of the token: “Health to the navel, narrow in the bones, ...” (Temple Mormonism, page 22)

In his book, Freemasonry Exposed, Capt. William Morgan gave this information concerning the “five points of fellowship” in the Masonic Lodge:

He (the candidate) is raised on what is called the five points of fellowship, which are foot to foot, knee to knee, breast to breast, hand to back and mouth to ear. This is done by putting the inside of your right foot to the inside of the right foot of the person to whom you are going to give the word, the inside of your knee to his, laying your right breast against his, your left hands on the back of each other, and your mouths to each other’s right ear (in which position alone you are permitted to give the word), and whisper the word Mahah-bone. He is also told that Mahah-bone signifies narrow in the bone. (Freemasonry Exposed, page 84)

William Morgan’s book was first published in Batavia, N.Y., in 1827. We know that it was a very popular book, and that the Mormon Apostle Heber C. Kimball had a copy. Although Joseph Smith was probably familiar with this book, the connection between Mormonism and Masonry is even closer than this, for Joseph himself joined the Masonic Lodge in Nauvoo in 1842. We find the following in Joseph Smith’s History under the date of March 15, 1842:

In the evening I received the first degree in Freemasonry in the Nauvoo Lodge, assembled in my general business office. (History of the Church, vol. 4, page 551)

The next day Joseph Smith stated:

I was with the Masonic Lodge and rose to the sublime degree. (History of the Church, vol. 4, page 552)

Less than two months later, May 4, 1842, Joseph Smith introduced the temple ceremonies, and according to his own statement, it was in the same room “where the Masonic fraternity meet occasionally”:

I spent the day in my general business office, or lodge room (that is where the Masonic fraternity meet occasionally, for want of a better place) in council with . . . Patriarch Hyrum Smith, . . . and President Brigham Young and Elders Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards, instructing them in the principles and order of the Priesthood, attending to washings, anointings, endowments and the communication of keys pertaining to the Aaronic Priesthood, and so on to the highest order of the Melchisedek Priesthood, . . . (History of the Church, vol. 5, pages 1-2)

Some Mormon writers have admitted that there are similarities between the temple ceremony and the Masonic ritual. E. Cecil McGavrin stated:

It is evident that the Masonic ritual embraces a few features that resemble the rudimental ceremonies of the Temple Endowment, yet these few points of similarity are largely restricted to the rituals pertaining to the Aaronic priesthood. (Mormonism and Masonry, page 197)

We feel that there are more than just a few points of similarity,” and we hope to document these parallels in the next chapter of our work, The Mormon Kingdom. Also, we plan to print the Mormon temple ceremony and show some of the important changes that have been made in it through the years. We want to bring the ceremony right up to date. One couple who has been through the temple about fifty times has helped us and another man who has been through over a hundred times has agreed to help.

The Mormon Kingdom, vol. 1 (which will have the information concerning the temple ceremony) usually sells for $4.95, but if it is ordered before March 31, 1969, the price will be only $4.45 (this includes a top quality vinyl loose-leaf binder. One hundred and four pages are already printed, and the rest will be mailed out as soon as they are printed.) — Special Prices: $4.45 — 2 for $8.05 — 4 for $13.45.

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**Lord Blesses Papyri Work**

In a letter, dated September 15, 1968, the Mormon Egyptologist Dee Jay Nelson wrote:

Does it not impress you that the fact against the Book of Abraham are coming one on the heels of another? I believe that God has decided that the time is right that these untruths (Book of Abraham) be unmasked (in this decade). Do you not also think that God is blessing us greatly by giving us this chance to serve His purposes!

We feel that we would be very ungrateful if we did not acknowledge the hand of God in this work, for he has blessed it in a wonderful way. We are able to testify that God “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Ephesians 3:20).

Dee Jay Nelson has completed another pamphlet concerning the Book of Abraham. It is entitled, A Translation and Study of Facsimile No. 3 in the Book of Abraham. On page 26 of this study, Dee Jay Nelson states: “... Joseph Smith’s explanation attached to Facsimile No. 3 is almost totally incorrect.” On page 5 of the same pamphlet, we find this statement by Mr. Nelson:

I am, per consequence, torn between two philosophic extremes . . . what I have been urged to believe as an Elder of my church and what I have been urged to believe as an Egyptologist. There is no reconciling the two!

If Joseph Smith, Jr. correctly interpreted the Pearl of Great Price illustrations we must conclude that the science of Egyptology is based upon fallacies and Egyptian philology is erroneous. I take exception to Joseph Smith’s interpretation of this Facsimile. It does not conform with the mass of archaeological evidence nor with the laboriously established principles of Egyptology.
Amazing Progress

In February, 1968, we began printing material concerning the papyri which were given to the Mormon Church by the Metropolitan Museum. Since that time we have made a great deal of progress. In fact, an article by Dr. Hugh Nibley which was recently published in the Brigham Young University Studies clearly reveals the progress we have made. As most of our readers know, Dr. Nibley was appointed by the Church leaders to defend the Book of Abraham, yet he has been unable to handle the job and now appears to be in a rather serious predicament.

In the Messenger for March, 1968, we demonstrated that one of the fragments of papyrus which the Metropolitan Museum gave to the Church—i.e., the “Small ‘Sensen’ text (unillustrated)” was the fragment Joseph Smith “translated” the Book of Abraham from. Dr. Nibley admitted that this fragment supplied “the symbols for the Book of Abraham,” but he was unable to explain how Joseph Smith derived the text of the Book of Abraham from it. The fragment was translated by qualified Egyptologists and found to be part of a pagan text known as the “Book of Breathings.” Dr. Nibley did not contest this, and in a speech delivered at the University of Utah, May 20, 1968, he stated:

By what process could the Book of Abraham have been squeezed out of a few brief signs? Nobody has told us yet. Was Joseph Smith really translating the papyri? If so, it was not in any way known to Egyptology.

Dr. Nibley’s recent article in the Brigham Young University Studies shows that he is no closer to finding an answer to this problem than he was on May 20, 1968. In this article he states:

We still suspect that there is a relationship between the two documents, but we don’t know what it is.

On October 12, 1968, two graduate students in Near Eastern studies at the University of Utah, R. Crapo and J. A. Tvednes, presented an interesting hypothesis to explain the relationship between the Breathing Certificate and the Book of Abraham... it seems that the idea is that if one takes the actual meaning of the hieratic signs in the order in which they occur, they can be roughly matched up with certain general themes of the Book of Abraham which occur in the same order. ... This would make the “Sen-Sen” papyrus a sort of prompter’s sheet. True, the document tells a connected and consistent story, but then it would have to do that in order to serve as an effective aid to memory by itself being easily memorized.

Far-fetched as it may seem, there are many ancient examples of this sort of thing, the best-known of which is the alphabet itself... The classic example of a work which condenses the meaning of whole chapters into a single letter is the Sefer Yetzirah, etc.

The condensing of matter on prompting sheets is a very old practice, etc. the famous Stele C14 in the Louvre “consists of sentences which read like the headings of chapters,” though they also make a connected text. We could, and in time probably will, furnish many examples of this sort of thing. In a preliminary statement in Dialogue it was suggested that the hieratic symbols placed over against the long sections of the Book of Abraham might be viewed not as texts but as topic headings. We still don’t know what the connection is, but one thing is certain—that the relationship between the two texts was never meant to be that of a direct translation. (Brigham Young University Studies, Autumn 1968, pages 101-102)

Dr. Nibley’s statement that the papyrus may have only been a “sort of prompter’s sheet” is certainly not in harmony with the statements of Joseph Smith concerning the papyrus and the translation. He stated:

... I commenced the translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, etc. (History of the Church, vol. 2, page 236)

Joseph Smith did claim that he made a direct translation of the papyrus, and in his history it is called “a correct translation” (History of the Church, vol. 2, page 352).

Dr. Nibley does not inspire much confidence in Joseph Smith’s work as a translator, for he states:

... Joseph Smith has made it clear that his inspiration is by no means bound to any ancient text, but is free to take wings at any time. (Brigham Young University Studies, Autumn 1968, page 71)

Since the Mormon leaders cannot show any connection between the meaning of the “‘Sensen’ papyrus and the text of the Book of Abraham, they should admit that the Book of Abraham is a work of Joseph Smith’s imagination. It should no longer be considered as scripture, and the anti-Negro doctrine contained in its pages should be rejected. Naomi Woodbury, a Mormon who has studied Egyptology, made this statement in a letter to the editor of Dialogue: A Journal of Thought:

Let us not lose sight of what I think is the primary importance of this papyri find. It can free us from our dilemma about excluding Negroes from the Priesthood. Perhaps our Father in Heaven intended the papyri to come to light now for just this purpose. I have shared the growing concern in the Church about this exclusion. (Dialogue, Autumn 1968, page 8)

Abraham’s Drawings?

When Joseph Smith printed the Book of Abraham he included three facsimiles which were supposed to have been drawn by Abraham. Although Egyptologists claimed that these were drawings from Egyptian funerary papyri, Mormon writers have defended them. William E. Berrett wrote:

The translation made by Joseph Smith, and facsimiles of some of the engravings, remain as one of the greatest contributions to the field of religion...

No prophet ever gave to the world a stronger challenge of his divine calling than did Joseph Smith in his publication of the Book of Abraham. (The Restored Church, page 144)

Anti-Mormon writers not only claimed that these drawings were pagan, but they also stated that the Mormons had falsified them before publication. Now that some of the original papyri have been located, both charges have been established.

Dr. Nibley tried to defend the facsimiles, but he has now found himself in a serious dilemma. In the Improvement Era for September 1968, Dr. Nibley claimed that “evidence that Facsimile I has been honestly reproduced is found in an... old portrait of Lucy Mack Smith,..." He claimed that the drawing showed the “original papyrus hanging on the wall,” and that it “matches our printed reproductions, and not the proposed restoration.”

Dr. Nibley’s photograph of it was very unclear, but Wesley P. Walters located the original portrait in Chicago, Illinois. The original proves beyond all doubt that it shows the printed facsimile and not the original papyrus. It even has the figure numbers that were added by Rueben Hedlock who made the engraving for the printed cut. Dr. Nibley now admits that he “overlooked” the numbers, and that it was only “after the article went to press” that he got his first good look at the picture. In a dialogue between himself and the opposition, Dr. Nibley states:

They: Speaking of naive suggestions, when you used that portrait of Lucy Mack Smith to guarantee the integrity of Facsimile No. 1 “before it was damaged,” why didn’t you call attention to the numbers indicating some of the figures in the pictures? The numbers weren’t part of the original papyrus, you know.

We: We completely overlooked the numbers until after the article went to press. Only then did we get our first good look at the picture. So you win a point. We now assume that the artists consulted the Hedlock reproduction. (BYU Studies, Autumn 1968, page 82)

On page 98-99 of the same article we find the following:

They (by letter): You admit that the sketch of Facsimile No. 1 in the Lucy Mack Smith portrait has the Hedlock numbers on it; yet you think it significant that it may indicate the actual state of preservation of the papyrus at the time the portrait was made. How do you reconcile the two propositions?

We: Well, naturally that artist would not keep his model sitting and suffering while he sketched in the little picture on the wall; with plenty of Hedlock reproductions going around he could easily fill in that part at his leisure—so he did. But at the same time he made an undeniable effort to indicate that the framed thing on the wall really was the original. Better photographs accent the wrinkling and the frame, and it still remains unthinkable that the old lady should have displayed a mere printed copy—the only “original” Hedlock would be a wood-block!
Even though Dr. Nibley now admits that the printed reproduction was “consulted” he still maintains that the portrait furnishes evidence concerning the state of the papyrus:

... in examining the portrait closely we discovered something of importance that is not discernible in the Improvement Era reproduction, something that is not in the Hedlock drawing. The artist has drawn a jagged line right across the top of the facsimile, cutting off the top both of the priest’s head and of the bird’s head but leaving the rest, including the knife in the priest’s hand untouched. The areas above the jagged line is of a slightly lighter shade than that below, and in the original may be of a different color. It seems to mark the limit of the papyrus, i.e., of the damage to the thing, at some time after the Mormons had acquired it. It is nearly all there. In other things also the painter of Mrs. Smith’s portrait departs from the Hedlock engraving.

They: What about the wrinkling? It seems to us that some of the wrinkles supposedly in the papyrus extend right out beyond and include the picture frame.

We: The paint could have run where the artists made extra heavy vertical markings (providing he used water colors), or else the wrinkles could belong to the big portrait itself, of which we have only a photograph. But the picture frame is clearly a frame, closely resembling the one in which other papyri are still mounted, and most of the wrinkling is definitely confined within its borders as if it really belonged to the papyri. (Brigham Young University Studies, Autumn 1968, pages 82-85)

It is hard to believe that Dr. Nibley would continue to try to see things in this portrait, especially after he had to admit that it contains the figure numbers from the printed facsimile. Wesley P. Walters has written a letter to Dr. Nibley which he has given us permission to quote. In this letter we find these statements:

I was surprised to see you still drawing conclusions from the Lucy Smith portrait, and yet you have never seen the original.

I have seen the original water color and can assure you that none of the points you have been making on the basis of poor photographs are correct. The wrinkles are not painted-in wrinkles, but wrinkles in the paper on which the entire painting was made. This can be seen from the enclosed photo, . . .

There is no painted-in line across the top as you try to indicate in your article. The color close-up enclosed should make this clear. What makes it appear to be a line in the photo you reproduced is partly due to the way the shadows made by the wrinkles in the paper fall. It is also due partly to the contrasty nature of the print which over-emphasized the streaky nature of the painting itself. As a person who did water colors all through high school and college, I can assure you that it is extremely difficult to get the color to flow evenly without settling more densely in at least one or two areas. This is the type of thing that has occurred in the area above the head of the reeling figure. This same type of spottiness occurs over the entire background behind Lucy Smith.

If you would make the effort to see the original in Chicago, I believe that even you would be convinced. It would at least save you the necessity of making retractions and would be far more fitting to one’s posture as a scholar.

(Letter dated January 23, 1968)

In Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer 1968, pages 92-98 evidence was presented which showed that the original of Facsimile No. 2 was damaged when Joseph Smith worked with it and that he made false restorations from the Book of the Dead and the Book of Breathings papyri which he had in his possession Dr. Nibley, however, maintained that Facsimile No. 2 had not been falsified:

Then too, we must recognize that there are sections of hieroglyphic text in Facsimile 2 that present-day Egyptologists read without too much trouble: since these legible portions are found to be correct and conventional Egyptian, it is perfectly plain that nobody has falsified or jumbled them, as was charged. That is to say, whenever the text can be checked, everything is found to be in order. (Improvement Era, September, 1968, page 74)

We were, of course, very disturbed to find that Dr. Nibley would deny these false restorations in the face of documented proof. We republished evidence in our last issue of the Messenger and were able to distribute thousands of copies. It seems that truth has prevailed, for Dr. Nibley now admits that “restorations” were made in Facsimile No. 2:

(4) The Hedlock engraving when compared with an early sketch showing parts of Facsimile No. 2 to be missing shows definite signs of attempted restoration.

(5) The restoration was not as extensive as the other sketch would indicate, and no clear instances of such have been demonstrated on Facsimile No. 1.

(6) The restorations on Facsimile No. 2 are limited to the filling in of gaps, not the alteration of existing symbols. (Brigham Young University Studies, Autumn 1968, page 92)

Even though Dr. Nibley now admits that restorations were made, he seems unwilling to face the implications:

They: Let’s turn to Facsimile No. 2, where we have much clearer evidence of restoration. In the Church Historian’s Office among the papers of the EAG is a rather well-done pen-and-ink sketch of the facsimile made by some Mormon at an early date. This, we believe, is the way the hypocephalus looked when it came into Joseph Smith’s hands; and in it there are certain parts missing and we are shown exactly what they are. Now these parts are not missing in the official engraving of the hypocephalus, Facsimile No. 2 which can only mean that they have been later supplied. You will notice that a large part of the inscription around the rim is missing, and this has been filled in with hieratic characters from other papyri definitely known to have been in the possession of Joseph Smith. So there you have it.

We: Since the restored portions of the rim with their crude repetitions (hardly an attempt to be subtle) are not a subject of inspired commentary, we don’t think that is too important. (BYU Studies, Autumn 1968, page 86-87)

Although Joseph Smith does not try to translate the writing around the rim, he states that it “will be given in the own due time of the Lord” (Pearl of Great Price, Book of Abraham, page 35). We feel that this matter cannot be as easily dismissed as Dr. Nibley would have us believe. To begin with, it shows that Joseph Smith knew absolutely nothing about the Egyptian language, for the portion which is added from the “Book of Breathings” is written in hieratic, whereas the writing that appears on Facsimile No. 2 is hieroglyphic writing. Also, the characters that were added into the blank area were added upside down, so that they read in the opposite direction to the rest of the text. The Mormon Egyptologist Dee Jay Nelson states: “For a Sensen (Book of Breathings) inscription to be written upon a hypocephalus is about as logical as to find part of the Koran in the New Testament” (Joseph Smith’s “Eye of Ra,” page 22).

We feel that this matter also reflects seriously upon Joseph Smith’s honesty. Scholars, of course, do not object to restorations in a text if they are sincere attempts to restore a missing portion. For instance, in 1961 a stone inscription was found at Caesarea. The second line was damaged, but scholars were able to read “ . . . tius Pilate” (The Biblical World, edited by Charles E. Pfeiffer, page 156). Since Pontius Pilate had resided in Caesarea, they felt that it was reasonable to restore “Pon” to complete the name “Pontius Pilate.” This type of restoration is reasonable. In Joseph Smith’s case, however, it seems to be an attempt to deceive rather than to restore what was on the original document. No one who is honest with himself could approve of these false restorations. How can we possibly trust the rest of Joseph Smith’s Book of Abraham after seeing what he did with Facsimile No. 2?

From Dr. Nibley’s article, it would appear that he has yielded a great deal of ground. In fact, some of his statements are very similar to the ones Grant Heward was excommunicated for less than two years ago.

WORDS OF CHRIST:

“If you are faithful to owhat I have said, you are truly my disciples. And you will know the truth and the truth will set you free! . . . Believe me when I tell you that every man who commits sin is a slave. . . . If the Son, then, sets you free, you are really free!” (John 8:31-36) (Phillips)

A PERSONAL GOD?

To all those who will send us their address and zip code we will send a FREE COPY of Is There a Personal God? This is a 56-page pamphlet by Jerald Tanner.
REVIVALS AND VISIONS

The Mormon Prophet Joseph Smith claimed that when he was 14 years old there was a revival in his neighborhood. Because of this excitement he went into the woods to pray, and “two personages” appeared to him. One of them pointed to the other and said: “This is my beloved Son, hear him.” The Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe claims that this vision of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ “is of first importance in the history of Joseph Smith. Upon its reality rest the truth and value of his subsequent work” (Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth, page 19).

For many years Mormon writers claimed that Joseph Smith “told but one story” concerning the First Vision, but now it has become obvious that he told several conflicting stories concerning this vision.

LaMar Petersen was one of the first to learn that the Mormon leaders were suppressing important material concerning the first vision. In 1953 he met with Levi Edgar Young, head of the Seven Presidents of Seventies in the Mormon Church. The following is from notes by Mr. Petersen of the interview with Levi Edgar Young, held February 5, 1953:

His [Levi Edgar Young’s] curiosity was excited when reading in Roberts’ Doc. History reference to “documents from which these writings were compiled.” Asked to see them. Told to get higher permission. Obtained that permission. Examined the documents. Written, he thought, about 1837 or 1838. Was told not to copy or tell what they contained. Said it was a “strange” account of the First Vision. Was put back in vault. Remains unused, unknown.

Since that interview two “strange” account of the first vision have come to light. Paul R. Cheesman included the first in Appendix D of his thesis. We printed this account in 1965 under the title, “Joseph Smith’s Strange Account of the First Vision.” The other “strange” account appeared in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, in 1966. We reprinted these accounts in the Salt Lake Messenger and The Case Against Mormonism, vol. 1 and thousands of copies have been circulated. Some Mormons doubted the authenticity of these “strange” accounts, and the LDS Church leaders did not make any public statements concerning them. Nevertheless, we continued to circulate these accounts and predicted that the time would come when the Mormon leaders would have to face these problems. Finally, four years after we printed “Joseph Smith’s Strange Account of the First Vision,” the Church Historian’s Office has publicly confirmed the authenticity of both these “strange” accounts. The following statement appeared in the Mormon newspaper, Deseret News:

Dean C. Jessee, a staff member at the Church historian’s office in Salt Lake City, searched through documents of the Church historian’s library concerning events of the 1820’s. He located and analyzed three early accounts of Joseph Smith’s first vision dictated by the Prophet himself.

Through other historical approaches and techniques, he has determined the dates, sources, and records of these accounts. Published in the BYU Studies with his report are photographic reproductions of these early accounts in the handwriting of the Prophet’s personal scribes. (Deseret News, Church Section, May 3, 1968, page 15)

From these statements a person would be led to believe that Dean C. Jessee made some new discovery, but an examination of the BYU Studies, Spring 1969, reveals that the three accounts are: (1) The account we published in 1965 under the title, “Joseph Smith’s Strange Account of the First Vision.” Dean C. Jessee claims that this account was written in 1831 or 1832. (2) The account published in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought in 1966. This is the account Joseph Smith gave to “Joshua the Jewish Minister” in 1835. (3) The official account which is published by the church in the Pearl of Great Price. Dean C. Jessee, however, has shown how it appears in the original handwritten manuscript, before the changes were made.

This issue of the BYU Studies contains photographs of all these documents. The reader may wonder why the church would allow the “strange” accounts to be published after suppressing them for over 130 years. We feel that they have been forced to own up to these documents. The LDS Church leaders apparently feel that it would be better to tell their people about these documents now than to have them eventually find out through “apostate” sources. This is certainly a most interesting example of reverse psychology. They suppressed the documents all these years, but now they allow them to be published as if they were proud of them. They claim, in fact, that 10,000 copies of the BYU Studies have been printed! Dr. Richard L. Anderson of the BYU, not only acknowledges the authenticity of the “strange” accounts, but he even calls them “official accounts of the First Vision from the Prophet”:

Before one can prove that Joseph Smith contradicts history, he must be sure of what Joseph Smith claimed. There are four official accounts of the First Vision from the Prophet. The three manuscript texts are printed in Dean Jessee’s articles in this issue. As he shows, their dates of composition are 1831-1832, 1835, and 1838. This 1838 account was published as the “History of Joseph Smith” in 1842. The fourth account is Joseph Smith’s “Wentworth Letter,” also published in 1842. (BYU Studies, Spring 1969, page 373)

ONE, TWO, OR MANY?

Dr. Truman G. Madsen, of the BYU, claims that the harmony of the documents is impressive:

Now that we have copies of the three early manuscript accounts of the First Vision bound in this single volume, we are impressed with their harmony considering the very different circumstances of their writing: (1) the 1831-32 manuscript is apparently an attempt to get it on record; (2) the 1835 account relates a spontaneous interview between the Prophet and a Jewish minister, recorded by his scribe “as nearly as follows” and (3) the 1838 record was written to answer “the many reports” circulating as far west an Missouri which the Prophet said were designed to militate against the character of the Church. (BYU Studies, Spring 1969, page 240)

New Books

THE FIRST VISION EXAMINED — A Study of New Theories and Documents Regarding Joseph Smith’s First Vision and the 1820 Revival, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. This 50-page pamphlet presents new and important material relating to Joseph Smith’s First Vision. It shows that the Mormon research team has failed in their effort to establish an 1820 revival in Palmyra, and how they have skirted the real issues involved in this controversy. It also provides new evidence found in “Joseph Smith’s Manuscript History,” Book A-1, regarding two important changes in Joseph Smith’s History. Prices: 50¢ each — 3 for $1.00 — 10 for $3.00 — 20 for $5.00

— NOW COMPLETED —

THE MORMON KINGDOM, VOL. 1

By Jerald and Sandra Tanner. This volume contains the most accurate and up to date account of the Temple ceremony. Also discusses the changes in the ceremony, changes in the Temple garments, the relationship to Masonry, the “Oath of Vengeance,” the doctrine of “Blood Atonement,” baptism for the dead, the Danites, the Council of 50, the failure of the Kirtland Bank, the war in Missouri, Joseph Smith’s secret ordination as King and his candidacy for President of the United States. The Mormon Kingdom is now available in plastic binding for just $2.95. The quantity prices are: 2 for $4.95 — 5 for $9.95 — 10 for $17.70. (Also available in loose-leaf binder for $4.95)
We feel that Dr. Madsen is not facing reality when he claims that these accounts are harmonious. In the first account Joseph Smith states:

...I saw the Lord and he spake unto me saying Joseph my son Thy sins are forgiven thee. (BYU Studies, Spring 1969, page 281)

In the second account Joseph Smith stated:

A personage appeared in the midst of this pillar of flame, which was spread all around and yet nothing consumed. Another personage soon appeared like unto the first: he said unto me thy sins are forgiven thee. He testified also unto me that Jesus Christ is the son of God. I saw many angels in this vision. (BYU Studies, Spring 1969, page 285)

In the account published by the church in the *Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith stated:

...I saw two Personages. . . . One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him! (Pearl of Great Price, page 48, v. 17)

We would, of course, expect some variations in any story, but we feel that there are so many variations in Joseph Smith’s story and they are of such a nature that they make it impossible to believe.

In the first written account Joseph Smith stated that only one personage appeared to him. The second account says there were many, and the third account says there were two.

When Lauritz G. Petersen, Research Supervisor at the Church Historian’s Office, was asked concerning the different accounts of the first vision he wrote a letter in which he stated:

We are not concerned really with which of the two Versions of the First Vision is right. . . . Personally I would take the version which the Prophet Joseph Smith gave himself when he stated that he saw two personages. Regardless whether he saw one or two the fact remains that Jesus Christ is mentioned in both of them.

It is obvious from this statement that Mormon apologists are beginning to retreat from the idea that God the Father appeared to Joseph Smith. This is actually a very important matter, for Mormon leaders have used this vision as evidence for their doctrine of a plurality of gods. They have stated that this vision proves that God and Christ are two distinct personages and that they both have a body. They use this vision to prove that God Himself is only an exalted man.

The Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe stated:

Two personages, the Father and the Son, stood before Joseph. The Father asked the Son to deliver the message to the boy. There was no mingling of personalities in the vision. Each of the personages was an individual member of the Godhead. Each one separately took part in the vision. (Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth, page 7)

Those who argue that the “strange” accounts of the first vision can be harmonized with Joseph Smith’s printed account might do well to read a speech given by S. Dilworth Young, of the First Council of Seventy. This speech was given sometime before the “strange” accounts became known to the public. We quote from this speech:

I cannot remember the time when I have not heard the story, . . . concerning the coming of the Father and the Son to the Prophet Joseph Smith. . . . I am concerned however with one item which has recently been called to my attention on this matter. There appears to be going about our communities some writing to the effect that the Prophet Joseph Smith evolved his doctrine from what might have been a vision, in which he is supposed to have said that he saw an angel, instead of the Father and Son. According to this theory, by the time he was inspired to write the occurrence in 1838, he had come to the conclusion that there were two beings.

This rather shocked me. I can see no reason why the Prophet, with his brilliant mind, would have failed to remember in sharp relief every detail of the eventful day. . . . How then could any man conceive that the Prophet, receiving such a vision as he received, would not remember it and would fail to write it clearly, distinctly, and accurately? (Improvement Era, June 1957, page 436)

Now that we have the “strange” accounts we find that the first vision story did evolve. Joseph Smith originally taught that only one personage appeared, but after he changed his doctrine concerning the Godhead he also changed the story of the First Vision.

**NO REVIVAL**

In Joseph Smith’s story of the First Vision he tells of a great revival in his neighborhood just before he had his vision.

In 1967 the Utah Christian Tract Society published Wesley P. Walters’ study, *New Light on Mormon Origins From the Palmyra (N.Y.) Revival*. In the forward to this work Mr. Walters states:

Mormons account for the origin of their movement by quoting from a narrative written by their prophet Joseph Smith, Jr. in 1838. In this account he claims that a revival broke out in the Palmyra, New York area in 1820 . . . Information which we have recently uncovered conclusively proves that the revival did not occur until the fall of 1824 and that no revival occurred between 1819 and 1823 in the Palmyra vicinity.

Mormon scholars became very concerned when they saw Wesley P. Walters’ study. They were so disturbed, in fact, that a team was sent back east to do research concerning the first vision and other matters dealing with the history of the Mormon Church in New York. Although the scholars who went east “secured libraries, studied newspapers, and sought to find private individuals who might uncover hitherto unknown source materials” (BYU Studies, Spring, page 242) they were unable to find evidence of a revival in Palmyra in 1820. In their article, “Mormon Origins in New York,” James B. Allen and Leonard J. Arrington report:

What evidence do we have, other than the word of Joseph Smith, that there was “an unusual excitement on the subject of religion” in the vicinity of Palmyra in 1820? Up to this point little such evidence has been uncovered, and Walters challenged the story in the article referred to above. (BYU Studies, Spring 1969, page 272)

Before Mr. Walters’ study appeared Mormon writers taught that the revival occurred right in Palmyra, but since the Mormon research team has been unable to find evidence of a revival in Palmyra Mormon apologists are now beginning to forsake Palmyra and search elsewhere for a revival. Lauritz G. Petersen, Research Supervisor at the Church Historian’s Office, made these statements in a letter dated November 1, 1968:

Now let me ask you a question. Where was the revival? In Palmyra? He doesn’t mention a revival at all. He mentions an unusual excitement [sic] in the “Whole district of country.” Could an excitement [sic] be caused by a revival somewhere near the area? He doesn’t mention being to a revival. If there was a revival somewhere outside of Palmyra and the news of it had already excited the village, would or could it be possible that the Smith family have travelled there to sell root beer and cakes?

Although it is true that Joseph Smith does not use the word Palmyra, his description makes it very clear that he was referring to this area. He states that there “was in the place where we lived an unusual excitement on the subject of religion” (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 2).

In 1843 Joseph Smith told a reporter from the *New York Spectator* that the revival occurred “in the neighborhood where I lived, . . .” (Joseph Smith the Prophet, by Preston Nibley, pages 30-31).

Before Mr. Walters’ pamphlet appeared Mormon writers were claiming that there was a great deal of evidence to show that there was a revival in Palmyra in 1820. The *Religious Advocate* of Rochester has been cited by Mormon writers as showing that there was such a revival. The Mormon Apostle Gordon B. Hinckley stated:

One week a Rochester paper noted: “more than two hundred souls have become hopeful subjects of divine grace in Palmyra and Macedon, Manchester, Lyons, and Ontario since the late revival commenced.” The week following it was able to report “that in Palmyra and Macedon . . . more than four hundred souls have already confessed that the Lord is good.” (*Truth Restored, Salt Lake City*, 1969, page 2)

In *The Case Against Mormonism*, vol. 1 pages 111-112, we showed that these purported references from the *Religious Advocate* of Rochester actually appeared in the *Wayne Sentinel* on March 2, 1825, and therefore had nothing to do with the Palmyra area.

(Continued on page 4, column 2)
SECRET TEMPLE CEREMONY

The following statement is recorded in Joseph Smith’s *History* under the date of March 15, 1842: “In the evening I received the First Degree in Free Masonry in the Nauvoo Lodge, assembled in my general business office” (*History of the Church*, vol. 4, page 551). The next day Joseph Smith stated: “I was with the Masonic Lodge and rose to the sublime degree” (*History of the Church*, vol. 4, page 552). Less than two months later, May 4, 1842, Joseph Smith established the secret Temple ceremony among the Mormon people.

In the last issue of the *Messenger* we showed that the “five points of fellowship” found in the Mormon Temple ceremony are almost identical to those used by the Masons in their ritual. In *The Mormon Kingdom*, vol. 1, page 159-164, we have documented 27 parallels between the Masonic ritual and the Mormon Temple ceremony.

OATHS CHANGED

From testimony given in *The Reed Smoot Case* and other investigations, we are convinced that the oaths administered in the Temple were originally very crude. August W. Lundstrom testified that the penalty he agreed to for revealing the first token was to have “the throat cut from ear to ear.” The second was to “have my breast cut asunder and my vitals torn out,” and the third was that he would have his body “cut asunder and my entrails gushed out” (*The Reed Smoot Case*, vol. 2, pages 160-162). Since that time the oaths have been greatly modified. The changes were probably made within the last thirty or forty years. Below is a comparison of the oaths as they were published in *Temple Mormonism* in 1931 with the way they are given today.

Temple Mormonism

As Given Today (1969)

Although the oaths are no longer as crude as they used to be, Mormons who go through the Temple still draw the thumb across the throat, stomach, etc., and are told that “The representation of the penalties indicates different ways in which life may be taken” (*The Mormon Kingdom*, vol. 1, page 129).

A careful examination of the oaths as originally given reveals that they were taken from Masonry. Below is a comparison of Mormon and Masonic oaths.

Mormons

... we will not reveal any of the secrets of this, the first token of the Aaronic priesthood, with its accompanying name, sign or penalty. Should we do so, we agree that our throats be cut from ear to ear and our tongues torn out by their roots. (*Temple Mormonism*, page 20)

... we will not reveal any of the secrets of this, the first token of the Aaronic priesthood, together with its accompanying name, sign or penalty. Rather than do so I would suffer my life to be taken. (*The Mormon Kingdom*, vol. 1, page 129)

... we will not reveal any of the secrets of this, the second token of the Aaronic Priesthood, together with its accompanying name, sign or penalty. Rather than do so I would suffer my life to be taken. (*The Mormon Kingdom*, vol. 1, page 131)

Masons

... I will . . . never reveal any part or parts, art or arts, point or points of the secret arts and mysteries of ancient Freemasonry . . . binding myself under no less penalty than to have my throat cut across, my tongue torn out by the roots. . . . (*Freemasonry Exposed*, pages 21-22)

As Given Today (1969)

... we will not reveal any of the secrets of this, the first token of the Aaronic priesthood, with its accompanying name, sign or penalty. Should we do so, we agree that our throats be cut from ear to ear and our tongues torn out by their roots. (*Temple Mormonism*, page 20)

... I will never reveal the first token of the Melchizedek Priesthood, with its accompanying name, sign or penalty. Should we do so, we agree that our bodies be cut asunder in the midst and all our bowels gush out. (*Temple Mormonism*, page 20)

... I will never reveal the second token of the Aaronic Priesthood, together with its accompanying name, sign and penalty. Rather than do so I would suffer my life to be taken. (*The Mormon Kingdom*, vol. 1, page 131)

... I will never reveal the first token of the Melchizedek Priesthood or sign of the nail, with its accompanying name, sign or penalty. Rather than do so I would suffer my life to be taken. (*The Mormon Kingdom*, vol. 1, page 132)

OATHS CHANGED

From the comparisons above it is obvious that the oaths used in the Mormon Temple ceremony were derived from Masonry. In *The Mormon Kingdom*, vol. 1, we present what we feel is conclusive proof that many essential elements of the Temple ritual were taken from Masonry. This volume also includes the most accurate and up to date account of the Temple ceremony. We also discuss the changes in the ceremony, changes in the Temple garment, the “Oath of Vengeance,” the doctrine of “Blood Atonement,” baptism for the dead, the Danites, the Council of 50, the war in Missouri, Joseph Smith’s secret ordination as King and his candidacy for President of the United States.

*The Mormon Kingdom* is now available in plastic binding for just $2.95. The quantity prices are: 2 for $4.95 — 5 for $9.95 — 10 for $17.70. (Also available in loose leaf binder for $4.95)

IT ALREADY HURTS!

In the November 1968 issue of the *Improvement Era*, page 101, we found an advertisement in which this statement appeared: “Hunger Hurts!” Under such a title one might expect to find something concerning the people who are starving in India or Africa; instead, however, we found this question: “is your year’s supply important?” This was not a plea for the hungry, but an advertisement for a “food storage booklet.” (The Mormon leaders have been counseling their people to store food in case of an emergency.)

This advertisement reminded us again of the selfishness of man. Most of us who live in America have enough to eat, and many people have a surplus, yet millions of people throughout the world are starving to death. What are we going to do about it?
Should we think of storing food and other things for ourselves when millions of people are starving to death? In the 25th chapter of Matthew Jesus tells us that in the judgment the righteous will be separated from the wicked. Then the righteous will be told:

... Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ... Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. (Matthew 25:44-40)

... And the King shall answer... (Matthew 25:34-40)

Above are photographs of boys who are starving to death in Biafra. The reader might wonder if there is anything that he can do to help these children.

World-Wide Missions answers YES:

The lives of Biafrans are, literally, in your hands. Just as a doctor feels for a pulse and it gets slower and slower, then stops, so is the life of many people in Biafra and the liberated areas in your hands. If you act, they may live. If you—and you and you—across America and around the world fail to act, a death by starvation will be the result.

In a recent news letter written by Dr. Basil Miller, of World-Wide Missions, we find this statement:

The best way you can show your love for these children and the starving parents is by feeding them right now.

Your gift, every penny of it, will go to the fighting Biafrans in the liberated area. . . .

It has one purpose alone—to feed the starving.

By this means, you can show your loving care. By this means, you can prove your faith in the Master . . .

In the liberated area, your gift of $1 will furnish food for a family for one day. Think how it spreads and increases in value. The price of a hamburger, french fries and a coke means life for an entire family, or it will feed an underprivileged, near-starving child for days.

All gifts to World-Wide Missions are tax-deductible. Donations should be sent to the following address:

World-Wide Missions
PO Box G
Pasadena Calif. 91109

LATEST “FINDS”

Some people have told us that we should be patient with the Church Historian’s Office and they will eventually make all of the Church records available. Judging from past experience, however, we feel that they will not make these documents available until a great deal of pressure has been applied by members of the Church. Take for instance the “strange” accounts of the First Vision. These documents were “located and analyzed” only after a great deal of pressure was applied. Another example is the fragment of papyrus which the Church Historian’s Office suppressed for 130 years. Jay M. Todd, an editor and staff writer for the Church’s Improvement Era, states that Dr. Clark, of BYU, knew about this fragment for thirty years but was told to suppress this information:

Outside of a few associates, Dr. Clark had kept the fragment a matter of confidence, under instructions from the historian’s office, for over 30 years. (The Sage of the Book of Abraham, Salt Lake City, 1969, page 364)

An Egyptologist told us that he wrote to the Historian’s Office and asked if they had any of Joseph Smith’s papyri. They replied that they did not. In 1966 we printed Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar, which included a photograph of this fragment. Grant Heward identified it as an actual fragment of papyrus, and in the Salt Lake Messenger for April, 1966, we stated that the Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar included "a photograph of an actual piece of papyrus which may be part of the ‘Book of Abraham’ or the ‘Book of Joseph!’” Almost two years after we published a photograph of this fragment of papyrus, the Church leaders decided that it was time to “find” it. The LDS Church Section of the Deseret News carried this statement on February 10, 1968:

... And the King shall answer... (Matthew 25:34-40)

(Continued from page 2) — Revivals and Visions do with a revival in Palmyra in 1820. Wesley P. Walters showed that the Religious Advocate was not even published in Rochester in 1820! It is obvious that the Mormon research team has been unable to verify these references, for Richard L. Bushman states:

Mr. Walters’ main argument is that no revival occurred in Palmyra itself. But even that fact cannot be established absolutely. It is a negative claim and depends on negative evidence, which is always tenuous. Mr. Walters relies on the absence of revival reports, but just because someone failed to write a report of an event does not mean it did not occur. . . . The point is that although we think a revival should have been recorded, there are many reasons why it could have been missed. We cannot know for sure that an event did not occur unless reliable witnesses on the scene say no, and thus far Mr. Walters has found none such to testify. (Dialogue, Spring 1969, page 87)

It would appear, then, that all evidence for a revival in Palmyra and vicinity has fallen, and that Wesley P. Walters’ work has been vindicated. All that the Mormon research team have been able to do is to confirm his original findings. The result of their research is published in the BYU Studies, Spring 1969. We feel that most of these writers have not dealt with the real issues involved, nor have they given enough credit to Wesley P. Walters for the research he has done. The editors of Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, on the other hand, “felt that the issues Reverend Walters raises should be dealt with directly and in the context of a full statement of his arguments.” Therefore, they printed his work, a response from Richard L. Bushman, and Mr. Walters reply to Dr. Bushman (see Dialogue, Spring 1969, pages 58-100). We must congratulate the editors of Dialogue for their honesty with regard to this matter.

In the last year a great deal of new information has come to light concerning Joseph Smith’s First Vision and the 1820 revival. Because of this new information and the increased interest in this matter we have prepared a new pamphlet entitled, The First Vision Examined—A Study of New Theories and Documents Regarding Joseph Smith’s First Vision and the 1820 Revival. In this pamphlet we provide important new evidence found in "Joseph Smith’s Manuscript History," Book A-1, regarding two important changes in his History of the Church. We also show that the Mormon research team has failed to establish a revival in Palmyra in 1820 and that they have not dealt with the real issues involved in the controversy over the First Vision.

The prices on this pamphlet are: 50¢ each — 3 for $1.00 — 10 for $3.00 — 20 for $5.00. ■
At the time Joseph Smith established the Mormon Church, many people believed that the moon was a habitable globe. Adam Clark, a Protestant writer, stated: “There is scarcely any doubt now remaining in the philosophical world that the moon is a habitable globe” (Clark’s Commentary, vol. 1, page 36). Josiah Priest made this statement:

“It is believed and asserted by astronomers as their opinion, obtained from telescopic observation, that the moon, . . . is a globe in ruins, or if not so, at least is frequently much convulsed by the operations of volcanic fires. Its surface, as seen through the glasses, is found extremely mountainous, . . . a great number of rivers, creeks, lakes and small seas must divide the land of this globe into a vast number of tracts of country, which are doubtless filled with animals,—consequently with rational beings in the form of men, as ourselves, for we can conceive of none other, as fitted to preside over its animals. The same we believe of all the stars of heaven. (American Antiquities and Discoveries in the West, Albany, N.Y., 1835, page 396)

Although we know that Joseph Smith was influenced by the views of his time, he claimed to receive his information directly from heaven. Oliver B. Huntington, who was a member of the Mormon Church in Joseph Smith’s time, claimed that Smith gave the following information concerning the inhabitants of the moon:

**INHABITANTS OF THE MOON**

“The inhabitants of the moon are more of a uniform size than the inhabitants of the earth, being about 6 feet in height.

“They dress very much like the quaker style and are quite general in style, or the fashion of dress.

“‘They live to be very old; coming generally, near a thousand years.”

This is the description of them as given by Joseph The Seer, and he could “see” whatever he asked the father in the name of Jesus to see. (Journal of Oliver B. Huntington, vol. 2, page 166 of typed copy at the Utah State Historical Society)

Brigham Young, the second President of the Mormon Church, also seemed to believe that the moon was inhabited (see Journal of Discourses, vol. 13, page 271, or Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 89) but it is doubtful that many Mormons today can accept Joseph Smith’s statement about the “inhabitants of the moon,” especially in light of the fact that men have now landed on the moon.

Joseph Smith’s statement concerning the “inhabitants of the moon,” however, raises a very important question: Could it be possible that Joseph Smith’s revelations—the revelations which are accepted as scripture by the Mormon people—are the product of his own imagination, influenced by the thinking of his time, rather than revelations from God?

**NEPHITES**

We feel that the works of Josiah Priest had a real influence on Joseph Smith’s thinking. Joseph Smith was probably very familiar with Priest’s American Antiquities (which speaks of the moon being a habitable globe), for he quotes from this book in the Times and Seasons, vol. 3, pages 813-814.

In 1825—five years before the Book of Mormon was published—Josiah Priest wrote a book entitled, The Wonders of Nature and Providence Displayed. In the Salt Lake Messenger, issue No. 22, we presented evidence that seems to show that Joseph Smith used material from this book when he wrote the Book of Mormon. Priest’s book contained “Proofs that the Indians of North America are linearly descended from the ancient Hebrews” (The Wonders of Nature and Providence Displayed, Albany, N.Y., 1825, page 297). The Book of Mormon also teaches that the Indians are the descendants of a group of Hebrews who came to America.

However this may be, the Mormon people accept the Book of Mormon as scripture. Some members of the Church have made some fantastic claims about archaeologists using the Book of Mormon. For instance, we are informed that a letter which was written to Ernest L. English on May 3, 1936, was duplicated and “distributed to LDS church members by leaders (local) in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1959.” We quote the following from this letter:

. . . it was 1920 before the Smithsonian Institute officially recognized the Book of Mormon as a record of value. All discoveries up to this time were found to fit the Book of Mormon accounts and so the heads of the Archaeological Department decided to make an effort to discover some of the large cities described in the Book of Mormon records.

All members of the department were required to study the account and make rough-maps of the various populated centers. When I visited the Smithsonian Institute Library in 1933 I noticed that there were over thirty copies of the Book of Mormon on file . . . it is true that the Book of Mormon has been the guide to almost all of the major discoveries.

When Col. Lindbergh flew to South America five years ago, he was able to sight heretofore undiscovered cities which the archaeologists at the Institute had mapped out according to the locations described in the Book of Mormon. This record is now quoted by the members of the Institute as an authority and is recognized by all advanced students in the field.

**New Book**

*Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*

By Jerald and Sandra Tanner. This is a 64-page book dealing with such subjects as: the Book of Mormon in light of archaeological findings in the New World, the disagreement between Dr. Nibley and Dr. Jakeman over archaeology and the Book of Mormon, Nephite coins, the Anthon transcript, Mayan glyphs, the Parahyba text, Kinderhook plates, Newark stones, Lehi Tree of Life Stone, and the problem of Book of Mormon geography.

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This special price includes the beautiful vinyl loose-leaf binder which will hold all three volumes. We have completed 78 pages of volume 3 and will mail out the remaining pages as soon as they are printed. All of our readers should have this work.

In a review of the first two volumes of this work, Dr. Kenneth Kantzer, Dean of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School stated:

These books represent no ordinary polemic against Mormonism. This is the definitive, fully-documented, utterly-devastating case against the divine authority and truthfulness of the foundational documents upon which the Mormon religion is based. (Evangelical Beacon, October 8, 1968, page 7)
Because of many false statements, such as the one printed above, the Smithsonian Institute has been forced to publish a statement concerning these matters. In this statement we find the following:

1. The Smithsonian Institution has never used the Book of Mormon in any way as a scientific guide. Smithsonian archaeologists see no connection between the archeology of the New World and the subject matter of the Book.

We have recently completed a 64-page book entitled, *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*. In this book we show that archeology does not support the Book of Mormon, and that the Nephites mentioned in the Book of Mormon never really existed. In fact, all evidence seems to show that the Nephites were as mythical as Joseph Smith's description of the "inhabitants of the moon."

One of the subjects which we cover is the "Lehi Tree-of-Life Stone." We devote 18 pages to this matter in the new book. The following is a sample of some of the information we give on this subject.

In 1965 the Mormon-owned Deseret News announced that the El Paso Times had published an article which seemed to show that the Book of Mormon had been proven by archaeologists. The article had appeared in the *El Paso Times* on July 4, 1965. In this article we find the following statements:

The Book of Mormon, . . . is purported to be an ecclesiastical and historical record of the American continent . . . .

Archaeologists have conceded the possible existence of such a record, and a recent archaeological find in Mexico has been interpreted of relevance to its authenticity.

A large carving unearthed in Chiapas, Mexico, has been interpreted and offers the first sound evidence of the near-eastern origin of its carvers—an origin set in the Book of Mormon.

... Three name glyphs on the carving have been translated as "Lehi," "Sariah," and "Nephi," prominent names in the Book of Mormon, and the study shows a detailed symbolization of a crucial scene in the book termed "Lehi's Vision of the Tree of Life." It may be one of the most important finds in the history of archeology, some think. (*El Paso Times*, July 4, 1965)

At first sight this article appears to be very impressive, but careful research shows it to be nothing but old Mormon propaganda rewritten. In the book, *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*, we show that this is a rehash of material which appeared in a sheet entitled, "Near East Type Ancient Carving Found in Mexico," which was published in Safford, Arizona, a few years before. When we wrote to the *El Paso Times* for information regarding this article, we were informed that it was submitted to the newspaper by "missionaries" from the Mormon Church:

The material, in somewhat elongated form, was submitted to our religion desk by Robert Elder and Vaughn Byington, missionaries of the Church of Christ of Latter-Day Saints assigned to El Paso wards.

The information was written by Mr. Byington, who said his sources were articles obtained at the Department of Archaeology, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. (Letter from Joseph Rice, Religion Editor, *El Paso Times*, dated November 3, 1965)

A photograph of this letter is found in our book *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*.

Notice that the article in the *El Paso Times* stated: "Three name glyphs on the carving have been translated as 'Lehi,' 'Sariah,' and 'Nephi,' prominent names in the Book of Mormon. . . . " Dr. M. Wells Jakeman, of Brigham Young University, is responsible for the idea that these names appear on this stone. In our book, *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*, we show that this claim is not based on facts, and that Dr. Jakeman has not read a single Book of Mormon name on this carving.

We sent a copy of the clipping from the *El Paso Times* to the Mormon Egyptologist Dee Jay Nelson. After examining this clipping, Mr. Nelson made the following statement:

Thank you for the kind letter and the newspaper clipping. I never take much stock in newspaper articles which do not carry bylines. I think someone is talking through his hat when he claims that the names "Lehi, Sariah and Nephi" are written upon the Tree of Life Stella. I have studied the features of that stella very carefully . . . I found nothing which transmuted into the three names. . . .

Believe me when I say that nothing would delight me more than to learn that I am wrong and that the Tree-of-Life Stella was made to commemorate Lehi's dream and that the names had been found and identified. I must be honest with myself though. I don't buy the story. (Letter from Dee Jay Nelson, dated December 16, 1968)

Dee Jay Nelson's statement is especially interesting in light of the fact that he is probably the most qualified Egyptologist in the Mormon Church and has also studied Mayan glyphs. Furthermore, he wishes to prove the Book of Mormon true, but he will not accept evidence which he knows to be false.

Mr. Nelson is certainly not the only Mormon who has questioned the identification of Lehi and his family on the carving. Dr. John L. Sorenson has served as Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Brigham Young University and was editor of the *University Archaeological Society Newsletter* from August 15, 1951, to July 1, 1952. Writing in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Dr. Sorenson stated:

... the uncontrolled use of trait comparison leads to absurd conclusions. Particularly, it leads to overambitious interpretations of shared meaning and historical relationship, as in Jakeman's previous pseudo-identifications of "Lehi" (and other characters from the Book of Mormon) on an Irapan monument. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1966, page 148)

Dr. Hugh Nibley does not seem to accept Dr. Jakeman's work on the "Lehi Tree-of-Life Stone." In fact, Dr. Nibley frankly admits that there is no definite archaeological evidence to support the Book of Mormon:

Of course, almost any object could conceivably have some connection with the Book of Mormon, but nothing short of an inscription which could be read and roughly dated could bridge the gap between what might be called a preactualistic archeology and contact with the realities of Nephiite civilization.

The possibility that a great nation or empire that once dominated vast areas of land and flourished for centuries could actually get lost and stay lost in spite of every effort of men to discover its traces, has been demonstrated many times since Schliemann found the real world of the Mycenaeans. . . .

So it is with the Nephites. All that we have to go on to date is a written history. That does not mean that our Nephites are necessarily mythical, . . . as things stand we are still in the pre-archaeological and pre-archaeological stages of Book of Mormon study. Which means that there is nothing whatever that an anthropologist or archaeologist as such can say about the Book of Mormon. Nephiite civilization was urban in nature. . . . It could just as easily and completely vanish from sight as did the worlds of Ugarit, Ur, or Carcosa; and until some physical remnant of it, no matter how trivial, has been identified beyond question, what can any student of physical remains possibly have to say about it? Everything written so far by anthropologists or archaeologists—even real archaeologists—about the Book of Mormon must be discounted, for the same reason that we must discount studies of the lost Atlantic: not because it did not exist, but because it has not yet been found. (*Since Cumorah*, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1967, pages 243-244)

(Continued on page 4)
Joseph’s “Inspired” Bible

Joseph Smith claimed that after the Bible came from the Jews to the Gentiles, a “great and abominable church” was formed, and that this church made many changes in the Scriptures. In the Book of Mormon we read:

... thou seest the foundation of a great abominable church which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold, they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away. (Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 13:26)

Mormon writers still teach that the “great and abominable Church” altered the Bible. Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr. (son of the Mormon Historian Joseph Fielding Smith) made this statement:

The early “Apostate Fathers” did not think it was wrong to tamper with inspired Scripture. If any scripture seemed to endanger their viewpoint, it was altered, transplanted, or completely removed from the Biblical text. All this was done that they might keep their traditions. Such mutilation was considered justifiable to preserve the so-called “purity” of their doctrines. (Religious Truths Defined, page 175)

The Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe made this statement concerning Joseph Smith’s criticism of the text of the Bible:

The teachings of the Book of Mormon, and the revelations he had received, convinced Joseph that in the Bible were many errors... after placing the matter before the Lord, he began the so-called “inspired translation” of the Bible...

Towards the end of the year 1830, with Sidney Rigdon as assistant, he began a somewhat full “explanation and review” of the Old and New Testaments. The work then done is a convincing evidence of Joseph’s inspiration. (Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth, Salt Lake City, 1951, page 139)

In 1859 the Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt claimed that the “oldest manuscripts of the New Testament which this age are in possession of are supposed to date from the sixth century of the Christian era” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 7, page 26). While the Apostle Pratt’s statement was an exaggeration (Codex Vaticanus was probably written in the fourth century), there was a substantial gap between the original manuscripts and the earliest copies known to scholars. Consequently, Mormons would not accept these manuscripts as evidence against Joseph Smith’s “Inspired Translation” of the Bible.

Since the turn of the century the situation has entirely changed, for papyrus fragments have been found which virtually close the gap and prove that the Scriptures have not been rewritten by a “great and abominable church.” F. F. Bruce, of the University of Manchester, states:

In addition to the two excellent MSS of the fourth century mentioned above, which are the earliest of some thousands known to us, considerable fragments remain of papyrus copies of books of the New Testament dated from 100 to 200 years earlier still. The Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri, the existence of which was made public in 1931, consists of portions of eleven papyrus codices, three of which contained most of the New Testament writings. One of these, containing the four Gospels with Acts, belong to the first half of the third century; another, containing Paul’s letters to churches and the Epistle to the Hebrews, was copied at the beginning of the third century; the third, containing Revelation, belongs to the second half of the same century. . . .

Earlier still is a fragment of a papyrus codex containing John xviii. 31-33, 37f., now in the John Rylands Library, Manchester, dated on palaeographical grounds around AD 130, showing that the latest of the four Gospels, which was written according to tradition, at Ephesus between AD 90 and 100, was circulating in Egypt within about forty years of its composition (if, as is most likely, this papyrus originated in Egypt, where it was acquired in 1917). It must be regarded as being, by half a century, the earliest extant fragment of the New Testament.

A more recently discovered papyrus manuscript of the same Gospel, while not so early as the Rylands papyrus, is incomparably better preserved: this is the Papyrus Bodmer II, whose discovery was announced by the Bodmer Library of Geneva in 1956: it was written about AD 200, and contains the first fourteen chapters of the Gospel of John with but one lacuna (of twenty-two verses), and considerable portions of the last seven chapters. (The New Testament Documents—Are They Reliable? Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1976, pages 17-18)

The Papyrus Bodmer II, dated about 200 A.D., provides an excellent test for Joseph Smith’s “Inspired Translation” of the Bible. Below is a photograph of the first page “of the Gospel of John in Papyrus Bodmer II.” This is taken from The Biblical Archaeologist, September, 1957.

The reader will notice that we have placed an arrow at the beginning of the text of the Gospel of John—the writing just above this is the introduction to John’s Gospel. In this study we are only dealing with the first line and about half of the second. Below we have copied the characters—written in the “Greek Uncial Script”—from the papyrus, and with the help of Berry’s Interlinear Literal Translation of the Greek New Testament we have been able to divide the words and give the English translation below each word.

EN ARKH HN 0 LOGOS KAI 0 LOGOS HN
In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word.

The reader will note that the right side of the fragment is damaged, and that we have restored the word which translates “God” (ΩΣ is an abbreviation for ΘΕΟΣ). According to Floyd V. Filson the word “God” is always abbreviated in this manuscript (The Biblical Archaeologist, September, 1957, page 59). Except for the last letter in the word ΘΕΟΣ, this is the only restoration we have had to make. This word means “the,” but in this case it is best to leave it untranslated. W. E. Vine states that “the article is often used with proper names, but must not be rendered in English” (New Testament Greek Grammar, page 21).

It is extremely interesting to find that the translation of the papyrus confirms the reading found in both the King James Version and the Revised Standard Version:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

When we examine Joseph Smith’s “Inspired Revision,” however, we find that this verse has been drastically altered:

In the beginning was the Gospel preached through the Son. And the Gospel was the word, and the word was with the Son, and the Son was with God, and the Son was of God.

While Joseph Smith would have us believe that he was restoring the text of the Bible to its original purity, the evidence indicates just the opposite. Because of recent discoveries of papyrus manuscripts Mormon writers are faced with a serious dilemma. It is almost impossible to maintain Joseph Smith’s teachings concerning the Bible in light of these discoveries.

Dr. Richard L. Anderson, of Brigham Young University, is undoubtedly one of the top authorities on Bible manuscripts in the Mormon Church. In a paper read at the “Fourteenth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures,” Dr. Anderson seemed to be warning his people against the idea that the New Testament has been drastically altered:
This process of uncovering the major papyri manuscripts of the New Testament has largely taken place not only in our own century, but in our own generation. . . . Almost the whole New Testament is represented in the papyri fragments. The only two exceptions now are I and II Timothy. The real achievement, then, is that the antiquity of the text has now been pushed back almost another century. . . . the gap now separating the time of the writing of the New Testament and the oldest preserved manuscripts is now generally no more than 200 years. To underline the extent of the findings, let us stress that some part of every book of the New Testament is represented by papyri dated as early as the third century, with the present exception of Philmemon, I Timothy, II Timothy, I, II and III John. . . . As to its antiquity, p 46 is thought by leading papyrologists to be no later than 200 A.D. This means that the oldest collection of Paul’s letters now dates from a maximum of 150 years after Paul wrote. With such an early collection, the question naturally arises how the text is different from the traditional one. Differences lie in numerous details, but the outstanding conclusion is that there is little, if any, significant change. . . .

Among the Bodmer Papyri, the greatest treasures are the copies of the Gospels dating back to the end of the second century. The original publication took place in 1956 of a manuscript enumerated P66. It is a practically complete copy of the Gospel of John, which the editor dates about 200 A.D. . . . the most impressive contribution of the new manuscripts of Luke and John is not the few differences, but the extent of their agreement with the life and teachings of Christ as preserved in other manuscripts. . . . For a book to undergo progressive uncovering of its manuscript history and come out with so little debatable in its text is a great tribute to its essential authenticity. In tracing the history of manuscript investigation, the student finds that two great facts emerge. First, no new manuscript discovery has produced significant differences in the essential story. This survey has disclosed the leading textual controversies, and together they would be well within one percent of the text. Stated differently, all manuscripts agree on the essential correctness of 99% of the verses in the New Testament. . . .

Robert J. Matthews, Director of Academic Research for the Department of Seminaries and Institutes in the Mormon Church, has done a great deal of research on Joseph Smith’s “Inspired Version” of the Bible. In an article published in a recent issue of BYU Studies, Dr. Matthews goes so far as to admit the possibility that Joseph Smith may have added material which was never contained in the original manuscripts of the Bible:

The question might be raised whether the Prophet actually restored the text as Matthew wrote it, or whether, being the seer that he was, he went even beyond Matthew’s text and recorded an event that actually took place during the delivery of the Sermon, but which Matthew did not include. . . . It is probable that the Inspired Version is many things, and that only portions of it represent restorations while other portions may be interpolations, enlargements, clarifications and the like.

The science of textual criticism offers an objection to the Inspired Version being a restoration of the original text on the basis that the Prophet’s work is not extensively supported by the many ancient manuscripts and fragments of the Bible that are now in common use by scholars. However, this may possibly be accounted for in two ways. First, no original manuscripts of the Bible are available, and even the earliest available documents are removed from the originals by many decades. Corruption of the texts could have taken place in the intervening years. Second, many of the passages in the Inspired Version may be reiterations of events which were either not recorded by the Biblical writers or were lost before the Bible was compiled in which case even the original Bible manuscripts would not contain the information.

My analysis leads me to conclude that the Inspired Version is many things. There are passages that are strongly persuasive of being restorations of the original text, or even of historical events beyond the text. There are other passages that may be inspired explanations, but not necessarily restorations.

(Continued from page 2) MOOMEN and NEPHITES

In 1843 some brass plates were reported to have been found near Kinderhook, Illinois. The Mormon used these plates as evidence for the Book of Mormon (see Times and Seasons, vol. 5, page 406), but it later turned out that they were forgeries that were made to trap Joseph Smith. On June 30, 1879, W. Fugate wrote a letter to James T. Cobb. In this letter we find these statements:

I received your letter in regard to those plates and will say that they are a humbug, gotten up by Robert Wilely, Bridge Whiton and myself. . . . We read in Pratt’s prophecy that “Truth is yet to spring out of the earth.” We concluded to prove the prophecy by way of a joke. We soon made our plans and executed them. Bridge Whiton cut them out of some pieces of copper; Wiley and I made the hieroglyphics by making impressions on beeswax and filling them with acid and putting it on the plates. (The Kinderhook Plates, by Welby W. Ricks, reprinted from Improvement Era, September 1962)

Evidently Joseph Smith was not aware of the fact that the plates were made to trick him, for Charlotte Haven stated that he “said that the figures or writing on them was similar to that in which the Book of Mormon was written, . . . he thought that by the help of revelation he would be able to translate them” (Letter dated May 2, 1843, as printed in Overland Monthly, December 1890, page 630).

Under the date of May 1, 1843, this statement appeared in Joseph Smith’s History:

I have translated a portion of them, and find they contain the history of the person with whom they were found. He was a descendant of Ham, through the loins of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, and that he received his kingdom from the Ruler of heaven and earth. (History of the Church, vol. 5, page 372)

After Joseph Smith’s death the Kinderhook plates were lost. Fortunately however, one of the plates has recently been found in the Chicago Historical Society Museum. In 1962 Welby W. Ricks wrote an article for the Improvement Era in which he told about the plate in Chicago and claimed that the discovery “reaffirms” Joseph Smith’s “prophetic calling.” Mr. Ricks claimed that there were discrepancies in Fugate’s account of how the plates were made, but he furnished no evidence to show that they were genuine relics of antiquity.

During the summer of 1965 George M. Lawrence, a Mormon physicist, was given permission to examine and make “some non-destructive physical studies of the surviving plate.” In the Summary to his study, we find this statement:

The plate is not pure copper. It may be a low zinc brass or a bronze. The dimensions, tolerances, composition and workmanship are consistent with the facilities of an 1843 blacksmith shop and with the fraud stories of the original participants. (“Report of a Physical Study of the Kinderhook Plate Number 5,” by George M. Lawrence)

In our new book, Archaeology and the Book of Mormon, we have six pages of information on the Kinderhook plates. The reader will, no doubt, be interested in learning more about these plates and Mr. Lawrence’s research with them. In this 64-page book we cover such subjects as: the Book of Mormon in light of archaeological findings in the New World, the disagreement between Dr. Nibley and Dr. Jakeman over archaeology and the Book of Mormon, Nephite coins, the Anthon transcript, Mayan glyphs, Parahyba text, Kinderhook plates, Newark stones, Lehi Tree-of-Life Stone, and the problem of Book of Mormon geography.

The prices on this book are: $2.00 each — 2 for $3.50 — 5 for $7.00 — 10 for $12.00.
VIOLENCE IN ZION

The Mormon leaders teach that because of apostasy the true Church of Christ has been lost from the earth. They claim, however, that in 1830 the Lord restored His Church through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

When we compare the methods used by Christ and His Apostles with those used by Joseph Smith and other early Mormon leaders, we find great discrepancies. It was Joseph Smith himself who once said: “I am not so much a ‘Christian’ as many suppose I am. When a man undertakes to ride me for a horse, I feel disposed to kick up and throw him off, and ride him.” (History of the Church, vol. 5, page 335). Joseph Smith related the following incident in his History of the Church: “Josiah Butterfield came to my house and insulted me so outrageously that I kicked him out of the house, across the yard, and into the street” (History of the Church, by Joseph Smith, vol. 5, page 316).

Brigham Young, the second President of the Mormon Church, was very prone to the use of violent methods. In fact, he even based a doctrine on the use of violence. This doctrine is known as “Blood Atonement.” Brigham Young made these statements in one of his sermons:

This is loving our neighbor as ourselves: if he needs help, help him; and if he wants salvation and it is necessary to spill his blood on the earth in order that he may be saved, spill it. Any of you who understand the principles of eternity, if you have sinned a sin requiring the shedding of blood, except the sin unto death, would not be satisfied nor rest until your blood should be spilled, that you might gain that salvation you desire. That is the way to love mankind. (Desert News, February 18, 1857; also reprinted in the Journal of Discourses, vol. 4, pages 219-220)

In our work, The Mormon Kingdom, we have a great deal to say about the doctrine of “Blood Atonement.” The Mormon leaders not only preached this doctrine, but it was actually put into practice. Gustive O. Larson, Professor of Church History at the Brigham Young University, admits that this is the case:

To whatever extent the preaching on Blood Atonement may have influenced action, it would have been in relation to Mormon disciplinary action among its own members. In point would be a verbally reported case of a Mr. Johnson in Cedar City who was found guilty of adultery with his stepdaughter by a bishop’s court and sentenced to death for atonement of his sin. According to the report of reputable eyewitnesses, judgment was executed with consent of the offender who went to his unconsecrated grave in full confidence of salvation through the shedding of blood. Such a case, however primitive, is understandable within the meaning of the doctrine and the emotional extremes of the reformation. (Utah Historical Quarterly, January, 1958, page 62, footnote 39)

John D. Lee claimed that some enemies of the church were killed in Nauvoo by orders from the Church leaders:

I knew of many men being killed in Nauvoo by the Danites. It was then the rule that all the enemies of Joseph Smith should be killed, and I know of many who were quietly put out of the way by the orders of Joseph and his Apostles while the Church was there. (Confessions of John D. Lee, photographic reprint of 1880 edition, page 284)

The people of Illinois were well aware of the fact that the Mormon leaders used violent methods in dealing with their enemies. In the Warsaw Signal for January 7, 1846, we find the following reprinted from the Springfield Journal:

Some other disclosures are talked of as having been made: the manner in which persons are disposed of, who are supposed to be enemies of the leading Mormons. They are seized by some members of the Danite or other band, a leather strap placed around the neck, so that if the least resistance is made, they are choked; and in this condition they are taken to a skiff, carried to the middle of the river, their bowels ripped open, and their bodies sunk. This is what is termed making “catfish bait” of their enemies. It is said that quite a number of persons were disposed of in this manner.

According to John D. Lee, the police in Nauvoo were very similar to the Danite organization:

Whatever the police were ordered to do, they were to do and ask no questions . . . Under Brigham Young, Hosea Stout was Chief of Police. They showed me where they buried a man in a lot near the Masonic Hall. They said they got him tight and were joking with him while some men were digging his grave. They asked him to go with them into a pit of corn, saying it was fully grown. They told him they had a jug of whiskey caught out there. They led him to his grave, and told him to get down there, and hand up the jug, and he should have the first drink. As he bent over to get down, Rosswell Stevens struck him with his police cane on the back of the head and dropped him. They then tightened a cord around his neck to shut off his wind, and then they covered him up, and set the hill of corn back on his grave to cover him up, any tracks that might lead to his discovery.

Another man they took in a boat, about two o’clock at night for a ride. When out in the channel of the river, the man who sat behind him struck him upon the head and stunned him. They then tied a rope around his neck and a stone to the other end of the rope, and sent him to the bottom of Mississippi River. (Confessions of John D. Lee, page 159)

Notice that Lee claimed that the Mormon police committed murders for the Church and that “Under Brigham Young, Hosea Stout was Chief of Police.” Fortunately, Hosea Stout’s diary has survived, and it is certainly one of the most revealing documents that we have ever encountered. The fact that it was written by a faithful Mormon makes it even more significant. In his diary Hosea Stout frankly tells of some of the violent methods used by the Mormon leaders. For instance, under the date of April 3, 1845, Hosea Stout recorded the following in his diary:

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In the morning I went to the Temple and was roughly accosted by Bros Cahoon & Cutler about a circumstance which took place last night at the Temple. They said that the Old Police had beat a man almost to death in the Temple. To which I replied I was glad of it and that I had given orders to that effect in case anyone should be found in the Temple after night and they had only done as they were told, or ordered, . . . we concluded to lay the matter before President Brigham Young and get his advice, as we went we met Brother H. C. Kimball and while relating the matter to him Brother Brigham came to us and we related the matter to him and he approved of the proceedings of the Police and said he wanted us to still guard the Temple after which he & Br. Kimball went to the Temple to regulate the matters there which was done to our satisfaction and justification. (On The Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout, edited by Juanita Brooks, vol. 1, page 32)

Under the date of January 9, 1846, Hosea Stout recorded:

When we came to the Temple somewhat a considerable number of the guard were assembled and among them was William Hibbard son of the old man Hibbard. He was evidently come as a spy. When I saw him I told Scott that we must “bounce a stone off of his head” to which he agreed we prepared accordingly & I got an opportunity & hit him on the back of his head which came very near taking his life. But few knew anything about what was the matter he left the ground out of his senses when he came to himself he could not tell what had happened to him & (On The Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout, vol. 1, page 103)

BILL HICKMAN

Brigham Young, the second President of the Mormon Church, once stated:

And if the Gentiles wish to see a few tricks, we have “Mormons” that can perform them. We have the meanest devils on the earth in our midst, and we intend to keep them, for we have use for them; and if the Devil does not look sharp, we will cheat him out of them at the last, for they will reform and go to heaven with us. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 6, page 176)

Brigham Young may have had Bill Hickman on his mind when he made this statement, for he was considered as a man that would do anything mean. There is good reason to believe that Hickman was involved in crime when the Church was in Nauvoo. The Warsaw Signal, March 26, 1845, printed a letter which contained this statement:

Wm. A. Hickman stole some bacon, was put in jail, in a few days was bailed out by two brother Mormons . . .

The Bloomington Herald, November 22, 1845, published this statement by Edward Bonney concerning Hickman:

. . . Wm. A. Hickman, a fugitive from justice, . . . has twice been chased from Missouri into Nauvoo, with stolen horses, within the last two months. (Bloomington Herald, November 22, 1845, typed copy)

Bill Hickman was finally arrested and put in prison. In his autobiography Bill Hickman states:

I stayed a few days, and when the jailer came in one afternoon, I knocked him down, . . . and left, and have not been back since, which was about twenty-five years ago. (Brigham Destroying Angel, pages 46)

In Utah the Mormon leaders not only protected him from justice, but they actually encouraged him in his crimes. This fact is made very plain in the journal of John Bennion. In 1860 Bennion felt that Hickman should be punished for his evil deeds, but he soon learned that Bishop Gardiner “had been bound & could not act” against Hickman and that the Mormon Apostle Orson Hyde, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, taught that a man should not be punished for stealing from the “gentiles.” We copy the following from Bennion’s journal:

Sat 13 went to the city met Bp Gardner had a talk with him about W. A. Hickmans wicked course for some time past he said that up till now he had been bound & could not act I told him I was not bound neither was I afraid to expose the wickedness of any man that it was my duty to expose we got home about sun down in the evening I met with Bp & councilors & parties concerned [to] try George Hickman for stealing mules when about to commence trial Elder Hyde come in and by Gardners solicitation he preached and the trial was postponed after meeting Bp council & Elder Hyde had a long talk in my house by Hyde said speaking of stealing that a man may steal & be influenced by the Spirit of the Lord to do it that Hickman had done it years past said that he never would institute a trial against a brother for stealing from the gentiles but stealing from his brethren he was done on it he laid down much teaching on the subject

S 14th went to meeting at the mill to hear br Hyde . . . he give much good instruction spoke on last nights intention to try Hickman give it as the Word of the Lord to set him free for the past, bid him go & sin no more. (“John Bennion Journal,” October 13 and 14, 1860, original journal located at Utah State Historical Society)

In The Mormon Kingdom, vol. 1, page 62, we quoted Mary Ettie V. Smith as stating that the Apostle Orson Hyde received stolen goods at Kanesville and that Bill Hickman was involved in this stealing. In the light of the reference given above, it would appear that Mrs. Smith was telling the truth.

Toward the end of his life Bill Hickman wrote a book in which he stated that he had committed his crimes with the approval of the Mormon Church leaders. He even claimed that he had committed murderers by the orders of Brigham Young and the Apostle Orson Hyde. For instance, he stated that he murdered Jessie Hartly after receiving orders from these men.

Before examining Hickman’s account of the murder of Hartly, it is interesting to read Mrs. Mary Ettie V. Smith’s comments concerning this matter:

About the time referred to in the last chapter, Jessie T. Hartly came to Great Salt Lake City. He was a man of education and intelligence, and a lawyer by profession. . . . and soon after married a Mormon girl by the name of Bullock, which involved a profession, at least, of Mormonism. It was afterwards supposed by some that his aim was to learn the mysteries of the Church, in order to make an expose of them afterwards. . . . the Prophet regarded him with suspicion, as a fit person to be appointed missionary preacher among the Gentiles. As is customary in such cases, he was proposed in open convention, when all the Heads of the Church were on the stand; and the Prophet rose at once with that air of judicial authority, from which those who know best understand there is no appeal, and said: “This man, Hartly, is guilty of heresy. He has been writing to his friends in Oregon against the Church, and has attempted to expose us to the world, and he should be sent to hell cross lots.” This was the end of the matter as to Hartly.

His friends after this avoided him, and it was understood that his fate was sealed. He knew that to remain was death; he therefore left his wife and child, and attempted to effect an escape.

Not many days after he had gone, Wiley Norton told us, with a feeling of exultation, that they had made sure of another enemy of the church. That the bones of Jesse Hartly were in the canons, and that he was afraid they would be overlooked at the Resurrection, unless he had better success in “pleading” in the next world than in this, referring to his practice as a lawyer.

Nearly a year and half after this, when on our way to the States, I saw the widow of Jesse Hartly at Green River. She had been a very pretty woman, and was at that time but twenty-two years old. I think she was the most heart-broken human being I have ever seen. . . . she commenced by saying:

“You may have suffered; and if you have been a Mormon wife, you must have known sorrow. But the cruelty of my own fate, I am sure, is without a parallel—even in this land of cruelty.”

“I married Jesse Hartly, knowing he was a ‘Gentile’ in fact, but he passed for a Mormon, but that made no difference with me, although I was a Mormon, because he was a noble man, and sought only the right. By being my husband, he was brought into closer contact with the members of the Church, and was thus soon enabled to learn many things about us, and about the Heads of the Church, that he did not approve, and of which I was ignorant, although, I had been brought up among the Saints; and which, if known among the Gentiles, would have greatly damaged us. I do not understand all he discovered, or all he did; but they found he had written against the Church, and he was cut off, and the Prophet required as an atonement for his sins, that he should lay down his life. . . . They kill those there who have committed sins too great to be atoned for in any other way. The Prophet says, if they submit to this he can save them, otherwise they are lost. Oft! that is horrible. But my husband refused to be sacrificed, and so set out alone for the United States: thinking there might at least a hope of success. I told him when he left me, and left his child, that he would be killed, and so he was. William Hickman and another Danite, shot him in the canons; and I have often since been obliged to cook for this man, when he passed this way, knowing all the while, he had killed
my husband. My child soon followed after its father, and I hope to die also; for why should I live? They have brought me here, where I wish to remain, rather than to return to Salt Lake, where the murderers of my husband curse the earth, and roll in affluence unpunished." (Mormonism: Its Rise, Progress, And Present Condition, Hartford, 1870, pages 308-311)

In his confessions Bill Hickman frankly admitted that he had killed Hartly, and he states that Brigham Young and Orson Hyde had ordered the killing:

When we had got across what was known as the Big Mountain, and into East Canon, some three or four miles, one Mr. Hartly came to us from Provo City. This Hartly was a young lawyer who had come to Salt Lake from Oregon the fall before, and had married a Miss Bullock, of Provo, a respectable lady of a good family. But word had come to Salt Lake (so said, I never knew whether it did or not), that he had been engaged in some counterfeit affair. He was a fine-looking, intelligent young man. He told me he had never worked any is his life, and was going to Fort Bridger or Green River to see if he could not get a job of clerking, or something that he could do. But previous to this, at the April Conference, Brigham Young, before the congregation, gave him a tremendous blowing up, calling him all sorts of bad names, and saying he ought to have his throat cut, which made him feel very bad. He declared he was not guilty of the charges.

I saw Orson Hyde looking very sour at him, and after he had been in camp an hour or two, Hyde told me that he had orders from Brigham Young, if he came to Fort Supply to have him used up. "Now," said he, "I want you and George Boyd to do it." I saw him and Boyd talking together; then Boyd came to me and said: "It's all right, Bill; I will help you to kill that fellow." One of our teams was two or three miles behind, and Orson Hyde wished me to go back and see if anything had happened to it. Boyd saddled his horse to go with me, but Hartly stepped up and said he would go if Boyd would let him have his horse. Orson Hyde said: "Let him have your horse," which Boyd did. Orson Hyde then whispered to me: "Now is your time; don't let him come back." We started, and about half a mile on had to cross the canon stream, which was midisides to our horses. While crossing, Hartly got a shot and fell dead in the creek. His horse took fright and ran back to camp.

I went on and met Hosea Stout, who told me the team was coming close by. I turned back, Stout with me, for our camp. Stout asked me if I had seen that fellow, meaning Hartly. I told him he had come to our camp, and he said from what he had heard he ought to be killed. I then told him all that had happened, and he said that was good. When I returned to camp Boyd told me that his horse come into camp with blood on the saddle, and he and some of the boys took it to the creek and washed it off. Orson Hyde told me that was well done; that he and some others had gone on the side of the mountain, and lectures were delivered against girls marrying gentiles & winter Saints & all that was not native to the earth, and roll in affluence unpunished." (Mormonism: Its Rise, Progress, And Present Condition, Hartford, 1870, pages 308-311)

Hosea Stout also mentioned Orson Hyde's speech to the company:

This evening Elder Hyde informed the company that Mr J___ Hartley who did not make his appearance to day with us had most likely had some dishonest intentions by his leaving & wished the guard to renew their diligence least their horses might be stolen. (On The Mormon Frontier, vol. 2, page 514)

The fact that Mrs. Hartley told of the murder of her husband years before Hickman made his confession, and that Hosea Stout's diary confirms many of the details around in Hickman's confession, seems to prove that Hartley was murdered by orders of the Mormon leaders. We must agree with a statement made by J. H. Beadle:

But those accustomed to judging the weight of evidence can come to but one conclusion: Jesse Hartley was murdered for apostasy, and the charge of counterfeit was cooked up to furnish some sort of excuse to those of the Mormons who could not "swallow the strong doctrine of blood-atonement." (Brigham's Destroying Angel, Appendix C, pages 204-205)

As we examine the history of the Mormon Church, it becomes very apparent that the Mormon leaders were attempting to establish a kingdom by some very worldly methods. These methods in many cases were just the opposite of what Jesus taught. When he was brought before Pilate he stated: "... My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, ... but now is my kingdom not from hence" (John 18:36).

In The Mormon Kingdom, vol. 2, we have a great deal of information concerning the men who killed and committed violent acts for the early Mormon leaders. We cover such subjects as: the actual practice of Blood Atonement, whipping, emasculation, Hosea Stout, Bill Hickman, Orrin Porter Rockwell, Tom Brown, the Hodges, the murder of Miller and Lieza, the murder of Irvine Hodges, and the murder of Col. Davenport. We hope to deal with many other important subjects in the volume. We feel that this is a very important work and that all of our readers should have this.

The first volume of The Mormon Kingdom is now finished and we have completed 32 pages in the second volume. The remaining pages will be mailed out as soon as they are completed. To receive both these volumes and a vinyl loose-leaf binder the customer would normally pay $7.90. We are having a special, however, and if these two volumes are ordered before December 31, 1969, the price will be only $6.95!

IF you were arrested
for being a
Christian,
Would there be
enough evidence to
convict
YOU?

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. —Matthew 5:16
Besides the devastating evidence against the authenticity of the Book of Abraham, there is additional evidence which we should consider. For instance, it is plain to see that Joseph Smith borrowed heavily from the King James Version of the Bible. An example is Genesis 12:1 compared with the Book of Abraham 2:3.

*Genesis 12:1*

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:  

*Book of Abraham 2:3*

Now the Lord had said unto me: Abraham, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee.

We could cite many parallels, but these should be sufficient to convince the reader that the two texts are related. Now, we feel that the only logical explanation for this relationship is that Joseph Smith merely borrowed from the Bible, rewriting and adding to the text as he went along. Dr. Sidney B. Sperry, of Brigham Young University, on the other hand, states that the Book of Abraham was in existence before Genesis was written and that Genesis was taken from it! Dr. Sperry states:

... the writer believes that the second chapter of Abraham is the original, of which Gen. 12:1-13 is an abridgment. This is a remarkable fact. ... (Ancient Records Testify in Papyrus and Stone, Salt Lake City, 1938, page 81)

On pages 83-84 of the same book, Dr. Sperry states:

For a number of years I have strongly felt that chapter 2 of the Book of Abraham is the original account from which Gen. 12:1-13 was made. Putting it another way, the account in Genesis is nothing more or less than an abridgment of that in the Book of Abraham. ... The similarity cannot be accidental ... a linguistic study of the Book of Abraham and of the parallel versions of the Bible points unmistakably to the independent character of the Egyptian record and to the conclusion that it is, at least, the possible original from whence the account in Genesis was taken.

Although Dr. Sperry’s idea that Genesis was taken from the Book of Abraham may seem fantastic, it is the only answer he could give that would not undermine the Book of Abraham. To say that the Book of Abraham came from Genesis is to label it a fraud. Of course, now that we have the original papyrus from which the Book of Abraham was “translated,” we know that it is in reality nothing but an Egyptian funerary document and has nothing to do with Abraham or his religion. But even if the original papyrus were not available, there would be sufficient evidence to show that the Book of Abraham was written after Genesis.

It is extremely interesting to note that the Book of Abraham itself seems to catch Joseph Smith in the process of changing his doctrine concerning the Godhead. In the first part of the Book of Abraham we do not find the doctrine of a plurality of Gods. For instance, in Abraham 2:1 we read: “Now the Lord God caused the famine to wax sore ...” This part of the Book of Abraham was probably written in 1835. The Mormon writer Jay M. Todd states: “Another fact of relevance in the matter is the amount of present-day Book of Abraham in the hand of Warren Parrish: chapter 1:1-2:18. This is also the exact length of the first installment in the 1842 Times and Seasons. One tends to wonder if that is as far as the Prophet reached in his 1835 work” (The Sage of the Book of Abraham, page 228). As we examine the text of the Book of Abraham we find that it is the part which was “translated” in March, 1842, which contains the doctrine of a plurality of Gods. The words “the Gods” appear more than forty times in the fourth and fifth chapters of the Book of Abraham.

Actually, chapters four and five of the Book of Abraham appear to be nothing but the first of Genesis rewritten to include a plurality of Gods. The word “God” is changed to “the Gods” and wherever the word “he” refers to God it has been changed to “they.” It would appear, however, that in one instance Joseph Smith forgot to change the word “he” to “they” and that it had to be changed after his death. He was apparently copying from Genesis 1:16, which reads:

And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also. (Genesis 1:16)

Joseph Smith rewrote this to read as follows:

And the Gods organized the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; with the lesser light He set the stars, also; ... (Times and Seasons, vol. 3, page 721)

This was reprinted the same way in the Millennial Star, August 1842, vol. 3, page 51. In the Pearl of Great Price it has been changed to read:

And the Gods organized the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; with the lesser light they set the stars also. (Pearl of Great Price, Book of Abraham 4:16)

In *The Case Against Mormonism*, volumes 2 and 3, we give a great deal of information concerning the Book of Abraham. (See the SPECIAL OFFER below.)

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In a review of the first two volumes of this work, Dr. Kenneth Kantzer, Dean of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School stated:

These books represent no ordinary polemic against Mormonism. This is the definitive, fully-documented, utterly-devastating case against the divine authority and truthfulness of the foundational documents upon which the Mormon religion is based. (Evangelical Beacon, October 8, 1968, page 7)

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Teach us, O God, the love that is revealed in Jesus Christ. Grant us the graces of humility and of an inquiring mind, and by Thy Spirit guide us into all truth, through Christ our Lord. Amen. —Student Prayer
Those of us who grew up in the Mormon Church know the Church teaches that the revelations of Joseph Smith are supposed to be received as if from God’s “own mouth” (Doctrine and Covenants, Section 21, verse 5), and that the present-day leader is supposed to be God’s mouthpiece on earth. The ward teacher’s message for June 1945 contained these statements:

Any latter-day Saints who denounces or opposes, whether actively or otherwise, any plan or doctrine advocated by the “prophets, seers, and revelators” of the Church is cultivating the spirit of apostasy... Lucifer... wins a great victory when he can get members of the Church to speak against their leaders and to “do their own thinking.”

When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. When they propose a plan—it is God’s plan. When they point the way, there is no other which is safe. When they give direction, it should mark the end of controversy. (Improvement Era, June 1945, page 354)

In making a study of Mormon Church history we ran across a number of things that have led us to question the wisdom of blindly following the “Prophet, Seer and Revelator” of the Church.

To begin with, David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, makes it clear that Joseph Smith sometimes gave false revelations. He stated:

When the Book of Mormon was in the hands of the printer, more money was needed to finish the printing of it. . . . Brother Hyrum said it had been suggested to him that some of the brethren might go to Toronto, Canada, and sell the copy-right of the Book of Mormon for considerable money; and he persuaded Joseph to inquire of the Lord about it. Joseph concluded to do so. He had not yet given up the stone. Joseph looked into the hat in which he placed the stone, and received a revelation that some of the brethren should go to Toronto, Canada, and that they would sell the copy-right of the Book of Mormon. Hiram Page and Oliver Cowdery went to Toronto on this mission, but they failed entirely to sell the copy-right, returning without any money. Joseph was at my father’s house when they returned. I was there also, and am an eye witness to these facts. Jacob Whitmer and John Whitmer were also present when Hiram Page and Oliver Cowdery returned from Canada. Well, we were all in great trouble; and we asked Joseph how it was that he had received a revelation from the Lord for some brethren to go to Toronto and sell the copy-right, and the brethren had utterly failed in their undertaking. Joseph did not know how it was, so he enquired of the Lord about it, and beheld the following revelation came through the stone: “Some revelations are of God: some revelations are of man: and some revelations are of the devil.” So we see that the revelation to go to Toronto and sell the copy-right was not of God, but was of the devil or of the heart of man. . . . I will say here, that I could tell you other false revelations that came through Brother Joseph as mouthpiece, (not through the stone) but this will suffice. Many of Brother Joseph’s revelations were never printed. The revelation to go to Canada was written down on paper, but was never printed. (An Address to All Believers in Christ, Richmond, Missouri, 1887, pages 30-31)

The Mormon historian B. H. Roberts makes these comments concerning this matter:

...we have here an alleged revelation received by the Prophet, through the “Seer Stone,” directing or allowing men to go on a mission to Canada, which fails of its purpose:... Then in explanation of the failure of that revelation, the Prophet’s announcement that all revelations are not of God; some are of men and some are even from evil sources. ...The revelation respecting the Toronto journey was not of God, surely; else it would not have failed; but the Prophet, overwhelmed in his deep anxiety for the progress of the work saw reflected in the “Seer Stone” his own thought, or that suggested to him by his brother Hyrum, rather than the thought of God... in this instance of the Toronto journey, Joseph was evidently not directed by the inspiration of the Lord. (A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, vol. 1, page 165)

While David Whitmer felt that some of Joseph Smith’s printed revelations were from God, he was skeptical of many of the rest. For instance, he stated that “the revelation on polygamy is not of God” (An Address to All Believers in Christ, page 44). Although the revelation on polygamy is still printed in the Doctrine and Covenants as Section 132, it is no longer practiced by the Mormon people. At one time, however, polygamy was a burning issue. When Lorenzo Snow, who later became President of the Mormon Church, was on trial for practicing polygamy, Mr. Bierbower, the prosecuting attorney, predicted that if he was convicted, “a new revelation would soon follow, changing the divine law of celestial marriage.” To this Lorenzo Snow replied:

Whatever fame Mr. Bierbower may have secured as a lawyer, he certainly will fail as a prophet. The severest prosecutions have never been followed by revelations changing a divine law, obedience to which brought imprisonment or martyrdom.

Though I go to prison, God will not change his law of celestial marriage. But the man, the people, the nation, that oppose and fight against this doctrine and the Church of God, will be overthrown. (Historical Record, page 144)

It was not long after Lorenzo Snow made this statement that the Church was forced to give up the practice of polygamy. In 1890 Wilford Woodruff, the fourth President of the Church, issued the Manifesto—i.e., a revelation which was supposed to stop the practice of polygamy.

THE COMING CRISIS

Today the Church is faced with a crisis that is similar to the one it encountered in 1890 over polygamy. This controversy stems from the fact that Mormon leaders teach that the Negroes are cursed by God and therefore ineligible to hold the Priesthood. The Mormon Apostle Mark E. Petersen stated:

If I were to marry a Negro woman and have children by her, my children would all be cursed as to the Priesthood. Do I want my children cursed as to the priesthood? If there is one drop of Negro blood in my children, as I have read to you, they receive the curse.

This doctrine is derived from Joseph Smith’s “translation” of the Book of Abraham. David O. McKay, the ninth President of the Mormon Church made this statement in a letter dated November 3, 1947:

I know of no scriptural basis for denying the Priesthood to Negroes other than one verse in the Book of Abraham (1:26); however, I believe, as you suggest, that the real reason dates back to our pre-existant life. (Mormonism and the Negro, part 2, page 19)
Since the Book of Abraham contains the verse that is used for “denying the Priesthood to Negroes,” it should be examined with a very critical eye. Joseph Smith claimed that this book was a correct translation of a roll of Egyptian papyrus which he obtained in 1835.

While Egyptologists questioned the authenticity of Joseph Smith’s work because of his interpretation of three drawings included in the printed version of the “Book of Abraham,” they were unable to prove that the text of book itself was mistranslated because the original papyrus had become lost. On November 27, 1967, however, the entire picture changed, for the Deseret News announced that “A collection of papyrius manuscripts, long believed to have been destroyed in the Chicago fire of 1871, was presented to The Church . . . by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. . . . Included in the papyri is a manuscript identified as the original document from which Joseph Smith had copied the drawing which he called ‘Facsimile No. 1’ and published with the Book of Abraham” (Deseret News, November 27, 1967, page 1). While the Church leaders were willing to admit that the drawing which Joseph Smith used for Fac. No. 1 in the Book of Abraham was among the manuscripts they were reluctant to admit that the fragment of papyrus from which Joseph Smith “translated” the text for the Book of Abraham itself was among the collection. In the Salt Lake City Messenger, March 1968, we pointed out that the fragment of Papyrus which Dr. Nibley labeled “XI. Small ‘Sensen’ text (unillustrated)” was the fragment Joseph Smith “translated” the Book of Abraham from. In the Mormon publication, Improvement Era, May 1968, Dr. Nibley finally admitted that the papyrus Joseph Smith used “in preparing the text of the Book of Abraham” had been located.

This fragment of papyrus has now been translated by three different Egyptologists, and they have all come to the conclusion that it is in reality an appendage to the Egyptian “Book of Breaths,” and has nothing to do with Abraham or his religion. Therefore, the Book of Abraham has been proven to be a spurious work.

Dee Jay Nelson, one of the Egyptologists who translated the papyrus, is a member of the Mormon Church. Mr. Nelson’s research has led him to the conclusion that his church must give up the Book of Abraham. In a letter dated July 13, 1968, he stated: “I have been swamped lately by letters and long distance telephone calls from troubled people. Almost every one of them asks if I really believe that the Book of Abraham is untrue and each seems almost pleadingly eager for me to defend it. To each I have said that I do not believe it.” Mr. Nelson informed us that in one week he “received 33 letters and 19 long distance calls about the Book of Abraham & the papyri.”

Since David O. McKay, the ninth President of the Mormon Church, has stated that he knows of “no scriptural basis for denying the Priesthood to Negroes other than one verse in the Book of Abraham,” and since the Egyptologists have declared the Book of Abraham a spurious work, it appears that there is no real basis for this doctrine.

THE GREAT STALL

The Mormon leaders seem to feel that if they ignore this problem it will eventually go away. They have appointed Dr. Hugh Nibley, of Brigham Young University, to unfold “the meaning of the hieroglyphics.” Although Dr. Nibley knows several languages, he was not qualified to translate the Egyptian papyri.

In fact, in a letter to the Egyptologist Dee Jay Nelson, Dr. Nibley claimed that he did not even want to “get involved in the P.G.P. business.” (The letters “P.G.P.” are, of course, an abbreviation for Pearl of Great Price. The Book of Abraham is printed as part of the Pearl of Great Price.) Dr. Nibley stated:

I don’t consider myself an Egyptologist at all, and don’t intend to get involved in the P.G.P. business unless I am forced into it—which will probably be sooner than that. . . . I see no reason in the world why you should not be taken into the confidence of the Brethren if this thing ever comes out into the open; in fact, you should be enormously useful to the Church. . . . As you know, there are parties in Salt Lake who are howling for a showdown on the P.G.P.; if they have their way we may have to get together. (Letter from Dr. Hugh Nibley to Dee Jay Nelson, dated June 27, 1967)

Whether Dr. Nibley wanted to or not, he now finds himself deeply involved in the “P.G.P. business,” and the Mormon people are looking to him for answers. After writing almost 400 pages on the papyri, the Mormon writer Jay M. Todd has to admit that he has not discussed “the meaning of the papyri themselves” and refers the readers to Dr. Nibley’s work:

One major remaining issue remains still undiscussed in this background study, and that is the meaning of the papyri themselves. That issue shall remain undiscussed. Egyptologists in and out of the Church will address themselves to that area for some years to come. The import and significance of the papyri recently rediscovered will be told Latter-day Saints by Dr. Hugh Nibley, to whom the First Presidency has given the assignment. Surely his mind and hand will be blessed, and his report will be one of immense interest and significance to members of the Church. (The Saga of the Book of Abraham, Salt Lake City, 1969, pages 387-388)

Dr. Nibley has written many articles for the Improvement Era, but so far he has not translated the papyri or made any attempt to tell the Mormon people “the meaning of the papyri themselves.” He has had photographs of the papyri since “the summer of 1966,” and the original papyri have been at BYU since they were presented to the Church, yet he has failed to produce a translation. In a letter dated February 8, 1968, Dr. Nibley stated that the “papyri are not difficult to translate,” and that he had “made a translation of some of the papyri.” If Dr. Nibley has made a translation why hasn’t he published it? Dee Jay Nelson completed his “Translation and Preliminary Survey” in less than two months. Hugh Nibley has had photographs of the papyri for about four years, yet he has not published a translation. The picture of Dr. Nibley working with the papyri on the front page of this Messenger is taken from the Brigham Young University Alumni, February, 1970. The caption under the picture contains this statement: “Hugh Nibley works at translating some of the papyri donated recently to the Church. Copies of the writings of Abraham will be shown at the Alumni Reception—College of Religion reception in the Hotel Utah during April General Conference.”

While the article goes on to state that “copies of the Book of Abraham papyri” would be displayed, it says nothing about Dr. Nibley completing a translation before April Conference. There is good reason to believe that Dr. Nibley will never publish a translation of the papyri, for in an article he wrote in 1968, he stated: “. . . it is doubtful whether any translation could do as much good as harm” (Brigham Young University Studies, Spring 1968, page 251).

NAIVE VIEW

Although the Mormon leaders have refused to face the facts concerning the Book of Abraham, there is evidence that some of the Mormon people are beginning to look seriously at the problem. For instance, the Latter-day Saints Student Association publication, LDSA Commentary, has published some interesting information by Richley Crapo and John Tvedtines. While these men still hold to the idea that the Book of Abraham is divinely inspired they admit that it cannot be a literal translation of the papyri as the church has always taught. In one article they state:

The rediscovery of the Joseph Smith Papyri in 1967 has facilitated further research into the origin and nature of the Book of Abraham and has made it possible to reformulate entirely our concepts about the process by which Joseph Smith produced the Book of Abraham. . . .

Lacking the original papyri or any significant amount of information about the materials which stimulated the writing of the Book of Abraham, the members of the Church have always assumed that book to have been a literal translation of a document written by Abraham himself. Now it is possible to supersede this naive view with a deeper understanding of the origins of that book. . . . One of the recently acquired papyri, it seems, is directly related to the Book of Abraham. Critics of the Church have labelled the source from which the book of Abraham was “translated.”

Upon examination of the original papyrus fragments presented to the Church, and others discovered that the Egyptian hieratic characters of the “preface” portion of the Small Sensen Fragment were essentially those contained in the left-hand column of Joseph Smith’s notes concerning the Book of Abraham. These Egyptian words were juxtaposed in the order in which they occur on the papyri to verses from the Book of Abraham. It appears therefore, that Joseph Smith connected the Book of Abraham to the Small Sensen Fragment. This conclusion is supported by the fact pointed out by Dr. Klaus Baer, a well-known Egyptologist, that the Small Sensen Fragment immediately followed and was originally attached to the left side of the papyri bearing “Facsimile 1.” . . .

Our own translation and those of several Egyptologists of the Small Sensen Fragment have demonstrated that this papyrus is part of an Egyptian funerary document. Its relationship to the Book of Abraham must, then, be something other than has long been thought. The possibility of its use
as a mnemonic device in connection with an Abrahamic oral tradition was suggested by our further studies. (LDSS Commentary, March 27, 1969)

### INTO THE FIRE

On November 13, 1969, the Salt Lake Tribune stated that Stanford University “announced Wednesday it will schedule no new athletic or other competitions with Brigham Young University because of alleged racial discrimination by the Mormon Church.” Obert C. Tanner, professor of philosophy at the University of Utah, called Stanford’s action “easily the sharpest criticism of the Mormon religion in this century” (Salt Lake Tribune, January 7, 1970). After Stanford University made this announcement, it appeared that the Mormon leaders might change the doctrine concerning the Negro. On December 25, 1969, the following appeared in the Salt Lake Tribune:

San Francisco — The Mormon Church’s denial of its priesthood to Negroes of African lineage “will change in the not too distant future,” according to Hugh B. Brown, one of the highest ranking officials of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Lester Kinsolving, religious columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle reported Wednesday.

Pres. Brown, who is first counselor to Pres. David O. McKay, told Mr. Kinsolving that admission of Negroes to the priesthood will come about “in the ordinary evolution of things as we go along, since human rights are basic to the church.”

When asked if he thought that this change would come about during Pres. McKay’s presidency, he replied:

“Well, that’s impossible to predict. He’ll be right now.” . . . Pres. Brown disclosed Wednesday that Willard Wymans [from Stanford University, . . . had contacted him . . . Pres. Brown also disclosed that he had told Wymans that “the church is not prejudiced in any way but this one, but I think that will change.” (Salt Lake Tribune, December 25, 1969)

Shortly after this members of the Mormon Church were surprised to learn that David O. McKay, the ninth President of the Church, held some very liberal views with regard to the Negro. This information came from a letter Sterling McMurrin had written to Llewelyn R. McKay (David O. McKay’s son) in 1968. In this letter Dr. McMurrin stated:

I am writing this letter, with copies to your brothers Lawrence, Edward, and Robert, to tell you of a conversation with your father in the Spring of 1954. . . .

At one point in the conversation I introduced the subject of the common belief among the Church membership that Negroes are under a divine curse. I told him that I regarded this doctrine as both false and morally abhorrent and that some weeks earlier, in a class in my own Ward, I had made it clear that I did not accept the doctrine and that I wanted to be known as a dissenter to the class instructor’s statements about “our beliefs” in this matter.

President McKay replied that he was “glad” that I had taken this stand, as he also did not believe this teaching. He stated his position in the matter very forcefully and clearly and said with considerable feeling that “there is not now, and there never has been, a doctrine in the Church that the Negroes are under a divine curse.” He insisted that there is no doctrine of any kind pertaining to the Negro. “We believe,” he said, “that we have scriptural precedent for with the privilege of the Priesthood and have been denied the privilege of Priesthood and the fullness of the blessings of the Gospel. These are the descendants of Cain. Moreover, they have been made to feel their inferiority and have been separated from the rest of mankind from the beginning . . . we will also hope that blessings may eventually be given to our Negro brethren, for they are our brethren—children of God—notwithstanding their black covering emblematical of eternal darkness. (The Way to Perfection, page 101-102)

Since the Church has run into trouble because of the anti-Negro doctrine, Joseph Fielding Smith has become more guarded in his statements. Notice that in his book, The Way to Perfection, page 101, he plainly stated that Negroes are “an inferior race,” yet when the Church was in serious trouble because of George Romney’s political ambitions, Joseph Fielding Smith stated that the Mormons have never described the Negro as “belonging to an ‘inferior race’”:

“The ignorance on the part of writers who do not belong to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in relation to the view of the ‘Mormons’ on the status religiously or otherwise of the Negro is inexusable. . . .

“The Latter-day Saints, so commonly called ‘Mormons’ have no animosity towards the Negro. Neither have they described him as belonging to an ‘inferior race.’” (Deseret News, Church Section, June 14, 1962, page 3)

Joseph Fielding Smith is the same man who tried to hide the fact that some Negroes were ordained to the Priesthood in the Mormon Church. On June 8, 1960, a woman who was a member of the Mormon Church, wrote a letter to Joseph Fielding Smith asking him if it was true that Negroes had been ordained Elders. The answer she received was postmarked June 10, 1960, and read: “Negroes were not ordained in the early Church.” Three years later, Joseph Fielding Smith was forced to admit that at least one Negro, Elijah Abel, had been ordained. In a letter dated April 10, 1963, Joseph Fielding Smith stated: “. . . this statement that Elijah Abel was so ordained has traveled to the end of the earth.” In the same letter Joseph Fielding Smith stated:

It is true that Elders of the Church laid hands on a Negro and blessed him “apparently” with the Priesthood, but they could not give that which the Lord had denied. It is true that Elijah Abel was so “ordained.”

Wallace Turner gives this information concerning Negroes in the Priesthood:

The continual LDS insistence on racial bigotry has another serious defect, too, since it assumes that the prohibition is equal to all Negroes and always has been. This is untrue. All Mormons who have ever studied the matter know that Elijah Abel, the Nauvoo mortician who was a friend of Joseph Smith, was a priesthood member, even becoming a Seventy. . . .

Jerald and Sandra Tanner, in a short book they call Joseph Smith’s Curse Upon the Negro, assert that Enoch Abel, a son of Elijah, was ordained as an elder in Logan, Utah, and that his son, Elijah, a grandson of the first Elijah
Abel, was ordained a priest in 1934 and an elder in Logan in 1935. About the descendants of the pioneer Negro Mormon, the Tanners write:

“At least forty of these live within a radius of 100 miles of Salt Lake City, and, of course, some of them hold the Priesthood and are doing missionary work for the church.” (The Mormon Establishment, Boston, 1966, pages 241-243)

The Mormon writer Armand L. Mauss stated:

One wonders, for example, why the Lord permitted the ordination of Elijah Abel (and I have even heard it claimed that Church records would show Abel’s sons and grandsons to have been ordained too, although I have never seen any such records or their facsimiles). (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Winter 1967, page 24)

In order to verify the fact that Abel’s descendants were ordained we have obtained a photograph from the Record of Members of the Logan Tenth Ward for the years 1927-1943. This photograph proves that Elijah Abel (the grandson of the Negro Elijah Abel) was ordained to the Priesthood. Notice that he was ordained a Priest July 5, 1934, and an Elder September 29, 1935.

The Mormon writer John L. Lund seems willing to admit that Abel’s descendants have been ordained: “It is also apparently true that several other Negroes, including some of Elijah Abel’s descendants, have been ordained to the Priesthood” (The Church and the Negro, 1967, page 78).

NEGOEES IN CHOIR

It is obvious that the situation between Mormons and Negroes is becoming very tense. The following appeared in the Denver Post on November 15, 1969:

The Rev. Roy Flournoy . . . called for reform of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon) in what he alleged is a practice of racism against blacks. . . .

The Church of the Black Cross, . . . is called for:

—Boycott of Mormon goods, such as record albums of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

—Discouraging tourist travel to Utah, home state of the church.

—Taxpayer petitions to the government asking that the Mormon church’s tax-exempt status be abolished. . . .

Flournoy added that he believes the average member of the Mormon Church would willingly remove such doctrines from his religion and would welcome outside pressure to do so. . . .

“I believe racism has been forced upon Mormons by its leaders, and isn’t the philosophy of the people,” Flournoy said.

The reader will notice that the Church of the Black Cross is calling for a boycott “of Mormon goods, such as record albums of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.” Shortly after this article appeared the Mormons decided to bring some Negroes into their choir. Wallace Turner states: “recently the Mormon Tabernacle Choir took in two Negro women as second sopranos, and reportedly, is about to welcome a Negro tenor” (New York Times, January 25, 1970).

Almost a month after Wallace Turner published his article in the New York Times, the Salt Lake Tribune reported:

Black faces are among the sea of white ones in the 375-voice Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

The two new members of the 122-year-old choir are Negroes Wynetta Martin and Marilyn Yuille. . . . Mrs. Martin . . . and her two daughters, came to Salt Lake City in 1967 “because my stake president in San Diego said that I had a mission to do here, in his words ‘to teach love among all people.’ I sold everything I had and flew to Salt Lake,” she said.

She first applied for membership in the choir after she arrived but her dream wasn’t realized until last month. . . .

Miss Yuille “just happened into the Tabernacle Choir.” . . . she came to Utah last summer and the group’s conductor, Dr. Jay E. Welch, also assistant Tabernacle Choir director, encouraged her to audition . . .

“I thought he was kidding but when he cornered me at a fireside and I discovered he was serious, I decided to audition,” she explained. She auditioned for choir director Richard P. Condie on Dec. 2, and sang at her first performance Dec. 4.” (Salt Lake Tribune, February 21, 1970)

It is interesting to note that Mrs. Martin waited two or three years to get into the choir, whereas Miss Yuille was singing in the choir only two days after her audition. This whole matter looks especially strange when we consider the fact that Miss Yuille was put in the choir less than three weeks after the Denver Post announced that the Church of the Black Cross was calling for a boycott of “Mormon goods, such as record albums of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.”

A reliable source within the Church reveals that the Church is considering taking two more Negroes into the Tabernacle Choir. There is, of course, opposition to this plan within the Church, so it is impossible to say whether this will actually work out.

BYU TROUBLES

The Church-operated Brigham Young University has received a great deal of criticism from those who are seeking equal rights for the Negro. In rebuttal to these charges, Ernest L. Wilkinson, President of BYU, made this statement:

True, there are not many black students on our campus. Just how many there are I do not know . . . .

Their decisions may have been based on their belief that their social life would be curtailed. . . . as far as we know there is not a single Negro family residing in the entire county in which BYU is located, and this we are told by Negroes is an important factor in the decision black students make in not coming to BYU.

You should be informed that we have had Negro athletes. . . . we welcome black athletes at BYU provided they satisfy our entrance requirements and are willing to abide by our standards.

We shall continue to try to bring them to BYU. . . . (Daily Universe, Brigham Young University, December 15, 1969)

While it is true that the BYU has had black athletes, the record for recruiting them has not been very impressive. In fact, the Salt Lake Tribune, November 26, 1969, reported that the “BYU has had no varsity black athletes since the late 1950s when two Negroes were on the track team. No Negroes have ever played on the varsity football or basketball teams, school officials have said.”

Recently the Salt Lake Tribune reported that BYU would have a Negro football player this year. Tom Hudspeth, head football coach at BYU, has made some very revealing statements concerning this matter. He admits that in the past Negro athletes have been discouraged from coming to BYU and that one of the “rules” at BYU is that there be no “inter-racial dating.” The following appeared in the Daily Herald, published at Provo, Utah:

Springville — The protests and demonstrations which are being launched against BYU are just an easy entrance into other problems the Negroes feel they have, Tom Hudspeth, head BYU football coach, told the Springville Chamber of Commerce recently at an early morning breakfast meeting.

“The shame of all this is that these young men are victims of circumstances. . . . The only answer is to stand fast, and we are going to do that. We will not change our policies,” he declared.

Negro Here

Coach Hudspeth pointed out that he has a young Negro man on the campus now, and they feel this is the time to bring him into the athletic program.

“In the past we felt we should discourage the Negroes because we felt they would not be happy in the social situation here. We have certain rules and regulations which we won’t change. They must meet academic standards. We will not allow inter-racial dating. We are only 35 minutes from Salt Lake City where there is a Negro community, and we are setting up appointments and introductions there.” . . . Coach Hudspeth declared that the young Negro man is from a junior college in Oklahoma . . . “We felt we could work out something to relieve a little of the pressure. This is the only way we have changed our policy,” he said. . . .

Coach Hudspeth indicated that “a lot of people are mad at me right now because they feel we are giving in.” (Daily Herald, Provo, Utah, February 16, 1970)
Brigham Young University athletic teams have been met with “a gathering wave of protest” during the last two years. Finally, on February 5, 1970, the BYU basketball team was met with the “most violent demonstration” it had ever encountered. The Salt Lake Tribune reported:

Fort Collins, Colo.— The most violent demonstration yet against Brigham Young University by black students protesting the Provo school’s allegedly racist policies took place here Thursday night.

The real violence, however, erupted at halftime when approximately 100-150 black students shuffled out of the stands and walked out on the court.

The violence occurred as campus police tried to remove the blacks from the floor. . . a photographer . . . was struck on the head with a metal object and was taken to a Fort Collins hospital. . . an object described as a Molotov Cocktail, huge and flaming, was tossed on the court. It was quickly brushed off the floor by an alert attendant. (Salt Lake Tribune, February 6, 1970)

TRUE REVELATION

While the Mormon leaders claim that the Church is led by revelation, many people are beginning to realize that this claim cannot substantiated. To accept their “revelation” concerning the Negro, it is necessary to reject the Spirit of God which works within us. The Lord plainly reveals to us, as he did to Peter many years ago, that “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34) to accept the anti-Negro doctrine is to deny the spirit of revelation. If we allow others to do our thinking on this vital issue it could lead to violence or bloodshed. Because we felt that it was not right to put our trust in man, we separated ourselves from the Mormon Church. Those who choose to remain in the Church should at least make it clear that they do not support the anti-Negro doctrine. Stewart L. Udall, who served as Secretary of the Interior, has made this statement:

We Mormons cannot escape persistent, painful inquiries into the sources and grounds of this belief. . . This issue must be resolved . . . It must be resolved because we are wrong and it is past the time when we should have seen the right. A failure to act here is sure to demean our faith, damage the minds and morals of our youth, and undermine the integrity of our Christian ethic. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer 1967, pages 5-6)

We have now completed a book of over 70 pages entitled: Mormons and Negroes. This book contains the information found in our previous work on this subject plus a great deal more. We cover such subjects as: the protest against BYU and the Mormon Church, racism at BYU, dissatisfaction in the Church, the question of a new revelation, President McKay’s statements to Dr. McMurrin, Negroes who have held the Priesthood, the failure of the Nigerian Mission, slavery and civil rights among the Mormons, and many other important subjects. Also included is the complete text of the Apostle Mark E. Petersen’s speech “Race Problems—As They Affect The Church.” The prices on this book are: $2.00 each — 2 for $3.50 — 5 for $7.00 — 10 for $12.00.

Help Send Food

In the February 1970 issue of the newsletter published by the World-Wide Missions we find the following:

“My food tastes bitter in my mouth. Every bite I take brings pictures of the horror of my own people in Biafra,” said Dr. Njaka who had just returned from Biafra, his native land. “Here in America we throw away enough every day to keep Biafra from starving.”

He had come to my office begging for supplies for his people. World-Wide Missions had on hand several tons for shipment and we prayed and discussed what to do about it. He said:

“We need money to ship all of these supplies to my native land. I can get them in. Will you ask your people to help supply the funds for shipment?”

My friend, now as multiplied thousands are starving in Biafra, I ask you, “Will you send a gift to ship the supplies we have on hand?”

All gifts to World-Wide Missions are tax-deductible. Donations should be sent to the following address:

WORLD-WIDE MISSIONS
PO BOX G
PASADENA, CA  91109
CONQUERING PREJUDICE

While the Mormons have not retaliated against the demonstrators, there are extremists on both sides, and this could lead to bloodshed. Perhaps we could all learn a lesson from a Negro who became a Christian. Tom Skinner grew up in Harlem and became the leader of “the Harlem Lords”—a gang of over 100 young men. He had “led the fellows in more than fifteen large scale gang fights.” In his book, *Black and Free*, he states:

Just as the racist convinces himself that his racial prejudice is really good for both races, I had gotten to the place where I could take a bottle, bash it across a fellow’s head and be undisturbed about it. I could take that same bottle, break it in half, and shove the glass in the man’s face and twist it without even batting my eye.

By the time I left the gang I had twenty-two notches on the handle of my knife which meant that my blade had gone into twenty-two different fellows. (*Black and Free*, Michigan, 1969, pages 40-41)

One night Tom Skinner was “preparing strategy for a gang fight.” This was to be “the largest gang rumble ever to take place in the city of New York.” Five gangs “were going to unite together to fight a coalition of gangs from the other side of the city.” Over “3,000 fellows” were to be involved in this fight. While planning this gang war, Tom Skinner was listening to a rock and roll program on the radio. At nine o’clock that night an “unscheduled gospel program came on.” Mr. Skinner states:

I tried to turn to another station, but somehow I found myself compelled to listen to this uncouth preacher.

I went on mapping out the strategy that I planned, trying to ignore what the preacher was saying. Yet, what he was saying got through to me.

This uncouth, uneducated preacher spoke from II Corinthians, chapter 5, verse 17, a passage which says, “Wherefore, if any man be in Christ he is a new creature. Old things are passed away and behold all things are become new.”

That night Tom Skinner decided to leave the gang and become a Christian. On pages 68-69 of his book, *Black and Free*, Mr. Skinner gives this interesting information:

If I had not been reached by Jesus Christ I would either be dead, in prison, or graduated to a higher form of hoodlumism. . . Jesus Christ is alive in me. My life has new meaning and purpose because of Him.

The tremendous work that the Spirit of God had done in my life in transforming me soon became evident to me. He took the bigotry, hate and violence out of my life. I had reached the place where I hated white people and blamed them for all the atrocities, immorality and social injustices that were brought against the Negro. Now that hate was gone.

In a football game several weeks later, my new-found Christian love met another test. . . I pulled out and blocked the defensive end, knocking him out of play. . . . The kid that I happened to block got up and was furious. He jumped in front of me and slammed me in the stomach. As I bent over from the blow he hacked me across the back. I hit the ground as he kicked me shouting, “You dirty black nigger! I’ll teach you a thing or two!”

Under normal circumstances the old Tom Skinner would have jumped up and pulverized this white boy. But instead, I got up from the ground and found myself looking this fellow in the face. A smile broke across my face and I said to him, “You know, because of Jesus Christ, I love you anyway.” . . . I was a new person! Here was Tom Skinner who, six weeks before, would have tried to kill this white bigot, bashed him. Now I was able to look into the face I normally would have smashed, and tell him that I loved him in Christ.

The kid threw his helmet down to the ground, ran off the field, and couldn’t play for the rest of the game. When the game was over he met me in the locker room and said to me, “Tom, you’ve done more to knock prejudice out of me by telling me that you loved me than you would have if you’d socked my jaw in.”

I became convinced that the only answer to the prejudice, the bigotry, and the hate that exists in our world today is that people allow the love of God through the Person of Jesus Christ to be expressed through them.

Karl Menninger, a noted psychiatrist, once stated that “love is the medicine for the sickness of the world,” and Jesus himself stated: “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).

SPECIAL OFFER

*Offer Ends — April 30, 1970*

Case Against Mormonism — Vol. 1, 2 & 3

Reg. $10.85 — SPECIAL — $8.95

This special price includes the beautiful vinyl loose-leaf binder which will hold all three volumes. We have completed 32 pages of volume 2 and will mail out the remaining pages as soon as they are printed. All of our readers should have this work.

In a review of the first two volumes of this work, Dr. Kenneth Kantzer, Dean of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School stated:

These books represent no ordinary polemic against Mormonism. This is the definitive, fully-documented, utterly-devastating case against the divine authority and truthfulness of the foundational documents upon which the Mormon religion is based. (*Evangelical Beacon*, October 8, 1968, page 7)

THE MORMON KINGDOM

Vol. 1 & 2 — Special — $6.95

This special price includes the beautiful vinyl loose-leaf binder which will hold three volumes. We have completed 32 pages of volume 2 and will mail out the remaining pages as soon as they are printed. These volumes deal with such subjects as: the doctrine of Blood Atonement, stealing, the Danites, the Temple ceremony, changes in the Temple garments, the relationship to Masonry, the “Oath of Vengeance,” baptism for the dead, the Council of 50, the Kirtland Bank, Joseph Smith’s secret ordination as King and his candidacy for President of the United States, whipping, emasculation, Hosea Stout, Bill Hickman, Orrin Porter Rockwell, Tom Brown, the Hodges, the murder of Miller and Lieza, the murder of Irvine Hodges, the murder of Col. Davenport, and many other important subjects.

NEW BOOK

MORMONS and NEGROES

By Jerald and Sandra Tanner. This is a book of over 70 pages dealing with such subjects as: the protests against BYU and the Mormon Church, racism at BYU, dissatisfaction in the Church, the question of a new revelation, President McKay’s statements to Dr. McMurrin, Negroes who have held the Priesthood, the failure of the Nigerian Mission, slavery and civil rights among the Mormons, and many other important subjects. Also included is the complete text of the Apostle Mark E. Petersen’s speech “Race Problems—As They Affect the Church.”

Prices: $2.00 — 2 for $3.50 — 5 for $7.00 — 10 for $12.00
In *The Mormon Kingdom*, vol. 1, pages 31-42, we show that the early Mormon leaders taught the doctrine of “Blood Atonement.” The Church’s own newspaper, the *Deseret News*, quoted Brigham Young, the second President of the Mormon Church as saying:

> Now take a person in this congregation . . . and suppose that he is overtaken in a gross fault, that he has committed a sin that he knows will deprive him of that exaltation which he desires, and that he cannot attain to it without the shedding of his blood, and also knows that by having his blood shed he will atone for that sin, and be saved and exalted with the Gods, is there a man or woman in this house but what would say, “shed my blood that I may be saved and exalted with the Gods?”

> All mankind love themselves, and let these principles be known by an individual, and he would be glad to have his blood shed. That would be loving themselves, even unto an eternal exaltation. Will you love your brother or sisters likewise, when they have committed a sin that cannot be atoned for without the shedding of their blood? **Will you love that man or woman well enough to shed their blood?**

> I could refer you to plenty of instances where men have been righteously slain, in order to atone for their sins. I have seen scores and hundreds of people for whom there would have been a chance (in the last resurrection there will be) **if their lives had been taken and their blood spilled** on the ground as a smoking incense to the Almighty, but who are now angels to the devil . . . I have known a great many men who left this church for whom there is no chance whatever for exaltation, but if their blood had been spilled, it would have been better for them . . .

> This is loving our neighbor as ourselves; if he needs help, help him; and if he wants salvation and it is necessary to spill his blood on the earth in order that he may be saved, **spill it . . . that is the way to love mankind.**

>Sermon by Brigham Young, delivered in the Mormon Tabernacle, February 8, 1857, printed in the *Deseret News*, February 18, 1857)

In *The Mormon Kingdom*, vol. 1, we list ten offenses for which a person might have been put to death by the early Mormon leaders. They are: murder, adultery or immorality, stealing, using the name of the Lord in vain, refusing to receive the gospel, marrying an African, covenant breaking, apostasy, lying and counterfeiting.

Joseph Fielding Smith, who recently became the tenth President of the Mormon Church, made this statement concerning the doctrine of Blood Atonement:

> Joseph Smith taught that there were certain sins so grievous that man may commit, that they will place the transgressors beyond the power of the atonement of Christ. If these offenses are committed, then the blood of Christ will not cleanse them from their sins even though they repent. Therefore their only hope is to have their own blood shed to atone, as far as possible, in their behalf. (*Doctrine of Salvation*, vol. 1 page 135)

> Although Joseph Fielding Smith admits that Joseph Smith taught “Blood Atonement,” he is willing to admit that the Mormon people never actually practiced it:

> But that the Church practices “Blood Atonement” on apostates or any others, which is preached by ministers of the “Reorganization” is a damnable falsehood for which the accusers must answer . . .

> Did you not know that not a single individual was ever “blood atoned,” as you are pleased to call it, for apostasy or any other cause? (*Ibid.*, pages 136-137)

> In volume 2 of *The Mormon Kingdom* we plan to show that Joseph Fielding Smith’s statement is far from the truth. We feel that we can document the fact that well over 100 people lost their lives because of the Mormon doctrine of “Blood Atonement” and the idea that those who opposed the Church should be put to death.

> One case of “Blood Atonement” was reported by Sarah S. Leavitt in her record book:

> The first person I spoke to after I entered Salt Lake was Dr. Vaun. He came running out of a house and appeared much pleased to see me. He said, “Well, Mrs. Leavitt, I have joined the church.” Of course, I was glad and was in hopes he had repented of his sins and would forsake them. But in this I was disappointed, for he sought the women’s company and with the help of love powders succeeded in gratifying his hellish desires. He was called up before the authorities more than once and confessed his sins and asked forgiveness. He was forgiven and he said if he was ever found guilty again his life should be the penalty. He knew the law of God required it. He was guilty again and was shot and killed. Oh, the weakness and depravity of man, to sell their birthright for a mess of pottage, or in other words, sell their souls’ salvation for a few moments of carnal pleasure. (*Sarah S. Leavitt Journal*, page 41)

This was probably the same case which Hosea Stout recorded in his journal on February 15, 1851:

> They bring news that M.D. Hambleton on last Sunday killed Dr. J. M. Vaughan for similar conduct with Mrs. H. as took place with Dr & Foots wife last summer. (*On the Mormon Frontier; The Diary of Hosea Stout*, edited by Juanita Brooks, vol. 2, pages 393)

Gustive O. Larson, Professor of Church History at Brigham Young University, admits that “Blood Atonement” was actually practiced by the Mormons:

> To whatever extent the preaching on blood atonement may have influenced action, it would have been in relation to Mormon disciplinary action among its own members. In point would be a verbally reported case of a Mr. Johnson in Cedar City who was found guilty of adultery with his stepdaughter by a *Bishop’s Court* and sentenced to death for atonement of his sin. According to the report of reputable eye witnesses, judgement was executed with consent of the offender who went to his unseconsecrated grave in full confidence of salvation through the shedding of blood. Such a case, however primitive, is understandable within the meaning of the doctrine and the emotional extremes of the Reformation. (*Utah Historical Quarterly*, January, 1958, page 62, footnote 39)

Recently the journals of Abraham H. Cannon came to light. These journals—now located in the Special Collections Department of the Brigham Young University Library—contain some very revealing information regarding the doctrine of Blood Atonement. Under the date of December 6, 1889, the Mormon Apostle Abraham H. Cannon (son of George Q. Cannon, a member of the First Presidency) recorded the following in his journal:

> About 4:30 p.m. this meeting adjourned and was followed by a meeting of Presidents Woodruff, Cannon and Smith and Bros. Lyman and Grant . . . In speaking of the recent examination before Judge Anderson Father said that he understood when he had his endowments in Nauvoo that he took an oath against the murderers of the Prophet Joseph as well as other prophets, and if he had ever met any of those who had taken a hand in that massacre he
would undoubtedly have attempted to **avenge the blood of the Martyrs**. The Prophet charged Stephen Markham to avenge his blood should he be slain; after the Prophet's death Bro. Markham attempted to tell this to an assembly of the Saints, but Willard Richards pulled him down from the stand, as he feared the effect on the enraged people.—Bro. Joseph F. Smith was traveling some years ago near Carthage when he met a man who said he had just arrived five minutes too late to see the Smiths killed. Instantly a dark cloud seemed to overshadow Bro. Smith and he asked how this man looked upon the deed. Bro. S. was oppressed by a most horrible feeling as he waited for a reply. After a brief pause the man answered, “just as I have always looked up on it—that it was a d_d cold-blooded murder.” The cloud immediately lifted from Bro. Smith and he found that he had his **open pocket knife grasped in his hand** in his pocket, and he believes that had this man given his approval to that murder of the prophets he **would have immediately struck him to the heart.** ("Daily Journal of Abraham H. Cannon," December 6, 1889, pages 205-206)

Photographs of the journals of Abraham H. Cannon were made before they were taken to the Brigham Young University Library. We have been offered photographs from three different sources, and therefore we are able to provide photocopies of four important pages—i.e., the pages cited above and two pages concerning the Adam-God doctrine—from these journals freely upon request.

The statement cited above from the journal of the Mormon Apostle Abraham H. Cannon tends to verify our work in *The Mormon Kingdom* concerning the doctrine of Blood Atonement. On pages 131-137 of vol. 1, we demonstrated that the early Mormons had an “Oath of Vengeance” in their Temple ceremony in which they pledged themselves to avenge Joseph Smith’s blood. This is verified in the quotation above by the Apostle Abraham H. Cannon, when he states that his father (George Q. Cannon, a member of the First Presidency) admitted that when “he had his endowments in Nauvoo that he took an oath against the murderers of the Prophet Joseph as well as other prophets, and if he had ever met any of those who had taken a hand in that massacre he would undoubtedly have attempted to avenge the blood of the martyrs.”

The statement that Joseph F. Smith was about to murder a man with his “pocket knife” if he expressed approval of Joseph Smith’s death reveals the intense hatred which the early Mormon leaders felt toward their enemies. Joseph F. Smith later became the sixth President of the Mormon Church, and his son Joseph Fielding Smith recently became the tenth President of the Mormon Church.

Statements like the ones quoted above led to the death of many people in Utah. We will have a great deal more to say about this subject in our work, *The Mormon Kingdom. ■

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**A DELAY**

Although we have spent a great deal of time doing research on our books, *The Case Against Mormonism* and *The Mormon Kingdom*, we did not have any pages ready to mail out with this issue of the *Messenger*. We hope, however, to finish both these volumes in the near future. So far we have completed 62 pages of *The Case Against Mormonism*, vol. 3, and 32 pages of *The Mormon Kingdom*, vol. 2.

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**Is Adam Christ’s Father?**

Brigham Young, the second President of the Mormon Church, once stated: “Now, remember from this time forth, and forever, that Jesus Christ was not begotten by the Holy Ghost” (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 1, page 51). This statement is in conflict with both the Bible and the Book of Mormon (see Matthew 1:18-20; Book of Mormon, Alma 7:10). In spite of the teachings of the Bible and the Book of Mormon, Joseph Fielding Smith, who recently became President of the Church, has denied that Christ was begotten by the Holy Ghost: “They tell us the Book of Mormon states that Jesus was begotten of the Holy Ghost. I challenge that statement. The Book of Mormon teaches no such thing! Neither does the Bible” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 1, page 19).

Since Mormon theology teaches that God himself is a man instead of a spirit and is the literal father of Christ, the birth of Christ is considered a natural, rather than miraculous, occurrence. The Mormon writer Carlford B. Broderick made these comments:

There are two basic elements in the Gospel view of sexuality as I interpret it from the scriptures. The first is that sex is good—that sexuality, far from being the antithesis of spirituality, is actually an attribute of God. . . . In the light of their understanding that *God is a procreating personage of flesh and bone*, latter-day prophets have made it clear that despite what it says in Matthew 1:20, the Holy Ghost was not the father of Jesus. . . . The Savior was fathered by a personage of flesh and bone, and was literally what Nephi said he was, “son of the Eternal Father.” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Autumn, 1967, pages 100-101)

Brigham Young had this to say concerning the birth of Christ:

The man Joseph, the husband of Mary, did not, that we know of, have more than one wife, but Mary the wife of Joseph had another husband. (*Deseret News*, October 10, 1866)

The Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt stated:

The fleshly body if Jesus required a Mother as well as a Father. Therefore, the Father and Mother of Jesus, according to the flesh, must have been **associated together in the capacity of husband and wife**: hence the Virgin Mary must have been, for the time being, the lawful **wife of God the Father**: we use the term **lawful Wife**, because it would be blasphemous in the highest degree to say that He overshadowed her or begat the Savior unlawfully. It would have been unlawful for any man to have interfered with Mary, who was already espoused to Joseph; for such a heinous crime would have subjected both the guilty parties to death, according to the law of Moses. But God having created all men and women, had the most perfect right to do with His own creation, according to His holy will and pleasure: He had a lawful right to overshadow the Virgin Mary in the **capacity of a husband**, and beget a Son, although she was espoused to another; for the law which he gave to govern men and women was not intended to govern Himself, or to prescribe rules for his own conduct. It was also lawful in Him, after having thus dealt with Mary, to give her to Joseph her espoused husband. Whether God the Father gave Mary to Joseph for time only, or for time and eternity, we are not informed. Inasmuch as *God was the first husband to her*, it may be that He only gave her to be the wife of Joseph while in this mortal state, and that He intended after the resurrection to again take her as **one of his own wives** to raise up immortal spirits in eternity. (*The Seer*, page 158)

On April 9, 1852, Brigham Young, the second President of the Mormon Church, went so far as to declare that Adam “is our Father and our God” and that he is the Father of Jesus:

Now hear it, O inhabitants of the earth, Jew and Gentile, Saint and sinner! When our father Adam came into the garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial body, and brought Eve, one of his wives, with him. He helped to make and organize this world. He is Michael, the Arch-angel, the Ancient of Days! about whom holy men have written and spoken—**he is our Father and our God, and the only God with whom we have to do**. Every man upon the earth, professing Christians or non-professing, must hear it, and will know it sooner or later . . . When the Virgin Mary conceived the child Jesus, the Father had begotten him in his own likeness. He was not begotten by the Holy Ghost. And who is the Father? He is the **first of the human family**: . . . Jesus, our elder brother, was begotten in the flesh by the same character that was in the garden.
of Eden, and who is our Father in Heaven . . . Jesus Christ was not begotten by the Holy Ghost. I will repeat a little anecdote. I was in conversation with a certain learned professor upon this subject, when I replied, to this idea—"if the Son was begotten by the Holy Ghost, it would be very dangerous to baptize and confirm females, and give the Holy Ghost to them, lest he should beget children, to be palmed upon the Elders by the people, bringing the Elders into great difficulties." (Journal of Discourses, vol. 1, pages 50-51)

Although this doctrine is no longer taught by the Mormon leaders, there is a great deal of evidence to show that it was taught and accepted for many years. For instance, on Wednesday, February 7, 1877, L. John Nuttall recorded in his journal that Brigham Young taught in the Temple that Jesus was the son of Adam:

Wed. 7 at Temple. I officiated as Recorder at the font—. . . Prest Young was filled with the spirit of God & revelation & said, . . . Adam was an immortal being when he came on this earth . . . and had begotten all the spirit that was to come to this earth and Eve our common Mother who is the mother of all living bore those spirits in the celestial world . . .

Father Adam’s oldest son (Jesus the Savior) who is the heir of the family is Father Adam’s first begotten in the spirit world, who according to the flesh is the only begotten as it is written. (In his divinity he having gone back into the spirit world, and come in the spirit to Mary and she conceived . . .) ("Journal of L. John Nuttall," vol. 1, pages 18-21, taken from a typed copy at the Brigham Young University).

As late as 1888 George Q. Cannon, a member of the First Presidency, was teaching that Adam was the father of Jesus. His son recorded the following in his journal on March 10, 1888:

As we drove home Father told me that all his success in life was due to his zeal for the work of God . . . He asked me what I understood concerning Mary conceiving the Savior; and as I found no answer, he asked what was to prevent Father Adam from visiting and overshadowing the mother of Jesus. “Then,” said I, “he must have been a resurrected Being.” “Yes,” said he, “and though Christ is said to have been the first fruits of them that slept, yet the Savior said he did nothing but what He had seen His Father do, for He had power to lay down His life and take it up again. Adam, though made of dust, was made, as Pres. Young said, of the dust of another planet than this.”—I was very much instructed by the conversation and this days services. ("Daily Journal of Abraham H. Cannon," vol. 10, page 178, original located at Brigham Young University, Special Collections)

On June 23, 1889, Abraham H. Cannon recorded this statement in his journal:

Father proved to my entire satisfaction this morning by passages from the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants that all men, even the sons of perdition, will be resurrected and stand before God to be judged. He believes that Jesus Christ is Jehovah, and that Adam is his Father and our God; that under certain unknown conditions the benefits of the Savior’s atonement extend to our entire solar system. ("Daily Journal of Abraham H. Cannon," June 23, 1889, page 39)

Even before the turn of the century the Mormon leaders seemed to be ashamed of the Adam-God doctrine. On November 28, 1898, George Q. Cannon stated:

I was stopped yesterday afternoon by a young man, who wanted to know whether Adam was the Father of our Lord and Savior—whether he was the being we worshipped, etc. . . . Concerning the doctrine in regard to Adam and the Savior, the Prophet Brigham Young taught some things concerning that; but the First Presidency and the twelve do not think it wise to advocate these matters. (Proceedings of the First Sunday School Convention of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, 1899, as quoted in “The Position of Adam in Latter-day Saint Scriptures and Theology,” Master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, August, 1953, pages 69-70)

In our book, The Case Against Mormonism, vol. 3, we plan to devote a chapter to the Adam-God doctrine and one to the virgin birth in Mormon theology.

“...Our lives constantly manifest what we truly think about God!”

“...Forfeiting the Game”?...

In an article published in the New York Times, May 3, 1970, Wallace Turner wrote:

SAN FRANCISCO, May 2 — The “Book of Abraham,” which provides the theological basis for the Utah Mormon churches excluding Negroes from its priesthood, has been described as “simply the product of Joseph Smith Jr.’s imagination” by a leading scholar in a branch of the church Mr. Smith founded.

It was the Book of Abraham that Mr. Smith produced as a translation of papyri he acquired along with four Egyptian mummies in 1835.

The papyri were thought to have been destroyed in the Chicago fire of 1871. But, reasoning from crude copies, Egyptologists have argued for decades that the papyri did not say what Joseph Smith said they said, and were instead quite ordinary burial papers of the sort found with mummies.

Three years ago the original papyri from which Joseph Smith worked to produce the Book of Abraham were found in the Metropolitan Museum in New York . . .

The growing social impact of Negro resentment of the Utah Mormons’ exclusion of them from full participation in the church has served to focus further attention on the credibility of the Book of Abraham. This is because there is a story among its thousands of words that is cited as the reason for prohibiting Negroes from entering the priesthood orders.

Black athletes at the University of Wyoming have refused to play against teams from Brigham Young University, the Utah Mormon school. Stanford University has served notice of intention to sever athletic relationships with the school . . .


Mr. Howard pointed out that the publication in 1966 by Modern Microfilm Company of Salt Lake City of Joseph Smith Jr.’s original “Egyptian alphabet and grammar” allowed scholars to discover how the prophet worked in producing the Book of Abraham.

Mr. Howard cited the work of Dee Jay Nelson, an older in the Utah Mormon Church and a philologist with 20 years’ experience in Egyptology. Mr. Nelson took two words from the papyrus fragment and showed their translation properly to be “offspring of” or “born of.”

Joseph Smith Jr. produced a 132-word passage in the Book of Abraham and attributed it to those words, Mr. Howard wrote. He also suggested that the Prophet Joseph used the “curse of Ham” argument against Negroes as a means of reconciling differences that arose among his followers when Elijah Abel, a Negro, was ordained into the priesthood March 3, 1836, . . .

“Whatever the intent of Joseph Smith in expounding this view of the Negro,” Mr. Howard wrote, “it is clear that the ancient papyri from Egypt contained no such information.”

Mr. Howard wrote that “it may be helpful to suggest that the ‘Book of Abraham’ represents simply the product of Joseph Smith Jr.’s imagination, wrought out in the midst of what to him must have been a very crucial and demanding complex set of circumstances.” (New York Times, May 3, 1970)

For many years the Salt Lake Tribune refused to take articles critical of the Mormon Church. Times are changing, however, for the article quoted above was printed in the Salt Lake Tribune on May 4, 1970. While the part concerning the Mormon Egyptologist Dee Jay Nelson was not included, the Salt Lake Tribune contains some additional material concerning the Book of Abraham. In an article entitled “LDS Affirm ‘Abraham’” we find the following:

The First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints accepts the “Book of Abraham” as “scripture given to us through the Prophet (Joseph Smith),” President N. Eldon Tanner said Sunday night.

President Tanner, second counselor in the church’s First Presidency, made the statement in response to an article saying the translation of the “Book of Abraham” was the product of Joseph Smith Jr.’s “imagination.”
The article appears in a publication of the Reorganized Church . . .

Author of the article is Richard P. Howard, historian for the RLDS. (Salt Lake Tribune, May 4, 1970)

Joseph Smith clearly stated that he “translated” the Book of Abraham from the papyrus, but since Egyptologists have proven that the papyrus is in reality an Egyptian funerary text known as the “Book of Breathings,” Mormon apologists are faced with a serious problem. James R. Harris, of Brigham Young University, now suggests that Joseph Smith received the Book of Abraham by revelation before he obtained the papyrus and that the papyrus was “defective” and “unnecessary” to the production of the Book of Abraham. In an article published in Brigham Young University Studies he made these revealing statement:

A possibility that the text of the Book of Abraham may have been defective and therefore both inadequate and unnecessary to the production of a revealed translation is explored and proposed by Todd (pages 289, 325).

We may have observed additional support for this theory about a month before Todd went to press. The second article in a series on The Three Witnesses was published by Richard L. Anderson. In a quote from a patriarchal blessing recorded in 1833, December 13, (Patriarchal Blessing Book, No. 1, pages 8-9) Oliver Cowdery (recorder) added this comment:

But before baptism our souls were drawn out in mighty prayer . . . and we diligently sought for the right of the fathers, and the authority of the Holy Priesthood, and the power to administer in the same; for we desired to be followers of righteousness and the possessors of greater knowledge, even the knowledge of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. (See also The Improvement Era, September 1968, page 20) . . .

Comparing this quote with Abraham 1:2 would support the theory that a papyrus text in the hands of the prophet was not essential to production of the translation:

I sought for the blessings of the father, and the right where unto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness and to possess a greater knowledge . . .

The near identical wording of these passages would indicate that some of the text of the Book of Abraham was revealed and recorded before the Abraham Papyri came into the possession of Joseph Smith. (Brigham Young University Studies, Autumn 1969, pages 126-127)

James R. Harris, Assistant Professor of Religious Education at Brigham Young University, has apparently uncovered the source for some of the text of the Book of Abraham, but he does not seem to realize the serious implications of this important discovery. From Dr. Harris’ comments it would appear that he is willing to accept the idea that the Book of Abraham did not come from the papyrus. He would apparently have us believe that at least some of the text of the Book of Abraham was revealed to Joseph Smith before December 13, 1833, and that Oliver Cowdery borrowed his statements from there. While this would explain the “near identical wording,” it is not facing the reality of Joseph Smith’s statements that the Book of Abraham came from the papyrus.

A much more logical explanation is that Joseph Smith’s Book of Abraham is work of his own imagination and that he derived his ideas from Oliver Cowdery and several other sources.

In an article published in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Winter 1969, page 93, Lester Bush states that “the parallels between Mormon Scripture and the contemporary pro-slavery arguments are striking.” He goes on to point out that even before Joseph Smith received the papyri, W. W. Phelps had published an article which contains ideas similar to the Book of Abraham. This article was published in the Messenger and Advocate in March, 1835, and according to the History of the Church, Joseph Smith did not receive the papyri until July of the same year. In this article we find the following:

Is or is it not apparent from reason and analogy as drawn from a careful reading of the Scriptures, that God causes the saints, or people that fall away from his church to be cursed in time, with a black skin? Was or was not Cain, being marked, obliged to inherit the curse, he and his children, forever? And if so, as Ham, like other sons of God, might break the rule of God, by marrying out of the church, did or did he not, have a Canaanite wife, whereby some of the black seed was preserved through the flood, and his son, Canaan, after he laughed at his grandfather’s nakedness, heireid three curses; one from Cain for killing Abel; one from Ham for marrying a black wife, and one from Noah for ridiculing what God had respect for? Are or are not the Indians a sample of marking with blackness for rebellion against God’s holy word and holy order? And can or can we not observe in the countenances of almost all nations, except the Gentile, a dark, sallow hue, which tells the sons of God, without a line of history, that they have fallen or changed from the original beauty and grace of father Adam? (Messenger and Advocate, vol. 1, page 82)

In his Book of Abraham, Joseph Smith seemed to follow the same argument used by Phelps—i.e., that Ham married a Canaanite woman and thus “the curse” was “preserved” in the land:

Now this king of Egypt was a descendant from the loins of Ham, and was a partaker of the blood of the Canaanites by birth.

From this descent sprang all the Egyptians, and thus the blood of the Canaanites was preserved in the land.

The land of Egypt being first discovered by a woman, who was the daughter of Ham, and the daughter of Egyptians, which in the Chaldean signifies Egypt, which signifies that which is forbidden.

When this woman discovered the land it was under water, who afterward settled her sons in it; and thus, from Ham, sprang that race which preserved the curse in the land. (Pearl of Great Price, Book of Abraham, 1:21-24)

Mormon leaders use these verses to try to prove that the Negroes were cursed and therefore cannot hold the Priesthood. John Taylor, the third President of the Mormon Church, made this statement:

And after the flood we are told that the curse that had been pronounced upon Cain was continued through Ham’s wife, as he had married a wife of that seed. And why did it pass through the flood? Because it was necessary that the Devil should have a representation upon the earth as well as God; . . . (Journal of Discourses, vol. 22, page 364)

That Joseph Smith may have borrowed ideas from W. W. Phelps or Oliver Cowdery is not too surprising, for both these men were good writers, and worked with him on the papyri. In Joseph Smith’s History we read the following under the date of July 5, 1835: “ . . . with W. W. Phelps and Oliver Cowdery as scribes, I commenced the translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, . . .” (History of the Church, vol. 2, page 236).

JOSEPHUS

It is very possible that the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus had some influence on the Book of Abraham 1:23 we read of “the daughter of Egyptus, . . .” This name is not found in the Bible, but in “Flavius Josephus Against Apion,” we read: “ . . . Manetho says that Sethosis himself was called Egyptus, . . .” (Josephus, translated by William Whiston, Michigan, 1966, page 612).

According to the Book of Abraham, the Lord revealed the principles of astronomy to Abraham before he went into Egypt. In Abraham 3:15 we read: “And the Lord said unto me: Abraham, I show these things unto thee before ye go into Egypt, that ye may declare all these words.” At the bottom of the explanation to Facsimile No. 3 in the Book of Abraham we find this statement: “Abraham is reasoning upon the principles of astronomy, in the King’s court.” While the Bible does not even use the word “astronomy,” Josephus claimed that Abraham taught the Egyptians “the science of astronomy”: . . . Abram conferred with each of them, . . . He communicated to them arithmetic, and delivered to them the science of astronomy: . . . (Josephus, page 33)

The Mormon leaders must have been familiar with Josephus at the time the Book of Abraham was written, for in a letter, dated December 22, 1835, Oliver Cowdery stated: “ . . . Josephus says that the descendants of Seth were virtuous, and possessed a great knowledge of the heavenly bodies . . . (Messenger and Advocate, vol. 2, page 236)

In The Case Against Mormonism, vol. 3, we will deal with this matter at greater length and show other sources from which the Book of Abraham was probably derived. 
FILIBUSTER ENDS

When the papyri were given to the Mormon Church by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Dr. Hugh Nibley, of Brigham Young University, was assigned by the Church leaders to give a report to his people. He began a series of articles for the Improvement Era in January, 1968. This series ran for over two years, and was finally brought to a conclusion with the issue published May, 1970. Dr. Nibley was supposed to unfold “the meaning of the hieroglyphics” in this series of articles. In our last Messenger we stated: “There is good reason to believe that Dr. Nibley will never publish a translation of the papyrus, for in an article he wrote in 1968, he stated: ‘... it is doubtful whether any translation could do as much good as harm’ (Brigham Young University Studies, Spring 1968, page 251).” This prediction seems to be proving true, for Dr. Nibley has completed his series of articles and no translation has appeared. It would appear that Dr. Nibley’s main objective was to blind the eyes of his fellow Church members so that they could not see the real issues involved in this matter. Although he used almost 2,000 footnotes, he never did deal with the main problem. In the issue for August, 1969, Dr. Nibley made this fantastic statement:

From here on the reader might as well know that this writer intends to show that the Book of the Dead fragments, the Breathing Papyrus, and the three facsimiles, that is, all the available Egyptian materials that were once in the possession of Joseph Smith, contain the elements of a single story, which happens to be the story of Abraham as told in the Book of Abraham and the early Jewish legends. (Improvement Era, August 1969, page 75)

Dr. Nibley’s concluding article makes it clear that he was unable to demonstrate any relationship between the papyri and the Book of Abraham. Nevertheless, he encourages members of the Mormon Church to go on stalling lest they be accused of “forfeiting the game”:

Since the basic charges against Joseph Smith emerging from the study of the newly found papyri have not been discussed in the pages of the Era, it may be well to review them briefly here. Two documents of the Joseph Smith Papyri were identified and translated in 1967/8, the one comprising sections from the Book of the Dead, the other being the much rarer but still unknown “Sen-

sen” Papyrus or “Book of Breathings.” Neither of these texts contained the same reading matter as the Book of Abraham, but who said they should?... What supports the idea that the Book of Abraham was thought by Joseph Smith to be a translation of the Breathing Certificate? Two things: first, that the “Breathing text” was originally adjoined to Facsimile 1 on the same strip of papyrus, and second that the symbols from the “Breathing text” are interpreted bit by bit in a writing known as “the Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar” in which the interpretation turns out to be the same as the text of the English Book of Abraham. No slightest knowledge of Egyptian is necessary to convince anybody that when a symbol as brief as CAT is “translated” by an involved paragraph of over one hundred words, we are not dealing with a “translation” in any accepted sense of the word. The “Alphabet and Grammar” was never given out as an official or inspired document, was never meant for publication, never placed before the Church for approval, never discussed for the record, never explained to the world as the facsimiles were. 1968 priority went to the newly found papyri, which had never been translated and about which many people were understandably curious and impatient. But when it soon became apparent that those documents did not contain any of the text of the Book of Abraham as we have it, it was time for the Egyptologists, having done their work and done it well, either to bow out of the scene or to go on to the more important and essential problems of the facsimiles. It is only the last step that counts, as the French say, and so far nobody has taken it. The hopes for a quick decision with the finding of the Joseph Smith Papyri were blasted when it became apparent on the one hand that those documents do not contain the Book of Abraham, and on the other that the connection between the so-called Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar and the Book of Abraham is anything but clear. The work has hardly begun, but people still seek the safe and easy solution of authority and ask with impatience, “Can’t you spare us all that speculation and surmising and comparing and illustrating and simply give us the results?” The anti-Mormons have been only too glad to do just that, but we must never let them make us forget that proof is a process, not an answer, and that there is no such thing as total knowledge.

Many Latter-day Saints have not been too happy with the Joseph Smith Papyri, which instead of giving them all the answers only set them to work on a lot of problems with which none of this generation is prepared to deal. But it was the Mormons who started this game, and it is their responsibility to keep it going. They can never again leave the field without forfeiting the game. The bringing forth of the papyrus fragments in 1967 was a reminder to the Saints that they are still expected to do their homework and may claim...
no special revelation or convenient handout solutions as long as they ignore the vast treasure-house of materials that God has placed within their reach.

So far we have only taken a preliminary view of a few problems raised by Facsimile No. 1, and hardly even mentioned Facsimiles 2 and 3. . . . We have dealt entirely in possibilities, never in certitudes, possibilities being all we need to keep the door open. . . . As long as a single aspect of any problem raised by the Book of Abraham remains unexamined, as long as there is the remotest possibility that any slight detail of any significance may have been overlooked, as long as a single possible relevant text remains unread, we must hold our final word in abeyance. . . .

Who, then, is to decide these weighty matters? That is just the point: Is it necessary to decide here and now? The Mormons have always hesitated and asked for time, waiting (though rarely seeking) for further light and knowledge. Significantly, it has always been the Egyptians, usually the very soul of caution, who have insisted on a once-for-all, here-and-now, before-we-leave-the-room decision and have been desperately determined not to prolong the discussion. That is still their policy, and it forces us to return upon their own heads the routine question that the world would confound the demolish us: You scholars have spoken; why don’t you do the honest thing and admit that you don’t know a blessed thing about the facsimiles, that you haven’t made even a superficial study of them. . . . Why not admit that the relationship between the “Alphabet and Grammar” and the Book of Abraham is an enigma, full of odd contradictions and unexplained anomalies? Why not admit that you are not privy to the mind of Joseph Smith? That the test of the Book of Abraham lies in what it says, not in the manner in which it may have been composed, and that a thorough test of its contents would require a scope of research that no scholar today has any intention of undertaking, a scope of knowledge that few if any scholars today possess? . . .

Until now, no one has done much more than play around with the bedizenizing treasury of the Pearl of Great Price. “They” would not, we could not make of the Book of Abraham an object of serious study. The time has come to change all that. (Improvement Era, May, 1970, pages 82, 83, 93 and 94)

While the evidence clearly shows that the Book of Abraham is a product of Joseph Smith’s imagination, Dr. Nibley would have his people continue to stall and evade the main issue. The Mormon leaders can continue to ignore the evidence against the Book of Abraham and the anti-Negro doctrine contained in its pages, but such a course may very well lead to violence and bloodshed. In the last Messenger we point out that the Church-operated Brigham Young University has received a great deal of criticism from those who are seeking equal rights for the Negro. We also showed that Brigham Young University athletic teams have been met with “a gathering wave of protest” during the last two years. There is every reason to believe that this situation will get worse.

The Deseret News for April, 4, 1970, contained these statements:

Harry Edwards, the man most responsible for mounting discontent against Brigham Young University athletic teams, vowed in Salt Lake City Friday that “Things will get worse unless Mormon (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) doctrine is changed.”

A change of doctrine which forbids Blacks to hold the priesthood and places them in an inferior human role, is the only action by Mormon authorities which will prevent escalation of activity against BYU, and I think I could go on national television and have it stopped.”

Referring to members of the press, Edwards said: “If things don’t get better by next fall, those who travel with BYU should invest in hard hats and asbestos suits.” (Deseret News, April 4, 1970)

The Salt Lake Tribune carried these statements in an article printed the same day:

Mr. Edwards spoke briefly in criticism of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its doctrine of barring Negroes from the priesthood . . . The structure of the church “is crumbling” from within by the hierarchy’s action, he said.

If the church is destroyed, it will not be from the blacks . . . but by the fact that the 20th Century has caught up with the state of Utah,” Mr. Edwards said. (Salt Lake Tribune, May 4, 1970)

From the information we have presented it is plain to see that if the Mormon leaders continue to ignore these problems the consequence could be disastrous.
MORMON SCRIPTURES AND THE BIBLE

Milton R. Hunter, of the First Council of the Seventy in the Mormon Church, recently was quoted as saying the following:

The Prophet Joseph Smith produced for the world three new volumes of holy scriptures, namely the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price, and, in addition, he revised the Bible. No prophet who has ever lived has accomplished such a tremendous feat. There are only 177 pages in the Old Testament attributed to Moses, while Joseph Smith either translated through the gift and power of God or received as direct revelation from Jehovah 835. (Deseret News, Church Section, July 18, 1970, page 14)

The Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt once made this statement:

This generation have more that one thousand times the amount of evidence to demonstrate and forever establish the Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon than they have in favor of the Bible! (Orson Pratt’s Works, “Evidences of the Book of Mormon and Bible Compared,” 1851, page 64)

We have recently completed a new book entitled Mormon Scriptures and the Bible. In this book we have compared the evidence for the Bible with that for Mormon scriptures. This evidence clearly shows that Mormon writers are being very unrealistic when they make statements such as those quoted from the writings of Orson Pratt and Milton R. Hunter.

The Apostle Pratt’s statement that there is “more than one thousand times” the amount of evidence to prove the Book of Mormon than to prove the Bible is certainly a misrepresentation. In our Case Against Mormonism, vol. 2, we show that the only evidence for the Book of Mormon is the testimony of the witnesses and that this testimony can not be relied upon. Many Mormons have claimed that the Book of Mormon is supported by archaeological evidence, but a careful examination reveals that there is no evidence that the Nephites—i.e., the people mentioned in the Book of Mormon—ever really existed. In fact, Dr. Hugh Nibley, who is supposed to be the Church’s greatest scholar, admits that there is no definite archaeological evidence to support the story found in the Book of Mormon:

Of course, almost any object could conceivably have some connection with the Book of Mormon, but nothing short of an inscription which could be read and roughly dated could bridge the gap between what might be called a pre-actualistic archaeology and contact with the realities of Nephite civilization.

The possibility that a great nation or empire that once dominated vast areas of land and flourished for centuries could actually get lost and stay lost in spite of every effort of men to discover its traces, has been demonstrated many times since Schliemann found the real world of the Mycenaeans.

So it is with the Nephites. All that we have to go on to date is a written history. That does not mean that our Nephites are necessarily mythical, . . . as things stand we are still in the pre-archaeological and pre-archaeological stages of Book of Mormon study. Which means that there is nothing whatever that an anthropologist or archaeologist as such can say about the Book of Mormon. Nephite civilization was urban in nature, . . . It could just as easily and completely vanish from sight as did the worlds of Ugarit, Ur, or Chosos; and until some physical remnant of it, no matter how trivial, has been identified beyond question, what can any student of physical remains possibly have to say about it? Everything written so far by anthropologist or archaeologists—even real archaeologists—about the Book of Mormon must be discounted, for the same reason that we must discount studies of the lost Atlantians: not because it did not exist, but because it has not yet been found. (Since Cumorah, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1967, pages 243-244)

While the Nephites are never mentioned in any ancient inscription, the existence of the Israelites is verified by many inscriptions dating back hundreds of years before the time of Christ. The “earliest archaeological reference to the people of Israel” is a stele of the Egyptian ruler Merneptah which is now in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. In The Biblical World we find this information concerning this stele:

Merneptah, son and successor of Ramesses II, ruled Egypt from ca. 1224 to ca. 1214 B.C. . . . . His campaign in Palestine, waged during the fifth year of his reign (ca. 1220 B.C.) is commemorated on a large black granite stele which was found in Merneptah’s mortuary temple in Thebes. At the top is a representation of Merneptah and the god Amun, . . . . Merneptah states: Israel is laid waste, his seed is not; Hurru (i.e. Syria) is become a widow for Egypt.

The stele provides the first mention of Israel on ancient monuments, and provides proof that Israel was in western Palestine by 1220 B.C. (The Biblical World, edited by Charles F. Pfeiffer, Michigan, 1966, pages 380-381)

John A. Wilson, a noted Egyptologist from the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, made this comment concerning this stele: This is the customary magniloquent claim that the god-king was victorious over all opponents, whether he had met them in battle or not. The appearance of Israel in an Asiatic context is interesting, but has no meaning in terms of armed conflict against Egypt. It merely shows that an Egyptian scribe was conscious of a people known as Israel somewhere in Palestine or Transjordan. (The Culture of Ancient Egypt, University of Chicago Press, 1965, page 255)

Many other references from ancient sources could be cited to prove that the Israelites actually existed. If Mormon writers could find evidence such as this for the Book of Mormon, we would be forced to consider its claim to be a divinely inspired record. As far as historical and manuscript evidence is concerned Joseph Smith’s scriptures have absolutely no foundation. The “records of the Nephites,” for instance, were never cited by any ancient writer, nor are there any known manuscripts or even fragments of manuscripts in existence older than the ones dictated by Joseph Smith in the late 1820s. Joseph Smith’s Book of Moses is likewise without documentary support. The only handwritten manuscripts for the Book of Moses are those dictated by Joseph Smith in the early 1830s. Since Joseph Smith revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants do not purport to be translations of ancient records, we would not expect to find any manuscript evidence concerning them. There is one revelation, however, which purports to be a translation of a “record made on parchment by John and hidden up by himself.” This revelation is found in the Doctrine and Covenants as Section 7. There is no documentary support for it other than a handwritten copy from Joseph Smith’s time. The Book of Abraham purports to be a translation of an ancient Egyptian papyrus. We have already shown, however, that the original papyrus is in reality the Egyptian “Book of Breathing” and has nothing to do with Abraham or his
DEAD SEA SCROLLS

The Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt once stated that the “oldest manuscripts of any of the books of the Old Testament at the present day date from the twelfth century of the Christian era” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 7, page 23). While this statement may have been true on Orson Pratt’s time, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has changed the entire picture. We now have some manuscripts that date back prior to the time of Christ.

The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1947 when a boy threw a rock into a cave near the Dead Sea. He was startled by the sound of something breaking and later came back to find jars with ancient manuscripts in them. This was only the beginning, for further search by a number of people led to the discovery of many important manuscripts. When scholars learned of these manuscripts they were elated. Edmund Wilson gives this interesting information:

Dr. Trever at once sent off prints of columns of the Isaiah scroll to Dr. W. F. Albright of Johns Hopkins, one of the ablest living Biblical archaeologists and an authority on the Nash Papyrus, which he had studied intensively over a period of years. They heard from him by air mail on March 15. He had written the same day he received the letter: “My heartiest congratulations on the greatest manuscript discovery of modern times! There is no doubt in my mind that the script is more archaic than that of the Nash Papyrus . . . I should prefer a date around 100 B.C. . . . What an absolutely incredible find! And there can happily not be the slightest doubt in the world about the genuineness of the manuscript.” (The Dead Sea Scrolls: 1947-1969, by Edmund Wilson, New York, 1969, page 18)

They set out now to examine systematically all the caves in the Qumran neighborhood. They entered two hundred and sixty-seven, . . . Several of the caves contained scrolls, which, unprotected by jars, were in a state of disintegration, . . . The fragments of these collected ran into the tens of thousands. It was becoming more and more apparent that a library had been hidden here—a library which seems to have included almost all the books of the Bible [the Old Testament], a number of apocryphal works and the literature of an early religious sect. (Ibid., page 25)

In this book, The Ancient Library of Qumran, Frank Moore Cross, Jr., gives this information:

A sketch of the contents of Cave IV may be helpful in the discussions to follow. . . . 382 manuscripts have been identified from this cave. . . . Of the manuscripts identified thus far, about one hundred, slightly more than one fourth of the total, are biblical. All of the books of the Hebrew canon are now extant, with the exception of the Book of Esther . . . .

Three very old documents have been found in Cave IV. . . . they include an old copy of Samuel, preserved in only a handful of fragments; a patched and worn section of Jeremiah, . . . and a copy of Exodus . . . of which only a column and a few tatters are extant . . . .

The archaic Samuel scroll can date scarcely later that 200 B.C. A date in the last quarter of the third century is preferable. The Jeremiah is probably slightly later. The archaic Exodus has not been subject to detailed paleographical analysis; . . . Nevertheless it appears to be no later than the old Samuel fragments and probably is earlier.

The biblical scrolls from Qumran span in date about three centuries. A few archaic specimens carry us back to the end of the third century, as we have seen. The heavy majority, however, date in the first century B.C. and in the first Christian century. . . . (The Ancient Library of Qumran, by Frank Moore Cross, Jr., Garden City, New York, 1961, pages 39, 40, 42 and 43)

In a recent article Frank Moore Cross writes:

For the science of paleography, it is difficult to exaggerate the importance of these papyri. . . . the dating proposed by the writer for the archaic Samuel manuscript (ca. 225 B.C.E.) now appears to be minimal. The chronology of the Archaic Period (pre-Hasmonaeans) may prove too low by a generation; the archaic Samuel then would date from 275-225 B.C.E. (New Directions in Biblical Archaeology, edited by David Noel Freedman and Jonas C. Greenfield, Garden City, New York, 1969, page 53)

Mormon scholars accept the authenticity of the Dead Sea Scrolls, although they have not come to grips with the serious problems which these manuscripts create for the Book of Mormon and the “Inspired Version” of the Bible. The Mormon Apostle Mark E. Petersen stated:

Although the extent of the verses preserved is so slight, in one respect this tiny scrap of papyrus possesses quite as much evidential value as would the complete codex. Just as Robinson Crusoe, seeing but a single footprint in the sand, concluded that another human being, with two feet, was present on the island with him, so PS2 [Rylands Greek Papyrus 457] proves the existence and use of the Fourth Gospel during the first half of the second century in a provincial town along the Nile, far removed from its traditional place of composition (Ephesus in Asia Minor). Had this little fragment been known during the middle of the past century, that school of New Testament criticism which was inspired by the brilliant Tubingen professor, Ferdinand Christian Baur, could not have argued that the Fourth Gospel was not composed until about the year 160. (The Text of the New Testament, page 39)

In recent times papyrus manuscripts which are even older than the three manuscripts mentioned above have been discovered. Although these papyrus manuscripts are “relatively fragmentary,” almost every book in the New Testament is represented. In the Salt Lake City Messenger, Issue 24, we printed a photograph of “Papyrus Bodmer II,” which contains the book of John and is dated about 200 A.D. An even earlier fragment from the book of John has been located. Below is a photograph taken from The Biblical Archaeologist, September 1957, page 61. This photograph shows “Rylands Greek Papyrus 457, dated about 125-130 A.D., the oldest known fragment of a New Testament manuscript. It contains John 18:31-33 on one side and 18:38 on the other. Both sides are shown.”

Bruce M. Metzger makes these interesting observations concerning this fragment of papyrus:

Although the extent of the verses preserved is so slight, in one respect this tiny scrap of papyrus possesses quite as much evidential value as would the complete codex. Just as Robinson Crusoe, seeing but a single footprint in the sand, concluded that another human being, with two feet, was present on the island with him, so PS2 [Rylands Greek Papyrus 457] proves the existence and use of the Fourth Gospel during the first half of the second century in a provincial town along the Nile, far removed from its traditional place of composition (Ephesus in Asia Minor). Had this little fragment been known during the middle of the past century, that school of New Testament criticism which was inspired by the brilliant Tubingen professor, Ferdinand Christian Baur, could not have argued that the Fourth Gospel was not composed until about the year 160. (The Text of the New Testament, page 39)
Until recently, scholars depended on Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament dating only from the 9th to the 11th Centuries A.D., but now come the Dead Sea Scrolls dating back as far as the 3rd Century B.C. They include a nearly complete text of Isaiah and fragments of all Old Testament books except Esther. (As Translated Correctly, pages 3-4)

Millar Burrows, a noted authority on the Dead Sea Scrolls, made this statement with regard to the Isaiah scrolls:

The first of the prophetic books, Isaiah, was evidently, as we have seen, the most popular in the Qumran community. In addition to the two scrolls from Cave 1, there are more or less extensive fragments of thirteen others from Cave 4. Like the later and incomplete scroll from Cave 1, the Cave 4 fragments agree closely with the Masoretic text. This demonstration of the antiquity of our traditional text in the book of Isaiah is all the more important in view of the quite different indications in our books.

By far the most interesting and useful of all the Isaiah manuscripts for the study of the text is the complete St. Mark’s Isaiah scroll... It too supports the accuracy, by and large, of the Masoretic text... (More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls, New York, 1958, page 146)

On page 172 of the same book, Millar Burrows states that the St. Mark scroll of Isaiah gives “the complete text of the book in a manuscript which cannot be dated much after 100 B.C. at the latest.”

Werner Keller made these observations about this scroll:

The text of Isaiah from the cave at Qumran had actually been copied about 100 B.C., as Professor Albright had been first to recognize. The remarkable and wonderful fact is that ancient scroll of Isaiah, just like the book of the prophet in any printed Bible, whether in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, German, or any other language, has sixty-six chapters and agrees with our present-day text. (The Bible as History, by Werner Keller, translated by William Neil, New York, 1957, pages 423-424)

Bible scholars have reason to rejoice over the discovery of manuscripts of Isaiah dating back to ancient times. Mormon scholars, however, are faced with a dilemma, for although these manuscripts support the text of the Bible, they could turn out to be one of the strongest evidences against Joseph Smith’s “Inscribed Revision” of the Bible and his “translation” of the text of Isaiah found in the Book of Mormon. For years Mormon scholars have labored to prove that the text of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon is actually a translation of an ancient copy of Isaiah and is therefore superior to the translation found in the Bible. They have attempted to show parallels between the text of Isaiah found in the Book of Mormon and that found in some ancient manuscripts. In our book Mormon Scriptures and the Bible we show that these parallels are of little value because these manuscripts were known and studied in Joseph Smith’s time.

If Mormon writers could find similarities between the text of the Book of Mormon and documents that were not known in Joseph Smith’s day, this type of evidence would be impressive. The Dead Sea Scrolls, for instance, should provide a great deal of evidence for the Book of Mormon if it is really an ancient record. The Isaiah scroll found at Qumran Cave 1 should have caused a great deal of joy among Mormon scholars, for here is a manuscript of Isaiah which is hundreds of years older than any manuscript previously known. Surely, if the Book of Mormon is true, this manuscript should be filled with evidence to support the text of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon and thus prove that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. Instead of proving the Book of Mormon, however, it has turned out to be a great disappointment to Mormon scholars. Lewis M. Rogers, who was assistant professor of religion at Brigham Young University, wrote a paper which is entitled “The Significance of the Scrolls and a Word of Caution.” In this article he stated:

It has been noted that deviations from the Masoretic text in the newly found Isaiah scrolls were minor, indicating a faithful preservation of the accepted Scriptures. However, variations from the standard in fragments from the Book of Samuel were startling, for they appeared to follow the Greek or Septuagint rather than the Masoretic text. . . . Latter-day Saints have cause to rejoice with other Christians and Jews for the new light and fresh perspective brought to them by the Dead Sea Scrolls, but occasionally they need to be reminded that their hopes and emotions make them vulnerable. It is quite possible that claims for the Book of Mormon and for L.D.S. theology will not be greatly advanced as a consequence of this discovery. (Progress in Archaeology, Brigham Young University, 1963, pages 46-47)

The Mormon scholar Sidney B. Sperry, of Brigham Young University, frankly admits that the Dead Sea Scrolls do not help the case for the Book of Mormon:

After reading the Scrolls very carefully, I come to the conclusion that there is not a line in them that suggests that their writers knew the Gospel as understood by Latter-day Saints. In fact, there are a few passages that seem to prove the contrary. . . .

We should be especially interested in the light the Isaiah scroll throws on the problem of the Isaiah text in the Book of Mormon. I have compared in some detail the text of the scroll with its parallels in the Book of Mormon text. This tedious task has revealed that the scroll seldom agrees with the departures of the Book of Mormon text from that of the conventional Masoretic text of Isaiah and consequently the Authorized Version. The conclusions I come to as a result of these comparative studies may be set down as follows:

1. Despite the supposed antiquity of the scroll, its text is inferior to the conventional Hebrew text that has come down to us in the King James Version.

2. If the date assigned to the scroll is correct, we must conclude that serious changes took place in the text prior to the coming of Christ. If my thinking is correct, however, the pronouncement of Nephi concerning the perversion of the scriptures (1 Nephi 13:26) would suggest that we give through to the possibility that the Isaiah scroll is dated a little too early—let us say about 150 years.

3. The Isaiah scroll is of relatively little use to Latter-day Saints as showing the antiquity of the text of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon.

4. The Book of Mormon text of Isaiah should warn us that the use of the Isaiah scroll of Qumran for purposes of textual criticism is open to grave suspicion.

What then do I see as valuable in the Scrolls? It should be understood that they have great value to the scholar in matters pertaining to Hebrew spelling, grammar and paleography. The Scrolls undoubtedly contribute much to the history of Judaism and Christianity, and specialists of the Old and New Testaments are properly much concerned with them. . . .

But aside from their technical value to scholars, I believe that the importance of the Scrolls in a religious sense has been highly overrated by certain scholars. Their practical importance to Latter-day Saints is relatively small. (Progress in Archaeology, pages 52-54)

It is interesting to see how Dr. Sperry has to detract from the Isaiah scroll in his attempt to save the Book of Mormon. The reason that Dr. Sperry does not want too accept the date of 100 B.C. for the Isaiah scroll is quite obvious to those who are familiar with the teachings of the Book of Mormon. The Mormons claim that the Catholics conspired to alter the Bible. The Book of Mormon plainly states that these changes were made after the time of Christ and after the formation of the Catholic Church:

The book that thou beholdest is a record of the Jews... the book proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew; and when it proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew it contained the plainness of the gospel of the Lord... these things go forth from the Jews in purity unto the Gentiles. . . . thou seest the foundation of a great and abominable church, which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold, they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts... they might pervert the right ways of the Lord, . . . After the book hath gone forth through the hands of the great and abominable church, . . . there are many plain and precious things taken away from the book, which is the book of the Lamb of God. (Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 13:23-28)

**NEW BOOK**

MORMON SCRIPTURES and the BIBLE

By Jerald and Sandra Tanner. A 53-page book dealing with such subjects as: the decline of the importance of the Bible in Mormon theology, the influences of Bible critics on Mormonism, the charge that the Catholics conspired to alter the Scriptures, a comparison of the manuscript evidence for the Bible and Mormon scriptures, the Isaiah text in the Book of Mormon in the light of the Septuagint Version and the Dead Sea Scrolls, a study of a hand-written copy of one of Joseph Smith’s revelations which reveals serious changes in the printed version, Young’s attempt to suppress Joseph Smith’s Inspired Revision, how Smith ignored his own renderings, Smith’s failure to see the places in the text of the Bible that really needed correction, the lack of support in ancient manuscripts for Smith’s “Inspired” renderings, relationship of the Book of Enoch to the Inspired Revision, how Smith changes his own revision, changes in the Pearl of Great Price, and the changes in the “Lectures on Faith.” This book is filled with new and important information. The regular price will be $2.00, but if it is ordered before September 30, 1970, the price will be only $1.80 — 2 for $3.15 — 5 for $6.30 — 10 for $10.80.
If the “great Isaiah Scroll” found at Qumran was written 100 years before Christ as scholars claim, then it is obvious that the Catholics did not alter the book of Isaiah. Consequently, the Book of Mormon is incorrect in charging that the Catholics conspired to change the Bible.

Also it should be remembered that this scroll is a Jewish production, and the Book of Mormon claims that the Jews had the Scriptures in their “purity.” Why, then, does this scroll fail to support the text of Isaiah as found in the Book of Mormon or Joseph Smith’s Inspired Revision of the Bible?

Dr. Sperry is well aware of the fact that the Catholics did not exist before the time of Christ, and therefore he suggests that the Isaiah scroll may not have been written until about 50 A.D., but it was a persecuted minority and hardly fits the description of the “great and abominable church” found in the Book of Mormon. Joseph Fielding Smith, President of the Mormon Church, has stated that the Catholics did not become the “ruling power in religion” until after the beginning of the fourth century (Essentials in Church History, page 10).

Because of Old Testament manuscripts found in the area of the Dead Sea and the discovery of papyrus manuscripts of the New Testament, it is almost impossible to maintain Joseph Smith’s teaching that the Catholics conspired to change the Bible. Dr. Richard L. Anderson, one of the top authorities on Bible manuscripts in the Mormon Church, has frankly admitted that the idea that the New Testament has been drastically changed cannot be maintained in the light of new discoveries:

It is easy to get lost in debate on details and fail to see the overwhelming agreement of all manuscripts to the historical record of the New Testament... (For a book to undergo progressive uncovering of its manuscript history and come out with so little debatable in its text is a great tribute to its essential authenticity. In tracing the history of manuscript investigation, the student finds that two great facts emerge. First, no new manuscript discovery has produced serious differences in the essential story. The survey has disclosed the leading textual controversies, and together they would be well within one percent of the text. Stated differently, all manuscripts agree on the essential correctness of 99% of the verses in the New Testament. There is more reason today, then, to agree with him [Sir Fredric Kenyon] that we possess the New Testament “in substantial integrity” and to underline that “the variations of text are so entirely questions of detail, not of essential substance.”

It is true that the Latter-day Saints have taken the position that the present Bible is much changed from its original form. However, greatest changes would logically have occurred in writings more remote than the New Testament. The textual history of the New Testament gives every reason to assume a fairly stable transmission of the documents we possess. Major losses might occur by elimination of whole books rather than alteration of those admitted as canonical. Nor do subsequent changes have to be based on open changes of the writings. The forces of evil are more effective at changing the meaning of true terms and concepts than removing them. (Fourteenth Annual Symposium of the Archaeology of the Scriptures, Brigham Young University, 1963, pages 57-59)

The Mormon Apostle Mark E. Petersen has written a book on the Bible in which he made several serious errors. He even goes so far as to judge the text of the Bible by the text found in the Book of Mormon. The following references to the Bible are taken from the book:

Many insertions were made, some of them “slanted” for selfish purposes, while at times deliberate falsifications and fabrications were perpetrated. (As Translated Correctly, Salt Lake City, 1966, page 4)

It is evident then that many of the “plain and precious” things were omitted from the Bible by failure to choose all of the authentic books for inclusion, and by deliberate changes, deletions and forgeries. . . . (Ibid., page 14)

A direct reference to baptism was plainly deleted from Isaiah 48:1. In the Old Testament this reference reads:

“Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which sware by the name of the Lord, . . .” (Ibid., page 14)

And now note this same passage from the brass plates [the Book of Mormon]: “Hearken and hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, or out of the waters of baptism, who sware by the name of the Lord. . . .” (1 Nephi 20:1)

But the Bible as we know it is a different volume from what it was—and would have been—had it not been changed so much by those with selfish interests. (Ibid., page 67)

The Apostle Petersen certainly picked a poor example to prove his charge, for there is definite proof that the change was made in the text of the Book of Mormon rather than in the text of the Bible. The text of the original 1830 printing of the Book of Mormon reads as follows:

Hearken and hear this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of the Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which sware by the name of the Lord, . . . (Book of Mormon, 1830 edition, page 52)

In later editions of the Book of Mormon this has been changed to read:

Hearken and hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, or out of the waters of baptism, who sware by the name of the Lord, . . . (Book of Mormon, 1964 edition, 1 Nephi 20:1)

Notice that the clause, “or out of the waters of baptism,” has been added. Richard P. Howard’s new book, Restoration Scriptures, page 117, plainly shows that these words did not appear in the original handwritten manuscript.

“INSPIRED REVISION”

The Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe gives this information concerning Joseph Smith’s “Inspired Version” of the Bible:

Joseph Smith accepted the Bible as far as it was translated correctly but felt that many errors which should correctly had crept into the work. . . . he endeavored through inspiration from on high to correct those many departures from the original text. This was not fully completed when he died, but his manuscript exists in the original and in copies, and has been published by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is a remarkable evidence of the prophetic power of Joseph Smith. Hundreds of changes make clear many a disputed text. (Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth, page 139)

Although the Mormon Church has never printed the Inspired Version, the Reorganized Church’s printing is now available at the Mormon owned Deseret Book Store, and Mormon scholars use it freely in their writings. Bruce R. McConkie, of the First Council of the Seventy, states: “. . . the marvelous flood of light and knowledge revealed through the Inspired Version of the Bible is one of the great evidences of the divine mission of Joseph Smith” (Mormon Doctrine, Salt Lake City, 1958, page 352).

While the Mormon Church has not printed the Inspired Revision in its entirety, a few chapters are printed in the Pearl of Great Price, under the title “Book of Moses.” Joseph Smith’s “inspired” revision of Matthew, chapter 24, is also included in the Pearl of Great Price. The Mormon Church accepts the Pearl of Great Price as scripture, and it is one of the four standard works of the LDS Church.

Some of Joseph Smith’s “inspired” renderings were apparently written in rebuttal to Bible critics. For instance, Thomas Paine was very critical of the account of creation found in Genesis. The first verse of Genesis reads: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” Paine made this comment concerning this matter:

The manner in which the account opens shows it to be traditionary. It begins abruptly; it is nothing that speaks; it is nobody that hears; it is addressed to nobody; it has neither first, second, nor third person; it has every criterion of being a tradition; it has no voucher. Moses does not take it upon himself by introducing it with the formality that he uses on other occasions, such as that of saying, “the Lord spake unto Moses, saying.”

Why it has been called the Mosaic account of the Creation, I am at a loss to conceive. (The Age of Reason, reprinted by the Thomas Paine Foundation, New York, page 20)

An examination of Joseph Smith’s “inspired” translation of this portion of Scripture, leads us to believe that he was answering Thomas Paine’s argument:

. . . The Lord spake unto Moses, saying: . . . in the beginning I created the heaven, and the earth upon which thou standest. (Pearl of Great Price, Book of Moses, 2:1)

Notice that Joseph Smith added the exact words that Thomas Paine said should be in Genesis to prove that it was written by Moses.

Joseph Smith not only attempted answer the critics in his Inspired Revision, but he even added prophecies concerning himself and the Book of Mormon.
Mormon. In fact, he even added his own name in an interpolation of about 800 words which he added to Genesis, Chapter 50:

. . . and his name shall be called Joseph, and it shall be after the name of his father; . . . the thing which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand shall bring my people unto salvation. (Inspired Revision, Genesis 50:33)

Besides adding his own name to the Bible, Joseph Smith added many of his own views. For instance, his bias against people with a dark skin is apparent in several interpolations he made in the book of Genesis:

And there was a blackness came upon all the children of Canaan, that they were despised among all people . . .

And it came to pass, that Enoch continued to call upon all the people, save it were the people of Cainan, to repent . . .

And Enoch also beheld the residue of the people which were the sons of Adam, and they were a mixture of all the seed of Adam, save it were the seed of Cain; for the seed of Cain were black, and had not place among them. (Inspired Revision, Genesis 7:10, 14 and 29)

These same interpolations are found in the Pearl of Great Price, Book of Moses 7:8, 12 and 22.

In the King James Version, Genesis 9:26 reads:

And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.

In his Inspired revision, Joseph Smith changed this to indicate that a “veil of darkness” came upon Canaan:

And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant, and a veil of darkness shall cover him, that he shall be known among all men. (Inspired Revision, Genesis 9:30)

Joseph Smith’s rendition of this verse is not supported by the Septuagint Version of the Bible—the Septuagint is a Greek version of the Old Testament said to have been translated from the Hebrew text two or three hundred years before the time of Christ. The Septuagint Version reads: “And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Sem, and Chanaan shall be his bond-servant” (Septuagint Version, Genesis 9:26).

Joseph Smith not only made many unnecessary changes in the Bible, but he also failed to see the places where the text of the Bible really needed correction. There is one statement in the King James Version, 1 John 5:7 and 8 which scholars are certain is an interpolation. In modern versions of the Bible this statement has been removed to conform with the ancient Greek manuscripts. Below is a comparison of the text in the King James Version and that found in the Revised Standard Version.

KING JAMES

. . . there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water and the blood: and these three agree in one. (The New Testament in Four Version, page 766)

REVISED STANDARD

There are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree. (The New Testament in Four Versions, page 766)

In the book, Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts, we find the following information concerning this interpolation:

The text is found in no Greek MSS. except a few of very late date in which it has been inserted from the Latin. It is a purely Latin interpolation of African origin, which, beginning as a gloss, first found its way into the text of Spain, where it appears in the Freising Fragments, and later in the Vulgate codices Cavensis and Tobelenus. Thence it spread over Europe as an unequivocal Scripture “proof” of the doctrine of the Trinity. (Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts, page 258)

Even in Joseph Smith’s time this portion of 1 John was rejected by many scholars. Adam Clarke stated:

Though a conscientious advocate for the sacred doctrine contained in the disputed text, and which I think expressly enough revealed in several other parts of the sacred writing, I must own the passage in question stands on a most dubious foundation. (Clarke’s Commentary, vol. 6, page 929)

An examination of the writings of Mormon scholars reveals that they also question the authenticity of this verse. Arch S. Reynolds stated: “The extraneous matter added in the Authorized Version is clearly an interpolation, since the above is wanting in every manuscript except one before the fourteenth century, and in all early versions” (“A Study of Joseph Smith’s Bible Revision,” typed copy, page 169). Richard L. Anderson, of the Brigham Young University, stated: “One of the few major additions that seem apparent is 1 John 5:7. . . . The text of the fifth century did not speak of the heavenly Trinity, and the fact that very few Greek manuscripts add the heavenly Trinity makes it probable that this comment was not an original part of John’s letter” (Fourteenth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures, Brigham Young University, 1963, page 53).
Now, if Joseph Smith was inspired at all in his work on the Scriptures we would expect to find this interpolation removed in his “Inspired Revision.” Instead, we find that it appears exactly as written in the King James Version!

Many Mormon writers have claimed that Joseph Smith never completed his Inspired Revision. Evidence, however, showing that in 1833 Joseph Smith considered his “translation” as finished. In a letter dated July 2, 1833, signed by Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon and F. G. Williams, the following statement is found:

We this day finished the translation of the scriptures, for which we return gratitude to our Heavenly Father, . . . (History of the Church, vol. 1, page 368)

Earlier in this paper we quoted the Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe as saying that the Inspired Revision is “a remarkable evidence of the prophetic power of Joseph Smith.” We cannot accept this statement, for a careful examination of his work reveals unmistakable evidence that it is merely a human production and contains many serious errors.

Within the last year or two scholars from both the Reorganized Church and the Utah Church have made some astonishing admissions concerning the Inspired Revision. Robert J. Matthews, Director of Academic Research for the Department of Seminaries and Institutes in the Utah Church, goes so far as to admit that Joseph Smith may have added material which was never contained in the original manuscripts of the Bible:

The question might be raised whether the Prophet actually restored the text as Matthew wrote it, or whether, being the seer that he was, he went even beyond Matthew’s text and recorded an event that actually took place during the delivery of the Sermon, but which Matthew did not include. . . . It is probable that the Inspired Version is many things, and the only portions of it represent restorations while other portions may be explanations, interpolations, enlargements, clarifications and the like . . . many of the passages in the Inspired Version may be reiterations of events which were either not recorded by the Biblical writers or were lost before the Bible was compiled, in which case even the original Bible manuscripts would not contain the information. (Brigham Young University Studies, Winter 1969, pages 170 and 173)

Richard P. Howard, Church Historian of the Reorganized Church, appears to be on the verge of repudiating the Inspired Version. In his recent book, Restoration Scriptures, Richard P. Howard made these statements:

Viewing these subjects as he did from the vantage point of his own Christian background, Joseph Smith quite naturally would have tended to read into the symbolic pre-Christian language of the Old Testament certain uniquely Christian meanings. . . . For example, references to the Holy Ghost and to the Only Begotten—terms arising from the early Christian community—help one to see that even at this early stage of development the text in a sense represents Joseph Smith’s studied theological commentary on the King James Version of the early Genesis chapters of the Bible.


. . . the manuscripts indicate rather clearly that Joseph Smith, Jr., by his continued practice of revising his earlier texts (occasionally as many as three times), demonstrated that he did not believe that at any of those points of revision he had dictated a perfectly inerrant text by the power or voice of God . . . It is thus unnecessary and could be misleading to claim “direct” revelation in the determination of the entire text of the Inspired Version as the preface written for the 1867 edition apparently implied. (Ibid., page 151)

In our book, Mormon Scriptures and the Bible, we devote more than 20 pages to Joseph Smith’s Inspired Version of the Bible. This book has 53 large 8 1/2 by 11 inch pages and covers such topics as: the influence of Bible critics on Mormonism, the Apostle Pratt’s attacks on the Bible, the charge that the Catholics conspired to alter the Scriptures, a comparison of the manuscript evidence for the Bible and for Mormon scriptures, the Isaiah text in the Book of Mormon in the light of the Septuagint Version and the Dead Sea Scrolls, a study of a handwritten copy of one of Joseph Smith’s “Inspired Revision,” which reveals serious changes in the printed version, Brigham Young’s attempt to suppress Joseph Smith’s “Inspired Revision,” Joseph Smith’s failure to see the places in the text of the Bible that really needed correction, the lack of support in ancient manuscripts for Joseph Smith’s “Inspired” renderings, how Joseph changed his own revision, & changes in the Pearl of Great Price.

The normal price for Mormon Scriptures and the Bible will be $2.00, but if it is ordered before September 30, 1970, the price will be only $1.80 — 2 for $3.15 — 5 for $6.30 — 10 for $10.80.

SPECIAL OFFER

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In a review of the first two volumes of this work. Dr. Kenneth Kantzer, Dean of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School stated:

These books represent no ordinary polemic against Mormonism. This is the definitive, fully-documented, utterly-devastating case against the divine authority and truthfulness of the foundational documents upon which the Mormon religion is based. (Evangelical Beacon, October 8, 1968, page 7)

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NEW BOOK

MORMONS and NEGROES

By Jerald and Sandra Tanner. This is a book of over 70 pages dealing with such subjects as: the protests against BYU and the Mormon Church, racism at BYU, dissatisfaction in the Church, the question of a new revelation, President McKay’s statements to Dr. McMurrin, Negroes who have held the Priesthood, the failure of the Nigerian Mission, slavery and civil rights among the Mormons, and many other important subjects. Also included is the complete text of the Apostle Mark E. Petersen’s speech “Race Problems—As They Affect the Church.”

Reg: $2.00 — Special: $1.80 — 2 for $3.15 — 5 for $6.30 — 10 for $10.80
In 1877 the Vermont Historical Gazetteer printed the following information:

About 1800, occurred the “Wood scrape,” . . . a strange affair in which the Wood families, then living here, were the leading actors . . . the Woods dug for money in various parts of the town, and were engaged in this for nearly a year; . . . they used hazel-rods which they pretended would lead them to places where money had been buried, . . . His [Nathaniel Wood’s] peculiar religious doctrines will appear as we proceed . . . he regarded himself and his followers as modern Israelites or Jews . . .

In this condition we find Nathaniel Wood and his followers when the hazel-rod was introduced, and the money digging commenced; but the Woods did not commence it . . .

A man by the name of Winchell, as he called himself when he came here, was the first man who used the hazel-rod. . . . He was a fugitive from justice from Orange county, Vermont, where he had been engaged in counterfeiting. He first went to a Mr. Cowdry’s in Wells, who then lived in that town, near the line between Wells and Middletown, in the house now owned and occupied by Robert Parks, Esq. Cowdry was the father of Oliver Cowdery, the noted Mormon, who claimed to have been one of the witnesses to Joe Smith’s revelations, and to have written the book Mormon, as it was deciphered by Smith from the golden plates . . . Winchell said at Cowdry’s some little time, keeping himself concealed, and it is the opinion of some with whom I have conversed that he commenced his operations of digging for money in Wells, but I have been unable to determine as to that . . .

Winchell next turns up in Middletown, at Ezekiel Perry’s . . . and here he began to use the hazel-rod (whether he had before used it at Cowdry’s, in Wells, I cannot say) . . . he gathered quite a number about him . . . and told them there was money buried in that region, and with his rod he could find it, and if they would assist in digging it out, and forever keep it a secret, he would give them a part of the money . . . we should, perhaps, say a word about this rod . . . The best description we can give of it is this: It was a stick of what has been known as witch-hazel . . . It was cut with two prongs, in the form of a fork, . . . From the use of this stick Winchell and[d] [the Woods pretended to divine all sorts of things to suit their purpose . . . Winchell held up his rod, got some motion from it, and told them the money was in an iron chest and covered with a large stone, and that they would soon come to it . . .

The Woods then commenced using the hazel rod and digging for money . . . Winchell was with them, but it was not generally known, he being concealed . . . “Priest Wood,” . . . seemed to throw his whole soul into the rod delusion, but his use of the rod was mostly as a concealed . . . “Priest Wood,” . . . seemed to throw his whole soul into the rod delusion, but his use of the rod was mostly as a concealed . . .

That the system of religion promulgated by Nathaniel Wood, and adopted by his followers in 1800, was the same, or “much the same,” as the Mormons adopted on the start, is beyond question . . . The Woods were very fruitful in prophecies, especially after the hazel rod came to their use; so were the Mormons in the beginning of their creed . . . This same Winchell or Wingate, the counterfeiter, who introduced the rod here, and was with the Woods in their operations, afterwards went to Palmyra, New York, the home of Joe Smith . . . he was there early enough to get Joe Smith’s father to digging for money . . . I have been told that Joe Smith’s father resided in Poultney at the time of the Wood movement here, and that he was in it, and one of the leading roddmen. Of this I cannot speak positively, for the want of satisfactory evidence, but that he was a roddman under the tuition of this counterfeiter after he went to Palmyra has been proven, to my satisfaction, at least. I have before said that Oliver Cowdry’s father was in the “Wood scrape.” He then lived in Wells, afterwards in Middletown, after that went to Palmyra, and there we find these men with the counterfeiter, Winchell, searching for money over the hills and mountains with the hazel-rod, and their sons Joe and Oliver, as soon as they were old enough, were in the same business, . . . It is not claimed that any of the Woods . . . ever had anything to do with Mormonism after it was known to the world as such, but their religion and their ways of deceiving the people by pretended revelations and otherwise, were brought along down by the Smiths, the Cowdrys, and the counterfeiter. They used the rod, that is, the elder Smith and Cowdry, and pretended by that to obtain revelation, . . . their sons Joe jr. and Oliver . . . commenced their education with the use of the hazel-rod or forked stick, in searching for hidden treasures—though afterwards they used what they called enchanted stones. (Vermont Historical Gazetteer, edited by Abby Maria Hemenway, Claremont, N.H., 1877, vol. 3, pages 810-814 and 818-819)

In a new book entitled Joseph Smith and Money-Digging we have carefully examined the charges which claim that Joseph Smith was a money-digger and believed in divining rods and peep stones. We will give a brief summary of our conclusions in this paper.

The fact that Joseph Smith believed in divining rods has been obscured by two important changes in one of his revelations. These changes were obviously made to cover up the fact that he had endorsed the idea that Oliver Cowdery had a gift from God to work with a divining rod. Below is a comparison of the way this revelation was first printed in the Book of Commandments and the way it has been changed to read in recent editions of the Doctrine and Covenants (see photograph in our Case Against Mormonism, vol. 1, page 144, Change F).

Book of Commandments

Now this is not all, for you have another gift, which is the gift of working with the rod: behold it has told you things: behold there is no other power to save God, that can cause this rod of nature, to work in your hands . . . (Book of Commandments 7:3)

Doctrine and Covenants

Now this is not all thy gift; for you have another gift, which is the gift of Aaron: behold it has told you many things; Behold, there is no other power to save the power of God, that can cause this gift of Aaron to be with you. (Doctrine and Covenants 8:6 and 7)

The reader will notice that the words “working with the rod” and “rod of nature” have been entirely deleted from this revelation without any indication. While the Utah Mormon leaders have failed to come to grips with this important issue, Richard P. Howard, Reorganized LDS Church Historian, made these startling admissions in a book recently published by his Church:

◆ NEW BOOK — Joseph Smith and Money-Digging

By Jerald and Sandra Tanner. This book deals with such subjects as money-digging in Joseph Smith’s time, treasures that slipped into the ground, statements by Martin Harris and Brigham Young on money-digging, Joseph Smith’s “seer stone,” the use of the “seer stone” to find the Book of Mormon plates and its use to translate the book itself, the agreement between Joseph Smith and other money-diggers, other seer stones among the Mormon, the “cave” in the hill Cumorah, the relationship of money-digging to the story of the gold plates of the Book of Mormon and to the text of the book, the use of the divining rod in the early Mormon Church, the revelation regarding treasure hunting, the 1826 trial of Joseph Smith, an analysis of different accounts of the trial, Joseph Smith’s use of the “seer stone” to find treasures for Josiah Stowell, and the practice of sacrificing lambs to find treasures. This book also contains a photographic reprinted of the affidavits regarding Joseph Smith’s money-digging activities which were published by E. D. Howe in 1834.

Price: $2.50 — 2 for $4.00 — 5 for $8.00 — 10 for $15.00
Several writers have established that both in Vermont and in western New York in the early 1800’s, one of the many forms which enthusiastic religion took was the adaptation of the witch hazel stick (used then and even to this date for locating underground water sources) to religious purposes. For example, the “divining rod” was used effectively by one Nathaniel Wood in Rutland County, Vermont, in 1801. Wood, Winchell, William Cowdery, Jr., and his son, Oliver Cowdery, all had some knowledge of and associations with the various uses, both secular and sacred, of the forked witch hazel rod. Winchell and others used such a rod in seeking buried treasure; . . . when Joseph Smith met Oliver Cowdery in April, 1829, he found a man peculiarly adept in the use of the forked rod . . . He soon was Joseph’s close friend and confidant, his scribe and trusted counselor. In the midst of such mutual rapport and against the background of his own experiments with and uses of oracular media, Joseph Smith’s April,1829, affirmations about Cowdery’s unnatural powers related to working with the rod are quite understandable. . . .

By the time that Joseph Smith approached the reinterpretation and wording of this document for the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, he had the time and experience necessary to place his 1829 assessment of the meaning of Cowdery’s gift of working with the rod in a somewhat more accurate perspective. Both he and Cowdery had developed away from an emphasis on the religious or mystical meanings in such mechanical objects as the water witching rod. Joseph’s 1835 wording of this document . . . left behind the apparent 1829 reliance upon external media, which by 1835 had assumed in Joseph’s mind overtones of superstition and speculative experimentation. (Restoration Scriptures, Independence, Mo., 1969, pages 211-214)

In our new book, Joseph Smith and Money-Digging, we have photographically reproduced the affidavits relating to money-digging which were first printed by E. D. Howe in 1834. In one of these affidavits Peter Ingersoll stated:

I, Peter Ingersoll, first became acquainted with the family of Joseph Smith, Sen. in the year of our Lord, 1822. . . .

The general employment of the family, was digging for money. . . . I was once ploughing near the house of Joseph Smith, Sen. about noon, he requested me to walk with him a short distance from his house, for the purpose of seeing whether a mineral rod would work in my hand, saying at the same time he was confident it would. . . . he cut a small witch hazel bush and gave me direction how to hold it. He then went off some rods, and told me to say to the rod, “work to the money,” which I did, in an audible voice. He rebuked me severely for speaking it loud, and said it must be spoken in a whisper. This was rare sport for me. While the old man was standing off some rods, throwing himself into various shapes, I told him the rod did not work. He seemed much surprized at this, and said he thought he saw it move a whisper. This was rare sport for me. While the old man was standing off some rods, throwing himself into various shapes, I told him the rod did not work. He seemed much surprized at this, and said he thought he saw it move. He then put it into his hat, and then his face into the top of his hat. . . . After obtaining the stone, he began to publish abroad what wonders he could discover by looking in it, . . .

There is a great deal of evidence to show that Joseph Smith used the “seer stone” to search for buried treasures. Martin Harris, one of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon, made these comments concerning Joseph Smith’s “stone”:

These plates were found at the north point of a hill two miles north of Manchester village. Joseph had a stone which was dug from the well of Mason Chase, twenty-four feet from the surface. In this stone he could see many things to my certain knowledge. It was by means of this stone he first discovered these plates.

“Therefore, he placed me in the second place of magistracy of this church; without me he has a stone he says contains the characters engraven on the plates. (Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, vol. 1, page 129)

In Joseph Smith and Money-Digging we reproduce an affidavit from Willard Chase which contains these revealing statements:

I became acquainted with the Smith family . . . in the year 1820. At that time, they were engaged in the money digging business, which they followed until the latter part of the season of 1827. In the year 1822, I was engaged in digging a well. I employed Alvin and Joseph Smith to assist me; . . . After digging about twenty feet below the surface of the earth, we discovered a singularly appearing stone, which excited my curiosity. I brought it to the top of the well, and as we were examining it, Joseph put it into his hat, and then his face into the top of his hat . . . . After obtaining the stone, he began to publish abroad what wonders he could discover by looking in it, . . .

In her book, No Man Knows My History, Fawn M. Brodie states:

In March 1826 Joseph’s magic arts for the first time brought him into serious trouble. One of Stowel’s neighbors, Peter Bridgeman, swore out a warrant for the youth’s arrest on the charge of being a disorderly person and an impostor . . . . the court pronounced him guilty, though what sentence was finally passed the record does not say. (No Man Knows My History, page 30)

We quote the following from the “court record” as it was first published in Fraser’s Magazine in 1873:

Warrant issued upon written complaint upon oath of Peter G. Bridgeman, who informed that one Joseph Smith of Bainbridge was a disorderly person and an impostor.

Prisoner brought before Court March 20, 1826. Prisoner examined: says that he came from the town of Palmyra, and had been at the house of Josiah Stowel in Bainbridge . . . . That he had a certain stone which he had occasionally looked at to determine where hidden treasures in the bowels of the earth were; that he professed to tell in this manner where gold mines were a distance under ground, and he looked for Mr. Stowel several times, and had informed him where he could find these treasures, and Mr. Stowel had been engaged in digging for them . . . he had occasionally been in the habit of looking through this stone to find lost property for three years, but of late had pretty much given it up on account of its injuring his health, especially his eyes, making them sore; that he did not solicit business of this kind, and had always rather declined having anything to do with this business.

Josiah Stowel sworn: says that prisoner had been at his house . . . he pretended to have skill of telling where hidden treasures in the earth were by means of looking though a certain stone . . . he positively knew that the prisoner could tell, and did possess the art of seeing those valuable treasures through the medium of said stone . . . that prisoner had told by means of this stone where a Mr. Bacon had buried money . . . that had said it was in a certain root of a stump five feet from surface of the earth, and with it would be found a tail feather; that said Stowel and prisoner thereupon commenced digging, found a tail feather, but money was gone; that he supposed the money moved down.
That prisoner did offer his services; that he never deceived him; that prisoner looked through stone and described Josiah Stowell’s house and outhouses, while at Palmry at Simpson Stowell’s correctly; . . . That he had been in company with prisoner digging for gold, and had the most implicit faith in prisoner’s skill. (Fraser’s Magazine, February 1873, page 229)

In our book Joseph Smith and Money-Digging we have printed this document in its entirety and have devoted over 15 pages to an examination of its authenticity.

When Fawn Brodie printed this document Mormon writers claimed that it was spurious. She had reprinted it from the New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge. Since this encyclopedia did not print this account until 1883, there was a wide gap between the date of the trial and the published version. Since Mormon scholars contested the authenticity of the trial, scholars began to search for more documentation. Helen L. Fairbanks, of Guernsey Memorial Library, Norwich, N.Y., made a very interesting discovery. She found that Dr. W. D. Purple, who had lived in Bainbridge and claimed to be an eyewitness to the trial had written concerning it in The Chenango Union, May 3, 1877. We have reproduced this article in its entirety in Joseph Smith and Money-Digging. While Mormon writers were willing to concede that Purple mentioned the trial in 1877, they felt confident that no earlier mention of the trial would be discovered. Dr. Francis W. Kirkham made this statement: “No account of the life of Joseph Smith confessed in a court of law that he had used a seer stone for any purpose, and especially that the record of such confession was in existence” (A New Witness for Christ in America, vol. 1, pages 386-387). Further research led to the discovery that the “court record” had been printed ten years previous to this in Fraser’s Magazine. In a “Supplement” to his book, Dr. Kirkham conceded that it had been printed in 1873.

Finally, Dale L. Morgan, a noted historian, discovered that the trial was actually mentioned as early as 1831 in a letter published in the Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate, printed in Utica, N.Y., the letter is “signed A.W.B.,” and Mr. Morgan identifies him from subsequent articles as A. W. Benton” (No Man Knows My History, page 418 A). Since Mr. Benton lived in Bainbridge, his account is very important. Wesley P. Walters had furnished us with a photograph of Benton’s account as it appears in the Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate. We cite the following from that publication:

Messrs. Editors— . . . thinking that a fuller history of their founder, Joseph Smith, Jr. might be interesting. . . . I will take the trouble to make a few remarks . . . For several years preceding the appearance of his book, he was about the country in the character of a glass-looker: pretending, by means of a certain stone, or glass, which he put in a hat, to be able to discover lost goods, hidden treasures, mines of gold and silver, &c. . . . In this town, a wealthy farmer, named Josiah Stowell, together with others, spent large sums of money in digging for hidden money, which this Smith pretended he could see, and told them where to dig; but they never found their treasure. At length the public, becoming wearied with the base imposition which he was palming upon the credulity of the ignorant, for the purpose of sponging his living from their earnings, had him arrested as a disorderly person, tried and condemned before a court of justice. But considering his youth, (he then being a minor,) and thinking he might reform his conduct, he was designedly allowed to escape. This was four or five years ago. (Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate, April 9, 1831, page 120)

In Joseph Smith and Money-Digging we have graphically reproduced A. W. Benton’s entire letter. From what we quoted above, however, the reader will notice that Benton claimed that Joseph Smith was “arrested as a disorderly person.” This agrees well with the “court record” for it states that Joseph Smith was “a disorderly person and an impostor.” Benton’s statement also agrees with the “court record” in stating that Joseph Smith was found guilty. The “court record” states that the trial took place on March 20, 1826. This would have been five years prior to the time Benton wrote his letter in 1831. Mr. Benton states that the trial took place “four or five years ago.”

Dr. Hugh Nibley tries to dismiss Benton’s letter as “fiction.” In his book, The Myth Makers, page 157, he states: “. . . are inclined to regard A.W.B.’s story of the 1826 trial as fiction . . . without the reality of the peep-stones, the whole legend of the 1826 trial collapses . . . the 1826 trial, unattested in any source but his for fifty years, was a product of A.W.B.’s own wishful thinking.”

Actually, there is some very good evidence from a Mormon source to show that Joseph Smith had some trouble with the law at the time he was working for Josiah Stowell. In 1835 Oliver Cowdery, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, wrote the following:

Soon after this visit to Cumorah, a gentleman from the south part of the State, . . . employed our brother . . . This gentleman, whose name is Stowell, resided in the town of Bainbridge, . . . Some forty miles south, . . . is said to be a cave . . . where a company of Spaniards, . . . coined a large quantity of money; . . . our brother was required to spend a few months with some others in excavating the earth, in pursuit of this treasure . . .

On the private character of our brother I need add nothing further, at present, previous to his obtaining the records of the Nephites, only that while in the country, some very officious person complained of him as a disorderly person, and brought him before the authorities of the county; but there being no cause of action he was honorably acquitted.” ( Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate, October, 1835, vol. 2, pages 200-201)

While Oliver Cowdery disagrees with the “court record” when he states that Joseph Smith was acquitted, he is in agreement with the “court record” and with A. W. Benton’s letter in stating that Joseph Smith was charged with being “a disorderly person.”

Although the “court record” itself was not published until many years after Joseph Smith’s death, the information given in the record seems to agree well with facts derived from many other sources. For instance, in the “court record” we read that Josiah Stowell “positively knew that the prisoner could tell, and did possess the art of seeing those valuable treasures through the medium of said stone.” . . . Josiah Smith’s own mother confirms the fact that Stowell came to her son for help in locating hidden treasures:

A short time before the house was completed, a man, by the name of Josiah Stotel, came from Chenango county, New York, with the view of getting Joseph to assist him in digging for a silver mine. He came for Joseph on account of having heard that he possessed certain keys, by which he could discern things invisible to the natural eye. . . . Joseph and several others, returned with him and commenced digging.” (Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet, London 1853, page 91-91)

The Mormon historian B. H. Roberts states that Stowell came to Joseph Smith because he had “heard of Joseph Smith’s gift of seership” (Comprehensive History of the Church, vol. 1, page 82).

Martin Harris, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, gave this very revealing information:

When Joseph found this stone, there was a company digging in Harmony, Pa., and they took Joseph to look in the stone for them, and he did so for a while, and then he told them the enchantment was so strong that he could not see, and they gave it up. (Tiffany’s Monthly, 1959, page 164)

A careful examination of the whole story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and even the text of the book itself reveals that it originated in the mind of someone who was familiar with the practice of money-digging. We deal with this at some length in Joseph Smith and Money-Digging, but for lack of space in this paper we will simply point out that the “seer stone” used in “translating” the book seems to have been nothing but a common “peep stone.” Isaac Hale, Joseph Smith’s father-in-law, made these statements in an affidavit dated March 20, 1834:

I first became acquainted with Joseph Smith, Jr. in November, 1825. He was at that time in the employ of a set of men who were called “money-diggers,” and his occupation was that of seeing, or pretending to see by means of a stone placed in his hat, and his hat closed over his face. In this way he pretended to discover minerals and hidden treasure. . . . Young Smith gave the “money-diggers’ great encouragement, at first, but when they had arrived in digging, to near the place where he had stated an immense treasure would be found—he said the enchantment was so powerful that he could not see . . . Young Smith made several visits at my house, and at length asked my consent to his marrying my daughter Emma. This I refused, and gave my reasons for so doing; some of which were, that he was a stranger, and followed a business that I could not approve; . . . he returned, and while I was absent from home, carried off my daughter, into the state of New York, where they were married . . . they returned, bringing with them a Peter Ingersol, . . .
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From this information it would appear that Joseph Smith was almost an accessory after the fact, since, according to his own statement, he warned Cowdery to flee from the law if he was guilty. A few years later a man by the name of Joseph H. Jackson claimed that Joseph Smith and other Mormon leaders operated a bogus press in Nauvoo, and that Joseph Smith told him “that in Ohio, he, Dr. Boynton, Lyman Wight, Oliver Cowdery, and Hyrum, were engaged with others in a bogus establishment on Licking Creek, but that their operations were cut short by the bursting of the Kirtland Bank” (The Adventures and Experience of Joseph H. Jackson: ... Warsaw, Illinois, 1846, page 15).

Jackson revealed Joseph Smith’s connection with counterfeiting in a letter printed in the Warsaw Signal on June 5, 1844. Within a few weeks, however, Joseph Smith had been murdered, and therefore he was never brought before the law on this charge. Brigham Young and some of the other Mormon Apostles were indicted. On January 7, 1846, the Warsaw Signal contained the following:

During the last week, twelve bills of indictment, for counterfeiting Mexican dollars, and American half dollars and dimes, were found by the Grand Jury, ... embracing some of the “Holy Twelve,” and other prominent Mormons, ... From incidental remarks made by some of the witnesses in private conversation (not before the jury,) we are led to believe that a large amount of counterfeit coin of the above description, is, and has been for a long time past, circulating in the western country. ... It was said that the Mormons had three presses for counterfeiting the coin named, and that Joe Smith worked most industriously at the business.

Brigham Young and the other Mormon leaders had no intention of submitting to the law. Although Young denied he was guilty of counterfeiting, he admitted in the History of the Church that he had tricked the U.S. Marshal. Under the date of December 23, 1845, we find the following:

One-five p.m. Almon W. Bubbitt came into the Temple and informed me that there were some of federal officers ... in the city for the purpose of arresting some of the Twelve, especially Amasa Lyman and myself. ... William Miller put on my cap and Kimball’s cloak and went downstairs meeting the marshal ... as he was about getting into my carriage the marshal arrested him, on a writ from the United States court, charging him with counterfeiting the coin of the United States. ... The marshal put up at Hamilton’s Tavern, and the rumor soon spread through town that Brigham Young was in the custody of the marshall. ... William Backenstos was called in and he told them William Miller was not Brigham Young. ... Eight-twenty, I left the Temple disguised ... to elude the vexatious writs of our persecutors. (History of the Church, vol. 7, pages 549-551)

While the Mormon leaders remained in Nauvoo they were constantly bothered by the law. They claimed that they would not allow themselves to be arrested because they might meet the same fate as Joseph Smith. John Taylor, who became the third President of the Mormon Church, threatened the officers who attempted to serve writs with death. Brigham Young stated:

Saturday, 12. ... the U.S. deputy marshal for the district of Illinois arrived in town with writs for myself and others.

Sunday, 13.—Meeting at the stand. Elders Heber C. Kimball and John Taylor preached. Several officers attended meeting. Elder Taylor gave them to understand that if they made an attempt to serve writs on him it would cost them their lives. ... (History of the Church, vol. 7, page 395-396)

In 1846 the Mormon leaders fled from Nauvoo and headed west. While the anti-Mormons were demanding that the Mormons leave Illinois, the indictments for counterfeiting apparently speeded up the process. The Mormon writer Kenneth W. Godfrey made this statement:

Warrants pending for the arrest of Brigham Young and other leaders on charges of counterfeiting were among the reasons for the early departure of the Saints from the “city of Joseph” in February rather than in the spring as originally proposed. (Brigham Young University Studies, Winter 1968, page 215)

The United States Government has preserved some important records concerning the indictment of the Mormon leaders for counterfeiting. In a “Reference Service Report,” dated December 11, 1963, Hardee Allen made these statements:

Inquiry: Information about Records Relating to the Indictment in Illinois of Brigham Young, Mormon Leader, and Apostles of the Mormon Church, 1845-1848, for counterfeiting.
Report: The records of the Solicitor of the Treasury (National Archives Record Group 206) contain a few summary references to the indictment, and proceedings thereunder, of Brigham Young and eleven other men on the charge of counterfeiting, the indictments having been presented in December 1845 in the United State Circuit Court for the District of Illinois. . . . The National Archives can furnish negative photostats of the pertinent United States Attorneys’ reports (from Reports of the U.S. District Attorneys, From 1845 to 1850), as follows:

1. Report of Suits Pending in the Circuit Court of the United States for the District of Illinois at its December Term 1845, listing suits brought in that court on indictments for counterfeiting, dated December 17 and December 18, 1845, against Brigham Young and 11 other men, . . .

2. Report of Suits Pending at the June Term 1846, which identifies Brigham Young and most of the others charged with counterfeiting as ‘not arrested.’ 1 page; negative photostat, 75 cents.

. . . . 

“The United States Attorneys’ reports in the records of the Solicitor of the Treasury do not show the disposition of the charges against Brigham Young and 10 others. . . . the reports of the Clerk of the Circuit Court of the United States for the District of Illinois. . . . do contain a report for the December Term 1848 which shows that the cases against Brigham Young and 10 others (not including Edward Bonney), indicted for counterfeiting, had been dismissed at that Term of the court. The National Archives can furnish negative photostats of the pertinent Clerks’ reports (from Reports of the Clerks of the U.S. Court, 1846 to 1850). . . .”

In the same “Reference Service Report,” Hardee Allen lists 16 reports that are related to these indictments and states that “The National Archives can supply negative photostats of any of these reports at the price listed, or a 35mm. microfilm of all of them (16 pages) for $2.50.” We have obtained a copy of this microfilm and find it very revealing. According to these records, Brigham Young and four of the other Apostles (Willard Richards, John Taylor, Parley P. Pratt and Orson Hyde) were indicted “for counterfeiting the current coin of the U.S.” (A photograph of a U.S. government record showing the indictments against the Mormon leaders for counterfeiting will be sent free upon request.) Among the list of those indicted we find the name of Theodore Turley. This comment concerning Turley appears in a handwritten note on the record showing the indictment: “This is an indictment for counterfeiting the current coin of the U.S. The defendant, who is the chief manufacturer of dies &c resides at Nauvoo. From the testimony before the Grand Jury, it appeared that counterfeiting coin has been largely carried on at that place for some years. The defendant evades the service of process.” Joseph Smith was certainly acquainted with Turley, for he made this statement in his History of the Church: “I told Theodore Turley that I had no objection to his building a brewery” (History of the Church, vol. 5, page 300). Under the Brigham Young leadership, Theodore Turley became a member of the secret Council of Fifty (Quest for Empire, page 224). Under the date of November 16, 1845, Brigham Young recorded that “Elder Theodore Turley has been arrested at Alton on a charge of bogus-making” (History of the Church, vol. 7, page 525). Turley apparently received help to pay his bail and then fled west with the Mormons. A. U.S. Government record dated January 12, 1847, contains this statement concerning Turley: “The deft in this case is beyond the reach of process—proceedings against his bail have been had—further proceedings useless.” Under the date of March 28, 1846, Brigham Young recorded the following in his “Manuscript History”: “I met my captains of Tens at the Post Office at 3:40 p.m.; immediately after which Theodore Turley came into the Council and reported that Edward Bonney, Haight and another man had been in pursuit of him for two or three days, . . . by several meanderings and disguises he had escaped them; that his family were at Richardson’s Point, and had not team sufficient to bring them on” (“Manuscript History of Brigham Young,” March 28, 1846, typed copy). On November 28, 1847, Brigham Young recorded this statement in the History of the Church:

I met with the Twelve and high council in the forenoon, Theodore Turley and Joseph Fielding were voted members of the high council. (History of the Church, vol. 7, page 620)

Mrs. Mary Ettie V. Smith gives this very revealing information concerning counterfeiting in her book:

“When we were on the route through Iowa, it occurred, that one day, when one of the wagons was upset, the press for making bogus money rolled into sight. . . . the business of counterfeiting was carried on extensively, and that too under the personal sanction and blessing of the Prophet Joseph, and of the Twelve. . . . One thing is certain; this bogus press was carried, to my certain knowledge, to Salt Lake, . . . (Mormonism: Its Rise, Progress, and Present Condition, Hartford, 1870, pages 28-29)
While dressing the next morning, Wallace [her husband] accidentally left his belt in my room; . . . which I examined . . . and found it to contain about three hundred dollars of bogus money . . . . The discovery . . . sharpened my curiosity, . . . I made it convenient, . . . to question Joseph Young, brother of the Prophet, about it. I commenced by telling him I thought he had given Wallace more than his share of bogus money . . . Brother Joseph, thrown off his guard, replied, “Did he get me a span of horses?”

I told him I did not know but he bought one for himself.

“Yes, yes,” said brother Joseph, thinking I knew all about it, as some of the wives of the Prophet did; “he can sell the bogus any time to the Missourians, . . . we shall be off and beyond their reach, and they can whistle.”

I thus ascertained . . . that my husband was a thief and a counterfeiter, . . . soon after this, a man came to our house, who was unknown to me, and had a long conversation with Wallace . . . . Wallace told me it was necessary for us to move to St. Joseph, Mo.; that he was going there by direction, and in the service of the Church . . . .

The reader will not be surprised to know, what I soon learned to be true, that this “business” was selling bogus money, and buying with it various kinds of property needed by the Church, and forwarding it to Council Bluffs . . . .

The horses, and other booty purchased or stolen, was forwarded at one to Kanesville, and was there received by Orson Hyde . . . . Orson Hyde is one of the “Twelve Apostles,” and is often in the States. There are now many persons living by whom these facts can be proved.

The bogus money used by these men, was mostly made at Nauvoo; but I have heretofore mentioned that the press used in its manufacture was taken west, and on to Salt Lake in the wagon of Peter Haws, and was at this time at Kanesville. This man Haws, is now living on Humbolt River, west of Great Salt Lake City. (Ibid., pages 103-107)

Mrs. Smith’s statement that the Mormon Apostle Orson Hyde received the stolen property at Kanesville is very interesting, for we know that Orson Hyde approved of stealing from the Gentiles. In his journal of October 13, 1860, John Bennion recorded that “after meeting Bp council & Elder Hyde had a long talk in my house Br Hyde said speaking of stealing that a man may steal & be influenced by the Spirit of the Lord to do it that Hickman had done it years past said that he never would institute a trial against a brother for stealing from the Gentiles but stealing from his brethren he was down on it . . . .” (The reader will find the complete statement by Bennion in The Mormon Kingdom, vol. 2, pages 11-12)

It is also interesting to note that the U.S. Government records show that the Mormon Apostle Orson Hyde was indicted for counterfeiting at Nauvoo.

Mrs. Smith states that a bogus press was hauled west in the wagon of “Peter Haws.” This seems very likely, for Brigham Young himself admitted that Peter Haws was involved in the bogus business after the Mormons left Nauvoo:

While I was standing with Prest. Kimball at his tent, an outcry was heard from Peter Haws’ Camp; we repaired thither and found that Haws and Thomas Williams and two others had a quarrel about some property, etc. that Haws had let Williams have some bogus money on shares and Williams had not paid him his share of the profits. I reproved them for dealing in base coin and told Haws he could not govern himself, his family, or a company; and unless he repented and forsook such dishonesty, the hand of the Lord would be against him and all those who partook of such corruption. (“Manuscript History of Brigham Young,” May 12, 1846, typed copy)

The U.S. Government records show that Peter Haws was indicted along with the Mormon leaders for counterfeiting in Nauvoo. Klaus J. Hansen shows that Peter Haws was a member of the “Council of Fifty under Joseph Smith” (Quest For Empire, page 223).

Brigham Young’s rebuke of Peter Haws can hardly be taken very seriously, since Haws continued to serve in the “Council of Fifty in Colonial Utah, 1847-49” (Quest For Empire, page 225). When we find that both Peter Haws and Brigham Young were under indictment for counterfeiting and were fleeing from the law at the time, it throws a new light on this incident.

In The Mormon Kingdom, vol. 2, we plan to devote about 20 pages to the subject of counterfeiting in the early Mormon Church. So far we have completed 50 pages of vol. 2, and the remaining pages will be mailed out as soon as completed. To receive both these volumes and a vinyl loose leaf binder the customer would normally pay $7.90. We are having a special, however, and if these two volumes are ordered before October 31, 1970, the price will be only $6.95!
Carl Gustav Jung, one of the world’s greatest psychiatrists, made these very interesting observations:

All mass movements, as one might expect, slip with the greatest ease down an inclined plane represented by large numbers. Where the many are, there is security; what the many believe must of course be true; what the many want must be worth striving for, and necessary, and therefore good. In the clamor of the many there lies the power to snatch wish-fulfillments by force; sweetest of all, however, is that gentle and painless slipping back into the kingdom of childhood, into the paradise of parental care, into happy-go-luckiness and irresponsibility. All the thinking and looking after are done from the top; to all questions there is an answer; and for all needs the necessary provision is made. The infantile dream state of the mass man is so unrealistic that he never thinks to ask who is paying for this paradise. The balancing of accounts is left to a higher political or social authority, which welcomes the task, for its power is thereby increased; and the more power it has, the weaker and more helpless the individual becomes. (The Undiscovered Self, pages 70-71)

Very few organizations would want to admit that “all the thinking and looking after are done from the top.” The Mormon Church, however, is an exception. In fact, the ward teacher’s message for June 1945 contained these statements:

Any Latter-day Saint who denounces or opposes, whether actively or otherwise, any plan or doctrine advocated by the “prophets, seers, and revelators” of the Church is cultivating the spirit of apostasy . . . Lucifer . . . wins a great victory when he can get members of the Church to speak against their leaders and to “do their own thinking.” . . . When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. When they purpose a plan—it is God’s plan. When they point the way, there is no other which is safe. When they give direction, it should mark the end of controversy. (Improvement Era, June 1945, page 354)

Brigham Young, the second President of the Mormon Church, once stated:

The Lord Almighty leads this Church, and he will never suffer you to be led astray if you are found doing your duty. You may go home and sleep as sweetly as a babe in its mother’s arms, as to any danger of your leaders leading you astray, . . . (Journal of Discourses, vol. 6, page 289)

Heber C. Kimball, First Counsellor to Brigham Young, made these statements:

. . . learn to do as you are told, . . . if you are told by your leader to do a thing, do it, none of your business whether it is right or wrong. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 6, page 32)

If you do things according to counsel and they are wrong, the consequences will fall on the heads of those who counseled you, so don’t be troubled. (William Clayton’s Journal, page 334)

Joseph Fielding Smith, who recently became the tenth President of the Church, made this statement:

“Therefore it behooves us, as Latter-day Saints, to put our trust in the presiding authorities of the Church . . . Saints safe in following Church authorities. No man ever went astray by following the counsel of the authorities of the Church. (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 1, page 243)

Those of us who grew up in the Mormon Church were taught that the revelations of Joseph Smith should be received as if from God’s “own mouth” (Doctrine and Covenants 21:5), and that the present-day leader is supposed to be God’s mouthpiece on earth. A careful study of Mormon history and doctrine, however, led us the conclusion that it is wrong to allow others to do our thinking or to put trust in man.
Perhaps those coals, I thought, were from wood burned by Father Adam, . . .

I felt sure, however, that the rocks were the identical rocks that he placed there, for Joseph said, “That altar was built by our Father Adam and there he offered sacrifice.” . . . according to the words of the Prophet Joseph, mankind in that age emigrated eastwardly until they reached the country on or near the Atlantic coast; and that in or near Carolina Noah built his remarkable ship, in which he, his family, and all kinds of animals lived a few days over one year without coming out of it. (The Juvenile Instructor, Organ for Young Latter Day Saints, November 15, 1845, pages 700-701)

Mr. Huntington also claimed that Joseph Smith described the inhabitants of the moon:

“The inhabitants of the moon are more of a uniform size than the inhabitants of the earth, being about 6 feet in height.

“They dress very much like the quaker style and are quite general in style, or the fashion of dress.

“They live to be very old; coming generally, near a thousand years.

This is the description of them as given by Joseph the Seer, and he could “see” whatever he asked the father in the name of Jesus to see. (Journal of Oliver B. Huntington, page 166 of typed copy at Utah State Historical Society; original journal in Henry E. Huntington Library, Pasadena, California)

Although many people could not accept Joseph Smith’s claims, there were a number of people who gave support to his ideas. Martin Harris, for instance, provided Joseph Smith with financial support and became one of the “Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon.” Like Joseph Smith, Martin Harris was a visionary man. William A. Linn gives this information:

Daniel Hendrix relates that as he and Harris were riding to the village one evening, and he remarked on the beauty of the moon, Harris replied that if his companion could only see it as he had, he might well call it beautiful, explaining that he had actually visited the moon, and added that it “was only the faithful who were permitted to visit the celestial regions.” (The Story of the Mormons, New York, 1902, page 35)

Joseph Smith seemed to have great power over the mind of Martin Harris. Mary Rollins Lightner—a devout Mormon—related the following:

A few evenings after his [Joseph Smith’s] visit to our house, Mother and I went over to the Smith home. . . . I sat with others on a plank. . . . After prayer and singing, Joseph began talking. Suddenly he stopped and seemed almost transfixed. He was looking ahead and his face outshone the candle. . . . A short time he looked at us very solemnly and said, “Brothers and Sisters, do you know who has been in our midst this night?” One of the Smith family said, “An angel of the Lord.” Joseph did not answer. Martin Harris was sitting at the Prophet’s feet on a box. He slid to his knees, clasped his arms around the Prophet’s knees and said, “I know, it was our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

Joseph put his hand on Martin’s head and answered, “Martin, God revealed that to you. Brothers and Sisters, the Savior has been in our midst. I want you to remember it. He cast a veil over your eyes for you could not endure to look upon him.” (“Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner Journal,” as quoted in Conflict at Kirtland, by Max Parkin, pages 82-83)

Although Joseph Smith was able to persuade Martin Harris to become a witness to the Book of Mormon, he had a great deal of trouble with him. In a revelation given in July of 1828, Martin Harris is called a “wicked man”:

And when thou deliverest up that which God had given thee sight and power to translate, thou deliverest up that which was sacred into the hands of a wicked man.

Who has set at naught the counsels of God, and has broken the most sacred promises which were made before God, and has depended upon his own judgment and boasted in his own wisdom. (Doctrine and Covenants, 3:12-13)

Joseph Smith certainly made a mistake when he chose Martin Harris to be one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, for it would be hard to find a more unstable person as far as religion is concerned. In an affidavit dated November 28, 1833, G. W. Stoddard, a resident of Palmyra, stated that as a farmer Harris was “industrious and enterprising,” but that his “moral and religious character was such, as not to entitle him to respect among his neighbors. . . . He was first an orthodox Quaker, then a Universalist, next a Restorationer, then a Baptist, next a Presbyterian, and then a Mormon” (Mormonism Unveiled, by E. D. Howe, 1834, page 260-261).

Martin Harris’ instability did not end when he joined the Mormon Church. In 1846 the Mormon Church’s own publication, Millennial Star, reported the following concerning Harris:

One of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, yielded to the spirit and temptation of the devil a number of years ago—turned against Joseph Smith and became his bitter enemy. He was filled with the rage and madness of a demon. One day he would be one thing, and another day another thing. He soon became partially deranged or shattered, as many believe, flying from one thing to another, as if reason and common sense were thrown off their balance. In one of his fits of Monomania, he went and joined the “Shakers” or followers of Anne Lee. He tarried with them a year or two, or perhaps longer, having had some flare ups while among them; but since Strang has made his entry into the apostate ranks, and hoisted his standard for the rebellious to flock to, Martin leaves the “Shakers,” whom he knows to be right, and has known it for many years, as he said, and joins Strang . . . if the Saints wish to know what the Lord hath said of him, they may turn to the 178th page of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and the person there called a “wicked man” is no other than Martin Harris, . . . It is not the first time the Lord chose a wicked man as a witness. . . . evil men like Harris, out of the evil treasure of their hearts bring forth evil things. . . .

———

Just as our paper was going to press, we learned that Martin Harris, . . . had landed in Liverpool. . . . there was a strangeness about him, and about one or two who came with him. A lying deceptive spirit attends them. . . . they are of their father, the devil, who was a liar from the beginning, and abode not in the truth. The very countenance of Harris will show to every spiritual-minded person who sees him, that the wrath of God is upon him. (Latter-Day Saint’s Millennial Star, vol. 8, November 15, 1846, pages 124-128)

The Mormon writer Richard L. Anderson admits that Martin Harris “changed his religious position eight times” during the period he was in Kirtland, Ohio:

He and other prominent dissenters in the Church were formally excommunicated in the last week of December 1837 . . . Martin Harris remained at Kirtland for the next 30 years in the condition of a fossil embedded in an earlier layer of sediment . . .

Martin Harris also felt strong resentment against Church leaders, in large part stemming from the blow to his ego in never being given a major office. If such thinking is obviously immature, it was nevertheless real to the man who had sacrificed domestic peace, fortune, and reputation to bring about the printing of the Book of Mormon and the founding of the Church. Real or supposed rejection breeds hostility and, at its worst, retaliation. . . .

The foregoing tendencies explain the spiritual wanderlust that afflicted the solitary witness at Kirtland. In this period of his life he changed his religious position eight times, including a rebaptism by a Nauvoo missionary in 1842. Every affiliation of Martin Harris was with some Mormon group except when he was affiliated with the Shaker belief, a position not basically contrary to his Book of Mormon testimony because the foundation of that movement was acceptance of personal revelation from heavenly beings. (Improvement Era, March 1969, page 63)

If we add the “eight times” that Martin Harris changed his religious position in Kirtland to the five changes he made before, we find that he changed his mind thirteen times! Richard Anderson is forced to admit that Martin Harris’ life shows evidence of “religious instability” (Ibid.). The Mormon writer E. Cecil McGavin states that “Martin Harris was an unaggressive, vacillating, easily influenced person who was no more pugnacious than a rabbit . . . His conviction of one day might vanish and be replaced by doubt and fear before the setting of the sun. He was changeable, fickle, and puerile in his judgement and conduct” (The Historical Background for the Doctrine and Covenants, page 23, as quoted in an unpublished manuscript by LaMar Petersen).

At one time Martin Harris even went on a mission for the Strangites. Andrew Jenson, who was Assistant Church Historian wrote the following in the book Church Chronology, under the date of October 1, 1846:

— Martin Harris and others, followers of the apostate James J. Strang, preached among the Saints in England, but could get no influence. (Church Chronology, page 31)

The fact that Martin Harris would join with such a group casts a shadow of doubt upon his testimony to the Book of Mormon, for the Strangites claimed
that James Jesse Strang found some plates which he translated with the Urim and Thummim. The Mormons, of course, claim that Strang was a deceiver.

The reader will notice that Richard Anderson admitted that Martin Harris “affiliated with the Shaker belief,” although he feels that this position was “not basically contrary to his Book of Mormon testimony because the foundation of that movement was acceptance of personal revelation from heavenly beings” (Improvement Era, March 1969, page 63).

Now, while it is true that the Shakers believed in revelation, a Mormon could not accept these revelations without repudiating the teachings of Joseph Smith. For instance, the Shakers felt that “Christ has made his second appearance on earth, in a chosen female known by the name of Ann Lee, and acknowledged by us as our blessed mother in the work of redemption” (Sacred Roll and Book, page 358). If Martin Harris accepted this teaching, he was certainly out of harmony with Joseph Smith’s revelations, for in one of the revelations we read that the Son of Man cometh not in the form of a woman, . . .” (Doctrine and Covenants, 49:22)

The Shakers, of course, did not believe the Book of Mormon, but they had a book entitled A Holy, Sacred and Divine Roll and Book: From the Lord God of Heaven, to the Inhabitants of Earth. More than sixty individuals gave testimony to the “Sacred Roll and Book.” Although not all of them mention angels appearing, some of them tell of many angels visiting them—one woman told of eight different visions.

The evidence seems to show that Martin Harris accepted this book as divine revelation. In our Case Against Mormonism, vol. 2, page 50, we cited a very revealing statement by Clark Braden:

Harris declared repeatedly that he had as much evidence for a Shaker book he had as for the Book of Mormon. (The Braden and Kelly Debate, page 173)

Since we published this statement evidence has been brought to light from a Mormon source which shows that Harris claimed to have a greater testimony to the Shakers than to the Book of Mormon. In a thesis written at Brigham Young University, Wayne Cutler Gunnell stated that on December 31, 1844, “Phineas H. Young [Brigham Young’s brother] and other leaders of the Kirtland organization” wrote a letter to Brigham Young in which they stated:

There are in this place all kinds of teaching; Martin Harris is a firm believer in Shakerism, says his testimony is greater than it was of the Book of Mormon. (“Martin Harris—Witness and Benefactor to the Book of Mormon,” 1955, page 52)

The fact that Martin Harris would even join with such a group shows that he was unstable and easily influenced by men. Therefore, we feel that his testimony that the Book of Mormon was of divine origin cannot be relied upon. How can we put our trust in a man who was constantly following after movements like the Shakers? Brigham Young himself once stated:

Some of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon, who handled the plates and conversed with the angels of God, were afterwards left to doubt and to disbelieve that they had ever seen an angel. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 7, page 164)

In the Case Against Mormonism, vol. 2, we devote a great deal of space to the witnesses to the Book of Mormon.

THE TEST

Although a great deal of evidence against Joseph Smith’s claims was presented during the 19th century, the most devastating evidence has come to light within the last few years.

Since Joseph Smith claimed that an angel took the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated, and since both the Kinderhook plates and the Book of Abraham papyri were lost, it appeared that Joseph Smith’s ability as a translator could not be tested. As to Joseph Smith’s claim that the moon was inhabited, very few people living in the 19th century would have believed that some day it would be possible for men to go there. In fact, as late as 1958 Joseph Fielding Smith (who recently became President of the Mormon Church) made these statements:

In relation to the present trend of science in the development of synthetic planets which, for a season revolve around the earth and the trend of science in developing guided missiles, or even the sending of passengers to the moon and other planets, you need not to be troubled in the least . . . Naturally the wonders in the heavens that man has created will be numbered among the signs which have been predicted—the airplanes, the guided missiles, and man-made planets that revolve around the earth. Keep it in mind however, that such man-made planets belong to this earth, and it is doubtful that man will ever be permitted to make any instrument or ship to travel through space and visit the moon or any distant planet.

The Lord will permit men to go so far and no farther, and when they get beyond the proper bounds, he will check them . . .

When man was placed on this earth it became his probationary, or mortal home. Here he is destined to stay until his earthly life is completed, . . . Here we are, and here we should be content to stay. All this talk about space travel and the visiting of other worlds brings to mind vividly an attempt long ago made by foolish men who tried to build to heaven . . . wise men will be content and will wait until the time comes when this earth is cleansed and purified from all sin for heavenly visits, and in that day they will come. (Answers to Gospel Questions, vol. 2, pages 189-192)

Although astronauts have now shown that Joseph Smith’s statements about the moon are not correct, a more serious problem faces the Church. In 1967 the original papyrus from which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham was discovered. Egyptologists translated it and found that it has nothing to do with Abraham or his religion. In other words, Joseph Smith’s translation was proven to be completely incorrect. This was a devastating blow to the Church because the Mormon leaders had canonized the Book of Abraham and had made it the very basis of the anti-Negro doctrine.

In spite of the fact that the papyrus absolutely proves that the Book of Abraham is spurious, the Mormon leaders have decided that they cannot give it up without undermining the whole foundation of Mormonism:

The First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints accepts the Book of Abraham as “scripture given to us through the Prophet (Joseph Smith),” President N. Eldon Tanner said Sunday night.

President Tanner, second counselor in the church’s First Presidency, made the statement in response to an article saying the translation of the Book of Abraham was the product of Joseph Smith Jr.’s “imagination.”

The article appears in a publication of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints . . . Author of the article is Richard P. Howard, historian for the RLDS. (Salt Lake Tribune, May 4, 1970, page 12B)

In a letter to the Editor of Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Autumn 1968, page 8, Naomi Woodbury suggested that the translation of the papyri by Egyptologists could “free us from our dilemma about excluding Negroes from the Priesthood. Perhaps our Father in Heaven intended the papyri to come to light now for just this purpose.” Unfortunately, in an organization where “the thinking” is done from the top, it is almost impossible for the ordinary member to oppose decisions made by the Church leaders. Jim Bridel, a student at Brigham Young University, made this very clear in a statement regarding the anti-Negro doctrine of the Church:

“Most students are unconcerned. They look at it as a matter that the Church will have to decide. You have to understand we are taught unquestioning obedience,” said Jim Bridel, a BYU junior. (Salt Lake Tribune, November 30, 1969, page 12D)

The Mormon writer Klaus Hansen makes these interesting observations in an article recently published in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought:

To a professional historian, for example, the recent translation of the Joseph Smith papyri may well represent the potentially most damaging case against Mormonism since its foundation. Yet the “Powers That Be” at the Church Historian’s Office should take comfort in the fact that the almost total lack of response to this translation is an uncanny proof of Frank Kermode’s observation that even the most devastating act of disconfirmation will have no effect whatever on true believers. Perhaps an even more telling response is that of the “liberals,” or cultural Mormons. After the Joseph Smith papyri affair, one might well have expected a mass exodus of these people from the Church. Yet none has occurred. Why? Because cultural Mormons, of course, do not believe in the historical authenticity of the Mormon scriptures in the first place. So there is nothing to disconfirm. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer 1970, page 110)
The reader will remember that Dr. Hugh Nibley wrote a letter to the Mormon Egyptologist Dee Jay Nelson in which he stated: “I don’t consider myself an Egyptologist at all, and don’t intend to get involved in the P.G.P. business unless I am forced into it . . . .” (Letter by Hugh Nibley dated June 27, 1967). In the Improvement Era for August 1968, page 56, he admitted that he was “anything but an Egyptologist.” Several years ago Dr. Nibley took some classes in the Egyptian language at the University of Chicago under John A. Wilson and Klaus Baer, but it now appears that Dr. Nibley feels he knows more about the papyri than his tutors! In a letter dated December 11, 1970, Dr. Nibley wrote:

The evidence supporting the Book of Abraham is simply overpowering. In a series of articles in the Era that ended last June I brought up a few important points necessary to laying a foundation for serious study of the subject . . . . Joseph Smith or anyone else could not possibly have faked the Book of Abraham, which I perfectly convinced is a true record. Some of our ideas about it may call for rectification from time to time, but, of the authenticity of the book there can be no doubt . . . . I have studied with both Prof. Baer and Wilson, who translated some of the Misses; they are splendid men but they have no idea of what these particular manuscripts are about . . . . Before long you will see that the Book of Abraham furnishes some of the best evidence for the divine mission of the Prophet Joseph . . . . I must ask you to be patient until this can be demonstrated more fully. (Letter from Hugh Nibley, dated December 11, 1970)

It is really hard to believe that a man could go to such great lengths to keep from facing the truth about the Book of Abraham. How long do the Mormon leaders think they can continue this deception?

The Mormon Church has already had serious trouble with Negroes over the doctrine found in the Book of Abraham that Negroes cannot hold the priesthood. Instead of facing the truth with regard to this matter and giving the priesthood to Negroes, they are trying to pacify them in other ways. Negroes have been added to the Tabernacle Choir and the football team at Brigham Young University, and on June 13, 1970, the Deseret News reported the following:

The bonds of brotherhood between members of the Church and a Negro congregation in Salt Lake City were fastened this week with a plea “to let all America see that blacks and whites can live peacefully together.” Some 500 persons representing the leadership of the Church, including President Joseph Fielding Smith, and of the Church of God in Christ participated in a banquet Wednesday night, climaxing the month-long “Operation Good Samaritan.”

The project started when Rev. M. A. Givens Jr., minister of Deliverance Temple, Church of God in Christ, asked officials of the LDS Church to assist his congregation in raising funds to complete construction of their church building in Salt Lake City.

The Presiding Bishopric accepted the opportunity as a challenge to the Mormon youth to raise at least $30,000 for the building. Youth in 566 wards of the 71 stakes in the Salt Lake and Bountiful areas accepted the challenge and went to work on a variety of fund-raising projects . . . .

Presiding Bishop John H. Vandenberg told the banquet-goers that with 14 more stakes to report, the youths have already raised $32,949. He said that 28,000 young men and women participated in the project . . . .

Music for the banquet was provided by Mrs. Jessie Evans Smith, wife of President Smith, who sang two solo numbers, and the all-Negro Utah Community Choir, which also preformed two selections. (Deseret News, Church Section, June 13, 1970)

Although we feel that this was a good move and that many members of the Mormon Church participated in this project in a sincere effort to help the Negroes, the deed would have been more impressive if it had been performed ten or twenty years ago. Even some members of the church felt that their leaders were trying to buy off the Negro people. In a letter to the Editor of the Salt Lake Tribune, Bill Morrison stated:

Editor, Tribune: I noticed with incredulity an article in the Salt Lake Tribune (June 10) entitled “Negro Faith, LDS Join In Deliverence Fund.” The substance of the article was that the LDS Church was aiding the construction of the Deliverance Temple, a building owned by the Church of God in Christ, a Negro denomination.

Since I am LDS and take my religion seriously, I question the wisdom of my church leaders giving material or other aid for the purpose of building up another church. A fundamental concept of any religion is that the reason for its existence is that it, and it alone, harbors the truth necessary for salvation.

The Mormon Church adheres to this, but is engaging in support of the growth of another religion . . . . the LDS Church should focus on consolidating its position rather than being concerned with building up the congregations of other churches. The money raised for building Deliverence Temple could have gone to a nonsectarian use such as aid for the mentally retarded or those physically unable to help themselves.

The question appears to be one of aiding the Negro rather than one of aiding a different religion. Would the Mormon Church give $32,000 for construction of a Catholic cathedral? A Jewish synagogue? Probably not.

Why the Negro? The Mormon Church has discriminated against the Negro since its inception. Let’s drop all the rhetoric excusing this and admit it. The aid therefore appears to be a case of LDS Church leaders, in their weakness, attempting to placate the Negro.

If the purpose of this aid isn’t tacit support of another religion but rather an expression of guilt or an attempt at placation, does this mean that the general authorities believe God has erred in not allowing the Negro to hold the priesthood in the LDS Church? (Salt Lake Tribune, June 23, 1970)

Regardless of the motives of the Mormon leaders in performing this deed, we feel that it is a step in the right direction.

**FROM A TEA-CHEST?**

In the book Archaeology and the Book of Mormon, pages 25-31, we discussed the Kinderhook plates. These plates were made to trick Joseph Smith. Smith claimed that he “translated a portion of them, and find they contain the history of the person with whom they were found. He was a descendant of Ham, through the loins of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, and that he received his kingdom from the Ruler of heaven and earth” (History of the Church, vol. 5, page 372).

All of the plates were lost, but in 1962 the Improvement Era announced that one of them had been rediscovered. It was claimed that research revealed that false statements had been made concerning the Kinderhook plates and that the “plates are now back in their original category of genuine.” In 1965, however, George Lawrence, a Mormon physicist, examined the plate and found that “the dimensions, tolerances, composition and workmanship are consistent with the facilities of an 1843 blacksmith shop and with the fraud stories of the original participants.” Mr. Lawrence submitted his study to the BYU Archaeological Society, but since they seemed reluctant to print it he allowed us to make public some of his research (see Archaeology and the Book of Mormon, pages 28-29). Mormon scholars will eventually have to come to grips with this problem, and John A. Wittorf has made a move in this direction. Although he still wants to maintain Joseph Smith’s reputation as a translator, he cites George Lawrence’s study and discusses the implications if the plates are “ultimately demonstrated to be fraudulent”:

. . . a report of a physical examination of the plate in 1965 by George M. Lawrence, a Mormon physicist, contained the conclusion that:

“The plate is neither pure copper nor ordinary brass. It may be a low zinc brass or a bronze. The dimensions, tolerances, composition and workmanship are consistent with the facilities of an 1843 blacksmith shop and with the fraud stories of the original participants . . . .”

In view of present archaeological evidence, neither brass nor bronze appears to have been known in North America until European times. It is thought that the first bronze in the New World was probably made in Bolivia about AD 700 . . . In light of the known use of metal in North America, brass or bronze plates in an Illinois mound, bound together with what was reported to be a rusted iron ring, should be regarded with suspicion. However, this would not preclude the possibility of their having been brought into North America from elsewhere . . . .

Joseph Smith’s behavior with regard to the Kinderhook Plates is quite interesting when viewed in perspective. He made no attempt to purchase these artifacts on behalf of the Church, as he did in the case of the papyri from which the Book of Abraham was translated; he forwarded no specific claims for the plates with respect to the Book of Mormon, although he evidently approved of John Taylor’s Times and Seasons editorial on the plates as evidence for the authenticity of the Book; and he left no indication that he was planning to utilize them for the production of another work of scripture as the Quincy Whig, with its headline “Material for Another Mormon Book,” apparently expected him to do.

Accepting the find as genuine, Joseph had facsimile drawings of the plates made, presumably for future study. The brevity of his translation of “a portion of the plates” precludes the possibility that—if the plates are ultimately
Mr. Owens became interested in the idea that the characters might have been “copied from the lid of a Chinese tea-chest,” and submitted the facsimiles of the Kinderhook plates to scholars. On January 10, 1969, he received a letter from Charles T. Sylvester, of the Embassy of the United States of America, Taipei, Taiwan, which contained this information:

According to Professor Li Hsueh-chih of Academia Sinica and National Taiwan University the language on the inscriptions which you sent is that of the Lo tribe that lives in Yunnan Province in the southwest of mainland China. Unfortunately, Professor Li said that he could identify the writing but could not read the inscription . . .

On March 19, 1969, Bruce Owens received a letter from Kun Chang, Department of Oriental Languages, University of California, Berkeley. In this letter we find this statement: “The inscriptions enclosed seem to be the ideographs used by the Lolo tribes in Yunnan.” The Mormon Egyptologist Dee Jay Nelson also feels that “the script is indeed that of the Lo tribe” (Letter dated August 1, 1969), but he has not been trained to actually read this language.

It is very likely that the men who made the Kinderhook plates had access to a tea-chest. According to Joseph Smith’s mother, her husband received a tea-chest before they moved to Palmyra:

... the only thing which had been brought for Mr. Smith from China was a small chest of tea, which had been delivered into his care, for my husband. (Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith, Liverpool, 1853, page 50) . . .

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

In 1969 we published our book Archaeology and the Book of Mormon. On January 10, 1970, we received a letter from the Mormon Egyptologist Dee Jay Nelson in which the following statements appeared:

The booklets, The Mormon Kingdom and Archaeology and the Book of Mormon arrived in the mail today. Thank you for sending them . . . I already had a copy of Archaeology and the Book of Mormon but sat myself down this evening and read it again from beginning to end. I must say without qualification that I indorse your views completely as put down in this work (and you may quote me as having said so).

We are very happy with this endorsement of our work. Dee Jay Nelson is probably the most qualified Egyptologist in the Mormon Church, and he has spent years trying to prove that the Book of Mormon is true.
Since printing *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*, a number of important things relating to the Book of Mormon and archaeology have come to light. Therefore, we have added an Appendix of 22 pages to this book. This new material brings the book right up to date and increases its value. Those who have already obtained the book will be happy to know that they can obtain a copy of the new material without purchasing the entire book (price of the new Appendix alone is $1.00).

In the new Appendix we deal with Dr. Cyrus Gordon’s claim that a stone found at Bat Creek in Tennessee proves that if the Mormon Church were to accept Gordon’s claim it could actually weaken their case for the Nephites.

In this Appendix we show that there is a growing division between Mormon archaeologists. From 1948 to 1961 the Department of Archaeology at Brigham Young University sent “five archaeological expeditions to Middle America,” but since no evidence for the Nephites has been found interest has declined. The Mormon archaeologist Ross. T. Christensen states:

(2) The archaeology of the Scriptures, which once occupied the center of the picture, indeed was the very purpose for which the Department was created in the first place, now seems to be only a peripheral field. This great study, for which Elder Widtsoe and President McDonald had such high hopes . . . has now been relegated to the position of simply a private research interest on the part of two of the Department’s five faculty members . . . it cannot be said that BYU now officially supports through its archaeology department any kind of research program in the archaeology of the Scriptures. In other words, even though the Department’s original assignment in this field has never been explicitly annulled, still no genuine official support is now forthcoming (Newsletter and Proceedings of the Society for Early Historic Archaeology, Brigham Young University, June 1970, page 8).

If the Book of Mormon were a true history, we would expect to find hundreds, if not thousands, of inscriptions written in Hebrew or reformed Egyptian in the New World. In 1958 Thomas Stuart Ferguson, a Mormon scholar who founded the New World Archaeological Foundation, stated that digging should continue at an “accelerated pace” and that “eventually we should find decipherable inscriptions in modified (reformed) Egyptian, in a modified or pure Hebrew or in cuneiform, referring to some unique person, place or event in the Book of Mormon” (*One Fold and One Shepherd*, page 263). On December 2, 1970, we had the opportunity to ask Mr. Ferguson if any such inscription had been found. He indicated that nothing had been found. Although he believed that Bat Creek inscription was written in Hebrew, he felt that it had nothing to do with the people mentioned in the Book of Mormon. It would appear, then, that there is still no proof that the Nephites ever existed. The situation remains the same as it was when Dr. Hugh Nibley wrote these words:

Of course, almost any object could conceivably have some connection with the Book of Mormon, but nothing short of an *inscription* which could be read and roughly dated could bridge the gap between what might be called a pre-*actualistic* archaeology and contact with the realities of Nephite civilization . . . All that we have to go on to date is a written history. That does not mean that our Nephites are necessarily *mythical*, . . . Nephite civilization . . . could just as easily and completely *vanish* from sight as did the worlds of Ugarit, Ur, or Cnossos; and until some physical remnant of it, *no matter how trivial*, has been identified beyond question, what can any student of physical remains possibly have to say about it? Everything written so far by anthropologists or archaeologists—even real archaeologists—about the Book of Mormon must be discounted, for the same reason that we must discount studies of the lost Atlantis: not because it did not exist, but because it has *not yet been found*. (Since Cumorah, 1967, pages 243-244)

While Dr. Nibley would be willing to accept any archaeological evidence for the Book of Mormon, he seems to have closed his mind to any evidence against it. He states:

For one thing the Book of Mormon is immune to attack from the West. No matter how much archaeological evidence may pile up one way or the other, the fact remains that the Book of Mormon never claims to be telling the story of *all* the people who ever lived in the western hemisphere. . . . Thus, where research in America may conceivably bring forth a wealth of evidence to support the Book of Mormon, *no findings* can be taken as unequivocal evidence *against* it. (*Improvement Era, November 1970*, page 115)

Joseph Fielding Smith, who recently became President of the Mormon Church, has stated:

It is the personal opinion of the writer that the Lord does not intend that the Book of Mormon, at least at the present time, shall be proved true by any archaeological findings. (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, vol. 2, page 196)

In our book *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon* we devote a great deal of space to the problems one encounters when he tries to reconcile the Book of Mormon with archaeological discoveries. Notice the description of this book below.

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*Appendix Available*

For those who have already purchased the book, *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon* and wish to obtain the new material found in the Appendix we are selling copies for $1.00 each. The quantity prices are: 5 for $4.00 — 10 for $6.00.

**6 more books gone!**

The reader will note that we have removed 6 more titles off our book list. Some of the other books are on the verge of selling out, so it would be wise to place your order immediately so you will get the books you desire.

**Christian Book**

Our booklet *Is There a Personal God?* is now sold out, but we are working on a full-size book on Christianity which we hope to publish soon.

**WHOM CAN WE TRUST?**

*It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.* (Psalm 118:8)

*SOMEONE* has taken the time to count all the verses in the Bible and claims that this text is in the exact center of the Scriptures. Whether this is right or not, it certainly is a verse that highlights a central truth. Both in salvation and sanctification we must trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and not put our faith in anything or anyone, including ourselves. . . .

(Our Daily Bread, February 1971)
Reliable Revelations?

In our three-volume work The Case Against Mormonism, we have presented a great deal of evidence which demonstrates that the Book of Abraham was a work of Joseph Smith’s own imagination and that the anti-Negro doctrine contained in its pages must be abandoned.

Fawn M. Brodie has recently come out with a “Revised and Enlarged” edition of her book No Man Knows My History. In this new edition she makes these interesting comments concerning the Book of Abraham problem:

From the standpoint of the church which survived him, the Book of Abraham was the most unfortunate thing Joseph ever wrote. By outlining the Civil War, which forever banished slavery as an issue between Mormon and gentile, its racial doctrine preserved the discrimination that is the ugliest thesis in existing Mormon theology.

Moreover, the book laid Joseph open to the ridicule of future scholars, for his papyri were almost certain to be examined at some later date by experts in the Egyptian language. Unlike the golden plates, which had been whisked back into heaven, the mummies and papyri were kept exhibit in both Kirtland and Nauvoo. The actual papyri escaped scholarly examination for many years. So after Joseph’s death they were sold . . . and were thought to have burned in the great Chicago fire. Such a disaster might have ended all chance of exposing Joseph’s mistake had he not preserved three facsimiles of the papyri, which he published in 1842 with elaborate interpretations.

These interpretations were first challenged in 1860, . . . to examine the facsimiles agreed that they were ordinary funeral documents such as can be found on thousands of Egyptian graves. The discovery in 1967 that eleven fragments of the papyri had found their way to the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art led to fresh interpretations by scholars which confirmed the earlier appraisals. (No Man Knows My History, New York, 1971, pages 174-175)

On pages 422-425 of the same book, Mrs. Brodie states:

. . . when the eleven fragments were given to the Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City, many of the devout thought confidently that they would prove to be scientific evidence of the divine claims of their prophet.

Translation of the fragments by Egyptologists John S. Wilson and Klaus Baer of the University of Chicago Oriental Institute and Richard A. Parker of Brown University, indicated, however, that some of the fragments were Book of the Dead scrolls . . . and that others were from the Egyptian Book of Breathings, . . .

A remarkable compilation of the documentation on the papyri appeared in 1968 in two issues of Dialogue, A Journal of Mormon Thought, a scholarly Mormon publication not subject to censorship by the church leadership. . . . Professor Hugh Nibley of the Brigham Young University wrote defensively:

“So far everything that has appeared in print about the newly found papyri has been written either by hysterical opponents of everything Mormon or by people innocent of any bias in favor of Joseph Smith. . . . we have seen some of the papyri that were in Smith’s possession but there is no evidence that we have seen them all, and it is apparent that only one small piece among them has any direct bearing on the Book of Abraham.”

The controversy over the papyri was further heightened in 1968 by that acquisition and publication by Jerald Tanner of a filmed copy of Joseph Smith’s “Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar.” Formerly unknown save to Mormon archivists, which proved to be at least as damaging to Joseph Smith’s claims as a translator as the translations of the papyri by the Egyptologists. Tanner, together with Grant Heward, in commenting on the specific explanations Joseph Smith gave for numerous Egyptian characters, pointed out that “The characters from fewer than four lines of the papyrus make up forty-nine verses of the Book of Abraham, containing more than two thousand words.” Their study indicates that the Book of Abraham did in fact come from a portion of the papyri now under scrutiny by scholars, and that Professor Nibley’s suggestion that the Book of Abraham was translated from papyri not yet found is without foundation.

What makes for an intolerable complication to the Book of Abraham controversy is the fact that several lines in the sacred book constitute the theological basis for the Mormon Church’s long-standing discrimination against the Negro. . . .

From this “scriptural precedent” the Mormon Church over the years developed an elaborate Jim Crow system in regard to black converts. Though all white and Oriental males were granted the right to “hold the priesthood,” this right was denied to all blacks. . . . the Mormon leadership now faces a dilemma of peculiar complexity. To heed the Egyptologists means repudiation of the Book of Abraham, which could make all of Joseph Smith’s holy books suspect. To give the blacks the priesthood without a new revelation or “manifesto” also means implicit repudiation of the Book of Abraham. But to continue to deny blacks the full privileges or membership in the Church on the basis of a book that is manifestly suspect as history seems to be an increasing number of Mormons an immoral process, alien to the ideas of the Declaration of Independence and to the fundamental injunction of Christianity about loving one’s neighbor as oneself. . . .

If the Mormon Church does not modify its racist practices, it seems likely that its future converts in large part will continue to come, as they have been in recent years, from right-wing groups who are hostile to black people under any circumstances. If so, the alienation of the intellectuals from the Church will continue. . . . As a social organization the Church is a dynamo of inexhaustible energy. It remains to be seen if Mormon leadership now seriously impeded by its failure to retire before they become aged the men at the peak of the pyramid, can continue to direct this dynamo in the direction of social betterment and racial understanding. (No Man Knows My History, pages 422-425)

In an article entitled “What is ‘The Book of Breathings’?” Dr. Hugh Nibley now frankly admits that the facsimiles for Joseph Smith’s “Book of Abraham” were taken from the Book of Breathings papyrus. He admits that the Book of Breathings is an Egyptian funerary text, but he is still unwilling to admit that the Book of Abraham is spurious:

Upon their publication in 1967, the Joseph Smith Papyri Nos. X and XI were quickly and easily identified as pages from the Egyptian “Book of Breathings.” . . . the Book of Breathings is before all else, as Bonnet observes, a composite, made up of “compilations and excerpts from older funerary sources and Mortuary formulas.” . . . The Book of Breathings is the great time binder; it comes towards the end of Egyptian civilization and so wraps everything up, right from the beginning . . .

The lateness of the “Breathing” documents, instead of detracting from their value actually enhances it. For it not only gives them a chance to embrace the entire funerary literature of the past, but places them in that crucial moment of transition in which they are able to transmit much ancient Egyptian lore to early Jewish and Christian circles. . . .

Of particular interest to us is the close association of the Book of Breathings with the Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham. It can be easily shown by matching up the fibers of the papyri that the text of Joseph Smith Pap. No. XI was written on the same strip of material as Facsimile Number 1, the writing beginning immediately to the left of the “lion-couch” scene . . .

Thus our “Sensen” Papyrus is closely bound to all three facsimiles by physical contact, putting us under moral obligation to search out possible relationships between the content of the four documents.

As a “packaging job” the Book of Breathings is a most remarkable performance, “an attempt to include all essential elements of belief in a future life in a work shorter and more simple than the Book of the Dead.” . . .

The Book of Breathings is the end-product of a long process of abbreviating and epitomizing which was characteristicly Egyptian . . . the Book of Breathings . . . contains the essential elements of the Egyptian funerary rites from the earliest times; . . . The Book of Breathings is not to be dismissed as it has been, as a mere talisman against stinking corpses; it is a sermon on breathing in every Egyptian sense of the word. ( Brigham Young University Studies, Winter 1971) pages 153, 158-160, 162-164 and 166)
It would appear that Dr. Nibley still has no real answers to give his people and that the authenticity of the Book of Abraham has been disproven by the translations of the Egyptologists.

In our *Case Against Mormonism* we not only show that the Book of Abraham is spurious but also that the Book of Mormon is a product of the 19th century and that Joseph Smith’s revelations have been changed. In a review of the first two volumes of this work Kenneth Kantzer, Dean of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, made these statements:

> These books represent no ordinary polemic against Mormonism. This is the definitive, fully-documented, utterly-devastating case against the divine authority and truthfulness of the foundational documents upon which the Mormon religion is based. . . . It is difficult to see how the Mormon church can survive the devastating destruction of its foundations as presented in these volumes. (*Evangelical Beacon*, Minneapolis, Minn., vol. 42, no.1, October 8, 1968, page 7)

Marvin S. Hill, who teaches history at Brigham Young University, seems to feel that the Church can survive almost any attack on its scriptures by appealing to the fact that it is led by revelation at the present time:

> While Mormons venerate their sacred books, . . . the final word comes not from any scriptural passage but from the living oracles. The Saints hang more upon the words of their prophets than upon the canons of the written law. This is one reason it may make little difference to them if they are told that some of the divine books have been altered, or even that the accepted view of the origin of one of their books might have to be revised.

> . . . Yesterday’s mistakes and revisions seem insignificant when compared with the advantage of social stability which derives from waiting upon the word of the Lord. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Autumn 1970, page 96)

In *The Case Against Mormonism*, vol. 3, we show that even though the Church claims to be led by revelation the evidence clearly shows that it is not. Joseph F. Smith, the sixth President of the Mormon Church, testified as follows in the Reed Smoot Investigation:

> Senator Dubois.— Have you received any revelations from God, which has been submitted by you and the apostles to the body of the church in their semiannual conference, which revelation had been sustained by that conference, through the upholding of their hands?
> Mr. Smith.— Since when?
> Senator Dubois.— Since you became President of the Church.
> Mr. Smith.— No, sir; none whatever.
> Senator Dubois. — Have you received any individual revelations yourself, since you became President of the Church under your own definition, even, of a revelation?
> Mr. Smith.— I cannot say that I have.
> Senator Dubois.— Can you say that you have not?
> Mr. Smith.— No; I cannot say that I have not.
> Senator Dubois.— Then you do not know whether you have received any such revelations as you have described or whether you have not?
> Mr. Smith.— Well, I can say this: That if I live as I should in the line of my duties, I am susceptible, I think, of the impressions of the Spirit of the Lord upon my mind at any time, just as any good Methodist or any other good church member might be. And so far as that is concerned, I say yes; I have had impressions of the Spirit upon my mind very frequently but they are not in the sense of revelations. (*Reed Smoot Case*, vol. 1, page 483-484)

On page 99 of the same volume Joseph F. Smith stated: “Mr. Smith, I have never pretended to nor do I profess to have received revelations.” From this it is plain to see that just because a man is ordained a “Prophet, Seer, and Revelator,” it does not necessarily mean that he is. If Joseph F. Smith was only as susceptible to the impressions of the Spirit of the Lord as “any good Methodist,” then why should his word be trusted above that of a good Methodist?

> Although the Mormon Church is supposed to be led by revelation the evidence of this revelation is very hard to find. No new revelations have been added to the *Doctrine and Covenants* since the Manifesto of 1890.

We are told that revelation is found in the Conferences of the Church, when the leaders of the Church speak under the inspiration of the Lord, but how can we know when they are speaking under the Spirit of the Lord? Obviously, much of what has been said at the conferences of the church down through the years was not spoken under the inspiration of the Lord.

Today the Mormon Church is faced with some very serious problems, and these problems are complicated by the fact that some of the Mormon leaders are very old. Wallace Turner made these statements:

> In 1966, I attended the April conference in Salt Lake City and was able to watch the almost casual way this disposal of power was reaffirmed. President David O. McKay was then greatly enfeebled by age and a stroke. He sat in the top row of the tiers of seats for the General Authorities while his first counselor, Hugh B. Brown, spoke, explaining that President McKay was “presiding” while Brown was “conducting” the meeting. Then the ninety-two old man slowly moved two or three steps to the rostrum, so aged and frail that one’s anxiety was increased lest he fall. He spoke slowly and indistinctly and with great effort. Since his stoke at age ninety his once-powerful voice had faded. But he was still handsome and straight as he stood erect at the rostrum, . . .

> (*The Mormon Establishment*, pages 52-53)

David O. McKay lived to be 96 years old, but he was in very poor health toward the end of his life and was hardly in any condition to function as Prophet, Seer and Revelator for the Church.

Instead of appointing a younger man to lead the Church, they chose Joseph Fielding Smith who is now 94 years old. He is the son of Joseph F. Smith—the man who testified that although he was the Prophet, Seer and Revelator of the Church, he had never received a revelation.

In our three volumes of *The Case Against Mormonism* we deal at great lengths with these matters. The reader will notice that we have extended our special offer on *The Case Against Mormonism*. The regular price for all three volumes is $8.85, but if they are ordered before August 31, 1971, the price will be only $6.95.

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**MORE SKELETONS?**

After Joseph Smith’s death the Egyptian papyri, which were supposed to contain the books of Abraham and Joseph, were lost. In 1967, however, the Mormon Church announced the “discovery” of eleven pieces of this papyri at the Metropolitan Museum. Another fragment had also been preserved in the Church Historian’s Office, but the Mormon leaders tried to suppress this fact. Jay M. Todd, who has served as an editor and staff writer for the Church’s *Improvement Era*, states that Dr. Clark, of Brigham Young University, knew about this fragment for thirty years but was told to suppress this information:

> “Outside of a few associates, Dr. Clark had kept the fragment a matter of confidence, under instructions from the Historians Office, for over 30 years” (*The Sage of the Book of Abraham*, Salt Lake City, 1969, page 364).

Two years after we published a photographic fragment of this Joseph Smith’s “Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar,” the Church leaders decided that it was time to “find” it. The LDS Church Section of the Church’s *Deseret News* carried this statement from February 10, 1968:

> “An interesting development in the work going on at BYU by Dr. Hugh Nibley on the papyri fragments turned over to the Church by the New York Museum of Art is the locating of another fragment in the vaults at the Church Historian’s Office.”

We now have evidence which seems to show that the Mormon leaders have still not brought all of the skeletons out of the closet. In the *Messenger* for October, 1970, we stated: “We have heard from two separate sources that Dr. Nibley has discovered more of Joseph Smith’s papyri—possibly Facsimile No. 2. If any of our readers know the location of the papyri or have any other information on this subject we would appreciate it if they would let us know.”

In a letter dated October 5, 1970, we received the following information:

> I received your *Salt Lake City Messenger* . . . you mention about more papyri and for any information on the subject.

Here is what I know:

> The first I heard about more Joseph Smith Papyri was from you . . . I went to see ____ [a prominent Mormon who is acquainted with Dr. Nibley] . . . He stated . . . Nibley told him that there was more papyri found and that it was discovered in Texas . . . Mention was made by Nibley that Facsimile No. 2 was among the papyri.

The same man who sent us this information talked with another man who claimed:

> Hugh Nibley mentioned that there were 2 scrolls still in existence which were once in the possession of Joseph Smith. One was owned by Emma Smith and the other by someone who had some connection with the R.L.D.S. Church. . . .

> The Papyrus is in a small town safe and it is owned by an antique dealer. The dealer bought it from Emma Smith or relatives; he believed that they were sacred and said that they were Joseph’s. He also said that they had Masonic symbols on the Papyrus and that he wouldn’t sell them even for $750.00.
It could be that Dr. Nibley’s has known of this papyri for some time. In *The Case Against Mormonism*, vol. 3, page 1, we stated:

A friend of Dr. Nibley’s gave us this information in a letter dated August 13, 1968: “I saw photographs of them [i.e., the papyri in the Metropolitan Museum] for the first time in 1963, I believe . . . I wrote Nibley that some of the Joseph Smith papyri still existed but that I was not at liberty to say where, and he wrote me about the same time that someone in Utah had located a pile of unpublished Joseph Smith papyri.”

However this may be, it would appear that Dr. Nibley has recently made statements which would indicate that more of the papyri are still in existence and that he knows their location. Now, these papyri may be very important to those who are studying Mormonism, but we do not feel that we can put a great deal of stock in the statement that they are in Texas. This may be the case, but we remember that Dr. Atiya tried to divert us when we were on the track of the papyri in the Metropolitan Museum. He had a friend of ours write to a university back East when he knew the exact location of the papyri.

Perhaps some of our readers can provide a few clues that could lead to the discovery of the rest of the papyri. These manuscripts may contain some very important evidence concerning the development of the Mormon Church.

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**GOD’S POWER**

On April 23, 1971, the *Salt Lake Tribune* printed this statement: “Utah is ranked among the five states in the country with the worst drug abuse problems on a per capita basis, a national authority on drug abuse and treatment said there Thursday.”

The drug situation in Utah as well as in other parts of the country certainly points to the fact that there is a spiritual problem in America today. We feel, however, that the Lord is able to deal with this problem. In an earlier issue of the *Messenger* we discussed the conversion of Tom Skinner. The reader may remember that Tom Skinner grew up in Harlem and became the leader of “the Harlem Lords” — a gang of over 100 men. He had “led the fellows in more than fifteen large scale gang fights.” In his book *Black and Free* he states that he “had twenty-two notches on the handle of my knife which meant that my blade had gone into twenty-two fellows.” One night Skinner was “preparing strategy for a gang fight.” This was to be “the largest gang rumble ever to take place in the city of New York.” Five gangs “were going to unite together to fight a coalition of gangs from the other side of the city.” Over “3,000 fellows” were to be involved in this fight. While planning this gang war, Tom Skinner was listening to a rock and roll program on the radio. At nine o’clock that night an “unscheduled gospel program came on.” That night Tom Skinner decided to leave the gang and become a Christian. He states:

For the first time in my life I took a good look at Jesus Christ. Not so much what Tom Skinner had done— the money I’d stolen, the fact that there were fellows who were going to bear permanent bodily injury for the rest of their lives because of me and the gang fights I’d led. But I began to think of what I had become, arrogant, proud, bigoted, hateful. I was as bigoted as any white racist. (*Black and Free*, page 57)

. . . that particular night I came to Jesus Christ. Because God can’t lie, Jesus Christ actually took up residence in my life and began to live in me, and He’s been living there ever since.

It’s been the most thrilling, the most adventurous life I believe a person could ever live. I’ve had the privilege of actually having the God of heaven and earth live inside me. . . .

I turned the radio off and began to think about the wonder of this new life—and was confronted with a reminder of the old Tom Skinner.

There in front of me were the plans for the rumble. Here was a dilemma! (*Ibid.*, page 64)

You don’t just walk up to a gang of fellows that you’ve been leading around for two years in rioting, looting, fighting and law-breaking and say, “Well, guys, it’s been nice knowing you. So long.”

No one quits a gang. In fact, just two weeks before I had personally broken the arms and legs of two fellows who told me they were going to quit. And these fellows got off easy. . . .

The preacher signed off the air that night by saying that the promise of God to any person who receives Christ is that He will never leave you nor forsake you. He quoted a passage from the Bible that went like this: “Jesus says, Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

That’s all I had to protect myself as I walked to the meeting place of the Harlem Lords—just a promise of God.

I moved into the smoky room and walked to the front. There were 129 fellows in that room. Every one of them carried a knife. Some had guns—and none of them had any reservations about using their weapons. . . .
I motioned for silence and began to speak. I told of the broadcast—how the speaker had given me insight to truth I’d never heard before. I told them that I was convinced Jesus Christ had died for all the sins I’d ever committed, and had given me ever-lasting life.

“Last night, I asked Him to come inside me and live in me. And He answered me,” I said.

All the time I was talking, I could see the number two man in the gang. His nickname was “The Mop.” We call him “The Mop” because whenever there was a gang fight, this fellow wasn’t happy unless he drew blood from someone and wiped his foot in it. I knew “The Mop” wanted to be number one man. He would term my telling them that I had committed my life to Jesus Christ as a sign of weakness. And he would relish the opportunity to put his knife between my ribs or across my throat.

I forced myself to finish without weakening. . . . You could have heard a pin drop. No one spoke. No one even moved. I walked down the aisle and out into the night air, half expecting a knife to come tearing into my back or a bullet to dig into my flesh. But nothing! I walked out without one person raising a hand against me.

I nearly shouted my thankfulness to God.

Two nights later I saw “The Mop” on the street. He motioned to me and said, “Tom, I wanna talk to you.”

We stopped and he grinned. “You know,” he said, “the other night when you got up and walked out of that meeting I was gonna really cut you up. I was all set to put my knife right in your back.”

“And why didn’t you?”

“I couldn’t move,” he said, his eyes growing wider. “It was like somebody was holding me back—like I was glued to my seat!”

He licked his lips and continued. “And I talked to some of the other guys, too. I wasn’t the only one. They said the same thing—that something, somebody, actually held them back in their seats.”

Now my eyes widened and I felt the hair on the back of my neck rise.

“What d’ya make of it Tom?” he asked.

“I know that the Christ I’ve committed myself to isn’t just some fictitious character who lived two thousand years ago . . . some nebulous spirit floating around in the air somewhere. I know now that Jesus Christ is alive! He’s real! . . .”

The toughness was gone from my former associate in crime. I turned to “The Mop” and asked, “Would you like to know who that ‘Somebody’ was who kept you glued to your seat?”

He nodded.

Standing on 153rd Street and McCombs Place—two blocks from the Polo Grounds—an ex-gang leader, a Christian less than 48 hours, led another group member to Christ. Apart from the thrill of my own commitment to Christ, I can’t think of any other experience as thrilling as introducing “The Mop” to Jesus Christ.

“The Mop” has since graduated from law school and has entered one of the largest law firms in the city of New York, proof that Jesus Christ transforms the whole individual. (Ibid., pages 65-67)

Many people believe that Christianity has failed, J. B. Phillips, however, made this observation:

How many people, what proportion of people, do you suppose have ever tried to take the teaching of Jesus Christ seriously in any century? Your guess is as good as mine; but I should seriously doubt it’s ever been much more than a very small percentage. Most people, even if you can get them to take the trouble to learn what Jesus Christ really said, did and taught, don’t do anything about it. So how can you be surprised that the result seems so poor? I don’t believe that Christianity, the real thing, has ever failed, but I am certain that it hasn’t been given a fair chance to work, by most people. It’s so much easier to go your own sweet way and say that Christianity is a beautiful ideal since a great many people take the line of least resistance, that’s just what’s happened. The results are written all over the world. But don’t blame Christianity, blame people—you might even blame yourself. (Plain Christianity, page 66)

We thoroughly agree with J. B. Phillips. The gospel of Christ worked for us. It changed our lives, and we believe that it will do the same for anyone who will try it. It does not matter what we have done in the past; God stands ready to forgive us.

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. (Isaiah 1:18)

As we indicated in our last Messenger, we are working on a full size book on Christianity and hope to have it published in the near future.

Thot: The greatest thief is one who will rob you of the truth. —Watson
New Find Undermines Mormonism

We feel very honored and happy to announce one of the most important discoveries since Joseph Smith founded the Mormon Church in 1830. This is the discovery by Wesley P. Walters of an original document which is more than 140 years old. This document proves that Joseph Smith was a “glass looker” and that he was arrested, tried and found guilty by a justice of the peace in Bainbridge, New York, in 1826. (The reader will find a photograph of this discovery on page two of this paper.) The importance of this discovery cannot be overstated, for it establishes the historicity of the account of the trial which was first published in Fraser’s Magazine in 1873. We quote the following from that publication:


Warrant issued upon written complaint upon oath of Peter G. Bridgeman, who informed that one Joseph Smith of Bainbridge was a disorderly person and an impostor.

Prisoner brought before Court March 20, 1826. Prisoner examined: says that he came from the town of Palmyra, and had been at the house of Josiah Stowel in Bainbridge most of time since; had small part of time been employed in looking for mines, but the major part had been employed by said Stowel on his farm, and going to school. That he had a certain stone which he had occasionally looked at to determine where hidden treasures in the bowels of the earth were; that he professed to tell in this manner where gold mines were a distance under ground, and had looked for Mr. Stowel several times, and had informed him where he could find these treasure, and Mr. Stowel had been engaged in digging for them. That at Palmyra he pretended to tell by looking at this stone where coined money was buried in Pennsylvania, and while at Palmyra had frequently ascertained in that way where most property was of various kinds; that he had occasionally been three years, but of late had pretty much given it up on account of his injuring his health, especially his eyes, making them sore; that he did not solicit business of this kind, and had always rather declined having anything to do with this business.

Josiah Stowel sworn: says that prisoner had been at his house something like five months; had been employed by him to work on farm part of time; that he pretended to have skill of telling where hidden treasures in the earth were by means of looking through a certain stone; that prisoner had looked for him sometimes; once to tell him about money buried in Bend Mountain in Pennsylvania, once for gold on Monument Hill, and once for a salt spring; and that he positively knew that the prisoner could tell, and did possess the art of seeing those valuable treasures through the medium of said stone; that he found the (word illegible) at Bend and Monument Hill as prisoner represented it; that prisoner had looked through said stone for Deacon Attleton for a mine, did not exactly find it, but got a ___ (word unfinished) of ore which resembled gold, he thinks; that prisoner had told by means of this stone where a Mr. Bacon had buried money; that he and prisoner had been in search of it; that prisoner said it was in a certain root of a stump five feet from surface of the earth, and with it would be found a tail feather; that said Stowel and prisoner there upon commenced digging, found a tail feather, but money was not; that he supposed the money moved down. That prisoner did offer his services; that he never deceived him; that prisoner looked through stone and described Josiah Stowel’s house and outhouses, while at Palmyra at Simpson Stowel’s, correctly; that he had told about a painted tree, with a man’s head painted upon by means of said stone. That he had been in company with prisoner digging for gold, and had the most implicit faith in prisoner’s skill.

Arad Stowel sworn: says that he went to see whether prisoner could convince him that he possessed the skill he professed to have, upon which prisoner laid a book upon a white cloth, and proposed looking through another stone which was white and transparent, hold the stone to the candle, turn his head to book, and read. The deception appeared so palpable that witness went off disgusted.

McMaster sworn: says he went with Arad Stowel, and likewise came away disgruntled. Prisoner pretended to him that he could discover objects at a distance by holding this white stone to the sun or candle; that prisoner rather declined looking into a hat at his dark coloured stone, as he said it hurt his eyes.

Although the Bainbridge court record was printed a few times, it did not become too well known until Fawn Brodie printed it in her book No Man Knows My History. Immediately after her book was printed the Mormon leaders declared that the record was a forgery. The following statements appeared in the “Church Section” of the Deseret News:


Although the Bainbridge court record was printed a few times, it did not become too well known until Fawn Brodie printed it in her book No Man Knows My History. Immediately after her book was printed the Mormon leaders declared that the record was a forgery. The following statements appeared in the “Church Section” of the Deseret News:

. . . the alleged find is no discovery at all, for the purported record has been included in other books . . . after all her puffing and promise the author produces no court record at all though persistently calling it such . . . This alleged record is obviously spurious . . . The really vital things which a true record must contain are not there, though there is a lot of surplus verbiage set out in an impossible order which the court was not required to keep.

New Book

Joseph Smith’s 1826 Trial

By Jerald and Sandra Tanner. This booklet proves beyond all doubt that the report of the 1826 trial is authentic. Also included are some affidavits about Joseph Smith’s money-digging which do not appear in any of our other works. The regular price for this book will be $5.00, but if it is ordered before September 30, 1971, the price will be only 45¢. The quantity prices are: 3 for 90¢, 10 for $2.70, 20 for $4.50.

A FREE COPY will be sent with every order of $5.00 or more if placed before September 30, 1971.
Above is a photograph of Justice Albert Neely’s bill showing the costs involved in several trials in 1826. The fifth item from the top mentions the trial of “Joseph Smith The Glass looker.” When the letter “s” was repeated in documents of Joseph Smith’s time, as in the word “glass,” the two letters appeared as a “p” (see the word “assault” in items 1, 4, 7 and 9). To the left we have typed out the portion of the bill which mentions Joseph Smith. This bill proves that the published court record is authentic.
however, led to the discovery that the “court record” had been printed ten years previous to this in *Fraser’s Magazine*. In a “Supplement” to his book, Dr. Kirkham conceded that it had been printed in 1873.

Dale L. Morgan did research on this matter and discovered that the trial was actually mentioned as early as 1831 in a letter published in the *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate*, printed in Utica, N.Y. The letter is “signed” A.W.B., and Mr. Morgan identifies him from subsequent articles as A.W. Benton ("No Man Knows My History", page 418 A). Since Mr. Benton lived in Bainbridge, his account is very important:

Messrs. Editors—... thinking that a fuller history of their founder, Joseph Smith, jr. might be interesting... I will take the trouble to make a few remarks... For several years preceding the appearance of his book, he was about the country in the character of a glass looker: Pretending, by means of a certain stone, or glass, which he put in a hat, to be able to discover lost goods, hidden treasures, mines of gold and silver, &c. &c. In this town, a wealthy farmer, named Josiah Stowell, together with others spent large sums of money in digging for hidden money, which this Smith pretended he could see, and told them where to dig; but they never found their treasure. At length the public, becoming wearied with the base imposition which he was palming upon the credulity of the ignorant, for the purpose of sponging his living from their earnings, had him arrested as a disorderly person, tried and condemned before a court of justice. But considering his youth, (he then being a minor,) and thinking he might reform his conduct, he was designedly allowed to escape. This was four or five years ago. (Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate, April 9, 1831, page 120)

Dr. Hugh Nibley tries to dismiss Benton’s letter as “fiction.” In his book *The Myth Makers*, page 157, we find the following: “...we are inclined to regard A.W. B.’s story of the 1826 trials as fiction... without the reality of the peep-stones, the whole legend of the 1826 trials collapses... the 1826 trial, unattested in any source but his for fifty years, was a product of A.W. B.’s wishful thinking.”

We could not agree with Dr. Nibley concerning this matter. In our book *Joseph Smith and Money-Digging*, we devoted over 15 pages to the question of the authenticity of the trial. On page 38 we concluded: “Although the evidence supporting the authenticity of the ‘court record’ seems to be rather convincing, more research needs to be done.” During the past two years Wesley P. Walters has been doing a great deal of research and has made some very important discoveries which tend to support the 1826 trial. The discovery which we report in this issue of the *Messenger*, however, is certainly the most important, for it absolutely proves that the 1826 trial actually took place and that the published report is authentic.

The document which Wesley P. Walters has found is Justice Albert Neely’s bill showing the costs involved in several trials in 1826. The reader can see from the photograph on page 2 that the fifth item from the top mentions the trial of “Joseph Smith The Glass Looker.” This statement alone seems to show that the published account of the trial is authentic. Besides this, however, Neely’s bill provides additional evidence. It states that the trial took place on “March 20, 1826,” and this is precisely the date found in the published account of the trial: “Prisoner brought before Court March 20, 1826” (*Fraser’s Magazine*, February 1873, page 229). In Albert Neely’s bill the fee for this trial is listed as "$2.68," and this is the exact figure found in the printed record:...

In the face of this evidence it is impossible to continue to deny the authenticity of the court record.

**IMPORTANCE OF DISCOVERY**

Now that Wesley P. Walters has proven beyond all doubt that the Bainbridge court record is authentic, it will be interesting to see how the Mormon leaders will react. They have previously stated that the record is “spurious.” The Mormon scholar Francis W. Kirkham has stated that if the court record could be proven authentic, it would show that Mormonism itself is untrue:

A careful study of all facts regarding this alleged confession of Joseph Smith in a *court of law* that he had used a *seer stone* to find hidden treasure for purposes of fraud, must come to the conclusion that no such record was ever made, and therefore, is not in existence. ...If any evidence had been in existence that Joseph Smith had used a *seer stone* for fraud and deception, and especially had he made this confession in a *court of law* as early as 1826, or four years before the Book of Mormon was printed, and this confession was in a court record, it would have been impossible for him to have organized the restored Church. (A New Witness For Christ In America, vol. 1, page 385-387)

If a court record could be identified, and if it contained a confession by Joseph Smith which revealed him to be a poor, ignorant, deluded, and superstitious person—unable himself to write a book of any consequence, and whose church could not endure because it attracted only similar persons of low mentality—if such a court record confession could be identified and proved, then it follows that his believers must deny his claimed divine guidance which led them to follow him... How could he be a Prophet of God, the leader of the Restored Church to these tens of thousands, if he had been the superstitious fraud which “the pages from a book” declared he confessed to be? (Ibid., pages 486-487)

In his book *The Myth Makers*, Dr. Hugh Nibley has written almost 20 pages in an attempt to discredit the “Bainbridge court record.” On page 142 of Dr. Nibley’s book we find this statement: “... If this court record is authentic it is the most damning evidence in existence against Joseph Smith.” Dr. Nibley’s book also states that if the authenticity of the court record could be established it would be “the most devastating blow to Smith ever delivered...” (Ibid.)

Now that the authenticity of the court record has been established, the Mormon Church leaders are faced with a serious dilemma. The record shows plainly that Joseph Smith was deeply involved in magic practices at the very time he was supposed to be preparing himself to receive the plates for the Book of Mormon. A careful examination of Joseph Smith’s story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and even the text of the book itself reveals that it is just an extension of his money-digging practices. For example, the court record shows that Joseph Smith had used a *stone placed in his hat* to find treasures “for three years” prior to 1826. Now according to eye witnesses to the translation of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith translated the plates in the same manner. David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, stated:

I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. *Joseph would put the seer stone into a hat*, and put his *face in the hat*, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. (An Address To All Believers In Christ, by David Whitmer, page 12)

The Mormon historian B. H. Roberts frankly admitted that Joseph Smith sometimes used a “Seer Stone” to translate:

The *seer stone* referred to here was a chocolate-colored, somewhat egg-shaped stone which the Prophet *found* while digging a well in company with his brother Hyrum, for Mr. Clark Chase, near Palmyra, N.Y. It possessed the qualities of Urim and Thummim, since by means of it—as described above—as well as by means of the Interpreters found with the Nephite record, Joseph was able to translate the characters engraved on the plates. (A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Published by the Church, vol. 1, page 129)

In the Book of Mormon we read: “And the Lord said: I will prepare unto my servant Gazelem, a *stone*, which shall shine forth in *darkness* unto light, ...” (Book of Mormon, Alma 37:23). In the *Doctrine and Covenants* 78:9, Gazelem is identified as “Joseph Smith Jun.”

It is interesting to note that the gold plates of the Book of Mormon were supposed to have been found in the Hill Cumorah. In light of the court record, however, this sounds like just another extension of Joseph Smith’s money-digging schemes. In our book *Joseph Smith and Money-Digging* we explore these parallels at greater length.

**DOES TRUTH MATTER?**

Jesus once said: “And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Those of us who were raised in the Mormon Church should be glad that the Lord has sent us light so that we can be set free from the errors into which Joseph Smith has led us. Unfortunately, however, Jesus also said that “men loved darkness rather than light, ...” (John 3:19). It is sometimes very difficult to receive the truth when it comes in conflict with our preconceived opinions.
The reader will remember that when the original papyrus from which Joseph Smith “translated” the Book of Abraham was rediscovered in 1867, it was submitted to Egyptologists. These Egyptologists translated the papyrus and found that it was in reality the Egyptian “Book of Breathings” and had nothing to do with Abraham or his religion. This was a perfect opportunity for the Mormon leaders to free themselves from the anti-Negro doctrine found in the Book of Abraham, but instead they decided to suppress the truth concerning this matter. A number of fantastic theories were proposed in an attempt to save the Book of Abraham. Some claimed that the characters on the papyrus had a double meaning and some even went so far as to state that Joseph Smith received the Book of Abraham by revelation and didn’t even need the papyrus! Dr. Henry Eyring, for instance, recently made this statement:

Now, the Lord didn’t need the Book of Abraham—those scrolls. He was pretty well clear on everything without that. So whatever was on them wouldn’t have helped him much, I suspect, and so the essential ingredient in the Book of Abraham is whatever the Prophet was inspired to write down… To me, it’s very exciting to study the Book of Abraham itself to find out how the Lord works. . . . I wouldn’t look in it to find out whether He does work or not—I already know that. I also wouldn’t look into the matter to find out whether I thought Joseph Smith was a Prophet, because I think there are a hundred things—in fact, to anyone who is curious, I would be glad to enumerate them—where it seems to me evident that he was much more than that… I don’t like to say it in this crude way, but I think it’s quite an interesting way, maybe a shocking way: it wouldn’t make a bit of difference to me if the scholars, studying the scrolls that led the Prophet to think about the problem of Abraham and write about it—it wouldn’t make a bit of difference to me if they discovered that it was a bill of lading for wheat in the Lower Nile. You see, some people don’t feel that way about it. But I think the Lord actually inspired Joseph. (Book of Abraham Symposium, April 3, 1970, Salt Lake Institute of Religion, page 3)

Dr. Eyring’s idea is about as far from reality as it is possible to get, for Joseph Smith himself claimed that the Book of Abraham was a “correct translation” of the papyrus (see History of the Church, vol. 2, page 351). It would seem that some of the Mormon scholars have made up their minds that Joseph Smith was a prophet and no amount of evidence will convince them otherwise. This reminds us of the International Flat Earth Research Society. The Salt Lake Tribune for July 26, 1969, reported:

. . . Flat Earthist Secretary Samuel Shenton . . . has not wavered in his beliefs despite astronomers orbiting the earth and flying to the moon. All that, including moon landing he said, is just part of a great deception by NASA and its contractors and the manufacturers of globe maps who have a vested interest in perpetuating the globite teaching. . . . “Once you get your teeth into it, it turns your stomach over that such deception can go perhaps to your children,” he said.

The astronauts are hypnotized into believing they go into space, Shelton contended.

Although some of the Mormon scholars will not receive any evidence against Joseph Smith, there is a growing number who are searching for the truth. To those who really want to know the truth, the discovery by Wesley P. Walters will be very important. It would be almost as foolish to ignore the evidence concerning the 1826 trial as to maintain that the earth is flat.

Just as we were preparing to print this paper, Wesley P. Walters sent us a photograph of another original document dealing with the arrest of Joseph Smith in 1826. Although we do not have room to include it here, we will have a photograph of it in our new booklet Joseph Smith’s 1826 Trial. This new booklet contains important information of the trial and its significance. Also included are affidavits concerning Joseph Smith’s money-digging—some of them have never appeared in any of our other works. These affidavits provide additional evidence that Joseph Smith used his “Seer Stone” to search for buried treasures.

JOSEPH SMITH & MONEY-DIGGING

In light of the new discovery concerning the 1826 trial our book Joseph Smith & Money-Digging should be very interesting to our readers. Besides devoting over 15 pages to the 1826 trial, we covered such subjects as: the common practice of money-digging in Joseph Smith’s time, treasures that slipped into the ground, statements by Martin Harris and Brigham Young on money-digging, Joseph Smith’s “seer stone,” the use of the “seer stone” to find the Book of Mormon plates and its use to translate the book itself, the agreement between Smith and the other money-diggers, the “cave” in the hill Cumorah, the use of the divining rod in the early Mormon Church, the revelation regarding treasure hunting, the practice of sacrificing lambs to find treasures. This book also contains a photographic reprint of the affidavits regarding Joseph Smith’s money-digging activities which were published by E. D. Howe in 1834. The regular price on this book is $2.50, but if it is ordered before September 30, 1971, the price will be $2.25. The quantity prices are: 2 for $3.60 – 5 for $7.20 – 10 for $13.50.

NEW LIGHT ON MOONMEN

In the Messenger for August 1969, we quoted Oliver B. Huntington (a friend of Joseph Smith) as saying:

Inhabitants of the moon
“The inhabitants of the moon are more of a uniform size than the inhabitants of the earth, being about 6 feet in height. “The dress very much like the quaker style and are quite general in style, or the fashion of dress. “They live to be very old; coming generally, near a thousand years.”

This is the description of them as given by Joseph the Seer, and he could “see” whatever he asked the father in the name of Jesus to see. (Journal of Oliver B. Huntington, vol. 2, page 166 of typed copy at the Utah State Historical Society)

A number of people have found it difficult to accept this reference since it comes from a private journal. Recently, however, a friend pointed out to us that an article concerning this matter was printed in 1892 in the Young Woman’s Journal, a Mormon publication, published by the Young Ladies’ Mutual Improvement Associations of Zion. The article, written by Oliver B. Huntington, was entitled “The Inhabitants of the Moon.” This article reads as follows:

Astronomers and philosophers have, from time almost immemorial until very recently, asserted that the moon was uninhabited, that it had no atmosphere, etc. But recent discoveries, through the means of powerful telescopes, have given scientists a doubt or two upon the old theory. Nearly all the great discoveries of men in the last half century have, in one way or another, either directly or indirectly, contributed to prove Joseph Smith to be a Prophet.

As far back as 1837, I know that he said the moon was inhabited by men and women the same as this earth, and that they lived to a greater age than we do—that they live generally near the age of 1000 years.

He described the men as averaging near six feet in height, and dressing quite uniformly in something near the Quaker style.

In my Patriarchal blessing, given by the father of Joseph the Prophet, in Kirtland, 1837, I was told that I should preach the gospel before I was 21 years of age; that I should preach the gospel to the inhabitants upon the islands of the sea and—to the inhabitants of the moon, even the planet you can now behold with your eyes.

The first two promises have been fulfilled, and the latter may be verified. From the verification of two promises we may reasonably expect the third to be fulfilled also.

Men have lost millions of dollars, and hundreds of lives to find a country beyond the north pole; and they will yet find that country—a warm, fruitful country, inhabited by the ten tribes of Israel, a country divided by a river, on one side of which lives the half tribe of Manasseh, which is more numerous than all the others. So said the Prophet . . .

Cedar Fort, Utah, February 6,1892. (Young Woman’s Journal, vol. 3, no. 6, pages 263-264)

For additional information on this subject see our publication The Case Against Mormonism, vol. 3, page 129.

FREE—Photographic copies of the article “The Inhabitants of the Moon,” which was published in The Young Woman’s Journal, will be sent free upon request.

THE MORMON KINGDOM

We are still working on volume 2 of The Mormon Kingdom and hope to have it finished in the next few months. We have completed 70 pages so far.
For many years we have been gathering material for a book of Christianity. We are now happy to announce that this work has been completed and is now available. In this book we devote over twenty pages to a discussion of evolution and creation. We show, for instance, that while men like Julian S. Huxley and Bertrand Russell questioned the existence of a Creator, Thomas Paine, an avowed enemy to Christianity, was forced to acknowledge that there must be a God. In his book, *The Age of Reason*, he made these statements:

But some, perhaps, will say: Are we to have no word of God—no revelation? I answer, Yes; there is a word of God; there is a revelation. *The Word of God is the creation we behold* and it is in this word, which no human invention can counterfeit or alter, that God speaketh universally to man . . . The Creation speaketh an universal language, independently of human speech or human language, multiplied and various as they maybe. It is an ever-existing original, which every man can read. It cannot be forged; it cannot be counterfeited; it cannot be lost; it cannot be altered; it cannot be suppressed. . . .

Do we want to contemplate his power? We see it in the immensity of the Creation. Do we want to contemplate his wisdom? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible whole is governed. . . .

The only idea man can affix to the name of God is that of a first cause, the cause of all things. And incomprehensible and difficult as it is for a man to conceive what a first cause is, he arrives at the belief of it from the tenfold greater difficulty of disbelieving it. . . .

In like manner of reasoning, everything we behold carries in itself the internal evidence that it did not make itself. Every man is an evidence to himself that he did not make himself; neither could his father make himself, nor his grandfather, nor any of his race; neither could any tree, plant, or animal make itself; and it is the conviction arising from this evidence that carries us on, as it were, by necessity to the belief of a first cause eternally existing, of a nature totally different to any material existence we know of, and by the power of which all things exist; and this first cause man calls God.

. . . Canst thou by searching find our God? Yes; because, in the first place, I know I did not make myself, and yet I have existence; and by searching into the nature of other things, I find that no other thing could make itself; and yet millions of other things exist; therefore it is, that I know, by positive conclusion resulting from this search, that there is a power superior to all those things, and that power is God. (*The Age of Reason*, by Thomas Paine. pages 31-35)

In his book, *Man Does Not Stand Alone*, A. Cressy Morrison wrote the following:

So many essential conditions are necessary for life to exist on our earth that it is mathematically impossible that all of them could exist in proper relationship by chance on any one earth at one time. Therefore, there must be in nature some form of intelligent direction. If this be true, then there must be a purpose. (*Man Does Not Stand Alone*, page 13)

The lens of our eye varies in density so that all rays are brought into focus. Man finds this unattainable in any homogeneous substance, such as glass. All the marvelous adjustments of lens, rods, cones, nerves, and all else must have occurred simultaneously, for before each of them was complete, sight was impossible. How could one necessary factor know and adjust itself to each of the requirements of the others? . . . Nature would have had a job in developing the science of optics unless somewhere along the line there was a little help from intelligence. (*Ibid.*, pages 51-52)

Sir Arthur Keith, who was one of the world’s most noted anthropologist, admitted that the development of their eye was hard to explain:

What are we to say, then, about such a complicated and efficient instrument as the human eye? If it had been made of wood, brass, and glass, it would have been said to have been planned for a purpose, but because it has been “evolved,” is made up of living tissues, and came into existence without a preliminary “blueprint,” it is not purposive. Are not my critics, by the use of a verbal quibble, seeking a sophist’s escape from a real difficulty? Would it not be more honest to say that the finer purposive adaptations we see in plants and animals remain, as yet, unexplained? The eye has been evolved; that much is quite certain; the living vital forces which have molded it are probably still at work, but as yet we have not isolated them. I could as easily believe the theory of the Trinity as one which maintains that living, developing protoplasm, by
merely throws of chance, brought the human eye into existence. (*Evolution and Ethics*, by Sir Arthur Keith, 1947, page 238)

Even the simple cells of which the human body is composed have been found to be extremely complex. On June 2, 1970, the *Salt Lake Tribune* printed this statement:

The cell is the basic unit of all living matter. Only a few generations ago it was thought of as mostly an enclosed sac of protoplasm or living jelly, with only a few finer structures outside the cell nucleus.

Today, as a result of electron microscopy, biologists know the cell is no empty blob but a densely occupied factory, with many structures doing many jobs.

Since even the simplest cells are extremely complex, it is very difficult to believe that the human body, with all its organs, could have been developed by mere chance. In his book of the evolution of man, William Howells has to admit that “man must be looked at as an extraordinary achievement of design and organization” (*Mankind in the Making*, New York, 1967, page 349).

We feel that the design found in living matter and throughout the universe shows that there is a Creator.

Anthropologists use the argument of design in their attempt to prove the antiquity of man. For instance, a stone which has been chipped in a purposeful way might be considered to tool of an ancient man. Hartmut Bastian states:

... he [Boucher de Parthes] also unearthed a number of very oddly shaped stones such as bad always been found here and there and had been dismissed casually as freaks of Nature. ... Suddenly these stones caught his attention: their shaping was no “freak of nature,” but the result of purposeful work by the hands of men . . . A stone fashioned as an implement presupposes a prehistoric man who must have made it. But acceptance of this fact only gained ground during the second half of the last century. (*And Then Came Man*, New York, 1964, page 308)

It is true that a stone “fashioned as an implement” seems to show that it has been made by an intelligent creature, and the more complex the design of the tool the more unlikely that it is a “freak of nature.” Now, using this same type of reasoning with regard to living matter, we feel that the brain, eyes and other complex organs found in man “presupposes” a Creator. Are not these organs the “result of purposeful work by the hands” of God?

In our new book *A Look At Christianity* we have a great deal to say about this matter. We also deal with such subjects as: the age of the earth and of life, the earliest man, the Flood, the report of the discovery of Noah’s Ark, Egypt and the Bible, evidence from Palestine, the Moabite Stone, Assyrian records, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the importance of love, the destructive effects of hate, reconciliation with God, our own testimony, the historicity of Jesus, early writings concerning Christianity, manuscripts of the New Testament, recent papyri discoveries, the historical setting of the New Testament, and many other important matters. This book has 91 large pages and is bound in plastic binding. It will usually sell for $1.00, but if it is ordered before September 30, 1971, the price will be only 90¢.

NOTE: We have been gathering material for this book for a number of years. Normally a book of this size would sell for at least $2.50 a copy, but since we feel this information is so vital we are selling it at this bargain price.

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**YOUR WONDERFUL BODY**

*I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.* (Psalm 139:14)

The man who heads the medical school of the University of Mississippi, Dr. A. C. Guyton, says: “The human body is the most beautifully engineered and the most complicated system there is. It works by means of several hundred patterns of control, each affecting the other. A complete understanding of it can hardly be gained without the help of computer with their ability to handle vast amounts of data. For instance, the brain has 10 billion nerve cells to record what you learn. The information travels inside you at speeds of up to 300 miles per hour over a network of nerve fibers 100 thousand miles long! There are more interconnections in your nervous system than there are street corners in the entire world!” Your brain which weighs less than four pounds can do certain things that couldn’t be matched by ALL of the world’s computers!

Biochemists tell us that utilizing the most up-to-date laboratory equipment, the typical protein must be boiled for at least 24 hours in a chemical solution to be thoroughly broken down. However, the chemical plant of your body completes the identical job in only four hours and with high temperatures. A portion of skin the size of a postage stamp contains four yards of nerves. In all, there are millions of these nerve endings, fanning through your skin, each of them especially constructed to deliver only one type of message, heat, cold, pain, or pressure. In a single day your blood travels about 168 million miles—the equivalent of 6720 times around the world! No wonder David exclaimed, “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” — H. G. B. THOT: Proper praise of God for your marvelous body involves giving it back to Him for spiritual service (Rom. 12:1, 2).

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Our Daily Bread — March 1971

**SPECIAL OFFER**

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**Joseph Smith & Money-Digging** — by Jerald and Sandra.

This book is very important in light of the new discovery mentioned in this paper. See description of this book on page 4. Reg. $2.50 — Special: $2.25 – 2 for $3.60 – 5 for $7.20 – 10 for $13.50

**A Look at Christianity**

By Jerald and Sandra Tanner

We deal with such subjects as: the age of the earth and of life, the earliest man, the Flood, the report of the discovery of Noah’s Ark, Egypt and the Bible, evidence from Palestine, the Moabite Stone, Assyrian records, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the importance of love, the destructive effects of hate, reconciliation with God, our own testimony, the historicity of Jesus, early writings concerning Christianity, manuscripts of the New Testament, and many other important matters. This book has 91 large pages. Price: $1.00

**Joseph Smith’s 1826 Trial** — by Jerald and Sandra Tanner.

Contains important information on the trial and its significance, more information concerning Wesley P. Walters’ research, some affidavits concerning Joseph Smith’s money-digging activities which aren’t in any of our other books. The regular price will be 50¢ but if ordered before September 30, 1971, the price will be only 45¢ – Quantity prices: 3 for 99¢ – 10 for $2.70 – 20 for $4.50.

**FREE** — A copy of *Joseph Smith’s 1826 Trial* will be sent FREE with every order of $5.00 or more placed before September 30, 1971.
Falsification of Joseph Smith’s History

Suppressed records reveal that drastic changes were made in Joseph Smith’s History after his death. New research shows that less than 40% of the material attributed to Joseph Smith was actually compiled before his death.

Joseph Fielding Smith, the tenth President of the Mormon Church, stated: “The most important history in the world is the history of our Church, and it is the most accurate history in all the world, it must be so” (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 2, page 199). The Mormon Apostle LeGrand Richards also claimed that no changes have been made in the History of the Church. In a letter Morris L. Reynolds he stated: “Your second question: ‘Has Joseph Smith’s History been changed from the original history?’ No. No changes have been made in meaning in any way” (Letter by LeGrand Richards, dated May 11, 1966). Dr. Hugh Nibley also stated that “There have been no changes in Joseph Smith’s history” (Letter dated May 12, 1966).

The material which follows will prove beyond all doubt that the statements quoted above are completely false. Actually, the Mormon historians have broken all the rules on honesty in their publication of Joseph Smith’s History of the Church. They have deleted, added and changed thousands of words without any indication. Many of the changes in Joseph Smith’s History have been made to cover up the fact that the Mormon leaders have made important changes in the policies and doctrines of the Church. Take, for instance, the “Word of Wisdom.” The “Word of Wisdom” is a revelation given by Joseph Smith on February 27, 1833. It forbids the use of hot drinks, alcoholic beverages and tobacco. The Mormon writer John J. Stewart made this statement concerning the “Word of Wisdom”:

. . . no one can hold high office in the Church, on even the stake or ward level, nor participate in temple work, who is a known user of tea, coffee, liquor or tobacco.

The Prophet himself carefully observed the Word of Wisdom. . . . (Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet, Salt Lake City, 1966, page 90)

In spite of this statement by John J. Stewart, Joseph Smith did not keep the “Word of Wisdom,” and at times he would even advise others to disobey it. In a thesis written at Brigham Young University, Gary Dean Guthrie gives the following information:

Joseph tested the Saints to make sure their testimonies were of his religion and not of him as a personable leader. Amasa Lyman, of the First Presidency, related:

“Joseph Smith tried the faith of the Saints many times by his peculiarities. At one time, he had preached a powerful sermon on the Word of Wisdom, and immediately thereafter, he rode through the streets of Nauvoo smoking a cigar. Some of the brethren were tried as was Abraham of old.” (“Joseph Smith as an Administrator,” Master’s Thesis, Brigham Young University, May, 1969, page 161)

Mr. Guthrie’s source for this reference is the diary of the Mormon Apostle Abraham H. Cannon, vol. xix, October 1, 1895. The original journal is now located in the Special Collections Dept. of the Brigham Young University Library. Because of the importance that is now placed upon the “Word of Wisdom,” most members of the Church are shocked when they find out that Joseph Smith did not keep it. It is very surprising to learn that Joseph Smith, the man who introduced the Temple Ceremony into the Mormon Church, would not be able to go through the Temple if he were living today because of his frequent use of alcoholic beverages. In his history, Joseph Smith admitted several times that he drank wine, and under the date of June 1, 1844, he stated that he had “a glass of beer at Moessers.” The statement concerning the glass of beer was apparently very embarrassing to later Mormon leaders, for in recent editions of the History of the Church it has been deleted. When Joseph Smith’s statement was first published in the Latter-Day Saints’ Milennial Star, it read as follows:

Then went to John P. Greene’s, and paid him and another brother $200. Drank a glass of beer at Moessers. Called at William Clayton’s, . . . (Millennial Star, vol. 23, page 720)
When this statement was reprinted in the History of the Church, seven words were deleted without any indication:

Then went to John P. Greene’s, and paid him and another brother $200. Called at William Clayton’s, . . . (History of the Church, vol. 6, page 424)

Other important changes concerning the “Word of Wisdom” were made in Joseph Smith’s History. At one time Joseph Smith encouraged some “brethren” to break the “Word of Wisdom”:

It was reported to me that some of the brethren had been drinking whisky that day in violation of the Word of Wisdom. I called the brethren in and investigated the case, and was satisfied that no evil had been done, AND GAVE THEM A COUPLE OF DOLLARS, WITH DIRECTIONS TO REPLENISH THE BOTTLE TO STIMULATE THEM IN THE FATIGUES OF THEIR SLEEPLESS JOURNEY. (Millennial Star, vol. 21, page 283)

When this was reprinted in the History of the Church, the last 23 words—the words we have capitalized—were deleted without any indication (see History of the Church, vol. 5, page 450)

Another important change was made in the History under the date of June 27, 1844—the day of Joseph Smith’s death. In the version that was first published (Millennial Star, vol. 24, page 471), Joseph Smith recommended that the Apostle Richards use a “pipe and tobacco” to settle his stomach. When this was reprinted in the History of the Church, vol. 6, page 614, the words “pipe and tobacco” were removed and the word “medicine” has been inserted.

WRITTEN BY JOSEPH SMITH?

A few years ago we published a book entitled Changes in Joseph Smith’s History. In this book we stated:

Mormon Historians state that in 1838 Joseph Smith began writing the account of the history of the Church which is now published by the Church. Joseph Smith began publishing this history in the Times and Seasons in 1842. It was published in installments, and therefore only part of the history was published before Joseph Smith’s death. The Church continued to publish the history in the Times and Seasons after his death until they were driven from Nauvoo. The remainder of the history was published in the Millennial Star and also in the Deseret News. . . .

In 1961 we wrote to many of the highest authorities in the Mormon Church and asked for a microfilm of Joseph Smith’s history in the handwritten form, as well as other manuscripts. The Mormon Church leaders refused to allow us to have a microfilm or to allow us to examine the documents. The Mormon Apostle LeGrand Richards answered our letter as follows:

“I am returning herewith the $10 enclosed in your letter of April 7.

“I have no interest, whatever, in doing anything to furnish you information you ask for in your letter for the purpose for which you desire the same.”

Not only has the history of the Church been changed since it was first printed, but there is also evidence to prove that changes were made before it was first printed. . . . Charles Wesley Wandell, who worked in the Church Historian’s Office after the death of Joseph Smith, accused the leaders of the Mormon Church of falsifying the history. When he saw the way that they were printing it in 1855, he made this comment in his journal:

“I notice the interpolations because having been employed (myself) in the Historian’s Office at Nauvoo by Doctor Richards, and employed, too, in 1845, in compiling this very autobiography, I know that after Joseph’s death his biographer was ‘doctor’d’ to suit the new order of things, and this too, by the direct order of Brigham Young to Doctor Richards and systematically by Richards” (Statement from the journal of Charles Wesley Wandell, as printed in the Journal of History, vol. 8, page 76).

On the title page to vol. 1 of the History of the Church, this statement appears: “History of Joseph Smith, the Prophet by himself”; this study, however, reveals that much of the history was not written by Joseph Smith. Only a small part of the history was printed during Joseph Smith’s lifetime, and we are very suspicious that Joseph Smith did not finish writing the history before his death. Joseph Smith probably kept a journal which the historians used to write part of the history. The entries in the History of the Church for 1835 sound very much like a day-to-day journal. The Church Historians, no doubt, used Joseph Smith’s journals, but they also interpolated material of their own and tried to make it appear that Joseph Smith had written it. An example is found in the Millennial Star, vol. 19, page 7:

“. . . on this evening Joseph the Seer commenced giving instructions to the scribe concerning writing the proclamation to the kings of the earth, . . .”

It is very obvious that Joseph Smith did not write this; when this was reprinted in the History of the Church, the words “Joseph The Seer” were changed to the word “I.”

It is interesting to note that in 1844 Joseph Smith said: “For the last three years I have a record of all my acts and proceedings, for I have kept several good, faithful, and efficient clerks in constant employ: they have accompanied me everywhere, and carefully kept my history” (History of the Church, vol. 6, page 409). The last few years of Joseph Smith’s life in the History of the Church are filled with personal incidents, however, in the year 1840 there seems to be a vacuum. There seems to be an abundance of information concerning England but very little concerning incidents that were happening in Nauvoo (where Joseph Smith was). The interesting thing about this is that Brigham Young, George A. Smith and Heber C. Kimball (the men who “revised” Joseph Smith’s history after his death) were in England at this time. Could it be that they wrote this part of the history after Joseph Smith’s death? See especially the History of the Church, vol. 6, pages 233-239. . . .

The Mormon Historians evidently feel that more changes can be won to the church with a bogus history than with a true factual one. It is apparently felt that the truth will not bear its own weight and that a little forgery here and there is not wrong as long as it helps win converts to the Church. Men go to prison for the crime of forgery, however, the Mormon Church leaders seem to be immune from punishment because it is a religious document they have falsified. Perhaps some day the members of the Church will demand an honest history and that the “secret manuscripts” be made available.

NEW DISCOVERIES

Since we published our book, Changes in Joseph Smith’s History, a great deal of information has come to light which tends to confirm our conclusions concerning the falsification of Joseph Smith’s History. For instance, a microfilm copy of the original handwritten manuscript of Joseph Smith’s History, “Book A-1,” was recently given to us. This manuscript is the basis for the History of the Church, “Book A-1,” and therefore it is written in the “Addenda” which follows page 553 of the History of the Church, vol. 1, pages 295-297, seventy-four words were added which were not in the Times and Seasons (see vol. 5, page 673). This interpolation reads as follows:

About the 8th of November I received a visit from Elders Joseph Young, Brigham Young, and Heber C. Kimball of Mendon, Monroe county, New York. They spent four or five days at Kirtland, during which we had many interesting moments. At one of our interviews, Brother Brigham Young and John P. Greene spoke in tongues, which was the first time I had heard this gift among the brethren; others also spoke, and I received the gift myself.

This interpolation was certainly made after Joseph Smith’s death and is an obvious attempt to glorify Brigham Young. The interpolation was too large to be inserted into the handwritten manuscript at its proper place (page 240), and therefore it is written in the “Addenda” which follows page 553 of Book A-1. (The “Addenda” contains a great deal of material which was to be inserted into Joseph Smith’s History and was obviously written after his death.) Below is a photograph from the “Addenda” showing the words concerning Brigham Young which were to be added to the History of the Church.
The reader will notice that although the Mormon leaders added most of this interpolation into Joseph Smith’s History, they omitted two lines (see arrow). These lines contain some very important information: “Brother Joseph Young is a great man, but Brigham is a greater, and the time will come when he will preside over the whole Church.”

Although the Mormon Historians added the part about Brigham Young speaking in tongues, they have never dared to add the prophecy that Brigham Young was to become leader of the Church. We must remember that many people questioned the leadership of Brigham Young. In fact, the Apostle William Smith—Joseph Smith’s brother—left the Church and stated that he once heard Joseph say that if Brigham Young ever led the Church “he would certainly lead it to destruction” (Warsaw Signal, October 29, 1845). However, this may be, the Mormon historians never dared to add in the “prophecy” found in the “Addenda.” They probably realized that the dissenters would question such a statement in Joseph Smith’s History and ask for proof. An examination of the original manuscript, however, would soon reveal that the prophecy is a forgery made after Brigham Young had become the leader of the Church.

For more information concerning Book A-1 see our new publication Falsification of Joseph Smith’s History.

Although we now have a film of the handwritten manuscript of Joseph Smith’s History up to 1836, the remaining portion is still suppressed. Fortunately, we have another film which sheds a great deal of light on this period. This is a copy of a film in the Church Historian’s Office of the newspaper published in Nauvoo by the Mormons. This newspaper was originally called The Wasp but the name was later changed to The Nauvoo Neighbor. A woman who lived outside of Utah told us that she could borrow a copy which had previously been made of the film in the Church Historian’s Office and wondered if we could get a firm in Salt Lake City to make duplicate copies. Although there were no copyright restrictions on the film, the company refused to make copies because the Church Historian’s Office would be opposed to it. Finally, it was duplicated outside the State of Utah and a copy was sent to us.

We wondered why the Church Historians Office had suppressed this film, and with this question in mind we began our research on it. At first we found nothing of importance, but then one day we noticed that some words had been crossed out with a pen or pencil and some other words written in their place. Naturally, we wondered why the words had been changed in this newspaper. The answer soon became apparent. We found that the article which contained these words was reprinted in Joseph Smith’s History of the Church. The words which were crossed out on the newspaper were left out in Joseph Smith’s History, and the words which were written in by hand on the newspaper appeared in Joseph Smith’s History. We found this same pattern in many other articles reprinted in the History of the Church. Where words were crossed out on the newspaper, they were deleted from Joseph Smith’s History, and where words were added in by hand on the newspaper they were also found in the History. From this one possible conclusion could be reached; we had a film of the very pages which the Mormon Church Historians used when they compiled Joseph Smith’s History, and the handwriting clearly revealed the falsifications which they made in composing the History. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that the name “W. Richards” is written on the top of many of the pages, and Brigham Young claimed that Willard Richards helped in “revising” Joseph Smith’s History after his death (History of the Church, vol. 7, page 411).

We have more information on this matter in Falsification of Joseph Smith’s History.

The film of The Wasp and The Nauvoo Neighbor not only proves that the changes made in Joseph Smith’s History were deliberate falsifications, but it also seems to show that Joseph Smith did not finish the History of the Church and that it was actually written after his death. Many of the articles from the newspaper used in Joseph Smith’s History are introduced with a statement like the one found in the History of the Church, vol. 6, age 171: “I insert the following from the Neighbor, . . .” This, of course, is what we would expect to find if Joseph Smith actually wrote the History of the Church. In our study of the film, however, we found articles marked to be included in Joseph Smith’s History, but inserted in the History of the Church as if they were the very words of Joseph Smith himself.

Many cases could be cited to show that the Mormon Historians borrowed heavily form the newspaper published in Nauvoo when they composed Joseph Smith’s History. The film of The Wasp and The Nauvoo Neighbor has helped us solve a problem which we mentioned in our book, Changes in Joseph Smith’s History. On page 60 of that book we stated:

In the Millennial Star, vol. 19, page 630, Joseph Smith supposedly said: “. . . they left them in the care of the Marshall, without the original writ by which they were arrested, and by which only they could be retained, and returned back to Governor Carlin for further instructions, and Messrs. Smith and Rockwell went about their business.”

In the History of the Church, vol. 5, page 87, this has been changed to read: “. . . they left us in the care of the marshal, without the original writ by which we were arrested, and by which we could be retained, and returned to Governor Carlin for further instructions, and myself and Rockwell went about our business.”

It would appear that Joseph Smith did not write this part of the history, and that the Mormon Historians forgot the change these words when they first printed them. Later the “mistake” was corrected.

It is interesting to note that Joseph Smith’s prophecy that the “Saints” would “be driven to the Rocky Mountains” appears only two paragraphs before this. Could it be that this was not written by Joseph Smith, but by someone after the Mormons were driven to Utah? (Changes in Joseph Smith’s History, page 60)

Now that we have examined the film of the newspaper published at Nauvoo, we know the exact source for the portion of Joseph Smith’s History which deals with his arrest. This is an article published in The Wasp on August 13, 1842. Below is a comparison of the article from The Wasp and the material which was purported to have been written by Joseph Smith in his History of the Church. In The Wasp we read as follows:

. . . Joseph Smith was arrested . . . upon the affidavit of Ex-Governor Boggs, . . . Mr. Rockwell was arrested at the same time as principal. There was no evasion of the officers, . . . they left them in care of the Marshall, without the original writ by which they were arrested, and by which only they could be retained, and returned back to Gov. Carlin for further instructions,—and Messrs. Smith and Rockwell went about their business . . .

As to Mr. Smith, we have yet to learn by what rule of right he was arrested to be transported to Missouri . . . (The Wasp, August 13, 1842)

That this is the source for the entry in Joseph Smith’s History for August 8, 1842, is obvious to anyone who will make a careful comparison:

I was arrested . . . upon the affidavit of Ex-Governor Boggs, . . . Brother Rockwell was arrested at the same time as principal. There was no evasion of the officers, . . . they left us in the care of the Marshall, without the original writ by retained, and returned to Governor Carlin for further instructions, and myself and Rockwell went about our business.

I have yet to learn by what rule of right I was arrested to be transported to Missouri . . . (History of the Church, vol. 5, pages 86-87)

In our new publication Falsification of Joseph Smith’s History we stated:

The discovery of the source of the material concerning Joseph Smith’s arrest certainly casts a shadow of doubt upon the authorship of the prophecy that the Saints would “become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains” (History of the Church, vol. 5, page 85). The material concerning his arrest from The Wasp is inserted in the History of the Church only twelve words after Joseph Smith’s famous prophecy, and the top of the paragraph containing the prophecy may have been taken from another article on the same page of The Wasp. In this article we find the following: “We attended the installation of Rising Sun Lodge of Ancient York Masons, at Montrose, . . . The deputy Grand Master of Illinois, Gen. Adams, installed the officers” (The Wasp, August 13, 1842). Joseph Smith’s History contains almost the same words, although they are in a slightly different order. It states that he witnessed “the installation of the officers of the Rising Sun Lodge Ancient York Masons, at Montrose by General James Adams, Deputy Grand-Master of Illinois” (History of the Church, vol. 5, page 85).

It is also interesting to note that the same issue of The Wasp contains a poem which speaks of “the Rocky Mountains,” and a lengthy quotation from an unpublished work entitled “Life in the Rocky Mountains.” There is some evidence that Joseph Smith considered going west to build his kingdom, but
The reader will notice that the part concerning the Mormons becoming “a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains” has been crammed in at the bottom in a smaller handwriting, and this would seem to indicate that it was added sometime after the page had originally been written.

It is interesting to note that the Mormon writer Nephi Morris wrote a book of the “Prophecies of Joseph Smith” in 1920. The Church leaders allowed him to publish a photograph of the prophecy as printed in the Deseret News for November 7, 1855, but he apparently had no access to the original manuscript. He stated: “It was published in its regular order as the History of the Church appeared in that paper. We have not had access to the original record as kept by the Prophet, containing this remarkable prophecy” (Prophecies of Joseph Smith and Their Fulfillment, page 63).

Now that we have a photograph of the page containing this “prophecy,” we can see why it was suppressed for all these years.

There is another change in the History of the Church that seems to be related to this matter. In Joseph Smith’s History as it was first published in the Millennial Star, vol. 23, page 280, the following words were attributed to Joseph Smith: “The Lord has an established law in relation to the matter: there must be a particular spot for the salvation of our dead. I verily believe this will be the place; . . . .”

In the History of the Church, vol. 6, page 319, this has been changed to read: “The Lord has an established law in relation to the matter: there must be a particular spot for the salvation of our dead I verily believe there will be a place, . . . .”

The reason for this change is obvious; the Mormons were driven from Nauvoo in 1846, just two years after Joseph Smith had said “this will be the place.” It is reported that when Brigham Young looked over the valley where Salt Lake City now stands he stated: “This is the place.” A temple has been built at Salt Lake City, and work for the dead is performed in this temple. The change in the location of the headquarters of the Church seemed to make it necessary to change Joseph Smith’s statement.

**STARTLING ADMISSIONS**

The evidence concerning the changes in Joseph Smith’s History is already beginning to have an effect on some of the Mormon scholars. Davis Bitton cited a number of changes which we mentioned in our book Changes in Joseph Smith’s History, and made these interesting observations concerning the History of the Church:

> . . . the basic text itself has not been treated with proper respect. When we compare the DHC with the earlier published versions, fact, we discover that hundreds of changes have been made. These include deletions, additions, and simple changes of wording . . . for researchers in early Mormon history Rule Number One is “Do not rely on the DHC; never use a quotation from it without comparing the earlier versions.” (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Winter 1968, pages 31-32)

In his new book Nightfall At Nauvoo the Mormon writers Samuel W. Taylor made these comments concerning Joseph Smith’s History:

> This work, known as the “Documentary” history, is a rich vein that must be mined with care . . . this work has been “corrected” by many hands, making corroboration from original sources necessary. Jerald and Sandra Tanner, in their Changes in Joseph Smith’s History, detail “More than 62,000 words deleted” in the first six volumes. Even so, the Tanners overlooked some changes, a notable example being alteration of the conference minutes of October, 1843, concerning Sidney Rigdon. (Nightfall At Nauvoo, New York, 1971, page 383)

Just as we were preparing to print our new book Falsification of Joseph Smith’s History, Dean C. Jesse, a member of the staff at the LDS Church Historian’s Office, published an article in the Brigham Young University Studies which contains some very startling admissions. His work verifies our contention that Joseph Smith did not finish his History of the Church and that it was actually completed after his death. He states:

> At the time of Joseph Smith’s death, the narrative was written to August 5, 1838.

> By February 4, 1846, the day the books were packed for the journey west, the History had been completed to March 1, 1843, . . . . resumption of work on the History occurred on “Dec. 1, 1853 [when] Dr. Willard Richards wrote one line of History being sick at the time—and was never able to do any more.” . . .

> The remainder of Joseph Smith’s History of the Church from March 1, 1843, to August 8, 1844, was completed under the direction of George A. Smith . . . .

> The Joseph Smith History was finished in August 1856, seventeen years after it was begun. (Brigham Young University Studies, Summer 1971, pages 466, 469, 470 and 472)

Dean C. Jesse frankly admits that the manuscript was only completed to page 812 at the time of Joseph Smith’s death (Ibid., page 457). Since there were almost 2,200 pages, this would mean that over 60% of Joseph Smith’s History was not compiled during his lifetime!

As we had suspected, Willard Richards played a prominent part in making up this bogus history after Joseph Smith’s death in 1844. Dean C. Jesse stated: “Bullock became the chief scribe under Willard Richards when work resumed on the Joseph Smith History in 1845” (Ibid., page 456).

Dean C. Jesse cites a letter from the Mormon Historian George A. Smith which shows that he was still writing the last part of Joseph Smith’s History many years after Smith’s death:

> On the 10th April 1854, I commenced to perform the duties of Historian by taking up the History of Joseph Smith where Dr. Willard Richards had left it . . . . I had to revise and compare two years of back history which he had compiled, filling up numerous spaces which had been marked as omissions on memoranda by Dr. Richards. . . . The severe application of thought to the principles of the History, the exercise of memory &c., have caused me to suffer much from a nervous headache or inflammation of the brain; and my application of mind being in exercise both day and night, deprived me of a great portion of necessary sleep. (Letter from George A. Smith to Woodruff, April 21, 1856, as cited in BYU Studies, Summer 1971, pages 470-472)

This letter certainly provides devastating evidence against the authenticity of “Joseph Smith’s History.” Take, for instance, the “prophecy” concerning the Rocky Mountains. It could have been added when George A. Smith was tampering with this portion of the History in Utah in 1854. At any rate, Dean C. Jesse’s study proves that this prophecy could not have been written in “Joseph Smith’s Manuscript History” until at least a year after Joseph Smith’s death. He shows that page 1362 of the Manuscript History— the page containing the prophecy—was not even written until July 4, 1845! Thus, even if the small handwriting was added on the same day, it could not have been written during Joseph Smith’s lifetime. Unless the Mormon leaders can establish that the entry in the Manuscript History was taken from another source written during Joseph Smith’s lifetime, the “prophecy” as found in the History of the Church becomes of no historical value.

We must commend Dean C. Jesse, of the Church Historians Office, for his article on Joseph Smith’s History. It is certainly one of the most honest and scholarly articles that has ever appeared in a Mormon publication. The Mormon leaders must now face the serious implications of this whole matter. Less than 40% of the history attributed to Joseph Smith was written during his lifetime, and this portion has had serious changes made in it. The remaining portion—more than 60%—was not even compiled until after Smith’s death. Since it was written by men who believed in falsification and deceit, it cannot be trusted as a reliable history of Joseph Smith.

Our new book Falsification of Joseph Smith’s History contains more information and photographs suppressed for over a hundred years (see description on page 1 of this paper).
Reign of the Mormon Kings

We are happy to announce that we have now completed the second volume of *The Mormon Kingdom*. In the first volume of this work (temporarily out of print) we showed that Joseph Smith formed a secret organization known as the “Council of Fifty” and “suffered himself to be ordained king” when he lived in Nauvoo, Illinois. When Fawn Brodie pointed this out in her book *No Man Knows My History*, Dr. Hugh Nibley claimed that there was not enough evidence to support such a claim (see *No Ma'am That's Not History*, page 40). In our book *The Mormon Kingdom*, vol. 2, we show that Mormon scholars are now accepting the fact that Joseph Smith was ordained king. The Mormon writer Klaus J. Hansen, for instance, frankly admitted that “Joseph Smith did start a political kingdom of God and a Council of Fifty; he was made king over that organization; . . .” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1966, page 104). Kenneth Godfrey, Director of the LDS Institute at Stanford University, also admits that Joseph Smith was “ordained ‘King over the Immediate House of Israel’ by the Council of Fifty” (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Winter, 1968, pages 212-213). Richard D. Poll, Professor of History and Political Science at Brigham Young University, also seems willing to concede that Smith was ordained king:

That neither the Prophet nor the Council was totally preoccupied with the political race is clear from the investigations of Texas and other possible new homes for the Saints which were in progress, and also from the intriguing and rather convincingly documented report that the Prophet was ordained “King on Earth” in the Council during this period. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Autumn 1968, page 19, n. 11)

The practice of ordaining the President of the Mormon Church as “King on Earth” did not cease with the death of Smith. The Mormon writer Klaus J. Hansen states: “. . . the prophet apparently had himself ordained as ‘King on Earth.’ Brigham Young, upon his arrival in the Salt Lake Valley, likewise reportedly had this ceremony performed in the Council of Fifty” (*Quest for Empire*, page 66). On page 200, footnote 74, of the same book, Hansen gives this information:

Former Bishop Andrew Cahoon, whose father Reynolds Cahoon had been a member of the Council of Fifty, testified in 1889: “The King of that Kingdom that was set up on the earth was the head of the Church Brigham Young proclaimed himself King here in Salt Lake Valley before there was a house built, in 1847.”

The journal of the Mormon Apostle Abraham H. Cannon has recently come to light. It shows that after Brigham Young’s death there was a discussion in the Council of Fifty as to whether John Taylor, the third President of the Church, should be ordained king:

Father [George Q. Cannon, a member of the First Presidency] said Moses Thatcher’s drawing away from his brethren commenced as far as his knowledge concerning it went, at a time when the Council of Fifty met in the old City Hall, and Moses opposed the proposition to anoint John Taylor as Prophet, Priest and king, and Moses’ opposition prevailed at that time. Moses has constantly opposed the increase of power in the hands of the President of the Church. (“Daily Journal of Abraham H. Cannon,” December 2, 1895, page 198, original at Brigham Young University Library)

The Apostle Cannon’s Journal also shows that the Council of Fifty was still in existence in 1884:


It is interesting to note that the “Minutes of the Council of Fifty,” for 1880 list Joseph F. Smith as a member (*Quest for Empire*, page 226). Joseph F. Smith became the sixth President of the Mormon Church, and his son, Joseph Fielding Smith, recently became the tenth President.

In *The Mormon Kingdom*, vol. 2, we have a great deal of information concerning the Council of 50 and how it controlled early Utah. We also deal with such subjects as: Mormonism and money, how Church leaders used Church funds for private gain, Joseph F. Smith’s testimony on church businesses, the involvement of the Church in business today, how the Apostles condemn a paid ministry yet receive large salaries, politics in early Utah, the Law Observance and Enforcement Committee in the Church, the Mountain Meadows Massacre, the Utah War, the practice of Blood Atonement in Utah, Brigham Young’s indictment for murder, robbing the Gentiles, counterfeiting, and many other important subjects.

*The Mormon Kingdom*, vol. 2, is now available in plastic binding for $2.95. The quantity prices are: 2 for $4.95 – 5 for $9.95 – 10 for $17.70. (NOTE—SEE SPECIAL OFFER ON PAGE 1 OF THIS PAPER.)
Godhood and start their own world. However, the Bible states:

...God himself, who sits enthroned in yonder heavens, is a man like unto one of yourselves, that is the great secret...I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined that God was God from all eternity...God himself; the Father of us all dwelt on an earth the same as Jesus Christ himself did, ... You have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves; to be kings and priests of God, the same as all Gods have done; by going from a small degree to another, from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, ... (Times and Seasons, vol. 5, pages 613-614)

Brigham Young, the second president of the Mormon Church, taught:

He is our Father—the Father of our spirits, and was once a man in mortal flesh as we are, and is now an exalted being...God has once been a finite being;... (Journal of Discourses, vol. 7 page 333)

...But I expect, if I am faithful with yourselves, that I shall see the time with yourselves that we shall know how to prepare to organize an earth like this—know how to people that earth, how to redeem it, how to sanctify it, and how to glorify it, with those who live upon it. ... Consequently every earth has its redeemer, and every earth has its tempter;... (Ibid., vol. 14, page 71)

The Mormon Church teaches that God is married and that there is a Heavenly Mother as well as a Heavenly Father. Milton R. Hunter writes:

The stupendous truth of the existence of a Heavenly Mother, as well as a Heavenly Father, became established facts in Mormon theology. ... Man, as a spirit, was begotten and born of Heavenly Parents, and reared to maturity in the eternal mansions of the Father prior to coming upon the earth in a temporal body... (The Gospel Through the Ages, pages 98-99)

Writing in 1853, the Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt tried to calculate the number of years it took God and His Wife to give birth to all the spirits that were to come to this earth:

...As soon as each God has begotten many millions of male and female spirits, ... he, in connection with his sons, organizes a new world, after a similar order to the one which we now inhabit, where he sends both the male and female spirits to inherit tabernacles of flesh and bones. ... The inhabitants of each world are required to reverence, adore, and worship their own personal father who dwells in the Heaven which they formerly inhabited ... The number of the sons and daughters of God, born in Heaven before this earth was formed, is not known to us. ... Seventy thousand million, therefore, is a rough approximation to the number of inhabitants which the Lord destined to dwell in the flesh on this earth... Add to seventy thousand million, the third part which fell, namely, thirty-five thousand million, and the sum amounts to one hundred and five thousand million, which was the approximate number of the sons and daughters of God in Heaven before the rebellion which broke out among them.

If we admit that one personage was the Father of all this great family, and that they were all born of the same Mother, the period of time intervening between the birth of the oldest and the youngest spirit must have been immense. If we suppose, as an average, that only one year intervened between each birth, then it would have required, over one hundred thousand million of years from the same Mother to have given birth to this vast family. (The Seer, pages 37-38)

The Mormon Church teaches that those who are married in a Mormon temple and obey the principles of the Mormon faith may eventually attain Godhood and start their own world. However, the Bible states:

...I am he: before me there was no God formed neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no savior. (Isaiah 43:10-11)

God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent. ... (Numbers 25:19)

For I am the Lord, I change not; (Malachi 3:6)

The Bible and Mormon Doctrine also deals with such subjects as: do we need modern day revelation, what is the gospel, is salvation by grace or works, what is the true church, did we pre-exist, how many kingdoms in heaven, do we need temple work, what priesthood do we need, and the nature of God.

One church has already purchased 150 copies. Their treasurer wrote:

The booklet on "The Bible and Mormon Doctrine" is a needed tool. Praise the Lord for your fine work. How I wish your materials would make the national best sellers list.

The Bible and Mormon Doctrine by Sandra Tanner. A 33-page booklet. Price: 75¢ – 3 for $2.00 – 5 for $3.00 – 10 for $4.50.

SAVE —

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MORMONISM — SHADOW or REALITY?

In 1966 Wallace Turner, a correspondent for the *New York Times*, wrote the following:

Dr. Thomas F. O’Dea, a sociologist at Columbia University, who wrote a major study called *The Mormons* when he taught at the University of Utah, insists that the church is in the midst of a crisis . . . in keeping with Dr. O’Dea’s theory of the sleeping crisis, one of the most influential apostates of the 1960s has been a young machinist, who with his wife, left the church and now makes a living printing books and documents which contradict official Mormon pronouncements.

His name is Jerald Tanner. His wife, Sandra, is a great-great-granddaughter of Brigham Young . . . .

The Tanners operate as the Modern Microfilm Company. They specialize in copying books and documents that are out of print, or have been suppressed in one way or another, but that bear on the history and doctrine of the LDS church. When I talked with them, they had thirty-one titles for sale, the best seller was *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* prepared by them jointly. They had sold about 3000 copies . . . . The Tanners’ masterwork, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* is an intricate weaving of arguments from many sources against the fundamental precepts of the Saints’ doctrine—that Joseph Smith, Jr., was a prophet of God . . . .

With the Tanners the church today finds itself faced by its own techniques of argument and its own words turned back against it to create doubts and uneasiness among some members. The campaign is effective, too, and of this there is no doubt. (*The Mormon Establishment*, by Wallace Turner, Boston, 1966, pages 153-156, 159, 160 and 162)

Since printing the book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* in 1964, many important things have happened. By far the most important was the rediscovery of the papyri from which Joseph Smith “translated” the Book of Abraham, for these papyri prove that the Book of Abraham is the work of Joseph Smith’s own imagination. Another important discovery was that the Mormon Church had been suppressing important accounts of Joseph Smith’s First Vision which differ from the account printed in the *Pearl of Great Price*. Wesley P. Walters discovered an original document which proves beyond all doubt that Joseph Smith was a “glass looker” and that he was arrested, tried and found guilty by a justice of the peace in Bainbridge, New York, in 1826. Wesley P. Walters has also discovered that there was no revival in Palmyra, and we are baptizing these people into the Church. . . .

Many other important discoveries have also been made since we published *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* in 1964. These discoveries, which have come to light one right after another, have taken a great deal of our time. In 1967 we began printing our work, *The Case Against Mormonism*. This was a three-volume work and dealt with many of the new discoveries. We have also completed a two-volume work entitled *The Mormon Kingdom*. Besides this we have printed a number of other books concerning Mormonism. The publication of these new books has kept us very busy.

After printing thousands of copies of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* the metal plates began to break down. We hoped to get out an enlarged edition of this book, but we were unable to find the time. Consequently, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* went out of print for a number of years. We are now happy to announce, however, that we have found the time to bring out a new enlarged and revised edition of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* This is by far our most important work, for we have taken the best material out of the old edition and combined it with the most important material from the publications we have printed since 1964. In addition we have added a great deal of new material that has never before appeared in print. Condensing all this material into one volume has been a tremendous task, but we feel that our efforts will be rewarded by the fact that more people will have access to the material. This new edition actually contains more than twice as much material as the old edition.

Photograph of Jerald and Sandra Tanner and their children—April, Dennis and Teresa

Just as we were preparing to print the new edition of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* Michael Marquardt called our attention to some new and important information concerning the Mormon doctrines about the Negro and polygamy. Fortunately, we were able to add this new information in Appendix B.

**IMPORTANT DOCUMENT ON NEGROES**

A very important document concerning the anti-Negro doctrine of the Mormon Church was found in the George Albert Smith Papers at the University of Utah Library. George Albert Smith served as President of the Mormon Church from 1945 to 1951. His private papers are preserved at the University of Utah Library. Among this collection is a document listed as, “Excerpts From the Weekly Council Meetings of the Quorum of the Church, 1849-1940.” Since this document throws a great deal of light on the development of the anti-Negro doctrine, we printed it in its entirety in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 582-585. The first Council Meeting is dated January 25, 1940. In the report of this Council Meeting we find the following about the Negro:

President Clark said at his request the clerk of the Council had copied from the old records of the Council discussions that have been had in the past on this subject. He said that he was positive that it was impossible with reference to the Brazilians to tell those who have Negro blood and those who have not, and we are baptizing these people into the Church. . . .

President Clark suggested that this matter be referred to the Twelve who might appoint a sub-committee to go into the matter with great care and make some ruling or reaffirm whatever ruling has been made on this question in the past as to *whether or not one drop of negro blood deprives a man of the right to receive the priesthood.* ("Excerpts From the Weekly Council Meetings of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, . . . “ *as printed in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 582.)

As we examine these discussions from the “old records of the Council” it is plain to see that the Mormon doctrine forbidding Negroes the Priesthood or access to the temple rites grew out of rumor and prejudice and did not come by revelation as the Mormon leaders have always claimed.

Joseph F. Smith, the sixth “Prophet, Seer and Revelator” of the Mormon Church, seemed to have no revelation on this subject. The following is taken from a Council Meeting held January 2, 1902:

President Smith, replying to this, referred to the doctrine taught by President Young which . . . he believed in himself, to the effect that the children of Gentile parents, in whose veins may exist a single drop of the blood of Ephraim, might be all pure-blooded Gentiles excepting one, and that one might extract all the blood of Ephraim from his parents’ veins, and be actually a full-blooded Ephraimithe. He also referred to the case of a man named Billingsby, whose ancestor away back married an Indian woman, and whose descendants in every branch of his family were pure whites, with one exception, and that
exception was one pure blooded Indian in every branch of the family . . . the same had been found to be the case with stockmen engaged in the improvement of breeds. Assuming therefore this doctrine to be sound, while the children of a man in whose veins may exist a single drop of negro blood, might be entirely white, yet one of his descendants might turn out to be a pronounced negro. And the question in President Smith's mind was, when shall we get light enough to determine each case of its merits? He gave it as his opinion that in all cases where the blood of Cain showed itself, however slight, the line should be drawn there; but where children of tainted parents were found to be pure Ephraimites, they might be admitted to the temple. This was only an opinion, however, the subject would no doubt be considered later. ("Extracts" as printed in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality, pages 583-584)

On August 26, 1908, President Joseph F. Smith told that a Negro woman was sealed as a servant to Joseph Smith:

The same efforts he said had been made by Aunt Jane to receive her endowments and be sealed to her husband and have her children sealed to their parents and her appeal was made to all the Presidents from President Young down to the present First Presidency. But President Cannon conceived the idea that, under the circumstances, it would be proper to permit her to go to the temple to be adopted to the Prophet Joseph Smith as his servant and this was done. This seemed to ease her mind for a little while but did not satisfy her, and she still pleaded for her endowments.

The idea that this Negro woman should be sealed as a servant apparently stems from the teaching that slavery was a “divine institution.” Brigham Young, the second President of the Mormon Church, once stated that the Civil War could not free the slaves:

Ham will continue to be servant of servants, as the Lord decreed, until the curse is removed. Will the present struggle free the slave? No; . . . for Ham must be the servant of servants until the curse is removed. Can you destroy the decrees of the Almighty? You cannot. (Millennial Star, vol. 25, page 787; also published in Journal of Discourses, vol. 10, page 250)

The idea that the Negro is only worthy of the position of a servant has deep roots in Mormon theology. Mark E. Petersen, who is now serving as an Apostle in the Church, said that if a “ Negro is faithful all his days, he can and will enter the celestial kingdom. He will go there as a servant, but he will get celestial glory” (Race Problems—As They Affect the Church, address by Mark E. Petersen at the Convention of Teachers of Religion on the College Level, Brigham Young University, August 27, 1954).

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 266, we quote Brigham Young as saying:

Shall I tell you the law of God in regard to the African race? If the white man who belongs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the penalty, under the law of God, is death on the spot. This will always be so. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 10, page 110)

In the “Excerpts From the Weekly Council Meetings of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles,” Brigham Young’s statement is cited under the date of March 8, 1863. In a Council Meeting held August 22, 1895, we read the following:

President Cannon remarked that the Prophet Joseph taught this doctrine: That the seed of Cain could not receive the Priesthood nor act in any of the offices of the priesthood until the seed of Abel should come forward and take precedence over Cain’s offspring; and that any white man who mingled his seed with that of Cain should be killed, and thus prevent any of the seed of Cain’s coming into possession of the priesthood.

In a report of a Council Meeting held December 15, 1897, we find the following:

A letter . . . was read, . . . enclosing a letter from Elder S. P. Oldham, who asked Brother Lyman the following questions, and Brother Lyman forwarded it to be answered by the First Presidency: “Can a man (white) be permitted to receive the priesthood, who has a wife who is either black or is tainted with negro blood?”

President Cannon said he had understood President Taylor to say that a man who had the priesthood who would marry a woman of the accursed seed, that if the law of the Lord were administered upon him . . . he would be killed, and his offspring, for the reason that the Lord had determined that the seed of Cain should not receive the priesthood in the flesh; and that this was the penalty put upon Cain, because if he had received the priesthood the seed of the murderer would get ahead of the seed of Abel who was murdered. The point, President Cannon said, which President Taylor sought to make was that if a white man who had received the priesthood should have children by a negro woman, he could go back and act for his dead ancestors on his wife’s side, and he therefore thought it would be improper for a man, as for instance the case referred to, to receive the priesthood for the reasons assigned as being those given by President Taylor.

While there was no formal action taken, this seemed to be the mind of the Council, President Snow adding that the way might be opened for the man referred to in the case under consideration to get a divorce from his present wife and marry a white woman, and he would then be entitled to the priesthood. ("Extracts" as printed in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 582)

This document certainly reveals the state of confusion that the Mormon leaders found themselves in as they tried to formulate their anti-Negro doctrine. It is plain to see that they did not know where to draw the line as to who could be ordained to the Priesthood. The Apostle John Henry Smith felt that “persons in whose veins the white blood predominated should not be barred from the temple.” Joseph F. Smith, the sixth President of the Church, gave it as his opinion that “in all cases where the blood of Cain showed itself, however slight, the line should be drawn there; but where children of tainted parents were found to be pure Ephraimites, they might be admitted to the temple.” While Joseph F. Smith was still serving as President of the Church, the following decision was reached: “Number 3—The descendants of Ham may receive baptism and confirmation but no one known to have in his veins negro blood, (it matters not how remote a degree) can either have the Priesthood in any degree or the blessings of the Temple of God; no matter how otherwise worthy he may be” (“Extracts,” as printed in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 584).

This is the policy that the Mormon leaders claim they follow today. In our new edition of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? we point out that there have been a number of cases where people with Negro blood have been ordained to the Priesthood. For instance, the Negro blood in Elijah Abel and his descendants did not prevent them from holding the Priesthood. Although there is some false information concerning Elijah Abel in the “Excerpts From the Weekly Council Meeting of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles,” these records show that on August 22, 1895:

President Joseph F. Smith told of Brother Abel having been ordained a Seventy and afterwards a High Priest at Kirtland under the direction of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? we pointed out that some of Elijah Abel’s children married into the white race and that their descendants hold the Priesthood and do missionary work for the Mormon Church today. Although the Mormon leaders are aware of this, no attempt has been made to remove these special privileges from Elijah Abel’s descendants. The hypocrisy of this whole matter of giving special privileges was made plain in a letter from Joseph E. Taylor to John Taylor, the third President of the Church:

President J. Taylor Sept. 5th, 1885

Dear Brother

Now comes a case of a young girl residing in the Eighteenth Ward of the City by the name of Laura Berry whose mother was a white woman but whose father was a very light mulatto. It appears she has fallen in love with brother Barons Son and it is reciprocated.

But the question of jeopardizing his future by such an alliance has caused a halt. She now desires to press her claim to privileges that others who are tainted with that blood have received. For example, the Meads family in the Eleventh Ward Mrs. Jones Elder Sister; (the former now resides in Logan) I am cognizant of all these having received their endowments here.

Brother Meads is a white man he married his wife many years ago; she was a quadroon and died some three years ago their children (the oldest a girl, are married to a white man) are all very dark.

The question I desire to ask is: Can you give this girl any privileges of a like character? The girl is very pretty and quite white and would not be suspected as having tainted blood in her veins unless her parentage was known. Again I subscribe myself your brother in the Faith. (Letter from Joseph E. Taylor to President John Taylor, Sept. 5, 1885, Church Historical Department, John Taylor Letter File, b1346, Box 20, file #3, typed copy)
GENESIS GROUP

Because of the anti-Negro doctrine there are not many blacks in the Mormon Church, and there is reason to believe that some of the blacks within the Church are almost at the point of rebellion. Recently a group was organized within the Church which is known as the “Genesis Group.”

H. Michael Marquardt has interviewed a member of this group and has obtained some important information. In his notes of an interview held November 7, 1971, we find the following concerning the Genesis Group:

Set up for Black missionary work. . . . The Group hopes to reinitiate Black members in the Salt Lake Area. **Main objective is to get the Priesthood** and then do missionary work among the Black both in America and throughout the world . . . June 24, 1971 was the first time that the First Presidency and Twelve have prayed in the Temple about whether Black members of the Church should hold the Priesthood. The First Presidency and Twelve were not in agreement on the question. But they did agree that the Genesis Group should be formed.

An article concerning the Genesis Group which appeared in the Salt Lake Tribune caused some confusion among members of the Church. In this article we find these statements:

A **stake** for black members of the Church . . . has been formed in Salt Lake City. The organization, called Genesis Group, is part of the auxiliary program of the Liberty Stake.

Ruffin Bridgetforth Jr., president of the group, said the stake was in total concordance with the Mormon Church. Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson and Boyd K. Packer, members of the Council of Twelve Apostles, set the stake apart Oct. 19. (Salt Lake Tribune, October 24, 1971)

This article caused confusion because it referred to the group as a “stake.” Now, if the group were actually a “stake” this would mean that the blacks had received the Priesthood, and that Ruffin Bridgetforth is a stake president—a stake president, of course, has to hold the Priesthood.

That the Church did **not** give the Priesthood to the blacks is very plain from an article which appeared in the Church Section of the Deseret News—the Mormon newspaper. This article does not use the word “stake” or even the word “branch” when referring to the Genesis Group:

An **organization** for black members of the Church, called the Genesis Group, was formed as part of the auxiliary program of Liberty Stake in Salt Lake City. Designed to serve all black members in the Salt Lake Valley, the **group** will meet and conduct Relief Society, Primary and MIA for the benefit and enjoyment of their members, but will attend their respective Sunday School and sacrament meetings in their home wards, where they will retain their membership.

The **group** will meet in the Third Ward facility at 119 E. 7th South. A **group presidency** was called, sustained and set apart as follows: President Ruffin Bridgetforth, Darius Gray, first counselor, and Eugene Orr, second counselor . . . .

The group will work with the auxiliaries of Liberty Stake. Liberty Stake also has the Danish, Norwegian, Chinese and Japanese branches as part of the stake. (Deseret News, October 23, 1971)

The reader will notice that the Genesis Group is never referred to in this article as a “stake.” It is referred to only as a “part of the auxiliary program of Liberty Stake.” While the article speaks of the “Danish, Norwegian, Chinese and Japanese branches,” the word “branch” is not used with regard to the Genesis Group. It is only a “group.” It has a “group presidency,” not a Stake Presidency nor even a Branch Presidency. This “group presidency” has no Priesthood authority and can only preside over meetings for the women and young people. They must return to their home wards for “their respective Sunday School and sacrament meetings.” The reason that the black people have to return to their own wards for the meetings on Sunday is very clear: these meetings require someone who has the Priesthood. The sacrament is passed twice on Sunday, and black people can neither bless nor pass it. Therefore, they have to return to their “home wards” on Sunday so that the white boys can serve them the sacrament!

At first glance, it would appear that the Genesis Group is moving in the wrong direction—i.e., they seem to be moving toward segregation. As we examine the matter more closely, however, we see that segregation could actually be a victory for the black people. The Mormon Church cannot allow blacks to become completely segregated because this would mean they would have to give them the Priesthood. Other churches which discriminate against blacks at least allow them to have their own congregations and perform their own ordinances. The Mormon leaders, however, say that the ordinances of the Mormon Church cannot be performed without their Priesthood, and since blacks cannot have the Priesthood they cannot even achieve segregation! If they could perform ordinances for their own people, it would actually be a step toward equality. It is reported that the Genesis Group is friendly toward white people and that they are welcomed into the services. From all this we conclude that the Genesis Group really wants Priesthood, and that they are only using segregation as a means of obtaining it.

On July 2, 1972, Joseph Fielding Smith, the tenth President of the Mormon Church, had a heart attack and died. Although President Smith was responsible for much of the anti-Negro feelings in the Mormon Church, there is no evidence that there will be a change in policy. On July 8, 1972, the Salt Lake Tribune, carried an article which contained this information:

Harold B. Lee was chosen Friday as president of the Church . . .

President Lee was asked if any change is contemplated in spiritual interpretations of the church which bars blacks from holding the priesthood.

“To one who doesn’t believe in revelation, as we do, there can be no adequate explanation,” he responded. “We stand by and wait until the Lord speaks.” (Salt Lake Tribune, July 8, 1972)

For more information concerning the origin and development of the anti-Negro doctrine in the Mormon Church, see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 262-293.

SECRET WIVES AND CONCUBINES

On July 12, 1843, the Mormon Prophet Joseph Smith dictated the revelation which sanctioned the practice of plural marriage. This revelation is still printed in the Doctrine and Covenants—one of the four standard works of the Mormon Church. It appears as Section 132. In verse 52, Joseph Smith’s wife is instructed to receive the other women:

And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith, **receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph,** and who are virtuous and pure before me; and those who are not pure, and have said they were pure, shall be destroyed, saith the Lord God.

History shows that Emma Smith had a difficult time receiving this commandment. Lucy W. Kimball made this statement:

. . . the Prophet Joseph and his wife Emma offered us a home in their family, . . . I was married to Joseph Smith on the 4th of March 1843, . . . My sister Eliza was also married to Joseph a few days later. This was done without the knowledge of Emma Smith. Two months afterward she consented to give her husband two wives, providing he would give her the privilege of choosing them. She accordingly chose my sister Eliza and myself, and to save family trouble brother Joseph thought it best to have another ceremony performed. Accordingly on the 11th of May, 1843, we were sealed to Joseph Smith a second time, in Emma’s presence, . . . From that very hour, however, Emma was our bitter enemy, . . . we were obligated to leave the house and find another home. (Historical Record, page 240)

Plural marriage led to some very serious quarrels between Joseph and Emma Smith. For additional information on this subject see our new edition of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 210-211.

No one knows for sure how many wives Joseph Smith had. The Assistant Church Historian Andrew Jenson listed 27 women who were married to him (see Historical Record, pages 233-234). The Mormon writer John J. Stewart, however, states that Joseph Smith may have married 36 or even 48 wives: “. . . he married many other women, perhaps three or four dozen or more, . . .” (B Brigham Young and His Wives, page 31). Stanley S. Ivins stated that the number of Joseph Smith’s wives “can only be guessed at but it might have gone as high as sixty or more” (Western Humanities Review, vol. 10, pages 232-233).

After Joseph Smith’s death the Mormon leaders sealed over 200 women to him to be his wives in eternity.

In an article published in Western Humanities Review, vol. 10, pages 232-233, Stanley S. Ivins stated that “Brigham Young is usually credited with only twenty-seven wives, but he was sealed to more than twice that many living women, and to at least 150 more who had died.” The Mormon writer John J. Stewart lists the names of 52 women who were sealed to Brigham Young, and then he makes this statement: “There were perhaps one or two
The Mormon leaders became obsessed with building up their own kingdoms. According to Stanley S. Ivin, the Endowment House Records reveal that on November 22, 1870, the Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt had himself sealed to 101 dead women. On November 29, 1870, he was sealed to 109 dead women. The same day (November 29, 1870) 91 dead women were sealed to his brother, Parley P. Pratt, who had died in 1857. Mr. Ivin found that the St. George Temple Records show that Wilford Woodruff—who later became the fourth President of the Mormon Church—was sealed to 189 dead women in a period of slightly over two years (January 29, 1879, to March 14, 1881). Moses Franklin Farnsworth was sealed to 345 dead women in a two year period.

The Apostle Abraham H. Cannon recorded this interesting item in his diary in 1894:

Thursday, April 5th, 1894 . . . I met with the Quorum and Presidency in the temple . . . President Woodruff then spoke . . . In searching out my genealogy I found about four hundred of my female kindred who were never married. I asked Pres. Young what I should do with them. He said for me to have them sealed to me unless there were more that [than?] 999 of them. The doctrine startled me, but I had it done . . . (“Daily Journal of Abraham H. Cannon,” April 5, 1894, vol. 18, pages 66-67)

Heber C. Kimball, a member of the First Presidency under Brigham Young, believed that in the resurrection he would be able to have “thousands” of wives (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?, pages 212-213). At any rate, the Mormon leaders found themselves in serious trouble with the U.S. Government because of the practice of polygamy. They did every thing in their power to escape the federal officials. Wilford Woodruff, who became the fourth President of the Mormon Church, had an armed guard to protect him. In a letter written in 1887, Wilford Woodruff stated:

I have a large stout man who goes with me every -------[where?] night and day carried 2 pistols & a double barrel shot gun and says he will shoot the marshals if they come to take me (Don’t tell anybody this) so I am ----well garded . . . (Letter from Wilford Woodruff to Miss Nellie Atkin, dated September 3, 1887, microfilm copy of the original)

Under the dates of October 17 and 18, 1890, the Apostle Abraham H. Cannon recorded the following in his journal:

Uncle David came in about noon and told me that he had a conversation with Lindsey Sprague, a deputy marshal, who told him that there were papers out for me and he learned that it was indeed a fact that a warrant was issued and in Doyle’s hands for my arrest. . . . Saturday, Oct. 18th, 1890 . . . Bro. Wilcken came and informed me that he had bought Doyle off, and had got his promise that I should not be molested, nor should any other person without sufficient notice being given for them to escape, and to get witnesses out of the way. He gave Bro. Wilcken the names of some 51 persons whose arrest he intended to try and effect on a trip he and another deputy intended to undertake today, through Utah and Emery counties.

A messenger was therefore despatched to give these people warning. Thus with a little money a channel of communication is kept open between the government offices and the suffering and persecuted Church members. (“Daily Journal of Abraham H. Cannon,” October 17 and 18, 1890)

Before the year 1890 the Mormon leaders were declaring that plural marriage was essential for “man’s highest exaltation in the life to come,” and that the Church never could give up this principle (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?, pages 228-234).

Before Wilford Woodruff became President of the Mormon Church he stated that the church could not give up polygamy (Journal of Discourses, vol. 13, page 166). After he became President he even claimed to receive a revelation that he should not yield to the pressure of the government. Under the date of December 19, 1889, the Apostle Abraham H. Cannon recorded the following in his journal:

During our meeting a revelation was read which Pres. Woodruff received Sunday evening, Nov. 24th. Propositions had been made for the Church to make some concessions to the Courts in regard to its principles. Both of Pres. Woodruff’s counselors refused to advise him as to the course he should pursue, and he therefore laid the matter before the Lord. The answer came quick and strong. The word of the Lord was for us not to yield one particle of that which he had revealed and established. He had done and would continue to care for his work and those of the Saints who were faithful, and we need have no fear of our enemies when we were in the line of our duty. We are promised redemption and deliverance if we will trust in God and not in the arm of flesh . . . The whole revelation was filled with words of the greatest encouragement and comfort, and my heart was filled with joy and peace during the entire reading. It sets all doubts at rest concerning the course to pursue. (“Daily Journal of Abraham H. Cannon,” December 29, 1889)

Before a year had passed Wilford Woodruff had issued the Manifesto which was supposed to end the practice of plural marriage in the Church. Because of the fact that Woodruff had previously taught that polygamy could not be discontinued and had even claimed to receive revelation to that effect, the other leaders of the Mormon Church were confused by his Manifesto. That there was division among the highest leaders of the Mormon Church at the time the Manifesto was issued is evident from the journal of the Apostle Abraham H. Cannon (see quotations in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 234). Although the leaders of the Mormon Church promised to obey the laws of the land, many of them broke their promises. Very few people, however, realized to what extend they had deviated from their word until they were called on to testify in the “Proceedings Before the Committee on Privileges and Elections of the United State Senate in the Matter of the Protests Against the Right of Hon. Reed Smoot, a Senator From the State of Utah, to Hold His Seat.” Joseph F. Smith, the sixth President of the Mormon Church, admitted that he had continued to practice unlawful cohabitation after the Manifesto:

Senator Overman. Is there not a revelation that you shall abide by the laws of the State and of the land?
Mr. Smith. Yes, sir.
Senator Overman. If that is a revelation, are you not violating the laws of God?
Mr. Smith. I have admitted that, Mr. Senator, a great many times here. (Reed Smoot Case, vol. 1, page 312)

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? we present a great deal of information which proves that the Mormon leaders were not only engaging in unlawful cohabitation after the Manifesto, but that they were actually performing new plural marriages. Many of these marriages were performed in Mexico. On pages 237-238 we show that Joseph F. Smith married a plural wife to the Apostle Abraham H. Cannon off the coast of California some six years after the Manifesto was issued. Mrs. Wilhelmina C. Ellis, who had been a plural wife of the Mormon Apostle Abraham H. Cannon, gave this testimony:

Mrs. Ellis. He told me to pack his grip or his satchel and told me he was going on a trip. When did he marry Lillian Hamlin?
Mr. Tayler. Of what year?
Mrs. Ellis. After June 12 and before July 2.
Mr. Tayler. Did you not know they were married on the high sea?
Mrs. Ellis. Yes, sir.
Mr. Tayler. You were a plural wife?
Mrs. Ellis. Nineteen.
Mr. Tayler. How old were you when you married Abraham Cannon?
Mr. Smith. Nineteen.
Mrs. Ellis. You were a plural wife?
Mr. Smith. Yes, sir.
Mrs. Ellis. When did he marry Lillian Hamlin?
Mr. Smith. After June 12 and before July 2.
Mr. Tayler. Of what year?
Mrs. Ellis. 1896.
Mr. Tayler. He was at that time an Apostle?
Mrs. Ellis. Yes, sir.
Mr. Tayler. Did he say he was going away that day, or that evening, to California?
Mrs. Ellis. He told me to pack his grip or his satchel and told me he was going to this trip.
Mr. Tayler. What did he say about Miss Hamlin?
Mrs. Ellis. Of course I understood, in fact he said she was going with him and President Smith.
Mr. Tayler. And President Smith?
Mrs. Ellis. Yes, sir.
Mr. Tayler. And that they were going to be married?
Mrs. Ellis. Yes, sir.
Mr. Tayler. Did you not know they were married on the high sea?
Mrs. Ellis. Only from reports.
Mr. Tayler. That is not an essential part of the inquiry. [To the witness.] I was an inference from the fact that your husband said he was going to marry
her, and went away to California for that purpose, and that Joseph F. Smith went along with them. From that you inferred that Joseph F. Smith had married them?

Mrs. Ellis. Yes, sir. (Reed Smoot Case, Vol. 2, pages 141-144)

President Smith denied that he performed the marriage ceremony, but he acknowledged that he did go on a trip with Lillian Hamlin and the Apostle Cannon at the very time when the marriage was supposed to have taken place:

Mr. Smith. . . . The first time I ever saw her [Lillian Hamlin], . . . was some time in June—I do not remember the date—1896. I was at that time president of the Sterling Mining and Milling Company . . . . I was asked by the board of directors to accompany Abraham H. Cannon to Los Angeles, . . . I accompanied Abraham H. Cannon and his wife on that trip, and had one of my wives with me on that trip.

Mr. Tayler. When did you first learn that Lillian Hamlin was his wife?

Mr. Smith. The first that I suspected anything of the kind was on that trip, because I never knew the lady before. (The Reed Smoot Case, vol. 1, page 111)

Mr. Tayler. Did you have any talk on that journey . . . as to when they were married?

Mr. Smith. No, sir.

Mr. Tayler. Did you have any talk with either of them?

Mr. Smith. Not in the least.

Mr. Tayler. Not in the least?

Mr. Smith. Not in the least, sir; and no one ever mentioned to me that they were or were not married. I simply judged they were married because they were living together as husband and wife.

Mr. Tayler. Did you say anything by way of criticism to Abraham Cannon?

Mr. Smith. No, sir.

Mr. Tayler. For going about with this wife?

Mr. Smith. No, sir; I did not. (Ibid., pages 127-128)

Mr. Tayler. Now, the church—I gather from your statement the officials of the church have been ever since 1890, and are now, very sensitive as to the charge that plural marriages have been solemnized.

Mr. Worthington. Since the manifesto?

Mr. Tayler. Since the manifesto.

Mr. Smith. Yes; I think we have been very sensitive about that.

Mr. Tayler. Very sensitive?

Mr. Smith. Yes, sir.

Mr. Tayler. What inquiry did you make to find out whether Abraham H. Cannon, one of the twelve apostles of the church, had made a plural marriage?

Mr. Smith. I made no inquiry at all.

Mr. Tayler. Did you have any interest in finding out whether there had been—

Mr. Smith. Not the least. (Ibid., pages 476-477)

Frank J. Cannon claimed that his father, George Q. Cannon, told him that Joseph F. Smith performed the ceremony (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 238)

In the Reed Smoot Case, vol. 2, page 265, Abraham H. Cannon’s widow, Mrs. Ellis, was questioned about his diary. She replied: “I have seen it, but not since his death.” Recently many diaries belonging to Abraham H. Cannon have come to light. Unfortunately, however, if Cannon kept a diary at the time of his marriage in 1896, it has not been made public.

Even though we do not have the Apostle Cannon’s diary for 1896, Michael Marquardt has pointed out some references in his diary for 1894 which throw important light on this marriage and on the attitude of the Mormon leaders concerning polygamy after the Manifesto. (The Apostle Cannon’s diaries are now located in the Brigham Young University Library and photocopies are found at the University of Utah Library and the Utah State Historical Society.)

Long before Abraham H. Cannon’s diaries came to light, his brother Frank J. Cannon quoted his father George Q. Cannon as saying:

“... President Smith obtained the acquiescence of President Woodruff, on the plea that it wasn’t an ordinary case of polygamy but merely a fulfilment of the biblical instruction that a man should take his dead brother’s wife. Lillian was betrothed to David, and had been sealed to him in eternity after his death...” (Under the Prophet in Utah, Boston, 1911, page 177)
Now, according to the diary of Abraham H. Cannon, his father, George Q. Cannon, a member of the First Presidency, lamented the fact that his sons could not raise up seed to David through polygamy: “My son David died without seed, and his brothers cannot do a work for him, in rearing children to bear his name because of the Manifesto” (“Daily Journal of Abraham H. Cannon,” April 5, 1894, vol. 18, page 70).

From an entry in the Apostle Cannon’s diary for October 24, 1894, it would appear that the Mormon leaders had decided that a plural marriage could be performed in Mexico to raise up seed to David. Although the diary has been damaged at this point and a few words are missing, the remaining portion shows that the Mormon leaders did not take the Manifesto seriously:

After meeting I went to the President’s Office and _____ Father [George Q. Cannon] about taking a wife for David. I told him David had taken Annie[e] _______ cousin, through the veil in life, and suggested she might be a good pe___ sealed to him for eternity. The suggestion pleased Father very much, and _____ Angus was there, He spoke to him about it in the presence of the Presidency. _____ not object providing Annie is willing. The Presidents Woodruff and Smith both said[ ] they were willing for such a ceremony to occur, if done in Mexico, and Pres. Woodruff[ ] promised the Lord’s blessing to follow such an act. (“Daily Journal of Abraham H. Cannon,” October 24, 1894, vol. 18, page 170)

We may never know if Annie was “willing” to enter into this plural marriage, but we do know that less than two years later Lillian Hamlin was married to the Apostle Cannon. Mrs. Wilhelmina C. Ellis, who had been one of Cannon’s plural wives testified:

Mrs. Ellis. He said he could marry her out of the State—out of the United States.
Mr. Tayler. What conversation did you have with him then about his going away and about his getting married again? What did he say first about going?
Mrs. Ellis. He told me he was going to marry her for time, and that she would be David’s wife for eternity. (The Reed Smooth Case, vol. 2; pages 142-143)

The Apostle Abraham H. Cannon’s journal not only reveals that the Mormon leaders approved of polygamy after the Manifesto, but it shows that they were considering the idea of a secret system of concubinage wherein men and women could live together without being actually married:

Father [George Q. Cannon] now spoke of the unfortunate condition of the people at present in regard to marriage. . . . I believe in concubinage, or some plan whereby men and women can live together under sacred ordinances and vows until they can be married. . . . such a condition would have to be kept secret, until the laws of our government change to permit the holy order of wedlock which God has revealed, which will undoubtedly occur at not distant day, in order to correct the social evil. . . . ——— Pres. Snow. “I have no doubt but concubinage will yet be practiced in this Church, but I had not thought of it in this connection. When the nations are troubled good women will come here for safety and blessing, and men will accept them as concubines.” ——— Pres. Woodruff: “If men enter into some practice of this character to raise a righteous posterity, they will be justified in it. . . .” (“Daily Journal of Abraham H. Cannon,” April 5, 1894, vol. 18, page 70)

It is interesting to note that Joseph Smith’s revelation on polygamy also said that concubinage was justifiable in God’s sight: “Abraham received concubines and they bore him children; and it was accounted unto him for righteousness. . . .” (Doctrines and Covenants 132:37)

At any rate, the diaries of the Apostle Abraham H. Cannon reveal devastating evidence against the Mormon Church, and this evidence cannot be easily dismissed. The Mormon writer Kenneth W. Godfrey feels that the Apostle Abraham Cannon’s diaries present an accurate picture of what was being said by the Mormon leaders in private: “…what were the Mormon leaders saying in private? With the recent acquisition of the Abraham H. Cannon diaries it is now possible to accurately report what was taking place in meetings of the Council of the Twelve Apostles” (“Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Autumn 1970, page 22). We understand that there has recently been an attempt to suppress the Cannon diaries, but we know that they are still available at the University of Utah Library and the Utah State Historical Society. These diaries need to be thoroughly searched for they throw a great deal of light on Mormon history.

In the new enlarged edition of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? we have many quotations from the Cannon journals and from other unimpeachable sources which prove beyond all doubt that Mormonism was not founded on truth.

This is by far our most comprehensive and revealing work on Mormonism. See description of this book below.

**Enlarged Edition**
Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?

SPECIAL OFFER $7.95
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This book deals with such subjects as: the claims of Mormonism, the inhabitants of the moon, “Adam’s Altar” in Missouri, changing doctrines, suppressing the records, book-burning, changes in Joseph Smith’s revelations, money-digging, Joseph Smith’s 1826 trial for engaging in “glass looking,” proof that the Book of Mormon is a product of the 19th century, the Book of Mormon witnesses, changes in the Book of Mormon, a study of Book of Mormon names, archaeology and the Book of Mormon, changes in Joseph Smith’s History, the First Vision, “strange” accounts of the First Vision, no revival in 1820, Joseph Smith seeks membership in the Methodist Church, the Godhead, the Heavenly Mother, the Adam-God doctrine, the Priesthood, false prophecy, the missionary system, plural marriage, wives before the revelation, taking other men’s wives, polygamy after the Manifesto, polygamy in Utah today, death of Joseph Smith, the Virgin Birth, the anti-Negro doctrine, the Genesis Group, the rediscovery of the Joseph Smith Papyri and the fall of the Book of Abraham, Mormon scriptures and the Bible, changes in the Pearl of Great Price, Blood Atonement among the early Mormons, the Word of Wisdom, the secret Council of 50, Joseph Smith anointed king, Joseph Smith runs for President of the United States, the Church’s “Law Observance and Enforcement Committee,” the Danites, Bill Hickman, Orrin Porter Rockwell, baptism for the dead, temple marriage, changes in the temple garments, the temple ceremony by a temple worker, changes in the ceremony, sealing men to men, the temple ceremony and Masonry, the Mountain Meadows Massacre, the Utah War, Mormonism and money, the failure of the bank established by revelation, birth control, our conversion to Christianity, answers to questions about our work, and hundreds of other important subjects.

This book is bound in plastic binding and contains 587 full 8 1/2 by 11 inch pages. This is by far our most important work, for we have taken the best material out of the old edition and combined it with the most important material from publications we have printed since 1964. Also includes a great deal of new material that has never before been published. The regular price on this book will be $8.50, but if it is ordered before September 30, 1972, the price will be only $7.95. The quantity prices are: 2 for $15.00 – 5 for $29.00 – 10 for $51.00.

A Look at Christianity
By Jerald and Sandra Tanner

We deal with such subjects as: the age of the earth and of life, the earliest man, the Flood, the report of the discovery of Noah’s Ark, Egypt and the bible, evidence from Palestine, the Moabite Stone, Assyrian records, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the importance of love, the destructive effects of hate, reconciliation with God, our own testimony, the historicity of Jesus, early writings concerning Christianity, manuscripts of the New Testament, and many other important matters. This book has 91 large pages. Price: $1.00.
One of the most serious problems facing a student of Mormon history today is that those who have gone before us have not always been honest. Both Mormon and anti-Mormon writers have been guilty of deceit, and this has sometimes led to problems for those who desire to know the real truth about Joseph Smith and the origin of the Mormon Church.

An example of a forgery which went undetected for many years is an anti-Mormon publication entitled, "Defence in a Rehearsal of My Grounds for Separating Myself from the Latter Day Saints." This "Defence" was supposed to have been written by Oliver Cowdery, one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, in 1839. For a number of years we accepted this document as being authentic. Even B. H. Roberts, who was probably the most famous Mormon historian, accepted the "Defence" as the work of Oliver Cowdery. Fawn M. Brodie also accepted the "Defence" as an authentic document, but she cautioned: "Apparently there are no copies of the original extant." On November 15, 1960, however, Pauline Hancock received a letter from Yale University Library which contained the statement that they had obtained a photographic copy of the original of Oliver Cowdery's "Defence." Mrs. Hancock told us that the original copy was located in or near Independence, Missouri. Wesley P. Walters later located and examined this copy. Unfortunately, it turned out to be a copy printed more than 60 years after Cowdery was supposed to have written it. In 1967 we did a great deal of research on the "Defence." In the Salt Lake City Messenger for May 1967, we stated: "Even though B. H. Roberts (who was the Assistant Mormon Church Historian) accepted the 'Defence' as the work of Oliver Cowdery, we have found some material that seems to show that it may have been spurious. We have made a study of this matter and have prepared a pamphlet entitled A Critical Look—A Study of the Overstreet 'Confession' and the Cowdery 'Defence.' " In the conclusion to this pamphlet we said:

After carefully examining the evidence, we have come to the conclusion that the "Defence" is probably a spurious work, written sometime after 1887—i.e., after David Whitmer's pamphlet appeared. Until an original copy or a contemporary reference to it is found, we must regard it as spurious. Perhaps some of our readers will have some information concerning the "Defence" or the Overstreet "Confession" which we are not aware of. If so, they can write us at: Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah.

While we received a few letters from people who still maintained the "Defence" was authentic, no one has furnished any new evidence that would lead us to change our mind.

In the pamphlet A Critical Look, we demonstrated that the person who made up the "Defence" used some articles which Oliver Cowdery wrote for the Messenger and Advocate, in 1834-35. This made the "Defence" appear to be in the style of Oliver Cowdery and helped to fool many people. A careful examination of some of the portions lifted from the Messenger and Advocate, however, shows they are so unnaturally inserted into the "Defence" that they give the whole thing away (see A Critical Look, pages 22-27).

In the same publication (A Critical Look) we also showed that the Overstreet "Confession" is a forgery. This is another anti-Mormon document which purports to show that Oliver Cowdery did not make a speech at Council Bluffs, Iowa, which the Mormons attribute to him. Instead, a man by the name of Oliver Overstreet was supposed to have been paid $5,000.00 by Brigham Young to impersonate Oliver Cowdery. In the pamphlet A Critical Look, pages 4-6, we show that Oliver Cowdery was at Council Bluffs, and therefore it would have been impossible for Mr. Overstreet to have impersonated him.

While we have suspected for some time that there may have been some relationship between the Oliver Cowdery "Defence" and the Overstreet "Confession," recently we have become convinced that they came from the hand of the same impostor. To begin with, both documents are related to Oliver Cowdery and his apostasy from the Mormon Church. Both the "Defence" and the "Confession" began to be circulated after the turn of the century, and in neither case can a 19th century copy be located. The most astonishing thing about this whole matter, however, is that the Overstreet "Confession" reveals the exact method that the impostor used in writing the "Defence." The reader will remember that we have previously stated that portions of Oliver Cowdery's early writings were used in the "Defence" to make it appear that it is written in his style. Now, in the Overstreet "Confession," Mr. Overstreet claimed that he was told to read some articles written by Oliver Cowdery so that he would be able to impersonate him: "To enable me to know what to say and do, Bro. Miller had me read some articles written by Cowdery and also gave me some voice drill, assuring me that he would make a verbatim record of my remarks, while personating Mr. Cowdery to be preserved for future use under Br. Brigham Young's direction; and that my part in the matter he was confident would never be known or suspected" (A Critical Look, page 1).

The fact that many portions of Oliver Cowdery's writings have been inserted into the "Defence" makes it very difficult to compare its style with that found in the "Confession." For instance, in an article published in the Messenger and Advocate, vol. 1, page 14, Oliver Cowdery stated: "And what serves to render the reflection past expression on this point is, that from his hand I received baptism, by the direction of the angel of God ..." The reader will notice that while most of the words were copied verbatim from the Messenger and Advocate, the words "in its bitterness to me" did not appear there. This is very interesting because in the Overstreet "Confession" we find the words "bitter to me." (A Critical Look, page 1)

The reader will probably be pleased to learn that we have reprinted A Critical Look—A Study of the Overstreet "Confession" and the Cowdery "Defence." We have included it in a special offer which is explained on the last page of this issue of the Messenger.

LIBERTY TAKEN ON HISTORY

Although it is easy for Mormon writers to accept the fact that these two anti-Mormon documents are forgeries, it is very difficult for them to be as objective about the documents upon which their own church is founded. For instance, in our book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 126-142, we prove that more than 60% of Joseph Smith's History of the Church was not compiled until after his death although the Mormon leaders have published it under his name. The remaining portion—less than 40%—compiled in his lifetime had serious changes made in it after his death. We pointed out that that material was taken from newspapers and journals and changed to the first person to make it appear that Joseph Smith had written it. One brief example
should suffice: in the newspaper The Wasp for August 13, 1842, we read: “As to Mr. Smith, we have yet to learn by what rule of right he was arrested to be transported to Missouri . . . .” This was inserted in the History of the Church and changed to the first person to make it appear that it was written by Joseph Smith: “I have yet to learn by what rule of right I was arrested to be transported to Missouri . . . .” (History of the Church, vol. 5, page 87)

Although a few Mormon writers have been willing to admit that changes have been made in Joseph Smith’s History of the Church, there has been a reluctance to admit that material has been stolen from many sources and made to appear as if it were written by Joseph Smith. One Mormon scholar tried to inform his people about this matter in a book he was writing, but before publication this material was deleted by those who edited his book. The Mormon scholar Paul R. Cheesman has made a very revealing statement concerning Joseph Smith’s History of the Church. It is found in an unpublished manuscript at the Brigham Young University Library and reads as follows:

As of now, the original source of Joseph Smith’s statement, under the date of May 1, 1843, concerning the Kinderhook Plate, cannot be found. Much of Volume V of the Documentary History of the Church was recorded by Leo Hawkins in 1853, after the saints were in Utah, and was collected by Willard Richards from journals (Dean Jesse, Church Historian’s office, Appendix #2). Liberty was taken by historians of those days to put the narrative in the first person. Even though the source was not as such. Verification of the authenticity of Joseph Smith’s statement is still under study. In examining the diary of Willard Richards, the compiler of Volume V, the Kinderhook story is not found there. Our research has taken us through numerous diaries and letters written at this particular time, and the Kinderhook story is not mentioned. (“An Analysis of the Kinderhook Plate,” by Paul R. Cheesman, March, 1970, Brigham Young University Library.)

Just as we were preparing to print this issue of the Messenger we learned that another Mormon scholar has now admitted that “large portions” of Joseph Smith’s History were not written by him. Marvin S. Hill, of the Brigham Young University History Department, made these very revealing statement:

One reason that Brodie concluded that Joseph had veiled his personality behind a “perpetual flow of words” in his history may be that she assumed he had actually dictated most of it. We now know that large portions of the history were not dictated but were written by scribes and later transferred into the first person to read as though the words were Joseph’s. That fact makes what few things Joseph Smith wrote himself of great significance. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Winter 1972, page 76)

The reader will notice that some Mormon writers now admit that Joseph Smith’s History was not finished until after his death and that sources not written by Joseph Smith were put in “the first person” to make it appear that they were written by Smith himself. The Mormon leaders must face the serious implications of this whole matter. The Mormon scholar Hugh Nibley says: “A forgery is defined by specialists in ancient documents as ‘any document which was not produced in the time, place, and manner claimed by it or its publishers’” (Since Camorah, page 160). Under this definition the History of the Church must be classed as a forgery. It is every bit as spurious as the “Defence” or the Overstreet “Confession.” Mormon writers might maintain that Joseph Smith’s History is partly based on Joseph Smith’s private journals. This is undoubtedly true, but which portions were taken from there and which portions were taken from other sources? The whole truth may never be known unless the Mormon leaders release all the manuscripts relating to this matter. A person might just as reasonably try to justify the writing of the “Defence” as to uphold Joseph Smith’s History as the Mormon Church prints it today. We could say that part of the “Defence” actually comes from Cowdery’s writings and that many of the incidents it relates are historically accurate. This would of course be true, but it is still a forgery and it would be dishonest for us to continue using it as Cowdery’s work. If we did use it there would be no end to the ridicule that Mormon writers would heap upon us. This ridicule would, of course, be justified, for we could not blame the Mormons for protesting against the use of a bogus document which attacks their Church. The question we would like to ask Mormon scholars is this: will they be as objective about Joseph Smith’s History as they are about the “Defence”?” We feel that an honest investigation of the material which we present in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 126-142, will show the reader that Joseph Smith’s History of the Church is a bogus history.

The Mormon leaders are certainly aware of the fact that they are confronted with a serious problem with regard to Joseph Smith’s History, and it may very well be that they will try to phase it out. The Church recently announced that a “sixteen-volume Sesquicentennial History has been launched” (Mormon History Association Newsletter, March 10, 1973, page 5). From reports we have heard this new history will be written by prominent Mormon scholars and will be far more honest than Joseph Smith’s History. While this is certainly a step in the right direction, we feel that the Mormon leaders should first publicly repudiate Joseph Smith’s History before bringing out a new one.

STILL SuppressING records?

For many years we have maintained that the Mormon leaders do not want their people to know the truth about Joseph Smith and the foundation of the Church. The following appeared in the publication Tiffany’s Monthly in 1859:

People sometimes wonder that the Mormon can revere Joseph Smith. That they can by any means make a Saint of him. But they must remember, that the Joseph Smith preached in England, and the one shot at Carthage, Ill., are not the same. The ideal prophet differs widely from the real person. To one, ignorant of his character, he may be made the impersonation of every virtue. He may be associated in the mind with all that is true, pure, and lovely and divine. Art may make him, indeed, an object of religious veneration. But remember, the Joseph Smith thus venerated, is not the real, actual Joseph Smith . . . but one that art has created.

The Mormon leaders have gone to great lengths to keep their people from finding the real Joseph Smith. In our book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 11-13, we demonstrated that the Mormon leaders have suppressed the records which would reveal the truth about Joseph Smith and the origin of his Church. We showed that Dr. Hugh Nibley, who many Mormons feel is the top scholar in the Church, donated his great-grandfather’s journal to the Church Historian’s Office. This journal contained important information about Joseph Smith. The Mormon Historian Joseph Fielding Smith took the journal and locked it up in a safe, and when Dr. Nibley wanted to see it at a later time he was refused. In a letter dated March 21, 1961, Dr. Nibley stated: “Actually, the last time I asked permission to see the Journal I was refused. Any attempt to reproduce it at this time is out of the question.” (See photograph of this letter in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 12)

For a number of years we severely criticized the Church for suppressing the documents which would reveal the truth about Joseph Smith. Finally, in 1972 it appeared that the Church was going to have a change of policy. Dr. Leonard J. Arrington was appointed Church Historian. The Deseret News for January 15, 1972, stated that Arrington’s appointment “marks the first time that this important post has been filled by going outside the membership of the church’s general authorities . . .” While Dr. Arrington is an active Mormon, many people considered him to be very liberal. The thing that made the appointment of Dr. Arrington most surprising was that he had been critical of the Church leaders’ policy of suppressing the documents. Writing in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1966, page 26, Dr. Arrington stated:

It is unfortunate for the cause of Mormon history that the Church Historian’s Library, which is in the possession of virtually all of the diaries of leading Mormons, has not seen fit to publish these diaries or to permit qualified historians to use them without restriction.

On March 18,1972, the Deseret News announced that James B. Allen and Davis Bitton had been appointed “as assistant church historians.” These appointments came as a real shock, for both these men are rather liberal. Davis Bitton had even criticized the Church for changing Joseph Smith’s History. He cited a number of changes which we mentioned in our book Changes in Joseph Smith’s History, and made these interesting observations:

. . . the basic text itself has not been treated with proper respect. When we compare the DHC with the earlier versions, in fact, we discover that hundreds of changes have been made. These include deletion, additions, and simple changes of wording . . . for researchers in early Mormon history Rule Number One is “do not rely on the DCH; never use a quotation from it without comparing the earlier versions.” (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Winter 1968, pages 31-32)

With men like Arrington, Allen and Bitton we expected great changes in the policy of the Church with regard to the documents which have been suppressed. Unfortunately, however, the Mormon leaders have not allowed these men to proceed as they had planned. Now, it is true that there has been some improvement. We understand that a person can now obtain photocopies of many books which were not available in the past, and a Mormon scholar reported to us that he had better access to manuscript material than in the past.
While this may be true, the archives are certainly not available to everyone, and there is evidence that the First Presidency of the Church is trying to stop some of Dr. Arrington’s plans. For instance, on November 24, 1972, the Mormon-owned Deseret News announced that an organization known as “Friends of Church History” would be formed:

Friends of Church History, a group of professional and nonprofessional history buffs will hold an organizational meeting Thursday Nov. 30, at 7:30 p.m. in the General Church Office Building, . . . .

The meeting, . . . is open to all persons with an interest in the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints . . . .

Monthly meetings will be held at which papers will be presented thus providing members with a means of keeping up-to-date on current research and new interpretations, Smart added . . . .

“it will be a meeting of the like-minded, a chance for Church history buffs to stimulate thought and encourage study among their group and beyond,” commented Dr. Leonard Arrington, . . . .

The group, which will operate in cooperation with the Church’s Historical [department, will have access to the department’s facilities for research and study. (Deseret News, November 24, 1972)

The Friends of Church History got off to a great start. We understand that about 500 people attended the first meeting. Dr. Arrington was probably elated by the large turn out, but the Mormon leaders could see that this would cause serious problems for the Church. With a large group studying Church history the truth about Joseph Smith and the foundation of the Church would be very likely to emerge. They could not stand for their people to learn about the real Joseph Smith; therefore, an order was issued by the First Presidency that the next meeting should be cancelled. Meetings were to be held “the fourth Thursday of each month,” but no meetings have been held since November 30, 1972. On April 27, 1973, we talked to a woman in Dr. Arrington’s office. She admitted that the group did not meet in April and could not give a date when the group might meet again. She went so far as to say that they were “not sure” of the standing of the Friends of Church History. It is reported that Dr. Arrington was recently asked why the Friends of Church History were not meeting. He replied that they were still “thrashing out” the constitution. When a prominent Mormon scholar was told of Dr. Arrington’s statement, he said that they were “thrashing out more than the constitution.” William B. Smart—the man who was supposed to head the Friends of Church History—confirmed that it was the “First Presidency” that gave the order to “hold” it up.

On December 13, 1972, the Deseret News announced that “Elder Joseph Anderson has been appointed director of the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.” Joseph Anderson is a man who believes in suppression of the records, and he could make it very difficult for Dr. Arrington. On March 8, 1973, a member of the Church asked Joseph Anderson concerning an unpublished revelation of Joseph Smith. His reply was that it “isn’t available.” It would now appear that the Mormon leaders are still in charge of the Historical Department and that Dr. Arrington is only the “Church Historian” in name. When asked about access to documents he states that he is in charge of writing and researching but has nothing to do with persons wanting to do their research in the Church Historical Department of the Church. He refers a person to Earl Olsen who is the Church Archivist. Earl Olsen has been refusing access to the documents for many years. In the case where the man wanted to see an unpublished revelation of Joseph Smith, he had first asked Earl Olsen. Olsen told him he must get permission from the First Presidency. He called the First Presidency’s Office, but they referred him back to Joseph Anderson. Anderson told him to call back in a few days, but when he did he was told that it “isn’t available.” This is almost the same routine that used to go on when Joseph Fielding Smith was Church Historian. Even the Mormon scholar who claims to have better access to material admits that the Mormon leaders are still not making all the documents available. For instance, the journal of George Q. Cannon may never be made available because it contains so much revealing material concerning the secret Council of 50. Although there has certainly been an improvement in the Church Historical Department since Dr. Arrington’s appointment, some of the liberal Mormons fear that he is beginning to compromise. We know that he was planning to print Joseph Smith’s journals, but we also know that some of the Mormon leaders would be very opposed to this since it would tend to further undermine the History of the Church and to reveal the truth about Joseph Smith. We hope that many people will put pressure on the Church to make the journals of Joseph Smith available. If pressure is not applied it may very well be that these journals may never be made available. Members of the Church can be especially effective in this regard. If enough people will unite against the suppressive measures of the Mormon leaders they will be forced to release these documents. We know of one woman who had the courage to tell the Mormon leaders to either make a suppressed document available or remove her name from the Church records. Of course they did not comply with either request, but we know that if enough people will stand up for the truth great things will be accomplished. We feel that the Mormon leaders were forced into appointing Dr. Arrington as Church Historian because of the pressure that was exerted upon them. Now that he has been appointed, however, they have tried to take away the powers of his office and to make him compromise his position. We feel that the documents belong to the Mormon people and that they should raise their voice in protest against these oppressive measures.

JOSEPH SMITH AND ADULTERY

When Mormon apologists are unable to refute our arguments against the Church, they will often resort to dishonesty by accusing us of adultery or polygamy. For instance, in a letter dated February 26, 1973, we find the following:

A close friend of mine was recently converted to Mormonism . . . . I gave my friend your original thesis, Mormonism, and I could tell him was somewhat disturbed after reading it. But after discussing the thesis with some elders of his church, he came back with this statement about you: “Gerald Tanner was excommunicated from the Church on the charge of adultery.” Mr. Tanner, I would be most appreciate to hear your comment as to any truth that may surround this statement.

We, of course, replied that there is no truth in this statement and that we requested our names to be withdrawn from the rolls of the Church. We pointed out that we have photographically reproduced the letters relating to this matter (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 575) and that these letters plainly show that there was no “charge of adultery” involved. In a letter addressed to “Brother Jerald Tanner” and dated August 28, 1960, the Cannon Seventh Ward Bishopric stated: “In accordance with your request your name has been removed from the records and you are no longer considered a member of said Church.”

Actually, the truth of the matter is that we felt that the Mormon Prophet Joseph Smith was guilty of adultery. This helped lead us to the conclusion that he was not a prophet and that we should ask for our names to be removed from the rolls of the Church. In our book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 202-251, we show that the Mormon doctrine of plural marriage was not the divine system that many people believe it was. In fact, there is evidence that Joseph Smith was involved with other women long before he gave his famous revelation on polygamy on July 12, 1843. The Mormon writer Max Parkin made this statement concerning a girl by the name of Fanny Alger:

The charge of adulterous “relations with a certain girl” was leveled against Smith by Cowdery in Missouri in 1837; this accusation became one of the complaints the Church had against Cowdery in his excommunication trial in Far West, April 12, 1838. In rationalizing Cowdery’s accusation, the Prophet testified “that Oliver Cowdery had been his bosom friend, therefore he entrusted him with many things.” (Conflict at Kirtland, 1966, page 166)

Max Parkin’s source for this information is the “Far West Record.” This is an unpublished “record book containing minutes of meetings in Kirtland and Far West, Missouri.” The original is in the Church Historical Department. At one time Michael Marquardt was allowed access to a typed copy on microfilm at the Church Historical Office. He copied some important material from it which has never been published. We take the following from his notes:

David W. Patten testifies, that he went to Oliver Cowdery to enquire of him if a certain story was true re[s]pecting J. Smith’s committing adultery with a certain girl, when he turned on his heel and insinuated as though he was guilty: Also said that Joseph told him, he had confessed to Emma, also that he has used his influence to urge on lawsuits.

Thomas B. Marsh testifies that while in Kirtland last summer, David W. Patten asked Oliver Cowdery if Joseph Smith Jr. had confessed to his wife that he was guilty of adultery with a certain girl, when Oliver Cowdery cocked up his eye very knowingly and hesitated to answer the question, saying, he did not know as he was bound to answer the question yet conveyed the idea that it was true. Last fall after Oliver came to this place he heard a conversation take place between Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery when J. Smith asked...
him if he had ever confessed to him that he was guilty of adultery, when after a considerable winking etc he said No. Joseph the asked him if he ever told him that he confessed to any body, when he answered no.

Joseph Smith, Jr. testifies that Oliver Cowdery had been his bosom friend, therefore he intrusted him with many things. He then gave a history respecting the girl business. Also that Oliver Cowdery took him one side and said, that he had come to the conclusion to get property and if he could not get it one way he would another. . . (“Far West Record,” page 117)

Oliver Cowdery was one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. In a letter dated January 21, 1838, Cowdery plainly stated that Joseph Smith had an “affair” with Fanny Alger:

When he [Joseph Smith] was there we had some conversation in which in every instance I did not fail to affirm that what I said was strictly true. A dirty, nasty, filthy affair of his and Fanny Alger’s was talked over in which I strictly declared that I had never deserted from the truth in the matter, and as I supposed was admitted by himself. (Letter written by Oliver Cowdery and recorded by his brother Warren Cowdery; see photograph in The Mormon Kingdom, vol. 1, page 27)

Mormon writers admit that there was a connection between Joseph Smith and Fanny Alger, however, they claim that Fanny Alger was Joseph Smith’s plural wife and that he was commanded by God to enter into polygamy.

Andrew Jenson, who was the Assistant L.D.S. Church Historian, made a list of 27 women who were sealed to Joseph Smith. In this list he said the following concerning Fanny Alger: “Fanny Alger, one of the first plural wives sealed to the Prophet” (Historical Record, page 233). The Mormon writer John J. Stewart gives this interesting information:

Benjamin F. Johnson, another close friend to Joseph . . . says, “In 1835, at Kirtland, . . . there lived then with his family [the Prophet’s] a neighbor’s daughter. Fanny Alger, a very nice and comely young woman . . . toward whom not only myself but everyone, seemed partial, for the amiability of her character; and it was whispered even then that Joseph loved her.” Johnson, a Church patriarch at the time of writing, put his finger on the beginning of Oliver Cowdery’s and Warren Parrish’s downfall—Parrish was the Prophet’s secretary: “There was some trouble with Oliver Cowdery, and whisper said it was relating to a girl then living in his (the Prophet’s) family; and I was afterwards told by Warren Parrish, that he himself and Oliver Cowdery did know that Joseph had Fannie Alger as wife, for they were spied upon and found together.” . . . “Without doubt in my mind,” says Johnson, “Fannie Alger was, at Kirtland, the Prophet’s first plural wife . . .” One of the charges against Cowdery when he was excommunicated was that he had insinuated that Joseph was guilty of adultery. (Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet, pages 103-104)

A PRETENDED MARRIAGE

Because of his relationships with other women Joseph Smith began to find himself in trouble with the law, his own followers and his first wife Emma. He found it necessary, therefore, to use a great deal of deceit to keep the matter from becoming public knowledge. This fact is made very evident in the case of his secret relationship with Sarah Ann Whitney. According to the Assistant Church Historian, Sarah Ann Whitney was married to Joseph Smith by her father, Newel K. Whitney: “Sarah Ann Whitney, afterwards the wife of Pres. Heber C. Kimball married to Joseph July 27, 1842, her father Newel K. Whitney officiating” (Historical Record, vol. 6, May 1887, pages 223-34).

As we pointed out in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 581, Michael Marquardt discovered photographs of a letter written by Joseph Smith himself and addressed to Bishop Newel K. Whitney and his wife. It is very interesting because Smith asks the “three” of them—presumably Mr. and Mrs. Whitney and their young daughter Sarah Ann, to whom Joseph Smith was secretly married—to come see him by night. In the letter Joseph Smith makes it very clear that he does not want them to come when Emma, his first wife, would be present:

. . . All three of you can come and see me in the fore part of the night, . . . The only thing to be careful of is to find out when Emma comes then you cannot be safe, but when she is not here, there is the most perfect safety: . . . I think Emma won’t come tonight if she don’t fail to come tonight, I subscribe myself your obedient and affectionate, companion, and friend. Joseph Smith

Since finding photographs of this important letter in the George A. Smith Collection at the University of Utah Library, Michael Marquardt has completed some very important research concerning this whole affair. His findings are so important that we are publishing them in a pamphlet entitled, The Strange Marriages of Sarah Ann Whitney to Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet, Joseph C. Kingsbury and Heber C. Kimball (see special offer on page 6 of this Messenger). Among other things that Mr. Marquardt has discovered is the fact that Joseph Smith actually performed a “pretended” marriage ceremony between Sarah Ann Whitney and Joseph C. Kingsbury so that his own relationship with her would not be noticed. Mr. Marquardt cites the following from “The History of Joseph C. Kingsbury,” a document that is now in the Western Americana of the University of Utah Library:

. . . on the 29th of April 1843 I according to President Joseph Smith Council & others agreed to Stand by Sarah Ann Whitney as supposed to be her husband & had a prete[n]ded marriage for the purpose of Bringing about the purposes of God in these last days as spoken by the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel and also Joseph Smith, & Sarah Ann Should Reed a Great Glory Honor & eternal lives and I also Should Reed a Great Glory, Honor & eternal lives to the full desire of my heart in having my Companion Caroline in the first Resurrection to claim her & no one have power to take her from me & we both shall be Crowned & enthroned together in the Celestial Kingdom of God . . . (“The History of Joseph C. Kingsbury,” University of Utah Library)

That a man professing to be a prophet of God would perform a “pretended” marriage to cover up his own iniquity is almost beyond belief.

In his pamphlet, Mr. Marquard goes on to show that after Joseph Smith’s death, Sarah Ann Whitney continued to live with Joseph C. Kingsbury in this “pretended” marriage. While living with Kingsbury she became pregnant with the Apostle Heber C. Kimball’s child. Seven months later she was married to Kimball for “time” in the Nauvoo Temple, but she continued to live with Kingsbury until after the child was born. All these facts are well documented in Michael Marquardt’s pamphlet. We highly recommend this work.

From the above it would appear that Joseph Smith had absolutely no regard for the sacred vows involved in marriage. In our book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? we show that Joseph Smith took married as well as single women as his plural wives.

ABRAHAM AND NEGROES

In our book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 294-369, we prove beyond all doubt that the Book of Abraham—which contains the basis for the anti-Negro doctrine—is a product of Joseph Smith’s own imagination and that it must be repudiated by the Mormon people. On page 304 of this book we show that Wesley P. Walters—one of the top scholars on Mormon history—may have forced the Mormon leaders to make the rediscovery of the Joseph Smith Papyri public and thus set the stage for its translation by Egyptologists. We are now happy to announce that Mr. Walters has written a pamphlet on the Book of Abraham (see special offer on page 6 of this Messenger). Wesley P. Walters’ achievements in Mormon history have been astounding. He is the man who demonstrated that there was no revival in Palmyra in 1820 as Joseph Smith had claimed. As if this were no enough, he discovered the document which proved that Joseph Smith was a “glass looker” and that he was arrested, tried and found guilty before a justice of the peace in Bainbridge, N.Y., in 1826. Mormon scholars had claimed that if this court trial could ever be established it would be the most damning evidence in existence against Joseph Smith.

After the discovery by Walters, the Mormon scholar Marvin S. Hill, of the History Dept. at Brigham Young University, published a statement in which he said: “If a study of the handwriting and paper of the originals demonstrates their authenticity, it will confirm that there was a trial in 1826 and that glass looking was an issue at the trial.” It would appear that Marvin S. Hill now accepts the authenticity of the discovery for he makes the following statement in the latest issue of Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought: “There may be little doubt now, as I have indicated elsewhere, that Joseph Smith was brought to trial in 1826 on a charge, not exactly clear, associated with money digging” (Dialogue, A Journal of Mormon Thought, Winter 1972, page 77).

Besides making these important discoveries Wesley P. Walters has also proved his objectivity by helping us to discover the truth about the Cowdery “Defence.” His new pamphlet is entitled, Joseph Smith Among the Egyptians. In this new work Wesley P. Walters states:
In April of that year [1966] Jerald and Sandra Tanner published a photomechanical reproduction of the “Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar” which Joseph had begun to put together in 1835. Although a few Mormon scholars had known of the existence of this material since about 1935, it was not generally available to most Mormon or to non-Mormon scholars . . . When the scholarly world through the Tanners’ publication got their first good look at this bizarre method of translating Egyptian, some Mormons became unsettled to the point of losing their faith in Smith’s ability to translate Egyptian. Yet a more shattering blow to their faith was still to come to the following year.

On November 27,1967, the news media carried an unexpected announcement that a portion of the papyri which Joseph Smith had acquired in 1835 was still in existence and had been turned over to the Mormon church by the Metropolitan Museum of Art . . . Now at last the official material was available for judging the Mormon leader’s translating ability. What was heralded with great rejoicing by the Mormon community, has since turned into a nightmare for their scholars and has been responsible for some learned Mormons coming to reject the Book of Abraham and even renounce all the claims of their Prophet . . .

It is no wonder that some Mormons have come recently to reject Joseph’s claim to a knowledge of Egyptian, . . . not even the best scholarship can save a sinking ship, and Mormons of integrity such as Dee Jay Nelson, whose competence in Egyptian is granted by all, have sorrowfully admitted that the Book of Abraham was not at all a divine production, but purely the work of Joseph Smith’s imagination.

Wesley P. Walters gives a very good summary of the evidence against the Book of Abraham. He deals with Dr. Nibley’s attempts to defend it and shows that he is in a “state of confusion” on almost every important issue. All of our readers should have a copy of Walters’ new work, Joseph Smith Among the Egyptians.

**HIDDEN REVELATION REVEALED**

Just as we were preparing the last page of the Messenger, Michael Marquardt brought to light an extremely important revelation which the Mormon leaders have suppressed since 1842. This revelation is concerning polygamy and is dated a year earlier than the one published in the Doctrine and Covenants. It sanctions Joseph Smith’s secret marriage to Sarah Ann Whitney. (The reader will remember that Sarah Ann Whitney was secretly married to Smith, but that she had a “pretended” marriage to Joseph C. Kingsbury to cover up this relationship.) This revelation is dated July 27, 1842, and reads as follows:

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Verily, thus saith the Lord unto my servant N. K. Whitney, the thing that my servant Joseph Smith has made known unto you and your family and which you have agreed upon is right in mine eyes and shall be rewarded upon your heads with honor and immortality and eternal life to all your house, both old and young because of the lineage of my Priesthood, saith the Lord, it shall be upon you and upon your children after you from generation to generation, by virtue of the holy promise which I shall now make unto you, saith the Lord. These are the words which you shall pronounce upon my servant Joseph and your daughter S. A. Whitney. They shall take each other by the hand and you shall say, You both mutually agree, calling them by name, to be each other’s companion so long as you both shall live, preserving yourselves for each other and from all others and also throughout eternity, reserving only those rights which have been given to my servant Joseph by revelation and commandment and by legal authority in times passed. If you both agree to covenant and do this, I then give you, S. A. Whitney, my daughter, to Joseph Smith, to be his wife, to observe all the rights between you both that belong to that condition.

I do it in my own name and in the name of my wife, your mother, and in the name of my holy progenitors, by the right of birth which is of priesthood, vested in me by revelation and commandment and promise of the living God, obtained by the holy Melchisedek Gethrow [Jethro?] and others of the Holy Fathers, commanding in the name of the Lord all those powers to concentrate in you and through you to your posterity forever. All these things I do in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that through this order he may be glorified and that through the power of anointing David may reign King over Israel, which shall hereafter be revealed. Let immortality and eternal life hereafter be sealed upon your heads forever and ever. (Revelation given by Joseph Smith, July 27, 1842, typed copy; original in the LDS Church Historian’s Office)
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In The Strange Marriages of Sarah Ann Whitney . . . Michael Marquardt shows that the Mormon historian Orson F. Whitney mentioned this revelation in 1885 but stated that “it has never been published.” Mr. Marquardt has also found that the Mormon scholar Larry Neil Poulson claims to have “seen and read it several times in the Church Historian’s Office in Salt Lake City.” Although he did not include a copy of the revelation in his thesis written at Brigham Young University, Mr. Poulson did include a description of it which seems to verify the copy we have printed above:

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In the ceremony uniting the Prophet Joseph Smith and Sarah Ann in celestial marriage, the ceremony having been given to the Prophet by revelation, Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, is mentioned as one of Bishop’s Whitney’s ancestors. (“The Life and Contributions of Newel Kimball Whitney,” Brigham Young University, 1966, pages 113-114, typed copy)
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A TREMENDOUS SUCCESS

In 1963 we published our most important work on Mormonism. A major publishing company predicted that it wouldn’t sell over 250 or 300 copies, but by 1965 Wallace Turner reported that we had sold “about 3000 copies” (The Mormon Establishment, page, 157). It was not long after this that our metal plates for printing began to break down, and the book went out of print for a number of years. In 1972, however, we issued a new enlarged and revised edition which has become a tremendous success. We have now sold almost 2,000 copies of the new printing, and this brings the total sales to over 7,000 copies. Dr. Jennings G. Olson, of the Department of Philosophy at Weber College, made these comments concerning it:

...there is now in existence a book which every Mormon and interested non-Mormon should study and ponder. . . . it is called Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? . . . it is tightly packed with serious, responsible research which no one can deny is the most comprehensive and thorough analysis and evaluation of Mormonism ever produced in the history of the Church.

Any Mormon of Elemental identification who wants to “answer” the Tanners will have his hands full for a long time to come because the Tanners have the microfilm sources from the early Mormon Church which no one before has had in such abundance. . . . I seriously doubt Dr. Nibley will take this new revised book on, because he is quoted often enough in it to be identifiable as one of the major contributors to Mormonism’s obfuscation of issues; and he has actually contributed (unknowingly perhaps) to the growing painful dilemmas now facing the Elemental Mormonism I have previously identified . . .

But if Dr. Nibley or anyone else decides to “answer” the Tanners’ book point for point I certainly promise to study that book carefully and review it in public. In the mean time I will state publically this book of the Tanners is a major contribution in the search for integrity and truth about Mormonism, and I shall quote from it a number of times. (“The Uniqueness of Mormonism: An Evaluation.”) by Dr. Jennings G. Olson, October 7, 1972, pages 22-23

The following are some other comments concerning the new edition of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?

...the original was good—the new edition is a marvel. (The Utah Evang., Sept.-Oct. 1972, page 1)

We must admit it is the greatest thing yet written on the subject . . . (The Utah Evang., November-December 1972, page 4)

The most comprehensive and revealing work on Mormonism in print today . . . a must for all students of Mormonism. (Utah Christian Tract Society Newsletter, September-October, 1972, page 2)

Perhaps the most exhaustive expose of Mormonism between two covers . . . Based largely on primary sources. (Mormonia—a Quarterly Bibliography of Works on Mormonism, Fall 1972, page 89)

May this find you all well and busy shipping out the greatest compendium that ever existed on a most intriguing subject concerning the greatest religious hoax of all time . . . please prepare another 50 copies . . . (Letter from California)

We believe “Shadow or Reality” to be the best book available in refuting Mormonism. I showed it to more of the students & I now place an order for you for (55) more copies of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? (Letter from Texas)

...I must say that your new work, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? is a lulu! I have read it from cover to cover—much to the neglect of my other duties, but can & should become familiar with what you have found. It is interesting that so much of what you have printed I have found to be so in my own independent study . . . I sincerely need to know how you go about making a commitment to Christ, and I feel a real need to do so, . . . (Letter from Illinois)

Our customers seem to be well pleased with the new edition of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? and it is taking a good deal of our time just to fill the orders. In our spare time we are working on a book about Creation which we hope to complete in about a year. This is a project we have worked on for many years.

Recently we decided to put a hard-backed binding on all copies of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? Though this costs us more money, we feel that it gives the book a much better appearance and will make it last a great deal longer. The reader will notice that we are having a special offer on Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? The regular price is $8.95, but if it is ordered before September 30, 1973, the price will be only $7.95 (see special offer below). Considering the size of this book and the fact that it is hard bound this is a real bargain. As one customer expressed it: “It never ceases to amaze me how for the price of two hours work I can buy a book such as your new enlarged edition.”

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This book is now in a hard binding and contains 587 full 8 1/2 by 11 inch pages. This is by far our most important work, for we have taken the best material out of the old edition and combined it with the most important material from publications we have printed since 1964. Also includes a great deal of new material that has never before been published. The regular price on this book will be $8.95, but if it is ordered before September 30, 1973, the price will be only $7.95. The quantity prices are: 2 for $16.00 – 5 for $31.00 – 10 for $53.70

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MORMONISM and WATERGATE

Mormon Credibility Gap Widens as Joseph Smith’s Suppressed 1831 Polygamy Revelation Comes to Light. This Revelation Commands Mormons to Marry Indians to Make Them “White” and “Delightsome.”

Recently a revelation given by Joseph Smith, which has been suppressed for over 140 years, has come to light. Although Mormon leaders have never published this revelation, they have referred to it and admitted that it was given to Joseph Smith in 1831. They maintain that it supports the doctrine of polygamy and that it is a forerunner to the revelation on polygamy—given July 12, 1843—which still appears in the Doctrine and Covenants as Section 132. Joseph Fielding Smith, who was the Mormon Church Historian and later became the tenth President of the Church, made this statement in a letter written to J. W. A. Bailey in 1935:

...I care not to enter into any argument with you in relation to the origin of plural marriage. ...I do know that there was a revelation given in July 1831, in the presence of Oliver Cowdery, W. W. Phelps and others in Missouri, in which the Lord made this principle known through the Prophet Joseph Smith. (Letter from Joseph Fielding Smith, dated September 5, 1935, typed copy)

In 1943 Joseph Fielding Smith told Fawn Brodie about this revelation, but he would not allow her to see it:

Joseph F. Smith, Jr., the present historian of the Utah Church, asserted to me in 1943 that a revelation foreshadowing polygamy had been written in 1831, but that it had never been published. In conformity with the church policy, however, he would not permit the manuscript, which he acknowledged to be in possession of the church library, to be examined. (No Man Knows My History, New York, 1971, page 84, footnote)

H. Michael Marquardt, a young Mormon scholar who became very disturbed with the Church’s policy of suppressing important records, became interested in this revelation. He began to do research and found that some Mormon scholars had copies of the 1831 revelation, but they had promised not to make any copies. Finally, Mr. Marquardt learned what appears to be the real reason why the revelation has been suppressed. This is that the revelation commanded the Mormons to marry the Indians to make them a “white” and “delightsome” people.

Now, to a Christian who is familiar with the teachings of the Bible, the color of a man’s skin makes no difference. In Mormon theology, however, a dark skin is a sign of God’s displeasure. In the Mormon publication Juvenile Instructor we read:

We will first inquire into the results of the approbation or displeasure of God upon a people, starting with the belief that a black skin is a mark of the curse of heaven placed upon some portions of mankind. ... when God made man in his own image and pronounced him very good, ... he made him white. We have no record of any of God’s favored servants being of a black race. (Juvenile Instructor, vol. 3, page 157)

The teaching that a dark skin is the result of God’s displeasure comes directly out of Joseph Smith’s Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon teaches that about 600 B.C. a prophet named Lehi brought his family to America. Those who were righteous (the Nephites) had a white skin, but those who rebelled against God (the Lamanites) were cursed with a dark skin. The Lamanites eventually destroyed the Nephites; therefore, the Indians living today are referred to as Lamanites. The following verses from the Book of Mormon explain the curse on the Lamanites:

And it came to pass that I beheld, after they had dwoundled in unbelief they became a dark, and loathsome, and a filthy people, full of idleness and all manner of abominations. (Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 12:23)

And he had caused the cursing to come upon them, yea, even a sore cursing, because of their iniquity ... wherefore, as they were white, and exceeding fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them. ...
While Spencer W. Kimball seems to feel that the Indians are to be made white by the power of God, Michael Marquardt learned that Joseph Smith's 1831 revelation says they are to be made white through intermarriage with the Mormons. Because of this fact, the Mormon leaders seemed to feel that it was necessary to keep the revelation from their people. Only the most trusted men, such as Dr. Hyrum Andrus, were allowed a copy of it. It was only after a great deal of research that Mr. Marquardt was able to obtain a typed copy of the revelation. In our new book Mormonism Like Watergate? we reproduce this revelation in its entirety, but in this study we only have room for the most important portions:

Part Substance

of a revelation by Joseph Smith Jr., given over the boundary, west of Jackson County, Missouri, on Sunday morning, July 17, 1831, when seven Elders: viz., Joseph Smith Jr., Oliver Cowdery, W. W. Phelps, Martin Harris, Joseph Coe, Ziba Peterson, and Joshua Lewis united their hearts in prayer, in a private place, to inquire of the Lord who should preach the first sermon to the remnant of the Lamanites and Nephites and the people of that section, that should assemble that day in the Indian country, to hear the Gospel and the revelations according to the Book of Mormon.

Among the company, there being neither pen, ink nor paper, Joseph remarked that the Lord could preserve his words, as he had ever done, till the time appointed, and proceeded:

1 Verily, Verily, saith the Lord, your Redeemer, even Jesus Christ, the light and the life of the world, . . .
2 Verily, I say unto you, that the wisdom of man, in his fallen state, knoweth not the purposes and the privileges of my holy priesthood, but ye shall know when ye receive a fulness by reason of the anointing: For it is my will, that in time, ye should take unto you wives of the Lamanites and Nephites, that their posterity may become white, delightfulsome and just, for even now their females are more virtuous than the gentiles. . . .
3 Be patient, therefore, possessing your souls in peace and love, . . .

Reported by W.W.P.

About three years after this was given, I asked brother Joseph, privately, how “we” that were mentioned in the revelation could take wives from the “natives” as we were all married men? He replied, instantly “In the same manner that Abraham took Hagar and Keturah; and Jacob took Rachel, Bilhah and Zilpah; by revelation—the saints of the Lord are always directed by revelation.

The letters “W.W.P.” stand for William Wine Phelps, who served as a scribe for the Mormon leaders.

According to what Mr. Marquardt could learn, the original revelation is preserved in a vault in the LDS Church Historical Department. The paper on which it is written has the appearance of being very old.

There is a second copy of the revelation in the Historical Department. This appears in a letter from W. W. Phelps to Brigham Young. The letter is dated August 12, 1861. Michael Marquardt has been able to obtain a copy of this letter, and we have reproduced it in its entirety in our booklet Mormonism Like Watergate? Except for the opening and closing lines, this letter is almost identical to the other document.

In this new book Doctrines of the Kingdom, Dr. Hyrum L. Andrus of Brigham Young University, actually quotes part of this revelation as it appears in the letter, but he is very careful to suppress the fact that the wives to be taken were Lamanites:

The Prophet understood the principle of plural marriage as early as 1831. William W. Phelps stated that on Sunday morning, July 17, 1831, he and others were with Joseph Smith over the border west of Jackson County, Missouri, when the latter-day Seer received a revelation, the substance of which said in part: “Verily I say unto you, that the wisdom of man in his fallen state knoweth not the purposes and the privileges of my Holy Priesthood, but ye shall know when ye receive a fulness.” According to Elder Phelps, the revelation then indicated that in due time the brethren would be required to take plural wives.

In footnote 37 on the same page, Dr. Andrus gives his source for this information as “Letter of William W. Phelps to Brigham Young, August 12, 1861, Church Historian’s Library, Salt Lake City, Utah” (Ibid., page 450).

The reader will notice that in his quotation from the revelation, Dr. Andrus suppressed the important portion concerning the Indians. His quotation ended with “… ye shall know when ye receive a fulness.” The revelation itself, and the copy in Phelps’ letter, goes on to mention the Lamanites. We quote the following from the letter:

… ye shall know when ye receive a fulness by reason of the anointing: For it is my will, that in time, ye should take unto you wives of the Lamanites and Nephites, that their posterity may become white, delightfulsome and just for even now their females are more virtuous than the gentiles.

BOOTH CONFIRMS REVELATION

Since we are unable to examine the original revelation, it is very difficult to determine when it was actually recorded. From W. W. Phelps’ letter to Brigham Young we know that the revelation had to have been recorded by 1861. As we understand it, the first document—containing only the revelation and Phelps’ comment—appears to be older than the letter dated August 12, 1861. It is possible that it could have been recorded any time between 1831 and 1861. If the revelation and the note at the bottom were written at the same time, then obviously the revelation could not have been written until some time after 1834. It could be, however, that the note was added at a later time. It will not be possible to decide this vital question unless the Mormon leaders allow scholars to closely examine the document itself or allow photographs of it to be printed.

Regardless of when the revelation was actually written down on paper, however, we have found definite historical proof that it was given in 1831. The proof is derived from a letter written by Ezra Booth and published in the Ohio Star only five months after the revelation was given! In this letter Ezra Booth stated:

In addition to this, and to co-operate with it, it has been made known by revelation, that it will be pleasing to the Lord, should they form a matrimonial alliance with the Natives; and by this means the Elders, who comply with the things so pleasing to the Lord, and for which the Lord has promised to bless those who do it abundantly, gain a residence in the Indian territory, independent of the agent. It has been made known to one, who has left his wife in the state of N.Y. that he is entirely free from his wife, and he is at liberty to take a wife from among the Lamanites. It was easily perceived that this permission, was perfectly suited to his desires. I have frequently heard him state, that the Lord had made it known to him, that he is as free from his wife as from any other woman; and the only crime that I have ever heard alleged against her is, she is violently opposed to Mormonism. But before this contemplated marriage can be carried into effect, he must return to the state of N.Y. and settle his business, for fear, should he return, after that affair had taken place, the civil authority would apprehend him as a criminal. (Ohio Star, December 8, 1831)

We had originally discovered Booth’s statement in an 1834 reprint of his letters, but Michael Marquardt found a microfilm copy of the original paper in the Mormon Church’s Genealogical Library in Salt Lake City.

Since Ezra Booth did go to Missouri and was well acquainted with the Elders, his letter furnishes irrefutable proof that Joseph Smith gave the revelation commanding the Mormons to marry Lamanite women.

“BLEACHING” THE LAMANITES

Like Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, the second President of the Mormon Church, taught that “the curse will be removed” from off the Indians and “they will become “a white and delightfulsome people.”” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 2, page 143)

While Brigham Young suppressed the 1831 revelation, there is evidence that he was familiar with its teaching that the Indians should be made white through intermarriage. William Hall said that just after the Mormons left Nauvoo, Brigham Young gave a speech which “was in substance as follows”:

“… We are now going to the Lamanites, to whom we intend to be messengers of instruction. . . . We will show them that in consequence of their transgressions a curse has been inflicted upon them—in the darkness
of their skins. We will have intermarriages with them, they marrying our young women, and we taking their young squaws to wife. By these means it is the will of the Lord that the curse of their color shall be removed and they restored to their pristine beauty. . . .” (The Abominations of Mormonism Exposed, Cincinnati, 1852, page 59)

Juanita Brooks gives the following information concerning the Salmon River Mission:

Very early, some of the Mormon leaders recommended that the missionaries marry Indian women as a means of cementing the friendship between the races. . . .

The Elders who were sent to the Salmon River Mission were given similar instructions by Brigham Young and his party, who visited them in May, 1857. At least three different missionaries tell of them, . . . Milton G. Hammond says simply, “The president and members of the Twelve all spoke. Pres. Young spoke to Elders marrying natives.” William H. D. . . . wrote in his journal: “Meeting was held . . . Young men might take squaws to wife. . . .” The mission clerk, David Moore, gave a somewhat more detailed account: “Sunday, May 10, [1857]. . . Pres. H. C. Kimball & Wells addressed Missionaries . . . on the importance of the Missionaries being faithful . . . and for them to marry the Native women. . . Pres. B. Young said, . . . when the Lord opened they [sic] way before them so that they Could Marry Girls they would be very likely to be enabled to keep them. . . .”

As a result of these teachings, at least three of the brethren married Indian women. . . . As to the Indian women whom they had taken as wives the “L.D.S. Journal History” of April 9, 1858, records: “Two squaws who had married the brethren refused to come, fearing the soldiers would kill all the Mormons.”

(Utah Historical Quarterly, vol. 12, pages 28-30)

T. B. H. Stenhouse gives the following information concerning the Salmon River Mission:

Before any of the married brethren could make love to a maiden with the view of making her a second, third, or tenth wife, he was expected to go and obtain Brigham’s permission. He sent at one time a mission to Fort Limhi, Salmon River, to civilize the Indians. The brethren were counselled not to take their families with them, but they were to live with the Indians, to educate and civilize them, and to teach them various trades and farming. When Brigham and Heber afterwards visited the missionaries to see how they were succeeding, Heber, in his quaint way, told them that he did not see how the modern predictions could well be fulfilled about the Indians becoming “a white and delightsome people” without extending polygamy to the natives. The approach of the United States army, in 1857, contributed to break up that mission, but not before Heber’s hint had been clearly understood, and the prophecy half fulfilled! Heber was very practical, and believed that the people should never ask “the Lord” to do for them what they could do themselves, and, as all “Israel” had long prayed that the Indians might speedily become a “white and delightsome people,” he thought it was the duty of the missionaries to assist “the Lord” in fulfilling his promises. This was not the first time that a Mormon prophet attempted to aid in bringing to pass the prophecies of “the Lord.” More than one missionary appears to have thoroughly understood him! (The Rocky Mountain Saints, pages 657-659)

In a footnote on page 659 of the same book, Mr. Stenhouse stated:

One young man replied to Brother Heber that it was the teaching of the Church that the elders should always follow their “file-leaders,” and that “if President Young and he should each take a squaw to wife and thus set the example, they would certainly follow suit.” That ended the “bleaching” of the “Lamanites.”

William Hall claimed that Brigham Young was married “to two young squaws,” but so far we have been unable to find any documentation for this statement. According to John D. Lee, on May 12, 1849, Brigham Young said that he did not want to take the Indians “in his arms until the curse is removed from off[!] them. . . But we will take their children & s[co]hool them & teach them to be cleanly & to love morality & then raise up seed among them & in this way they will be brought back into the presence & knowledge of God. . . .” (A Mormon Chronicle, The Diaries of John D. Lee, vol. 1, page 108)

It would appear, then, that Brigham Young would not follow Joseph Smith’s revelation to take “wives of the Lamanites and Nephites, that their posterity may become white, delightful and just, . . .” Even though the revelation said that “their females are more virtuous than the gentiles,” Brigham Young built up his “kingdom” with women who were already “white and delightful.”

If Brigham Young did not follow the 1831 revelation to marry the Lamanites, we must remember that he was only following the example of Joseph Smith, for Smith also married “white” women. Though Young suppressed Smith’s 1831 revelation and chose “white” women in preference to the Lamanites, he did at least encourage others to marry them “that the curse of their color shall be removed and they restored to their pristine beauty.”

After Brigham Young’s death the idea that the Indians should be made “white and delightful” through intermarriage began to fall into disrepute. The Mormon leaders have tended to frown upon interracial marriage with the Indians, even though there is no written rule against the practice.

The Mormon Apostle Mark E. Petersen made these comments in an address delivered at Brigham Young University:

What should be our attitude as Latter-day Saints toward negro and other dark races? . . . We cannot escape the conclusion that because of performance in our pre-existence some of us are born as Chinese, some as Japanese, some as Indians, some as Negroes, some as Americans, some as Latter-day Saints. These are rewards and punishments, . . .

Now let’s talk segregation again for a few moments. . . . When the Lord chose the nations to which the spirits were to come, . . . He engaged in an act of segregation. . . In placing a curse on Laman and Lemuel, He engaged in segregation. . . .

The Lord segregated the people both as to blood and place of residence. At least in the cases of the Lamanites and the Negroes we have the definite word of the Lord Himself that He places a dark skin upon them as a curse—as a punishment and as a sign to all others. He forbade intermarriage with them under threat of extension of the curse. (2 Nephi 5:21) . . .

What is our advice with respect to intermarriage with Chinese, Japanese, Hawaiians and so on? I will tell you what advice I give personally. If a boy or girl comes to me claiming to be in love with a Chinese or Japanese or a Hawaiian or a person of any other dark race, I do my best to talk them out of it. I tell them that I think the Hawaiians should marry Hawaiians, the Japanese ought to marry Japanese, and the Chinese ought to marry Chinese, and the Caucasians should marry Caucasians. . . I teach against inter-marriage of all kinds. (Race Problems—As They Affect The Church, Address by Mark E. Petersen, Brigham Young University, August 27, 1954)

Mark E. Petersen is second in line to become President of the Mormon Church. The Apostle Petersen and other Mormon leaders who are opposed to intermarriage will probably be very embarrassed now that the 1831 revelation

A STRANGER TO HUNGER

I am a stranger to hunger. My mind can’t comprehend starvation. Yet millions of people today are learning the meaning of “famine” by personal experience. Do I care? Is my Christian concern real? Christ said:

For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: . . . Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. (Matthew 25:35 & 40)

World Vision Magazine reports:

For five years the rains have been inadequate across West Africa, and last year they did not come at all. Rivers failed to flood the plains, and crops died. There are 25 million people living in the Sahel (Arabic for “fringe,” meaning here the edge of the Sahara Desert). Some 14 million were directly affected by the five-year drought which brought severe famine this year to an area about one-fourth the size of the United States.

Some have said that this drought and famine bordering the Sahara are the worst recorded since biblical times. . . and we through World Vision can help the starving of the Sahel both physically and spiritually. . . . (World Vision, February 1974)

This area of Africa is less than 10% Christian. What a great opportunity to demonstrate the love of Christ by reaching out to these suffering ones and sharing our abundance, in His name.

Money for food and farming needs can be sent to:

World Vision International
P.O. Box 70050
Tacoma, WA 98481-0050

(Gifts to World Vision are tax-deductible.)
NEGRO DOCTRINE COST 20,000 CONVERTS

Although the Bible teaches that the Gospel is to be carried to all people, the Mormon Church has tried to avoid doing missionary work among the Negro people. Bruce R. McConkie, who recently became an Apostle, stated: “Negroes in this life are denied the priesthood; . . . The gospel message of salvation is not carried affirmatively to them.” (Mormon Doctrine, 1966, page 527).

Lester E. Bush, Jr. says that “As early as 1946, Council minutes report correspondence from Nigeria which ‘pleads for missionaries to be sent . . . and asks for literature regarding the Church’ ” (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1973, page 67, footnote 204). Finally, after seventeen years the Mormon Church decided they would send a mission to Nigeria. President McKay made the announcement on January 11, 1963.

A few months after the mission was announced it became apparent that something was wrong. On August 7, 1963, we called the Mormon Church offices asking if there was still going to be a mission to Nigeria. The woman in the Missionary department said that conditions were “unsettled.” Then she stated: “We have been asked not to give out any information about it.”

Eleven years have passed and it now appears that the Nigerian Mission is a complete failure. Lester E. Bush says that “the Nigerian government became more fully aware of the scope of Mormon teachings on the blacks, and denied the Church resident visas . . . Estimates for the number of ‘Nigerian Mormons’ who would have been involved ranged from 10,000 to 25,000, nearly all of whom were Biafrans” (Dialogue, Spring 1973, page 45).

Because the Nigerian government refused to give resident visas to the Mormon missionaries, the Nigerians decided “to organize their own branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (Time Magazine, June 18, 1965, page 56).

Even though the Negroes in Nigeria were converted to Mormonism, the Mormon leaders in Utah could not accept them because of the belief that a Negro church cannot function without men holding the Priesthood to direct it. On February 10, 1966, Hugh B. Brown, David O. McKay’s First Counselor, wrote a letter in which he stated:

We are just now wrestling with the problems in Nigeria, where some five thousand people have applied for baptism unto the Church but where the government officials are opposing us and where, if we should baptize them, we would involve ourselves in financial problems which could very well bankrupt the Church . . . Conditions in the Southern part of the United States, in fact, all over the United States, affecting the Negro are such that for us to take positive action might involve us in controversies to which as yet seems to be no definite inspired answer. (Letter by Hugh B. Brown, dated February 10, 1966)

By 1972 the number of Nigerians converted to the doctrines of the Mormon Church had grown to over 20,000. Anie Dick Obot was the leader of this group. In a letter dated July 1, 1972, Obot stated:

I am the Bishop in charge [of the] Church of Jesus Christ Latter-day Saints in Nigeria, and we are 48 congregations with the total membership of 20,698.

Not long after Obot wrote this letter he became disillusioned with Mormonism. In a letter dated December 21, 1972, Obot stated:

. . . I am no more with the Organisation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and I will never go back to that group.

Obot claimed that he learned the truth about Mormonism after “Dr. O. J. Udo who was at BYU, Provo, Utah” returned to Nigeria. After that he decided to leave the group he had directed.

Lamar S. Williams had been set apart by the Mormon Church in Salt Lake City to direct the missionary work in Nigeria. His work turned out to be a complete failure. In a letter to Williams dated January 23, 1973, E. E. Akpan of Nigeria told that the Nigerians were rapidly defecting from Mormon teachings: “Praise the Lord, greetings to you in Jesus Christ precious Name. We are the group Bishop E. A. Attah led to join with you, but now seeing the truth revealed to us about the mormon teachings we have decided in our General Conference of 18th–21st Jan., 1973, to adopt the name above.” The name which they adopted was “Grace and Truth Church.”

In the same letter, E. E. Akpan went on to explain that they had been reading our book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? and that this had raised questions in their minds concerning the truthfulness of Mormonism. He went on to state that they were no longer “called Church of Jesus Christ of LDS, and we are no more with your organisation please. All the 25 congregations have withdrawn from [the] Mormon organisation.”

COVER-UP ON NEGRO DOCTRINE

While the Indians are considered to be under a curse, they can still hold the Priesthood. Negroes, on the other hand, are denied the Priesthood and cannot be married in the temple. According to Mormon leaders, the curse on the Negro cannot be removed through intermarriage. The Apostle Mark E. Peterson stated:

We must not intermarry with the Negro. Why? If I were to marry a Negro woman and have children by her, my children would all be cursed as to the priesthood. Do I want my children cursed as to the priesthood? If there is one drop of Negro blood in my children, as I have read to you, they receive the curse. (Race Problems—As They Affect The Church)

The Mormon leaders have suppressed some very important documents on the development of the anti-Negro doctrine. For instance, in our new book Mormonism Like Watergate? we reproduce an important address by Brigham Young which has been suppressed since 1852. Another important document which has been suppressed is the patriarchal blessing given to Elijah Abel. Elijah Abel was a Negro who was ordained to the Priesthood during Joseph Smith’s lifetime. Some Mormons claim that Abel was “light of color” and that Joseph Smith was not aware of the fact that he had Negro blood when he allowed him to be ordained. Abel’s patriarchal blessing proves that these apologists are mistaken. This blessing was given by Joseph Smith’s father, who was Patriarch to the Church and was “sustained by the Saints as a prophet, seer, and revelator” (Doctrines of the Kingdom, page 191).

Lester E. Bush, Jr., cites portions of this blessing in his article in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1973, but it has never been published in its entirety. Fortunately, Michael Marquardt obtained a copy and we have printed it in Mormonism Like Watergate? Since we do not have much room here, we will only print a few important extracts:

A blessing under the hands of Joseph Smith, Sen., upon Elijah Abel, . . . Thou has been ordained an Elder and annointed to secure thee against the power of the destroyer. . . . Thou shalt travel in the East, and visit foreign countries, speak in various tongues, and shalt be able to teach different languages. . . . Thou shalt be made equal to thy brethren, and thy soul be white in eternity and thy robes glittering: thou shalt receive these blessings because of the covenants of thy fathers. Thou shalt save thy thousands, . . . These and all the blessings which thou canst receive the curse. If there is one drop of Negro blood in my children, as I have read to you, they receive the curse. (Race Problems—As They Affect The Church)

Now, if this patriarchal blessing was given by revelation, then it proves that God himself was unaware of the fact that the Negro should not hold the priesthood. It says plainly that Elijah Abel had “been ordained and Eldered,” and the promise that Abel’s soul would “be white in eternity” shows that it was obvious that he was black. The reader will note that the blessing also states that Abel was to be “made equal” to his brethren. This blessing seems to show that neither the early Mormons nor their God were aware that the Negro could not hold the Priesthood.

There are reports of another early patriarchal blessing which may be even more important than the blessing given to Elijah Abel. Michael Marquardt reports that in April of 1965 he obtained permission from the Church Historian Joseph Fielding Smith to examine a microfilm which contained the first three volumes of patriarchal blessings given during Joseph Smith’s lifetime. As he was going through the microfilm he discovered a blessing given to a descendant of “Ham” — i.e., a Negro according to Mormon theology. The blessing went on to state that through the blood of Christ the “curse” has been removed. Unfortunately, Mr. Marquardt was not allowed to make any notes at the time he was looking at this film, and now even the top Mormon scholars are denied access to the early patriarchal blessing books. The Mormon leaders apparently realize that if the patriarchal blessing which tells of the “curse” being removed from a descendant of “Ham” were to be made public, it might entirely destroy all basis for the anti-Negro doctrine.
In his reply to E. E. Akpan, LaMar S. Williams made these comments:

I am sorry to hear that you have changed your mind regarding your affiliation with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. . . .

I am sorry to learn that you were unfortunate enough to read such unfavorable literature as *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. They have done much to discredit the church by the material they have published . . . I would disregard any literature printed by them. (Letter dated February 27, 1973)

We have photographically printed all four of these important letters in our book *Mormonism Like Watergate?*

From the information we have presented, the reader can see that the Nigerian Mission was a complete failure. On October 24, 1974, Michael Marquardt did some research with regard to this mission and found that the Mormon Church only claims to have 25 members in Nigeria, and there is some question as to how many of these are whites.

It is very obvious, then, that the Mormon Church has decided to sacrifice over 20,000 converts rather than change their anti-Negro doctrine!

On June 22, 1968, the *Ogden Standard-Examiner* quoted Sterling McMurrin as saying that the "Church will completely lose tens of thousands of its members" if it does not “come to grips” with the Negro problem. So far there is no real evidence that the Mormon leaders are going to make a change. In fact, Bruce R. McConkie, a defender of the anti-Negro doctrine, was recently elevated to the Council of Twelve Apostles.

Spencer W. Kimball, the new President of the Church, feels that a dark skin is a curse from God and has stated that he does not anticipate any change in the Negro doctrine. The next two in line for the Presidency of the Church—i.e., Ezra Taft Benson and Mark E. Petersen—seen to be even more outspoken in their defense of the anti-Negro doctrine.

It would appear, then, that those who choose to remain in the Mormon Church face a gloomy future. The Mormon leaders seem determined in their effort to cover up the past and to run the Church after the manner of Watergate. For more information concerning this matter see our new publication *Mormonism Like Watergate?*

**INDIANS DISTURBED**

Just as we were preparing to bring the 1831 revelation concerning the Indians to light the *Salt Lake Tribune* published the following:

About 20 representatives of the American Indian Movement (AIM) Thursday demanded the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints “recall all your missionaries from the reservations and the areas where native Americans frequent.” . . .

In a declaration to LDS Church President Spencer W. Kimball, AIM leaders said the church has a “racist attitude regarding our skin color” and “you have a divisive practice of putting Indian against Indian.” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, April 12, 1974)

Gov. Rampton claims that AIM does not represent any substantial group of Utah Indians, but it will be interesting to see what develops.

**IMPEACHMENT?**

As a general rule we have tried to keep the *Messenger* out of political controversies. The situation with regard to President Nixon, however, is so serious that we feel that it would be wrong to keep silent. Before the Watergate investigation began we felt that the charges against President Nixon were without foundation in fact. As the investigation proceeded we became convinced that there was a serious problem involved, and in July, 1973, we wrote a letter which was published in the *Salt Lake Tribune*:

Editor, Tribune: One disturbing thing about Watergate is that many people do not seem to realize the serious implications of the whole matter. Some people, for instance, say that even if President Nixon is involved, he should not be impeached or resign. While I feel that we should wait until more evidence is in before judging the President, it would seem to me that even if he was only involved in the cover-up, this would be a serious crime and should be punished by impeachment. The cover-up, of course, involved the obstruction of justice and the encouragement of perjury. If we were to allow a president to continue leading us after becoming involved in such serious crimes, we would be stamping our approval on this type of behavior and would be accessories to the crimes in the eyes of the world. Even if it is very embarrassing and painful for our country, we cannot sweep this under the rug. If we love liberty and justice we must apply the same rules to everyone, and even the President of the United States should not be exempt from these rules. Jerald Tanner (*Salt Lake Tribune*, July 8, 1973)

After we learned of the tapes we felt that they would either prove or disprove the charges against the President. We knew, however, that if they contained evidence against the President this evidence would probably be destroyed before the tapes were turned over for inspection. We were shocked...
to learn that two of the tapes did not exist, but when we found that there was an 18 minutes gap in another tape we lost all faith in President Nixon. We feel, therefore, that it is our Christian obligation to call for his impeachment.

REPUDIATES BOOK OF MORMON

After we found serious problems with the Utah Mormon Church, we joined a group known as the Church of Christ—sometimes called the “Luftikes.” This is a small group which is not to be confused with the large Church of Christ nor the Church of Christ—Temple Lot. Although this group rejected Joseph Smith’s revelations as printed in the Doctrine and Covenants, it still accepted the Book of Mormon. At any rate, these people had discovered the true message of Christ, and the love of God certainly showed forth in their lives. Their lives were so strikingly different that it pointed out our own need of Christ.

When we decided that the Book of Mormon was not true, it was very hard to let this group know. Fortunately, these people did not become bitter towards us, and in all of their correspondence with us they continued to show the love of Christ. We, of course, wanted to see them come to a knowledge of the truth concerning the Book of Mormon. We prayed concerning this matter, but we could hardly believe that a Church so committed to the Book of Mormon could give it up as a group. We are now happy to report that a miracle has happened! On November 24, 1973, this group published an advertisement telling that they had repudiated the Book of Mormon. In this document we find these interesting statements:

Do you know that on July 28, 1971, among some old Chenango County bills, the bills of Justice Neely and Constable Philip DeZeng for the year 1826 were found and among the items listed on them were the costs for the arrest and trial of “Joseph Smith, The Glass Looker,” as the case is listed on Justice Neely’s bill? . . .

Many anti-Mormon authors have written about this March 20, 1826 trial, using it to prove that the Book of Mormon was not of divine origin, but a product of Joseph Smith’s fraud and deceit—a continuation of the principles manifested in his money-digging activities. . . .

When Fawn Brodie published her book, No Man Knows My History (this was before these documents were found by Mr. Wesley P. Walters, a Presbyterian minister from Marissa, Illinois and Mr. Fred Poofarl, of Ardsley, Pennsylvania), she wrote of Joseph Smith’s money digging activities and his 1826 trial. This was answered by Mormon writers with statements like, “This alleged court record . . . seems to be a literal attempt of an enemy to ridicule Joseph Smith . . . no existing proof that such a trial was ever held” (Apostle John A. Widtsoe of the Utah Church). “If this court record is authentic it is the most damning evidence in existence against Joseph Smith” (Dr. Hugh Nibley). Book of Mormon believers, do you realize proof of the 1826 trial has now been found, so what about the claim that the Book of Mormon is of divine origin???

Until recently we were believers in the Book of Mormon and felt that the 1826 trial was just a fabrication of anti-Mormon origin to discredit the Book of Mormon. But after we learned of the discovery of these two original county bills, we realized that our beliefs needed examination. In the investigation and search for the truth which followed we found that we were the ones who had been deceived. After several letters and a trip to Norwich, Chenango County, New York, we knew that the bills were authentic. We have obtained photo copies both from the County Historian and the County’s acting Deputy Clerk. . . .

This is a small group which is not to be confused with the large Church of Christ—Temple Lot. Although this group rejected Joseph Smith’s revelations as printed in the Doctrine and Covenants, it still accepted the Book of Mormon. At any rate, these people had discovered the true message of Christ, and the love of God certainly showed forth in their lives. Their lives were so strikingly different that it pointed out our own need of Christ. We are happy to announce that Walters has now prepared a complete copy will be sent free upon request.

WALTERS WRITES ON 1826 TRIAL

From the article above the reader will notice that Wesley P. Walters’ discovery of the 1826 bills convinced the Church of Christ that the Book of Mormon is untrue. We are happy to announce that Walters has now prepared an article in which he discusses this important discovery as well as other aspects of Joseph Smith’s 1826 trial. Wesley Walters has also discovered Joseph Chamberlain’s bill for a trial of Joseph Smith which occurred in 1830. He deals with this matter in his new work Joseph Smith’s Bainbridge, N.Y., Court Trials. Price: $50 — 3 for $1.00 — 10 for $3.00 — 20 for $5.00

Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?


This book deals with such subjects as: the claims of Mormonism, the inhabitants of the moon, “Adam’s Altar” in Missouri, changing doctrines, suppressing the records, book-burning, changes in Joseph Smith’s revelations, money-digging, Joseph Smith’s 1826 trial for engaging in “glass looking,” proof that the Book of Mormon is a product of the 19th century, the Book of Mormon witnesses, changes in the Book of Mormon, a study of Book of Mormon names, archaeology and the Book of Mormon, changes in Joseph Smith’s History, the First Vision, “strange” accounts of the First Vision, no revival in 1820, Joseph Smith seeks membership in the Methodist Church, the Godhead, the Heavenly Mother, the Adam-God doctrine, the Priesthood, false prophecy, the missionary system, plural marriage, wives before the revelation, taking other men’s wives, polygamy after the Manifesto, polygamy in Utah today, death of Joseph Smith, the Virgin Birth, the anti-Negro doctrine, the Genesis Group, the rediscovery of the Joseph Smith Papyri and the fall of the Book of Abraham, Mormon scriptures and the Bible, changes in the Pearl of Great Price, Blood Atonement among the early Mormons, the Word of Wisdom, the secret Council of 50, Joseph Smith anointed king, Joseph Smith runs for President of the United States, the Church’s “Law Observance and Enforcement Committee,” the Danites, Bill Hickman, Orrin Porter Rockwell, baptism for the dead, temple marriage, changes in the temple garments, the temple ceremony by a temple worker, changes in the ceremony, sealing men to men, the temple ceremony and Masonry, the Mountain Meadows Massacre, the Utah War, Mormonism and money, the failure of the bank established by revelation, birth control, our conversion to Christianity, answers to questions about our work, and hundreds of other important subjects.

Contains 587 full 8 1/2 by 11 inch pages. This is by far our most important work, for we have taken the best material out of the old edition and combined it with the most important material from publications we have printed since 1964. Also includes a great deal of new material that has never before been published.

Price: Hard-back binding – $8.95 – 2 for $16.00 – 5 for $31.00 – 10 for $53.70

Plastic Cover – $6.95 – 2 for $12.50 – 5 for $26.25 – 10 for $41.70

Mormonism Like Watergate?

By Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Contains an answer to Dr. Nibley’s article in the Salt Lake Tribune. This book contains the 1831 revelation on polygamy, which commands the Mormons to marry Indians to make them a “white” and “delightsome” people. Also includes suppressed material on the anti-Negro doctrine, and a reprint of our article, “Mormon Records, Like Watergate, Embarrassing.” This book is filled with new and important information. Plastic binding. Price: $1.50 – 3 for $4.00 – 5 for $6.00 – 10 for $9.00

Joseph Smith’s Bainbridge, N.Y., Court Trials

By Wesley P. Walters. In this pamphlet Mr. Walters discusses his important discoveries concerning Joseph Smith’s 1826 and 1830 trials. He proves beyond all doubt that Joseph Smith was a money-digger, who used a “peep stone” to find buried treasures at the very time he was supposed to be preparing himself to receive the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. Price: 50¢ – 3 for $1.00 – 10 for $3.00 – 20 for $5.00
MORMONS and the WATERGATE SCANDAL
Justice Dept. Warns Church About Illegal Taping

During 1973, as the details of the Watergate cover-up began to unfold, we were struck with the many parallels to Mormon history. Since that time we have found more parallels. Even more important, however, has been the discovery that Mormons were involved with Howard Hunt in his plans for wiretapping and burglary.

A very important clue came from former President Nixon’s tapes. The reader will of course remember that Nixon fought desperately to keep his tapes from becoming public. When he was finally forced to yield them, transcripts were printed by the U.S. Government and the New York Times. These tapes not only proved to be embarrassing for Richard Nixon but for the Mormon leaders as well. On pages 292-293 of The White House Transcripts, Nixon, Haldeman and Ehrlichman discuss an alleged attempt to break into the safe of Hank Greenspun. During the course of the conversation it was suggested that “Senator Bennett’s son, for whom Hunt worked,” may have been involved in the planning of the break-in. The transcript reads as follows:

E: . . . McCord volunteered this Hank Greenspun thing, gratuitously apparently not—
P: Can you tell me is that a serious thing? Did they really try to get into Hank Greenspun?
E: I guess they actually got in.
P: What in the name of (expletive deleted) though has Hank Greenspun got with anything to do with Mitchell or anybody else?
E: Nothing. Well, now, Mitchell, Here’s—Hughes. And these two fellows, Colson and Shapiro, Colson threw that out.
P: Hughes on whom?
E: Well, you know the Hughes thing is cut into two factions—
P: I don’t even know—but they’re fighting.
P: Yeah.
E: Bennett, Senator Bennett’s son, for whom Hunt worked.

Before reading the White House Transcripts we were not aware of the fact that Howard Hunt worked for “Senator Bennett’s son,” nor did we know that the two of them had been involved in planning a break-in at Mr. Greenspun’s office. When we told Michael Marquardt about this, he did some research and found that Robert Bennett (son of the Mormon Senator Wallace F. Bennett) is the man spoken of in The White House Transcripts. Mr. Marquardt also learned that Robert Bennett worked for the Robert R. Mullen & Company. Later we discovered that Robert Bennett was the actual owner of the Mullen Co. and that this company handled international public relations for the Mormon Church. Howard Hunt, who was involved in the Ellsberg break-in and the Watergate affair, worked for Robert Bennett and was at one time Vice President of the Mullen Co. Further research led us to the discovery that plans for the Watergate break-in and other illegal activities were actually discussed in Bennett’s company—i.e., the Mullen Company. James Mc Cord, who was involved in the Watergate break-in, gave this testimony at the Senate Watergate Hearings:

Photographs from pages 1-2 of the Priesthood Bulletin—printed for Mormon priesthood leaders. The reader will notice that item 3 acknowledges that the Justice Dept. has warned the Church against illegal interception of oral communications for use in Church courts.

Mr. Mc Cord. The meetings, as best I recall in which these references by Mr. Hunt took place, took place in Mr. Hunt’s office in the Robert F. Mullen Co. offices at 1700 Pennsylvania Avenue. They took place in April and May of 1972. To the best of my recollection, Mr. Liddy was present in all of the discussions.

Mr. Liddy, during those discussions, as best I recall, would raise the topic that the planning and the progress of the operation itself was going forward, comments about what Mr. Mitchell was saying to him about what could be done in terms of the priorities of the operation; that is, which ones were to be done first and second . . .

Mr. Thompson. Do you recall anything that Mr. Hunt said to you about Mr. Colson’s involvement or did you just get the general impression that Mr. Colson was involved in some way from what Mr. Hunt told you?

Mr. Mc Cord. I believe my previous testimony . . . was to the effect that when I had met Mr. Hunt in his office at 1700 Pennsylvania Avenue with Mr. Liddy that he referred to his previous work at the White House for Mr. Colson . . . Mr. Hunt had a typed plan that he had typed himself, step-by-step, for the entry of the Democratic National Committee headquarters . . . (Hearings Before The Select Committee On Presidential Campaign Activities of the United States Senate . . . U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973, Book 1, pages 142-143)

MULLEN, MORMONS AND THE C.I.A.

The Mullen Company—the company which Bennett bought—was originally founded by Robert R. Mullen. Mr. Mullen handled world-wide public relations for the Mormon Church and is the same man who wrote the book The Latter-day Saints: The Mormons Yesterday and Today. Mr. Mullen’s book was apparently written to bring converts into the Mormon Church and to cover-up the truth about Mormon history. In the Salt
Robert Mullen’s association with the Mormons began when his public relations firm was hired to publicize the first European tour of the famous Mormon Tabernacle Choir. He now runs a world-wide public relations agency with headquarters in Washington, D.C.

When Mr. Mullen’s book came out, the Mormon Church’s Deseret News printed these statements:

A great new book about the Mormons will be in the bookstores of the nation beginning Oct. 1. . . . the author is Robert P. Mullen of Washington, D.C., . . .

The new book is one of the most complete, objective, and friendly treatments of the Mormon story ever done by an “outsider.” (Deseret News, Church Section, Sept. 24, 1966)

To any reader who is well informed on Mormon history it is plain to see that Robert Mullen’s book is a cover-up of the true facts.

Newsweek for July 15, 1974, reported the following about the Mullen Company:

Washington was buzzing again last week with talk that the Central Intelligence Agency was involved in the scandals of the Nixon Administration—and this time the source was a 43-page report prepared by Howard Baker, . . . of the Senate Watergate committee. . . .

The report had further questions about Robert R. Mullen & Co., the Washington public-relations firm that Hunt joined after he left the White House. According to the report the firm had been used as an overseas cover for CIA activities from 1959 to mid-1972. (Newsweek, July 15, 1974, page 29)

Senator Baker has provided us with a copy of his report, but it has also been printed at the back of The Senate Watergate Report, vol. 1. On page 7 of “The Baker Report” we find this statement:

The Mullen Company has maintained a relationship with the Central Intelligence Agency since its incorporation in 1959. It provided cover for an agent in Europe and an agent in the Far East at the time of the Watergate break-in.

A SURPRISING DISCOVERY

After we learned of the involvement of Robert Bennett and the Mormon Church with the Mullen Company, we tried to find more material about the matter. Progress was very slow until September, 1974, when we made a most interesting discovery. We felt that there may be something in our files showing that the Mullen Company had contacted us several years ago. After a long and diligent search we found a letter from James A. Everett who was an employee of the Mullen Company in Sweden. This letter was dated January 20, 1965, and contains a request for books. Since the letter seemed to be written in a friendly spirit, we decided to try to locate Mr. Everett. We found that he had returned to Washington D.C. and then moved to Missouri. On October 7, 1974, we were able to have a long telephone conversation with him, and on October 15, 1974, Mr. Everett sent us a letter in which he answered many questions we had about the relationship between the Mormon Church and the Mullen Company. We found Mr. Everett to be very open and willing to discuss this matter. The information which he has provided has really increased our knowledge of this relationship.

Mr. Everett worked in Europe for the Mullen Company for a number of years. Incredible as it may seem, he returned to America to work at the offices in Washington, D.C. on the night of the Watergate break-in. In his letter Mr. Everett stated:

I returned from Europe on the night of the break-in, i.e. 17th June 1972. I went to the office on Monday the 19th and for the first time met Howard Hunt who had been hired during my absence in Europe. We spoke of the days newspaper headlines concerning the break-in and I remarked that it certainly was a stupid caper and I hoped that no responsible Republican had been involved. I assumed at the time that he was in full agreement. Only about an hour after that conversation the first call came from Woodard (or Bernstein) concerning the fact that Hunt’s private telephone number at the White House (Executive Office Building) had been discovered in two of the persons who were apprehended at Watergate. Hunt was asked if he knew how this could be and he exclaimed loudly, “My God, No!” Hung up and left the office. I met him about a half hour later coming back from 1701 Pennsylvania Ave. where he undoubtedly had gone to confer with his friend Liddy. He returned to the office, removed a few things and left and I have never met him in person since. (Letter from James A. Everett, dated October 15, 1974)

In our telephone conversation with Mr. Everett, he told us that the Mullen Company handled public relations for the Mormon Church from 1957 to 1973. One of the more important projects that the Mullen Company handled for the Church was the Hill Cumorah pageant. Mr. Everett felt that they did a great deal toward making it the tremendous success it is today. In the telephone conversation, Mr. Everett told us that the Mullen Company handled a good deal of work for the Church. In a letter dated October 11, 1974, we asked Mr. Everett if he could remember some of the projects which were handled by the Mullen Company. He replied:

4. Earl Minderman of Robert R. Mullen & Co. has through the years done a most commendable job for the Mormon Church, including the publicity for the Cumorah Pageant. There have been many, many others such as answering critical media reports, placing of radio programs on Radio Free Europe, Armed Forces Radio, etc.

The Mullen Company also handled public relations for the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. We must remember, too that Mr. Mullen wrote a book about the Church which was printed in a number of different languages.

ROBERT BENNETT BUYS MULLEN COMPANY

As we indicated earlier, Robert Bennett is the son of Wallace F. Bennett. Wallace F. Bennett has served for twenty-four years as a Senator from Utah. He is considered one of the real “pillars” of the Mormon Church and his book Why I Am A Mormon, published in 1958, has been widely used to bring converts into the Mormon Church. On page 53 of his book, Senator Bennett speaks of his “faith that Joseph’s story is true.” He claims to have an “unshakeable assurance” that Mormonism is true. In relation to politics Senator Bennett had a very strong faith in Richard Nixon. Even after the fiving of Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox, Bennett still expressed his faith in Nixon:

Thank you for your letter regarding recent developments relating to the “Watergate” affair. I still have complete faith in the President. (Letter from Senator Bennett)

Senator Bennett’s strong faith in Mormonism and Richard Nixon was shared by his son Robert. On page 7 of his book Why I Am A Mormon, Senator Bennett indicated that Robert Bennett and his other sons have served on missions for the Mormon Church. According to James A. Everett, Robert Bennett served his “mission in England” (Letter dated October 15, 1974). Mr. Everett also stated that “Mr. Bennett has maintained a most respected position in the Mormon Church and I believe has been a Stake President. I know he was active as Counselor to the Stake President and has served in setting up the P.R. activity in the Eastern States” (Letter dated October 15, 1974).

If Robert Bennett was a Stake President it would have been some time before 1973, because Michael Marquardt found him listed as 1st Counselor in the Bishopric of the Arlington Ward, Oakton Virginia Stake, in 1973-74 (see The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Directory, General Authorities and Officers 1973-74, page 225).

We do not know exactly when Robert Bennett and Robert Mullen met, but we do know that they worked together in Nixon’s 1968 campaign. Who’s Who In America, 1972-73, vol. 2, page 2273, informs us that Robert Mullen served as “Chmn Pub. relations Nixon-Agnew 1968.” In The Senate Watergate Report, vol. 2, page 251 we read:

Robert Bennett had served as Vice Chairman for Public Relations (under Robert Mullen) in the 1968 campaign (when he met Colson and Evans), and then became Congressional liaison in the Department of Transportation, where he was Colson’s “political contact.” When he left the Department in 1970, he joined Mullen’s Washington public relations firm.

In the “Baker Report,” page 8, we learn that Robert Bennett became President of the Mullen Co. in 1971:

Robert Bennett, who is Senator Bennett’s son, joined Mullen and Company and became its President in 1971. He was introduced to the Mullen CIA case officer in April of that year. Bennett brought the Hughes Tool account! with him to Mullen.
The planning of this operation: before the Senate Watergate Hearings, Hunt implicated Robert Bennett in about breaking into Hank Greenspun’s safe was discussed. In testimony given

Robert Bennett purchased Robert R. Mullen & Co. in 1971 as near as I can recall. I was in Amsterdam at the time. Mr. Mullen remained on as Chairman of the Board and Bob Bennett took the position of President. The purchase agreement went over an extended period of time.

BURGLARY AND BUGGING

In Senator Bakers Report, page 7, we learn that Hunt joined the Mullen Company in 1970: “Hunt left the CIA in 1970 and joined Mullen and Company with what founder Robert Mullen understood to be Director Helms’ blessing. Hunt’s covert security clearance was extended by the CIA; he was witting of the Mullen cover; and, on occasion he undertook negotiations with the Agency with respect to that cover . . .”

While Hunt was working with Bennett at the Mullen Company, an idea about breaking into Hank Greenspun’s safe was discussed. In testimony given before the Senate Watergate Hearings, Hunt implicated Robert Bennett in the planning of this operation:

Mr. Dash. During this same period and prior to the Watergate break-in, Mr. Hunt, did you and Mr. Liddy work on a political espionage plan involving a target in Las Vegas?

Mr. Hunt. Apart from Gemstone?

Mr. Dash. Yes.

Mr. Hunt. . . . my employer, Mr. Robert Bennett, informed me that he had heard a rumor around Las Vegas to the effect that a publisher named Hank Greenspun had information which would “blow Muskie out of the water” . . . I reported by very brief memo this information to Mr. Liddy. Mr. Liddy responded enthusiastically seeing in it initially an opportunity for us to travel at company expense as it were, to Las Vegas . . . Mr. Liddy informed me . . . that there was a disposition on the part of his principals to pursue it.

I reported this matter back to Mr. Bennett and within a short period of time Mr. Bennett introduced me to a Mr. Ralph Winte who was then the head of security for either Hughes Tool Co. or one of its many subsidiaries. At our initial discussion Mr. Bennett, Mr. Winte, and I discussed Las Vegas, . . . this discussion reached the point where Mr. Bennett suggested that there was a commonality of interest between the Hughes Tool Co. and Mr. Liddy and myself.

Mr. Winte and I withdrew to my office . . . he said he would attempt to produce a floor diagram of the Greenspun office and I asked him whether his firm . . . could provide us with support facilities. Mr. Dash. Did that include an airplane or an escape plane should that be necessary?

Mr. Hunt. That came later, Mr. Dash! (Hearings, Book 9, pp. 3686-3687)

The White House Transcripts, which we have previously quoted, seem to indicate that the operation might have been actually carried out:

E: Bennett, Senator Bennett’s son, for whom Hunt worked.

P: Oh?

E: Represents one of those factions.

P: So he ordered the burgling?

E: I don’t know. I know the (unintelligible) say’s it’s a bag job. The: They busted his safe to get something out of it. Wain’t that it?

E: No. They flew out, broke his safe, got something out (unintelligible) . . . (The White House Transcripts, page 293)

According to the New York Times, Robert Bennett admitted that he did discuss the break-in with Hunt and with a Las Vegas company, but he claimed it never actually took place:

Robert F. Bennett, president of a Washington public relations firm that once employed Hunt, who is one of the Watergate conspirators, said Hunt in 1971 discussed with him possibly breaking into the safe of a Las Vegas, Nev., publisher . . .

Mr. Bennett, president of the company . . . said that Hunt told him he heard through underground channels that Hank Greenspun . . . had papers in his safe that would be “very damaging” to Senator Muskie.

He said the safe might also contain papers sought by a Las Vegas company and that the company might be interested in the break-in. Mr. Bennett said he checked it with the company involved and told him “No way.” . . . Later when I asked Hunt if it came off, he said, “Oh, no, but Muskie’s not going to be the candidate, so it doesn’t matter anyway.” (New York Times, April 28, 1973)

On May 23, 1973 the New York Times reported the following:

Mr. Greenspun said that he had learned . . . that Robert Bennett, . . . had testified in a “secret hearing” that he had presented a blank check from the Hughes interests to the Nixon campaign fund and that it had been cashed for a very large sum, . . .

He said that he was not certain when the burglary attempt occurred. He said that he had noticed that the aluminum sills of his office window, which are concealed behind heavy curtains, had been jimmied and that the safe bore the marks of heavy tools having been used on it when he returned from a vacation trip last September. (New York Times, May 23, 1973, page 30)

In the White House Transcripts, Nixon seemed to suggest that “bugging” might have been involved in the Greenspun affair. We have no other evidence for this; however, we do know that Robert Bennett had an interest in bugging devices. In a deposition given in DNC v. McCord, April 19, 1973, Bennett testified as follows:

A. He [Hunt] said a friend of his had developed a device, which, as he described it, was very, very sophisticated in the realm of electronic surveillance. He said it could be attached to a piece of furniture, that it was voice actuated so that the batteries or whatever power source it had would be preserved and that it was invulnerable to an electronic sweep and suggested that maybe some of our clients would be interested in knowing about the existence of this device. If they were, he said he could introduce them to the individual who had developed it. I checked and none of our clients had any interest in it. (Robert Bennett Deposition, April 19, 1973, DNC v. McCord, page 25)

Senator Howard Baker claims that Robert Bennett was actually involved in a plan to bug Clifford Irving:

Bennett asked for and received from Hunt a price estimate for bugging Clifford Irving for Hughes; . . . (“The Baker Report,” pp. 8-9)

The testimony by Howard Hunt and Robert F. Bennett concerning this “estimate for bugging” was taken in Executive Session before the Senate Watergate Committee, and therefore is not available to the public.

HUNT’S B.Y.U. SPY

In his report Senator Baker said: “. . . Bennett coordinated the employment of political spy Tom Gregory by Hunt and discussed the latter’s refusal to proceed with bugging plans on or about June 16, 1972” (“The Baker Report,” page 9).

Thomas Gregory was a student at the Mormon Church’s Brigham Young University at the time he was hired by Howard Hunt to spy on Democratic candidates. Gregory’s decision to engage in this type of activity may have been influenced by his experience at Brigham Young University. According to the University’s newspaper, Daily Universe, Jan. 11, 1973, Gregory “attended BYU from 1966-1968. He served in the South Brazil Mission until 1970 and has been registered at BYU since then.”

Since Gregory was attending BYU “from 1966-1968,” he would have been there at the time that a scandal concerning a spy ring rocked the campus. It was in February, 1967, when the existence of this spy ring was first revealed. The following appeared in The Daily Utah Chronicle, a newspaper published at the University of Utah:

Brigham Young University is in the calm of a hurricane’s eye after being rocked with student charges of an administration-instigated spy ring. . . .

Two political science students, Ronald Hankin and Colleen Stone, described the “spy ring” to BYU student body Tuesday during a “free forum” speech. Hankin claims to have been asked by Steven Russell, senior political scientist, to “check up on a reaction to Pres. Ernest Wilkinson’s April 21 speech” . . .

In a Chronicle interview, Hankin said 15 students were offered the “spy task” authorized by Vice President Joseph T. Bentley. “We were to check up on eight teachers: . . .” (The Daily Utah Chronicle, March 6, 1967)

At first Ernest L. Wilkinson, who was President of BYU, evidently tried to deny the charges: “According to an Associated Press story, Wilkinson said the students were ‘misinformed’ and that he had no knowledge of the alleged
spy ring.” *(Ibid.*) Even though BYU officials denied the existence of the spy ring, an investigation showed that such a ring did exist. Finally Ernest L. Wilkinson was forced to admit that there was such a group:

PROVO (AP)—Brigham Young University President Ernest L. Wilkinson acknowledged Tuesday that a student investigation team had existed on campus to check on so-called liberal professors. . . . In his letter Dr. Wilkinson said:

Although there is misinformation in the charges, there was such a group, reports were made and students were under impression they were acting with the sanction of the administration.

He did not say who the students were reporting, but added:

“As president I must accept responsibility and I regret the misunderstanding and uneasiness which had been engendered.”

Brigham Young University is owned and operated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly known as the Mormon Church. *(Salt Lake Tribune, March 15, 1967)*

On March 6, 1967, the *Daily Utah Chronicle* reported the following:

In the same *Chronicle* interview, Miss Stone said she and Hankin could not be “ousted” from school for the speech because the activity was authorized by the administration since it was sponsored by the student government committee. However, she said, “I have been tailed since 1 p.m. Wednesday and they’re trying to find us doing something wrong so they can oust us.”

On March 28, 1967, “two of the BYU spies,” Mr. Hankin and Mr. Sisin, were guests in the Caucus Room at the University of Utah. They stated that they “had been subjected to a good deal of harassment. BYU people seemed to resent them as ‘squealers.’” They also stated that one of the administrators at the BYU “told them he wished they would leave, that he wished he had had their telephones bugged.” Two weeks later Ronald Hankin was “dismissed from school.” The Mormon paper, *Deseret News*, claimed that there was no connection between his dismissal and his part in exposing the spy ring:

PROVO—Student Ronald Hankin, 24, was dismissed from school for multiple violations of BYU standards all separate from his part in disclosing a student “spy” ring, a statement, printed in the university’s weekly Faculty Bulletin, said Thursday.

It emphasized there was no connection with the fact that Mr. Hankin was the student who charged that classmates were being used to spy on so-called “liberal” professors.

Mr. Hankin also wrote Thursday in a letter to the BYU *Daily Universe* that his dismissal was unrelated to his allegations regarding the spy ring. . . .

Dr. Ernest Wilkinson, BYU president, acknowledged the existence of the spy ring and said the administration would not permit such conditions in the future. *(Deseret News, April 13, 1967, page 14B)*

As we indicated earlier, Thomas Gregory was attending BYU at the time the spy scandal came to light. He then “served in the South Brazil mission until 1970 and has been registered at BYU since then.” *(Daily Universe, Jan.11, 1973)*

In the *Senate Watergate Report*, we find the following information about the recruitment of Gregory for spying activities:

**D. Ruby II**. In February 1972, Howard Hunt hired Thomas Gregory, a student at Brigham Young University, to infiltrate the Muskie campaign. Hunt met Gregory through Robert Fletcher, the nephew of Robert Bennett, Hunt’s employer at the Mullen Company.

Using the alias Ed Warren, Hunt called Gregory in Utah and asked him to come to Washington for an expense-paid job interview. About a week later Hunt and Gregory met at the Park Central Hotel in Washington, where Hunt explained that he wanted information from the Muskie campaign, including schedules, internal memoranda, and general observations of the campaign. Gregory was to work as a volunteer for Muskie, report to Hunt once a week, and receive $175 a week for his services. Gregory accepted the offer. *(The Senate Watergate Report, vol.1, page 297)*

The BYU’s newspaper, *Daily Universe*, published an article entitled “Student is witness” on January 9, 1973. In this article we read:

A BYU student has been called as one of the key government witnesses in the Watergate trial which began Monday. . . .

Gregory, a history major, became involved with the Muskie campaign through an “Independent Learning Experience” sponsored by the BYU Honors program. After the Muskie campaign folded, Gregory went to work for McGovern. J. Keith Melville, Professor of Political Science, who supervised Gregory, said that he worked on foreign policy for Muskie and was a student coordinator for McGovern.

Melville said that in his talks “there was nothing that Gregory ever related to me that would have connected him with the Watergate case.”

He noted that Gregory was “very diligent in his particular political area and very perceptive about his work.” Early in his progress reports, Gregory related to Melville that Muskie was on a downward trend—before this was recognized by the press.

On January 12, 1973, BYU’s *Daily Universe* reported the following:

BYU student Thomas Gregory testified late Thursday that he was paid to spy on the campaigns of Democratic presidential contenders . . .

Gregory, a 25-year old history major at BYU, testified that Hunt paid his fare to Washington and induced him to work in Muskie’s office and then for Sen. George McGovern.

Gregory testified his assignment in both offices was to get as much information as possible on the candidates’ schedules, the names of their contributors and such physical details of their headquarters as locations of heating ducts, pictures on the walls and light fixtures. . . .

Gregory said he and Hunt met once a week in a drug store and exchanged envelopes, Gregory giving typewritten notes and Hunt returning his pay, $175.

Earlier Thursday, . . . BYU President Dallin Oaks issued a statement . . .

Pres. Oaks said, “I am satisfied that no Brigham Young University teacher or official had any knowledge of the alleged spying. If the spying took place, we deplore it.”

The president issued the statement after conferring with Dr. Keith Melville, the political science professor who was supervising Gregory’s “Independent Learning Experience” project as intern with the Edmund Muskie and George McGovern campaigns.

Melville said he was first contacted last February by Gregory.

“He proposed the program and gave me a list of books he was to read,” said Melville. “It seemed to be a noteworthy program.”

On January 17, 1973, the *Daily Universe* printed this information:

BYU student Thomas Gregory testified yesterday in Washington, D.C. that he was paid $3400 for spying and quit after a “close call” in an effort to bug Sen. George McGovern’s headquarters.

Gregory testified in the Watergate bugging trial that he met with E. Howard Hunt, G. Gordon Liddy, James W. McCord Jr., and four other defendants in a Washington hotel room early last May.

He said McCord expressed interest in planting electronic listening devices in the offices of McGovern campaign officials, according to Associated Press reports. On a visit to McGovern headquarters, Gregory said, McCord went through the building observing the burglar-alarm system and the location of exits. He said he later was introduced to Liddy, who went along on a night-time reconnaissance of the area around McGovern headquarters.

Gregory said he was asked to provide keys to the McGovern headquarters but refused. He did agree to remain in the building late on May 28 and leave some locks open when he departed. However, another man working in the headquarters discovered him and wanted to know why he was there. He then left and called to warn Hunt and the bugging operation scheduled for that night was called off . . .

During a final meeting with Hunt on June 15, Gregory said he wanted out of the operation. *(Daily Universe, January 17, 1973)*

In the *Senate Watergate Report*, we find the following:

At about this same time, Hunt asked Gregory to transfer to the McGovern campaign as a volunteer, which he did . . . he was now to prepare and assist Hunt and Liddy in their plans to place electronic surveillance on McGovern headquarters.

Gregory gave Hunt a floor plan and office description of the McGovern headquarters at Hunt’s request. Hunt then introduced Gregory to James McCord, in late April or early May 1972. In a meeting . . . Hunt and McCord told Gregory they were planning to place a “bug” in the McGovern headquarters and would need assistance.

In late May 1972, Gregory took McCord through the McGovern headquarters to familiarize McCord with the physical layout. On a second occasion (May 27, 1972) Gregory again took McCord through the McGovern headquarters; on that visit McCord unsuccessfully attempted to plant a bug in Frank Mankiewicz’s office.
Sometime in late May-early June 1972 Gregory met Gordon Liddy for the first time, during an automobile ride in which Hunt drove Liddy and Gregory around the McGovern headquarters while Liddy told Gregory that he, too, was interested in getting into the McGovern offices.

Hunt, Liddy, McCord, and Gregory met at a Washington hotel to discuss breaking into McGovern headquarters to copy documents and to go over a physical layout of offices and the location of alarm systems. (The Senate Watergate Report, vol. 1, page 298)

In a chart published in the Senate Watergate Hearings, vol. 11, page 4,637, Thomas Gregory is listed as being part of the “Gemstone” operation; Mr. Lackritz says that “Thomas Gregory was known as Rudy 2. . . .” (Ibid., page 4,638)

Although Gregory was deeply involved with the Watergate burglars, he was fortunate enough to get out of the conspiracy before he was caught. In The Senate Watergate Report, vol. 1, page 298, we find that “By early June, Gregory had serious questions about the propriety of his activities,” and that he discussed the matter with “Robert Bennett.” The report goes on to state: “On or about June 15 or 16, 1972, Gregory met with Hunt to tell him that he no longer wished to continue with his work. After terminating his employment with Hunt, Gregory also contacted the McGovern headquarters to discontinue his volunteer work. Gregory received approximately $3,400 for his services.”

Thomas Gregory confessed his role in the spying activities and appeared as a witness at the Watergate Trial in January 1973. It is interesting to note that at least 3 other Mormons appeared as witnesses at the trial—i.e., Senator Wallace Bennett, his son Douglass, and Robert Bennett Fletcher (Daily Universe, January 11-12, 1973). The Senate Watergate Report, vol. 1, page 297, says that “when Hunt was not available, Gregory gave this material to Robert Fletcher to pass on to Hunt.” Although Fletcher was aware of the fact that Gregory was spying on the Democrats and had recommended him for this work, we have not found any evidence that he was aware of the plans for bugging and burglary.

*Note Added—The BYU Daily Universe for January 11, 1973 said Wallace and Douglas Bennett were “Listed among the witnesses,” but Official Court Reporter Nicholas Sokal has been unable to locate any testimony given by these two men. At any rate, at least three Mormons gave testimony—i.e., Robert Bennett, Thomas Gregory and Robert B. Fletcher.

BENNETT’S COMPANY IN TROUBLE

In our telephone conversation with James A. Everett, he admitted that a good share of the planning of the Watergate caper took place in Howard Hunt’s office at the Mullen Co. In his letter to us, Mr. Everett stated:

13. Howard Hunt’s office was the only room in the RRM & Co. suite, which could be entered from the outside hall without going through the central reception room. When Hunt would have visits from McCord, Liddy, Barker, et.al. he would have them use his outside entrance and then close the inner reception room door. In this manner they could conduct their extraneous activities and plantings without having it known to the other members of the R.R.M. & Co. staff. Liddy had his own offices across the street and I would imagine all the confidential charts used in the infamous briefing to Mitchell were done there where he would have greater security in the preparation.

Notice that Mr. Everett stated that “Liddy had his own offices across the street” from the Mullen Company This is a very revealing statement concerning the location of the Mullen Company. Actually, the address for the Mullen Company was 1700 Pennsylvania Ave., and the Committee to Re-elect the President was located at 1701 Pennsylvania Ave., which is of course right across the street. Both the Mullen Company and the Committee to Re-elect the President were within a block of the White House—the White House is located at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.

As we have already shown, James McCord told of attending meetings where the Watergate conspirators discussed their plans “in Mr. Hunt’s office, in the Robert R. Mullen offices. . . .” (Hearings, vol. 1, page 142). Bernard Baker also told of meeting with the conspirators at the “Mullins [sic] headquarters.”

After it was discovered that Howard Hunt was involved in the Watergate break-in, Robert Bennett found his company under investigation. James A. Everett states: “After the initial telephone call from the Washington Post there was a veritable deluge of calls all seeking leads” (Letter dated October 15, 1974). The New York Times for June 21, 1972, reported the following:

Robert F. Bennett, president of the Robert R. Mullen Company, . . . said in an interview this afternoon that Mr. Hunt could not be found. Mr. Bennett said that F.B.I. agents came to the offices of his company, at 1700 Pennsylvania Avenue, yesterday morning looking for Mr. Hunt. Mr. Bennett said that he found a message from Mr. Hunt this morning saying he had gone to New York for the day in connection with a television project in which the company is engaged. But, Mr. Bennett said, he could not reach him there. . . .

Howard Hunt hid from the FBI for about two weeks. Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward state:

Meanwhile, Howard Hunt had not been seen since the day he had spoken briefly on the telephone to Woodward. The FBI assigned 150 agents to the search. On July 7, . . . Hunt came in from the cold. (All The President’s Men, page 34)

On page 9 of his report, Senator Baker claimed that “Bennett served as the point of contact between Hunt and Liddy during the two weeks following the Watergate break-in.”

Since Hunt worked for Robert Bennett, it did not take the FBI long to suspect that all was not well at the Mullen Company. James A. Everett, who had just arrived from Europe, felt that the FBI bugged the phones of the Mullen Co. after the Watergate break-in. This, of course, cannot be proven, but there can be no doubt that the Mullen Company was under investigation. On July 7, 1972, the New York Times reported: “The Mullen Company’s records have been subpoenaed in connection with the current Federal grand jury investigation into the Watergate matter.”

The Mullen Company’s records proved very fruitful to investigators. For instance, the records showed that more than a dozen phone calls had been placed to Donald Segretti, who had “directed a campaign of political espionage and sabotage against the Democrats.” This, of course, linked Segretti’s activities to Howard Hunt.

BENNETT’S COVER-UP

After the Watergate break-in was discovered, Robert Bennett found himself faced with the possibility that his activities would bring embarrassment to both the Mormon Church and the CIA. Therefore, he did his best to cover-up the BYU spy and the relationship of his company with the CIA.

Bennett’s attempt to suppress the involvement of the BYU spy did not last long. Jack Anderson, who is himself a Mormon stated:

Bennett was called in for questioning six times by the original Watergate prosecutors. He held back Gregory’s vital information out of loyalty to the youth, Bennett claims.

But the prosecutors traced Bennett’s long-distance telephone calls to Gregory. When Bennett learned this, he called the prosecutors and said: “Look, you’ve found Tommy. I’ll tell you about Tommy.” (Deseret News, June 25, 1974)

Bennett’s attempt to suppress the involvement with the CIA was successful for a while, but the truth eventually came out anyway. In Senator Baker’s Report we find the following:

The true nature of Bennett’s relationship to the CIA was not known to us until late November of 1973 when, at Senator Baker’s request, the CIA produced another volume of CIA documents (Volume IV). The following information was added from this volume.

On July 10, 1972, Bennett reported detailed knowledge of the Watergate incident to his CIA case officer. The case officer’s report of this meeting was handwritten and carried to Director Helms on or before July 14, 1972, in this form because of the sensitivity of the information. It revealed that Bennett had established a “back door entry” to E. B. Williams, the attorney for the DNC, in order to “kill off” revelations of the Agency’s relationship with the Mullen and Company in the course of the DNC lawsuit. He agreed to check with the CIA prior to contacting Williams. Our staff has confirmed that Bennett did funnel information to Williams via attorney Hobart Taylor and that this information was more extensive than the information Bennett had previously provided the Grand Jury. The CIA has acknowledged paying one-half of Bennett’s attorney fee for his Grand Jury appearance.

Although Bennett was supplying information to the CIA about many aspects of the Watergate incident and was at that time serving as liaison between Hunt and Liddy, there is no indication that these facts were disclosed to the FBI . . .
A memorandum drafted by the Chief of the Central Cover Staff, CIA, on March 1, 1973, notes that Bennett felt he could handle the Ervin Committee if the Agency could handle Hunt. Bennett even stated that he had a friend who had intervened with Ervin on the matter. ("The Baker Report," pp. 9, 10 and 12)

Robert Bennett publicly stated that he knew nothing about the Watergate break-in. He claimed, in fact, that Hunt had lied to him (see New York Times, April 28, 1973). Now that more information has come out, it has become apparent that Bennett knew about Hunt’s illegal activities prior to the Watergate break-in. Jack Anderson has published the fact that Bennett knew of the “White House burglary-bugging team” before the Watergate break-in:

WASHINGTON—CIA front man Robert Bennett, son of veteran Sen. Wallace Bennett, R-Utah, has conceded that he knew a White House burglary-bugging team was on the prowl in advance of the celebrated Watergate break-in.

A secret memorandum written by his CIA case officer, states that the senator’s son withheld vital information from the authorities.

In an interview with my associate Les Whitten, Bennett acknowledged he knew at least three days before the Watergate burglary that White House aide E. Howard Hunt and his second-story crew had plotted to break into the campaign headquarters of Sen. George McGovern, D-S.D., and bug the place.

Instead of reporting the conspiracy to the police, Bennett kept his mouth shut. At the same time, he told his CIA contact that he had held back information from the original Watergate prosecutors when they later questioned him about the Watergate break-in.

This episode is another link in the mysterious CIA involvement in Watergate. . . . the full story still hasn’t been told.

The CIA used Bennett’s public relations firm, Mullen and Company, as a spy front. On its payroll was none other than Howard Hunt, the Watergate conspirator.

Bennett’s nephew referred a Brigham Young University student, named Thomas Gregory, to Hunt who recruited the young man as a political spy. . . .

As Bennett related it Gregory had been told by Hunt to work late one night at McGovern headquarters and leave a door open so the White House burglars could sneak in. (Deseret News, June 25, 1974)

From documents which we have examined, it appears that Robert Bennett was able to offer Mullen clients not only public relations but burglary services as well. Bennett’s own testimony plainly shows that he was trying to interest his clients in equipment for electronic surveillance. The fact that Bennett was offering burglary service is very plain from Senator Baker’s statement that “Bennett asked for and received from Hunt a price estimate for bugging Clifford Irving for Hughes; . . . .” (“The Baker Report,” pp. 8-9) Senator Baker links Robert Bennett’s name to a number of illegal or questionable activities:

. . . Bennett suggested and coordinated the Demont interview regarding Chappaquiddick; Bennett coordinated the release of Dita Beard’s statement from Denver, after contacting Beard’s attorneys at the suggestion of a Hughes executive; Bennett suggested that Greenspun’s safe contained information of interest to both Hughes and the CRP . . . Bennett coordinated the employment of political spy Tom Gregory by Hunt and discussed with Gregory the latter’s refusal to proceed with bugging plans on or about June 16, 1972. Bennett served as the point of contact between Hunt and Liddy during the two weeks following the Watergate break-in. (“The Baker Report,” pages 8-9)

At one time Robert Bennett assigned Howard Hunt to the Hughes account. Hunt not only asked for help from the CIA in his work for the White House but also for his work on the Hughes account. Senator Baker states: “. . . he actually contacted the CIA’s External Employment Assistance Branch (EEAB) and approached active CIA personnel regarding several operations including e.g., Hunt’s requests to the CIA for person(s) skilled in lockpicking, electronic sweeping, and entry operations.” (Ibid., pages 26-27) In a footnote on page 27 of the same report, Senator Baker gives this interesting information:

a. Hunt was referred to [Former CIA employee] [Chief EEAB] of the CIA’s EEAB, . . . when Hunt requested a “retired lockpicker” and entry man in the time period of March-May 1972. CIA Supplemental Materials, Volume 1, Tab 4, Memorandum of June 19, 1972.

b. Hunt, in late 1971, requested some “security types to check physical security and monitor telephones in Las Vegas” in connection with Hunt’s work on the Hughes account with Mullen and Company.

The evidence indicates that Robert Bennett was especially interested in providing a burglary and bugging service for Hughes. He may have wanted his other clients to also receive these services. As we have already shown, Bennett did admit discussing a bugging device with his “clients,” but he claimed that “none of our clients had any interest in it.” We do not know whether the Mormon Church was one of the “clients” Bennett was referring to.

In his relationship with the Mormon Church Robert Bennett seems to have dealt with the Mormon Apostle Mark E. Petersen. Petersen is now second in line to be President of the Mormon Church. James A. Everett made this statement in his letter to us: “9. It is my understanding that Mark E. Petersen was head of the Public Relations effort at the level which was served by Robert R. Mullen & Co.” (Letter dated October 15, 1974) Mr. Everett also stated that Bennett and Petersen are “good friends.”

The reader may remember that Mark E. Petersen is the same man who threatened to sue us because we published his anti-Negro speech. Since the speech was in the public domain, and since we accurately reproduced it, Mr. Petersen had no grounds for any legal action and the matter was dropped (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pp. 12-13).

One of Mark E. Petersen’s most important responsibilities is to investigate and order the excommunication of those Mormons who deviate from the teachings and doctrines of the Mormon Church. At the present time the Apostle Petersen seems to be after Michael Marquardt. Mr. Marquardt is the Mormon scholar who brought to light Joseph Smith’s 1831 revelation on polygamy. This revelation had been suppressed for over 140 years because it commanded the Mormons to marry Indians to make them a “white” and “delightsome” people. About a month after we published this revelation in the Messenger and in the book Mormonism Like Watergate? Mark E. Petersen had Mr. Marquardt’s Stake Presidency call him in for questioning. It was June 9, 1974, when Mr. Marquardt appeared before the Stake Presidency. The same day Mr. Marquardt wrote a report of the meeting from which we extract the following:

President Reed Brown said that he had received a letter from Mark E. Petersen of the Council of the Twelve asking about my name being mentioned in publication by the Tanners who were apostates. He asked a few questions which I answered and then his counselor Calvin broadband asked a few questions which I also answered.

I then told them that in 1971 I had been called in by my previous Stake President because of a letter from Mark E. Petersen . . .

I then asked if I could read the letter. The letter was dated June 3, 1974 and written to President Reed Brown and signed by Mark E. Petersen. Mention was made that reports of Brother Michael Marquardt were being received by Mark E. Petersen . . . Reports that they have in the office goes back to rumors in 1971 . . . Mention was made that my name had appeared in a publication by the Tanners who were apostate, reference was made to the Salt Lake City Messenger published by Modern Microfilm Company . . . The Historian’s Office was upset about my research as it related to the Church. Mark E. Petersen wanted to make sure that I was not teaching false doctrine in the Elders’ Quorum.”

Since Mr. Marquardt is more interested in getting out the truth than in his membership in the Church, Mark E. Petersen has not been able to silence him. Unfortunately, however, many members of the Church are afraid of Petersen’s investigations and are intimidated when he has them called in for examination.

MORMONS IN THE C.I.A.

Since the Mullen Company was used as a cover for the CIA, a question concerning the involvement of the Mormon Church with the CIA naturally arises. An examination of the evidence has led us to the belief that at least some of the clients of the Mullen Company were used as cover for CIA agents. In his report Senator Baker states: “CIA records indicate that Agency consideration was given to utilizing Mullen’s Hughes relationship for a matter relating to a cover arrangement in [South America] and to garner information on Robert Maheu” (“The Baker Report,” page 8). There is good reason to believe that at least two other clients of the Mullen Company had some involvement with the CIA.
The Mormon Church’s world-wide activities and mission program could provide a perfect cover for CIA agents, but at the present time we have no evidence that this is actually the case. We do know, however, that the Church provides many men for the CIA. Writing in the New York Times for September 16, 1974, Wallace Turner states: “Many Mormon scholars work on contracts for the C.I.A.” We recently asked a man who had taught at Brigham Young University if he had any reason to believe that the Mormon missionary program was used as a cover for CIA agents. He replied that he did not, but he went on to state that many missionaries are later recruited to CIA work. He felt that the missionary program provided good training for CIA agents. The missionaries are taught absolute obedience to authority and many of them learn foreign languages as well. He also stated that the Church’s educational system contains a large number of men who have been involved in the CIA or FBI.

There can be little doubt that the Church’s Brigham Young University provides many men for the CIA. One man told us that he was recruited while working in the language department at BYU. Another man has written a letter in which he stated:

. . . I did have a professor at BYU who had been first a member of U.S. Army Intelligence (Korean War), and later an employee of the CIA . . . and he never made any secret of it . . . I also had a roommate at BYU who is now and has been for some time a covert agent (a "007") for the CIA, . . .

The Brigham Young University’s Daily Universe reported the following on November 7, 1974:

An expense paid trip to the nation’s capital and a monthly salary of $780 from the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), provided BYU law student Dale Storer with an “interesting experience” last summer. . . . Storer spent the summer in Washington D.C., doing research for the CIA.

Storer, a graduate in economics, who served a two-year mission for the church in Indonesia, did research in the areas of economy and industrialization. . . .

He said there are many opportunities to work with the CIA and urged students wishing to gain more information to contact Dr. Lawrence G. Woodward, coordinator for cooperative programs.

We are rather alarmed that so many Mormons are involved with the CIA. The Watergate investigation has clearly demonstrated that there is a tendency for some of those trained in covert operations to return and use them on their own people. Any group with a large proportion of their members trained in spying activities could become a serious threat to freedom. The Mormon Church could prove to be exceptionally dangerous, however, because it has a secret “Council of Fifty” in its history (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pp. 414-421).

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT WARNS CHURCH

In 1972 a man we had known for a number of years complained that the Apostle Mark E. Petersen was investigating him in order to find evidence that he was out of harmony with the teachings of the Church. After about eight months he was excommunicated from the Church. Later we heard that this man was claiming his telephone was bugged and his private journal stolen at the time he was under investigation. On March 5, 1974, we checked with him and found that he was making these charges. He claimed, in fact, that both his home phone and his phone at the Dugway Proving Ground had been bugged. These charges alarmed us for two reasons: First, the bugging of a U.S. Government phone on which national security matters might be discussed would be a very serious matter. Second, we knew that this man had called us in 1972, and if his phone was wiretapped then any conversations we had with him might have been intercepted also.

After we learned that Mormons like Robert Bennett and Thomas Gregory had been involved in the planning of bugging operations, we became very interested in this man’s charges. In June 1974 Attorney General William B. Saxbe called on the American people to report any information they might have about illegal wiretapping. On July 1, 1974, we sent all the material that could be gathered about this alleged wiretapping to the Justice Department. A man who was well informed on legal matters told us that he felt the charges should be investigated but that he doubted the FBI would touch the matter if it involved the Mormon Church. At any rate, the Justice Department acknowledged receiving the material on July 3, 1974. Over two months past and to our knowledge no investigation was begun. On September 15, 1974, we wrote to the Attorney General and asked if he was serious about the matter. Finally, after about three months from the time we first contacted the Justice Department an agent from the FBI visited our house. He said that the Government had no record of any legal wiretapping of the man, and therefore if there was any wiretapping it had to be illegal. He assured us that a thorough investigation would be made, and that the investigation would begin the next day. After a week had passed however, we learned that the victim of the alleged wiretapping had still not been interviewed. We called the FBI to find out what they were doing, and within a few hours the man was interviewed. Another month passed and we assumed that the FBI had contacted the important witnesses. To our dismay, however, we learned that by November 5, 1974, some of the most important persons had still not been interviewed. Now it could be that the FBI is doing something we do not know about, but we cannot help but have the depressing feeling that the claim of a thorough investigation and the few interviews actually made were only for the purpose of pacifying us. In a book which we are now working on we may have more to report on this matter.

However this may be, the victim of the alleged wiretapping claimed that his wife told him that a counselor to his Stake President had listened to 4 1/2 hours of taped conversation which was supposed to have been derived from the bugging. His wife, however, denies that she said this—the counselor also vigorously denies the allegation. Nevertheless, she does support her husband’s story that their phone was monitored and claims to have some important evidence on the subject. This is especially interesting since she is still a loyal member of the Church and does not go along with her husband’s religious views. This woman feels that her husband’s excommunication was engineered from above, and that local leaders were pressured into taking action against him. She supports her husband’s claim that the Apostle Petersen had been gathering information against him. At any rate, unless the FBI makes a good thorough investigation of this matter, we may never know who is telling the truth.

Although we can make no definite conclusions about this alleged case of wiretapping, the research concerning it has brought to light some important information. After we informed a man who has good connections in the Church of the case, he watched carefully for any material relating to it. Sometime around the middle of November he made a very important discovery in The Priesthood Bulletin. This publication is printed by the Mormon Church for priesthood leaders and is not for the general membership of the Church. The important item is found in Vol. 10, No. 3, Third Quarter, 1974, p. 2, and reads as follows (see photograph on page 1):

The United States Department of Justice has notified the Church that federal law can be violated by the illegal use of an oral communication in connection with a Church court. The law is violated when anyone willfully and knowingly uses a recorded communication when he knows or has reason to believe that the recording was obtained by interception without the consent of the parties involved in the conversation.

All priesthood authorities are advised to refrain from using any tape-recorded communication unless the party whose conversation was recorded clearly has given express consent in writing to its use.

After reading The Priesthood Bulletin, we felt that it must certainly relate to the alleged wiretapping case. We called the FBI and asked if it did relate to this case. The FBI claimed the statement in The Priesthood Bulletin did not relate to this particular case. It was concerning another matter which the FBI had investigated. From what we could gather it involved the illegal use of a concealed tape recorder to gain evidence against a Church member to be used in a Church court. The FBI had investigated the matter, and the Department of Justice had sent the Church a letter warning them against the illegal interception of oral communications. This whole matter seems to have been handled in secret and probably would not have come to our attention if it had not been for the unusual circumstances we have related.

The Mormon Church is probably very lucky to receive only a private letter of warning from the Justice Department. A car dealer in Ogden, Utah, was recently indicted for “intercepting oral communications.” (Salt Lake Tribune, November 21, 1974) While the offense is serious, the car dealer could only take monetary advantage of people. The Church, on the other hand, could easily ruin a person’s reputation through the misuse of the excommunication process. A person who has been excommunicated could lose his job, family or friends.
The U.S. Government has dismissed many cases where the prosecution has used illegal means to obtain evidence. Mormon Church courts are not subject to the same rules as legal courts, but anyone who can prove he was illegally bugged to obtain information for a Church court could undoubtedly win a lawsuit against the Church. Therefore, although the Mormon Church may have escaped action by the Justice Department, it may still face serious legal problems.

**INFORMATION NEEDED FOR BOOK**

The material we have presented in this issue of the Messenger is only a preliminary and brief report. We are now in the process of writing a book about these matters. Some of our readers may have vital information which could help us. We are looking for information on the following subjects: wiretapping or bugging in the Mormon Church, the theft of personal papers or journals before excommunication, Apostle Petersen’s methods of gaining information against those suspected of apostasy, the Church’s Law Observance and Enforcement Committee, any evidence of the existence of the secret Council of 50 after 1900, the BYU spy ring, Robert Bennett and the Mullen Co., the CIA and Mormonism, and Howard Hughes’s relationship with the Mormons.

If the reader has any accurate information or leads on any of the subjects above we would appreciate knowing about it.

**THE BOOK THAT CAN NOT EXIST!**

Psychiatrists tell us that the inability to face reality leads to many serious emotional problems. Those who are honest with themselves must admit that at sometime during their life they have had difficulty facing reality. Some of Richard Nixon’s greatest problems seem to stem from his inability to face reality. Even churches can have this problem. The Mormon Church, for instance has some serious problems which the leaders have failed to come to grips with. We have detailed a large number of these problems in our book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* Now, instead of facing these problems the Mormon leaders have turned their backs and pretended that they do not exist. As early as October 1966, we made this comment in the Messenger:

Many people have commented that it is very strange that the Mormon leaders have not made a rebuttal to this book. We feel the reason that they have not openly denounced it is because they know it would draw attention to the very things they want to hide from their people and that this would work to our advantage.

In 1972 we enlarged *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* and brought it completely up to date. We are now happy to announce that over 10,000 copies have been sold. During the last month alone we sold about 300 copies. Even though sales are mounting and many people are leaving the Church, Mormon scholars continue to keep silent concerning this book. Neither Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought nor Brigham Young University Studies have carried a review. This is really incredible since these publications have reviewed many books that have been critical of the Church. For instance, the BYU Studies published a 4 1/2 page review of the book *Latter-day Saints and the Sabbath.*

It seems to be almost unwritten rule among Mormon scholars that they must never mention *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* in print. They apparently feel that they must not allow their people to know of its existence. Fortunately there are a few exceptions. Samuel W. Taylor mentions it in his book *Nightfall at Nauvoo,* and in *Mormonia—A Quarterly Bibliography of Works on Mormonism,* Fall 1972, page 89. *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* is referred to as “Perhaps the most exhaustive expose of Mormonism between two covers.” It seems almost beyond belief that Mormon writers will write long reviews of many books and even small pamphlets critical of the Church and yet fail to mention the book which *Mormonia* calls “Perhaps the most exhaustive expose of Mormonism between two covers.” We feel that there can be only one explanation for this silence by Mormon writers, and that is that they know that the charges we make are basically correct and cannot be refuted. We do not claim, of course, that *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* is a perfect book. Any book of this size would have a few errors in it and unless Mormon writers can discover substantial defects in this book they would do well to keep silent. One Mormon writer attempted to write a rebuttal to *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* He found, however, that he could not deal with the issues raised in the book. He admitted that the truth concerning the Church was even worse than what we had presented. Finally, this man was excommunicated from the Church.

Since we are more interested in getting the truth out than in making a lot of money, we sell *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* at a very reasonable price—many publishers would charge twice as much for a book this size.

**AN ETERNAL COVER-UP**

Although the Watergate scandal has really hurt our country, there is a real lesson that we all can learn from it—that is, that it does not pay to try and cover up our sins. The Bible warns: “. . . be sure your sin will find you out” (Numbers 32:23). It is true that we can often hide our sins from men, but Jesus tells us that we cannot hide them from God: “. . . there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known” (Matthew 10:26).

Our former President must have firmly believed that his tapes would never come to light, but through some very strange circumstances they did become public and caused his downfall. This is certainly a tragic example, and we cannot help but feel sorry for him and for his family. Nevertheless, it teaches us that even the President of the United States does not have the power to cover up his sins.

It is certainly ironical that Richard Nixon should be trapped by his own tapes. The Bible, however, tells us that we all stand in jeopardy of being convicted by our own words at the judgment:

> But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. (Matthew 12:36-37)

Although we do not feel that God has a secret tape recorder which he uses to bug us with, we do believe He has knowledge of everything through his Holy Spirit. The Bible says that God not only knows our every word and action but also the “thoughts and intents” of our heart:

> For the word of God is quick, and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12 -13)

In 1 Corinthians 4:5 we read that the Lord “will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: . . .” Romans 2:16 tells us that “God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.”

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus it is clear that after death our memory will be restored and that if we have continued in sin and selfishness it will condemn us (see Luke 16:25). The Bible tells us that we are all sinners and in need of God’s forgiveness. To refuse to face this fact is to live a life which is founded on cover-up, and this will eventually prove disastrous to our souls. In the story of the Pharisee and the publican Jesus shows that we can appear to be very religious, but if we have not acknowledged that we are sinners in need of God’s grace we are still under condemnation.

Now, while the Bible teaches that it is impossible for us to cover up our own sins, it does state that God Himself can cover them up if we will turn to him and ask for forgiveness:

> But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:7-9)

In Psalms 32:1 we read: “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” This is a cover-up that really works. In Psalms 103:12 we find this statement: “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” Isaiah 43:25 gives this assurance: “. . . and will not remember thy sins.” Those who have received the Lord into their hearts know the great joy and peace that comes from accepting God’s forgiveness. The Bible says:

> Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: Old things are passed away; Behold, all things are become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)
In our last issue of the _Salt Lake City Messenger_ we pointed out some interesting facts that seem to point to a relationship between the Mormon Church and the CIA. For one thing, we proved that a company which handled international public relations for the Mormon Church was used as "an overseas cover for CIA activities" (Newsweek, July 15, 1974, page 29). This was the Robert R. Mullen and Company. Mr. Mullen is the same man who wrote a book entitled _The Latter-day Saints: The Mormons Yesterday and Today_. This book is obviously written in defense of the Mormon Church.

Robert Bennett, a prominent Mormon who is the son of Wallace F. Bennett, bought the Mullen Company in 1971. The notorious Howard Hunt worked under Bennett at the Mullen Company at the very time the Watergate break-in took place. In fact, the Watergate conspirators met and discussed plans for the burglary in the Mullen Company.

Since the publication of our last _Messenger_, the Rockefeller Report on the CIA has been issued. It tends to confirm much of our research. The following is taken from that report:

In April 1970, E. Howard Hunt retired from the Central Intelligence Agency after having served in it for over twenty years. With the help of the Agency's External Employment Affairs Branch, he obtained a job with Robert R. Mullen and Company, a Washington, D.C., public relations firm. The Mullen Company itself had for years cooperated with the Agency by providing cover abroad for Agency officers, carrying them as ostensible employees of its offices overseas.

Hunt, while employed by Mullen, orchestrated and led the Fielding and Watergate break-ins and participated in other questionable activities. The Mullen Company had tangential associations with some activities of the White House staff... Robert Mullen had, however, for many years cooperated with the CIA by making some of his overseas offices available at different times as a cover for Agency employees operating abroad. The existence of Mullen's relationship with the CIA was, of course, kept secret to protect the secrecy of the cover arrangements and this led to complications when, after Watergate, the Mullen Company came under investigation...

Eight months after Hunt was hired by the Mullen Company, Robert Bennett joined the company. Bennett, the son of Senator Wallace Bennett (R-Utah), had been active in Republican Party affairs... His political connections led him to be involved in some of Hunt’s later activities, discussed below...

Bennett brought Hughes Tool Company (now Summa Corporation) as a client to Mullen. He had met Hughes representatives while at the Department of Transportation. Later in 1971, he introduced Hunt to representatives of Hughes and various contacts occurred which are discussed further below. (Report to the President by the Commission on CIA Activities Within the United States, U.S. Government Printing Office, June 1975, pages 173-176)

On pages 193-197 of the Rockefeller Report we find the following:

Hunt had dealings with the Agency in the summer and fall of 1971 in connection with the White House projects previously discussed. And he continued to be employed by Mullen, which had a CIA relationship, and to be associated with Bennett in several projects with political or espionage overtones. . . .

During the period preceding Watergate, Hunt continued to be employed by Mullen Co. and was in regular contact with Robert Bennett, its president. Mullen continued to provide cover for CIA officers abroad and Bennett and Hunt had a few meetings with the case officer respecting these arrangements. . . .

At one time Hunt approached Bennett with a proposal to obtain the assistance of the Hughes organization for a burglary in Las Vegas to secure purported information about Senator Muskie. . . .

**MISSIONARIES AND THE C.I.A.**

Almost from its inception in 1947, the CIA has used religious groups both as a source of information and as a conduit for funds. CIA spokesmen declined to discuss the CIA-church connection in any detail... Sources said the CIA dealt with religious groups in Latin America, Africa, Asia and elsewhere.

A spokesman for the Senate select intelligence committee said the panel’s staff is investigating complaints that the CIA has had improper dealings with missionaries.

In the _Salt Lake City Messenger_ for January 1975, we suggested that the Mormon Church could provide a perfect cover for the CIA agents:

Since the Mullen Company [the firm which handled the Mormon Church’s public relations] was used as a cover for the CIA, a question concerning the involvement of the Mormon Church with the CIA naturally arises... The Mormon Church’s world-wide activities and mission program could provide a perfect cover for CIA agents, but at the present time we have no evidence that this is actually the case. We do know, however, that the Church provides many men for the CIA. Writing in the _New York Times_ for September 16, 1974, Wallace Turner states: “Many Mormon scholars work on contracts for the C.I.A.” We recently asked a man who had taught at Brigham Young University if he had any reason to believe that the Mormon missionary program is used as a cover for CIA agents. He replied that he did not, but he went on to state that many missionaries are later recruited to CIA work. He felt that the missionary program provided good training for CIA agents. The missionaries are taught absolute obedience to authority and many of them learn foreign languages as well.

**New Books!**

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On February 22, 1975, an employee of the CIA sent us a letter in which he stated:

Thank you for your current “Messenger.” As usual it is very informative. I am currently employed with the Central Intelligence Agency and can attest to the fact that the Agency has been very fruitful in hiring Mormons, especially former missionaries.

In my section they are four . . .

I’m sorry I do not have any vital information other than what I just told you. I would appreciate it if you would keep the above information in your confidence as to not using my name. I do not feel that I have given you any secret information but people can sometimes make something out of nothing.

We tried to get this CIA employee to tell us how large his “section” is, but he would not answer.

While this letter confirms the hiring of “former missionaries,” it does not answer the question as to whether the missionary program itself is ever useful as a cover for CIA agents. There is, however, a book which may throw important light on this subject. It is written by Patrick J. McGarvey, a man who worked for the CIA for a number of years. This book is entitled C.I.A.: The Myth and The Madness. On page 57 of Mr. McGarvey’s book we find this very revealing information:

Lastly, CIA uses what they call “deep cover.” Men usually accept such tours for seven-to-nine-year periods, and all traces of American governmental or commercial connections are kept to an absolute minimum. They blend into the local landscape and perform only discreet tasks for the Agency. . . . Deep cover knows few bounds. CIA has a surprising number of Mormon Church members in its employ, and the fact that many of these men had spent two years in a Mormon mission in Latin America or the Far East is not overlooked by CIA.

A friend found himself back in the Mormon mission in Hong Kong after his training. (C.I.A.: The Myth and The Madness, Maryland, 1974, page 57)

According to the Salt Lake Tribune for June 28, 1975, Mormon Church President Spencer W. Kimball said there are now 20,160 missionaries in 133 missions. It is very unlikely, however, that the CIA would use a large number of Mormon missionaries while they were still serving on their missions. For one thing, most missionaries would be too young to be trusted with such important responsibilities. Then, too, if very many were used, it would soon become generally known and the cover would not be effective.

The CIA would naturally be drawn to the Mormon missionary who has learned a foreign language and has had some experience in a foreign country. If the CIA already has a “surprising number” of Mormons in its employ, they will probably have a great many more in the future because the Church plans to have the “language center of the world” to train missionaries at Brigham Young University. In the BYU alumni paper we read:

It’s a profound combination: take BYU and add a multi-million dollar language center designed to teach at least 20 languages to 22,250 missionaries each year. The result is, as one observer conjured, the “language center of the world.” (Brigham Young University Today, August, 1974)

Speaking of the CIA, Tad Szule states:

An enormous sense of loyalty develops within this elite corps, and this also leads to an unquestioning acceptance of orders from above. (Compulsive Spy, page 33)

The Mormon missionary is certainly trained in this type of absolute obedience to authority. In the ward teacher’s message for June 1945 we find these statements:

Any Latter-day Saint who denounces or opposes, whether actively or otherwise, any plan or doctrine advocated by the “prophets, seers, and revelators” of the Church is cultivating the spirit of apostasy. . . . Lucifer . . . wins a great victory when he can get members of the Church to speak against their leaders and to “do their own thinking.” . . .

When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. When they propose a plan—it is God’s plan. When they point the way, there is no other which is safe. When they give direction, it should mark the end of controversy. (Improvement Era, June 1945, page 354)

Heber C. Kimball, First Councillor to Brigham Young, made these statements:

. . . learn to do as you are told, . . . if you are told by your leader to do a thing, do it, none of your business whether it is right or wrong. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 6, page 32)

If you do things according to counsel and they are wrong, the consequences will fall on the heads of those who counseled you, so don’t be troubled. (William Clayton’s Journal, page 334)

It would certainly be easy for a Mormon to extend this type of thinking from Church leaders to government leaders.

CIA & the Church’s Educational System

In the last Messenger we reported that a man who had taught at the Brigham Young University told us that the Church’s educational system contains a large number of men who have been involved in the CIA or FBI. We now have evidence that even the Church’s commissioner of education, Dr. Neal A. Maxwell, has been connected with the CIA. In the Brigham Young University’s paper The Daily Universe we found the following:

Dr. Neal A. Maxwell, Church commissioner of education and regional representative to the Council of the Twelve, . . . was a legislative assistant to Senator Wallace F. Bennett and served for two years with the United States Central Intelligence Agency. (Daily Universe, Feb. 23, 1971)

Dr. Maxwell not only serves as Church commissioner of education but as an assistant to the Twelve Apostles. The Salt Lake Tribune for June 7, 1975, said that “He is commissioner of the educational system of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and an assistant to the Council of Twelve Apostles.” Dr. Maxwell worked at the University of Utah sometime between leaving the CIA and accepting his call from the Mormon Church. Some people at the University of Utah seem to have been suspicious that Dr. Maxwell had not completely severed his contact with the CIA. We do not know whether there is any truth to this accusation, however.

In the last issue of the Messenger we stated:

There can be little doubt that the Church’s Brigham Young University provides many men for the CIA. . . .

The Brigham Young University’s Daily Universe reported the following on November 7, 1974:

An expense paid trip to the nation’s capital and a monthly salary of $780 from the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), provided BYU law student Dale Storer with an “interesting experience” last summer. . . . Storer spent the summer in Washington D.C., doing research for the CIA. . . .

He said there are many opportunities to work with the CIA and urged students wishing to gain more information to contact Dr. Lawrence G. Woodward, coordinator for cooperative programs.

In the same issue of the Messenger, we cited the following from a letter:

. . . I did have a professor at BYU who had been first a member of U.S. Army Intelligence (Korean War), and later an employee of the CIA . . . and he never made any secret of it. . . . I also had a roommate at BYU who is now and has been for some time a covert agent (“007”) for the CIA, . . .

After publishing this information we had a very interesting thing happen. The very man who was a “covert agent” for the CIA visited our bookstore. After conversing for some time, he made some statements concerning his friends and travels which led us to suspect that he was the “covert agent” mentioned in the letter cited above. We confronted him with these facts, and he frankly admitted that he was the man. He stated that he had served on a mission for the Mormon Church. Later he worked in the language department at Brigham Young University where he was recruited by the CIA. He served as a covert agent for the CIA, but he was unable to adjust to the double life. He claimed that he finally left the CIA altogether, and he asked us not to reveal his name. He seemed to be disillusioned with both the CIA and the Mormon Church.

HUGHES AND MORMONS

Although the Rockefeller Report says that the Mullen Co. had “a number of clients having no known relationship to the CIA,” it does concede that “various companies who were clients of the Mullen firm may in turn have had relationships with the CIA. . . . (Report to the President by the Commission on CIA Activities Within the United States, pp. 174, 176). In our last issue of the Messenger we stated the belief that at least three clients (continued on page 5)
In our book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 413, we said that “LaMar Petersen has prepared a manuscript entitled *Hearts Made Glad*. When this manuscript is published it will throw a great deal of light on the Word of Wisdom and Joseph Smith’s attitude towards it.” We are now happy to announce that Mr. Petersen’s book has been printed and is available at Modern Microfilm Company.

The “Word of Wisdom” is a revelation which was given to Joseph Smith on February 27, 1833 (see *Doctrines and Covenants*, Sec. 89). It forbids the use of hot drinks (tea and coffee), strong drinks and tobacco.

The Word of Wisdom is considered to be one of the most important revelations in the Mormon Church. A Mormon who continues to break the Word of Wisdom is considered to be weak in the faith. Breaking the Word of Wisdom is considered a sin which can bar a person from the Temple. In order to get a Temple Recommend a person is required to answer this question: “4. Do you keep the Word of Wisdom?” (Temple Recommend Book).

Joseph Fielding Smith, tenth President of the Mormon Church, claimed that the habit of drinking tea can “bar” a person from the “celestial Kingdom of God” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 2, page 16).

The Mormon writer John J. Stewart claims that the Prophet Joseph Smith “carefully observed the Word of Wisdom, and insisted upon its observance by other men in high Church positions, . . .” (*Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet*, page 90).

Although most members of the Church feel that Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon religion, “carefully observed the Word of Wisdom,” research reveals just the opposite. In fact, Joseph Smith, the man who introduced the Temple Ceremony into the Mormon Church, would not be able to go through the Temple if he were living today because of his frequent use of alcoholic beverages.

On page 92 of his book *Sounding Brass*, Dr. Hugh Nibley asks where the evidence is that Joseph Smith drank. We would answer Dr. Nibley by saying that this evidence is found throughout Joseph Smith’s *History of the Church*. Under the date of May 2, 1843, the following statement is recorded in his history:

Wednesday, 3.—Called at the office and drank a glass of wine with Sister Jenetta Richards, made by her mother in England, and reviewed a portion of the conference minutes. (*History of the Church*, vol. 5, page 380)

The title for LaMar Petersen’s new book *Hearts Made Glad* seems to come from some references recorded in Joseph Smith’s *History of the Church* for January, 1836:

We then partook of some refreshments, and our hearts were made glad with the fruit of the vine. (*History of the Church*, vol. 2, page 369)

Elders Orson Hyde, Luke S. Johnson, and Warren Parrish, then presented the Presidency with three servers of glasses filled with wine to bless. And it fell to my lot to attend to this duty, which I cheerfully discharges. It was then passed round in order, then the cake in the same order; and suffice it to say, our hearts were made glad while partaking of the bounty of earth which was presented, until we had taken our fill, . . . (*History of the Church*, vol. 2, page 378)

Joseph Smith continued to disobey the Word of Wisdom until the day of his death. The *History of the Church* records that just before his murder in the Carthage jail, Joseph Smith gave the guards money to buy a “bottle of wine.” When the bottle arrived, “Dr. Richards uncorked the bottle, and presented a glass to Joseph, who tasted, as also brother Taylor and the doctor, and the bottle was then given to the guard, who turned to go out” (*History of the Church*, vol. 6, page 616).

Joseph Smith’s *History of the Church* certainly provides evidence that he continually broke the Word of Wisdom. Although a number of references concerning Smith’s disregard for the Word of Wisdom have remained uncensored, the Mormon leaders have made three important changes in Joseph Smith’s *History of the Church* (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*, pp. 6-8). In one instance, Joseph Smith asked “Brother Markam” to get “a pipe and some tobacco” for the Apostle Willard Richards. These words have been replaced with the word “medicine” in recent editions of the *History of the Church*. At another time Joseph Smith related that he gave some of the brethren “a couple of dollars, with directions to replenish” their supply of “whisky.” In modern editions of the *History of the Church*, twenty-three words have been deleted from this reference to cover up the fact Joseph Smith encouraged the “brethren” to disobey the Word of Wisdom. In the third instance, Joseph Smith frankly admitted that he had “drank a glass of beer at Moessers.” These words have been omitted in recent editions of the *History*.

LaMar Petersen adds some interesting background to the change concerning the “glass of beer at Moessers”:

On another day he [Joseph Smith] recommended that Jacob Zundall and Frederick Moosere, who were known to drink ale, wine, and other spirits, be called on missions to Germany. Brother Moeser was held responsible for the disturbance of a crowd in front of his combination grogshop and grocery. A foreign mission would strengthen his testimony. But before departing he was fined $3 for breach of the temperance ordinance.

With the above facts in mind some may find it puzzling that Joseph was not shy about recording: “At one p.m. I rode out with Dr. Richards and O. P. Rockwell . . . drank a glass of beer at Mooser’s.” This entry of June 1, 1844 was altered by prudent historians when reprinting the history, the phrase “drank a glass of beer at Moeser’s” being deleted. (*Hearts Made Glad*, page 187)

On page 165-166 of *Hearts Made Glad*, Mr. Petersen gives this interesting information:

To his varied roles of restorationist, revelator, seer, prophet, translator, elder, high priest, apostle, president, editor, Bible redactor, temple-builder, and the more mundane roles of land-agent, merchant, and banker, Joseph now added innkeeper, lieutenant-general, Mason, judge, mayor, candidate for President of the United States, and husband of more than two score wives. Did such a man have time to drink? The sophisticate might well ask: Under the weight of such unlikely banners how could he desist?

But the larger question persists: Was Joseph’s conduct exemplary? Being so constantly exposed before his people how could he have fooled them? Apostle Amasa Lyman thought perhaps not all were fooled. He told fellow-Apostle Abraham H. Cannon: “Joseph Smith tried the faith of the Saints many times by his peculiarities. At one time, he had preached a powerful sermon on the Word of Wisdom, and immediately there after, he rode through the streets of Nauvoo smoking a cigar. Some of the brethren were tried as was Abraham of old.”

After presenting overwhelming evidence that Joseph Smith drank “strong drinks” in violation of his Word of Wisdom, Mr. Petersen goes on to deal with the question of whether he drank to excess. On pages 205-207 we find the following:

William [Law], Joseph’s counselor in the First Presidency from 1841 to 1844, broke with his leader in opposition to polygamy . . . Dr. Wyl obtained this succinct statement from Law . . . in 1887: “I only saw him drunk once. I found Joseph and Hyrum at a place where they kept quantities of wine . . . I remember that Joseph drank heavily, and that I talked to Hyrum, begging him to take his brother away, but that was the only time I saw the prophet drunk.” . . .

Joseph’s associates sometimes spoke of his paleness when “in vision” or when receiving a revelation. A daughter of Adaline Knight Belnap recorded her mother’s impression of the Prophet in an instance of spiritual (spirituous?) passivity. “How well she remembers one day before her father died (Vinson Knight) of a little excitement in school. The children were busy when the school room door was carefully opened and two gentlemen entered, carrying the limp form of Joseph Smith. The children all sprang to their feet, for Brother Joseph lay helpless in their arms, his head resting on his brother’s shoulder, his face pale as death, but his eyes were open, though he seemed not to see things earthly. The teacher quieted them by telling them that Brother Joseph was in a revelation, and they were carrying him to his office above the school room.” . . .

Most critics were less charitable than Adaline and unwilling to attribute paleness to revelation.

WINE AND VISIONS

We feel that one of LaMar Petersen’s most important contributions is his work on the visions in the Kirtland Temple. He presents very strong evidence to show that wine was used to excess in the Kirtland Temple at the very time the Mormons were claiming to receive their important visions:
When he awoke from his wine, commenced to curse their enemies as righteous Noah did prophesied, and bore testimony and continued so to do until some of the and views. It was this, after the people had fasted all day, they went out and one principle was apparently so simple, and so foolish in their eyes, that a Salt Lake: “The Lord did actually reveal one principle to us there, and that meat for some of the neophyte priests. “The Entablature of Truth” [George A. jubilee, and time of rejoicing to the Saints of the Most High God.” . . . This was but a prelude to the great jubilee and time of rejoicing during the dedication week of March 27. . . Elder George A. Smith. . . arose and began to prophesy . . . Suddenly a noise was heard like the sound of a mighty rushing wind filling the Temple. The congregation simultaneously arose as though moved by an invisible power and began to prophesy and speak in tongues. . . . “And I beheld the Temple was filled with angels,” reported the Seer, “which fact I declared to the congregation.” . . . The fever and excitement mounted as the services moved toward midweek. Joseph had promised the Saints a veritable Pentecost, and by Wednesday, when attendance was restricted to the male membership of the Church, nearly five hundred Melchizedek and Aaronic priests cloathed themselves in a session that lasted throughout the night. . . Joseph recorded that “it was expedient for us to prepare bread and wine sufficient to make our hearts glad, as we should not, probably leave this house until morning.” The stewards passed round and took up a liberal contribution, and messengers were despatched for bread and wine.” . . . “The brethren began to prophesy upon each other’s heads,” continued the Prophet, “and cursings upon the enemies of Christ, who inhabited Jackson county, Missouri; . . . “The brethren continued exhorting, prophesying, and speaking in tongues until five o’clock in the morning,” the Prophet reported. . . It was a Pentecost and an endowment indeed, . . . the occurrences of this day shall be handed down upon the pages of sacred history, to all generations; as the day of Pentecost, so shall this day be numbered and celebrated as a year of jubilee, and time of rejoicing to the Saints of the Most High God.” . . . The cursing of the ungodly at the Kirtland Temple dedication was strong meat for some of the neophyte priests. “The Entablature of Truth” [George A. Smith] had something to say about it nineteen years later in the Tabernacle at Salt Lake: “The Lord did actually reveal one principle to us there, and that one principle was apparently so simple, and so foolish in their eyes, that a great many apostatized over it, because it was so contrary to their notions and views. It was this, after the people had fasted all day, they went out and got wine and bread, and blessed them, and distributed them to the multitude, that is, to the whole assembly of the brethren, and they ate and drank, and prophesied, and bore testimony and continued so to do until some of the High Council of Missouri stepped into the stand, and as righteous Noah did when he awoke from his wine, commenced to curse their enemies. . . You never felt such a shock go through any house or company in the world. . . .” Addressed, in a half a pint of wine. . . .” . . . Professor Turner, . . . wrote in 1842: “In 1836, an endowment meeting, or solemn assembly, was held in the temple, . . . The day was spent in fasting, prayer, and other ceremonial preparation . . . They first broke their fast, by eating a little light bread and drinking freely of pure wine, which they were assured would not hurt them, since it had been consecrated to the Lord. . . . A marvellous spirit of prophecy soon ensued, as might have been expected, which vended itself mainly in blessing their friends and cursing their enemies, in which latter class, the clergy of the day and the Missouri mob received their full share. An eye-witness informed the author that he never imagined that language more awful could be used in the world of despair. . . For several days, and even for weeks, they went from house to house, feasting and prophesying, blessing and cursing, as the occasion might require, until the ‘triumphs of faith’ were fully achieved, . . . others thought it the spirit of delusion, darkness, and error.” . . . Two former high-ranking Churchmen, Benjamin Winchester and the contumacious Apostle, W. E. M’Lellin, offered striking details in their discourses of the Temple raptures. . . Winchester visited Utah in 1889 and gave a candid two-column report on early Church history to the Salt Lake Tribune. Regarding the Kirtland affair he was unsparing: “That ceremony ended in a drunken frolic, one of the worst I ever saw. . . Joseph Smith became beastly intoxicated, and his father and his brother Hyrum begged that the wine should be taken away, so that the carousal might be stopped as soon as possible. I did not know Joseph to be what is termed ‘a common sot,’ but that was not the last time I saw him intoxicated.” . . . Apostle M’Lellin, . . . had been numbered among the Twelve. . . His remembrance of the Temple was detailed and unvarnished: “About five hundred ministers entered the great temple about sunrise and remained fasting until next morning sunrise, except a little bread and wine in the evening. The Twelve were required to take large servers and set glasses of wine and jamps of bread and go through the house and serve the brethren. . . . I did my part of the serving. During the night a purse was made up and a wagon sent to Painesville and a barrel of wine procured. . . All the latter part of the night I took care of Samuel H. Smith, perfectly unable to help himself. . . And I had others removed from the house because they were unfit to be in decent company.” . . . In a statement published in the True Latter-Day Saints’ Herald, official organ of the Reorganized L.D.S. Church M’Lellin reiterated his protest: “As to the endowment in Kirtland, I state positively, it was no endowment from God. Not only myself was not endowed, but no other man of the five hundred who was present—except it was with wine.” . . . M’Lellin’s disquisition was paralleled by David Whitmer’s. . . The longest-lived of the eleven men who testified to the sacred origin of the Book of Mormon, Whitmer remained true to his original testimony even though abandoning the faith. . . Whitmer . . . made this statement when he was eighty-one: “The great heavenly visitation . . . was a great fizzle. The elders were assembled on the appointed day, which it was promised would be a veritable day of Pentecost, but there was no visitation. No Peter, James and John, no Moses and Elias put in appearance. I was in my seat on that occasion and I know that the story sensationally circulated, and which is now on the record of the Utah Mormons as an actual happening, was nothing but a tramped-up yarn. I saw a great many of these things which I knew were not right, but I clung on in patience, trusting everything eventually would be put right.” That the appearance of Heavenly beings at the Temple may have been purely subjective is suggested not only in Whitmer’s statement but from others who, though present, did not attain that effulgence of spirit necessary for celestial sight. . . . Milo Andrus, a faithful Seventy who had been a member of the ill-starred Zion’s Camp, despaired of seeing the celestial visitors until Joseph told him to continue to fast and pray. “When we had fasted for 24 hours,” marvelled Milo, “and partaken of the Lord’s supper, namely a piece of bread as big as your double fist and a half a pint of wine in the temple, I was there and saw the Holy Ghost descend upon the heads of those present like cloven tongues of fire. I said it is enough, Father, and I will bear a faithful testimony of it while I live.” . . . In the one hundred thirty-eight years of Temple activity that followed, the charge of drunkenness was not again hurled. Complete observance of the Word of Wisdom came to be a requirement for the thousands of zealous workers in the seventeen Temples built between 1841 and 1974. Other than some allusions to wine-drinking in the Nauvoo Temple there of zealous workers in the seventeen Temples built between 1841 and 1974. Other than some allusions to wine-drinking in the Nauvoo Temple there seems to be no reference to intoxication in the score of exposes of Temple procedure that came from the pens of Saints and Apostates willing to break the vows of secrecy. (Hearts Made Glad, pp. 121-127, 133-141) The reader will find more on the subject of drinking in the Kirtland Temple in Chapter IV of Hearts Made Glad. On pages 200-201 of the same book, Mr. Petersen gives this information about the Nauvoo Temple: Wine and dancing parties were not all confined to the Masonic Hall; at Nauvoo some were held in the nearly completed Temple. A week before the dedication on April 23, 1846 Samuel Richards, another faithful diarist, noted that after the carpenters swept up their shavings “It was voted that Bro. Angel go and inform the Trustees that the hands were ready to drink the Barrell of Wine which had been reserved for them.” The painters continued their work
until the evening of April 29, when a group of the workers and their wives met in the attic and “had a feast of cakes, pies, wine &c, where we enjoyed our[ ] selves with prayer, preaching, administering for healing, blessing children, and music and Dancing until near Midnight. The other hands completed the painting in the lower room.”

Elder Mosiah Hancock wrote in his journal: “After the death of the Prophet, the mob spent their fury on the Twelve and a few others. The Brethren pushed the work on the Temple... Although I was very young [Mosiah was twelve at the time] I was on guard many a night, and gladly did I hail with many of the Saints, the completion of the Temple. On about January 10, 1846, I was privileged to go in the Temple and receive my Washings and Anointings. I was sealed to a lovely young girl named Mary, who was about my age; but it was with the understanding that we were not to live together as man and wife until we were sixteen years of age. The reason that some were sealed so young was because we knew that we would have to go West and wait many a long time for another Temple. My mother had a little son that we called Leivson. There was a man who would get drunk in the Temple; and once when mother was giving endowments to the women, a voice said to her, “Go to your baby.” She went and found that drunkard lying on her child. She grabbed the fellow up and threw him on the floor by main strength, although his weight was about 240 pounds. The baby did not live long.” (Hearts Made Glad, pp. 200-201)

In Hearts Made Glad, LaMar Petersen presents a great deal of revealing information concerning Joseph Smith’s “barroom” sale of “spirituous liquors” and the question of his own excessive use of alcoholic beverages. Mr. Petersen has a very scholarly and honest way of dealing with his materials. We have a great deal of respect for him, and we must admit that his constant help and encouragement have had much to do with the success of Modern Microfilm Co. The research he has done has had a real effect upon our lives and upon our work. Mr. Petersen’s earlier booklet, Problems in Mormon Text, is certainly one of the best works on the subject of Mormonism. In a letter dated February 24, 1958, John Blackmore, who was General Church Historian of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, made this comment: “I thank you for the two books Problems in Mormon Text. I find that the contents of your book and the interpretations of the text, demand a re-evaluation of the incidents of our religious theories and practices.”

We feel that all those who are interested in Mormon history should have a copy of LaMar Petersen’s new book Hearts Made Glad. This paperback book has 258 pages and is beautifully printed and illustrated. The normal price for Hearts Made Glad will be $7.50, but if it is ordered before June 30, 1976, the price will be only $6.95.

MORMONS, HUGHES & CIA—continued from page 2 of the Mullen Company had some involvement with the CIA. (We feel that this list can be increased to six, and we have deep suspicions about some of the other clients.) Two clients which we mentioned in the last issue were the Mormon Church and Howard Hughes. The relationship between these two clients is a story in itself, but when we add the involvement of the CIA it becomes even more intriguing.

Robert Bennett, the Mormon who bought the Mullen Company, is the same man who brought the Hughes account to that firm. On page 176 of the Rockefeller Report we read: “Bennett brought Hughes Tool Company (now Summa Corporation) as a client to Mullen... Later in 1971, he introduced Hunt to representatives of Hughes...”

After the Watergate break-in was discovered, Robert Bennett found himself faced with the possibility that his activities would bring embarrassment to both the Mormon Church and the CIA. Therefore, he did his best to cover-up the relationship between his company and the CIA and the fact that a Brigham Young University student had been involved with Howard Hunt in his conspiracy to bug the Democrats (see Salt Lake City Messenger, January 1975). Bennett’s cover-up proved unsuccessful and the Mullen Company was brought to ruin. It is interesting to note, however, that Robert Bennett is now working for Hughes:

Robert Bennett . . . said that the Mullen Company went out of business last June and three months later he moved to California to become director of pr for the Sum[ma] Corp., wholly owned by Howard Hughes, to handle his corporate activities. (Advertising Age, February 3, 1975, page 1)

We first began to suspect Hughes’ relationship with the CIA when we read the following statement in Senator Baker’s Report:

CIA records indicate that Agency consideration was given to utilizing Mullen’s Hughes relationship for a matter relating to a cover arrangement in [South America], and to garner information on Robert Maheu. (“The Baker Report,” page 8)

The depth of Hughes’ involvement with the CIA really began to come to light sometime after a burglary was reported at the Hughes’ headquarters. As the story unfolded it became apparent that the recovery of a Russian submarine was involved:

The Times early last month was the first to report that the CIA, using a revolutionary ocean mining craft purportedly owned by Howard Hughes, had recovered a Russian submarine. . . .

The CIA obtained Hughes’ permission to use the billionaire’s ongoing ocean mining venture as a front to cloak the true nature of the operation. (Salt Lake Tribune, March 19, 1975)

Howard Hughes has had two objectives which are of particular interest to us here: First, to establish a relationship with the CIA. Second, to staff his organization with a large number of Mormons. Mr. Hughes seems to have succeeded very well in both areas.

Noah Dietrich, the man who “took control of Hughes Tool and who guided the destiny of the entire empire for over thirty years,” has written the following:

The early years of the 7000 Romaine message center brought the Advent of the Mormons.

“I think Mormons as a whole have the most integrity of any group of people in the country,” Howard told me. “They take care of their own people, and they won’t accept help from charity or the government. And I like the idea that they don’t drink liquor. You can trust them.”

Howard began staffing the message center and the fleet of Chevrolets exclusively with Mormons. (Howard: The Amazing Mr. Hughes, page 218)

SO-CALLED “MORMON MAFIA”

Some of Hughes’ closest aides are sometimes referred to as the “Mormon Mafia.” In his secret executive session testimony before the Senate Watergate Committee, page 68, Howard Hunt spoke of the “Mormon Mafia.” In an article published in Time on Jan. 24, 1972, we read of “the ‘Mormon Mafia’”—the secretary-nurse-assistants who attend Hughes round the clock . . . .” Wallace Turner give the following information concerning the so-called “Mormon Mafia”:

The guys you have to talk to are the five who live with him and are the only ones who ever see him. You might as well have a chat with the Sphinx. These guys are hired and paid by Frank W. (Bill) Gay, who was a young Mormon student at U.C.L.A. when Hughes hired him... It was Gay who built up the security capsule that still surrounds Hughes... .

Hughes is supposed to prefer Mormon employees in key spots in his security network because they don’t drink or smoke. Further, their religion includes strong drives for submission to authority. Besides, Bill Gay, a Mormon likes to hire Mormons. . . . Three of the five executive assistants are Mormons and a fourth is married to a Mormon. . . . Only the insiders knew all five of these men, who shuttled mysteriously around Las Vegas for four years. . . . One, Howard Eckersley, commuted from Salt Lake City where he kept his family. Before the big flight, their names were known only to a handful. Now Eckersley and Myler have been photographed and their pictures are in the files of every major news agency in the world. They are both Mormons. So is George Francom. Roy Crawford is Presbyterian, married to a Mormon. John Holmes is a Catholic. . . . I wondered how these fellows could serve a demanding boss like Hughes and still find time for the work load of being a Mormon Church official. Myler and I talked about it and he said it took a lot of doing. (Esquire, July, 1971, pp. 65, 67 and 73)

In his book The Real Howard Hughes Story, Stanton O’Keefe gives this interesting information:

Hughes remained isolated on the ninth floor of the Desert Inn throughout everything that went on. The only members of his staff with whom he had personal face-to-face contact were the five secretary-nurses of his so-called “Mormon Mafia.”

They tended to all his needs and maintained the sophisticated communications center. Although Hughes obviously watched television and read newspapers to keep abreast of developments, the “Mormon Mafia” were literally his only real contact with the outside world. (The Real Howard Hughes Story, page 189)
The headquarters, message center and general command post of Hughes' spy network and secret empire is an unimposing two-story beige stucco building in downtown Los Angeles. . . .

The Romaine Street headquarters is a nerve center of the finest and most sophisticated electronic equipment available in the espionage field. Various warning devices can spot any attempt to intrude anywhere in the building. . . .

The selection of employees to work in the building involves more screening and investigation that [than?] the CIA uses in selecting its agents. . . .

An asphalt parking lot on one side of the building is Stafford by expressionless young Mormon men. There are noticeable bulges under the arms of their jackets. . . .

Like his own living quarters, the Romaine Street building is staffed primarily by Mormons. (Ibid., pp. 205-207)

Stanton O'Keefe goes on to state that “All of the members of the ‘Mormon Mafia’ were hired and paid by Frank W. Gay, the Hughes Tool executive. . . .” (Ibid., page 209). Fortune Magazine for Dec. 1973, page 175, gives this information: “Since the sale of Toolco, Summa has been run by Frank W. Gay, a long-time Hughes aide, who operates out of an office in Los Angeles.” The Washington Post for April 1, 1975, carried this information:

Summa Corp. is the financial umbrella under which most of Hughes’ worth is contained. . . .

Most recently, another Summa “asset” hit the news: the $350 million Glimar Explorer vessel that Hughes built at the behest (and the expense of) the Central Intelligence Agency . . .

Nearly all of Hughes’ holdings are under the Summa Corp. umbrella. . . . Its board of directors (Hughes is not a member) consists of Frank W. (Bill) Gay, . . . Chestor Davis, . . . Nadine Henley and Lester Mylar, two of Hughes personal assistants who remain with him and who are among the few individuals who see him face to face.

The Mormon Church’s Brigham Young University has honored Frank W. Gay for “distinguished service to the University” and to his fellowmen (see Brigham Young University Today, October 1974, page 16). On March 19, 1975, the BYU paper Daily Universe reported:

A native Provoan who works in top positions in the Howard Hughes organization will speak on campus Thursday.

Frank William Gay, executive vice president and chief executive officer, director and chairman of the executive committee of the Summa Corp., will be the guest speaker at the Executive Lecture Series, . . .

An active Latter-day Saint, Gay has served as a stake high councilman, member of the General Sunday School Board, and officer, director and chairman of the executive committee of the Summa Corp. . . , is presently on the board of directors and vice-chairman of the executive committee of the Polynesian Cultural Center in Hawaii. . . . he serves on the BYU National Advisory Council and its executive committee associated with the College of Business. (Daily Universe, March 19, 1975)

The reader will notice that Mr. Gay is “on the board of directors and vice-chairman of the executive committee of the Polynesian Cultural Center in Hawaii.” This is very interesting because the Salt Lake Tribune for November 15, 1970, states that the Mormon Church’s “Zions Security Corp. . . . is owner and manager of the Village of Laie in Hawaii, . . . and the Polynesian Cultural Center.”

Kay Glenn, whom Time Magazine for January 24, 1972, identified as one of the “Mormon Mafia,” now serves as “a vice president of the Summa Corp.” (Salt Lake Tribune, April 4, 1975). According to the New York Times for March 27, 1975, it was Mr. Glenn who had custody of the memo which told of the CIA’s involvement in the Glimar Explorer project.

IS HUGHES DEAD?

It is a well-known fact that Howard Hughes obtained a large interest in the gambling industry in Nevada. Robert Maheu, who has acknowledged being part of a CIA-Mafia plot to assassinate Castro, became Chief Executive of Hughes Nevada operations. Although Maheu rose to great power in the gambling industry in Nevada. Robert Maheu, who has acknowledged, April 4, 1975). According to the New York Times, Salt Lake Tribune.

Corp. . . . is owner and manager of the Village of Laie in Hawaii, . . . and for November 15, 1970, states that the Mormon Church’s “Zions Security Center in Hawaii.” This is very interesting because the

The contention that the billionaire is dead was denied by Hughes spokesman Richard Hanna in Los Angeles. . . .

“The man—as far as we know—has no children. We don’t even know if there is a will,” Bader said. “Nobody has seen him for 10 years or more. Unless it can be proved otherwise, he is either dead or incompetent and the burden of proof must rest with Mr. Hughes or those acting in his behalf.”

On September 5, 1975, the Tribune printed the following: “A State Supreme Court justice has signed an order requiring billionaire Howard R. Hughes to appear personally in court or face the prospect of being declared legally dead.” On September 18 the Tribune reported that “billionaire recluse Howard Hughes did not show up in court Wednesday to prove he is still alive.” Finally, on September 20 the following appeared in the Tribune:

NEW YORK (AP) — A judge on Friday dismissed as “an exercise in futility” a suit calling upon billionaire recluse Howard Hughes to prove he is alive or be declared legally dead.

Now that the close ties between Howard Hughes and the CIA have been revealed, there will probably be even more speculation that he is “either dead or incompetent” and that his empire has fallen into the hands of the “Mormon Mafia” or the CIA.

We have almost completed our new book, Mormon Spies, Hughes and the CIA. In this book we will deal extensively with such subjects as: the Mullen Company and the Watergate break-in, the BYU spying operations, the prostitution conspiracy and the Church, wiretapping and bugging, Mullen and the Mormons, Mormons and the CIA, Robert Bennett’s involvement with Hunt, Hunt’s BYU spy, Bennett’s cover-up, Mormons and Hughes, assassination plots, Intertel, Interprogres, the possible existence of the secret Council of 50 in the Church, Bennett’s dummy milk committees, and many other important subjects.

We are now taking orders for Mormon Spies, Hughes and the CIA. It should be ready sometime around the first of April. Price: $2.95.
NIBLEY FAILS TO SAVE BOOK OF ABRAHAM

In our book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? Chapter 22, we show that the original papyrus from which Joseph Smith “translated” the Book of Abraham was rediscovered in 1967 in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Egyptologists translated this papyrus and found that it was an Egyptian funerary text known as the “Book of Breathings.” This is a pagan text which has absolutely nothing to do with Abraham or his religion.

Since the Mormon Church is supposed to be led by a “Prophet, Seer, and Revelator,” we might have expected the President of the Church to make a translation of the rediscovered Joseph Smith Papyri. Instead, however, the papyri were turned over to Dr. Hugh Nibley of the Church’s Brigham Young University to be translated by “the wisdom of the world.” The Mormon writer Jay M. Todd stated:

One major remaining issue remains still undiscussed in this background study, and that is the meaning of the papyri themselves. . . . The import and the significance of the papyri recently rediscovered will be told Latter-day Saints by Dr. Hugh Nibley, to whom the First Presidency has given the assignment. Surely his mind and hand will be blessed, and his report will be one of immense interest and significance to members of the Church. (The Saga of the Book of Abraham, pages 387-388)

Dr. Nibley wrote a series of articles which lasted for over two years in the Improvement Era—from January 1968 to May 1970. Although he used almost 2,000 footnotes, he never did translate the papyri. In the Salt Lake Tribune for November 11, 1973 we criticized Dr. Nibley for not producing a translation of the papyri. He replied that he had prepared a book which was 800 pages long: “It is all about the ‘Book of Breathings’ and is 800 pages long, but that is not enough to account for keeping the impatient Tanners waiting for six years. What took up all that time was having to find out about a lot of things” (Salt Lake Tribune, November 25, 1973). This book, which many people believed would answer the objections of the critics and save the Book of Abraham, was finally published by the Church’s Deseret Book Co. in 1975. Dr. Nibley’s book, The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment, will certainly prove to be a disappointment for those who hoped he could save the Book of Abraham.

Although the First Presidency of the Church assigned Dr. Nibley to work on the papyri, they seem unwilling to give his work any real official endorsement. When John L. Smith asked about Dr. Nibley’s new book, Francis M. Gibbs, Secretary to the First Presidency, replied:

Answering your letter dated August 19, 1975, the writings of Dr. Hugh Nibley concerning the papyri scrolls have been done entirely on his own responsibility and do not have the official approval and sanction of the Church. The brethren appreciate your interest and asked me to extend to you your best wishes.

At any rate, the reader may order Dr. Nibley’s new book from the Deseret Book Store, 60 East South Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah. Although this book is nicely printed and bound, the contents are very disappointing. Of the eleven fragments of papyri which were discovered, ten of them contain significant Egyptian messages which can be translated. We would expect that any book about the papyri would at least have a translation of all ten pieces. Dr. Nibley’s book, however, only contains a translation of two fragments! Dr. Nibley has now had photographs of the papyri for almost ten years, and yet he has only provided a translation of two fragments. Among the fragments which Dr. Nibley has not translated is the original of Fac. No. 1 in the Book of Abraham. This fragment contains a number of lines of hieroglyphics which tell what the drawing is about. The reason Dr. Nibley has not translated these lines is obvious: they show that Fac. No. 1 is not a picture of “Abraham fastened upon an altar” as Joseph Smith proclaimed, but rather a picture of an Egyptian by the name of Hor being prepared for burial (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 347).

Those of us who have purchased Dr. Nibley’s writings in the Improvement Era, the BYU Studies and now his new book have spent at least $30.00. What do we have to show for this investment? We have hundreds of pages of material with thousands of footnotes, but we have a translation of only two of the fragments of papyri and no answer to the main problems about the Book of Abraham.

After the Joseph Smith Papyri were first located it was pointed out that the papyrus labeled “XI. Small ‘Sensen’ text (unillustrated)” contained the very Egyptian characters which Joseph Smith “translated” into the Book of Abraham. In a speech given at the University of Utah on May 20, 1968, Dr. Nibley admitted that it was a “definite fact that, one of the fragments seemed to supply all of the symbols for the Book of Abraham. This is the little ‘Sensen’ scroll. Here are the symbols. The symbols are arranged here, and the interpretation goes along here and this interpretation turns out to be the Book of Abraham” (Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 314).

At first Dr. Nibley toyed with the idea that the papyrus might have a second or hidden message. Now, he apparently believes that this idea cannot be successfully maintained and has decided to take the position that Papyrus XI was not the source Book of Abraham. He states:

Is the Book of Abraham a correct translation of Joseph Smith Papyri X and XI? No, the Book of Breathings is not the Book of Abraham! . . .

Doesn’t the text of the Book of Abraham appear in a number of manuscripts in columns running parallel with characters from the Book of Breathings? Yes, the brethren at Kirtland were invited to try their skill at translation; in 1835 the Prophet’s associates, miffed by his superior knowledge and determined to show him up, made determined efforts to match up the finished text of the Book of Abraham with characters from the J.S. Papyrus No. XI. . . .

Whatever exercises, discreet or indiscreet, the brethren in Kirtland may have engaged in, the Prophet Joseph himself has supplied us with the most conclusive evidence that the manuscript today identified as the Book of Breathings, J.S. Papyri X and XI, was not in his opinion the source of the Book of Abraham. For he has furnished a clear and specific description of the latter: “The record of Abraham and Joseph, found with the mummies, is (1) beautifully written on papyrus, with black, and (2) a small part red, ink or paint, (3) in perfect preservation.” (The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, page 2)

Dr. Nibley says that Papyrus XI could not be the source of the Book of Abraham because he feels it is not as beautifully written or well preserved as the other fragments of papyri and does not contain writing in red ink. Now, besides making the baseless assumption that Joseph Smith allowed his scribes to add the wrong Egyptian characters to the original translation manuscripts, Dr. Nibley does not seem to understand that the statement he cites from Joseph Smith’s History about “The record of Abraham and Joseph” is a statement about Joseph Smith’s Papyri collection in general, not just the one roll which Joseph Smith called the Book of Abraham. This is made very clear in another entry in Joseph Smith’s History:

On the 3rd of July, Michael H. Chandler came to Kirtland to exhibit some Egyptian mummies. There were four human figures, together with some two or more rolls of papyri . . . some of the Saints at Kirtland purchased the mummies and papyrus, . . . I commenced the translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt, etc., . . . (History of the Church, vol. 2, pp. 235-236)

Now, when we understand that Joseph Smith believed the Book of Abraham was written on a different roll of papyrus than the Book of Joseph, it becomes clear that he was referring to the collection of papyri in general and not specifically to the Book of Abraham. That Joseph Smith did in fact choose the papyrus identified as the Book of Breathings as the source for his Book of Abraham is established by irreparable evidence. To begin with, Joseph Smith used the drawing at the beginning of the Book of Breathings roll as Facsimile No. 1 for his Book of Abraham. It does not contain red ink and the workmanship appears to be no better or well-preserved than that found on Papyrus XI. This in itself would completely destroy Dr. Nibley’s argument, but the evidence becomes even stronger as we look into the matter. The writing in the columns to the side of the fragment used for Fac. No. 1, which Dr. Nibley does not dare to translate, mentions that the papyrus was made for Hor, and this is the same name mentioned in the Book of Breathings text which follows on Papyrus XI. Second, even Dr. Nibley has to admit that before the papyrus was cut Papyrus XI followed immediately after Fac. No. 1 on the roll: “It can be easily shown by matching up the cut edges and fibers of the papyri that the text of the Joseph Smith ‘Breathing’ Papyrus
(No. XI) was written on the same strip of material as Facsimile No. 1 and immediately adjoining it” (The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, page 13). On page 3 of the same book Dr. Nibley has to admit that even Joseph Smith’s own scribes felt that the text of the Book of Abraham followed right after Fac. No. 1: “Since this is an illustration to the Book of Abraham, it has naturally been assumed that the text that follows the drawing could only be that of Abraham—even the brethren at Kirtland assumed that.”

The strongest evidence that Joseph Smith believed that Papyrus XI was the Book of Abraham is found in the fact that the characters from this fragment were used in the translation manuscripts. Dr. Nibley’s suggestion that this was only the work of his scribes is absolutely preposterous. That Joseph Smith would allow his scribes to copy the characters from the wrong papyrus into three different manuscripts of the Book of Abraham is really beyond belief. A person might almost as reasonably conclude that the Book of Abraham itself was made up by Joseph Smith’s scribes.

All evidence, then, points to the unmistakable conclusion that Joseph Smith believed that Papyrus No. XI was the Book of Abraham. This papyrus has been translated by qualified Egyptologists and found to be nothing but the Book of Breathings—a pagan text. Even Dr. Nibley has to admit that Papyrus XI contains “the directions for wrapping up the Joseph Smith papyri with the mummy. . . .” (Ibid., page 6). Fortunately, Dr. Nibley has included a translation of this fragment in his new book. His work agrees in substance with the translations we have published in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 317. In fact, Dr. Nibley includes the names of many pagan gods in his translation of the Book of Breathings. Dr. Nibley cannot find anything about Abraham in this text, but to soften the disappointment he tries to relate it to the Mormon temple ceremony. Why he would want to equate the Egyptian religion with Mormonism is really a mystery to us. The Egyptian religion is so filled with magic and other pagan practices.

At any rate, Dr. Nibley’s book contains some very serious errors. We may find time to point these out in the future, but in the meantime, Michael Marquardt has prepared a good rebuttal entitled, The Book of Abraham Papyrus Found: An Answer to Dr. Hugh Nibley’s Book The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment. The Mormon Egyptologist Dee Jay Nelson made these comments in an Introduction to Mr. Marquardt’s new work:

In this book Mr. Marquardt’s research has been meticulous and the evidence of his contention infallibly documented. . . . The original ancient Egyptian papyrus from which Joseph Smith claimed to have “translated” the Book of Abraham in the The Pearl of Great Price, has been found and is now in the possession of the Latter-day Saint Church. From my own translation of the hieratic text, substantiated by the translations of other responsible Egyptologists, the fraudulent nature of the Book of Abraham is obvious. . . . Dr. Hugh Nibley, . . . has recently published a book . . . in which he denies that the Hor Sensen Papyrus is the original from which Smith made his so-called translation. The L.D.S. Church has in its possession three separate “translations” written by two of Smith’s scribes, at his dictation, which prove that these are the documents Smith used. Mr. Marquardt effectively proves the reality of this fact.

Mr. Marquardt’s new book, The Book of Abraham Papyrus Found, is available from Modern Microfilm Co. for $2.00 per copy.

15,000 BOOKS MET WITH SILENCE

In the last issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger we announced that we had sold over 10,000 copies of our major work Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? We are now happy to report that almost 15,000 copies have been sold. Mormon leaders seem to feel that it is best to ignore this book. This silent treatment, however, has proved to be completely ineffective and our sales have continued to increase at a rapid rate. As a result many people are leaving the Mormon Church, and many others are beginning to wonder if the Church has any answers to the serious charges contained in this book.

One woman wrote us the following:

I am a convert to the LDS Church, joining when I was 19 years old . . . My husband joined the church a year later, in 1961. I have been a member of the Church now for 15 years and I am presently a visiting teacher and Primary secretary.

Over those 15 years I have had to admit to a lot of unhappiness and lack of fulfillment. There were, of course, weeks at a time when I felt close to the Lord and got a lot out of Church; but for the most part I have to admit to a growing restlessness and a feeling of frustration.

In 1966 . . . we were sealed in the Oakland temple, along with our three daughters. I was disappointed in the temple ceremonies and left with a throbbing headache, several hours later. I have been to the temple four or five times since then.

One year ago a couple moved next door to us, . . . She was very religious and as we talked I expressed to her my prayer failure and general frustration at not being able to have the real power of the New Testament church in my life. And, yet I knew that I had the true church. This led to more frustration and confusion.

I went a few times with her to her church, . . . I loved their worship and saw how much they really did love the Lord.

Sitting in our own meetings, especially Sacrament Meeting, hearing talks of food storage, travels, etc., but never hardly hearing the word of God preached made me feel even worse. My neighbors had gone . . . for five months on a job . . .

Then, our neighbors returned . . . Again, I saw the glow in her face and wished that I could have what she had. Why did she have such happiness, and extraordinary answers to her prayers, etc. Here I had the true Gospel of Jesus Christ and she didn’t and she was getting all the blessings. I felt cold and dead inside.

I started going with her to her serv[i]ce[s] again once in a while. It was then that I really got desperate. I wanted to be happy so badly. I prayed to God that he would reveal the truth to me, reveal his will, in a manner that I could not mistake. I didn’t care how much it cost me or where the chips fell. I just wanted to be on His side, no matter what . . .

Nothing particular happened for about a week. I kept telling myself that I wasn’t going to worry about it because the Lord would take care of my problem. I kept telling myself that I had to learn to “wait patiently on the Lord.” Well, then my neighbor borrowed your book, “Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?” from a friend of hers in her church, and I saw it laying on her bedroom bureau. She was embarrassed and said she wasn’t trying to offend me but just wanted to find out more about my religion. I told her she wasn’t going to find out much reading anti-Mormon books.

But, I did agree that I would be happy to discuss any of our religious doctrine with her husband. I knew I could ably defend my religion as I was well versed in it. I wasn’t worried at all. I decided to debate on a particular subject and started doing research. Then I decided I’d better know what the opposition was so I borrowed the book from her.

Well, I spent almost three days and nights reading. The adjectives used in the back of your book such as “devastating” and “utterly crushed” were so true!! My husband and I spent days discussing what the book had brought to light, at first not believing, then not wanting to believe. Could it be possible that what we had been deceived? Could it be true? I asked the Lord to confirm that this was, in fact, an answer to my prayer. . . . Within an hour, I received an unmistakable confirmation from a completely different source. I was scared and yet happy . . .

We are now in the position of having to face reality, but not knowing exactly what to do about it. I have resigned as Primary Secretary and both of us have thrown our garments away. . . . We know in our heart that what you have written is true.

1, of course, checked in all the books which we have in our home, on the correctness of your quotations. They were all correct. . . .

In the preface of your book, you quote a letter received from a member of the Church in Arizona dated July 28, 1965. He states that your book . . . would do more harm to the church than any other volume published in the last 50 to 75 years and that it could tear the church apart. We have to agree. We have read anti-Mormon books before without it having any effect on us. They were written by non-Mormons who obviously didn’t have anything going for them but opinions and statements from people who were enemies to the LDS church in its early history. Big deal! But . . . your book condemns the church by using our own history and statements from our own presidents . . . It is truly a startling revelation!

Please write and help us. We need to share with someone who’s been there. We know we must go and ask the Bishop to remove our names from the Chur[ch] rolls. And, our children are with us in that thinking. . . . (Letter dated October 29, 1975)

In a plastic cover Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? sells for $7.95. In hardback binding it sells for $9.95.
Blacks Receive LDS Priesthood

Pressure Forces Mormon President to Issue New “Revelation”

Bruce R. McConkie, who now serves as an Apostle in the Mormon Church, made these remarks concerning blacks in his book *Mormon Doctrine*:

**Negroes** in this life are denied the Priesthood; under no circumstances can they hold this delegation of authority from the Almighty. (Abra. 1:20-27.) The gospel message of salvation is not carried affirmatively to them . . . negroes are not equal with other races where the receipt of certain spiritual blessings are concerned, particularly the priesthood and the temple blessings that flow therefrom, but this inequality is not of man’s origin. **It is the Lord’s doing**, is based on his eternal laws of justice, and grows out of the lack of Spiritual valiance of those concerned in their first estate. (*Mormon Doctrine*, 1966, pages 527-528)

However, in a broad general sense, caste systems have their root and origin in the gospel itself, and when they operate according to the divine decree, the resultant restrictions and segregation are right and proper and have the approval of the Lord. To illustrate: Cain, Ham, and the whole negro race have been cursed with a black skin, the mark of Cain, so they can be identified as a caste apart, a people with whom the other descendants of Adam should not intermarry. (*Ibid.*, page 114)

Because of these teachings the *Los Angeles Times* for August 27, 1967, referred to the Mormon Church as “one of the few uncracked fortresses of discrimination.” For eleven more years the Latter-day Saints continued to cling to a policy of discrimination. Church leaders claimed that the doctrine could only be changed by revelation from God. Finally, on June 9, 1978, the Mormon Church’s *Deseret News* carried a startling announcement by the First Presidency which said that a new revelation had been given and that blacks would be allowed to hold the priesthood:

. . . we have pleaded long and earnestly in behalf of these, our faithful brethren, spending many hours in the upper room of the Temple supplicating the Lord for divine guidance.

He has heard our prayers, and by revelation has confirmed that the long-promised day has come when every faithful, worthy man in the church may receive the holy priesthood, with power to exercise its divine authority, and enjoy with his loved ones every blessing that flows therefrom, including the blessings of the temple. Accordingly, all worthy male members of the church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color. (*Deseret News*, June 9, 1978, page 1A)

Since we have probably printed more material critical of the Mormon anti-black doctrine than any other publisher, the new revelation comes as a great victory and a vindication of our work. We printed our first criticism of this doctrine in 1959. This was certainly not a popular cause to espouse anti-black doctrine than any other publisher, the new revelation comes as a...
this vital issue it could lead to violence or bloodshed. Because we felt that it was not right to put our trust in man, we separated our selves from the Mormon Church.”

As early as 1963 we printed a sheet entitled, “Will There Be a Revelation Regarding the Negro?” At the bottom of this sheet we predicted: “If the pressure continues to increase on the Negro question, the leaders of the Mormon Church will probably have another revelation which will allow the Negro to hold the priesthood.” In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 291-292, we pointed out:

If the Mormon Church should decide to change its policy and allow Negroes to hold the priesthood, it will not be the first time that Mormon doctrine has been revised to fit a changing world.

Twenty-five years before the Mormon Church gave up the practice of polygamy they were declaring that no such change could be made. In the Millennial Star, Oct. 28, 1865, the following appeared: “We have shown that in requiring the relinquishment of polygamy, they ask the renunciation of the entire faith of this people. . . . “There is no half way house. The childish babble about another revelation is only an evidence how half informed men can talk.”

As the pressure increased against polygamy, Wilford Woodruff issued the Manifesto (now claimed to be a revelation) which suspended the practice of polygamy.

THE BRIGHAM YOUNG MISREPRESENTED

We feel that the Mormon Church’s change on the doctrine concerning blacks is a very good move because it will undoubtedly help blacks obtain equality in Utah and will probably prevent much bloodshed and trouble. Nevertheless, we must point out that Brigham Young and other leaders have been misrepresented in order to make the change palatable to the Mormon people. For instance, the Church’s Deseret News would have us believe that the change was a fulfillment of a prophecy uttered by Brigham Young, the second President of the Church:

The announcement Friday fulfilled statements made by most LDS Church presidents since Joseph Smith that blacks would one day obtain the full blessings of the church, including the priesthood.

Speaking against slavery, Brigham Young once told the Utah Legislature, “. . . . the [sic] day will come when all that race (blacks) will be redeemed and possess all the blessings which we now have.” (Deseret News, June 10, 1978, page 1A)

While it is true that Brigham Young believed that blacks would eventually receive the priesthood, he made it clear that this was not to happen until after the resurrection. The context of the speech which the Deseret News cites reveals that Brigham Young believed it would be a sin for the Church to give blacks the priesthood before the “last of the posterity of Able” had received it. He went on to say that if the Church gave “all the blessings of God” to the blacks prematurely, the priesthood would be taken away and the Church would go to destruction. This address is preserved in the Church Historical Department. Michael Marquardt has provided a typed copy which retains the spelling errors of the original. We extract the following from Brigham Young’s speech:

What is that mark? you will see it on the countenance of every African you ever did see upon the face of the earth. . . . the Lord told Cain that he should not receive the blessings of the priesthood nor his seed, until the last of the posterity of Able had received the priesthood, until the redemption of the earth. If there never was a prophet, or apostle of Jesus Christ spoke it before, I tell you, this people that are commonly called negroes are the children of old Cain. . . . they cannot bear rule in the priesthood, for the curse on them was to remain upon them, until the resude of the posterity of Michal and his wife receive the blessings, . . . until the times of the restitution shall come, . . . Then Cain’s seed will be had in remembrance, and the time come when that curse should be wiped off. . . .

I am as much oposed to the principle of slavery as any man in the present acception or usage of the term, it is abused. I am opposed to abusing that which God has decreed, to take a blessing, and make a curse of it. It is a great blessing to the seed of Adam to have the seed of Cain for servants. . . . Let this Church which is called the kingdom of God on the earth; we will summons the first presidency, the twelve, the high counsel, the Bishoprick, and all the elders of Israel, suppose we summons them to appear here, and here declare that it is right to mingle our seed, with the black race of Cain, that they shall come in with us, and be partakers with us of all the blessings God has given to us. On that very day, and hour we should do so, the priesthood is taken from this Church and kingdom and God leaves us to our fate. The moment we consent to mingle with the seed of Cain the Church must go to destruction,—we should receive the curse which has been placed upon the seed of Cain, and never more be numbered with the children of Adam who are heirs to the priesthood until that curse be removed. (Brigham Young Addresses, Ms d 1234, Box 48, folder 3, dated February 5, 1852, located in the LDS Church Historical Dept.)

The Mormon people are now faced with a serious dilemma; if they really believe Brigham Young was a prophet, then it follows from his statement that the Church has lost the priesthood, been put under “the curse” and is going to destruction! In spite of Brigham Young’s emphatic warning against giving blacks “all the blessings God has given us,” the present leaders have announced that blacks will now receive “all of the privileges and blessings which the gospel affords” (Deseret News, June 9, 1978).

After the First Presidency made their statement, many people became confused over the Church’s position on interracial marriage. It soon became apparent, however, that the Church’s ban on marriage to blacks had been lifted. Joseph Freeman, the first black man ordained to the priesthood after the change, indicated that he wanted to be sealed in the Temple to his wife who was not of African descent. Church spokesman Don LeFevre said that such a marriage would be possible and that although the Church did not encourage interracial marriage, there was no longer a ban on whites marrying blacks:

That is entirely possible, said Mr. LeFevre. . . . “So there is no ban on interracial marriage.

“If a black partner contemplating marriage is worthy of going to the Temple, nobody’s going to stop him—if he’s marrying a white, an Oriental . . . if he’s ready to go to the Temple, obviously he may go with the blessings of the church.” (Salt Lake Tribune, June 14, 1978)

On June 24, 1978, the Tribune announced that Joseph Freeman, 26, the first black man to gain the priesthood in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Friday went in the Salt Lake Temple with his wife and 5 sons for sacred ordinances. . . Thomas S. Monson, member of the church’s Quorum of Twelve Apostles, conducted the marriage and sealing ceremonies [sic].

In allowing temple marriages between blacks and whites, the Church is completely disregarding what President Brigham Young referred to as “the law of God”:

Shall I tell you the law of God in regard to the African race? If the white man who belongs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the penalty, under the law of God, is death on the spot. This will always be so. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 10, page 110)

The reader will notice that Brigham Young said that this “law of God” could never be changed. In 1967 the Mormon writer John L. Lund made these comments about Brigham Young’s statement:

Brigham Young made a very strong statement on this matter when he said, “. . . . Shall I tell you the law of God in regard to the African race? If the white man who belongs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the penalty, the law of God, is death on the spot. This will always be so.” God has commanded Israel not to intermarry. To go against this commandment of God would be to sin. Those who willfully sin with their eyes open to this wrong will not be surprised to find that they will be separated from the presence of God in the world to come. This is spiritual death. . . . It does not matter if they are one-sixth Negro or one-one hundred and sixth, the curse of no Priesthood is still the same. . . . To intermarry with a Negro is to forfeit a “Nation of Priesthood holders.” (The Church and the Negro, 1967, pages 54-55)

The Church Section of the Deseret News for June 17, 1978, says that “Former presidents of the Church have spoken of the day when the blessings of the priesthood would come to the blacks.” A quotation from a sermon by Brigham Young which appeared in the Journal of Discourses, vol. 7,
is cited, but when we go to the original book we find that it has been taken out of context. In this sermon Brigham Young plainly taught that blacks could not receive the priesthood until all of Adam’s other children receive it:

Cain slew his brother . . . and the Lord put a mark upon him, which is the flat nose and black skin. . . . How long is that race to endure the dreadful curse that is upon them? That curse will remain upon them, and they never can hold the Priesthood or share in it until all the other descendants of Adam have received the promises and enjoyed the blessings of the Priesthood and the keys thereof. Until the last one of the residue of Adam’s children are brought up to that favorable position, the children of Cain cannot receive the first ordinances of the Priesthood. They were the first that were cursed, and they will be the last from whom the curse will be removed. When the residue of the family of Adam come up and receive their blessings, then the curse will be removed from the seed of Cain, and they will receive blessings in like proportion. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 7, pages 290-291)

Brigham Young also taught this doctrine in other published sermons:

When all the other children of Adam have had the privilege of receiving the Priesthood, and of coming into the kingdom of God, and of being redeemed from the four quarters of the earth, and have received their resurrection from the dead, then it will be time enough to remove the curse from Cain and his posterity. . . . he is the last to share the joys of the kingdom of God. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 2, page 143)

And when all the rest of the children have received their blessings in the Holy Priesthood, then that curse will be removed from the seed of Cain, and they will then come up and possess the priesthood, and receive all the blessings which we now are entitled to. (Ibid., vol. 11, page 272)

In 1949 the First Presidency of the Mormon Church issued a statement in which they cited Brigham Young’s teaching that blacks cannot receive the priesthood until after the resurrection:

The prophets of the Lord have made several statements. . . . President Brigham Young said: “They will go down to death. And when all the rest of the children have received their blessings in the holy priesthood, then that curse will be removed from the seed of Cain, and they will then come up and possess the priesthood, . . .” (Statement by the First Presidency, as cited in Mormonism and the Negro, by John J. Stewart and William E. Berrett, 1960, Part 2, page 16)

Joseph Fielding Smith, who served as the tenth President of the Mormon Church in the early 1970s, taught that blacks would never hold the priesthood as long as “time endures”:

Not only was Cain called upon to suffer, but because of his wickedness he became the father of an inferior race. A curse was placed upon him and that curse has been continued through his lineage and must do so while time endures. Millions of souls have come into this world cursed with a black skin and have been denied the privilege of Priesthood and the fullness of the blessings of the Gospel. . . . they have been made to feel their inferiority and have been separated from the rest of mankind from the beginning. (The Way To Perfection, 1935, page 101)

In his book Answers to Gospel Questions, vol. 2, page 188, Joseph Fielding Smith said that the bestowal of priesthood on blacks was “in the far distant future,” and in a meeting held in Barratt Hall on October 11, 1958, he commented that “the Lord will, in due time, remove the restrictions. Not in this world but the time will come, . . .” (Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 586).

N. Eldon Tanner, a member of the First Presidency who finally signed the statement granting blacks the Priesthood, was completely opposed to the idea in 1967:

“The church has no intention of changing its doctrine on the Negro.” N. Eldon Tanner, counselor to the First President told Seattle during his recent visit here. “Throughout the history of the original Christian church, the Negro never held the priesthood. There’s really nothing we can do to change this. It’s a law of God.” (Seattle Magazine, December 1967, page 60)

Mormon writer John L. Lund claimed that if the President of the Mormon Church gave a revelation that blacks were to hold the priesthood, members of the Church would accept it, but he emphasized that such a revelation would not be forthcoming because the “present prophets are in complete agreement with Brigham Young and other past leaders on the question of the Negro and the Priesthood”:

Brigham Young revealed that the Negroes will not receive the Priesthood until a great while after the second advent of Jesus Christ whose coming will usher in a millennium of peace.

Revelation?

In view of what President Young and others have said, it would be foolish indeed to give anyone the false idea that a new revelation is immediately forthcoming on the issue of the Negroes receiving the Priesthood. . . . our present prophets are in complete agreement with Brigham Young and other past leaders on the question of the Negro and the Priesthood. President McKay was asked by a news reporter at the dedication of the Oakland Temple, “When will the Negroes receive the Priesthood?” He responded to the question over a national television network saying, “Not in my lifetime, young man, nor yours.”

Social pressure and even government sanctions cannot be expected to bring forth a new revelation. This point is mentioned because there are groups in the Church, as well as out, who feel that pressure on the Prophet will cause a revelation to come forth. It would be wise to emphasize that all the social pressure in the world will not change what the Lord has decreed to be. Let those who would presume to pressure the Prophet be reminded that it is God that inspires prophets, not social pressure. . . . It is not the responsibility nor the stewardship of any person on earth to dictate to the Lord or the Lord’s servants when a revelation should be given. . . .

The prophets have declared that there are at least two major stipulations that have to be met before the Negroes will be allowed to possess the Priesthood. The first requirement relates to time. The Negroes will not be allowed to hold the Priesthood during mortality, in fact, not until after the resurrection of all of Adam’s children. The other stipulation requires that Abel’s seed receive the first opportunity of having the Priesthood. . . . Negroes must first pass through mortality before they may possess the Priesthood (“they will go down to death”). Reference is also made to the condition that the Negroes will have to wait until after the resurrection of all of Adam’s children before receiving the Priesthood. . . . the last of Adam’s children will not be resurrected until the end of the millennium. Therefore, the Negroes will not receive the Priesthood until after that time. . . . this will not happen until after the thousand years of Christ’s reign on earth. . . .

The second major stipulation that needs to be met . . . is the requirement that Abel’s seed receive the opportunity of holding the Priesthood first. . . . The obvious question is, “When will Abel’s seed be redeemed?” It will first of all be necessary that Abel marry, and then be resurrected, and ultimately exalted in the highest degree of the Celestial Kingdom so that he can have a continuation of his seed. It will then be necessary for Abel to create an earth for his spirit children to come to and experience mortality. These children will have to be “redeemed” or resurrected. After the resurrection or redemption of Abel’s seed, Cain’s descendants, the Negroes, will then be allowed to possess the Priesthood. (The Church and the Negro, 1967, pages 45-49)

On pages 109-110 of the same book, John L. Lund reiterates:

First, all of Adam’s children will have to resurrec and secondly, the seed of Abel must have an opportunity to possess the Priesthood. These events will not occur until sometime after the end of the millennium. As late as 1974 Apostle Bruce R. McConkie questioned the spirituality of Church members who believed it was time for a new revelation on the blacks. In a conference message delivered Oct. 4, 1974, Apostle McConkie said:

Am I valiant in the testimony of Jesus if my chief interest and concern in life is laying up in store the treasures of the earth, rather than the building up of the kingdom? . . .

Am I valiant if I am deeply concerned about the Church’s stand on who can or who cannot receive the priesthood and think it is time for a new revelation on this doctrine? . . .

Am I valiant if I engage in gambling, play cards, go to pornographic movies, . . . (The Ensign, November 1974, page 35)
Writing in the *New York Times*, June 11, 1978, Mario S. DePillis observed: “For Mormonism’s anti-black policy a revelation was the only way out, and many students of Mormonism were puzzled only at the lateness of the hour.” As far back as 1963, Donald Ira French, Jr., wrote a letter in which he remarked:

Sir: As an elder in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, it has long seemed incredible to me that a church with so much forward vision in social welfare and higher education can be so backward in its outlook on a segment of the human race that is also supposed to be among our brothers. . . .

The revelation that the church is talking about with respect to the Negro and the priesthood should have been sought 50 years ago—not now when we are forced into looking for one. Even if a revelation should come now, we have compromised our position because it looks as if we have been forced into seeking it, which will be true. (*Time*, November 1, 1963)

That the Mormon Church was forced into the revelation is obvious to anyone who seriously examines the evidence. In the books *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* and *Mormons and Negroes* we show that there has been a great deal of pressure exerted against the Church. For instance, athletic teams from the Church’s Brigham Young University have been the target of very serious protests.

In 1974 the Mormon doctrine of discrimination against blacks brought the Boy Scouts into a serious confrontation with the NAACP. The Boy Scouts of America do not discriminate because of religion or race, but Mormon-sponsored troops did have a policy of discrimination. On July 18, 1974, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported:

A 12-year-old boy scout has been denied a senior patrol leadership in his troop because he is black, Don L. Cope, black ombudsman for the state, said Wednesday. . . .

The ombudsman said Mormon “troop policy is that in order for a scout to become a patrol leader, he must be a deacon’s quorum president in the LDS Church. Since the boy cannot hold the priesthood, he cannot become a patrol leader.”

The Mormon leaders apparently realized that they could never prevail in this matter and a compromise was worked out:

Shortly before Boy Scout officials were to appear in Federal Court Friday morning on charges of discrimination, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints issued a policy change which will allow black youths to be senior patrol leaders, a position formerly reserved for white LDS youths in troops sponsored by the church. . . .

An LDS Church spokesman said Friday under the “guidelines set forth in the statement, a young man other than president of the deacons quorum could (now) become the senior patrol leader if he is better qualified.” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, August 3, 1974)

Mormon President Spencer W. Kimball “had been subpoenaed to testify” in the suit (*Ibid.*, October 23), but on November 7, 1974, the Tribune reported:

A suit claiming discrimination against blacks by the Boy Scouts of America was dismissed Wednesday in federal court . . . all parties to the suit . . . signed an agreement stating the alleged discrimination “has been discontinued.”

Since 1976 the Mormon Church has been repeatedly embarrassed by one of its own members who became alienated over the anti-black doctrine and decided to take matters into his own hands. On April 3, 1976, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported:

PORTLAND, Ore.—A member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ordained a black into the priesthood Friday, saying he did so in an attempt to force a revision in Mormon doctrine about the Negro race.

Douglas A. Wallace, . . . first baptized Larry Lester, . . . in the swimming pool of a motel in northeast Portland. He then ordained Lester to the office of priest in the Aaronic Priesthood of the LDS Church. . . .

The rite was preceded by a news conference at which Wallace said he has long been bothered by the Mormon Church’s bias against blacks and he feels the time has come to challenge it. He said often all that is required to change a policy is for someone to break out of tradition. . . .

The president of the Portland-Oregon Mission of the church, Robert Seamons, said of Wallace’s actions:

“He is using the priesthood in an unrighteous manner and his action will have no validity because the president of the church has said that blacks are not to hold the priesthood.”

Wallace said he hopes there are no recriminations against him for his action, such as excommunication.

On April 13, 1976, the *Salt Lake Tribune* revealed that “Douglas A. Wallace was excommunicated from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Sunday for ordaining a black man into the church’s priesthood.”

After a confrontation with Church personnel at an April conference session, Mr. Wallace was ejected from the Tabernacle. Later he was served with “a court order barring him from attending conference” (*Ibid.*, October 4, 1976). Although we did not agree with some of Mr. Wallace’s ideas on religion, we did not consider him to be dangerous and we were rather surprised to notice the close surveillance the police kept him under when he walked along the public sidewalk outside of Temple Square. We were rather startled to see such a thing in Salt Lake City.

**SHOOTING OF OFFICER OLSON**

The Mormon leaders’ fear of the threat Mr. Wallace presented to the Church seems to have led to a tragic incident where a policeman was accidentally shot and permanently paralyzed. This occurred about the time of the Church’s conference held in April, 1977. On April 5, 1977, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported:

Mormon dissident Douglas A. Wallace charged Monday that a Salt Lake City police officer, shot early Sunday was keeping surveillance on him in a nearby residence.

Acting Police Chief Edgar A. Bryan Jr. denied it. He said his men were not keeping surveillance on Mr. Wallace, an excommunicated member of the Church . . . but he would not say what the stakeout’s purpose was.

Officer David W. Olson remained in critical condition Monday at St. Mark’s Hospital, where personnel said he suffered a severed spinal cord from a single shot in the neck. The policeman was shot accidentally by his partner, . . . Wallace was staying at the home of a friend, Dr. John W. Fitzgerald, 2177 Carriage Ln. (4600 South).

He was in Salt Lake City to try to make an appearance at the LDS World Conference last weekend. Attorneys for the church, however, obtained a temporary restraining order . . . which prevented the dissident from visiting Temple Square.

“I have not committed any crime, and I don’t intend to commit any crime. I have been raised in the Mormon faith and I am a man of peace . . . . This is not Russia; this is not Nazi Germany; there is no reason why I should be under surveillance of the police,” Mr. Wallace said.

The following day the *Salt Lake Tribune* related:

Ex-Mormon Douglas Wallace, who claims the wounding of an undercover police officer was done while police held surveillance on him, Tuesday afternoon said he will subpoena various high ranking police and sheriff’s deputies to establish the fact.

Mr. Wallace said also, “It is clear from the evidence that we have uncovered that I was under surveillance. The police department’s denial of that simply compounds the wrong. Is this going to be Salt Lake’s sequel to the Watergate scandal?” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, April 6, 1977)

With Mr. Wallace and his attorney pressing them hard, the police were finally forced to admit the truth about the matter:

Salt Lake City police officers admitted Thursday that the accidental wounding of an undercover officer occurred during surveillance of Mormon dissident Douglas A. Wallace. . . .

Reports released Thursday by both the county sheriff’s office and the county attorney show that six officers were on stakeout around the John W. Fitzgerald home . . . where Mr. Wallace was staying.

The lawmen were paired up in three police vehicles and two of those were parked close together in opposite directions . . . (*Salt Lake Tribune*, April 8, 1977)

Those who know Mr. Wallace find it strange that there should have be so many policemen on the surveillance crew watching him at 4:20 a.m. A subsequent story in the newspaper reported that the “lawmen . . . had been on duty for 16 straight hours, Chief Willoughby said” (*Ibid.*, April 15, 1977). At any rate, Wallace claimed the Mormon Church was behind the whole affair: “Ex-Mormon Douglas Wallace Friday renewed his assertion that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was behind April police surveillance of Mr. Wallace that led to the accidental shooting of a Salt Lake City police officer” (*Ibid.*, September 17, 1977). Finally, David Olson, the disabled police officer, took exception to a press release issued by the Church. In a letter to the Editor of the *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 18, 1978, Mr. Olson made a direct attack on the President of the Church:
I would also like to thank Spencer W. Kimball for his incorrect press release concerning the police involvement combined with the LDS church’s efforts to restrict Douglas A. Wallace from the temple grounds, specifically the Tabernacle, on April 3, 1977.

His denial of these actions is wrong. Any man who can take such actions and still call himself a prophet deserves more than I to be confined to this wheelchair.

Douglas Wallace filed lawsuits amounting to millions of dollars against the Mormon Church, and although he has not been able to prevail against the Church in the courts, the publicity surrounding the suits has caused the Church no end of trouble. We feel that his actions and the embarrassment they have caused the Church have played a part in bringing about the decision to have a new “revelation.”

Another Mormon who has put a great deal of pressure on the Church is Byron Marchant. Mr. Marchant took a very strong stand against racism in the Church. The *Dallas Morning News* for October 20, 1977, reported:

SALT LAKE CITY (AP)—The man who cast the first vote in modern history against a leader of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been excommunicated and fired as church janitor.

Byron Marchant, 35, of Salt Lake, is the second opponent of the church policy withholding the priesthood from blacks to be excommunicated in the last two years.

When Mr. Marchant tried to distribute literature at Temple Square at the next conference he was arrested:

Byron Marchant, excommunicated member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was arrested Sunday at 1:45 p.m. at Temple Square of charges of trespassing, . . . Marchant was requested to leave the church grounds after he offered literature to people waiting in line for admission to the 2 p.m. session of general conference, Mr. Gibbs said. J. Earl Jones, director of security for the Mormon church reportedly advised Mr. Marchant he was on private property and asked him to leave. When Mr. Marchant refused, Mr. Gibbs said police officers were contacted and Mr. Marchant was placed under arrest at approximately 1:45 p.m. (Salt Lake Tribune, April 3, 1978)

Mr. Marchant published a sheet in which he called for demonstrations against the Church’s policy:

Next October Conference (1978) I will join all interested in a march on Temple Square in Salt Lake City. In the event that the Mormon Church decides to ordain worthy Afro-Americans to the priesthood this demonstration will be a sort of celebration. A demonstration of support. In the meantime, every person and/or group concerned about Utah Racism is encouraged to speak out and attend the October protest.

Mr. Marchant’s threat of a demonstration at the next conference may have caused Mormon leaders to think more seriously about having a new revelation. The general authorities seem to have a real fear of demonstrations around Temple Square. Although Mr. Marchant is probably a peaceful man, the issue concerning blacks in the Mormon Church was so explosive that the slightest incident could have touched off a riot where innocent people could have been injured. We think that the Church was wise to change its policy before the demonstration.

However this may be, when the Mormon Church yielded Mr. Marchant dropped a civil suit:

Following Friday’s announcement that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will allow blacks to receive the priesthood, BYU President Spencer W. Kimball Wednesday.

Marchant was suing President Kimball for not appearing as a witness in a case currently pending against Marchant. . . . Marchant was suing the Mormon Church president for $100 for not appearing after being subpoenaed to testify in the case. Marchant’s subpoena was quashed Thursday. (Salt Lake Tribune, June 10, 1978)

Another article in the same issue of the *Tribune* observed that “The last three years have also seen repeated attempts by church dissidents to subpoena Mormon leaders into court proceedings, with the central issue often related to the church’s belief about blacks.”

PROBLEM IN BRAZIL

Besides all the problems the Church was having with dissidents, it was faced with an impossible situation in Brazil. Even the Church’s own *Deseret News* admitted that “A major problem the church has faced with its policy regarding blacks was in Brazil, where the church is building a temple. Many people there are mixed [mixed?] racially, and it is often impossible to determine whether church members have black ancestry” (*Deseret News*, June 10, 1978).

Mormon leaders have been aware of this problem for some time. Lester Bush, Jr., gave this revealing information in an article published in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1973, page 41:

The decision to deny the priesthood to anyone with Negro ancestry (“no matter how remote”), had resolved the theoretical problem of priesthood eligibility, but did not help with the practical problem of identifying the “blood of Cain” in those not already known to have Negro ancestry. . . .

The growth of the international Church was clearly bringing new problems. Brazil was particularly difficult. Later that year J. Ruben Clark, First Counselor to George Albert Smith, reported that the Church was entering “into a situation in doing missionary work . . . where it is very difficult if not impossible to tell who has negro blood and who has not. He said that if we are baptizing Brazilians, we are almost certainly baptizing people of negro blood, and that if the Priesthood is conferred upon them, which it no doubt is, we are facing a very serious problem.”

In a letter published in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Autumn, 1967, page 8, Gary Lobb observed:

My studies currently in Brazil. . . have led me to conclude that most Brazilians who are not second or third generation descendants of German, Italian, Polish, or Japanese immigrants, are probably descendants of Negroes. This is especially true among the lower and lower-middle classes which make up a large portion of L.D.S. membership in this land. . . . In some of the branches of the Church which my wife and I have attended here in Brazil, there appear to be priesthood bearers who possess the essential characteristics of the Negro race.

The hypocrisy of the situation in South America was pointed out in 1966 by Wallace Turner:

A different thing is going on in South America where Mormon missionaries are pushing ahead full throttle. There the former careful selection to keep out “white Negroes” has been allowed to slide a little. . . .

“There is no question but that in Brazil they have been ordaining priests who are part Negro,” said one careful observer. (*The Mormon Establishment*, 1966, page 261)

With the opening of the new temple in Brazil the situation would have turned into a real nightmare. Actually, the Mormon Church has the same problem in the United States. Patriarch Eldred G. Smith remarked:

“I had a young lady who was blond, and no sign or indications visibly of the Negro line at all, but yet she was deprived of going to the Temple . . . . We have these conditions by the thousands in the United States today and are getting more of them. If they have any blood of the Negro at all in their veins at all, they are not entitled to the blessings of the Priesthood. . . . No limit as to how far back so far as I know. (*Patriarchal Blessings*, Institute of Religion, January 17, 1964, page 8)

*Time Magazine* for June 30, 1958, page 47, pointed out Dr. Robert P. Stuckert researched the “conclusion that of 135 million Americans classified as white in 1950, about 28 million (21%) had some African ancestry.” The Church’s stress on genealogical research placed many members of the Church in a very embarrassing position. Many members of the Church discovered they had black ancestors and attempted to cover it up. Some however, faced the issue and yielded up all rights to the priesthood. The *Deseret News* Church Section for July 11, 1970, told of an interesting case:

Mr. and Mrs. John Lono Pea are an amazing couple. . . . he was set apart as genealogy secretary.

“I found out through my family telling me and in genealogy work that a grandparent was an offspring of one of the Negroes who migrated to Hawaii in 1820, through the slave trade.

“I have a sure testimony that what the Lord has said regarding the priesthood is true. I sent my genealogy to the First Presidency so there upon them, which it no doubt is, we are facing a very serious problem.”
REVELATION EVADES REAL ISSUE

O. Kendall White, Jr., made these interesting observations six years before the revelation was given:

Since they believe in “continuing revelation,” Mormons have a mechanism that enables them to reverse previous positions without repudiating the past. This is illustrated in the resolution of the conflict over polygamy. Mormons never disavowed their belief in polygamy, but they discontinued the practice on the grounds that it conflicted with another belief involving support for “the law of the land.” That the church will invoke such a mechanism to resolve the racial issue is not too unlikely.

However, this approach has a serious drawback. It is the tendency not to acknowledge the errors of the past. While revelation could be used to legitimate a new racial policy and to redefine Mormon relations with black people, Mormons might still be unwilling to condemn the racism involved in their history. They might be inclined to argue that Mormons in earlier periods were under a different mandate than the one binding them. This obviously implies that the church is never wrong. Thus, change may come through the notion of continuing revelation, but the racist aspects of Mormon history will not necessarily be condemned. (The Journal of Religious Thought, Autumn-Winter, 1973, pages 57-58)

It would appear that the Church leaders have done exactly what Mr. White warned against—i.e., they have used revelation as a means of sidestepping the real issues involved. Mario S. DePillis pointed out that “the revelation leaves unsolved other racist implications of the Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price—scriptures that are both cornerstones and contradictions” (New York Times, June 11, 1978).

One issue that the Mormon leaders now seem to be dodging is that concerning skin color. From the beginning Mormon theology has taught that a black skin is a mark upon a people, starting with the belief that dark skins are cursed: “Conceived in filth and will remain so.” (New York Times, October 29, 1936: “The revelation leaves unsolved other racist implications of the Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price—scriptures that are both cornerstones and contradictions” (New York Times, June 11, 1978).)

The Book of Mormon is filled with the teaching that people with dark skins are cursed:

- the Lord God did cause a curse upon them because... (Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 15:21)
- And the skins of the Lamanites were dark, according to the mark which was set upon their fathers, which was a curse upon them because at their transgression... (Ibid., Alma 3:6)

In Mormon 5:15 of the Book of Mormon the following statement is made concerning the Indians:

... for this people shall be scattered, and shall become a dark, a filthy, and a loathsome people, beyond the description of that which ever hath been amongst us, ...

The Book of Mormon, however, predicts that the Indians will repent of their sins and become white:

... and many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a white and delightsome people. (Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 30:6)

Spencer W. Kimball, who gave the new revelation which allows blacks to hold the priesthood, seems to be a real believer in the teaching that God makes righteous people become “white and delightsome”:

I saw a striking contrast in the progress of the Indian people today as against that of only fifteen years ago... (Improvement Era, December 1960, pages 922-923)

It is interesting to note that while Spencer W. Kimball believes that the Indians are to become “white and delightsome,” he has suppressed Joseph Smith’s 1831 revelation on polygamy which commanded the Mormons to marry the Indians to make them white. We published this revelation in full in the book Mormonism Like Watergate? in 1974. The most important verse of this revelation reads as follows:

4. Verily, I say unto you, that the wisdom of man, in his fallen state, knoweth not the purposes and the privileges of my holy priesthood, but ye shall know when ye receive a fulness by reason of the anointing: For it is my will, that in time, ye should take unto you wives of the Lamanites and Nephites, that their posterity may become white, delightsome and just, and even now their females are more virtuous than the gentiles.

We seriously doubt that President Kimball will ever allow this revelation to be canonized in the Doctrine and Covenants since he feels that the Indians are being made “white and delightsome” through the power of God and has in the past discouraged intermarriage with the Indians. The Church Section of the Desert News for June 17, 1978, gave this information:

In an address to seminary and institute teachers at Brigham Young University on June 27, 1958, President Kimball, then a member of the Council of the Twelve, said:

“...there is one thing that I must mention, and that is interracial marriages. When I said you must teach your young people to overcome their prejudices and accept the Indians, I did not mean that you would encourage intermarriage.”

Although the Mormon Church is now opening the door to temple marriages between blacks and whites, President Kimball is probably not too enthused about the matter. An endorsement of Joseph Smith’s 1831 revelation encouraging intermarriage with Indians could now lead white members to seek marriages with blacks. Since blacks are no longer cursed as to the priesthood, the revelation might just as logically be interpreted as Mormons should “take unto you wives” of the Ethiopians or Nigerians “that their posterity may become white, delightsome and just, ...”

For more documentation and verification of the 1831 revelation on polygamy see our book Mormonism Like Watergate? pages 6-14.

Another matter which the new revelation allowing blacks to hold the priesthood does not resolve is the teaching concerning pre-existence. In the past Mormon leaders have stressed that blacks were cursed as to the priesthood because of “unchristianness in the spirit—or pre-existence” (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 263-264). Should a faithful Mormon continue to believe that blacks were unrighteous in a pre-existent state? The Mormon leaders are silent concerning this matter. It will be especially interesting to see how Church leaders explain this matter to blacks in the Church. Monroe Fleming, far instance, was converted to the Church over 25 years ago. President Joseph Fielding Smith explained to him why he could not hold the priesthood, but since the new “revelation” he is being encouraged to be ordained. Now, was Mr. Fleming really unfaithful in a pre-existent state or did the Church leaders just make a mistake in
the past when they said he could not hold the priesthood? Church leaders should explain if they believe black babies born after the new “revelation” were inferior spirits in a pre-existent state. Now that they have abandoned the idea that blacks cannot hold the priesthood, they should explain if they are giving up some of their teachings on the pre-existence. They should also explain whether they are repudiating the Book of Mormon teaching that a dark skin is given by God as a “curse.”

By giving a “revelation” on the matter without explaining its implications, the Mormon leaders are leaving their people in a dense doctrinal fog. They should take a lesson from the situation that has developed since the Church gave up polygamy. Instead of actually repudiating the doctrine, President Woodruff said he received a revelation and issued the Manifesto which was supposed to put a stop to the practice. The Church retained Joseph Smith’s 1843 revelation on polygamy in the Doctrine and Covenants Section 132. Church leaders continued to teach that polygamy was a righteous doctrine, but since it was against the law, it should not actually be practiced. Because of their reluctance to come to grips with the real issue and repudiate the doctrine, the Mormon leaders left their people in confused state. Many Mormons have reasoned that since the Church teaches plural marriage will be practiced in heaven, they should practice it on earth. Therefore, in disregard to the Church’s Manifesto, thousands of people in Utah are living in polygamy today. The Church excommunicates those who are caught living in the practice, but since it retains the revelation on plural marriage in the Doctrine and Covenants, the number of dissidents continues to grow.

Now, if the Church continues to hide behind a purported revelation on the blacks and fails to come to grips with its racist doctrines, thousands of people are going to continue believing these doctrines and the Church will be plagued with racism for many years to come. In 1960, Sterling McMurrin predicted:

. . . I really believe, if I don’t die in the very near future, I will live to see the time when this doctrine is dissolved. I don’t mean repudiated. The Mormon Church is like the Catholic Church, it doesn’t repudiate doctrine that at one time or another were held to be revelation or absolute truth. They didn’t repudiate the doctrine of Polygamy. I use the word dissolve, and I imagine by some technique they will dissolve the doctrine on the Negro, rather than repudiate it. (Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 287)

Dr. McMurrin’s prediction seems to be coming true. The Mormon Church now appears to be in the process of trying to dissolve the doctrine through new “revelation.” This is the very thing which we warned against in our book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 293:

The honest solution to the problem facing the Mormon leaders is not to have another “revelation,” but to repudiate the doctrine. They should admit that Joseph Smith, Brigham Young and other Mormon leaders taught doctrines that cannot be accepted as coming from God.

The reader will remember that Brigham Young, the second President of the Mormon Church, said that slavery was a “divine institution,” and that the Civil War could not free the slaves (see Journal of Discourses, vol. 10, page 250); however, the Civil War did free the slaves, and Brigham Young was wrong . . .

Brigham Young said that if a person who belongs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the Negro the penalty is “death on the spot” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 10, page 110). Obviously, the Mormons do not believe this statement by Brigham Young or they would be putting many people to death. Brigham Young called this the "law of God" and said that "This will always be so." Now, if Brigham Young was wrong about this, what assurance have we that he was right when he said that the Negro could not hold the Priesthood? Why should we disregard this teaching, which Brigham Young called the "law of God," and yet hold to his teaching that the Negro can not have the Priesthood?

Instead of continuing to cling to Joseph Smith’s Book of Abraham, the Mormon leaders should come to grips with the matter and acknowledge that it is a false translation of the Egyptian Book of Breaths. To come forth with a new “revelation” only compounds the problem.

One thing that should be noted about the new “revelation” is that the Church has failed to produce a copy of it. All we have is a statement by the First Presidency that says a revelation was received. Joseph Smith scribbled many of his revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants and other Church publications, and the Apostle Orson Pratt mocked the Catholics for not adding revelations to the canon:

. . . strange to say, none of their revelations are permitted to enter the sacred canon . . . Here, indeed, is a strange inconsistency! Even the Catholic church herself, evidently places no confidence in the popes and bishops, . . . if she did, she would have canonized their revelations along with the rest of the revelations of the New Testament. . . . We can but conclude that it is all an imposition . . . (Orson Pratt’s Works, “The Bible Alone An Insufficient Guide,” page 39)

It appears that the Mormon Church does not intend to canonize or even make public the new revelation on the blacks. The Salt Lake Tribune for June 13, 1978 reported:

Kimball refused to discuss the revelation that changed the church’s 148-year-old policy against ordination of blacks, saying it was “a personal thing.”

Kimball said the revelation came at this time because conditions and people have changed.

“It’s a different world than it was 20 or 25 years ago. The world is ready for it,” he said.

We seriously doubt that President Kimball will put forth a written revelation on the bestowal of priesthood on blacks. We doubt, in fact, that any such document exists. What probably happened was that the leaders of the Church finally realized that they could no longer retain the anti-black doctrine without doing irreparable damage to the Church. Under these circumstances they were impressed with the fact that this doctrine had to be changed and this impression was referred to as a revelation from God. In a letter to the Editor of the Salt Lake Tribune, June 24, 1978 Eugene Wagner observed:

. . . was this change of doctrine really a revelation from the Lord, or did the church leaders act on their own? Why don’t they publish that revelation and let the Lord speak in his own words? All we saw was a statement of the First Presidency, and that is not how a revelation looks.

When God speaks the revelation starts with the words: “Thus saith the Lord…”. It seems when the Lord decides to change a doctrine of such great importance he will talk himself to the people of his church. If such a revelation cannot be presented to the members it is obvious that the first presidency acted on its own, most likely under fear of public pressure to avoid problems of serious consequences and to maintain peace and popularity with the world.

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 281, we included an account of an interview Michael Marquardt had with a member of the Genesis Group. According to Mr. Marquardt’s notes, “June 24, 1971 was the first time that the First Presidency and Twelve have prayed in this Temple about whether Black members of the Church should hold the Priesthood. The First Presidency and Twelve were not in agreement on the question. But they did agree that the Genesis Group should be formed.”

We will probably never know whether the First Presidency and Twelve reached a unanimous decision in June, 1978, but it is logical to believe that the majority had come to believe that the doctrine had to be changed.

Be this as it may, we feel that it is wrong to attribute such a revelation to God. It makes it appear that God has been a real racist for thousands of years, and that the Mormon leaders by “pleading long and earnestly in behalf of these, our faithful brethren, spending many hours in the upper room of the Temple” have finally persuaded God to give blacks the priesthood. The truth of the matter, however, is that “God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10: 34-35). It is the Mormon leaders who have kept blacks under a curse. They have continually and stubbornly opposed the advancement of black people, threatening and excommunicating those who differed with them on the matter. Finally, when their backs are to the wall, the Mormon leaders are forced to change their position. We would think that at this time they would fall down before God and acknowledge their wrong doing, but instead they proudly stand up as heroes and proclaim that because of their “pleading long and earnestly” on behalf of the blacks, God has changed the doctrine and decided to give them the priesthood. To claim a “revelation” at this point seems almost like mockery to God. Less than four years ago Apostle McConkie was claiming that it was unspiritual people who were “deeply concerned about the Church’s stand on who can or who cannot receive the priesthood and think it is time for a new revelation. . . .” Now members of the First Presidency admit that they have been “pleading long and earnestly” concerning the question. Dr. Hugh Nibley once claimed that “of all churches in the world” only the Mormon Church “has not found it necessary to adjust any part of its doctrine in the last hundred years” (No Man’s, That’s Not History, page 46). The new revelation on the blacks is just another evidence of how Dr. Nibley has misrepresented the situation.
Sterling McMurrin made some interesting observations ten years ago:

He expressed belief the time would come when “the Mormon people for the most part will have to abandon their crude superstitions about Negroes because their children forced them to.”

But he said there will be those who will remember “with sadness and moral embarrassment the day when their Church could have done great things to hasten the achievement, but failed.” (Ogden Standard-Examiner, June 22, 1968)

**IS THE PRIESTHOOD LOST?**

The reader will remember that President Brigham Young once said that if the blacks were given all the blessings of the Gospel, the priesthood would be taken from the Church and it would go to destruction. Our research leads us to believe that the Mormon Church never had any priesthood to lose. Even David Whitmer, one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, seems to have had some real reservations about the “priesthood”:

This matter of “priesthood,” since the days of Sydney Rigdon, has been the great hobby and stumbling-block of the Latter Day Saints. . . . Authority is the word we used for the first two years in the church — until Sydney Rigdon’s days in Ohio. This matter of the two orders of priesthood in the Church of Christ, and lineal priesthood of the old law being in the church, all originated in the mind of Sydney Rigdon. (An Address to All Believers in Christ, Richmond, Missouri, 1887, page 64)

The question might well be asked, “If what David Whitmer says is true, how can Section 27 and other sections of the Doctrine and Covenants be accounted for?” Actually, these revelatory were have been changed from the way they originally read when they were first printed. David Whitmer charged: “You have changed the revelations from the way they were first given . . . to support the error of high priests. You have changed the revelations to support the error of a President of the high priesthood, high counselors, etc.” (Ibid., page 49).

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 19, 22-25, we show through photographs of the first printing of Joseph Smith’s revelations that Whitmer was right when he charged that serious changes were made concerning priesthood, and on pages 177-182 we demonstrate that the Mormon idea of “priesthood” is unscriptural. The Bible teaches that the old order of priesthood was fulfilled and that Christ Himself is our High Priest. It indicates that Jesus has “an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:24-25).

The Bible also indicates that all Christians (not just men) are a “royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9). In 1 Peter 2:5 we read that “Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” The priesthood of the Old Testament has been fulfilled and now “as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name (John 1:12).

**IMPACT OF REVELATION**

Some people believe that the Mormon Church is not sincere in opening the priesthood to blacks. We feel however, that even though the Mormon leaders have failed to face some important issues, they have made a major concession which will gradually weaken racism throughout the Church.

We feel that one of the important reasons the Church decided to confer the priesthood on blacks was that the anti-black doctrine was hurting missionary work. With the change in this policy, we anticipate that the Church will make many more converts. On the other hand, many members of the Church have become disillusioned because of the Church’s handling of the racial issue, and the new “revelation” has tended to confirm in their minds that the Lord had nothing to do with the whole matter. For those Christians working with Mormons, this may really prove to be an opening for effective witnessing.

For those who are interested in the subject of the anti-black doctrine we highly recommend our book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? In this book we have devoted over 100 pages to the doctrine and Joseph Smith’s false translation of the Book of Abraham. In addition to this, on pages 582-85 we have printed the “Excerpts from the Weekly Council Meetings of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Dealing with the Rights of Negroes in the Church, 1849-1940.” This important document throws a great deal of light on why the Church was finally forced to have a new “revelation.”

**AMBUSHING THE TANNERS**

So far we have been unable to trace exactly how Zion Bookstore received the pamphlets. According to one report, the books were first mailed anonymously to a post office box. From there they were transported to a publishing company near Redwood Road and were subsequently picked up by an employee from Zion Bookstore. Willfrid Clark, who works for Sam Weller, maintained that he did not know anything about a publishing company picking up the books from a post office box. He said that all he knew about the matter was that Zion Bookstore received an anonymous letter containing a key to a room in a self storage company on Redwood Road. He claimed that he personally went to the company and picked up the booklets.

As we followed the tracks of this conspiracy to destroy our work, we found that they led right into the Mormon Church Office Building. Actually, it was more than a year ago when we first heard that something was afoot. We had a visit with a young Mormon singer who had some questions regarding Church history. He told us he held an appointment with a woman or the Church Office Building who claimed she had been part of a committee which was organized to evaluate our research. The committee worked on our material until they received an order From the Prophet — i.e., the President of the Church — that they were to desist from the project. We were unable to learn anything more about this purported committee, but one of the top Mormon historians did tell us in a telephone conversation in Dec. 1976 that a manuscript had been prepared to refute the allegations contained in our work. He was not sure if the Church would actually publish it, but the writing had been done.

One of the major clues which led to the discovery of the source of the pamphlet Jerald and Sandra Tanner’s Distorted View of Mormonism was an unpublished thesis by Richard Stephen Marshall. We were absolutely amazed at its contents. Three of the top historians in the Mormon Church are cited as making very candid statements concerning our work and other matters relating to the history of the Church. These three men were all assigned to write volumes in the Church’s new “sixteen-volume sesquicentennial history of the Latter-day Saints.” Two of them subsequently found themselves in trouble with the Church and were called in to answer for the statements attributed to them. At any rate, one of these historians really “spilled the beans” when he told that the Mormon Church
Historical Dept. had assigned a scholar to answer our work and that his manuscript would probably have to be published anonymously. We cite the following from Mr. Marshall’s paper:

Recent years have seen the emergence of a new kind of anti-Mormon literature which uses Mormon historical records . . . to try to show that the Church was more human than divine. This new kind of literature is best typified by Jerald and Sandra Tanner and their Modern Microfilm Publishing Company. . . . They have been prolific since 1961 and have, at present, a world-wide reputation. This writer encountered materials published by them while living in Australia several years ago. Max Parkin, of the LDS institute of Religion at the University of Utah calls them “publishers extraordinary,” and notes that one of their most recent volumes, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? is the finest, most comprehensive and hard-hitting anti-Mormon book in history. . . .

Many prominent Mormons have expressed a high regard for the work the Tanners have done. . . . T. Edgar Lyon, a Mormon historian and long-time teacher at the Institute of Religion at the University of Utah told this writer he thought the Church should subsidize the Tanners, although he said it tongue-in cheek.

Reed Durham using virtually the same words as Lyon said that he thought the Church should subsidize the Tanners because of all the historical research they do for it. He teaches a class at the Institute of Religion at the University of Utah on the problems of Mormon history called “Special Studies in Mormon History.” He uses the Tanner’s book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? as the text for the class. Formerly he would purchase copies of the book in quantity from Modern Microfilm through the Institute. Because it did not look very good for the Institute to be carrying quantities of an anti-Mormon work, he now encourages his students to go down to Modern Microfilm and buy the book on their own.

Durham said he would like to write a book answering the accusations of the Tanners point by point. To do so, however, would require certain admissions that Mormon history is not exactly as the Church has taught it was, that there were things taught and practiced in the nineteenth century of which the general Church membership is unaware. He said that the Church is not ready to admit that yet. He also said that due to the large number of letters the Church Historian’s Office is receiving asking for answers to the things the Tanners have published, a certain scholar (name deliberately withheld) was appointed to write a general answer to the Tanners including advice on how to read anti-Mormon literature. This unnamed person solicited the help of Reed Durham on the project. The work is finished but its publication is delayed, according to what Leonard Arrington told Durham, because they can not decide how or where to publish it. Because the article is an open and honest approach to the problem, although it by no means answers all of the questions raised by the Tanners, it will be published anonymously, to avoid any difficulties which could result were such an article connected with an official Church agency. (The New Mormon History, by Richard Stephen Marshall, A Senior Honors Project Summary, University of Utah, May 1, 1977, pages 57, 61 and 62)

The fact that an anonymous rebuttal appeared just seven months from the time Mr. Marshall wrote his paper seems like more than just a coincidence.

Unfortunately, Mr. Marshall’s paper does not give the name of the author, referring to him only as “a certain scholar (name deliberately withheld) . . .” We did, however, remember our telephone conversation with the Mormon scholar (see above) and thought that he might have told us that D. Michael Quinn was the historian assigned to write the rebuttal. We began to do research in Dr. Quinn’s writings and found a number of things in his M.A. thesis which led us to believe he was the author of the rebuttal. We thought that in light of the evidence he would surely confess his involvement. To our great surprise, however, he emphatically denied any connection with it. We were somewhat taken back by his firm and unyielding denial, and therefore decided to do further research. We spent some time examining Quinn’s dissertation written at Yale University, a copy of which is found at the University of Utah library.

STONEWALLING

After examining Dr. Quinn’s writings, we were rather certain that he wrote the rebuttal. Still, we did not want to be too hasty in rushing into print. His vigorous denials were still ringing in our ears, and we felt that it was unfair to accuse a man of such a cowardly act unless we had very good evidence.

The reader will remember that Richard Steven Marshall’s paper gave information that indicated Leonard Arrington, Mormon Church Historian, was involved in the project even before May 1, 1977. We had a number of phone conversations with Dr. Arrington, and in every conversation he emphatically declared he did not know who the author of the rebuttal was and had absolutely no foreknowledge of the matter.

Everywhere we turned we met with the same response—an absolute stonewall. We knew that we had circumstantial evidence that Quinn was the author and that the project came through the Mormon Church Historical Department, but since everyone contacted denied the accusation our confidence was somewhat shaken. Then an unbelievable thing happened: while searching through a drawer for some samples of typewritten material we came upon a handwritten note we had made over a year before concerning the phone conversation we had with the Mormon scholar. Our note, written on or before December 12, 1976, confirmed that the author was “Michael Quinn[n] and that the work was written “For Historians Office.” The note also indicated that the Church “May not publish it.”

The handwritten note also contained what proved to be a very significant item—i.e., a statement that a man by the name of “David Mayfield” said the paper “had been done.” We decided to call Mr. Mayfield and ask him concerning the matter. After all the stonewalling we had encountered we really expected to learn very little from Mr. Mayfield. To our great surprise, however, he turned out to be very honest about the matter.

Our first question to Mr. Mayfield was whether he worked for the Mormon Historical Department. He replied that he had worked there but was not working there at the present time Then we asked him if he had seen Michael Quinn’s paper in the typed form before it was published as Jerald and Sandra Distorted View of Mormonism. After hesitating slightly, he replied: “Yes.” Then we asked if he was sure that it was the typed copy he had seen. The reply: “Yes.” The third question we asked was whether it was about a year ago when he saw it. Mr. Mayfield also replied “yes” to that question. Then he began to get uneasy and asked to whom he was speaking. (He apparently thought he was talking to a Mormon who had been initiated into the secret.) Needless to say, he was not too happy when he learned who it was, although he was still very polite. He went on to say that he was told not to reveal the identity of the author because it was supposed to be an anonymous publication. We reminded him, however, that in his answer to an earlier question, he had already revealed the identity of the author. He had replied “yes” to the question of whether he had seen the typed copy of Michael Quinn’s paper before it was published.

As soon as we had terminated the conversation with Mr. Mayfield, we called Dr. Arrington, Church Historian, and asked him if he was still going to stand by his story in the light of David Mayfield’s admission. He emphatically replied that he knew absolutely nothing about the project and that the charges were completely untrue. Later that day Dr. Arrington called us and said he had checked with Mayfield, and that Mayfield told him he had made a mistake; it was another document that he had seen. We, of course, could hardly believe that Mr. Mayfield could have made such a serious mistake. In light of the handwritten note and the telephone conversation confirming the note, we could only believe that the Historical Department was behind the whole project. Nevertheless, Dr. Arrington continued to deny the whole matter. Later we called David Mayfield and asked him if he held told Dr. Arrington that he had made a mistake about the document. Mr. Mayfield did not support Dr. Arrington; he simply replied that he was “not going to comment” about the matter.

With this new evidence in hand, we called Michael Quinn. The reader will remember that Dr. Quinn had strongly denied the accusation when we first called him. This conversation was entirely different from the first. When we asked him if he was the author of Jerald and Sandra Tanners Distorted View of Mormonism, he replied that he would “neither affirm nor deny” the allegation. He explained that only a small number of Mormon historians were capable of writing the rebuttal. To affirm or deny the allegation would help us to limit the field, and since the author wished to remain anonymous he would not help us in any way. This, of course, was a long step from his original position. He had moved from an absolute “no” to the compromised position that he would “neither affirm nor deny” authorship. Now, if he had taken the position of refusing to affirm or deny at the first, he would have been in far better shape. As it is, Dr. Quinn has put himself and the Church in a very embarrassing position.
In an article entitled, “Doctrinal Cloak and Dagger,” David Merrill told of talking to Michael Quinn about the rebuttal. He claimed that Mr. Quinn would “neither confirm, nor deny involvement or knowledge of the manuscript’s origins” (Utah Holiday, February 1978, page 7). Gary James Bergera also talked to Quinn about the matter:

While neither affirming nor denying the charge that he wrote the attack, Quinn adds, “If they want to attribute [attribute?] me as the author, they’re free to, just as long as they spell my name right.” (“Jerald and Sandra Tanner,” unpublished paper by Gary James Bergera, page 7)

The Utah Historical Quarterly for Winter 1973, page 70, informs us that Dr. Quinn has served as “a historical assistant with the Historical Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” The Ensign for August 1977, page 37, says that Quinn is “an assistant professor of history at Brigham Young University.” BYU is of course owned by the Church. Since the whole operation was carried out in such a clandestine manner, we were not surprised to learn that Quinn has served as a “Special Agent, U.S. Military Intelligence, Washington, D.C. and Munich, Germany, 1968-1971.” (“Organizational Development and Social Origins of he Mormon Hierarchy, 1832-1932: A Prosopographical Study,” M.A. thesis, University of Utah, 1973, page 311)

Although we are convinced that Michael Quinn played the major role in preparing the rebuttal, others could have contributed. The reader will remember it was reported that a committee had been set up to examine our work. One Mormon scholar told us he was informed that an answer to anti-Mormon criticism was being prepared by the Church. He was taken into a room where “they picked my brain” for answers to the problems. He admitted that Dr. Quinn was involved in the project but did not identify the others.

Be this as it may, the fact that the rebuttal was published anonymously tends to destroy its credibility. We do not believe that most Mormons would approve of such a cowardly method of attack. In 1903, the noted Mormon scholar told us he was informed that an answer to anti-Mormon criticism was being prepared by the Church. He was taken into a room where “they picked my brain” for answers to the problems. He admitted that Dr. Quinn was involved in the project but did not identify the others.

Like B. H. Roberts, we feel that any challenge to our work “should be otherwise than from ambush.” Chad Flake, a longstanding critic of our work, seems to agree about the matter:

“Here’s a man who’s writing to evaluate the Tanners, yet he doesn’t have enough gumption to put his name on it. The credibility of the pamphlet, as far as I’m concerned, is nil,” remarks Chad Flake, associate professor of library science and Director of Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU. (“Jerald and Sandra Tanner,” unpublished paper by Gary James Bergera, pages 6-7)

That the Church Historical Department would publish the rebuttal anonymously is bad enough, but even worse is the fact that those responsible (Church Historian Leon Arrington and Michael Quinn) would emphatically deny any connection with it. In the rebuttal we have been accused of dishonesty, yet those responsible for its publication will not admit their connection with it. In February, 1978, we challenged “Leonard Arrington, D. Michael Quinn and everyone else who was involved in this surreptitious plot to come forth and meet us in a public debate. We will even pay to rent the hall.” So far all of the participants have remained silent about the matter.

Not only has the rebuttal been put forth in a dishonest manner, but also it contains serious errors and misrepresentations. We have written a response to it entitled, Answering Dr. Clandestine: A Response to the Anonymous LDS Historian. This 22-page pamphlet demonstrates how Jerald and Sandra Tanner’s Distorted View of Mormonism was traced back to Michael Quinn and the Church Historical Department and shows some of the glaring errors that it contains. We feel that our pamphlet has completely destroyed the credibility of the LDS Church Historical Department’s response to Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?

One man who read the rebuttal to Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? wrote us a letter in which he stated: “If that pamphlet is the best the church has been able to come up with in the 6 years since Shadow or Reality was published, the church must be really desperate.” The Mormon historians apparently believed they were going to deal us a serious blow with this rebuttal, but it has turned out to be an incredible blunder. In fact, if they were to have sat down and planned a method to promote our work they could have hardly come up with a better idea. It has only tended to increase sales of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? and now that we have sold over 27,000 copies many people are asking why the Church has not prepared an official rebuttal. We believe it is because the Church leaders have no real answers to the problems and that any publicity that they give would only work to their disadvantage. In a letter written January 19, 1977, a spokesman for Deseret Bookstore wrote: “We do not plan a specific written response to the Tanner book. Perhaps it does not deserve the dignity of a response.” In a letter dated November 2, 1977, Francis M. Gibbons, Secretary to the First Presidency, dismissed Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? with this terse comment: “I have been asked to acknowledge your letter to Church Headquarters received October 27, 1977, and to explain that the book by Jerald and Sandra Tanner referred to in your letter is apocryphal material and has no basis in fact.”

We feel that the Mormon leaders will eventually be forced to come to grips with Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? In the pamphlet Answering Dr. Clandestine, we pointed out that “a representative of a major publishing company has written us a letter in which he said his firm is “vitally interested in being the publisher of your materials.” If an arrangement is worked out, we should have a distribution which is almost beyond our imagination.” Since that time we have signed a contract with Moody Press to publish a condensed version of our book. Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? Although it may take a year or two to actually get the book into production, it should get our work into the hands of thousands of people who would otherwise never hear about it.

At any rate, we feel that all of our readers should have both the unabridged edition of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? and Answering Dr. Clandestine. A Response to the Anonymous LDS Historian.:

NOTICE: One free copy of Answering Dr. Clandestine will be sent with every order for Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? which sells for $7.95 ($9.95 in hardback). Special ends October 31, 1978.

HONESTY WITH MORMONS ON SPALDING

On June 25, 1977, the Los Angeles Times reported a very sensational story relating to the origin of the Book of Mormon:

Three Southern California researchers say they have new evidence that challenges the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, . . . Based on the opinions of three handwriting experts, the researchers have declared that portions of the Book of Mormon were written by a Congregationalist minister and novelist who died more than 10 years before Joseph Smith is said to have received the revelations from God through golden plates.

Since we do not believe in the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon, nothing could have pleased us more than to have seen the conclusion of the Californian researchers verified. Nevertheless, we had grave doubts about the new find, and after an examination of the documents we were forced to the conclusion that the discovery would not stand up under rigorous examination. In an article published in the Ogden Standard-Examiner, David Briscoe wrote the following:

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — One of Mormonism’s longstanding critics has joined the church in discounting conclusions of California researchers that the Book of Mormon was pirated from the writings of a 19th Century novelist.

Jerald Tanner, a Salt Lake City anti-Mormon publisher, says he was allowed by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon) on Thursday to see documents that convinced him novelist Solomon Spaulding could not have written part of the Book of Mormon manuscript. . . .

Tanner accompanied one of the Californian handwriting experts, William Kays, to church headquarters Thursday, where they were allowed to see the original Book of Mormon manuscripts held by the church.
Church spokesman Don LeFevre said Kaye also examined a document which is the basis of part of another Mormon scripture, The Doctrine and Covenants.

That manuscript is clearly dated 15 years after Spaulding’s death in 1816 and appears to have been written in the same hand as the disputed Book of Mormon manuscript, Tanner said.

He acknowledged not being a handwriting expert but said there are significant differences in the handwriting between the Book of Mormon manuscript and the Spaulding document that a layman can spot. . . . (Ogden Standard-Examiner, July 8, 1977)

After publishing Did Spalding Write the Book of Mormon? in July, 1977, we received a great deal of criticism for not waiting until the California researchers finished their book before making an attack on the new theory. It was felt that after we examined all their evidence we might change our minds about the matter. The book was delayed for some time but finally appeared in November, 1977 under the title, Who Really Wrote the Book Of Mormon? After reading this book carefully, we must report that our feelings have not changed. In fact, we are more convinced than ever that we made the right decision. The evidence against the new Spalding theory now seems to be overwhelming, and the California researcher’s failure to deal with some of the basic criticisms leads us to the conclusion that they have no real answers to the objections raised. Although we have received some sharp criticism because of our stand on the Spalding matter, we feel that it is based on very strong evidence and that it would be dishonest for us to compromise our position just to discredit the Mormons. We feel that all work against Mormonism should be based on reliable evidence which will meet the test of time.

When we made our first statement on the Spalding matter, we felt almost like we were alone. The researchers were claiming their three noted handwriting experts had examined photocopies of the documents and all three agreed that twelve pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript were actually written by Solomon Spalding. We felt better, however, on July 9, 1977, when the Salt Lake Tribune reported that

One of three handwriting experts hired to check authenticity of the Book of Mormon has withdrawn from the assignment. . . .

He said he decided to withdraw after published reports that he agreed 12 pages of the Book of Mormon were written by . . . Spalding, . . .

“That is not true,” Mr. Silver said. “I have told news representatives that I could not say that without examining the original writings of Solomon Spalding, not just the photocopies . . .”

The researchers have implied that Henry Silver withdrew from the case because he feared for his life, but in a letter dated January 12, 1978, Silver himself stated:

As far as I am concerned I have never had any threat what-so-ever thrown at me in connection with the case, nor have I ever had a threat against me any time in my life. I never made at any time or any place any statement or even suggested a fear of being killed, in connection with the case, . . .

William Kaye, the second handwriting expert, supported the researchers in his letter of September 8, 1997, but one week after Mr. Kaye issued his statement, a big blow fell on the researcher’s case. This was the final opinion of the third handwriting expert, Howard C. Doulter. In a letter dated September 15, 1977, Mr. Doulter stated: “It is my conclusion the handwriting in the name of Solomon Spalding is NOT the author of the unidentified pages, . . . of the Book of Mormon.” The Los Angeles Times, September 24, 1977, reported that when Howard A. Davis, one of the three researchers, was asked about Doulter’s statement, he said:

“I kind of expected he (Doulter) would go negative on the thing because there have been so many death threats.”

Asked if his life had been threatened during his investigation of the Mormon manuscripts, Doulter replied: “Not at all.”

The researchers claim that Doulter’s “second opinion contradicted his own first report” (Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon? page 175). Now while it is true that Mr. Doulter gave an opinion supporting the Spalding theory before his final report, we must remember that he had only examined photocopies of the documents and had made it clear that this was not a final verdict. In a report dated March 4, 1977, Doulter stated:

Because I have examined machine copies and photographic enlargements and NOT the originals, I can only render a qualified opinion. . . .

A positive conclusion can be rendered only after an examination of all the original documents. (Ibid., page 80)

The researchers have used the statements of the handwriting experts in a very clever way. They have photographically printed both the preliminary statements and the later statements. To the uncritical reader it would appear that they have five statements supporting their conclusion and only one against it. Actually, what they have is four preliminary statements (Henry Silver gave two preliminary opinions) and only two later opinions by those who have examined the original documents. What it boils down to, then, is that they have only one favorable statement by a handwriting expert made after he had seen all the documents. Two of the three handwriting experts no longer support their conclusions, yet in the face of this the researchers boldly assert that the “overwhelming weight” of the handwriting evidence supports their conclusion (Ibid., page 176). Although we do not profess to be handwriting experts, we certainly cannot agree with the researchers on this matter. We feel that the evidence is strongly against their theory.

In their book the California researchers try to show that Sidney Rigdon stole Spalding’s manuscript from Patterson’s Print Shop in Pittsburgh and that Rigdon visited Joseph Smith in Palmyra, New York, before the Book of Mormon was printed. Although Fawn Brodie feels that “The tenuous chain of evidence accumulated to support the Spalding-Rigdon theory breaks altogether when it tries to prove that Rigdon met Joseph Smith before 1830” (No Man Knows My History, page 453), the California researchers claim to have new evidence on this matter. On page 119 of Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon? we find a very surprising assertion:

1829 (June/July) Gap in Rigdon’s o.i.

David Whitmer (founding Mormon) testifies that Smith and Rigdon were together.

As soon as we read this statement we became suspicious that the researchers had nothing to back it up. When an inquiry was made, one of the researchers claimed that this statement had appeared in the book by mistake and that it would be corrected in the next printing. David Whitmer had not actually said Rigdon was present, but in a book by Preston Nibley, Whitmer had described a stranger and the description seemed to fit Rigdon.

This story is found in The Witnesses of the Book of Mormon, pages 70-71:

When I was returning to Fayette, . . . all of us riding in the wagon, a very pleasant, nice-looking old man suddenly appeared by the side of our wagon and saluted us with, “Good morning,” . . . We returned the salutation, and, by a sign from Joseph, I invited him to ride if he was going our way. But he said very pleasantly, “No, I am going to Cumorah.” . . . as I looked around inquiringly of Joseph, the old man instantly disappeared, . . . He was, I should think, about 5 feet 8 or 9 inches tall and heavy set, about such a man as James Vancleave there, but heavier; his face was as large, he was dressed in a suit of brown woolen clothes, his hair and beard were white, like Brother Pratt’s, but his beard was not so heavy. . . . It was the messenger who held the plates, who had taken them from Joseph just prior to our starting from Harmony.

Since Sidney Rigdon was only 36 years old at the time, we do not think that he could be described as an “old man.” At any rate, David Whitmer (one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon) would never have testified that Smith and Rigdon were together in 1829. In his booklet, An Address to All Believers in Christ, page 11, David Whitmer plainly stated:

Neither Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris or myself ever met Sydney Rigdon until after the Book of Mormon was in print. I know this of my own personal knowledge being with Joseph Smith, in Seneca County, N.Y., in the winter of 1830, when Sydney Rigdon and Edward Partridge came from Kirtland, Ohio, to see Joseph Smith, and where Rigdon and Partridge saw Smith for the first time in their lives.

The Spaulding manuscript story is a myth; there being no direct testimony on record in regard to Rigdon’s connection with the manuscript of Solomon Spaulding.

If the researchers had been able to back up their assertion that David Whitmer testified Smith and Rigdon were together in 1829, we would have been very impressed. As it is, however, we are only left with statements which were made by other people many years after the events described. We do not think that this testimony is of any real value.
On pages 190-199 of their book *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon*, the California researchers use Dee Jay Nelson and Wesley P. Walters as witnesses against the truthfulness of Mormonism. It is interesting to note, however, that both these men reject the idea that Spalding actually penned 12 pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript. In fact, Wesley P. Walters, one of the most noted researchers on Mormonism, has come out with a very critical review of *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon?* He has provided us with a copy, a version of which is published in *Contemporary Christianity*, Winter 1977-78. We extract the following from Wesley Walter’s review of the California researchers’ book:

This work brings together a great deal of painstaking research, collecting evidence from hard-to-find books and old newspapers to build a circumstantial case for the 140 year-old theory that the Book of Mormon is traceable to a now-missing manuscript written by a Congregational minister named Solomon Spalding. ... The case is built entirely upon circumstantial evidence from testimonies of persons who had knowledge of events at various stages in the supposed chain linking Spalding to Rigdon to Smith. In general, the later the testimony, the more detailed and specific it becomes in affirming these connections, the witnesses’ memory apparently improving with age.

A new feature in the research team’s presentation of the theory is that there were two lost manuscripts of Spalding’s novel instead of one. According to the older theory it was thought that Rigdon had simply copied the manuscript left by Spalding to the printer’s and that subsequently been returned to the Spalding household where his wife and daughter reported seeing it in the family trunk after his death in 1816. On the basis of a very late testimony ... the authors of this book maintain that there was a second copy of Spalding’s work, one which had been prepared for the printer and which, according to Miller, needed only a title page and a possible preface to ready it for publication. They further maintain that Rigdon actually stole this copy from the printer’s office and gave it to Joseph Smith who used it to produce the Book of Mormon. ... This theory seems apparently confirmed with the sensational discovery by the researchers that twelve pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript appear to be in the handwriting of Spalding himself. ... When looked at carefully, however, this discovery raises so many knotty problems and conflicts in regard to the theoretical reconstruction in the first part of their book, that it actually tends to discredit it. ... While the handwriting appears quite similar to Spalding’s there seem to be some obvious differences to anyone who looks at it carefully. Furthermore, the manuscript of one of Joseph’s revelations is in the handwriting of a scribe whose writing, to the layman’s eye, looks more like the Book of Mormon portion attributed to Spalding than the undisputed samples of Spalding’s handwriting itself. This shows that someone whose handwriting was very much like Spalding’s was one of Joseph’s scribes in the 1830 period, .... If not, followed by twelve pages of manuscript which contain the actual handwriting of Spalding, then the facts preclude identifying that manuscript with the printer’s copy stolen by Rigdon. This is evident from the fact that the twelve manuscript pages attributed to Spalding are part of twenty pages on identical paper stock. The four pages that precede the “Spalding” block of material and the four that follow are in the known handwriting of identified scribes of Joseph Smith, Jr. This would mean that at least eight pages without any printer’s copy, by Spalding alone, in his manuscript. What is even more inexplicable is that two of the four pages immediately before the twelve “Spalding” pages have page-titles, summarizing the page’s content, in the same apparent “Spalding” hand, while the content of the pages themselves is written in the known handwriting of those serving as Joseph’s scribes in 1829. Why would Spalding send a printer blank pages with page-titles at the top of two of these, followed by twelve pages of manuscript, the first page of which starts in the middle of a sentence (viz., “and I commanded him in the voice of Laban...” ¡= Ne. 4:20c)? This makes no sense at all and can hardly be regarded as a printer’s copy. Moreover, Joseph Smith must be regarded as having composed and dictated the material on the blank pages sent by Spalding, and or having done this in the same vocabulary and style as the Spalding portion. Furthermore he succeeded in filling these blank pages with no indication of either crowding or coming up short and even connected smoothly into the incomplete sentence of Spalding without a hint of discontinuity. Anyone that clever could just as easily have composed the entire content himself. In any event, the fragmentary nature of the alleged Spalding material makes it impossible to connect this with any printer’s copy that might have been stolen by Rigdon. There is one final consideration that is really fatal to the identification of the twelve pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript as being the actual writings of Spalding himself. When Joseph was producing the Book of Mormon he met with a very disastrous event. Mrs. Harris, the wife of his financial backer, managed to get hold of 116 pages of the opening portion of the Book of Mormon manuscript and never returned them to Joseph Smith. Had Joseph been dictating from a manuscript provided for him by Rigdon, he would have been able to have read off the same portion again. Likewise, even if he had read his translation from the words God had caused to appear on his Seer Stone ... it should also have been no problem for God to restore the lost pages in identical words. However, it seems more likely that Joseph had simply dictated his material as it came to his mind. This meant that he could not reproduce word-for-word what he had already dictated on those 116 missing pages. The way out of this embarrassing predicament was given in a very curious statement in which he was informed that there was a second set of plates and that the Lord knew that those who had taken the 116 pages had altered the words so that, even if Joseph had been able to give the identical wording, they now would not agree with his original copy (it is not explained how such changes could be made on a pen and ink page of that period without being detected). Therefore, the Lord instructed him to take the second set of plates that had been provided for just that situation and translate the material covering the same period from them. References to that second set of plates appear, therefore, in the part of the Book of Mormon which replaced the purloined manuscript, explaining that it was for “a wise purpose” that this second set was being made. One of the passages mentioning this second set of plates that rescues Smith from his problem occurs right in the middle of the section said to be in the handwriting of Spalding ( ¡= Ne. 4:17), in which he made the observation that there was a second set of plates and that the “Spalding” portion of the Book of Mormon had been altered, and that Smith dictated it, but there is no explanation why Spalding should introduce a second set of plates into his story where it serves no purpose.

The writers have failed to explain how these facts correlate with the theory they present in the first part of their book. How can the preoccupation with religious topics in these twelve pages be explained when Spalding’s novel was said by the earliest witnesses to have had little religious content? How can twelve manuscript pages preceded by blank pages with only page-titles over two of them be considered a part of a completed printer’s copy? ... Why should Spalding introduce, with no apparent need for it in the plot, a second set of plates, just where Joseph would need so badly a second set of plates to avoid being discredited by his inability to reproduce the identical words of the missing 116 pages? Until the researchers can provide some reasonable and satisfying correlations, backed by some kind of dependable evidence, their book will continue to make interesting reading but their proof must be regarded as highly questionable.

Wesley P. Walters

We feel that Wesley Walters’ arguments against the new Spalding theory are irrefutable, and we cannot understand how the California researchers could continue to cling to their idea in the face of Walters’ arguments. We feel that the evidence was sufficient to write *Did Spalding Write The Book Of Mormon?* We feel that all those who are using the new Spalding theory in dealing with Mormons should be open-minded enough to examine the other side of the question. In *Did Spalding Write The Book Of Mormon?* we not only provide photographic evidence that Spalding did not pen twelve pages of the Book of Mormon, but we also reprint Spalding’s only extant manuscript so that the reader can compare its style and story with the Book of Mormon.

THE “MORMON WILL”

In our publication *Howard Hughes and the “Mormon Will”* written in May 1976, we demonstrated that in spite of the fact that several prominent handwriting experts endorsed the so-called “Mormon Will,” the internal evidence proved it was a forgery. Two years after we wrote this pamphlet the *Salt Lake Tribune* (June 9, 1978) reported: “A district court jury Thursday rejected the ‘Mormon Will’ of Howard Hughes as a fraud, . . . .” Although we knew that the Mormon Church had called a press conference to announce the discovery of the will, we were surprised to learn that it was paying part of the court costs for the trial of this bogus document. The *Salt Lake Tribune* for June 7, 1978, revealed: “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints issued a statement Tuesday saying is [it?] is ‘neutral’ concerning validity of the purported Howard Hughes will, but is sharing court costs in Nevada.”

On the subject of the “Mormon Will” it is also interesting to note that Henry Silver, the handwriting expert who was certain the will was genuine, is the same man that the Spalding researchers first contacted.
In our last issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger we made some very serious charges concerning the pamphlet Jerald and Sandra Tanner's Distorted View of Mormonism: A Response to Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? by an anonymous Mormon historian. We stated that the secret production of this booklet "had all the earmarks of an intelligence operation mounted by the CIA or the KGB." We asserted that Michael Quinn, of the Mormon Church's Brigham Young University, was involved in the project. We presented evidence showing that the response came out of the Church Historical Department and that Church Historian Leonard Arrington was deeply entangled in its production. We indicated that there was a real cover-up involved and that Dr. Arrington emphatically denied any connection with the rebuttal. In spite of his denials we maintained that Arrington was involved. Some of our readers felt we were going out on a limb in making this accusation. Finally, on August 3, 1978, we received a letter that completely shattered Dr. Arrington's entire defense. In this letter we found this startling information:

I have a typewritten copy of "Jerald and Sandra Tanner's Distorted View of Mormonism: A Response to Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?" by a Latter-day Saint Historian. It was sent to me with a cover letter from Leonard Arrington dated Sept 6, 1977. If this means anything to you I would appreciate my name not being used . . . Leonard showed an interest in keeping me in the Church. I must say the arguments he and other historians used actually pushed me out faster. I was amazed that such scholars as these men would resort to the illogical arguments and untenable positions they presented to me . . . I could not maintain membership in an organization assuming the position the Church is in now. I . . . wrote a letter asking to have my membership removed.

Since the rebuttal was not published until December, 1977, we knew that if Dr. Arrington sent a typed copy of the article together with a "cover letter" on Sept. 6, 1977, he would have had to have been implicated in the project. We asked the person who made this accusation to furnish us with photographs of the documents. We received a copy of both the typewritten manuscript and Arrington's cover letter. The reader will find a photograph of Dr. Arrington's letter in the new "Enlarged Edition" of our book, Answering Dr. Clandestine: A Response to the Anonymous LDS Historian, page 24. In this letter Arrington stated:

A historian friend of mine the other day brought me this copy of a letter he had sent to one of his friends who had been reading some of the Tanner materials. I thought you might be interested in reading this as well, and I asked him for permission to xerox a copy for you. He kindly consented. I thought this would be particularly appropriate for you to read because it helps to put some perspective on the principal publication of the Tanners.

This letter proves beyond all doubt that Leonard Arrington was deeply involved in the whole matter and tends to confirm the statement in Richard Steven Marshall's paper that "Durham . . . said that due to the large number of letters the Church Historian's Office, is receiving asking for answers to the things the Tanners have published, a certain scholar, (name deliberately withheld) was appointed to write a general answer to the Tanners . . . The work is finished but its publication is delayed, according to what Leonard Arrington told Durham, because they can not decide how or where to publish it. Because the article is an open and honest approach to the problem, although it by no means answers all of the questions raised by the Tanners, it will probably be published anonymously, to avoid any difficulties which could result were such an article connected with an official Church agency" ("The New Mormon History," pages 61-62).

REBUTTAL ALTERED

The typed copy of the rebuttal tends to verify the accusations we made in the first edition of Answering Dr. Clandestine, page 6. The reader may remember that Jerald and Sandra Tanner's Distorted View of Mormonism purports to be a copy of a letter written by an anonymous Mormon historian to a
friend. We pointed out, however, that since the printed version contains information which was not published until September or October of 1977, it could not be identical to a copy seen by a Mormon scholar in the later part of 1976. We demonstrated for instance, that a footnote on page 61 of the rebuttal which refers to the September 1977 issue of The Ensign would have to be an interpolation. The typed copy reveals that we were correct in this assumption. Not only was the footnote added, but 19 words were inserted into the text of the purported letter just before the footnote number appears.

In Answering Dr. Clandestine we also noted that in Footnote 67 (page 58 of the published rebuttal) BYU Studies, Spring 1971, is cited. We pointed out, however, that the distribution of this issue was delayed until October 1977. The typed copy again confirms our allegation. It does not refer to BYU Studies but only to “a paper” by Michael Rhodes which was “delivered at the Welch Lecture Series.” The footnote goes on to state that “hopefully . . . Rhode’s work will become available in print.”

A very interesting change in the text of the letter appears just above the footnote number. In the earlier typed copy, it is claimed that Dr. Hugh Nibley (probably the most well-known Church apologist) has only “limited experience” in the Egyptian language, whereas Michael Rhodes and Eric Olson have “extensive experience”:

... the work of Hugh Nibley (who has limited experience in the Egyptian language), Michael Rhodes, and Eric Olsen (both of whom have had extensive experience with the Egyptian language) on the Joseph Smith papyri have indicated some valuable insights . . .

In the published version, page 58, nineteen words have been deleted so that Dr. Nibley seems to achieve equal status:

... the work of Hugh Nibley, Michael Rhodes, and Eric Olson on the Joseph Smith papyri have indicated some valuable insights . . .

In comparing the typed copy of Jerald and Sandra Tanner’s Distorted View of Mormonism with the printed version we find many changes have been made. We estimate that at least 400 words were deleted and over 600 added. These changes were made in spite of the fact that Dr. Clandestine claims to be a “professionally trained historian.” On page 42 of his booklet, Clandestine charges that “James Madison made extensive changes in his own notes of the Constitutional Convention twenty years after they were originally written, and his ‘contemporary’ Notes were published as he had changed them rather than as he had originally written them; . . . He goes on, however, to tell of the “present standards concerning plagiarizing, footnoting, and editorial adherence to the original manuscript . . . if Dr. Clandestine is really a “professionally trained historian” and is familiar with the present standards in professional historical writing, why did he fail to follow them in this piece of work? He purports to give us a copy of a letter which apparently saved a Mormon convert from apostasy, yet extensive changes have been made in the text of the “letter” without any indication. While most of the changes are not very important, some of them are significant. For instance, in one place in the typed copy (page 22) Dr. Clandestine charged that we used incessant repetition and that this characteristic of our work reminded him of “hypnotism, the Nazi approach to propaganda, and other mind-control efforts.”

In the published version this has been entirely deleted without any indication. For a study of other changes see the enlarged edition of Answering Dr. Clandestine, pages 25-26.

As we pointed out earlier, we estimated that over 1,000 words were either added or deleted from Dr. Clandestine’s booklet. Now, if it were not for the fact that he put his work forth as a copy of a “letter” which he prepared “for a friend” who was troubled after reading our book, we would have no objection to the changes. Every author has the right to change his own manuscript. We certainly do not feel, however, that a “professionally trained historian” should make changes in the contents of a letter. It appears, then, that Mormon apologists who would defend the rebuttal are faced with a serious dilemma. If the letter was genuine, then the printed version is a falsified copy. On the other hand, if they admit that it was never really a “letter,” they will have to explain why it was published as such. Neither alternative seems very attractive.

When we first published our response to the anonymous rebuttal, some people accused us of making too much of the Watergate-like way it was produced. They felt we did not spend enough time answering the specific charges which it contained. In the enlarged edition of Answering Dr. Clandestine more space is devoted to answering the allegations. In addition, Wesley P. Walters, a scholar noted for his work on Mormon history, has also written an attack on the anonymous historian’s rebuttal which we have included in Answering Dr. Clandestine.

**BENSON VS ARRINGTON**

One thing we deal with at some length in our new edition is the growing rift between Mormon scholars and some of the General Authorities. Ezra Taft Benson, for instance, is very opposed to some of the things that Church Historian Leonard Arrington is doing. (Benson is President of the Twelve Apostles and is next in line to become President of the Church.) Arrington’s problems began just after his appointment to the office of Church Historian when he announced the formation of a group known as “Friends of Church History.” When about 500 people showed up for the first meeting, the General Authorities apparently became fearful that such a large group studying history might uncover things which would prove embarrassing to the Church. Orders were given to hold up the project, and no meetings have been held since November 30, 1972 (see, Answering Dr. Clandestine, page 41). Although no official announcement has been made, it is reasonable to assume that “Friends of Church History” is now defunct.

Some of Dr. Arrington’s other projects seem to be endangered by the attitude of the General Authorities. One of Arrington’s dreams was to have the Church publish a one-volume history. This dream seemed to become a reality in 1976 when James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard produced the book The Story of the Latter-day Saints. In the Foreword to this book, Dr. Arrington said that “two of our finest historians” had been assigned to the project—James B. Allen is, of course, Assistant Church Historian. Dr. Arrington went on to state that he had personally approved the manuscript for publication. Although most Mormons would consider this a harmless publication, President Benson felt that it was too humanistic and it is rumored that he wanted it shredded. In a letter dated June 23, 1978, President Benson stated: “The book, The Story of the Latter-day Saints, will not be republished.” It appears, therefore, that as far as Mormon history is concerned, the views of Leonard Arrington and Ezra Taft Benson are diametrically opposed. While Benson seems to believe that anything unfavorable to the Church should be suppressed, Arrington seems to be somewhat more scholarly in his approach. Although the rebuttal to our
work is disappointing in many respects, it does make some admissions that tend to verify our accusations. It seems, in fact, to contain a thinly-disguised attack on Benson’s view of Mormon history (see Answering Dr. Clandestine, page 43), and some scholars feel that it was published anonymously to hide its true origin from President Benson and other conservatives in the Church. One Mormon historian asked us not to expose the role of the Historical Department in the rebuttal lest it cause unsurmountable problems for Leonard Arrington. We feel, however, that Benson was probably aware of Arrington’s involvement before we brought it to the public’s attention. There is reason to believe that Benson wants to remove Arrington from his position as Church Historian. Some feel that he will gradually be “phased out.” It is also reported that it is becoming increasingly difficult for Mormon scholars to get access to documents in the Historical Dept. If Dr. Arrington should survive under the leadership of President Spencer W. Kimball, it is very unlikely that he will remain Church Historian if Ezra Taft Benson becomes President.

In any case, in the enlarged edition of Answering Dr. Clandestine we have some interesting information concerning the confrontation between Mormon scholars and the General Authorities of the Church. We also deal with the Nag Hammadi texts. Mormon scholars contend that these ancient documents support the Church’s doctrines. Our examination of these texts, however, reveals that although they are important documents, they are of little value when it comes to supporting the unique claims of the Mormon Church. We deal with many other important issues in the new enlarged edition of Answering Dr. Clandestine. The price of this book is $2.00. The quantity prices are: 2 for $3.50 — 5 for $7.00 — 10 for $12.00.

JOSEPH SMITH’S DIARIES
DEAL FATAL BLOW TO HISTORY OF CHURCH

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 126-135, we demonstrated that the History of the Church which Church leaders always attributed to Joseph Smith himself was mostly compiled after his death. The evidence clearly shows that less than 40% was compiled during his lifetime. The remainder was not compiled until after Smith’s death in 1844. It was not completed, in fact, until 1856, and many important changes were made after that date. The fact that more than 60% of the History was not compiled until after Joseph Smith’s death invalidates the statement which appears on the title page of all six volumes: “History of Joseph Smith, the Prophet BY HIMSELF.”

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? we gave evidence which clearly showed that the writings of other people were changed to the first person to make it appear that they were the very words of Joseph Smith himself. This evidence has forced Mormon apologists into a very compromised position. Dr. Clandestine, for instance, has to admit that our charges are true:

They criticize the fact that deletions and additions were introduced into the original texts without acknowledgments in the printed history, that Joseph Smith’s autobiographical “History” was written in large part after his death, by clerks and “historians” who transformed third-person accounts by others than Joseph Smith into first-person autobiography of Joseph Smith, and that between the first serialized publication of the history (1840s-1860s) and the seven-volume edition of the History of the Church in the twentieth century, there have been thousands of deletions and additions not noted in the text or footnotes. This is certainly all true, and as an historian I regret the confusion that such editorial practices have caused. (Jerald and Sandra Tanner’s Distorted View of Mormonism: A Response to Mormonism-Shadow or Reality? page 42)

Since we now know that more than 60% of Joseph Smith’s History was not compiled until after his death, the question arises as to what were the sources which Mormon historians used to create the purported history. We know that they used newspapers and journals of other Mormon leaders and that much of the material came only from memory. (It was, of course, written in the first person to make it appear that Joseph Smith was the author.) We have always felt that Joseph Smith’s private diaries were used as a source in preparing the history, but we were denied access to them. Finally, in August, 1976, we were able to examine microfilm copies of these important documents. We can now see some of the reasons why the Mormon leaders suppressed Joseph Smith is diaries.

The first thing we notice is that there are large periods of Joseph Smith’s life that are not covered by extant diaries—unless some of the diaries are still being suppressed. Only three of the last six years of Smith’s lifetime as it appears in the History of the Church can be checked against his diaries. The famous Rocky Mountain Prophecy, for instance, appears in the printed history under a date when Joseph Smith did not keep a diary. In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? we demonstrated that this prophecy was not written in the original manuscript of the History of the Church until after Joseph Smith’s death (see also Answering Dr. Clandestine, pages 29-31). Dr. Clandestine has to admit that “the exact source for the account of Joseph Smith’s prophecy of August 6, 1842, is not clear” (Jerald and Sandra Tanner’s, Distorted View of Mormonism, page 15).

Unfortunately, Joseph Smith’s diaries do not contain the important information that we would expect to find about his life. Many pages are left blank or only contain information on the weather or some other trivial matters. The value of the diaries decreases even more when we learn that a large portion of the entries were not written in the first person, but rather by Joseph Smith’s Nauvoo scribe Willard Richards. For instance, under the date of October 20, 1843, we read this entry in Joseph Smith’s Diary: “heard that Joseph went to Ramus yesterday has not returned.”

Our brief examination of the diaries reveals that although they were used as one of the sources for “Joseph Smith’s History,” there was no attempt to follow them faithfully. The Mormon leaders chose only the portions of the journals which served their purposes. For instance, in his diary Joseph Smith related a dream and its interpretation which tended to discredit his famous prophecy about the Civil War. This material was simply omitted in Joseph Smith’s History. We will have more to say about this matter in the chapter on false prophecy in the book which will be published by Moody Press.

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? we show that Joseph Smith frequently broke the Word of Wisdom—i.e., a revelation which forbids the use of tea, coffee, tobacco or alcoholic beverages (see Doctrine and Covenants, Section 89). Dr. Clandestine was unable to refute our evidence and had to admit that Joseph Smith had an “occasional glass of...
beer or wine” (Jerald and Sandra Tanner’s Distorted View of Mormonism, page 9, note 2). On page 7 of the same booklet he speaks of “Joseph Smith’s polygamy, smoking and drinking, . . . He maintains, however, that the Mormon leaders have not tried to suppress the fact that Smith broke the Word of Wisdom. In Answering Dr. Clandestine, pages 28-29, we prove beyond any doubt that there was a deliberate cover-up on this matter. Joseph Smith’s diaries provide additional evidence concerning his disregard for the Word of Wisdom and the attempt to cover-up the matter in the History of the Church. Under the date of January 20, 1843, the following was recorded in Joseph Smith’s Diary:

    Elder Hyde told of the excellent white wine he drank in the east. Joseph prophesied in the name of the Lord—that he would drink wine with him in that country.

These words were suppressed in the printed History of the Church.

The Mormon Church forbids the use of tea, but according to Joseph Smith’s Diary, March 11, 1843, Smith was fond of strong tea:

    . . . in the office Joseph said he had tea, with his breakfast his wife asked him if it was good, he said if it was a little stronger he should like it better, when Mother Granger remarked, “It is so strong, and good, I should think it would answer both for drink, and food.”

This was entirely omitted in the History of the Church (see vol. 5, page 302).

Another statement which was probably embarrassing to the Mormon leaders appeared in Joseph Smith’s Diary under the date of May 19, 1844: “Ive I talked a long time in the bar Room . . .” in the History of the Church, vol. 6, page 398, this has been modified to read: “In the evening I talked to the brethren at my house, . . .”

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 408, we show that Joseph Smith sold liquor in Nauvoo, and that his wife Emma almost moved out when he installed a bar in the Nauvoo Mansion.

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? we show that on many occasions the Mormon leaders emphatically denied polygamy at the very time they were living in it. Some of Joseph and Hyrum Smith’s denials were so embarrassing to later Mormon leaders that they were altered in the History of the Church. Since publishing our book, we have learned that a statement in Joseph Smith’s History, which sanctions plural marriage was actually a condemnation of the practice before it was falsified. This statement was used by Joseph Fielding Smith, who later became the tenth president of the Mormon Church, in rebuttal to a member of the Reorganized LDS Church who claimed that Joseph Smith never endorsed the doctrine of plurality of wives:

    Whether any such statement was ever printed in his lifetime or not I am not prepared to say. But I know of such evidence being recorded during his lifetime, for I have seen it.

    I have copied the following from the Prophet’s manuscript record of Oct. 5, 1843, and know it is genuine:

    “Gave instructions to try those persons who were preaching, teaching or practicing the doctrine of plurality of wives or this law—Joseph forbids it, and the practice thereof. No man shall have but one wife. (Joseph Smith Diary, October 5, 1843, Church Historical Department)

The reader will notice how this has been changed in the History of the Church, to make it appear that Joseph Smith has the “keys of power” to perform plural marriages if the Lord “directs otherwise”:

    Gave instructions to try those persons who were preaching teaching or practicing the doctrine of plurality of wives or this law—Joseph forbids it, and the practice thereof. No man shall have but one wife. (Joseph Smith Diary, October 5, 1843, Church Historical Department)

As we indicated before, in compiling the History of the Church, the Mormon leaders used only the parts of Joseph Smith’s diaries which suited their purposes. Where a portion did not say what they wanted, they altered it or ignored it completely, sometimes using an entirely different source. The diaries of Joseph Smith, then, tend only to deal another heavy blow to the credibility of “Joseph Smith’s History of the Church.” No wonder the Mormon leaders suppressed these diaries for about 130 years.

PUBLISHING SMITH’S DIARIES

When we first started our work we became acquainted with M. Wilford Poulson who had taught at the Mormon Church’s Brigham Young University for many years. Professor Poulson sometimes boasted that he was one of a very limited number of people who had examined Joseph Smith’s 1832-34 Diary. He claimed that he was only allowed access to it because of his very special connections in the Historian’s Office. During the 1960s we exerted a great deal of pressure on the Mormon leaders to make the diaries of Joseph Smith available. The General Authorities, of course, resisted our efforts, but some
of the Mormon scholars agreed with us on this issue and began to speak out against the suppression of important Church documents. Strange as it may seem, even Dr. Leonard Arrington spoke out against suppression before he was chosen as Church Historian:

It is unfortunate for the cause of Mormon history that the Church Historian’s Library, which is in the possession of virtually all of the diaries of leading Mormons, has not seen fit to publish these diaries or to permit qualified historians to use them without restriction. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1966, pages 25-26)

When Dr. Arrington was appointed Church Historian it was reported that the diaries of Joseph Smith would finally be published. Dean C. Jessee was assigned to begin making the transcripts of these documents. Unfortunately, however, almost seven years have passed since Dr. Arrington took office and nothing has appeared in print—not even Joseph Smith’s first “1832-34 Diary. We understand that when Dean Jessee was asked if he planned to have something in print by 1980, he replied that he hoped to have it out by the turn of the century. We do not know how serious Mr. Jessee was in making this statement, but as we pointed out before, it is a fact that Ezra Taft Benson and some of the other General Authorities are trying to stop Dr. Arrington’s projects. We believe that these men would be especially opposed to the publication of the diaries of Joseph Smith. Although we have had access to a microfilm of the diaries since 1976 (as yet we do not have our own copy), we have waited to see if the Church would begin publication. We do not feel that members of the Church should have to wait until the millennium to find out the truth about these diaries. Therefore, we decided to begin by printing Joseph Smith’s 1832-34 Diary. H. Michael Marquardt freely volunteered his services and provided us with a typescript of this early diary. Although we were reluctant to do it, we have completed the project and it is now available at Modern Microfilm Co. We felt that the Mormon Church itself should have printed the diaries for its members. After all, they have the original volumes and it would have been much better to make a typescript from them. Mr. Marquardt, who does not have any access to records in the Church Historical Department, had to work from a microfilm and photocopies of Joseph Smith’s 1832-34 Diary. Although he has been very careful in his work, the original documents probably would have thrown much light on some portions that were hard to decipher. Mr. Marquardt does not put his work forth as a perfect transcript, but we feel that he has done a very good job. In printing the diary we have included a number of photographs of the original handwritten pages.

We feel that it is a very sad indictment on the Mormon leaders that we have to publish their own foundational documents and books. For instance, the Church suppressed Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar for 130 years and it was not available to scholars until we published it in 1966. Joseph Smith’s first handwritten account of the First Vision was likewise suppressed until we printed it in 1965. Joseph Smith’s 1831 revelation on plural marriage as a means to make the Indians a “white” and “delightsome” people was kept hidden from the Mormon people until we published it in 1974. Many other examples could be cited, but the ones we have presented should be sufficient to convince the reader that the General Authorities do not want their people to become acquainted with the real Joseph Smith.

While Joseph Smith’s 1832-34 Diary is not as important as the diaries he wrote later in his life, Professor Poulson felt that it was useful in showing that Joseph Smith had the ability to write the Book of Mormon. He was certainly not the ignorant man that some have represented him to be. In any case, while Michael Marquardt is preparing the very revealing 1835-36 Diary, we can offer the reader Joseph Smith’s 1832-34 Diary for $2.00 a copy. In this publication we have also included the first photographs of all six pages of the document which contains Joseph Smith’s “strange account” of the First Vision. Mr. Marquardt has done a line-for-line transcription of this important document.

MODERN MICROFILM & THE FUTURE

It was about fourteen years ago when we began a full-time operation at Modern Microfilm Company. Our object was to produce accurate literature on Mormonism. It was only by faith that we launched out on this project, and it has been through faith that we have been able to carry on. Although we have passed through some deep waters during these fourteen years, it seems that the Lord has always provided us with the strength and resources to continue the work. Our lowest point was probably 1966 when we decided we would have to sell out all of our reprints and possibly go back to only a part-time work on Mormonism. Fortunately, however, our book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? began to sell so fast that we were able to survive the crisis and even enlarge our operations. In 1977 we were able to purchase a printing press that is about three times as fast as the one which we had for over a decade. This has made it possible for us to reprint many of our publications and to do some new books as well. The reader should consult our new book list to find out what we have available.

Within the next month or two our sales on Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? will probably have mounted to over 30,000 copies, and there is no evidence that interest is declining. Since we feel that our work is really a missionary effort, we have tried to charge the lowest price possible for the literature and still stay in business. While many books have doubled in price, the 1972 edition of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? actually declined from $8.50 to $7.95. We find, however, that with the mounting price of paper and other costs we can no longer continue at such a low margin of profit. We have held the line as long as we possibly can; therefore, we have decided that we must raise the price to $9.95 ($11.95 for hard-back binding). We feel that this is still a real bargain because most publishers would charge 15 or 20 dollars for a book of this size.

We have previously paid postage on mail orders, but since postage on books has more than doubled we will have to ask our customers to send an additional 10% for postage and handling.

We are temporarily short on funds, but when we consider the circumstances it is amazing that we have done as well as we have. It took about a year to prepare the manuscript for Moody Press and we will not receive any royalties until some time after it appears in print. The publication will probably be somewhat delayed because of the change in the Mormon doctrine on blacks. This change has made it necessary for us to rewrite the chapter concerning Mormon theology and blacks.
Although the future looks very bright, at the present time we are functioning with a limited amount of capital. This, of course, makes our work less effective. For instance, we are forced to print very limited quantities of the works listed on our booklist. This wastes a great deal of time because we are forced to jump back and forth from one project to another. This time could be better spent getting out new material. With more capital we could run things a lot smoother and have far better results in getting the truth out. A number of people have sent us gifts and these have been greatly appreciated. Unfortunately, however, these gifts cannot be deducted from a person’s income tax because we are not a nonprofit organization.

In the past some of our friends have helped us with loans which we have been able to repay. If anyone is interested in loaning some money at the present time we could pay 10% interest. A loan of $1,000 would return $100 interest within a year (12 monthly payments of $91.67) or $200 if loaned for two years, and $5,000 would bring $1,000 interest if loaned for two years. We could use any amount between $500 and $5,000 and would sign a promissory note to make the matter legally binding. We feel that this would be a good investment, and it would help us to make our work more effective.

While most people will not be able to help this work in a financial way, all of our Christian friends are able to pray for us and for the Mormon people. The scriptures say that the “effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16). We feel that the Lord has really blessed our work and that it is being widely used as a tool to bring Mormons to the knowledge of the true Gospel. We believe that with the Lord’s help we can weather the present storm and that thousands of Mormons will come to a knowledge of the truth.

NEW BOOK

An article which we wrote on Mormonism has been published as Chapter 10 of a new book entitled, Dynamic Religious Movements, edited by David J. Hesselgrave. It was published by Baker Book House in 1978 and sells for $9.95. We will not be handling this book, but it can be ordered from your local bookstore.

Tape Embarrassing

While it is easy for a person to criticize an adversary, it is always hard to blow the whistle when something goes wrong in one’s own camp. It is with some difficulty, therefore, that we report the following: About two months after the Mormon President Spencer W. Kimball gave the famous revelation concerning blacks holding the Priesthood, a friend of ours met with the Apostle LeGrand Richards. Although Apostle Richards was not aware of it, a tape-recorder inside the man’s brief case was recording the conversation. Apostle Richards was very frank in the discussion and uttered statements that seemed to confirm some observations in the last issue of the Messenger. However this may be, we were rather concerned that a tape-recording had been made. We knew, of course, that this was not illegal because one party had consented to the recording. Nevertheless, we felt that Apostle Richards should have been aware of the fact that his voice was being preserved on tape. In any case, someone later borrowed the tape and made a transcription. Subsequently the tape fell into the hands of a man who decided to publish it. Another man has even been playing portions of the tape on radio stations.

We became so concerned about these developments that we discussed the matter at length with the individual who had made the original recording. After thinking the matter over, he decided to send a letter to Apostle Richards in which he apologized for his indiscretion in allowing such a situation to develop. Also he has sent a message asking the man who has been playing portions of the tape over the radio to desist. In addition to this, he has contacted the man who published it, and the plates from which it was printed have been destroyed. We think these actions are to be commended, and we hope that no one else will attempt to publish or duplicate this tape. We also hope that in the future both sides will refrain from the use of secret recordings. Such recordings will only tend to cause distrust and unnecessary dissension. For a discussion of the problems involved in secret tape-recordings see our book Mormons, Spies, Hughes and the CIA, pages 59-62.

As to the question of whether the President of the Church really received a “revelation” on the blacks, the report of the 148th Semiannual General Conference throws some light upon the subject (see The Ensign, November 1978, page 16). Members of the Church were asked to “accept this revelation as the word and will of the Lord, but the only document presented to the people was the letter of the First Presidency, dated June 8, 1978 (see the Salt Lake City Messenger, July 1978). We feel that it is becoming increasingly clear that there is no written “revelation” on the subject.

THE THINKING HAS BEEN DONE:
THE MOUNTAIN MEADOWS TO GUYANA

Since the recent massacre in Guyana there has been a great deal of discussion concerning what constitutes a cult and the process of brainwashing used by such a group. The Salt Lake Tribune for November 26, 1978 reported:

The brainwashing, said the experts, was just as subtle as the charismatic tune played by the Pied Piper. Brainwashing, they point out, doesn’t require a dungeon, bright lights, or physical torture.

The Guyana victims, they said, probably lost their will and substituted blind obedience months and years before they even went to the “Peoples Temple” complex in Guyana, long before their suicides . . .

Ultimately they had to turn possessions over to the temple, follow orders without question as they fell in line behind the charismatic leader Jones. . . . Dr. Calvin Frederick, chief of emergency mental health and disaster assistance at the National Institute of Mental Health, commented on how to avoid brainwashing:

“Unless you are aware ahead of time of some of the dangers you cannot help yourself. For psychological ‘immunization’ to work it must take place prior to exposure . . . .

“There is nothing wrong in wanting to belong to a group, to do good through that group, to get swept up by the activity—but without losing control over your will. . . . You do their thing but you still do your own thing. You are still the master.”

The difference is that the dangerous groups reduce participants to dependent, childlike states as part of the brainwashing, Frederick says.

“New members are told . . . ‘You do not need to think. I will do the thinking for you.’ A lot of worries are taken a-way. The group promises to take care of you forever and remove all stress.”

The next step is blind obedience in which people might follow an order to jump off a cliff.
For a number of years we have tried to point out that Mormonism encourages blind obedience. For instance, the ward teacher’s message for June 1945 contained these statements:

> "... no man or woman in this dispensation will ever enter into the celestial kingdom of God without the consent of Joseph..." (Joseph Smith’s secret practice of polygamy together with his political ambitions and the destruction of an opposition press (The Nauvoo Expositor) eventually led to his murder in a jail at Carthage, Illinois (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 252-59). After Smith’s death relations between the Mormons and their neighbors deteriorated to the point where the Mormon people were forced to leave the city of Nauvoo. Brigham Young, the second leader of the Mormon people, blamed the U.S. Government for his troubles. Apostle Orson Pratt wrote the following in 1845: “Brethren awake! — be determined to get out from this evil notion next spring. We do not want one saint to be left in the United States after that time...” (Times and Seasons, vol. 6, page 1043).

Like Jim Jones, Brigham Young decided to take his people “beyond the boundaries of the United States, but the Mexican War “changed these calculations” (Quest for Empire, page 115). It is claimed that Jim Jones “viewed anyone who criticised or defected from the Temple as part of a conspiracy, aimed at destroying him and his movement” (Salt Lake Tribune, December 5, 1978). President Brigham Young had a similar attitude toward dissenters:

> "I say, rather than that apostates should flourish here, I will unsheath my bowie knife, and conquer or die. (Great commotion in the congregation, and a simultaneous burst of feeling, assenting to the declaration.) Now, you nasty apostates, clear out, or judgment will be put to the line, and righteousness to the plummet. (Voices, generally, “go it, go it.”) If you say it is right, raise your hands. (All hands up.) Let us call upon the Lord to assist us in this, and every good work. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 1, page 83)

During his reign over the people of Utah, Brigham Young preached the doctrine of Blood Atonement. According to this doctrine, a person who committed certain sins such as murder, adultery, stealing, apostasy or marriage to an African had to make atonement by sacrificing his own life so that his blood would be spilled upon the ground. In a sermon given in 1857, Brigham Young taught:

> "Now take a person in this congregation who has knowledge with regard to being saved in the kingdom of God... and suppose that he is overtaken in a gross fault, that he has committed a sin that he knows will deprive him of that exaltation which he desires, and that he cannot attain to it without the shedding of his blood, and also knows that by having his blood shed he will atone for that sin, and be saved and exalted with the Gods, is there a man or woman in this house but what would say, “shed my blood that I may be saved and exalted with the Gods?” All mankind love themselves, and let these principles be known by an individual, and he would be glad to have his blood shed. That would be loving themselves, even unto an eternal exaltation. Will you love your brothers or sisters likewise, when they have committed a sin that can not be atoned for without the shedding of their blood? Will you love that man or woman well enough to shed their blood?"

Although the Bible warns: “Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, ...” (Jeremiah 17:5), President Brigham Young claimed that “The Lord Almighty leads this Church, and he will never suffer you to be led astray if you are found doing your duty. You may go home and sleep as sweetly as a babe in its mother’s arms, to any danger of your feeders leading you astray, ...” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 9, page 289).

> "... teach the convert that “You do not need to worry about the church for whom there is no chance whatever for exaltation, ..." (Ibid., vol. 6, page 32)

The reader will notice that at least to some extent Mormonism encourages the very thing Dr. Frederick warned against—i.e., teaching the convert that “You do not need to worry about the church for whom there is no chance whatever for exaltation, ...” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 2, page 106)

Although we do not find anything in present-day Mormonism to compare with the tragedy in Guyana, when we examine Mormon history we find some interesting parallels to the religion of Jim Jones. For instance, Joseph Smith was certainly a charismatic leader who had a powerful influence on his followers. Brigham Young, the second President of the Church, emphasized:

> "he was our Prophet, our Seer, and Revelator; He was our dictator in the things of God, and it was for us to listen to him, and do just as he told us. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 7, page 3 page 334)

Heber C. Kimball, First Councillor to President Brigham Young, made these statements about obedience to the leaders of the Church:

> "... learn to do as you are told, ... if you are told by your leader to do a thing, do it, Lone of your business whether it is right or wrong. (Ibid., vol. 6, page 32)

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for them, the wickedness and ignorance of the nations forbid this principle’s being in full force, but the time will come when the law of God will be in full force.

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

That is the way to love mankind. (Sermon by Brigham Young, printed in the Deseret News, February 18, 1857)

In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 398-413, we give a great deal of information concerning the doctrine of Blood Atonement. Gustive O. Larson, Professor of Church History, at the Church’s Brigham Young University, made this comment about Brigham Young’s suicide-murder doctrine:

To whatever extent the preaching on blood atonement, may have influenced action, it would have been in relation to Mormon disciplinary action among its own members. In point would be a verbally reported case of a Mr. Johnson in Cedar City who was found guilty of adultery with his step-daughter by a bishop’s court a sentenced to death for atonement of his sin. According to the report of reputable eye witnesses, judgment was executed with consent of the offender who went to his unconsecrated grave in full confidence of salvation through the shedding of his blood. Such a case, however primitive, is understandable within the meaning of the doctrine and the emotional extremes of the Reformation. (*Utah Historical Quarterly*, January 1958, page 62, note 39)

Conditions in Utah became so intolerable under Brigham Young that the U.S. Government finally had to send a small army to restore order. Like Jim Jones, the Mormon leaders stirred up their people to the point of bloodshed. They misrepresented the intentions of the U.S. Government by stating that the troops were going to kill them and steal the women. On September 27, 1857, Heber C. Kimball claimed that the troops “exulted over us . . . telling how they were going to kill brother Brigham and all those who would uphold ‘Mormonism,’ . . . They swore that they would use every woman in this place at their own pleasure—that they would slay old Brigham and old Heber; . . .” (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 5, page 274). Charles L. Walker recorded the following in his diary “Sunday, Jan. 24, 1858 . . . Went to the Tabernacle. Bro. E. T. Benson . . . said the U.S. were all gaping full of fear about the Mormons and wereshipping troops around by California. Said it was their intention to destroy all the Mormons.”

Brigham Young issued a “proclamation” which stated that he intended to resist the U.S. troops when they tried to enter the territory of Utah. This document also stated that “no person shall be allowed to pass or repass into, or through, or from this territory, without a permit from the proper officer” (*A Comprehensive History of the Church*, vol. 4, page 274). This “proclamation” virtually made the inhabitants of Utah prisoners of Brigham Young. Heber C. Kimball boldly asserted:

We have declared our independence . . . that man and that woman who cannot stand up to the test, I ask you to leave as quick as you can; for when the time of the test comes, as the Lord God Almighty lives, if you then leave us or betray us, that is the end of you. . . .

This year’s trouble . . . will amount to this—a collision between this people and the United States; and the gate will be shut down between us and them . . .

When the United States have done their best, then other nations will tackle us, and so things will go on, until every nation is brought into subjection to the kingdom of God. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 5, page 275)

The conflict which followed is known as the “Utah War.” The historian Hubert Howe Bancroft says that “the Mormons lived on the troops, stampeding their cattle, plundering or destroying their provision trains, and only after all fear of active hostilities had been removed, selling them surplus grain at exorbitant rates” (*History of Utah*, page 499).

**THE MASSACRE**

The Mormon historian B.H. Roberts called the Mountain Meadows Massacre “the most lamentable episode in Utah history, and in the history of the church” (*A Comprehensive History of the Church*, vol. 4, page 139). This massacre took place when a company of emigrants tried to pass through the territory of Utah at the time of the “Utah War.” Since the Mormon leaders had been fervently preaching the doctrine of Blood Atonement and stirring up their people with the spirit of war, the emigrants could not have picked a worse time to try to pass through Mormon country. As they went south the Mormons refused to sell them grain. When the emigrants arrived at Mountain Meadows, about 325 miles south of Salt Lake City, the Mormons encouraged the Indians to attack them. The Indians could not overcome the emigrants, however, and the Mormons were forced to directly participate in the massacre which followed. Mormon historian B. H. Roberts admits that the number of “whites” at the Mountain Meadows had swelled to “between fifty and sixty” by September 10, 1857 (*A Comprehensive History of the Church*, vol. 4, page 153). Another Mormon writer, William E. Berrett, gives this description of the massacre:

It was a deliberately planned massacre, treacherously carried into execution. On the morning of September 11, flag of truce was sent to the emigrant camp and terms of surrender proposed. The emigrants were to give up their arms. The wounded were to be loaded into wagons, followed by the women and children, and the men to bring up the rear, single file. Thus they were to be conducted by the whites to Cedar City. This was agreed to, and the march began.

A short distance from the encampment, the white men at a given signal, fell the unarmed emigrant men. At the same time hundreds of Indians, who had lain in ambush, rushed upon the hapless party. In five minutes the terrible tragedy was enacted. . . . Only the smallest children were spared. (*The Restored Church*, 1956, page 468-469)

A monument at Mountain Meadows contains this statement: “A company of about 140 Arkansans and Missouri emigrants led by Captain Charles Fancher, on route to California, was attacked by white men and Indians. All but 17, being small children, were killed.” Juanita Brooks, a Mormon scholar who is considered to be a real authority on the massacre, says that “While Brigham Young and George A. Smith, the church authorities chiefly responsible, did not specifically order the
massacre, they did preach sermons and set up social conditions which made it possible” (The Mountain Meadows Massacre, 1970, page 219). Mrs. Brooks goes so far as to admit that “Brigham Young was accessory after the fact, in that he knew what had happened, and how and why it happened. Evidence of this is abundant and unmistakable, and from the most impeccable Mormon sources” (Ibid.). In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 493-515, we give a detailed account of the Mountain Meadows Massacre and the cover-up and obstruction of justice which followed.

The historian Bancroft says that the army that came to Utah passed “the winter of 1857-8 amid privations no less severe than those endured at Valley Forge . . .” He claimed that the Utah War “cost several hundred lives.” It would, of course, be hard to determine just how many of these men would have lived if the Mormons had not spent their time destroying and stealing their provisions. While the Mormons were reluctant to fire upon the U. S. troops, they killed a large number of innocent civilians in Utah at this time. The Mountain Meadows Massacre, the Aiken Massacre and a number of other cruel murders were committed during this period of rebellion. We feel that hundreds of people probably lost their lives because of the teachings and foolish orders of Brigham Young. In the case of the Aiken massacre we feel that there is very good evidence linking Brigham Young directly to the crime (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 448-450).

**SPIRITUAL SUICIDE**

During the last year our minds have been impressed with the danger of cults. For instance, just a few months ago a man by the name of Immanuel David committed suicide in a canyon near Salt Lake City. David, who had served as a Mormon missionary, broke away from the Church and formed his own cult. After his death his wife and children jumped (some of the children were apparently pushed) from a tall building on West Temple—just 12 blocks north of our company. The reader will remember that Dr. Frederick said that when people allow someone else to do their thinking the “next step is blind obedience in which people might follow an order to jump off a cliff.” In November Jim Jones induced his followers to commit suicide.

Brigham Young’s teaching concerning Blood Atonement (i.e., suicide or murder for atonement of sin) is almost as bizarre as Jim Jones’ order that his followers kill themselves. Although Blood Atonement is not practiced by Mormons today, some of the polygamous cults which have broken off from the Mormon Church still strongly advocate Brigham Young’s doctrine of killing sinners. The Deseret News for September 29, 1977, reported that a “polygamist cult leader” by the name of Ervil Lebaron “has been linked to more than a dozen deaths and disappearances in the West, . . .” Mormons, of course, claim that Brigham Young was a prophet but tend to ignore his teaching on Blood Atonement. Nevertheless, we feel that people should be very cautious about a religion which teaches “When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done.” Since the Bible warns against trusting in an arm of flesh, we feel that it is possible to commit spiritual suicide if we allow others to do our thinking. Jesus Himself warned that “false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall spew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect” (Mark 13:21). Notwithstanding the fact that Mormonism has many attractive things to offer, the evidence clearly shows that it is based upon a false foundation. We urge all of those who are Mormons or are thinking of joining the Church to take the time to consider the evidence we have compiled in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?

**EXCERPTS**

FROM SOME OF THE MANY LETTERS RECEIVED

Thank you, Thank you, Thank you for Mormonism Shadow or Reality. We have always had our doubts in the Mormon Church, but had nothing but our feelings to base it on.

1. We simply never had the courage to turn away, but after reading your book we decided there was one Book we knew little about, yes the Bible, and that’s where its at. We became baptized for Christ at ages 35 and 28, . . . Thank you for bringing out the truth, for people have a right to know. (Letter from Colorado)

2. I want to thank you for the work you have done in documenting the Mormon fraud. I was also raised in the LDS Church and became a new person in n Jesus Christ only three years ago. My family dates back more than 100 years in the Church and I’ve been unable to offer any effective presentation of God’s plan to them because of their lack of trust in the Bible as God’s Word where it is not in agreement with Joseph Smith. I believe God is using your efforts to open a crack in the armor . . . (Letter from Texas)

Recently bought your book, Mormonism, Shadow or Reality . . .

3. Both my husband & myself just Praise the Lord for it! We were both raised Mormons & married in the temple in 1961 . . . the Good News, that Jesus died for our sins has been the most important thing that has ever happened to us! . . . your book has helped us so much. We’re studying it & trust that the Lord will help us in some way to reach our family & childhood friends. . . I will pray for your work daily. (Letter from California)

We continue our personal witnessing and just last week, a Mormon couple who we had given a copy of S or R [Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?] last year were saved.

That makes 23 Mormons here in Cambridge since last April. And they are all active in good Christian Churches. Praise God! (Letter from Massachusetts)

With the deepest gratitude I write and thank you for sharing your research in Mormonism Shadow or Reality? with all readers. I joined the LDS Church in November of 1975 and have since then had spiritual as well as marital problems [problems?]. I focused myself on my own self exaltation and not that of God and found myself, as you mentioned, going down further in sin after sin. Your work has forced me to look for the TRUTH . . .

I have discovered that we are here to glorify God and not ourselves and that the only way we can do so is through Jesus Christ. I have found a personal relationship with Christ and I recognize a completeness I never experienced before. (Letter from California)

I’m writing you to thank you for your publication Mormonism—Shadow or Reality. I’ve been a converted Mormon for 23 years now & 6 months ago my husband finally joined the church. Our Son . . . came home & brought his new
conversion to Christ into our home. Saying the Mormons were very wrong, I fought him tooth & nail with my Book of Mormon, D&C, & testimony. Then he went to the library with me & sighted your book & insisted we check it out. We read it for 7 nights straight & yesterday I told them I was quitting the church. . . . the Joseph Smith Papyri really clinched it for me. . . . I know Joseph just made it [the Book of Abraham] up & the statement he translated it from a papyri written in Abraham’s own hand was his big mistake. . . . I just want you to see you saved another family. . . . I’ve excepted Christ into my heart & with this finally came joy & peace. (Letter from California)

Mormonism, Shadow or Reality has been a blessing to me and to our home.

I have been a Mormon since 1947, . . . but finally last week I accepted the Lord . . .
Your work has been an inspiration to me . . . (Letter from New Mexico)

I am in the process of reading your book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality and must say you are a God Send! Being a Mormon myself, with many questions no one seems to be able to answer for me—was answered in your book. (Letter from Idaho)

I am reading your book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality. I am extremely interested in the part concerning the Temple ceremony. I have been LDS for 40 years but always disliked going to the Temple. I have felt guilty for this feeling—but I just felt something was wrong. . . . I’ve never read anti-Mormonism literature before but I find this book fascinating. (Letter from California)

Praise the Lord for your Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? . . . I came out of Mormonism due to my brother. . . . How I tried to hang onto my lies. My husband was a “jack-Mormon” and we know now the real Lord Jesus. Our lives are his . . . We’re being baptized Sunday! Now we know the joy of the Lord!!

I have a burden & calling for the Mormons. I’m studying my beat-up “Shadow.” It’s fascinating and can hardly wait to take it to the LDS here. . . . I want to really know what I’m doing & prayed & fasted to be right in tune with the Holy Spirit. . . . We’ve seen soldiers give their lives to the Lord. One was a Mormon & now wants to take friends & family out of the mess. (Letter from California)

I have read your excellent book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? . . . All who read it are impressed with the devastating evidence it contains.

For much of my life I was a member of the Reorganized CDJ Church. I am convinced now that it is a heresy, but I find myself almost a stranger to Christianity. . . . I have much to learn, but to have come at last to the Lord Jesus is great happiness. (Letter from Canada)

I used to belong to the Church of Jesus Christ of latter day Saints. But Thank God I started reading the Bible and studying history and Books like Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? (Letter from California)

I was the sixth generation from my family to be blinded by the L.D.S. With the help and prayers of Christian friends I accepted Jesus Christ. As I read the Bible I also read your book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality.

My husband and I and our son asked for and received excommunication from the Mormon church . . . I pray for the Mormon people and for your work to continue.” (Letter from Arizona)

Just read your book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? Thank you for helping me make a decision I just couldn’t bring myself to make on my own. I will probably leave the L.D.S. Church soon. (Letter from California)

Because of the truth in your book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? I have requested my excommunication from the Mormon Church. Thank you for helping me find Jesus Christ and recognize the false doctrines of the Church. (Letter from Virginia)

I was excommunicated from the Mormon church . . . at my own request. . . . I became a REBORN CHRISTIAN praise the Lord!! Your books were a great help at getting my brain “un-brainwashed” . . . I am out of bondage, after 28 years . . . (Letter from Minnesota)

After I read your book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? I gave away all my LDS books . . . and we wrote a letter to our Bishop asking for termination of our membership. . . . now I know the truth and I’m grateful to you both for your efforts to help those of us who are trapped & held bound by the Mormon Church. (Letter from Oregon)

I have been a Christian for about five months. . . . I was almost converted to Mormonism myself but God answered my prayer about Joseph Smith by leading me to your research efforts, and I thank Him for it. (Letter from California)

A personal “thanks” for writing and putting together all of your research in your Book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality. Boy was that book Very badly needed. You have done a magnificent job with it.

We have been excommunicated from the Mormon Church upon our own request. And in so doing we have broken the chains that bound us to a standardized & crystalized belief. And in so doing we are finding out in the world so many new & exciting things of Jesus Christ & our great eternal God. Thank you. (Letter from Idaho)

I had been a member of LDS Ch. for 71/2 yrs, but something bothered me and the more I read the Bible the more I knew that J.S. was a fraud. . . . my husband was called in and told we were not to delve into the mysteries of the Church but all we had to do was concern ourselves with 1. Faith 2. Repentance and 3. Baptism

Of course this made us mad and we kept on researching. That was when we got hold of a copy of your book — Mormonism—Shadow or Reality.

Yes, we have left the Church after much prayer and thought and we really feel good about our decision. (Letter from Kansas)
I have discovered your volume quite by accident. *Mormanism, Shadow or Reality.*

It may be interesting to know I became a convert to the Mormon Church in Dec. of ’67. Before that I was a minister for the Church of Christ or Christian Church. . . . I left the ministry . . . met Mormon people & became a member . . .

Recently I have taken a very strong — objective look at religion — particularly Mormonism . . . I commend you for your work . . .

I’m very much interested in obtaining all you have printed & made available in the way of research . . . I feel I can be of use & make a contribution.

The Church—(Morman) has made use of me—They published a “propaganda” article in a Church newspaper a few years ago—”Former Minister, Now Elder”—I can reference this article if you wish. (Letter from Arizona)

I was recently given a copy of your *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality.* I have of late been very interested in Mormonism, as last October I was baptized into that church . . . I thought I had adequately researched the Mormon church before I allowed myself to be baptised, but I see now that I barely scratched the surface.

What bothers me most is that I possessed God’s greatest gift—a faith in Christ as personal savior—but that I traded that for the conditional salvation of Mormonism. . . . I have come to love many people within the Mormon church, but I feel a hesitancy to go on being a member, . . . I must do what is right first, then perhaps in love share that knowledge with them. I want to return my life to Jesus, not to an inanimate organization, first, then perhaps in love share that knowledge with them. I realize I have turned my back on Jesus since I joined the LDS church, for although I repeat His name each Sunday, the true meaning has fled from my heart. I earnestly want that back, for the conditional salvation of Mormonism. . . . I have come of late been very interested in Mormonism, as last October I was baptized into that church . . . I thought I had adequately researched the Mormon church before I allowed myself to be baptised, but I see now that I barely scratched the surface.

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ALEX JOSEPH

On November 11, 1978, the *Salt Lake Tribune*, printed a very sensational story relating to Joseph Smith’s *Pearl of Great Price*:

Claiming the “biggest breakthrough since the discovery of the Rosetta Stone,” Utah polygamist Alex Joseph said Friday he has worked out a mathematical formula proving a link between the writings of Moses and the writings of Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints prophet Joseph Smith.

Mr. Joseph said in a press conference . . . that his complex formula “demonstrates that both Moses and Smith were working from the same manuscript when the former wrote Genesis and the latter, the ‘Pearl of Great Price.’” . . .

Using as a guide a burial head plate found in Egyptian pyramids, a facsimile of which also appears in the Book of Abraham in the “Pearl of Great Price,” Mr. Joseph claims to have worked out an “irrefutable” mathematical formula with which he translated part of the plate into the first words of the Bible, “In the beginning . . .”

“My formula will stand any test,” Mr. Joseph said. “It’s a very complex machine, but it is also a mathematical certainty.”

The manuscript is “a rebuttal to anti-Mormon writer Gerald Tanner’s arguments against the validity of the translations made by Joseph Smith of the ancient Egyptian manuscripts which appear in the ‘Pearl of Great Price.’” Joseph begins with a refutation of Tanner’s claim that because Smith derived 76 English words from a single Egyptian character, his efforts at translation are thereby rendered fraudulent,” according to an editor’s note in the beginning of the 24-page Joseph manuscript.

Mr. Joseph said he had been working on the project for about 10 years, and a full book is expected within a year.

We would probably not mention Mr. Joseph’s work if it were not for the fact that the newspapers and television stations gave him so much publicity. Even the Associated Press carried a story on its wire:

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Polygamist Alex Joseph says he has “just saved the Mormon Church’s bacon” by proving that Egyptian hieroglyphics Mormon founder Joseph Smith claimed to have translated “were the basis of the Old Testament writings of Moses.” . . . The 24-page booklet purports to be a refutation of attacks made on Smith’s work by Gerald Tanner of Salt Lake City in his book, *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality.?* (Ogden Standard-Examiner, November 12, 1978)

Mr. Joseph’s 24-page booklet is entitled, *The Bones: The Key to Facsimile No. 2.* In this pamphlet he is very critical of our work:

This entire approach to the translation of anything is asinine. Asiminity is, however, the main element in Tanner’s prolixic intellectualism.

I shall now leave Tanner and his pin-headed scholarship and freely translate BRASHITH, . . . (page 2)

Joseph Smith’s expertise in these matters is forever established by Gerald Tanner’s ignorant parroting of these ancient words on page 471 of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality.* The title of Tanner’s book is more properly *The Shadow of Tanner and the Reality of Smith.*” (page 10)
Mr. Joseph’s work cannot be tested by Hebrew scholars because it does not come from any known method of translation. The Associated Press release claims that “Joseph . . . says he knows no Hebrew . . .” (Ogden Standard-Examiner, November 12, 1978) It is also obvious from his work on Facsimile No. 2 of the Book of Abraham that he knows nothing about the Egyptian language. He claims “The facsimile is the very plate from which Moses wrote the Book of Genesis” (The Bones, page 24). Although Facsimile No. 2 contains no Hebrew letters, Alex Joseph derives the word Bereshith from Figures 5-6 of that facsimile (see, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 343, Part E). What Egyptologists would see as “The goddess Hathor in the form of the Divine Cow Ahait” facing the four sons of Horus, is in Alex Joseph’s thinking the Hebrew word Bereshith. If we are correctly following his reasoning, he believes the scene takes place in a house; and since a house is Beth in Hebrew, we have the first letter in Bereshith. His method of deriving the rest of the letters is just as bizarre. It reminds us of Wells Jakeman’s attempt to read the words Lehi, Sariah and Nephi from the so-called Lehi Tree of Life Stone.

Although Alex Joseph’s work is of no scientific value, it helps us to understand Joseph Smith’s way of thinking. We feel that Alex Joseph and Joseph Smith used the same system in their “translation”—i.e., an over-worked imagination. Joseph Smith’s History of the Church, vol. 2, page 238, contains this statement under the date of July, 1835: “The remainder of this month, I was continually engaged in translating an alphabet to the Book of Abraham, and arranging a grammar of the Egyptian language as practiced by the ancients.” Egyptologist I.E.S. Edwards, Keeper of Dept. of Egyptian Antiquities, British Museum, wrote the following in a letter dated December 22, 1966: “Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar . . . is largely a piece of imagination and lacking in any kind of scientific value . . . The whole document reminds me of the writings of psychic practitioners which are sometimes sent to me” (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 360). Mormon scholars have worked for many years on Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar, but so far no one has been able to make any sense out of it. Alex Joseph’s work certainly reminds us of this purported “Alphabet and Grammar.” Both, for instance, believed that a large number of words could be translated from one Egyptian or Hebrew word. As we have already pointed out, Alex Joseph “translated” over 870 words from Bereshith. After performing this incredible feat, he commented: “Again, I apologize for the brevity of this translation, but time and space do not allow for a fuller exposition.” Fortunately, the original translation manuscripts for Joseph Smith’s Book of Abraham are still in existence (see photographs in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 312-313). These manuscripts show that like Alex Joseph and Joseph Smith used the same system in their translation—i.e., an over-worked imagination. Joseph Smith’s way of thinking. We feel that Alex Joseph and Joseph Smith used the same system in their “translation”—i.e., an over-worked imagination. Joseph Smith’s History of the Church, vol. 2, page 238, contains this statement under the date of July, 1835: “The remainder of this month, I was continually engaged in translating an alphabet to the Book of Abraham, and arranging a grammar of the Egyptian language as practiced by the ancients.” Egyptologist I.E.S. Edwards, Keeper of Dept. of Egyptian Antiquities, British Museum, wrote the following in a letter dated December 22, 1966: “Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar . . . is largely a piece of imagination and lacking in any kind of scientific value . . . The whole document reminds me of the writings of psychic practitioners which are sometimes sent to me” (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 360). Mormon scholars have worked for many years on Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar, but so far no one has been able to make any sense out of it. Alex Joseph’s work certainly reminds us of this purported “Alphabet and Grammar.” Both, for instance, believed that a large number of words could be translated from one Egyptian or Hebrew word. As we have already pointed out, Alex Joseph “translated” over 870 words from Bereshith. After performing this incredible feat, he commented: “Again, I apologize for the brevity of this translation, but time and space do not allow for a fuller exposition.” Fortunately, the original translation manuscripts for Joseph Smith’s Book of Abraham are still in existence (see photographs in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 312-313). These manuscripts show that like Alex Joseph, Joseph Smith felt he could squeeze an extraordinarily large number of English words out of just one ancient word. For instance, in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 323, we show that Joseph Smith derived 177 words from one Egyptian word. These words are published in the Pearl of Great Price, Book of Abraham 1:16-19. The Egyptian word which Joseph Smith pretended to translate 177 words from is “Khons”—the name of an Egyptian moon-god.

Because of Joseph Smith’s mistranslation of the Egyptian papyrus we have been calling upon the Mormon leaders to repudiate the Book of Abraham and the anti-black doctrine contained in its pages. They have finally yielded to pressure and allowed black to hold the Priesthood. We feel, however, that they should go one step further and admit the Book of Abraham is a work of Joseph Smith’s imagination.
January is a month we are anxiously awaiting, for this is when Moody Press plans to release our new book, *The Changing World of Mormonism*. This is a condensed and updated version of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*—a book which has sold over 32,000 copies and which Bible scholar Norman L. Geisler claims has “shaken” the “historical and theological foundations” of Mormonism.

The title, *The Changing World of Mormonism*, is especially fitting for this work because even while we were in the process of preparing it, the Mormon Church made a major revision of its doctrine concerning blacks.

**DEATH OF THE ANTI-BLACK DOCTRINE**

David Briscoe and George Buck refer to June 9, 1978, as “Black Friday” because this was the day that Mormon leaders announced the death of the anti-black doctrine (see *Utah Holiday*, July 1978, page 33). Prior to that time blacks of African lineage were not allowed to hold the Priesthood nor go through the temple even though they lived exemplary lives.

The Mormon position concerning blacks was clearly stated in a letter written by the First Presidency on July 17, 1947:

> From the days of the Prophet Joseph even until now, it has been the doctrine of the Church, never questioned by any of the Church leaders that the Negroes are not entitled to the full blessings of the Gospel. (Letter from the First Presidency, quoted in *Mormonism and the Negro*, by John J. Stewart and William E. Berrett, pages 46-47)

Bruce R. McConkie, who now serves as an Apostle in the Mormon Church, wrote the following in a book published in 1958:

> Negroes in this life are denied the priesthood; under no circumstances can they hold this delegation of authority from the Almighty. The gospel message of salvation is not carried affirmatively to them . . .

> Negroes are not equal with other races where the receipt of certain spiritual blessings are concerned . . . (*Mormon Doctrine*, 1958, page 477)

In the July 1978 issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger* we pointed out that in the past Mormon leaders have taught that the doctrine could not be changed. President Brigham Young, for instance, emphatically affirmed that blacks could not hold the Priesthood until AFTER the resurrection:

> Cain slew his brother . . . and the Lord put a mark upon him, which is the flat nose and black skin. . . . How long is that race to endure the dreadful curse that is upon them? That curse will remain upon them, and they never can hold the Priesthood or share in it until all the other descendants of Adam have received the promises and enjoyed the blessings of the Priesthood and the keys thereof. Until the last ones of the residue of Adam’s children are brought up to that favourable position, the children of Cain cannot receive the first ordinances of the Priesthood. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 7, pages 290-291)

When all the other children of Adam have had the privilege of receiving the Priesthood, and of coming into the kingdom of God, and of being redeemed from the four quarters of the earth, and have received their resurrection from the dead, then it will be time enough to remove the curse from Cain and his posterity. . . . he is the last to share the joys of the kingdom of God. (*Ibid.*, vol. 2, page 143)

The First Presidency of the Church reaffirmed Brigham Young’s teaching in 1949 (see *Mormonism and the Negro*, Part 2, page 16), and in 1967, N. Eldon Tanner, was quoted as saying:

> “The church has no intention of changing its doctrine on the Negro,” N. Eldon Tanner, counselor to the First President told Seattle during his recent visit here. “Throughout the history of the original Christian church, the Negro never held the priesthood. There’s really nothing we can do to change this. It’s a law of God.” (*Seattle Magazine*, December 1967, page 60)

The Mormon apologist John L. Lund wrote the following:

> Brigham Young revealed that the Negroes will not receive the Priesthood until a great while after the second advent of Jesus Christ, . . . our present prophets are in complete agreement with Brigham Young and other past leaders on the question of the Negro and the Priesthood. . . .

> Social pressure and even government sanctions cannot be expected to bring forth a new revelation . . . all the social pressure in the world will not change what the Lord has decreed to be. . . .

The prophets have declared that there are at least two major stipulations that have to be met before the Negroes will be allowed to possess the Priesthood. The first requirement relates to time. The Negroes will not be allowed to hold the Priesthood during mortality, in fact, not until after the resurrection of all of Adam’s children. The other stipulation
requires that Abel’s seed receive the first opportunity of having the Priesthood. . . . Negroes must first pass through mortality before they may possess the Priesthood (“they will go down to death”). Reference is also made to the condition that the Negroes will have to wait until after the resurrection of all of Adam’s children before receiving the Priesthood. . . . the last of Adam’s children will not be resurrected until the end of the millennium. Therefore, the Negroes will not receive the Priesthood until after that time . . . this will not happen until after the thousand years of Christ’s reign on earth. . . .

The second major stipulation that needs to be met . . . is the requirement that Abel’s seed receive the opportunity of holding the Priesthood first. (The Church and the Negro, 1967, pages 45-48)

Because Church leaders stressed for over a hundred years that blacks would never be able to hold the Priesthood DURING MORTALITY, the Mormon people were surprised when they learned of the death of the anti-black doctrine. They were aware of the fact that the change tended to undermine the concept that they were led by a “living prophet” who could not yield to the pressures of the world. Even though most Mormons claim they are happy with the doctrinal change regarding blacks, there is evidence that the “revelation” came as a real shock. A class at Brigham Young University which conducted a “random telephone survey” of Utah County residents found that 79 percent of those interviewed did not expect a change at this time. Furthermore, many people compared the news to an announcement of some kind of disaster or death:

Some 45 percent of those who heard of the doctrine from personal sources expressed doubt that the news was true. This compares with only 25 percent of those who learned from media sources. Sixty-two percent of the former group expressed shock, compared with 52 percent of the latter. . . .

Those surveyed appeared surprised by the announcement, Haroldsen said. Thirty-nine percent said they did not think “it would ever happen” that the priesthood would ever be given to blacks.

Another 44 percent expected it years in the future, after Christ’s return, during the Millennium, or “not in my lifetime.” . . .

In trying to explain how they reacted to the news, 14 persons compared its impact with that of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Another 13 compared it to the news of the death of an LDS Church president. Eight compared it to a natural disaster, especially the Teton dam break.

Others compared the news with the death of a family member or friend, with a declaration of war, or other major political event. (The Daily Universe, June 22, 1978)

The Mormon people apparently realized the deep doctrinal implications this change involved, and therefore they associated it with death or disaster. If they were really pleased with the change, why did they not relate it with a happy event like marriage, the birth of a child or the end of a war? We feel that this survey unwittingly reveals what Church members really thought of the change.

**OLD TEACHINGS BECOME INOPERATIVE**

The reader will remember that when the public began to find out the real truth about Watergate, President Nixon’s press secretary Ron Ziegler said that statements which had previously been made were now “inoperative.” What he really meant, of course, was that the past denials were untrue.

Like the early statements concerning Watergate, the pronouncements and revelations that Mormon leaders used to support the anti-black doctrine have now become “inoperative.” Although he did not use this word, the Apostle Bruce R. McConkie recently conceded that the old teachings concerning blacks were given “without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world”:

I would like to say something about the new revelation relative to our taking the priesthood to those of all nations and races. . . . There are statements in our literature by the early brethren which we have interpreted to mean that the Negroes would not receive the priesthood in mortality. I have said the same things, and people write me letters and say, “You said such and such, and how is it now that we do such and such?” And all I can say to that is that it is time disbelieving people repented and got in line and believed in a living, modern prophet. Forget everything that I have said, or what President Brigham Young or President George Q. Cannon or whomever has said in days past that is contrary to the present revelation. We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world.

We get our truth and our light upon line and precept upon precept. We have now had added a new flood of intelligence and light on this particular subject, and it erases all the darkness and all the views and all the thoughts of the past. They don’t matter any more.

It doesn’t make a particle of difference what anybody ever said about the Negro matter before the first day of June of this year (1978). It is a new day and a new arrangement, and the Lord has now given the revelation that sheds light into the world on this subject. As to any slivers of light or any particles of darkness of the past, we forget about them. (“All Are Alike Unto God,” by Apostle Bruce R. McConkie of the Council of the Twelve, pages 1-2)

Because of the new revelation concerning blacks, Bruce R. McConkie has had to make a number of changes in his “best-seller,” Mormon Doctrine. This is not the first time that Apostle McConkie has been forced to revise his book. The original 1958 edition was suppressed because it contained anti-Catholic material (see The Case Against Mormonism, vol. I, pages 8-9). When a new edition appeared in 1966, Apostle McConkie wrote that “experience has shown the wisdom of making some changes, clarifications, and additions.” At any rate, when the “25th Printing” of Apostle McConkie’s book appeared in 1979, the majority of the anti-black material was deleted or changed. For instance, the section on “NEGROES” (pages 526-528 of the new printing) was completely rewritten and no longer contains McConkie’s statement that “Negroes are not equal with other races where the receipt of certain spiritual blessings are concerned . . .” Nor does it contain McConkie’s long explanation of how blacks were “less valiant” in the pre-existence and therefore had “spiritual restrictions imposed upon them during mortality . . .” In another section, RACES OF MEN, McConkie originally wrote:

We know the circumstances under which the posterity of Cain (and later of Ham) were cursed with what we call negroid racial characteristics. (Mormon Doctrine, 1958, page 554)

This has been softened to read:

We know the circumstances under which the posterity of Cain (and later of Ham) were born with the characteristics of the black race. (Mormon Doctrine, 1979, page 616)
In the 1958 edition, page 314, Apostle McConkie had written that “Negroes are thus descendants of Ham, who himself also was cursed, apparently for marrying into the forbidden lineage.” This was shortened to: “Ham was cursed, apparently for marrying into the forbidden lineage…” (Mormon Doctrine, 1979 printing, page 343).

On page 102 of the 1958 printing, Apostle McConkie wrote the following:

As a result of his rebellion, Cain was cursed with a dark skin; he became the father of the Negroes, and those spirits who are not worthy to receive the priesthood are born through his lineage. He became the first mortal to be cursed as a son of perdition.

In the 1979 printing of McConkie’s Mormon Doctrine, page 109, this has been changed to read:

As a result of his rebellion, Cain was cursed and told that “the earth” would not thereafter yield him its abundance as previously. In addition he became the first mortal to be cursed as a son of perdition.

The reader will notice that Apostle McConkie has changed the statement so that it no longer reads that “Negroes” are cursed with a black skin. In the 1979 printing McConkie does go on to talk of the “dark skin,” but he calls it a “mark” rather than a “curse”: “The Lord placed on Cain a mark of a dark skin, and he became the ancestor of the black race.”

Although we believe that Apostle McConkie has the right to change his own writings, we feel that these changes tend to undermine his claim to have “all of the keys of the kingdom of God on earth” (Mormon Doctrine, 1979 printing, page 45). In any case, we feel that McConkie’s book may have to undergo even more revision. Although he apparently tried to remove all material unfavorable to blacks, he seems to have missed the following in his section entitled, CASTE SYSTEM:

However, in a broad general sense, caste systems have their root and origin in the gospel itself, and when they operate according to the divine decree, the resultant restrictions and segregation are right and proper and have the approval of the Lord. To illustrate; Cain, Ham, and the whole negro race have been cursed with a black skin, the mark of Cain, so they can be identified as a caste apart, a people with whom the other descendants of Adam should not intermarry. (Mormon Doctrine, 1979, page 114)

EXISTENCE OF NEW REVELATION QUESTIONED

In the July 1978 issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger we observed: “One thing that should be noted about the new ‘revelation’ is that the Church has failed to produce a copy of it. All we have is a statement by the First Presidency which says a revelation was received.” We went on to say:

We seriously doubt that President Kimball will put forth a written revelation on the bestowal of priesthood on blacks. We doubt, in fact, that any such document exists. What probably happened was that the leaders of the Church finally realized that they could no longer retain the anti-black doctrine without doing irreparable damage to the Church. Under these circumstances they were impressed with the fact that the doctrine had to be changed and this impression was referred to as a revelation from God. In a letter to the Editor of the Salt Lake Tribune, June 24, 1978, Eugene Wagner observed:

... was this change of doctrine really a revelation from the Lord, or did the church leaders act on their own? Why don’t they publish that revelation and let the Lord speak in his own words? All we saw was a statement of the First Presidency, and that is not how a revelation looks.

When God speaks the revelation starts with the words: “Thus saith the Lord.” It seems when the Lord decides to change a doctrine of such great importance he will talk himself to the people of his church. If such a revelation cannot be presented to the members it is obvious that the first presidency acted on its own, most likely under fear of public pressure to avoid problems of serious consequences and to maintain peace and popularity with the world.

At the 148th Semiannual Conference of the Mormon Church, members of the church were asked to “accept this revelation as the word and will of the Lord,” but the only document presented to the people was the letter of the First Presidency, dated June 8, 1978 (see The Ensign, November 1978, page 16).

On June 2, 1979, the Church Section of the Deseret News announced that “The statement of the First Presidency telling of the revelation extending the priesthood to ‘all worthy male members of the Church’ released June 9, 1978, will also be added to the Doctrine and Covenants.” The reader will notice that it is only the “statement...telling of the revelation” that will be added to the Doctrine and Covenants.

Some Mormons have put forth the rumor that the power of God was manifested as on the day of Pentecost when President Kimball gave the “revelation.” Kimball himself seems to be trying to dispel this idea. The following statement about the “revelation” appeared in Time on August 7, 1978, page 55:

In other renditions it came complete with a visitation from Joseph Smith. ... In an interview, his first since the announcement, Kimball described it much more matter of factly to Time staff writer Richard Ostling: “I spent a good deal of time in the temple alone, praying for guidance, and there was a gradual and general development of the whole program, in connection with the Apostles.”

For some time after the anti-black doctrine was changed, Mormon leaders were reluctant to inform their own people of the details surrounding the giving of the “revelation.” Finally, six months after the event, the Church News staff asked President Kimball if he would “care to share with the readers of the church news any more of the circumstances under which that was given?” President Kimball’s answer is very revealing. He makes no reference to a voice or any written revelation. In fact, his statement gives the impression that it was only a feeling or an assurance that he received:

President: ... It went on for some time as I was searching for this, because I wanted to be sure. We held a meeting of the Council of the Twelve in the temple on the regular day. We considered this very seriously and thoughtfully and prayerfully. I asked the Twelve not to go home when the time came. I said, “now would you be willing to remain in the temple with us?” And they were. I offered the final prayer and I told the Lord if it wasn’t right, if He didn’t want this change to come in the Church that I would be true to it all the rest of my life, and I’d fight the world against it if that’s what He wanted.

We had this special prayer circle, then I knew that the time had come. I had a great deal to fight, of course, myself largely, because I had grown up with this thought that Negroes should not have the priesthood and I was prepared to go all the rest of my life till my death and fight for it and defend it as it was. But this revelation and assurance came to me so clearly that there was no question about it. (Deseret News, Church Section, January 6, 1979, page 19)
In his speech, “All Are Alike Unto God,” pages 2-3, Apostle Bruce R. McConkie told how the “revelation” was received. His description indicates that there was no spoken or written revelation—only a very good “feeling”:

The result was that President Kimball knew, and each one of us knew, independent of any other person, by direct and personal revelation to us, that the time had now come to extend the gospel and all its blessings . . . to those of every nation, . . . including the black race . . . it was a revelation of such tremendous significance and import; one which would reverse the whole direction of the Church, . . . The Lord could have sent messengers from the other side to deliver it, but he did not. He gave the revelation by the power of the Holy Ghost. Latter-day Saints have a complex: many of them desire to magnify and build upon what has occurred, and they delight to think of miraculous things. And maybe some of them would like to believe that the Lord himself was there, or that the Prophet Joseph Smith came to deliver the revelation . . . which was one of the possibilities. Well, these things did not happen. The stories that go around to the contrary are not factual or realistic or true, . . . I cannot describe in words what happened; I can only say that it happened and that it can be known and understood only by the feeling that can come into the heart of man. You cannot describe a testimony to someone.

Because of the circumstances under which the revelation on blacks came, many people have referred to it as “a revelation of convenience.” We may never know all the details which led President Kimball to seek this revelation, but it is obvious that it was the result of pressure from many sources. In the July 1978 issue of the Messenger we pointed out that the Church was faced with an almost impossible situation in Brazil where so many of its members had black ancestry. Since that time we have learned from a source within the Church that Church leaders were very concerned that they were going to lose their tax exempt status on property they own in the United States. In the months just prior to the revelation, Church leaders were carefully watching developments in a case in Wisconsin in which an organization was about to lose its tax exempt status because of racial discrimination. The Church leaders finally became convinced that the tide was turning against them and that they would lose their tax exempt status in Wisconsin and eventually throughout the United States because of their doctrine of discrimination against blacks. This was probably only one of many factors which entered into the decision to admit blacks into the priesthood, but it may very well have been the “straw that broke the camel’s back.”

**ADDING OLD REVELATIONS**

On April 3, 1976, the Church Section of the Deseret News announced that “Two revelations received by former Presidents of the Church, were accepted as scripture Saturday afternoon, April 3, by vote of Church membership.”

This was certainly a surprising move for the Mormon leaders to make. Since one of the revelations which was canonized was given by Joseph F. Smith, we feel that it is possible this move was made to counter some statements which we printed in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? We cite the following from that book:

> Although the Mormon Church claims to be led by revelation, Joseph F. Smith, the sixth President of the Mormon Church, testified as follows in the Reed Smoot Investigation:

> Senator Dubois. — Have you received any revelations from God, which has been submitted by you and the apostles to the body of the church in their semiannual conference, which revelation has been sustained by that conference, through the upholding of their hands?

> Senator Dubois. — Since you became President of the Church.

> Senator Dubois. — Have you received any individual revelations yourself, since you became President of the church under your own definition, even, of a revelation?

> Senator Dubois. — Do you say that you have not?

> Senator Dubois. — Then you do not know whether you have received any such revelation as you have described or whether you have not?

> Mr. Smith. — Well, I can say this: That if I live as I should in the line of my duties, I am susceptible, I think, of the impressions of the Spirit of the Lord upon my mind at any time, just as any good Methodist or any other good church member might be. And so far as that is concerned, I say yes; I have had impressions of the Spirit upon my mind very frequently, but they are not in the sense of revelations. (Reed Smoot Case, vol. 1, pages 483-484)

> On page 99 of the same volume Joseph F. Smith stated:

> “I have never pretended to nor do I profess to have received revelations.” From this it is plain to see that just because a man is ordained a “Prophet, Seer, and Revelator,” it does not necessarily mean that he is. If Joseph F. Smith was only as susceptible to the impressions of the Spirit of the Lord as “any good Methodist,” then why should his word be trusted above that of a good Methodist?

> Although the Mormon Church is supposed to be led by revelation, the evidence of this revelation is very hard to find. The Manifesto of 1890 is the last revelation, if it can be termed a revelation, that has been added to the Doctrine and Covenants. So we can see that the last revelation that was added . . . is eighty years old. . . .

> The Reorganized LDS Church has continued to add new revelations to their Doctrine and Covenants, but the Utah Mormon Church has not added a new revelation since . . . 1890. It is interesting to note that during the last century, when new revelations were being added to the Doctrine and Covenants, the Mormon leaders were condemning the Catholics for not adding new revelations to their “sacred canon.” The Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt stated:

> That the Romanists have continued in their apostacy until the present day is demonstrated from the fact that they have not added one single book to their canon since they first formed it. Now, if there had been any prophet or apostle among them, during the last seventeen centuries, they certainly would have canonized his epistles, revelations, and prophecies, as being equally sacred with those of the first century. As they have not done this, it shows most clearly, that even they, themselves, do not consider that they have had apostles, prophets, and revelation among them, during that long period of time. . . . since the first century, the Catholics must have had many tens of thousands of revelators, and yet, strange to say, none of their revelations are permitted to enter the sacred canon . . . Here, indeed, is a strange inconsistency! Even the Catholic church herself, evidently places no confidence in the popes and bishops, the pretended successors of St. Peter and the rest of the apostles; if she did, she would have canonized their revelations along with the rest of the revelations of the New Testament. What must we conclude then, as to her bishops holding “the rank and functions of apostles?”

> We can but conclude that it is all an imposition—a wicked soul-destroying imposition, practiced upon the nations by a corrupt apostate church . . . Well might the revelator John,
The very words used by Orson Pratt concerning the Catholics could now be applied to the Mormon Church, for “if there had been any prophet or apostle among them,” during the past eighty years, “they certainly would have canonized his epistles, revelations, and prophecies, . . . .” The Church “evidently places no confidence” in the last six Presidents; “if she did, she would have canonized their revelations along with the rest of the revelations” in the Doctrine and Covenants. (Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? 1972, page 184)

It is difficult to resist the idea that the Mormon leaders decided to canonize the “new” revelations to offset the criticism found in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? That they would choose a revelation given to Joseph F. Smith is especially interesting. This purported revelation was given less than two months before Joseph F. Smith’s death in 1918 at a time when he “was very ill.” He had served as “Prophet, Seer and Revelator” for some seventeen years before receiving this revelation. The reader will remember that Joseph F. Smith had previously admitted he had served as “Prophet, Seer and Revelator” for some time without receiving any revelation: “I have never pretended to nor do I profess to have received revelations.”

The other revelation which the Mormons canonized was given to Joseph Smith on January 21, 1836. As we will show later, this revelation was falsified when printed by the Church to avoid a major contradiction.

In the manuscript for our new book, The Changing World of Mormonism, we wrote the following: “Joseph F. Smith once stated that any new revelations would be added to the Doctrine and Covenants, but Mormon leaders have decided that these two revelations should be added to the Pearl of Great Price instead (Deseret News, Church Section, April 3, 1976).” President Smith’s statement appears as follows in The Reed Smoot Case, vol. 1, page 489:

. . . if the Lord should reveal His mind to His people and it should be accepted by His people in the way that He has appointed, it would then become a matter to be added to the Book of Doctrine and Covenants.

The Mormon leaders now seem to realize that they made a mistake when they added the revelations into the Pearl of Great Price. The Church Section of the Deseret News for June 2, 1979, reported that these revelations will be transferred to the Doctrine and Covenants: Joseph Smith’s Vision of the Celestial Kingdom and Joseph F. Smith’s Vision of the Redemption of the Dead have been transferred from the Pearl of Great Price to become Sections 137 and 138, respectively, in the Doctrine and Covenants. . . .

The decision to place these revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants has been made by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve.

The fumbling around with these “new” revelations only tends to emphasize that the Mormon Church is led by fallible men rather than by direct revelation from God.

IMPORTANT CHANGE IN CANONIZED REVELATION

After the two revelations mentioned above were canonized by the Mormon Church, H. Michael Marquardt, a student of Mormon history, discovered that the one concerning Joseph Smith’s vision of the Celestial Kingdom had been altered. Mr. Marquardt found that this revelation was recorded in Joseph Smith’s own diary under the date of January 21, 1836. In Joseph Smith’s diary the revelation read as follows:

The heavens were opened upon us and I beheld the celestial Kingdom of God. . . . I saw father Adam and Abraham and Michael and my father and mother, my brother Alvin, . . . (Joseph Smith’s 1835-36 Diary, January 21, 1836; printed by Modern Microfilm Co.)

When the Mormon leaders printed this revelation they deleted the words “and Michael” without any indication. It reads as follows in the new edition of the Pearl of Great Price:

The heavens were opened upon us, and I beheld the celestial kingdom of God. . . . I saw Father Adam and Abraham; and my father and my mother; my brother Alvin, . . . (Pearl of Great Price, 1976, page 63, verses 1, 5)

At first glance the deletion of the words “and Michael” does not appear too important. In Mormon theology, however, a serious problem is created by the statement, “I saw father Adam and Abraham and Michael.” According to Joseph Smith’s other revelations, Adam is Michael. In the Doctrine and Covenants 107:54 we read: “And the Lord appeared unto them, and they rose up and blessed Adam, and called him Michael, the prince, the archangel.” In 27:11 we read: “And also with Michael, or Adam, the father of all, the prince of all, the ancient of days.” Thus it is clear that if Adam is Michael, Joseph Smith could not have seen “Adam, and Abraham and Michael.” Mormon leaders must have been aware that this would create a problem in Mormon theology, and therefore they deleted the words “and Michael” from the revelation.

This change was apparently made sometime while the Church was under Brigham Young’s leadership. The fact that the change was made after Joseph Smith’s death is evident from Mr. Marquardt’s research. He found that the revelation was copied into the handwritten manuscript of the History of the Church (Book B-1, page 695), with the words “and Michael” still included. Mr. Marquardt also found that the words were in the duplicate copy of the “Manuscript History,” (Book B-2, page 618). This is significant because the Mormon leaders did not even start the duplicate copy until almost a year after Joseph Smith’s death (see Brigham Young University Studies, Summer 1971, page 469). This would mean that the change had to have been made after Smith’s death. By the time the revelation was published in the Deseret News, September 4, 1852, the words “and Michael” had been deleted. Thus it appears that the change took place sometime between 1845 and 1852 and that current Mormon leaders have canonized a falsified revelation.

With regard to the vision of the Celestial Kingdom, it is also interesting to note that the Mormon leaders have only canonized the first part of the vision. Over 200 words which appear in Joseph Smith’s diary are not included. (The History of the Church 2:380-81 also bears witness to this fact.) Among the words missing from the canonized revelation, we find the following:

. . . I also beheld Elder McLellin in the South, standing upon a hill surrounded with a vast multitude preaching to them and a lame man standing before him supported by his crutches, he threw them down at his word and leaped as a heart, by the mighty power of God. . . .

It would probably prove to be embarrassing if the Mormon leaders canonized this prophecy about McLellin, because the History of the Church informs us that he was “excommunicated from the Church at Far West. Thence forward he took an active part in the persecution of the Saints in Missouri, and at
one time expressed the desire to do violence to the person of Joseph Smith. . . . Subsequently he attempted what he called a reorganization of the Church, . . .” (vol. 3, pages 31-32).

In the same revelation Joseph Smith claimed that he “saw the 12 apostles of the Lamb who are now upon the earth who hold the keys of this last ministry in foreign lands standing together in a circle . . . and I finally saw the 12 in the celestial Kingdom of God . . .”

In the Bible, Jesus predicted that the Apostle Judas would fall; Joseph Smith, however, seemed to be oblivious to what was about to happen to his Apostles. At least half of the Apostles were eventually excommunicated, and four of them apparently died out of the church (see Essentials in Church History, 1942, pages 663-665). Since Apostles William E. McLellin and William Smith (Joseph Smith’s own brother) tried very hard to destroy the Mormon Church, we wonder how Joseph Smith could have seen “the 12 in the celestial Kingdom of God.” In any case, the present-day leaders of the Mormon Church did not seem to feel that it would be wise to canonize this part of the revelation.

CRITICISM STILL VALID

Even though the leaders of the Mormon Church have decided to make three additions to the Doctrine and Covenants, our criticism that the Church does not fulfill its claim to present-day revelation still stands. To begin with, the revelations which are to appear as Sections 137 and 138 of the Doctrine and Covenants can hardly be considered as “new” revelations. The one given to Joseph F. Smith is sixty-one years old, and the revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith is 143 years old.

The fact that the statement on blacks is to be added to the Doctrine and Covenants also fails to show the Church is led by revelation. The June 1978 declaration on blacks is not a revelation, but only a statement that a revelation has been received. Furthermore, President Kimball himself made a statement that gives the impression that it was only a feeling or assurance that he received. The reader will remember that President Joseph F. Smith admitted that “any good Methodist or any other church member” is susceptible to “impressions of the Spirit of the Lord.”

That Mormon leaders do not give the declaration on blacks the same status as the “visions” of Joseph Smith and Joseph F. Smith is obvious from the fact that they are not going to give it a section number in the new Doctrine and Covenants. The Church’s magazine, The Ensign, for August 1979, page 75, explained:

... yet-to-be printed copies of the Doctrine and Covenants will contain three new additions...

The two visions to be transferred from the Pearl of Great Price to the Doctrine and Covenants are Joseph Smith’s Vision of the Celestial Kingdom and Joseph F. Smith’s Vision of the Redemption of the Dead. These two additions will become Sections 137 and 138 in the Doctrine and Covenants. . . .

The third addition will be the proclamation of 9 June 1978 . . . The proclamation will be known as Official Declaration—2. Official Declaration—1 will be the title of the announcements discontinuing plural marriage that are already part of the Doctrine and Covenants.

SUPPRESSED REVELATIONS

While present Mormon leaders are canonizing two revelations given by former Presidents of the Church, they are suppressing others. For instance, on September 27, 1886, President John Taylor gave a revelation in which the Lord was supposed to have told him that plural marriage would always be a part of the Church:

My son John . . . how can I revoke an everlasting covenant; for I the Lord am everlasting & my everlasting covenants cannot be abrogated nor done away with; but they stand for ever . . . I have not revoked this law nor will I for it is everlasting & those who will enter into my glory must obey the conditions thereof, even so Amen.

The reader will find a discussion of this matter in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 242-243.

Another revelation which Mormon leaders have suppressed is one given by Joseph Smith in 1831 on the practice of polygamy. We first published this revelation in 1974 in the book Mormonism Like Watergate? pages 7-8. The reason it was suppressed was that it commanded the Mormons to “take unto you wives of the Lamanites and Nephites, that their posterity may become white, delightful and just, for even now their females are most [sic] virtuous than the gentiles.”

In Mormon theology the Lamanites and Nephites are the Indians. The Book of Mormon teaches that the Indians were cursed with a dark skin:

And the skins of the Lamanites were dark, according to the mark which was set upon their fathers, which is a curse upon them because of their transgression . . . (Book of Mormon, Alma 3:6)

The Book of Mormon states, however, that in the last days the Indians will repent and “many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a white and delightful people” (Ibid., 2 Nephi 34:5-6).

Even after we published this important revelation on marriage to the Indians, Mormon writers failed to come to grips with its existence. Donna Hill did mention it in her book, Joseph Smith: The First Mormon, published in 1977, but it was 1979 before Church Historian Leonard J. Arrington and his assistant Davis Bitton publicly acknowledged its existence. In their new book, The Mormon Experience, page 195, we find the following:

A recently discovered document is a copy of a purported revelation of 1831 that instructed seven missionaries in Missouri as follows: “For it is my will, that in time, ye should take unto you wives of the Lamanites and Nephites that their posterity may become white, delightful and just, for even now their females are more virtuous than the gentiles.”

Although we are glad to see the Church Historian acknowledge the reality of this revelation, the statement that it was “recently discovered” does not square with the facts. Joseph Fielding Smith, who was LDS Church Historian and later became the tenth President of the Church, told of the revelation’s existence in a letter written in 1935:

... I do know that there was a revelation given in July 1831, in the presence of Oliver Cowdery, W. W. Phelps and others in Missouri, in which the Lord made this principle known through the Prophet Joseph Smith. (Letter from Joseph Fielding Smith to J.W.A. Bailey, dated September 5, 1935, typed copy)

Fawn Brodie wrote that “Joseph F. Smith, Jr., the present historian of the Utah Church, asserted to me in 1943 that a revelation foreshadowing polygamy had been written in 1831, but that it had never been published. In conformity with the church policy, however, he would not permit the manuscript, which he acknowledged to be in possession of the church library, to be examined” (No Man Knows My History, 1971, page 184, footnote).
In the light of this evidence, it would have been better for Arrington and Bitton to have stated that the revelation had been suppressed for a long time rather than to have stated that it was “recently discovered.”

At any rate, a speech given by Mormon President Spencer W. Kimball at the LDS General Conference, October of 1960, might mislead one into believing that he would rejoice over Joseph Smith’s 1831 revelation about marrying Indians to turn them white:

I saw a striking contrast in the progress of the Indian people today as against that of only fifteen years ago. Truly the scales of darkness are falling from their eyes, and they are fast becoming a white and delightful people. . . .

The day of the Lamanites is nigh. For years they have been growing delightful, and they are now becoming white and delightful, as they were promised. In this picture of the twenty Lamanite missionaries, fifteen of the twenty were as light as Anglos; . . . The children in the home placement program in Utah are often lighter than their brothers and sisters in the hogan on the reservation.

At one meeting a father and mother and their sixteen-year-old daughter were present, the little member girl . . . was several shades lighter than her parents . . . There was the doctor in a Utah city who for two years had had an Indian boy in his home who stated that he was some shades lighter than the younger brother just coming into the program from the reservation. These young members of the Church are changing to whiteness and to delightfulness. One white elder jokingly said that he and his companion were donating blood regularly to the hospital in the hope that the process might be accelerated.

The day of the Lamanites has come . . . today the dark clouds are dissipating. (Improvement Era, December 1960, pages 922-923)

Now while it is true that President Kimball is very concerned about the fulfillment of the Book of Mormon prophesy that the Indians will become a “white and delightful people,” he is apparently unable to accept Joseph Smith’s 1831 revelation because he believes that Indians are to be turned white by the power of God and is opposed to intermarriage with them. In 1958 he gave an address which touched on this subject. President Kimball’s statement was reprinted in the Church Section of the Deseret News on June 17, 1978:

“. . . there is one thing that I must mention, and that is interracial marriages. When I said you must teach your young people to overcome their prejudices and accept the Indians, I did not mean that you would encourage intermarriage.”

President Kimball’s teaching on intermarriage with the Indians appears to be diametrically opposed to Joseph Smith’s 1831 revelation. In view of President Kimball’s feelings, we seriously doubt that he will ever allow this revelation on marrying Indians to be canonized in the Doctrine and Covenants. The fact that the Mormon leaders have suppressed this revelation seems to indicate that they do not really believe that it came from God. It is obvious, then, that they have been involved in a cover-up to protect the image of Joseph Smith.

If the Mormon leaders had canonized Joseph Smith’s 1831 revelation on the Indians instead of his 1836 revelation on the Celestial Kingdom, it would have caused many people to lose faith in President Kimball, and if they had canonized John Taylor’s revelation that Mormons should continue to practice polygamy instead of Joseph F. Smith’s vision, it would have caused serious problems in the Church. Mormon apologists cannot explain why some revelations are canonized and others suppressed, but it is obvious to anyone who seriously studies the matter that Mormon authorities have often given false revelations. David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, frankly admitted that Joseph Smith himself gave a false revelation:

. . . that some of the brethren should go to Toronto, Canada, and that they would sell the copy-right of the Book of Mormon. Hiram page and Oliver Cowdery went to Toronto on this mission, but they failed entirely to sell the copy-right, returning without any money. Joseph was at my father’s house when they returned. I was there also, and am an eye witness to these facts. . . . Well, we were all in great trouble; and we asked Joseph how it was that he had received a revelation from the Lord for some brethren to go to Toronto and sell the copy-right, and the brethren had utterly failed in their undertaking. Joseph did not know how it was, so he enquired of the Lord about it, and behold the following revelation came through the stone: “Some revelations are of God: some revelations are of man: and some revelations are of the devil.” So we see that the revelation to go to Toronto and sell the copy-right was not of God, but was of the devil or of the heart of man. . . . I will say here, that I could tell you other false revelations that came through Brother Joseph. . . . Many of Brother Joseph’s revelations were never printed. The revelation to go to Canada was written down on paper, but was never printed. (An Address to All Believers in Christ, by David Whitmer, Richmond, Missouri, 1887, page 31)

The Mormon leaders complain that the Catholics withheld the scriptures from the common people, and yet they keep some of Joseph Smith’s revelations hidden from their own people.

**APOSTLE PETERSEN AND THE ADAM-GOD DOCTRINE**

On April 9, 1852, Brigham Young, the second President of the Mormon Church, publicly preached his famous Adam-God doctrine. In this sermon he stated:

Now hear it, 0 inhabitants of the earth, Jew and Gentile, Saint and sinner! When our father Adam came into the garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial body, and brought Eve, one of his wives, with him. He helped to make and organize this world. He is Michael, the Archangel, the Ancient of Days! about whom holy men have written and spoken — He is our Father and our God, and the only God with whom we have to do. Every man upon the earth, professing Christians or non-professing, must hear it, and will know it sooner or later. . . . When the Virgin Mary conceived the child Jesus, the Father had begotten him in his own likeness. He was not begotten by the Holy Ghost. And who is the Father? He is the first of the human family; . . . Jesus, our elder brother, was begotten in the flesh by the same character that was in the garden of Eden, and who is our Father in Heaven. Now, let all who may hear these doctrines, pause before they make light of them, or treat them with indifference, for they will prove their salvation or damnation. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 1, pages 50-51)

After Brigham Young’s death, his Adam-God doctrine fell into disrepute. In 1976 the Mormon Apostle Mark E. Peterson wrote a book in which he attacked this doctrine as unscriptural:

To say that Adam is God is, of course, opposed utterly and completely to the scriptures as well as to our Articles of Faith, . . . to say that we have nothing to do with “any God but Adam,” . . . violates all the teachings of the gospel of Christ, who taught us to pray to the Father in the name of Christ, . . . (Adam: Who Is He? page 14)
Apostle Petersen claimed that Brigham Young was misquoted and brought forth some new information which he maintained would establish his case:

Elder Charles C. Rich, of the Council of the Twelve, was present on a day when President Young gave an address that was wrongly reported as saying Adam was Deity. In the copy of the Journal of Discourses that he had, Elder Rich referred to the misquotation as it appears in the Journal of Discourses, and in his own hand he wrote the following as the correct statement made by President Young: “Jesus our elder Brother, was begotten in the flesh by the same character who talked with Adam in the Garden of Eden, and who is our Heavenly Father.” (This signed statement is in the hands of the Church Historian.)

On the face of it the mistake is obvious and was quickly noted by Elder Rich, who was present and heard the sermon. Hence the correction that he made. (Adam: Who Is He? pages 16-17)

After Adam: Who Is He? appeared in print, Bob Witte marshaled evidence to show that Apostle Petersen was inaccurate in his statement about Apostle Rich correcting Brigham Young’s statement (see the enlarged edition of Where Does It Say That?). Chris Vlachos has recently written an article which completely smashes Apostle Petersen’s whole thesis:

What seems to be a good case made by Mr. Petersen crumbles, however upon cross-examination. C. C. Rich, who Petersen claims “was present and heard the sermon,” was in reality not even in Salt Lake City on that day! Rich left San Bernardino, California, on March 24, 1852, for the Great Salt Lake. He did not reach his destination until April 21. Under this date, the LDS Journal History records:

April 21, 1852:
Elder Chas. C. Rich and thirteen others arrived today in G.S.L. from California.

In the May 1, 1852 issue of the Mormon Deseret Weekly the following announcement was made:

Elder C. C. Rich arrived on Wednesday, the 21 of April, in company with 13 others . . . direct from San Bernardino.

Hosea Stout, in his journal, also noted the event:

Wednesday 21st April 1852 . . . Gen. Rich and some 15 others arrived today from California by the South rout all well.

Furthermore, not only was C. C. Rich absent on the ninth, but the reference Petersen claims was written by C. C. Rich “in his own hand” was in reality written and signed by his son, Ben E. Rich, many years after the sermon was delivered!

Whether Mr. Petersen was deliberately seeking to suppress the facts or not, the truth is that there is no evidence whatsoever that Brigham Young was misquoted. As we shall see, Young came under much criticism from outside and from within the Mormon Church for teaching that Adam was God the Father. If he had merely been misquoted, Brigham simply could have corrected his hearers and accusers. Instead, however, Young continued to affirm and preach this doctrine against all opposition. (The Journal of Pastoral Practice, vol. III, no. 2, 1979, pages 99-100)

Although Apostle Petersen does not acknowledge making a mistake with regard to this important matter, he has made some very revealing changes in the 1979 printing of his book. He admits, in fact, that Charles Rich was not present and that the statement was in reality written by his son, Ben E. Rich:

Elder Charles C. Rich was not present on the day when President Young gave an address that was wrongly reported as saying Adam was our Father in heaven. [See JD 1:51.1] The sermon was delivered April 9, 1852, and Elder Rich returned April 21. In a copy of the Journal of Discourses Elder Ben E. Rich, son of Elder Charles C. Rich, referred to the misquotation as it appears in the Journal of Discourses, and in his own hand corrected the statement to read as follows: “Jesus our Elder Brother, was begotten in the flesh by the same character who talked with Adam in the Garden of Eden, and who is our Father in heaven.” In this same statement Ben E. Rich wrote “As corrected above is what Prest. Young said, as testified to me by my father, C. C. Rich.” (This signed statement is in the hands of the Church Historical Department.)

On the face of it the mistake is obvious. We find in Genesis 2:15-16 and 3:8-9 that God walked and talked with Adam in the Garden of Eden. (Adam: Who Is He? 1979 printing, pages 16-17)

The reader will notice that in the 1976 printing, Apostle Petersen asserted: “Elder Charles C. Rich, of the Council of the Twelve, was present on a day when President Young gave an address that was wrongly reported . . .” In the 1979 printing this was changed to read: “Elder Charles C. Rich was not present on the day when President Young gave an address that was wrongly reported . . .” The 1976 printing assured us that “Elder Rich referred to the misquotation as it appears in the Journal of Discourses, and in his own hand he wrote the following . . .” This was changed to read that “Elder Ben E. Rich, son of Elder Charles C. Rich, referred to the misquotation as it appears in the Journal of Discourses, and in his own hand corrected the statement . . .” Apostle Petersen originally stated: “On the face of it the mistake is obvious and was quickly noted by Elder Rich, who was present and heard the sermon. Hence the correction that he made.” In the 1979 printing this was altered to read: “On the face of it the mistake is obvious. We find in Genesis 2:15-16 and 3:8-9 that God walked and talked with Adam in the Garden of Eden.”

It is very difficult to understand how Apostle Petersen could make such a serious mistake. We wonder, too, why he continues to use this material when it is of no real value. Since Charles C. Rich was not present, and since his son, Ben E. Rich, who recorded the material, had not even been born, we cannot see that it provides any substantial help to Apostle Petersen’s thesis. In fact, that he would even use such material shows that he is totally unprepared to deal with the issue of the Adam-God doctrine.

If Apostle Petersen had taken the time to carefully examine the thesis written by Rodney Turner, who now teaches religion at the Church’s own Brigham Young University, he could never have made the mistake of claiming that Brigham Young was misquoted. After presenting a great deal of evidence to prove that Brigham Young believed Adam was God, Rodney Turner observed:

Was Brigham Young Misquoted?

It is the writer’s opinion that the answer to this question is a categorical no. There is not the slightest evidence from Brigham Young, or any other source, that either his original remarks on April 9, 1852, or any of his subsequent statements were ever misquoted in the official publications of the Church. . .
In the light of Brigham Young’s attitude toward the errors of others, and in view of the division created by his remarks concerning Adam, it would be stretching one’s credulity to the breaking point to believe that he would have remained silent had he been misquoted. . . . Brigham Young would surely have referred to those misquotations at sometime or other—he never did. . . . The complete absence of any real evidence to the contrary obliges the writer to conclude that Brigham Young has not been misquoted in the official publications of the Church. (“The Position of Adam in Latter-day Saint Scripture and Theology,” M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, August, 1953, pages 45-47)

On page 58 of the same thesis, Rodney Turner states:

A careful, detached study of his available statements, as found in the official publications of the Church, will admit of no other conclusion than that the identification of Adam with God the Father by President Brigham Young is an irrefutable fact.

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? and in The Changing World of Mormonism—we show that Brigham Young continued to teach the Adam-God doctrine until the time of his death. In fact, in 1873 President Young was quoted by the Church’s Deseret News as saying that God Himself revealed this doctrine to him:

How much unbelief exists in the minds of the Latter-day Saints in regard to one particular doctrine which I revealed to them, and which God revealed to me — namely that Adam is our Father and God — . . . (Deseret News, June 18, 1873)

Chris Vlachos, of the Utah Christian Mission, has gleaned a great deal of new evidence from manuscript sources to prove that Brigham Young vigorously defended his Adam-God doctrine:

During a discourse given on Sunday night, February 19, 1854, Brigham Young again addressed the question of who begot Jesus Christ in the flesh. Speaking of Christ, he asked:

Who did beget him? His Father, and his father is our God, and the Father of our spirits, and he is the framer of the body, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who is he. He is Father Adam; Michael; the Ancient of days . . .

While Brigham in his discourse of 1852 may have been unclear, in this 1854 address there is no question about his meaning. Here Brigham distinctly names Adam as God the Father. Wilford Woodruff, Mormon Apostle and later Church President, had no doubt about what Brigham meant. Referring to this discourse under the date of February 19, 1854, in his journal, Woodruff recorded:

He [Brigham Young] said that our God was Father Adam. He was the Father of the Savior Jesus Christ—Our God was no more or less than ADAM, Michael the Arkangel.

It should be noted that Brigham identifies Adam as the “Father of our spirits.” . . . By referring to Adam as the Father of our spirits, Brigham was clearly identifying him as the being whom Mormons address as “Heavenly Father.” . . .

Though Richards and most of the other Church authorities accepted their prophet’s declaration as the word of God, there was one member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles who openly opposed Brigham in his views. That man was Orson Pratt. Under the date of September 17, 1854, LDS Apostle Wilford Woodruff recorded in his journal the details of a confrontation between Young and Pratt. . . . When Young declared some of Orson’s doctrines to be false, Pratt retaliated against the prophet by voicing his disbelief in the Adam-God doctrine:

Brother Pratt also thought that Adam was made of the dust of the Earth Could not believe that Adam was our God or the Father of Jesus Christ President Young said that He was that He came from another world . . . He told Brother Pratt to lay aside his Philosophical reasoning & get revelation from God to govern him & enlighten his mind more. . . .

This dispute between the Mormon Prophet and his Apostle continued for several years. Because of his disbelief in the Adam-God teaching and in other doctrines of Young, Pratt was for years upon the point of being severed from the Church. (The Journal of Pastoral Practice, vol. III, no. 2, 1979, pages 101-104)

In his article, Chris Vlachos not only presents a great deal of evidence to prove that Brigham Young taught the Adam-God doctrine, but he shows clearly that this was a serious violation of the commandment, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3) and the grave implications for present-day Mormons:

While throughout the flow of Bible history we see God proclaiming that He alone is to be worshiped, at the same time we find prophets who were not of God taught the contrary. True prophets would never be found teaching the people to worship another god—whether it was a stone idol, an imaginary god dwelling in heaven, or a deified man. . . . when these living oracles of God spoke as prophets, they were moved to proclaim, “Thou shalt worship the LORD thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.” . . .

Holding fast to these truths let us turn now to Brigham Young, a man who claimed for himself the station and office of prophet of God. Recent history records the lives of few men who have possessed the leadership qualities that Young exhibited. For thirty years he presided as Prophet, Seer, and Revelator over the Mormon Church, a people claiming to be led by prophets of God as in the days of ancient Israel. . . . Their priesthood claims sole possession of the authority or power needed to act on behalf of God, and they consider all other “Christian churches” to be in a state of apostasy, who at best teach a partial truth about the gospel of Christ. Now if Brigham Young, Mormon prophet from 1847 to 1877, were a false prophet all along, then the claims of those who have sought to derive their priesthood authority through him are empty and void. If Brigham taught false doctrine, that cuts the ground from under Mormonism’s claim of latter-day prophetic revelation and the Mormon Church is not divinely led. . . .

The Mormon Church must base the truth of her claims on the authenticity of Brigham’s calling. Yet, we shall see that Brigham Young, who presided over the Mormon Church longer than any other man, did indeed advance false doctrine that focused worship on a god other than the Lord God of Israel. . . .

An examination of the evidence, however, will admit to no other conclusion than that Brigham Young did teach that Adam was Heavenly Father, the Father of men’s spirits as well as the Father of Jesus Christ in the flesh. . . . The doctrine that he taught for over 25 years was false doctrine and the LDS Church admits this today. It has, in effect, sided with Orson Pratt and has adopted his arguments and views as being right. However, in doing this it has unknowingly admitted that Brigham was not an inspired prophet of God. . . .

The implications certainly are obvious. The claims of Utah LDS Church utterly collapse when they claim to be the only true church and the sole possessor of God’s authority.
The Mormon, furthermore, faces the dilemma of being unable to be certain that his present prophet is advancing true doctrine. Perhaps the present teachings of the living prophet will be tomorrow’s false teachings of a dead prophet. Perhaps the present revelations which the modern President claims to have received will be swept under the carpet as was the revelation concerning Adam that Brigham Young claimed to have received from God.

Today’s Mormon cannot hide behind a testimony that the living prophet is advancing correct doctrine. His testimony holds no more weight than the strong testimonies which past members had concerning the truth of Brigham’s Adam-God teaching. . . .

This frightening dilemma in which the Mormon finds himself is not peculiar to him or to his people, but is the snare in which all men find themselves when they put their trust in men. To trust in the arm of flesh is really to have no hope at all. . . .

Bob Witte, of Ex-Mormons for Jesus, has reprinted Chris Vlachos article under the title, Adam is God?!!! It is available from Modern MicroFilm Company for $0.95. We highly recommend this excellent study of the Adam-God doctrine.

A LIVING PROPHET?

As Mormonism continues to change its doctrines apologists for the Church are stressing that Mormons are led by “living prophets” and are not bound by the teachings of the past. This is certainly very poor reasoning. As Chris Vlachos points out, “Perhaps the present teachings of the living prophet will be tomorrow’s false teachings of a dead prophet.” The people in Brigham Young’s day firmly believed that he was a “living prophet,” and when he said that “Adam” is “our Father and our God, and the only God with whom we have to do,” they accepted the doctrine. Elder James A. Little explained: “I believe in the principle of obedience; and if I am told that Adam is our Father and God, I just believe it” (Millennial Star, vol. 16, page 530).

Today, the “living prophet” Spencer W. Kimball denounces the Adam-God teaching as false doctrine:

“We warn you against the dissemination of doctrines which are not according to the scriptures and which are alleged to have been taught by some of the General Authorities of past generations. Such, for instance is the Adam-God theory.

“We denounce that theory and hope that everyone will be cautioned against this and other kinds of false doctrine.” (Deseret News, Church Section, October 9, 1976)

We believe that President Kimball is right in denouncing the Adam-God doctrine, but does this not mean that Brigham Young was a false prophet?

Joseph Smith claimed that God revealed to him that plural marriage was an essential part of the doctrine of the Church (see Doctrine and Covenants, Section 132). President Brigham Young said that “The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 11, page 269). John Taylor, who became the third President of the Mormon Church, once declared: “. . . we are not ashamed . . . to declare that we are polygamists. . . . that we are firm, conscientious believers in polygamy, and that it is part and parcel of our religious creed” (Life of John Taylor, page 255).

Today, the Mormon leaders are firmly opposed to the practice of polygamy. Assistant Church Historian Davis Bitton says: “Today probably no modern people is more antipolygamtist than the orthodox Mormons, . . .” (Journal of Mormon History, vol. 4, 1977, page 101). While early Mormon leaders taught that polygamy was absolutely essential to exaltation, the Apostle Bruce R. McConkie proclaimed just the opposite: “Plural marriage is not essential to salvation or exaltation” (Mormon Doctrine, 1958, page 523). The Apostle McConkie also stated: “Any who pretend or assume to engage in plural marriage in this day, when the one holding the keys has withdrawn the power by which they are performed, are guilty of gross wickedness. They are living in adultery, have already sold their souls to Satan, and (whether their acts are based on ignorance or lust or both) they will be damned in eternity” (Ibid.).

While McConkie maintained that those practicing polygamy today will be “damned in eternity,” the early Mormon leaders declared that the Church would be “damned” if it ever gave up the practice. Heber C. Kimball, First Counselor to Brigham Young, warned:

Some quietly listen to those who speak against the Lord’s servants, against his anointed, against the plurality of wives, and against almost every principle that God has revealed. Such persons have half-a-dozen devils with them all the time. You might as well deny “Mormonism,” and turn away from it, as to oppose the plurality of wives. Let the Presidency of this Church, and the Twelve Apostles, and all the authorities unite and say with one voice that they will oppose that doctrine, and the whole of them would be damned. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 5, page 203)

The Mormon authorities have not only “united” against the practice of polygamy, but they have decided to give blacks the Priesthood and “all of the privileges and blessings which the gospel affords” (Deseret News, June 9, 1978). According to Brigham Young, if the Church ever did this, it would lose the Priesthood and go to destruction. The following is taken from a typed copy of a speech given by Brigham Young in 1852 (the spelling errors of the original are retained in this copy):

It is a great blessing to the seed of Adam to have the seed of Cain for servants, . . . Let this Church which is called the kingdom of God on the earth [say]; we will summons the first presidency, the twelve, the high counsel, the Bishoprick, and all the elders of Isreal, suppose we summons them to apear here, and here declare that it is right to mingle our seed, with the black race of Cain, that they shall come in with us and be pertakers with us of all the blessings God has given us. On that very day, and hour we should do so, the priesthood is taken from this Church and kingdom and God leaves us to our fate. The moment we consent to mingle with the seed of Cain the Church must go to destruction,—we should receive the curse which has been place upon the seed of Cain, and never more be numbered with the children of Adam who are heirs to the priesthood until that curse be removed. (Brigham Young Addresses, Ms d 1234, Box 48, folder 3, dated Feb. 5, 1852, located in the LDS Historical Dept.)

The Mormon people are now faced with a serious dilemma; if they really believe Brigham Young was a prophet, then it follows from his statement that the Church has lost the Priesthood, been put under “the curse” and is going to destruction! Apostle Bruce R. McConkie would like us to completely forget what was taught in the past. We have previously quoted him as saying:

. . . it is time disbelieving people repented and got in line and believed in a living, modern prophet. Forget everything
that I have said, or what President Brigham Young or President George Q. Cannon or whomsoever has said in days past that is contrary to the present revelation. ("All Are Alike Unto God," page 11)

We feel that it would be very difficult to forget what has been taught in the past. We cannot help but remember that as recently as 1974 Apostle McConkie questioned the spirituality of Church members who believed it was time for a new revelation on the blacks. In a conference message delivered October 4, 1974, he stated:

"Am I valiant in the testimony of Jesus if my chief interest and concern in life is laying up in store the treasures of the earth, rather than the building up of the kingdom? . . .

"Am I valiant if I am deeply concerned about the Church’s stand on who can or who cannot receive the priesthood and think it is time for a new revelation on this doctrine? . . .

"Am I valiant if I engage in gambling, play cards, go to pornographic movies, . . . (The Ensign, November 1974, page 35)

In 1974 Apostle McConkie was reproving his people for even suggesting that there should be a “new revelation” on the blacks, but now that the “revelation” has come, he says that it is “time disbeliefing people repent” and got in line and believed in a living, modern prophet.” It appears to us that the people Apostle McConkie accused of not being valiant are the ones who were right all along. We feel that the Church leaders should be the ones to “repent” for teaching false doctrine.

BYU COMPUTER STUDY

During the last two or three years the newspapers have carried some sensational stories concerning the Book of Mormon. On June 25, 1977, the Los Angeles Times reported that three handwriting experts had declared that portions of the Book of Mormon were written by Solomon Spalding. Now that the controversy over this issue has somewhat subsided, the Mormon Church has countered with the startling claim that a computer study has yielded evidence favorable to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. The Provo Herald for October 7, 1979, contained this information:

Statisticians, using modern computer techniques to digest and analyze the Book of Mormon word by word, are debunking the 150-year-old claims that the book is the work of just one man.

Utilizing a computer to identify “wordprints” or word use patterns that scientifically differentiate between individual writing styles, researchers have uncovered what they claim is conclusive evidence that the Book of Mormon is the work of many authors.

This is in direct contradiction to critics who claim the book is a fictional work written in the 1820s by Joseph Smith, the prophet-founder of the LDS Church, or by Solomon Spalding, . . .

The research was done by Dr. Alvin C. Rencher, a professor of statistics at Brigham Young University, and Dr. Wayne A. Larsen, a statistician for the Eyring Research Center, both located in Provo.

“The overwhelming evidence given here should permanently lay to rest the alternative theories that Joseph Smith or Solomon Spalding wrote the Book of Mormon,” a report on the study says. . . .

Wordprint comparisons between the Book of Mormon and the known 19th century writings of Joseph Smith and Mr. Spalding show conclusively that neither of these persons, authored the book, the statisticians say.

In fact, their research indicates that the book was authored by at least 24 different writers, and possibly more, whose styles bear no resemblance to that of Joseph Smith, Mr. Spalding or other 19th century writers whom they examined . . .

One of the tests went so far as to indicate that “odds against a single author exceeded 100 billion to one,” the statisticians noted in the report.

Are the conclusions of the study final? “I don’t think the last word is in yet,” Dr. Rencher says. But he also says he is confident the research is valid and the statistical methods used in the study are sound. . . .

Wordprints are developed by feeding passages of 1,000 word minimum for each author into a computer and analyzing the frequency of what Dr. Rencher calls “non-contextual words” such as and, for, it, as, be and which.

Different authors develop different patterns in the frequency of use of such words—patterns not related to the context of the material but constant throughout the individual’s writing.

That makes the wordprint a useful tool for identification of authorship, much like a fingerprint or voiceprint can be used to identify an individual, Dr. Rencher said.

While we certainly do not profess to be computer experts, we can make a few preliminary comments about the study and wait for a response by non-Mormon authorities in the field.

To begin with, the list of “24 Major Book of Mormon Authors Used in the Study,” seems to be somewhat padded (see The New Era, November 1979, page 11). For instance, we find Isaiah listed as one of the authors. Since Isaiah is a book in the Bible and since the Book of Mormon itself acknowledges that it is quoting from Isaiah, we do not feel that it should be included in this study. If we are going to include Bible authors as part of the list of “Book of Mormon Authors,” we might as well add Moses, Matthew and Malachi (see Book of Mormon, pages 161, 423-429, 446-448).

The BYU researchers stretch the matter even further by including the “Lord” as “quoted by Isaiah” as part of the “24 Major Book of Mormon Authors.” Also included in this list are the “Lord,” “Jesus” and the “Father.” It would appear, then, that the BYU researchers have created four “Book of Mormon Authors” out of the Father and the Son! On page 11 of their study in The New Era, the researchers admit: “Since the term Lord can refer either to the Father or the Son, we separated the words attributed to the Lord from those attributed to the Father or to Christ.” From this it would appear that the list of “24 Major Book of Mormon Authors,” is a preconceived listing of authors rather than the results actually obtained from a computer.

Actually, we are very much in favor of computer studies with regard to the Book of Mormon. We would especially like to see a study showing the parallels between the King James Version and the Book of Mormon. We feel that such a study could provide some very important evidence regarding the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. As to the use of a computer in the analysis of different styles we are not certain that the results would be as conclusive. We feel that there are many factors that could affect such a study. Just as in the analysis of handwriting, we are concerned that the interpretation of the data can be affected by the person who studies it. We remember that many years ago a computer expert declared that all of the letters of Paul in the Bible were forgeries except for the book of Romans! Of course we were not willing to accept such a startling claim just on the basis of a computer study, and we doubt that a Mormon would receive it without additional evidence.

In 1972 Herbert Guerry began a computer study on the Book of Mormon to determine authorship. When information about the study was published in a tract by an individual belonging to the Reorganized Church, Dr. Guerry felt he had been “grossly” misrepresented. The tract had stated that “Authentic authorship of books and papers can apparently be established by computer comparisons of grammar and language usage peculiar to each individual.” Dr. Guerry’s reply to this statement was as follows: “False. Or, rather, we simply do not
know enough yet to be able to make such claims. Moreover, it just might turn out that writers’ styles are not sufficiently unique to allow us to make positive identifications” (Saint’s Herald, August 1975, page 16).

The tract said that “Apparently one’s language is unique much like one’s fingerprints.” Dr. Guerry replied that “This is a paraphrase of a speculation I made often at Idaho State University: what I usually said was that I wanted to find out whether or not one’s prose style was as unique as one’s fingerprints.”

The tract alleged that “The government believes in the method and recently granted $200,000 for a computer analysis of the Federalist Papers to determine authorship.” Dr. Guerry protested: “False again . . . or at best misleading. The federal government funds much research, but to do so does not mean that the government ‘believes in’ a particular method. When the government funds a research project of this type it, in effect, is only saying that the project has sufficient merit to deserve support. . . . Many people have done authorship determination studies, and they use many different methods. My methods differ from those of the two recent studies of the Federalist Papers [these latter two studies, incidentally, reached differing conclusions].”

The tract stated that “There was no match between the Book of Mormon and any contemporary author of that period.” The reply to this was as follows: “False, since no clear results about the authorship of the Book of Mormon have yet emerged from the study except perhaps, that it was not written by Solomon Spaulding or Sidney Rigdon, but this is hardly an amazing result.” Dr. Guerry went on to state that “The study has shown nothing yet about Smith’s relationship to the Book of Mormon, . . .”

The Mormon scholar Elinore H. Partridge made these observations on the analysis of a person’s style of writing:

A stylistic analysis, even an objective, statistical analysis, is not as certain a means of establishing authorship as handwriting . . .

Some of the linguists who have done stylistic studies have suggested that the style of a person is as unique as his fingerprints. If one could adequately describe a person’s style, he would then have a stylistic “register” unique to that person. Unfortunately, things are not quite that simple. A person’s fingerprints do not change, but his style often does. Furthermore, everyone adjusts his style to suit various occasions. The language we use in speaking to a colleague or a friend differs from the language we use in a formal speech or paper. However, a careful analysis of someone’s style can usually identify certain features which that person uses on a variety of occasions. Even when a person’s style changes, as it often does, during his lifetime, a trained observer can usually trace the changes and identify continuing characteristics. (“Characteristics of Joseph Smith’s Style and Notes on the Authorship of the Lectures on Faith,” Task Papers in LDS History, no. 14, December 1976, pages 1-2)

On page 23 of the same study we find the following:

Joseph Smith’s writing is characteristically marked by series of related ideas joined by simple conjunctions: and, but, for. In his handwritten manuscripts, he used neither punctuation nor capitalization as sentence markers. When his writing has been edited, or when someone else wrote words which he dictated, the result is an unusually large number of sentences beginning with for, and, or but [almost three out of five sentences].

After reading these statements by Elinore H. Partridge, we decided to see how Joseph Smith’s style with regard to these words compared to the Book of Mormon. We picked at random Alma, Chapter 2, and found that about 62 percent of the sentences begin with and, for or but. This compared well with the statement that “almost three out of five sentences” (about 60 percent) of Smith’s sentences begin with these three words. We applied the same test to Joseph Smith’s “strange” account of the First Vision, which we have photographically reproduced in the book Joseph Smith’s 1832-34 Diary. We found that 61 percent of the sentences tested began with these words. We also made a study of a portion of Solomon Spalding’s printed manuscript, but found that he only used these three words about 10 percent of the time. Elinore H. Partridge claims that Rigdon only used these words about 5 percent of the time in the material she studied.

In any case, we feel that there are some very serious problems with regard to the text of the Book of Mormon which will make it very difficult to examine with a computer. One thing that presents a real challenge is that the Book of Mormon is filled with material which has been plagiarized from the Bible and other sources. For instance, it is very obvious that 1 Nephi, Chapter 18, borrows from Mark, Chapter 4. The reader will notice the identical material in the two extracts which follows:

. . . there arose a great storm . . . the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. (Mark 4: 37,39)

. . . there arose a great storm . . . the winds did cease, . . . and there was a great calm. (1 Nephi 18:13,21)

The storm in the book of Nephi was supposed to have occurred about 600 years before the one recorded in Mark. The only logical conclusion for this similarity is that the author of the Book of Mormon lived in the 19th century and borrowed from the King James Version of the Bible. In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? and The Changing World of Mormonism, we show a large number of passages that have been lifted from the King James Version without any indication. In another study which we made (The Case Against Mormonism, vol. 2), we listed 400 parallels between the New Testament and the Book of Mormon. H. Michael Marquardt has also made a good summary of the issue in his pamphlet The Use of the Bible in the Book of Mormon and Early Nineteenth Century Events Reflected in the Book of Mormon.

It seems that almost every time we carefully examine a portion of the Book of Mormon we find more parallels. We feel, however, that a computer would reveal many more. This would be in addition to the large amount of material which is acknowledged to have been included from the Old Testament.

We feel, therefore, that if a computer could actually be programmed to sort out writing styles, it would, no doubt, show more than 24 different authors. We would probably find Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Job, David, Solomon, Ezekiel, Daniel, Jonah, Micah, Malachi, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, James, Peter, Jude, etc. The Book of Mormon also seems to have parallels to the Apocalypse, the Westminster Confession, and other publications (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?). We feel that it will be very difficult to make an accurate stylistic analysis of a book which plagiarizes from so many different sources.

Even if a researcher were able to struggle through this pitfall, there is another problem when it comes to comparing Joseph Smith’s style to that found in the Book of Mormon. This is that Joseph Smith (or his scribes) continued to borrow from other authors in his later writings. For instance, we find this statement attributed to Joseph Smith in his History of the Church 2:349-50:

I was then unknown to Mr. Chandler, neither did he know that such a book or work as the record of the Nephites, had been brought before the public. From New York, he took his collection on to Philadelphia, . . .
Research has revealed that these are really the words of Oliver Cowdery and are taken from a letter which was published in the *Messenger and Advocate*, December 1835, vol. 2, page 235:

Bro. Smith was then unknown to Mr. Chandler, neither did he know that such a book or work as the record of the Nephites had been brought before the public. From New York he took his collection to Philadelphia, . . .

This is just a brief example. Actually, hundreds of words have been taken from this letter by Cowdery and inserted into the *History of the Church* as if Joseph Smith was the author. We could cite many other examples of this process. What started out as harmless plagiarism turned into out-and-out falsification after Joseph Smith’s death. He had completed less than 40 percent of the *History of the Church* before passing away, but the Mormon leaders tried to make it appear that he had written all six volumes. They did use some original documents which Smith was responsible for, but they altered the words to suit their purposes. In many places they had nothing to follow and had to falsify material from sources such as other people’s diaries and newspapers to fill in the void. For example, on August 13, 1842, the local newspaper, *The Wasp*, reported:

. . . Joseph Smith was arrested upon a requisition of Gov. Carlin, . . . Mr. Rockwell was arrested at the same time as principal. . . they left them in care of the Marshal, without the original writ by which they were arrested, and by which only they could be retained, and returned back to Gov. Carlin for further instruction,—and Messrs. Smith and Rockwell went about their business. . . .

As to Mr. Smith, we have yet to learn by what rule of right he was arrested to be transported to Missouri for a trial of the kind stated.

When this was republished in the *History of the Church* it was changed to the first person to make it appear that Joseph Smith had written it:

. . . I was arrested . . . on a warrant issued by Governor Carlin, . . . Brother Rockwell was arrested at the same time as principal. . . they left us in the care of the Marshal, without the original writ by which we were arrested, and by which only we could be retained, and returned to Governor Carlin for further instructions, and myself and Rockwell went about our business.

I have yet to learn by what rule of right I was arrested to be transported to Missouri for a trial of the kind stated. (*History of the Church*, vol. 5, pages 86-87)

Even Joseph Smith’s famous Rocky Mountain Prophecy was interpolated into the *History of the Church* as if he had written it (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 133-34).

In 1965 we published a book entitled, *Changes in Joseph Smith’s History*, in which we charged that most of Joseph Smith’s *History* was not written until after his death. For some time the Mormon historians kept silent about this serious charge, but finally they had to admit that the *History of the Church* had been falsified. Dean C. Jesse, of the Church Historical Department, conceded that “At the time of Joseph Smith’s death, the narrative was written to August 5, 1838” (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Summer 1971, page 466). On page 472 of the same article, Dean Jesse admitted that “The Joseph Smith History was finished in August 1856, seventeen years after it was begun.” Since Joseph Smith died in 1844, this would mean that the *History* was not finished until 12 years after his death. The Church’s 1978 printing of the *History of the Church* still claims on the title page of each volume that it is the “History of Joseph Smith, the Prophet, BY HIMSELF.”

The Mormon scholar Hugh Nibley says that “A forgery is defined by specialists in ancient documents as ‘any document which was not produced in the time, place, and manner claimed by it or its publishers’” (*Since Cumorah*, page 160). Under this definition the *History of the Church* must be classed as a forgery. While it does contain some very important information about Joseph Smith, most of it “was not produced in the time, place, and manner claimed by it or its publishers.”

Although the *History of the Church* contains hundreds of pages of material attributed to Joseph Smith, it is of little value to those who seek to find his style of writing. Even one of the Assistant Church Historians, Davis Bitton, has had to admit that “for researchers in early Mormon history Rule Number One is ‘Do not rely on the DHC; never use a quotation from it without comparing the earlier versions’” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Winter 1968, page 32).

Mormon scholar Marvin S. Hill made this observation about the *History of the Church*:

One reason that Brodie concluded that Joseph had veiled his personality behind a “perpetual flow of words” in his history may be that he assumed he had dictated most of it. We now know that large portions of that history were not dictated but were written by scribes and later transferred into the first person to read as though the words were Joseph’s. That fact makes what few things Joseph Smith wrote himself of great significance. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Winter 1972, page 76)

We would challenge the BYU researchers to make a computer study of Joseph Smith’s *History of the Church*. We feel that they would find far more than 24 authors involved in the production of that work.

We assume that the BYU computer experts used authentic specimens from Joseph Smith’s writings to compare with the Book of Mormon. We asked Dr. Alvin C. Rencher about this matter on the phone. He replied that he could not specifically remember just what sources they had used for Joseph Smith, but he claimed that they had been verified as authentic by historians in the Church. In any case, anyone who attempts this type of research in the future should be aware of the fact that Joseph Smith’s *History of the Church* is not a dependable source for the study of his style of writing. Elinore H. Partridge felt that the Church’s published sources were not reliable for stylistic analysis. For this reason she used some of Joseph Smith’s own letters and early diaries for her study. She says that the manuscripts she “found most useful included ten letters and parts of a letterbook, and small sections of two diaries. . . . I studied the parts of the Letterbook, dated 1832-33, the 1832-34 Diary, and the 1835-36 Diary which were in Joseph Smith’s handwriting” (“Characteristics of Joseph Smith’s Style . . .” page 4).

The Mormon leaders suppressed Joseph Smith’s diaries for many years, but recently we obtained copies of and printed both the 1832-34 and the 1835-36 diaries. We feel that they are very valuable in showing that Joseph Smith had the ability to write the Book of Mormon and that they are very important when it comes to stylistic analysis. As we indicated before, we have also included a photographic copy of Joseph Smith’s 1832 account of the First Vision in the publication *Joseph Smith’s 1832-34 Diary*. We feel that the style of this writing agrees very well with that found in the Book of Mormon. For instance, the account begins, “I was born . . . of goodly parents . . .” This reminds us of 1 Nephi 1:1: “I Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, . . .” Joseph Smith’s “strange” account of the First Vision sounds very much like the conversion of Enos in the forest. In the “strange” account we read: “. . . I cried unto the Lord . . . and he spake unto me saying Joseph my Son thy Sins are forgiven thee.” The Book of Mormon account says: “. . . I cried unto him . . . And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, . . .” (Enos, verses 4-5).
When the Book of Mormon was first published, some people ridiculed it because it was filled with the expression, “And it came to pass.” Joseph Smith was bothered by this criticism and in later years tried to not use this expression. If we examine the 1832 account, however, we find that it was really a part of his early style. For instance, at one place in the manuscript he stated: “. . . and it came to pass when I was seventeen years of Age . . .”

If we had the time and space, we could cite a number of other things that tend to make us believe that the two works came from the same pen.

In trying to determine the value of the BYU computer study we have been hindered because of the unavailability of material. Alvin Rencher told us that a larger study would appear in a forthcoming book, but he said he had been “asked not to release copies until the editorial process is complete” (Letter dated November 14, 1979). In the same letter he said that “The New Era article is the only thing available so far.” He did enclose a copy of a letter written on November 6, 1979, and while it does not add much to our knowledge of the study, it does show that the first edition of the Book of Mormon was not used: “We are, of course, aware that there have been many changes since the first edition, (mostly minor). Someday we may repeat the study using the 1830 edition. Our experience with this present study would indicate that no new conclusions would be reached. Two different linguists have told us that the many minor changes from the 1830 edition really attest to the fact that the translation is from a Hebrew-like language. That is, the present edition is much better English. The 1830 edition is better Hebrew.”

While we do not really know how much difference it would make, we do feel that the use of a later edition would have a definite affect on stylistic analysis (see our study 3.913 Changes in the Book of Mormon). We would be especially interested in seeing a study comparing the “strange” account of the First Vision with the unchanged text of the 1830 Book of Mormon.

As to the claim that the grammatical errors in the Book of Mormon tend to prove it was translated from “a Hebrew-like language,” we feel that this is only wishful thinking. Joseph Smith’s other documents and letters have the same type of grammatical errors in them. We do not feel that anyone would argue that a letter to his wife Emma came from a Hebrew-like language just because it contains grammatical errors. We tend to agree with the Mormon historian B. H. Roberts when he wrote:

. . . such errors in grammar and diction as occur in the translation are just such errors as might reasonably be looked for in the work of one unlearned in the English language. . . . it cannot be claimed that the Nephite original is responsible for verbal inaccuracies and grammatical errors. . . . Are these flagrant errors in grammar chargeable to the Lord? To say so is to invite ridicule. The thoughts, the doctrines, are well enough; but the awkward, ungrammatical expression of the thoughts is, doubtless, the result of the translator’s imperfect knowledge of the English language. . . . (Defense of the Faith, pages 278-308)

B. H. ROBERTS’ SECRET MANUSCRIPT

We are often asked how a young man like Joseph Smith could produce a work like the Book of Mormon. As we have already indicated, we feel that the Bible was the main source. Many of the stories found in the Bible were simply rewritten and inserted into the Book of Mormon. Hundreds of passages have been lifted from the New Testament and appear in the Book of Mormon in the style of the King James Version.

Besides the Bible, however, Joseph Smith had access to a great deal of source material. One of the most interesting books which was published prior to the Book of Mormon was Ethan Smith’s View of the Hebrews. The first edition was printed in 1823; it was soon sold out and an enlarged edition appeared in 1825. The Mormon historian B. H. Roberts read View of the Hebrews and evidently became concerned because of the many parallels between it and the Book of Mormon. He prepared a manuscript in which these parallels are listed. Copies of Roberts’ list of parallels were “privately distributed among a restricted group of Mormon scholars,” and in January 1956 Mervin B. Hogan had them published in The Rocky Mountain Mason. A careful reading of B. H. Roberts’ work leads one to believe that he had serious doubts about the Book of Mormon. Roberts listed eighteen parallels between View of the Hebrews and the Book of Mormon. In his fourth parallel he stated: “It is often represented by Mormon speakers and writers, that the Book of Mormon was the first to represent the American Indians as the descendants of the Hebrews; holding that the Book of Mormon is unique in this. The claim is sometimes still ignorantly made” (page 18).

Some new evidence concerning B. H. Roberts’ interest in View of the Hebrews has recently come to light. It has been discovered that Roberts wrote a manuscript of 291 pages entitled, “A Book of Mormon Study.” In this manuscript 176 pages were devoted to the relationship of View of the Hebrews to the Book of Mormon. The manuscript was never published and remained in the family after his death.

A false rumor concerning this suppressed manuscript has recently been circulated—i.e., that B. H. Roberts tried to answer the objections which he himself had raised in his shorter work of eighteen parallels. This idea is certainly far from the truth. We have recently had the privilege of studying Roberts’ work and have found that it not only fails to answer the objections to the Book of Mormon mentioned in the shorter work, but that it raises many new problems as well.

Truman G. Madsen, professor of philosophy at Brigham Young University, concedes that B. H. Roberts did prepare a manuscript entitled, “Book of Mormon Study,” but he maintains that Roberts was merely using “the ‘Devil’s Advocate’ approach to stimulate thought”.

Later, in March of 1922, Roberts prepared a draft of a written report to the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. It included a further discussion of the linguistic problems and other points as well. The study of such books as those of Josiah Priest, Ethan Smith, and others led him to examine such questions as: What literary and historical speculations were abroad in the nineteenth century? Could Joseph Smith have absorbed them in his youth and could these influences have provided the ground plan for such a work as the Book of Mormon? Did Joseph Smith have a mind “sufficiently creative” to have written it? And what internal problems and parallels within the Book of Mormon called for explanation? In confronting such questions Roberts prepared a series of “parallels” with Ethan Smith’s View of the Hebrews; a summary of this analysis excerpted passages from Ethan Smith’s work and lined them up in columns with comparable ideas in the Book of Mormon. Examination of such questions was contained in a typewritten manuscript entitled “Book of Mormon Study.”

About this particular study, certain points must be kept in mind if it is not to be gravely misunderstood. First, it was not intended for general dissemination but was to be presented to the General Authorities to identify for them certain criticisms that might be made against the Book of Mormon. . . .

Second, the report was not intended to be balanced. A kind of lawyer’s brief of one side of a case written to stimulate discussion in preparation of the defense of a work, already accepted as true, the manuscript was anything but a careful presentation of Robert’s thoughts about the Book of Mormon or of his own convictions. . . .

Teachers who have used the “Devil’s Advocate” approach to stimulate thought among their students, lawyers who in preparation of their cases have brought up what they consider
the points likely to be made by their worthy opponents—all such people will recognize the unfairness of taking such statements out of context and offering them as their own mature, balanced conclusions. For ill-wishers to resurrect Roberts’s similar “Devil’s Advocate” probings is not a service to scholarship, for they are manifestly dated. And it is a travesty to take such working papers as a fair statement of B. H. Roberts’s own appraisal of the Book of Mormon, for, as this paper abundantly demonstrates, his conviction of its truth was unshaken and frequently expressed down to the time of his death. (Brigham Young University Studies, Summer 1979, pages 440-442)

While there is no evidence that B. H. Roberts publicly repudiated the Book of Mormon, a careful reading of his manuscript, “A Book of Mormon Study,” leads one to believe that he was in the process of losing faith in its divine origin. Although he may have started out merely playing the part of the “Devil’s Advocate,” we feel that he played the role so well that he developed grave doubts about the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. The following quotations from Roberts’ manuscript should be of interest to the reader. In Part I, Chapter 14, of his study B. H. Roberts summarized:

...was Joseph Smith possessed of a sufficiently vivid and creative imagination as to produce such a work as the Book of Mormon from such materials as have been indicated in the preceding chapters—from such common knowledge as was extant in the communities where he lived in his boyhood and young manhood; from the Bible, and more especially from the “View of the Hebrews,” by Ethan Smith? That such power of imagination would have to be of a high order is conceded; that Joseph Smith possessed such a gift of mind there can be no question....

A superabundance of evidence of Joseph Smith’s power of imagination exists outside of the Book of Mormon. If the Book of Mormon be regarded as of merely human origin, then, of course, to those so regarding it, the rest of Joseph Smith’s work falls to the same plane. ...

In the light of this evidence, there can be no doubt as to the possession of a vividly strong, creative imagination by Joseph Smith, the Prophet, An imagination, it could with reason be urged, which, given the suggestions that are to be found in the “common knowledge” of accepted American Antiquities of the times, supplemented by such a work as Ethan Smith’s “View of the Hebrews,” would make it possible for him to create a book such as the Book of Mormon is.

In Part II, Chapter 1, of B. H. Roberts’ manuscript “A Book of Mormon Study,” we find this surprising observation:

If from all that has gone before in part I, the view be taken that the Book of Mormon is merely of human origin; that a person of Joseph Smith’s limitations in experience and in education; who was of the vicinage and of the period that produced the book—if it be assumed that he is the author of it, then it could be said that there is much internal evidence in the book itself to sustain such a view.

In the first place there is a certain lack of perspective in the things the book relates as history that points quite clearly to an undeveloped mind as their origin. The narrative proceeds in characteristic disregard of conditions necessary to its reasonableness, as if it were a tale told by a child, with utter disregard for consistency.

These are not the words of an “anti-Mormon” writer, but the words of the Mormon historian B. H. Roberts—one of the greatest scholars the Church has ever known. Roberts not only prepared the “Introduction and Notes” for Joseph Smith’s History of the Church, but he also wrote the six-volume work, A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He is also noted for his many works defending the Book of Mormon.

The following is found in Part II, Chapter 2, of Roberts’ manuscript:

The same lack of perspective and of consistency is also manifest in the early movements of both Jaredite and Nephite colonies after arriving “to the promised land.” Also the same tendency to parallel incidents and characteristics as we have noted in the formation of the two colonies, and the incidents of their wilderness journey and sea voyage. It may be asked, what of this parallelism? What does it amount to? If such a question should be asked the opponent of the Book of Mormon would answer with emphasize—‘This of it. It supplies the evidence that the Book of Mormon is the product of one mind, and that, a very limited mind, unconsciously reproducing with only slight variation its visions.” And the answer will be accepted as significant at least, if not conclusive.

In Part II, Chapter 3, Roberts wrote:

There were other anti-Christians among the Nephites, but they were more military leaders than religious innovators, yet much of the same character in spirit with these dissenters here passed in review; but I shall hold that what is here presented illustrates sufficiently the matter taken in hand by referring to them, namely that they are all of one breed and brand; so nearly alike that one mind is the author of them, and that a young and undeveloped, but piously inclined mind. The evidence, I sorrowfully submit, points some will contend to Joseph Smith as their creator. It is difficult to believe that they are the product of history, that they come upon the scene separated by long periods of time, and among a race which was the ancestral race of the red man of America.

In the next chapter B. H. Roberts maintains:

The allusions here to absurdities of expressions and incidents in the Book of Mormon, are not made for the purpose of ridiculing the book, or casting any aspersions upon it; but they are made to indicate what may be fairly regarded as just objects of criticism under the assumption that the Book of Mormon is of human origin, and that Joseph Smith is its author. For these absurdities in expression; these miraculous incidents in warfare; these almost mock—and certainly extravagant—heroes; ... are certainly just such absurdities and lapses as would be looked for if a person of such limitations as bounded Joseph Smith undertook to put forth a book dealing with the history and civilization of ancient and unknown peoples.

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 84-85, we show that “Another book which Joseph Smith may have read before ‘translating’ the Book of Mormon was written by Josiah Priest. It was entitled The Wonders of Nature and Providence Displayed, and was published in 1825 at Albany, New York.” It is interesting to note that B. H. Roberts also felt that this book could have furnished structural material for the Book of Mormon:

A number of years ago in my treatises on the Book of Mormon under the general title “A New Witness for God.” I discussed the subject “Did the Book of Mormon antedate works in English on American antiquities, accessible to Joseph Smith and his associates?” ... it was insisted upon that books sufficient for a ground plan of the Book of Mormon, and accessible to Joseph Smith, did not exist.

The writer at the time being considered did not take sufficiently into account the work of Josiah Priest’s ... Priest himself, indeed, published a book ... The Wonders of Nature and Providence, copyrighted by him June 2nd, 1824, and printed soon afterwards in Rochester, New York, only some twenty miles distant from Palmyra, near which place the Smith family then began to reside. It will be observed that this book
precended the publication of the Book of Mormon by about six years. At the time I made for my “New Witnesses” the survey of the literature on American Antiquities, traditions, origins, etc., available to Joseph Smith and his associates, this work of Priest’s was unknown to me; as was also the work by Ethan Smith, View of the Hebrews—except by report of it, and as being in my hands but a few minutes.

In this book The Wonders of Nature and Providence, . . . Mr. Priest begins to argue at length that the Indians may be descendants of the Israelites. . . . he quotes in all about forty writers, . . . who advocated in one way or another, that the American Indians are Israelites. . . . it is altogether probable that these two books, Priest’s Wonders of Nature and Providence, 1824; and Ethan Smith’s View of the Hebrews, 1820, were either possessed by Joseph Smith or certainly known by him, for they were surely available to him, and of course, with all the collection of quoted matter . . . some forty or fifty earlier authors in all being quoted. . . .

Moreover, on subjects widely discussed, . . . there is built up in course of years, a community knowledge of such subjects, usually referred to as matters of common knowledge . . . Such “common” knowledge existed throughout New England and New York . . . the prevailing ideas respecting the American Indians throughout the regions named; a favorable to the notion that they were of Hebrew origin, . . . And with the existence of such a body of knowledge, or that which was accepted as “knowledge,” and a person of vivid and constructive imaginative power in contact with it, there is little room for doubt but that it might be possible for Joseph Smith to construe “a theory of origin for his Book of Mormon, in harmony with these prevailing notions; and more especially since this common knowledge” is set forth in almost hand-book form in the little work of Ethan Smith, . . . It will appear in what is to follow that such “common knowledge” did exist in New England; that Joseph Smith was in contact with it; that one book, at least, with which he was most likely acquainted, could well have furnished structural outlines for the Book of Mormon; and that Joseph Smith was possessed of such creative imaginative powers as would make it quite within the lines of possibility that the Book of Mormon could have been produced in that way. (“A Book of Mormon Study,” Part I, Chapter 1)

In Part I, Chapter 7, of the same manuscript B. H. Roberts asked this question:

Could an investigator of the Book of Mormon be much blamed if be were to decide that Ethan Smith’s book with its suggestion as to the division of his Israelites into two peoples; with its suggestion of “tremendous wars” between them; and of the savages overcoming the civilized division—led to the fashioning of these same chief things in the Book of Mormon?

B. H. Roberts made this comment in Part I, Chapter 13:

As to the first consideration, in this case, priority of production of Ethan Smith’s book, and priority of sufficient duration for it to become generally known in the vicinity where both books were produced—there is absolute certainty. For Ethan Smith’s book ran through two editions in New England before the Book of Mormon was published. As to the second consideration, in this case, the likelihood of Joseph Smith coming in contact with Ethan Smith’s book is not only very great, but amounts to a very close certainty. For being published in an adjoining county to the one in which their home had been for so long, and the interest in the subject being very general, not only in New England but in New York also, it would be little short of miraculous if they did not know of Ethan Smith’s book.

Further on in the same chapter Roberts made these observations:

But now to return from this momentary divergence to the main theme of this writing—viz, did Ethan Smith’s View of the Hebrews furnish structural material for Joseph Smith’s Book of Mormon? It has been pointed out in these pages that there are many things in the former book that might well have suggested many major things in the other. Not a few things merely, one or two, or a half dozen, but many; and it is this fact of many things of similarity and the cumulative force of them, that makes them so serious a menace to Joseph Smith’s story of the Book of Mormon’s origin. . . .

The material in Ethan Smith’s book is of a character and quantity to make a ground plan for the Book of Mormon: . . . Can such numerous and startling points of resemblance and suggestive contact, be merely coincidence?

B. H. Roberts also felt that the Bible could have provided seeds for Joseph Smith’s fruitful imagination:

Matthew and Zechariah, then, could well be thought of as furnishing material for the Book of Mormon signs of the Birth of Messiah.

So also as to the Book of Mormon signs of Messiah’s death and resurrection . . . The three hours darkness, expanded to three days of darkness; the evidently momentary earthquake of Matthew, to three hours of earth quaking; the local rending of rocks in Matthew, to the rending of a continent; and the fear of a Roman Centurion and those that were with him, to the terror of a whole people.

With these things as suggestions as to signs for Messiah’s birth and death and resurrection, and one of conceded vivid, and strong and constructive imaginative powers to work them all out, need not be regarded as an unthinkable procedure and achievement. (Ibid.)

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 64-65, we demonstrated that the great revivals which swept New York in the 1820s are reflected in the Book of Mormon. B. H. Roberts also considered this to be a possibility:

It is clearly established now that these scenes of religion frenzy, were common in the vicinage where Joseph Smith resided in his youth and early manhood. . . . Joseph Smith himself came in contact with these emotional phenomena in his own experience after their rebirth in the early decades of the 19th century.

The Question is, did his knowledge of these things, lead to the introduction of similar ones into the Book of Mormon narrative? I think it cannot be questioned but what there is sufficient resemblance . . . to justify the thought that the latter might well have suggested, and indeed become the source of the former. (Ibid., Part U, Chapter 5)

In Part II, Chapter 6, of his manuscript, B. H. Roberts observed:

There can be no doubt but what the style of preaching, exhortation, warning, praying, admonition together with the things emphasized and the ends aimed at in such work of the Christian ministry as came to the attention of Joseph Smith, was all largely and deeply influenced by those first and greatest evangelical popular preachers of Protestant Christianity, John Wesley, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, and Dr. Thomas Coke, et al.

Roberts gives lengthy extracts from some of the religious writings that would have been available to Joseph Smith. One quotation from the “Eighteen Sermons” by George Whitefield, published in 1808, contains this statement: “. . . Methinks I see . . . the Judge sitting on his throne, . . .” This reminds us of Alma’s statement in the Book of Mormon, Alma 36:22: “. . . me thought I saw . . . God sitting upon his throne, . . .”

After a careful examination of B. H. Roberts’ manuscript, “A Book of Mormon Study,” we have come to the conclusion that he has done an excellent job of compiling the evidence to show that Joseph Smith could have written the Book of Mormon from the material available to him. Although Roberts’ study has not been published, we are happy to report that Wesley P. Walters has prepared an article analyzing this manuscript for The Journal of Pastoral Practice, vol. III, no. 3. We felt that Walters’ article was so important that we reproduced it in its entirety. Also we have included some very revealing photographs taken from Roberts’ original manuscript. This reprint of Wesley P. Walters’ article is now available from Modern Microfilm Co. for $2.00 a copy.
WILL BENSON BE KING?
MORMON LEADER STRIVES FOR POLITICAL POWER

On February 24, 1980, the Salt Lake Tribune carried a full-page advertisement concerning our new book, *The Changing World of Mormonism*. In this ad we demonstrated that many important changes have been made in Mormon doctrine. Two days after this was published, Ezra Taft Benson, who is President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and next in line to lead the Mormon Church, spoke at Brigham Young University. In this speech he claimed that the “Living Prophet” is “More Vital to Us Than the Standard Works”—i.e., the Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price. He went on to warn: “Beware of those who would pit the dead prophets against the living prophets, for the living prophets always take precedence.” Using this type of reasoning a Mormon could set aside the teachings of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young when they disagree with the “Living Prophet.”

It would appear from President Benson’s speech that he wants his people to allow the “Living Prophet” to do their thinking in temporal as well as spiritual matters. This is reminiscent of the ward teacher’s message for June, 1945:

> When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. When they point the way, there is no other which is safe. When they give direction, it should mark the end of controversy. (*Improvement Era*, June 1945, page 354)

Ezra Taft Benson’s speech has caused great consternation among Mormons who want to “do their own thinking.” One thing they really fear is his attempt to mix politics with religion. He indicates that the Prophet has a right to dictate to his people on political matters and even to “lead them in government. Alma was the head of the Church and of the government in the Book of Mormon; Joseph Smith was mayor of Nauvoo and Brigham Young was governor of Utah . . . Those who would remove prophets from politics would take God out of government.” Those who know of President Benson’s previous attempts to involve the Church in politics realize the danger that lies ahead if he should become the “Living Prophet.” This is a very real possibility because Spencer W. Kimball, the present leader, is four years older than Benson and now in poor health (during the last several months Kimball has undergone surgery twice to drain “an accumulation of fluid between his brain and skull” (*The Ensign*, January 1980, page 80).

The Mormon Kingdom

From the very beginning Mormon Church leaders were inclined to meddle in politics. Joseph Smith himself set up a secret “Council of Fifty” and had himself ordained to be a king. In 1853 William Marks, who had been a member of the Council of Fifty, revealed: “I was also witness of the introduction (secretly,) of a kingly form of government, in which Joseph suffered himself to be ordained a king, to reign over the house of Israel forever, . . .” (*Zion’s Harbinger and Baneemy’s Organ*, St. Louis, July, 1853, page 53).

In his master’s thesis for Brigham Young University, Klaus J. Hansen tells that George Miller, who had been a member of the Council of Fifty, admitted that Joseph Smith was ordained to be a king: “Rumors implying that the Prophet assumed royal pretensions are somewhat substantiated by George Miller who stated on one occasion that ‘In this council we ordained Joseph Smith as King on earth’” (“The Theory and Practice of the Political Kingdom of God in Mormon History, 1829-1890,” master’s thesis, BYU, 1959, typed copy, page 114).

In *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1966, page 104, Mr. Hansen frankly admitted that “Joseph Smith did start a political kingdom of God and a Council of Fifty; he was made king over that organization. . . .”

When Fawn Brodie stated that Joseph Smith was anointed king, Dr. Hugh Nibley claimed that there was not enough evidence to support this accusation. Since that time, however, a great deal of new evidence has come to light, and now many Mormon scholars are willing to concede that Joseph Smith was made king. For instance, Kenneth W. Godfrey, who was director of the LDS Institute at Stanford University, admitted that Joseph Smith was “Ordained ‘King over the Immediate House of Israel’ by the Council of Fifty” (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Winter 1968, pages 212-213). Among other things, Dr. Godfrey’s footnote refers us to the “Diary of George A. Smith, May 9, 1844,” which is in the “Library of the Church Historian.” In a dissertation written at Brigham Young University, Dr. Godfrey observed:

Davidson states that Joseph Smith had himself anointed King and Priest . . . in a revelation dated 1886 given to President John Taylor, mention is made of Joseph Smith being crowned a king in Nauvoo. Not only was he ordained a king but the leading members of the Church were assigned governmental responsibilities. Brigham Young was to be president, John Taylor vice president, members of the Church were assigned to represent different states in the house and senate of the United States, and a full cabinet was appointed. (“Causes of Mormon Non-Mormon Conflict in Hancock County, Illinois, 1839-1846,” Ph.D. dissertation, BYU, 1967, pages 63-65)

In his book, *Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet*, page 204, Mormon writer John J. Stewart related that “(The Prophet established a confidential Council of Fifty, or ‘Ytfif,’ comprised of both Mormons and non-Mormons, to help attend to temporal matters, including the eventual development of a government, in harmony with preparatory plans for the second advent of the Saviour.)”

Joseph Smith For President

In 1844 the Council of Fifty decided to run Joseph Smith for the presidency of the United States. Klaus J. Hansen said that “the Council of Fifty, while seriously contemplating the possibility
of emigration, also considered a rather spectacular alternative, namely, to run its leader for the presidency of the United States in the campaign of 1844. . . . Smith and the Council of Fifty seems to have taken the election quite seriously, much more so, indeed, than both Mormons and anti-Mormons have heretofore suspected” (Quest for Empire, page 74).

The elders of the church were actually called to “electioneer” for Joseph Smith (History of the Church, vol. 6, page 322). Mormon writer John J. Stewart refers to those who were sent to campaign as a “vast force of political missionaries” (Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet, page 209).

Under the date of January 29, 1844, this statement is attributed to Joseph Smith in the History of the Church: “If you attempt to accomplish this, you must send every man in the city who is able to speak in public throughout the land to electioneer. . . . There is oratory enough in the Church to carry me into the presidential chair the first slide” (vol. 6, page 188).

The fact that Joseph Smith would allow himself to be crowned king shows that he was driven by the idea of gaining power. It is very possible that Smith seriously believed that he would become president and that he would rule as king over the people of the United States. The attempt by Joseph Smith to become president seems to have been a treasonous plot to bring the United States Government under the rule of the priesthood. George Miller, who had been a member of the Council of Fifty, recorded in a letter dated June 28, 1855:

It was further determined in Council that all the elders should set out on missions . . . and do everything in our power to have Joseph elected president. If we succeeded in making a majority of the voters converts to our faith, and elected Joseph president, in such an event the dominion of the Kingdom would be forever established in the United States; and if not successful, we could fall back on Texas, and be a kingdom notwithstanding. (Letter by George Miller, as quoted in Joseph Smith and World Government, by Hyrum Andrus, 1963, page 54)

The Living Prophet Is King

The practice of ordaining the President of the Mormon Church as “king on earth” did not cease with the death of Joseph Smith. It is reported that Brigham Young, the second president, was ordained king, and the Mormon Apostle Abraham H. Cannon states that there was a discussion in the Council of Fifty as to whether John Taylor, the third president, should be ordained king:

Father [George Q. Cannon, a member of the First Presidency] said Moses Thatcher’s drawing away from his brethren commenced as far as his knowledge concerning it went, at a time when the Council of Fifty met in the old City Hall, and Moses opposed the proposition to anoint John Taylor as Prophet Priest and King, and Moses’ opposition prevailed at that time. (“Daily Journal of Abraham H. Cannon,” December 2, 1895, page 198; original at Brigham Young University Library)

The journal of Franklin D. Richards seems to show that Taylor was anointed king on February 4, 1885, (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 418). While we do not know whether the President of the Mormon Church is still anointed king, Apostle Bruce R. McConkie makes it plain that he is in reality “the earthly king”:

1. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as it is now constituted is the kingdom of God on earth. . . . The Church and kingdom are one and the same.

The Church (or kingdom) is not a democracy; . . . The Church is a kingdom. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Eternal King, and the President of the Church, the mouthpiece of God on earth, is the earthly king. All things come to the Church from the King of the kingdom in heaven, through the king of the kingdom on earth. (Mormon Doctrine, 1979, pages 415-416)

Benson’s Political Involvements

While most scholars believe that the Council of Fifty died out sometime around the turn of the century, in the book Mormon Spies, Hughes and the C.I.A., page 51, we explored the possibility that it may have continued to exist in this century. We noted that on September 13, 1967, we received a letter from a man who had come to Utah to do research on Mormonism. In this letter he asserted:

Concerning the present status of the Council of the Fifty, I was told by an instructor at BYU that the Council exists today. Both Apostle Benson & a son (the John Bircher) are on it. I will write him and see if he will talk with you. He is in a very precarious situation, having apostacized but not having been excommunicated or fired from the “Y.” When he discovered this evidence on the 50, he was called into the Vice President office & sworn to secrecy. (I believe there was a mild threat used-at least he implied this. . . . (Letter dated September 13, 1967; for more information on this see Mormon Spies, Hughes and the C.I.A., pages 51-52)

While this is certainly “hear-say information” which cannot be checked unless the Church releases all of the secret records of the Council of Fifty, there is a great deal of evidence showing that Apostle Benson would like to involve the Church deeply in politics. In other words, his goals are consistent with those of the Council of Fifty. If the Council of Fifty is not in existence at the present time, it seems reasonable to believe that Benson might want to reestablish it. He would certainly have the power to do this if he became the “Living Prophet.”

In any case, at one time Benson served as Secretary of Agriculture under President Eisenhower. Although he is not a member of the John Birch Society, his activities on its behalf have caused other Church leaders a great deal of embarrassment. On January 4, 1964, Drew Pearson made the following comment concerning Ezra Taft Benson: “Benson has become so extreme in his views that the Mormon Church, of which he is one of the Twelve Apostles, has quietly transferred him abroad to head the church’s European mission” (San Francisco Chronicle, January 4, 1964).

President David O. McKay denied the accusation, but the newspapers let the “cat out of the bag” when they published two letters written to Rep. Ralph R. Harding. One of them was written by Joseph Fielding Smith, who became the tenth president of the Church:

“I am glad to report to you that it will be some time before we hear anything from Brother Benson, who is now on his way to Great Britain where I suppose he will be at least for the next two years. When he returns, I hope his blood will be purified.” (Salt Lake Tribune, February 21, 1964)

On September 25, 1968, a newsmen sent us a letter which contained this information about Benson:

Had an interesting telephone conversation with Elder Benson the other day. He said he could have had the American Independent Party vice presidential nomination, but turned it down after consultation with President McKay.

Since the death of Joseph Fielding Smith, the Apostle Benson has risen to great power in the Mormon Church. On February 25, 1974, the Brigham Young University’s Daily Universe reported the following:

SALT LAKE CITY (AP)—President Ezra Taft Benson, . . . said, in an interview this week, it is “entirely possible” the president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Some have speculated that the Freemen Institute may be in some way connected with the Mormon Kingdom. While we have no way of knowing whether this is true, the Institute was founded by Benson’s friend W. Cleon Skousen, a former F.B.I. agent who was devoted to J. Edgar Hoover. Mr. Skousen also served as Chief of Police in Salt Lake City and as professor of ancient scriptures at the Church’s BYU. Ezra Taft Benson seems to be deeply committed to the purposes of the Institute. In 1976 a “Special Invitation” to the grand opening of the new national headquarters building stated that “President Ezra T. Benson will be the featured speaker.” The Ogden Standard Examiner for February 25, 1980, reported that Benson spoke at a gathering of the Institute in Scottsdale, Arizona. Utah Holiday magazine for February 1980, gave this information:

Generally the impact of the far-right is discounted. An exception is the Benson/Skousen following. Representative Irvine considers Skousen’s Freeman Institute the most cohesive and influential conservative group in the state. They reportedly claim 5,000 members in the Salt Lake area which would make them a rather formidable organization, especially in light of their ability to control the nominating process. By heavy mass meeting participation it is relatively easy for a well organized minority to push through their candidate, which is what frequently happens. . . . Ezra Taft Benson, has the most instantly recognizable conservative image of any Utahn, and it extends nationwide. (pages 29-30)

According to Sunstone:

Mark A. Benson, a regional representative of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has been appointed Vice-president and Director of Development for the Freeman Institute. . . . The new vice-president is the son of Ezra Taft Benson, President of the Council of Twelve Apostles. (Jan.-Feb. 1980, page 50)

The Freeman Institute is growing rapidly in America and is spreading to other countries as well. In any case, Ezra Taft Benson realizes that he is very close to the position of “Prophet, Seer and Revelator,” or as Apostle McConkie would phrase it, “king of the kingdom on earth.” It would appear from some of his statements that he is now polishing the crown in anticipation of the day he becomes President. The following extracts from his speech of February 26, 1980, make this very plain:

My beloved brothers and sisters. I am honored to be in your presence today. . . . As a Church we sing the song, “We Thank Thee, Oh God, For A Prophet.” Here then is the grand key—Follow The Prophet—and here now are Fourteen Fundamentals In Following the Prophet, the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

FIRST: The Prophet is the only man who speaks for the Lord in Everything. . . . Did you hear what the Lord said about the words of the Prophet? We are to “give heed unto all his words”—as if from the Lord’s “own mouth.”

SECOND: The Living Prophet is More Vital to Us Than the Standard Works. . . .

THIRD: The Living Prophet is More Important to Us Than a Dead Prophet. . . . the most important prophet so far as you and I are concerned is the one living in our day and age to whom the Lord is currently revealing His will for us. Therefore the most important reading we can do is any of the words of the Prophet contained each week in the Church Section of the Deseret News, and any words of the Prophet contained each month in our Church magazines. Our marching orders for each six months are found in the General Conference addresses which are printed in the Ensign magazine. . . . Beware of those who would pit the dead prophets against the living prophets, for the living prophets always take precedence.

FOURTH: The Prophet Will Never Lead the Church Astray. . . .

President Marion G. Romney tells of this incident which happened to him: I remember years ago when I was a Bishop I had President (Heber J.) Grant talk to our ward . . . . he put his arm over my shoulder and said: “My boy, you always keep your eye on the President of the Church, and if he ever tells you to do anything, and it is wrong, and you do it, the Lord will bless you for it.” Then with a twinkle in his eye, he said, “But you don’t need to worry. The Lord will never let his mouthpiece lead the people astray.” (CR, October 1960, page 78.)

FIFTH: The Prophet is Not Required to Have Any Particular Earthly Training or Credentials to Speak on Any Subject or Act on Any Matter at Any Time. . . . We haven’t yet had a prophet who earned a doctorate degree in any subject, but as someone said, “A prophet may not have his PhD but he certainly has his LDS.” . . .

SIXTH: The Prophet Does Not Have to Say “Thus Saith the Lord” to Give Us Scripture.

Sometimes there are those who haggle over words. They might say the prophet gave us counsel but that we are not obligated to follow it unless he says it is a commandment. But the Lord says of the Prophet, “Thou shall give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you.” (D&C 21:4.) . . . Said Brigham Young, “I have never yet preached a sermon and sent it out to the children of men, that they many not call scripture.” (JD 13:95.)

SEVENTH: The Prophet Tells Us What We Need to Know, Not Always What We Want to Know. . . .

Sometimes there are those who haggle over words. They might say the prophet gave us counsel but that we are not obligated to follow it unless he says it is a commandment. But the Lord says of the Prophet, “Thou shall give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you.” (D&C 21:4.) . . . Said Brigham Young, “I have never yet preached a sermon and sent it out to the children of men, that they many not call scripture.” (JD 13:95.)

EIGHTH: The Prophet is Not Limited by Men’s Reasoning.

There will be times when you will have to choose between the revelations of God and reasoning of men—between the prophet and the politician or professor. . . .

NINTH: The Prophet Can Receive Revelation on Any Matter-Temporal or Spiritual. . . .

TENTH: The Prophet May be Involved in Civic Matters.

When a people are righteous they want the best to lead them in government. Alma was the head of the Church and of the government in the Book of Mormon; Joseph Smith was mayor of Nauvoo and Brigham Young was governor of Utah. . . . Those who would remove prophets from politics would take God out of government.
Although Young promoted the sealing of women and men in temple marriage for eternity, he seemed to feel that the sealing of men to men (one man would be adopted to another as his son) was even a more solemn ordinance. In a speech given September 4, 1873, Brigham Young maintained: “But we can seal women to men, but not men to men, without a Temple” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 16, page 186). Kimball Young observed:

To understand the role and status and the accompanying self-images of men and women in polygamy, we must recall that Mormonism was a male-dominated society. The priesthood which only men could hold—was in complete control and celestial marriage, either monogamous or polygamous, exemplified the higher status of men. Women were viewed as of lesser worth, to be saved only through men holding the priesthood. . . .

That this masculine principle went deep, and far more fantastically that the Saints could comprehend, is shown in a sermon by Brigham Young, reported by John Read. In a letter to one of his wives Read said that Brigham referred to some future time “when men would be sealed to men in the priesthood in a more solemn ordinance than that by which women were sealed to man, and in a room over that in which women were sealed to man in the temple of the Lord.” (Isn’t One Wife Enough? pages 279-280)

For more information on the sealing of men to men, see our book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?, pages 480-483.

While Brigham Young did not care much for the “private society of women,” he taught that a man’s place in heaven depended to a great extent on the size of his family. His wife, therefore, should bear as many children as possible:

Sisters, do you wish to make yourselves happy? Then what is your duty? It is for you to bear children, in the name of the Lord . . . bring forth in the name of Israel’s God, that you may have the honour of being the mothers of great and good men . . . are you tormenting yourselves by thinking that your husbands do not love you? I would not care whether they loved a particle or not; but I would cry out, like one of old, in the joy of my heart, “I have got a man from the Lord!” . . . “I have borne an image of God!” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 9, page 37)

On another occasion Brigham Young admonished:

. . . I am going to set every woman at liberty and say to them, Now go your way, my women with the rest, go your way And my wives have got to do one of two things; either round up their shoulders to endure the afflictions of this world, and live their religion, or they may leave, for I will not have them about me. I will go into heaven alone, rather than have scratching and fighting around me. I will set all at liberty. “What, first wife too?” Yes, I will liberate you all . . .

I wish my women, and brother Kimball’s and brother Grant’s to leave, and every woman in this Territory, or else say in their hearts that they will embrace the Gospel—the whole of it. . . . say to your wives, “Take all that I have and be set at liberty; but if you stay with me you shall comply with the law of God, and that too without any murmuring and whining. You must fulfil the law of God in every respect, and round up your shoulders to walk up to the mark without any grunting.”

Now recollect that two weeks from to morrow I am going to set you at liberty. But the first wife will say, “It is hard, for I have lived with my husband twenty years, or thirty, and have raised a family of children for him, and it is a great trial to me for him to have more women;” then I say it is time that you gave him up to other women who will bear children. If my wife had borne me all the children that she ever would bare, the celestial law would teach me to take young women that would have children. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 4, pages 55-57)
Fanny Stenhouse, who left the Church in Brigham Young’s day, made these interesting observations:

In my unhappy condition, I thought that perhaps I might derive some consolation from the sermons in the Tabernacle . . . But instead of obtaining consolation, I heard that which aroused every feeling of my soul to rebellion. . . . I heard that woman was an inferior being, designed by the Lord for the special glory and exaltation of man, that she was a creature that should feel herself honored if he would only make her the mother of his children—a creature who if very obedient and faithful through all the trials and tribulations in life, might some day be rewarded by becoming one of her husband’s queens, but should even then shine only by virtue of the reflected light derived from the glory of her spouse and lord. He was to be her “saviour,” for he was all in all to her, and it was through him alone and at his will that she could obtain salvation. We were informed that man was the crowning glory of creation, for whom all things—woman included—were brought into being; and that the chief object of woman’s existence was to help man to his great destiny. 

Not a sentence—indeed, not a word—did we ever hear as to the possibility of womanly perfection and exaltation in her own right. . . . The great object of marriage, we were told, was the increase of children. . . . if some woman was found objecting to polygamy on account of its crushing and degrading effects upon women generally, then, . . . she was told in the coarse language of Brigham Young himself, that “Such women had no business to complain; it was quite enough honour for them to be permitted to bear children to God’s holy Priesthood.” . . . It was painfully clear to my understanding, then as now, that in Mormonism woman was to lose her personal identity. All that Christianity had done to elevate her was to be ruthlessly set aside and trampled under foot, and she was instantly to return to the position which she occupied in the darkest ages of the world’s existence. (Tell It All, pages 181-182)

Although the Church no longer allows the practice of polygamy, some of the teachings concerning the inferiority of women persist in its theology. Mormon apologist John J. Stewart proclaims:

The Church has never, and certainly will never, renounce this doctrine. The revelation on plural marriage is still an integral part of LDS scripture, and always will be. If a woman, sealed to her husband for time and eternity, preceeds her husband in death, it is his privilege to marry another also for time and eternity, providing that he is worthy of doing so. Consider, for instance, the case of President Joseph Fielding Smith of the Council of the Twelve, one of the greatest men upon earth. . . . After the death of his first wife President Joseph Fielding Smith married another, and each of these good women are sealed to him for time and all eternity. (Brigham Young And His Wives, Salt Lake City, 1961, page 14)

In his book Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 2, page 67, President Smith remarked: “. . . my wives will be mine in eternity. I don’t know how some other people feel, but that is a glorious thought to me. That helps to keep me sober.”

Every Mormon woman, therefore, faces the possibility of living in a polygamous relationship in heaven if she dies first and her husband decides to be sealed to another woman. A woman, of course, cannot be sealed for eternity to more than one husband. Because a woman is not granted the same privilege as a man a problem has arisen for those doing work for the dead. In a newsletter published by Sandy First Ward we find the following:

. . . Brother Christiansen talked about new rulings concerning sealings for the dead. It is now possible for a woman that was married more than once to be sealed to ALL her husbands, providing that in life she had not been sealed to any of her husbands.

The First Presidency of the Church has ruled that rather than try to decide which husband a deceased woman should be sealed to, she can be sealed to all of them. However, only one sealing will be valid and accepted before God. God and the woman will decide which one of the sealings will be accepted on Judgment Day. (Tele-Ward, Sandy First Ward, January 25, 1976, vol. V, no. 2, page 5)

In 1976 the First Presidency announced a new rule which discriminates against a woman who wishes to obtain her endowments in the temple after marriage:

A wife whose husband is not endowed should not be given a recommend to receive her endowments. . . . A worthy man whose wife has not received her endowments may be given a recommend to receive his own endowments. (General Handbook of Instructions, Number 21, 1976, page 54)

Christian theology teaches that males and females will be equal in the resurrection:

But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. (Luke 20:35-36)

Mormon Church leaders teach that both men and women can attain Godhood. Apostle Bruce R. McConkie says that “Godhood is not for men only; it is for men and women together” (Mormon Doctrine, 1979, page 844).

While at first glance it appears that this would make men and women equal, a more careful examination of the doctrine reveals just the opposite. According to Mormon theology, Church members follow the same plan of eternal progression as God the Father. Mormon leaders claim God is just an exalted man who has a wife known as the “Eternal Mother.” Apostle McConkie explains:

Implicit in the Christian verity that all men are the spirit children of an Eternal Father is the usually unspoken truth that they are also the offspring of an Eternal Mother.

This doctrine that there is a Mother in Heaven was affirmed in plainness by the First Presidency of the Church . . .

Mortal persons who overcome all things and gain an ultimate exaltation will live eternally in the family unit and have spirit children, thus becoming Eternal Fathers and Eternal Mothers. (Mormon Doctrine, 1979, pages 516-517)

Now, if the “Eternal Mother” really had gained equality with her husband, we would expect the Mormons to pray to her. The Apostle Orson Pratt, however, made it plain that the “Eternal Mother’s” Godhood does not really amount to much since she is in “the most perfect obedience” to her “great head”:

But if we have a heavenly Mother as well as a heavenly Father, is it not right that we should worship the Mother of our spirits as well as the Father? No; for the Father of our spirits is at the head of His household, and His wives and children are required to yield the most perfect obedience to their great Head. It is lawful for the children to worship the King of Heaven, but not the “Queen of heaven.” . . . Jesus prayed to His Father, and taught His disciples to do likewise; but we are nowhere taught that Jesus prayed to His heavenly Mother. . . . (The Seek, page 157)

It would appear, then, that in Mormon theology the claim that a woman can obtain “Godhood” amounts to very little. Like the present “Heavenly Mother,” she will be required to yield the most perfect obedience to her “great Head”—i.e., her husband, while she continues to give birth to “many millions” of spirit children.
Apostle Pratt explained:

In the Heaven where our spirits were born, there are many Gods, each one of whom has his own wife or wives which were given to him previous to his redemption, while yet in his mortal state. Each God, through his wife or Wives, raises up a numerous family of sons and daughters; . . . As soon as each God has begotten many millions of male and female spirits, . . . he, in connection with his sons, organizes a new world, . . . where he sends both the male and female spirits to inhabit tabernacles of flesh and bones. . . . The number of the sons and daughters of God, born in Heaven before this earth was formed, is not known by us . . . Seventy thousand million, therefore, is a rough approximation to the number . . . Add to seventy thousand million, the third part which fell, namely, thirty-five thousand million, and the sum amounts to one hundred and five thousand million which was the approximate number of the sons and daughters of God in Heaven before the rebellion which broke out among them.

31. If we admit that one personage was the Father of all this great family, and that they were all born of the same Mother, the period of time intervening between the birth of the oldest and the youngest spirit must have been immense. If we suppose, as an average, that only one year intervened between each birth, then it would have required, over one hundred thousand million of years for the same Mother to have given birth to this vast family. . . . if it required one hundred thousand million of years to people a world like this, as above stated, it is evident that, with a hundred wives, this period would be reduced to only one thousand million of years. (Ibid., pages 37-39)

Since the Mormon Church changed the anti-black doctrine, many Mormon women have come to see that they are the ones who will be “second class” citizens in heaven. Mormon leaders used to explain that blacks could not hold the priesthood because they were not ‘‘valiant in the pre-existence, but no reason has been given for the inferiority of women in Mormon theology.

AN UPDATE ON

FALL of the BOOK of ABRAHAM

In the Salt Lake City Messenger for March 1968, we announced the “FALL OF THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM.” Subsequently we published a number of books showing that Joseph Smith’s “Book of Abraham” had been proven untrue (see especially Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 294-369). During the past few years we have received a number of inquiries as to whether there has been any change in the situation with regard to the Book of Abraham. Our reply is that although there have been a few new developments, the case against the Book of Abraham stands as firm as it did over a decade ago.

In our new book, The Changing World of Mormonism, we give this information about the “Fall of the Book of Abraham”:

The Book of Abraham was supposed to have been written on papyrus by Abraham about 4,000 years ago. According to Mormon writers, this same papyrus fell into Joseph Smith’s hands in 1835. He translated the papyrus and published it under the title, “The Book of Abraham.” The Book of Abraham was accepted by the Mormon Church as Scripture and is now published as part of the Pearl of Great Price—one of the four standard works of the church. . . .

For many years Joseph Smith’s collection of papyri was lost, but on November 27, 1967, the Mormon owned Deseret News announced:

NEW YORK—A collection of pa[p]yrus manuscripts, long believed to have been destroyed in the Chicago fire of 1871, was presented to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints here Monday by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. . . .

Included in the papyri is a manuscript identified as the original document from which Joseph Smith had copied the drawing which he called “Facsimile No. 1” and published with the Book of Abraham.

The importance of this find cannot be overemphasized, for now Joseph Smith’s ability as a translator of ancient Egyptian writing can be put to an absolute test. . . .

After receiving the papyri from the Metropolitan Museum, Mormon leaders turned them over to “Dr. Hugh Nibley, scholar, linguist at Brigham Young University, . . . for further research and study” . . .

Dr. Nibley began a series of articles for the Improvement Era in January, 1968. This series ran for over two years, and was finally brought to a conclusion with the issue published May, 1970. Although Dr. Nibley was supposed to unfold “the meaning of the hieroglyphics” in this series of articles, no translation of the Joseph Smith Papyri ever appeared in this series. It would appear that Dr. Nibley’s main objective in this series was to blind the eyes of his fellow church members so that they could not see the real issues involved in this matter.

Although he used almost 2,000 footnotes, he never did deal with the main problem.

Dr. Nibley gave this excuse for not translating the papyri in an article published in Brigham Young University Studies, (Spring 1968, page 251): “We have often been asked during the past months why we did not proceed with all haste to produce a translation of the papyri the moment they came into our possession. Well, for one thing others are far better equipped to do the job than we are, and some of those early expressed a willingness to undertake it. But, more important, it is doubtful whether any translation could do as much good as harm.”

In the Salt Lake Tribune for November 11, 1973, we criticized Dr. Nibley for not producing a translation of the papyri. He replied that he had prepared a book which “is 800 pages long, but that is not enough to account for keeping the impatient Tanners waiting for six years. What took up all that time was having to find out about a lot of things” (Salt Lake Tribune, November 25, 1973). This book, which many people believed would answer the objections of the critics and save the “Book of Abraham,” was finally published by the church’s Deseret Book Company in 1975 under the title, The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment. . . .

Although Dr. Nibley’s book is nicely printed and bound, the contents are very disappointing. Of the eleven fragments of papyrus which were discovered, ten of them contain significant Egyptian messages which can be translated. We would expect that any book about the papyri would at least have a translation of all these pieces. Dr. Nibley’s book, however, only contains a translation of two fragments! Among the fragments which Dr. Nibley has not translated is the original of “Facsimile No. 1” in the “Book of Abraham.” This fragment contains a number of lines of hieroglyphs which relate to the meaning of the drawing. The reason Dr. Nibley has not translated these lines seems obvious: they show that “Facsimile No. 1” is not a picture of “Abraham fastened upon an altar” as Joseph Smith proclaimed, but rather a picture of an Egyptian by the name of Hor being prepared for burial. We will have more to say about this later. (The Changing World of Mormonism, pages 329, 330, 334-336)
In the Salt Lake City Messenger for April 1976 we pointed out that Dr. Nibley’s book contains some very serious errors. H. Michael Marquardt has prepared a good rebuttal entitled, The Book of Abraham Papyrus Found: An Answer to Dr. Hugh Nibley’s Book “The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment.”

As we have already shown, Dr. Nibley’s book was published in 1975. In 1979, however, he spoke at the Sunstone Theological Symposium and his statements seem to discredit his own book:

“I refuse to be held responsible for anything I wrote more than three years ago. For heaven’s sake, I hope we are moving forward here. After all, the implication that one mistake and it is all over with—how flattering to think in forty years I have not made one slip and I am still in business! I would say that about four fifths of everything I put down has changed, of course.” (Sunstone, December 1979, page 49)

Dr. Nibley would have us believe that the science of Egyptology is in a constant state of upheaval. Now, while it is true that there will always be refinements, the basic principles remain the same. We feel that the constant state of confusion that Dr. Nibley finds himself in is caused by his attempt to defend a work of Joseph Smith’s own imagination—i.e., the Book of Abraham. While our case against the Book of Abraham stands on the same unshakeable foundation it did 12 years ago, Dr. Nibley has to constantly change his ideas. First, he was going to answer the critics in the Improvement Era. When this did not work, he prepared a book which “is 800 pages long”—actually 305 large printed pages. Four years later, however, he says that “I refuse to be held responsible for anything I wrote more than three years ago.” After all this one would think that Dr. Nibley would give up, but instead he threatens the critics with the possibility of still another book: “Of these things and much, much more we speak in what is a forthcoming book” (ibid., page 51).

Dr. Nelson?

Although Dr. Nibley was not able to translate the papyri at the time it came to light, there was an elder in the church who was qualified—Dee Jay Nelson. When Nibley learned of Nelson’s ability as an Egyptologist, he wanted him to help defend the church. In a letter dated June 27, 1967, he told Nelson that he could “see no reason in the world why you should not be taken into the confidence of the Brethren if this thing ever comes out into the open; in fact, you should be enormously useful to the Church . . . there are parties in Salt Lake who are howling for a showdown on the P.P.G.; if they have their way we may have to get together.”

On January 4, 1968, Dee Jay Nelson visited with Dr. Nibley at Brigham Young University and examined the original papyri. Dr. Nibley agreed that Nelson should translate the papyri, and he sent a note to N. Eldon Tanner, a member of the First Presidency, stating that “it would be a good idea to let Prof. Dee J. Nelson have copies” of the papyri. Mr. Nelson translated the papyri, but he was unable to find any mention of Abraham or his religion in any portion of the papyri. He found the names of many pagan gods who were worshiped by the Egyptians but nothing concerning the God of Abraham. After completing his translation, Mr. Nelson contacted us and asked if we wanted to print it. Since the translation proved unfavorable to the church, it was obvious that the church would not print it. When we completed the publication we tried to advertise it in the Deseret News but church leaders would not allow the ad to be run.

Unfortunately, about ten years after completing his translation of the Joseph Smith Papyri, Dee Jay Nelson put forth the claim that he had a doctor’s degree from an institution he later identified as Pacific Northwestern University. On February 13, 1980, we attended a lecture in Brigham City, Utah, where we heard Mr. Nelson proclaim he had a Ph.D. in anthropology. We became a little suspicious, however, when he failed to give the name of the school. A few weeks later a woman called us from Arizona and said that Nelson had claimed the school he had attended was in Seattle. When she called information, however, she was unable to locate it. We tried the same thing and obtained a similar result. On March 11-12, 1980, we wrote to Nelson asking for documentation which would prove he had a doctor’s degree. Mr. Nelson did send us a photograph of what purported to be his diploma from Pacific Northwestern University. After examining this document and another paper he sent, we became very suspicious that Pacific Northwestern University was not a legitimate university. We contacted a noted educator from the University of Utah who checked with Dr. James Bemis, Executive Director of the Higher Commission of the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges, and found that Pacific Northwestern University was only a “diploma mill of the worst kind.” We confirmed this report by calling the U.S. Postal Department in Seattle and the King County Attorney’s Office. (More information concerning this matter will be sent to the reader free upon request.)

In the letter of March 11-12, 1980, we made it clear to Mr. Nelson what we would do if his claim concerning a doctor’s degree could not be substantiated:

It is with great sorrow that I sit down to write this letter to you. I feel, however, as the publisher of four of your booklets I am obligated to find out the truth about certain matters that have recently come to my attention. . . . While it is true that I have never published anything about you having a Dr.’s degree, any statements you have made about this matter subsequent to the translation of the Joseph Smith Papyri could have a tendency to reflect upon my integrity in the eyes of many people.

If I were to overlook misrepresentation on the part of non-Mormon writers I would be operating on a double standard. You will no doubt remember what we wrote about “Dr. Webb”—the great defender of the Mormon faith. It is summed up in our new book, The Changing World of Mormonism, page 333:

The other Egyptologists whom Spalding contacted rendered a similar verdict—i.e., the “Book of Abraham” was a work of Joseph Smith’s own imagination and had no basis in fact. . . . Mormon historian B. H. Roberts admitted that there “were no Egyptian scholars in the church of the Latter-day Saints who could make an effective answer to the conclusions of the eight scholars who in various ways pronounced against the correctness of Joseph Smith’s translation . . . .” (A Comprehensive History of [sic] the Church, vol. 2, page 139).

The Mormons, however, did receive help from a writer who called himself “Robert C. Webb, Ph.D.” Fawn M. Brodie claimed that Robert C. Webb’s real name was “J. E. Homans,” and that he was “neither an Egyptologist nor a Ph.D.” (No Man Knows My History, 1957, page 175). From this it is rather obvious that the Mormon leaders were guilty of deception.

Strange as it may seem, Dr. Sidney B. Sperry, of Brigham Young University, confirmed the fact that Robert C. Webb was no Ph.D.: “He wrote a wonderful book, . . . under the name of Robert C. Webb, Ph.D. I regret that the brethren let him put down Robert C. Webb, Ph.D., because he was no Ph.D.” (Pearl of Great Price Conference, December 10, 1960, 1964 ed., page 9). On page 6 of the same publication, Dr. Sperry stated that Dr. Webb’s “real name was J. C. Homans.”

At any rate, the Mormon church was able to survive Spalding’s attack on the “Book of Abraham” with very little injury because church members felt that “Dr. Webb” had answered the critics. Writing in the Improvement Era, April 1913, N. L. Nelson stated: “Dr. Webb has, indeed, vindicated the prophet better than he knew himself.” (The Changing World of Mormonism, page 333)
If it turns out that you do not have a Dr.’s degree, honesty would demand that I make a public statement to that effect. Otherwise, I would find myself in the same position as the Mormon leaders who concealed the true identity of “Dr. Webb.” It is my firm belief that “there is nothing covered; that shall not be revealed, and hid, that shall not be known” (Matthew 10:26). I feel that the Lord wants Christians to be honest even though it costs us a great deal.

I doubt that the Mormon Church leaders will ever have the courage to directly attack you concerning the issue of credentials because of their use and support of “Dr. Webb.” Even Dr. Hugh Nibley defended “Dr. Webb” in the Church’s own publication, Improvement Era:

Thus reassured, Bishop Spalding proceeded to demolish R. C. Webb: “We feel that we should be in a better position to judge the value of the opinions of Robert C. Webb, PhD . . . if we were told definitely who he is . . . . If Dr. Talmage . . . would inform us what the author’s real name is, where he received his degree, and what academic position he holds, we should be better able to estimate the value of his opinions.” Here it is again: The bishop is not interested in Webb’s arguments and evidence, but in his status and rank—considerations that are supposed to bear no weight whatever with honest searchers after truth—Nullus in verbis! What on earth have a man’s name, degree, academic position, and, of all things, opinions, to do with whether a thing is true or not? (Improvement Era, January 1968, page 22)

At any rate, even though the Mormon Church will probably remain officially silent concerning your credentials, I feel that my conscience will not allow me to keep silent if there is a problem. I realize, of course, that the question of your credentials does not affect the validity of your translation, and that the Church is in a bind with regard to the matter since its chief defender, Dr. Hugh Nibley, has written that your work is reliable:

The publication of the Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri has now begun to bear fruit. Two efforts at translation and commentary have already appeared, the one an example of pitfalls to be avoided, the other a conscientious piece of work for which the Latter-day Saints owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Dee Jay Nelson . . . . This is a conscientious and courageous piece of work—. . . . Nelson has been careful to consult top-ranking scholars where he has found himself in doubt. He has taken the first step in a serious study of the Facsimiles of the Pearl of Great Price, supplying students with a usable and reliable translation of the available papyri that once belonged to Joseph Smith. (Brigham Young University Studies, Spring 1968, pages 245 & 247)

Although we have used your translation of the Joseph Smith Papyri in a number of publications, we do not feel that our case against the Book of Abraham rests upon it. We have the testimony of some of the world’s greatest Egyptologists—i.e., Professor Richard Parker of Brown University and Professors Klaus Baer and John A. Wilson (now deceased) of the University of Chicago’s Oriental Institute. Even before you came on the scene our friend Grant Heward had identified the papyrus Joseph Smith used in the production of the Book of Abraham as the “Book of Breathing”—a pagan funerary document (see Salt Lake City Messenger, March 1968). I had studied the Egyptian language on my own before you came to Salt Lake and was able to test your work at various points. I knew therefore that it was generally a “reliable translation” as Dr. Nibley has admitted. . . .

Now, concerning your work at Rocky Mountain College: I have called the school and confirmed that you teach “Egyptology” in the “New Horizons” continuing education program. Lorri Keck, the director of this program, informs me that no credit is given for these classes. (I do not accuse you of hiding this fact, because you previously sent me a “Course Schedule” for Spring, 1976, which said the classes were “non-credit.”) Mrs. Keck, however, is disturbed because you have been calling yourself a Professor of Egyptology at Rocky Mountain College . . . . Since the classes you teach are “non-credit,” this appears to be somewhat misleading. . . . I must confess that I feel disappointed and sad because of this whole matter—somewhat like the feeling I had when I realized the Book of Mormon was not an authentic ancient document but rather a product of the 19th century. In any case, I feel it is my obligation to make this information available to the public. . . . I am convinced that our case against the Book of Abraham is absolutely devastating, and I would not want to weaken it in any way by trying to cover up or remain silent concerning such an important matter. (Letter from Jerald Tanner to Dee Jay Nelson, March 11-12, 1980)

On March 29, 1980, the Ogden Standard-Examiner printed an article by Charles F. Trentelman which contains the following:

An investigation of the credentials of Dee Jay Nelson . . . shows he does not hold a doctor’s degree from a university . . . . The discovery has caused considerable consternation among his supporters in Salt Lake City. . . . Jerald and Sandra Tanner, publishers of numerous books and papers attacking the LDS Church, say they are concerned by claims made by Nelson in recent months.

Mrs. Tanner said they investigated the claims and found Nelson’s diploma was from . . . a diploma mill, an operation that sells diplomas without requiring any schooling. . . .

Efforts by the Standard-Examiner to contact Nelson have been unsuccessful. His wife says Nelson is in Egypt doing more study. She declined to comment on her husband’s credentials except to say Nelson had written a letter to the Tanners, explaining the whole situation . . . .

The Standard-Examiner . . . was referred to Dr. Klaus Baer, University of Chicago Oriental Institute, as the leading Egyptologist in the country and the man who, if anyone, would know of Nelson. . . .

Baer said that, so far as he knew, Nelson had no formal education in Egyptian, although “he has certainly learned Egyptian somewhere.”

As to the papyri in question, Baer said Nelson’s translation is “essentially” correct.

Baer said he prepared a translation of the same papyrus. . . . and the translations say basically the same thing. . . .

In his letter to the Tanners, Nelson describes contacting Pacific Northwestern University in 1977 and inquiring about obtaining a doctorate. . . .

Mrs. Tanner told the Standard-Examiner she and her husband tried to find out about Pacific Northwestern University and learned from federal authorities in Seattle that it had been ordered to shut down, although no charges were brought against it.

Source of Book of Abraham

When the original papyri were located in 1967, many members of the Mormon Church felt that Joseph Smith’s work would be vindicated. As it turned out, however, just the opposite occurred. Within six months from the time the Metropolitan Museum gave the papyri to the Church, the “Book of Abraham” had been proven untrue! The fall of the Book of Abraham has been brought about by the identification of the actual fragment of papyrus from which Joseph Smith ‘translated’ the book. The identification of this fragment has been made possible by a comparison with Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar—handwritten documents we photographically reproduced in 1966. Dr. James R. Clark, of Brigham Young University, gives this information:
When the Mormon magazine, Improvement Era, printed sepia photographs of the papyri, the fragment of papyrus from which Joseph Smith translated the “Book of Abraham” was printed as the very last photograph. It is found on page 41 of the February 1968 issue, and is labeled: “XI. Small ‘Sensen’ text (unillustrated).”

All of the first two rows of characters on the papyrus fragment can be found in the manuscript of the “Book of Abraham” that is published in Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar.

Dr. James R. Clark reveals that there is another handwritten manuscript “in the Church Historian’s Office in Salt Lake City. The characters from which our present book of Abraham was translated are down the left-hand column and Joseph Smith’s translation opposite, so we know approximately how much material was translated from each character” (Pearl of Great Price Conference, December 10, 1960, 1964 ed., pages 60-61).

The Brigham Young University had photographs of this manuscript which Mr. Grant Heward was able to examine. This manuscript goes further than the one in the Alphabet and Grammar, and Mr. Heward found that the characters on this manuscript continue in consecutive order into the fourth line of the papyrus. This brings the text to Abraham 2:18. (For a photographic reproduction of four pages of this manuscript and a comparison of the characters on it with those found on the papyrus, see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 312-313.) A careful examination of this manuscript reveals that Joseph Smith used less than four lines from the papyrus to make forty-nine verses in the “Book of Abraham.” These forty-nine verses are composed of more than 2,000 English words! After a thorough examination of the evidence, Mormon scholar Richley Crapo had to concede “the startling fact that one of the papyri of the Church collection, known as the Small Sen-Sen Papyrus, contained the same series of hieratic symbols, which had been copied, in the same order, into the Book of Abraham manuscript next to verses of that book! In other words, there was every indication that the collection of papyri in the hands of the Church contained the source which led to a production of the Book of Abraham. It was naturally this document which I immediately began to translate” (Book of Abraham Symposium, LDS Institute of Religion, Salt Lake City, April 3, 1970, page 27).

Although Dr. Hugh Nibley later reversed his position in an attempt to save the Book of Abraham, in 1968 he frankly admitted that the papyrus Joseph Smith used for the text of the Book of Abraham had been located (see Improvement Era, May, 1968, page 54). At a meeting held at the University of Utah, Dr. Nibley declared:

Within a week of the publication of the papyri students calling my attention . . . to the fact that, the very definite fact that, one of the fragments seemed to supply all of the symbols for the Book of Abraham. This was the little “Sensen” scroll. Here are the symbols. The symbols are arranged here, and the interpretation goes along here and this interpretation turns out to be the Book of Abraham. Well, what about that? Here is the little “Sensen,” because that name occurs frequently in it, the papyrus, in which a handful of Egyptian symbols was apparently expanded in translation to the whole Book of Abraham. This raises a lot of questions. It doesn’t answer any questions, unless we’re mind readers. (Speech given by Hugh Nibley, University of Utah, May 20, 1968; see also Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer 1968, page 102).

As we indicated earlier, Grant Heward examined the papyrus which has been identified as the source of the Book of Abraham and concluded that “it is probably a part of the Egyptian “Book of Breathings” (Salt Lake City Messenger, March 1968). This identification was soon confirmed by several prominent Egyptologists. In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 317, we reproduced three different translations of the papyrus Joseph Smith used as the basis for his Book of Abraham. To save space here we will only include Professor Richard Parker’s translation. This translation was published in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought—a periodical published by a group of liberal Mormons but not controlled by the Church leaders. In Dialogue, Richard Parker was listed as “Wilbour Professor of Egyptology and Chairman of the Department of Egyptology at Brown University.” Mormon apologist Hugh Nibley said that Professor Parker is “the best man in America for this particular period and style of writing.” His translation reads as follows:

1. [. . . . . .] this great pool of Khonsu
2. [Osiris Hor, justified], born of Taykhebyt, a man likewise.
3. After (his) two arms are [fastened] to his breast, one wraps the Book of Breathings, which is
4. with writing both inside and outside of it, with royal linen, it being placed (at) his left arm
5. near his heart, this having been done at his
6. wrapping and outside it. If this book be recited for him, then
7. he will breathe like the soul[s of the gods] for ever and

Except for a few minor variations, the other two renditions of the text are essentially in agreement with Professor Parker’s. The “Book of Abraham,” therefore, has been proven to be a spurious work. The Egyptologists find no mention of Abraham or his religion in this text. The average number of words that the three Egyptologists used to convey the message in this text is ninety-two, whereas Joseph Smith’s rendition contains thousands of words. It is impossible to escape the conclusion that the Book of Abraham is a false translation.

After the publication of the papyri it became very obvious that Dr. Nibley was unprepared to deal with the problems related to the translation of the Book of Abraham and that he had no real answers to give his people. At one point he became so desperate to save the Book of Abraham that he suggested that the “Sensen” text may have a second meaning unknown to Egyptologists:

. . . you very often have texts of double meaning . . . it’s quite possible, say, that this “Sensen” papyrus, telling a straight forward innocent little story or something like that, should contain also a totally different text concealed within it . . . they [the Egyptians] know what they’re doing, but we don’t. We don’t have the key. (Speech by Hugh Nibley, University of Utah, May 20, 1968)

When Marvin Cowan asked Professor Richard Parker if the papyri could have a second meaning, he replied that he knew of “no Egyptologist who would support such a claim” (Letter dated January 9, 1968).

Although Dr. Nibley gave some support to the theory that the papyrus might have a second or hidden meaning, he seems to have come to his senses and now realizes that such an idea cannot be successfully maintained. Unfortunately, however, he has come up with another theory which is as fantastic as the first: that the Book of Abraham is still lost and the “Sensen” papyrus has no relationship to it. It is, in fact, “the directions for wrapping up the Joseph Smith papyri with the mummy” (The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: . . . , page 6). According to Dr. Nibley’s theory, Joseph Smith’s scribes mistakenly copied the characters from the “Sensen” papyrus into the three handwritten manuscripts of the Book of Abraham:
Is the Book of Abraham a correct translation of Joseph Smith Papyri X and XI? No, the Book of Breathings is not the Book of Abraham! . . . Doesn’t the text of the Book of Abraham appear in a number of manuscripts in columns running parallel with characters from the Book of Breathings? Yes, the brethren at Kirtland were invited to try their skill at translation; in 1835 the Prophet’s associates, . . . made determined efforts to match up the finished text of the Book of Abraham with characters from the J.S. Papyrus No. XI . . . (Ibid., page 2)

Dr. Nibley’s suggestion that Joseph Smith’s scribes added the wrong characters in the translation manuscripts is absolutely preposterous. That Joseph Smith would allow his scribes to copy the characters from the wrong papyrus into three different manuscripts of the Book of Abraham is really beyond belief. A person might almost as reasonably conclude that the Book of Abraham itself was made up by Joseph Smith’s scribes. Dr. Nibley’s attempt to separate the “Sensen” papyrus from the Book of Abraham cannot be accepted by those who honestly examine the evidence. The reader should remember that Nibley himself originally accepted the “Sensen” text as the source of the Book of Abraham.

Nibley, of course, has to maintain that the rediscovered papyri do not contain the portion which Joseph Smith translated as the Book of Abraham. A number of Mormon apologists have blindly followed Dr. Nibley into this grave error. Caleb A. Shreeve, Sr., for instance, wrote the following in an advertisement which appeared in the Ogden Standard-Examiner on March 24, 1980:

Joseph Smith (Dec. 31, 1835) describes the writing of Abraham Papyri as, “Beautifully written on papyrus, with black, and small part red, ink or paint, in perfect preservation” (HC. 2:348). To date, (1980) a papyrus fitting Joseph’s description has not been found.

If Mr. Shreeve had cited the first part of the quotation from the History of the Church, vol. 2, page 348, it would have changed the whole meaning of the statement:

The record of Abraham and Joseph, found with the mummies [sic], is beautifully written on papyrus, with black, and a small part red, ink or paint, in perfect preservation.

The reader will notice that when the entire statement is quoted it becomes plain that it is referring to the records of both Joseph and Abraham. In other words, it is a statement about Joseph Smith’s Papyri collection in general, not just the one roll which Joseph Smith called the Book of Abraham. This is made very clear in another entry in Joseph Smith’s History:

. . . I commenced the translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt, etc. (History of the Church, vol. 2, page 236)

Now, when we understand that Joseph Smith believed the Book of Abraham was written on a different roll of papyrus than the Book of Joseph, it becomes clear that he was referring to the collection of papyri in general and not specifically to the Book of Abraham. Among the papyri that were rediscovered in 1967 there are pieces which contain rubrics—i.e., portions written in red ink. In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 354-355, we prove conclusively that they are from the roll of papyrus the early Mormons designated as the “Book of Joseph.” When they are translated, however, they turn out to be nothing but portions of the Egyptian Book of the Dead.

At any rate, the fact that Joseph Smith chose the papyrus identified as the Book of Breathings as the source for his Book of Abraham is established by irrefutable evidence. To begin with, Joseph Smith used the drawing at the beginning of the Book of Breathings roll as Facsimile No. 1 for his Book of Abraham. It does not contain red ink and the workmanship appears to be no better or well-preserved than that found on Papyrus XI. This in itself would completely destroy the argument advanced by Shreeve and Nibley, but the evidence becomes even stronger as we look into the matter. The writing in the columns to the side of the fragment used for Fac. No. 1, which Dr. Nibley does not dare to translate, mentions that the papyrus was made for Hor, and this is the same name mentioned in the Book of Breathings text which follows on Papyrus XI. Second, even Dr. Nibley has to admit that before the papyrus was cut up by the early Mormons, Papyrus XI followed immediately after Fac. No. 1 on the roll: “It can be easily shown by matching up the cut edges and fibres of the papyri that the text of the Joseph Smith ‘Breathing’ Papyrus (No. XI) was written on the same strip of material as Facsimile No. 1 and immediately adjoining it” (The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, page 13). On page 3 of the same book, Dr. Nibley has to admit that even Joseph Smith’s own scribes felt that the text of the Book of Abraham followed right after Fac. No. 1: “Since this is an illustration to the Book of Abraham, it has naturally been assumed that the text that follows the drawing could only be that of Abraham—even the brethren at Kirtland assumed that.”

The strongest evidence that Joseph Smith believed that Papyrus XI was the Book of Abraham is found in the fact that the characters from this fragment were used in the translation manuscripts. Dr. Nibley’s suggestion that this was only the work of his scribes cannot be accepted. All evidence, then, points to one unmistakable conclusion: Joseph Smith believed that Papyrus No. XI was the Book of Abraham. Although Dr. Nibley does not dare give a translation of the writing on the papyrus fragment used as Fac. No. 1 in the Book of Abraham, he has published a translation of Papyrus XI. His work agrees in substance with the translations we have published in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 317. In fact, Dr. Nibley includes the names of many pagan gods in his translation of the Book of Breathings (see The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, pages 19-23). Dr. Nibley cannot find anything about Abraham in this text, but to soften the disappointment he tries to relate it to the Mormon temple ceremony. Why he would want to equate the Egyptian religion with Mormonism is really a mystery to us. The Egyptian religion is so filled with magic and other pagan practices.

Egyptian Study Hurts Church

Just after the rediscovered Joseph Smith Papyri were turned over to the Church, Dr. Hugh Nibley lamented the fact that Mormon scholars were not prepared to deal with the issue. He went so far as to say that “LDS scholars are caught flat-footed by this discovery” (Daily Universe, BYU, December 1, 1967). Since that time some Mormons have taken a serious interest in the study of Egyptology. This research, however, has only tended to increase the problems facing the Church. Michael Dennis Rhodes, for instance, has made a study and translation of Fac. No. 2 in the Book of Abraham which has been published in Brigham Young University Studies. Joseph Smith claimed that Fac. No. 2 was “A Fac-simile From The Book of Abraham,” but in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 334-346, we demonstrate it is in reality a hypocephalus—a disk which was placed under the head of the mummy. We show, in fact, that Egyptologists can even read the name of the mummy from the disk. Michael Dennis Rhodes confirms that it is indeed a “hypocephalus” and that “The text of the hypocephalus itself seems to be an address to Osiris, the god of the Dead, on behalf of the deceased, Sheshonk” (Brigham Young University Studies, Spring 1977, page 274). Rhodes translation of Fac. No. 2 contains absolutely nothing about Abraham. It only mentions the pagan gods of the Egyptians. For instance, on the edge of the disc he reads:
“Edge: I am Djabty in the House of the Benben in Heliopolis, so exalted and glorious. [I am] a copulating bull without equal. [I am] that Mighty God in the House of the Benben in Heliopolis ... that Mighty God ...” On page 260 of the same article, Michael Dennis Rhodes says that “the meaning of the hypocephalus is intimately connected with chapter 162 of the Book of the Dead, ...”. This is certainly an astonishing statement to find in a publication printed by the Mormon Church’s own university. One would think that if it is a “Fac-simile From the Book of Abraham,” it would be “intimately connected” with the Book of Abraham—not the Book of the Dead. In any case, Rhodes goes on to point out that the cow found in Fac. No. 2 is in reality a pagan goddess:

This is the cow Ihet, mentioned in chapter 162 of the Book of the Dead, which should be drawn on a piece of new papyrus. This picture of a cow is common to almost all hypocephali. Ihet is a form of Hathor, the personification of the power of nature. She is also connected with Mehwert (Greek Methytr), another cow goddess who symbolized the sky. (Ibid., page 272)

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 341-343, we show that one of the scenes shown in Fac. No. 2 of the Book of Abraham is actually a pornographic representation of an ithyphallic god known as Min which was altered to cover up this fact in current printings of the Pearl of Great Price. Joseph Smith claimed that the scene “Represents God sitting upon his throne, . . .” While it is easy to believe a pagan deity might be represented in such a way, it would be hard to believe that Abraham would draw an obscene picture of God.

It is interesting to note that Michael Dennis Rhodes agrees that an ithyphallic god is shown in Fac. No. 2:

7. A seated ithyphallic god with a hawk’s tail, holding aloft the divine flail. ...

The seated god is clearly a form of Min, the god of the regenerative, procreative forces of nature, perhaps combined with Horus as the hawk’s tail would seem to indicate. ... The procreative forces, receiving unusual accentuation throughout the representation, may stand for many divine generative powers, not least of which might be conjointed with the blessings of the priesthood in one’s posterity eternally. (Ibid., page 273)

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 335-344, we prove that portions of the original hypocephalus from which Joseph Smith prepared Facsimile No. 2 were either missing or damaged when he obtained it and that he falsely inserted material from both the Book of the Dead and the Book of Breathings papyri to fill in the blank spaces. The fact that he did not know what he was doing is very obvious because he inserted hieratic characters from the Book of Breathings where hieroglyphic characters should appear. To make matters even worse, he inserted characters upside down to the rest of the text. In plain language, then, Fac. No. 2 is a falsified reconstruction of the original disc. Michael Dennis Rhodes confirms this on page 263 of his article in Brigham Young University Studies:

When persuing Facsimile 2, one is immediately struck by the contrast between most of the hieroglyphic signs, which are readily recognizable, and the signs of the right third of the figure on the outer edge as well as the outer portions of the sections numbered 12-15. On closer examination, these prove to be hieratic and inverted (that is, upside down to the rest of the text). And, most surprising of all, these hieratic characters are recognizable as a fairly faithfully rendered copy of lines 2, 3, and 4 of the Church papyrus XI, which contains a portion of the Sensen papyrus or Book of Breathings. Especially clear is the actual word, ssn, in section 14, and part of the name of the possessor of the papyrus, ... repeated twice. Why this was done I am not sure. I can only postulate that these portions of the hypocephalus were damaged (a common enough occurrence because of the extremely fragile condition of these documents) and someone (the printer, one of the Prophet’s associates, or Joseph Smith himself) copied these characters off the Sensen papyrus so that the facsimile would look complete. In support of this view is an ink drawing of Facsimile 2 in the Church Historian’s Office which shows blanks in these sections.

One of the best articles published on the Book of Abraham facsimiles appears in Sunstone for December 1979. It is written by Edward A. Ashment of the Translation Department of the Mormon Church. Mr. Ashment is at present working on his Ph.D. in Egyptology from the University of Chicago. While we cannot agree with Ashment when he maintains that Joseph Smith “can yet be a prophet” even though he gave false restorations of the facsimiles, we do feel that his—especially the footnotes—will find that it is actually a devastating attack on the work of Hugh Nibley. For example, in BYU Studies, Autumn 1968, page 95, Dr. Nibley claims that “no clear instances” of restoration have been demonstrated in Fac. No. 1. To this Ashment responds:

In relation to the lion-couch scene of Facsimile 1 (Plate 1) it has been claimed that “no clear instances” of restoration “have been demonstrated.” However, close examination of the evidence leads to the conclusion that such instances indeed are demonstrable. (Sunstone, December 1979, page 33)

Joseph Smith maintained that Fac. No. 1 shows the “priest of Elkenah attempting to offer up Abraham as a sacrifice.” In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 348-350, we show that it is really the Egyptian god of the dead Anubis and that he should have the head of a jackal. This portion of the papyrus where the head should appear had broken off and Joseph Smith falsely restored a human head. On page 36 of his article, Ashment declared: “With high probability, Fig. 3 should be restored as Anubis and not as a human-headed individual.”

With regard to Fac. No. 2, Edward Ashment freely admits that it has been incorrectly restored:

Finally, attention must be given to the hieroglyphic texts of Facsimile 2 ... they are very important in that they help to conclusively identify the damaged areas ... as well as to provide information about the “instruction [Joseph Smith gave to Reuben Hedlock] concerning the arrangement of the writing on the large cut, illustrating the principles of astronomy [i.e., Facsimile 2].”

It comes as no surprise then, that the areas in which the Prophet conceivably could have given “instruction” to Reuben Hedlock “concerning the arrangement of the writing” are those where lacunae [i.e., gaps] exist in the CH document but in which the Hedlock version has material, mostly written upside down and backwards in a different script, the subject matter of which radically differs from that of the rest of the texts on the hypocephalus. ...

The basic document with all of the conjecturally restored material reveals, in addition to the vignettes already discussed, many signs that have come from the small snn text (or Papyrus Joseph Smith XI, which was originally attached to Papyrus Joseph Smith I—see Plate 8); ... As already noted, these texts are part of a different contextual unit, written upside down and backwards in the hypocephalus, and are in a different script from the rest of its texts. Why those characters were chosen, apparently by the prophet, to fill in the lacunae is not exactly known, for other signs written in hieroglyphic instead of hieratic were available and their style would have more closely approximated that of the hypocephalus. One possibility may be that those particular signs may have been well-known to the prophet in relation to the Book of Abraham manuscripts (Plate 9), with the result that he “gave instruction” to Hedlock to arrange them within the hypocephalus. (Sunstone, December 1979, page 42)
In his attempt to save the Book of Abraham, Dr. Hugh Nibley has tried to separate Joseph Smith as far as possible from the Kirtland Egyptian Papers—i.e., the papers we published as Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar. Edward Ashment, however, feels that Dr. Nibley is in error on this matter:

Consequently, the fact that the prophet “gave instruction concerning the writing on the large cut,” together with the fact that that same writing is connected with the Book of Abraham manuscripts, implies that the prophet had some positive connection with the production of the Joseph Smith Egyptian Papers. Therefore, even though involvement with them on his part has been disputed, thoughtful reexamination of the evidence leads to the conclusion that the prophet was connected with the entire project. (Ibid., page 42)

It seems that Ashment has demolished Dr. Nibley’s arguments at every turn. In his reply to Ashment Nibley conceded:

Since hearing Brother Ashment I have to make some changes in what I have said already. Do I have to hang my head and go hide or something like that because I have been discredited? These things are being found out all the time. There are lots of things that Brother Ashment pointed out that I should have noticed; but I notice I could point out a lot of things that he has not noticed.

But who can do all that stuff? . . . the main thing is to move on into unexplored territory, and go into it with the careful, meticulous examination that he has. (Sunstone, December 1979, page 51)

Those who have carefully followed this controversy since the discovery of the papyri in 1967 are aware of the fact that Dr. Nibley, the Church’s chief defender, has stubbornly fought against the truth with regard to the Book of Abraham. Although he has put up many smoke screens to try to divert attention from the real problems, he has not been successful in silencing the opposition. Many Mormons, in fact, have lost confidence in him because of his inability to fulfill his promises about saving the Book of Abraham. Now that one of the Mormon Church’s own scholars has attacked him, Dr. Nibley replies: “I refuse to be held responsible for anything I wrote more than three years ago” (Ibid., page 49).

While the whole foundation for Dr. Nibley’s arguments seems to be crumbling, we can point with confidence to the case we have prepared against the Book of Abraham. Our arguments are just as good as when we first advanced them twelve years ago. Our case is not based on any one man or any wild speculation, but rather on the science of Egyptology, original documents and careful research. We feel, in fact, that the case against the Book of Abraham is irrefutable. Those who are interested will find the evidence clearly presented in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? A condensed version appears in our new book, The Changing World of Mormonism.

Over a year ago our daughter April decided she was interested in the possibility of full-time Christian service. She has attended Simpson College (a Bible school in San Francisco) this past year and has really grown in her Christian commitment. Instead of working this summer, April has decided to take a step of faith and become involved in a difficult missionary project. In her prayer letter she says:

I have been accepted as a team member on the Teen Missions Tamboboan, Philippines Team. The team of 30 teens plus leaders will build a church for the nationals . . . On Sundays we will be sharing our love for the Lord in surrounding villages through personal testimonies and song. . . . This experience will give me a first-hand look at and involvement with missions. I am asking my friends to contribute to Teen Missions International, Inc., to enable them to cover my expenses as a summer missionary . . .

April’s expenses will amount to over $1,700. So far she has raised about half this amount. Perhaps some of our readers will be interested in helping her (all gifts are tax-deductible). Checks must be made out to TEEN MISSIONS INTERNATIONAL, INC., and mailed to April Tanner, 1350 South West Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah 84115.
Joseph Smith’s “Caractors” Found!
Important Discovery Puts President Kimball on the Spot

On May 3, 1980, the Church Section of the Mormon newspaper, Deseret News, reported that an amazing discovery had been made:

A hand-written sheet of paper with characters supposedly copied directly from the gold plates in 1828, and also bearing other writing and the signature of Joseph Smith, has been found in an old Bible by a Utah State University student.

This would make it the oldest known Mormon document as well as the earliest sample of the Prophet’s handwriting.

Experts believe the paper may be the original one copied by Joseph Smith from the plates and given to Martin Harris in February 1828 to take to New York City for examination by linguistic experts.

The paper, written in faded brown ink, was discovered by Mark William Hofmann. Written on the back, apparently after Harris brought the paper back from his encounter with Professor Anthon, are the following words (and spellings):

“...these curators were diligently copiyed by my own hand from the plates of gold and given to Martin Harris who took them to New York City but the learned could not translate it because the Lord would not open it to them in fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah written in the 29th chapter and 11th verse. [signed] Joseph Smith Jr.”

“In my judgment, this writing is that of Joseph Smith,” said Dean C. Jessee, senior historical associate in the Church Historical Department. He is a recognized authority on the handwriting of the Prophet. Brother Jessee said that after a preliminary examination, the paper and ink also give every appearance of being authentic materials of the 1828 period.

The discovery of the historic paper by Brother Hofmann was quite accidental.

In March he purchased...a Bible once owned by members of Joseph Smith’s family. Handwriting in the Bible is signed by Samuel Smith, either the great-grandfather or great-great-grandfather of Joseph Smith. While leafing through the book, he noticed two pages stuck together. He carefully pulled them apart and saw a folded paper. “I couldn’t tell what it was, but I saw the signature of Joseph Smith. I wasn’t sure it was genuine, but I got rather excited,” he said.

According to a newspaper report, Dr. Richard L. Anderson, of Brigham Young University, claimed that “This new discovery is sort of a Dead Sea School [sic] Equivalent of the Book of Mormon.” (The Herald, Provo, Utah, May 1, 1980). Dr. Hugh Nibley was quoted as saying, “This offers as good a test as we’ll ever get as to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.” (Ibid.)

The reader will find a photograph of this significant document below on page 3 of this paper.

NO GIFT TO TRANSLATE

In the book, The Changing World of Mormonism, pages 334-335, we pointed out that when the Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri were rediscovered in 1967, the Mormon leaders turned them over “to Dr. Hugh Nibley, scholar, linguist at Brigham Young University...for further research and study.” This turned out to be a very serious mistake. To begin with, the fact that the papyri were turned over to Dr. Nibley is almost an admission that church leaders are not guided by revelation as they claim. The Mormon church is led by a man who is sustained by the people as “Prophet, Seer, and Revelator.” The Book of Mormon says that a “seer” can “translate all records that are of ancient date” (Mosiah 8:13). Apostle John A. Widtsoe stated that if “records appear needing translation, the President of the Church may at any time be called, through revelation, to the special labor of translation” (Evidences and Reconciliations, vol. I, page 203).

Since the church claims to have the “seer stone” and is supposed to be led by a “Prophet, Seer, and Revelator,” we might expect a translation by this means. Instead, however, the papyri were sent to Dr. Nibley to be translated by “the wisdom of the world.” Thus, it appears that the prophet does not have the gift to translate languages as has been previously claimed.

Because Dr. Nibley was not really qualified to translate the papyri and because he felt that it was “doubtful whether any translation could do as much good as harm” (Brigham Young University Studies, Spring 1968, page 25), he stalled around until other Egyptologists produced translations. When their works were published, it was discovered that the roll of papyrus Joseph Smith “translated” as the Book of Abraham was only a pagan funerary text known as the Book of Breathings. The roll identified by the Mormons as the Book of Joseph turned out to be nothing but the Egyptian Book of the Dead.

The new discovery of characters supposedly taken from the gold plates puts the Mormon Prophet in an embarrassing position. Instead of using the “seer stone” to translate the characters, President Kimball examined them with a magnifying glass (see photograph in Deseret News, Church Section, May 3, 1980). In a statement published in The Herald, May 1, 1980, Dr. Nibley makes it very plain that he is looking to a computer rather than to the “seer” for a translation of the characters:

“Of course it’s translatable. There are enough characters to strongly suggest a sequence so that you can determine the fingerprint of a language. There are 220 characters which could give a computer plenty to work with.”
VINDICATES SMITH?

*The Herald*, May 1, 1980, quotes Richard L. Anderson as saying:

“Joseph Smith’s story is really vindicated by the finding of the document because he mentioned that he sent Harris to the East to show the characters on the gold plates to the learned.

“We have Anthon’s story in letters explaining exactly what Harris showed to him. What Anthon describes is quite remarkably like what is on the new transcript.”

Since we have never questioned the fact that Joseph Smith sent Martin Harris to Professor Anthon, we fail to see how the discovery of this document vindicates Smith. We feel, in fact, that if anyone is vindicated it is Anthon. The story of the visit Martin Harris had with Professor Anthon is found in the *Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith 2:62-65:

... I commenced copying the characters off the plates. I copied a considerable number of them, and by means of the Urim and Thummim I translated some of them, ... Mr. Martin Harris came to our place, got the characters which I had drawn off the plates, and started with them to the city of New York. For what took place relative to him and the characters, I refer to his own account of the circumstances, as he related them to me after his return, which was as follows:

I went to the city of New York, and presented the characters which had been translated, with the translation thereof, to Professor Charles Anthon, ... (Professor Anthon stated that the translation was correct, more so than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian. I then showed him those which were not yet translated, and he said that they were Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyric, and Arabic; and he said they were true characters. He gave me a certificate, certifying to the people of Palmyra that they were true characters, and that the translation of such of them as had been translated was also correct. I ... was just leaving the house, when Mr. Anthon called me back, and asked me how the young man found out that there were gold plates in the place where he found them. I answered that an angel of God had revealed it unto him.

He then said to me, “Let me see that certificate.” I accordingly took it out of my pocket and gave it to him, when he took it and tore it to pieces. ... Upon examining the paper in question, I soon came to the conclusion that it was all a trick, perhaps a hoax. ... This paper was in fact a singular scrawl. It consisted of all kinds of crooked characters disposed in columns, and had evidently been prepared by some person who had before him at the time a book containing various alphabets. Greek and Hebrew letters, crosses and flourishes, Roman letters inverted or placed sideways, were arranged in perpendicular columns, and the whole ended in a rude delineation of a circle divided into various compartments, decked with various strange marks, and evidently copied after the Mexican Calendar given by Humboldt, but copied in such a way as not to betray the source whence it was derived. I ... well remember that the paper contained anything else but “Egyptian Hieroglyphics.”... (Letter written by Charles Anthon, as published in *Mormonism Unvailed*, 1834, pages 270-272)

B. H. Roberts admitted that the “statements of Professor Anthon and Martin Harris are very contradictory,” but he stated that Professor Anthon wrote another letter in 1841 which contains some statements that are not in harmony with the earlier letter (see *Comprehensive History of the Church*, vol. 1, pages 100-109).

Some Mormon writers are willing to admit that Anthon could not have claimed that the characters were correctly translated. John M. Lundquist, an instructor at Brigham Young University, conceded that “Charles Anthon ... was not trained in ancient languages. In addition, Demotic Egyptian and other ancient near eastern languages were not deciphered in his day” (*The Herald*, May 1, 1980). Stanley B. Kimball commented concerning this matter:

... in 1828 neither Anthon, Mitchell (nor anyone else in the world for that matter) had seen much translated from the Egyptian. ... Perhaps Harris was so intent on fulfilling a scriptural prophecy that he heard only what he wanted to hear. ... As far as the truthfulness of the Harris statements concerning what occurred, we have no evidence whatsoever beyond his character. ... this author does not think the incident had any great practical value—especially when we conclude, as we must, that the opinions of Anthon and Mitchell were not conclusive in any way. (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Spring 1970, pages 335, 336, 339-340)

The Mormon scholar Sidney B. Sperry maintained that some minor matters relating to Martin Harris’ interview with Professor Anthon might not have been correctly reported. We must also keep in mind that Martin Harris was no linguist, and in his report to the prophet he might have unwittingly misrepresented some of Professor Anthon’s statements concerning translation. (*The Problems of the Book of Mormon*, 1964, page 56)

Speaking of Joseph Smith’s account of the Harris-Anthon meeting—i.e., the account which appears in the *Pearl of Great Price*, Curt H. Seeman observed:

Unfortunately, this account has led people to claim that the Book of Mormon has been “proven” to be translated correctly, for Professor Anthon certified to this effect. Actually, nothing could be farther from the truth! At the time of the above incident, the study of Egyptian was in its beginning stage. ... He was in no position to vouch for the correctness of the translation. (*Fourteenth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures*, April 13, 1963, page 20)

The idea that Professor Anthon endorsed the translation of the Egyptian characters was undoubtedly an after-thought, for when Joseph Smith first wrote an account of his early life in 1832, he said nothing about Anthon endorsing his translation. On the contrary, he claimed that when the “learned” were asked to read the characters they replied, “I cannot” (*Joseph Smith’s 1832-34 Diary*, pages 10-11). The newly discovered document tends to verify Anthon’s own statement that he did NOT certify that the characters were “true characters, and that the translation ... was also correct.” The back side of this sheet contains Joseph Smith’s own signed statement that “the learned could not translate it because the Lord would not open it to them in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah ...” In this case we feel that the new discovery vindicates Anthon rather
A photograph of the newly-discovered document which is supposed to contain characters from the gold plates of the Book of Mormon.
than the account published in Joseph Smith’s story in the *Pearl of Great Price*.

Long before Mark W. Hofmann made his discovery, the Mormon Church published photographs of another document known as the “Anthon Transcript.” This document had been preserved by Book of Mormon witness David Whitmer and is now in the possession of the Reorganized LDS Church. In a booklet published in 1887, Whitmer wrote: “I have in my possession the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon... also the original paper containing some of the characters transcribed from one of the golden plates, which paper Martin Harris took to Professor Anthon...” (*An Address to All Believers in Christ*, page 11). Although this document contains “caractors” from the gold plates, they are printed horizontally (the new document has the characters running in vertical columns). A photograph of this transcript is found on page one.

Dean Jesse, of the Church Historical Department, feels that Joseph Smith penned both the vertical and the horizontal transcript (see *The Herald*, May 1, 1980). He points out, for instance, that both documents have the same misspelling of the word character. The letter h is omitted and the letter o is used instead of e toward the end of the word—“Caractor.”

Since the transcript preserved by David Whitmer is written horizontally and does not contain the circular object, most Mormon scholars have felt Anthon’s description of the document was in error. John L. Sorenson believed that Anthon’s statement carried some weight, but he observed that “No Mormon student apparently ever took Anthon seriously in his statement that they were vertical, ...” (*Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A., Brigham Young University*, no. 139, December 1976, page 2).

The Mormon writer Janne M. Sjodahl attacked Anthon’s credibility because his statement did not agree with the copy preserved by David Whitmer:

...the paper which the professor repudiates could not possibly have been the one submitted by the “plain farmer.” Read the description again. Professor Anthon says the “singular scroll” had characters copied from Hebrew, Greek, Roman, etc., alphabets, by someone who had the book containing such alphabets before him. That lets the young boy, Joseph Smith, and his associates at that time out of the case; for neither of them had, at that time, any such literature before them. He says the characters were arranged in “perpendicular columns.” That is evidently not the case in the published facsimiles. Finally, he says the whole ended in a rude delineation of Humbolt’s reproduction of the Mexican calendar. That proves positively that the paper Professor Anthon is talking about is not the one Martin Harris exhibited. For neither Joseph nor any of his friends at that time was a student of Humbolt, and there is no picture, crude or otherwise, of the Mexican (Aztec) calendar stone on the facsimiles of Book of Mormon characters, now extant in print, ... Is it possible that someone had perpetrated a hoax on the professor, and, under an assumed name, submitted a paper such as that described in the Howe letter, just to accommodate Mr. Howe? Or was Professor Anthon’s memory so treacherous that it made him give a totally fictitious description of the paper Martin Harris presented? The latter of these alternatives is the more probable; the first is not altogether impossible. (*An Introduction to the Study of the Book of Mormon*, pages 11-12).

Now that the vertical transcript has come to light, Anthon’s description can no longer be discounted. It does contain characters in “perpendicular columns,” and it does end in a “circle divided into various compartments, decked with various strange marks, ...” In another letter written in 1841, Anthon maintained the “characters were arranged in columns, like the Chinese mode of writing, ... the whole ended in a rude representation of the Mexican zodiac” (*Gleanings by the Way*, page 233).

Mormon scholars seem to have accepted the new find as authentic. We are inclined to agree because it not only fits Anthon’s description, but it also contains very distinctive characters which were omitted on the horizontal transcript. It was pointed out at a meeting of the Mormon History Association that these very characters appeared in the Mormon newspaper, *The Prophet*, on December 21, 1844, and in a placard printed about this same time (see photographs in *About the Book of Mormon*, by Ariel L. Crowley, pages 11 and 17).

### Reformed Egyptian or Deformed English?

There are a number of theories as to what the characters on the transcript sent to Anthon actually represent. Joseph Smith, of course, maintained they were “reformed Egyptian.” Charles A. Shook, on the other hand, felt that

Instead of “Reformed Egyptian” many of the “Caractors” are deformed English, as any one will observe who will compare them with English letters, figures and signs. I have counted thirty-six different characters in the fac-simile, some of them occurring more than once, which are either identical with, or which closely resemble, the English. ... Latter-day Saints are very quick to see a resemblance between the “Caractors” and the letters in the Maya and Egyptian alphabets of Le Plongeon; will they be as quick to see the similarity between the “Caractors” and the English? If similarity proves anything, it proves that the transcript is a bold, bare forgery and one not above the ability of a Smith or a Harris to execute. (*Cumorah Revisited*, 1910, pages 538-539)

After the discovery of the vertical transcript was announced, Grant Heward suggested that it would be interesting to see if an English message could be conveyed with Joseph Smith’s characters. It did not take us too long to find characters on the transcript which could represent every letter and every number in the English language. Below the reader will find the English alphabet, numbers up to ten and an English message written in “reformed Egyptian” characters. As early as 1834 Professor Anthon suggested that the letters appearing on the transcript had been “inverted or placed sideways.” We have taken the liberty, therefore, of turning some characters around and in some cases have used the same character to represent more than one letter or number. Nevertheless, all the characters are taken from photographs of the original document and have not been recopied by hand.

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**The Alphabet**

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A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
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**Numbers**

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0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
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While we do not feel that our experiment actually proves that the transcript is composed of “deformed English,” we think that it should serve as a warning to those overzealous scholars who cannot refrain from making dubious parallels between Egyptian characters and those penned by Joseph Smith.

**MAGIC CHARACTERS?**

A former Brigham Young University professor has maintained for a number of years that the characters on the Anthon Transcript are taken from works on magic and astrology. Although we felt that he could demonstrate a few parallels, we have never taken this idea too seriously. In recent years some evidence has come forth which definitely proves that Joseph Smith was involved in magical practices. For instance, in 1971 Wesley P. Walters discovered an original document which proves that Joseph Smith was a “glass looker” and that he was arrested, tried and found guilty by a justice of the peace in Bainbridge, New York, in 1826 (see *The Changing World of Mormonism*, pages 67-75). Three years after Walters made this startling discover (1974), Dr. Reed Durham, who was director of the LDS Institute of Religion at the University of Utah and president of the Mormon History Association, discovered that what had previously been identified as the “Masonic jewel of the Prophet Joseph Smith” was in reality a “Jupiter talisman.” This is a medallion which contains material relating to astrology and magic. Dr. Durham, apparently not realizing the devastating implications of his discovery, announced this important find in his presidential address before the Mormon History Association on April 20, 1974:

...I should like to initiate all of you into what is perhaps the strangest, the most mysterious, occult-like esoteric, and yet Masonically oriented practice ever adopted by Joseph Smith... All available evidence suggests that Joseph Smith the Prophet possessed a magical, Masonic medallion, or talisman, which he worked during his lifetime and which was evidently on his person when he was martyred. His talisman is in the shape of a silver dollar and is probably made of silver or tin. It is exactly one and nine-sixteenths in diameter, the talisman, originally purchased from the Emma Smith Bidamon family, fully notarized by that family to be authentic and to have belonged to Joseph Smith, can now be identified as a Jupiter talisman. It carries the sign and image of Jupiter and should more appropriately be referred to as the Table of Jupiter. And in some very real and quite mysterious sense, this particular Table of Jupiter was the most appropriate talisman for Joseph Smith to possess. Indeed, it seemed meant for
Reed Durham was severely criticized by Mormon scholars and officials for giving this speech. He was even called in by Mormon President Spencer W. Kimball, and finally found it necessary to issue a letter in which he reaffirmed his faith in Joseph Smith and said that he was sorry for the “concerns, and misunderstandings” that the speech had caused. We feel that Dr. Durham’s identification of Joseph Smith’s magic talisman is one of the most significant discoveries in Mormon history and that he should be commended for his research. In The Changing World of Mormonism, pages 90-91, we show that the possession of a magic talisman by Joseph Smith fits well with evidence presented in his 1826 trial.

In any case, the recent discovery of the vertical transcript which Martin Harris took to Professor Anthon has revived interest in magic characters and Joseph Smith’s talisman. The reader will notice that in the lower right hand corner of the transcript there appears a circular object which bears some resemblance to Joseph Smith’s talisman. In both cases we have a circle drawn within another circle with characters running around the edge and within the center circle. While there does not appear to be as many characters on the talisman as on the transcript, a magic work known as The Sixth & Seventh Books of Moses contains “over One Hundred and Twenty-Five Seals, Signs, Emblems, etc.” which have magical characters and discs which could furnish ideas for creating a document like the Anthon-Harris manuscript. Francis Barrett’s book The Magus also contains “Misterious Characters” and material relating to magical circles. As Dr. Durham pointed out, Joseph Smith’s magic talisman is shown in this book.

Now, although we could make many parallels to magical characters, we do not feel that the case has been proven.

**Will Nibley Translate It?**

We have previously quoted Dr. Hugh Nibley as making this comment concerning the recently discovered vertical transcript:

“Of course it’s translatable” (The Herald, May 1, 1980). According to The Herald,

Nibley also said he counted at least two dozen out of 47 characters in the Demotic alphabet that could be given phonetic value.

“This offers as good a test as we’ll ever get. Nobody could have faked those characters. It would take 10 minutes to see that this is fake.”

For many years Dr. Nibley has maintained that the “Reformed Egyptian” spoken of in the Book of Mormon was derived from the Egyptian script known as Demotic. Just why the Nephites would have such a system of writing is certainly a mystery, for Nibley himself feels that Demotic was “the most awkward, difficult, and impractical system of writing ever devised by man!” (Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites, 1952, page 16).

For many years Mormon scholars have been trying desperately to link the horizontal “Anthon Transcript” to the Egyptian language. Ariel Crowley, for instance, photographically compared characters from the Anthon Transcript with those found in “Recognized Egyptian Works.” Although his parallels appear rather impressive at first glance, Wesley P. Walters has pointed out that they really do not amount to much:

The one serious attempt to find similarities with Egyptian characters (A. Crowley, Improvement Era, February 1942, pp. 76 ff) had to hunt among scripts separated from each other by a thousand years and in some instances much later than the period from which the alleged “Reformed Egyptian” is supposed to date. In addition, Mr. Crowley sought correlations with the Sinai proto-Semitic script . . . rendering the entire attempt a linguist[sic] impossibility, a sort of alphabetic smorgasbord (Joseph Smith Among the Egyptians, page 26, footnote).

In the Improvement Era, October 1960, Stanley B. Kimball wrote the following:

Several efforts have been made to demonstrate that the Book of Mormon characters are in fact Egyptian. Honorable as such attempts are and fascinating though they may be, the net result is generally a striking comparison of the similar characters and an ignoring of the dissimilar characters. By this very method it may be “proved” that we speak Russian in this country.

In 1971 Stanley B. Kimball prepared another article on the Anthon Transcript. At the end of this article he stated:

In conclusion, I am forced to say that the research done on the Anthon Transcript to date has accomplished little more than to define the problems connected with it . . . (Newsletter and Proceedings of the Society for Early Historic Archaeology, BYU, August 1971, page 4)

Two Mormon scholars tried to make a translation of the Anthon Transcript in 1973, but the results proved to be disastrous. While one translator felt he found the word “Mormon” in the first line, the other scholar believed it contained “Zarahemla.” John Buenger tells about this matter in Appendix I of his unpublished paper, “A Preliminary Approach to Linguistic Aspects of the Anthon Transcript.”

Edward H. Ashment, who has studied Egyptology at the University of Chicago and is now working with the Translation Department of the LDS Church, has been much more cautious with regard to the Anthon Transcript. He worked on it with the noted Egyptologist George Hughes, of the University of Chicago, but was unable to come up with anything concrete.

Dr. Hugh Nibley now claims that the transcript preserved by David Whitmer looks like it was copied by a baby: “The first was a sloppy transcript and badly copied, . . . In the earlier transcript, it was copied horizontally which would confuse anybody’’” (The Herald, May 1, 1980). While Dr. Nibley maintains that the newly discovered document is “translatable,” so far he has not provided any evidence to verify this statement. If the vertical transcript could be translated, we really wonder what Mormon scholars would do should the results turn out to be a copy of a pagan document. As we pointed out earlier, this very thing happened with regard to Joseph Smith’s Book of Abraham. Mormon apologists, however, would not accept this devastating evidence and came up with all kinds of excuses as to why Joseph Smith’s translation did not agree with that given by Egyptologists. At one time Dr. Nibley even supported the fantastic idea that the papyrus had a secret message unknown...
to Egyptologists. In more recent studies Nibley has come up with other explanations which are just as far-fetched. The Mormon scholar Dr. Henry Eyring went so far as to say:

... the essential ingredient in the Book of Abraham is whatever the Prophet was inspired to write down. ... it wouldn't make a bit of difference to me if the scholars, studying the scrolls that led the Prophet to think about the problem of Abraham and write about it — it wouldn't make a bit of difference to me if they discovered that it was a bill of lading for wheat in the Lower Nile. (Book of Abraham Symposium, Salt Lake Institute of Religion, April 3, 1970, page 3)

John L. Speer, a reporter for the Provo Herald, asked Dr. Nibley what would happen if the transcript which was supposed to have been copied from the gold plates turned out to be something other than the Book of Mormon:

What if, when it is translated, it turns out to be just an Egyptian shopping list?

Countered Nibley, “Then the question still remains—where did Joseph Smith get it? Demotic Egyptian wasn’t discovered until the 1850s and there was no grammar until the 20th century.” (The Herald, May 1, 1980)

It would appear from this that Nibley would maintain faith in Joseph Smith even if the document contained nothing about the Book of Mormon. The statement that “Demotic Egyptian wasn’t discovered until the 1850s” is so far from the truth that we wonder if Nibley has been misquoting. The Rosetta Stone, for instance, was discovered before Joseph Smith was even born. In his monumental work, Egyptian Grammar, page 12, Sir Alan Gardiner gives this information:

Such a clue was at last provided when some French soldiers, working on the foundations of a fortress at Rosetta, came across a trilingual inscription in Greek, demotic, and hieroglyphic (1799) ... scholars first directed their attention towards the demotic section.

Stanley B. Kimball says that “Many books had been published by 1828 containing facsimiles of Egyptian characters, ..." (Improvement Era, Feb. 1957, page 106; see also BYU Studies, Spring 1970, page 335).

In our book Archaeology and the Book of Mormon, we suggested that it was possible that Joseph Smith copied his characters from some book available at that time. Even if this were the case, however, the characters might still be impossible to read. Those who have studied our work, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? know that when Joseph Smith made copies of the characters from the Egyptian papyrus he obtained in 1835, the reproductions were so badly done that they were hardly recognizable. We must remember, too, about Joseph Smith’s method of working with ancient documents. Take, for instance, Facsimile No. 2 of his Book of Abraham, which is published in the Pearl of Great Price. In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 337-341, we graphically demonstrate that while Facsimile No. 2 is published as one circular disc, it is in reality a combination of three documents. The first document was an Egyptian hypocephalus. This is a magical disc which was placed under the head of the mummy. Because it was damaged portions were missing. Joseph Smith proceeded to fill in these areas with material from two other documents—i.e., the Book of Breathings and the Book of the Dead. Hieroglyphic characters were mixed with hieratic, and as if this was not bad enough, portions of the script were actually inserted upside down and backwards to the rest of the writing! Joseph Smith’s methods with regard to the Book of Abraham make us very cautious about accepting his Book of Mormon characters at face value. It could very well be that the newly discovered transcript is a composite of several documents. It is true that some of the characters look like Egyptian, but it is also true that they bear a resemblance to magic characters and an even stronger resemblance to the English alphabet. It should also be kept in mind that while the English alphabet is composed of only 26 letters, the Egyptian language has hundreds of characters from which one could draw parallels.

Stanley B. Kimball is one of the best authorities on the Anthon Transcript—i.e., the horizontal copy. Writing in Brigham Young University Studies, Spring 1970, page 350, he cautions:

... suggestions and attempts have been made to indicate and prove that the characters are some form of Egyptian, Meso-American, or even Phoenician. The strongest argument that can be made for the ingenious and pioneering efforts of those who favor Egyptian origin of the characters is the definite resemblance of the RLDS transcript characters to Egyptian characters. But this does not prove that the transcript is authentic, that the characters make connected thought, or are Egyptian. (Indeed, twelve, almost half of our English-Latin characters, appear in the Cyrillic alphabet, but this fact never has given and never will give anyone insight whatsoever into or understanding of Russian, Serbian, or Bulgarian.) Also it must be pointed out that there are so many variant, hieratic, and demotic characters that the affinity of many other writing systems with Egyptian could probably be proved.

If the case for the transcript characters being Egyptian in origin appears less than absolute, it is, nonetheless, infinitely stronger than any of the other arguments.

We would suspect that if any part of the newly discovered document is genuine it would be the circular object in the lower right hand corner. We have previously pointed out that in form it is somewhat like Joseph Smith’s own magic talisman, but the reader will also notice that it bears some resemblance to Facsimile No. 2 in the Book of Abraham (see the Pearl of Great Price). As we have already stated, this is a magic disk known as a hypocephalus. The Mormon scholar Michael Dennis Rhodes confirms this when he writes the following: “The text of the hypocephalus itself seems to be an address to Osiris, the god of the Dead, on behalf of the deceased, Sheshonk” (Brigham Young University Studies, Spring 1977, page 274).

All of the photographs of hypocephali we have examined have a good deal of their area devoted to drawings, but Claudia Veteto says that “The last stage in the development of the hypocephalus, the Roman epoch, is characterized by the lack of any one scene on the disk, the field being occupied almost entirely by inscriptions” (Newsletter and Proceedings of the S. E. H. A., May 1, 1967, page 6). More study in this area might be worth-while.

In any case, Edward Ashment, the Mormon scholar who worked with George Hughes in an unsuccessful attempt to translate the horizontal transcript, feels that Hugh Nibley jumped the gun when he stated that the newly discovered vertical transcript could be translated. The Provo Herald reported:

Will the translation of the new “Anthon Transcript” meet with the same fate as the translation of the Joseph Smith Papyri? Jerald Tanner, author of “Shadows or Reality?” [Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?] an expose on early Mormonism believes it will. ... Tannem maintains that there is no connection between the Book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price and the Joseph Smith papyri from which the book is supposedly translated.

Hugh W. Nibley, agrees with Tanner that, on the surface, there is no relationship between the two. However he holds to the theory that the Joseph Smith papyri is a prompt sheet where each word is a clue to what is written in the original Book of Abraham.
Edward H. Ashment, LDS Church Supervisor of Scripture Translation Research, disagrees with both men.

“I would tend to be more cautious than Nibley and I certainly don’t hold to Tanner’s views,” he said.

“The important thing to realize when discussing both the Anthon transcript and the Joseph Smith Papyri is that Smith was not necessarily interested in historical accuracy as much as he was in getting what the Lord wanted him to get.

“We cannot judge Joseph Smith’s work from the viewpoint of twentieth century theory and methodology.”

Ashment warned also against making rash statements or drawing early conclusions that could trap the church into an embarrassing position.

What if the transcript is a translation of Mormon’s abridgement of the Book of Lehi (the 116 lost pages)?

“We’ve got to slow down and take it easy. We can’t have contradictions. There are people like Tanner and ‘Former Mormons for Jesus’ in California who are just waiting to catch us slipping up.”

Ashment said that Tanner had called him recently to verify Hugh Nibley’s assessment that the Anthon transcript could be translated.

“I told him I wasn’t as convinced as Nibley although I did discuss the characters with Dr. George A. Hughes of the University of Chicago. We agreed that there are some characters that look like demotic Egyptian.”

*The Herald* called Hugh Nibley to see if he was still confident about his earlier assessments.

“I still say just what I said before. It can be translated. I will take a couple of years to complete though. These things take time” *(The Herald*, May 12, 1980).

It would now appear that Dr. Hugh Nibley is going into the same type of stall that he used with regard to the Book of Abraham papyrus. In 1968 we were told that Dr. Nibley was going to unfold “the meaning of the hieroglyphics and illustrations on these valuable manuscripts” *(Improvement Era*, January 1968, page 40-H). Twelve years have now past and he has still not translated the hieroglyphic writing which is found on the important fragment of papyrus printed as Facsimile No. 1 in the Book of Abraham. Other Egyptologists were able to translate all of the Joseph Smith Papyri in just a short time.

In the case of the recently found transcript which is purported to contain Book of Mormon characters, Hugh Nibley immediately asserted that “Of course its translatable.” He claimed, in fact, that he had counted at least two dozen out of 47 characters in the Demotic alphabet that could be given a phonetic value. We would expect, however, that a translation might come forth at any time. Dr. Nibley now tells us, however, that it “will take a couple of years” to complete the translation. It would appear to us that Hugh Nibley has made a claim that he cannot back up and that he is now stalling for time.

Klaus Baer, Professor of Egyptology at the University of Chicago’s Oriental Institute, was one of “Hugh Nibley’s primary tutors in the art of reading Egyptian characters” *(Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Autumn 1968, page 109). Although Professor Baer is a good friend to Dr. Nibley, he does not share his views with regard to the recently-discovered transcript:

“What is it? Probably not Egyptian, even if here and there signs appear that could be interpreted as more or less awkwardly copied hieroglyphs or hieratic signs. . . . I suspect that one would have about the same batting average in comparing this with Chinese or Japanese or other systems that arrange signs in columns. (Letter dated May 10, 1980)

In a recent television interview the Mormon Egyptologist Edward H. Ashment said that the document “doesn’t come very close to being readable as demotic.” He went on to say that “it’s in a script that is entirely unique and it has no relationship, to my knowledge again, of Egyptian or to any American script.”

“*I NEFI*

As we were about to go to press with this issue of the *Messenger*, a very sensational story came to our attention. It was claimed that a non-Mormon scholar had translated the transcript and had found the name “Nefi” in the text. We decided that we would have to delay publication in order to check this matter out. We discovered that the scholar was Barry Fell, and after a great deal of trouble we were finally able to locate and converse with him on the telephone. He confirmed that he had made a translation which contains the name “Nefi.” This, of course, reminds one of “Nephi”—the first writer mentioned in the Book of Mormon. Mr. Fell claimed that he had originally been asked by a Mormon man if he could decipher the horizontal version of the Anthon Transcript. He felt that it was a very poor copy and was unable to translate it.

When the newspaper published a picture of the recently-discovered document, he examined it and immediately recognized that it contained scripts which he had encountered in North Africa. After translating the first four lines, he sent his work to the Mormon Church for publication. When we asked about obtaining a copy, Mr. Fell indicated that he was giving the Mormon Church first chance to purchase his work. Later, however, Mr. Fell became somewhat disturbed that the Church had not responded and began to release some of his material. We have been able to examine his translation of the first four lines plus a letter to Ali-Akbar Habeb Bushiri, dated May 27, 1980, which contains additional information.

Mr. Fell’s translation is remarkable in that it sounds very much like the first chapter of the Book of Mormon. For instance, in the first line he translates: “. . . I, Nefi, a son born of sagacious parents, . . .” This, of course, sounds like the first eight words of the Book of Mormon: “I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, . . .” *(1 Nephi 1:1)* In line three Fell finds the words, “My father, Lehi, was of Salem, . . .” This is similar to 1 Nephi 1:4: “. . . my father, Lehi, having dwelt at Jerusalem . . .” Mr. Fell claims that line two contains the words “Zedekiah” and “Judah.” These two names are also found in 1 Nephi 1:4.

While at first glance a person would be led to believe that Barry Fell has proven the Book of Mormon to be authentic, a closer examination reveals just the opposite. To begin with, Fell does not read the text as “Reformed Egyptian,” but rather as an “Arabic text” *(Letter dated May 27, 1980).* He claims the first line is “in Maghrabi script” and that lines 2-4 contain a text “enciphered in the Belinos alphabet” which he has “identified as cipher number 19 in the book of ancient alphabets prepared by Ahmed bin Abu-Bekr bin Washish, a Nabataean scholar who in A.H. 241 presented his work to the Egyptian Caliph Abdul Malik bin Manwan.” Notice the date given by Fell is not 241 A.D., but rather 241 A.H. In his book *Arabic Coins And How To Read Them*, page 7, Richard Plant informs us that “Dates are nearly always ‘Anno Hegirae’ . . . A.H. rather than A.D. The Hegira was the ‘Flight,’ Mohammed’s flight from Mecca on 16th July 622 A.D.” This would mean that the text could not have been written before the ninth century A.D.

Barry Fell’s interpretation, therefore, not only would give the wrong language but also a date centuries too late to fit Joseph Smith’s story of the Book of Mormon. Fell makes the matter even more difficult for the Mormons to accept, however, when he claims that the circular object in Joseph Smith’s document is “what purports to be a gold dirhem issued by the Al-Muwahid, or ‘Almohad’ . . . Dynasty in Andalusia . . . in Libyan (Numidian) script.” This would
tend to date Joseph Smith’s “Caractors” to the 12th or 13th century A.D.! Barry Fell, then, would have us believe that instead of making a copy of “Reformed Egyptian” from gold plates, Joseph Smith copied a gold coin and characters from an old Arabic manuscript known as the “apocryphal book of Nefi.”

Mr. Fell’s thesis would lead a person to conclude that Joseph Smith saw a book or manuscript which contained a copy of a page from the “book of Nefi” together with a translation in English, and that this became the basis for his Book of Mormon. While we would really like to accept Barry Fell’s work, we feel that there are a number of things that cast considerable doubt upon it.

To begin with, Mr. Fell’s translation requires that the text of the manuscript be read sideways—i.e., according to his theory, the left side of the manuscript should be the top and the text reads from right to left. Since Joseph Smith copied some Egyptian characters upside down in his Book of Abraham, we could probably accept this idea without too much trouble. From that point, however, Mr. Fell’s work becomes more difficult to accept. Instead of working from just one language he claims that there are five different forms of writing on the document—i.e., Maghrabi, cipher number 19, Hebrew (one word), Egyptian (one word) and Numidian. While it could be true that there is more than one script involved, this claim could also be used to produce an inaccurate translation. If the script did not read as the translator wanted at some point, then it could be claimed that this portion was written in another language. Because Mr. Fell works from several different scripts and uses “cipher,” we feel that it makes his “translation” very questionable. His rendition of the very first character which appears on the transcript gives an interesting example of his questionable methods of operation. This character, which looks like a small bowl in a larger one, is supposed to be the $n$ in “Nefi.” We find this same character written seven times in the first four lines. Below is a photograph of the way it appears each time together with Mr. Fell’s transliteration and translation of the word in which it appears.

The reader will notice that in the first three examples Fell transliterates the character as $n$, but in example number four he has moved into “the Belinos alphabet” and transliterates it as $y$. (This character is separated by a break in the paper in the fourth example, but it is obvious that it is the same character.) In the fifth example Fell renders the same character as two letters, $u$ and $d$. In the sixth example he transliterates it as $f$, and in the seventh it makes two letters, $w$ and $m$. It would appear, then, that Mr. Fell can make almost anything he wants out of the same character. An examination of our examples shows that Fell uses the same character in making the names “Nefi,” “Zedekiah” and “Judah.” (As we have already indicated, the names “Zedekiah” and “Judah” appear in the Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 1:4). It is obvious, then, that much of Fell’s case is based only on his wishful-thinking with regard to one character. The reader will also notice that the second and third characters ($f$ and $i$) which Fell uses in making “Nefi” are almost completely different in examples one and two.

Because Mr. Fell claimed that those who knew how to read Arabic would support his translation of the first line, we decided to consult someone who was qualified to pass judgment. We were referred to Adel Allouche of the Department of Middle East Studies at the University of Utah. Mr. Allouche, who teaches Arabic and reads both ancient and modern script, examined photographs of Joseph Smith’s “Caractors” to see if Mr. Fell’s thesis is correct. He consulted others at the University concerning this matter, and after carefully comparing the characters with many ancient scripts came to the conclusion that it was no known form of Arabic nor any other language that he was aware of. He felt, in fact, that Barry Fell’s translation was only a work of the imagination.

Mr. Fell’s statement that he found “cipher number 19 in the book of ancient alphabets prepared by Ahmed bin Abu-Bekr bin Washish” has been questioned by at least one scholar who is critical of his work. David Persuite, however, has obtained access to a copy of this book and has made photocopies. It was printed in London in 1806 under the title, Ancient Alphabets and Hieroglyphic Characters Explained; With An Account of the Egyptian Priests, Their Classes, Initiation, and Sacrifices. It not only has Ahmad Bin AbuBekr Bin Wahshish’s work in the Arabic language, but also a translation into English by Joseph Hammer. We feel that this book furnishes devastating evidence against Fell’s work. The “alphabet of Belinos, the philosopher” (the alphabet which Fell claims is used in three lines of Joseph Smith’s translation) appears on page 23 of the Arabic section. As the reader can see in the photograph below, it bears little resemblance to the writing found in the recently-discovered transcript (under each character is its equivalent in the Arabic script).

While Barry Fell seems to be completely wrong in his identification of the script, it is interesting to note that according to the Translators Preface, this book contains “eighty alphabets.” In looking over the other alphabets we find some interesting parallels...
to Joseph Smith’s “Caractors,” and we feel that more time should be spent in examining this matter. This is the type of book that would have really appealed to people like Joseph Smith who were involved with talismans, magic and money-digging. Pages 6 and 7, for instance, contain this information about some of the scripts:

Section XI. The alphabet of Costoodjis . . . He wrote in this alphabet, three hundred and sixty books on divinity, talismans, astrology, magic, influence of planets and fixed stars, and on the conjuration of spirits, . . .

Section XII. The alphabet of Hermes Abootat . . . He constructed in upper Egypt treasure chambers, and set up stones containing magic inscriptions, . . .

Section XIII. The alphabet of Colphotorios . . . He was deeply learned in the knowledge of spirits and cabalistic spells, in talismans, astrological aspects, and in the magic and black art . . .

Section XIV. The alphabet of Syourianos . . . He wrote in this alphabet on astronomy, and the secrets of the stars; on talismans, and their qualities; on magic alarm-posts; on the effects of planet-rings; and on the invocation and conjuration of spirits.

Section XV. The alphabet of Philaos . . . He invented miraculous fuminations, marvellous compounds, talismans, and astrological tables. (Ancient Alphabets and Hieroglyphic Characters Explained . . ., 1806, pages 6-7)

Although Mr. Fell is certainly incorrect about the Belinos script, his work has brought an interesting old book to light.

When speaking of Mr. Fell’s work, we should probably mention the fact that he has stirred up a great deal of controversy with the publication of the book, America B.C. in 1976, and this year he has come out with a new volume entitled Saga America. His work is of special interest to the Mormons because of his attempt to prove contacts between the Old World and America in ancient times. In his new book Saga America, page 83, he even includes a photograph of Professor Paul Cheesman of the Church’s Brigham Young University.

Newsweek, May 26, 1975, stated that while “Fell has his defenders,” his “translations bring snorts from some critics. . . . ‘He is doing too much cross-country running,’ argues Frank M. Cross, professor of Semitic languages at Harvard.” Ives Goddard and William W. Fitzhugh of the Department of Anthropology at the Smithsonian Institution wrote a criticism which was published in Biblical Archeologist, September, 1978, pages 85-88, which contains the following:

The Department of Anthropology of the Smithsonian Institution occasionally receives inquiries regarding the book America B.C. . . . The statement below has been prepared to explain briefly why Smithsonian specialists in linguistics and New World prehistory consider the conclusions reached in this book to be incorrect.

None of the inscriptions mentioned in America B.C. can be accepted as genuine ancient inscriptions carved in the New World. Some appear to be accidental or random markings, while others have been created by hoaxers. . . .

No prehistoric loanwords of Old World origin have been found in any North American Indian language. The contention is made in America B.C. that there are words of Egyptian, Semitic, Celtic, and Norse origin in certain Indian languages of the Algonquian family, but the alleged evidence is seriously flawed. The discussion does not distinguish clearly among the separate Algonquian languages; ignores basic facts of Algonquian grammar, linguistic history, and etymology; makes many errors on specific facts; misreads and misinterprets words [or impossible fragments of words] and their translations; and shows no awareness of the basic scientific linguistic procedures that have been used by specialists for over a hundred years to study the history of languages. . . . The claim is made in America B.C. that songs in the Pima dialect of Papago, a language of the Uto-Aztecan family spoken in southern Arizona, can be read using a “Semitic” dictionary. But the analysis that is presented (p. 172) is not consistent with the grammars of either Papago or any Semitic language: the Papago words have been arbitrarily divided or rearranged; the free translation given in the source used has been ignored; and some of the phonetic symbols in the original publication have been misinterpreted. . . .

In sum, it must be said that the discussions in America B.C. show no knowledge of the correct grammatical analysis of the American Indian languages considered. There is no understanding of the grammars of the Algonquian languages, Pima, or Zuni, and no conception of the existence of strict rules governing the permissible order and shape of elements in those languages. To Smithsonian linguists, the arguments presented in America B.C. are therefore of no value.

Mr. Fell’s work on Joseph Smith’s “Caractors” leads us to believe that he first read the Book of Mormon and then tried to slant his translation in that direction. He wanted the Mormon Church leaders to print it and was disappointed in their lack of response. We have been told that Mr. Fell finally submitted his work to BYU Studies but those in charge decided it should not be printed. The thing we cannot understand is why Fell did not try to derive the text from Egyptian since it is claimed that he has a working knowledge of “Egyptian hieroglyphics” (see Saga America, Foreword). This would certainly have been more enticing to the Mormons. In claiming that the text is from Arabic and Libyan writings dating from the ninth to the thirteenth century A.D., Mr. Fell will, no doubt, alienate his Mormon friends. While we would like to accept his thesis, we feel that his work on the first four lines is completely unconvincing.

MICMAC?

Some scholars have noticed a resemblance between some of Joseph Smith’s “Caractors” and a script used by the Micmac Indians. In his book America B.C., Barry Fell published photographs of Micmac and related it to the Egyptian language: “The Micmac language has evidently acquired much of its technical and astronomical vocabulary from ancient Egyptian, . . .” (page 278). Ives Goddard and William W. Fitzhugh criticized Mr. Fell for this conjecture:

The claim is made in America B.C. that the so-called hieroglyphics of the Micmac Indians are derived from Egyptian hieroglyphics. However, general resemblances between some individual signs, some of which have been misinterpreted or misread (pp. 254-58), do not prove a relationship between the two writing systems, because there is no explanation of their very different structures. The Micmac writing system is a purely mnemonic system used to aid in the reciting of Christian prayers; it cannot be used to write new messages. It was developed by Roman Catholic missionaries inspired by the use of pictographic mnemonics among the Indians, but its principles have never been explicated in detail. . . (Biblical Archeologist, September 1978, page 86)

In his latest book, Saga America, page 223, Fell seems to have changed his opinion somewhat:

In America B.C. the hieroglyphic system of writing used by the Micmac Indians of Nova Scotia was attributed to influence from Egypt, and the similarity of the signs to hieratic letters was illustrated in tables. . . this was taken as evidence of an ancient contact with Egyptian writers of the ancestors of the Micmacs of modern times. More recent studies have led to the conclusion that the Micmac contact was not so much with ancient Egyptian writers directly, as rather with eastern Libyans, from the border of Egypt.
and Libya: ... Thus Micmac script is probably to be attributed to east Libyan influence.

In *Saga America*, pages 224-225, Barry Fell has reproduced two pages of “a handwritten copy of portions of the hieroglyphic version of the Catholic mass, translated by the Abbe Maillard in the eighteenth century.”

After making a superficial examination of Micmac characters, we were not too impressed with the idea that they are related to Joseph Smith’s work. Even if a case could be made, however, it would not provide evidence for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Despite Barry Fell’s attempts to show that Micmac was an ancient written language, the evidence stems to show just the opposite. Garrick Mallery claimed that what has been “erroneously” called “Micmac hieroglyphics ... do not partake of the nature of hieroglyphics, and their origin is not Micmac” (*Picture Writing of the American Indians*, page 666). If any connection between Micmac and Joseph Smith’s work could be established, it would lead us to suspect that Smith had access to a copy of a Christian text produced in the 18th or 19th century A.D. It is possible, of course, that Joseph Smith could have acquired a sample of this writing. Wesley P. Walters has pointed out that Smith’s uncle, Jason Mack, lived in “New Brunswick” (*Joseph Smith’s History by His Mother*, page 52), and, according to Mallery, “the northern part of New Brunswick” was occupied by Micmacs. We tend to doubt, however, that there is any connection between the two scripts.

**IMPORTANCE OF CIRCLE**

We are inclined to believe that the circular object in Joseph Smith’s transcript could hold the key to its origin. We feel that this would be an excellent area of research for those interested in the origin of Mormonism. We are especially suspicious of the disk because Joseph Smith never published it. In the case of the Book of Abraham and the Kinderhook plates he proudly published facsimiles for the world to see. Why was he ashamed of the Book of Mormon disk? Was he afraid that its publication would give something away? It is true that he did allow Harris to take it to Anthon in February 1828, but after that incident he seems to have suppressed it. (The reader will remember that Anthon later suggested that it might be an altered copy of something that had been published.)

A second copy of the “Caracorts” was produced which does not contain the disk. Although the characters were copied from the circular object (see especially the last two lines in the photograph which appears on page one), they appear in straight horizontal lines. Book of Mormon witness David Whitmer came on the scene a year after Harris took the transcript to Anthon. From his statement we know that Harris took the manuscript entitled, “A Book of Mormon Study,” Part 1, Chapter 14, which is B. H. Roberts’ Manuscripts Revealed

We have had a number of inquiries about this matter. A man from a local television station contacted us to see if it was the same man, and another man from a Provo radio station wanted to know just what comment we had to make about Mr. Marquardt’s behavior. When we told him that he had the wrong Mr. Marquardt, it took all of the wind out of his sails. Actually, the Michael Marquardt we know is 35, lives in Sandy and does not have a pickup truck.

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**MICHAEL DIDN’T DO IT**

On June 25, 1980 the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported:

A man who caused about $10,000 damage with his truck on Temple Square last Thursday was arraigned in 5th Circuit Court Tuesday Michael George Marquart, 29, 642 Spring Hill Dr., North Salt Lake, ... was arrested inside the temple grounds after a pickup truck crashed through south gate and ran over planters, water fountains and other fixtures. Officers said the driver attempted to run over several people as well ... Officers said the driver told them he was “ordered by God” to destroy the Mormon Temple. ... Marquart ... faces a possible prison sentence of up to five years if convicted. ... Marquart is being held in the Salt Lake City-County Jail in lieu of $2,000 bail.

Since the driver of the truck was named Michael Marquart, and since a man with a similar name has done a great deal of research for us, some members of the Mormon Church rejoiced thinking that at last they had a way to discredit our work. On the Sunday following the incident, an LDS Church security officer reported in priesthood meeting that he looked through the file the Church maintains on Mr. Marquardt and found that he is a “cohort of the Tanners.” When we called this officer he freely admitted that he had mistakenly linked the man arrested at Temple Square with the man who has helped us with our research. He said he realized his error Sunday afternoon when he found that Mr. Marquardt was working at the U.S. Post Office while the other man was in jail. The Mr. Marquardt who has given us a great deal of help is actually named “Henry Michael Marquardt.” He usually goes by “H. Michael Marquardt” in his publications, but we usually refer to him as just “Michael Marquardt.” The reader will notice that the *Tribune* identified the man who drove the pickup truck as “Michael George Marquart, 29, 642 Spring Hill Dr., North Salt Lake, ...” The Mr. Marquardt we know is 35, lives in Sandy and does not have a pickup truck.

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**B. H. ROBERTS’ MANUSCRIPTS REVEALED**

In the December 1979 issue of the *Messenger* we pointed out that the famous Mormon historian and General Authority B. H. Roberts wrote some material concerning the Book of Mormon which is very embarrassing to the Church. For instance, in a manuscript entitled, “A Book of Mormon Study,” Part 1, Chapter 14, B. H. Roberts frankly admitted that Joseph Smith had a vivid enough imagination and the source material necessary to have produced
the Book of Mormon without the aid of gold plates. Truman G. Madsen, of the Church’s Brigham Young University, maintains that B. H. Roberts was only playing the “Devil’s Advocate” in his unpublished material. We cannot agree with Professor Madsen concerning this matter and have come to the conclusion that the best way to settle the issue is to publish Roberts’ manuscripts so that our readers can make up their own minds concerning this important question. The Mormon Church’s *Deseret News*, April 14, 1980, said that “Roberts’ defense of the Book of Mormon is contained in two manuscripts titled ‘Book of Mormon Difficulties’ and ‘Book of Mormon Studies.’ To say that these manuscripts contain a “defense” of the Book of Mormon is certainly a serious error.

B. H. Roberts believed that his fellow Church leaders should come to grips with the problems of the Book of Mormon. He was very disturbed with Apostle Richard R. Lyman’s attitude of sweeping them under the rug. He mentioned this matter in a letter to President Heber J. Grant and the Council of Twelve Apostles, and four years later wrote directly to Apostle Lyman:

> You perhaps will recall our conversation of a few days ago in relation to the inquiry we had before the Council of the Twelve Apostles on some problems associated with the Book of Mormon, . . . and how I reminded you that on the former occasion here alluded to I announced that what I had presented did not constitute all our B. of M. problems, that there were others. You then asked, “Well, will these help solve our present problems or will it increase our difficulties?” to which I replied, “It would very greatly increase our problems.” At which you said (and I thought rather lightly) “Well, I don’t see why we should bother with them then. To this I answered that I should go on with my studies nevertheless. And the other day I told you, if you remember, that I had continued my investigations and had drawn up a somewhat lengthy report for the First Presidency [sic] and the Council of the Twelve. . . . I thought I would submit in sort of tabloid form a few pages of matter pointing out a possible theory of the Origin of the Book of Mormon that is quite unique . . . which in the hands of a skillful opponent could be made, in my judgment, very embarrassing.

> I submit it in the form of a Parallel between some main outline facts pertaining to the Book of Mormon and matter that was published in Ethan Smith’s “View of the Hebrews” which preceded the Book of Mormon, . . . It was published in Vermont and in the adjoining county in which the Smith Family lived in the Prophet Joseph’s boyhood days, so that it could be urged that the family doubtless had this book . . . the Parallel that I send to you is not one fourth part of what can be presented in this form, and the unpresented part is quite as striking as this that I submit. (Letter from B. H. Roberts to Richard R. Lyman, dated October 24, 1927, carbon copy of the original)

We hope to have *Roberts’ Manuscripts Revealed* printed in a month or two. The regular price for this publication will be $13.95, but those who send payment before August 31, 1980, will receive it for only $11.95.

**APRIL’S NEEDS MET**

In the last issue of the *Messenger* we reported that our daughter April was planning to do some missionary work with Teen Missions International and that her expenses would amount to over $1,700. Much to our surprise, the Lord met her needs before we could get the newsletter in the mail. She is now on her way to the Philippines, and we would ask you to remember her in prayer. We just want to thank the Lord who supplies all our needs “according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).

**THE CHANGING WORLD**

We are happy to report that our new book, *The Changing World of Mormonism*, published by Moody Press, is selling very well throughout the nation. It is now in its second printing. The first printing sold out about four months after it was issued. *Moody Monthly* for June 1980 reviewed *The Changing World of Mormonism* and devoted about six pages to our work (see pages 30-32, 34-36 and 59). Since this is one of the most, widely circulated religious magazines, it is bound to significantly increase the sales of this book.

*The Changing World of Mormonism* is an updated and condensed version of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* It has 592 pages with an index and bibliography. In the Introduction to this book Wesley P. Walters writes:

> Their [the Tanners] major work, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* has sold more than thirty thousand copies without any advertising campaign, simply because it is the most definitive work in print on the fallacies of Mormonism. This condensed version of that earlier work, though still of necessity lengthy, sets forth the heart of their extensive research.

**OTHER NEW BOOKS**

*Following the Brethren*. Contains the speech, “Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophets,” by Ezra Taft Benson. In this address Benson maintains that the President of the Mormon Church has a right to dictate in both temporal and spiritual matters. Even political views are to be subjected to his control. This speech has caused a great deal of consternation because Benson is President of the Council of Twelve Apostles and next in line to lead the Mormon Church (see *Salt Lake City Messenger*, April 1980). This booklet also contains Apostle Bruce R. McConkie’s speech “All Are Alike Unto God.” This address relates to the new revelation giving blacks the priesthood. **Price: $2.00**

*Joseph Smith’s 1835-56 Diary*. Transcription by H. Michael Marquardt. This diary was suppressed by the Mormon leaders for 140 years. Includes a revealing introduction by Jerald and Sandra Tanner and some photographs of the original document. **Price: $3.50**

*Joseph Smith’s Kirtland Revelation Book*. Introduction by Jerald and Sandra Tanner showing some important changes in Joseph Smith’s revelations. Although a typescript is not provided, this publication contains photographs of the entire manuscript book which has been suppressed since the 1830s. **Price: $4.50**

*The Use of the Bible in the Book of Mormon and Early Nineteenth Century Events Reflected in the Book of Mormon*. By H. Michael Marquardt. A good summary of the evidence showing the Book of Mormon is a product of the 19th century. **Price: $1.00**

*Confessions of John D. Lee*. A photomechanical reprint of the original 1877 edition of *Mormonism Unveiled: Or the Life and Confessions of the Late Mormon Bishop, John D. Lee*. Contains very important material on the Mountain Meadows Massacre and the role of Danites in the church. **Price: $7.00**
UNMASKING A MORMON SPY

AN APPEAL FOR SUPPRESSED FBI DOCUMENTS

On March 5, 1974, we talked with a man who had been excommunicated from the Mormon Church who claimed that his telephone had been bugged and his private journal stolen at the time he was under Church investigation. In June of that year Attorney General William B. Saxbe called on the American people to report any information they might have about illegal wiretapping. On July 1, 1974, we sent all the material that could be gathered about this alleged wiretapping to the Justice Department. After a long delay the FBI finally investigated these charges and claimed that there was no “validity to the allegations” (Salt Lake Tribune, April 9, 1975).

During this period we were investigating to see if there was a connection between Mormonism and the intelligence world. We found, for instance, that the Watergate break-in and other illegal activities had been discussed in the Mullen Company, an organization which handled public relations for the Mormon Church. Robert Bennett, the son of Utah Senator Wallace F. Bennett, was president of the firm and the notorious spy Howard Hunt worked for Mr. Bennett. We also found that a student from Mormon-owned Brigham Young University helped Hunt with spying and bugging operations. Moreover, we discovered that James A. Everett, who worked for Bennett’s company in Europe, was doing public relations work for the Mormon Church at the very time he was serving as a secret agent for the CIA.

“THEY’RE TRYING TO CALL OUT”

On November 6, 1975, one of the authors of this article (Jerald Tanner) picked up the phone to call an ex-Mormon who claimed to have information on bugging operations. The phone rang a number of times without an answer. Between two of the rings, however, a woman’s voice softly but distinctly said, “They’re trying to call out.” Since both our phone and the number we were calling were private lines, we could only conclude that someone was monitoring our conversations.

While we are aware of the fact that much of the equipment used in bugging telephones is made in such a way that it does not produce any sound, on some occasions telephone equipment is used which can carry a voice back into the line. In his book, Undercover: Memoirs of an American Secret Agent, page 273, Howard Hunt alleges that

> On September 22 I was telephoning attorney Bittman from my home when I heard a whisper just after my attorney had spoken. The intruder voice said, “That’s Bittman,” as though to identify the person to whom I was talking. This slipup by the monitors convinced me—if I needed further convincing—that my telephone line continued to be tapped.

At any rate, after the strange voice came on the phone, we became fearful that we were uncovering something that could turn out to be like Pandora’s box. This was a very disturbing experience.

Not too long after this occurred (January 23, 1976) a man in California by the name of Steven L. Mayfield wrote Dr. John Fitzgerald a letter inquiring if he happened to “know anything” about the individual who claimed his phone had been bugged before he was excommunicated—the incident we reported in 1974:

> "I understand the FBI investigated possible illegal wiretapping against the church . . .” Steven L. Mayfield’s desire to know more about this man becomes rather interesting in light of the information which follows: According to Mr. Mayfield’s own admission (tape recorded interview, July 16, 1980), he was working for the FBI at the time he wrote this letter of inquiry. Even more important, however, is the fact that on October 11, 1976, Steven L. Mayfield assumed the alias of “Stan Fields” in a letter which he wrote to us:

> Dear Friends in Christ: I am a fellow [sic] Ex-Mormon for Jesus, and would like to be added to your mailing list, . . . What is it like being “Apostates” in the capitol of the “Saints”? It really fascinates me how anyone could survive as long as you have.

> Thank you in advance for answering my questions . . . God’s blessings on you as you do His work, Sincerely in Christ.

Mr. Mayfield not only assumed an alias, but he opened up a post office box in Pleasant Hill, California (P.O. Box 23114) for the purpose of deception. On the very day (October 11, 1976) that Mr. Mayfield wrote to us under the alias “Stan Fields,” he wrote a letter to John Fitzgerald in which he gave his address as 925 St. Louis Ct., Concord, California 94518. It is common practice, of course, for those who are engaged in spying operations to cover their tracks by assuming an alias and renting a post office box.

In any case, Mr. “Fields,” who has professed to be our Christian brother, has been spying on our operation for about four years and has also penetrated a number of groups of Ex-Mormons for Jesus. By dishonest means he has obtained the names of many Mormons who have questions about their religion. He has been diligently working to obtain photographs of critics of the Mormon Church and has gathered large files of information. He boasted, in fact, that he had the largest file on Sonia Johnson. We know that in one case he did research on a prominent non-Mormon and found that he had obtained a divorce several years ago. He also claims to have “tons of tapes.” One of his primary objects seemed to be gathering information concerning the scheduling of activities which were critical of the Mormon Church.
MAYFIELD’S CONFESSION

Mr. Fields’ nefarious career came to a sudden end in July, 1980, when we discovered his true identity. We also found that he was employed at the Mormon Church Office Building in the Genealogical Department. On July 16, 1980, Edward Decker of Saints Alive in Jesus (a group of ex-Mormons who share “the gospel of Jesus Christ with the Mormon people”) and Jerald Tanner directly confronted Steven L. Mayfield in the Mormon Church Office Building in Salt Lake City. We had abundant evidence of the spying activities and Mr. Mayfield made no attempt to deny the basic charges. He consented to an interview and we went to an area of the Church Office Building where we could have some privacy.

Although Mormon Church Security guards were patrolling the area, they made no attempt to stop the interview. Mr. Decker pulled out his tape recorder, set it on the table and asked Mr. Mayfield, “Do you mind if I record our conversation?” Mayfield replied: “You might as well, I kind of figured you would . . . Do you want to ask questions, or do you just want me to spill the beans here?”

Mayfield admitted that “by taking on an alias I made a mistake, an error, a sin. I was out of line . . .”

In this same interview Mr. Mayfield gave this revealing information about his activities:

I went on my mission to Colorado and Nebraska . . . 71 to 73 . . . I went back home . . . started working with the FBI in San Francisco as a file clerk . . .

Everything about Stan Fields is untrue, but I did work for the FBI. If you care to I’ve got, from the Freedom of Information, I’ve got my file which you can look at.

A lot of things happened down there that I wasn’t aware of . . . San Francisco . . . I think is the fifth largest FBI office . . . I served from July of 73 to June of 77 . . . I went over to Berkeley, this is in early 74, to be the clerk in Berkeley ______ on the Patty Hearst thing . . . then back . . . I went back to a security squad which were maintaining the file . . . upon various radicals . . . Then, from there . . . I accepted a job as the evidence enclosure clerk . . . and that is the job I had when I resigned. My letter, in . . . my file says . . . that I resigned to go back to school, which is true.

. . . what I was doing with you was spy, what I did with the bureau . . . was just a paper shuffle.

One of the biggest fears I had was some crazy person taking a pot shot at you or you. Why? Well, because the first thing they [the authorities] would do, they would probably want to get your mailing list . . . and try . . . contact people you’ve had contact with . . . and that would come right back to me, and then they find that Stan Fields is a non-existent person — let’s find out about it.

JERALD TANNER— . . . You were watching us— protecting us?

STEVEN MAYFIELD— Well, this was one of my concern[s], you know, . . . people would say, you know, I wish someone would take a pot shot. I’d say please, no, don’t think that.

Some time after giving this tape recorded interview, Steven Mayfield said he wished he had not consented to it. He was apparently concerned with some of the things he had revealed. However this may be, the FBI has confirmed the fact that Mayfield was an employee at the time he assumed his alias:

Steven L. Mayfield was employed by the FBI in a clerical capacity in our San Francisco Office from July 3, 1973, until June 3, 1977. (Letter from Roger S. Young, Inspector in Charge, Office of Congressional and Public Affairs, to Jerald Tanner, dated August 18, 1980)

MAYFIELD’S MASK COMES OFF

Although we were at times a little suspicious of Stan Fields, we did not realize what he was up to until July 1980. On the morning of the 10th a well-known Mormon, who works at the Church Office Building, called us on the phone and said he would be paying us a visit. Not too long after this Stan Fields showed up at our bookstore and began to engage in a conversation with Sandra and another man from California.

The man from the Church Office Building was delayed for sometime. When he finally arrived, we noticed that Mr. Fields turned his back to him and pretended to be looking at books.

This lasted for some time, but when the man finally left, Mr. Fields jumped right back into the conversation. His behavior led us to suspect that he might have been at our bookstore for the purpose of spying on this man.

After Mr. Fields had been in our bookstore for about three hours, Michael Marquardt came walking up the path. As soon as Fields saw who it was he made for the door. We thought that his sudden departure was rather strange, but it was not until two days later that we learned Mr. Marquardt knew the name Steven L. Mayfield. Mr. Marquardt had originally been introduced to him by a man who had known him before he took on the alias. Michael Marquardt, therefore, posed a real threat to him, and he was always afraid that Mr. Marquardt would run into him when he was using the alias. In his tape recorded confession, Mr. Mayfield said that, “My problem . . . was the fact that . . . I’m as scared of Church . . .”

Besides the problem with the alias, it would appear that Steven Mayfield had another reason for fearing an encounter with Marquardt. This stems from an incident that took place on March 18, 1980. (In an earlier “Statement on Mormon Spies” we erroneously gave the date as August 11, 1979. This was actually another occasion when Mr. Mayfield visited with Marquardt for over four hours.) On March 18, 1980, Mayfield came to Marquardt’s house and spent five hours visiting with him. During the course of the conversation, Mayfield desired the telephone number for a Mormon scholar at BYU. Mr. Marquardt got out his address book and gave him the number.

Later, however, when Marquardt went to put his papers away, he noticed that his address book had disappeared! Although we cannot actually prove that Mr. Mayfield took it, it is interesting to note that Mayfield subsequently compiled a long address list of critics of the Mormon Church and such a notebook would have been helpful in its production.

LINKED TO FBI?

The question as to whether Mr. Mayfield’s spying operation had anything to do with the FBI is one we are not prepared to answer at the present time. The FBI maintains that Mayfield’s work “was not connected to any FBI investigation. Mr. Mayfield has assured you that he acted on his own initiative, and his correspondence was in no way authorized or approved by the FBI” (Letter dated August 18, 1980).
A photograph of an FBI document which indicates that Mormon leaders tried to pressure the New York Times so that it would not print articles critical of the LDS Church.
According to Steven Mayfield’s tape recorded statement, he did go under cover—i.e., rent a post office box and assume an alias—while he was still employed with the FBI. He claimed that he did not stop working for the FBI until “June of 1977,” yet as we have already shown, he wrote to us under the name of Stan Fields on October 11, 1976. The letter from the FBI confirms that Mayfield was working for them “until June 3, 1977.”

Melaine Layton has sent us a copy of a letter which moves the date Mayfield took the alias back before October 11, 1976. He wrote a letter to her on September 22, 1976, in which he mentioned that he had “not yet received the tapes which I ordered two months ago,...” The letter is signed “Stan Fields,” and we would naturally assume that he would have used the same name when he wrote “two months ago.” This would bring the date back to July 1976—about a year before he left the FBI.

When we told Wallace Turner, a reporter for the New York Times, about Mayfield, he advised us to request the FBI to release any documents they have relating to us under the Freedom of Information Act. We did this and to our great surprise, one of the FBI documents had to do with Wallace Turner himself. It is dated December 19, 1974, and contains this revealing information (see photograph on page 3):

During the interview with [over one line blacked out] was advised Mr. JERALD TANNER had written numerous individuals concerning this inquiry, among them a newspaper man in San Francisco, California. [one-third line blacked out] he is acquainted with Mr. WALLACE TURNER as a “New York Times” representative at San Francisco, California, because Mr. TURNER on several occasions has written articles highly unfavorable to the LDS Church and its activities. [one-fourth line blacked out] said this became of so much concern to church authorities at Salt Lake City that they requested [two and one-half lines blacked out] to intercede with the editor of the “New York Times” at New York City to request that articles such as those written by Mr. TANNER [Turner?] be carefully examined.

[one-fourth line blacked out] said that shortly after [one-fourth line blacked out] contact with the editor of the “New York Times,” the “Times” began publishing articles favorable to the LDS Church and [one-fourth line blacked out] said he was not surprised that Mr. TANNER remained in contact with Mr. TURNER in view of their apparent mutual feelings about the activities of the LDS Church.

This document was apparently generated because of our call for an investigation into wiretapping allegations in 1974. We will have more to say about the document concerning Wallace Turner in another article in this newsletter.

Although the material concerning Turner is certainly revealing, the document which we are most interested in is dated October 4, 1974. In this document we find the following:

... TANNER then suggested he thought a complete investigation into this matter was called for. [a full page of material blacked out]

Salt Lake City files further disclose that on 4/30/70 [one and one-third lines blacked out] reported that JERALD J. [sic] TANNER and his wife, SANDRA LUCILLE TANNER, moved to Salt Lake City from California several years ago, that TANNER operates the Modern Microfilm Company and that [one-third line blacked out] had told [one-fourth line blacked out] that the TANNERS had been circulating petitions against the Church and had been “trouble makers.”

This report seems to indicate that the “Salt Lake City” Division of the FBI has a file or files concerning us with material dating back to at least April 30, 1970. Since almost all of page two and portions of page three have been blacked out (see photograph on page 5 of this newsletter), it is impossible to determine if this report mentions Steven Mayfield. Two reasons were given for the suppression of this material. It was claimed that these are “investigatory records compiled for law enforcement purposes, the disclosure of which would . . . constitute an unwarranted invasion of the personal privacy of another person; (D) reveal the identity of a confidential source or reveal confidential information furnished only by the confidential source; . . . ” In addition to the deletions made on these pages we have received, eighteen full pages were “withheld entirely” for the same reasons. On October 21, 1980, we appealed this decision to the Associate Attorney General in Washington, D.C. Even if we are able to obtain these pages, however, we will only have the information sent to the central records system in Washington, D.C. This would not give us the records stored in the Salt Lake City Division of the FBI. We have, however, requested these records under a separate Freedom of Information request. Until we are able to examine all the records, we will not be able to make a definite statement about this matter.

In any case, the facts as we now have them show that an employee of the FBI assumed an alias and began spying on us. About a year later he resigned his position. He then became an employee of the Mormon Church and was employed there at the time we became aware of his spying operations.

**LINKED TO CHURCH SECURITY?**

One of the most interesting aspects of the Mayfield affair is his association with Church Security Guard Brent Metcalfe. For over a year Mr. Metcalfe has been deeply involved in gathering information from critics of the Mormon Church. In fact, a Mormon scholar who knows him told us that Metcalfe feels it is his mission to destroy the Tanners and Ex-Mormons For Jesus. Our first contact with Metcalfe came when he sent a letter while serving on a mission to England.

After Mr. Metcalfe returned from his mission, he went to work for Mormon Church Security. He came to our bookstore on a number of occasions, but he did not tell us of his involvement with Church Security. We became very suspicious of him, however, and finally discovered that he worked for Church Security. When we confronted him with the matter, he frankly admitted the fact but claimed that his visits to our bookstore were prompted because of his own personal interest and had nothing to do with the Church.

The evidence now shows that all during this period Brent Metcalfe was closely associated with Steven Mayfield. In fact, on one occasion Metcalfe and Mayfield (posing under his alias of Stan Fields) came to our bookstore. When Paul Carden asked “Fields” about Brent Metcalfe, he responded:

Now as to BRENT METCALFE. He is a returned missionary from England who, while on his mission, began writing to out [sic] brothers and sisters in the ministry about their work and material. He became acquainted with Cromptons while in England. I meet [sic] him last summer at the Historical Dept. Tom Truitt . . . introduced me to him and he bragged about his apparent refuting and successful defense of mormonism . . . he knows a lot of the arguments used against Mormonism. But he is a little pest when ever I run into him. Always asking questions etc. about EMFJ [Ex-Mormons For Jesus] and what I know about others. (Letter from Stan Fields to Paul Carden, received March 81, 1980)

Edward Decker told us that “Stan Fields” and Brent Metcalfe came in Metcalfe’s car to a meeting at a Baptist church in Roy in January 1980. Moreover, he claims that they showed up together at meetings held at the Salt Palace in Salt Lake. Metcalfe and Mayfield have also been seen together in the Church Office Building on a number of occasions. One woman told us that while Mayfield was
A photograph of page two and part of page three of an FBI document dated October 4, 1974. This document seems to indicate that the Salt Lake City Division of the FBI has a file or files containing information on the Tanners dating back to April 30, 1970. Notice that a full page of material has been blacked out.
posing as Stan Fields, he said that Metcalfe was a good friend whom he had known for a long time. In his interview, however, Mayfield claims that it was only about a year ago that he met Brent Metcalfe.

Last winter a group known as LDS Study Clubs of America sponsored a series of lectures by individuals who were critical of the Mormon Church. Brent Metcalfe and Steven Mayfield had a peculiar interest in these lectures. The activities of both these men made one woman suspicious, and on July 4, 1980, she wrote a letter to John Fitzgerald and told him she believed they were “spies” (like Michael Marquardt, she did not know at that time that Steven Mayfield went under the alias “Stan Fields”):

...You know, and I know that the church has its spies; ... I must tell you about one night at that series of lectures being held in S.L. last winter. I learned that the church has a file with my name, address, picture—and the devil knows what all—with information that I set up some lectures in Ogden to overthrow the church, that I am sending out hundreds of anti-Mormon tapes, etc. I don’t know if you were there the night that little fresh returned missionary with white bib overalls was jumping up and down after the lecture, spouting the words of the Lord. ... A bigger man was standing by him taking everything in. The next week this friend was there and came up to me after the meeting and asked—or stated—. . . “My friend told me last week who you are, that you live in Ogden, and that you set up lectures there to overthrow the church, and that you are sending out hundreds of anti-Mormon tapes.” “Wow,” I said, “what an accomplished lady I am. Pray tell, wasn’t your friend that newly returned missionary?” “Yes.” “Well, how could he possibly know who I am?” “Because he’s a security man from the church.” I started to stammer, “But he’s only been back a few months, and I’m sure he hadn’t seen me before. Or had he and where?” “They keep files with pictures and information.” “Why isn’t he here tonight?” “Well, the church officials told him not to come. He was making too much commotion last week which wasn’t good for the church.” “Well, bless him,” I said, “and thanks for the information. It’s good to know I’m so busy sending out tapes when I haven’t sent any and have only loaned them to two individuals. The one individual, I’ve come to believe, is also a spy.”

John, you remember that friendly young man from Kaysville that used to talk with you—Steve Mayfield. We both thought he was earnestly trying to find out what was right. ... When our lectures started in Ogden you remember Steve showed up. I think you introduced him to me. He was so interested to hear everything so he could understand things better, but he couldn’t be to all the lectures. Could he borrow the tapes?

Steve would call me from college where he attended school. Could he come down and, borrow the tapes he hadn’t already had? Then when he got there he wanted copies of all our flyers, asking for any other materials I could let him have. He was so-o-o interested in hearing what I could tell him. And when I would offer him a comfortable chair to sit in, if it wasn’t right next to me, he would always come and sit where I was, be it the dining table or whatever. I hope I’m not getting paranoid, but he would pump me with questions and he could have been recording. When a church sends out spies, I think that church is very sick, deceitful, and dangerous. (Letter dated July 4, 1980)

By cautioning people to beware of Brent Metcalfe’s questions, Stan Fields directed attention from himself. This is evident from a letter to Paul Carden, postmarked July 11, 1980:

...I’m sure our “buddy” Metcalfe has tried to contact Rick Graham—he told me he heard about what Rick said on the phone and was drooling to talk to him—I’m sure he would also like all the info on Dr. Martin—so I wouldn’t tell him you work there [at CRI]. ... Say, Paul could you do me a favor? Now that you work at CRI I would like copies of if possible, the following—... According to Edward Decker, Steven Mayfield went by the name “Stan Fields” in the presence of Brent Metcalfe as early as September 1979. In his tape recorded interview with us, Steven Mayfield affirmed that Metcalfe “knew that I had that name. I think I told him that I used that and he just didn’t want to know about it ...” When one of the authors of this article (Jerald) talked to Brent Metcalfe about this matter, he acknowledged that he knew about the alias and had told Mayfield that he should not use it. When Metcalfe was pressed as to the wisdom of a Church Security man going about with a man who was using an alias, he finally blurted out that he had reported this fact in a written statement he prepared for Church Security on Edward Decker’s first visit to the Church Office Building (apparently sometime in 1979).

It has been claimed that just after we found out about “Stan Fields,” Brent Metcalfe wrote him a note in which he dissociated himself from him and claimed that he would tell the Tanners all about his activities. Unfortunately, when we tried to reach Metcalfe at Church Security we were told that he was “apparently on vacation.” We later learned that he was visiting ex-Mormons in Los Angeles. After he came back he had changed his mind and stated he would not submit to a tape recorded interview. Mr. Metcalfe was later asked to appear on a radio show to give his side of the story, but he claimed he had been given instructions not to talk publicly about the matter and could only appear if approval was obtained from his superior.

Mr. Metcalfe now claims that a false rumor has been circulated about him—i.e., that he was hired by Church Security because of his knowledge of Ex-Mormons For Jesus. While we have no way of knowing about this, before the Stan Fields episode came to light, Metcalfe told us that he had been questioned about his association with Ex-Mormons For Jesus by Church Security before he was hired.

In making this statement about Brent Metcalfe, we should probably point out that to our knowledge he never used an alias nor represented himself to us as an ex-Mormon. If there is a connecting link between Church Security and Steven Mayfield it probably was forged long before Mr. Metcalfe came on the scene. We feel that Metcalfe was only one of many who knew of Mayfield’s alias and deceitful methods. We believe, in fact, that a number of Church Security men must have been aware of what was going on. To begin with, Metcalfe claimed that he reported this to Church Security in a written report. Then, too, on different occasions Mayfield helped (or at least claimed to help) pass out anti-Mormon literature around Temple Square. In a letter to Edward Decker, dated April 25, 1980, Stan Fields wrote:

Conference went off with nothing too earth shattering—... We had about 12 people handing out literature on Sat & Sun., Wally Tope, Paul Carden & friends, Einar & Ann Anderson, Rev. & Mrs. M’Gimsey — and yours truly. Brent M. was there, cocky as ever.

Brent Metcalfe later admitted to us that he had seen Mayfield standing with anti-Mormon literature in his hand at Temple Square. Church Security guards, of course, would have had a great deal of interest in knowing who was involved in this activity. Is it reasonable to assume that none of these guards (with the exception of Brent Metcalfe) recognized Steven Mayfield? It should be remembered that Mayfield worked in the Church Office Building which is close to Temple Square. It is rather hard to believe that Church Security guards or employees of the Church Office Building would not report that a fellow employee was helping the enemy. The fact that no discipline was administered may very well indicate that Mayfield had protection in his deceitful activities.
Not long after we obtained the taped interview with Steven Mayfield, John Harrington, a reporter for the Ogden Standard-Examiner phoned Mayfield at the Genealogical Department of the Church. According to Harrington, he asked Mayfield if he had been passing on the material he had obtained in his spying activities to the Church. At first Mayfield said he would not comment about the matter, but when he was pressed real hard, he replied, “Yes.” Mr. Harrington was to meet with him the next day to learn the details, but to his disappointment Mayfield disappeared. For a number of days he could not be found at home nor at work. After this we tried on many occasions to call Mayfield at his home or the Church Office Building. We were always told that he was either not there or too busy to talk. When we finally reached him on the phone on August 5, we told him circumstantial evidence indicated that he did not conduct this spying operation on his own. He replied that this was “not necessarily so,” but declined an invitation to meet again to discuss the matter.

We feel that the link between Steven L. Mayfield and Church Security needs to be investigated. We have asked for help from the FBI, but they feel that no federal law has been violated. The Utah Attorney General’s Office has also declined the invitation to investigate the matter.

“ENEMIES LIST”

As we mentioned earlier, Mr. “Fields” prepared a long list of critics of the Mormon Church. The list contains at least 165 names of organizations or individuals who oppose the Church in one way or another. This list includes not only the “Major functioning units of EMFJ [Ex-Mormons For Jesus],” but also organizations such as: Modern Microfilm Co., Mormons for Era, Affirmation/Gay Mormons, American Civil Liberties Union and even the New York Times reporter Wallace Turner. Mr. “Fields,” of course, did not represent this list as an enemies list, but rather gave the impression that he was providing a valuable service for those who were working with the Mormons—in other words, he was helping to unite us. In the copy of the list he provided for us the page which contains the names “Affirmation/Gay Mormons,” and the “American Atheist (Utah Chapter)” was not included, but we were able to obtain it through another source. On our copy he made a handwritten note which invited us to add more names: “Jerald & Sandra—Here is a list of Christian groups or individuals that I typed up, who actively witness or work with Mormons. There might be some errors or changes—if you know of anyone else or different addresses et al, please let me know. Thanks and God bless Stan”

Mr. Fields sent this list to others and invited them to add additional names. He probably found it amusing that he could get critics of the Church to help him prepare his “enemies list.” In any case, when we learned that Fields was a spy we were able to use the same list to gather information concerning his dishonest activities. All we had to do was cut out the names and addresses from the list, tape them on an envelope and mail it, together with a request for information on Fields, to the parties involved. We received a good response from the people on the list. He had contacted a number of them and some had saved correspondence and made photocopies or turned the originals over to us. We also received information by telephone which added pieces to this intriguing puzzle.

One of the organizations Stan Fields penetrated is found as No. 11 on his list: “Mission to Mormons P.O. Box 322, Roy, Utah 84067.” Mission to Mormons was founded by Harry L. Ropp, a brilliant young man who seemed to have great potential for organization. In less than two years after he arrived in Utah Mr. Ropp became one of the most noted critics of Mormonism. In 1977 Inter Varsity Press published his book, The Mormon Papers, and in a short time thousands of copies were distributed throughout the country. Steven Mayfield’s first contact with Mission to Mormons apparently occurred when he wrote a letter to Harry L. Ropp on March 31, 1978, under his alias “Stan Fields.” In this letter he stated:

Dear Brother in Christ — I am an ex-Mormon for Jesus living here in the Ogden area. Recently I acquired a copy of your book “The Mormon Papers,” and found it very interesting. I am writing to you, to inquire some information about your organization and work. . . . Do you lecture or offer classes on the study of Mormonism? What is your present feelings on the Spaulding theory? Do you have any connection with any of the other Christian groups that work with the Mormons?

I hope to be able to meet you in the near future—as time and work permit. I . . . use my spare time witnessing about Christ (mostly to Mormons).

A few months later Harry Ropp’s dreams concerning “Mission to Mormons” were almost completely wiped out when his plane “apparently ran out of gas an[d] plunged onto the freeway last Thursday” (Salt Lake Tribune, September 6, 1978). After Hr. Ropp’s death it appeared that Mission to Mormons would go under, but his father (also named Harry Ropp) and others kept the work going. A few months after Harry Ropp’s death, and while the Mission was still in a very precarious situation, “Stan Fields submitted an application to be an “Associate Staff-Member.” On the application he listed “Jerald and Sandra Tanner” in the section for “personal references.” In the same application Stan Fields wrote:

Being an ex-Mormon and part of a group called “Ex-Mormons for Jesus” I feel that I can share my experiences, my knowledge and enormous material with others in witnessing to Mormons and guarding Christians against its falsehoods. I can also help with answering letters, filling orders etc.

Mr. Fields interest in “answering letters” and “filling orders” becomes especially important now that we know of his spying activities.

On March 20, 1979, Mr. “Fields” was accepted as an Associate Staff-Member, and at the time we interviewed him in the Church Office Building (July 16, 1980) he said: “. . . I’m on the staff of that [Mission to Mormons] . . .” Mr. Fields apparently did not get the acceptance with Mission to Mormons that he had hoped for because he was unable to list a phone number where he could be contacted.

Another organization found on the “enemies list” is Mormons For ERA. We asked Mr. Fields about this organization and he freely admitted that he was a member of the group. He went so far as to produce a card showing that he was a member and allowed us to obtain a photocopy of the document.
The President of Mormons For ERA is Sonia Johnson, an excommunicated Mormon who vigorously opposed the Church’s stand against ERA. The battle between Sonia Johnson and the Mormon Church has received a great deal of coverage in the national news media. It is little wonder, therefore, that Stan Fields would try to infiltrate her organization. According to Edward Decker, Stan Fields has a massive collection of material on Sonia Johnson. In a letter to Maurice Barnett, dated December 27, 1979, Stan Fields wrote: “P.S. You interested in the SONIA JOHNSON THING?? got a ton of articles on Her. It’s BIG NEWS Here in ZION!!”

Although Mr. Fields tried to penetrate a number of groups, his greatest effort seems to have been directed against J. Edward Decker, whose organization appears on the “enemies list” as “Saints Alive In Jesus P.O. Box 1076 Issaquah, Washington 98027.” In a letter to Paul Carden, written in the fall of 1979, Fields stated that he “visited Ed in July.” Fields apparently spent over a week at Decker’s home in Washington, and was able to obtain at least some of his mailing list by posing as an “Ex-Mormon For Jesus” who wanted to help enlighten the Mormon people.

At the time of the Mormon Conference in April, 1980, Mr. Decker published a two page article in the Home Section of the Salt Lake Tribune. It was entitled, To Moroni With Love. This article was published in a tract, but the Mormon Church leaders threatened to sue him because the picture of Moroni on the front resembled the cover of the Book of Mormon. Mr. Decker felt he could win the suit, but his publisher received a phone call stating that the Church was willing to pay $100,000 or more to stop publication.

Edward Decker, of course, capitulated and modified the cover. He now feels, however, that Stan Fields was in some way involved in relaying information to and from Church leaders about this matter. That Stan Fields wanted to be closely involved with Decker’s operations is evident from the following: On September 13, 1979, Decker was to speak at the Ascension Lutheran Church in Ogden. According to Claudette Bingham, Stan Fields prepared a rather large number of advertisements for Decker’s meeting and mailed them out. Mr. Fields told Claudette Bingham that it cost him $50.00 to mail out the advertisements—which would amount to over 300 copies at 15¢ each. There is no way to know whether he actually mailed out all of these, but one thing seems certain, he was trying to make an impression with Decker and his fellow workers. It is hardly any coincidence, then, that “Stan Fields” requested permission to set up a chapter of Decker’s organization in Utah. Since it was apparent that eventually a branch would be set up, Fields wanted to be in on the ground floor. This type of thing reminds us of tactics used by the FBI with regard to the Ku Klux Klan: “Covert techniques used in this COINTELPRO included creating new Klan chapters to be controlled by Bureau informants . . .” (Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans, Book II, page 87)

Mr. Fields had an interest in many other groups and individuals and would go to great lengths to try to demonstrate how opposed he was to Mormonism. In a letter to Laytane Colvett Scott, dated July 22, 1978, he wrote:

Not too long ago I read a copy of the Ex-Mormons for Jesus REPORT, and it mentioned your letter seeking information from ex-Mormons. So I am taking this time to respond and help in any way, your proposed book.

My name is STAN FIELD, I am 24 years old and presently live in Ogden, Utah . . .

When I started to attend college (U.C. Berkeley) I became social involved with the growing protest against society. I tried drugs, and all those things related with the “hippie” element. During this time I gave up my church activity, and denounced Mormonism, mainly due to the Negro priesthood denial, and what I believed was church involvement in politics and business fraud.

While at Cal Berkeley, I came across some students involved with the Campus Crusade for Christ who shared Jesus with me. Their testimonies of Christ’s love and their patience with me enabled me to come to Christ, and claim him as my personal Lord and Savior. After this I became involved on Campus with various Christian groups and began studying my original faith. I read some of the Tanner’s material and became thoroughly convinced that the Mormon cult the church of my youth, the church of my ancestors was wrong, false, and Satan inspired . . . the love and patience of some Christians and the quiet workings of the Lord touched my heart and made me realize I was [a] sinner before God and needed Christ as my Savior. I realized that good works and faithful church attendance were not going to save me from hell and eternal damnation. Finding the Lord was the greatest thing that has ever happened to me. It gave me the most happiness that any man could ever receive, and it enabled me to see the falseness of man-made religion (like Mormonism) which leads men to hell.

In another letter addressed, “Dear Brother in Christ,” Fields said that his eyes were opened “to see that I was involved in a godless—false religion—”

**USING CHURCH EQUIPMENT**

To carry out his diabolical plan to obtain information, Stan Fields used a type of bait which he referred to as his “goodies.” He would do research in newspapers and magazines to find articles critical of Mormonism. Then he would make photocopies of these articles and send them to critics of the Mormon Church in various parts of the country. Fields apparently began this practice while he was still working for the FBI in California. In a letter to Melaine Layton, whom he refers to as, “Dear Sweet Sister in Christ,” Stan Fields wrote:

I make it a practice to go to the San Francisco library at least once a week to get articles from the Salt Lake Tribune and other papers about the Mormon cult. Perhaps you would be interested in copies of some of these articles? Let me know and I will send you some. (Letter dated October 11, 1976)

The following year (October 6, 1977) Fields wrote to Mrs. Layton:

I still spend any of my spare time in the libraries going thru newspapers and magazines . . . (If you want articles on any matter, I [will] send them to you, since I probably have them or can get them.). . . Let me know [if] I can send you anything or do anything for you . . .

After Fields moved to Utah, his base of operations became the Church Office Building and he used both the Historical Department and the Genealogical Department. In a letter to Wally Tope, dated December 19, 1978, Fields commented: “If you’d like, I can provide you with material from L.D.S. Historical Dept or articles . . .” In a letter to Paul Carden, apparently written in September or October 1979, Stan Fields made these statements:

When I first started requesting things out of the archives, I had an hour interview with Don Schmidt (1977) at which time he was told by me, that I had been excommunicated. I have not been restricted or denied anything (so far) But have been watched closely and given BIG HINTS that if I do anything “against” the church, I will be banned from the library . . . I have been carefully watched—but not yet “kicked out.”

The reader will remember that in a letter dated March 31, 1980, Fields claimed that he met Brent Metcalfe “last summer at the Historical Dept. Tom Truitt . . . introduced me to him . . .”
However this may be, Fields used the Historical Department as well as the Genealogical Department to carry out his deceitful work. In a letter to Paul Carden, postmarked July 15, 1979, Fields indicated he would send “some clippings once a month . . ." In another letter he commented: “Hope you got my package of clippings ok. I’ll try to send you some each month — if I’m in town and can get copies made.” In still another letter, postmarked July 11, 1980, Fields wrote: “Greetings and Salutations in the name of Jesus! Here are some more goodies for you . . .” Fields was providing without charge packets of photocopies on a regular basis to a number of people. John L. Smith, who is also on the “enemies list,” claims that Fields “sent clippings perhaps half a dozen times in recent months” (Letter dated August 6, 1980). On July 11, 1980, Fields mailed Wally Tope a package containing 24 pages of photocopies, a letter and an order for $10 worth of material. The postage alone for this package was 93¢. A question, of course, arises as to who was paying for all the photocopying and mailing. Was Steven Mayfield or the Mormon Church paying the bill? Since we found that Steven Mayfield’s job in the Genealogical Department was in “Copy Supplies,” it would have been very hard for him to deny that the packets of “goodies were photocopied on Mormon Church equipment. In the taped interview, Mayfield acknowledged that he was not paying for all the photocopies he was making at the Church Office Building:

MAYFIELD — Sometimes I would copy up there and not pay for it, which means I’m in heck with them . . .
TANNER — On this copying without paying, you could . . . do probably as much of that as you wanted couldn’t ya?
MAYFIELD — Yea, unless they caught you at it.
TANNER — So we could almost infer, though you say they [the Church] didn’t pay for it that—
MAYFIELD — I paid for some of it . . . (Taped Recorded Interview, July 16, 1980)

It is interesting to note that almost a month after Mayfield was caught red-handed in his spying activities, he was observed making photocopies of letters from Mormon critics in the Historical Department of the Church. Church Security guard Brent Metcalfe was also present with him in the Historical Department, but we have no evidence that he gave him photocopies.

In any case, Mayfield must have incurred numerous other expenses in his deceitful activities. Besides the money spent on his vast collection of anti-Mormon materials and the mailing out of packets of “goodies,” Fields seems to have made long distance phone calls and traveled to see different ex-Mormons. For instance, according to Kurt Salfrank, Fields spent at least ten days visiting Edward Decker in Issaquah, Washington. In a letter to Wally Tope, postmarked July 11, 1980, Fields indicated he was planning another trip to Washington:

Are you going to be at the Seattle Wash. temple dedication??
I’m thinking of going up there & be with the Deckers in whatever they do — haven’t heard if Ed has anything planned. I’m sure Mormons for ERA will be there with their plane & Banners.

In the application Fields filled out for Mission to Mormons the question was asked: “How many miles from home would it be possible for you to travel to Meet with someone who needs help with Mormonism?” Fields answered as follows:

I travel throughout Idaho, Nevada into Calif, and parts of Utah, as part of job

The question that comes to our mind is this: how could a man who works only 30 hours a week at the Genealogical Department of the Church and goes to school at Weber State College afford to travel in these states to “Meet with someone who needs help with Mormonism”?

We do not have the room in this issue of the Messenger to deal at length with Stan Fields’ spying activities, but we have prepared a new booklet entitled, Unmasking A Mormon Spy: The Story of Stan Fields. In this booklet we show that Steven Mayfield not only spied on ex-Mormons, but he also tried to cause dissension. This booklet also presents new evidence that the Council of Fifty actually anointed Joseph Smith as King on Earth, and that Heber J. Grant, the seventh President of the Church who lived until 1945, was initiated into this secret organization. Unmasking a Mormon Spy: The Story of Stan Fields sells for only $1.00 a copy. The quantity prices are 5 for $4.00 — 10 for $6.00.

SOMETHING TO HIDE?

Some of those who would defend the tactics used by Steven Mayfield assert that we would not make such a big issue over the matter unless we have something to hide. Actually, just the opposite is true, if we really had something to hide, we would want to remain quiet about the matter and just let the whole thing blow over. After all, we believe that we have been victims of electronic surveillance and other forms of spying, and if we were involved in any wrongdoing we would certainly be afraid that would come out as we bring this whole matter to light. Now, while it would be untrue to say we have no fear of a direct confrontation with the Church, this anxiety does not come because of any wrong doing on our part, but simply from the knowledge that the Church has a great deal of power that could be directed against us. On the other hand, we know that God is greater than all and we have great comfort in that fact. Almost a year before the strange voice came on our telephone, we wrote the following:

Although the Watergate scandal has really hurt our country, there is a real lesson that we all can learn from it—that is, that it does not pay to try and cover up our sins. The Bible warns: “ . . . be sure your sin will find you out” (Numbers 32:23). It is true that we can often hide our sins from men, but Jesus tells us that we cannot hide them from God: “ . . . there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known” (Matthew 10:26).

Our former President must have firmly believed that his tapes would never come to light, but through some very strange circumstances they did become public and caused his downfall. This is certainly a tragic example, and we cannot help but feel sorry for him and for his family. Nevertheless, it teaches us that even the President of the United States does not have the power to cover up his sins. It is certainly ironical that Richard Nixon should be trapped by his own tapes. The Bible, however, tells us that we all stand in jeopardy of being convicted by our own words at the judgment: “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. “ For by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matthew 12:36-37).

Although we do not feel that God has a secret tape recorder which he uses to bug us with, we do believe He has knowledge of everything through his Holy Spirit. The Bible says that God not only knows our every word and action but also the “thoughts and intents” of our heart:

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”
“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Hebrews 4:12-13).

In 1 Corinthians 4:5 we read that the Lord “will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: . . .” Romans 2:16 tells us that “God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.”

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus it is clear that after death our memory will be restored and that if we have continued in sin and selfishness it will condemn us (see Luke 16:25). The Bible tells us that we are all sinners and in need of God’s forgiveness. To refuse to face this fact is to live a life which is founded on cover-up, and this will eventually prove disastrous to our souls. In the story of the Pharisee and the publican Jesus shows that we can appear to be very religious, but if we have not acknowledged that we are sinners in need of God’s grace we are still under condemnation.

Now, while the Bible teaches that it is impossible for us to cover up our own sins, it does state that God Himself can cover them up if we will turn to him and ask for forgiveness: . . .

In Psalms 32:1 we read: “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” This is a cover-up that really works. In Psalms 103:12 we find this statement: “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” . . . Those who have received the Lord into their hearts know the great joy and peace that comes from accepting God’s forgiveness. The Bible says:

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away: Behold, all things are become new.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

(Turner, Mormons and the C.I.A.)

As we indicated earlier in this issue, Wallace Turner was included on Stan Fields’ “enemies list.” Mr. Turner is a former Pulitzer Prize winning reporter who works for the New York Times. Ever since Turner began criticizing the Mormon Church for its anti-black doctrine, Church leaders have been very concerned about him. The FBI document which appears on page 3 of this issue reveals that Turner’s articles “became of so much concern to church authorities at Salt Lake City that they requested” some undisclosed person or persons to “intercede with the editor of the ‘New York Times’” so that articles unfavorable to the Church would not be printed. Mr. Turner has told us that he believes that pressure was exerted on the Times, but he feels that it did not affect the policy of the newspaper as the FBI document indicates.

In any case, the Mormon leaders have considered Wallace Turner to be a serious threat. In 1966 Turner published his book The Mormon Establishment. Right after this book came out, another book by a non-Mormon appeared which many people feel was written in an attempt to counter the influence of The Mormon Establishment. This book was written by Robert Mullen and was entitled, The Latter-day Saints: The Mormons Yesterday and Today. Writing in the Book Review Section of the New York Times for October 23, 1966, John Cogley observed:

Forty-eight pages of the Turner book, for example, are devoted to what the author terms the Mormons’ “anti-Negro doctrine.” Mr. Mullen glides past the same doctrine in one-half of a compound sentence: . . . Mr. Mullen is too obvious about avoiding the “back corners” of Mormonism to put the Gentile reader wholly at ease. . . . It is known that Mr. Turner’s earlier newspaper accounts of the Mormon dilemmas upset some in the Church’s hierarchy. It does seem not altogether coincidental, then, that these two books should be turning up at the same time.

Although it is true that Mr. Mullen was a non-Mormon, he was hardly an unbiased observer. As a matter of fact his company handled public relations for the Mormon Church. As we indicated earlier, the notorious spy Howard Hunt worked for the Mullen Company while Robert Bennett served as president, and the Watergate break-in and other illegal surveillance activities were discussed there. The fact that the Mormon Church would use the Mullen Company to handle public relations becomes extremely interesting when we learn that this company provided cover for CIA agents. J. Anthony Lukas wrote:

. . . when Mullen established its “own” office in Stockholm in 1962, it was staffed by two CIA men—James Everett and Jack Kindschi—who pretended to be working on a study for General Foods. . . . while they were actually debriefing Soviet and Chinese defectors. . . . Kindschi moved for a time to Mexico, City, again under Mullen cover, while Everett established a Mullen office in Amsterdam. . . . there is evidence that Mullen & Company may have served a similar role at home. (Nightmare: The Underside of the Nixon Years, New York, 1976, page 38)

It is interesting to note that we had corresponded with CIA agent James Everett for a number of years. In fact, he had written to us from Sweden on January 20, 1965, on Mullen & Company stationary (see photograph in Mormon Spies, Hughes, and the C.I.A., page 14) and had requested copies of our publications on Mormonism. When we first confronted James Everett with the question of whether he had worked for the CIA, he denied any involvement. Later, however, we found evidence that Everett had served as an agent. On May 29, 1976, we decided that we would confront Mr. Everett again with this important question. This time we had the evidence and Mr. Everett frankly confessed that he had been under “deep cover” while he was with the Mullen Co. and that this fact had come out in testimony before the Nedzi committee. The findings of the Nedzi committee have been published under the title, Inquiry into the Alleged Involvement of the Central Intelligence Agency in the Watergate and Ellsberg Matters: Hearings Before the Special Subcommittee on Intelligence of the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, Ninety-Fourth Congress, First Session. These hearings not only throw light on James Everett, but they also show the cover-up which Robert Mullen and Robert Bennett engaged in after the Watergate break-in when they tried to keep their company’s relationship with the CIA a secret. One CIA memo, written March 1, 1973, contains some enlightening information:

1. Mr. Robert R. Mullen . . . telephoned CCS on the morning of February 28 to advise us that Sandy Smith, a reporter from Time Magazine, was in the Mullen office late on February 27. Smith started off by saying that “a source in the Justice Department” had informed him that the company “is a front for CIA.” Mr. Mullen denied the allegation stoutly, said the company clients are all legitimate and offered to let Smith inspect the company books. . . .

3. Mullen told Smith that Bob Bennett, partner of Mr. Mullen who was on a business trip to California, really knew most about Hunt’s later period of Mullen employment. . . .

It was agreed that Mr. Colby would recommend to the DCI Mr. Schlesinger, that Messrs. Mullen and Bennett be allowed to read the June 21, 1972 memorandum to the FBI and that they be asked to continue to deny any allegation of association with the Agency, and state in effect that there was no relationship, and if there were, it, of course, would not be admitted. . . .
12. Mr. [deleted] and Mr. Mullen met near the Watergate and proceeded to Mr. Mullen’s apartment in The Watergate through a rear entrance to the Watergate. Mr. Bennett joined them shortly and both read the memorandum. . . . They said they would continue to deny any association with the Agency other than the already acknowledged relationship with the Cuban Freedom Committee.

13. . . . Mr. Bennett said that he recently spent four hours in Los Angeles being interviewed by a *Newsweek* reporter and had convinced him that the Mullen Company was not involved with the Watergate Affair. Mr. Bennett rather proudly related that he is responsible for the article “Whispers about Colson” in the March 5 issue of *Newsweek*. Mr. Bennett does not believe the company will be bothered much more by the news media . . . Mr. Bennett said also that he has been feeding stories to Bob Woodward of the *Washington Post* with the understanding that there be no attribution to Bennett. Woodward is suitably grateful for the fine stories and by-lines which he gets and protects Bennett (and the Mullen Company). . . . Mr. Bennett mentioned the February 12, 1973 meeting among himself, Mullen and [deleted], when he stated his opinion that the Ervin Committee investigating the Watergate incident would not involve the company. He said that, if necessary, he could have his father, Senator Bennett of Utah, intercede with Senator Ervin. His conclusion then was that he could handle the Ervin Committee if the Agency can handle Howard Hunt. . . .

14. . . . Bennett believes he and his Agency affiliations will not be raised again. He has the Ervin Committee shut off and feels the Agency has the responsibility to persuade Howard Hunt to avoid revealing what he knows of the history of cover arrangements with the company. Bennett and Mullen further suggested that the Agency “plug the leak” in the FBI and/or Department of Justice. (CIA memo, dated March 1, 1973, as cited in *Inquiry into the Alleged Involvement of the Central Intelligence Agency in the Watergate and Ellsberg Matters*, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975, pages 1073-1075)

In his testimony before the Nedzi committee, Robert Bennett gave this information:

**Mr. Nedzi.** When was your last contact with the CIA on any matter prior to July 10?

**Mr. Bennett.** The last one?

**Mr. Nedzi.** Yes; prior to then?

**Mr. Bennett.** I cannot recall.

**Mr. Nedzi.** Had you any general idea prior to the Watergate break-in, for instance, Mr. Bennett?

**Mr. Bennett.** Oh, indeed, yes. We were having discussions with Mr. Lukoskie about the transfer of Mr. Everett. The suggestion had been made to us that it might be necessary for the CIA to transfer him to [deleted]. . . .

**Mr. Nedzi.** Did you ever receive any instructions from anyone in the CIA to misrepresent or to refuse to represent the truth to the press?

**Mr. Bennett.** In the July 10 meeting with Mr. Lukoskie when I told him that I denied to the press that Mullen had any CIA ties, he expressed approval of that. He urged me to continue to take that posture. . . .

**Mr. Bennett.** Although we did not make any money out of our relationship with the CIA, . . . it was of some value to us as a firm to be able to say to our clients that we had an office in Europe and that we had an office in Asia. This gave a little extra stature to the firm.

On occasion, Mr. Everett, while in [deleted] did perform services for some of our clients. The CIA was very happy to have him do that. It added to the legitimacy of his cover. . . . during the 9 years that Mr. Everett was on our payroll, we formed a close personal bond with him. We felt that he was not being given the amount of personal consideration by the Agency that he deserves. . . .

**Mr. Fisher.** You are an innocent victim. You happened to hire this man [Hunt?] and you became involved in that respect. I would be interested to know what effect during this time period that has occurred since the Watergate break in, as to what effect this has had on your public relations business?

**Mr. Bennett.** It has destroyed it. The Mullen Co. does not exist anymore. All of the clients that we had at the time of the break in, they are gone with one exception. That is the Hughes organization. . . .

**Mr. Nedzi.** At one point Mr. Eisenstadt, in his memo, makes reference to a statement allegedly made by you, “* *** that they take care of Hunt and you take care of Ervin.” Would you comment on that statement?

**Mr. Bennett.** That is an accurate statement. I am not sure the way it appeared in the paper is accurate. There have been other phrases.

**Mr. Nedzi.** The statement in the memorandum was, “His conclusion then was that he could handle the Ervin committee if the Agency can handle Howard Hunt.”

**Mr. Bennett.** Yes, that is accurate. The reference to the newspaper to my father was not accurate. We are talking about a coverup, Mr. Chairman. We are talking about a coverup of the Mullen Co.'s relationship with the CIA overseas. As I explained this morning, I have consistently attempted, prior to the time that it was blown by CBS News, to keep this relationship dark. I was convinced that the Ervin committee would not expose that relationship. I was not convinced that Howard would—that Howard might, very easily, get on the stand and, for some purpose connected with his own defense, expose Mr. Everett in [deleted.]

I was saying to the Agency . . . I am satisfied that the Ervin committee can be handled in terms of covering up the relationship between the Mullen Co. and the CIA. I said, “I cannot handle Howard. That is your responsibility.” That is the message that I was giving the CIA. (*Inquiry into the Alleged Involvement of the Central Intelligence Agency in the Watergate and Ellsberg Matters*, pages 1081-1084, 1105, 1106)

Robert Bennett, of course, knew that if the whole story came out it would bring embarrassment to both the Mormon Church and the CIA. In spite of his efforts to cover up the matter, the truth became known, and Jack Anderson, who is himself a member of the Mormon Church, revealed that Bennett knew of the “White House burglary-bugging team” before the Watergate break-in was discovered. For a more complete statement about Bennett’s cover-up see Mormon Spies, Hughes and the C.I.A., pages 35-39.

At any rate, we think the most significant thing about James A. Everett’s confession that he was a secret agent for the CIA is the new light it throws on Robert R. Mullen’s book about the Mormons, *The Latter-day Saints: The Mormons Yesterday and Today*. This is the book which the Mormon newspaper, *Deseret News*, called “one of the most complete, objective and friendly treatments of the Mormon story every done by an ‘outsider’” (*Church Section, September 24, 1966*). After we found that the Mullen Co. provided cover for the CIA, we began to suspect that Mr. Mullen’s book might have some connection to the CIA. Since the investigation by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, the connection between the CIA and the publishing world has become known. The *New York Times* for April 27, 1976, reported that “Prior to 1967, the Central Intelligence Agency sponsored, subsidized or produced over 1,000 books: approximately 25 percent of them in English. In 1967 alone, the C.I.A. published or subsidized over 200 books, . . .”

*The* Mullen book on the Mormons appeared in the fall of 1966, and was printed by “Doubleday & Company.” It is interesting to note that the Senate Select Committee found that another book “actually written by C.I.A. agents” was unwittingly published by Doubleday.
This, of course, does not prove, that the CIA had anything to do with Mullen’s book about the Mormons, but when we remember that Mullen provided cover for the CIA, we cannot help but be a little suspicious of any book which came from his public relations firm. Now, when we add to this the fact that CIA agent James Everett worked on foreign editions of the book on the Mormons the whole thing becomes even more intriguing. We became aware of Mr. Everett’s involvement with the Mullen book when we first talked to him on the telephone October 7, 1974. At that time, of course, he was denying any connection between himself and the CIA. Now that we learn that Mr. Everett was really a secret agent, this takes on new significance. Why would a CIA spy be working on a book for the Mormons? Mr. Everett later explained that this work was just part of his cover and that he had no connection with the CIA. In other words, he needed a legitimate project to work on so that he could cover up his secret activities. This could very well be true, but then how can we be certain that it was not also a part of his CIA role? How do we know where to draw the line? In a conversation on May 29, 1976, Mr. Everett made a very revealing statement concerning his work on the Mullen book. He said that before the various translations were made, it was necessary to make certain changes to make the book fit each country and that he helped make these revisions. In other words, he had a part in the decision making process as to what should appear in each translation of the book. These revisions were then approved by Mr. Mullen.

The situation we have, then, is this: Robert Mullen, whose company provided cover for the CIA and helped to prepare literature for groups connected with the CIA, wrote a book promoting the interests of the Mormon Church. It was published by a company which had previously been unwittingly used by the CIA to print a book written by CIA agents. After Mr. Mullen’s book about the Mormons appeared in English, it was translated into foreign languages and a secret agent of the CIA, James A. Everett, helped to make revisions in the text to fit the various countries. Because of these strange circumstances, we cannot help but raise the question as to whether the CIA has some interest in the programs of the Mormon Church. In the book Mormon Spies, Hughes and the C.I.A., pages 55 and 68, we pointed out that some former CIA agents believe that the Mormon missionary system is sometimes used to provide cover. Mr. Everett claims that this is “a lot of hogwash.” He indicated that the CIA would never use such young men. We, of course, agree that most missionaries would be too young, but there are certainly many that are old enough. Then, too, there are mission presidents who serve for a longer period. Patrick J. McGarvey, who used to work for the CIA, gave this information in his book, C.I.A.: The Myth and the Madness, page 57: “Deep cover knows few bounds. . . . A friend found himself back in the Mormon mission in Hong Kong after his training.” The Church’s educational system and genealogical program could also be very useful to the CIA. In our book Mormon Spies, Hughes and the C.I.A., we explored the possibility of a relationship between Mormonism and the CIA. Jim Kostman, of the Assassination Information Bureau, an organization which has done research on the murder of John F. Kennedy, became so interested in this possibility that he flew out from Massachusetts to talk with us. Mr. Kostman told us he interviewed a man who had been involved with the CIA. This man claimed that when he was trying to locate a piece of equipment belonging to the CIA, he was told that it was on loan to the Mormon Church Genealogical Library, and that the Church did a great deal for the CIA. Although we have no information linking Steven Mayfield with the CIA, it is interesting to note that he worked with the Genealogical Department when he was caught in his spying activities.

However this may be, we feel that the publication of Mullen’s book was probably an attempt to offset Wallace Turner’s criticism of the Church in the New York Times and The Mormon Establishment. Mr. Turner, for instance, stressed the great wealth of the Church. In the “Author’s Forward” to his book, Mr. Mullen talks of “the world’s press” giving “a somewhat overblown idea of the Church’s business activities, . . .” Mr. Everett denied there was any connection between the two books, but he did say that Mr. Mullen’s book grew out of an attempt to counter criticism of the Church. He also stated in a letter written October 15, 1974, that Earl Minderman of the Mullen Company had been “answering critical media reports, . . .”

Since the book The Latter-day Saints: The Mormons Yesterday and Today was written by a man who prepared material for organizations linked to the CIA, and since a secret agent worked on foreign editions, we cannot help but suspect that it is in some way connected with the interests of the CIA.

We feel that this whole matter needs further investigation to determine if there has been a secret attempt to link church and state through the CIA. For more information on this important subject we recommend our book, Mormon Spies, Hughes and the C.I.A. This book sells for $2.95 a copy.
Communists In Zion?
FBI DOCUMENTS TO BE SOUGHT IN COURT

In the last issue of the Messenger (November 1980) we pointed out that an employee of the Mormon Church by the name of Steven Mayfield was caught spying on us under the alias “Stan Fields.” After some investigation we learned that Mr. Mayfield was an employee of the FBI at the time he originally assumed the alias. Because of Mayfield’s involvement with the FBI, we requested under the Freedom of Information Act that the FBI provide us with all records relating to us or Modern Microfilm Company. After a long delay, FBI headquarters in Washington, D.C., provided us with some documents. A great deal of material, however, had been blacked out and eighteen full pages were “withheld entirely.” In one of the documents, dated October 4, 1974, a full page of material has been blacked out. This revealing information appeared just after the suppressed portion:

Salt Lake City files further disclose that on 4/30/70 [one and one-third lines blacked out] reported that JERALD J. [sic] TANNER and his wife, SANDRA LUCILLE TANNER, moved to Salt Lake City from California several years ago, that TANNER operates the Modern Microfilm Company and that [one-third line blacked out] had told [one-fourth line blacked out] that the TANNERS had been circulating petitions against the Church and had been “trouble makers.”

This report indicated that the “Salt Lake City” Division of the FBI had a file or files concerning us with material dating back to at least April 30, 1970. We requested this information under the Freedom of Information Act. The Salt Lake City Division did provide us with a document, with a number of items blacked out, which seems to be the original source for material found in the Washington, D.C. records (see photograph of this document on page 3). This document throws an eerie light on the whole situation, for it reveals that we had been secretly accused of being communists:

On [material suppressed] telephonically advised that captioned individuals, husband and wife, who reside at 1350 South West Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah, are allegedly communists. [material suppressed] stated [material suppressed] had been advised the TANNERS moved to Salt Lake City from California several years ago and that JERALD J. TANNER operates the Modern Microfilm Company. [material suppressed] also stated [material suppressed] had told the TANNERS have been circulating petitions against the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and that they have been “trouble-makers” in that respect. [material suppressed] had been contacted by one of the [material suppressed] and that [material suppressed] did not know the source of the original information [material suppressed] could furnish no further pertinent information in this regard.

SKOUSEN’S PARANOIA

The malicious charge that we were communists was probably the result of scare tactics used by W. Cleon Skousen, author of the book, The Naked Communist. Mr. Skousen was at one time an agent for the FBI and was devoted to J. Edgar Hoover. On January 25, 1981, the Salt Lake Tribune reported that FBI records concerning

A picture of W. Cleon Skousen, who said communists were behind criticism of Church.

Mormon Church President David O. McKay were obtained under the Freedom of Information Act:

[material suppressed] file shows that in March 1956, McKay wanted to award Hoover an honorary doctor’s degree from church-owned Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. McKay decided Skousen should first call Hoover informally.

According to the same article, Hoover was too busy at the time, and “Skousen says now . . . Hoover had told him ‘he would retire the next year and then accept the (BYU) degree. . . .’ ”

After Skousen left the FBI he served as Chief of Police in Salt Lake City and as professor of ancient scriptures at the Church’s Brigham Young University. He now directs the Freeman Institute—an organization which many people believe is set up to obtain political power for the Mormon Church. Ezra Taft Benson, next in line to be President of the Mormon Church, is one of Skousen’s chief supporters.

In any case, about six months prior to the time we were reported to the FBI, a communist newspaper launched an attack on the Mormon Church. A photographic reprint of this article was distributed by members of the Mormon Church together with a response written by W. Cleon Skousen. (Incidentally, this is the only communist article we can ever remember reading. It is certainly ironic that it was circulated by members of the Mormon Church.) Skousen’s response was entitled, “Communist Press Calls For Attack On LDS Church,” and contained an emotional appeal to resist “the attack”:

Attached hereto is a reprint of an article from an official Communist Paper called the World Magazine which is the Sunday Supplement to the Daily World and the People’s World. This article appeared in the issue of October 18, 1969 . . .

Anyone familiar with Communist tactics will recognize that this is no ordinary article. It is a signal to the Communist “transmission belt” to go to work. There are people strategically placed in the bulk of the opinion-molding facilities of the United
States who watch for signals like this in the Communist press. . . . Communist signals are therefore accepted by the entire cadre of left-wing collectivists as the logical targets for a united attack. The Communists refer to this large group of fellow-travelers as their “transmission belt.” . . .

For several months the volume and intensity of criticism against the LDS Church has been mounting. The Communist Party has apparently decided to take over the leadership of this agitation and give it financial and institutional support. If the pattern follows past incidents of this kind, we may expect to see the so-called legitimate press, radio and TV begin a whole series of “reports” on all types of subjects related to the LDS Church. It will be explained that the LDS Church has suddenly become “news.” All of these “reports” will be handled in a way which makes the Church look rich, priest-ridden, racist, super-authoritarian and conservative to the point of being archaically reactionary.

In the past, organizations selected for this kind of assault have usually attempted to ignore the attack until the damage has become practically irreparable. A more responsive approach such as that followed by J. Edgar Hoover when the FBI is attacked has proven more effective in blunting the impact of such campaigns.

Since we had been questioning the LDS Church’s policy with regard to blacks not being allowed the priesthood and had criticized the church for many years because of its attempt to become rich, it is only logical to conclude that Skousen and many of his uncritical followers would suspect we were communists. At any rate, in the March 1970 issue of the *Messenger* we published an article, concerning the racist doctrines of the Mormon Church. Although we also printed an article condemning violence in the same issue, this newsletter may very well have led to the charge that there is reason to believe that we were communists. The FBI received its information concerning us on April 30, 1970.

**DANGEROUS SITUATION**

To be reported as a communist during the late 1960s and early 1970s was a very serious matter. At that time the FBI had a secret program known as COINTELPRO. This program was investigated by Frank Church’s “Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities.” In the Final Report, we find this information:

> The abusive techniques used by the FBI in COINTELPRO from 1956 to 1971 included violations of both federal and state statutes prohibiting mail fraud, wire fraud, incitement to violence, sending obscene material through the mail, and extortion. More fundamentally, the harassment of innocent citizens engaged in lawful forms of political expression did serious injury to the First Amendment guarantee of freedom of speech and the right of the people to assemble peaceably and to petition the government for a redress of grievances. (Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976, Book II, page 139)

The FBI, CIA and IRS were all involved in some very questionable activities at the time we were reported to be communists. The Senate Select Committee reported:

> United States intelligence agencies have investigated a vast number of American citizens and domestic organizations. FBI headquarters alone has developed over 500,000 domestic intelligence files, and these have been augmented by additional files at FBI Field Offices. . . . Nearly a quarter of a million first class letters were opened and photographed in the United States by the CIA between 1953–1973, producing a CIA computerized index of nearly one and one-half million names. . . . 300,000 individuals were indexed to a CIA computer system and separate files were created on approximately 7,200 Americans and over 100 domestic groups during the course of CIA’s Operation CHAOS (1967–1975). . . . Intelligence files on more than 11,000 individuals and groups were created by the Internal Revenue Service between 1969 and 1973 and tax investigations were started on the basis of political rather than tax criteria. . . .

> Intelligence agencies have collected vast amounts of information about the intimate details of citizens’ lives and about their participation in legal and peaceful political activities. Targets of intelligence activity have included political adherents of the right and the left, ranging from activist to casual supporters. Investigations have been directed against proponents of racial causes and women’s rights, outspoken apostles of nonviolence and racial harmony; establishment politicians; religious groups; and advocates of new life-styles . . .

> (b) Illegal or Improper Means. — The surveillance which we investigated was not only vastly excessive in breadth and a basis for degrading counterintelligence actions, but was also often conducted by illegal or improper means. . . .

> (3) Since the early 1930’s, intelligence agencies have frequently wiretapped and bugged American citizens without the benefit of judicial warrant . . . .

> (5) Warrentless break-ins have been conducted by intelligence agencies since World War II. During the 1960’s alone the FBI and CIA conducted hundreds of break-ins, many against American citizens and domestic organizations. In some cases, these break-ins were to install microphones; in other cases, they were to steal such items as membership lists from organizations considered “subversive” by the Bureau. (Ibid, pages 6, 7, 12 and 13)

In the November 1980 issue of the *Messenger* we indicated that there is very good reason to believe that we were subjected to electronic surveillance on November 6, 1975. We do not know, however, if the intelligence world had anything to do with this. The FBI has refused to investigate this matter.

**CIA DELAYS RESPONSE**

In the November 1980 issue of the *Messenger* we demonstrated that there is reason to believe that there is a close relationship between the CIA and the Mormon Church. The Church’s public relations were handled by a firm connected with the CIA at the time of the Watergate break-in, and CIA agent James Everett actually helped in preparing foreign editions of a book which was favorable to the Church. Because of the CIA’s obvious interest in those thought to be communists and because of its relationship with the Mormon Church, we suspected that it might also have records concerning us. Our attempt to find out has been extremely frustrating. Although the Freedom of Information Act was supposed to prevent long delays in obtaining information, the CIA has stalled for months. On October 23, 1980, the CIA indicated that “before we may begin processing your request, we must receive from you a notarized statement as explained above.” This was provided and on November 16, 1980, the CIA said it was “processing your request and will provide you with the results under the Privacy Act as soon as possible.” On December 8, 1980, we were sent another letter which stated that “it is not possible to give you a firm estimate of when your request will be completed. . . . We also regret to inform you that your request for information on the Modern Microfilm Company was inadvertently overlooked . . . We will first need same verification from you indicating that you indeed represent Modern Microfilm Company.” Finally, on January 21, 1981, we were sent a letter which said: “Since we will be unable to respond within the 10 working days stipulated by the Act, it is your right to construe this as a denial, subject to appeal to the CIA Information
Review Committee. It would seem more reasonable, however, for us to continue processing your request and to respond as soon as feasible. Any denials of records could be appealed at that time.”

Since this appeared to be another means of stalling, we have appealed the matter and will take it into the United States District Court if we do not obtain results within a reasonable period.

**COURT ACTION**

As we indicated earlier, the FBI blacked out many portions of the documents concerning us and has “withheld entirely” eighteen full pages. We felt this was an unwarranted suppression of material and appealed the decision. On November 19, 1980, the Office of Privacy and Information Appeals sent us a letter denying the appeal and stating that “None of the information being withheld is appropriate for discretionary release.” Because we question the right of the FBI to withhold this information and since it is our only recourse, we have decided to take the matter into the United States District Court.

In taking this action we do not want our motives to be misunderstood. We believe that both the FBI and the CIA are necessary for the good of our nation. We also feel that these organizations should have power to conduct legitimate investigations against criminals and subversives. Our only complaint is that in some instances they have gone beyond the power granted to them under the law. We feel that the FBI and CIA should be exemplary in their conduct and should not be used by any individual, church or group to promote their own objectives.

However this may be, the attempt to link us to communism or any other subversive or illegal activities has been a complete failure. We can boldly demand the records because we know that we have nothing to hide.

**STAND BY US!**

Over the years we have found that one of the greatest weapons the Mormon Church has is fear. Because of the size and power of the Church many people refuse to stand up and be counted. In revealing the story of Steven Mayfield’s spying activities and the relationship of the Church to the CIA, we know that we have caused many people to fear that they could also become targets for surveillance. This fear has probably led some people to back off and withhold support from the important work in which we are engaged. This is a time, however, when we really need support. If we lose many customers because of the spying situation it could prove fatal to the work. While it is probably true that some people would go to great lengths to stop our work, it is doubtful that they are going to pay much attention to those who support us. To become paranoid about the situation is to play right into the Church’s hands. Skousen would have people believe that the communists are behind those who oppose Mormonism, but we can fall into the same type of trap if we tend to see a Mormon spy behind every bush. This would have a tendency to greatly damage the progress of the work. The Bible admonishes: “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, . . .” (2 Timothy 1:7-8).

Many false rumors have been started to counteract our work. Some Mormons, for instance, have put forth the story that the work we are engaged in is very profitable. One woman wrote: “. . . you are getting rich on poor people’s money . . . Someone needs to
A photograph of an FBI document containing allegations concerning communism.
unmask you and your growing bank acct.” Strange as it may seem, the Mormons are not the only ones putting forth false rumors. It was reported to us that some Protestants believe that we have sold out to the Mormon Church for $2,000,000. The truth of the matter is that we have no savings account and have had to borrow several thousand dollars just to make it through the year. Our royalties from Moody Press for the sale of The Changing World of Mormonism during 1980 will probably all be used to pay back these loans. It should be obvious to anyone who examines the prices on our books that we are not in this work for the money. Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? could probably be sold for twice as much as we are now charging. We have always considered this to be a missionary work and have been content to receive enough money to pay our bills.

For many years people have encouraged us to form a non-profit organization. Although we realized that we could easily meet the qualifications, we have never taken any action on this matter. During the past few months, however, we have reconsidered this matter and have decided that we will try to form a non-profit corporation so that those who donate may receive a deduction from their income taxes. This will probably take a few months because the IRS must give its approval. In the meantime, we would be happy to receive donations, but we must caution that they will not be tax exempt.

In the January 1979 issue of the Messenger we printed an article entitled, “Modern Microfilm & The Future.” We feel that the last part of this article really fits our present situation:

Although the future looks very bright, at the present time we are functioning with a limited amount of capital. This, of course, makes our work less effective. For instance, we are forced to print very limited quantities of the works listed on our booklist. This wastes a great deal of time because we are forced to jump back and forth from one project to another. This time could be better spent in getting out new material. With more capital we could run things a lot smoother and have far better results in getting the truth out. . . .

In the past some of our friends have helped us with loans which we have been able to repay. If anyone is interested in loaning some money at the present time we could pay 10 percent interest. A loan of $1,000 would return $100 interest within a year (12 monthly payments of $91.67) or $200 if loaned for two years, and $5,000 would bring $1,000 interest if loaned for two years. We could use any amount between $500 and $5,000 and would sign a promissory note to make the matter legally binding. We feel that this would be a good investment, and it would help us to make our work more effective.

While most people will not be able to help this work in a financial way, all of our Christian friends are able to pray for us and for the Mormon people. The scriptures say that the “effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16). We feel that the Lord has really blessed our work and that it is being widely used as a tool to bring Mormons to the knowledge of the true Gospel. We believe that with the Lord’s help we can weather the present storm and that thousands of Mormons will come to a knowledge of the truth.

APRIL HELPS NEEDY

In the April 1980 newsletter we announced that our daughter April had become interested in full-time Christian service. She had been attending Simpson College (a Bible school in San Francisco), and had decided to spend a summer in the Philippines with Teen Missions International. She had a very successful summer during which she became even more interested in full-time service. In January she came back to Salt Lake City to begin work as Family Coordinator for the Rescue Mission of Salt Lake. This is a very important ministry, for it involves helping to set up a work for both families and single women. Salt Lake really needs this type of service because many families and single women do not know where to turn in time of need. The Rescue Mission will be providing food, lodging, spiritual counseling and other services for these people. We are sending out a letter concerning April’s work in the first 7,000 copies of the Messenger. If it is not included in your copy, you can obtain it by writing to her at the following address: April Tanner, Rescue Mission of Salt Lake, Box 1431, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110. April is trying to raise her own support so that the Mission will have more money to put the new plans into effect. We hope that many people will support her with both prayers and contributions. All donations are tax deductible. For details read her letter.
EXCERPTS FROM RECENT LETTERS

...I talked with your wife on the telephone...I want to thank you also for your works, “The Changing World of Mormonism” and “Mormonism—Shadow or Reality.” Since reading these publications my husband and I & five of our children has asked for excommunication. I’m meeting with an Ex- Mormons for Jesus group. I feel that I’m on my way to really knowing Jesus Christ and letting him into my life.

After being a member for 15 years and having been sealed in the temple the church is not letting go very easily but I know we have the strength and conviction, thanks to you, to complete the task. K. M. (Oregon)

Thanks for unmasking Mormonism. I was born into the church, believed everything I was told, went on a mission, returned to BYU to finish school and met and married a non-Mormon (she converted for me but was never really converted). This was the best thing that could have happened as she slowly opened my eyes, along with a good friend that was learning about Mormon untruths himself. It was a shock. For years, the home teachers had threatened us with excommunication if we didn’t let them come for a visit. After reading about a number of changes in Mormonism, I realized it was fraud, pure and simple. However, this did not alleviate the severe guilt. Nevertheless, my wife and I asked to be removed from the church records. Of course there was a Bishops Court which we would not subject ourselves (Inquisition).

It’s been an emotional roller coaster up until about a year ago. Someone should write a book about how these false beliefs can keep you from learning the truth and the emotional scars that come with realizing that so many years were wasted. But I will say that many of my experiences were extremely gratifying and the basic Christian principles have been invaluable in my life. Nevertheless, fraud is fraud! R. S. (Texas)

I was particularly interested in your article “Bleaching the Lamanites.” I have a personal testimony concerning this subject that might shed light on this subject for you.

In South Carolina, near the town of Rock Hill, there is the Catawba Indian tribe. Many of these Indians are Mormons. In fact the Indian who is supposed to follow the footsteps of his father as chief is a Mormon, It is quite remarkable how this man is almost white and how the Indians who are active in the church are also that way.

This is a testimony unto the world that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God when he prophicied that this would come about...

You really must be jealous of the (Mormon) Lord’s true church... Of course your reason might be for filthy lucre. E. C. (Idaho)

I’m writting you to just thank-you for the work you are doing on Mormonism. I myself have just come out of it, about a year ago... I was born & raised in the church. I’m 26 now and I served a mission in England, the London mission, for the church. So it wasn’t that long ago I began reading your material. I started with “Mormonism—Shadow or Reality.” My wife showed it to me. She by the way read it first, and after only being in the church a few months, got out quick and knew it was a false religion. Of course all this devastated me at first. But after 2 years of prayer & study and other churches, I became a true Christian and left the church. I realize now that the Mormon Church can’t be what they claim it is... K.H. (Arizona)
43,000 BOOKS MET WITH SILENCE

We are happy to report that we have now sold over 35,000 copies of our major work, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* A condensed version of this work entitled, *The Changing World of Mormonism*, has also been published by Moody Press. In less than a year 8,000 copies have been sold, and Moody Press is now preparing for a third printing. This means that 43,000 books have been distributed, and yet there has been no official response to this material by the Mormon Church leaders. Some have maintained that the reason for this silence is that the Church does not like to engage in controversy. This idea, however, has no basis in fact. In 1977 three researchers claimed that they had found proof that Solomon Spalding was the real author of the Book of Mormon. On August 20, 1977, the Mormon Church responded with a direct attack on this idea (see *Deseret News*, Church Section, pages 3-5). Since the Church leaders do respond to criticism when they feel they can win, their silence with regard to *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* and *The Changing World of Mormonism* leads to the unescapable conclusion that they know that the charges made in these books are basically correct and cannot be refuted.

**MORMONISM—SHADOW OR REALITY?**

by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. This book has been called “Perhaps the most exhaustive expose of Mormonism between two covers.” It deals with such subjects as: the claims of Mormonism, changing doctrines, suppressing the records, book-burning, changes in Joseph Smith’s revelations, money-digging, Joseph Smith’s 1826 trial for engaging in “glass looking,” proof that the Book of Mormon is a product of the 19th century, changes in the Book of Mormon, archaeology and the Book of Mormon, changes in Joseph Smith’s History, the “strange” accounts of the First Vision, no revival in 1820, the Godhead, the Heavenly Mother, the Adam-God doctrine, the Priesthood, false prophecy, the missionary system, plural marriage, the anti-black doctrine, the rediscovery of the Joseph Smith Papyri and the fall of the Book of Abraham, Mormon scriptures and the Bible, Blood Atonement among the early Mormons, the Word of Wisdom, the secret Council of Fifty, Joseph Smith anointed king, the Danites, baptism for the dead, temple marriage, changes in the temple ceremony and its connection to Masonry, the Mountain Meadows Massacre, the Utah War, Mormonism and money, and hundreds of other important subjects. Contains 587 large pages with many photographs. About 35,000 copies of this book have been sold!

**THE CHANGING WORLD OF MORMONISM**

by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. An updated and condensed version of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* published by Moody Press. Almost 600 pages with an index and bibliography. In the introduction to this book, Wesley P. Walters writes:

“Oh, this stuff is dynamite,” exclaimed a prestigious director of a Mormon Institute of Religion,

“I tell you, though you may not believe it, I have seen people get utterly crushed, almost devastated

with some of the material that the Tanners have reproduced.”

“I will tell you,” he continues, “there was an Institute teacher here, not long ago . . . who lost his

testimony and went out of the church on the basis of this stuff.”

That description of the effects of Jerald and Sandra Tanner’s publishing efforts to unmask

Mormonism is hardly an overstatement . . .

Their major work, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*, has sold more than thirty thousand copies

without any advertising campaign, simply because it is the most definitive work in print on the fallacies

of Mormonism. This condensed version of that earlier work, though still of necessity lengthy, sets

forth the heart of their extensive research.

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UNMASKING A MORMON SPY

THE STORY OF STAN FIELDS
by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. A thirty-page booklet dealing with Steven Mayfield’s spying activities under the alias “Stan Fields.” Deals with such subjects as: the possibility of a link with the FBI, the possibility of a link with Mormon Church Security, a false accusation against Michael Marquardt, the “enemies list,” infiltration into Ex-Mormons For Jesus, intelligence gathering, the question of whether the Salt Lake City Police Department is influenced by the Church, Ezra Taft Benson’s attempt to stop the work of church historians, new evidence that the Council of Fifty anointed Joseph Smith King on Earth and that Heber J. Grant, who became the seventh president of the Church and lived until 1945, was initiated into this secret organization. Contains photographs of a number of important documents relating to Stan Fields. Price: $1.00  Quantity Prices: 5 for $4.00 — 10 for $6.00

ROBERTS’ MANUSCRIPTS REVEALED

A Photographic reproduction of some secret manuscripts written by B. H. Roberts. Roberts was a General Authority and one of the greatest historians the Mormon Church has ever known. In the manuscript, “A Book of Mormon Study,” Roberts frankly admitted that Joseph Smith had a vivid enough imagination and the source material necessary to have produced the Book of Mormon without the aid of the gold plates. Contains 424 pages with a revealing preface by Jerald and Sandra Tanner which throws light upon the writing and suppression of these important manuscripts. PRICE: $13.95

NOTE THESE TWO SPECIAL OFFERS!!

1. A FREE COPY of UNMASKING A MORMON SPY: THE STORY OF STAN FIELDS will be sent with all orders of $10 or more. (You must indicate that you want the free copy on your order form or letter.) Special ends March 31, 1981.

2. The coupon below is WORTH $5.00 on any order of $50.00 or more.

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On the Purchase of $50.00 or More Worth of Books From Modern Microfilm Company. Offer Limited to One Coupon Per Purchase.
BOOK OF MORMON “CARACTORS” FOUND!

BY JERALD & SANDRA TANNER

A report on the recently discovered sheet containing characters which were supposed to have been copied directly from the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. Although Dr. Hugh Nibley claimed that this sheet contained Egyptian writing and could be translated, his claim has been rejected by competent Egyptologists. Also contains a rebuttal to Barry Fell’s work and a look at the theory that Joseph Smith’s characters were derived from magic books.

PRICE: $2.00

JOSEPH SMITH’S 1835-36 DIARY
Transcription by H. Michael Marquardt. This diary was suppressed by the Mormon leaders for 140 years. Includes a revealing introduction by Jerald and Sandra Tanner and some photographs of the original document. Price: $3.50

JOSEPH SMITH’S KIRTLAND REVELATION BOOK
Introduction by Jerald and Sandra Tanner showing some important changes in Joseph Smith’s revelations. Although a typescript is not provided, this publication contains photographs of the entire manuscript book which has been suppressed since the 1830’s. Price: $4.50

AN EXAMINATION OF B. H. ROBERTS SECRET MANUSCRIPT
Contains an article by Wesley P. Walters analyzing Roberts’ compilation of evidence showing that Joseph Smith could have written the Book of Mormon . . . B. H. Roberts was a General Authority, and one of the greatest historians the Church has ever known. Although it was known that Roberts prepared a list of parallels between the Book of Mormon and the View of the Hebrews, his larger work, “A Book of Mormon Study,” only recently came to light. We have included some photographs of the original manuscript along with Wesley P. Walters’ examination of this devastating work. Price: $8.00

ADAM IS GOD???
by Chris Vlachos. Contains new and important material on the Adam-God doctrine which Mr. Vlachos has gleaned from manuscript sources. We highly recommend this excellent study. Price: $ .95

THE USE OF THE BIBLE IN THE BOOK OF MORMON AND EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY EVENTS REFLECTED IN THE BOOK OF MORMON
by H. Michael Marquardt. A good summary of the evidence showing the Book of Mormon is a product of the 19th century. Price: $1.00

CONFessions of JOHN D. LEE
A photomechanical reprint of the original 1877 edition of Mormonism Unveiled Or The Life And Confessions Of The Late Mormon Bishop, John D. Lee. Contains very important material on the Mountain Meadows Massacre and the role of Danites in the Church. Price: $7.00
A White Pure and Delightsome People

Since its beginning the Mormon Church has taught that a dark skin is a sign of God’s displeasure. This teaching comes directly from Joseph Smith’s Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon teaches that about 600 B.C. a prophet named Lehi brought his family to America. Those who were righteous (the Nephites) had a white skin, but those who rebelled against God (the Lamanites) were cursed with a dark skin. The Lamanites eventually destroyed the Nephites; therefore, the Indians living today are referred to as Lamanites. The following verses are found in the Book of Mormon and explain the curse on the Lamanites:

And it came to pass that I beheld, after they had dwindled in unbelief they became a dark, and loathsome, and a filthy people, full of idleness and all manner of abominations. (Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 12:23)

And he had caused the cursing to come upon them, yea, even a sore cursing, because of their iniquity . . . wherefore, as they were white, and exceeding fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them. (2 Nephi 5:21)

And the skins of the Lamanites were dark, according to the mark which was set upon their fathers, which was a curse upon them because of their transgression . . . (Alma 3:6)

The Book of Mormon stated that when the Lamanites repented of their sins “their curse was taken from them, and their skin became white like unto the Nephites” (3 Nephi 2:15). The Book of Mormon also promised that in the last days the Lamanites—i.e., the Indians—will repent and “many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a white and delightsome people” (2 Nephi 30:6).

While the Mormon Church leaders taught that Indians were cursed with a dark skin they went a step further with regard to blacks. They claimed that God would not even allow blacks to hold the priesthood. After a great deal of pressure was exerted against them, the Mormon leaders finally had a new revelation granting blacks the priesthood (Deseret News, June 9, 1978). In The Changing World of Mormonism, pages 324-325, we wrote:

One issue that Mormon leaders now seem to be dodging is that concerning skin color. As we pointed out earlier, Mormon theology has always taught that “a black skin is a mark of the curse of heaven placed upon some portions of mankind” (Juvenile Instructor, vol. 3, page 157). The Book of Mormon itself is filled with the teaching that people with dark skins are cursed . . .

Now that they [Church leaders] have abandoned the idea that blacks cannot hold the priesthood, they should explain . . . if they are repudiating the Book of Mormon teaching that a dark skin is given by God as a “curse.” By giving a “revelation” on the blacks without explaining its implications, the Mormon leaders are leaving their people in a dense doctrinal fog.

A photograph of one of the Kinderhook plates. Joseph Smith “translated” a portion of these plates and claimed they contained the history of a descendant of Ham. Recent tests, however, show they are forgeries.

One of the most embarrassing things about the doctrine concerning the Indians is that they are not becoming “white” as the Book of Mormon prophesied. The anti-Mormon writer Gordon H. Fraser claims that the “skin color” of the Indians converted to Mormonism “has not been altered in the least because of their adherence to the Mormon doctrines” (What Does the Book of Mormon Teach? page 46).

It now appears that the Mormon leaders are trying to “dissolve” the doctrine that the Indians will turn white after turning to Mormonism. The Church has just released its 1981 printing of the “triple combination” which contains the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price. This new publication contains a very important change. Previous editions of the Book of Mormon had said that in the last days the Indians “shall be a white and delightsome people” (2 Nephi 30:6). In the new edition this has been altered to read that the Indians “shall be a pure and delightsome people.”

The official Church magazine, The Ensign, tries to justify this change by stating:

Most students of latter-day scriptures are aware that from the very first printing typographical errors have crept into the Book of Mormon. . . .

The Prophet himself attempted to correct some of these kinds of errors, but his many duties prevented him from completing the project; and even so, some of his corrections
It should be noted that Church leaders are unable to produce any documentary evidence to support their claim that this was merely a correction by Joseph Smith of a typographical error. There were originally two handwritten manuscripts for the Book of Mormon—a copy which was written by Joseph Smith’s scribes as he dictated it and a second “emended” copy that was prepared for the printer. Unfortunately, most of the first manuscript was destroyed through water damage. The Mormon scholar Stanley R. Larson informs us that this manuscript “does not exist for this section of the text. . . .” (“A Study of Some Textual Variations in the Book of Mormon Comparing the Original and the Printer’s Manuscripts and the 1830, the 1837, and the 1840 Editions,” Unpublished M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, April 1974, page 283)

Fortunately, the second handwritten manuscript—the copy given to the printer to use to set the type for the first printing of the Book of Mormon—was preserved by Book of Mormon witness Oliver Cowdery and is still in excellent shape. This handwritten manuscript does contain the portion printed as 2 Nephi 30:6. It uses the word “white,” and therefore does not support the claim that Joseph Smith was only correcting a typographical error (see Restoration Scriptures, by Richard P. Howard, Independence, Missouri, 1969, page 49). It should be remembered also that both the first two editions of the Book of Mormon (1830 and 1837) used the word “white.” It is especially significant that the 1837 edition retained this reading because the preface to this edition stated that “the whole has been carefully reexamined and compared with the original manuscripts, by elder Joseph Smith, Jr., the translator of the book of Mormon, assisted by the present printer, brother O. Cowdery, . . .” (Book of Mormon, 1837 edition, Preface, as cited in The Ensign, September 1976, page 79)

Besides all the evidence from the original Book of Mormon manuscript and the first two printed editions, there is another passage in the Book of Mormon which makes it very clear that Joseph Smith believed that the Lamanites’ skins could be turned “white” through repentance:

And their curse was taken from them, and their skin became white like unto the Nephites. (3 Nephi 2:15)

We have taken this quotation directly from the new “triple combination” to show that the Mormon Church is still bound by the belief that righteousness affects skin color even though they have changed the verse appearing as 2 Nephi 30:6.

The fact that Joseph Smith believed that the Indians’ skins would actually become white seems to also be verified by a revelation he gave in 1831. In The Changing World of Mormonism, pages 207-214, we discuss this revelation and show that it was suppressed until 1974 when we printed it in Mormonism Like Watergate? Since that time the Mormon Church Historian Leonard J. Arrington and his assistant Davis Bitton published the important portion of it in their book, The Mormon Experience, page 195:

“For it is my will, that in time, ye should take unto you wives of the Lamanites and Nephites that their posterity may become white, delightsome and just, for even now their females are more virtuous than the gentiles.”

Like Joseph Smith, President Brigham Young taught that the Indians would “become ‘a white and delightsome people’” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 2, page 143). While Brigham Young never released the 1831 revelation, there is evidence that he was familiar with its teaching that the Indians should be made white through intermarriage. In a book published in 1852, William Hall commented:

About the time of the breaking up of the camp at Sugar Creek, the people were called together and several speeches delivered to them by Brigham Young, and others. The speech of Young was in substance as follows:

“. . . We are now going to the Lamanites, to whom we intend to be messengers of instruction. . . . We will show them that in consequence of their transgressions a curse has been inflicted upon their race, in the darkness of their skins. We will have intermarriages with them, they marrying our young women, and we taking their young squaws to wife. By these means it is the will of the Lord that the curse of their color shall be removed and they restored to their pristine beauty . . .” (The Abominations of Mormonism Exposed, Cincinnati, 1852, pages 58-59)

T.B.H. Stenhouse related that Heber C. Kimball, a member of the First Presidency, spoke to some of the missionaries and told them that he did not see how the modern predictions could well be fulfilled about the Indians becoming “a white and delightsome people” without extending polygamy to the natives, . . . (The Rocky Mountain Saints, 1873, pages 657-659)

Although Joseph Smith’s 1831 revelation commanding Mormons to marry Indians to make them “white” was suppressed, recent leaders have continued to teach the Book of Mormon doctrine that the Indians become white when they turn to Mormonism. Spencer W. Kimball, who became the twelfth President of the Church on December 30, 1973, has strongly endorsed that teaching. In the LDS General Conference, October 1960, Mr. Kimball stated:

I saw a striking contrast in the progress of the Indian people today . . . they are fast becoming a white and delightsome people. . . . For years they have been growing delightsome, and they are now becoming white and delightsome, as they were promised. . . . The children in the home placement program in Utah are often lighter than their brothers and sisters in the hogans on the reservation.

At one meeting a father and mother and their sixteen-year-old daughter were present, the little member girl—sixteen—sitting between the dark father and mother, and it was evident she was several shades lighter than her parents—on the same reservation, in the same hogan, subject to the same sun and wind and weather. . . . These young members of the Church are changing to whiteness and to delightsomeness. One white elder jokingly said that he and his companion were donating blood regularly to the hospital in the hope that the process might be accelerated. (Improvement Era, December 1960, pages 922-923)

The reader will notice that Spencer W. Kimball used the Book of Mormon phrase, “a white and delightsome people.” This, of course, is the very phrase that has now been changed to read, “a pure and delightsome people.” It is very difficult to see any evidence of inspiration in this whole matter.

In any event, the Church now wants to suppress the Book of Mormon’s teaching concerning skin color. Ron Barker, of the Associated Press, questioned Church spokesman Jerry P. Cahill concerning the matter:

Asked whether church members should assume that faithful Mormon Indians would one day become light complexioned, Cahill said they should assume that they will become “a pure and delightsome people.” (Salt Lake Tribune, September 30, 1981)
We can probably expect more revisions in Mormon books to cover up this embarrassing doctrine. Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, who has recently had to revise his book *Mormon Doctrine* to conform to the change on the anti-black doctrine, will undoubtedly have to revise his section on the “LAMANITE CURSE.” On pages 428-29 of the 1979 printing of *Mormon Doctrine* we find the following:

... a twofold curse came upon the Lamanites: ... “they became a dark, and loathsome, and a filthy people, full of idleness and all manner of abominations.” (1 Ne. 12:23) So that they “might not be enticing” unto the Nephites, “the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them.” (2 Ne. 5:20-25; Alma 3:14-16) ... 

During periods of great righteousness, when groups of Lamanites accepted the gospel and turned to the Lord, the curse was removed from them ... the curse was removed from a group of Lamanite converts and they became white like the Nephites. (3 Ne. 2:15-16) ... 

When the gospel is taken to the Lamanites in our day and they come to a knowledge of Christ and of their fathers, then the “scales of darkness” shall fall from their eyes; “and many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a white and delightsome people.” (2 Ne. 30:6) Finally, before the judgment bar of God, all who have been righteous, Lamanites and Nephites alike, will be free from the curse of spiritual death and the skin of darkness. (Jac. 3:5-9)

We believe, of course, that Apostle McConkie has the right to alter his book in any way he desires. His changes concerning the anti-black doctrine are certainly a step in the right direction. When it comes to the Book of Mormon, however, we wonder how the Mormon leaders can justify altering words that were supposed to have been translated by the power of God.

**Joseph As A Translator**

**The Browns Fail to Save the Book of Abraham**

In 1912, F. S. Spalding published a booklet entitled, *Joseph Smith, Jr., As a Translator*. In this booklet Spalding questioned the authenticity of the Book of Abraham—a work which Joseph Smith claimed he translated from an ancient Egyptian papyrus. The Book of Abraham is published in the *Pearl of Great Price*, one of the four standard works of the Mormon Church. Although Spalding presented a very good case against the Book of Abraham, he was limited because he did not have the original papyrus or the handwritten manuscripts of the Book of Abraham. Since Spalding’s time a great deal of material has come to light which demonstrates conclusively that Joseph Smith failed in his attempt to translate the Book of Abraham, the Kinderhook plates and the Book of Mormon.

**BOOK OF ABRAHAM**

On November 27, 1967, the Mormon-owned *Deseret News* announced:

NEW YORK—A collection of papyrus manuscripts, long believed to have been destroyed in the Chicago fire of 1871, was presented to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints here Monday by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. ... 

Included in the papyri is a manuscript identified as the original document from which Joseph Smith had copied the drawing which he called “Facsimile No. 1” and published with the Book of Abraham.

In the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for March 1968 we demonstrated photographically that one of the papyrus fragments in this collection was used by Joseph Smith in producing his “translation” of the Book of Abraham. Grant Heward, an amateur Egyptologist who had previously done missionary work for the Mormon Church, pointed this out to us and also demonstrated that what Joseph Smith believed was the Book of Abraham was in reality the pagan “Book of Breathings”—an Egyptian funerary document having nothing to do with Abraham or his religion. Some of the world’s top Egyptologists later confirmed that this is a copy of the “Book of Breathings.” Professor Klaus Baer, of the University of Chicago’s Oriental Institute, and Professor Richard A. Parker, of Brown University, published translations of the papyrus in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*—a periodical printed by a group of liberal Mormons but not controlled by the Church leaders. To save space here we will only include Professor Parker’s translation. In *Dialogue*, Richard Parker was listed as “Wilbour Professor of Egyptology and Chairman of the Department of Egyptology at Brown University.” Mormon apologist Hugh Nibley said that Professor Parker is “the best man in America for this particular period and style of writing.” His translation reads as follows:

1. […] this great pool of Khonsu
2. [Osiris Hor, justified], born of Taykhebyt, a man likewise.
3. After (his) two arms are [fastened] to his breast. one wraps the Book of Breathings, which is ... 
4. with writing both inside and outside of it, with royal linen, it being placed (at) his left arm
5. near his heart, this having been done at his
6. wrapping and outside it. If this book be recited for him, then

Except for a few minor variations other renditions of the text are essentially in agreement with Professor Parker’s. The Book of Abraham, therefore, has been proven to be a spurious work. The Egyptologists find no mention of Abraham or his religion in this text. The average number of words that the Egyptologists used to convey the message in this text is eighty-seven, whereas Joseph Smith’s rendition contains thousands of words. It is impossible to escape the conclusion that the Book of Abraham is a false translation.

**THE BROWNS’ ATTACK**

In 1981 Robert L. and Rosemary Brown published the book, *They Lie in Wait to Deceive*. This book purports to tell “The amazing story of how “Dr.” or “Prof.” Dee Jay Nelson, Jerald and Sandra Tanner, and other anti-Mormons work to obstruct and distort the truth.” Actually, this book is nothing but a smoke screen to divert attention from the Book of Abraham problem to Dee Jay Nelson. In this work Mr. and Mrs. Brown make a devastating attack on Nelson, a man who translated the Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri in 1968. The Browns demonstrate that in 1978—ten years after making his translation—Nelson made the false statement that he had obtained a doctor’s degree. After a careful examination of this book, we concluded that the Browns did an excellent job of exposing some false claims made by Dee Jay Nelson. Unfortunately, however, in their zeal to destroy Mr. Nelson they have made some very serious errors. Although they have made a number of false statements concerning Dee Jay Nelson, their most flagrant violation of the principle of honesty occurs when they accuse us of being part of a cover-up. Those who are acquainted with the facts about the situation know that nothing could be further from the truth.
The Browns claim that “in the latter part of 1980,” they “sent information about Dee Jay Nelson to Moody Press”—the publisher of our book The Changing World of Mormonism. They go on to state that we were given “instructions to revise the section concerning Dee Jay Nelson. At this time they were also informed that no more copies of their just printed book would be released for sale, and all future editions must also be revised. In 1981, the new revised edition was printed . . . Between the Moody Press and us, it looks like the Tanners had no choice but to come clean” (They Lie in Wait to Deceive, page 161).

While the Browns would have their readers believe that we covered up the situation until they and Moody Press forced us “to come clean,” the truth of the matter is that we commenced our own investigation into Nelson’s credentials as soon as we became convinced there was a problem. The results of that investigation were published immediately in the Salt Lake City Messenger.

By March 20, 1980, we had learned that Pacific Northwestern University (the school Nelson claimed he had received his doctor’s degree from) was really a diploma mill, and we wrote to Nelson that his “claim to a doctor’s degree in anthropology cannot be substantiated. Even though we have never made this claim, we feel that it would not be right for us to continue selling your booklets.” Just about one week after we wrote this letter to Nelson, we were contacted by Charles F. Trentelman of the Ogden Standard-Examiner. Mr. Trentelman had heard that Nelson’s credentials had been questioned and asked us if we could throw any light on the subject. We informed him of all we had learned about Pacific Northwestern University, and on March 29, 1980, he wrote the following: “Mrs. Tanner said they investigated the claims and found Nelson’s diploma was from a university that was shut down recently by the federal government as being a diploma mill, an operation that sells diplomas without requiring any schooling” (Ogden Standard-Examiner, March 29, 1980).

Immediately after Mr. Trentelman’s article appeared in the Ogden Standard-Examiner, we published the 42nd issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger. This was printed in April 1980 and fully exposed Nelson’s deception with regard to the doctor’s degree. A copy of this paper was mailed to the Moody Bible Library, and there was no attempt to hide the matter from anyone. As a matter of fact, we printed somewhere in the neighborhood of 10,000 copies of this issue!

In spite of these facts, the Browns try to make it appear that we were covering up the matter. To do this they had to entirely omit any reference to the fact that we published an exposure of Nelson in the April 1980 issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger. Instead of telling the truth about the matter, they assert that “Between the Moody Press and us, it looks like the Tanners had no choice but to come clean” (They Lie in Wait to Deceive, page 161). On the same page the Browns admit that they “sent information about Dee Jay Nelson” to Moody Press “in the latter part of 1980.” It should be obvious, then, that the Browns are completely misrepresenting the situation. Since we had already exposed Nelson in the April 1980 issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger, how could the Browns and Moody Press force us “to come clean” in the “latter part” of the same year? This, of course, just doesn’t make any sense.

In a new booklet entitled, Can the Browns Save Joseph Smith? we deal with other false claims which the Browns have made concerning us and Dee Jay Nelson. We show, for instance, that the Browns were incorrect in stating that

Dr. Klaus Baer’s, Dr. Richard A. Parker’s, and Dr. John A. Wilson’s translations preceded Nelson’s!

Nelson, and his supporters, likes to make it sound as if . . . he was the first to translate and publish the Egyptian document. In reality, the first scholarly publications were by Dr. Klaus Baer, Dr. Richard Parker, and Dr. John A. Wilson. (Ibid., page 110)

Actually, Nelson’s work The Joseph Smith Papyri was advertised for sale in the Salt Lake Tribune on April 6, 1968, (see Salt Lake City Messenger, April, 1968), while the translations of Professors Baer, Parker and Wilson did not appear in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought until the Summer and Autumn issues. In fact, Klaus Baer refers to Nelson’s publication in his article:

So far as I know, Nelson, The Joseph Smith Papyri, page 42, was the first to point out that the bird above the head of Osiris clearly has a human head and therefore must be his ba. In “Facsimile No. 1,” it is drawn with a falcon’s head, and I must confess with some embarrassment that I also “saw” the falcon’s head before reading Nelson’s study. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Autumn 1968, page 118)

It would, of course, have been impossible for Professor Baer to refer to Nelson’s study unless it was already in print when he wrote his article.

The Browns accuse Nelson of lying when he said he went to President Tanner’s office to obtain photographs of the papyri which were being suppressed from the general public. In the booklet, Can the Browns Save Joseph Smith? we quote from a letter written by N. Eldon Tanner himself which supports Nelson’s claim. Furthermore, we reproduce a photograph of a memorandum from President Tanner’s office which verifies Nelson’s visit. Robert L. Brown has charged that “the Tanners are being deceitful” with regard to this matter. The evidence, however, completely supports our statements regarding this incident.

In our rebuttal to the Browns, we examine the charge that some of the information found in their book was obtained through secret tape recording of telephone conversations. We also show that they have cut out a paragraph from a photograph of a letter written by the Egyptologist Klaus Baer, and that the other parts of the letter have been pasted back together to make it appear that nothing is missing! The Browns have also suppressed over 900 words from a letter which we wrote. The reason for the suppression of these words is very obvious: we tell that the Mormon Church itself used a fake Ph.D. to defend the Book of Abraham at the time of Spalding’s attack. The noted Mormon scholar Dr. Sidney B. Sperry confirmed that deception was practiced in this regard:

He wrote a wonderful book . . . under the name Robert C. Webb, Ph.D. I regret that the brethren let him put down Robert C. Webb, Ph.D., because he was no Ph.D. (Pearl of Great Price Conference; December 10, 1960, 1964 ed., page 9)

In their book, the Browns main thesis appears to be that the critics of the Mormon Church have been discredited because one of them used a fake Ph.D. The Browns, however, completely suppressed the fact that the Church previously used a man with an assumed name as well as a fake doctor’s degree. We feel that Mr. and Mrs. Brown are operating under a double standard. They accuse us of deception, but the truth of the matter is that we were completely unaware of Nelson’s false claim to a Ph.D. As soon as we found out, we exposed him and quit selling his books. The Mormon Church leaders, on the other hand, allowed Mr. Homans to call himself “Robert C. Webb, Ph.D.” They engaged in a cover-up of this matter and continued to print his books for many years. As late as 1936 Church President Heber J. Grant took out a copyright on R. C. Webb’s book Joseph Smith as a Translator.

In any case, the Browns have tried to divert attention from the Book of Abraham problem. On the “Mormon Miscellaneous” radio program, August 3, 1981, we challenged Robert L. Brown to a public debate concerning the Book of Abraham, but he said he would only debate on the Dee Jay Nelson affair. We feel that this is just another attempt to avoid facing the real issue. As long as the Browns continue side-stepping the evidence against the Book of Abraham, their work will be of no real value.

While the whole foundation for the Book of Abraham seems to be crumbling, we can point with confidence to the case we have
preparing against the Book of Abraham. Our arguments are just as good as when we first advanced them thirteen years ago. Our case is not based on any one man or any wild speculation, but rather on the science of Egyptology, original documents and careful research. We have the testimony of some of the world’s greatest Egyptologists—i.e., Professor Richard A. Parker of Brown University and Professors Klaus Baer and John A. Wilson (now deceased) of the University of Chicago’s Oriental Institute. We feel that the case against the Book of Abraham is irrefutable. If the Browns feel otherwise, they should be willing to meet us in a public debate in Salt Lake City.

**KINDERHOOK PLATES**

While we give a detailed report concerning Joseph Smith’s “translation” of the Kinderhook plates in our book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* new and important information has recently come to light. The Mormon publication *Times and Seasons* for May 1, 1843, reported that these plates were found in a mound in Kinderhook, Illinois. In a letter written from Nauvoo, dated May 2, 1843, Charlotte Haven commented:

> ... Mr. Joshua Moore, ... brought with him half a dozen thin pieces of brass ... in the form of a bell. ... They were recently found, he said, in a mound ... When he showed them to Joseph, the latter said that the figures or writing on them was similar to that in which the Book of Mormon was written, and if Mr. Moore could leave them, he thought that by the help of revelation he would be able to translate them. So a sequel to that holy book may soon be expected. (Overland Monthly, December 1890, page 630)

According to the *History of the Church*, Joseph Smith did accept these plates as authentic and even claimed that he had translated a portion of them:

> Monday, May, 1. ... I insert fac-similes of the six brass plates found near Kinderhook, ... I have translated a portion of them, and find they contain the history of the person with whom they were found. He was a descendant of Ham, through the loins of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and that he received his kingdom from the Ruler of heaven and earth. (*History of the Church*, vol. 5, page 372)

On January 15, 1844, this statement appeared in the Mormon publication *Times and Seasons*:

> Why does the circumstance of the plates recently found in a mound in Pike county, Ill., by Mr. Wiley, together with ethnology and a thousand other things, go to prove the Book of Mormon true?—Ans. Because it is true! (*Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, page 406)

A number of the citizens of Kinderhook certified that the plates were taken from the mound by R. Wiley. Unfortunately for the Mormon position, however, it was later discovered that the plates were forgeries, made for the purpose of tricking Joseph Smith. W. Fugate, one of those who signed the certificate, wrote the following in a letter to James T. Cobb: “Bridge Whitton cut them out of some pieces of copper; Wiley and I made the hieroglyphics by making impressions on beeswax and filling them with acid and putting it on the plates.”

At the time of the Civil War the Kinderhook plates were lost. M. Wilford Poulson, a retired teacher at Brigham Young University and a student of Mormon history, told us that he found one of the original Kinderhook plates in the Chicago Historical Society Museum, but it was mislabeled as one of the original gold plates of the Book of Mormon. The plate which he found has been identified as number 5 in the facsimiles found in the *History of the Church*. Except for an acid blotch on one side, the plate is in excellent condition. Mr. Poulson did a great deal of research concerning the Kinderhook plates and was convinced that they were made in the 1840s as W. Fugate claimed.

Welby W. Ricks, who was President of the BYU Archaeological Society, had another opinion concerning these plates. The official Mormon publication, *Improvement Era*, accepted his view and printed the following in September, 1962:

> A recent rediscovery of one of the Kinderhook plates which was examined by Joseph Smith, Jun., reaffirms his prophetic calling and reveals the false statements made by one of the finders. The plates are now back in their original category of genuine.

What scholars may learn from this ancient record in future years or what may be translated by divine power is an exciting thought to contemplate.

This much remains. Joseph Smith, Jun., stands as a true prophet and translator of ancient records by divine means and all the world is invited to investigate the truth which has sprung out of the earth not only of the Kinderhook plates, but of the Book of Mormon as well. (*The Kinderhook Plates, by Welby W. Ricks, reprinted from the *Improvement Era*, September 1962*)

In 1965 George M. Lawrence, a Mormon physicist, was given permission to examine and make “some non-destructive physical studies of the surviving plate.” Mr. Lawrence allowed us to quote from his study in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* (page 113) as follows: “The dimensions, tolerances, composition and workmanship are consistent with the facilities of an 1843 blacksmith shop and with the fraud stories of the original participants.”

Since Mr. Lawrence was only allowed to make non-destructive tests, some Mormon scholars would not accept his work as conclusive.

In 1980 the Mormon scholar Stanley P. Kimball was able “to secure permission from the Chicago Historical Society for the recommended destructive tests. These tests, involving some very sophisticated analytical techniques, were performed by Professor D. Lynn Johnson of the Department of Materials Science and Engineering at Northwestern University” (*The Ensign*, August 1981, page 69).

Professor Kimball describes the results of the tests in the official Church publication *The Ensign*, August 1981:

> A recent electronic and chemical analysis of a metal plate (one of six original plates) brought in 1843 to the Prophet Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, Illinois, appears to solve a previously unanswered question in Church history, helping to further evidence that the plate is what its producers later said it was—a nineteenth-century attempt to lure Joseph Smith into making a translation of ancient-looking characters that had been etched into the plates.

As a result of these tests, we concluded that the plate owned by the Chicago Historical Society is not of ancient origin. We concluded that the plate was etched with acid; and as Paul Cheesman and other scholars have pointed out, ancient inhabitants would probably have engraved the plates rather than etched them with acid. Secondly, we concluded that the plate was made from a true brass alloy (copper and zinc) typical of the mid-nineteenth century; whereas the “brass” of ancient times was actually bronze, an alloy of copper and tin. (*The Ensign*, August 1981, pages 66 and 70)

Back in 1970, the Mormon scholar John A. Wittorf tried to come to grips with what would happen if the Kinderhook plates were proven to be forgeries:

> Accepting the find as genuine, Joseph had facsimile drawings of the plates made, presumably for future study. The brevity of his translation of “a portion of the plates” precludes the possibility that—if the plates are ultimately demonstrated to be fraudulent—his abilities as a translator of ancient scripts and languages can be called into question. (*Newsletter and Proceedings of the Society for Early Historic Archaeology, BYU, October 1970*, page 7)
In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 113, we observed:

Although we are happy to see John A. Witto’s honesty with regard to the Kinderhook plates, we cannot agree with him when he states that Joseph Smith’s reputation as a translator will not be affected. We feel that Joseph Smith’s work on the plates casts serious doubt upon his ability as a translator of “ancient scripts and languages.” He definitely stated that he “translated a portion of them, and find they contain the history of the person with whom they were found. He was a descendant of Ham through the loins of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and that he received his kingdom from the Ruler of heaven and earth” (*History of the Church*, vol. 5, page 372). Now, in order to obtain this much information from the plates it would have been necessary to have translated quite a number of the characters, and a man who could make such a serious mistake with regard to the Kinderhook plates is just the type of man who would pretend to translate the Book of Abraham from Egyptian papyri which he knew nothing about.

The Mormon scholar Paul R. Cheesman opened the door for an entirely different approach to the problem in an article written in March, 1970. He suggested that Joseph Smith was not really the author of the statement about the translation which appeared in the *History of the Church*:

As of now, the original source of Joseph Smith’s statement, under the date of May 1, 1843, concerning the Kinderhook Plate, cannot be found. Much of Volume V of the *Documentary History of the Church* was recorded by Leo Hawkins in 1853, after the saints were in Utah, and was collected by Willard Richards from journals. . . . Liberty was taken by historians of those days to put the narrative in the first person, even though the source was not as such. Verification of the authenticity of Joseph Smith’s statement is still under study. In examining the diary of Willard Richards, the compiler of Volume V, the Kinderhook story is not found there. Our research has taken us through numerous diaries and letters written at this particular time, and the Kinderhook story is not mentioned. (‘An Analysis of the Kinderhook Plates,’ an unpublished paper by Paul R. Cheesman, page 2)

Some of our readers will remember that as early as 1965 we charged that Joseph Smith was not really the author of a large portion of the material attributed to him. This was finally confirmed by Dean C. Jessee of the Church Historical Department in an article published in *Brigham Young University Studies*, Summer 1971. According to Jessee’s research over 60% of Joseph Smith’s *History* was compiled after his death. In any case, the idea with regard to the Kinderhook plates seemed to be that if they turned out to be forgeries, a person could get the Church off the hook by arguing that the statement attributed to Joseph Smith concerning the translation was also a forgery. This is certainly a strange way of looking at the matter—almost as if “two wrongs” would make “a right.” Since the *History of the Church* was prepared by the highest officials of the Mormon Church and printed by the Church itself, to admit falsification in it is to undermine the entire foundation of Mormonism. Joseph Fielding Smith, the tenth President of the Church, claimed that the *History of the Church* “is the most accurate history in all the world; it must be so” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 2, page 199).

Since the recent tests on the Kinderhook plate, Mormon apologists find themselves facing a real dilemma, and there is no way out without doing serious injury to the Church. Stanley B. Kimball chose to discredit the accuracy of the *History of the Church* rather than admit that Joseph Smith “translated” bogus plates:

It has been well known that the serialized “History of Joseph Smith” consists largely of items from other persons’ personal journals and other sources, collected during Joseph Smith’s lifetime and continued after the Saints were in Utah, then edited and pieced together to form a history of the Prophet’s life “in his own words.” (*The Ensign*, August 1981, page 67)

Professor Kimball was apparently planning to advance the argument that since the part in Joseph Smith’s *History* concerning the Kinderhook plate was not recorded until after his death and since there seems to be nothing written in any journal during his lifetime, it must have been made up by later historians. Before Kimball printed his article, however, he was informed that the Church was suppressing a journal written by William Clayton which contained evidence that Joseph Smith did “translate” a portion of the plates. This journal was hidden in the First Presidency’s vault, but Kimball was able to obtain a copy of the important portion:

President J. has translated a portion and says they contain the history of the person with whom they were found, and he was a descendant of Ham through the loins of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and that he received his kingdom from the Ruler of heaven and earth. (Ibid., page 73)

Professor Kimball maintains that this is the original source for the entry in Joseph Smith’s *History*. Speaking of this *History*, Kimball writes:

Although this account appears to be the writing of Joseph Smith, it is actually an excerpt from a journal of William Clayton. . . . the words “I have translated a portion” originally read “President J. has translated a portion.” . . . this altered version of the extract from William Clayton’s journal was reprinted in the *Millennial Star* of 13 January 1859, and, unfortunately, was finally carried over into official Church history when the “History of Joseph Smith” was edited into book form as the *History of the Church* in 1909. (Ibid., pages 67-68)

Stanley Kimball is undoubtedly correct in assuming that Clayton’s journal is the source for the entry in Joseph Smith’s *History*. The two writings appear to be too similar to be coincidental. While this shows evidence of falsification on the part of Church leaders as far as the *History of the Church* goes, Clayton’s journal proves that Joseph Smith claimed he had “translated a portion” of the plates. This testimony by Clayton cannot be easily set aside. For one thing, Clayton’s account is contemporary with the event. According to Kimball, “in his journal entry of Monday, May 1, he included a tracing of one of the plates” (*Ibid.*, page 71). Furthermore, Clayton was Joseph Smith’s scribe and was in constant contact with him. James B. Allen wrote:

Beginning in early 1842, then, William Clayton became involved in nearly every important activity in Nauvoo, including the private concerns of the Prophet. . . . He became an intimate friend and confidant of Joseph Smith, writing letters for him, recording revelations, and performing important errands. As a scribe he kept the sacred “Book of the Law of the Lord”; was officially designated to write the history of the Nauvoo Temple; helped prepare the official history of Joseph Smith (indeed, his personal journals become the source for many entries in that history); and kept various other books . . . for almost two and a half years, until Joseph’s death in 1844, they were in each other’s possession almost daily. (*Journal of Mormon History*, vol. 6, 1979, pages 42-43)

If anyone would be in a position to know what Joseph Smith really believed about the Kinderhook plates, it would be William Clayton.

Since Clayton’s journal was apparently used for the statement about the Kinderhook Plate in the *History of the Church*, it shows that the highest leaders of the Church at the time the History was compiled also believed that Joseph Smith “translated a portion” of the plates. Wilford Woodruff (who
became the fourth President of the Church) and George A. Smith said that the History was “carefully revised under the strict inspection of President Brigham Young, and approved by him” (History of the Church, vol. 1, Preface, page VI).

Besides the Clayton journal, there is other contemporary evidence that Joseph Smith “translated a portion” of the plates. On May 7, 1843, just six days after the entry appears in Clayton’s journal, the Apostle Parley P. Pratt wrote a letter containing the following:

“Six plates having the appearance of Brass have lately been dug out of a mound by a gentleman in Pike Co. Illinois. They are small and filled with engravings in Egyptian language and contain the genealogy of one of the ancient Jaredites back to Ham the son of Noah.” (The Ensign, August 1981, page 73)

If Joseph Smith had not been murdered in June of 1844, it is very possible that he might have published a “translation” of the Kinderhook plates. On May 22, 1844, just a month before his death, the Warsaw Signal published the following statement:

Jo. had a facsimile taken, and engraved on wood, and it now appears from the statement of a writer in the St. Louis Gazette, that he is busy in translating them. The new work which Jo. about to issue as a translation of these plates will be nothing more nor less than a sequel to the Book of Mormon; . . .

The fact that Joseph Smith was actually preparing a translation of the plates is verified by a broadside published by the Mormon newspaper, The Nauvoo Neighbor, in June 1843. On this broadside, containing facsimiles of the plates, we find the following: “The contents of the Plates, together with a Fac-Simile of the same, will be published in the Times and Seasons, as soon as the translation is completed.” It is certainly possible that the Church still has Joseph Smith’s unpublished work on the Kinderhook plates.

However this may be, Joseph Smith certainly fell into a trap when he claimed to translate a portion of the plates. James D. Bales brings the whole matter clearly into focus when he writes:

What does this all add up to? Does it merely mean that one of the “finds” which the Latter Day Saints believed supported the Book of Mormon does not support it, and that there is no real blow dealt to the prophethood of Joseph Smith? Not at all, for as Charles A. Shook well observed . . . “Only a bogus prophet translates bogus plates.” Where we can check up on Smith as a translator of plates, he is found guilty of deception. How can we trust him with reference to his claims about the Book of Mormon? If we cannot trust him where we can check him, we cannot trust him where we cannot check his translations. (The Book of Mormon? 1958, page 98)

BOOK OF MORMON

Although the original gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was supposed to have been translated were reported to have been taken away by an angel, Joseph Smith did make copies of some of the characters from the plates. According to the account given in the Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith claimed that Martin Harris came to our place, got the characters which I had drawn off the plates, and started with them to the city of New York . . . I refer to his own account of the circumstances, as he related them to me after his return, which was as follows:

I went to the city of New York, and presented the characters which had been translated, with the translation thereof, to Professor Charles Anthon, a gentleman celebrated for his literary attainments. Professor Anthon stated that the translation was correct, more so than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian. (Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith, 2:63-64)

Although Book of Mormon witness David Whitmer preserved a paper which contained Book of Mormon characters, it did not match the description given by Professor Anthon in a letter dated February 17, 1834:

This paper was in fact a singular scrawl. It consisted of all kinds of crooked characters . . . arranged in perpendicular columns, and the whole ended in a rude delineation of a circle divided into various compartments decked with various strange marks. . . . I . . . well remember that the paper contained any thing else but “Egyptian Hieroglyphics.”. . . (Letter written by Charles Anthon, as published in Mormonism Unvailed, 1834, pages 271-272)

On May 3, 1980, the Church Section of the Mormon Church’s newspaper, Deseret News, made the startling announcement that Mark William Hofmann had discovered the original document that Harris took to Professor Anthon. According to another newspaper report, Dr. Richard L. Anderson, of Brigham Young University, claimed that “This new discovery is sort of a Dead Sea School [sic] Equivalent of the Book of Mormon.” (The Herald, Provo, Utah, May 1, 1980). Dr. Hugh Nibley was quoted as saying, “This offers as good a test as we’ll ever get as to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.” (Ibid.)

This new discovery has made it possible to decide whether Martin Harris or Professor Anthon told the truth. According to the account published in the Pearl of Great Price, “Professor Anthon stated that the translation was correct, more so than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian.” In his letter, however, Professor Anthon charged that this report concerning him was incorrect and that “the paper contained any thing else but ‘Egyptian Hieroglyphics.’” To settle the matter a photograph of the original document was sent to Klaus Baer, Professor of Egyptology at the University of Chicago’s Oriental Institute. Dr. Baer replied:

What is it? Probably not Egyptian, even if here and there signs appear that could be interpreted as more or less awkwardly copied hieroglyphs or hieratic signs, . . . I suspect that one would have about the same batting average in comparing this with Chinese or Japanese or other systems that arrange signs in columns. (Letter dated May 10, 1980)

In a television interview the Mormon Egyptologist Edward H. Ashment said that the document “doesn’t come very close to being readable as demotic.” He went on to say that “it’s in a script that is entirely unique and it has no relationship, to my knowledge again, of Egyptian or to any American script.”

When the Mormon apologist Dr. Hugh Nibley was asked about the document just after its discovery, he proclaimed: “Of course it’s translatable” (The Herald, Provo, Utah, May 1, 1980). Almost a year and a half has passed, however, and no translation has been published. It appears that Mormon scholars have found it impossible to vindicate Joseph Smith’s claims concerning the Book of Mormon characters.

In The Changing World of Mormonism, pages 334-335, we pointed out that when the original Joseph Smith Papyri were rediscovered, the “Prophet, Seer and Revelator”—i.e. the President of the Church—was completely silent about the translation of the manuscripts. We also quoted the Book of Mormon as saying that a “seer” can “translate all records that are of ancient date” (Mosiah 8:13). We then stated that “it appears that the prophet does not have the gift to translate languages as has been previously claimed.” The Browns feel that they have a good answer to this accusation:

Why wasn’t the papyri given to the prophet and leader of the LDS church to translate? That the papyri was translated by several persons shows that such translation is humanly possible. Why would the prophet need to translate it?
Our Heavenly Father will not do for us what we can do for ourselves. Individually, or as a group, we grow and progress by solving our own problems. There was no need to have the papyri translated by the prophet . . . and it wasn’t! (They Lie in Wait to Deceive, page 113)

Although the Browns seem to feel that they have answered the criticism, the discovery of the paper containing Book of Mormon characters certainly weakens their argument and puts the President of the Church in an embarrassing position. The characters on this paper are as unintelligible to scholars as those on the Kinderhook plates, yet the President of the Church had refused to get involved in the matter. Instead of using the “seer stone,” which is in the Church’s possession, to translate the characters, he examined them with a magnifying glass (see photograph in Deseret News, Church Section, May 3, 1980).

CONCLUSION. While there has always been a question as to Joseph Smith’s ability as a translator, the recent tests on the Kinderhook plates, the translation of the Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri by noted Egyptologists and the discovery of the sheet containing Book of Mormon characters all combine to show that Joseph Smith did not understand the Egyptian language. It is clear, therefore, that the “translations” he has produced are only the work of his own imagination. For more information on the question of Joseph Smith’s ability as a translator we recommend the following books: Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? (dealing with the Book of Abraham and the Kinderhook plates), The Changing World of Mormonism (for an updated work on the Book of Abraham), Book of Mormon “Caractors” Found (for important information on the recently discovered sheet Harris took to Anthon) and Can the Browns Save Joseph Smith? (for a rebuttal to charges made by Robert L. and Rosemary Brown).

Success In New Zealand

On January 30, 1981, we received a very encouraging letter from Ronald M. Rees, Manager of Beehive Books in New Zealand. Mr. Rees has given us permission to share extracts from this letter with our readers:

No doubt you have wondered if Beehive Books is an L.D.S. bookshop. Perhaps you may be interested to learn a little about us. Nine years ago my wife Roberta and I established New Zealand’s first privately owned bookshop for Latter-Day Saints. Our venture has met with success, and we now supply Mormons throughout both New Zealand and Australia with their book requirements . . . we also supply the Church owned bookshop at the Visitors’ Centre adjacent to the N.Z. Temple, also many Church units throughout New Zealand and Australia, and a steady flow of members calling at the shop to make their purchases . . .

Roberta and I are in our early thirties, and we both joined the L.D.S. Church about 17 years ago. Over the years, although we have always been fully active in the Church and have both held responsible leadership positions, we have both at times felt aware of the constant pressures. Also, working with L.D.S. publications, we have been keenly aware and disturbed by the unorthodox views expressed by many of the early Church authorities such as are found in the Journal of Discourses.

In September of last year together we agreed to quietly withdraw our fellowship from the Church. It caused some consternation and surprise amongst local Church leaders when both Roberta and I requested releases from our positions as High Priest’s Group Leader and Spiritual Living Leader in Relief Society, and quietly slipped into what is termed “inactivity” with our three children.

At this time a non-Member customer told us about your book “Mormonism, Shadow or Reality”—hence our letter to you of October 17. When your catalogue arrived, we noted that “Changing World of Mormonism” was a Moody Press publication, and obtained a copy from their local representatives. After reading this book we feel very relieved to be free from the Mormon Church, and grateful to you for the efforts you and Jerald are making to reveal the untruths, paradoxes, doctrinal conflicts and errors which most Mormons are totally unaware of. We have lent your book to seven of our friends, and all have withdrawn from the Church. These fine people were all faithful and fully active . . .

Now, as to our future . . . We have completely ceased ordering L.D.S. publications, and by the end of March hope to have cleared all stocks. At that stage we intend to formally request that our names and those of our three children be removed from the records of the Church. It is our intention to promote your publications at that time. We have a very extensive mailing list of the many hundreds of Latter-Day Saints who have purchased books from us over the years, and we will be mailing each of these customers a copy of a catalogue of your publications . . .

Naturally, you will appreciate that our decision to close down the very successful L.D.S. section of our business was a difficult one. However, we find that in conscience we can no longer promote L.D.S. Church literature . . .

Once again, Sandra and Jerald, may we thank you for the effort and research you both made in publishing “The Changing World of Mormonism.” We always found difficulty complying with the common Mormon attitude of “the thinking has been done,” and with continual access to Church literature we have been troubled by contradictions in doctrine. To read your fully documented and objective appraisal of all these various questions—plus many others which local members are totally unaware of—has been quite a traumatic and shattering experience. However, our family is very happy in our new-found freedom, and reaching out to understand what Christ would have us do. We feel a sense of mission in our future, and are keen to share our newly discovered knowledge with our Mormon friends and customers. We believe that we are in a truly unique position so to do.

By June 12, 1981, Mr. and Mrs. Rees reported that “nearly 70 Mormons” had come out of the Church:

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

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

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

We are very pleased to learn of these dramatic developments in New Zealand, and we hope that our readers will remember these people in prayer.
The evidence we presented in another article in this issue of the Messenger shows that Joseph Smith failed as a translator. In this article we will show that the Mormon Church now faces a similar problem with regard to his role as a “Prophet.”

Church leaders maintain that Joseph Smith was appointed by God to be president of the true church and that there has been an unbroken chain of succession in the presidency ever since that time. According to Mormon apologists, any break in the chain of succession would throw the church into a state of apostasy. President Joseph Fielding Smith attacked the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints—a group that broke off from the Utah Mormons—for failure to conform to the true plan of succession: “An ordination in the “Reorganized” church is of no more effect than is an ordination in the Methodist, Presbyterian, or Catholic church, for those officiating do not hold the priesthood, and are not recognized of God” (Succession in the Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Salt Lake City, 1975).

One of the chief differences between the Mormon Church and the RLDS Church centers around the question of who was the successor to Joseph Smith. While the Utah Mormons claim that Brigham Young was the true successor, the RLDS maintain that Joseph Smith had bestowed this right on his son Joseph Smith III. Although the Utah Church has always disputed this claim, a recent discovery proves that Joseph Smith actually did designate his son as successor. The Mormon Church’s own newspaper, Deseret News, confirmed the authenticity of the document:

A handwritten document thought to be a father’s blessing given by Joseph Smith Jr., first president and prophet of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to his son Joseph Smith III has been acquired by the Church Historical Department. . . .

Olson and other LDS officials said they are convinced the blessing is authentic. Handwriting and the paper were examined and compared with other documents . . .

The blessing document, dated Jan. 17, 1844, is thought to have been written by Thomas Bullock, one of several men who served as clerk to Joseph Smith Jr. . . .

Church officials obtained the document from Mark William Hofmann, a collector of historical documents and antiques. He said he received it from a descendant of Thomas Bullock. . . .

The document outlines a blessing given by Joseph Smith Jr. to his son, then age 11, and includes the possibility of the son succeeding his father “to the Presidency of the High Priesthood: A Seer, and a Revelator, and a Prophet, unto the Church.” (Deseret News, March 19, 1981)

A photograph of this important document is found above. The text of the blessing reads as follows:

A blessing given to Joseph Smith, 3rd, by his father, Joseph Smith, Jun., on Jan. 17, 1844.

Blessed of the Lord is my son Joseph, who is called the third, —for the Lord knows the integrity of his heart, and loves him, because of his faith, and righteous desires. And, for this cause, has the Lord raised him up; — that the promises made to the fathers might be fulfilled, even that the anointing of the progenitor shall be upon the head of my son, and his seed after him, from generation to generation. For he shall be my successor to the Presidency of the High Priesthood: a Seer, and a Revelator, and a Prophet, unto the Church; which appointment belongeth to him by blessing, and also by right.

Verily, thus saith the Lord: if he abides in me, his days shall be lengthened upon the earth, but if he abides not in me, I, the Lord, will receive him, in an instant, unto myself.

When he is grown, he shall be a strength to his brethren, and a comfort to his mother. Angels will minister unto him, and he shall be wafted as on eagle’s wings, and be as wise as serpents, even a multiplicity of blessings shall be his. Amen.
For a number of years we have maintained that “After Joseph Smith’s death it was expected that his son would someday lead the Church” (Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? 1972, page 195). The recently discovered blessing, of course, confirms this statement.

The blessing not only fits very well with the historical evidence, but it even contains wording resembling that found in a revelation given to Joseph Smith on January 19, 1841. In the Doctrine and Covenants 124:57 and 59 we read:

... this anointing have I put upon his head, that his blessing shall also be put upon the head of his posterity after him. . . . let . . . his seed after him have place in that house, from generation to generation. . . .

In the blessing to Joseph Smith III we find this:

... the anointing of the progenitor shall be upon the head of my son, and his seed after him, from generation to generation.

If there is any truth to the claim that Joseph Smith was led by revelation, the blessing given to his son would seem to indicate that Joseph Smith III was the true successor and that Brigham Young wrongfully appropriated this right to himself. The idea that Joseph Smith III was the true successor and that Brigham Young should not have assumed the position of leader was clearly expressed by Joseph Smith in a blessing given to Joseph Smith III in the Tabernacle which gives support to Lee’s claim:

In a book published in 1877: Brigham Young had stolen Joseph Smith’s son’s right to be Young wrongfully appropriated this right to himself. The idea that Joseph Smith III was the true successor and that Brigham Young expected Joseph Smith III or his brother to lead the Church:

Brigham Young is also alleged to have acknowledged privately and publicly prior to 1860 that Joseph Smith III had a right to preside in the Church. Not only Brigham Young, but many Mormons in the Great Basin seem to have anticipated that one day Joseph Smith III would become a leader in the Church perpetuated by the apostles. It was with wonderment that they learned he had become the president, on 6 April 1860, of a church formed by dissidents from numerous sects established after the death of Joseph Smith. Jr. Joseph Smith III was ordained president of the RLDS Church . . . As Joseph Smith III demonstrated increasing hostility to the church in Utah, Brigham Young expressed hope that the martyred Prophet’s youngest son, David Hyrum Smith would one day merit his rightful place as president of the LDS Church. (Brigham Young University Studies, Winter 1976, pages 228-29)

As the RLDS Church continued to oppose the Utah Mormons, feelings became very bitter and a great deal of literature was printed by both sides. Finally, on April 10, 1898, President Wilford Woodruff completely denied that Joseph Smith had set his son apart to lead the Church:

“Joseph Smith never ordained his son Joseph, never blessed him nor set him apart to lead this Church and Kingdom on the face of the earth. When he or any other man says he did, they state that which is false before high heaven.” (Statement by President Woodruff, as cited in Priesthood and Presidency, by Charles W. Penrose, page 22)

It should be obvious that the discovery of the blessing completely destroys President Woodruff’s case.

A TRUE REVELATION?

The second paragraph of the recently discovered blessing is extremely interesting:

Verily, thus saith the Lord: if he abides in me, his days shall be lengthened upon the earth, but, if he abides not in me, I, the Lord, will receive him, in an instant, unto myself.

Since this statement begins with the words, “Verily, thus saith the Lord,” the Utah Mormon Church will have a difficult time explaining it away. Notice that the blessing says that if Joseph Smith III “abides in me his days shall be lengthened.” While Brigham Young lived to be an old man, Joseph Smith III lived even longer. He was eighty-two years old when he died in 1914. In view of Joseph Smith III’s long life, those who believe Joseph Smith received his revelations from God are almost forced to the conclusion that his son lived a righteous life. If this is the case, why was he rejected by the Utah Mormon Church? Notice also that the revelation says that if he was not faithful, the Lord would “receive him, in an instant, unto myself.” According to Mormon belief, Joseph Smith III must have been one of the most evil men who ever lived, for he spent over fifty years of his life actively fighting the Utah Mormon Church. Now, if one were to assume that the Utah Mormon Church is really the true church, it would be difficult to understand why the Lord would allow Joseph Smith III to continue living. There could hardly be any sin worse than fighting against the Lord’s church. He certainly could not be abiding in the Lord and be actively opposing His work, and the blessing definitely states, “if he abides not in me, I, the Lord, will receive him, in an instant unto myself.”
Although the RLDS Church may proclaim that the new discovery is a victory over the Utah Church, a careful examination of all the evidence concerning succession leads one to conclude that Joseph Smith was never directed by revelation from God. It seems, in fact, that Smith had been groping in the dark for years trying to find a successor. According to David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith had so much confidence in me that in July, 1834, he ordained me his successor as “Prophet Seer and Revelator” to the Church. He did this of his own free will and not at any solicitation whatever on my part. I did not know what he was going to do until he laid his hands upon me and ordained me. (An Address To All Believers In Christ, by David Whitmer, Richmond, Missouri, 1887, page 55)

Neither Mormons nor members of the Reorganized Church can believe it was God who directed Joseph Smith to ordain David Whitmer because Whitmer later claimed that Smith was a fallen prophet and spent the last part of his life striving to build up another apostate church. Writing in 1887, Whitmer admonished:

If you believe my testimony to the Book of Mormon; if you believe that God spake to us three witnesses by his own voice, then I tell you that in June, 1838, God spake to me again by his own voice from the heavens, and told me to “separate myself from among the Latter Day Saints, for as they sought to do unto me, so should it be done unto them.” In the spring of 1838, the heads of the church and many of the members had gone deep into error and blindness. (Ibid., page 27)

According to Dr. Quinn, Whitmer was not the only one Joseph Smith appointed successor:

When Joseph Smith contemplated a successor, he made an appointment without seeking prior approval of the other governing bodies of the Church. He did this in 1834 with David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery, and in 1843 with Hyrum Smith. (BYU Studies, Winter 1976, page 219)

On page 232 of the same article, Quinn sadly observes:

Joseph Smith had at different times by preceptor or precedent established eight possible routes of legitimate succession to his place as President of the Church and of the High Priesthood on earth. As two recent analysts of LDS succession have observed: “In the first years of church government, the law of succession was in embryo stage. It seems that even in the Prophet Joseph Smith’s mind, just who would succeed him at any given moment was not always clear. There was a gradual evolution of succession principles.” Whether through oversight or as a means to test the faithful, Joseph Smith’s neglect to make explicit to the general membership an undisputed mode of succession caused thousands of his followers to falter, wander, and ultimately to reject the Church headquartered in Utah, . . .

We cannot believe that all this confusion could possibly come from the Lord. The Bible says that “God is not the author of confusion” (1 Corinthians 14:33). It would appear from the evidence presented that if the Mormon Church ever had any “priesthood,” it was lost when Brigham Young took the presidency unto himself. Our research, however, leads us to believe the Mormon Church never had any priesthood to lose. In The Changing World of Mormonism we show that serious changes were made in Joseph Smith’s revelations concerning priesthood, and we also demonstrate that the Mormon idea of “priesthood” is unscriptural. The Bible teaches that the Old Testament order of priesthood was fulfilled and that Christ Himself is our High Priest. It indicates that Jesus has “an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:24-25).

The Bible also indicates that all Christians (not just men) are a “royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9). In 1 Peter 2:5 we read that “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” The priesthood of the Old Testament has been fulfilled, and now “As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, . . .” (John 1:12). Instead of trusting in a church to save them, the Mormon people should turn directly to Christ for salvation. The Lord Himself has said: “. . . I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

The work we have presented in the article concerning Joseph Smith’s ability as a translator is absolutely devastating, but if there is still any doubt in the reader’s mind, the recently discovered blessing should completely settle the matter. The blessing certainly disproves the claim that Joseph Smith was God’s true “Prophet” on the earth.

LISTEN TO HIS VOICE

Many people feel that if they have not committed any major sins they are in good standing with God and on their way to heaven. The Bible, however, makes it clear that we must believe on the Lord and receive Him into our hearts:

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13)

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (John 3:3)

According to the Bible, there is no such thing as being neutral with regard to Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself said: “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.” If we try to remain neutral we find ourselves continually resisting God’s Spirit. The Lord is speaking to us in thousands of different ways, urging us to commit our lives to Him. If we continue to say no, we become like the men in the parable who said, “We will not have this man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14). We may not openly say these words, but both our thoughts and actions will demonstrate that we are not really living for the Lord. In Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus shows that we can even do “many wonderful works” and yet not be in obedience to His Spirit:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.
If we are going to do God’s will, we need to listen carefully to his voice. We read in John 10:27-28:

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:
And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

It is through diligent prayer and reading His word that we hear the voice of God. We urge all of those who have never received the Lord to accept the wonderful gift of salvation. Those of us who already know Him should seek to listen carefully for His voice so that we will not stumble but walk in the path of His perfect will.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (Psalms 119:105)

FBI-CIA SUIT FILED

After the Mormon spy “Stan Fields” was exposed, we learned that he formerly had connections with the FBI. Because of this, we requested under the Freedom of Information Act that the FBI furnish all information that it had concerning us. FBI headquarters in Washington, D.C. provided us with some documents. A great deal of material, however, had been blacked out and eighteen pages were “withheld entirely.” About a year ago (October 1980) we also requested the CIA to send any information in their files. After a great deal of stalling, on December 8, 1980 we were informed that “your request for information on the Modern Microfilm Company was inadvertently overlooked due to an administrative error and was only recently surfaced. . .” Since the CIA had failed to comply with the Freedom of Information Act in the time allotted, we appealed to the CIA Information Review Committee. Finally, on February 5, 1981, we were told that no “information or record” pertaining to Jerald Tanner could be located, but they would not tell us whether anything about Modern Microfilm Company had been found: “You will be advised of the outcome as soon as our processing has been completed.” After waiting for the information for almost a year, we felt that it was time to take action. Therefore, on September 8, 1981 we filed a suit in the United States District Court for the District of Utah (Civil Action No. C81-0670J). We have named both the CIA and the FBI as defendants in this case. This is not a suit to obtain damages, but rather an attempt to try to force the FBI into releasing the suppressed documents and to make the CIA come into compliance with the law.

WARNING ON TAXES

In the February 1981 issue of the Messenger we informed our readers that we were planning on forming a non-profit corporation. Unfortunately, we have still not decided exactly how to proceed with the matter. While we are very happy to receive donations, we should warn the reader that they are still not tax exempt.

NEW BOOKLETS

Can the Browns Save Joseph Smith? By Jerald and Sandra Tanner. A rebuttal to the book, They Lie in Wait to Deceive. Deals with the false statements and misrepresentations which appear in the Browns’ work and also shows that they have side-stepped the main issue—i.e. whether Joseph Smith correctly translated the Book of Abraham. PRICE: $2.00 (Mail orders add 10% for postage and handling.)

Joseph Smith’s Successor — An Important New Document Comes to Light. By Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Deals with Joseph Smith’s blessing on his son, Joseph Smith III. Shows that the revelation contained in this blessing did not come to pass and that Brigham Young wrongfully appropriated the right of succession to himself. Provides important background information on the blessing. PRICE: $1.00 — 5 for $4.00 — 10 for $6.00. (Mail orders add 10% for postage and handling.)
MORMONISM—Shadow or Reality?

A decade has passed since we published the 1972 edition of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? Since that time a number of important discoveries have been made which strengthen our original thesis regarding the origin of Mormonism. There have also been some significant developments in the Church. For instance, on June 9, 1978, the Deseret News announced that the President of the Mormon Church received a revelation that the curse had been removed from the blacks and that they could now hold the priesthood. Because of the new discoveries and developments, we felt that it was time for a new edition of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? We are now happy to announce that the work has been completed and that the new enlarged and revised 1982 edition of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? is available from Modern Microfilm Company. Although we had presented an extremely strong case against Mormonism in the earlier edition, the new material which we included in the 1982 edition makes the case even more devastating. Since the 1982 printing is about 90 pages longer than the old edition, we will have to increase the price from $10.95 to $11.95 ($14.95 for hardback). We are, however, having a special offer on all copies ordered before April 30, 1982. Instead of $11.95, the reader will pay ONLY $9.95 ($12.95 for hardback). We feel that all of our readers should have a copy of this new edition so that they will be right up to date on Mormon history and doctrine.

**Historians Face Crisis**

In the new edition of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? we deal with the serious problems Mormon historians are having with the leaders of the Church. We show that some of the top Mormon leaders are trying desperately to hide the truth about the origin of the Church from their own people. Since many of the Mormon historians want to “tell it like it is,” this has caused a real rift between the Apostles and the historians. For years we have been pointing out that Ezra Taft Benson, who is next in line to be President of the Church, has been trying to destroy the influence of the Mormon Church Historian Leonard Arrington and other prominent historians in the Church. During this last year the situation facing Mormon historians has turned from bad to worse. The big blow to the historians came on August 22, 1981, when Boyd K. Packer, one of the Twelve Apostles of the Church, “criticized Church historians for ‘forsaking things of the Spirit’ in their histories” (Seventh East Press, An Independent Student Weekly, Provo, Utah, October 6, 1981). That Apostle Packer really meant business in this speech became evident when it appeared as the lead article in the Summer 1981 issue of Brigham Young University Studies. In this speech, Packer gave the following warning to Mormon historians:

There is a temptation for the writer or the teacher of Church history to want to tell everything, whether it is worthy or faith promoting or not.

Some things that are true are not very useful.

Historians seem to take great pride in publishing something new, particularly if it illustrates a weakness or mistake of a prominent historical figure.

The writer or the teacher who has an exaggerated loyalty to the theory that everything must be told is laying a foundation for his own judgment.

Some time ago a historian gave a lecture to an audience of college students on one of the past Presidents of the Church. It seemed to be his purpose to show that that President was a man subject to the foibles of men. He introduced many so-called facts that put that President in a very unfavorable light, particularly when they were taken out of the context of the historical period in which he lived.

Teaching some things that are true, prematurely or at the wrong time, can invite sorrow and heartbreak instead of the joy intended to accompany learning. The scriptures teach emphatically that we must give milk before meat. The Lord made it very clear that some things are to be taught selectively and some things are to be given only to those who are worthy.

It matters very much not only what we are told but when we are told it. Be careful that you build faith rather than destroy it.

President William E. Berrett has told us how grateful he is that a testimony that the past leaders of the Church were prophets of God was firmly fixed in his mind before he was exposed to some

**Special Offer**

Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?

1982 enlarged edition by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. The most comprehensive and revealing work ever written on Mormonism. Regular price: $11.95 ($14.95 for hardback)

Special Price if Ordered Before April 30, 1982: $9.95 ($12.95 for hardback) (Mail orders add 10% for postage)

On Being a Mormon Historian by D. Michael Quinn. One of the best speeches ever given by a Mormon historian. Newsweek called it a “stirring defense of intellectual integrity.” In this speech Dr. Quinn, Associate Professor of History at BYU, attacked the suppressive policies advocated by Apostles Benson and Packer. Price: $2.00 (Mail orders add 10%)
of the so-called facts that historians have put in their published writings. . . .

What that historian did with the reputation of the President of the Church was not worth doing. He seemed determined to convince everyone that the prophet was a man. We knew that already. All of the prophets and all of the Apostles have been men. It would have been much more worthwhile for him to have convinced us that the man was a prophet, a fact quite as true as the fact that he was a man. . . .

That historian or scholar who delights in pointing out the weaknesses and frailties of present or past leaders destroys faith. A destroyer of faith—particularly one within the Church, and more particularly one who is employed specifically to build faith—places himself in great spiritual jeopardy. He is serving the wrong master, and unless he repents, he will not be among the faithful in the eternities. . . .

In an effort to be objective, impartial, and scholarly, a writer or a teacher may unwittingly be giving equal time to the adversary. . . . The idea that we must be neutral and argue quite as much in favor of the adversary as we do in favor of righteousness is neither reasonable nor safe.

In the Church we are not neutral. We are one-sided. There is a war going on, and we are engaged in it. It is a war between good and evil, and we are belligerents defending the good. We are therefore obliged to give preference to and protect all that is represented in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and we have made covenants to do it. . . . I want to say in all seriousness that there is a limit to the patience of the Lord with respect to those who are under covenant to bless and protect His Church and kingdom upon the earth but do not do it. . . .

There is much in the scriptures and in our Church literature to convince us that we are at war with the adversary. We are not obliged as a church, nor are we as members obliged, to accommodate the enemy in this battle.

President Joseph Fielding Smith pointed out that it would be a foolish general who would give access to all of his intelligence to his enemy. It is neither expected nor necessary for us to accommodate those who seek to retrieve references from our sources, distort them, and use them against us. . . . Those of you who are employed by the Church have a special responsibility to build faith, not destroy it. If you do not do that, but in fact accommodate the enemy, who is the destroyer of faith, you become in that sense a traitor to the cause you have made covenants to protect. (Brigham Young University Studies, Summer 1981, pages 263-269)

To the Mormon scholar D. Michael Quinn, Apostle Packer’s words were a call to battle. In an emotionally charged speech, Dr. Quinn rebutted the charges made by Boyd K. Packer, Louis Midgley and Ezra Taft Benson, who is next in line to be President of the Church. The Seventh East Press reported:

Mormon apostles Ezra Taft Benson and Boyd K. Packer are advocating a kind of religious history which borders on idolatry, asserted D. Michael Quinn, associate professor of history at BYU in a recent lecture to the university’s student history association.

In an address entitled “On Being a Mormon Historian,” Quinn, who holds a Ph.D. in history from Yale University, addressed recent criticisms made against Mormon historians by Elders Benson and Packer and BYU Professor of Political Science Louis Midgley.

Stating that he was speaking only for himself, Quinn explained that by the time he was age fifteen he had read all the standard works except for part of the Old Testament . . . Quinn also briefly recounted his entrance into the field of LDS history and his prayerful approach to researching and writing that history.

Turning to Elder Packer’s caution that previously published material is not always suitable for re-publishing, Quinn described the “odd situation” created by General Authorities criticizing individuals for reprinting material that was viewed by General Authorities of an earlier era as faith-promoting and “appropriate for children and recent converts.”

Quinn expressed the opinion that for LDS historians to avoid what Elder Packer called “the unworthy, the unsavory, or the sensational” would be of questionable honesty and professional integrity and would do a “disservice to the cause of the Church,” and open the Church and its historians to justified criticisms.

Quinn also discussed Elder Benson’s counsel against “environmental explanations” of the background of revelations and Church history. Quinn stated that to ignore such backgrounds in a non-religious history is “inimet at best and dishonest at worst.” Quinn agreed with the sentiment expressed by Elder Benson that to use environmental observations as a basis for rejecting Joseph Smith’s inspiration would be inappropriate. Nevertheless, he continued, a discussion of such influences is important since “revelations come from specific questions that prophets ask God, and those questions arise because of conditions prophets experience.”

Quinn expressed the belief that such an approach demonstrates the “view that the official acts and pronouncements of the prophets are always the express will of God,” a position which Quinn sees as “the Mormon equivalent of the Roman Catholic doctrine of papal infallibility.” Such a doctrine of infallibility, Quinn explained, denies the principle of free agency and goes against Joseph Smith’s assertion that a prophet is only a prophet when he is acting as such. To ignore the limitations and errors of significant statements of the prophets, Quinn feels, would be as false as to ignore their visions, revelations and testimonies.

Quinn went on to state that to play down the human side of prophets would not be sacred history, for the sacred history of the scriptures portrays not only the “spiritual dimensions and achievements of God’s leaders” but also matter of factly demonstrates their weaknesses.

As examples, Quinn cited the scriptures’ treatment of Noah’s drunkenness, Lot’s incest, Moses’ arrogance, Jonah’s vacillation, Peter and Paul’s disagreements, Alma’s youthful iniquity, and “the Lord’s condemnations of Joseph Smith in the Doctrine and Covenants.” While sacred history shows God’s leaders as “understandable human beings with whom people can identify and still revere the prophetic mantle,” Elders Benson and Packer, Quinn asserted, expect a history which makes LDS leaders “flawless and benignly angelic.” Such a history of “demigod-like Church leaders,” Quinn stated, “borders on idolatry.”

While Quinn noted that Elder Packer accused Mormon historians of ignoring “fundamentals before presenting advanced information,” Quinn expressed the opinion that in reality Elder Packer “is not advocating a gradual exposure to historical truth, but excludes that possibility.” He further asserted that Elder Packer’s approach is not the same as Paul’s recommendation of milk before solid food, and goes against Joseph Smith’s assertion that to use environmental explanations of the background of revelations and Church history in approach and philosophy. (The Seventh East Press, November 18, 1981)
Since Ezra Taft Benson will probably become the next President of the Church, there has been some concern that D. Michael Quinn may have sacrificed his career as a Mormon historian when he made this rebuttal. Many Mormons would count this as a great loss because Dr. Quinn is probably one of the best historians the Church has ever produced. However this may be, Quinn certainly demonstrated a great deal of courage when he publicly challenged the suppressive policies advocated by Benson, Packer and Midgley.

We were so impressed with Dr. Quinn’s lecture that we decided to publish it in its entirety. It is now available from Modern Microfilm Company under the title, On Being a Mormon Historian. This is probably one of the most important speeches ever delivered by a Mormon Historian.

Dr. Arrington Demoted

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? we demonstrated that the Mormon leaders suppressed important Church documents and that we exerted a great deal of pressure in an attempt to force the release of these documents. Some of the more liberal Mormon scholars became very aroused over the policy of suppression. A group of these scholars presented the Mormon leaders with a list of suggestions on how they should run the Historian’s Office. They wanted a trained historian to be appointed as the Church Historian. They also wanted the records to be made available to scholars and for the Church itself to start printing the rare documents. When we heard of these requests we could not see how the Church leaders could possibly comply with them without undermining the entire foundation of the Church. Take, for instance, the idea of appointing a qualified historian. A true historian, if he were honest with himself, could never approve of the methods used by Joseph Fielding Smith and other Church Historians in the past. Besides, it had become traditional for a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to fill this position. It seemed very unlikely, then, that the Church would appoint a trained historian, but on Jan. 15, 1972, we received a real surprise when we read the following in the Salt Lake Tribune:

Dr. Leonard J. Arrington, noted Utah educator and author, has been named historian of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, . . . Howard W. Hunter of the Council of Twelve Apostles will be released . . .

While Dr. Arrington is an active Mormon, many people consider him to be very liberal. At one time Arrington had openly criticized the Church for not publishing the diaries of the early Mormon leaders and for not permitting “qualified historians to use them without restriction” (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1966, page 26).

While the appointment of Leonard Arrington as Church Historian was certainly a surprise, the choice of James B. Allen and Davis Bitton as assistant historians made some wonder what direction the Church was headed in. Allen had previously published an article which undermined Joseph Smith’s story of the First Vision, and Bitton had written an article in which he made an attack on the accuracy of Joseph Smith’s History of the Church. Now, what could the Church leaders have had in mind when they appointed such liberals to the Church Historian’s Office? The only reasonable explanation is that the policy of suppressing the records had failed and that the Mormon leaders were trying to present a new image to the world. They were apparently going to try to make it appear that they were proud of the records they had suppressed for so many years.

In any case, after his appointment, Dr. Arrington announced great plans for the Historical Department. Many of them, however, have been thwarted by men who follow the philosophy of Ezra Taft Benson, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. Benson is a man who believes that it is wrong to tell the whole truth about Mormon history. He believes, in other words, that there should be a cover-up with regard to certain things that have occurred in the past. Arrington, on the other hand, is more open and scholarly in his approach.

Dr. Arrington’s problems began just after his appointment to the office of Church Historian when he announced the formation of a group known as “Friends of Church History.” When about 500 people showed up for the first meeting, the General Authorities apparently became fearful that such a large group studying history might uncover things which would prove embarrassing to the Church. Orders were given to hold up the project, and no meetings have been held since November 30, 1972 (see Answering Dr. Clandestine, page 41). Although no official announcement has ever been made, it is reasonable to assume that “Friends of Church History” is now defunct.

Some of Dr. Arrington’s other projects seem to be endangered by the attitude of the General Authorities. One of his dreams was to have the Church publish a one-volume history. This dream seemed to become a reality in 1976 when James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard produced the book The Story of the Latter-day Saints. In the Foreword to this book, Dr. Arrington said that “two of our finest historians” had been assigned to the project—as we have already pointed out, James B. Allen is Assistant Church Historian. Dr. Arrington went on to state that he had personally approved the manuscript for publication. Although most Mormons would consider this a harmless publication, President Benson felt that it was too humanistic and it is rumored that he wanted it shredded. In a letter dated June 23, 1978, President Benson stated: “The book, The Story of the Latter-day Saints, will not be republished.” It appears, therefore, that as far as Mormon history is concerned, the views of Leonard Arrington and Ezra Taft Benson are diametrically opposed.

Leonard Arrington’s most important project was to oversee the production of a sixteen-volume sesquicentennial history of the Mormon Church. These volumes were to be authored by prominent Mormon scholars. The Salt Lake Tribune for April 26, 1975, quoted Dr. Arrington as saying:

“We have signed contracts with 16 persons, each of whom is writing one volume of the set,” said the church historian. “Each requires several years of intensive research and none will be available before 1978. We hope all 16 volumes will be ready by 1980.”

The original idea behind the project was to have the volumes ready for the 150th anniversary of the Church—the sesquicentennial celebration of 1980. While Dr. Arrington said he hoped “all 16 volumes will be ready by 1980,” 1982 has arrived and not a single volume has been published!

From what we have been able to determine, some of the scholars who were working on the volumes were too frank in their presentation and this caused great consternation among some of the Apostles. Since that time Church leaders have been dragging their feet in an effort to delay or even cancel publication of the volumes. The Church leaders find themselves in a difficult situation, however, since Deseret Book Company had signed an agreement with the sixteen authors which would be binding in court. In order to suppress the history without the possibility of lawsuits, the General Authorities decided to pay each author who
had finished his work $20,000 (those who have not completed their volumes were to receive a smaller amount). Since there were sixteen authors to be paid off and other costs involved, the Church may have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars. That the General Authorities would approve this massive project and then abort it after some of the Church’s top scholars spent years working on it shows a total lack of inspiration.

In the Salt Lake City Messenger, January 1979, we observed:

There is reason to believe that Benson wants to remove Arrington from his position as Church Historian. Some feel that he will gradually be “phased out.” It is also reported that it is becoming increasingly difficult for Mormon scholars to get access to documents in the Historical Dept. If Dr. Arrington should survive under the leadership of President Spencer W. Kimball, it is very unlikely that he will remain Church Historian if Ezra Taft Benson becomes President.

It now appears that the Church has begun the process of “phasing out” Dr. Arrington. The Salt Lake Tribune for July 3, 1980, announced:

PROVO (AP) — The history research division of the Mormon church’s historical department will move to Brigham Young University, officials announced Wednesday.
The department’s library and archives division and arts and sites division will remain at the church’s Salt Lake City headquarters, said church President Spencer W. Kimball.

Director of the new institute will be Dr. Leonard J. Arrington, church historian.

Most of the division’s personnel will be transferred to BYU, where they will become part of the faculty and staff.

Although President Kimball tries to persuade members of the Church that “This transfer of the work of professional historians from a Church department to an institute in the university is a forward step,” (Deseret News, Church Section, July 5, 1980), it is obvious to anyone who really examines the situation that this is a real demotion for Church Historian Leonard Arrington. While he may remain Church Historian in name, it is clear now that Church leaders have removed the powers which used to go with this title. Before Arrington’s appointment, the Church Historian had charge of the records and would make decisions as to who could see these documents. Now it appears that there will be about a forty-five mile gap between the Church Historian and the church records—i.e., the distance between Provo and Salt Lake City:

Dr. Arrington and some History Division staff members eventually will move to the BYU campus but, the institute has not yet been assigned a particular building or office area in Provo. The Church’s library and archives will remain in Salt Lake City. (Deseret News, Church Section, July 5, 1980)

It is obvious, then, that Church leaders want to get Dr. Arrington as far away from the Church Office Building as possible and to reduce his influence with the Mormon people. It has been claimed that it will not be too long before Arrington retires, and planning the move and setting up operations in Provo will no doubt take up much of his remaining time.

There now seems to be a question as to whether Dr. Arrington can even be referred to as “Church Historian.” Sometime after he was installed as Church Historian he was given the title “Director of the History Division.” It is reported that when Dr. Arrington was asked about whether he was still “Church Historian,” he replied that he had been sustained in conference as the Church Historian and had never been released from that position; therefore, he still retained the title “Church Historian.” Although he was referred to as “the Church Historian” in the March 1979 issue of The Ensign (page 51), a recent advertisement for a book by Arrington and Bitton seems to indicate that he no longer claims the title:

For many years Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton served as Church Historian and Assistant Church Historian for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Arrington is currently Director of the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History at Brigham Young University and Bitton is Professor of History at the University of Utah. (Sunstone Review, vol. 1, no. 3, page 23)

The reader will remember that Apostle Boyd K. Packer criticized a historian for trying to “convince everyone that the prophet was a man.” Interestingly enough, the new book by Arrington and Bitton, which deals with “two apostles” and other Mormons, is entitled Saints Without Halos: The Human Side of Mormon History. It is also interesting to note that this new book is NOT being published by the Church but rather by Signature Books in Salt Lake City.

Although Dr. Arrington is trying to be very gracious about the whole matter, it is obvious that the Church leaders have stubbornly opposed his plans to get out an accurate history of the Church. Nevertheless, many important documents have come out of the Historical Department since Dr. Arrington became Historian, and these documents have really helped us in the production of the new edition of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?

RESTRICTED CHURCH DOCUMENT LEAKS OUT

For 140 years the Mormon Church has been suppressing the Nauvoo diaries of Joseph Smith’s secretary William Clayton. These diaries have been hidden in the vault of the First Presidency. Recently, however, quotations from these diaries leaked out, and this has caused great consternation among the General authorities and officials at Brigham Young University. In an article entitled, RESTRICTED CHURCH DOCUMENT ‘STOLEN,’ the Seventh East Press reported the following (the names David Brown and Tom Wilson “are pseudonyms,” according to this paper):

A BYU graduate student has accused a member of a bishopric of stealing copies of materials which the student obtained from the vault of the First Presidency.

In doing research in LDS Church history, Andrew F. Ehat, . . . obtained permission to examine the restricted Nauvoo diaries of William Clayton and make notes. He gave a copy of his notes to BYU religion instructor Lyndon Cook, who kept them in his campus office. The notes were taken without permission and photocopied by David Brown, a member of a bishopric who uses Cook’s office. In September Brown lent his copy to Tom Wilson, a BYU religion instructor, who in turn lent them to a history student, Scott Faulring. Faulring had already made five copies for various individuals when Ehat discovered that his notes were being copied without his permission. Ehat spent much of the remainder of fall semester trying to recover all the copies that had been made.

The notes represent approximately 90 typed pages of excerpts from the personal diaries of William Clayton, . . .

Some time ago, Andrew (“Andy”) Ehat obtained permission through the Historical Department of the Church to examine the Clayton diaries. Ehat made a copy of his notes for Lyndon Cook, with whom he was working to produce the book The Words of Joseph Smith which appeared in early 1981. . . . In an interview, Ehat implied that he had made copies for others as well, but declined to mention any names. . . .

After borrowing the copy from religion instructor Tom Wilson, Scott Faulring made five copies for student and faculty
acquaintances. A few days later, Faulring had the notes in a campus office when Andy Ehat, who was present, happened to recognize Lyndon Cook’s handwriting in the margins of the photocopy. Ehat bolted to his feet and demanded to know where the copy had come from. Faulring was reluctant to cooperate at first, but was willing to help when he learned the notes had been copied without permission. Individuals present report that Ehat was extremely upset and at one point said, “If this gets out it could destroy the Church.”

Ehat says he was able to obtain the five copies Faulring made within about 12 hours, but that three of the people who turned in copies had secretly made extra copies and kept them back for themselves and others. Another person to obtain a copy was Hal Palmer, a former student who dropped out of BYU near the end of fall semester.

Palmer reports that he was surprised to see Andy Ehat on his doorstep as he left for school early one morning last November. Ehat asked for Palmer’s copy and, according to Ehat, “reasoned with him from every possible way I could conceive of: ethically, morally, and so forth. And he was unwilling to cooperate.” Palmer states that Ehat followed him from his apartment to his class on campus and that the two were “screaming and yelling and I was swearing at him the whole way. People kept turning and looking at us.” According to Palmer, Ehat implied that he (Palmer) could be excommunicated if the notes weren’t returned.

Angry with Ehat’s approach, Palmer gave copies to Special Collections libraries at both BYU and the University of Utah. Ehat has since retrieved both of these copies. At one point, Ehat phoned Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve Apostles to ask for advice on the situation. Ehat declined to comment on that conversation.

To this date, Palmer’s copy has not been returned, and it appears that other copies are still being circulated by various individuals, a situation which has left Ehat frustrated. Ehat explains that Brown’s actions “cost me getting a master’s degree here at the university in the sense that I lost twelve weeks of my life trying to track down all the people who had copies.”

While Ehat initially stated that information in the Clayton diaries “could destroy the Church,” he has since given very different explanations for wanting to keep the material confidential. Ehat told the Seventh East Press that his concern in this matter was “the fact that the diaries (i.e., his notes) were stolen and . . . that wide publicity of this matter would almost certainly prevent further access to any other materials.”

Ehat also believes that use of the diaries should be limited out of respect to William Clayton, who “in a different sphere is still living.”

Others, however, see different reasons for not wanting to see the diary made public. Lyndon Cook for example, says the diary contains some “very sensitive entries which may not do us too well if the anti-Mormons got a hold of them.”

Cook says the diary gives a lot of information concerning the secret practice of polygamy in Nauvoo and says that for a time Emma Smith was unaware that it was being practiced by her husband Joseph. He also feels that publishing the diary “may injure some who are of weaker faith.” (Seventh East Press, January 18, 1982, pages 1 and 11)

This whole episode led BYU President Jeffery Holland to call for an investigation:

President Jeffery Holland has appointed Vice-president Noel Reynolds to investigate the recent unauthorized circulation of restricted research materials concerning Church history. Reynolds thinks that incidents such as those surrounding the circulation of the Clayton material may “destroy our credibility as a research institution with the Church archivists.”

Palmer . . . denies that he has acted irresponsibly, saying that he would never give information to anti-Mormons. Palmer asserts that he has “an undying testimony of the gospel” . . .

Bill Seavey, another student contacted by Reynolds, feels that while irresponsible students in the underground may contribute to the tightening of restrictions in the Church Historical Department, it is equally likely that the reverse is true: the tightening of restrictions encourages students to participate in the underground. (Seventh East Press, January 18, 1982, pages 1, 10, 11)

If the General Authorities had taken Dr. Arrington’s advice and published “the diaries of leading Mormons,” they would not be faced with the embarrassing situation of having Clayton’s material leak out. It would appear, however, that the Mormon leaders feel that the contents of the early diaries and records are so shocking that their release would do irreparable damage to the Church.

Quinn Is “Clandestine”

In 1977 an anonymous Mormon historian launched an attack on our work in a pamphlet entitled, Jerald and Sandra Tanner’s Distorted View of Mormonism: A Response to Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? In our reply to this pamphlet we pointed out that we had a very difficult time tracing its source and that “the whole matter had all the earmarks of an intelligence operation mounted by the CIA or the KGB” (Answering Dr. Clandestine: A Response To The Anonymous LDS Historian, page 1). Zion Bookstore had “received an anonymous letter containing a key to a room in a self storage company on Redwood Road.” When an employee of the store went to the storage company, he found 1,800 copies of the pamphlet. These copies were given to Zion Bookstore without any charge, and the money obtained from their sale was supposed to be used to make a reprint. We, of course, immediately suspected that the Mormon Church had financed this attack “from ambush,” and evidence pointed directly to the Church Historical Department. In an unpublished thesis, Richard Steven Marshall told of an anonymous rebuttal that the Historical Department was preparing in 1977:

He [Reed Durham] also said that due to the large number of letters the Church Historian’s Office is receiving asking for answers to the things the Tanners have published, a certain scholar (name deliberately withheld) was appointed to write a general answer to the Tanners including advice on how to read anti-Mormon literature. This unnamed person solicited the help of Reed Durham on the project. The work is finished but its publication is delayed, according to what Leonard Arrington told Durham, because they can not decide how or where to publish it. Because the article is an open and honest approach to the problem, although it by no means answers all of the questions raised by the Tanners, it will probably be published anonymously, to avoid any difficulties which could result were such an article connected with an official Church agency. (“The New Mormon History,” A Senior Honors Project Summary, University of Utah, May 1, 1977, page 62)

After a great deal of investigation, we were able to obtain a copy of a letter from Church Historian Leonard Arrington which linked him to the distribution of the rebuttal (see photograph of his letter in Answering Dr. Clandestine, page 24). We also discovered that D. Michael Quinn, the historian who recently challenged the statements of Apostles Benson and Packer, was the author of the anonymous rebuttal. This identification was confirmed by David Mayfield, who worked for the Historical Department at the time the rebuttal was being prepared (Ibid., page 4).
In our book *Answering Dr. Clandestine* we suggested some of the possible reasons why the rebuttal to *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* was printed anonymously. We said that it was “likely that the Historical Department wanted the writer to remain anonymous for one of two reasons:

One, the Mormon leaders approved of a rebuttal being issued but only if it could be put out in such a way that it could not be traced back to the Church. They did not want to engage in a debate which could lead to any unfavorable publicity for the Church. Also, they did not want to give any respectability to our work by officially endorsing a rebuttal.

Two, the liberals in the Church published the pamphlet, and the elaborate cover-up operations are designed to hide the matter from conservatives like Ezra Taft Benson, who is next in line to be President of the Church. This theory presupposes a serious split between the Historical Department and at least some of the general authorities of the Church. . . . We certainly do not believe that Apostle Benson would approve of this rebuttal. It makes far too many admissions concerning historical problems in the Church. For instance, we do not think Benson would be pleased with Dr. Clandestine’s admission that the History of the Church, which was supposed to have been written by Joseph Smith himself, was really “written in large part after his death” and that there have been “thousands of deletions and additions” which have not been noted. (*Answering Dr. Clandestine*, page 7)

That there is a “serious split” between the Church historians and the Apostles has now become evident. Before Dr. Quinn gave his speech at BYU, he tried very hard to conceal this rift. In his rebuttal to our work, Quinn made it plain that he disagreed with the methods of most of the “apologist-defenders,” but he did not mention anyone by name. On page 43 of *Answering Dr. Clandestine*, we observed:

> . . . the pamphlet Jerald and Sandra Tanner’s Distorted View of Mormonism appeared at just about the time the General Authorities became so disturbed over how scholars like Arrington were affecting the Church. Anyone who reads this rebuttal can tell that it is a product of those who believe in “New Mormon History.” It seems, in fact, to contain a thinly disguised attack on Benson’s view of Mormon history: “It is regrettable that in our urbane, twentieth century experience as a church, many of our writers (including nearly all of our apologist-defenders) have found it necessary to ignore or even deny the weaknesses, fallibility, and humanity of our prophets and apostles. . . . In the short-run, glorifying our leaders may be good public relations, but in the long-run it makes Mormons vulnerable to shallow, muckraking ad hominem attacks on their leaders.” (page 11)

It is certainly too bad that Dr. Clandestine did not have the courage to give us the names of these “apologist-defenders.” Anyone who takes the time to study Mormon history, however, would know that he is referring to men like the Mormon Apostles Ezra Taft Benson, Mark E. Petersen and Bruce R. McConkie.

Now that Apostle Packer has come out with a condemnation of those who point out “the weaknesses and frailties of present or past leaders,” Dr. Quinn was unable to remain silent about the matter. As we have already pointed out, he has shown a great deal of courage in directly attacking the position of two of the highest officials in the Mormon Church.

Even though we disagreed with some of Dr. Quinn’s conclusions in our book *Answering Dr. Clandestine*, we had to admit “that he is probably one of the best historians in the Mormon Church. His dissertation from Yale University is a masterpiece” (page 5). After reading Quinn’s secret rebuttal, we felt that he was actually frustrated with the suppressive policies of his own Church and was taking much of his anger out on us. His BYU talk seemed to show that this was the case.

While Quinn accused us of having a “distorted view of Mormonism,” we felt that his view was colored by wishful thinking. Now that the Mormon leaders are becoming more aggressive in their attempt to control and distort the history of the Church, Quinn decided it was time to come out and make a public statement. In doing this, however, he finds himself labeled an adversary of the Church. It is certainly ironic that the man who attacked our work now finds himself “regarded as subversive” by his own Church leaders.

**APOSTASY GERMS?**

Apostle Boyd K. Packer has warned Church historians not to help apostates “spread disease germs!” (*BYU Studies*, Summer 1981, page 271). Dr. Quinn vigorously protested:

> In warning Mormon historians against objective history and against telling too much truth about the Mormon past, Boyd K. Packer says, “Do not spread disease germs!” To adopt the symbolism of Elder Packer, I suggest that it is apostates and anti-Mormons who seek to infect the Saints with disease germs of doubt, disloyalty, disaffection, and rebellion. These typhoid Marys of spiritual contagion obtain the materials of their assaults primarily from the readily available documents and publications created by former LDS leaders and members themselves. Historians have not created the problem areas of the Mormon past; they are trying to respond to them. Believing Mormon historians like myself seek to write candid Church history in a context of perspective in order to inoculate the Saints against the historical disease germs that apostates and anti-Mormons may thrust upon them. The criticism we have received in our efforts would be similar to leaders of eighteenth century towns trying to combat smallpox contagion by locking up Dr. Edward Jenner who tried to inoculate the people, and killing the cows he wanted to use for his vaccine.

The central argument of the enemies of the LDS Church is historical, and if we seek to build the Kingdom of God by ignoring or denying the problem areas of our past, we are leaving the Saints unprotected. As one who has received death threats from anti-Mormons because they perceive me as an enemy historian, it is discouraging to be regarded as subversive by men I sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators. (*On Being A Mormon Historian*, by D. Michael Quinn, page 23)

While the Apostles are blaming the historians for the epidemic of apostasy, the historians feel that it is the other way around. George Raine observed:

> Intellectuals and historians, all faithful members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, for several months have had a vigorous but quiet dispute with influential church leaders who criticized so-called objective church history which includes very human dimensions.

The debate is now formal, as indicated in a speech last week by University of Utah historian James L. Clayton. He characterized “faith-promoting” history, as advocated by at least two LDS general authorities, as “intellectually and morally irresponsible.” . . .

Both sides of the debate over history say the point of view of the other can lead to the undermining of faith, that church members can be made vulnerable. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, February 28, 1982, page B-1)

If apostasy from the Mormon Church is really an illness, then it is obvious that the disease often begins when a person comes in contact with material preserved in the Church Historical Department. Instead of attacking the historians, Apostles Benson
and Packer should ask themselves why the original records of the Church are so full of apostasy germs. If the Church were true, the writings of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young and other church leaders would be filled with good things which promote spiritual health. The fact that Benson and Packer want to keep these records hidden shows that they know the archives are really filled with dangerous germs which can infect their people. From our viewpoint, of course, what Apostle Packer calls disease germs are in reality historical facts which can open a person’s eyes to the truth about Mormonism. While it is sometimes painful to face these matters, it can lead a person to spiritual health.

In his speech at the University of Utah, James L. Clayton mentioned a dangerous anti-history trend which is growing in the Church. He indicated that Leonard Arrington had been removed as Church Historian and that the Church had gone back on its plans to print the 16-volume history. He also stated that he had just learned that the Church archivists were beginning to suppress a vast amount of material that had previously been available to Church scholars. In his article in the Tribune, George Raine claimed that the Church said the restriction of documents was only a temporary measure:

It was rumored, for example, that church archivists are barring access to diaries, journals and other private materials of church leaders back to the 1830s and that this was illustrative of a narrowing church attitude toward Mormonism’s past. But the church responded that these have been withdrawn temporarily for reclassification and reevaluation, and they are still available with permission from the managing director of the church historical department.

Since qualified historians had been working with these documents for ten years, we can see no legitimate reason why the Church would have to reclassify and reevaluate them at this time. We can only believe that this is a move to suppress the material from Church historians. Whether the Church can keep these things hidden remains to be seen. The bad publicity that this is bringing the Church could very well force the General Authorities to reconsider their decision.

STILL STRUGGLING

The present recession has really affected our work. Although we are doing our best to press forward, we are functioning with a limited amount of capital. This, of course, makes our work less effective. For instance, we are forced to print very limited quantities of the works listed on our booklist. This wastes a great deal of time because we are forced to jump back and forth from one project to another. With more capital we could run things a lot smoother and have far better results in getting out the truth. Last year our sales fell many thousands of dollars short of the amount we needed to cover expenses. Fortunately, however, some of our readers sent gifts and we were able to continue the work. Because the financial conditions of the country have caused a decrease in our sales, we find ourselves in a similar situation this year. We are trusting, however, that the Lord will in some way meet this need. Although we are not a non-profit corporation, we certainly welcome any donations that our readers are able to make. In the past some of our friends have helped us with loans which we have been able to repay. If anyone is interested in loaning money at the present time we could pay 10% interest. A loan of $1,000 would return $100 interest within a year (12 monthly payments of $91.67), and $5,000 would bring $500 interest if loaned for two years. We could use any amount between $500 and $5,000 and will sign a promissory note to make the matter legally binding. We feel that this would be a good investment, and it would help us to make our work more effective.

While most people will not be able to help this work in a financial way, all of our Christian friends are able to pray for us and for the Mormon people. We feel that the Lord has really blessed our work and that it is being widely used as a tool to bring Mormons to the knowledge of the true Gospel. We believe that thousands of Mormons will come to a knowledge of the truth through this work.

THE BEST MEDICINE

Karl Menninger, one of the world’s greatest psychiatrists, once stated that “love is the medicine for the sickness of the world.” Jesus certainly recognized this fact, for in the book of John we find that He made this statement to His disciples:

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. (John 13:34-35)

The scriptures tell us that God is love and that when we are “born again” our hearts are filled with love:

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. (1 John 4:7-8)

In verse 20 of the same chapter the Apostle John stated:

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”

In Ephesians 3:19 we are told that the love of Christ “passeth knowledge.”

The psychiatrist Karl Menninger made these observations concerning the importance of love:

...for the brief period that we love (others than ourselves) we live—which corresponds with astonishing precision to numerous sayings attributed to Jesus and Plato. (Man Against Himself, pages 62-63)

Nothing inhibits love so much as self-love...just as self-directed aggressions are harmful because of their immediate consequences, so the self-direction of love is harmful through its secondary consequences, the consequences of the emotional starvation resulting...Thus again psychoanalytic science comes to the support of an intuitive observation of a great religious leader who said, “He who seeketh his own life shall lose it but whosoever loseth his life for my sake shall find it.” We need only read in place of “for my sake” an expression meaning the investment of love in others, which is presumably what Jesus meant. (Ibid., pages 381-382)

The Apostle Paul maintained that love was the most important thing:

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. (1 Corinthians 13:1-6, Revised Standard Version)
Myron Augsburger wrote:

True love cannot be expressed for things, for things only serve personal ends and affection for things is turned inward and is closed and selfish. Love for a person is outgoing and genuine as it cares to share relationship rather than to use the person. . . . Only the born-again person knows the transformation of divine love through the indwelling Spirit, and can express a measure of love that Jesus commanded toward both friends and enemies. . . .

The evidence that one has been delivered from the selfishness of sin is the expression of Christian love. (Plus Living, pages 25-27)

J. B. Phillips stated:

It is plain from the Gospels that Christ regarded the self-loving, self-regarding, self-seeking spirit as the direct antithesis of real living. His two fundamental rules for life were that the “love-energy,” instead of being turned in on itself, should go out first to God and then to other people. “If any man will come after me,” he said, “let him deny himself” . . . Now the moment a man does this . . . he finds himself in touch with something more real than he has known before. . . . In other words, the moment he begins really to love, he finds himself in touch with the life of God. (And, of course, if God is love, this is only to be expected.) He now knows beyond any doubting that this is real, happy, constructive living. He knows now that the teaching of Christ is not a merely human code of behaviour, but part of the stuff of reality. (Your God Is Too Small, pages 84-85)

Thomas a Kempis wrote: “Know that the love of yourself is more hurtful to you than anything else in the world” (Of the Imitation of Christ, page 42). Because the love of self is “more hurtful” to us than anything else, the Lord tells us to deny ourselves: “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and fellow me” (Matthew 16:24). In John 12:25 Jesus said: “He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.”

Raymound L. Cramer made these observations:

Another effective method for helping the neurotic is in involving him in something outside himself. Jesus taught this principle—who would save his life would lose it. An individual wrapped up in himself is like a circle revolving inward. Losing his life in interest of others, turning the circle outward, giving himself away has the advantage of distracting the neurotic from his own worries and giving him something worthwhile to live for. Being loved by others is pleasant, but it may become boring, while loving the other person is absorbing and creative. (The Psychology of Jesus and Mental Health, page 126)

The phrase, “save his life,” refers to saving it for a selfish purpose, utilizing ability in terms of self-gratification—a self-possessed, self-centered life. Jesus was not talking here about some distant future, but physical, down-to-earth, everyday living. He claimed that anyone who used his life in this way would lose it. The word “lose” means to become empty, void, useless and destructive. That which is capable of being useful becomes a source of insecurity, greed, and a vehicle of hostility if it is used for selfish purposes. Fear and anxiety result when man tries to hang onto his life. He loses what he is trying to save—life itself. (Ibid., page 139)

Many people will not become Christians because they fear that the Lord will ask them to give up too much. The truth is, however, that the Lord only asks us to give up the things that will hurt us or make us unhappy in the long run. We are told that true happiness comes only when we submit ourselves to the Lord and that there is only misery in self-love.

For a more complete treatment of this subject and what it really means to be a Christian we recommend our book A Look At Christianity.
In the last issue of the Messenger we reported that

For 140 years the Mormon Church has been suppressing the Nauvoo diaries of Joseph Smith’s secretary William Clayton. These diaries have been hidden in the vault of the First Presidency. Recently, however, quotations from these diaries leaked out, and this has caused great consternation among the General authorities and officials at Brigham Young University.

The Seventh East Press, a student newspaper published just off the Brigham Young University campus, published the following:

A BYU graduate student has accused a member of a bishopric of stealing copies of materials which the student obtained from the vault of the First Presidency.

In doing research in LDS Church history, Andrew F. Ehat, . . . obtained permission to examine the restricted Nauvoo diaries of William Clayton and make notes. He gave a copy of his notes to BYU religion instructor Lyndon Cook, who kept them in his campus office. The notes were taken without permission and photocopied by . . . a member of a bishopric which uses Cook’s office. (Seventh East Press, January 18, 1982)

A religion instructor at BYU borrowed photocopies of these notes and subsequently lent them to a student who made five more copies. When Ehat discovered what had happened he became very upset and according to witnesses he declared, “If this gets out it could destroy the Church” (Ibid.). Ehat tried desperately to get all of the copies back. He went to “BYU security and the Provo Police Department,” but neither of these organizations were able to help him. BYU President Jeffery Holland “appointed Vice-president Noel Reynolds to investigate the matter,” but in spite of all the pressure “various individuals” continued to circulate and make copies of the material. Many copies have now been spread by the Mormon “underground” (a group composed mostly of liberal Mormon scholars) to different parts of the United States. Most of those who received copies were very careful to see that they did not fall into the hands of critics of the Church. The Seventh East Press reported that one man who refused to give up his copy of Ehat’s notes said that “he would never give information to anti-Mormons.” Finally, several months after Mormon scholars began circulating the typed excerpts, we were given access to a copy of them. These notes certainly tend to confirm our research concerning the deceitful way plural marriage was introduced by the Mormon Prophet Joseph Smith. For instance, in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 206-207, we quote Emily Dow Partridge (a faithful Mormon) as telling how Joseph Smith deceived his wife Emma:

. . . the Prophet Joseph and his wife Emma offered us a home in their family. . . . I was married to Joseph Smith on the 4th of March 1843, . . . My sister Eliza was also married to Joseph a few days later. This was done without the knowledge of Emma Smith. Two months afterward she consented to give her husband two wives, providing he would give her the privilege of choosing them. She accordingly chose my sister Eliza and myself, and to save family trouble brother Joseph thought it best to have another ceremony performed. Accordingly on the 11th of May, 1843, we

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(Mail orders add 10%)
were sealed to Joseph Smith a second time, in Emma’s presence. 
... From that very hour, however, Emma was our bitter enemy... things went from bad to worse until we were obligated to leave the house and find another home. (Historical Record, page 240)

In William Clayton’s diary, he tells of Joseph Smith having a problem with Emma over the Partridge sisters. He indicates that Joseph deceived her by telling her he would “relinquish all” for her sake when he really didn’t intend to “relinquish anything”:

Wednesday 16. . . . This A.M. J. [Joseph] told me that since E. [Emma] came back fro St Louis she had resisted the P. [Priesthood?] in toto & he had to tell her he would relinquish all for her sake. She said she would [sic] given him E. & E. P [Emily and Eliza Partridge] but he knew if he took them she would pitch on him & obtain a divorce & leave him. He however told me that he should not relinquish anything O. God deliver thy servant from iniquity and bondage. (William Clayton’s Diary, August 16, 1843, typed excerpts, page 24)

On May 24, 1843, (page 43) William Clayton told of Joseph Smith holding the door shut when he was in a room with one of the Partridge girls and that this made Emma very “irritated”:

Prest. stated to me that he had had a little trouble with sis E. he was asking E. Partridge concerning Jackson conduct during Prest. absence & E came up stairs. he shut to the door not knowing who it was and held it. She came to the door & called Eliza 4 times & tried to force open the door. Prest. opened it & told her the cause &c. She seemed much irritated. He says Jackson is rotten hearted.

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 245, we show that while Joseph Smith secretly lived plural marriage, he denied it publicly and even published a statement that “Hiram Brown” had been “cut off from the church” for “preaching polygamy, and other false and corrupt doctrines, ...” (Times and Seasons, vol. 5, page 423). According to William Clayton, Joseph Smith was willing to go so far as to initiate a fake excommunication to cover up the practice of polygamy:

Thursday 19. . . . Prest. J. . . . began to tell me that E. was turned quite friendly & kind. she had been anointed & he also had been a K. He said that it was her advice that I should keep M [Clayton’s plural wife Margaret] at home and it was also his council. Says he just keep her at home and brook it and if they raise trouble about it and bring you before me I will give you an awful scourging & probably cut you off from the church and then I will baptise you & set you ahead as good as ever. (Ibid., October 19, 1843)

William Clayton’s diaries paint a very unattractive picture of polygamy in Nauvoo. Clayton was continually having family problems because of plural marriage. He tells, for instance, of a problem he encountered when he wanted to sleep with both of his wives at the same time:

Thursday 24. . . . At night I asked mother if M might sleep with Ruth & me she appeared very rebellious & would not consent but said we might do as we had a mind. (Ibid., August 24, 1843, page 25)

Clayton does not indicate how his wives felt about this situation, but it is obvious from the diary that Margaret was really in love with another man. She had been engaged to this man but had been counseled to marry Clayton instead. Clayton felt very bad and asked Joseph Smith if he had done wrong in taking Margaret away from the man she really loved. Smith “answered no you have a right to get all you can” (Ibid., August 11, 1843). Joseph Smith really seemed to believe in that philosophy. At one time he and Clayton were both interested in Lydia, the sister of two of Clayton’s wives. He claimed, therefore, that God gave him a special revelation showing it would be wrong for Clayton to have her:

Friday 15th. . . . Prest. J. told me he had lately had a new item of law revealed to him in relation to myself. He said the Lord had revealed to him that a man could only take 2 of a family except by express revelation and as I had said I intended to take Lydia he made this known for my benefit. to have more than two in a family was apt to cause wrangles and trouble. He finally asked if I would not give L to him I said I would so far as I had any thing to do in it. He requested me to talk to her. (Ibid., page 25)

William Clayton’s diaries certainly throw light on the bad relationship Joseph Smith had with his wife Emma. Most of the problems seemed to stem from the doctrine of plural marriage. Clayton records the following under the date of July 12, 1843:

Wednesday 12th This A.M. I wrote a Revelation consisting of 10 pages on the order of the priesthood, showing the designs in Moses, Abraham, David and Solomon having many wives & concubines &c. After it was wrote Presto. Joseph & Hyrum presented it and read it to E. who said she did not believe a word of it and appeared very rebellious. (Ibid., page 20)

On August 21, 1843, Emma was “vexed and angry” because of correspondence she found between Joseph and one of his plural wives. Two days later she treated Joseph so badly that “he had to use harsh measures to put a stop to her abuse but finally succeeded.” Joseph Smith feared that Emma would become involved in the same type of conduct in which he was engaged. At one time he even suspected William Clayton of using “familiarity” with her:

Monday 29 This A.M. prest J. told me that he felt as though I was not treating him exactly right & asked if I had used any familiarity with E. I told him by no means & explained to his satisfaction. (Ibid., May 29, 1843, page 44)

On June 23, 1843, William Clayton recorded this strange entry in his diary:

Friday June 23rd. This A.M. Prest J. took me and conversed considerable concerning some delicate matters. said [a mysterious character appears at this point in the manuscript which Mormon scholars interpret as “Emma”] wanted to lay a snare for me. He told me last night of this and said he had felt troubled. He said [the character representing “Emma” appears again at this point] had treated him coldly & badly since I came . . . and he knew she was disposed to be revenged on him for some things she thought that if he would indulge himself she would too. He cautioned me very kindly for which I felt thankful. He said Thompson professed great friendship for him but he gave way to temptation & he had to die. Also bro Knight he gave him one but he went to loose conduct and he could not save him. Also B.Y. [Brigham Young] had transgressed his covenant & he pled with the Lord to spare him this end & he did so, other wise he would have died. B. denied having transgressed. He said if I would do right by him & abide his council he would save my life while he lived. (pages 19-20)

Taken as a whole Ehat’s extracts from William Clayton’s diaries cast early Mormonism in a very bad light. In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 245, we quoted the Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe as saying: “The Church ever operates in full light. There is no secrecy about its doctrine, aim, or work.” Widtsoe further proclaimed that “From the beginning of its history the
Church . . . has fought half-truth and untruth.” William Clayton’s
diaries certainly show that Apostle Widtsoe was incorrect in
these statements. The Church was certainly not operating in “full
light” and there was a great deal of “secrecy about its doctrine.”
Furthermore, Clayton makes it clear that Joseph Smith used
“untruth” as a tool to advance his work. Not only was he deceiving
the outside world, but he was deceiving his own wife and other
members of the Church.

Instead of coming to grips with these matters, Mormon Church
leaders have been engaged in a cover-up. They kept the Clayton
diaries locked in a safe for 140 years, and after extracts got out,
they began to implement very repressive measures to see that no
more sensitive material comes to light. In the last issue of the
Messenger we gave a report concerning how the Mormon leaders
clamped down on the Historical Department and even scrapped
the 16-volume sesquicentennial history of the Church because it
turned out to be too revealing. James L. Clayton, a historian from
the University of Utah, became very disturbed about these matters,
and in a speech delivered February 25, 1982, he protested:

More recently, indeed, just within the past few days, I
understand that the archives of the LDS Church have been closed
to all research in the diaries, the letter books and other sensitive
materials of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve
back to the 1830s—diaries and letters long open to and currently
being used by scholars. Many projects of considerable worth are
now stymied or will be finished with incomplete sources. The
release of Leonard J. Arrington as Church Historian—the most
significant Mormon historian since B. H. Roberts, in my judgment;
the apparent refusal to complete already signed contracts with other
historians working on a multi-volume history of the church; the
movement of the Historical Department from the main source of
manuscripts at Church Headquarters in Salt Lake City to BYU,
these events raise serious questions regarding the nature and
direction of historical enquiry on Mormonism.

The Apostles Ezra Taft Benson and Boyd K. Packer have been
warning Mormon historians not to probe too deeply into the past
and to concentrate on printing only material which is favorable to
the Church. D. Michael Quinn, assistant professor of history at the
Church’s Brigham Young University, felt that these Apostles had
gone too far. In an emotionally charged speech, he commented that
“the Mormon history of benignly angelic Church leaders apparently
advocated by Elders Benson and Packer would border on idolatry”
(On Being a Mormon Historian, pages 18-19).

Although Dr. Quinn has been the most courageous in opposing
the suppressive moves of Church leaders, many Mormon scholars
feel the same way. Just after we published the last issue of the
Messenger, a researcher who had previously sided against us, wrote
us a letter in which he stated:

Thank you for sending me your newest edition of the
Messenger. As things are now, there is absolutely no reason to
to be surprised at the overwhelming number of
traditionally conservative, orthodox, sustaining LDS members who
have expressed criticism of Elder McConkie’s presentation. People
who we would never have suspected to say an unkind word about
their delinquent home teacher have gone out of the way to state their
distress over Elder McConkie’s “uncharitable rebuke” of George
Pace, abrasive style of presentation, unneeded mocking of other
religion’s rituals and saints, dogmatic approach, and condescending
tone. . . . Many of the offended saints seem to be looking beyond
the mark of learning truth from a great gospel scholar in the Church
by going out of their way to find fault. Indeed some seem to be
trying to position themselves so that Elder McConkie would be
sure to knock off the chip on their shoulder. (Seventh East Press,
March 14, 1982, p. 8)

The speech delivered on March 2, 1982, was not Apostle
McConkie’s first attack on those who stress a personal relationship
with Christ. According to the Seventh East Press, November 18,
1981, he had warned students against this doctrine a few months
before:

On the weekend of October 31, 1981 Elder Bruce R.
McConkie and other General Authorities presided over the 14
BYU Stake Conference. . . .

Elder McConkie counseled students against praying on dates,
saying that this practice develops a relationship that should only
exist in marriages. . . .

Elder McConkie believes that the Second Coming of Christ
will not take place during his lifetime, nor the lifetime of his

Apostle Attacks Personal Relationship
With Christ

At a Brigham Young University Devotional held March 2,
1982, the Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie delivered a very
significant message. In this speech, Apostle McConkie emphatically
declared that members of the Mormon Church “should not strive
for a special and personal relationship with Christ.” McConkie
maintained that he was expositions the “doctrine of the Church”
and so on and said that “you have never heard one of the
First Presidency or the Twelve . . . advocate this excessive zeal
that calls for gaining a so-called special and personal relationship
with Christ.” McConkie also admonished that “everyone who
is sound spiritually and who has the guidance of the Holy Spirit
will believe my words and follow my counsel.” In concluding his
remarks, Apostle McConkie set himself up as one of the greatest
living authorities on Christ: “It just may be that I have preached
more sermons, taught more doctrine, and written more words about
the Lord Jesus Christ than any man now living.”

Bruce R. McConkie seemed to be especially upset with “a
current and unwise book” which he does not identify by name.
It is believed, however, that he was referring to the book What It
Means To Know Christ, by George Pace, an associate professor
at BYU. In the Foreword to this book, Dr. Pace maintained that
people should “center their lives in Christ and . . . develop their
own personal relationship with Him.” From an article published in
the Seventh East Press, an independent student newspaper which
is published just off campus of BYU, it would appear that George
Pace has a number of supporters:

In any case, because the extracts from Clayton’s diaries throw
so much light on early Mormonism we have published them under
the title, Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered. For a complete
treatment of the subject of Mormonism and truth we recommend
our book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? ◆
children, and maybe not during the lifetime of his grandchildren. He said that there is too much to be done before the Savior’s return can take place . . . as we measure time, it is a long way off.

He also spoke on a subject he said had been going around the church—developing a personal relationship with Christ. He said that those who preach this doctrine, that is, “take it as a goal in life and focus on it or single it out” become “unbalanced.” He discussed the fact that we worship God the Father in the name of Christ through the Holy Ghost, and that we don’t pick out one member of the Godhead to have a “special” relationship with, but should seek to obtain the spirit.

While Bruce R. McConkie claims to be one of the greatest authorities on the life of Christ, he is certainly out of step with the teachings of the Bible. From beginning to end the New Testament stresses the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. In Matthew 11:28 we find Jesus Himself saying: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” This same theme continues right into the book of Revelation where Jesus says: “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Revelations 3:20). The Apostle Paul certainly taught a close personal relationship with Christ in his epistles. For instance, in Philippians 3:8-10 we read:

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.

Apostle McConkie’s teachings are not only out of harmony with the Bible, but they are contrary to the Book of Mormon as well. For example, McConkie claims that “We worship the Father and him only and no one else. We do not worship the Son . . .” He also warns that those who claim a personal relationship with Christ “often begin to pray directly to Christ because of some special friendship they feel has been developed. . . . Our prayers are addressed to the Father, and to him only.” The Book of Mormon, however, has the ancient Nephites both worshiping and praying to Jesus:

. . . they did cry out with one accord, saying:

Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God! And they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him. (3 Nephi 11:16-17)

And behold, they began to pray; and they did pray unto Jesus, calling him their Lord and their God. (3 Nephi 19:18)

And when Jesus had spoken these words he came again unto his disciples; and behold they did pray steadfastly, without ceasing, unto him; and he did smile upon them again; and behold they were white, even as Jesus. (3 Nephi 19:30)

Actually, Apostle McConkie’s recent statement is only the last step on a long pathway leading away from Biblical teachings about Christ. This process began during Joseph Smith’s lifetime, although the Book of Mormon itself emphasized the importance of Jesus. The Book of Mormon, in fact, teaches that Jesus is God Himself manifest in the flesh (see Mosiah 15:1-5). Brigham Young, the second President of the Mormon Church, departed even further from Biblical doctrine in his teachings concerning the Godhead. For a complete treatment of the changing conception of God in Mormon theology we recommend our book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 143-178.

In any case, we have found Apostle McConkie’s speech to be so extraordinary that we have reproduced it in its entirety. Our photographic reproduction of this speech was made directly from a copy acquired from McConkie’s office. It is entitled, Our Relationship With The Lord.

Danite Entry Crossed Out in Smith’s Diary

Although the Mormon leaders suppressed Joseph Smith’s private diaries for almost a century and a half, in the 1970s copies leaked out. In 1979 we were able to print his diaries for 1832-36, and just recently we completed his 1838-39 diaries. While these diaries are certainly not as sensational as the ones written in the 1840s, there is one entry that throws some important light on the secret band known as the Danites. David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, gave this information concerning the Danites:

In the spring of 1838, the heads of the church and many of the members had gone deep into error and blindness. . . . In June, 1838, at Far West, Mo., a secret organization was formed. Doctor Avard being put in as the leader of the band; a certain oath was to be administered to all the brethren to bind them to support the heads of the church in everything they should teach. All who refused to take this oath were considered dissenters from the church, and certain things were to be done concerning these dissenters, by Dr. Avard’s secret band. I make no farther statements now; but suffice it to say that my persecutions, for trying to show them their errors, became of such a nature that I had to leave the Latter Day Saints; . . . (An Address To All Believers In Christ, Richmond, Missouri, 1887, pages 27-28)

David Whitmer’s brother, John Whitmer (who was also a witness to the Book of Mormon) confirmed the allegation that there was a dangerous band formed in Far West to drive out dissenters:

Joseph Smith, Jr., S. Rigdon, and Hyrum Smith moved their families to this place. Far West, in the spring of 1838. As soon as they came here, they began to enforce their new organized plan, which caused dissensions and difficulties, threatenings and even murders. Smith called a council of the leaders together, in which council he stated that any person who said a word against the heads of the Church, should be driven over these prairies as a chased deer by a pack of hounds, having an illusion to the Gideonites, as they were termed, to justify themselves in their wicked designs. Thus on the 19th of June, 1838, they preached a sermon called the salt sermon, in which these Gideonites understood that they should drive the dissenters, as they termed those who believed not in their secret bands, in fornication, adultery or midnight machinations. . . . They had threatened us, to kill us, if we did not make restitutions to them, by upholding them in their wicked purposes and designs. . . . But to our great astonishment, when we were on our way home from Liberty, Clay County, we met the families of Oliver Cowdery and L.E. Johnson, whom they had driven from their homes, and robbed them of all their goods, save clothing, bedding, etc.

While we were gone Jo. and Rigdon and their band of Gadiatons kept up a guard, and watched our houses; and abused our families; and threatened them, if they were not gone by morning, they would be drove out, and threatened our lives, if they ever saw us in Far West. (John Whitmer’s History, page 22)
The Mormon writer William E. Berrett admitted that the Danite Band did exist, and that it was for the purpose of “plundering and murdering the enemies of the Saints,” he claimed that the Mormon leaders were not responsible for it being formed. According to the History of the Church, Joseph Smith made some very contradictory statements about this organization. On one occasion he said that it was organized but claimed that he did not have any knowledge of it at the time (see History of the Church, vol. 3, pages 178-182). On another occasion, however, Joseph Smith passed the whole thing off by saying, “The Danite system alluded to by Norton never had any existence” (History of the Church, vol. 6, page 165). Fortunately for the cause of truth, in 1838 Joseph Smith had his scribe George W. Robinson keep a diary which was called, “The Scriptory Book of Joseph Smith Jr President of The Church of Jesus Christ, of Latterday Saints in all the world.” This diary contains a very important entry under the date of July 27, 1838 which has been crossed out. H. Michael Marquardt, who made the transcription of the diary, worked very carefully with this portion of the record and was finally able to decipher most of the words that had been crossed out. He discovered that the entry related to the Danite Band. It not only confirmed the existence of the band but said it was organized for the purpose of making things right and cleansing the Church:

...according to the order of the Danites we have a company of Danites in these times, to put to right ... that which is not right, and to cleanse the Church of every great evil...

Mr. Marquardt points out that the account in Joseph Smith’s “Scriptory Book” agrees with other evidence about the Danites. For instance, he quotes Reed Peck as saying: “I heard Avid, on one occasion, say that the Danites were to consecrate their surplus property, and to come in by tens to do so. ...” Joseph Smith’s “Scriptory Book” agrees when it says that the Danites “came up to consecrate, by companies of tens,...”

While it is extremely interesting that Joseph Smith’s “Scriptory Book” would contain an entry concerning the Danites, the whole matter is made even more intriguing by the fact that there has been an attempt to obliterate the entry. Joseph Smith’s History of the Church relies on the “Scriptory Book” for the entries of July 26 and 28, but the entry for July 27—i.e., the portion concerning the Danites—has been omitted. We have included a photograph of the portion of the diary which was crossed out in our new publication, Joseph Smith’s 1838-39 Diaries. This book sells for $2.00 a copy.

For more information about the Danites see our book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 428-450.

**A PROPHET EMERITUS?**

Joseph Smith became President of the Mormon Church before he reached his thirtieth birthday and Brigham Young, the second President, took over the reigns of leadership while he was still in his forties. The early Mormon Church was led by a group of men who were relatively young. In fact, seven of the original Twelve Apostles were only in their twenties when they were called to that ministry—four of them were only twenty-three years old. Today, things have completely charged. The Church is now led by a group of men who are very old. David O. McKay, the ninth President, lived to be ninety-six. The tenth President, Joseph Fielding Smith was ninety-five when he passed away. Harold B. Lee, the eleventh President, died at the age of seventy-four. The current President, Spencer W. Kimball, is now eighty-seven. He is in very poor health and is hardly able to function, yet he is still sustained as the “Prophet, Seer and Revelator” of the Mormon Church. It seems that there is no retirement for the Prophet nor for the members of the Council of the Twelve—Apostle LeGrand Richards is now ninety-six years old. A man could be completely senile and still be sustained as the “Living Prophet.”

While the Apostles and the First Presidency will not retire from their positions, they have placed seven members of the First Quorum of the Seventy on emeritus status since 1978. This means, of course, that these men have been “retired or honorably discharged from active duty because of age, infirmity, or long service, but retained on the rolls.”

The most interesting case of placing a Church leader on emeritus status occurred on October 6, 1979, when the Church Patriarch was released. In the afternoon session of general conference, President N. Eldon Tanner announced:

...we now designate Elder Eldred G. Smith as a Patriarch Emeritus, which means that he is honorably relieved of all duties and responsibilities pertaining to the office of Patriarch to the Church. (The Ensign, November 1979, page 18)

Since the Mormon leaders did not appoint anyone to replace Eldred G. Smith, it appears that they may be abolishing the office of Patriarch to the Church. This is an office which was supposed to be established by revelation. Joseph Fielding Smith, who later became the tenth President of the Church said that “The office of Patriarch to the Church is one of two hereditary offices in the Church,...” (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 3, page 160). President Smith felt that this office would “last forever in the Church”:

It has always been understood, and so the revelations declare, that this office is hereditary...

It now appears, however, that the statement that the duty of Hyrum Smith was to the Church forever, because of his family, evidently conveys the thought that he would succeed to the office of Patriarch and that it should continue in his posteriority to the end of time, for, surely, it would have to continue in this way to last forever in the Church upon the earth among mortal men. (Ibid., page 164)

In any case, the following question comes to mind: If the Mormon Church can have a “Patriarch Emeritus,” why can’t it have a “Prophet Emeritus”? ◆

**Kimball’s Journal Confirms Oath of Vengeance**

We have recently printed one of Heber C. Kimball’s journals by the photomechanical method. Davis Bitton, formerly Assistant LDS Church Historian, described this journal as follows:


In this journal Heber C. Kimball, a well-known Mormon Apostle, gave some very important information concerning the “Oath of Vengeance” — an oath which used to be taken as part of the temple ritual. Although some members of the Mormon Church
denied the existence of such an oath, just after the turn of the century the “Committee on Privileges and Elections of the United States Senate” investigated the matter and concluded:

In the protest signed and verified by the oath of Mr. Leilich it is claimed that Mr. Smoot has taken an oath as an apostle of the Mormon Church which is of such a nature as to render him incompetent to hold the office of Senator. From the testimony taken it appears that Mr. Smoot has taken an obligation which is prescribed by the Mormon Church and administered to those who go through a ceremony known as “taking the endowments.” It was testified by a number of witnesses who were examined during the investigation that one part of this obligation is expressed in substantially these words:

You and each of you do covenant and promise that you will pray and never cease to pray Almighty God to avenge the blood of the prophets upon this nation, and that you will teach the same to your children and to your children’s children unto the third and fourth generation.

The fact that an oath of vengeance is part of the endowment ceremonies and the nature and character of such oath was judicially determined in the third judicial court of Utah in the year 1889 in the matter of the application of John Moore and others to become citizens of the United States.

The obligation hereinafter set forth is an oath of disloyalty to the Government which the rules of the Mormon Church require, or at least encourage, every member of that organization to take. It is in harmony with the views and conduct of the leaders of the Mormon people in former days, when they openly defied the Government of the United States, and is also in harmony with the conduct of those who give the law to the Mormon Church today in their defiant disregard of the laws against polygamy and polygamous cohabitation. It may be that many of those who take this obligation do so without realizing its reasonable import; but the fact that the first presidency and twelve apostles retain an obligation of that nature in the ceremonies of the church shows that at heart they are hostile to this nation and disloyal to its Government. (The Reed Smoot Case, vol. 4, pages 495-497)

Joseph Smith’s brother William publicly charged that the “Oath of Vengeance” was administered in Nauvoo. Heber C. Kimball’s journal confirms this accusation. On December 21, 1845, we find this report of remarks made in the temple:

Elder Kimball . . . said the Twelve would have to leave shortly, for a charge of treason would be brought against them far swearing us to avenge the blood of the anointed ones, and some one would reveal it, and we shall have to part some day between sundown and dark—. . . I have covenanted, and never will rest nor my posterity after me until those men who killed Joseph & Hyrum have been wiped out of the earth. (Heber C. Kimball’s Journal, December 21, 1845)

Below is a photograph of the portion of Heber C. Kimball’s Journal where he tells of the “Oath of Vengeance.”

As we have mentioned before, some Mormon apologists have maintained that there was no “Oath of Vengeance” in the temple ceremony. The journal of Heber C. Kimball, however, completely destroys their argument. The “Daily Journal of Abraham H. Cannon” also makes it very plain that there was such an oath. Under the date of December 6, 1889, the Apostle Cannon recorded the following in his dairy:

About 4:30 p.m. this meeting adjourned and was followed by a meeting of Presidents Woodruff, Cannon and Smith and Bros. Lyman and Grant. . . . In speaking of the recent examination before Judge Anderson Father said that he understood when he had his endowments in Nauvoo that he took an oath against the murderers of the Prophet Joseph as well as other prophets, and if he had ever met any of those who had taken a hand in that massacre he would undoubtedly have attempted to avenge the blood of the martyrs. The Prophet charged Stephen Markham to avenge his blood should he be slain. . . . (“Daily Journal of Abraham H. Cannon,” December 6, 1889, page 205)

The Apostle Cannon went on to relate that Joseph F. Smith, who later became the sixth President of the Mormon Church, was about to murder a man with his pocket knife if he even expressed approval of Joseph Smith’s death:

. . . Bro. Joseph F. Smith was traveling some years ago near Carthage when he met a man who said he had just arrived five minutes too late to see the Smiths killed. Instantly a dark cloud seemed to overshadow Bro. Smith and he asked how this man looked upon the deed. Bro. S. was oppressed by a most horrible feeling as he waited for a reply. After a brief pause the man answered, “Just as I have always looked upon it—that it was a d—d cold-blooded murder.” The cloud immediately lifted from Bro. Smith and he found that he had his open pocket knife grasped in his hand in his pocket, and he believes that had this man given his approval to that murder of the prophets he would have immediately struck him to the heart. (Ibid., pages 205-206)

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 475, we gave additional information on the “Oath of Vengeance” and speculated as to when it was actually removed from the temple ceremony. Recently we obtained a photograph of a letter written by George F. Richards to the President of the St. George Temple which shows that all vestiges of the oath had been removed by 1927:

We have the Temple ordinances written into the books for the Presidents of Temples and are preparing the Part books and will get them to you in the near future, or at conference time.

At request of President Grant we have already adopted some of the changes decided upon, and it will be in order for you to do the same.

In sealing for the dead wether one or both be dead, omit the kissing. Omit from the prayer in the circles all reference to avenging the blood of the Prophets. Omit from the ordinance and lecture all reference to retribution. This last change can be made with a day’s notice to those taking the parts that contain such reference.

This letter is written with the approval of the Presidency. (Letter from George F. Richards to the President of the St. George Temple, dated February 15, 1927)

The Reed Smoot Case, the diaries of Heber C. Kimball and Abraham H. Cannon and the letter of George F. Richards prove beyond all doubt that the Church had an “Oath of Vengeance” which finally had to be removed from the temple ceremony.
Those who are interested in collecting rare Mormon documents may be interested in obtaining our new publication, *Heber C. Kimball’s Journal, November 21, 1845 to January 7, 1846*. This book does not contain a transcript but does have photographs of this 370-page document. While this journal is marked as “Very Confidential” and has been “Restricted” by Church leaders, it is composed mostly of lists of names of people who participated in the temple rituals. It does tell of dances, meetings and other activities held in the Nauvoo Temple but is certainly not as sensational as many of the other journals written by early Mormons. ♦

**ABSOLUTELY NO MIDDLE GROUND**

Since we began our work in the early 1960s, a great deal of historical information has come to light which shows that Mormonism is not based upon a solid foundation. The General Authorities of the Church could not deal with the problems and called upon the historians hoping that they could provide some answers. Leonard J. Arrington was called to be Church Historian and a whole crew of professionally trained people began working with the documents. Unfortunately for the Church, however, the results were disastrous. As the historians began their work, they saw that the problems were much deeper than anyone had ever realized. Instead of providing additional evidence for the Church, the original foundational documents proved to be very embarrassing. Some of the prominent historians, therefore, began to lose faith in the Church and to search for some type of “middle ground.” At first the Mormon leaders seemed to be oblivious to what was happening, but as time went on they began to comprehend the gravity of the situation. As we indicated earlier, they finally suppressed the 16-volume sesquicentennial history, moved “the Historical Department from the main source of manuscripts at Church Headquarters in Salt Lake City to BYU,” and released Leonard J. Arrington as Church Historian. The Church leaders apparently realize that Dr. Arrington is too prominent a man to publically take issue with, but they hope that his influence will gradually be dissolved. On March 14, 1982, the *Seventh East Press* printed the following:

> Along one hall on the second floor [of] the Church Historical Department (LDS Church Office Building) hang portraits of LDS Church Historians from the beginning down to Elder G. Homer Durham. Interestingly, however, there is no portrait of Leonard J. Arrington.

The same issue of *Seventh East Press* reported:

> In a recent lecture . . . James L. Clayton . . . announced that Dr. Leonard J. Arrington has been dismissed as LDS Church Historian. . . . Reliable sources report that Elder G. Homer Durham, member of the presidency of the First Quorum of Seventies, has been set apart as the new Church Historian.

Although the Church has made no official announcement, the *Sunstone Review* for May 1982, asserted that “Elder G. Homer Durham . . . was called and set apart as Church Historian on February 2.” If this report is true, it is certainly a very strange procedure. Dr. Arrington was publicly “sustained in the April 1972 General Conference” (*Ibid.*), but no announcement was ever made by the Church that he had been released. Durham, on the other hand, apparently replaced Arrington without being publicly sustained in the April 1982 conference. This seems to be a rather underhanded way of removing Dr. Arrington from his position.

In any case, in “a draft of the first chapter of a manuscript for a book entitled *No Middle Ground*,” Professor Louis C. Midgley, of Brigham Young University, has accused some Mormon historians of “caving in” on the vital issues:

> I wish to show that what is behind the writing of at least some recent Mormon history is a rash and unnecessary caving in on crucial issues. . . . I would prefer to see Mormon history written with an eye to building and defending the Kingdom of God; it is a grave mistake for a Mormon to do otherwise. (“The Question of Faith and History,” pages 1 and 2)

Professor Midgley maintains that it is impossible for Mormon leaders to take a neutral position with regard to Joseph Smith:

> Mormon historians who attempt to account for Joseph and the restoration with one of the “countless options” of Professor Marty’s middle ground between genuine prophet and fraud will have invoked theories that necessarily entail a problematic competing “religious” faith . . . from the point of view of the Mormon faithful . . . any explanation of Joseph’s prophetic claims that does not accept him as a genuine prophet has in effect rejected him as a fraud: there is no real middle ground between those alternatives. All of the “countless options” available to explain what might have caused Joseph to claim prophetic revelations other than God end up being just different versions of the fraud thesis. To substitute illusion, delusion or madness for conscious fraud (or charlatan) is obviously destructive to the Mormon faith. For the Mormon historian to toy with one of these “countless options” is therefore tantamount to rejecting Joseph’s prophetic claims. To explain Joseph’s revelations (for example, the Book of Mormon, Book of Moses, Book of Abraham) as mere products of culture is an act of treason; it would amount to handing over the sacred texts to the enemy by treating these texts as somehow merely the invention of Joseph Smith. . . . The gentiles . . . have now offered what they believe is a choice different than that of prophet or fraud: they propose a choice between prophet and product of culture. As I will show, these product-of-culture explanations make it next to impossible for the historian, or those influenced by his explanations, to take the gospel seriously; they are also only nice ways of saying fraud.

> The Mormon position has always been to argue that on the decisive question of the veracity of Joseph’s prophetic revelations there are only two alternatives: he was either a genuine prophet or a base fraud. . . .

> But are Mormon historians now really tempted by the New Chicago Argument? Are Mormons really interested in reaching such an accommodation with secular and gentile historians? Are Mormon historians now busy grasping for a middle ground between prophet and fraud in their accounts of Joseph Smith and the Restored Gospel? The answer is yes! . . . Certain Mormon historians—the New Mormon Apologists, armed with the Chicago Argument—are busy attempting to discover a safe middle ground—a kind of neutral territory somewhere between divine revelation on the one hand and outrageous fraud on the other; . . . Clearly one would have no interest in such detachment or neutrality unless one began with a premise that in effect denied the possibility that the Saints have had access to genuine prophetic revelation . . . the history of the Mormon community would be, in the hands of the New Apologists, only the story of a people guided by an illusion, and the telling of that story would have as its end the utter disillusionment of that people. . . .

> The real challenge to the Restored Gospel is not with the findings; or theories of some special science, but with history . . . Is it not with historical questions or with an examination of historical documents or artifacts where the attack on the Restored Gospel always begins and where the greatest difficulties arise? The pressure of such questions has taken its toll on Mormon historians. The suggestion is currently being advanced, sometimes in a rather
cautious and indirect manner by the New Mormon Apologists, that it is now both necessary and even quite proper to abandon the old notions such as the belief that the Book of Mormon and the special revelations of Joseph Smith are genuinely prophetic. . . . some have been quick to assume that the battle for the capital has been decided and that Mormon faith has finally lost the war. . . . The New Mormon Apologists have thus striven to show that there is nothing in the Book of Mormon or the early teachings of Joseph Smith that was not wholly typical of the sectarian religious background of New England and western New York. . . . Those who now toy with various so-called middle-ground alternative explanations of the restoration have probably not worked out the implications of their endeavor or sensed the grave risks involved in their project—that seems to be the common problem . . . There is no way around the fundamental controversy about his [Smith’s] claims to some neutral or middle ground somewhere between the traditional alternatives of prophet or fraud. A neutral or presumably “objective” explanation would not be a genuinely higher ground. To attempt such a maneuver is to enter the darkness of a night in which all cats are grey. (Ibid., pages 16-19, 21-23 and 28)

Davis Bitton, who used to serve as Assistant Church Historian under Leonard Arrington, commented on Midgley’s paper. Midgley responded by accusing Professor Bitton of defending the idea of a “middle ground between prophet and fraud.” He went on to stress that

The substantive arguments that propose to be “middle-ground” explanations have, up to this point, all turned out to be merely rather obvious variations on the fraud thesis. (“The San Antonio Discussion On Mormon Historiography,” page 8)

Jan Shipps also commented on Midgley’s paper. In reply, Midgley said that

Professor Shipps’ passion to defend the “club members” in the Mormon History Association from serious criticism has led her into the land of murky distinctions. . . . (Ibid., page 13)

On page 10 of the same paper, Midgley claimed that Shipps’ “hero is none other than Leonard J. Arrington”—the man who was recently released from his position as Church Historian. Midgley went to say that “Hugh Nibley is a hero and Fawn Brodie a villain in my plot. I think that Jan Shipps is somehow offended because she senses that my hero is not Leonard J. Arrington. I must have violated a club rule.” (Ibid., page 15)

While Professor Midgley finds it easy to condemn Mormon historians, he probably does not realize the serious problems they are facing. Most of them would probably be elated to find evidence that Joseph Smith was a true prophet. The documents, however, point in the opposite direction. Under these circumstances, we can understand why Mormon historians would try to find a neutral position. Midgley, of course, is correct in saying there is really no middle ground. As the Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt once said,

The Book of Mormon . . . must be either true or false. If true, it is one of the most important messages ever sent from God. . . . If false, it is one of the most cunning, wicked, bold, deep-laid impositions ever palmed upon the world, calculated to deceive and ruin millions. . . . (Orson Pratt’s Works, “Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon,” 1851, page 1)

Although some of the historians now agree with us that the Book of Mormon was not really translated from gold plates, they feel that we have been too harsh on Joseph Smith in our publications. Actually, the question of whether Joseph Smith was self-deceived, a deliberate impostor or a combination of both is one that is very difficult to answer. We do not pretend to know what was going on in his mind, and therefore we do not claim to have the final solution to this problem. If the historians prefer to believe that Joseph Smith was a “well-meaning but mistaken” man, we will not spend a great deal of time arguing about the matter. The important thing is whether Smith actually had gold plates written by the ancient Nephites. If he did not, then the whole foundation of Mormonism collapses.

In our book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? we deal at great length with the question of the origin of Mormonism. Through quotations and photographs from hundreds of printed sources and original documents, we prove conclusively that Mormonism is based on a sandy foundation. The 1972 edition of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? was proclaimed by Wesley P. Walters to be “the most definitive work in print on the fallacies of Mormonism.” We feel that the new 1982 enlarged edition is even better, and we urge all those who have not yet obtained a copy to do so. The price for Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? is $11.95 ($14.95 for hardback). Mail orders please include 10% for postage and handling.

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Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum are considered by the Mormon people to have been two of the greatest men who ever lived. The *Doctrine and Covenants* says that “their names will be classed among the martyrs of religion; . . . From age to age shall their names go down to posterity as gems for the sanctified” (*Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 135, verse 6). Critics, on the other hand, charge that Joseph and Hyrum led the people astray from the true Gospel of Christ. Among other things, the Smiths were charged with being involved in money digging and magic practices. Recently some new evidence has been discovered which strengthens this charge.

The Smith family’s involvement with the occult goes back before the Book of Mormon was “translated.” In 1971 Wesley P. Walters found an original document which proves that Joseph Smith was a “glass looker” and that he was arrested, tried and found guilty by a justice of the peace in Bainbridge, N.Y. in 1826 (see photograph in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 33).

This trial proves that Joseph Smith used a stone which he placed in his hat to try to locate buried treasures. This was, of course, a common practice by magicians and individuals influenced by the occult. As soon as the Book of Mormon was published, there was an attempt to link Joseph Smith with “Walters the Magician, who has strange books, and deals with familiar spirits; . . .” (*Palmyra Reflector*, June 1830, as cited in *A New Witness For Christ in America*, vol. 1, page 273). Walters had been involved with money digging in Palmyra, and it was claimed that “his mantle fell upon the Prophet . . .” (*Ibid.*, page 275).

In 1974 Dr. Reed Durham, who was director of the LDS Institute of Religion at the University of Utah and president of the Mormon History Association, made a discovery that was so startling that it caused great consternation among Mormon scholars and officials. Dr. Durham found that what had previously been identified as the “Masonic jewel of the Prophet Joseph Smith” was in reality a “Jupiter talisman.” This
is a medallion which contains material relating to astrology and magic. Dr. Durham, apparently not realizing the devastating implications of his discovery, announced this important find in his presidential address before the Mormon History Association on April 20, 1974:

...I should like to initiate all of you into what is perhaps the strangest, the most mysterious, occult-like esoteric, and yet Masonically oriented practice ever adopted by Joseph Smith... All available evidence suggests that Joseph Smith the Prophet possessed a magical Masonic medallion, or talisman, which he worked during his lifetime and which was evidently on his person when he was martyred. ...I wasn’t able to find what this was, for—as I said—two months; and finally, in a magic book printed in England in 1801, published in America in 1804, and I traced it to Manchester, and to New York. It was a magic book by Francis Barrett and, to and behold, how thrilled I was when I saw in his list of magic seals the very talisman which Joseph Smith had in his possession at the time of his martyrdom (Mormon Miscellaneous, vol. 1, no. 1, October 1975, pages 14-15).

Recently we were given photocopies of some material which Mormon scholars say was in the possession of Joseph Smith’s brother, Hyrum. We have compared it with the same book Reed Durham used to identify Joseph Smith’s Jupiter talisman (The Magis, by Francis Barrett) and found that it is definitely magic material. Pearson H. Corbett describes these “Relics” of Hyrum Smith on page 453 of his book, Hyrum Smith—Patriarch:

Dagger, Masonic ten inch, stainless steel—wooden handle—Masonic symbols on blade.
Emblematic parchments—Masonic—three, original hand painted on heavy bodied paper—on border appears initials “I.H.S.”...
Pouch, Masonic cotton fabric 4” x 4” with draw string attached.

The reader will find a photograph of one of the parchments on the first page of this newsletter. Eldred G. Smith, Church Patriarch Emeritus, has possession of these relics at the present time. He is convinced that they belonged to his great-great grandfather, Hyrum Smith, and he freely admits that they may be “cabalistic” in origin—i.e., linked to occult or mystic writings. While he used to freely display these relics to groups, he is more cautious at the present time because he is not sure of what they really are. He apparently does not want to cause embarrassment to the Church.

At any rate, the photograph which appears after page 106 in Francis Barrett’s book, The Magis (facsimile reprint by University Books, Inc., 1967), proves beyond all doubt that the Hyrum Smith material comes from magic. For example, the following object appears on one of the parchments.

The reader will notice that the shape of this object is almost identical to a drawing found in Barrett’s book (originally printed in 1801).

The reader will also notice that the drawings in both the parchment and Barrett’s book contain the name “Raphael” written in the center. The name of this archangel comes from the Apocrypha and does not appear in most Protestant Bibles. Joseph Smith, however, does refer to “the voice of... Raphael” in a revelation published in the Doctrine and Covenants 128:21. In any case, in the book The Grimoire of Armadel, translated and edited by S. L. McGregor Mathers, New York, 1980, page 30, we read that “Raphael is a Spirit of Science who did teach unto Solomon Knowledge and Wisdom. He is to be invoked on a Sunday before Sunrise.”

The reader will notice that there are two circular objects which appear in the Hyrum Smith material. These same objects are repeated on another parchment.

Although these two circular objects are not found in Barrett’s book, they do appear in other books about magic. In fact, we have found them in a book which was printed in 1584. This book, The Discoverie of Witchcraft, by Reginald Scot, was photographically reprinted in 1971. The following is taken from page 401 of that book. The reader will notice that the round objects are just like the ones found in the Hyrum Smith parchments.
Under one of the objects we find this message (we have taken the liberty of converting it into modern English): “Whoso beareth this sign about him, all spirits shall do him homage.” These circular objects are apparently pentacles or talismans. It would probably be difficult for those not involved in magic to distinguish a pentacle from a talisman. In The Encyclopedia of Occult Sciences, page 332, we read:

There are two kinds of pentacles, some universal (for invocations and spells), the others personal.

Pentacles, says Pierre Fiobb, are not talismans. The latter assist in the polarisation of fluids, whereas pentacles curtain the polarised fluids. Talismans are intermediaries, pentacles generators. . . .

A pentacle must be engraved on metal corresponding to the planet whence it comes, or else on virgin parchment or china.

The books The Greater Key of Solomon and Raphael’s Ancient Manuscript of Talismanic Magic show quite a number of pentacles and talismans.

On one of the Hyrum Smith parchments we find the following object (a slightly different version appears on the parchment shown on the front of this newsletter). The reader will notice that the name of God, Tetragrammaton, is written around the edge of the object. It is broken up as follows: Tetra-gram-ma-ton. We have added some printed letters to help the reader locate the component parts of the name.

In the book, The Ancients Book of Magic, by Lewis de Claremont, page 11, we find an exact duplicate of the drawing on the Smith parchment.

The reader will notice that the word “Tetragrammaton” is written on this object in the same way it appears on the Smith parchment. This word is frequently used in books on magic. Another name which appears on one of the Smith parchments is “Agla.” This name is also used in magic. We find the words “Agla” and “Tetragrammaton” written on both a magic sword and a wand in Barrett’s book.

The reader will remember that when Pearson Corbett spoke of the Hyrum Smith “Relics,” he listed a “Dagger” with “Masonic symbols on blade.” We compared photocopies of this knife with Barrett’s book (the book Dr. Durham used to identify Joseph Smith’s Jupiter talisman) and found that the markings on it were also derived from magic. Some of the markings, in fact, are found on a Mars talisman which is right next to the Jupiter talisman (see drawings in The Magis, facing page 174). On the one side of the talisman we find the Hebrew characters forming the word Adonai (Lord). These same characters are found on the knife. On the second side of the talisman we find what is known as the Seal of Mars. This is also found on the second side of the knife. Below is a comparison of the Seal of Mars as it appears on the talisman (above) with the way it appears on the knife.

Knives play a very important part in magic rituals. A number of drawings of knives with mysterious markings on them are found in The Greater Key of Solomon, between pages 97 and 98.

Pearson Corbett refers to one of Hyrum Smith’s relics as a “Pouch, Masonic cotton fabric. . . .” It is believed that this pouch was used to hold the magic parchments.

In a new book we are preparing, Mormonism, Magic and Masonry, we intend to have photographs of the parchments, both sides of the knife and the pouch.

Just after writing the above, we received photocopies from a manuscript entitled, “The Masonic Emblems & Parchments of Joseph & Hyrum Smith,” compiled by Arturo de Hoyos. With the exception of the knife, the author has linked the Hyrum Smith material to magic sources and has even found a great deal of additional material relating to the subject. The fact that we did our research completely independently and yet arrived at the same conclusions seems to show how strong the case is that the Hyrum Smith material was derived from magic. While we found the strange object with the name “Raphael” written on it in The Magis, Mr. de Hoyos located the same drawing in The Ancients Book of Magic (a book we also used to identify one of the other objects). The drawing in The Ancients Book of Magic, was apparently taken from The Magis (the word “Raphael” is illegible in The Ancients Book of Magic and in de Hoyos’ manuscript, whereas it is very readable in The Magis). While Mr. de Hoyos also used The Ancients Book of Magic to identify the pentacles or talismans on the Hyrum Smith parchments, we used The Discoverie of Witchcraft, a book originally published in 1584. The drawings in the two books appear to contain minor differences, although they are obviously representations of the same objects. In any case, we feel that Arturo de Hoyos has produced an excellent piece of work on the Hyrum Smith material. While he seems to be sympathetic to Joseph and Hyrum Smith, de Hoyos has to admit that it is puzzling that they would possess items linked to the occult:

. . . . the three parchments which belonged to the Patriarch Hyrum Smith will be discussed. These parchments are presently in the possession of [the] E.G. Smith family, and to my knowledge no interpretation of the figures found on them is to be found. . . .
These parchments have been termed “Masonic,” although they bear no direct relation to the Masonic ritual. There are however certain aspects of the parchments which do bear some relationship to Freemasonry.

It is very possible that Hyrum Smith learned about these charms from his fellow Masons, as Masons do attach importance to certain signs and emblems, and ascribe meanings to the same. . . . One cannot help but wonder the reason why the Prophet Joseph Smith, and his brother, Hyrum, the Patriarch would possess articles such as they did unless they actually believed that these items did possess some sort of supernatural power, or that they were a “key” to receiving power or protection. Is it possible that just as the Masonic ritual, which Joseph termed the “apostate endowment” retained principles of truth, that these Pentacles which have come down through the ages to be associated [sic] with witchcraft, black magic, and the occult as a whole yet contain elements of truth which were recognized by the Prophet? . . . Whatever the case may be both Joseph and Hyrum did possess these charms and it seems highly unlikely that there was not a legitimate reason for this (“The Masonic Emblem & Parchments of Joseph & Hyrum Smith,” Compiled by Arturo de Hoyos, 1982, pages 1 and 2).

**Suppressed Document?**

We have been told that there is a very important document being suppressed which may relate to the involvement of the early Mormon leaders in magic. This is a history of the Church written by Oliver Cowdery. Cowdery, of course, was one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon. According to Joseph Fielding Smith, he was “appointed to assist Joseph in . . . keeping a history of the Church . . . .” Cowdery kept this record until 1831 when John Whitmer was commanded “to keep the church record and history continually; for Oliver Cowdery I have appointed to another office” (Doctrines and Covenants 47:3). In John Whitmer’s history of the Church, he wrote that “Oliver Cowdery has written the commencement of the church history, commencing at the time of the finding of the plates, up to June 12, 1831” (John Whitmer’s History, page 4). While Dean C. Jessee said that the Cowdery history “has not been found” (Brigham Young University Studies, Summer 1971, page 461), Church Historian Joseph Fielding Smith, who later became the tenth President of the Church, indicated that it was in the Historian’s Office:

Oliver Cowdery was the first one appointed to assist Joseph in transcribing and keeping a history of the Church; John Whitmer took his place, when Oliver Cowdery was given something else to do. We have on file in the Historian’s Office the records written in the hand writing of Oliver Cowdery, the first historian, or recorder of the Church (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 2, page 201).

We understand that a number of documents which were originally stored in the Church Historian’s Office were later moved to the vault of the First Presidency. This was undoubtedly done to keep them out of the hands of the public. The Mormon leaders were especially concerned about this matter when Dr. Leonard J. Arrington became Church Historian. In any case, we understand that the Cowdery history of the Church (not to be confused with the history that was published in the Messenger and Advocate) is now located in the First Presidency’s vault. At one time an inventory was made of what was contained in the vault. When the Cowdery history was opened, it was discovered that it contained magic characters!

A number of years ago, we tried to get the Church to make Cowdery’s history and other documents available. We were informed by the Assistant Church Historian, however, that Joseph Fielding Smith was “not interested in the project you have in mind” (Letter from A. William Lund, as cited in The Case Against Mormonism, vol. 1, page 77). Since Cowdery’s history is supposed to go back to the time Joseph Smith found the plates, it may contain many things that would be embarrassing to the Church. If any of our readers have any additional information on the contents of Cowdery’s history (especially with regard to the charge that it contains magic characters) we would appreciate hearing about it.

**The Gold Plates and Magic Characters**

On May 3, 1980, the Church Section of the Mormon newspaper, Deseret News, reported:

A hand-written sheet of paper with characters supposedly copied directly from the gold plates in 1828, and also bearing other writing and the signature of Joseph Smith, has been found. . . . Written on the back, apparently after Harris brought the paper back from his encounter with Professor Anthon, are the following words (and spellings):

> These caracters were diligently copied by my own hand from the plates of gold and given to Martin Harris who took them to New York City but the learned could not translate it because the Lord would not open it to them in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah written in the 29th chapter and 11th verse. [signed] Joseph Smith Jr.

> “In my judgment, this writing is that of Joseph Smith,” said Dean C. Jessee, senior historical associate in the Church Historical Department.

After the discovery of the transcript was announced, Church scholar Hugh Nibley triumphantly announced: “Of course it’s translatable” (Herald, Provo, Utah, May 1, 1980). According to the Herald, “Nibley also said he counted at least two dozen out of 47 characters in the Demotic alphabet that could be given phonetic value. This offers as good a test as we’ll ever get.”

Mormon scholars have now had the transcript for two and a half years, and all attempts to translate it have ended in failure. The Mormon Egyptologist Edward H. Ashment, who originally had a great interest in the document, has now given up the idea of trying to link it to Egyptian writing. This is very important because the Book of Mormon claims to have been written in “reformed Egyptian.” Since all efforts by Mormon scholars to decipher the transcript through Egyptology have failed, scholars must now look for other alternatives. Many people feel that the document is merely a product of Joseph Smith’s vivid imagination. While this may be the true explanation, there are still other theories that need investigation. For instance, a former Brigham Young University professor has maintained for a number of years that the characters on the Anthon Transcript are taken from works on magic and astrology. Although we felt that he could demonstrate a few parallels, we have never taken this idea too seriously. Recently, however, evidence linking Joseph Smith and his family to magical practices has mounted to the point where we feel we have to take a closer look at this idea. We must admit that there are many magic characters which bear a striking resemblance to those on the Joseph Smith transcript.
For instance, in a script found in *The Greater Key of Solomon*, Plate XIII, we find this character:

![Character Image]

The reader will notice how similar this appears to a character found in Smith’s transcript:

![Character Image]

Although a number of similarities have been noted, at this point we do not think they are sufficient to prove the case. In our book, *Book of Mormon “Caractors” Found*, we show that there are many similarities to common English characters.

One thing that makes us suspect that there may be a connection to magic is the circular object which appears in the lower right hand corner of Joseph Smith’s transcript. As we pointed out in *Book of Mormon “Caractors” Found*, page 11, the circular object bears some resemblance to Joseph Smith’s magic talisman. In both cases we have a circle drawn within another circle with characters running around the edge and within the center circle. In magic books it is claimed that a circle drawn within a circle has great power. In *The Ancients Book of Magic*, page 10, we learn that a person who wants to contact the spirits must draw a circle:

![Circled Image]

Once he enters into the circle with his books, wands, incense and all things he needs, he draws the outer circle about 3 inches away from the circle he has already drawn . . .

The operator must remember not to leave this circle during the whole invocation until the closing words have been said, for as long as he remains in the circle, no matter how fierce the demons may be they cannot break through the walls of the circle, . . . he is protected by the Legion of 72 who form a protecting ring around the circle whence no one can farce their way through, . . .

Like Joseph Smith’s Jupiter talisman, Hyrum Smith’s pentacles or talismans have a circle within a circle. Another thing that really interests us about Joseph Smith’s Book of Mormon transcript is that the writing between the two circles appears to be divided into four parts. It is a common practice by those making magic circles to divide the area between the two circles into four parts and write four names of God, names of angels or other messages in these sections. Above is a drawing of a magic circle compared with the drawing Joseph Smith took from the “gold plates” of the Book of Mormon. In the magic circle the four sections are divided by crosses. In Joseph Smith’s drawing the circle appears to be divided by a repeat of the same character.

If the area between the two circles in Joseph Smith’s transcript is divided into four sections, as we think the evidence seems to show, then it may be possible that names for God or angels are recorded in cipher in this area. Many of these names can be found in the following books: *The Magis, Raphael’s Ancient Manuscript Of Talismanic Magic, The Greater Key of Solomon* and *The Grimoire of Armadel*. While it could be possible that each character on Joseph Smith’s transcript has an English equivalent, many of the magic alphabets are cipher for Hebrew or Arabic writing. Anyone who wishes to seriously test the transcript to see if it is in cipher should also be aware of the following: the first four columns of characters which are found to the left of the circular object appear to show “an intentional grouping of symbols” (*BYU Studies*, Spring 1980, page 335). It could very well be that these groupings are supposed to represent words. If the manuscript is in cipher, this could be very important to a person trying to break the code. A computer, of course, would be an important tool for anyone trying to decipher Joseph Smith’s transcript. Below the reader will find a copy of the complete transcript with arrows marking the places where the words (if they are really words) may divide.

**ENOCH’S GOLD PLATE**

Since Joseph Smith was involved in magic and money-digging, he must have had a keen interest in legends relating to these matters. One legend that may have had a real influence on the Book of Mormon is that concerning Enoch. In the talk Reed Durham gave in 1974, he revealed that,

There is a famous legend which the grand orator elaborates in lecture form in the ceremonies of the 13th, 14th and 21st degrees of Masonry which has some very ancient roots, bearing remarkable similarity to Mormonism. . . . Enoch is the central figure in the legend. It is with Enoch that the remarkable resemblances with Joseph Smith and Mormon history become disconcertingly dear. . . .
A photograph of the recently discovered document which is supposed to contain characters from the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. To the left we have added arrows to show where words may divide in the first line. These divisions seem to appear throughout the first four lines.
The parallels of Joseph Smith and the history of Mormonism are so unmistakable, that to explain them only as coincidence would be ridiculous (Mormon Miscellaneous, October 1975, pages 15-16).

Jack Adamson had pointed out parallels between the legend of Enoch many years ago. He referred to two books from which he derived most of his material. One of them was Thomas S. Webb’s Freemason’s Monitor. Wesley P. Walters has furnished us with photocopies from the 1802 edition from which we quote the following:

Enoch, the son of Jared, was the sixth son in descent from Adam . . . God appeared to him in a vision, . . . a mountain seemed to rise to the heavens, and Enoch was transferred to the top thereof, where he beheld a triangular plate of gold, . . . upon which were some characters which he received a strict injunction never to pronounce. —Presently he seemed to be lowered perpendicularly into the bowels of the earth, through nine arches; in the ninth, or deepest of which, he saw the same brilliant plate which was shewn to him in the mountain.

Enoch, being inspired by the Most High, and in commemoration of this wonderful vision, built a temple under ground, . . .

This happened in that part of the world which was afterwards . . . known by the name of the Holy Land.

Enoch, in imitation of what he had seen, caused a triangular plate of gold to be made, . . . He then engraved upon it the same ineffable characters which God had shewn to him, and placed it on a triangular pedestal of white marble, which he deposited in the ninth, or deepest arch . . . .

Enoch perceiving that the knowledge of the arts was likely to be lost in the general destruction, and being desirous of preserving the principles of the sciences, . . . he built two great pillars on the top of the highest mountain, the one of brass, . . . the other of marble, . . . and he engraved on the marble pillar, hieroglyphics . . . he engraved on the pillar of brass the principles of the liberal arts, particularly of masonry . . . the pillar of brass withstood the water, by which means the ancient state of the liberal arts, and particularly masonry, has been handed down to us (Freemason’s Monitor, New York, 1802, pages 245, 246, 247 and 249).

The Freemason’s Monitor goes on to relate that God promised Moses that “some of his descendants” would find the “plate of Gold.” When Solomon decided to build the temple, he chose the very place where the plate was buried. In digging for the foundations “an ancient edifice” and a “Quantity of treasure” were discovered. Solomon thought it might be the remains of an idolatrous temple, and therefore “made choice of another place, where the temple was erected”—i.e., Mount Moriah. Later Solomon sent the “three grand master architects” back to the first place, where the temple was erected”—i.e., Mount Moriah. Later Solomon sent the “three grand master architects” back to the first location to hunt for more treasure. They found “a large stone, perfectly square. With much difficulty they raised it, when the mouth of a deep and dismal cavern appeared” (Ibid., page 252).

After some problems, they went into the cavern where they found the “golden plate” and “observed certain characters engraved thereon, of the meaning of which they were then ignorant; . . .” (page 254). The next morning the three men took the plate to Solomon. Solomon and the King of Tyre then “explained to them the sacred characters engraven upon the golden plate.” Solomon had previously “caused a cavern to be built under the temple” on Mount Moriah (Ibid., page 251), and the “golden plate” was concealed in this “secret vault” (page 256).

The parallels to the Book of Mormon should be obvious to all those who are acquainted with that book. To begin with, Enoch was supposed to have recorded the secrets of Masonry on a “plate of gold” and a “pillar of brass.” According to Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon was “written upon gold plates” (Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith 2:34), and the Book of Mormon itself says that the ancient Nephites also had “plates of brass” (1 Nephi 3:3). It is interesting that in both cases the important messages would be recorded on “gold” and “brass.” Even more interesting, however, is the fact that both Mormons and Masons say the sacred writings were concealed in a hill. In addition, both maintain that the treasure was transferred from one underground location to another. Thomas Webb says that the gold plate was hidden in an underground cavern by Enoch and later transferred to a cavern which was dug under the temple on Mount Moriah. In the Book of Mormon, Ammoron originally hid the “sacred” records in the hill Shim (4 Nephi 1:48; Mormon 1:3), but Mormon later went “to the hill Shim, and did take up all the records which Ammoron had hid up unto the Lord” (Mormon 4:23). These records were later deposited in “the hill Cumorah” (Mormon 6:6). Even the name of the hill (Cumorah) reminds one of Moriah. In fact, if the first two letters are removed from Cumorah, we have MORAH, which is very close to MORIAH. In Masonic tradition, Solomon is the one who gives directions to transfer the gold plates to the cavern under the temple on Mount Moriah. In the Book of Mormon it is Mormon who brings the plates from the hill Shim to the hill Cumorah. Many years ago, before we even thought about the parallel between Solomon and Mormon, we suggested that the name Mormon “can be made by adding the first three letters of Moriah (MORIah), found in Genesis 22:2, with the last three letters of Solomon (solomon), found in 2 Samuel 5:14. Thus we would obtain MORMON” (Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 95).

It is interesting to note that Joseph Smith’s own brother, Hyrum, became a member of the Mount Moriah Lodge before the Book of Mormon was written. Reed Durham says that “Masonry in the Church had its origin prior to the time Joseph Smith became a Mason. . . . Hyrum received the first degrees of Masonry in Mount Moriah Lodge No. 112 of Palmyra, New York, at about the same time that Joseph was being initiated into the presence of God and angels . . . .” (Mormon Miscellaneous, October 1975, page 11). Joseph Smith may have learned of the gold plate of Enoch and Mount Moriah from his brother, although this information was also published in an anti-Masonic book printed in 1828 (Free Masonry, by Henry Dana Ward).

In the Masonic legend concerning Enoch, the cavern which held the gold plate was covered with “a large stone.” In Joseph Smith’s story, he also claimed that the gold plates were buried “under a stone of considerable size” (Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith 2:54).

The Book of Mormon never mentions Enoch, but it does speak of “Zenock” (1 Nephi 19:10). In August 1832, the Church published an “Extract From The Prophecy of Enoch.” In this revelation (later printed in the Pearl of Great Price, Moses, Chapter 7) Joseph Smith claimed that Enoch saw that the world would be destroyed by the flood (verse 43). The Masonic legend also said that Enoch was told of “the universal destruction now impending.” Joseph Smith must have really identified with Enoch, for in some of his revelations he used the code name “Enoch” for himself (see Doctrine and Covenants, sections 78, 92, 96 and 104).

In our new book, Mormonism, Magic and Masonry, we will include actual photographs from the Freemason’s Monitor, which was published in 1802, and photographs of the Hyrum Smith magic material.
THE ULTIMATE CASE

The July 16, 1982 issue of Christianity Today carried an interesting article about the work of ex-Mormons who have “dedicated their lives to winning Mormons away from the faith that defines the culture of the entire state.” The following appears in that article:

Jerald and Sandra Tanner are easily the most respected (and, to the Mormon Church, the most threatening) ex-Mormons. They live in Salt Lake City, only miles away from the Mormon citadel. Sandra is the great-great-granddaughter of Brigham Young, the nineteenth-century Mormon leader second in importance only to founder Joseph Smith.

Jerald’s family heritage is also thoroughly Mormon. The Tanners met, married, and turned away from the church of their childhood in the late 1950s. Starting with a modest mimeographed effort to convince their families Mormonism was a fraud, the Tanners have written 30 books alleging flaws in Mormon history, archaeology, and Scripture. Their masterwork is the 600-page behemoth Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? which has the bulk of a metropolitan telephone book.

The Tanners not only write, but also print, bind, and distribute their books. The sheer size and unrelenting detail of the books have prevented major publishers from publishing them (Moody Press has published a condensed version of Shadow or Reality). Thus the Tanners’ work—appearing between cardboard and plastic covers—hardly looks professional or slick. But even critics within Mormonism agree the Tanners have succeeded in accomplishing what they set out to do. “We wanted to build the ultimate case against Mormonism,” said Mrs. Tanner.

It is difficult to imagine a case being nearer “ultimate.” Shadow or Reality includes 38 chapters touching on almost every facet of the Mormon faith. It explores the practice of polygamy, temple ceremonies, and Mormon prophecy. Six pages are devoted to a meticulous listing of parallels between the King James Bible and Joseph Smith’s “new revelation,” the Book of Mormon. Sources are not only quoted, but the original documents are photocopied so the Mormon reader can see discrepancies for himself. . . . Max Parkin, a Mormon historian, says the Tanners’ history is “pretty good—they have done their research.” Interpretation of history, however, is subjective, Parkin adds. He thinks the Tanner interpretation is “not nearly as reliable as their history.”

Parkin, in fact, is unafraid to share the Tanners’ work with Mormon students. “Ignorance hurts more than information,” he said. And Mormon students need not be threatened by alleged historical contradictions when they understand that Mormon theology is “progressive and developmental,” said Parkin.

The Tanners work and live in their home. Harassment, according to Mrs. Tanner, has been light. . . . Neither of the Tanners is a trained historian. They learned research by raw experience, a venture taken out of necessity. “When we first started studying Mormonism, we were dissatisfied with the quality of material on it,” Mrs. Tanner explains. Much of it was poorly researched and inaccurate. . . .

The Tanners often get suppressed documents from administrators and educators who have lost their faith in Mormonism but do not leave it because of family and business ties. . . . Some of the disenchanted Mormons feel guilt for staying in a church they do not believe in, Mrs. Tanner believes, and do their “silent missionary part” by letting the Tanners view suppressed documents (Christianity Today, July 16, 1982, pages 31, 47 and 48).

Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? is certainly one of the best tools for bringing Mormons to the knowledge of the truth. Unfortunately, some people are reluctant to show this book to their Mormon friends. One man told us that he had been dealing with a Mormon for many months, and although he had been using the material in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? he had never actually shown him the book. We pointed out that this was a real mistake. Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? was designed to go right into the hands of the Mormon people. A good approach to use is to ask Mormons to read the book and point out any inaccuracies they might find. While some of them will refuse to even take it, there are others who will accept the challenge. In trying to find mistakes they will encounter historical problems which they never dreamed existed. Although they may become angry and make some very negative comments about the book, they will have a difficult time erasing from their minds what they have read. A person should not expect Mormons to immediately see they are wrong. In most cases this takes a great deal of time. During this period we need to show real love and patience with them.

Even though we have sold a large number of copies of the 1982 revised and enlarged edition of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? many of our customers are still using the 1972 edition. While the older edition is still an excellent book, a number of important discoveries have been made since 1972. There have also been some significant developments and studies which are discussed in the new edition. The 1982 edition contains about 90 pages of new material which is very important to have when dealing with Mormons. Because we feel so strongly that all of our supporters should have a copy of the new edition, we have decided to give a very special price to those who will donate their old edition to a local library, a pastor or one of their friends. We are already giving a $2 discount on copies of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? purchased before January 31, 1983, but we will give an additional discount of $2 to those who will donate their old copy to someone else. The hard bound copy regularly sells for $14.95, but it will be available for $10.95 to those who wish to take advantage of this special offer. The soft bound copy will be discounted from $11.95 to only $7.95. There will probably never be a better opportunity for our readers to get an updated copy of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?.

SUPPORT NEEDED

In an article published in Christianity Today, Rodney Clapp says that some of our critics feel that we must be engaged in this work because we make “a great deal of money.” When he asked Sandra about this, she said that our 1981 tax return showed a net profit of $16,000 (the actual figure is $15,115). Since we had to pay $5,940 in payments on our printing press during 1981, this left only a little over $9,000. Trying to support a family on this amount of money would be very difficult in today’s economy. Fortunately, however, some of our friends gave very generous contributions to us, and we were able to make it through the year without any problem.

As we see the anti-Tanner movement growing (Robert Brown has recently formed a non-profit corporation), we realize that we only have a small company and it would be difficult to counter any major operation that might be mounted against us. At the present time, we are not set up to give tax-deductible receipts, but we certainly welcome any gifts to our work. Even more important than gifts, however, are the prayers of those who support our work. Although we are small and insignificant, through the power of prayer we can prevail against those who are conspiring to destroy our work.
On February 19, 1981, the Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie wrote a letter to Eugene England which contains some remarkable statements concerning Brigham Young (the second President of the Mormon Church) and his Adam-God doctrine. In this 10-page letter Apostle McConkie frankly admitted, “Yes, President Young did teach that Adam was the father of our spirits and all the related things that the cultists ascribe to him.” Those who are acquainted with Mormon theology will recognize that this is an admission that Brigham Young taught that Adam was God the Father. Apostle McConkie’s revealing statements seem to mark the end of a cover-up which has lasted for over a hundred years.

When we began our research on Mormonism, the General Authorities of the Church emphatically denied that Brigham Young taught the Adam-God doctrine. On May 13, 1966, Hugh B. Brown, a member of the First Presidency, wrote a letter in which he claimed that Brigham Young was misquoted: “The Adam-God doctrine is not the doctrine of the Church, and the reports on that subject as published in the Journal of Discourses are not accurate.” In our book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? we demonstrated that it was ridiculous to claim that Brigham Young was misquoted in his Church’s own publications. Furthermore, we presented new evidence from the journals of early Mormon leaders which demonstrated conclusively that Brigham Young taught that Adam was God and that Jesus Christ was his son. A number of scholars did research on the subject and reached the same conclusion. In an article recently published in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, the Mormon scholar David John Buerger concluded that,

Young clearly believed that Adam was the father of the spirits of mankind in addition to being the first procurator of mankind’s physical bodies; . . . and that Adam was the spiritual and physical father of Jesus Christ. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1982, page 45)

In the new enlarged 1982 edition of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? we observed:

As time goes on, more and more evidence that Brigham Young taught the Adam-God doctrine is coming to light. In the face of this material, an increasing number of Mormon scholars are now willing to concede that the doctrine was taught. Even Apostle Bruce R. McConkie appears to be weakening. In a letter to “Honest Truth Seekers,” Apostle McConkie declared:

Some prophets—I say it respectfully—know more and have greater inspiration than others. Thus, if Brigham Young, who was one of the greatest of the prophets, said something about Adam which is out of harmony with what is in the Book of Moses and in Section 78, it is the scripture that prevails (Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 178-C).

Although we felt Bruce R. McConkie was softening his position on the Adam-God doctrine, we never dreamed that he would completely cave in on the issue. We must admit, in fact, that we were astonished when we read his letter to Eugene England. Although the General Authorities of the Church had stubbornly fought against the ideas expressed in chapter 10 of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? for many years, we suddenly found ourselves gazing on a letter written by a Mormon Apostle which verified almost everything we had written in that chapter. Apostle McConkie began his letter by stating: “This may well be the most important letter you have or will receive.” On page 4 he calls the Adam-God doctrine a false doctrine, but he admits that it is based on “plain and clear quotations” which are found in the Church’s own literature:

In that same devotional speech I said: “There are those who believe or say they believe that Adam is our father and our God, that he is the father of our spirits and our bodies, and that he is the one we worship.” I, of course, indicated the utter absurdity of this doctrine and said it was totally false.

Since then I have received violent reactions from Ogden Kraut and other cultists in which they have expounded upon the views of Brigham Young and others of the early Brethren relative to Adam. They have plain and clear quotations saying all of the things about Adam which I say are false. The quotations are in our literature and form the basis of a worship system followed by many of the cultists who have been excommunicated from the Church.

On the same page of this letter, Apostle McConkie goes on to quote from a speech he gave at Brigham Young University on June 1, 1980, in which he equates the Adam-God doctrine with the worship of idols or false gods. On pages 5 and 6, Bruce R. McConkie holds up Brigham Young as a great prophet, but then he has to concede that he taught false doctrine with regard to Adam:

... I am a great admirer of Brigham Young and a great believer in his doctrinal presentations. . . . He was a mighty prophet. . . . He completed his work and has gone on to eternal exaltation.

Nonetheless, as Joseph Smith so pointedly taught, a prophet is not always a prophet, only when he is acting as such. Prophets are men and they make mistakes. Sometimes they err in doctrine. Sometimes even wise and good men fall short in the accurate presentation of what is truth. Sometimes a prophet gives personal views which are not endorsed and approved by the Lord.

Yes, President Young did teach that Adam was the father of our spirits, and all the related things that the cultists ascribe to him. This [i.e., Brigham Young’s teaching on Adam], however, is not true. He expressed views that are out of harmony with the gospel. But, be it known, Brigham Young also taught accurately and correctly, the status and position of Adam in the eternal scheme of things. What I am saying is, that Brigham Young, contradicted Brigham Young, and the issue becomes one of which Brigham Young we will believe. The answer is we will believe the expressions that accord with the teachings in the Standard Works.

On page 7 of his letter, Apostle McConkie went so far as to say that if Mormons follow the “false portions” of Brigham Young’s doctrines, they are in danger of losing their souls:

This clearly means that people who teach false doctrines in the fundamental and basic things will lose their souls. The nature and kind of being that God is, is one of these fundamentals. I repeat: Brigham Young erred in some of his statements on the nature and kind of being that God is and as to the position of Adam in the plan of salvation, but Brigham Young also taught the truth in these fields on other occasions. And I repeat, that in his instance, he was a great prophet and has gone on to eternal reward. What he did is not a pattern for any of us. If we choose to believe and teach the false portions of his doctrines, we are making an election that will damn us.

According to Bruce R. McConkie’s reasoning, Brigham Young could teach the Adam-God doctrine and go “on to eternal reward,” but those who accept this doctrine today stand in danger of losing their souls. While Apostle McConkie refers to the Adam-God doctrine as “heresy” and says that the “devil” keeps it alive, President Brigham
Young claimed that it came directly from God. Over twenty years after he first publicly proclaimed the Adam-God doctrine, Brigham Young emphasized that God Himself had revealed the doctrine to him:

How much unbelief exists in the minds of the Latter-day Saints in regard to one particular doctrine which I revealed to them, and which God revealed to me—namely that Adam is our father and God—. . . . (Deseret News Weekly, June 18, 1873)

On October 8, 1861, Brigham Young said:

Some years ago, I advanced a doctrine with regard to Adam being our father and God. . . . It is one of the most glorious revelations of the economy of heaven. . . . ("A Few Words of Doctrine," unpublished manuscript in the Brigham Young Collection, LDS Archives, as cited by David John Buerger in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1982, page 29).

The Mormon Church’s own publication, Latter-Day Saints’ Millennial Star, clearly stated that the Adam-God doctrine was the word of the Lord:

. . . Adam is our Father and God. . . . the prophet and Apostle Brigham Young has declared it. . . . it is the word of the Lord. (vol. 16, page 534)

Brigham Young was certainly not the only early Mormon leader who had a testimony to the doctrine. According to David John Buerger, Heber C. Kimball, a member of the First Presidency, claimed that,

"[T]he Lord told me that Adam was my father and that he was the God and father of all the inhabitants of this earth." (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1982, page 27)

George Q. Cannon, who later became a member of the First Presidency, claimed that the doctrine was revealed to him. David John Buerger informs us that,

In an 1870 meeting, "Elder Geo[rge] Q. Cannon fully endorsed the doctrine that Father Adam was our God and Father. . . . Indeed, "the above doctrine had been revealed to him, so that he knew it was true." (Ibid., page 31)

Joseph Fielding Smith, who later became the sixth President of the Church, also endorsed the doctrine. Mr. Buerger points out that many Church leaders continued to believe the Adam-God doctrine after Brigham Young’s death. Even Lorenzo Snow, who became the fifth President of the Church, still maintained a belief in the doctrine a number of years after Brigham Young’s death:

Contrary to many later perceptions, Brigham Young’s death in late August 1877 did not mark the end of the Adam-God doctrine. . . . many of the Church’s leading authorities unquestionably retained a belief in Brigham’s teachings. . . . in the 1890s one also finds brief but supportive references to the doctrine by Apostles Brigham Young, Jr., Franklin D. Richards and Lorenzo Snow. Amidst discussions treated below, for example, Snow is reported as leading “out on Adam being our Father and God. How beautiful the thought it brot. God nearer to us.” To this Richards added that “it made him thrill through his whole body it was new & it was inspiring.” (Ibid., pages 33-34)

As time went on, of course, the Mormon leaders said less and less about Brigham Young’s teachings on Adam. In 1897, the Apostle Franklin D. Richards wrote a letter in which he remarked:

This, like many other points of more advanced doctrine, is too precious a pearl to be cast before swine. But when the swine get hold of them, let us rescue them by the help of the Spirit as best we can. Thinking it may be convenient to you to have President Youngs sayings on that subject, I enclose a copy from his sermon in the first Volume of the Journal of Discourses. (Letter from Apostle Franklin D. Richards to Ephraim H. Nye, dated Dec. 18, 1897, as cited in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1982, page 37)

If Bruce R. McConkie had lived in the days of Brigham Young, he would have found himself in hot water because of his opposition to the Adam-God doctrine. Apostle Orson Pratt, who was contemporary with Brigham Young, got into serious trouble because he made statements which are similar to those which have come from the pen of McConkie (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 174, 175 and 178-B). Another doctrine which Brigham Young taught that Bruce R. McConkie opposes is the idea that God progresses in knowledge.

In his letter to Eugene England, Apostle McConkie wrote:

On Sunday, June 1, 1980, I spoke at one of the multi-stake firesides in the Marriott Center on the subject, “The Seven Deadly Heresies.” In that talk I said:

There are those who say that God is progressing in knowledge and is learning new truths.

This is false—utterly, totally, and completely. There is not one sliver of truth in it (page 2).

On page 5 of the same letter, McConkie cites a speech he gave in which he suggested that the idea of God progressing in knowledge “borders on blasphemy.” On pages 6 and 7, Apostle McConkie says that Brigham Young will “to account” for his teaching concerning God progressing in knowledge:

Yes, Brigham Young did say some things about God progressing in knowledge and understanding, but again, be it known, that Brigham Young taught emphatically and plainly, that God knows all things and has all power meaning in the infinite, eternal and ultimate and absolute sense of the word. Again, the issue is, which Brigham Young shall we believe and the answer is: We will take the one whose statements accord with what God has revealed in the Standard Works.

I think you can give me credit for having a knowledge of the quotations from Brigham Young relative to Adam. . . . I think you can also give me credit for knowing what Brigham Young said about God progressing. And again, that is something he will have to account for. As for me and my house, we will have the good sense to choose between the divergent teachings of the same man and come up with those that accord with what God has set forth in his eternal plan of salvation.

Apostle McConkie seems to be threatening Eugene England with some type of serious ecclesiastical action if he continues to disseminate Brigham Young’s doctrine concerning the progression of God. On page 2 he warns:

I want you to know that I am extending to you the hand of fellowship though I hold over you at the same time, the scepter of judgment.

On pages 8 and 9 of the same letter, McConkie gives this threatening admonition:

If it is true, as I am advised, that you speak on this subject of the progression of God at firesides and elsewhere, you should cease to do so. If you give other people copies of the material you sent me, with the quotations it contains, you should cease to do so. . . .

Now, I think I have said enough in this letter so that if you are receptive and pliable, you will get the message. . . . Perhaps I should tell you what one of the very astute and alert General Authorities said to me when I chanced to mention to him the subject of your letter to me. He said: “Oh dear, haven’t we rescued him enough times already.”
On pages 8 and 9 of his letter to Eugene England, McConkie makes these emphatic statements:

It is not in your province to set in order the Church or to determine what its doctrines shall be. . . . it is my province to teach to the Church what the doctrine is. It is your province to echo what I say or to remain silent. You do not have a divine commission to correct me or any of the Brethren. The Lord does not operate that way. If I lead the Church astray, that is my responsibility, but the fact still remains that I am the one appointed with all the rest involved so to do. The appointment is not given to the faculty at Brigham Young University or to any of the members of the Church. . . . those at the head of the Church have the obligation to teach that which is in harmony with the Standard Works. If they err then be silent on the point and leave the event in the hands of the Lord. . . .

I advise you to take my counsel on the matters here involved. If I err, that is my problem; but in your case if you single out some of these things and make them the center of your philosophy, and end up being wrong, you will lose your soul. . . .

Now I hope you will ponder and pray and come to a basic understanding of fundamental things and that unless and until you can on all points, you will remain silent on those where differences exist between you and the Brethren. This is the course of safety. I advise you to pursue it. If you do not, perils lie ahead.

Notice that Apostle McConkie would have members of the Church “remain silent” even if the General Authorities “lead the Church astray.” If some members of the Mormon Church who lived in Brigham Young’s day had not opposed the Adam-God doctrine, it would probably be the official doctrine of the Church today. This alone should be sufficient to show that McConkie’s reasoning is fallacious. The Bible warns against such a teaching: “Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh his arm...” (Jeremiah 17:5).

Now that Apostle McConkie has admitted that “President Young did teach” the Adam-God doctrine, Mormons should seriously consider the grave implications of the matter. This teaching is clearly a violation of the commandment, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). In Deuteronomy, chapter 13, the Israelites were warned:

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder,

And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them;

Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.

And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the Lord thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee (Deuteronomy 13:1-5).

In his book, _Mormon Doctrine_, page 270, Apostle McConkie says: “There is no salvation in the worship of false gods. For such false worship the Lord imposed the death penalty in ancient Israel. (Deut. 13:6-11.)” Since McConkie admits that Brigham Young taught the Adam-God doctrine and says that those who believe it today do “not deserve to be saved,” we do not see how he can still maintain that Brigham Young was “a mighty prophet.” We feel that there is only one conclusion that an unbiased person could possibly reach—i.e., Brigham Young was a false prophet who tried to lead his people into serving another God. In his booklet, _Adam Is God??_ Chris Vlachos points out that

if Brigham Young, Mormon prophet from 1847 to 1877, were a false prophet all along, then the claims of those who have sought to derive their priesthood authority through him are empty and void. If Brigham taught false doctrine, that cuts the ground from under Mormonism’s claim of latter-day prophetic revelation and the Mormon Church is not divinely led.

When we first received Apostle McConkie’s letter we were only thinking of printing some quotations from it, but as we examined this remarkable document more closely, we became convinced that it should be in the hands of the public. Therefore, we have photographically printed this startling 10-page letter as Part 1 of a booklet entitled, _LDS Apostle Confesses Brigham Young Taught Adam-God Doctrine_. Some may feel that the publication of this letter will tend to stir up more trouble for Eugene England. (McConkie has already stated that he holds “the scepter of judgment” over England’s head, and this could possibly relate to the loss of his membership in the Church and/or his job as associate professor in the English Department at Brigham Young University.) We feel, however, that our publication of the letter will undoubtedly provide protection for England. Bruce R. McConkie will probably think twice about making a rash move if he knows many people are aware of the situation. This would be very bad public relations for the Church.

In Parts 2 and 3 of this new booklet we have photographs of manuscripts in the Church Archives which prove that Brigham Young taught that Adam was God and that Jesus Christ was his son. These documents, which were suppressed for a century, absolutely destroy the argument that Brigham Young was misquoted on the Adam-God doctrine. One manuscript throws a great deal of light on the dispute that Apostle Orson Pratt had with President Brigham Young over the nature of God and the Adam-God doctrine. ♦

**FBI WINS SUIT**

In the _Salt Lake City Messenger_ for November 1980 we told how we had learned that the FBI had material on us which dated back to at least April 30, 1970. Someone had reported that we were “allegedly communists” and had “been circulating petitions against the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and that they have been ‘trouble-makers’ in that respect.” Under the Freedom of Information Act we sought access to the file or files which the FBI had concerning us. When we received the material, we found that portions were blacked out (see photograph on page 5 of the Nov. 1980 Messenger) and that eighteen full pages were “withheld entirely.” We felt that we should have access to the material that had been suppressed and filed a suit in Federal Court. (This was not a suit for damages, only a request for copies of the material.) On June 16, 1982, Judge Bruce S. Jenkins ruled in favor of the FBI. Although we lost the case with the FBI, we were able to force the CIA to come into compliance with the Freedom of Information Act. The CIA finally submitted an affidavit which said they had no records on Modern Microfilm Company. We had originally requested this information on Oct. 15, 1980, but the CIA delayed responding until Nov. 22, 1981, when they were forced to do so because of our suit. In any event, we will have to accept the decision of the court concerning the FBI documents. We could appeal, but we do not believe it would be worth the time and expense involved. We will probably never know what was contained in the eighteen missing pages or on the portions which were blacked out. ♦
**Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?**

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**Lucy Smith’s 1829 Letter.** A photographic reproduction of a recently discovered letter written by Joseph Smith’s mother on January 23, 1829. Refers to the portion of the Book of Mormon which was lost. Contains an introduction by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. **PRICE:** $ .75

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**Heber C. Kimball’s Journal, November 21, 1845 to January 7, 1846.** A photographic reproduction of the journal of an early Mormon Apostle. Most of the space in this journal is devoted to listing the names of those who had been through the temple rituals. Does not contain a typescript. **PRICE:** $7.00

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Over twenty years ago we began publishing material relating to the Mormon Church. During this period we brought forth many important documents which were suppressed by the Mormon Church leaders. As early as 1968 Dr. Kenneth Kantzer, who later served as editor of Christianity Today, commented concerning our work:

. . . These books represent no ordinary polemic against Mormonism. This is the definitive, fully-documented, utterly devastating case against the divine authority and truthfulness of the foundational documents upon which the Mormon religion is based. Every evangelical pastor should have these books in his library . . . (Evangelical Beacon, Minneapolis, Minn., vol. 42, no. 1, October 8, 1968, page 7)

Since our work is entirely related to religion, we should have set up a non-profit corporation. Instead of this, however, we began operations as Modern Microfilm Company. We continued the work under this name until the end of 1982, when Modern Microfilm went out of business. On January 1, 1983, we began operations as a non-profit corporation—UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY, INC.

There are a number of reasons for setting up this non-profit organization: 1. It will provide more finances which should greatly increase the effectiveness and outreach of the work. 2. It will give our supporters a chance to make tax-deductible donations. 3. It will help us to counteract the anti-Tanner movement—a growing attempt to derail our work which is being carried on to some extent by clandestine operations. 4. It will help us in our endeavor to provide support for Rescue Mission work. We have been interested in this work for many years, and at the present time our organization is able to provide 20 hours a week to this important ministry. We hope to increase this many times in the future. (Rescue Missions preach the Gospel to the unfortunate, the alcoholic and the drug addict. They are also involved with feeding, clothing and sleeping the poor.)

We have been approved by the State of Utah as a non-profit corporation and are awaiting final clearance from the Federal Government. Assuming that this is approved, all gifts given any time in 1983 will be tax-deductible. We are very optimistic that our application will be accepted. A lawyer who looked at the papers we prepared felt that there would probably be no major problem. If the Government has not made a determination within 270 days from the date we filed our application, we can ask for a “declaratory judgment.” Because our papers were filed in December 1982, we should have a ruling before the end of the year, and, as we indicated before, if we pass, any gifts given since the time we began operation will be tax-deductible. Our readers should be sure, however, that all checks are made out directly to Utah Lighthouse Ministry.

Since we are helping thousands of Mormons to come to a knowledge of the truth, we feel that our ministry is worthy of support. We hope, in fact, that many will support it on a regular monthly basis.

THE ANTI-TANNER MOVEMENT

During the time we operated as Modern Microfilm Company, we published our most important work, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? This book was later condensed and published by Moody Press under the title, The Changing World of Mormonism. As sales on these two books have continued to mount to over 50,000 copies, some members of the Church have become very concerned that the Church itself has not published a rebuttal. They fear that we are going to win the battle by default.
Many people are leaving the Church, and others are beginning to wonder if the Church has any real answers to the serious charges we have printed. The Mormon leaders seem to feel that it is best to ignore our accusations. As a spokesman for the Church’s Deseret Bookstore wrote: “We do not have a specific written response to the Tanner book. Perhaps it does not deserve the dignity of a response” (Letter written January 19, 1977). In an article written in Utah Holiday, February 1978, David Merrill stated: “The official attitude of the Mormon hierarchy toward the Tanners has been one of silence and apparent unconcern. They have, however, actively discouraged LDS scholars and intellectuals from jousting with the Tanners . . .”

In 1982 Sandra Tanner appeared with Marvin Cowan on the John Ankerberg Show—a television show which is broadcast on the CBN and PTL networks as well as on other stations in different parts of the country. The series of four programs brought many complaints from Mormons throughout the United States. The Church’s public relations representative in Tennessee asked for equal time. The main public relations department in Salt Lake City, however, would not send out anyone to debate the issues—they only offered a pre-taped LDS presentation. (Ankerberg had offered to pay airfare and hotel costs for anyone they would send.) The local public relations men tried very hard to get someone to come. He contacted a professor at the Church’s Brigham Young University who agreed to come and bring another professor with him. Sandra Tanner and Wesley P. Walters consented to meet these two professors. The debate was scheduled for April 19, but the professor later called back to say that he had just remembered that he had a trip to Europe scheduled for that date. No future date was offered, and thus it appears that the great debate is off.

On September 17, 1982, Sandra and Dick Baer were interviewed by Mary Jane Pop for her television show on Channel 3 in Sacramento, California. A Mormon public relations representative and other Mormons were able to see a video tape of the show, and so much pressure was exerted that the station decided not to run the program. The television program was completely suppressed in spite of the fact that Mary Jane Pop had previously announced it on her radio program.

We understand that at one time the Church set up a committee to evaluate our research, but that President Spencer W. Kimball ordered the project discontinued. It seems, however, that there are a growing number of Mormons who feel they know more than the man they claim to accept as a “Prophet.” They believe they have the ability to answer the objections and vindicate the Church. The first scholar who attempted to write a rebuttal to our work ended up losing his faith and was excommunicated from the Church. In December 1977 another prominent Mormon scholar put out a rebuttal which was published anonymously. The whole project, however, turned into a nightmare for him when we discovered his identity. At first he strongly denied any connection with the booklet, but when more evidence was marshaled against him, he said he would “neither affirm nor deny” authorship of the pamphlet. The whole incident turned out to be very embarrassing to the Mormon Church, and the pamphlet fell into disrepute after we wrote a rebuttal entitled, Answering Dr. Clandestine: A Response to the Anonymous LDS Historian.

Robert L. and Rosemary Brown were the first to put their names to anything that could be called a rebuttal. Although they dealt mainly with Dee Jay Nelson in They Lie in Wait to Deceive, they claimed that “Jerald and Sandra Tanners . . . will be dealt with in depth in a future book; . . .” Because the Browns seem to be ungrounded in the critical issues of Mormonism and attack people rather than deal with the real issues, some Church scholars feel that they are going to cause the Church embarrassment if they continue to publish (see our answer to their book in Can the Browns Save Joseph Smith?).

According to the Arizona Republic, July 3, 1982, the Browns and others “have formed the Religious Research Association with the purpose of identifying and publicizing what they believe are false ideas, misconceptions and outright lies about the church. The association, which disavows any official connection with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, examines the credentials, statements and literature of various anti-Mormon groups and individuals with the intent of making these findings public through the media.

The same paper informs us that the Religious Research Association is a “Non-profit organization.” Robert L. Brown is “president” and Dr. Hugh Nibley (one of the best known Mormon scholars) serves on the board. While Mr. Brown is anxious to discredit “anti-Mormon groups,” he says that his organization will “not get into doctrinal debates.” We feel that this is a smoke screen to keep from facing the real issues. In Can the Browns Save Joseph Smith we pointed out that Mr. Brown would not debate the authenticity of the Book of Abraham with us, although he was willing to debate Dee Jay Nelson’s credentials. We feel that this is an attempt to side-step the real issues. In any case, it would appear that Mr. Brown is doing his best to find some type of scandalous material about his adversaries. He has even been in contact with the notorious Mormon spy Steven Mayfield. The reader will remember that Mr. Mayfield was at one time “employed
by the FBI in a clerical capacity.” On October 11, 1976, he sent us a letter from California in which he assumed the alias “Stan Fields.” He claimed to be a fellow “Ex-
Mormon for Jesus.” Mr. Mayfield not only assumed an alias, but he opened up a post office box in Pleasant Hill, California (P.O. Box 23114) to carry on his deception. He later moved to Utah, and under the same alias, carried on an extensive spying operation through the mail and through personal contacts. (It is a common practice, of course, for those who are engaged in spying operations to cover their tracks by assuming an alias and renting a post office box.) In any case, Mr. “Fields,” who professed to be our Christian brother, spied on our operations for about four years and also penetrated a number of groups of Ex-Mormons For Jesus. By dishonest means he obtained the names of many Mormons who have questions about their religion. He diligently worked to obtain photographs of critics of the Mormon Church and gathered large files of information.

In his zeal to provide a good cover for himself, Mr. “Fields” went so far as to claim that his own Church was “Satan inspired” (Letter dated July 22, 1978), and even pretended to pass out material critical of the Church around Temple Square. (He claims now that he actually destroyed most of this material.) Mr. “Fields” nefarious career, however, came to a sudden end in July, 1980, when we discovered his true identity. We also found that he was employed at the Mormon Church Office Building in the Genealogical Department. When we directly confronted him in the Church Office Building with the evidence of his spying activities, he made no attempt to deny the basic charges. Although he claimed that he “was not spying for the Church,” he acknowledged he had used Church equipment to carry out his duplicity. (For a complete account of this matter see our publication Unmasking a Mormon Spy. The Story of Stan Fields.)

Although Mr. Mayfield remained out of the public eye for some time, in 1982 he attended meetings of the Mormon History Association. On May 6, 1982, Mayfield appeared on the KBBX radio program Mormon Miscellaneous and told of his contacts with Robert Brown:

> ... its been my hope to organize us in some way as kind of a counter to say ex-Mormons, ... I guess we have to go on the same policy as they go on ... that we all have to be independent ... I’ve been in contact with a couple down in the Phoenix, Arizona area called the Browns—Robert and Rosemary Brown. Well, I don’t approve of everything they do, but I have been in contact with them ... maybe someday we can be as productive as the ex-Mormons’ group ...  

Mr. Mayfield went on to say that Robert Brown “contacted me after my leaving Utah in March of 1981, in fact, I think it was probably April.” When Mayfield was asked if he was still in contact with Robert Brown, he replied: “That’s what I said.”

Although Mr. Mayfield admitted that he has been secretly tape-recording some telephone conversations since “mid-April of this year (1982)” (Letter dated May 9, 1982), he insists that he has not been engaged in any illegal activities. In our book Can the Browns Save Joseph Smith, pages 20-21, we printed some evidence which shows that some of the information in the Browns’ book was obtained by the recording of telephone conversations without permission. In his radio interview, Steven Mayfield defended the Browns’ right to secretly record telephone conversations. However this may be, we cannot really blame Mr. Brown for seeking out Mr. Mayfield. Most reporters would have probably done the same thing. After all, if there is anything of bad report about critics of the Church, Mr. Mayfield is probably the man who knows about it.

**A NEW SPYING OPERATION**

While one would think that the exposure of Mr. Mayfield’s activities would completely discourage Mormons from entering into spying activities, recent developments prove just the opposite to be the case. In fact, in 1982 we discovered that there were a number of people using an alias who were trying to destroy our work. For instance, a spying operation involving two post office boxes was set up in Sacramento, California. Valerie Kuhn, a resident of that city, appears to be deeply involved in this operation. Valerie became very angry at us because of the number of people who have left the Mormon Church after reading our books. She was also extremely upset with Walter Martin, who has a radio program which is broadcast in Sacramento. She felt that the Church should answer our accusations and was puzzled as to why there was no official response. When the Browns made their discovery about Dee Jay Nelson’s credentials (see Salt Lake City Messenger, April 1980), Valerie was elated. We do not know when she first made contact with the Browns, but we have definite proof that she spoke with them on December 4, 1981, (Robert Brown was in Sacramento about that time for a debate with Walter Martin). In any case, the Browns confided in her and told her they were gathering a great deal of material on Walter Martin. In fact, they shared with her some of their most important information. Valerie apparently wanted to help the cause and decided to obtain information which would discredit the Tanners, Walter Martin and the three researchers who worked on the Spalding theory. Although we have
The name “Asenath Barry” also seemed very strange. The name “Asenath” comes from Genesis 41:45 and is the name of Joseph’s wife. It is also found in Walter Martin’s discussion of blacks and the priesthood (see *The Maze of Mormonism*, page 188). Although we know of one Mormon who had this name, it must be rather rare. In any case, since the letter came from a post office box (Box 20668) we began to suspect someone was pulling the same type of thing that Steven Mayfield did. When we looked at the zip code, we became even more suspicious; it was exactly the same as Valerie Kuhn’s zip code (95820). Valerie Kuhn’s address is given as 4719 Baker Avenue. Since Sacramento has over 60 zip codes, we found this to be an unusual coincidence.

Asenath Barry’s letter asked for a number of photocopies which would be important for someone writing a book dealing with the Spalding controversy. We did not believe that “Asenath Barry” was a real person, and therefore we decided to test the matter by sending the photocopies “RESTRICTED DELIVERY.” Under this method only the “Addressee” or an “Authorized agent” is allowed to sign for the mail. When we received the signed slip back from the Sacramento Post Office, we were startled at the dissimilarity between the signature that appeared on it and the one on the letter we had received. On the first page the reader will find a comparison of the two signatures. We called the Salt Lake City Post Office and informed them that the two signatures for “Asenath Barry” were entirely different. We were told that if the name were forged, it would be a violation of Federal mail laws and that an investigation would be made if we turned the documents over to the San Francisco Post Office. Since we were more interested in finding out the truth about the matter than getting the perpetrators of the deed into trouble, we decided not to ask for an investigation. We were able to learn, however, that the Post Office Box had been rented by “Valerie L. Kuhn.” Three names were listed to receive mail at the box: Barry, Nixon and Kuhn. A publication entitled, “Foolsgold & Quicksand” was also mentioned in connection with this box. We do not know whether this is an actual publication or part of a cover for getting the box. We also do not know whether “Nixon” is a real name or just another alias. The signature which appears on the “RESTRICTED DELIVERY” slip differs from both the signature on the “Asenath Barry” letter and the signature of Valerie Kuhn. To complicate the matter further, two of the signatures we have on letters purporting to be from Valerie Kuhn appear to have some dissimilarities. We do not know, however, whether the differences are striking enough to demand two separate writers. In any case, it is evident that the person who signed for the package addressed to “Asenath Barry” was not the same person who wrote the letter. The signature is clearly a forgery. It would appear from this that two or more people were involved in this scheme.

Our research on this matter led us to reexamine another letter we had received from Sacramento in 1982. It was written by a woman who claimed to be on our side. In this letter we find the following:

I am having a rather heated discussion with two Mormon friends of mine regarding Dee Jay Nelson. Can you help me out with some information:

According to my friends, Dee Jay Nelson has been proved to be a phony—he bought his so-called degrees from a fictitious college in Washington state. Is that true? When did you first become aware that he was a fraud? What were the exact circumstances of your discovery? Exactly when did you find all this out?

It is almost impossible to talk to a Mormon about Jesus, especially when they keep throwing questions like these at you! They love to divide and conquer, as it were. . . . They keep playing one group against another to ruin each others’ credibility!
The letter was signed, “S. Leone Todd,” and the return address was listed as “P.O. Box 2186.” In our research concerning Valerie Kuhn we learned that her middle name was also “LEONA.” While this appeared to be very suspicious, the fact that Valerie Leone Kuhn’s typewriter had the same peculiarities as S. Leone Todd’s led us to conclude that they were the same person. We later learned that Valerie Kuhn’s name was also listed to receive mail at “P.O. Box 2186.”

THE TOP SECRET TANNER PROJECT

In a letter dated August 3, 1981, “Elder Michael Griffith” wrote a promising young scholar a letter in which he stated:

____ gave me your address, so I thought I’d drop you a brief line and inquire about the possibility of you contributing to a work designed to rebut Mormonism—S or R?

As ____ may or may not have passed on to you, there is a group of “us” who feel that M—SR? has for far too long gone unanswered. Oh, there was the brief analysis of 77’, but that treatment, as well done and telling as it is, is far too incomplete. Something more is needed.

My question is simply this: Would you be interested in writing a chapter for the response to M—SR?

_____ tells me that your specialty is the Book of Abraham and that you are in the process of doing a report on the subject, i.e. you are doing a report on the Tanners distorted approach to the Book of Abraham. Please let me know if you would be interested on this long overdue project.

In the September-October 1981 issue of The Sunstone Review the following advertisement appeared:

FOR SOME time there has been concern about the impact of Sandra and Jerald Tanner’s Mormonism: Shadow or Reality (and its recent Moody Press version, The Changing World of Mormonism). No thorough, formal, direct response has been published, though a number of articles have been written dealing with specific aspects of their criticism. A project is now being organized to formulate an answer to the Tanners and to other prominent critics of Mormonism, such as Walter Martin and Wesley Walters. Anyone interested in contributing to this effort should outline his or her specialty and send the information to: The Tanner Project, P.O. Box 191, Calabasas, Cal. 91302-0191.

The reader will notice that only a number for a P.O. Box was given for “The Tanner Project.” Like the anonymous rebuttal, this move to destroy our work has been carried on with great secrecy. In fact, the “Elder” whose letter was cited above denied all connection with the project when we confronted him about the matter. The evidence seems to show that he was deeply involved. In any case, at first we could not learn from the Post Office who had rented the box, but we were told that a “pen name” was apparently being used. Shortly after the ad appeared in The Sunstone Review, we were told that a man by the name of Scott S. Smith was involved. Mr. Smith lives in Thousand Oaks, California, which seems to be within 10 miles of Calabasas where the P.O. Box was set up. Scott Smith is also involved in publishing. In fact, in the same issue of The Sunstone Review which mentions “The Tanner Project” we find the following advertisement:

ANIMALS AND THE GOSPEL. By Gerald Jones and Scott Smith. $2.00 at LDS bookstores or postpaid from Millennial Productions, 2455 Calle Roble, Thousand Oaks, Calif. 91360.

The address given for Millennial Productions is the same one that appears on Scott Smith’s stationary.

That Scott Smith has been opposed to our work is evident from a letter which is found in the Reader’s Forum of Sunstone, November/December 1980, page 3: “... the best critiques of Book of Mormon archaeology, by Frazer and the Tanners, are laughingstocks scientifically.” At any rate, sometime during 1982 we were told that Scott S. Smith was using the alias “Stephen Scott” to carry on his activities. This was very interesting to us because someone else had sent us a letter written by “Steven Scott” who was representing “The Tanner Project.” This letter spoke of our work on Book of Mormon archaeology as follows: “To a professional knowledgeable about both this field and the Book of Mormon this chapter is a laugh” (Letter dated April 9, [1982]). This, of course, reminded us of Scott S. Smith’s statement that the works of “Frazer and Tanner” on Book of Mormon archaeology “are laughingstocks scientifically.”

Later we were able to compare the signatures of “Steven Scott” and Scott S. Smith and concluded that they were written by the same person. The typewriter used by “Steven Scott” also appears to be the same as that used by Scott Smith. The only conclusion we could draw from all this was that Scott Smith was using the alias “Steven Scott.” When we told a man who had previously corresponded with Scott Smith that we believed Smith was using an alias, he decided to do some investigating on his own. He called Smith and told him of our accusation. Smith probably realized that we were gathering evidence against him and he did not try to deny the charge. In a letter reporting the conversation we find the following:
This night (Aug. 1, 1982) I personally talked to Scott Smith on the telephone about the Tanner project. . . . He says he was part of the first working group of people who started the project and opened the P.O. Box. Smith told me he did not want to say who was the main coordinator of the project, but Kirk Vestal may have been the main motivator in the beginning. Smith says he knows Vestal has a lot of the material in his files. Smith says there are about three dozen people who have access to the P.O. Box. . . . He also said Griffith had some stuff but had not heard from him for some time. Smith was clear about one thing though, he said he personally did not have very much time to devote to the project, adding that many of the others like Sorenson didn’t either and that it would be best if some young person headed the project like Vestal, Griffith, or perhaps Barber.

When asked if he used the name Steven Scott, he said: “I used the name, but so did others.” . . . He says there is a lot of switching and harrowing of names, and admits to using other peoples’ names. He says others have used his name. The reason for all this? To confuse the Tanners: He says they want to make the Tanners go off on wild goose chases trying to figure out who is who and who is doing what. Smith says the major reason for the name-switching is to keep the writers from being pestered by Anti-Mormons. I asked him if another reason could be because they feared the Mormon leaders could object, to which he replied that there was no reason to fear the leadership on this matter. (Letter dated August 1, 1982)

On August 19, 1982, we had a very interesting conversation with Scott Smith concerning “The Tanner Project.” Mr. Smith confirmed the admissions he had made on August 1, 1982. He said that he used the alias “Steven Scott,” and that this was not the only alias he had used during his lifetime. He went on to reveal that he had written an article published in Seventh East Press under the name Steven Scott (see the issue for February 7, 1982, page 2). In the letter which Scott Smith wrote under the alias Steven Scott on April 9, 1982, he said that “Kirk Vestal . . . has taken over the editing of this project.” Kirk Vestal and Arthur Wallace wrote the book, The Firm Foundation of Mormonism (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 368-69, for a few comments about this book). Scott Smith was apparently involved in the production of The Firm Foundation of Mormonism. In a letter dated September 30, Smith wrote: “We have been editing Vestal’s book this week and guarantee you will be impressed. Shadow or Reality looks pretty weak in comparison. . . . This book is going to stun everyone.” In another letter Smith told of “a book I am assisting the writing of, which we hope to have out by the end of the year. You will find ample archaeological and scientific support for the B of M therein . . .” In the Acknowledgements on page iv of The Firm Foundation of Mormonism, we find the following: “Special thanks are also extended to Jennifer Garrison and Scott and Vicki Smith who typed and helped edit the manuscript in its various stages, . . .”

When The Firm Foundation of Mormonism finally appeared, it did not have the effect that Scott Smith had anticipated. Instead of running a favorable review, The Sunstone Review, March 1982, published a very critical assessment by the Mormon Egyptologist Edward H. Ashment. Scott Smith was incensed over the review, and, in a letter to the editor, April 1982, he referred to it as “essentially a hatchet job.” Smith went on to say that “Ashment’s attitude is exactly what critics want us to have and this will continue to give them the field with the resulting damage.” Not satisfied with having just one letter critical of Ashment published in The Sunstone Review, Scott Smith, or one of his friends in “The Tanner Project,” wrote a second letter under the assumed name of “Steven Scott” (The Sunstone Review, June 1982, page 33). The address is given as Calabasas, California, which is of course the city where the box for “The Tanner Project” is located. Sunstone magazine and The Sunstone Review have carried many letters from Scott Smith and other members of the Tanner Project. It has been suggested that Scott Smith may have used another alias in these publications. There is one name which we are very suspicious of, but we can only say at this time that a letter from this individual in behalf of the “Tanner Project” appears to have been written on the same typewriter as the letters from Scott Smith and “Steven Scott.” There are also similarities in style. In any case, Scott Smith and members of the Tanner Project have really tried to use their influence in those publications. In one issue of Sunstone, (July-August 1981) there are eight letters in the Reader’s Forum. Three of these letters are written by people who are now identified as participants in the Tanner Project, and slightly over half of the space in this issue is given to these individuals. In the issue for July-August 1980 (page 4), a letter from Scott Smith’s wife, Vicki, appears with the address given as “Thousand Oaks, CA.” In the same issue (page 2) we find a letter from “Scott S. Smith Calle Roble, California.” Calle Roble, of course, is the street which Smith lives on, not the city. As we have already shown, Smith lives at 2455 Calle Roble in Thousand Oaks.
Since the Tanner Project seems to have been working on the same matters as Robert and Rosemary Brown, it has been speculated that the Browns may be involved. At the present time, we have no real evidence to prove that this is the case. We do know that Scott Smith, Michael Griffith and Kirk Vestal have all been in communication with the Browns at different times, but this does not prove that the Browns had anything to do with setting up the Tanner Project. Although he acknowledges contacts with the Browns, Scott Smith seems to feel that they are more interested in finding scandals than dealing with the real issues. We know that Michael Griffith had been in contact with the Browns, but they became disturbed with him when he told us they had secretly tape-recorded a telephone conversation with us (see a letter by Griffith cited in Can the Browns Save Joseph Smith, page 20). Kirk Vestal has probably spent the most time with the Browns. According to an undated letter we received in February 1981, Vestal had prepared a manuscript for the Browns’ book, They Lie in Wait to Deceive:

... There is a man in Mesa, Az. ... His name is Robert L. Brown. He claims to know you and Jerold and is absolutely vicious in his denunciations of you and your work ... he assured me that answers would shortly be forthcoming through the efforts of himself, his wife ... and this young man Kirk Vestal. I never had an opportunity to examine any of the material he claimed he and Vestal were preparing to publish at that time, but I requested that he supply me with a copy of Vestal’s “Approach to the Book of Abraham” which he said would comprise the last chapter of their joint publication. Bob refused to supply me a copy claiming he wanted to keep it under wraps until the book was published. ...

About two weeks ago my brother called and said that another man he knew in Mesa, a Richard Finlenson ... had Kirk Vestal as a house guest and if I would call Kirk would be glad to talk to me. I spent subsequently about 60 to 70 minutes on the Phone with Mr. Vestal ... He told me that Mr. Finlenson had a copy of his Book of Abraham material and would be glad to send me a copy. I called back to the Finlenson home today and spoke with LaVonne [Lavon], Richard’s wife. She apologized for not calling me back but explained that she had spoken with Bob Brown and had been instructed not to send me a copy of the material, that I could wait until the book he was working on was published to read it.

We were able to obtain a copy of Vestal’s “Approaching the Book of Abraham” (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 368-69), but it was not published in the Browns’ book, They Lie in Wait to Deceive. They did, however, highly recommend the book The Firm Foundation of Mormonism by Vestal and Wallace (see page 171). We understand that the Browns sent Vestal’s manuscript to an Egyptologist for evaluation and that the Egyptologist recommended against publication. Scott Smith suggests that there was another reason why the Browns dropped Vestal’s work from their book, but we will not go into that matter here. In any case, in a letter dated April 9, [1982], “Steven Scott” said that “Kirk Vestal” has “taken over the editing of this project. You can reach him by writing c/o Helen Schlie at Temple-view Books, 409 E. 1st Av, Mesa, AZ 85204.” Since Robert Brown lives in Mesa, we suspected that the two probably were in contact with each other. It did not take us long to discover that an advertisement mentioning the Browns’ book said it could be obtained at the “Mesa Temple View Book & Supply Inc.” As it turns out, Helen Schlie was commended for “her encouragement” on page ii of the Browns’ book. Scott Smith told us that Kirk Vestal had originally planned to go to Mesa and stay with the Browns, but by the time he arrived they no longer had the room. He worked for Mrs. Schlie for a time and then left for South America. Mr. Scott felt Vestal’s trip to South America was probably financed by someone in Mesa. In any case, even if the Browns had nothing to do with setting up the Tanner Project, they seem to have had close contact with the man who may have been “the main motivator in the beginning.” Since “Vestal has a lot of the material in his files,” the Browns are probably in a good position to gain access to it.

According to Scott Smith, “The Tanner Project” is not going very well. He would like to see Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought or the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies pick up the ball. John L. Sorenson, Professor of Anthropology at Brigham Young University, has shown some interest in this matter. In a handwritten note, he remarked: “Some of us here are talking about holding a conference with enough experts taking on the Tanners’ garbage to blow them out of the water.”

Now that we have exposed the dubious foundation of “The Tanner Project,” we doubt that any respectable Mormon scholars will want to associate their names with it. The Tanner Project seems doomed to failure. Nevertheless, there is growing unrest among Mormon scholars who are not satisfied with the Church’s silent treatment. They feel that something has to be done. Steven Mayfield’s desire “to organize” is shared by many Mormons. Robert Brown’s non-profit organization is certainly a move in that direction, and Professor Sorenson’s threat of assembling
“enough experts” to blow “the Tanners’ garbage” out of the water may also be a sign of things to come in the future. The Mormon leaders, of course, are trying to prevent a confrontation because they know a discussion of the issues will hurt the Church. Apostle Marvin J. Ashton, for instance, pleaded with his people to ignore those who find fault with the Church:

Whether accusations, innuendos, aspersions, or falsehoods are whispered or blatantly shouted, the gospel of Jesus Christ reminds us that we are not to retaliate nor contend... we declare there is no time for contention... Probably we will never be free of those who are openly anti-Mormon. Therefore, we encourage all our members to refuse to become anti-anti-Mormon. (The Ensign, November 1982, page 63)

After telling of Apostle Ashton’s attempt to restrain people like the Browns from contending with the Church’s critics, Linda Ostler Strack comments that “it remains to be seen if the LDS membership can restrain themselves” (The Sunstone Review, November 1982, page S). In the same article she says that “LaMar C. Berrett, professor of Church history at BYU, has been appointed by those ‘he is not at liberty to disclose’ to coordinate research on a number of anti-Mormon issues. Berrett points out that their work is directed largely to the missionary and others who are confronted with questions for the first time and have no resources available to them.” Professor Berrett says, however, that those who are involved in the research are “not going to enter into any dialogue with anti-Mormon writers. The main purpose is to help the poor innocent person who has never been confronted by those things.” Berrett feels that the Church must deal with the issues even if it costs thousands of members:

... The church must eventually answer these things but we’re old and big enough now that the Church isn’t worried about a falling away. If we have a few thousand fall away, we say “So what?” It’s a weeding out of those who have faith in the Church and those who don’t. (Ibid., page 4)

This is a very exciting time for us. After many years of laboring in the vineyard, we now see many Mormons turning to the Lord. There are thousands of ex-Mormons and concerned Christians who are working to bring the truth to the Mormon people. The best days of all appear to be ahead. We feel that prayer has been the real key to the success of God’s work among the Mormons, and we ask those who support our work to hold up Utah Lighthouse Ministry in prayer. We believe that God “is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Ephesians 3:20).

NOTICE: We may be writing more concerning “The Tanner Project,” the Browns and those who use similar tactics. If you have any information or photocopies of letters or other documents which throw light on this subject please let us know by writing to Utah Lighthouse Ministry, P.O. Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110.

JOSEPH SMITH’S USE OF MAGIC CIRCLES AND ANIMAL SACRIFICE

As we indicated in the last newsletter, we are preparing a book entitled, Mormonism, Magic and Masonry. Because of the amount of material that has become available on this subject and because of typesetting problems and the time we have spent forming our non-profit corporation, we have not yet finished it. If things work out as we hope, we should have it completed in about a month.

Among the many things we will be discussing in this book, we intend to deal with Joseph Smith’s use of magic practices in his money digging activities. Mormon apologists used to try to discredit testimony that Joseph Smith used a “seer stone” which he placed in his hat to try to discover buried treasures. In 1971, however, Wesley P. Walters discovered an original document which proves that Joseph Smith was a “glass looker” and that he was arrested, tried and found guilty by a justice of the peace in Bainbridge, N.Y., in 1826. This document is Justice Albert Neely’s bill showing the costs involved in several trials held in 1826. The fifth item from the top mentions the trial of “Joseph Smith The Glass Looker.” Below is a photograph of this portion of the document (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 33 for a photograph of the complete document).

The importance of this discovery cannot be overstated, for it establishes the historicity of the account of the trial which was first published in 1873. We quote the following from the court record:

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The importance of this discovery cannot be overstated, for it establishes the historicity of the account of the trial which was first published in 1873. We quote the following from the court record:
STATE OF NEW YORK v. JOSEPH SMITH.

. . . .

Prisoner brought before Court March 20, 1826. Prisoner examined: says that he came from the town of Palmyra, and had been at the house of Josiah Stowel in Bainbridge . . . That he had a certain stone which he had occasionally looked at to determine where hidden treasures in the bowels of the earth were; that he professed to tell in this manner where gold mines were a distance under ground, and had looked for Mr. Stowel several times, . . . at Palmyra he pretended to tell by looking at this stone where coined money was buried in Pennsylvania, and . . . had occasionally been in the habit of looking through this stone to find lost property for three years, . . . (Mormonism—Shadow or Reality, page 32)

Joseph Smith’s mother, Lucy Mack Smith, seems to have been willing to concede that magic was an “important interest” of her family. Wesley P. Walters quotes her admission in an article entitled, “From Occult to Cult With Joseph Smith, Jr.”:

. . . it is quite clear that Joseph Smith surrounded his money digging activities with a religious atmosphere that flavored of the occult. . . . One such feature was the use of a circle marked off on the ground, a practice inherited from medieval magic and considered to aid the magician in his dealing with dangerous spirits. Joseph’s use of such magic devices in his early years gave his mother concern in later life that the family not be thought of as having devoted their entire time to such occult matters. In the preliminary draft of her history of that early period (but omitted from the printed version) she wrote:

. . . let not the reader suppose that . . . we stopt our labor and went at trying to win the faculty of Abrac, drawing magic circles, or sooth saying, to the neglect of all kinds of business. We never during our lives suffered one important interest to swallow up every other obligation.

Thus it is quite clear from all sides that Joseph wove occult religious material into his money digging practices, and this led the communities where he dug for treasure to associate him with divination, necromancy, and wizardry. (Joseph Smith’s Bainbridge, N.Y. Court Trials, Part 2, pages 126-127)

One of the most important parts of magic ritual is the drawing of circles to gain control over evil spirits. In magic books it is claimed that a circle drawn within a circle has great power. In The Ancients Book of Magic, page 10, we learn that a person who wants to contact the spirits must draw a circle, and once

he enters into the circle with his books, wands, incense and all things he needs, he draws the outer circle about 3 inches away from the circle he has already drawn . . . The operator must remember not to leave this circle during the whole invocation until the closing words have been said, for as long as he remains in the circle, no matter how fierce the demons may be they cannot break through the walls of the circle, . . .

Joseph Capron tells how Joseph Smith used stakes to form a circle around the treasure:

The sapient Joseph discovered, north west of my house, a chest of gold watches; but, as they were in possession of the evil spirit, it required skill and stratagem to obtain them. Accordingly, orders were given to stick a parcel of large stakes in the ground, several rods around, in a circular form. This was to be done directly over the spot where the treasures were deposited. A messenger was then sent to Palmyra to procure a polished sword: after which, Samuel F. Lawrence, with a drawn sword in his hand, marched around to guard any assault which his Satanic majesty might be disposed to make. . . . But, in spite of their brave defender, Lawrence, and their bulwark of stakes, the devil came off victorious, and carried away the watches. (Mormonism Unveiled, pages 259-60)

William Stafford gave the following information in his affidavit:

Joseph Smith, Sen., came to me one night, and told me, that Joseph Jr. had been looking in his glass, and had seen, not many rods from his house, two or three keys of gold and silver, some feet under the surface of the earth; and that none others but the elder Joseph and myself could get them. I accordingly consented to go, . . . Joseph Sen. first made a circle, twelve or fourteen feet in diameter. This circle, said he, contains the treasure. He then stuck in the ground a row of witch hazel sticks, around the said circle, for the purpose of keeping off the evil spirits. Within this circle he made another, of about eight or ten feet in diameter. He walked around three times on the periphery of this last circle, muttering to himself something which I could not understand. He next stuck a steel rod in the centre of the circles, and then enjoined profound silence upon us, lest we should arouse the evil spirit who had the charge of these treasures. After we had dug a trench about five feet in depth around the rod, the old man by signs and motions, asked leave of absence, and went to the house to inquire
of young Joseph the cause of our disappointment. He soon returned and said, that Joseph had remained all this time in the house, looking in his stone and watching the motion of the evil spirit—that he saw the spirit come up to the ring and as soon as it beheld the cone which we had formed around the rod, it caused the money to sink. (Ibid., pages 238-239)

Animal sacrifices sometimes play an important role in magic ritual. In The Greater Key of Solomon, page 122, we find the following:

In many operations it is necessary to make some sort of sacrifice unto the Demons, and in various ways. . . Such sacrifices consist of the blood and sometimes of the flesh.

There seems to be evidence that Joseph Smith participated in blood sacrifices in his money-digging operations. For instance, in his affidavit William Stafford related:

. . . Old Joseph and one of the boys came to me one day, and said that Joseph Jr. had discovered some very remarkable and valuable treasures, which could be procured only in one way. That way, was as follows:— That a black sheep should be taken on to the ground where the treasures were concealed—that after cutting its throat, it should be led around a circle while bleeding. This being done, the wrath of the evil spirit would be appeased: the treasures could then be obtained, . . . To gratify my curiosity, I let them have a large fat sheep. They afterwards informed me, that the sheep was killed pursuant to commandment; but as there was some mistake in the process, it did not have the desired effect. (Ibid., page 239)

The reader will notice that it was a “black” sheep that was supposed to have been sacrificed. This is interesting because The Greater Key of Solomon, page 122, says that “Sometimes white animals are sacrificed to the good Spirits and black to the evil.” In any case, W. D. Purple, who attended Joseph Smith’s 1826 trial, related the following concerning another blood sacrifice:

Mr. Thompson, an employee of Mr. Stowell, was the next witness. . . . The following scene was described by this witness, and carefully noted: Smith had told the Deacon that very many years before a band of robbers had buried on his flat a box of treasure, and as it was very valuable they had by a sacrifice placed a charm over it to protect it, so that it could not be obtained except by faith, accompanied by certain talismanic influences. . . . the fruitful mind of Smith was called on to devise a way to obtain the prize. Mr. Stowell went to his flock and selected a fine vigorous lamb, and resolved to sacrifice it to the demon spirit who guarded the coveted treasure. Shortly after the venerable Deacon might be seen on his knees at prayer near the pit, while Smith, with a lantern in one hand to dispel the midnight darkness might be seen making a circuit around the spot, sprinkling the flowing blood from the lamb upon the ground, as a propitiation to the spirit that thwarted them. They then descended the excavation, but the treasure still receded from their grasp, and it was never obtained. . . .

What a picture for the pencil of a Hogarth! . . . it was declared under oath, in a Court of Justice by one of the actors in the scene, and not disputed by his co-laborers . . . (A New Witness For Christ In America, by Francis W. Kirkham, 1959, vol. 2, pages 366-67)

Wesley P. Walters has discovered a letter written in 1842 by Joel King Noble, a justice of the peace who tried Joseph Smith in a trial held in Colesville, N.Y., in 1830. Justice Noble relates that when Joseph Smith and others were digging “for a chest of money,” they procured a black dog and offered it as “a sacrifice [blo]od Sprinkled prayer made at the time (no money obtained) the above Sworn to on trial . . .” (Letter by Justice Noble, dated March 8, 1842, photographically reproduced in Joseph Smith’s Bainbridge, N.Y. Court Trials, Part 2, page 134).

In the Book of Mormon Joseph Smith condemned the practice of animal sacrifices after the death of Christ (3 Nephi 9:19), but he later wrote that “These sacrifices, . . . will, when the Temple of the Lord shall be built, and the sons of Levi be purified, be fully restored and attended to in all their powers, ramifications, and blessings (History of the Church, vol. 4, page 211). Wandle Mace, a devout Mormon, recorded this statement in his journal:

Joseph told them to go to Kirtland, and cleanse and purify a certain room in the Temple, that they must kill a lamb and offer sacrifice unto the Lord which should prepare them to ordain Willard Richards a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. (“Journal of Wandle Mace,” page 32, microfilmed copy at Brigham Young University)
MORMON RESEARCHER FINDS SMITHS' 1825 MONEY-DIGGING AGREEMENT

In Lippincott’s Magazine we find this strange story about Joseph Smith’s money-digging activities in Pennsylvania:

...On a wilderness hill...his peek-stone discovered a ton of silver bars...The third hole had been sunk fifteen out of the necessary twenty feet when the treasure once more jumped to the other side of the big hole. Then the prophet had a vision: the blood of a black sheep must be shed and sprinkled around the diggings. Black sheep were scarce,...At Length, no sheep appearing, Joe said that a black dog might answer. A dog, therefore, was killed, and the blood sprinkled on the ground. After that the silver...waltzed about the big hole in such a lively manner that frequent tunnelling to effect its capture availed nothing. At last the prophet decided that it was of no use to dig unless one of their number was made a sacrifice. None of the faithful responded to his call, and thus the magnificent scheme was abandoned. Oliver Harper, one of the diggers who furnished the money, was soon afterward murdered. The prophet thought this might answer for a sacrifice: he again rallied the diggers, but the charm remained stubborn and would not reveal the silver. (Lippincott’s Magazine, 1880, pages, 199-200)

On April 23, 1880, the Salt Lake Tribune published a very important document which shows that Joseph Smith was involved with Oliver Harper’s widow in a money-digging agreement after Mr. Harper was murdered:

Ed. Tribune: Knowing how interested you are in any matter pertaining to the early history of our church, I enclose a slip cut from the Susquehanna, P. Journal of March 20,...

Respectfully yours,
B. Wade

The following agreement, the original of which is in the possession of a citizen of Thompson township was discovered by our correspondent, and forwarded to us as a matter of local interest.

The existence of the “buried treasure” referred to was “revealed” to Joe Smith, Jr., who with his father the prophet, at that time resided on what is now known as the McCune Farm,...upon the strength of which revelation a stock company was organized to dig for the aforesaid treasure. After the company was organized, a second communication was received by Joseph Jr., from the “other world” advising the seekers to suspend operations, as it was necessary for one of the company to die before the treasure could be secured.

Harper the peddler, who was murdered soon after,...was one of the original members of the company, and his death was regarded by the remainder of the band as a Providential occurrence, which the powers had brought about for their special benefit. The death of Harper having removed the only obstacle in the way of success, the surviving members, recommended operations, and signed an agreement giving the widow Harper the half of one-third of all the treasures secured. The following is the agreement, written by the old humbug, Joseph Smith, himself:

ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT

We, the undersigned, do firmly agree, and by these present bind ourselves, to fulfill and abide by the hereafter specified articles:

First: That if anything of value should be obtained at a certain place in Pennsylvania near a William Hales, supposed to be a valuable mine of either gold or silver and also to contain coined money and bars or ingots of gold or silver, and at which several hands have been at work during a considerable part of the past summer, we do agree to have it divided in the following manner, viz: Josiah Stowell, Calvin Stowell and Wm. Hale to take two-thirds, and Charles Newton, Wm. I. Wiley, and the widow Harper to take the other third. And we further agree that Joseph Smith, Sen. and Joseph Smith Jr. shall be considered as having two shares, two elevenths of all the property that may be obtained, and shares to be taken equally from each third.

Second: And we further agree, that in consideration of the expense and labor to which the following named persons have been at (Johs F. Shepherd, Elijah Stowell and John Grant) to consider them as equal sharers in the mine after all the coined money and bars or ingot are obtained by the undersigned. Their shares to be taken out from each share; and we further agree to remunerate all the three above named persons in a handsome manner for all their time, expense, and labor which they have been or may be at, until the mine is opened, if anything should be obtained; otherwise they are to lose their time, expense and labor.

Third: And we further agree that all the expense which has or may accrue until the mine is opened, shall be equally borne by the proprietors of each third and that after the mine is opened the expense shall be equally borne by each of the shares.

Township of Harmony, Pennsylvania, November 1, 1825 in presence of:

Isaac Hale Joseph Smith Sen.
David Hale Isaiah Stowell
P. Newton Calvin Stowell
Charles A. Newton Joseph Smith Jr.
Wm. I. Wiley

(The Daily Tribune, Salt Lake City, April 23, 1880, as cited in A New Witness For Christ In America, vol. 1, pp. 492-494)
We recently heard that a Mormon researcher had discovered the original handwritten copy of this money digging agreement. We have confirmed this report and also learned that the person who found the document does not intend to keep it a secret. The details of this discovery, therefore, will probably be announced soon.

At any rate, the *History of Susquehanna County*, page 97, says that “Oliver Harper was murdered by Jason Treadwell, . . .” Wesley P. Walters, who has done original research into the murder of Harper, feels that Treadwell was originally part of the money-digging group. After the murder he stopped at Isaac Hale’s house (Hale, of course, later became the father-in-law of Joseph Smith). During the trial Treadwell admitted involvement with money obtained by trading counterfeit coin. The *History of Susquehanna County*, page 325, says that Treadwell was executed on January 13, 1826. This was only two months before “Joseph Smith The Glass looker” was tried before Justice Neely. We could probably overlook Joseph Smith’s association with the occult during his youth if it were not for the fact that he later claimed that during this period he was being visited by the Angel Moroni who was preparing him for the translation of the Book of Mormon. In our new book, *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*, we present a great deal of evidence linking the Smiths to magic. Because this book has taken a great deal of time to prepare and is larger than anticipated, we are going to have to raise the price to $3.00 a copy. However, all those who have ordered it already or place their orders before April 15, 1983, will receive it for ONLY $2.00 A COPY.

**NEW BOOKS**

*LDS Apostle Confesses Brigham Young Taught Adam-God Doctrine.* Contains a photographic reproduction of a ten-page letter written by Bruce R. McConkie. Also includes photographs of manuscripts in the Church Archives which prove Brigham Young taught that Adam was God and that Jesus Christ was his son. In addition this book has a six-page introduction by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. **PRICE: $2.00**

*Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered—Extracts from the diaries of Joseph Smith’s secretary William Clayton.* A very revealing glimpse into Joseph Smith’s private life in Nauvoo. These diaries, which have been suppressed for 140 years, throw a great deal of light on the doctrine of plural marriage. **PRICE: $3.00**

*Lucy Smith’s 1829 Letter.* A photographic reproduction of a recently discovered letter written by Joseph Smith’s mother on January 23, 1829. Refers to the portion of the Book of Mormon which was lost. Contains an introduction by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. **PRICE: $0.75**

*Our Relationship With the Lord.* By the Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie. An attack on the concept of a personal relationship with Christ. A very shocking speech given by one of the highest officials of the Mormon Church. **PRICE: $2.00**

*Joseph Smith’s 1838-39 Diaries.* Transcribed and edited by H. Michael Marquardt. Contains an important reference to the secret band known as the “Danites.” **PRICE: $2.00**

(Mail orders please add 10%)
SUING THE TANNERS

Legal Action to Suppress Diaries About Joseph Smith

In the last issue of the *Messenger* we reported concerning the anti-Tanner movement and some individuals who were using aliases in an attempt to discredit our work. In a notice accompanying that newsletter, we also announced that the Federal Government approved our non-profit organization, Utah Lighthouse Ministry, and that “any gifts given to the ministry are tax-deductible.”

Since publishing the March newsletter things have been very exciting at Utah Lighthouse Ministry. On May 7, 1983, we were served with a summons to appear in court. The paper made it clear that we were being sued for reproducing extracts from William Clayton’s diaries. This is the first time that anyone has actually taken legal action against us. In 1961 the Mormon Apostle LeGrand Richards threatened to sue us, and in 1965 Apostle Mark E. Petersen made a similar threat. Neither of these men followed through with any action (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 12-13). The plaintiff in the suit that has been filed against us is Andrew F. Ehat, and the attorney is listed as Gordon A. Madsen, the “authorized agent of Religious Studies Center” at the Mormon Church’s Brigham Young University. In the Complaint, we find the following:

4. The plaintiff is a research historian . . . having received a Master’s Degree from Brigham Young University . . . During the course of said graduate historical research, plaintiff was given permissive access to the private, heretofore-unpublished Nauvoo Journals of one William Clayton then deposited with the Office of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, from which he permissively extracted certain notes, quotes and extracts.

5. From said notes plaintiff, in collaboration with one Lyndon W. Cook, produced a book titled “The Words of Joseph Smith,” the proprietary interest and copyright interest of which were assigned by Ehat and Cook to the Religious Studies Center, an agency of Brigham Young University. . . . At no time has the plaintiff given the defendants, or either of them, any permission to publish or print any notes taken by him from the William Clayton Journal.

The complaint alleges that we violated Mr. Ehat’s rights when we produced the book *Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered*. The suit asks for damages of up to “the sum of $50,000,” and the costs of the action to the plaintiff, which could, of course, amount to thousands of dollars. The plaintiff also requests that we “be ordered to deliver up on oath for destruction all infringing copies of said notes, together with all plates, molds, matrices and other means for making such infringing copies.”

**WHY THE LAWSUIT WILL FAIL**

We feel that this suit cannot be successful because it is based on an erroneous assumption—i.e., that Ehat can copyright the writings of William Clayton. We find the following plainly stated in Section 103(b) of Title 17, United States Code:

> The copyright in a compilation or derivative work extends only to the material contributed by the author of such work, as distinguished from the preexisting material employed in the work, and does not imply any exclusive right in the preexisting material.

Since Ehat’s notes are composed of extracts from “preexisting” material (the diaries of William Clayton), he cannot claim copyright protection. If Mr. Ehat had made a unique compilation or translation of Clayton’s words, he could have sought protection under the copyright law. The notes which we have published do not meet either of these requirements. They are only typed quotations which are not organized for publication. They could not, therefore, be considered to be a manuscript prepared for publication. Although they are typed out, they would only be considered to be equivalent to photocopies of a document.

Because Mr. Ehat was able to put a copyright on the book *The Words of Joseph Smith*, he seems to feel that he has the exclusive rights to the quotations from William Clayton’s diaries. Using the same reasoning, we could maintain that Moody Press (the publisher of our book *The Changing World of Mormonism*) holds a copyright on the recently discovered sheet containing characters which were supposed to have been taken from the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. We could argue that a
photograph of the document appears in the book, and since the book has a copyright at the front, it must cover this important document. We could also put a copyright on the three Joseph Smith diaries we have published and claim we have the exclusive rights to these diaries. Such claims, of course, would be ridiculous and would never hold up in court. If such a thing could be done, it would have some serious implications for the Mormon Church. For instance, an ex-Mormon by the name of Chuck Sackett has recently published the Mormon temple ceremony with a copyright at the front of the pamphlet. According to Ehat’s reasoning, this would mean that a non-Mormon now owns the literary rights to the temple ceremony. It is, of course, true that Mr. Sackett can copyright his own introduction, comments, footnotes, etc., but the text of the ceremony is in the public domain.

When we printed the extracts from William Clayton’s diaries we took special precaution to see that we did not violate Mr. Ehat’s rights. In the Introduction to Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered, we wrote:

> . . . several months after Mormon scholars began circulating the typed extracts, we were given permission to make a copy. At first we were reluctant to print the material. Andrew Ehat was vigorously opposed to anyone publishing the material. In fact, one man who was preparing to print it, received a letter from Ehat’s lawyer which threatened legal action if he did not desist. We tried to weigh the rights of the Mormon people to know the truth about the diaries their leaders had suppressed against Ehat’s desire to keep the extracts out of the hands of the public. From what we were able to learn, Ehat could not copyright the material taken from Clayton’s diaries. However, he could possibly claim a copyright on his own comments which appear in the manuscript. Comments of Lyndon Cook also appear in the margins. To solve this problem we have cut off the sides of the photocopies and blacked out Ehat’s notes which appear in the text. Therefore, we have a photographic printing of the document which does not violate Ehat’s manuscript rights. . . . we feel we have arrived at a good solution to the problem.

One thing about Ehat’s notes which really interests us is that they appear to have been typed on four different typewriters. The typewriter styles change frequently throughout the manuscript. It is possible, of course, that Ehat typed all the pages on different typewriters, but there is reason to suspect that at least some of them came from a different source or sources. One Mormon scholar claims that the manuscript is actually a compilation of material from three individuals—Andrew F. Ehat, Lyndon W. Cook and James B. Allen. Allen, who formerly served as Assistant Church Historian, used some of these quotations in an article on William Clayton which was published in Journal of Mormon History, vol. 6, 1979, pages 37-59. This was an excellent article, but Allen was apparently fearful of revealing that these diaries were in the First Presidency’s vault. In a footnote on page 42, he only revealed that they were in “private custody”: “William Clayton, Journals, November 1842 to January 1846 (in private custody and used here by special permission), 9 February 1843.”

A handwritten note at the beginning of the manuscript which Ehat claims as his own says that the portions which have been underlined (at least 43 places) have been published by Allen. We cannot help but wonder if these are the original pages Allen used to prepare his article. We will probably get to the bottom of this when we take the depositions of Ehat, Cook and Allen. In any case, the book by Ehat and Cook contains a footnote which could destroy Ehat’s entire case. It seems to indicate that the quotations used in The Words of Joseph Smith really came from James B. Allen:

> 23. William Clayton 1842-1846 Diaries. Citations from these diaries are used by permission and were provided by Dr. James B. Allen, professor of history at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. In sharing with us these quotations, Dr. Allen has substantially assisted this work. (Hereafter cited as William Clayton Diary.) (The Words of Joseph Smith, page 263)

There seems to be a number of other serious weaknesses in Ehat’s case which we intend to point out as the suit progresses. We will probably find it necessary to take testimony from a number of Church officials and to seek access to the original Clayton diaries because they contain material which is important to our case.

**“IT COULD DESTROY THE CHURCH”**

Although Ehat claims in the suit that he will suffer “irreparable harm, damage and injury” if we are allowed to continue printing the Clayton material, we feel that there are probably other reasons for his actions. The devastating nature of the material in the diaries probably has a great deal to do with Ehat’s attempt to sue us. The Seventh East Press told how copies of the Clayton notes began to circulate around Brigham Young University. When Ehat found out, there was a real confrontation in “a campus office.” According to individuals who were present, “Ehat was extremely upset and at one point said, ‘if this gets out
it could destroy the Church” (Seventh East Press, January 18, 1982, page 11). Mr. Ehat was apparently horrified when he learned that a copy he had given to Lyndon Cook was secretly duplicated by a member of a bishopric who shared an office with Cook. The same article says that “Ehat implied he had made copies for others as well, but declined to mention any names” (Ibid., page 1). In any case, Ehat felt a personal responsibility to keep this embarrassing material from getting into the hands of critics of the church. After Mr. Ehat discovered the leak, he worked diligently to try to retrieve all of the copies that were in the possession of students and faculty at Brigham Young University. His efforts, however, were to no avail. He claimed that the situation “cost me getting a master’s degree here at the university in the sense that I lost twelve weeks of my life trying to track down all the people who had copies” (Ibid., page 11). According to Seventh East Press, the “unauthorized circulation of Andrew Ehat’s notes from William Clayton’s Nauvoo diaries . . . and other materials from the Historical Department of the Church prompted President Holland last November to appoint Noel Reynolds, Vice President over General Education, Religion, and the Honors Program to investigate the situation and retrieve unauthorized historical materials” (pages 1 and 10).

It was only about a month after Seventh East Press reported on the Ehat affair that the Mormon leaders began to implement very repressive measures to see that no more sensitive material comes to light. The Mormon “underground” (a group composed mostly of liberal Mormon scholars) spread the “unauthorized circulation of Andrew Ehat’s notes from William Clayton’s Nauvoo diaries . . . and other materials from the Historical Department of the Church” (Ibid., page 11). Mr. Ehat was apparently horrified when he learned that a copy he had given to Lyndon Cook was secretly duplicated by a member of a bishopric who shared an office with Cook. The situation “cost me getting a master’s degree here at the university in the sense that I lost twelve weeks of my life trying to track down all the people who had copies” (Ibid., page 11). According to Seventh East Press, the “unauthorized circulation of Andrew Ehat’s notes from William Clayton’s Nauvoo diaries . . . and other materials from the Historical Department of the Church prompted President Holland last November to appoint Noel Reynolds, Vice President over General Education, Religion, and the Honors Program to investigate the situation and retrieve unauthorized historical materials” (pages 1 and 10).

More recently, indeed, just within the past few days, I understand that the archives of the LDS Church have been closed to all research in the diaries, the letter books and other sensitive materials of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve back to the 1830s—diaries and letters long open to and currently used by scholars. Many projects of considerable worth are now stymied or will be finished with incomplete sources.

At a recent meeting of the Mormon History Association, David Whittaker, University Archivist at BYU, has admitted that the Church has tightened up its policy as far as access to documents is concerned:

... It’s clear that there are collections closed, presidential collections for example, now closed in Salt Lake. It’s clear that there are some collections closed. Some scholars see it as closing the barn door after the horse is gone... I was one of those for a number of years that had pretty full access... like most private libraries, those who criticize much of the policies of both BYU, for example, or the church archives, fail to see that they’re basically private libraries... it’s obvious that there are a lot of collections that from my point of view ought to be open. Part of the criticism has to do with material in the vault. For example, the first presidency. Which material has never been available. It was never available even in the sixties. (Eighteenth Annual Meeting of the Mormon History Association, May 6, 1983, typed copy)

At any rate, Mr. Ehat is probably deeply troubled because his notes have caused so much embarrassment to the Church. It is possible that one of Ehat’s motives for filing the suit is to vindicate himself in the eyes of the church leaders. If this is the case, Ehat has made a great mistake. The suit is only going to cause more embarrassment to church leaders. Since we feel that we have a very good case, we do not intend to make any compromises. We will continue publishing the Clayton extracts, and the publicity surrounding the suit will certainly tend to make more people aware of the whole affair.

In the Introduction to Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered, we show that the Clayton diaries cast early Mormonism in a very bad light. William Clayton records that Joseph Smith told his first wife, Emma, he would “relinquish all” his plural wives for her sake, but in reality he didn’t intend to “relinquish anything.” According to Clayton, Joseph Smith was willing to go so far as to initiate a fake excommunication against him to cover up the practice of polygamy: “Says he... I will give you an awful scouring & probably cut you off from the church and then I will baptise you & set you ahead as good as ever” (William Clayton Diary, October 19, 1843, typed extracts). Joseph Smith’s secretary’s journals clearly show that Smith used “untruth” as an important tool to advance his work. Not only was he deceiving the outside world, but he was deceiving his own wife and other members of the Church.

The diaries also contain important evidence that the History of the Church, which the Church claims was written by Joseph Smith himself, was actually compiled after his death. Portions of Clayton’s diary were plagiarized and changed to the first-person to make it appear that Smith was the author. Furthermore, instead of confirming Joseph Smith’s famous prophecy concerning Steven A. Douglas, the Clayton diary provides devastating evidence against it.

The Mormon leaders should have come to grips with these important matters, but instead they have been engaged in a cover-up. They kept the Clayton diaries locked in a vault, and after the extracts leaked out, they took measures to see that other sensitive materials did not come to light. The Mormon “underground” (a group composed mostly of liberal Mormon scholars) spread
THE MORMON “INQUISITION” BEGINS

For a number of years we have been predicting that Mormon scholars are in for some very rough times. For instance, in the January 1979 issue of the Messenger, we wrote that, “There is reason to believe that Benson [Ezra Taft Benson, the man who will become the next president of the Church if he outlives Kimball] wants to remove Arrington from his position as Church Historian.” As our readers now know, Dr. Arrington was removed from his position and the 16-volume History of the Latter-day Saints, which had been approved by Church leaders, was aborted because it proved to be too revealing. When we made our assessment of the situation four years ago, a number of Mormon scholars disagreed with us. They felt that we were exaggerating and that there was no need for concern. Recent developments, however, prove beyond all doubt that Mormon scholars who print the truth stand in danger of being punished by the Church. One scholar has been forced to resign from his job with the Church, and the Salt Lake Tribune for May 26, 1983, said that there has been an “‘Inquisition’ Reported.”

One of the reasons for this “inquisition” is that Mormon leaders feel that Church scholars are putting too much ammunition into the hands of critics. The so-called “anti-Mormon” movement is now prospering to the point that Mormon leaders feel drastic action must be taken to save the Church. They want to isolate us from Church scholars, and to be sure that nothing they print will help our cause. This was made very plain in an article which recently appeared in the Provo Herald:

Latter-day Saint stake presidents and bishops are warning Mormon writers who publish intellectual material to write faith-promoting stories or their church membership will be in jeopardy.

The writers say the stake presidents and bishops are acting under orders from high-ranking general authorities, a charge LDS officials neither confirm nor deny. . . .

Linda and Jack Newell, co-editors of Dialogue, a 17-year old independent historical journal, say the integrity [sic] of Mormon writers is being questioned.

“We are aware that some Mormon scholars have recently been questioned by (LDS) church authorities about their research, some of which has been published in Dialogue,” said the Newells in a prepared statement.

“We are gravely concerned that the faith of any Latter-day Saint would be questioned on the basis of his or her commitment to legitimate scholarship.”

James Clayton, a Utah professor of history, says, “This type of behavior is despicable. Interviewing writers will have a chilling effect on scholarly research and it will drive intellectuals out of the church.”

Scott Faulring, a writer for Seventh East Press, an independent student newspaper banned at Brigham Young University, said his stake president warned him to be cautious in his writings.

“My stake president refused to tell me who had asked him to talk to me,” says Faulring. “He admitted, however, that he had never read my stories.” . . .

Gary Bergera, who has published articles in Seventh East Press and Dialogue, also has been questioned by his stake president in Provo.

“My stake president told me that if the prophet told me to do something wrong, I would be blessed if I obeyed,” said Bergera. “He said what I had written was anti-Mormon because it wasn’t uplifting.”

Bergera says his stake president objected to the headline of an article Bergera had written entitled “Anti-Mormons Prompt Better Church History.” He says the stake president also disapproved of an article Bergera had written about anti-Mormon publishers Jerald and Sandra Tanner.

“My stake president said it was clear in the article that I didn’t support the Tanners,” says Bergera. “But because I interviewed them I came close to supporting them.”

Free-lance LDS history writer George Smith, from San Francisco, says he knows of eight writers who have been interviewed by their stake presidents, and three “told me told me [sic] LDS Church general authorities had initiated these interviews.”
“The writers felt intimidated,” says Smith. “We say we value honesty but to intimidate those who are honest is to discourage integrity in the Mormon community.”

David Buerger, a free-lance LDS history writer from Campbell, Calif., says his stake president questioned him about his writings.

“At the recent request of a member of the LDS Church Council of the Twelve, my stake president initiated an inquiry with my bishop regarding my writing of LDS Church history,” says Buerger. “I was informed that this apostle was concerned about me and the possible negative impact my writing might have among some church members.” (The Herald, Provo, Utah, May 22, 1983)

We have always maintained that the original records of the LDS Church are the most “anti-Mormon” documents in existence. In other words, these records are extremely embarrassing to the Church and also contain doctrines that are diametrically opposed to the teachings of present-day Church leaders. The attempt by the General Authorities to suppress these records and the present “inquisition” against church scholars who want to study these documents certainly shows that the Church’s own documents are far more damaging than the vicious attacks of anti-Mormons like John C. Bennett.

The Salt Lake Tribune for May 26, 1983, contained this interesting information:

In a Wednesday article in the Provo Daily Herald newspaper, reporter Dawn Tracy said she had talked to 14 Mormon writers in four states who said they had been questioned by their local bishops or stake (diocese) presidents and told the church was worried about their faithfulness.

Three of the 14 writers are faculty members at the church-owned Brigham Young University. All of the authors had contributed to Dialogue, a bimonthly magazine called Sunstone, or a former independent BYU student newspaper called the 7th East Press.

Earlier this year, BYU officials banned the 7th East Press from campus sales outlets, and the paper soon folded.

Roy Doxey, former BYU dean of education, said Mormon Church Apostle Mark E. Peterson ordered the investigations of the writers.

Richard Cracroft, dean of BYU’s College of Humanities and a stake president in Provo, said recent anti-Mormon activities prompted church leaders “to closely examine Mormon writers.”

Cracroft said, “All good LDS (Mormons), including scholars, must accept the judgment of the church’s General Authorities. If this is what the brethren want, then good LDS must say it is appropriate. This may be difficult for scholars, but obedience is an important concept of the Mormon Church.”

However, University of Utah political science Professor J. D. Williams called the questionings of writers “an inquisition.”

Williams, who is a member of the church, said, “Passing ecclesiastical judgment on writers who have conducted serious, historical research is a denial of everything the church stands for.”

We have been asked by one Mormon scholar for our assessment of what the future holds for historians in the Mormon Church. While we do not really know the answer to this question, an examination of the seniority structure in the Church points to a grim future for thinking Mormons. To begin with, President Spencer W. Kimball seems to be close to the point of death. The first in line to succeed him is Ezra Taft Benson, a man who has constantly fought the advancement of true historical research in the Church. Benson seems to have been instrumental in the suppression of the book The Story of the Latter-day Saints. The Sunstone Review, March 1983, page 2, maintains that Benson was the one responsible for stopping the sale of the Seventh East Press at Brigham Young University:

Whether the decision to ban Seventh East Press was made by the Board of Trustees . . . or the school administration, Richards wouldn’t say. Our sources confirm that it was . . . the initiative of one man—Ezra Taft Benson. . . . His efforts to ban the Press were resisted by President Holland, but finally Holland bowed to the demand. Huffaker also said that at least two sources have confirmed that Benson was responsible for the banning.

However this may be, the reader will find more information concerning Benson’s anti-historical views in our publication Answering Dr. Clandestine, pages 40-43.

Mark E. Petersen is second in line to the presidency of the Church. Petersen has spent a great deal of his time searching for heretics in the church. We have already quoted the Tribune as saying that Roy Doxey, former BYU dean of education, claimed that Petersen “ordered the investigation of the writers.”

As we go on down the line, we find three others who have given historians a bad time. Gordon B. Hinckley, for instance, is fifth in line. We have seen documents linking Hinckley with the suppression of the 16-volume history. Boyd K. Packer, who is seventh in line, made a scathing attack on Church historians who want to “tell it like it is” (see BYU Studies, Summer 1981, pages 259-278).

In position number nine we find Bruce R. McConkie. McConkie, of course, is the Apostle who warned the Mormon scholar Eugene England that he held “the scepter of judgment” over him. In the same letter McConkie stated:
It is not in your province to set in order the Church or to determine what its doctrines shall be. . . It is your province to teach to the Church what the doctrine is.

If I lead the Church astray, that is my responsibility, but the fact still remains that I am the one appointed with all the rest involved so to do. . . if I err, that is my problem; but in your case if you single out some of these things and make them the center of your philosophy, and end up being wrong, you will lose your soul. . . .

Now I hope you will ponder and pray and come to a basic understanding of fundamental things and that unless and until you can on all points, you will remain silent on those where differences exist between you and the Brethren. . . . if you do not, perils lie ahead. (Letter from Apostle McConkie, dated February 19, 1981, photographically reprinted in our publication LDS Apostle Confesses Brigham Young Taught Adam-God Doctrine)

It would appear that the Apostles who believe in absolute obedience and suppression of history are now in full control of the Mormon Church, and there in nothing to indicate that there will be any change for the better in the near future. In fact, these same Apostles can also keep any who are sympathetic to the historian’s point of view from coming into leadership positions in the Church.

In June 1945, the church’s official publication, Improvement Era, counseled Mormons to blindly follow their leaders: “When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done” (page 354). Today, many members of the Church are faced with a situation where they must choose between blindly following their leaders’ suppressive policies or stand up for the truth and face excommunication. The General Authorities are asking them to follow a course which they know is morally wrong. We must agree with James Clayton’s observation that the inquisition now taking place will tend to “drive intellectuals out of the church.” The Bible warns against putting trust in men. It says that we are to rely only on God and put our trust in Him. In Jeremiah 17:5 we read: “Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.”

JACK ANDERSON TO EXPOSE CRITICS

The Latter Day Sentinel for May 6, 1983, reported the following:

The country’s most famous investigative reporter, Jack Anderson, has a new target: Anti-Mormon groups. The well-known newspaper and TV personality has announced he plans to publish a magazine later this year titled For Mormons Only which will investigate and expose Mormon hate groups in America.

“We don’t plan to do it in a negative way,” Brother Anderson, a high priest in the Chevy Chase Ward, Washington D.C. Stake, told the Latter-day Sentinel. “We’re not interested in getting into any rhetoric exchanges. We want to look into their backgrounds and let Mormons know what they’re doing.

“What we want to do is isolate these hate groups and keep this sewage from seeping into the respectable and responsible press. Once our findings are published under my name, then responsible journalists are going to have to deal with me before they use their (the hate groups’) material.”

He said the magazine, to be published monthly, will be produced by a team of investigative reporters completely separate from his own corps of column writers.

“I’m not doing this for any purpose except to help the Church and my fellow members,” . . .

Brother Anderson said he decided to start such a publication when he was approached by a number of “high-powered Mormons” who offered to come up with the financing of such a project.

He said the idea has received “neither approval nor disapproval” from Church leaders.

The idea of Jack Anderson and his “team of investigative reporters” looking into the backgrounds of critics of the Church might intimidate some people. We feel, however, that since we have nothing to hide, the publicity would only do us good.

The reader will notice that Anderson claims that the Church itself is not sponsoring his activities. Instead, he says “He was approached by a number of ‘high-powered Mormons’ who offered to come up with the financing of such a project.” Newsweek for March 14, 1983, page 15, says that it will be a “nonprofit publication.” Although we cannot actually prove it, we feel that this new organization is suspiciously similar to another group set up by the Church itself last year. Sunstone Review learned of this Church group and reported that Jack Anderson was a part of it:

Ending a long tradition, which goes back at least as far as Brigham Young, of disregarding all the barbs and errors regarding the Mormon people, the Church has decided to fight back. It has formally organized a “Public Communications Advisory Council” which will be composed of twenty-five prominent media representatives and business leaders from all over the country. They met for the first time on April 2, 1982, in Salt Lake City under the direction of Gordon B. Hinckley of the First Presidency of the LDS church and will continue to meet semi-annually . . .
According to Heber Wolsey, managing director of LDS Public Communications Department, “We have organized this group to coalesce the best thinking of those familiar with or involved in the media.”

At the initial meeting . . . items of press coverage were mentioned and ways of handling them were discussed, for example, the 60 Minutes presentation of the Baum lawsuit against the Church . . . Jack Anderson suggested, however, that we should have organized a large-scale letter campaign as well as numerous phone calls from well-placed Mormons in the media. We should be applying subtle pressure, he said, so they begin to realize they can’t get away with that sort of irresponsibility . . .

The Church’s media problems surrounding the Equal Rights Amendment and, specifically, the excommunication of Sonia Johnson were of obvious concern. . . . Anderson proposed that one-half of the speeches given at General Conference be by women, but his idea was met with some resistance . . . When the Sunstone Review called Wolsey for a list of members of the committee, he seemed both surprised and a bit rankled at the request . . . he refused to give out the names . . . Such secrecy does not bode well for the future of this group. One inside observer called it “the Public Communications Council of 50” (referring to a nineteenth-century secret Mormon political group.) . . .

Other questions arise from the formation of such a committee. Once a group becomes institutionalized (in this case, it is a Church “calling” and therefore a religious obligation), it is forced to protect institutional interests. It then becomes suspect as an objective source for information . . . Does the presence of non-media, high-powered corporate representatives indicate a willingness to use economic or political pressure to insure a positive media image? Would the group in any way attempt to abort potentially damaging news items even if they were true? (Sunstone Review, May 1982, pages 1 and 5)

There are a number of reasons why we suspect that Anderson’s group may be an outgrowth of the Church committee. To begin with, both groups were set up to deal with criticism of the Church. The Sunstone Review claimed that at the initial meeting of the Church committee, “there was some talk of modelling this group after the Jewish Anti-Defamation League.” This is very interesting because after Anderson announced the formation of his organization, Newsweek reported: “Anderson will also alert his readers to criticism of the church in the press and elsewhere, in the manner of the Anti-defamation League of B’nai B’rith” (March 14, 1983, page 15).

In both cases powerful Mormons seem to be involved. According to Sunstone Review, the famous businessman J. Willard Marriott, Jr., president of the Marriot Corporation is involved with the Church committee. Jack Anderson admits that a number of “high power Mormons” are in his organization. When we add to all this the fact that Anderson himself is involved in both groups, we cannot help but wonder if the publication For Mormons Only is a part of the plan formulated by the original Church committee. The Church, of course, would probably not want to give any outright endorsement to Anderson’s work. If his efforts were to fail, this would give Church leaders “deniability” and save the Church from embarrassment.

According to the Latter-Day Sentinel, Jack Anderson says “he plans to use some of the material produced by the Religious Research Association based in Mesa.” This is the organization headed by Robert Brown, a man who has used misrepresentation in an attempt to discredit us. It is also a non-profit organization and has asked for a donation of $1,000 for Charter membership. Mr. Brown has some important Mormon businessmen on the board of his organization. The Latter-Day Sentinel for May 6, 1983, reports that, “Henry W. Richards, president of Granite Furniture” is now serving on the Board of Directors. The addition of Mr. Richards is a very important development because of the “special” work he does in behalf of the Church. The Sentinel East (not to be confused with the Latter-Day Sentinel) reported the following on January 17, 1980:

Regional Representative Henry W. Richards . . . has served in various church assignments . . . He is also under special assignment from the First Presidency to work directly with Elder Mark E. Peterson regarding apostate groups or apostate related problems.

From all this the reader will see that we have some “big guns” pointed at us. Jack Anderson and Robert Brown will undoubtedly have large sums of money to use to try to discredit us. In addition to all this, we have a lawsuit facing us. While we have no fear of losing the suit, it may cost thousands of dollars to win it. In spite of all this opposition, we feel that we have the truth on our side. If we can obtain the necessary support from our readers, we are confident that we will prevail. As we indicated earlier, any gifts give to Utah Lighthouse Ministry are tax-deductible. The most important thing, however, is the prayers of God’s people. Prayer is the most powerful force in all the world.
EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS RECEIVED

“. . . . . and I have been reading, researching, end cross referencing your excellent book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality. The Good Spirit has attended us and the Lord continues to give His Light and love. Your work, in its thoroughness and accuracy and completeness, has given us the strength, information, and direction to come out from the company of Joseph the sorcerer.” (Letter from California)

“I have just finished reading your book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality. . . . I to[o] would like my name taken off the church membership. I have always believed in the church but now I feel free.” (Letter from Texas)

“I’m over half-way through your book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? and thought I should let you know how marvelous that book is. I have been a Mormon for seven years now but have always had doubts. Your book answered my doubts plus showed me so much more. . . . I have asked to be excommunicated and am looking forward to truly being free.” (Letter from Wisconsin)

“We are a small group here who are interested in the truth of the Mormon Church as we are all Mormons. We would like some literature and a copy of Shadow or Reality . . . Please send unmarked as I’m sure you understand.” (Letter from Utah)

“I feel compelled to tell you that I am just coming out of the Mormon Church. . . . have found the truth through Jesus Christ, and the Bible. I now know that nice, peaceful feeling I had longed for. . . . Your book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? did complete my separation from the Church.” (Letter from Oregon)

NEW BOOKS

LDS Apostle Confesses Brigham Young Taught Adam-God Doctrine. Contains a photographic reproduction of a ten-page letter written by Bruce R. McConkie. Also includes photographs of manuscripts in the Church Archives which prove Brigham Young taught that Adam was God and that Jesus Christ was his son. In addition this book has a six-page introduction by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. PRICE: $2.00

Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered. Extracts from the diaries of Joseph Smith’s secretary William Clayton. A very revealing glimpse into Joseph Smith’s private life in Nauvoo. These diaries, which have been suppressed for 140 years, throw a great deal of light on the doctrine of plural marriage. PRICE: $3.00

Mormonism, Magic and Masonry. By Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Contains photographs of Joseph and Hyrum Smith’s magic material and a study of its significance. Also deals with the question of spiritualism and the temple ceremony. PRICE: $3.00

Our Relationship with the Lord. By the Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie. An attack on the concept of a personal relationship with Christ. A very shocking speech given by one of the highest officials of the Mormon Church. PRICE: $2.00

Joseph Smith’s 1838-39 Diaries. Transcribed and edited by H. Michael Marquardt. Contains an important reference to the secret band known as the “Danites.” PRICE: $2.00

(Mail orders add 10% for postage and handling.)

UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY
PO BOX 1884
SALT LAKE CITY UT 84110
On April 28, 1983, the Mormon scholar Andrew Ehat filed a lawsuit against us (Jerald and Sandra Tanner) in an attempt to stop publication of some extracts from the diaries of Joseph Smith’s private secretary, William Clayton. Because these diaries contain embarrassing material on the origin of polygamy and other matters, they have been suppressed in the vault of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church. Some time prior to 1981, Mr. Ehat gained access to the diaries and made the revealing extracts. Ehat tried very hard to keep the material from falling into the hands of critics of the Church, but a member of a bishopric in Provo duplicated the material and it was widely circulated by Mormon scholars at Brigham Young University. These extracts subsequently found their way into our hands and we printed them in the book *Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered*. We feel that the copyright laws do not support Ehat’s contention and believe that the suit is doomed to failure. In response to Mr. Ehat’s accusations, our lawyer subpoenaed the President of the Mormon Church and/or his representative to appear with the original Clayton diaries to give testimony on our behalf.

On July 22 attorneys for the Corporation of the President of the Church filed a motion which asked that our subpoena “be quashed and the discovery requested therein not be had on the grounds (1) that the requested discovery is not needed by the parties, nor relevant to the subject matter of this action, and not likely to produce admissible evidence, and (2) that the requested discovery is an annoyance and oppression, and an undue burden upon the Corporation of the President, . . .” In an accompanying Memorandum of Law the Church’s attorneys stated: “The Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and President Spencer W. Kimball of the Church, have standing to object to the production of documents which are unnecessary to the parties and irrelevant to the subject matter herein and with respect to which production may be sought for ulterior motives.” On September 6 a hearing was held before Judge A. Sherman Christensen. The Church’s attorney, Wilford W. Kirton, vigorously opposed the subpoena. Mr. Kirton argued:

The church, Mormon Church, has now been subpoenaed through its principal officer, Spencer W. Kimball, to appear and produce the original documents referred to as diaries, or the diary of William Clayton, . . . I’m here representing a third party who is required by subpoena duces tecum, unless the court gives protective order which we seek, to produce documents from its archives which have not heretofore been published in order to satisfy what the defendant conceives to be an issue in this case . . .

Now, this is a matter of some serious moment as far as we are concerned; and we call the court’s attention to those authorities that have been cited to it in support of this motion, and particularly at this time to Mc Cormick on Evidence at section 77. I will very briefly read, “It is evidence that for many people, judges, lawyers and laymen the protection of confidential communications from enforced disclosure has been thought to represent rights of privacy and security too important to relinquish to the convenience of litigants” . . . suddenly we find ourselves being subpoenaed to come in to court and make public certain writings, which up to the present time remain unpublished, . . .

Now, the defendants in this case, as I conclude, have, since the motion has been filed to quash, published another document here. It goes without saying any cursory reading of this document or any of their other writings discloses without question of doubt that they are self-appointed critics of the church that I represent, seek to find from whatever sources they can matters that they think are important in their minds enough to make public a part of their general criticism of the church. I am confident that which motivates them to require the public, or the publication or the bringing in to court of the materials that they seek to subpoena are for those purposes rather than to assist them in the defense of the cases being brought against them by the plaintiff. (“Hearing to Quash Subpoena Duces Tecum and Objections Before the Honorable A. Sherman Christensen, Tuesday, September 6, 1983,” certified copy, pages 4, 5, 7)

On page 20 of the same hearing, the Church’s attorney stated: “. . . I represent an organization that is very concerned about parties attempting to frame issues through which its own private materials may be discoverable. It has no desire to submit to the scrutiny of the parties.”
JUDGE’S DECISION

Andrew Ehat’s lawyer, Gordon A. Madsen, who is the “authorized agent of Religious Studies Center” at the Mormon Church’s Brigham Young University, joined with the church’s attorney in urging that the diaries be suppressed:

... their principal reason for wanting to see the original journal of William Clayton is to further embarrass the Mormon Church.

There is no reference about the rights of the plaintiff in this lawsuit, just rather we want more. Having stolen the horse, or gotten possession of the horse, we want the bridle and the saddle so we can embarrass you... I believe that the defendants are hoping in trying to get this discovery of this otherwise private journal of William Clayton, never before published... They’re hopeful, I believe, in order to put pressure on the Mormon Church to produce Clayton’s journal, the church will put pressure on the plaintiff to withdraw the lawsuit to protect his rights in order not to have the Mormon Church embarrassed. (“Hearing...”, pages 8-9)

Judge Christensen took the matter “under advisement” and on September 16, ruled that the church would not have to produce the diaries. (A photomechanical printing of the judge’s decision as well as the hearing itself is available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry for $1.00.) In order to get the ruling to suppress the diaries, Ehat’s lawyer had to back off from one of the charges made in the original complaint against us. This charge stemmed from some personal comments Ehat added to the Clayton extracts. Before we published the manuscript we noticed these comments. While we knew that Ehat could not copyright material from the diaries, we felt that he could possibly claim a copyright on his own comments. To solve this problem we blacked out Ehat’s own notes which appear in the text. We explained this matter in the Introduction to Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered. In the lawsuit, however, it was charged that our claim to have “blacked out” Ehat’s comments was “false” (page 5). Now, since it was sometimes difficult to tell when Ehat had added a comment, it could be possible that some of Ehat’s material filtered through. If it amounted to less than a few hundred words (which we feel is most likely), we could claim “fair use” and could easily win the suit. If, on the other hand, Ehat could show that a considerable amount of material written by him was not blacked out, there is a possibility that we could lose the suit. The only way we would ever be able to determine the truth about the matter would be by examining the original diaries. In order to keep the diaries suppressed, Mr. Ehat’s lawyer decided he would have to admit that the charge he had made against us was irrelevant to the outcome of the suit. Mr. Kirton (the church’s lawyer) also argued for this position:

The defendant... indicates to the court by answer and other documents that the materials which are the subject matter of the lawsuit were not any infringement of any copyright of the copyrights of the plaintiff, but simply were the reproduction of certain notes made by the defendant in connection with the preparation of his publication; and that exercising due care, these instruments came into the hands of the defendant, exercising due care that not be a violation of any of his original works. Care was taken though, as alleged by the defendant, to blot out in its reproduction of his notes whatever they could conceive to be his original work... Now, in a conversation before this hearing with counsel for the plaintiff, I believe he is prepared to say that the only things that are in the paragraph notes of Mr. Ehat, the plaintiff, on which there could be any question are a few dates, a couple of little marginal notes or this sort of thing which would not be material to his theory of the case that he is urging the court to consider... it could be only on a technical date or two that appear in the margins that perhaps have not been blacked out. That can’t be material to whether or not there has been a violation of the rights of the plaintiff which he has brought to this court with respect to the total publication. I respectfully urge this court to give the protective order that we have respectfully requested and protect the information that cannot serve any useful purpose in the determination of the issues as they have been framed in this lawsuit. (“Hearing...”, pages 3, 4, 6-8)

The following exchange occurred between Judge Christensen and Ehat’s lawyer:

THE COURT: Suppose the defendant is correct though that with regard to quotations from the journal, they are not subject to your client’s proprietary interest? Suppose that were held?

MR. MADSEN: Then it wouldn’t matter whether some parts are blacked out or not blacked out, matters why he would be entitled to publish.

THE COURT: He would be entitled to publish not only the extraction but the commentary of your client concerning them?

MR. MADSEN: They make an argument in their memorandum if he isn’t successful in all blacking out what notes are left are exempt under fair common notion of copyright. They also —
THE COURT: You’re not responding to my question.

MR. MADSEN: I’m sorry. Maybe I misunderstood your question.

THE COURT: Do you concede that if the law is that the quotations of your quotation from the journal doesn’t violate any proprietary interest of your client that your case fails?

MR. MADSEN: I think it does. I think if they can say this is not copyright material and they therefore are at liberty to print it. (“Hearing . . .”, pages 10-11)

In his ruling on the motion to quash the subpoena, Judge Christensen wrote:

Plaintiff’s complaint is not a model of clarity or certainty and talks in general of copyrighted works completed or to be completed, and of the notes from the Clayton Journals upon which these publications have been or will be based that have fallen into the hands of the defendants and which have either been republished or he fears will be republished by them. . . .

It is true that in argument plaintiff’s counsel claimed some work product interest in his research in general or in his arrangement of his research material. The complaint, however, negates any such separate actionable claim. Indeed, in response to the question of the court, plaintiff’s counsel conceded that if quotations from the Clayton Journal were not protectible under plaintiff’s claimed copyrights or proprietary interest, his “case would fail,” despite the fact that there may have been some of plaintiff’s own comments commingled with the quotations. The defendants on their part have disaffirmed by their own writings any claim of right or intent to publish protected work products of plaintiff as distinguished from the extracts he has made from the Clayton Journals. (“Ruling on Motion to Quash Subpoena Duces Tecum,” pages 2 and 4)

While the Church and Ehat’s lawyer were able to keep us from seeing the original diaries at the present time, we will be seeking them again if Mr. Ehat continues to press the suit. We maintain that Ehat cannot copyright the writings of William Clayton. The following is plainly stated in Section 103(b) of Title 17, United States Code:

“The copyright in a compilation or derivative work extends only to the material contributed by the author of such work, as distinguished from the preexisting material employed in the work, and does not imply any exclusive right in the preexisting material.” Since Ehat’s notes are composed of extracts from “preexisting” material (the diaries of William Clayton), he cannot claim copyright protection. If Mr. Ehat had made a unique compilation or translation of Clayton’s words, he could have sought protection under the copyright law. The notes which we have published do not meet either of these requirements.

Mr. Ehat’s lawyer argues that “the arrangement of the actual original Clayton material are proprietary rights of my client . . .” We feel, however, that the extracts are not organized in any way for publication and therefore do not qualify as copyrightable material. In any case, we do not see how that could possibly win the suit if the Church does not produce the original diaries for inspection by the court. We do not believe that any judge would convict us of a copyright violation without allowing us to compare the original diaries with Ehat’s version, and we would not accept such a decision without making an appeal to a higher court. The claim of a unique arrangement could not possibly be proven without the diaries themselves.

At any rate, one Mormon scholar said that Ehat’s notes are actually a compilation of material from three individuals—Andrew F. Ehat, Lyndon W. Cook and James B. Allen, who formerly served as Assistant Church Historian. When Ehat and Cook published their book, The Words of Joseph Smith, in 1980, they credited James B. Allen with providing material they used from the Clayton diary. In a footnote on page 263 they stated:

“23. William Clayton 1842-1846 Diaries. Citations from these diaries are used by permission and were provided by Dr. James B. Allen, . . .” It seems very likely that Ehat is claiming a copyright on some material he derived from other scholars. In order to get to the bottom of this matter, we are going to subpoena Ehat, Cook, Allen and possibly other Mormon scholars to testify concerning the matter. We are also thinking of subpoenaing a Mormon Apostle who talked to Ehat about the extracts. (If some of our readers have information about the Ehat affair, we would certainly appreciate it if they would contact us.)

FOR OUR GOOD

Fighting this lawsuit will cost thousands of dollars and a great deal of time, but we feel that it will all work out for our good. The publicity surrounding it has already helped our work a great deal. Some of those who oppose our work have been hoping that the suit will drive us into bankruptcy, but we feel that it will have just the opposite effect. As Joseph told his brothers who had sold him into Egypt, “. . . ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” (Genesis 50:20). In Romans 8:28 we read:

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”
Although Andrew F. Ehat is attempting to destroy our work with a suit which asks damages of up to “the sum of $50,000,” and the costs of the action to the plaintiff, we do not hold any bad feelings toward him. He apparently feels that he is doing the right thing and that he is working to save the Mormon Church. When Ehat originally discovered that the extracts were circulating at Brigham Young University, he exclaimed: “If this gets out it could destroy the Church” (Seventh East Press, January 18, 1982, page 11). In his misguided zeal to protect the Church, Mr. Ehat is actually causing it more embarrassment by bringing a great deal of attention to the matter. If we did not know otherwise, we would almost think that Mr. Ehat is working for our side.

**MUST SUPPRESS**

At the beginning of this Messenger we indicated that the Church is fighting to suppress the Clayton diaries because they “contain embarrassing material on the origin of polygamy and other matters.” One of the most important reasons for suppressing the diaries relates to the fact that they discredit Joseph Smith’s History of the Church—one of the most important publications issued by the Mormon Church. Below is some very revealing information which is taken from the Preface of our publication Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered.

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 126-142D, we show that the History of the Church, which was supposed to have been written by Joseph Smith himself, is filled with serious problems and that over 60% of it was actually compiled after Smith’s death. The Mormon leaders plagiarized from diaries, newspapers and oral accounts of other people to complete the history. To make it appear that the history was written by Joseph Smith, these accounts were changed to the first-person. The extracts from Clayton’s diaries throw important light on this subject. Even a superficial examination reveals that Clayton’s writings were the source for entries attributed to Joseph Smith in the History of the Church. For instance, under the date of May 1, 1843, Clayton recorded this statement concerning the Kinderhook plates in his diary: “Prest J. has translated a portion and says they contain the history of the person with whom they were found & he was a descendant of Ham . . .” (page 18). In the History of the Church this has been falsified to make it appear that Joseph Smith was the author: “I have translated a portion of them, and find they contain the history of the person with whom they were found. He was a descendant of Ham, . . .” (vol. 5, page 372).

On May 16, 1843, Clayton wrote: “Before we retired the Pres. gave bro Johnson & wife some instructions on the priesthood. He put his hand on my knee and says . . .” (page 40). This has been rewritten as follows in the History of the Church, vol. 5, page 391: “Before retiring, I gave Brother and Sister Johnson some instructions on the priesthood; and putting my hand on the knee of William Clayton, I said:”

The extracts from William Clayton’s diaries not only provide evidence that third-person sources were changed to appear that Joseph had authored them, but they also cast doubt upon one of Joseph Smith’s most famous prophecies—the prediction that Steven A. Douglas would “aspire to the presidency of the United States.” This prophecy appears in Joseph Smith’s History of the Church, vol. 5, page 394, under the title, “The Great Prophecy on the Head of Steven A. Douglas”:

> Judge, you will aspire to the presidency of the United States; and if ever you turn your hand against me or the Latter-day Saints, you will feel the weight of the hand of Almighty upon you; . . .

The Mormon historian B. H. Roberts made the following comment concerning this prophecy: “Two great prophecies by Joseph Smith belong to this period. The first was in relation to the removal of the saints to the valleys of the Rocky Mountains; the other was a most remarkable prediction concerning Steven A. Douglas, . . .” (A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, vol. 2, page 181)

In his book Prophecies of Joseph Smith and Their Fulfillment, Nephi Lowell Morris maintained that the prophecy concerning Steven A. Douglas provides “incontrovertible evidence to the divine mission and inspiration of Joseph Smith” (page 215). On pages 201-202 of the same book, Morris argued that “At the time of the event, Steven A. Douglas was in his thirtieth year and though a bright and promising young man, he was scarcely known outside of his own state.”

In the History of the Church a note appearing in brackets on page 393 of vol. 5 indicates that this prophecy was actually taken “from the journal of William Clayton, who was present.” In other words, it was supposed to have been copied from Clayton’s diary into the “Manuscript History” of the Church. Since Ehat’s extracts from Clayton’s diary cover the same day, one would expect to find the prophecy recorded there. An examination, however, reveals that while the diary does mention Douglas, the prophecy concerning him is not included. Joseph Smith is quoted as saying the following on May 18, 1843:

> . . . “I prophecy in the name of the Lord God that in a few years this government will be utterly overthrown and wasted so that there will not be a potsherd left” for their wickedness in conniving at the Missouri mobocracy. The Judge appears very friendly & acknowledged the propriety of the prests. remarks. (William Clayton’s Diary, May 18, 1843, typed excerpts, page 42)

The account published in the History of the Church is about 160 words longer than the one found in Clayton’s diary. It differs in two very important aspects: One, additional words appear in Joseph Smith’s prophecy that the United States would be “utterly overthrown.” These words change the prophecy to make its fulfillment conditional upon the performance of the United States Government. Two, the entire prophecy concerning Douglas has been inserted. In the quotation from the History of the Church which is printed below we have marked the important additions with italics:

> . . . I prophecy in the name of the Lord God of Israel, unless the United States redress the wrongs committed upon the Saints in the state of Missouri and punish the crimes committed by her officers that in a few years the government will be utterly overthrown and wasted, and there will not be so much as a potsherd left, for their wickedness in permitting the murder of men, women and children, and the wholesale plunder and extermination of thousands of her citizens to go unpunished, thereby perpetrating a foul and corroding blot upon the fair fame of this great republic, the very thought of which would have caused the high-minded and patriotic framers of the Constitution of the United States to hide their faces with shame. Judge, you will aspire to the presidency of the United States; and if ever you turn your hand against me or the Latter-day Saints, you will feel the weight of the hand of Almighty upon you; and you will live to see and know that I have testified the truth to you; for the conversation of this day will stick to you through life.
To the left is a photograph which contains Andrew Ehat's extract from William Clayton's diary for May 18, 1843. Notice that the circled portion contains only 78 words. The two pages to the right are from volume 5 of the *History of the Church*, printed by the Mormon Church. These pages quote the entry for the same day “from the journal of William Clayton.” Notice, however, that they contain 456 words and include the famous prophecy concerning Stephen A. Douglas which is not found in Ehat's version.
Instead of confirming the famous prophecy concerning Douglas, William Clayton’s diary seems to provide evidence against it. All it contains is the false prophecy that the United States will be destroyed. Joseph Smith’s private dairy for May 18, 1843, is also silent concerning the prophecy. The manuscript for the History of the Church cannot be used as evidence for the prophecy because this portion was NOT written during Joseph Smith’s lifetime. In an article published in 1971, Dean C. Jessee, who was serving on the staff of the Historical Department of the Church, published a chart which shows that this portion of the History of the Church was not written until 1854 or 1855 (Brigham Young University Studies, Summer 1971, page 441). This, of course, would be 10 or 11 years after Joseph Smith’s death! If the prophecy concerning Douglas was made up in the 1850s, as the evidence seems to indicate, then it has no real value.

By the middle of that decade it was well known that Douglas wanted to be President of the United States. T.B.H. Stenhouse informs us that in 1856 “Senator Douglas was a candidate for the Presidency” but that his party (the Democrats) chose James Buchanan to represent them. In 1860 Douglas finally received the nomination of the convention but was defeated by Abraham Lincoln in the election (The Rocky Mountain Saints, pages 347-48). Since Douglas died shortly after his defeat, Mormon historians seem to feel that God punished him for turning against the Church. These same apologists do not seem to realize that this type of reasoning could be used against Joseph Smith.

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 416-17, we show that Smith also aspired to be President of the United States. In 1844 he announced himself a candidate and the Elders of the Church were sent out to “electioneer for Joseph to be the next President” (History of the Church, vol. 6, p. 325). Before the election ever took place, however, Joseph Smith was murdered in the Carthage Jail. B. H. Roberts maintained that Douglas died “while yet in the prime of manhood—forty-eight years of age . . .” (Ibid., page 396). For those who are not already committed to the defense of Mormonism, this does not provide any evidence that God was judging Steven A. Douglas for opposing the Church. After all, Joseph Smith was ten years younger than Douglas when he was murdered. If Douglas died in the “prime of manhood,” what can be said about Joseph Smith? B. H. Roberts claimed that Joseph Smith’s prophecy concerning Douglas “is one of the most remarkable prophecies either in ancient or modern times” (History of the Church, vol. 3, p. 395). When all of the evidence is examined, however, it becomes clear that this purported prophecy does not furnish any evidence favorable to Mormonism.

**HELP NEEDED**

Utah Lighthouse Ministry is a non-profit organization which is helping thousands of Mormons to come to the knowledge of the truth. This ministry also provides help to two Rescue Missions (Rescue Missions preach the Gospel to the unfortunate, alcoholics and drug addicts, as well as feed, clothe and sleep the poor). All gifts given to Utah Lighthouse Ministry are tax-deductible.

At the present time a number of Mormons are trying to find ways to stop this work. We feel, however, that we have the truth on our side, and if our readers continue to support the work, we are confident we will prevail. Even those who cannot help financially, can stand with us in prayer.

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**LOST & FOUND?**

Spalding’s Manuscript and 116 Book of Mormon pages

A few months ago a reporter from one of the largest newspapers in the United States asked us if it was true that the Mormon Church had bought the long-lost Solomon Spalding manuscript for $6,000,000. We replied that we had no information to support such an accusation. It is known, of course, that Spalding prepared a manuscript on the inhabitants of ancient America, and we have published it in its entirety in our book, Did Spalding Write the Book of Mormon? Many people, however, feel that Spalding wrote another manuscript (now lost) which was the true source of the Book of Mormon. Although we have tried to keep an open mind on this matter, we have never put much stock in this theory. In any case, it was this manuscript to which the reporter was referring. In other words, he was trying to find out if it was true that the Mormon Church had paid $6,000,000 to suppress the fact that Spalding was the real author of the Book of Mormon.

Some time after this, we received a phone call which seems to explain the source of the rumor. The woman on the phone told us that if we would call a Mr. D_____ in St. James, New York, within half an hour, he could give us the details concerning the rediscovery of Spalding’s manuscript. The number we were given was 516-862-6448. We believed that someone might be playing a joke on us, but since the area code (516) was for the state of New York, we decided to take a chance. At first Mr. D. seemed rather indignant about the intrusion and was reluctant to talk about the matter, but with some prompting, he finally told us that he had discovered Spalding’s lost manuscript. In this and other phone conversations he revealed that he had found the 339-page manuscript in an old piano. He not only claimed that he found the manuscript, but he maintained that he also had a sixteen-page document written by Sidney Rigdon in which he confessed the part he played in the whole deception. This was not all, however; he also found an 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon which was marked to reveal the portions which were plagiarized from the Spalding manuscript.
We must admit that at first this all sounded very impressive, and we were certainly prepared to revise our views on the Spalding controversy if Mr. D. had the documents which he spoke of. Unfortunately, however, it soon became apparent that there were serious problems in this man’s story—problems that make it almost impossible to believe. To begin with, the claims are so sensational that they tend to make a person suspicious. If Mr. D. had claimed to have either the Spalding manuscript or the Rigdon confession, this would have been exciting enough, but for him to have stated he had both seemed just too good to be true. It is now obvious that although Mr. D. makes fantastic claims, he does not seem to be willing to back them up with any evidence. When we asked if we could examine the documents, he replied no, but said we could talk to Howard Davis and he could tell us all about the matter.

We were surprised that we were referred to Mr. Davis. The reader will remember that in Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon? Davis maintained that at least part of the Spalding manuscript was in the Mormon Church archives and that handwriting experts have verified this claim. To admit that Mr. D. had the original manuscript would seem to cast doubt on this idea. In any case, we have since learned that Mr. Davis has not actually seen the documents but is merely depending on this man’s word. Mr. D. also stated that Walter Martin had been to his home in St. James, N. Y., to see the documents. When we called Martin’s office, however, his staff told us that they knew absolutely nothing about the matter.

In a telephone conversation with Wesley P. Walters, Mr. D. claimed that a newspaper reporter had been out to his house to see the material. When Walters called the reporter, however, he said that he had never been to the man’s house, although he had talked to him on the phone. Mr. D. also told Wesley Walters that he had a report prepared at the F.B.I. laboratory which proved that the paper in the Spalding manuscript dated to the period between 1808 and 1811. He also said that he had sent information verifying the authenticity of the document to Dartmouth College. We felt that it was unlikely that an employee of the F.B.I. would use its laboratory to authenticate private papers which have no relationship to law enforcement, and when Mr. Walters called Dartmouth College, he was told that Mr. D. had not provided any documentation concerning the manuscript.

Mr. D. stated that he was thinking of using the manuscript to stir up the Spalding family to sue the Mormon Church, or else he might just lock it up and not let anyone see it for a hundred years. Taken as a whole, his story reminded us of some of the tales we have been told by con men who pass through the Rescue Mission. They always give tantalizing accounts of what they can provide in the future, but when they are pressed for evidence, they are unable to come up with anything tangible. Now, we certainly would not accuse Mr. D. of forgery. We have no evidence that he has forged any documents. As far as we can tell, the manuscripts either exist only in his own fertile imagination, or he is committing a deliberate hoax. One supporter of the Spalding theory has strongly urged that nothing be printed about this matter and it has been suggested that Mr. D. is so eccentric that he might burn the manuscripts if we publish a critical article. We believe, however, that the whole matter sounds suspiciously like Joseph Smith’s story of the gold plates, and we feel that Mr. D. should be pressured into either bringing forth his evidence or admitting that he has none.

**LEHI’S LOST BOOK**

Mormon leaders often charge that a number of books have been lost or suppressed from the Bible, but they seldom mention the fact that Joseph Smith lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript. This portion was known as “the book of Lehi.” The first edition of the Book of Mormon, published in 1830, contains a “Preface” by “The Author.” This “Preface” has been completely removed from later editions. It was apparently embarrassing to the Mormon leaders because it told how Joseph Smith lost the “Book of Lehi”:

**PREFACE.**

To the Reader—

As many false reports have been circulated respecting the following work, . . . I would inform you that I translated, by the gift and power of God, and caused to be written, one hundred and sixteen pages, the which I took from the Book of Lehi, . . . which said account, some person or persons have stolen and kept from me, notwithstanding my utmost exertions to recover it again—and being commanded of the Lord that I should not translate the same over again, for Satan had put it into their hearts to tempt the Lord their God, by altering the words, that they did read contrary from that which I translated and caused to be written: and if I should bring forth the same words again, or, in other words, if I should translate the same over again, they would publish that which they had stolen, and Satan would stir up the hearts of this generation, that they might not receive this work: but behold the Lord said unto me, I will not suffer that Satan shall accomplish his evil design in this thing: therefore thou shalt translate from the plates of Nephi, until ye come to that which ye have; and behold ye shall publish it as the record of Nephi; and thus I will confound those who have altered my words. . . . The Author.
Joseph Smith’s mother gave this information concerning the lost “Book of Lehi”:

Martin Harris, having written some one hundred and sixteen pages for Joseph, asked permission of my son to carry the manuscript home with him, in order to let his wife read it, . . .

Joseph . . . inquired of the Lord to know if he might do as Martin Harris had requested, but was refused. . . . Joseph inquired again, but received a second refusal. Still, Martin Harris persisted as before, and Joseph applied again, but the last answer was not like the two former ones. In this the Lord permitted Martin Harris to take the manuscript home with him, on condition that he would exhibit it to none, save five individuals . . . Mr. Harris had been absent nearly three weeks, and Joseph had received no intelligence whatever from him, . . . we saw him [Harris] walking with a slow and measured tread towards the house, . . . Harris pressed his hands upon his temples, and cried out, in a tone of deep anguish, “Oh, I have lost my soul! I have lost my soul!”

Joseph, . . . sprang from the table, exclaiming, “Martin, have you lost that manuscript?” . . .

“Yes, it is gone,” replied Martin, “and I know not where.”

“Oh, my God!” said Joseph, clinching his hands, “All is lost! All is lost! What shall I do? I have sinned—it is I who tempted the wrath of God.” . . . He wept and groaned, and walked the floor continually . . . Joseph continued, pacing back and forth, meantime weeping and grieving, until about sunset . . .

The manuscript has never been found; and there is no doubt but Mrs. Harris took it from the drawer, with the view of retaining it, until another translation should be given, then, to alter the original translation, for the purpose of showing a discrepancy between them, and thus make the whole appear to be a deception. (Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet, pages 117, 118, 120-123)

We have always believed that if the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon could be found, it would be one of the most important developments in Mormon history. There is at least one printed report that these lost pages were not destroyed immediately. In a statement published in 1888, W. R. Hine wrote:

Soon I learned that Jo claimed to be translating the plates in Badger’s Tavern, in Colesville, three miles from my house. . . . Martin’s wife cooked for them, and one day while they were at dinner she put one hundred and sixteen pages, the first part they had translated, in her dress bosom and went out. . . .

Dr. Seymour came along and she gave them to him to read and told him not to let them go. Dr. Seymour lived one and a half miles from me. He read most of it to me when my daughter Irene was born; he read them to his patients about the country. It was a description of the mounds about the country and similar to the “Book of Mormon”. . . . Martin Harris . . . has many times admitted to me that this statement about his wife and the one hundred and sixteen pages, as above stated, is true. (Naked Truths About Mormonism, Oakland, California, January 1888, page 2)

Wesley P. Walters did some original research and found that Dr. Seymour was in the area at about that time, but he was unable to find if there was any truth to the story that he had the missing pages. At any rate, Mark Hofmann, who has become famous because of his discoveries of early Mormon documents, has been diligently searching for the 116 pages. In the Sunstone Review, September 1982, page 18, we read the following:

REVIEW: Is there anything you know exists that you are looking for specifically?

HOFMANN: I’m hoping the lost 116 manuscript pages exist.

REVIEW: Do you have any evidence that they exist?

HOFMANN: I’ve heard a lot of rumors, and I’ve tracked down lots of leads. In fact, I have spent thousands of dollars in the pursuit of them, phone calls, research, and trips back and forth to the East.

Some time after this was written, we heard that the missing pages had been located and read by different individuals and that the contents were “dynamite.” We now believe that a document purporting to be the missing portion of the Book of Mormon has been located. Unfortunately, however, there seems to be concern that it is a forgery. It is apparently not the original document, only a handwritten copy. Furthermore, it is supposed to bear some evidence of being written after the Book of Mormon was printed. It is reported that it resembles (at least to some extent) the Book of Mormon story as we have it today but also contains information on money-digging—a practice Joseph Smith was involved in just before he wrote the Book of Mormon (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 32-49D).

We cannot, of course, make any real judgment as to the authenticity of the manuscript until we have a chance to examine it. At the present time we are trying to track down the exact location of the document. If any of our readers have any information about the matter we would certainly appreciate it if they would contact us. We hope to print more on this matter in the future.
A TIGHT SPOT

The theft of the 116 pages placed Joseph Smith in a very embarrassing position. Arthur Budvarson observed:

This “Preface” of the 1830 Edition (omitted in later editions) explains how, “one hundred and sixteen pages” of the original translation were stolen by “designing persons.”

This afforded a remarkable opportunity for Joseph Smith to have proven to the world that the work was true. All he needed to do was to reproduce an exact copy of the stolen pages, then perhaps even the thieves would have been converted! (The stolen pages were written in longhand and any alterations could have been easily detected.)

But Joseph had failed to make a copy of his writings, so it was not possible for him to make an exact duplicate. In order to get around this, he says that God commanded him that he “should not translate the same over again . . .”

This one incident alone (the above “Preface” by the “Author”) furnishes positive proof that the Book of Mormon is not a God-given, angel-protected book! (*The Book of Mormon Examined*, La Mesa, California, 1959, pages 13-14)

The Mormon writer Sidney B. Sperry attempted to reply to Mr. Budvarson’s charges:

Now, there might be some logic to Mr. Budvarson’s allegations if Joseph Smith had translated the Book of Mormon in the mechanical fashion suggested by David Whitmer and dealt with in our previous chapter. But Joseph Smith did not simply read off a word-for-word translation dictated by a divine source. If the translation had been effected in that manner, he doubtless could have reproduced an “exact copy of the stolen pages” for the thieves who had purloined the manuscript. Since he did not make a mechanical translation, he was in the position of any translator who would find it impossible to reproduce exactly his original translation, amounting to one hundred and sixteen pages in longhand. Another translation could reproduce the sense of the original but would not duplicate it word for word. The Lord knew this, and therefore instructed the prophet to translate other plates that gave a somewhat parallel but more spiritual account than that contained in the hundred and sixteen pages of stolen material. Thus we see again how Mr. Budvarson’s case breaks down . . . he is making woefully extravagant claims. He is whistling in the dark in the dark cemetery of his alleged “proofs.” (*The Problems of the Book of Mormon*, page 196)

From Dr. Sperry’s statement it would appear that he missed the whole point of Joseph Smith’s “Preface” to the first edition of the Book of Mormon. The “Preface” indicates that Joseph Smith could “bring forth the same words again,” but that if he did his enemies would alter the words in the stolen manuscript so that they would “read contrary from that which I translated . . .”

Although the “Preface” concerning the lost “Book of Lehi” has been deleted, the *Doctrine and Covenants* still contains a revelation which plainly shows that Dr. Sperry was wrong concerning this matter:

Now, behold, I say unto you, that because you delivered up those writings . . . into the hands of a wicked man, you have lost them.

And you also lost your gift at the same time, and your mind became darkened . . .

And, behold, Satan hath put it into their hearts to alter the words which you have caused to be written, or which you have translated, which have gone out of your hands . . .

Behold, I say unto you, that you shall not translate again those words which have gone forth out of your hands;

For, behold, they shall not accomplish their evil designs in lying against those words. For, behold, if you should bring forth the same words they will say that you have lied and that you have pretended to translate, but that you have contradicted yourself.

And, behold, they will publish this, and Satan will harden the hearts of the people to stir them up to anger against you, that they will not believe my words. (*Doctrine and Covenants* 10:1, 2, 10, 30-32)

The revelation published in the *Doctrine and Covenants* and the “Preface” found in the first edition of the Book of Mormon both seem to teach exactly the opposite of what Dr. Sperry would have us believe.

M. T. Lamb devotes a great deal of space to this matter in *The Golden Bible*, pages 118-126. We do not have room to quote all of this material, but on page 119 this interesting comment appears:

The general belief was that she [Mrs. Harris] burned it. But the prophet Joseph evidently was afraid she had not, but had secretly hid it, for the purpose of entrapping him, should he ever attempt to reproduce the pages. If the work was really of God, the manuscript could be reproduced word for word without a mistake. If, however, Joseph inspired it himself, his memory would hardly be adequate to such a task, without numberless changes or verbal differences—and thus “give himself away,” since he loudly professed to be all the time aided “by the gift and power of God.”
LETTERS

Utah Lighthouse Ministry receives many letters from those who read our publications. While most are favorable, we do receive some that are critical. Below are extracts from some of the letters.

I appreciated receiving the slanted and false information concerning the Mormon Church. I do like your title, but it should be changed to more directly represent you. The new name should be Utah Lighthouse for the Blind because you certainly try to blind people from the truth.

Please keep me on the mailing list and let me know what other material you have available because I can read it in lieu of the funny papers and get a better laugh which is very healthful. (Letter from Texas)

Thank-you for having sent me your book while I was in Japan. It was instrumental in helping a girl who got saved out of the Church clear up some lingering doubts as well as help another Mormon girl come to Christ on August 11. Both are friends of mine and are Japanese.

The first girl . . . was saved in December. She needed to clear some things up before requesting to be excommunicated. The book was so overwhelming because its so thoroughly documented and that’s what’s needed. She used it to help write a witnessing letter that she sent out to over 50 of her friends telling why she left the Church.

____ and I met with her friend____ to tell her why ____ was leaving the Church and so we could witness to her . . . . After our 3rd meeting she renounced the Church and accepted Christ. Now ______ and ______ are happily rejoicing together now that they are sisters in the Lord.

I thank the Lord for having helped you do your excellent research in your books. It definitely is bringing forth fruit. John 4:36 . . . Please send me another copy of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? . . . (Letter from Japan)

Every now and then I recieve literature from you in the mail and I want it to stop!

I believe in Mormonism with every fiber of my being and I know for a fact that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only true church on the face of this earth! . . . Your book real[ly] strengthened my testimony!

All I can say to you now is that I don’t want any more of your literature to arrive in my mail box again.

I do not want the literature from the Sons and Daughters of Perdition in my house.

There is a law against those who repetedly keep sending mail to someone who doesn’t want it.

And I won’t hesitate one second to take you to court. You may have been in contact with Mormons that won’t fight. Well I’m not that way and you’re no match for me! I can make you regret the day you ever heard of Mormonism and I won’t hesitate to prove it.

Consider yourself warned! (Letter from Arizona)

I was raised a mormon all my life and three ago I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior.

I first became acquainted with your writings in an article in the Moody Monthly (June 1980). I noticed the magazine at a friend’s house and the cover caught my eye . . . the Lord blessed me with a christian neighbor. . . I started attending a Bible Study class and for the first time in my life I heard “God’s Word.” . . . when I saw the Moody Monthly and read your article and others who had been mormons just like myself I knew what I had to do.

I got down on my knees and prayed to receive Jesus into my heart. Such peace and joy I had never known. (Letter from California)

I was saved because of your ministry. I have a deep love for you both. I hope to support you more in the future. (Letter from Wyoming)

I’m 18 years old and technically a Mormon, though I havn’t believed in it for about 4 years now. I was raised in a very active Mormon family . . . I was lucky enough to be born with a some what open mind and began to slowly realise the falsity of the Mormon church. Though I am attending Brigham Young University, it is for academic reasons, not religious.

I stumbled upon your book, “Mormonism—Shadow or Reality,” and it was the answer to my prayers. At last a comprehensive, scholarly debunking of Mormonism . . . Thank-you for writing it, . . . (Letter from Utah)
Please send . . . “Mormonism: Shadow or Reality.” . . . Being in Cedar City—so largely Mormon, and being Mormon myself, I have found it necessary to research both sides of Mormonism. Thus far, your indepth research is so overwhelming! It has changed my life. (Letter from Utah)

We wish we had a Million to send you. We are so greatful for all your efforts. You have done and are doing more than anyone to reach our Mormon friends. We do pray for your safety & efforts. (Letter from Utah)

I am always delighted to read your newsletter—Your material was partly responsible for my total emotional detachment from Mormonism, after I was saved. . . . Thank you for pointing it out for what it really was. I hope this small gift will help your cause in the lawsuit. . . . I look forward to hearing all about your court victories in a future newsletter. (Letter from Arkansas)

I want you to know that your ministry has been a major influence on my life! All for the better. Praise God and thank you. My father is on the high counsel and my whole family is Mormon. . . . I saw Sandra on John Ankerburg—What an impact. I love you guys you helped set me free! free indeed! We ordered Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? WOW. Then after reading some of that we ordered seven more in faith for my family. You have such an important ministry, . . . You sell those books so cheap and I wanted to be a small part of your ministry with this offering . . . and a big part with prayer. . . . we are now in the process of selling our possessions and preparing ourselves to be full-time missionaries. . . . We feel you are a part of our lives and ministry. You are a big part of why we’re going. . . . we love you. (Letter from Colorado)

I very very rarely correspond with publishers, editors, etc. concerning their work, but in your case I felt it was quite necessary not only to commend your work but to encourage its furtherance. . . . In an effort to learn more about the Mormon church in order to effectivly share Jesus with my wife’s friend, we began searching for sources in the University of Arizona Library, . . . and came across some fascinating materials. One such item was your Mormon Scriptures and the Bible, . . . Last week I read your Mormonism Like Watergate? Not only have these books opened my eyes to many facts about the Mormon church I did not know, but my own faith in the reality of Jesus has been strengthened.

One evening several weeks ago my wife . . . came home with your names as the definitive authorities on Mormon doctrine. I shared with her that I had been reading some of your work and was so impressed that I felt we should give a copy of one of your books to her Mormon friend. My wife said that she had met someone who had given her the name of a book which she felt would be better to give to a Mormon. To my amazement the book my wife had been referred to was Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? the same book I was recommending . . . Anyway, we have been so blessed and educated by your works that we would like to add as many as possible to our own resource library . . . you are in our prayers as we know the Mormon people are in yours. Be encouraged as you carry on with what God has called you to. (Letter from Arizona)

I read your book [Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?] . . . and “astonishment” is the only word I can find to describe what I felt. My astonishment was due to a very simple reason: I had never read such an excellent work about Mormonism and I didn’t even suspect that such a thing could have been written. . . . Some characteristics of your book caused me a very strong impression:

1. the avalanche of documents you quote and reproduce to prove your point;
2. the hability [sic] you show in dealing with all this material;
3. the scholarly way you treat every subject;
4. the honesty, rightness and inescapability of your conclusions;
5. the exegetical skill in the use of biblical texts to demonstrate, beyond any reasonable doubt, the fallacy of Mormon doctrines and claims;
6. the total absence, throughout the whole book, of defamatory and abusive language, imprecation, cursing and the like so commonly found in works of this sort.

The result, I tell you without any favour or flattering intention, is “a marvelous work and a wonder.” . . . It is to be lamented that a book like “Mormonism—Shadow or Reality” cannot be found in Portuguese. . . . What possibilities do you see of having one of your books translated into Portuguese? (I offer my services as a translator without charges, fees or costs of any kind). (Letter from Brazil)
MORONI OR SALAMANDER?
Reported Find of Letter by Book of Mormon Witness

For a month or two there have been rumors circulating that an extremely important letter written by Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris has been discovered. Although there has been an attempt to keep the matter quiet until the document has been published, we have been able to piece together the story and to learn of the remarkable contents of this letter. The document was apparently purchased by Mark Hofmann, a Mormon scholar who has made a number of significant discoveries in the last few years. Mr. Hofmann in turn sold the document to Steven Christensen, who is planning to publish it in *Sunstone.* (The mailing address for *Sunstone* is Box 2272, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110.)

Is It Authentic?

At the outset we should state that we have some reservations concerning the authenticity of the letter, and at the present time we are not prepared to say that it was actually penned by Martin Harris. The serious implications of this whole matter, however, cry out for discussion. If the letter is authentic, it is one of the greatest evidences against the divine origin of the Book of Mormon. If, on the other hand, it is a forgery, it needs to be exposed as such so that millions of people will not be mislead. We will give the reasons for our skepticism as we proceed with this article.

Since Martin Harris was one of the three special witnesses to the gold plates of the Book of Mormon (see his testimony in the front of the book), he is held in high esteem by the Mormon people. Mormon writers have commended him for his honesty. Although many Mormon critics may disagree with this view, everyone agrees that Harris played such an important role in early Mormonism that anything coming from his pen is of great significance. In this letter, written just after the Book of Mormon was published, we find these revealing statements concerning how Joseph Smith obtained the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated:

...I found it 4 years ago with my stone but only got it because of the enchantment the old spirit come to me 3 times in the same dream & says dig up the gold but when I take it up the next morning the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander in the bottom of the hole ... (Letter purported to have been written by Martin Harris to W. W. Phelps, dated October 23, 1830, typed extract)

The letter goes on to state that the “old spirit” struck Joseph Smith three times. This story definitely links Joseph Smith to the magical practices attributed to him in the affidavits published in E. D. Howe’s book in 1834. For instance, Willard Chase testified:

In the month of June, 1827, Joseph Smith, Sen., related to me the following story: “That some years ago, a spirit had appeared to Joseph his son, in a vision, and informed him that in a certain place there was a record on plates of gold, ... He repaired to the place of deposit and demanded the book, which was in a stone box, ... He saw in the box something like a toad, which soon assumed the appearance of a man, and struck him on the side of his head. Not being discouraged at trifles, he again stooped down and strove to take the book, when the spirit struck him again, and knocked him three or four rods, and hurt him prodigiously. (*Mormonism Unvailed,* page 242)

The reader will notice that in the statements reported to have come from Joseph Smith’s father, the spirit
which struck Joseph was transformed from “something like a toad.” The letter, of course, says that Joseph Smith identified the toad-like creature as a “white salamander.” Salamanders were important to those who practiced magic and dug for buried treasures in Joseph Smith’s time. Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language (Unabridged) gives this information about salamanders: “1. A mythological reptile resembling the lizard supposed to be able to endure or live in fire. 2. A spirit supposed to live in fire; an elemental spirit in Paracelsus’ theory of elementals.” In his book, The History of Magic, page 77, Kurt Seligmann reported:

Agrippa, basing his opinion on Aristotle, Dioscorides and Pliny the Elder, said that fire shelters salamanders and crickets. A simple experiment would have proven that salamanders and crickets die in fire, but Agrippa shared with the past an aversion to experimentation. From Pliny we learn that similar beliefs concerning the marvelous virtues of salamanders existed in Egypt and Babylon. . . . Thus did a superstitious belief perpetuate itself for about two thousand years.

Joseph Ennemoser said that “Paracelsus deserves one of the most eminent places in the history of magic.” Paracelsus, who was born in 1493, wrote a book entitled, A Book on Nymphs, Sylphs, Pygmies, and Salamanders, and on the Other Spirits. Henry E. Sigerist wrote the following in an introduction to this book:

Such strange creatures are the mysterious beings—Paracelsus usually calls them ding, things—that inhabit the four elements, the nymphs, sylphs, pygmies and salamanders and, related to them, the sirens, giants and dwarfs. . . . water is chaos to the nympha, earth to the pygmies, fire to the salamanders, while the sylphs have the same chaos as man. They are at home in their chaos and, therefore, nympha do not drown in water, pygmies are not choked in earth and salamanders do not burn in fire. This seems incredible but God is almighty. Why should he not be able to create such beings? . . . God created them for a special purpose—and here Paracelsus is writing as a theologian and scientist. God created these elemental beings as makers and guardians of the treasures of the earth. There is an infinite wealth of minerals in the earth. They are made in the depths of mountains under the influence of fire, and this is where the salamanders come in. Once the mineral ores are made they are guarded, those in the earth by the pygmies, those on the surface by the sylphs, and those at the bottom of the waters by the nympha. (Four Treatises of Theophrastus Von Hohenheim, Called Paracelsus, Baltimore, 1941, pages 216-220)

Since the gold plates of the Book of Mormon were considered to be a very valuable treasure, we can see why a believer in magic might choose to have a salamander guarding them.

According to the letter, Joseph Smith said he found the gold plates “4 years ago with my stone.” This statement seems to represent Martin Harris’ belief, for in an interview published in Tiffany’s Monthly about thirty years after the letter was supposed to have been written, Harris maintained that Joseph Smith found the plates by looking in a magical peep stone and that he also used the same stone to help a company of money-diggers search for buried treasure:

In this stone he could see many things to my certain knowledge. It was by means of this stone he first discovered these plates. . . .

Joseph had had this stone for some time. There was a company there in that neighborhood, who were digging for money supposed to have been hidden by the ancients. . . . They dug for money in Palmyra, Manchester, also in Pennsylvania and other places. When Joseph found this stone, there was a company digging in Harmony, Pa., and they took Joseph to look in the stone for them, and he did so for a while, and then he told them the enchantment was so strong that he could not see, and they gave it up. . . .

The money-diggers claimed that they had as much right to the plates as Joseph had, as they were in company together. They claimed that Joseph had been traitor, and had appropriated to himself that which belonged to them. . . . Joseph had before this described the manner of his finding the plates. He found them by looking in the stone found in the well of Mason Chase. (Interview with Martin Harris, published in Tiffany’s Monthly, 1859, pages 163, 164, 167 and 169)

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 32-38, we show that Joseph Smith got in serious trouble because he used this stone to help the money-diggers. On page 33 of that book we have a photograph of a document written by Justice Albert Neely. This document proves that Smith was a “glass looker” and that he was arrested, tried and found guilty by Justice Neely in Bainbridge, New York, in 1826.

In an affidavit published on pages 237-239 of Howe’s book, William Stafford gives this information concerning the Smith family:

. . . I have heard them tell marvelous tales, respecting the discoveries they had made in their peculiar occupation of money digging. They would say, . . . in such a hill, on a certain man’s farm, there were deposited keys, barrels and hogsheds of coined silver and gold—bars of gold, golden images, brass kettles filled with gold and silver . . .
Joseph Smith, Sen., came to me one night, and told me, that Joseph Jr. had been looking in his glass, and had seen, not many rods from his house, two or three kegs of gold and silver, some feet under the surface of the earth; . . . After we had dug a trench about five feet in depth, . . . the old man . . . went to the house to inquire of young Joseph . . . Joseph had remained all this time in the house, looking in his stone and watching the motion of the evil spirit—that he saw the spirit come up . . . it caused the money to sink.

The letter which was supposed to have been written by Martin Harris also mentions the “kettles” containing treasures and the spirits who are in charge of the treasures: “. . . Joseph [Sr.?] often sees Spirits here with great kettles of coin money it was the Spirits who brought it up rock because Joseph made no attempt on their money . . .”

Just An Old Spirit

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 136-137, we discussed the problem over the name of the angel who was supposed to have revealed the gold plates to Joseph Smith. In Joseph Smith’s History, first published in the Times and Seasons in 1842, Smith gave the name of the Angel as NEPHI. The 1851 edition of the Pearl of Great Price also used the name Nephi: “He called me by name and said . . . that his name was Nephi” (page 41). Modern editions of the Pearl of Great Price and other Church publications now give the name as MORONI. The letter attributed to Martin Harris not only fails to give the name of the Angel, but it also omits the word “Angel” altogether! The personage who takes the form of a “white salamander” is only referred to as an “old spirit.” The letter gives far more support to the views which appear in a series of articles published in the Palmyra Reflector in 1831 than it does to the story now published by the Mormon Church. The following appears in one of the articles:

. . . the elder Smith declared that his son Joe had seen the spirit, (which he then described as a little old man with a long beard,) and was informed that he (Jo) under certain circumstances, eventually should obtain great treasures, and that in due time he (the spirit) would furnish him (Jo) with a book, which would give an account of the ancient inhabitants . . . (Palmyra Reflector, as cited in A New Witness For Christ In America, vol. 1, page 289)

On page 291 of the same book, we find the following taken from the Reflector:

It is well known that Joe Smith never pretended to have any communion with angels, until a long period after the pretended finding of his book, and that the juggling of himself or father went no further than the pretended faculty of seeing wonders in a “peep stone,” and the occasional interview with the spirit, supposed to have the custody of hidden treasures . . .

Alvin’s Remains?

In his affidavit, Willard Chase gave this information concerning what occurred after the spirit struck Joseph Smith:

. . . he enquired why he could not obtain the plates; to which the spirit made reply, because you have not obeyed your orders. He then enquired when he could have them, and was answered thus: come one year from this day, and bring with you your oldest brother, and you shall have them. This spirit, he said was the spirit of the prophet who wrote this book . . . Before the expiration of the year, his oldest brother died; which the old man said was an accidental providence!

Joseph went one year from that day, to demand the book, and the spirit enquired for his brother, and he said that he was dead. The spirit then commanded him to come again, in just one year . . . (Mormonism Unveiled, pages 242-243)

This account is very similar to an account written by a faithful Mormon named Joseph Knight:

Joseph says, “when can I have it?” The answer was the 22nt Day of September next if you Bring the right person with you. Joseph says, “who is the right Person?” The answer was “your oldest Brother.”

But before September Came his oldest Brother Died . . . he went to the place and the personage appear and told him he Could not have it now. But the 22nt Day of September nex . . . if he Brot with him the right person. Joseph says, “who is the right Person?” The answer was you will know. Then he looked in his glass and found it was Emma Hale . . . (Brigham Young University Studies, Autumn 1976, page 31)

In the letter purported to have been written by Martin Harris we find the same story. The letter has an additional element, however. After Joseph Smith tells the “old spirit” that his brother Alvin has died, there is a comment made about bringing what remains. If this refers to Alvin’s corpse, then it adds a very spooky element to the story. Graves and human remains are, of course, very important to some of those who use seer stones and practice magic. In this regard, it is interesting to note that there was a rumor that Alvin’s body had been disinterred. On September 29, 1824, just one week after Joseph Smith was supposed to have been visited by the Angel at the Hill Cumorah, his father printed the following in the Wayne Sentinel, the local newspaper:
WHEREAS reports have been industriously put in circulation that my son Alvin had been removed from the place of his interment and dissected, which reports, . . . are peculiarly calculated to harrow up the mind of a parent and deeply wound the feelings of relations—therefore, for the purpose of ascertaining the truth of such reports, I, with some of my neighbors, this morning [September 25] repaired to the grave, and removing the earth, found the body which had not been disturbed. (Wayne Sentinel, September 29, 1824)

A Puzzling Find

Since we have been deeply involved in research having to do with the relationship of Mormonism to magic and have written a book entitled, Mormonism, Magic and Masonry, we were delighted to get the report that Martin Harris had written a letter relating to the subject. As we learned of the contents, we felt that it would provide additional evidence to support our thesis. Some time later, we were told of another letter, written by W. W. Phelps, which seemed to prove the authenticity of the letter attributed to Harris. This letter is printed in Howe’s book, pages 273-274. In the letter, Phelps tells of Martin Harris’ statements concerning the Book of Mormon. There are some remarkable parallels between the two letters. Both letters refer to the Urim and Thummim as “silver spectacles.” Both accounts tell of Martin Harris taking a copy of the Book of Mormon characters to “Utica, Albany and New York,” and both talk of the Book of Mormon language as “shorthand Egyptian.” Since Phelps’ letter is dated January 15, 1831, (less than three months after the letter which was reported to have been written by Harris), it seemed safe to conclude that Phelps used the Harris letter in preparing his own. In all fairness, however, we made another discovery which we feel we must report. Just two pages after Phelps letter, we found a statement written by E. D. Howe which is strangely similar to the “Harris” letter. The reader will remember that the letter said, “the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander in the bottom of the hole.” E. D. Howe’s statement reads as follows “. . . looked into the hole, where he saw a toad, which immediately transformed itself into a spirit, . . .” Notice that both accounts use the words “the hole” as well as “spirit,” and the words “transfigured himself” resemble “transformed itself.” Howe’s statement appears to be his own summary of the Willard Chase affidavit which we have already cited: “He saw in the box something like a toad, which soon assumed the appearance of a man . . .”

That Howe’s statement (Mormonism Unvailed, page 276) is so much like the one in the “Harris” letter is a little disturbing. Even more disconcerting, however, is the fact that it appears just two pages from a letter by W. W. Phelps which also bears remarkable parallels. This, of course, might all be a coincidence, and if it can be established that the letter was actually penned before Howe’s book was published in 1834, it will probably be accepted as a genuine letter. As we understand it, the Church’s handwriting expert, Dean Jessee, feels that the signature was penned by Martin Harris, but so far no tests on the paper have been completed. We feel that the letter should be made available to other handwriting experts, and that the public should be informed where the letter was originally obtained. We have heard that there is a red postal mark on the original letter and that the amount of postage is correct for a letter from Palmyra to Canandaigua. Although the average person would have a difficult time forging these things, there are probably a number of people who could do the job. In an interview with Sunstone Review, September 1982, page 16, Mark Hofmann made these comments concerning forgeries:

There have been all kinds of Lincoln forgeries . . . To date that hasn’t been a real problem with Mormon documents. Now, however, with the publicity that’s been given the tremendous amount of money to be realized (for example, the Trib mentioned a $30,000 figure for the Lucy Mack Smith letter), there may be some temptation to forge.

Although a great deal of the contents of the “Harris” letter can also be found in Howe’s book, there are some portions that resemble other writings. For instance, the letter relates a conversation Joseph had with the “old spirit”: “. . . Joseph says when can I have it . . .” This is identical to Joseph Knight’s statement published in BYU Studies, Autumn 1976, page 31: “Joseph says, ‘when can I have it?’”

While we would really like to believe that the letter attributed to Harris is authentic, we do not feel that we can endorse it until further evidence comes forth. If any of our readers have any information about the matter we would appreciate hearing about it. We understand that an article concerning the subject will be published in Time magazine.

AT LAST!

An Index to Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?

Although Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? is our most important work, we have never taken the time to prepare an index. Fortunately, Michael Briggs has seen the need and has prepared a 38 page index. This should be a great help to our readers. Price $2.00 (Mail orders add 10%)
COVER-UP ON LAWSUIT

As we have indicated in previous issues of the Messenger, on April 28, 1983, the Mormon scholar Andrew Ehat filed a lawsuit against us (Jerald and Sandra Tanner) in an attempt to stop publication of some extracts from the diaries of Joseph Smith’s private secretary, William Clayton. Because these diaries contain embarrassing material on the origin of polygamy and other matters, they have been suppressed in the vault of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church. In 1979-80 Mr. Ehat gained access to a copy of the diaries and made the revealing extracts. Ehat tried very hard to keep the material from falling into the hands of critics of the Mormon Church, but a member of a bishopric in Provo duplicated the material and it was widely circulated by Mormon scholars at Brigham Young University. These extracts subsequently found their way into our hands and we printed them in the book Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered.

We feel that the copyright laws do not support Ehat’s contention and believe the suit is doomed to failure. The following is plainly stated in Section 103(b) of Title 17, United States Code: “The copyright in a compilation or derivative work extends only to the material contributed by the author of such work, as distinguished from the preexisting material employed in the work, and does not imply any exclusive right in the preexisting material.”

Since Ehat’s notes are composed of extracts from “preexisting” material (i.e., the diaries of William Clayton), he cannot claim copyright protection.

False Testimony

In the Messenger for November 1983 we indicated that “it seems very likely that Ehat is claiming a copyright on some material he derived from other scholars. In order to get to the bottom of this matter, we are going to subpoena Ehat, Cook, Allen and possibly other Mormon scholars to testify concerning the matter.” We have now taken the depositions of a number of Mormon scholars. These depositions clearly show that Mr. Ehat covered up the truth concerning how he obtained his material.

In his complaint against us, Mr. Ehat indicated that he “was given permissive access to the private, heretofore-unpublished Nauvoo Journals of one William Clayton then deposited with the Office of the First Presidency . . . from which he permissively extracted certain notes, quotes and extracts. . . . From said notes plaintiff, in collaboration with one Lyndon W. Cook, produced a book titled The Words of Joseph Smith, the proprietary interest and copyright interest of which was assigned . . . to the Religious Studies Center, an agency of Brigham Young University, . . . At no time has the plaintiff given the defendants, or either of them, any permission to publish or print any notes taken by him from the William Clayton Journal.”

We have always felt that Ehat had an extremely weak case. The depositions tend to support our position. Before citing these depositions we should say that they were provided by the Certified Shorthand Reporters and are subject to corrections before being filed with the court. In his deposition, James B. Allen, formerly Assistant Church Historian, revealed that the material which Ehat printed in The Words of Joseph Smith came directly from him. This amounted to 12 of the 88 pages we published in Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered. Allen made it very clear that he had personally typed these pages and claimed that “I had kind of a moral obligation not to indiscriminately let my notes out. . . . I asked Mr. Ehat specifically . . . that when you put this in your book, The Words of Joseph Smith, please cite me as the source because I don’t want any questions about anything. . . . I said, cite me as the source because I’ve had legitimate access and everyone knows I’ve had legitimate access to the diaries” (Deposition of James B. Allen, Civil No. C-83-1593C, page 29).

As we indicated in a previous issue of the Messenger, Ehat did include a footnote thanking Allen for the material. In his deposition he admitted that the pages were actually typed by James B. Allen. While this seems to destroy his copyright claim on the quotations in The Words of Joseph Smith, he still maintains that he has a copyright on the other 76 pages. When we questioned Ehat as to how he got these pages, he replied:

In doing research in early LDS history in 1979 plaintiff approached Don Schmidt, Church Archivist, and inquired about some entries in William Clayton’s Journal in which he was interested. He ultimately received permission to read all three of the journals noted above. While reading he made notes of the dates of the journal entries in which he was primarily concerned. In 1979 and 1980 he was given permission to type out from a complete reproduction (a typescript) of those three diaries the extracts that he had earlier noted. (Andrew Ehat’s Answers to Interrogatories, November 21, 1983, pages 3-4)

It is plain from this that Mr. Ehat’s extracts came from a typed copy rather than the original diaries. In taking Ehat’s deposition, our lawyer, Brian Bernard, asked him
who had given him permission to see the typescript. Ehat replied that it was Donald Schmidt (mistakenly recorded as Smith), the Church Archivist:

Q. Who gave you the permission to see that typescript copy? Did Don Smith do that?
A. Yes.

Q. Okay. Was anybody else involved in giving you permission to see that typescript that you’re aware of?
A. No, not that I’m aware of. (Deposition of Andrew Ehat, page 43)

After this testimony was given, we subpoenaed Donald Schmidt. The Church’s lawyers fought the matter and filed a motion to quash the subpoena. They apparently realized, however, that we would win and withdrew their objection. In his testimony, Schmidt not only denied that he had given Ehat access to a typescript, but he claimed that he was not even aware of a typescript of the Clayton diaries:

Q. He’s indicated in his deposition that after that time he had access to a type script of the Clayton Journals and that he acquired access to that type script from you.
A. From me?

MR. BARNARD. Okay. Prior to 1979, had you heard that there was a type script of those volumes of the Clayton Journals?
A. No.

Q. The deposition of Andrew Ehat, page 43, indicates that Andrew Ehat was given permission by you to see a type script copy. You have no recollection of that?
A. Not of those diaries. It is possible that he is confused with some type script which we have of other Clayton material.

Q. And to your knowledge there is no type script of those three volumes?
A. I’m not aware of any type script other than very recently. (Deposition of Donald Schmidt, pages 20-23)

The Church’s lawyer Bruce Findley indicated that he was the first one to tell Mr. Schmidt about the typescript: “I might interject I think he heard it from me in connection with this case” (Ibid., page 21).

We took the deposition of Professor Richard L. Anderson of Brigham Young University. Anderson had examined the original diaries, but was also unaware of a typescript. The truth about the typescript finally came out when we were taking the testimony of James B. Allen:

Q. Okay. Are you aware of any type script of those journals?
A. Well—.

Q. A verbatim type script of those three journals?
A. Yes, I’m aware of a verbatim type script of the journals.

Q. Okay. And when was the first time you were aware of that?
A. When I made one.

Q. The type script that Andy Ehat had access to he described as being approximately 300 pages long of double-spaced typing.
A. Mine could possibly fit into that category, yes.

MR. BARNARD. Did Andy Ehat ever have access to that type script?
A. Andy Ehat did not have access to that type script and I do not think Andy Ehat knew I was preparing the type script. . . . and certainly he did not have access to it. . . . when I left at night I locked the material I was making in my own desk and put the key in my pocket and went home. So I don’t know of any way that Andy could have had access to my type script.

MR. BARNARD. Did you tell Don Schmidt?
A. I did not tell Don Schmidt although I’m sure Don Schmidt was aware that I was taking very extensive notes but I considered what I was taking to be my own particular scholarly property and that is the way it remained. (Deposition of James B. Allen, pages 20, 22, 24 and 25)

Dr. Allen admitted that there was one other person who had helped prepare the transcript and had a copy of it, but he did not want to reveal the name. The lawyer from Brigham Young University, in fact, instructed him not to tell who the other person was:

MR. BARNARD. Well I’m going to flat out ask you who that person was.
MISS PARK. I’ll instruct him not to answer.
MR. BARNARD. Okay. You’re going to take your attorney’s advice and not answer that question?
A. Yes.

Q. Do you know if that person has made any distribution of copies of those, copies of the copy that you gave to that person?
A. To my knowledge he has not and my firm assumption is that he is the kind of person that would not have but I do not have personal knowledge. That is a strong assumption on my part.

Q. Do you know if that person has let anybody else see your type script?
A. I do not believe he has but again, I do not have sure knowledge of it. (Ibid., pages 27-28)
The reader will remember that in his deposition, Ehat testified he got permission from Donald Schmidt to use the typescript, and when he was asked if anyone else was involved in giving him permission, he replied: “No.” One can only speculate as to why Ehat would go to such lengths to cover up the involvement of Jessee. Since Jessee was not the Archivist and had no real authority to show him Church documents, it is obvious that it would be better to say that Schmidt gave him permission.

However this may be, James B. Allen claimed on page 25 of his deposition that the typescript was “my own particular scholarly property.” Although he apparently made the typescript on his own authority, he claims that he was given special permission by the First Presidency of the Mormon Church to use the diaries for a biography of William Clayton and that it was his understanding that other scholars were not allowed to use them. He claimed, in fact, that he was “miffed” when he learned Ehat had material beyond the 12 pages he had supplied him with:

A. . . . I do remember asking Don questions like where did he get it . . . I remember my concerns at the time as I talked with other people was where did Andy that get access to this material. . . . I remember talking with several people, Don Schmidt and other people up in the Historical Department and people at BYU like Noel Reynolds and others and I was miffed. I didn’t know where he got access to it and that was the nature of the conversations I had with anyone.

Q. After the notes were taken from Cook and distributed and you described yourself as being miffed, were you miffed because you discovered the extent of Ehat’s notes?

A. Yes, I think so. It was a surprise to me to know that he had that much verbatim material from the Clayton Diaries. I knew he had what I gave him and I, of course, knew he had things from here and there but I was not aware that he had that much from the Clayton Journals and that is why I was miffed, if that is the proper word. Surprised.

Q. And I take it from your previous testimony that the reason you were surprised or miffed was because you thought you had been given some sort of special permission or exclusive permission to have access to those diaries?

A. That’s correct.

Q. Have you ever told anybody that the Clayton Diaries were not available for others to do research in?

A. I assume that I have because that was my understanding. (Deposition of Allen, pages 79-82)
After the Ehat notes got out, the President of Brigham Young University appointed Noel Reynolds to investigate the situation. One of Reynold’s concerns was whether Ehat had obtained the material surreptitiously. When Allen was asked if anyone had inquired how Ehat procured the material, he said: “... I believe that Noel Reynolds asked me specifically as part of his efforts to find out.” In compliance with a subpoena, Noel Reynolds turned over to us a note he had written concerning a conversation he had with a BYU professor who had obtained a copy of Ehat’s notes. We find the following in this note: “I began by explaining . . . the nature of the charge made against him by Andy Ehat, that is, that he had received and retained research materials which were stolen from a doctoral candidate. He indicated immediately 1) the concern that Andy may not have acquired the materials legitimately himself, . . .” When we questioned this professor concerning the matter, he said that it was his understanding that Ehat would not tell BYU officials where he had obtained the Clayton material.

While we feel that Ehat never had a case to begin with, the cover-up and false statements made concerning the way he obtained the Clayton material tend to make the whole matter absolutely ridiculous. Ehat accused us of causing him “irreparable damage” because we used his scholarly work product.

The truth of the matter, however, is that he never even made the transcription from the handwritten diaries. Instead, he relied upon the Allen-Jessee transcript which Dr. Allen calls “my own particular scholarly property.” This, of course, was done without Allen’s permission or knowledge.

Fortunately, the fact that the material which Ehat obtained did not come directly from the diaries does not invalidate its authenticity. Former Assistant Church Historian James B. Allen has checked our publication, Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered, and found that it is an accurate reproduction of the original diaries:

I can stipulate this: That whatever I have obviously, in the copy that I made, and the material that the Tanners published is just almost verbatim. There is little, tiny differences here and there but almost verbatim of that . . . (Deposition of James B. Allen, page 27)

In examining our records we find that over $9,000 has either been deposited with our lawyer or used to provide transportation for a witness. Fortunately, our friends have responded in a very generous way and most of this amount has been contributed. We really thank God for this show of support. So far we have no reason to believe that Ehat is planning on dropping this unjust suit. Our lawyer has filed a motion for dismissal, but if the judge does not grant this request, the case will go into court and expenses will continue to mount. We feel very confident that we will prevail in the end, and even though it costs a great deal of money it will be worth it. In addition to the legal expenses we have been faced with, we have spent countless hours working on this suit. We hope that some of our readers will consider contributing at this time so that we will meet all of our legal expenses and have enough left over to publish the truth about the matter to the world. All checks which are made out to UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY are tax-deductible. Our readers will notice also that we are still selling Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered for only $3.00 a copy (mail orders please add 10% for postage and handling).

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The Mormon scholar Andrew Ehat filed this lawsuit against us on April 28, 1983, in an attempt to stop publication of some extracts from the diaries of Joseph Smith’s private secretary, William Clayton. Because these diaries contain embarrassing material on the origin of polygamy and other matters, they have been suppressed in the vault of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church. In 1979–80 Mr. Ehat gained access to a copy of the diaries and made the revealing extracts. Ehat tried very hard to keep the material from falling into the hands of critics of the Mormon Church, but a member of a bishopric in Provo surreptitiously duplicated the material and it was widely circulated by Mormon scholars at Brigham Young University. These extracts subsequently found their way into our hands, and we printed them in the book Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered.

**Injunction Removed**

Mr. Ehat claimed that we had violated the copyright law when we printed the Clayton notes. We argued, however, that Ehat could not possibly have a copyright interest in material taken from Clayton’s diaries and refused to settle out of court.

Judge A. Sherman Christensen commenced the trial on March 21, 1984, and on March 25 he announced that we were correct in saying that Mr. Ehat had no copyright in the Clayton material: “2. That the plaintiff has no copyrightable interest in the so-called Ehat notes nor their ideas nor content, and that the plaintiff’s claim should be dismissed with prejudice” (Court’s Ruling, page 17). Instead of dismissing the case, however, Judge Christensen apparently felt that we had to be punished in some way for printing the material. He, therefore, awarded $16,000 for what he said was “unfair competition” and damage to Ehat’s reputation. In addition to this, Judge Christensen said he was going to stop our publication of the Clayton material: “. . . Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered . . . cannot lawfully be continued to be sold and distributed by the defendant and those acting under them” (Court’s Ruling, page 16).

Just four days after making this statement, Judge Christensen began to have doubts about the wisdom of his decision to enjoin Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered, and on April 10, he held a hearing and completely reversed his decision with regard to the injunction. Although we have won the battle as far as the continued publication of this book is concerned, we still feel that Christensen’s decision concerning “unfair competition” is completely wrong, and we are appealing it to the 10th circuit court where it will be reviewed by a panel of three judges. We will even consider going to the U.S. Supreme Court if we feel that it is necessary to vindicate the rights of freedom of the press guaranteed to us in the Constitution.

**Prejudice?**

We believe that Judge Christensen’s decision is a serious blow to freedom of the press and could have some implications as far as freedom of religion is concerned. A number of people have asked us if Judge Christensen

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*The Tanners On Trial*

By Jerald and Sandra Tanner

This book has well over 100 large pages with many photographs of the original court documents. Contains fascinating testimony by some of the Mormon Church’s top historians. Highly recommended.

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*The Money-Digging Letters*

A preliminary report by Jerald Tanner on some recently discovered letters linking Joseph Smith to the occult (see story on pages 11-12).

**PRICE:** $1.00
is a member of the Mormon Church and whether this would have had an influence on his decision. While we do not know whether his religion had anything to do with the verdict, the book *Who's Who In The West*, page 31, states that A. Sherman Christensen is a Mormon and that he attended the Church’s Brigham Young University. In 1971, Judge Christensen wrote an article entitled “Justice and Mercy.” It was published in the Church’s official organ, *The Ensign*, in November 1971 (see pages 29-31). In this article Christensen quoted from the Church’s Book of Mormon and the *Doctrine and Covenants* to uphold his position.

While it is true that we were not directly battling the Mormon Church in this case, Judge Christensen was called on to decide whether the original Clayton diaries would be available for our defense. Christensen took the matter “under advisement” and on September 16, 1983, ruled that the Church would not have to produce the diaries. Whether he was right or wrong in his decision to keep the diaries suppressed, we feel that he should have withdrawn from the case because it involved a matter where he would have found himself directly opposing the wishes of his Church leaders if he had ruled in our favor. While our lawyer and a number of other people feel that Judge Christensen is a good judge and attempts to be impartial in his decisions, his religion could have been a factor in this case. Moreover, the fact that the scandal over the notes occurred at the Church’s university, where he had attended, probably did not help us any. Andrew Ehat’s lawyer, Gordon A. Madsen, apparently felt that he could capitalize on the religious issue, and in the depositions he took from us, he asked questions to make it clear that we had left the Mormon Church and were publishing sensitive Church documents. This could, of course, create a great deal of prejudice against us in the mind of a Mormon judge. We will never know whether there was religious prejudice involved, but we would have felt much better about the matter if the case had been heard before a non-Mormon judge or decided before an impartial jury.

**Judge Very Upset!**

On April 29, 1984, we published an advertisement in the Salt Lake City newspapers. In this article we criticized Judge Christensen’s handling of the case and told that he had reversed his decision on the injunction. We also stated that *Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered* “is still available for $3.00 a copy.” This article set off a chain of circumstances which led us back before the Judge. Gordon A. Madsen was very upset over the matter and filed a “Motion to Alter or Amend Judgment.” In this motion he asked the Court to reinstate “a restraining order as encunciated [sic] by the Court March 23, 1984.”

Much to our surprise, Judge Christensen granted Ehat’s lawyer a hearing concerning the matter. This, of course, ran up our legal costs even higher. It is our belief that he only granted the hearing so that he could rebuke us for criticizing his judgment in the newspapers. At this hearing, Judge Christensen made some remarkable statements which clearly showed his prejudice against us:

**THE COURT:** At the time this matter was before me for final decision with respect to injunctive relief, I was persuaded that an injunction would involve too many problems of enforcement and First Amendment rights to commend to the Court its issuance. . . .

The other thing that persuaded me was my assumption that Mr. Tanner was acting in good faith, was a law abiding citizen . . . I assumed that until, if at all, a decision was changed, there would be compliance with the spirit of the decision. I really didn’t expect that Mr. Tanner would insist upon continuing to commit what was adjudged to be an unlawful act, . . .

According to the showing before the Court, not only did he do that, but as I read the article, the advertisement . . . he really misrepresented the decision of the Court and flaunted his defiance of it. . . . supposing that the defendants would be content with their rights of free speech, which the court has no disposition to restrain . . . it leaned over backwards. . . . I see, however, that the Tanners not only insisted upon the continuation of the unlawful acts, but tried to capitalize on the court’s circumspection toward them . . .

I had assumed that the principle damage accruing to the plaintiffs. . . . accrued . . . it is appropriate for me to notice, however, that damages of a nature far beyond what were awarded heretofore could well flow from the crafted, misrepresentation of the Court’s judgment by way of justification and self-protection, and then contrary to the expressed holding of the Court, flaunting and emphasizing by apparently a prepared publication the very situation that gave rise to the prior damages; . . . And beyond that, the invitation to the public by a public announcement to come in and buy additional copies and to accentuate the damage that I thought the case was limited to by prior action of the Court . . .

The Tanners weren’t content with their rights under the First Amendment, . . . but had to advertize through misrepresentation their violation and invite the public to contribute to that violation. I guess I’m a little naive. I’m not used to dealing with the kind of people when I accord consideration on balance in faith that there would be at least an attempt to comply with the Court’s ruling. I’m not used to people advertising their noncompliance . . .

The Tanners have done about as much as they can do to flaunt the judgment of the Court to appropriate further,
or for their own gain, plaintiff’s declared right. I don’t see that they can do very much else unless they went to publish another advertisement to try and market the matter. But if they do there is relief here. . . . In my judgment the amount of damages as a result of this additional publication under the circumstances I have mentioned may well be immeasurably more than the damage that was suffered by the plaintiff up to the time of the judgment. . . . if and when the case is affirmed, I assume the Tanners can be brought in and a full accounting made as to what other sales they have made which were unlawful. . . . The Tanners will be liable as a matter of law for such damages including punitive damages as may have been additionally caused by their unlawful act. (“Partial Transcript of Proceedings,” May 8, 1984, pages 3-11)

While Judge Christensen pretended that he was very shocked that there was “further publication,” his original Court’s Ruling, pages 15-16, plainly shows that he knew we were going to go on printing the book: “The Court finds that unless an order is issued enjoining the defendants from continuing to publish . . . the defendants will continue to do so to the irreparable damage of the plaintiff . . .” The Court recorded clearly show that we never entered into any kind of an agreement to cease publication. On the contrary, at the hearing on April 10, 1984, our lawyer, Brian Barnard, argued “And to enjoin the Tanners from distributing copies of those documents, . . . I think is inappropriate. . . . if, in fact, Mr. Ehat suffers further damage because of the distribution, that 45 cents a copy has been determined by the Court to be an appropriate compensation. And, I’d suggest that that would be the compensation that he should receive in the future if the Court would determine there was any liability” (pages 20-21).

That the Judge accepted Barnard’s argument is evident from his statement that Ehat could recover further damages “in the event of such future sales, publication, or distribution. I may say that I have been influenced to a degree by the suggestion of counsel for the defendant that this might be appropriate in lieu of injunctive relief” (“Partial Transcript of Proceedings,” April 10, 1984, pages 6-7).

In light of these facts, we find it impossible to believe that the Judge would be unaware that we were likely to continue publication of the book. Furthermore, we do not accept the Judge’s claim that he “leaned over backwards” to try and protect our “rights of free speech.” On the contrary, we believe that he only lifted the injunction because he found out that we were appealing the case and that he knew he would look very bad if his decision were overturned. The Judge’s attempt to make us appear to be without principles seems rather ridiculous. While it is true that he ruled that the publication was unlawful, he certainly does not have the final word about the matter. We completely disagree with his decision and feel that we have every right to continue selling the book until we are told not to by the 10th Circuit Court or the Supreme Court of the United States. If Judge Christensen really felt that it was an “unlawful” publication and that Mr. Ehat was going to suffer irreparable damages if we were allowed to continue publishing the book, he should have had the courage to stick by his original decision concerning the injunction.

We feel that Judge Christensen was not really as concerned about Ehat’s rights as he was about the fact that we had questioned his ruling and told how he had to reverse his decision on the injunction. On page 10 of the “Partial Transcript of Proceedings,” May 8, 1984, it became rather clear that our supposed “flaunting and misrepresentation” of Judge Christensen’s decision was the thing that really upset him:

. . . if the plaintiff suffered in the magnitude of $15,000 from the unlawful misappropriation and publication, the damages could well exceed that by many times because of the emphasis that hadn’t applied before through the public announcement and the Tanners’ flaunting and misrepresentation of the judgment of the Court . . .

It would appear from this that Judge Christensen is trying to intimidate us through threats of awarding vast sums of money to Mr. Ehat just so we will not publicly question his decision. On page 9 of the same document, he said that if we were to publish another advertisement, “there is relief here.” His statement on page 10 that he would award “many times” the $15,000 (actually $16,000) is certainly difficult to interpret. One might get the impression, however, that he is talking of hundreds of thousands of dollars.

We view Judge Christensen’s threats as nothing less than an attempt to keep us from exercising our freedom of speech, and feel that it is deplorable that a judge representing the United States Government would stoop to such methods to keep us from questioning his decisions. We feel that this is not the American way, and we do not intend to be intimidated by his threats. In any case, after severely rebuking us, the Judge ended up denying the motion to restore the injunction, and in a document prepared May 14, 1984, he wrote: “IT IS NOW HEREBY ORDERED that the motion of the plaintiff to alter or amend the judgment by granting injunctive relief as against the defendants is hereby denied, . . .”
Hurt Reputation?

We feel that one of Judge Christensen’s greatest mistakes occurred when he awarded Andrew Ehat $12,000 for loss of reputation:

6. The plaintiff’s entitled to a judgment for compensatory damages against the defendant in the sum of $960 representing profits made by the defendants for the unlawful publication of the Ehat notes, for the sum of $3,000 for the reduction by defendants unlawful acts of the potential market value of the publication of plaintiff’s master’s thesis, for the sum of $12,000 for damage to plaintiff’s reputation as a scholar and researcher; . . . (Court’s Ruling, page 24)

The Judge does not seem to make it clear whether we have actually hurt Ehat’s reputation or merely deprived him of being the first scholar to publish the Clayton material. On page 14 of the Ruling, however, Judge Christensen said “15. I further find that because of defendant’s publication of plaintiff’s notes, plaintiff’s access to private repositories is impaired to a degree.” Christine Rigby was far more observant than the Judge. In Utah Holiday, May 1984, page 14, she wrote: “. . . on Ehat’s loss of reputation, he testified that he had not once been denied access to private repositories since the incident. Yet, the judge made a finding of fact that ‘plaintiff’s access to private repositories is impaired to a degree.’” This testimony was given by Mr. Ehat at the trial:

Q. Has anyone in any library, archive, or repository said to you, You let your notes be distributed, your notes from the Clayton journal, therefore you can’t have access to any book or materials in our library?
A. No. (Trial Transcript, page 100)

In his deposition Andrew Ehat gave the following testimony:

Q. . . . Has anybody told you that you can’t have access to materials because of this incident?
A. Well, I can’t read others’ minds or know that if I’m denied access to something it’s a result of this. I can’t say that I’ve been denied any access.

Q. Nobody has specifically told you they won’t let you have access because of the incident?
A. That’s correct.

Q. And since the incident in ‘81, has it—has a situation ever arisen where you have asked for access and somebody said no for any reason?

THE WITNESS. I don’t know that I have been restricted from seeing anything. I may have asked for something, but for different reasons they would give me a no, but I don’t recall any occasions.

BY MR. BARNARD:
Q. Okay. That’s with regard to the LDS Church?
A. That was with regard to the LDS Church and any other repository.

Q. So you haven’t been refused to your recollection, since 1981 to have access to materials by anybody?
A. To my recollection, yes. (Deposition of Andrew Ehat, pages 115-116)

In spite of Mr. Ehat’s testimony to the contrary, Judge Christensen ruled that the “plaintiff’s access to private repositories is impaired to a degree.” We always thought that court decisions were supposed to be based on solid evidence. It would appear, however, that in this case the judge was acting on emotion rather than evidence.

With regard to the damage to Ehat’s reputation, Professor Richard L. Anderson testified: “He was I think more concerned with the personal professional loss of face and the very greater damage to his reputation as a scholar in allowing—appearing to allow these things to be published” (Trial Transcript, page 332). Dr. Anderson indicated, however, that when people learned the truth concerning how the material got out, there was no damage to Ehat’s reputation: “The people that knew the circumstances didn’t think ill of Andy because they knew it wasn’t his volition that contributed to the dissemination of the materials, . . .” (Ibid., page 336).

The important question, then, with regard to Mr. Ehat’s reputation is whether we told the truth concerning how the Clayton notes got out. If we tried to make it appear that Ehat had deliberately leaked a sensitive Church document to us for publication, this would have hurt his reputation as far as access to Church Archives is concerned. If, on the other hand, we indicated that he was opposed to the publication of the material, there would have been no damage to his reputation. A careful examination of the introduction to Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered clearly demonstrates we reported that Mr. Ehat did everything in his power to stop the dissemination of the notes. On the second page of the Introduction, we stated that, “Andrew Ehat was vigorously opposed to anyone publishing the material. In fact, one man who was preparing to print it, received a letter from Ehat’s lawyer which threatened legal action if he did not desist.”

“Stolen” Microfilms

Now, while Andrew Ehat did not suffer any damage to his reputation because of our publication, he will probably suffer a great deal of damage because of the things that came out in the depositions and the testimonies which were given at the trial itself. The
testimony shows that Mr. Ehat took an active part in the Mormon Underground (a group composed mostly of liberal Mormon scholars who secretly disseminate documents that have been suppressed by the Mormon Church), and this information could very well impair his access to documents owned by the Church.

Since the Mormon Church has tried very hard to keep many of its documents secret, a person can easily understand why Ehat participated in the Underground. Many prominent Mormon scholars have become involved in the Underground because they feel that the Church’s policy concerning documents is too restrictive. A number of documents which we have printed have leaked out through Mormon scholars. At the time our deposition was taken, Mr. Ehat encouraged his lawyer to point his finger at us and accuse us of printing “stolen documents.” We feel that this is very hypocritical when the evidence shows that Ehat himself was part of the Underground.

While professing to be a faithful Mormon historian, Andrew Ehat was involved in the dissemination of underground documents. In our new book, The Tanners On Trial, we show that Mr. Ehat was not only a participant in the Underground, but that he was receiving material from some of the worst enemies of the Church—i.e., the Mormon “Fundamentalists.” The Fundamentalists believe in the present-day practice of polygamy and in the Adam-God doctrine. They are excommunicated from the Mormon Church when they are discovered.

In his deposition, a former Brigham Young University student told of his underground dealings with Mr. Ehat. He claimed that Ehat allowed him to borrow illicit microfilm copies of important Church documents, which he in turn duplicated and distributed to other people in the Mormon Underground. When Andrew Ehat was being questioned at the trial, his lawyer did his best to prevent us from learning the source of these unauthorized microfilms:

Q. Now, with regard to the collection that you have . . . do you have in that collection copies of any historical documents that are restricted or held in libraries to which the general public or most historians don’t have access?
A. Yes.
Q. And what are the nature of those documents that you have? Do you have microfilm copies?
A. Yes.

MR. MADSEN: Your Honor, what is the relevance of this? We are not talking about microfilm or documents being printed.
THE COURT: Is that an objection, Mr. Madsen?
MR. MADSEN: It’s an objection as to relevance, your Honor.
THE COURT: Overruled. He may answer. (Trial Transcript, pages 69-70)

Because the Judge overruled Madsen’s objection, Mr. Ehat was forced into telling the source of three microfilms we knew he had in his possession. He frankly confessed that two of these were received directly from the Mormon “Fundamentalists.” In the “Transcript of Proceedings,” April 10, 1984, page 25, Mr. Ehat’s lawyer conceded that Ehat “got a copy” of a microfilm that “had been stolen.”

As we indicated earlier, it is certainly possible that Andrew Ehat’s reputation will be hurt by the revelations which came forth in the depositions and at the trial. He only has himself to blame, however, because none of this would have come to light if he had not filed the lawsuit.

**False Testimony**

Another thing that will hurt Andrew Ehat’s reputation is the fact that he gave false testimony under oath about how he obtained the Clayton material. The original complaint against us seemed to indicate that Mr. Ehat copied the material directly from the original Clayton diaries. We had reason to believe, however, that at least some of the material came from a different source. In his Answers to Interrogatories, November 21, 1983, Mr. Ehat admitted that he had been given 12 pages of the extracts by James B. Allen and that he had copied the rest from a typescript. In taking Ehat’s deposition, Brian Barnard asked him who had given him permission to see the typescript. Ehat replied that it was Donald Schmidt, the Church Archivist:

Q. Who gave you the permission to see that typescript? Did Don Schmidt do that?
A. Yes.
Q. Was anyone else involved in giving you permission to see that typescript that you’re aware of?
A. No, not that I’m aware of. (Deposition of Andrew Ehat, page 43)

After this testimony was given, we subpoenaed Donald Schmidt. The Church’s lawyers fought the matter and filed a motion to quash the subpoena. They apparently realized, however, that we would win and withdrew their objection. In his testimony, Schmidt not only denied that he had given Ehat access to a typescript, but he also claimed that he was not even aware that the Historical Department had a typescript of the Clayton diaries in question:

BARNARD: Okay. Prior to 1979, had you heard that there was a typescript of those volumes of the Clayton Journals?
A. No.
The church’s lawyer, Bruce Findlay, indicated that he was the first one to tell Mr. Schmidt about the typescript: “I might interject I think he heard it from me in connection with this case” (Ibid., page 21).

The truth about the transcript finally came out when we were taking the testimony of James B. Allen, who served as Assistant Church Historian during the 1970s. When Dr. Allen was asked when he first became aware of the typescript, he replied: “When I made one” (Deposition of James B. Allen, page 20). Allen claimed that he was given special permission by the First Presidency to use the diaries for a biography he was writing on William Clayton. He admitted that he made the verbatim typescript without the Church’s permission and did not tell Donald Schmidt about it. When he was asked whether Ehat had access to it, he answered as follows:

A. Andy Ehat did not have access to that type script and I do not think Andy Ehat knew I was preparing the type script . . . and certainly he did not have access to it. . . . when I left at night I . . . locked the material I was making in my own desk and put the key in my pocket and went home. So I don’t know of any way that Andy could have had access to my type script. (Ibid., page 22)

Dr. Allen admitted that there was one other person who had helped prepare the transcript and had a copy of it, but he did not want to reveal the name. The lawyer from Brigham Young University, in fact, instructed him not to tell who the other person was. We already suspected that it was Dean Jessee, a noted Mormon scholar. In Scott Faulring’s deposition, he testified that when Ehat first found that his notes had been duplicated, he went into “a rage” and mentioned that Allen, Jessee and Cook would get in trouble if the notes fell into the hands of critics of the Church.

Although Dr. Allen did his best to protect Dean Jessee, he finally found himself backed into a corner. He then stated that rather than “perjure” himself he would admit that “Dean Jessee” was the man. As a result of Allen’s testimony we found it necessary to subpoena Dean Jessee. Mr. Jessee testified that Ehat wanted access to the typescript “to check some dates on some information that he didn’t have and wanted to double-check or whatever. And so he used it in that setting” (Deposition of Dean Jessee, page 26).

In the March 1984 issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger, we pointed out that, “Mr. Ehat now finds himself in a real dilemma. In his Answers to Interrogatories, he has sworn that he did not use material from Jessee:

I'm not aware of any type script other than very recently. (Deposition of Donald Schmidt, pages 21-23)

Q. In preparing your notes . . . did you use or have access to any notes or other writings regarding or taken from the William Clayton diaries by (a) Lyndon Cook (b) Dean Jessie, . . .

ANSWER: (a) no, (b) no, . . .

If Mr. Ehat did not copy the material from Jessee’s copy of the transcript, then the only other alternative would be that it was purloined from Allen.

At the trial, Andrew Ehat finally revealed that he had obtained the Clayton material from Dean Jessee:

A. . . . I had a discussion with Dean Jessee.

Q. In a subsequent time did he give you permission to see the notes?

A. Un-huh.

Q. . . . what did you then do?

A. I made — I made notations from the dates that I had previously noted that I wanted to take copies of.

Q. And how many pages of typewriting manuscript did that amount to?

A. Approximately 77 pages. (Trial Transcript, pages 31-33)

The reader will remember that in his deposition Ehat testified he got permission from Donald Schmidt to use the typescript, and when he was asked if anyone else was involved in giving him permission, he replied, “No.” At the trial, Brian Barnard asked Mr. Ehat if he had previously testified that Schmidt had given him permission to use the typescript and that there was no one else involved, Ehat replied: “A. Yes” (Ibid., page 69). On page 94 of the Deposition of Andrew Ehat, Mr. Ehat was asked point-blank if there was “anybody else besides you, Allen and Anderson” who had had access to the original diaries “or the typescript of those three volumes?” To this Ehat replied: “A. No, not that I’m aware of.” In the written interrogatories, Mr. Ehat was asked the following question: “21. In compiling your notes which are the subject matter of this action did you use any material from the William Clayton diaries...
which came directly or indirectly from (a) Dean Jessee, (b) James B. Allen or (c) Lyndon Cook?” (Answers to Interrogatories, page 10). The only names Andrew Ehat mentioned in his answer were “Donald Schmidt” and “James Allen,” and Allen’s name was only mentioned with regard to the twelve pages he had given Ehat for the book The Words of Joseph Smith.

Although Judge Christensen took the strongest possible stand against the publication of “stolen documents,” he appeared to be very soft on perjury. He seemed to be oblivious to the obvious cover-up and false statements made under oath. Perhaps this was because he was having a difficult time following the testimony. In any case, statements made by the plaintiff’s witnesses concerning access to the diaries were so contradictory that it was obvious that someone was not telling the truth. In our new book, The Tanners On Trial, we have more material on the question of false testimony at the trial. We always thought it was a serious matter to give false testimony under oath. We wonder if the Judge would have been so lenient with us if we had made false statements under oath and covered up how we obtained the Clayton extracts?

**“Miffed”**

James B. Allen claimed on page 25 of his deposition that the typescript was “my own particular scholarly property.” Although he made a complete transcript without permission from the General Authorities of the Church, a memorandum from the First Presidency’s office confirms the fact that he was given access to the diaries so that he could prepare his biography of William Clayton. Dr. Allen testified that it was his understanding that other scholars were not allowed to use them. He claimed, in fact, that he was “miffed” when he learned that Ehat had material beyond the 12 pages he had supplied him with:

A. I do remember asking Don questions like where did he get it . . . I remember my concerns at the time as I talked with other people was where did Andy Ehat get access to this material. That was my concern. And I remember talking with several people, Don Schmidt and other people up in the Historical Department and people at BYU like Noel Reynolds and others and I was miffed. I didn’t know where he got access to it and that was the nature of the conversations I had with anyone.

Q. . . . you just used the word “miffed”?

A. Yes.

. . . .

Q. After the notes were taken from Cook and distributed and you described yourself as being miffed, were you miffed because you discovered the extent of Ehat’s notes?

A. Yes, I think so. It was a surprise to me to know that he had that much verbatim material from the Clayton Diaries. . . . I was not aware that he had that much from the Clayton Journals and that is why I was miffed, if that is the proper word. Surprised.

Q. And I take it from your previous testimony that the reason you were surprised or miffed was because you thought you had been given some sort of special permission or exclusive permission to have access to those diaries?

A. That’s correct. (Deposition of James B. Allen, pages 79-81)

At the trial, Dr. Allen testified:

A. Well, I was miffed when I discovered that those extensive notes that he had taken . . . were being circulated. I was also surprised to know the extent of his particular notes. I was not aware of the extent of the notes he had taken or where he had received permission to see them. (Trial Transcript, page 239)

That Ehat was aware that he was copying from Allen’s typescript without his permission seems obvious from the testimony we have obtained. Scott Faulring, for instance, said that when Ehat learned the notes were circulating, he became very emotional and said that Allen, Cook and Jessee “are going to be shot.” The fact that Ehat would make the statement that Allen would get in trouble if the notes were distributed can only be explained if Ehat knew he had copied material from Allen’s typescript.

Although Mr. Ehat accused us of “unfair competition,” the evidence shows that he secretly used James B. Allen’s typescript of the dairies and later tried to cover up the matter. Ehat’s lawyer, Gordon A. Madsen, claims that we have “unclean hands.” We feel, however, that it is his client that has unclean hands. Our actions were done openly; Mr. Ehat, on the other hand, secretly gained access to Allen’s typescript, used it and then gave false testimony to cover up his actions. We will leave the reader to judge who has “unclean hands.” In our opinion the cover-up and false statements made concerning the way Ehat obtained the Clayton material tend to make the whole matter absolutely ridiculous. Ehat accused us of causing him “irreparable damage” because we used his scholarly work product. The truth of the matter, however, is that he never even made the transcription from the handwritten diaries. Instead, he relied upon the typescript which Dr. Allen calls, “my own particular scholarly property.” This, of course, was done without Allen’s permission or knowledge. If anyone is guilty of “unfair competition” it is Mr. Ehat. We openly announced that we were publishing material typed by Andrew Ehat.
Ehat, on the other hand, surreptitiously appropriated notes from James B. Allen’s typescript for his own purposes. Dr. Allen specifically made this typescript for a biography he is preparing on Clayton. We know that Ehat was aware of Allen’s plans for publication because he made this statement on page 49 of his deposition: “Dr. Allen was preparing to publish both a biography of William Clayton and an article on William Clayton.” How Ehat could have been involved in all this and then bring a suit against us is very difficult to comprehend. That Judge Christensen would award him damages is even more unbelievable.

Very Unfair

Andrew Ehat claimed that our publication of his notes hurt him in a number of different ways. He indicated that it was an infringement of his copyright on the book *The Words of Joseph Smith*. In addition, he stated that he had prepared a thesis he intended to publish in which he used the Clayton material. He also claimed that he was going to use it in his “intended doctoral dissertation.” While the Judge rejected the claim of damage on the published book, he did award Ehat $3,000 for “reduction of the potential market value” of his master’s thesis, “Joseph Smith’s introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Question.” We felt that Judge Christensen was swayed by some unreasonable testimony given by Professor Truman G. Madsen of Brigham Young University. Dr. Madsen could hardly be considered an unbiased party in the suit. He has been a director of the Religious Studies Center at BYU—the organization that published Mr. Ehat’s book. In his testimony at the trial, Truman Madsen said that for “nearly five years” Ehat “was my research assistant and did in fact bring to me documentary materials that he had access to and copied in my behalf” (*Trial Transcript*, page 193). Dr. Madsen also said that he was the “brother” of Ehat’s lawyer, Gordon A. Madsen (*Ibid.*, page 186). At any rate, Madsen testified that the Religious Studies Center had discussed the possibility of printing Ehat’s thesis. He claimed, however, that because we printed 2,000 copies of the Clayton material, 2,000 people might not buy the thesis if it were published:

A. Well, if those who have now published [purchased?] the material through the Tanners were not therefore interested in purchasing the thesis, that would be 2,000 less sold, and that would mean a royalty less of about $3,285. (*Ibid.*, page 190)

Gordon A. Madsen used the same type of fallacious reasoning as his brother:

... since the Tanners have printed approximately 2,000 copies, sold approximately 2,000 of their publication, that would presumably reduce by approximately 2,000 the copies of the thesis to be sold, ... (*Ibid.*, page 10)

We find this reasoning to be absolutely absurd. Would the Madsen brothers have us believe that we have exactly the same 2,000 customers that the Religious Studies Center has? Actually, only about one-fifth of the people on our mailing list live in Utah. The others are scattered throughout the United States and in other countries. While it is true that a large percentage of the customers that actually come to our store are from Utah, the majority of our sales are through the mail. Most of the people on our mailing list would probably never come in contact with books published by the Religious Studies Center. Furthermore, most of our customers are non-Mormons and ex-Mormons who would not be interested in any book published by the Religious Studies Center. While we find it flattering that Ehat’s lawyer would argue that the customers from the Religious Studies Center frequent our establishment in droves, we feel that it is very far from the truth.

Even if we were to accept the fantastic claim that our 2,000 sales were all to the same people who would have bought Ehat’s thesis, we still could not accept the claim that Ehat’s sales would be harmed by our publication. We have examined Ehat’s thesis and found that only about 2 to 3 percent of the material is taken verbatim from the Clayton diaries in question. Although it is true that Ehat claims he was going to add an appendix containing additional material taken from Clayton’s writings, this appendix was not in the thesis when it was approved, and he has produced no evidence that this plan predated the publication of *Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered*. In any case, since 97 to 98 percent of the thesis is not copied from the diaries, we feel that Ehat would not lose sales because of our publication of the extracts.

Anyone who has ever written a thesis knows that there is far more to it than just quoting material from one source. It is the scholar’s organization of materials and observations that make the thesis of value. One noted Mormon scholar has made the interesting observation that it must show something concerning the quality of Ehat’s master’s thesis if our use of only the material copied from the Clayton diaries completely destroys a market for it. If Judge Christensen had taken the time to carefully examine how much material was actually quoted in the thesis, we doubt that he would have found us guilty of “unfair competition.” He apparently just relied on the testimony of Andrew Ehat and statements made by his lawyer.
When we printed *Clayton's Secret Writings Uncovered* we certainly had no idea that Ehat would claim “unfair competition” with his thesis. In fact, we had every reason to believe that he wanted the material suppressed. Although he would now have us believe that he was planning on eventually publishing almost all of his notes, the information we obtained from *Seventh East Press* indicated just the opposite:

Ehat also believes that use of the diaries should be limited out of respect to William Clayton, who “in a different sphere is still living.” Ehat feels that “we owe it to him” to observe certain restraints, even though he admits that there is nothing in the journal that explicitly requests it never be made public. Ehat says that Clayton “poured out his soul in there and . . . he’s going to face all of us again some day and we’re going to be associates with him too, and he didn’t write those things necessarily to expose himself to the world.” . . . *(Seventh East Press, January 18, 1982)*

Although Ehat questioned some other parts of the article in *Seventh East Press* when we took his deposition, he made no attempt to deny the words which we have quoted.

**Judge Wrong**

In our new book, *The Tanners On Trial*, we tell of a case in Texas where a supposed copyright violation was linked with “unfair competition.” It was successfully argued in this case that Section 301 of the Copyright Act (“Preemption with respect to other laws”) makes it clear that “unfair competition” is preempted by copyright law:

> On motion to dismiss and/or summary judgment and partial summary judgment, the District Court, Sessions, Chief Judge, held that: . . . firms’ claim of unfair competition was preempted by Copyright Act; . . . *(540 Federal Supplement, pages 928-29)*

We were under the impression that if Ehat’s lawyer failed in his attempt to prove a copyright violation, the entire case would fail. It seems that Mr. Madsen also held this view at the time of the hearing regarding the request for the Church to produce the original diaries:

**THE COURT:** Do you concede that if the law is that the quotations of your quotation from the journal doesn’t violate any proprietary interest of your client that your case fails?

**MR. MADSSEN:** I think it does. I think if they can say this is not copyright material and they therefore are at liberty to print it. (“Hearing to Quash Subpoena Duces Tecum and Objections,” September 6, 1983, page 11)

Judge Christensen’s attempt to apply the law concerning “unfair competition” just because he wanted to make an example of us seems to be a miscarriage of justice. When Mr. Ehat was unsuccessful in proving an infringement of copyright law, the Judge should have dismissed the entire case.

On page 931 of 540 Federal Supplement, we find that one of the elements for a case of “unfair competition” is that the “plaintiff created his product through extensive time, labor, skill, or money; . . .” We can not see how Ehat’s notes meet any of the criteria mentioned. Ehat’s lawyer appealed to the case, *Grove Press Inc., v. Collector’s Publication Inc.*, but our lawyer, Brian Barnard, demonstrated that this case does not provide support for a claim of “unfair competition” against us:

In *Grove Press*, supra, the Court in granting relief against unfair competition by the publication of an exact copy of an uncopyrighted book stated:

> In view of Plaintiff’s expenditure of substantial sums in setting type and engraving plates, it would constitute unfair competition for Defendants to appropriate the value and benefit of such expenditure to themselves by photographing and reproducing Plaintiff’s book through the offset-lithography process, thereby cutting their own costs and obtaining an unfair competitive advantage. [emphasis added] *(supra, 607)*

In *Grove Press*, the plaintiff had taken a public domain book and set it into book form. In excellent, easily-read type at a cost of about $26,000 and expended many thousands of dollars additional in printing, distributing and advertising that book. What the Court protected in *Grove Press* under the theory of unfair competition was not the uncopyrightable book but the substantial investment and expense that *Grove Press* had made toward the marketing of that “unprotected” book.

The case of *International, Capitol and Grove Press* all involve the expenditure of great sums of money and time by the plaintiffs in creating something different and protected from an uncopyrighted work. That is not the case at bar. Andrew Ehat did not even expend time and energy in reading the hand-written original journals in typing up his notes. He used the work of another, the typed Allen/Jessee transcript and made his notes. He spent several hours in doing so. What he did was the work of a photocopying machine; which, but for the fact that one was not easily available, he probably would have used any one with access to a photocopy machine could have done what Ehat did. Ehat’s contributions to the uncopyrighted Wm Clayton Journal extracts are not of the nature of substance to warrant protection under *International, Capitol or Grove Press*. *(Defendants’ Trial Brief, pages 26-28)*
Ehat’s lawyer argued that because “it was a direct copy from the original production of that work by Grove Press, Inc., there was indeed unfair competition . . .” This seems to be a very poor argument to support Ehat’s case. The notes which we reproduced were certainly not going to be the final product put out by Mr. Ehat. We didn’t photographically copy any of the typesetting in his book The Words of Joseph Smith, and the quotations he used in his master’s thesis were retyped in a far more presentable form. We would assume that if his thesis had been printed by Religious Studies Center, it would have been typeset like his other book. If we had photographically reproduced typeset material, then the Grove Press case would have applied As it is, however, we can see no just cause for a judgment against us.

In our new book, The Tanners On Trial, we present a great deal of evidence to show that Judge Christensen’s verdict was completely wrong. We also include many extracts from court documents which reveal the false testimony and cover-up which was used by the opposition. Some very important testimony is given on the Mormon Underground and how it functions. Andrew Ehat’s participation in this underground is detailed with an abundance of testimony showing that he has copies of “stolen” and unauthorized material obtained from the Church Historical Department. The testimony of some of the Church’s top historians is also included, as well as information on the suppression of documents and the “decline” of the History Division. We show how James B. Allen and Dean Jesse made the unauthorized typescript of the Clayton diaries and Ehat’s clever method of gaining access to it. Information concerning Noel Reynold’s investigation into the distribution of illicit copies of documents at BYU is also presented. The question of copyright violation on other Church documents is dealt with, and even testimony concerning our tax returns for 1982-83 is included. This book has well over 100 large pages with many photographs of the original court documents. It is filled with fascinating material. The Tanners On Trial is available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry for only $5.95 a copy (add 10% for postage and handling).

Light Not Out

Although some people felt that Ehat’s suit might put the light out at Utah Lighthouse Ministry, we are happy to report that it is still shining brightly. God has answered the prayers that have been offered on our behalf in a marvelous way. While the legal fees have mounted to over $22,000, and another $10,000 may be expended in the appeal, we have already received an incredible amount of help. If we lose the appeal we will have to pay the $16,000 judgment. (This amount of money has been set aside in an account awaiting the outcome of the appeal.) We feel, however, that we will prevail in the end. We still have a great deal of faith in our system of justice.

This is certainly a critical time for Utah Lighthouse Ministry. Because of some large bills which the corporation is trying to pay off, we haven’t received any salary for four weeks. We do hope that many of our readers will hold us up in prayer and that some will consider contributing so that we will be able to effectively continue publishing the truth to the Mormon people. UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY is a non-profit organization and all donations are tax-deductible.

Although fighting this lawsuit has cost many thousands of dollars and a great deal of time, we feel that it will all work out for our good. In Romans 8:28 we read: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

The Lord willing, the light from Utah Lighthouse Ministry will continue to shine and become even brighter in the future.

Good Letters

The Lord is beginning a real work among the Mormon people. We have been receiving letters and phone calls from all over the country. We recently received a letter which contained the following:

After having read (in part) Shadow or Reality, read much of the New Testament and prayed an awful lot my husband and I have come to believe the L.D.S. church is untrue. It is a painful realization but we now feel the Lord working in our lives bringing us to a true understanding of Him and what we are to do . . . The work you’re doing is such a blessing to us since we don’t have access to the documents etc. you have. Your work is one of courage and I know the Lord is working through you continually to bring about His purpose. . . .

We would like to obtain your book A Look At Christianity . . .

Thank you again for your work — it is a divine work and it has blessed our family immensely. (Letter from Ohio, dated July 5, 1984)

The following appeared in another letter.

Your book Changing World of Mormonism is “dynamite” to the church if key people got a hold of it. I am a Mormon 14 yrs. I’ve been RS pres — I dare not tell my husband what I have found out . . . I have turned this huge problem over to the Lord who I love dearly & want to serve. (Letter from Kansas)
During the past few months there have been a great many rumors circulating concerning the discovery of important letters proving that the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith was involved in the money-digging business and that he used magical practices in finding buried treasures. It is reported that there are three or four important letters concerning the subject. The first letter has recently been published by the Mormon scholar Dean Jessee in his book, *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 1984, pages 358-59. A photograph of the letter is included in Jessee’s book. According to Jessee, it is in the handwriting of Joseph Smith and is addressed to his brother Hyrum. Jessee says that it was mailed from Far West, Missouri to Plattisgrove on May 25, 1838. The text is very short:

Verily thus Saith the Lord unto Hyrum Smith if he will come strateaway to Far West and in=quire of his brother it shall be shown him how that he may be freed from debt and obtain a grate treasure in the earth even so  Amen

Jessee says that this letter is stored in the “LDS Church Archives.” It was supposed to have been written just after Joseph Smith explored some mounds. His *History of the Church*, vol. 3, page 37, indicates that he believed these mounds contained treasures:

. . . I returned to camp . . . We discovered some antiquities about one mile west of the camp, consisting of stone mounds, . . . These mounds were probably erected by the aborigines of the land, to secrete treasures.

The reader will note that this is more than just a letter; it actually purports to be a revelation from “the Lord.” This appears to be the second false revelation Joseph Smith wrote concerning the location of hidden treasures. The other revelation is actually canonized in the Mormon Church’s *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 111:1, 2, 4;

“I, the Lord your God, am not displeased with your coming this journey, . . . I have much treasure in this city for you, . . . I will give this city into your hands . . . and its wealth pertaining to gold and silver shall be yours.”

(For a more complete treatment of this revelation see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 49)

The second letter has never been published. It was sold to the Mormon Church by Mark Hofmann. Although its existence has been known by Mormon scholars for months, the Church has never publicly announced that it has possession of it. This is rather remarkable since it would be the earliest known letter of Joseph Smith. We have been told that Dean Jessee confirmed its existence, and when he was asked why he did not publish it in his book, *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, he said that it would take an entire volume to explain the letter. In any case, the text of the document has leaked out. A number of scholars received typed copies in the mail. The letters were sent anonymously from New York City. Although we were not sent a copy, we were able to obtain one from a friend. The letter was supposed to have been written to Josiah Stowel and reads as follows:

Canandaigua, New York  
June 18, 1825

Dear Sir:

My father has shown me your letter informing him and me of your success in locating the mine of which you told me, but we are of the opinion that if you have not ascertained the particulars, you should not dig for it till you first discover if any valuables remain. You know the treasure must be guarded by some clever spirit, and if such is discovered, so also is the treasure. So do this. Take a hazel stick, one yard long, being new cut, cleave it just in the middle and lay it asunder on the mine so that both inner parts of the stick hang up one right against the other one inch distant. If there is a treasure, after a while it will draw them both together unto themselves. Let me know how it is that you were here. I have almost decided to accept your offer. If you should make the decision to come this way, I shall be ready to accompany you if nothing happens more than I know of. I am,

Respectfully yours,
JOSEPH SMITH, JUN.

Since the spelling and punctuation are too good for Joseph Smith, we conclude that they have been corrected by the person who made the typescript. Although we cannot say that this typescript is 100% accurate, we know from very good sources that it gives the substance of the letter.

As far as the historical setting of the letter is concerned, we see no obvious problems. Joseph Smith acknowledged in his *History* that “in the month of October, 1825, I hired with an old gentleman by the name of Josiah Stowel, . . . He had heard something of a silver mine having been opened by the Spaniards . . . After I went to live with him, he took me, with the rest of his hands, to dig for the silver mine, . . . Hence arose the very prevalent story of my
having been a money-digger” (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 17).

In his 1826 trial Joseph Smith admitted that he had “a certain stone” he used to help Stowel locate buried treasures. There is also evidence linking him to the use of a hazel rod. We have a great deal of material on these matters in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* chapter 4.

Although we can see no obvious historical problems with the letter to Stowel, we will withhold judgment concerning its authenticity until we obtain more information concerning it.

The third letter was supposed to have been written by Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris in 1830. In the last newsletter we published a few extracts from it. The most important portion is the following account of how Joseph Smith obtained the gold plates of the Book of Mormon (Harris is quoting Smith):

> . . . I found it 4 years ago with my stone but only got it because of the enchantment the old spirit come to me 3 times in the same dream & says dig up the gold but when I take it up the next morning the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander in the bottom of the hole . . . (Letter purported to have been written by Martin Harris to W. W. Phelps, dated October 23, 1830, typed extract)

After our newsletter appeared, Steven Christensen acknowledged that he had the original letter. In a press release, dated March 7, 1984, he wrote:

> It is true that I am the owner of a letter written by Martin Harris to William W. Phelps, dated October 23, 1830. . . . Before I will release transcripts or photographs of the document to the public, I wish to first determine the document’s historicity . . . I look forward to the time when I will be able to offer a more complete presentation to the public and the media.

Five months have passed and no further statement concerning the document has appeared.

Recently we received a complete transcript of the letter. One thing about this letter that really surprised us is that it doesn’t mention anything about God or angels. This is certainly very strange. An interview with Harris published in 1859 in *Tiffany’s Monthly*, is filled with material on this subject. For instance, Harris quoted at least five portions of the Bible. He used the words *revelation, Moses, Scripture* and *Christ* at least once. He used the word *prayed* twice, and mentioned the *devil* four times. The word *angel* or *angels* appears five times. *God* is mentioned seven times, and the word *Lord* appears ten times. In the Salamander letter, however, all of these words are absent. In fact, there is nothing we can find concerning religion. Spirits are mentioned many times in the letter, but they are never linked to God in any way. Instead, they are linked to money-digging. This total lack of religious material seems to be out of character for Martin Harris. A person might try to explain this by saying that Harris was more interested in religion in 1859, but the evidence shows that he was always that way. One suggested reconciliation is that Phelps was a money-digger and this is why Harris emphasized this aspect of the story and suppressed the divine element.

We have learned that Mark Hofmann originally tried to sell this letter to the Mormon Church for a large sum of money. When his offer was turned down, he sold it to Steven Christensen. One of the most important things in determining a document’s authenticity is finding its pedigree. We have tried to find out where this letter came from but have not achieved any success. Hofmann claims that he has told the buyer (Christensen) the source, but cannot tell anyone else. We do hope that Christensen will reveal this important information soon. While we have expressed some doubts about the authenticity of the letter, they are based strictly on the text itself. The results of tests on the document as well as the establishment of a pedigree could alter our conclusions. We do hope that this will be the case. More information is found in our preliminary report, *The Money-Digging Letters*. Price: $1.00
In the March issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger* we announced the discovery of a very important letter which was supposed to have been written by Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris. The existence of this letter was confirmed on March 7, 1984, when a Mormon bishop by the name of Steven Christensen issued a “press release” in which he stated:

> It is true that I am owner of a letter written by Martin Harris to William W. Phelps, dated October 23, 1830. . . . Before I will release transcripts or photographs of the document to the public, I wish to first determine the document’s historicity as much as possible.

The original plan was for the letter to be published in *Sunstone*. Later, however, Christensen announced that he had three researchers working on a book and that the public would have to wait until it was finished. Unfortunately, one of the researchers (the only one working full time on the project) was released from Christensen’s employment, and some people began to fear that the letter would not be published. In our publication, *The Money-Digging Letters*, we indicated that we would print the letter in the *Messenger* if there was an attempt by the Church to suppress it. The latest report is that it may be published in a forthcoming issue of *Brigham Young University Studies*.

**A Summary**

While we will not print the letter in this issue of the *Messenger*, we have a typed copy on display at the Utah Lighthouse Bookstore, 1350 South West Temple, and we are including a summary of its contents in this article. To begin with, Martin Harris stated that Joseph Smith first came “to my notice” in 1824. Harris was amazed that Joseph was able to do a great amount of work in a short period of time. When he asked about this, Joseph said he had special “assistance.” Harris asked Joseph Smith’s father about the matter and was told that “Joseph often sees Spirits here with great kettles of coin money.” Harris then told of a dream which he himself had in which he conversed with spirits and they “let me count their money.” He awoke with a dollar in his hand, and when he consulted Joseph Smith, Smith told him that the spirits were “grieved” because he kept the dollar. Harris, therefore, threw the dollar back. Harris then told about Joseph Smith relating how “the old spirit come to me 3 times in the same dream & says dig up the gold [i.e., the gold plates of the Book of Mormon] but when I take it up the next morning the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander in the bottom of the hole & struck me 3 times . . .” The spirit then took the plates away from him because he had disobeyed his orders. Later the spirit said that he must bring his brother Alvin. Smith informed the spirit that “he is dead shall I bring what remains . . .” Joseph tried again to obtain the plates, but the spirit would not let him have them because he did not bring his brother (his body?). The spirit told Joseph to look to the seer stone, but he was unable to see who to bring. The spirit mockingly said, “I tricked you again.” Joseph finally saw his wife in the “stone” and obtained the “gold bible.”

Harris gave Joseph “fifty dollars” so he could move to Pennsylvania. Later Joseph gave Harris a copy of the hieroglyphics which appeared on the gold plates to take to Professor Anthon. Anthon confirmed that they were “shorthand Egyptian” and wanted the “old book” so he could translate it. Harris then told how Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon by putting the “giant silver spectacles” in an “old hat” and reading the words which appeared in the darkness. Harris concluded his relation of the facts concerning the coming forth of the Book of
Mormon by saying the Joseph showed him the gold plates and that he (Harris) had the Book of Mormon printed with “my own money.”

The letter attributed to Martin Harris is now referred to as the “Salamander letter” or the “White Salamander letter.” Although we do not have a photocopy of it at the present time, the typed copy we have has been compared with a photocopy and is supposed to be rather accurate. No claims are made, however, for the spelling or punctuation. Typed copies of a slightly different version of the Salamander letter were mailed anonymously to different scholars from New York City. We obtained a copy of this version and found that the salutation on the letter presented a problem. In *The Money-Digging Letters*, we wrote:

If this copy is accurate, we may have another problem. One would expect the salutation to read, “Dear Mr. Phelps.” Instead, the letter is addressed to, “Dear Bro. Phelps.” If Phelps had been a member of the Church, one would expect such a greeting. . . . While the Salamander letter is dated October 23, 1830, Phelps did not join the church until June of 1831.

A comparison with a photocopy of the original resolved this problem; the words, “Dear Bro. Phelps” are inaccurate. The salutation actually reads, “Dear Sir.”

**Making Tests**

We are happy to report that Steven Christensen has submitted the Salamander letter to some of the best experts in the country to determine its authenticity. Recently we received a tip from someone in the East which led to the discovery that the tests on the Salamander letter are being performed by Kenneth Rendell Incorporated of Newton, Massachusetts. This company is in the process of a rigorous examination of the document. The signature on the letter was compared with four other signatures attributed to Martin Harris. Although we do not know whether a final verdict has been reached, the information which we have been able to obtain suggested that the verdict will probably be favorable to the document’s authenticity. Bill Kruger, the man who made the tests on the paper, told us that he could detect no evidence of forgery. We talked to Leslie Kress of Kenneth Rendell Incorporated about the test being conducted on the letter. Although she acknowledged the work was being done, she was not able to reveal to us the results of the various tests. We have heard from another source, however, that the sealing wax used on the letter has been tested. It is also possible that tests will be performed on the postmark.

One test which had apparently not been completed at the time we talked to Leslie Kress was that on the ink. Some people, however, are now claiming that the Salamander letter has passed all the tests. Since Steven Christensen has not issued any statement about the matter, we do not know whether the report is true. In any case, at least one of the researchers is very optimistic that the results of the tests will be positive.

**The Handwriting**

On pages 15 and 19 of *The Money-Digging Letters*, we pointed out the following problem:

Handwriting experts are going to be confronted with a real problem with regard to this letter. As far as we know, there are no samples of Martin Harris’s handwriting except for his signature on a few documents. The *Deseret News* for September 1, 1984, claimed that “Christensen said that as far as is known known [now?] this is the only letter in Harris’ handwriting that has surfaced.” Steve Eaton wrote the following in the *Salt Lake Tribune* on September 2: “Because the only known samples of Harris’ handwriting are his signatures, researchers will be ‘handicapped’ as they attempt to authenticate the handwriting, Mr. Walker said.”

There are very few alphabetical characters represented in Martin Harris’s signature. We find the letter r three times. The letters a and f both appear twice, but the letters h, m, n, s, and t only appear once. In our alphabet there are 52 different written forms—26 small letters and 2 capital letters. Thus we only have about 15% of the different forms represented. We understand that while a signature is very useful to compare against another signature, the form of the letters used may differ somewhat from one’s normal writing because a signature is done almost automatically.

One of the researchers is now claiming that an early Book of Mormon bearing a short inscription by Martin Harris has been located. An inscription of this nature could throw some light on the issue. Scholars, however, should be careful about this matter. A forgery in a book would be much easier to perpetrate than a postmarked letter, and there is always a possibility that a second forgery would be created to provide support for the first. If the book was known to have had this writing in it for a number of years prior to the discovery of the Salamander letter, it could be very important in determining the authenticity of the letter.

One interesting thing that has been called to our attention by H. Michael Marquardt is that the signature which we always believed was the genuine Martin Harris...
signature was probably not written by Harris at all. This is
the signature which appears under the printed testimony
of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon in *A
Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of
Latter-day Saints*. When this signature is compared with
a signature appearing on the Book of Mormon contract
with E. B. Grandin, dated August 17, 1829, we find that
there is no resemblance. The signatures which appear
on other documents seem to agree with the one found
on the contract. If we assume that these documents are
authentic, then we have to conclude that the one which
has been published by the Mormon Church for at least
50 years is not Martin Harris’s signature. The following
is a photograph of the signature which appears in
*A Comprehensive History*, vol. 1, page 139. Below this
is the signature which appears on the Book of Mormon
contract with E. B. Grandin. This was published by the

Why a false signature was used by the Church is not
known, but it is possible that no good example of Harris’s
signature was readily available when the *Comprehensive
History* was first published. Someone has suggested that it
may really be the signature of Harris’s son, Martin Harris, Jr.

**Caution Urged**

When we first published extracts from the Salamander
letter in the *Messenger* (March 1984), we made these
comments about the importance of determining the
authenticity of the letter:

At the outset we should state that we have some
reservations concerning the authenticity of the letter,
and at the present time we are not prepared to say that
it was actually penned by Martin Harris. The serious
implications of this whole matter, however, cry out
for discussion. If the letter is authentic, it is one of the
greatest evidences against the divine origin of the Book
of Mormon. If, on the other hand, it is a forgery, it needs
to be exposed as such so that millions of people will not
be misled.

Since Martin Harris was one of the three special
witnesses to the gold plates of the Book of Mormon
(see his testimony in the front of the book), he is held
in high esteem by the Mormon people. Mormon writers
have commended him for his honesty. Although many
Mormon critics may disagree with this view, everyone
agrees that Harris played such an important role in early
Mormonism that anything coming from his pen is of
great significance.

Because of some problems in the text of the
Salamander letter we have been exceptionally cautious
about endorsing it as authentic. The reader will find more
information about these problems in *The Money-Digging
Letters* and in the article “Dilemma of a Mormon Critic”
which is published in this issue of the *Messenger*.

**Suit Drags On**

It has been a year and eight months since Andrew
Ehat brought a lawsuit against us for publishing the book,
*Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered*. Although Mr. Ehat
was able to convince a Mormon judge that we were guilty
of “unfair competition,” he was unable to prove the claim
of copyright violation and was unsuccessful in this attempt
to suppress the publication of the revealing extracts from
Joseph Smith’s secretary’s diaries. We are still selling
*Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered* for $3.00 a copy.

We have appealed the decision on “unfair competition”
to the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals where we hope to
get an unbiased examination of the case. Our appeal was
delayed by Ehat’s lawyer, Gordon A. Madsen, when
he tried to reinstate an unsuccessful injunction against
our continued publication of *Clayton’s Secret Writings
Uncovered*. Our lawyer completed a “Brief of Appellants”
on October 9, 1984, but Mr. Madsen did not respond.
On November 5, the Court sent him a letter in which the
following appeared:

> Our file in the captioned appeal indicates that you
> have failed to timely file an appellee’s brief. . . . That
> brief was due to be filed on: November 1, 1984. . . . Your
> failure to file an appellee’s brief precludes your being “heard
> at oral argument except by permission of the court.”
> Accordingly, unless you file an appellee’s brief within
ten (10) days . . . this case will be considered at issue
> and ripe for consideration and disposition by the court.

On November 9, Mr. Madsen responded that he “was
under the impression he had until November 9, 1984,
in which to file the same.” He went on to request “an
extension of time be granted allowing him until December
10, 1984, in which to file.” On December 6, however,
Mr. Madsen asked that another “extension of time be
granted allowing him until January 10, 1985, in which
to file his brief.”

Although we have no idea when this case will finally
be resolved, we are confident that the ruling of Judge
Christensen will be overturned by the panel of three judges
who will examine his decision.
DILEMMA OF A MORMON CRITIC
By Jerald Tanner

As we have indicated in the lead article, the evidence derived from physical testing seems to be pointed to the conclusion that the Salamander letter, attributed to Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris, is genuine. Since I have spent years proving that early Mormonism is linked to magic and money-digging, this news should have brought me a great deal of satisfaction. Instead, however, I find myself facing a real dilemma. While the tests and the opinions of noted Mormon scholars seem to indicate that I should relax and enjoy the victory, I still have serious reservations about the document’s authenticity. In fact, I find it very hard to believe that the Martin Harris I have learned about from numerous historical sources could have written the letter.

In the beginning I had full confidence in the validity of the letter. Everything seemed to be checking out, and when I was writing the story for the March issue of the messenger, I was very excited that we were going to be the ones who would break the story to the world. Unfortunately, however, I made a discovery that really disturbed me. Although there was a temptation to just forget what I had seen, I decided that it would be dishonest not to report the discovery. Consequently, the fourth page of the March issue of the Messenger contains this statement:

Since we . . . have written a book entitled, Mormonism, Magic and Masonry, we were delighted to get the report that Martin Harris had written a letter relating to the subject. As we learned of the contents, we felt that it would provide additional evidence to support our thesis. Some time later, we were told of another letter, written by W. W. Phelps, which seemed to prove the authenticity of the letter attributed to Harris. This letter is printed in Howe’s book, pages 273-274. In the letter, Phelps tells of Martin Harris’ statements concerning the Book of Mormon. There are some remarkable parallels between the two letters. Both letters refer to the Urim and Thummim as “silver spectacles.” Both accounts tell of Martin Harris taking a copy of the Book of Mormon characters to “Utica, Albany and New York,” and both talk of the Book of Mormon language as “shorthand Egyptian.” Since Phelps’ letter is dated Jan. 15, 1831 (less than three months after the letter which was reported to have been written by Harris), it seemed safe to conclude that Phelps used the Harris letter in preparing his own. In all fairness, however, we made another discovery which we felt we must report. Just two pages after Phelps letter, we found a statement written by E. D. Howe which is strangely similar to the “Harris” letter. The reader will remember that the letter said, “the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander in the bottom of the hole.” E. D. Howe’s statements read as follows: “. . . looked into the hole, where he saw a toad, which immediately transformed itself into a spirit, . . .” Notice that both accounts use the words “the hole” as well as “spirit,” and the words “transfigured himself” resemble “transformed itself.” Howe’s statement appears to be his won summary of the Willard Chase affidavit which we have already cited: “He saw in the box something like a toad, which soon assumed the appearance of a man, . . .”

That Howe’s statement (Mormonism Unveiled, page 276) is so much like the one in the “Harris” letter is a little disturbing. Even more disconcerting, however, is the fact that it appears just two pages from a letter by W. W. Phelps which also bears remarkable parallels. This, of course, might all be a coincidence, and if it can be established that the letter was actually penned before Howe’s book was published in 1834, it will probably be accepted as a genuine letter.

About five months after we broke the story about the Salamander letter and printed extracts from it, the Los Angeles Times printed a story on the subject. In this article John Dart commented:

However, unusual caution about the letter’s genuineness has been expressed by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, longtime evangelical critics of the Mormon church. The Tanners wrote in their Salt Lake City Messenger newsletter last march that the purported Harris letter contains too many similarities to statements published in an 1834 book by E. D. Howe.

After the Los Angeles Times ran its story, the Deseret News printed an article which contained the following:

. . . outspoken Mormon Church critics Jerald and Sandra Tanner suspect the document is a forgery, they told the Deseret News.

Jerald Tanner has not seen the actual letter but says similarities between it and other documents make its veracity doubtful.

Tanner said he studied a typescript of the document and wanted to believe it. But when he compared it to the 1834 book “Mormonism Unveiled” by E. D. Howe, he found highly similar stories about Smith viewing a toad that turned itself into a man or a spirit. . . . Tanner feels the document is an extremely important find. “It deserves a lot of attention,” he said. “If it’s authentic, its extremely important in linking Mormonism to the occult. If it’s a forgery, then it’s important because there’s a document forger out there.” (Deseret News, September 1, 1984)
In his article in the *Los Angeles Times*, John Dart commented: “The Tanners’ suggestion of forgery has surprised some Mormons, who note that the parallels in wording also could be taken as evidence for authenticity.” While I agree with the statement that parallels “could be taken as evidence” for the authenticity of the Salamander letter, it is the close proximity of important parallels in Howe’s book that causes concern. It is, in fact, very disconcerting to find only two pages in the Howe book separating highly significant parallels. In addition to these parallels, I find many other things in the Howe book that could have provided structural material for the Salamander letter. It is interesting to note that a manuscript written by Joseph Knight also has some remarkable similarities. This manuscript, which is stored in the Church Archives, was first published by Dean Jessee in the Autumn 1976 issue of *Brigham Young University Studies*. One thing I noticed in the Knight account that could have had an influence on the Salamander letter is the use of the words “says he” and “says I.” On page 37, as published in *BYU Studies*, we find the following: “Says he... Says he... Says I... Says I... Says he... Says he... Says I... Says I...”

The following is a comparison of portions of the Salamander letter with quotations from three different publications which are well known to students of Mormon history. The first source used is E. D. Howe’s book *Mormonism Unvailed* (abbreviated as “Howe”). The second is Francis Kirkham’s *A New Witness For Christ in America* (*NWFC*). Kirkham cites an article from the Rochester Gem, September 5, 1829. The third is the Joseph Knight account which appears in *Brigham Young University Studies* (*BYUS*), Autumn 1976. Parallel No. 9 is from *BYU Studies* article, but it is a footnote Dean Jessee had taken from Lucy Smith’s book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE SALAMANDER LETTER</th>
<th>POSSIBLE SOURCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Joseph can see anything he wishes by looking at a stone</td>
<td>1. This light of the stone, he pretended, enabled him to see anything he wished. Accordingly he discovered ghosts, infernal spirits (<em>Howe</em>, 259)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph often sees Spirits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. kettles of coin money</td>
<td>2. kettles filled with gold and silver (<em>Howe</em>, 237)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. the elder Smith... says... it was Spirits who brought up rock</td>
<td>3. Joseph, Sen. told me... the large stones... we call them rocks, ...are, in fact, most of them chests of money raised by the heat of the sun (<em>Howe</em>, 233)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. the enchantment</td>
<td>4. the enchantment (<em>Howe</em>, 267)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. the old spirit come to me 3 times in the same dream &amp; says dig up the gold</td>
<td>5. after a third visit from the same spirit in a dream he proceeded to the spot (<em>NWFC</em>, vol. 1, page 151)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. but when I take it up the next morning the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander in the bottom of the hole</td>
<td>6. after the plates were taken from their hiding place by Jo, he, ... looked into the hole, where he saw a toad, which immediately transformed itself into a spirit (<em>Howe</em>, 275-76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. &amp; struck me 3 times</td>
<td>7. and struck him... the spirit struck him again, and knocked him three or four rods (<em>Howe</em>, 242)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. to cover over the hole</td>
<td>8. that he would cover the place over (<em>BYUS</em>, 31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. the spirit said do not lay it down</td>
<td>9. he had been commanded not to lay the plates down (<em>BYUS</em>, 31, footnote 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Joseph says when can I have it</td>
<td>10. Joseph says, “when can I have it?” (<em>BYUS</em>, 31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. the spirit says I year from today if you will obey me</td>
<td>11. you have not obeyed your orders... come one year from this day (<em>Howe</em>, 242)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. bring your brother</td>
<td>12. bring with you your oldest brother (<em>Howe</em>, 242)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. Joseph says he is dead

14. Joseph goes to get the gold Bible but the spirit says...you cannot have it

15. the spirit says...look to the stone Joseph looks but cannot see who to bring the spirit says...look to the stone

16. Joseph looks & sees his wife

17. I give Joseph fifty dollars to move him down to Pa

18. I take them to Utica, Albany & New York in the last place Dr. Mitchell give me an introduction to Professor Anthon says he they are shorthand Egyptian the same what was used in ancient times

19. Joseph found some giant silver spectacles with the plates

20. he puts them in an old hat & in the darkness reads the words & in this way it’s all translated

It is possible that Peter Ingersoll’s affidavit could have had an influence on the story about Joseph Smith telling Harris the “spirits are grieved” because Harris kept a “coin” which belonged to them. In Ingersoll’s story, however, it is Joseph Smith who tricked a “gate tender” into handing him some money that did not rightfully belong to him (see Mormonism Unvailed, page 235).

The Palmyra Reflector printed a series of articles which Francis W. Kirkham included in A New Witness For Christ in America, vol. 1. On page 290 of this book, we read as follows:

“This rogue of a spirit who had baffled all the united efforts of the money-diggers, . . . intended it would seem to play our prophet a similar trick . . . the father . . . probably fearing some trick of the spirit, having known him for many years: . . .” This could have suggested the following statement in the Salamander letter: “. . . the spirit says I tricked you again . . .” On page 289 of the same book, the following is cited from the Palmyra Reflector: “. . . the elder Smith declared that his son Joe had seen the spirit, . . .” This reminds me of the following statement in the Salamander letter: “. . . the elder Smith . . . says Joseph . . . sees Spirits . . .” The words “the elder Smith” seem to be a little too formal for Martin Harris. In an interview published in Tiffany’s Monthly, Harris never used this term. He referred to “old Mr. Stowel,” “Old Mr. Beman” and “old Mr. Smith’s.”

The series of Palmyra Reflector articles cited in A New Witness For Christ in America present the idea that Joseph Smith’s story evolved from the visitation of a spirit connected with the money-diggers to communion with angels. We find this statement on page 291:

It is well known that Joe Smith never pretended to have any communion with angels, until a long period after the pretended finding of his book, and that the juggling of himself or father went no further than the pretended faculty of seeing wonders in a “peep stone,” and the occasional interview with the spirit, supposed to have the custody of hidden treasures: . . .

This exact thesis is presented in the Salamander letter. The word “angel” is not found once in the entire letter, whereas the words “spirit” or “spirits” appear twelve times. Furthermore, these spirits are clearly revealed as guardians of the treasures. While I feel that there may be something to the idea that “the spirit” evolved into an “angel,” I find it hard to believe that Martin Harris would still be telling the older version of the story in 1830. The early newspapers certainly do not support such a conclusion.
The Salamander

After reading the letter attributed to Martin Harris, I became very interested in the reason why it was a “salamander” that was transformed into a “spirit.” I found that salamanders are connected to magic and money-digging. The word salamander is defined in one dictionary as “a spirit supposed to live in fire; an elemental spirit in Paracelsus’ theory of elementals.” (For more information on this subject see The Money-Digging Letters, page 13.) I spent a great deal of time trying to find the word salamander in literature connected with Mormonism. I was not successful, however, until I examined an unpublished manuscript by A. C. Lambert which is found in the Western Americana Department of the University of Utah Library. In this work of over 400 pages, Dr. Lambert claimed that people in Joseph Smith’s time were aware of the four elemental spirits. He then stated that “salamanders were to be placated and made helpful or were to be defeated and put under control” (page 76). If this statement had appeared in some other work, I might have considered it as evidence for the Salamander letter. As it is, however, it makes me even more suspicious of the letter’s authenticity. This manuscript happen to be written concerning Martin Harris and is entitled, “A Study that Gives Some Special Attention to Martin Harris.” It is the very type of manuscript that someone making up a letter concerning Harris would want to read for background material. Although this is an unpublished manuscript, Sharon Pugsley made its existence known to scholars the very year it was written (see Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, vol. 8, no. 2, 1973, page 100).

Something Missing

When we published the March 1984 Messenger, I had only seen extracts from the Salamander letter. Later I obtained a typescript of the text of the letter, and this only increased my concern about its validity. On August 22, 1984, I printed my preliminary report on the letter under the title The Money-Digging Letters. The following appeared on page 7 of this report:

We have already mentioned the interview with Martin Harris which is published in Tiffany’s Monthly. . . . This article is used by both Mormon and anti-Mormon writers. In this interview, Harris says that Smith “found them [the gold plates] by looking in the stone” (page 169). The Salamander letter quotes Smith as saying, “I found it 4 years ago with my stone.” While there are a few other parallels with this interview, the dissimilarities seem to be much more significant. For example, the Salamander letter has very little to say about the gold plates of the Book of Mormon, whereas in the interview in Tiffany’s Monthly, Harris goes into great detail about the plates. He speaks of their size, thickness, weight and how they were buried. He gives a similar description of the Urim and Thummim. The Salamander letter give no description of these “silver spectacles.”

The interview in Tiffany’s Monthly also raises a very serious question about the lack of religious material in the Salamander letter. In the interview, Harris quoted at least five portions of the Bible. He used the words revelation, Moses, Scripture and Christ at least once. He used the word prayed twice, and mentioned the devil four times. The word angel or angels appears five times. God is mentioned seven times, and the word Lord appears ten times. In the Salamander letter all of these words are absent. In fact, there is nothing we can find concerning religion. Spirits are mentioned many times in the letter, but they are never linked to money-digging. They are the guardians of the treasures.

This total lack of religious material seems to be out of character for Martin Harris. A person might try to maintain that Harris was more interested in religion in 1859, but the evidence shows that he was always that way. E. D. Howe described him as follows:

He was naturally of a very visionary turn of mind on the subject of religion, . . . He frequently declares that he has conversed with Jesus Christ, Angel and the Devil. . . .

Martin is an exceedingly fast talker. He frequently gathers a crowd around him in bar-rooms and in the streets.—Here he appears to be in his element, answering and explaining all manner of dark and abstruse theological questions, from Genesis to Revelations; declaring that every thing has been revealed to him by the “power of God.” During these flights of fancy, he frequently prophecies of the coming of Christ, the destruction of the world, and the damnation of certain individuals. (Mormonism Unvailed, 1834, pages 13-15)

The article we have cited which was published in the Gem in 1829 claimed that Harris mentioned the “Almighty” in relationship to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. An article which appeared in the Pain[ef]ville Telegraph in 1831 contained this information: “Martin Harris . . . told all about the gold plates, Angels, Spirits, and Jo Smith.—He had seen and handled them all, by the power of God . . . Every idea that he advanced, he knew to be absolutely true, as he said, by the spirit and power of God” (Pain[ef]ville Telegraph, March 15, 1831, as cited in A New Witness for Christ in America, vol. 2, page 97.
Since printing this statement in *The Money-Digging Letters*, I have examined a number of other historical sources relating to Martin Harris. These references, from early newspapers up until the time of his death, point to the unmistakable conclusion that Harris could hardly open his mouth without talking about religion. That he could write a letter of over 600 words without mentioning the subject seems highly unlikely. This is especially true since the Salamander letter deals with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and gives ample opportunities to bring up the subject. While it is true that Martin Harris believed in money-digging and the superstitions connected with it, it seems very hard to believe that he would write a perspective convert like Phelps and leave out all the divine elements of the Book of Mormon.

It is claimed that the Salamander letter is the only letter in existence which is written in Martin Harris’s own hand. (There is a letter which bears his signature, but the handwriting resembles that of his son. We will have more to say about this later.) There are two other letters attributed to Harris which were published in the *Latter-Day Saints’ Millennial Star* on January 1, 1877. One of the letters claims to have been dictated by Martin Harris, but the other one might have been written in his own hand. The original copies of these letters have not been located, but there seems to be no reason to question their authenticity. While there could have been some editorial tampering, the letters undoubtedly came from Harris. They were published over a hundred years ago and bear internal evidence of having originated from the mind of Martin Harris. For instance, they conform very well with Howe’s early assessment of Harris: “Here he appears to be in his element, answering and explaining all manner of dark and abstruse theological questions, from Genesis to Revelations; declaring that everything has been revealed to him by the ‘power of God.’” In the first letter, Harris boasted: “I defy any man to show me any passage of Scripture that I am not posted on or familiar with.” The second letter is filled with quotations from the scriptures. We have previously quoted the March 15, 1831, issue of the *Painesville Telegraph* as saying: “Every idea that he advanced, he knew to be absolutely true, as he said, by the spirit and power of God.” In the second letter which appears in the *Millennial Star*, Martin Harris stated: “The Lord has shown me these things by his spirit . . .” Harris went on to claim that, “The Lord showed me there was no true Church upon the face of the earth, . . .”

The reader will find a photograph of these letters below. Notice that they are filled with Scriptures and material dealing with religion.
Smithfield, Utah, Nov. 23, 1870.

Mr. Emerson, Sir: I received your favor. In reply I will say concerning the plates, I do say that the angel did show to me the plates containing the Book of Mormon. Further, the translation that I married to Prof. Anthon was copied from these same plates; also, that the Professor did testify to it being a correct translation. I do firmly believe and do know that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God; for without I know he could not had [sic] that gift; neither could he have translated the same. I can give if you require it, one hundred witnesses to the proof of the Book of Mormon.

I defy any man to show me any passage of Scripture that I am not posted on or familiar with. I will answer any question you feel like asking to the best of my knowledge, if you can rely on my testimony of the same. In conclusion I can say that I arrived in Utah safe, in good health and spirits, considering the long journey. I am quite well at present, and have been, generally speaking, since I arrived.

With many respects I remain your humble friend,

MARTIN HARRIS.

Smithfield, Cache County, U.T., January, 1871.

To H. Emerson, Dear Sir:—Your second letter, dated December, 1870, came duly to hand. I am truly glad to see a spirit of inquiry manifested therein. I reply by a borrowed hand, as my sight has failed me too much to write myself. Your questions: Question 1, “Did you go to England to lecture against ‘Mormonism’?”

Answer, I answer emphatically, No, I did not;—No man ever heard me in any way deny the truth of the Book of Mormon, the administration of the angel that showed me the plates; nor the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, under the administration of Joseph Smith, Jun., the Prophet whom the Lord raised up for that purpose, in these latter days, that he may show forth his power and glory. The Lord has shown me these things by his spirit—by the administration of holy angels—and confirmed the same with signs following, step by step, as the work has progressed, for the space of fifty-three years.

The Lord showed me there was no true Church upon the face of the earth, none built upon the foundation, designated by the Savior, “The rock of revelation,” as declared to Peter. See Matt. xvi, 16, 17, 18 verses. He also showed me that an angel should come and restore the Holy Priesthood again to the earth, and commission his servants again with the Holy Gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth: See Rev. xiv, 6, 7 verses. He further showed me that the time was nigh when he would set his hand again the second time to restore the Kingdom of Israel, “when he would gather the outcasts of Israel and the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.” “When he would bring the record of Joseph which was in the hand of Ephraim, and join with the record of Judah, when the two records should become one in the hand of the Lord to accomplish his great work of the last days.” See Ex. 36th and 37th chap.; also Isaiah 29th chap.; also from the 58th chap. to the end of the book; also Psalms 50.

Question 2. What became of the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated?

Answer. They were returned to the angel, Moroni, from whom they were received, to be brought forth again in the due time of the Lord; for they contain many things pertaining to the gathering of Israel, which gathering will take place in this generation, and shall be testified of among all nations, according to the old Prophets; as the Lord will set his ensign to the people, and gather the outcasts of Israel.

See Isaiah, 11th chap.

Now, dear sir, examining these Scriptures carefully; and should there still be any ambiguity relative to this great work of the last days, write again and we will endeavor to enlighten you on any point relative to this doctrine.

I am, very respectfully,

MARTIN HARRIS, Sen.

—Opden Junction.
I find it very difficult to believe that the two letters published in the *Millennial Star* came from the same mind that produced the Salamander letter.

There is another letter attributed to Martin Harris (apparently not in his own hand) which is in the Church Archives. It was sent to Brigham Young along with a printed proclamation purporting to be a revelation from Moses, Elias, Elijah and John. In this letter we find the following:

Respected Friend Brigham Young

enclosed I Send you a Proclamation as you will discover by reading it given by Moses, Elias, Elijah, and John —

You no doubt will recollect of a favor asked of me — of the lone of Some money upon the ground of relationship and in the name of God. I now make an appeal to you in the name of god and Command you in the name of god = to Publish = the Revelation I send you in = your deseret news . . . that the = world and Commandment of the Proclamation may go to all the world this done you will Serve the cause of god . . . (Letter attributed to Martin Harris, August 13, 1855, Brigham Young Collection, MSD, BX 39, fd 17, handwritten copy)

While there is no way to know for certain that this letter was written by Martin Harris, the attempt to command Brigham Young “in the name of God” seems consistent with what is known about Harris’s character. In any case, the reader will notice that the letter uses the word “God” four times and mentions Biblical names.

With the exception of the Salamander letter, historical sources (both Mormon and anti-Mormon) reveal that Martin Harris could not keep silent on the subject of religion. Besides the early newspapers which mention Harris’s zealous attempt to tie Mormonism to God and the bible, we have a number of people who spoke with him throughout the years he was associated with Mormonism. They all tell the same story. One of the most interesting accounts was given by an Episcopalian minister by the name of John A. Clark. In a book published in 1842, he claimed that he had an important conversation with Martin Harris in 1827—three years before the Salamander letter was supposed to have been written. Clark believed that the Smith family “were principally known as money-diggers = and that Joseph Smith claimed “second sight, a power to look into depths of the earth, and discover where its precious treasures were hid,” but he did not seem to remember Harris telling anything about a spirit which “transfigured himself from a white salamander.” Instead, he claimed that Harris told him it was an angel of God who directed Joseph Smith to the plates:

It was early in the autumn of 1827 that Martin Harris called at my house in Palmyra, one morning about sunrise. His whole appearance indicated mor than usual excitement, . . .

According to Martin Harris, . . . Jo, while he lay upon his bed, had a remarkable dream. An angel of God seemed to approach him, clad in celestial splendor. This divine messenger assured him, that he, Joseph Smith, was chosen of the Lord to be a prophet of the Most High God, and to bring to light hidden things, . . . (Gleanings By The Way, pages 222 and 225)

Mark Hofmann, who sold the Salamander letter to Steven Christensen, suggested that the lack of religious material in the letter may stem from Phelps being involved in money-digging. This would account for Harris emphasizing this aspect of the story and suppressing the divine element. While it is possible that Harris would stress the things that were appealing to a money-digger, it still seems somewhat strange that he would leave out all mention of God or angels. Phelps’s own letter, written less than three months after the one attributed to Harris, seems to show that he was receptive to religious material. It mentioned “God,” “the Holy Ghost,” “the millennium” and “divine things.” The Phelps letter, in fact, says that, “Mr. Harris, . . . declares upon his soul’s salvation that the book is true, and was interpreted . . . through a pair of silver spectacles, . . .” While the words “silver spectacles” appear in the Salamander letter, nothing about Harris’s “soul’s salvation” is found there.

**The 1873 Letter**

It is disturbing to note that the Salamander letter, which seems to remove all religious elements out of the Book of Mormon story, comes right on the heels of the discovery of another letter reported to have been written by Martin Harris in 1873. This letter is supposed to be in the handwriting of Martin Harris’s son, although it appears to bear the signature of Harris himself. It is a strong affirmation of the testimony concerning the angel appearing to show the gold plates:

. . . as I was praying unto the Lord that I might behold the ancient record, lo there appeared to view a holy Angel, . . . the angel did take up the plates and turn them over so as we could plainly see the engravings thereon, and lo there came a voice from heaven saying “I am the Lord,” and that the plates were translated by God and not by men, and also that we should bear record of it to all the world. . . . (The Ensign, December 1983, pages 44-45)

The Salamander letter almost appears to be a rebuttal to the powerful testimony in the 1873 letter. When it comes to Harris’s view of the gold plates it merely states: “. . . Joseph takes me together with Oliver Cowdery & David Whitmer to have a view of the plates our names are appended to the book of Mormon . . .”
I have made a comparison of the religious content of the two letters and found the following: the 1873 letter uses the word Lord three times. The words Angel and holy appear twice, and the words God, Christ, heaven, vision, Gospel and praying all appear once. In the Salamander letter all of these words are missing, and since it is almost three times as long as the 1873 letter the discrepancy becomes even more important.

In *The Money-Digging Letters*, page 19, I wrote:

The style of the Salamander letter seems to differ from that of the 1873 letter. Although Harris was in his late forties at the time the Salamander letter was supposed to have been written, it appears to have been penned by someone who did not have a very good education. The 1873 letter, on the other hand, is very well written. One very obvious difference is that it used the word and three times as often as the Salamander letter.

After sorting the words in the two letters alphabetically on our computer, I found that the figure should be 2.6 instead of 3. The Salamander letter uses and 2.9 times per hundred words, whereas it appears 7.5 times per hundred words in the 1873 letter. I also made this observation in *The Money-Digging Letters*: “The Salamander letter is composed mostly of short sentences (an average of 12 words in each sentence), whereas the 1873 letter has an average of 73 words per sentence.” If the original punctuation of the 1873 letter is not followed, it is possible to divide it into more sentences. While this would reduce the number of words per sentence, the new sentences would all have to start with the word and. The other letters attributed to Harris which I have examined do not seem to use the word and to start sentences. It is also interesting to note that the sentences in these letter are about twice as long as those in the Salamander letter. I really do not profess to know how significant the length of sentences and the number of times and is used are for determining authorship. It would seem that both could be affected by the contents of the letter. I do feel, however, that the two letters bear little resemblance to each other. The differences have led me to question whether both could be genuine. Although the 1873 letter seems to fit more comfortable with the picture I have obtained of Martin Harris from many other sources, I must admit that I am not absolutely convinced that it is authentic.

If I accept the statement that Martin Harris was a man “of small literary acquirements” when he was over forty years of age, then I find it very hard to believe that he would have improved his style to the point where he could have written the 1873 letter. One explanation for this, however, might be that Martin Harris’s son imposed his own style into the letter. For that matter, he could have composed the entire letter, and as long as his father signed it, it would be considered the work of Martin Harris, Sen. The most important thing, then, is the signature. In *The Money-Digging Letters* I observed:

One signature that is rather remarkable is the one found on the 1873 letter. Although Martin Harris was supposed to have been “eighty-nine years old” when he wrote it (*The Ensign*, November 1982, page 97), it looks almost the same as the one on the 1829 contract with Grandin (see *The Ensign*, December 1983, pages 41 and 45). It is certainly not what one would expect from a man who was just four month from his ninetieth birthday.

I would expect Harris’s signature to be somewhat shaky by the time he was supposed to have signed the 1873 letter. I have been told by a scholar who has seen the original that it does show evidence of an unsteady hand. If this is the case, the photograph published in *The Ensign* does not seem to reveal it. In any case, after I published *The Money-Digging Letters*, I received a photocopy of an application for a U.S. Military pension which Martin Harris signed on April 21, 1871. Since it was signed 21 months before the 1873 letter was supposed to have been written, I would expect it to be as good as or even better than the one appearing on the letter. Instead, it seems to bear evidence of deterioration. Below is a comparison of Harris’s signatures as they appeared in 1829, 1871 and 1873.

While the 1871 signature does raise some questions about the signature on the 1873 letter, caution must be used. It could be that when Harris signed the document in 1871 he was having an exceptionally bad day. Although I am suspicious of the signature on the 1873 letter, I cannot say for certain that it did not come from Martin Harris’s pen. It is interesting to note, however, that in the letter dated January 1871, which was published in the *Millennial Star*, Harris commented: “I reply by a borrowed hand, as my sight has failed me too much to write myself.” If Harris was having such a severe problem when he was 87, I would think that it would even be worse by the time
he was 89. This could not only affect the appearance of the signature but also its orientation to the writing which had already been dictated. A close examination of the photograph in *The Ensign* shows that the signature is placed perfectly between the lines on the paper and that it is parallel to the other writing.

I do not know whether any physical tests have been made on this letter. The Church’s press release dated October 5, 1982, only told that, “Preliminary studies, comparing the handwritings in the letter with known examples of handwritings of both Martin Harris and his son, substantiate the letter’s authenticity.”

As to the pedigree of the letter, the Church’s press release said that Brent F. Ashworth “declined to identify the collectors from whom” he obtained it. We have since learned that it passed through the hands of Mark Hofmann—Hofmann, of course, is the same man who sold the Salamander letter to Steven Christensen. Martin Harris’s 1873 letter was addressed to Walter Conrad. Mr. Ashworth was apparently unsuccessful in tracing the letter back to the Conrad family. In the press release, we read as follows:

> He said the Martin Harris letter was previously owned by at least three collectors. The first of these, he said, kept the letter in a collection of postmarked covers from early Utah and apparently didn’t realize its import.

> It would appear, then, that the first person known to have had the letter was a collector. This, of course, provides no real evidences for the document’s authenticity. (It could be of some value, of course, if the collector furnished evidence that it was in his collection for a number of years.) In my opinion, the fact that a document has been in the hands of a collector does not really give it a pedigree. A forged document could be funneled through an unsuspecting collector to help convince someone else of its authenticity. The important thing, then, is where the document was before it arrived in the hands of the collector. Although many authentic documents have no pedigree, I would still feel better about the 1873 letter if it could be traced back beyond a collector.

The 1873 letter is worth a great deal of money because it fills a real vacuum for believers in the Book of Mormon. While Harris often claimed that an angel showed him the gold plates of the Book of Mormon (see his two letters published in the *Millennial Star*), he seems to have had little to say about the details of the vision. According to a number of sources, when Harris was questioned about the matter, he said he “never saw the plates with his natural eyes only in vision . . .” (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 96-C; *Gleanings By The Way*, pages 256-257). In the *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 142, Mormon historian B. H. Roberts concluded that “So far as any direct personal statement is concerned, Martin Harris is silent as to the manner in which the plates were shown to him, . . .”

The following appeared in the Church’s press release which announced the discovery of the 1873 letter: “Through the years several interviews with Martin Harris have been published, reaffirming his testimony . . . But this letter is the first statement to be discovered since then that carries his signature.”

Mormon officials were elated with this remarkable discovery. The managing director of the church Historical Department called it “one of the most significant discoveries regarding [the] coming forth of the Book of Mormon, . . .” (*Deseret News*, Church Section, October 9, 1982). The rejoicing was short-lived, however. Scarcely a year had elapsed when rumors began to surface that another letter by Martin Harris had been discovered. Instead of confirming the divine origin of the Book of Mormon, the Salamander letter turned out to provide devastating evidence against it by linking it to money-digging and the occult.

At any rate, the 1873 letter contains some interesting parallels with two documents printed in the *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, vol. 1, pages 142-143. The first is a statement by Edward Stevenson in which he claimed that Martin Harris gave important details concerning the vision of the gold plates at his (Stevenson’s) home. B. H. Roberts’ source for Stevenson’s statement is listed as *Millennial Star*, vol. 48, pages 367-389. When this reference was checked, it became evident that it was only a reminiscence. It was not published until June 21, 1886—eleven years after Martin Harris’s death. Furthermore, Stevenson seemed to have been relying at least to some extent on James T. Wood’s memory: “. . . Brother James T. Woods, who is now present while I am writing this article, reminds me that himself and G. D. Keaton were present on that occasion, and asked him [Harris] to explain the manner in which the plates containing the characters of the Book of Mormon were exhibited to the witnesses.” Since a number of similar statements by Book of Mormon witness David Whitmer had already been published, it is possible that some of Whitmer’s ideas were unconsciously attributed to Harris. However this may be, Stevenson said that Harris related that “the angel stood on the opposite side of the table . . .” The 1873 letter told of “a holy Angel, and before him a table, . . .” Stevenson’s account said “the angel . . . took the plates in his hand and turned them over.” The Harris letter also claimed that “the Angel did take up the plates and turn them over . . .” Both accounts use the words to all the world. Stevenson went on to say that Harris claimed “he lied not.” In the 1873 letter Harris said that “I lie not . . .”
While there are a number of interesting parallels between the two accounts, there is one significant difference. Stevenson claimed that Harris spoke of the “angel” who declared that the Book of Mormon was translated correctly, whereas the 1873 letter said it was “the Lord.” This is interesting because the other document used by Roberts in the *A Comprehensive History*, page 143, agrees with the 1873 letter in this matter. This is a report of an interview with David Whitmer which appears on the same page Stevenson’s account ends. In this report we find Whitmer (who seems to be borrowing heavily from the printed “Testimony of the Three Witnesses”) quoted as saying: “... I heard the voice of the Lord, ... declaring that the records of the plates ... were translated by the gift and power of God.” In the letter attributed to Harris, we read that, “there came a voice ... saying ‘I am the Lord,’ and that the plated were translated by God ...”

These parallels, of course, do not prove that the 1873 letter was created from the accounts used by B. H. Roberts. They only show that there was a source available which was printed after Harris’s death which someone could have used to write the letter.

**Unscientific?**

As I pointed out at the beginning of this article, some of the tests which the experts have completed on the Salamander letter seem to indicate that it is genuine. My study of the text, however, has led me to have serious doubts about its authenticity. In view of the tests, I have to ask myself whether I am being unscientific. Can the case I have built against the document possibly outweigh the findings of the experts? Everyone would probably agree that if the letter mentioned Joseph Smith watching television before he was visited by the spirit, it could not be accepted as authentic no matter what the scientific tests revealed. The evidence furnished by the text of the letter would override all physical tests. With the Salamander letter, however, I must admit that I do not have anything which is that convincing. My doubts are based solely on circumstantial evidence. As I investigated the matter, the evidence seemed to grow, and I found it increasingly difficult to believe in the document’s authenticity. I originally entered into the research with a strong desire to prove that the letter cam from the pen of Martin Harris. Unfortunately, however, the inconsistencies seemed to swallow up all my enthusiasm. Some of the evidence against the letter seemed to be similar to that which led me to the conclusion that a large portion of the History of the Church was not actually authored by Joseph Smith as the Church had always claimed. Mormon scholars later admitted that my conclusions about the matter were correct. Over 60% of the history had been compiled from many sources after Joseph Smith’s death, and references were changed from the third person to the first person to make it appear that Smith was the author (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 127-135).

At any rate, I now find myself wondering how much I can rely on the scientific tests which are available. I am convinced that the average person could not come up with a forgery that would stand up against these tests. On the other hand, I wonder how difficult if would be for someone who is seriously involved with old documents to create a forgery that would pass the tests. In *The Money-Digging Letters*, I questioned whether handwriting analysis is an exact science and pointed out important cases where the experts have differed. In the same pamphlet I pointed out that we had talked with Bill Kruger, the man who had tested the paper the Salamander letter was written on. Mr. Kruger stated that there was nothing in the chemical composition of the paper which would preclude its having been manufactured around 1830. Mr. Kruger informed us, however, that it is possible for a very clever forger to manufacture paper at the present time which will pass through his tests without detection.

We also talked with Dr. Antonio Kantu, one of the world’s greatest experts on the detection of forgery by testing ink. Dr. Kantu had been approached about making tests on the Salamander letter, but due to a mix up in communications someone else ended up doing the work. In our conversation with Kantu, he said that he could examine the ink to determine if its chemical properties were like those of ink used at this early period, but he would not be able to say for certain that this was actually ink in use in 1830 or if it was added to the paper at that date. He indicated that by merely applying heat to a document, a forger could give the appearance of great age. He knew of no ink test that could be made on the Salamander letter that would be absolutely conclusive.

If I were certain that the tests could not be thwarted by an expert forger, I would feel compelled to accept the document as authentic. As it is, however, the circumstantial evidence makes it very difficult for me to accept the letter as having come from the pen of Martin Harris.

After I published my views concerning the letter, a few scholars began to have questions about its authenticity. I understand that one professor has put forth the idea that the letter was really written by Harris’s wife, Lucy. Since she was known to be an enemy of the Book of Mormon, it is proposed she wrote the letter in an effort to discredit Mormonism. This theory would allow one to accept the results of all the tests except the handwriting analysis and still maintain that the letter is fraudulent. I personally find this idea to be rather hard.
to accept. While one could conceivably maintain that Phelps received it as genuine and used quotations from it in the letter published by Howe, it does not explain the other parallels to Mormonism Unveiled. If the letter was really written by Lucy Harris in 1830, Phelps probably would have learned that it was a fraud when he talked to Joseph Smith and others connected with the work. These conversations occurred prior to his response to Howe’s letter on January 15, 1831. I am of the opinion that if the Salamander letter was actually written in 1830, it probably came from Martin Harris’s own pen. If Steven Christensen’s researchers can convince me that the letter was in existence before Howe wrote his book, I will have to accept it as a genuine letter.

In The Money-Digging Letters, pages 8 and 9, I wrote the following:

We feel that one of the most important tests of the letter’s authenticity is its history since it was written. If Mr. Hofmann will tell historians where he obtained the letter, then it may be possible to trace it back to its original source. If, for instance, it had been in the Phelps family for many years, this would add a great deal to a case for its authenticity. We would feel much better about the matter if it could even be traced back prior to 1976 when Knight’s account of the finding of the Book of Mormon plates was first published. Mr. Hofmann is usually very cautious about this information, claiming that it will hinder his work as a document collector if people know his sources.

While we sympathize with Hofmann’s desire not to reveal the source of his discoveries, we feel that it is very important that historians know the source of these finds. Some kind of compromise need to be worked out.

On August 23, 1984, Sandra Tanner talked to Mark Hofmann concerning the authenticity of the Salamander letter. With regard to the question about revealing the source of the letter, Mr. Hofmann said that he had told the buyer (Steven Christensen) where he obtained it, but could not reveal this information to anyone else. According to Hofmann, we will have to wait until Christensen decides to release this information. I thought that this information might appear in the forthcoming article in BYU Studies. Unfortunately, however, I have been told that two other collectors involved in the transaction want to keep a low profile so they can acquire other documents, and therefore information concerning the document’s pedigree might not be given. I hope that this is an inaccurate report, but even if these collectors want to keep their identity secret, they could at least tell where the letter originally came from. If no information about the pedigree appears in BYU Studies, I will have to assume that it cannot be traced back beyond the hands of collectors. I do hope that scholars will not side-step this important issue. Too many of the documents which have recently come forth appear to be like Melchisedec, “Without father, without mother, without descent, . . .” (Hebrews 7:3).

In The Money-Digging Letters, I reported that Hofmann tried to sell the Salamander letter to the Mormon Church for a large amount of money. In the past Mr. Hofmann acted under the theory that the Church will buy up embarrassing documents to suppress them. This is very clear from his own account of how he handled the discovery of the Joseph Smith III Blessing. In a paper given at the Mormon History Association, Mr. Hofmann stated that he did not want “to come across like I was trying to blackmail the Church,” but he acknowledged that if the Church had wanted him to, he would have been “willing to promise not to breathe a word of its existence to anyone . . .” (Sunstone Review, August 1982, page 1). That the Salamander letter was offered to the Church before it was sold to Christensen was confirmed by Church spokesman Jerry Cahill (see Salt Lake Tribune, September 2, 1984).

The 1873 letter which was attributed to Harris was obviously worth a great deal of money to collectors who were interested in proving Mormonism. The Salamander letter, on the other hand, could have been sold to liberal Mormons, anti-Mormons or even to those who would want to buy it to keep it out of the hands of critics. It has been suggested that a letter written by Joseph Smith’s mother sold for $30,000 (see Sunstone Review, September 1982, page 16). I would think that the Salamander letter would bring at least that amount of money.

In conclusion I would like to say that my mind is still open concerning the Salamander letter. If anyone has any information about the letter (either pro or con) I would really like to hear about it. Those who want to know more about the matter should read my preliminary report, The Money-Digging Letters. This report sells for only $1.00 a copy. It includes the interview Martin Harris had with Tiffany’s Monthly in 1859. This interview alone is worth the price of the pamphlet.

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; all things are become new.”

(2 Corinthians 5:17)
UTAH LIGHTHOUSE & WORLD NEEDS

When we originally set up Utah Lighthouse Ministry, we indicated that we were going to provide some assistance to Rescue Missions. These organization preach the Gospel and help the poor and afflicted. Since beginning our operations we have been able to give about fifteen hours a week to this ministry. In addition, we purchased a computer for one mission and have furnished another mission with $100 a month to help pay a chaplain.

Recently the Lord has been moving on our hearts to expand this work into the area of world relief. Although most people are now familiar with the desperate needs in Ethiopia, this is only one of a number of countries where many people are dying of starvation. In 1 John 3:17 we read:

But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

We have been praying about what part the Lord would have Utah Lighthouse Ministry play in the area of world relief, and how we should go about it. Recently our prayers were answered when $1,000 was designated for relief in Africa—i.e. providing food, medical relief, shelter and a demonstration of true Christian love. Since the Lord has been so gracious in opening this door, we have decided to step out in faith and provide monthly support for five children under the World Vision Childcare Partner plan. We would really like to provide support for hundreds of people, and if the Lord provides the means, we will expand this ministry. In the meantime we have our regular expenses. It is necessary that we meet these obligations so that we can continue an effective work among the Mormon people. We do hope, however, that our friends will pray earnestly about Utah Lighthouse Ministry and world relief. We really want the Lord’s will in this matter.

It seems very obvious from Matthew 25:34-40, that He would have all His children helping to alleviate suffering throughout the world:

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?
Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?
And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Psalms 82:3 tells us that we should “Defend the poor and fatherless do justice to the afflicted and needy.” In James 1:27 we read:

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Those who are interested in helping out with this important ministry can send their tax-deductible contributions to Utah Lighthouse Ministry, P.O. Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110.
Important Find?

On November 27, 1967, the Deseret News announced the rediscovery of some of the Joseph Smith Papyri. In the Salt Lake City Messenger for March 1968, we demonstrated that the piece of papyrus from which Joseph Smith was supposed to have translated the Book of Abraham was among the papyri which had been located at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. When this fragment was translated by Egyptologists it was discovered that it was nothing but an Egyptian funerary document know as the “Book of Breathings.” This pagan document had absolutely nothing to do with Abraham or his religion. The original of Fac. No. 1 for the Book of Abraham was also found among the papyri. In the May 1971 issue of the Messenger, we quoted from a letter which related that Dr. Hugh Nibley had told someone that “there was more papyri found and that it quoted from a letter which related that Dr. Hugh Nibley had the papyri. In the May 1971 issue of the Fac. No. 1 for the Book of Abraham was also found among nothing to do with Abraham or his religion. The original of “Book of Breathings.” This pagan document had absolutely nothing to do with Abraham or his religion. The original of Fac. No. 1 for the Book of Abraham was also found among the papyri. In the May 1971 issue of the Messenger, we quoted from a letter which related that Dr. Hugh Nibley had told someone that “there was more papyri found and that it was discovered in Texas. . . . Mention was made by Nibley that Facsimile No. 2 was among the papyri.” Another individual was supposed to have said that Nibley claimed the papyri were in a small town safe which was owned by an antique dealer. Research by Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters led us to believe that the papyri might be in the possession of a Mr. Markham, the owner of Markham’s Trading Post in Cleveland, Texas. Mr. Markham apparently died or left the area a number of years ago, and we did not take the time to search for his descendants.

In any case, it has recently been reported that mark Hofmann has obtained the original Egyptian Papyrus which Joseph Smith used as Fac. No. 2 in the Book of Abraham. It is also claimed that Hofmann plans to secretly sell the document to the Church so that it can remain hidden from the eyes of the public. A prominent Mormon scholar, however, told us that although he had heard the Church was buying the document, he was not aware of any plans for a cover-up. Mr. Hofmann has acknowledged that the original of Fac. No. 2 is in existence and that paste up work has been done on it. Another individual, who has seen the original, claims that there are pencil and ink drawings on the paper it is pasted to which fill in missing portions.

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 335-343, we maintained that strong circumstantial evidence showed that the original of Fac. No. 2 was badly damaged when Joseph Smith obtained it and that he made false restorations from other pieces of papyrus to fill in missing portions. Some of the Egyptian writing was even inserted upside down! We believe that if Mr. Hofmann or the Church will release the original, it will prove our charges of fraudulent reconstruction. The false restorations and the erroneous translation of the Egyptian writing show beyond all doubt that the Book of Abraham is a work of Joseph Smith’s own imagination.

Videos Available

On February 16, 1984, the Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, established the “Tanner Annual Lectureship on Cults.” At that time Sandra delivered two very important lectures, “Is One God Enough: Monotheism to Polytheism” and “Learning the LDS Language: Terminology Differences Between Mormon and Christians.” While we were back in the Midwest, Sandra was also interviewed by a television station in Milwaukee. We are no happy to announce that we are having video cassettes (VHS) made of both the lectures and the interview. The first cassette includes both the lectures given at the First Annual Tanner Lecture and sell for $30. The second cassette contains both the lectures and the interview on the television station in Milwaukee. It is an excellent presentation and is highly recommended. The price is $20. Please include an additional 10% for handling and shipping.

Mormon Archaeology

In an article published in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer 1969, Dee Green, who had been deeply involved in archaeological work at the Church’s Brigham Young University declared:

The first myth we need to eliminate is that Book of Mormon archaeology exists. . . . no Book of Mormon location is known with reference to modern typography. Biblical archaeology can be studied because we do know where Jerusalem and Jericho were and are, but we do not know where Zarahemla and Bountiful (nor any location for that matter) were or are.

Although some people have been misled into believing the situation has changed since Dee Green made his comments, it is clear that Mormon archaeologists are still in the same predicament. This was pointed out at the Sunstone Symposium held on August 25, 1984. After a non-Mormon scholar made some critical comments concerning the relationship of the Book of Mormon to archaeology, two Mormon anthropologists responded to the challenge. Their comments were anything but encouraging to believers in the Book of Mormon. Ray T. Matheny, Professor of Anthropology at BYU, admitted that what had been found so far is disappointing:

No evidence has been found in the New World for a ferrous metallurgical industry dating to pre-Columbian times. And so this is a king-size kind of problem, it seems to me, for so-called Book of Mormon archaeology. . . . I really have difficulty in finding issue
or quarrel with those opening chapters of the Book of Mormon. But thereafter it doesn’t seem like a translation to me. It seems more like a transliteration. And the terminologies and the language used and the methods of explaining and putting things down are 19th century literary concepts and cultural experiences on which Joseph Smith and his colleagues would experience. And for that reason I call it a transliteration, and I’d rather not call it a translation after that 7th chapter. And I have real difficulty in trying to relate these cultural concepts as I’ve briefly discussed here with archaeological findings that I’m aware of . . .

If I were doing this cold like John Carlson is here, I would say in evaluating the Book of Mormon that it had no place in the New World whatsoever. I would have to look for the place of the Book of Mormon events to have taken place in the Old World. It just doesn’t fit anything that he has been taught in his discipline, nor I in mine discipline in anthropology, history; there seems to be no place for it. It seems misplaced . . . . I think there’s a great difficulty here for we Mormons in understanding what this book is all about. (“Book of Mormon Archaeology,” response by Professor Ray T. Matheny, typed copy transcribed from a tape-recording, pages 21, 30 and 31)

Bruce Warren, who is also a Professor of Anthropology at BYU, said that he hoped that the situation would change in the next 25 years, but he admitted that “today there really is not Book of Mormon archaeology” (Ibid., page 42).

For those who are interested in learning more about the Book of Mormon and archaeology we recommend our book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?

NEW BOOKS

The Tanners on Trial, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Has over 100 large pages with many photographs of the original court documents. Contains fascinating testimony by some of the Church’s top historians. Price: $5.95

The Money-Digging Letters, by Jerald Tanner. Contains important information on the Salamander letter and other letter which were recently discovered. Also contains a photographic reprint of Martin Harris’s interview with Tiffany’s Monthly. Price $1.00

An Index to Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? This 38-page index by Michael Briggs should be a great help to our readers. Price: $2.00


The Book of Abraham Revisited. by H. Michael Marquardt. A critical look at the Book of Abraham. Also contains a review of Hugh Nibley’s Abraham in Egypt. Price: $1.00

Tract Pack. An assortment of 12 tracts from other publishers. Price: $1.50

Where Does It Say That? by Bob Witte. Contains hundreds of photos from old Mormon publications. Price: $5.95

An Address to Believers in the Book of Mormon, by Book of Mormon witness David Whitmer. Contains some information not found in his Address to All Believers in Christ. Price: $1.00
BLOOD FLOWS IN UTAH

Brigham Young’s Teachings Put Into Practice

In the Old Testament we read: “And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot” (Deuteronomy 19:21). When Jesus came into the world he introduced a higher law of love:

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:
But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. (Matthew 5:38-39)

In 1 Kings 18:40, Elijah the prophet ordered the destruction of the “prophets of Baal.” The disciples of Jesus remembered this Old Testament story, and when the Samaritans “did not receive” Him, they wanted to know if they should “command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias [Elijah] did?” The account in Luke 10:55-56 says that Jesus “turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.”

The New Testament teaches that we are not to desire vengeance on our enemies. Instead we are to leave judgment in the hands of the Lord.

Blood Atonement

The early leaders of the Mormon Church seem to have reverted to Old Testament thinking when they formulated some of the doctrines of the Church. The New Testament clearly teaches that we are not to curse our enemies: “Bless them which persecute you; bless, and curse not” (Romans 12:14). The Mormon prophet Joseph Smith, on the other hand, gave a revelation which sanctioned the cursing of his enemies: “And inasmuch as mine enemies come against you . . . ye shall curse them; And whomsoever ye curse, I will curse, and ye shall avenge me of mine enemies” (Doctrine and Covenants, Section 103:24-25). In a manuscript written in 1839, Reed Peck said that Joseph Smith claimed that he had a revelation in which the Apostle Peter told him that he had killed Judas: “He [Joseph Smith] talked of dissenters and cited us to the case of Judas, saying that Peter told him in a conversation a few days ago that himself hung Judas for betraying Christ . . .” (The Reed Peck Manuscript, page 13). On December 13, 1857, Heber C. Kimball, a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, made this statement in the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City:

Judas lost that saving principle, and they took him and killed him. It is said in the Bible that his bowels gushed out; but they actually kicked him until his bowels came out. . . . I know the day is right at hand when men will forfeit their Priesthood and turn against us and against the covenants they have made, and they will be destroyed as Judas was. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 6, pages 125-126)

Brigham Young, the second president of the Mormon Church, publicly preached what is known as the “blood atonement” doctrine—i.e., that a man might be killed to save his soul. His sermons were published in the Church’s own newspaper, Deseret News, and were later reprinted by the Mormons in England in the Journal of Discourses. There can be no question, therefore, regarding the accuracy of the printed reports. In one sermon, President Brigham Young made these comments:

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

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

And furthermore, I know that there are transgressors, who, if they knew themselves, and the only condition upon which they can obtain forgiveness, would beg of their brethren to shed their blood. . . . I will say further; I have had men come to me and offer their lives to atone for their sins.

It is true that the blood of the Son of God was shed for sins through the fall and those committed by men, yet men can commit sins which it can never remit. . . . There are sins that can be atoned for by an offering upon an altar, as in ancient days; and there are sins that the blood of a lamb, of a calf, or of turtle doves, cannot remit, but they must be atoned for by the blood of the man. That is the reason why men talk to you as they do from this stand; they understand the doctrine and throw out a few words about it. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 4, pages 53-54; also published in the Deseret News, 1856, page 235)

On another occasion President Brigham Young went so far as to claim that his blood atonement doctrine fulfilled Jesus’ command to “love thy neighbor as thyself”:

Now take a person in this congregation . . . and suppose that he is overtaken in a gross fault, that he has committed a sin that he knows will deprive him of that exaltation which he desires, and that he cannot attain to it without the shedding of his blood, and also knows that by having his blood shed he will atone for that sin, and be saved and exalted with the Gods, is there a man or woman in this house but what would say, “shed my blood that I may be saved and exalted with the Gods?”

All mankind love themselves, and let these principles be known by an individual, and he would be glad to have his blood shed. That would be loving themselves, even unto an eternal exaltation. Will you love your brothers or sisters likewise, when they have committed a sin that cannot be atoned for without the shedding of their blood? Will you love that man or woman well enough to shed their blood?

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

This is loving our neighbour as ourselves; if he needs help, help him; and if he wants salvation and it is necessary to spill his blood on the earth in order that he may be saved, spill it. Any of you who understand the principles of eternity, if you have sinned a sin requiring the shedding of blood, except the sin unto death, would not be satisfied nor rest until your blood should be spilled, that you might gain that salvation you desire. That is the way to love mankind. (Sermon by Brigham Young, delivered in the Mormon Tabernacle, February 8, 1857, printed in the Deseret News, February 18, 1857; also reprinted in the Journal of Discourses, vol. 4, pages 219-20)

In another sermon, Brigham Young made it plain that a man could blood atone his own wife:

Let me suppose a case. Suppose you found your brother in bed with your wife, and put a javelin through both of them, you would be justified, and they would atone for their sins, and be received into the kingdom of God. I would at once do so in such a case; and under such circumstances, I have no wife whom I love so well that I would not put a javelin through her heart, and I would do it with clean hands . . .

There is not a man or woman, who violates the covenants made with their God, that will not be required to pay the debt. The blood of Christ will never wipe that out, your own blood must atone for it; . . . (Journal of Discourses, vol. 3, page 247)

On another occasion Brigham Young warned:

Shall I tell you the law of God in regard to the African race? If the white man who belongs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the penalty under the law of God is death on the spot. This will always be so. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 10, page 110)

Brigham Young taught that in the case of miscegenation with blacks, the children should also
be blood atoned. Wilford Woodruff, who became the fourth president of the Mormon Church, recorded in his journal an address delivered by Brigham Young in 1852. In this address we find the following:

Any man having one drop of the seed of Cane in him cannot hold the priesthood. I will say it now in the name of Jesus Christ. I know it is true & they know it. The Negro cannot hold one particle of Government. I . . . if any man mingles his seed with the seed of Cane the only way he could get rid of it or have salvation would be to come forward & have his head cut off & spill his blood upon the ground. It would also take the life of his children. (Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, vol. 4, page 97)

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 400-403, we demonstrate that the early Mormon leaders recommended blood atonement for murder, adultery, immorality, stealing, using the name of the Lord in vain, not receiving the Gospel, marriage to an African, covenant breaking, apostasy from the Mormon Church, lying, counterfeiting and speaking evil of Joseph Smith or consenting to his death.

Joseph F. Smith, who became the sixth President of the Church, admitted that he was about to stab a man with his pocket knife if he even expressed approval of the murder of Joseph Smith. The Mormon Apostle Abraham H. Cannon recorded the following in his journal under the date of December 6, 1889:

About 4:30 p.m. this meeting adjourned and was followed by a meeting of Presidents Woodruff, Cannon and Smith and Bros. Lyman and Grant. . . . Bro. Joseph F. Smith was traveling some years ago near Carthage when he met a man who said he had just arrived five minutes too late to see the Smiths killed. Instantly a dark cloud seemed to overshadow Bro. Smith and he asked how this man looked upon the deed. Bro. S. was oppressed by a most horrible feeling as he waited for a reply. After a brief pause the man answered, “Just as I have always looked upon it—that it was a d—d cold-blooded murder.” The cloud immediately lifted from Bro. Smith and he found that he had his open pocket knife grasped in his hand in his pocket, and he believes that had this man given his approval to that murder of the prophets he would have immediately struck him to the heart. (“Daily Journal of Abraham H. Cannon,” December 6, 1889, pages 205-206; original journals located in Special Collections Dept. of Brigham Young University)

There can be no doubt that many people in early Utah lost their lives because of the doctrine of blood atonement. John D. Lee, who had been a member of Joseph Smith’s secret Council of Fifty, related the following:

The most deadly sin among the people was adultery, and many men were killed in Utah for that crime.

Rosmos Anderson was a Danish man who had come to Utah . . . He had married a widow lady . . . and she had a daughter that was fully grown at the time of the reformation. The girl was very anxious to be sealed to her step-father . . . At one of the meetings during the reformation Anderson and his step-daughter confessed that they had committed adultery, believing when they did so that Brigham Young would allow them to marry when he learned the facts. Their confession being full, they were rebaptized and received into full membership. They were then placed under covenant that if they again committed adultery, Anderson should suffer death. Soon after this a charge was laid against Anderson before the Council, accusing him of adultery with his step-daughter. This Council was composed of Klingensmith and his two counselors; it was the Bishop’s Council. Without giving Anderson any chance to defend himself or make a statement, the Council voted that Anderson must die for violating his covenants. Klingensmith went to Anderson and notified him that the orders were that he must die by having his throat cut, so that the running of his blood would atone for his sins. Anderson, being a firm believer in the doctrines and teachings of the Mormon Church, made no objections, but asked for half a day to prepare for death. His request was granted. His wife was ordered to prepare a suit of clean clothing, in which to have her husband buried, and she was informed that he was to be killed for his sins, she being directed to tell those who should inquire after her husband that he had gone to California.

Klingensmith, James Haslem, Daniel McFarland and John M. Higbee dug a grave in the field near Cedar City, and that night, about 12 o’clock, went to Anderson’s house and ordered him to make ready to obey the Council. Anderson got up, dressed himself, bid his family good-bye, and notified him that the orders were that he must die by having his throat cut, so that the running of his blood would atone for his sins. Anderson, being a firm believer in the doctrines and teachings of the Mormon Church, made no objections, but asked for half a day to prepare for death. His request was granted. His wife was ordered to prepare a suit of clean clothing, in which to have her husband buried, and she was informed that he was to be killed for his sins, she being directed to tell those who should inquire after her husband that he had gone to California.

As soon as he was dead they dressed him in his clean clothes, threw him into the grave and buried him. They then carried his bloody clothing back to his family, and gave them to his wife to wash, when
she was again instructed to say that her husband was in California. . . . The killing of Anderson was then considered a religious duty and a just act. . . . I knew of many men being killed in Nauvoo by the Danites. It was then the rule that all the enemies of Joseph Smith should be killed, and I know of many a man who was quietly put out of the way by the orders of Joseph and his Apostles while the Church was there. (Confessions of John D. Lee, photomechanical reprint of the original 1877 edition, pages 282-284)

In The Mormon Kingdom, volumes 1 and 2, we have documented the fact that many people were put to death in the early history of the Mormon Church. A good condensation of this material appears in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 398-404A, 428-450, 493-515.

Its Practice Today

Although the Mormon Church no longer encourages the practice of blood atonement, some of the Church leaders still believe in the basic principles underlying the doctrine. Joseph Fielding Smith, who served as the tenth president of the Church, made these comments about the doctrine:

TRUE DOCTRINE OF BLOOD ATONEMENT. Just a word or two now, on the subject of blood atonement. . . . man may commit certain grievous sins—according to his light and knowledge—that will place him beyond the reach of the atoning blood of Christ. If then he would be saved he must make sacrifice of his own life to atone—so far as in his power lies—for that sin, for the blood of Christ alone under certain circumstances will not avail. . . . And men for certain crimes have had to atone as far as they could for their sins wherein they have placed themselves beyond the redeeming power of the blood of Christ. (Doctrines of Salvation, 1954, vol. 1, pages 133-136)

After expressing a belief in the doctrine of “blood atonement,” however, Joseph Fielding Smith turned right around and said that it was never actually practiced by the Mormon Church. At any rate, the teaching that the blood of Christ can not cleanse from all sin is diametrically opposed to the teachings of the Bible. In 1 John 1:7 we read that “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” Even though it is completely unscriptural, the Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie still maintains that “under certain circumstances there are some serious sins for which the cleansing blood of Christ does not operate, and the law of God is that men must have their own blood shed to atone for their sins” (Mormon Doctrine, 1979, page 92).

Fortunately, the present leaders of the Mormon Church have not promoted the blood atonement doctrine, and we know of no credible evidence linking them to its practice. On the other hand, some of the Mormon fundamentalists have sought to keep the blood atonement doctrine alive. Mormon fundamentalists are people who strongly believe in the original teachings of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. Since Joseph Smith received a revelation commanding polygamy (see Doctrine and Covenants, Section 132), they believe that it should be practiced today. When the Mormon Church finds any of its members advocating fundamentalist doctrines, they are excommunicated. In 1966 Wallace Turner said that “William M. Rogers, a former policeman and an investigator who has studied polygamy for many years” estimated that “there are about 100 ‘splinter’ groups living in various forms of polygamous society” (The Mormon Establishment, page 214). In 1979, Jerry Cahill, director of press relations for the Mormon Church, estimated that there were “between 6,000 and 8,000” men, women and children in polygamist families in Utah. A man who was actually involved in the practice, however, put “the polygamy population of Utah at about 35,000” (The Herald, Provo, Utah, January 31, 1979). Whatever the actual figure is for Utah, thousands more live in other parts of the United States, Canada and Mexico.

The great majority of the Mormon fundamentalists are peaceful, and although they may break the laws regarding polygamy, they are generally good citizens. Some of the fundamentalists profess a belief in the teachings of the early Mormon leaders regarding blood atonement, but they are hesitant to actually put the doctrine into practice. In his book, Blood Atonement, Ogden Kraut, a Mormon fundamentalist who has been excommunicated from the Church, quoted extensively from the early Mormon leaders and then said: “Scoffers and unbelievers may mock and refute the doctrine of blood atonement—but it remains a true principle of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (page 102). Even though Kraut maintains a belief in the doctrine, we seriously doubt that he will be influenced to the point where he will put his belief into action. Unfortunately, however, there are a few fundamentalists who have become convinced that blood atonement should actually be practiced at the present time. The first we heard about this matter was probably about fifteen years ago when a Mormon fundamentalist came into our bookstore and told us that his group had restored the secret Council of Fifty which was originally formed by Joseph Smith (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 414-427B). He claimed that his organization was going to set up...
the Kingdom of God on earth and that certain people would have to be eliminated in order to accomplish this objective. We did not take this too seriously and cannot remember which group he was affiliated with. In the 1970s, however, it became apparent that blood atonement was being restored. A number of assassinations have occurred since that time, and although there may be a question as to whether the murderers were more interested in avenging God’s enemies than saving souls, the victims were killed in such a way that their blood was “spilt on the ground.”

In August 1972 Joel LeBaron was murdered. The following year the Salt Lake Tribune reported:

ENSENADA, MEXICO (AP) — A man excommunicated from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon) has been sentenced to 12 years in prison for the killing of his brother. Ervil Morerel LeBaron . . . said his brother Joel, 49, was violating church doctrine in his teachings and was killed in August 1972 as a result. (Salt Lake Tribune, November 11, 1973)

Unfortunately, Ervil LeBaron’s “conviction was overturned by a higher court on an appeal” (Ibid., May 29, 1980), and the violence did not end. On December 28, 1974, the Salt Lake Tribune carried a story which contained the following:

ENSENADA, Mexico (AP) — A woman was reported slain Friday in a new outbreak of fighting between rivals in a dissident religious sect founded by polygamists from the United States.

Francisco Kraus Morales . . . said first reports indicate a house was set afire and occupants shot as they ran out . . . Kraus said as many as 10 other persons were reported wounded . . .

In 1972 the slaying of sect leader Joel LeBaron was blamed on unidentified men trying to take over his Church of the First Born of the Fullness of Time.

LeBaron, 47, founded the sect in Salt Lake City, in 1955, . . .

His brother, Ervil, was among a group of men who took issue with LeBaron’s leadership and philosophy.

The LeBaron family was excommunicated from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints several years before the sect was formed because of what Mormon church officials said was apostasy and polygamy.

On December 31, 1974, the Tribune reported:

A second man cut down by bullets fired in what authorities describe as a religious cult war died Monday. The assailants . . . wounded 13 persons who ran from the flames, police said.

The Tribune for July 13, 1978, reported the following concerning a murder committed in 1975:

SAN DIEGO (UPI) — Vonda White was just one of a “squad of assassins” controlled by her husband, polygamous cult leader Ervil LeBaron, Deputy District Attorney Gary Rempel said Wednesday.

In his opening statement in the murder and conspiracy trial of Mr. White, Rempel said he would prove that she killed Dean Grover Vest, 40, National City, by order of LeBaron to achieve “blood atonement.”

Vest was planning on “defecting” from the Church of the Lamb of God at the time of the killing, Rempel said, and had already packed his belongings the afternoon of the shooting.

Vonda White was sentenced to “life in prison” for the blood atonement slaying of Mr. Vest. According to a story published in the Tribune, Vest “was going to give FBI agents weapons, including machine guns, that belonged to LeBaron’s cult . . .” (June 14, 1979). On July 20, 1978, the Tribune printed the following:

Don Sullivan, 24, who said he was a member of the church from 1972 until 1977, testified Wednesday that LeBaron told him of a message from God he received concerning the murder of Vest.

“He stated that he had had a revelation,” Sullivan said. “And that in the revelation it was revealed to him . . . that Vest was a defector—he would run to police and was about to reveal top secrets of the kingdom of God.”

Sullivan said LeBaron told him that God said “to have a woman, Vonda White, to blood atone him (Vest) without his knowledge. She would sit down and fix him a hot meal. While he was sitting at the table enjoying the dinner she would . . . get behind him and shoot him in the back of the head until he was dead.”

In April 1975 Robert Simons was assassinated in Utah. LeBaron and his group were later linked to the murder:

The complaint alleges that Marston, LeBaron and Chynoweth lured Simons to a desolate spot six miles east of Wellington, Carbon County, and killed him on or about April 23, 1975. The three are members of the Church of the Lamb of God. (Salt Lake Tribune, July 22, 1978)

The Deseret News, September 29, 1977, claimed that Ervil LeBaron “has been linked to more than a dozen deaths and disappearances in the West, . . .” The Tribune, however, claimed that “Investigators have said he may be responsible for between 20 and 29 slayings stemming from his leadership of the Church of the Lamb of God” (Salt Lake Tribune, November 25, 1978).
Ervil LeBaron’s group became very notorious because of a murder committed about four miles from our bookstore. On May 11, 1977, the Tribune reported:

MURRAY — Rulon C. Allred, Fundamentalist leader and naturopathic physician who once served a Utah State Prison term for his religious beliefs, was gunned down at 4:45 p.m. Tuesday in his office at 133 E. 4800 South. . . .

Dr. Allred was a practicing polygamist, according to David Briscoe, an Associated Press writer . . .

In the AP story, Dr. Allred said his family was among 35,000 Fundamentalist Mormons, most of whom were excommunicated from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

According to an article printed in the Tribune on March 4, 1979, two women “went into Dr. Allred’s office with guns blazing, shooting the victim seven times and then attempted to administer a ‘coup de grace’ to his face but the shot missed.” The same article reported the following:

Isaac LeBaron, who has been hidden by lawmen since August 1977, said his father told cultists that he had a revelation that Dr. Allred should die and called the naturopath a “false prophet” during a meeting in Dallas, . . . his father warned that anyone who turned “traitor” to LeBaron’s Church of the Lamb of God would be executed.

This information appeared in the Tribune on March 13, 1977:

Donald Eugene Sullivan . . . who was allowed to plead guilty to attempted homicide in return for his testimony, said LeBaron also told his followers, as they planned the murder of Dr. Allred and Verlan LeBaron, “We would go to heaven for what we did” and become “God” whether they died or not.

Sullivan, 26, said LeBaron had a “revelation” in April 1977, that Dr. Allred would die May 3, 1977.

Although Ervil LeBaron was able to escape the penalty of the law for many years, on May 28, 1980, he “was found guilty . . . of first degree, capital homicide in the 1977 murder of Dr. Rulon C. Allred. . . .

“After the verdict was announced, one of LeBaron’s 14 wives . . . stood behind her husband as he was led from the courtroom by bailiffs” (Salt Lake Tribune, May 29, 1980).

On August 16, 1981, Mr. LeBaron was found dead in his cell at the Utah State Prison. An autopsy “was inconclusive in determining the cause of death,” and it was assumed by officials that he died of natural causes (Ibid., August 17, 1981).

It is interesting to note that Ervil LeBaron was also found guilty of planning to murder his brother Verlan. The assassination team was to blood atone him at the funeral of Dr. Allred. As it turned out, however, they were unable to carry out the plan because of the presence of a large number of police and members of the press. It is fortunate that this foolish scheme was aborted. Ben Bradlee, Jr., and Dale Van Atta feel that if the assassins had actually decided to carry out the plan, they “would have to go inside with guns drawn, . . . They probably would not be able to escape. They would have to spray their automatic rifles at random and scores would be killed” (Prophet of Blood: The Untold Story of Ervil LeBaron and the Lambs of God, New York, 1981, page 245). According to the same book, LeBaron did not seem to care how many people were killed at the funeral:

Ervil had one final comment for Don, Eddie and lack about the murder of Verlan LeBaron: “The Lord wants this guy more than anything . . . do whatever has to be done. Anybody gets in the way—men, women or children—it doesn’t make any difference.” (Ibid., pages 238-239)

After the failure of this mission, the LeBaron group tried to find Verlan in El Paso, Texas, so they could assassinate him. This plan also failed. Ervil had apparently been plotting for years to find a way to blood atone his brother. At one time he “asked a follower to rig up a fake police car, rent a home on the Baja highway and come screaming out of the garage with a siren when they saw Verlan go by. He’d think they were police and stop, giving them the perfect opportunity to shoot him” (Ibid., page 172). Strange as it may seem, Verlan died in “a Mexican car crash” at about the time that Ervil died in prison. The Lubbock Avalanche Journal, August 20, 1981, reported that the two deaths occurred on the “same day,” but Bradlee and Van Atta claim Verlan was “killed two days later . . . Police said Verlan’s car was struck head-on by another vehicle that had veered out of its lane.

“Verlan, . . . had recently told friends he still feared Ervil’s followers were stalking him. He only felt safe when on the move” (Prophet of Blood, page 350).

In any case, it seems obvious that Ervil LeBaron derived his blood atonement doctrine from the teachings of the early Mormon leaders. Bradlee and Van Atta inform us that Ervil served as a missionary for the Mormon Church “during the early 1940s when proselytizing in Mexico was particularly difficult” (Ibid., page 42). LeBaron, however, found himself leaning toward the Mormon fundamentalists and was finally excommunicated from the Church. He became deeply immersed in the teachings and plans of the early
Mormon prophets, and began to believe that he was required to take vengeance on God’s enemies and blood atone people to save their souls. As we have indicated earlier, the slaying of Dean Vest was a blood atonement killing. Bradlee and Van Atta provide this important information in their book:

... Ervil motioned Don Sullivan over to a couch in the corner... the prophet leaned over and quietly said: “I’ve had a revelation.”... “the Lord told me that Dean Vest is going to defect from the church; that he is going to go to the police, if he hasn’t already, and reveal the secrets of the Kingdom of God. Those who betray the kingdom must be condemned to death, but the Lord has let it be known to me that to save his soul, Dean should be blood-atoned.”... “The Lord,” he said, “has named Vonda White to carry out the blood atonement.” (Prophet of Blood, page 195)

According to Lloyd Sullivan, Vonda White told him that “it had been she who had blood-atoned both Naomi Zarate and Dean Vest” (Ibid., page 201).

Like Brigham Young, Ervil LeBaron believed that in certain cases a man should blood atone his own wife. Lloyd Sullivan claimed that he had been having problems with his wife, Bonnie, and that LeBaron told him the Lord wanted him to take Bonnie to the “deep south and deep-six her there” (Ibid., page 273). Ervil also believed that children who failed to obey should be executed, and according to witnesses, he “ordered his own daughter, Rebecca killed” (Ibid., pages 281-282). On pages 229-231 of the same book, we find the following:

At about 8 A.M., the next April morning, Lloyd was in the Perth Street warehouse when he noticed Ervil’s pride and joy, a green-over-white LTD, was sagging measurably. “I wonder if Rebecca’s in the trunk.,” Ervil commented idly to Lloyd, who opened the trunk about four inches and was stunned to see Rebecca Chynoweth lying there, blood running from her nose. She was obviously dead.

Later, Ervil called and instructed Lloyd to tell nephew John Sullivan to get a shovel and bring it over to Thelma Chynoweth’s house immediately. Don Sullivan would recall that the talkative LeBaron was a passenger in a car Don was driving, when Ervil began a conversation with the blunt statement that he had “gotten rid of Rebecca.”

“What do you mean you got rid of Rebecca?” Don asked hesitantly.

“Well, we sent her a one-way ticket,” LeBaron replied. “She couldn’t get along and the Lord ordered to send her a one-way ticket.”

“What did you send her to?”

“Well, we know what a one-way ticket is,” Ervil chided his driver. But Sullivan was still incredulous at the implication. He later confessed “astonishment at the idea that he could kill his own daughter.” At the time, he pressed as if he were a prosecutor: “Well, what do you mean exactly by a one-way ticket?”

“The Lord ordered her to be blood-atoned, so he had her blood-atoned,” LeBaron replied still cryptically. Finally, as if taking pleasure in his oblique comments, Ervil said, matter-of-factly, “Rebecca is no longer with us.”

In the same book (page 230) we learn that “LeBaron also ordered the bloodstained mat in the trunk, where his pregnant daughter had been lying, be burned. ... He traded in the car for another green-over-white LTD shortly thereafter.”

Ervil LeBaron seems to have taken Brigham Young’s words very literally. The reader will remember that President Young said, “This is loving our neighbor as ourselves; if he needs help, help him; and if he wants salvation and it is necessary to spill his blood on the earth in order that he may be saved, spill it” (Deseret News, February 18, 1857). Heber C. Kimball, who was the first counselor to Brigham Young commented:

... when it is necessary that blood should be shed, we should be as ready to do that as to eat an apple ... as brother Taylor says, you may dig your graves, and we will slay you, and you may crawl into them. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 6, pages 34-35)

Ervil LeBaron apparently felt that God wanted him to assassinate a large number of people. One of LeBaron’s followers reported that he told her “the reason he was getting boats to run a fishing business was so that the boats could be used to haul dead bodies out into the ocean, when they started to execute everyone who opposed his doctrine. ... they would also have some kind of a cement business going so they could make cement boxes to seal the bodies in ... he planned to execute lots of people—just everyone who opposed him in his thinking and did not uphold what he taught and did” (Prophet of Blood, pages 129-130).

Lafferty Murders

While the death of Ervil LeBaron may have ended the practice of blood atonement by his followers, by 1984 Don and Ron Lafferty arose to carry on the bloodshed. The Laffertys had been associating with a Mormon fundamentalist group known as “The School of the Prophets.” Robert Crossfield, the founder of the group, “claims The School of the Prophets dates back to the early days of the Mormon Church when it was mentioned in 1833 by church founder Joseph
Smith Jr.” (Salt Lake Tribune, February 2, 1985). Mr. Crossfield maintains that the Laffertys were dismissed from the group “in April of 1984” (Ibid.). Prior to this, the Lafferty brothers were members of the Mormon Church: “Both Don and Ron . . . are excommunicated members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (Salt Lake Tribune, January 9, 1985). Ron Lafferty was quoted in the August 11, 1984, issue of the Tribune as saying the following:

“I love the church with all my heart . . . but I love the church as it was set up by Joseph Smith. I believe Joseph Smith was a prophet, but I don’t believe that the leadership of the church today are prophets. . . .

“I’ve served in three bishoprics . . . I’ve been a faithful member, a faithful tithe payer to the Mormon Church for all my life, for over 40 years. I’d devoted my life to it and to my family and to those two things only.”

In a meeting with church officials, Lafferty said he told them the book by Mormon leader Ezra Taft Benson, “God, Family, Country,” supported everything he stood for. . . .

“I must say, however . . . that I do believe in plural marriage because I was taught plural marriage by the Mormons . . . because they believe in it. But I do not belong to any splinter group, nor have I ever practiced plural marriage,” he said.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints banned polygamy in 1890 and now excommunicates polygamists, but “they believe that it will be taught again someday, at least that’s what they’ve taught me,” he said.

On July 24, 1984, Ron and Dan Lafferty forced their way into their brother Allen’s home in American Fork, Utah, and brutally murdered his wife and her 15-month-old daughter. On August 17, 1984, the Tribune reported that, “The victims’ throats were slashed in what police speculated may have been a ritualistic murder.” American Fork Police Chief Randy Johnson claimed that “the victims were listed on a hand-written ‘religious revelation’ which told Ronald Lafferty to commit the murders” (Ibid., July 31, 1984). The revelation, which was found in the pocket of Ron Lafferty’s shirt, was later produced as evidence at the trial of Dan Lafferty. The Salt Lake Tribune printed the important portion of the revelation on January 8, 1985:

The document, which was read to the jury, states:

“Thus sayeth the Lord unto my servants the prophets. It is my will and commandment that ye remove the following individuals in order that my work might go forward, for they have truly become obstacles in my path and I will not allow my work to be stopped.

“First thy brother’s wife Brenda and her baby, then Chloe Low and then Richard Stowe. And it is my will that they be removed in rapid succession that an example be made of them in order that others might see the fate of those who fight against the true saints of God. . . .”

At his trial, Dan Lafferty claimed that the murders were a fulfillment of the revelation:

PROVO—The brutal killings of Brenda Lafferty and her infant daughter are not crimes, but are “the fulfillment of a revelation from God,” Daniel Charles Lafferty told the jury during his murder trial Tuesday. (Salt Lake Tribune, January 9, 1985)

In a pre-trial hearing, Ron Lafferty used the Book of Mormon story of Nephi cutting off Laban’s head to try to justify the murders (see Salt Lake Tribune, January 3, 1985). The reader may remember that God commanded Nephi to decapitate Laban so that he could obtain the scriptures written on the brass plates (Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 4:10-18). At his trial, Dan Lafferty maintained that “the state has failed to prove a crime has been committed because I feel the evidence shows it could very well be the fulfillment of a revelation of God” (Salt Lake Tribune, January 9, 1985). His defence failed, however, and on January 11, 1985, the Tribune reported:

PROVO — Daniel Charles Lafferty, a self-professed prophet who claimed God ordered the deaths of his sister-in-law and her baby daughter, Thursday was found guilty as charged of two counts of capital homicide and four other felonies in connection with their brutal deaths and plans to kill two other people.

One essential element of the blood atonement doctrine is that the sinner’s blood be shed. The Mormon prophet Joseph Smith said he was “opposed to hanging, even if a man kill another, I will shoot him, or cut off his head, spill his blood on the ground, and let the smoke thereof ascend up to God; . . .” (History of the Church, vol. 5, page 296). The original source for this quotation appears to be Joseph Smith’s diary. In his diary, however, Smith talks of cutting the murderer’s throat rather than complete decapitation. The effect, of course, would be the same, as the blood would be spilled on the ground. As we have shown, Brigham Young emphasized that sinners must have their “blood spilt upon the ground, that the smoke thereof might ascend to heaven as an offering for their sins; . . . whereas, if such is not the case, they will stick to them and remain upon them in the spirit world” (Deseret News, 1856, page 235). In a sermon delivered in the Mormon Tabernacle,
Brigham Young declared: “To diverge a little, in regard to those who have persecuted this people . . . if any miserable scoundrels come here, cut their throats. (All the people said, Amen.)” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 2, page 311) In early Utah the throat of the person being blood atoned was often cut from ear to ear (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 547-550). One of the penal oaths which the early Mormons took in the temple ceremony referred to the throats of traitors being cut from ear to ear. In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 474, we reproduced the oath before it was modified to tame down the bloody message:

“We, and each of us, covenant and promise that we will not reveal any of the secrets of this, the first token of the Aaronic priesthood, with its accompanying name, sign or penalty. Should we do so; we agree that our THROATS BE CUT FROM EAR TO EAR AND OUR TONGUES TORN OUT BY THEIR ROOTS.”

The bloody nature of this oath was verified by testimony given in the Reed Smoot Case (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 476-477). J. H. Wallis, Sr., for instance, testified that the oath contained this wording: “. . . ‘I agree that my throat be cut from ear to ear and my tongue torn out by its roots from my mouth.’” This oath was later changed to read as follows: “I, ____ (think of the new name) do covenant and promise that I will never reveal the First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood, together with its accompanying name, sign and penalty. Rather than do so I would suffer my life to be taken.” While the bloody wording has been removed, those who take this oath still refer to the “PENALTY” and draw their thumbs across their throats to demonstrate how their lives ran so; we agree that our THROATS BE CUT FROM EAR TO EAR AND OUR TONGUES TORN OUT BY THEIR ROOTS.”

Ron Lafferty seemed to feel that it was very important that their victims’ throats be cut. According to the Salt Lake Tribune, January 9, 1985, Charles Carnes testified:

“Mr. Watson, his voice cracked with emotion, said that then Dan Lafferty took the razor-edged knife “and walked down the hallway to that bedroom—with the baby crying “Mommy!“ “Mommy!”—and he cut her throat.

Fortunately, the Laffertys were unable to kill the other people mentioned in the revelation. Now that they are in custody, many people can sleep easier. Nevertheless, there is still cause for concern. There are other people who still believe the blood atonement doctrine who might be willing to actually practice it. The founder of the School of the Prophets claims that “he has received a half dozen death-threat letters. . . .” One was signed “God’s avenger” and another “The Avenger.” One letter said: “We’ve got your number. We are going to do to you what the Laffertys did to Brenda Lafferty” (Salt Lake Tribune, February 2, 1985).

According to the Tribune (January 11, 1985) there are “a number of people involved in similar renegade fundamentalist sects. Those people, as part of their beliefs, often belong to armed paramilitary and survivalist groups, the official said. Another deputy put it this way: ‘You’d be frightened if you knew who some of these people were.’ Apparently, some of these individuals attended Dan Lafferty’s trial.”
By Their Fruits

In Matthew 7:15-16 Jesus is reported to have said:

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

While Joseph Smith and Brigham Young claimed to be prophets who were restoring God’s true Church to earth, they brought forth some very questionable fruits. Joseph Smith gave a revelation commanding the practice of polygamy while the Mormons were in Nauvoo, Illinois. He also gave a revelation which sanctioned cursing and taking vengeance on his enemies. This planted the seeds for the blood atonement doctrine which Brigham Young openly taught in Utah. In addition, Brigham Young violated the command, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3) when he publicly proclaimed in 1852 that “our father Adam . . . is our FATHER and our GOD, and the only God with whom WE have to do” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 1, page 50). The journal of L. John Nuttall shows that he was still teaching this doctrine just before his death (see photograph in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 178-D). On June 8, 1873, he even claimed that God Himself had revealed the Adam-God doctrine to him:

How much unbelief exists in the minds of the Latter-day Saints in regard to one particular doctrine which I revealed to them, and which God revealed to me—namely that Adam is our father and God . . . (Deseret Weekly News, June 18, 1873)

Fortunately, the present leaders of the Mormon Church have declared the Adam-God teaching to be false doctrine and have made it clear that neither polygamy nor blood atonement should be actually practiced at the present time. In the 1979 printing of his book, Mormon Doctrine, Apostle Bruce R. McConkie made these comments concerning the blood atonement doctrine:

President Joseph Fielding Smith has written: “Man may commit certain grievous sins . . . that will place him beyond the reach of the atoning blood of Christ . . . Joseph Smith taught that there were certain sins so grievous that man may commit, that they will place the transgressors beyond the power of the atonement of Christ. If these offenses are committed, then the blood of Christ will not cleanse them from their sins even though they repent. Therefore their only hope is to have their own blood shed to atone, as far as possible, in their behalf.” (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 1, pages 133-138.)

This doctrine can only be practiced in its fulness in a day when the civil and ecclesiastical laws are administered in the same hands. It was, for instance, practiced in the days of Moses, but it was not and could not be practiced in this dispensation, except that persons who understand its provisions could and did use their influence to get a form of capital punishment written into the laws of various states of the union so that the blood of murderers could be shed. (Mormon Doctrine, page 93)

While many of the Mormon leaders have tried to hide the fact that Brigham Young taught the Adam-God doctrine, the Apostle Bruce R. McConkie wrote a letter to Eugene England in which he frankly confessed that “President Young” taught the doctrine:

. . . I am a great admirer of Brigham Young and a great believer in his doctrinal presentations. . . . He was a mighty prophet. . . . Nonetheless, as Joseph Smith so pointedly taught, a prophet is not always a prophet, only when he is acting as such. Prophets are men and they make mistakes. Sometimes they err in doctrine . . . Sometimes a prophet gives personal views which are not endorsed and approved by the Lord.

Yes, President Young did teach that Adam was the father of our spirits, and all the related things that the cultists ascribe to him. This [i.e., Brigham Young’s teaching on Adam], however, is not true. He expressed views that are out of harmony with the gospel. (Letter by Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, dated February 19, 1981, pages 5 and 6; photographically reproduced in LDS Apostle Confesses Brigham Young Taught Adam-God Doctrine)

On page 7 of his letter, Apostle McConkie went so far as to say that if Mormons follow the “false portions” of Brigham Young’s doctrines, they are in danger of losing their souls:

I do not know all the providences of the Lord, but I do know that he permits false doctrine to be taught in and out of the Church . . . If we believe false doctrine, we will be condemned. If that belief is on basic and fundamental things, it will lead us astray and we will lose our souls . . . people who teach false doctrine in the fundamental and basic things will lose their souls. The nature and kind of being that God is, is one of these fundamentals. I repeat: Brigham Young erred in some of his statements on the nature and kind of being
that God is and as to the position of Adam in the plan of salvation, but Brigham Young also taught the truth in these fields on other occasions. And I repeat, that in his instance, he was a great prophet and has gone on to eternal reward. What he did is not a pattern for any of us. If we choose to believe and teach the false portions of his doctrines, we are making an election that will damn us.

According to Apostle McConkie’s reasoning, Brigham Young could teach the Adam-God doctrine and go “on to eternal reward,” but those who accept this doctrine today stand in danger of losing their souls!

It is easy to understand the growth of the Mormon fundamentalist movement when we look at the way the Mormon Church handles its problems. The Adam-God doctrine was swept under the rug until the evidence became so strong that Apostle McConkie had to face it. While McConkie now concedes that Brigham Young taught false doctrine with regard to Adam being “our FATHER and our GOD, and the only God with whom WE have to do,” he still clings to plural marriage and blood atonement as true doctrines. Although he maintains that these two doctrines should not be practiced at the present time, he does claim that “plural marriage . . . will commence again after the Second Coming of the Son of Man . . .” (*Mormon Doctrine*, page 578).

A Mormon who seriously studies the teachings of the first two presidents of the Church and tries to follow McConkie’s logic is faced with some very serious problems. Some of the doctrines taught by these early prophets are supposed to be true, and a faithful Mormon is required to practice them. Other doctrines are true but they cannot be practiced at the present time. In fact, a person who practices Joseph Smith’s teaching concerning polygamy will be excommunicated from the Church. As if this is not confusing enough, Apostle McConkie confesses that sometimes the Mormon prophets “err in doctrine” and that if we follow them into error, “we are making an election that will damn us.”

Many Latter-day Saints who have studied the early history of their Church have ended up in the fundamentalist camp because they cannot see why a “prophet” would restore doctrines which cannot be practiced today. They feel that since Joseph Smith claimed God commanded the practice of polygamy, it must be practiced even though it is against the law. Although we do not believe in the teachings of Joseph Smith or Brigham Young, we can understand why many believing Mormons turn into fundamentalists. After all, if the teaching of baptism became unpopular with the world, we would not expect Christians to give it up just so they could get along with the world.

In any case, the Mormon fundamentalists bring us face to face with the real teachings of the founders of Mormonism. Most Mormon fundamentalists believe in polygamy and the Adam-God Doctrine. Many of them believe in the theory of blood atonement, but they have no desire to actually practice it. Ervil LeBaron and the Laffertys, on the other hand, restored the violence and bloodshed of early Utah. If these men had lived in the 1850s, they could have worked hand in hand with Brigham Young as he put his blood atonement doctrine into practice. Orrin Porter Rockwell, Bill Hickman, John D. Lee and a number of other men caused a great deal of blood to flow in early Utah (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 444-450, 493-515). These murderers were protected by the Mormon Church for many years. Brigham Young once boasted: “We have the meanest devils on the earth in our midst, and we intend to keep them, for we have use for them; . . .” (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 6, page 176) Ervil LeBaron and the Lafferty brothers would have been right at home with Brigham Young and his “destroying angels.”

At any rate, the brutal and senseless murders which have been committed since 1972 serve as reminders of the danger of trusting in the teachings of the early Mormon leaders. If we rely on Joseph Smith and Brigham Young we are liable to end up believing in blood atonement, plural marriage and the Adam-God doctrine. These doctrines should be recognized for what they are—i.e., the “evil fruit” which Jesus attributed to “false prophets.” If, on the other hand, we put our trust in Jesus, he will produce his “good fruit” within us:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

**Tanners’ Riches**

The following appeared in a letter which we received from Minnesota:

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Tanner: . . . I have a Mormon friend that claims that you . . . are involved in anti-Mormon publishing because of the money involved. . . . Would you folks like to address the charge that you are only “in it for the money.”

The following is written in response to this letter. In the lawsuit that Andrew Ehat recently brought against us, Gordon A. Madsen (Ehat’s lawyer) demanded that we produce our “1982 and ’83 tax returns and financial computation of profit of the defendants regarding the publication *Clayton’s Secret Writing Uncovered;* . . .” These records effectively destroy the charge that we are
getting rich from our publications. In the Deposition of Jerald Tanner, pages 106-107, the following appears:

A Well, I took my income tax form for 1982, and I grossed $64,374.49. And my total income after all the expenses is $9935.83. Now, that is all that I’ve gotten on sales. I received gifts besides that, but this is the sales, all the books I have done together.

Q 9,000 subtotal revenue from book sales?
A Yes. That also includes my royalty from Moody Press,....

Q And then you had a net profit of just under 10,000—
A Yes.

While some Mormon apologists have accused us of making vast sums of money through the sale of our publications, our tax records certainly do not support this malicious accusation. On our 1983 income tax return we reported an adjusted gross income of $22,285.15. Since we both worked full-time for Utah Lighthouse Ministry, this would amount to just over $11,000 each. Considering the amount of hours we have to work and the stress that comes from this type of ministry, we do not feel that we are taking advantage of the public.

Photographs of the first pages of our tax returns and some additional testimony concerning our finances are reproduced in our book, *The Tanners On Trial*, pages 138-141. One thing about our tax returns that seems to put to rest the idea that we have become rich off of our work is the fact that we show an “interest income” of only $24.37 in two years. It is obvious from this that we do not have any vast sums tucked away in savings accounts. The only real estate we own is our home.

While we could have charged twice as much for our publications, we have chosen to provide them at the lowest cost possible so that we can reach a larger number of Mormons. The expense of putting out just one issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, which we distribute free of charge, now amounts to quite a bit of money. If it were not for the donations given by our friends, we would have to either raise our prices or quit.

At the present time we find ourselves a little short of funds, and we would certainly appreciate any donations that our readers are able to make. Remember that UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY is a non-profit organization and all donations are tax deductible.

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**BOOKS & VIDEOS**

Sandra Tanner Video No. 1. Two lectures on Mormonism given at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Price: $30.00

Sandra Tanner Video No. 2. Interview on Mormonism with Milwaukee television station. Price: $20.00

*The Tanners on Trial*, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Over a hundred large pages with many photographs of original court documents. Price: $5.95

*The Money-Digging Letters*. By Jerald Tanner. Has important information on the Salamander letter and other recent discoveries. Price: $1.00

*An Index to Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* by Michael Briggs. Price: $2.00


*Tract Pack*. An assortment of 12 tracts from other publishers. Price: $1.50

*Where Does It Say That?* By Bob Witte. Contains hundreds of photos from old Mormon publications. Price: $5.95
“SALAMANDERGATE”
MORMON CHURCH CAUGHT IN MAGIC COVER-UP

On April 6, 1830, the very day the Mormon Church was organized, the prophet Joseph Smith gave a revelation in which he was commanded to see that a history of the Church was kept:

Behold, there shall be a record kept among you; and in it thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, . . . (Doctrine and Covenants 21:1)

Book of Mormon witness Oliver Cowdery was appointed to keep this history. Joseph Fielding Smith, who later became the tenth President of the Church, claimed that the Historian’s Office had preserved this important history:

Oliver Cowdery was the first one appointed to assist Joseph in transcribing and keeping a history of the Church; John Whitmer took his place, when Oliver Cowdery was given something else to do. We have on file in the Historian’s Office the records written in the hand writing of Oliver Cowdery, the first historian, or recorder of the Church. (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 2, page 201)

In 1961 we tried to get the Church to make Cowdery’s history and other documents available. We were informed by the Assistant Church Historian, however, that Joseph Fielding Smith was “not interested in the project you have in mind.” In our book, Mormonism, Magic and Masonry (published 22 years after our request was turned down), we reported that the Cowdery history could provide important information on the relationship of Mormonism and Magic:

We have been told that there is a very important document being suppressed which may relate to the involvement of the early Mormon leaders in magic. This is a history of the Church written by Oliver Cowdery. Cowdery, of course, was one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon. According to Joseph Fielding Smith, he was “appointed to assist Joseph in . . . keeping a history of the Church . . .” John Whitmer was commanded “to keep the church record and history continually; for Oliver Cowdery I have appointed to another office” (Doctrine and Covenants 47:3). In John Whitmer’s history of the Church, he wrote that “Oliver Cowdery has written the commencement of the church history, commencing at the time of the finding of the plates, up to June 12, 1831” (John Whitmer’s History, page 4). . . .

We understand that a number of documents which were originally stored in the Church Historian’s Office were later moved to the vault of the First Presidency. This was undoubtedly done to keep them out of the hands of the public. The Mormon leaders were especially concerned about this matter when Dr. Leonard J. Arrington became Church Historian. In any case, we understand that the Cowdery history of the Church (not to be confused with the history that was published in the Messenger and Advocate) is now located in the First Presidency’s vault. At one time an inventory was made of what was contained in the vault. When the Cowdery history was opened, it was discovered that it contained magic characters! . . . Since Cowdery’s history is supposed to go back to the time Joseph Smith found the plates, it may contain many things that would be
embarrassing to the Church. If any of our readers have any additional information on the contents of Cowdery’s history (especially with regard to the charge that it contains magic characters) we would appreciate hearing about it. (Mormonism, Magic and Masonry, pages 43 and 46) [first edition]

“Taunting Salamander”

We heard nothing more concerning the Cowdery history until just recently. On May 15, 1985, we read this startling heading in the Salt Lake Tribune: “Researcher Says LDS History Disputes Golden Plates Story.” In the article we find the following information:

A little-known history written by an important early Mormon leader contains an account of Joseph Smith’s brother Alvin finding the gold plates, rather than the Mormon prophet himself, according to a research historian.

An LDS spokesman will neither confirm nor deny the contents of the history. . . .

Brent Metcalfe, who worked on authenticating an earlier Mormon letter, said officials of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have the history written by Oliver Cowdery, who at one time was second in importance only to Joseph Smith. . . .

Mr. Metcalfe said his source is a private eye-witness account of the Cowdery history. The document tells of Joseph Smith’s brother Alvin first finding the gold plates by means of a stone, according to Mr. Metcalfe.

Mr. Metcalfe quoted the document as saying: “A taunting Salamander appears to Alvin and prevents him and his companions from digging up the gold plates.”

Early Mormon letters, recently released by LDS Church officials, link Joseph Smith to folk magic and to an “old spirit” that commanded Mr. Smith to return with his brother Alvin, who was dead at the time.

Traditional accounts of the founding or “restoring” of the LDS Church tell of heavenly visitations from angels, rather than salamanders. A cornerstone of Mormonism is the belief that Joseph Smith, not his older brother Alvin, found the gold plates. . . .

LDS spokesman Jerry Cahill said the LDS Historical Department does not have the Cowdery history. He said he would not ask members of the church’s ruling First Presidency if the history is locked up in a special presidency’s vault.

When asked about references to a Cowdery history in a book written by former President Smith, Mr. Cahill said he assumes the church has the history but it is no longer in the church’s Historical Department.

“I don’t intend to respond to every report or rumor of documents in the First Presidency’s vault,” said Mr. Cahill. “I have no idea if the history is there, nor do I intend to ask. I can’t have my life ordered about by rumors. Where does it end? . . .”

Former LDS President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: “The earliest records of the Church are in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery. . . .”

President Smith said the records “are invaluable.” . . . Mr. Cahill said he has no way of “confirming or denying rumors,” and he will “not pursue the matter” of the Cowdery history.

The document which Brent Metcalfe cites is apparently a summary of the Cowdery history by an individual who had access to it. In an interview on KUER Radio, May 17, 1985, Mr. Metcalfe gave further details:

Brent Metcalfe . . . I do know that Joseph Fielding Smith on at least two occasions claimed that the Church did in fact have possession of the document and so I don’t think that there’s too much question there. Perhaps a possible reconstruction of its genealogy after that time is that Joseph Fielding Smith may have placed it in his own private vault which we know he kept, and then at the time of his death it may have been assimilated into the First Presidency’s vault. However, in the course of my research and trying to get more historical insight regarding the Harris letter, I did come across a document which claimed first-hand knowledge of the content of the Cowdery history relating to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon . . . and apparently . . . the information in the Cowdery history does go back prior to 1827, and it does discuss, it mentions, the Salamander three times and it appears to Joseph Smith much like we have in the Martin Harris letter. But perhaps what I found after spending a year full-time with the Harris letter, what I found to be intriguing was that it apparently indicates that the salamander first appears to Joseph Smith’s brother Alvin and that it was, in fact, Alvin who first discovers the gold plates and not Joseph Smith. And that at the time of the death of Alvin in November of 1823, Joseph Smith then takes over as the seer who then proceeds to try to break the enchantment to get the plates, and then his story begins in 1824. This, by the way, . . . may in fact solve a great perplexing situation for historians who have tried to reconstruct this event because there has in fact been quite a lacuna in what some have supposed to be 1826. Where we suppose that there’s a year missing, but apparently we have all the information. The event that we have missing is the first year which appears to be Alvin’s experience and not Joseph’s.
In any case, the cover-up situation the Mormon Church finds itself in is reminiscent of the Watergate scandal. The reader will remember that it was discovered that President Nixon had made tape-recordings of his conversations. He claimed that these tapes would support his side of the story, but he refused to release them. As it turned out, the tapes turned out to be the smoking gun which caused his downfall. Nixon’s tapes might be compared to the Cowdery history. As far as the Church is concerned, this history should provide the best evidence concerning its origin, having been written closest to when the events occurred, yet the Mormon leaders stubbornly refuse to release it. This refusal can only lead people to conclude that Brent Metcalfe has told the truth. If the history supports the traditional version of Joseph Smith’s story, why not release it and silence him?

The “Salamandergate” cover-up even has its own “Deep Throat”—that mysterious and unidentified person who had access to Nixon’s secrets and leaked them to the press. Only a very limited number of people could have had access to the material in the vault of the First Presidency. It is reported that Brent Metcalfe will not name his source for fear that he will get the individual into trouble with the Church.

Alvin the Prophet?

The Salt Lake Tribune for May 15, 1985, reported that Brent Metcalfe “said Alvin Smith was a great influence on the prophet Joseph Smith, and perhaps even played a greater role of prophet, in light of the history written by Mr. Cowdery.”

There does seem to be some evidence that Joseph Smith’s brother Alvin was originally supposed to be the prophet. J. H. Kennedy wrote the following in 1888:

... long before the removal to New York she [Lucy Smith] announced the advent of a prophet in her family, and on the death of Alvah [Alvin], the first born, the commission that had been intended for him was laid upon Joseph. (Early Days of Mormonism, page 12)

This footnote is found on the bottom of the same page: Littell’s Living Age, vol. 30, page 429:

... Mrs. Smith was of strong, uncultivated intellect; ... The incipient hints, the first givings out that a prophet was to spring from her humble household came from her; ... Their son Alvah was originally intended or designated, by fireside consultations and solemn and mysterious outdoor hints, as the forthcoming prophet. The mother and the father said he was the chosen one; but Alvah, however spiritual he may have been, had a carnal appetite; ate too many green turnips, sickened and died. Thus the world lost a prophet, and Mormonism a leader. ... The mantle of the prophet, ... fell upon their next eldest son, Joseph Smith, Jr.
less than two months that Alvin could have known about the plates. In her history, Joseph Smith’s mother gives the impression that Alvin was more interested in the gold plates than anyone in the family:

Alvin manifested, if such could be the case, greater zeal and anxiety in regard to the Record that had been shown to Joseph, than any of the rest of the family; in consequence of which we could not bear to hear anything said upon the subject. Whenever Joseph spoke of the Record, it would immediately bring Alvin to our minds, with all his zeal, and with all his kindness; and, when we looked to his place. . . . we all with one accord wept over our irretrievable loss. . . . (Joseph Smith’s History By His Mother, pages 89-90)

Now that we have the story about Alvin being the one who discovered the gold plates, we can understand why mention of the plates “would immediately bring Alvin” to their minds. Before his death, Alvin instructed Joseph to “do everything that lies in your power to obtain the Record” (Ibid., page 88). The reader will remember that according to the report in the Salt Lake Tribune, Cowdery’s history is supposed to tell about “Alvin first finding the gold plates by means of a stone.” Peter Ingersoll’s affidavit confirms that Alvin did use a stone to find treasures:

The general employment of the [Smith] family, was digging for money. . . . When we arrived near the place at which he thought there was money, he [Joseph Smith, Sen.] cut a small witch hazel bush and gave me direction how to hold it. He then went off some rods, and told me to say to the rod, “work to the money,” which I did, in an audible voice. . . . Now, says he, if you only knew the value there is back of my house, . . . there, exclaimed he, is one chest of gold and another of silver. He then put the stone which I had given him, into his hat, and stooping forward, he bowed and made sundry maneuvers, quite similar to those of a stool pigeon. At length he took down his hat, and being very much exhausted, said in a faint voice, “If you knew what I had seen, you would believe.” . . . His son Alvin then went through the same performance, which was equally disgusting. (Mormonism Unvailed, 1834, pages 232-233)

According to Willard Chase, he employed Alvin to help dig the well in which Joseph Smith’s seer stone was discovered (Ibid., pages 240-241).

The claim that Cowdery’s history mentions Alvin as the one who originally discovered the gold plates also seems to clarify an account written by one of Joseph Smith’s best friends, Joseph Knight. Knight was a faithful Mormon whose wagon was used by Joseph Smith to obtain the gold plates. Knight’s account mentions that Joseph Smith was denied the plates when he was unable to bring Alvin to the Hill Cumorah:

Joseph says, “when can I have it?” The answer was the 22nd Day of September next if you Bring the right person with you. Joseph says, “who is the right person?” The answer was “your oldest Brother.”

But before September Came his oldest Brother Died. Then he was disapinted and did not [k]now what to do. But when the 22nd Day of September Came he went to the place and the personage appeard and told him he Could not have it now. (Brigham Young University Studies, Autumn 1976, page 31)

The Mormon historian Dean Jessee informs us that this “manuscript is incomplete, missing at least one beginning page” (Ibid., page 30). Since the manuscript now begins with Joseph Smith coming to the hill to get the plates, there is no way of knowing whether it originally mentioned Alvin finding the plates with his stone. It would, of course, be impossible to determine whether the first part of the manuscript was deliberately suppressed or just fell off. In any case, Willard Chase also claimed that the “spirit” told Joseph he must bring his “oldest brother” to obtain the plates and that when he showed up the next year without Alvin, the “spirit” would not let him have the plates.

The Salamander letter, which we will discuss in more detail as we proceed, adds a very spooky element to the story. This letter, which was supposed to have been written by Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris in 1830, claims that when Joseph Smith looked in his stone, “the spirit says bring your brother Alvin Joseph says he is dead shall I bring what remains . . .” That Joseph Smith would offer to bring his own brother’s body to the hill is shocking, to say the least. In Mormonism, Magic and Masonry we point out that graves and human remains are very important to some of those who use seer stones and practice magic. If Alvin originally found the plates, Joseph Smith may have felt that his corpse would be highly prized by the spirit. It is reported that when Joseph Smith was digging for money in Pennsylvania, he claimed at one time that the “enchantment” was so strong “that it was necessary that one of the company should die” before it could be broken. One of the company was in fact murdered (not by anyone in the money-digging group) and this was considered “a Providential occurrence.” (For more details on this matter see Mormonism, Magic and Masonry, pages 34-36.) Willard Chase claimed that after Alvin’s death, his father said it “was an accidental providence.”

However this may be, it is interesting to note that there was a rumor that Alvin’s body had been disinterred. On September 29, 1824, just one week after Joseph Smith was supposed to have been visited by the angel at the Hill
Cumorah, his father printed the following in the *Wayne Sentinel*, the local newspaper:

> WHEREAS reports have been industriously put in circulation that my son Alvin had been removed from the place of his internment and dissected, ... for the purpose of ascertaining the truth of such reports, I, with some of my neighbors, this morning [September 25] repaired to the grave, and removing the earth, found the body which had not been disturbed. (*Wayne Sentinel*, September 29, 1824)

Since Brent Metcalfe relates that the Cowdery history tells that Alvin had companions who were with him when he tried to dig up the gold plates, it is possible that Mr. Smith was worried that one of these money-digging companions had taken his son’s remains to the Hill Cumorah so that he could gain favor with the spirit and obtain the treasure.

Even without access to the Cowdery history it seems clear that there were magic elements in the early story of how Joseph Smith obtained the gold plates. That some material has been suppressed is evident from the minutes of a meeting held October 21, 1831:

> Brother Hyrum Smith said that he thought best that the information of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon be related by Joseph himself to the Elders present, that all might know for themselves.

> Brother Joseph Smith, Jun., said that it was not intended to tell the world all the particulars of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon; and also said that it was not expedient for him to relate these things. . . . (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 220)

**Salamander Letter**

We now give the full text of the letter which Martin Harris, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, wrote to W. W. Phelps on October 23, 1830:

> Palmyra Oct 23d 1830

Dear Sir

Your letter of yesterday is received & I hasten to answer as fully as I can—Joseph Smith Jr first come to my notice in the year 1824  in the summer of that year I contracted with his father to build a fence on my property  in the course of that work I aproach Joseph & ask how it is in a half day you put up what requires your father & 2 brothers a full day working together  he says I have not been with out assistance but can not say more only you better find out  the next day I take the older Smith by the arm & he says Joseph can see any thing he wishes by looking at a stone  Joseph often sees Spirits here with great kettles of coin money  it was Spirits who brought up rock because Joseph made no attempt on their money  I latter dream I converse with spirits which let me count their money when I awake I have in my hand a dollar coin which I take for a sign  Joseph describes what I seen in every particular says he the spirits are grieved so I through back the dollar in the fall of the year 1827 I hear Joseph found a gold bible I take Joseph aside & he says it is true I found it 4 years ago with my stone but only just got it because of the enchantment the old spirit come to me 3 times in the same dream & says dig up the gold but when I take it up the next morning the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander in the bottom of the hole & struck me 3 times & held the treasure & would not let me have it because I lay it down to cover over the hole when the spirit says do not lay it down Joseph says when can I have it the spirit says one year from to day if you obey me  look to the stone  after a few days he looks  the spirit says bring your brother Alvin Joseph says he is dead  shall I bring what remains but the spirit is gone  Joseph goes to get the gold bible but the spirit says you did not bring your brother you can not have it  look to the stone  Joseph looks but can not see who to bring  the spirit says I tricked you again  look to the stone  Joseph looks & sees his wife on the 22nd day of Sept 1827 they get the gold bible—I give Joseph $50 to move him down to Pa  Joseph says when you visit me I will give you a sign  he gives me some hiroglyphics  I take them to Utica Albany & New York in the last place Dr. Mitchell gives me a introduction to Professor Anthon  says he they are short hand Egyptian the same what was used in ancient times  bring me the old book & I will translate  says he it is made of precious gold & is sealed from view  says he I can not read a sealed book—Joseph found some giant silver specticles with the plates he puts them in a old hat & in the darkness reads the words & in this way it is all translated & written down—about the middle of June 1829 Joseph takes me together with Oliver Cowdrey & David Whitmer to have a view of the plates our names are appended to the book of Mormon which I had printed with my own money—space and time both prevent me from writing more at present  if there is any thing further you wish to inquire I shall attend to it

Yours Respectfully

Martin Harris

W W Phelps Esq
Dear Sir,

Your letter of yesterday is received & I hasten to answer as fully as I can. Joseph Smith is first come to my notice in the year 1834 in the summer of that year I contracted with his father to build a fence on my property in the town of that word. I engaged Joseph & asked him if he is in a hurry to get up what because your father & I both must go & work together he says I have not been with your father but can not say more exactly you letter find me out the next day & take the old bible by the arm & he says Joseph can do any thing he wishes in looking at a stone Joseph often was visited there with great hitherto & I can't say who brought me such because Joseph made no attempt at them before. Joseph had no contact with spirits which let me count their money while I was in my hand a dollar coin which take for a day Joseph described what I seen in every particular days in the spirits are envious do I through back the dollar. In the fall of the year 1834 I have Joseph found a gold bible I take Joseph aside & he says it is true I found it 4 years ago with my stone but only just yet it because of the enchantment the old spirit come to me 3 times in the same dream 3 days dig up the gold but when I take it up the next evening the spirit transformed himself gone in white calabash in the bottom of the hole & I turned one 3 times & held the treasure I would not let me have it because I lay it down to come over the hole when the spirit says he not lay it down Joseph says when can I have it the spirit says one year soon to day if you obey one look to the stone after a few days then look the present days being your birthday tonight days he is dead shall I bring what remains but the spirit is gone. Joseph goes to get the gold bible but the first days you did not bring your brother you can not have it look to the stone Joseph looks but cannot see who is bring the present days I tracked you again look to the stone Joseph looks & dey his wife on the 21st day of Sept 1829 this got the gold bible & gave Joseph $50 to move here.
down to the Joseph days when you visit me I will give
you a sign he gives the same hieroglyphics I take them to
Washington & New York in the last place I a blacked
eyes are a introduction to Professor Wright says he
they are about here in Egypt the same what was used
in ancient times bring me the old book & I will trans-
late days & it is made of precious gold & is sealed from
from view days & I cannot read a sealed book—
Joseph found some giant Caleb explicitly with the plates he
put them in a old box & in the shadings near the woods
& in this way it is all translated & written down—about
the middle of June 1839 Joseph takes me together with
Peter Cowdery & David Whitmer to have a view of the plates
our names are appended to the books of Mormon which is
had printed with my own money—since & time both
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thing further you wish to inquire I shall attend to it

W.W. Phelps Esq

Lemurian N.Y.
In the Salt Lake City Messenger for March 1984, over a year before the Salamander letter was officially released, we quoted from its contents and told of its relationship to magic. On the first page of that newsletter we stated:

For a month or two there have been rumors circulating that an extremely important letter written by Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris has been discovered. Although there has been an attempt to keep the matter quiet until the document has been published, we have been able to piece together the story and to learn of the remarkable contents of this letter. . . . If the letter is authentic, it is one of the greatest evidences against the divine origin of the Book of Mormon. If, on the other hand, it is a forgery, it needs to be exposed as such so that millions of people will not be misled.

In the Messenger for January 1985, we commented: “Because of some problems in the text of the Salamander letter we have been exceptionally cautious about endorsing it as authentic.” One of the editors of this publication (Jerald Tanner) expressed serious doubts concerning the letter’s authenticity and prepared a list of parallels between it and books that were published after the date which appeared on the letter. It was noted that these parallels could be viewed in two totally different ways: One, that the letter is a forgery which was plagiarized from printed sources. Two, that the letter is authentic and that the parallels only tend to confirm that a common story was known by Martin Harris and other writers. The parallels, then, could become evidence for the letter’s authenticity. In any case, the most disturbing parallel was to Howe’s toad into a “white salamander.”

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In the Salamander letter, Joseph Smith used the “stone” to contact the “old spirit” “salamander.”

Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language (Unabridged) gives this information about salamanders: “1. a mythical reptile resembling the lizard, supposed to be able to endure or live in fire; an elemental spirit in Paracelsus’ theory of elementals.” In his book, The History of Magic, page 77, Kurt Seligmann reported:

Agrippa, basing his opinion on Aristotle, Dioscorides and Pliny the Elder, said that fire shelters salamanders and crickets. . . . From Pliny we learn that similar beliefs concerning the marvelous virtues of salamanders existed in Egypt and Babylon. . . . Thus did a superstitious belief perpetuate itself for about two thousand years.

Joseph Ennemoser said that “Paracelsus deserves one of the most eminent places in the history of magic.” Paracelsus, who was born in 1493, wrote a book entitled, A Book of Nymphs, Sylphs, Pygmies, and Salamanders, and on the Other Spirits. Henry E. Sigerist wrote the following in an introduction to this book:

Such strange creatures are the mysterious beings—Paracelsus usually calls them ding, things—that inhabit the four elements, the nymphs, sylphs, pygmies and salamanders and, related to them, the sirens, giants and dwarfs. . . . water is chaos to the nymphs, earth to the
pygmies, fire to the salamanders, while the sylphs have the same chaos as man. They are at home in their chaos and, therefore, nymphs do not drown in water, pygmies are not choked in earth and salamanders do not burn in fire. This seems incredible but God is almighty. Why should he not be able to create such beings? . . . God created them for a special purpose—and here Paracelsus is writing as a theologian and scientist. God created these elemental beings as makers and guardians of the treasures of the earth. There is an infinite wealth of minerals in the earth. They are made in the depths of mountains under the influence of fire, and this is where the salamanders come in. Once the mineral ores are made they are guarded, those in the earth by the pygmies, those on the surface by the sylphs, and those at the bottom of the waters by the nymphs. (Four Treatises of Theophrastus Von Hohenheim, Called Paracelsus, Baltimore, 1941, pages 216-220)

Since the gold plates of the Book of Mormon were considered to be a very valuable treasure, we can see why a believer in magic might choose to have a salamander guarding them.

One concern we had with regard to the Salamander letter was that we could not find its genealogy. We wrote that “one of the most important tests of the letter’s authenticity is its history since it was written. If Mr. Hofmann will tell historians where he obtained the letter, then it may be possible to trace it back to its original source. If, for instance, it had been in the Phelps family for many years, this would add a great deal to a case for its authenticity.” We did suggest that a man by the name of Lyn Jacobs may have been involved in the matter. This was confirmed in the Church Section of the Deseret News, April 28, 1985:

The letter was part of a stamp collection in New England until discovered by Lyn Jacobs, an LDS collector. The letter was purchased in late 1983 by Jacobs and Mark Hofmann, another LDS collector.

On May 10, we called Lyn Jacobs to see if he would provide specific information. Unfortunately, Mr. Jacobs said he would not give us any information with regard to the discovery. Mark Hofmann and Lyn Jacobs are both dealers in rare Mormon documents and it is felt by some people that if they reveal their sources it may tend to hurt their business. While we sympathize with their desire not to reveal the source of their discoveries, we feel that it is very important that historians know the source of these finds. Some kind of compromise needs to be worked out.

Although we can not get their side of the story, we have been told that the letter was considered somewhat defective by the collector who had it (possibly because of an unclear postmark) and was sold to Jacobs for $20 or less.

One problem with allowing the suppression of important information concerning the source of discoveries is that it could encourage forgers to enter the Mormon document business. Since there is already a great deal of money involved in these transactions (the Lucy Smith letter was reported to have been sold for $30,000), there would be a temptation to create such documents and palm them off on unsuspecting collectors by merely saying: “I obtained these from a collector in ______.” If we allow this type of thing to go on, it will certainly encourage the forgery of Mormon documents. Since these documents have an important affect on the religious beliefs of many people, it is crucial that their pedigree be revealed to historians.

Secret Dealings

On October 24, 1984, we reported that before the Salamander letter was sold to Steven Christensen, there was an attempt to sell it “to the Mormon Church for a large amount of money.” The Salt Lake Tribune for September 2, 1984, confirmed that the letter was originally offered to the Church: “Jerry Cahill, church spokesman, said that someone had offered to sell the letter to the church before it was sold to its present owner earlier this year.”

In the past Mr. Hofmann acted under the theory that the Church would buy up embarrassing documents to suppress them. This is very clear from his own account of how he handled the discovery of the Joseph Smith III Blessing. In a paper read at the Mormon History Association, Mark Hofmann stated that he did not want to give the impression that he was trying to blackmail the Church, but he acknowledged that if the Church had wanted him to, he would have promised to never tell anyone about the discovery:

On February 16th 1981 I first showed a xerox of the Blessing to the LDS Archivist, Don Schmidt. . . . I was also willing to promise not to breathe a word of its existence to anyone . . . (Not wanting to come across like I was trying to blackmail the Church) I fully expected to relinquish ownership immediately. (Sunstone Review, August 1982, page 1)

The whole transaction seems to have been rather bizarre. Hofmann told Schmidt that he thought the Reorganized LDS Church “might possibly trade a Book of Commandments for it,” yet he was “willing to trade the document [to the Mormon Church] for about a quarter of the value of a Book of Commandments” (Ibid.). This would mean that Hofmann would take approximately $5,000 when he could have obtained $20,000. In the
September 1982 issue of *Sunstone Review*, page 17, Hofmann says, “I’m in this for the money.” If this is the case, we find it a little hard to understand why he would be willing to sacrifice $15,000 just so the Mormon Church could hide the blessing document. Mr. Hofmann, who has served as a Mormon missionary, may be concerned about protecting the Church’s image, or it could be that he feels that he receives some other compensation which makes up for the loss. We do know, for instance, that he has had special access to the First Presidency’s vault. (As we pointed out earlier, only the most trusted individuals can see documents from that vault.) On September 28, 1982, the *Seventh East Press* reported that since the discovery of the Anthon transcript, Hofmann has “enjoyed privileged access to otherwise restricted Church archive material, including the First Presidency’s vault. One reason for this privileged access, Hofmann thinks, is the fact that ‘I am not a historian. I’m not going to write an expose of Mormonism.’”

In our research with regard to the Joseph Smith III Blessing, we discovered that Mr. Hofmann was apparently helping the Church cover-up some important documents relating to President Brigham Young. When we heard that Hofmann would not reveal the exact source from which he obtained the blessing document, we questioned him about the matter. He indicated that he had given the Mormon Church an affidavit which stated where he had obtained it. He could not reveal that source to the public, however, because the member of the Bullock family from whom he had purchased the document also had important papers concerning Brigham Young’s finances that would be embarrassing to the Church. While Mr. Hofmann did not indicate whether he had sold these papers to the Church, in the interview published in the *Sanstone Review*, August 1982, page 1, he said that he “had previously made several trades” with the Church Archivist before obtaining the blessing.

As we will show later, in 1983 Mr. Hofmann sold an important letter written by Joseph Smith on divination and money-digging to the Church, and it was suppressed for two years before scholars forced the Church to make it available. This whole business of secret dealings with the Church is very disturbing. While dealers have a right to operate in this way, from a historian’s point of view it is deplorable. We can not see any real reason for all the secrecy that surrounds these transactions. It would seem to us that it would be far better if Hofmann and other collectors would make a public announcement of each find, release photographs and then sell it to the highest bidder.

God is Missing

The reader who takes time to carefully examine the Salamander letter, will find that there is no mention of God, angels or religion. As we have pointed out in our earlier writings, the evidence shows that Martin Harris could hardly open his mouth without mentioning these subjects. This presents a problem which we do not really have an answer for. That he would write a letter of over 600 words, detailing the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, without mentioning religion seems remarkable. While Professor Anthon claimed that Harris suppressed the fact that the plates were translated “by the gift of God” when he talked to him (Mormonism Unvailed, page 271), there seems to be a reasonable explanation for this—he would not want religious bias to enter into Anthon’s judgment on the Book of Mormon characters. Anthon wrote that when Harris visited a second time, he spoke of the “curse of God.”

It is hard to understand why in the letter to Phelps, Martin Harris would suppress all the divine elements and emphasize the aspects of the story relating to money-digging and magic. In fact, he seems to deliberately link the “old spirit” who reveals the Book of Mormon plates to the spirits connected with buried treasures. He says that, “Joseph often sees Spirits here with great kettles of coin money . . .” The letter goes on to say that “Joseph made no attempt on their money,” and therefore the spirits gave him supernatural help. The letter even says that the spirits let Harris “count their money.” When it comes to the part of the story where Joseph Smith is told to get the plates for the Book of Mormon, it quotes Smith as saying, “the old spirit . . . says dig up the gold but when I take it up . . .” The absence of the word plates after “gold” seems to emphasize the fact that the Book of Mormon was a valuable treasure which was controlled by the “old spirit.” The letter shows an obsession with money and treasures which is reminiscent of the wife’s statement that he was very materialistic: “. . . I told him he had better leave the company of the Smiths, as their religion was false; to which he replied, if you would let me alone, I could make money by it” (Mormonism Unvailed, page 256). There can be little doubt that Martin Harris was a money-digger himself. In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 38, we show that after Joseph Smith found the gold plates, Harris admitted that he went out to the hill to dig for some more boxes or gold. He claimed, in fact, that he found a box but that it slipped back into the hill.
Mark Hofmann has suggested that W. W. Phelps, the recipient of the Salamander letter, may have been a money-digger and that this would account for Harris emphasizing this aspect of the story and suppressing the divine elements. So far we have not found any evidence to this effect, but in a letter dated January 15, 1831, he did seem to be aware of the fact that the Mormons had been actively involved in digging in Joseph Smith’s neighborhood: “The places where they dug for the plates, in Manchester, are to be seen” (Mormonism Unveiled, page 273). While we do not know for certain what Phelps’s position was on magic and money-digging, he did reprint an article in his anti-Masonic newspaper just a month before the Salamander letter was supposed to have been written which ridiculed the practice of trying to win the “faculty of Abrac”:

A very ancient Masonic charm, or the way of winning the Faculty of Abrac,—is meant the chimerical virtues ascribed to the magical term—ABRACADABRA, written or repeated in a particular manner, and is thought to be efficacious in curing agues, and preventing Fits and other masonic diseases. (Ontario Phoenix, August 25, 1830)

The evidence seems to show that the Smith family was involved to some extent in trying to win the “faculty of Abrac” (see Mormonism, Magic and Masonry, pages 20-21).

**Church Says Authentic**

Steven Christensen, the man who purchased the Salamander letter after the Church decided not to buy it, has to be commended for his work with regard to the letter. He not only enlisted some of the top Mormon scholars to help him determine its authenticity, but he also sent it to a noted document examiner, Kenneth Rendell, Incorporated, for a careful examination. We understand that these tests cost about $6,000. The Salt Lake Tribune reported:

Tests included where the paper had been milled. Ink, sealing wax and the stamp were also studied, along with seemingly insignificant determinations such as whether the letter had been folded after it had been written and pressure points in drawing individual letters. (April 28, 1985)

On April 12, 1985, Steven Christensen donated the Harris letter to the Church. As the meetings of the Mormon History Association approached, it became apparent that someone was going to print it. We have been told, in fact, that a reporter from Time magazine actually had a photograph of the letter. The Mormon leaders apparently felt that it would be best if the Church itself published it with comments which would make it appear in the most favorable light possible. They must have reasoned that even though the contents of the letter are absolutely devastating, they could not keep their members from reading it, and therefore it would be best to put it forth as if they were not ashamed of it. It was published in the Church Section of the Deseret News on April 28, 1985. The title on one of the articles about the letter reads: “1830 Harris letter authenticated.” In another article we find the following:

A letter purportedly written by Martin Harris to W. W. Phelps was recently presented to the Church by Steven F. Christensen. . . . With the letter was presented a copy of a report which points out factors which indicate that the letter was written about the time of the date it bears and on materials which were likely manufactured about that time. The examiner concludes his statement by saying “that there is no indication that this letter is a forgery.”

In another article published in the Church Section, these comments appear:

A letter written early in Church history by Martin Harris and sent to William W. Phelps is almost certainly authentic and has been donated to the Church

Dean C. Jessee, research historian and handwriting expert at the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History at BYU, and others have studied and tested the letter extensively for almost a year. . . . In the letter, Harris confirms the 1823 date of the Angel Moroni’s visit to Joseph Smith. He also reconfirms in his own writing the experience with Prof. Charles Anthon and the “sealed book” prophecy. . . .

According to Jessee, handwriting analysis “shows that the writer of the 1830 letter is the same person who wrote the authentic Harris signatures. On the basis of the paper, ink and handwriting tests, the Harris letter appears authentic.

“However confusing the letter appears by present standards, neither Martin Harris in writing the letter, nor William Phelps in receiving it, perceived its message as out of the ordinary. That readers in our time do probably tells more about our present mind-set than anything else.” . . . Dr. Ronald W. Walker, another historian with the Smith Institute, said that in order to appeal to Phelps, Harris used a traditional sort of “religious folk language” that was extremely prevalent at the time. . . .

“My hunch is that Harris was talking to someone whom he knew had an understanding of the folk customs of the region,” said Walker, “a person to whom this way of describing that experience would have appealed.” . . .
“Members should realize this letter was written very early in the church, long before the restoration of the gospel was complete. At that point, it was logical that the religious folklore of the time was prevalent, and had not been replaced with the language of the gospel.”

This language involves two aspects that can be understood only in the context of the times, said Walker.

First, Harris makes reference to . . . “an old spirit that transforms himself from a white salamander.” In this context, said Walker, a salamander was a supernatural contact with spirits, and could mean a spirit or intermediary. A salamander was commonly believed to be a spirit that lived in fire. The “old spirit” referred to by Harris was surely synonymous in his mind with the Angel Moroni.

Second, continued Walker, this folk religion was thoroughly tied up in treasure hunting. “Seeking buried treasures for some people, particularly those coming out of Vermont, was extremely prevalent,” he said . . . “Josiah Stowell, who once hired Joseph to dig for treasure, was a prosperous man and a deacon in the Presbyterian Church, an outstanding citizen. There was no dichotomy in his mind between religion and treasure hunting in those days. Men like Stowell and Harris saw them as a package. Here are men with a reputation for veracity, hard work and good judgment.” (Deseret News, Church Section, April 28, 1985)

While the Church Section of the Deseret News tried to soften the blow for the faithful, Gordon B. Hinckley, a member of the First Presidency, gave the whole thing away when he stated: “No one, of course, can be certain that Martin Harris wrote the document. However, at this point we accept the judgment of the examiner that there is no indication of forgery. This does not preclude the possibility that it may have been forged at a time when the Church had many enemies” (Ibid.).

The astute reader will perceive that President Hinckley is saying that the letter really looks like something written by an enemy of the Church rather than by Martin Harris, one of the three special witnesses to the Book of Mormon.

During the first week in May we went back to Kansas City to attend the meetings of the Mormon History Association. We felt it was important to keep abreast of recent developments with regard to the Salamander letter. In his presentation, Dean Jessee gave some information concerning the handwriting examination. He said that there were three letters which could have been actually penned by Martin Harris—i.e., the 1830 Salamander letter, an 1846 letter and a letter written in 1855. A comparison with examples of Harris’s signature from other documents revealed that two of the three letters were not from the pen of Harris. According to Jessee, the only letter that checked out was the Salamander letter. There was one document bearing four words in addition to Harris’s signature. Jessee felt that this document was written by Harris. It was the longest document used to check the Salamander letter. Jessee reported concerning a number of important tests that had been conducted and said that he felt the tests proved the letter authentic. Comments were made on the document by three Mormon scholars and Richard Howard of the Reorganized LDS Church. Ronald Walker gave an excellent presentation of the research he had done with the assistance of Brent Metcalfe. Their findings certainly cast the whole Book of Mormon story in the context of magic and money-digging practice of the time.

All four of the speakers at the Mormon History Association freely admitted Joseph Smith’s connection to magic and money-digging, and as far as we could tell, those who attended the meetings seemed to agree with their research. Mormon historians, who have fought against these charges for many years, seemed to just cave in under the weight of the evidence.

**Forgery Charged**

As we indicated earlier, when the Salamander letter first came to our attention we publicly expressed doubts concerning its authenticity. Rhett James, a Mormon scholar who has done extensive research on the life of Martin Harris, did not seem to share our reservations about the letter. In an article published in the Church Section of the Mormon newspaper, Deseret News, September 9, 1984, we find the following:

The so-called “Martin Harris letter” is no repudiation of Joseph Smith, but rather probably is a further witness of the Prophet’s own account of the discovery of the golden plates.

This is the feeling of historian Rhett S. James of Logan, . . . James spent about 2 1/2 years researching the life of Harris . . .

“Martin Harris was enamored of classic Greek culture and its symbolism,” said James. . . . James said it was “highly likely” that Harris would use the kind of language and symbolism purported to be contained in the Harris letter.

“Martin Harris . . . was writing to Phelps, who himself was an author and a poet, and so he likely would have written in a poetic style.”

James . . . said it is the salamander imagery that intrigues him.
As time went on Rhett James began to develop serious doubts about the letter. These doubts did not subside with the announcement by the Church that the letter had been authenticated. On May 19, 1985, the Deseret News reported the following:

Rhett James, a Mormon bishop . . . said Thursday he has completed a computer analysis that indicates the letter by Martin Harris may have been forged . . .

James said there are only eight known Martin Harris letters. The others have averaged 30 words per sentence, compared to 13 words per sentence in the 1830 letter. The computer also analyzed the types of words used.

“I’ve found differences in the comparisons too great to ignore,” James said.

We had pointed out that there were discrepancies in style and length of sentences between the 1830 letter and other letters attributed to Martin Harris in The Money-Digging Letters (updated portion, October 24, 1984). Although we still feel that this type of approach has some merit, it has one serious flaw—i.e., according to Dean Jessee, none of the other letters are actually written in Martin Harris’s own hand. We do not know how much influence the scribes and editors may have had on the style of the letters. If we could find just one letter which we could prove was written in Harris’s own hand, it would throw important light on the subject.

In any case, the Salt Lake Tribune, May 20, 1985, reported that Mr. James claimed that he “had been assured that church officials were looking anew at the Harris letter in light of his doubts. “I was assured the document will be very carefully examined during the next few weeks,” James said.

The same article stated that “Cache Valley historian A. J. Simmonds, in charge of special collections at the Utah State University Library, says he agrees with James’ suspicions about the letter.” A. J. Simmond’s opposition to the Salamander letter comes as somewhat of a surprise. Simmonds was the one who assisted Mark Hofmann with one of his most important finds—the Anthon transcript. Writing in BYU Studies, Spring 1980, page 327, Danel W. Bachman stated:

To avoid the risk of damaging the document further, Mr. Hofmann took it the next day to the office of A. J. Simmonds, curator of the Utah State University Special Collections and Archives, who helped him separate the glued edges.

The Salt Lake Tribune for May 20, 1985, quoted Rhett James as saying: “I don’t know whether or not I think the “Salamander Letter” is a modern forgery or a forgery from the 1830s, but I do think it is a forgery . . .” A. J. Simmonds seems to feel that if the Salamander letter is a forgery, it comes from recent times.

As we have indicated earlier, President Gordon B. Hinckley has said that the Church accepts the opinion of the document examiners that there is no evidence of forgery, but he has also hinted that there is a possibility that the Salamander letter could have been forged “when the Church had many enemies.” We feel that the idea of a forgery in Martin Harris’s lifetime is untenable. It seems highly unlikely that a forger would create such a document while the sender and recipient were both alive and could deny its authenticity. (It is interesting to note also that Harris and Phelps lived into the 1870s.) Even if this were the case, a person would have to explain why the letter was never used. It would seem like a lot of effort for nothing. The postmark alone would be a real problem to forge. To maintain that the letter is a forgery, one is almost forced to the conclusion that it would have to be a recent forgery. Brent Metcalfe’s revelation that the Cowdery history mentions a salamander three different times throws important light on this question. Most scholars will probably use the Cowdery history as evidence that the letter is genuine. Those who still suspect forgery will almost be forced to the conclusion that it is a modern forgery. Since knowledge of the salamander’s role in early Mormon history was suppressed in the First Presidency’s vault until just recently, no one would have known to create a document mentioning that fact until after the leak occurred.

In the light of the new evidence, President Hinckley’s suggestion that the Salamander letter could have been written when the Church had many “enemies” seems to be very unlikely. Furthermore, it seems improbable that any open enemy of the Church could have had access to the information which Mr. Metcalfe mentioned. Those who had access to the vault would probably be very tight-lipped about the matter. They would only want to share this information with Mormons who could be trusted not to leak it to the enemy. It would seem, therefore, that it is unlikely that anyone but a Mormon could have had the knowledge necessary to commit such a forgery.

The tests which have been made on the Salamander letter, indicate that no ordinary person could have forged it. It would have to be the work of a very skilled forger. Only a person familiar with old documents, chemistry and the process of document authentication could prepare a letter that would have a chance of passing through these tests.

Editors Divided

Unfortunately, the editors of the Messenger find themselves divided over how to deal with the Salamander letter. We feel that it is best, therefore, to give our readers both viewpoints.
**Sandra Tanner:** As Jerald has pointed out, there are impressive parallels between the Martin Harris letter and different printed versions. These can be viewed either as proofs of plagiarism or authenticity. I, too, am bothered by the lack of information on the history of the letter and the lack of specific information on the tests given the letter. However, the information I have been able to gather on the testing seems impressive. I was told that the letter was sent to a paper specialist who removed a small piece for testing and found it was consistent with the type of paper used in 1830. In addition, it was determined the ink was put on the paper before the letter was folded. This establishes that someone didn’t use an old blank piece of paper that had been used as a cover for another letter.

The ink was also tested and is consistent with that used in 1830. The ink was also sufficiently faded for the age of the letter and was applied before the paper aged. The ink used for the postmark and postage amount was faded red, as it should be. Also, the amount of the postage was correct. The wax seal on the letter also seems authentic.

The flow of the ink was examined to determine the speed of writing. The letter appears to have been written at an even speed and normal rate. Presumably a forger would need to write slower with additional pauses in order to imitate someone else’s handwriting.

In looking at the actual writing on the letter it seems to be consistent with a few samples we have of Martin Harris’s handwriting. He had a distinct way of making his capital “P,” capital “M,” capital “H” and his lower case “r.” Another item of interest is the way the double “s” is made in the words “assistance” and “Professor.” In 1830 many people still used this old form which is foreign to us today.

When I look at all the different items used in authenticating the letter I wonder if it would be possible for a forger to have faked all these points without detection? I don’t think so. Those Mormon scholars who have read the test results all seem satisfied that the letter is indeed authentic.

**Jerald Tanner:** At the outset I will state that I originally approached the Salamander letter with a strong bias towards its authenticity. It seemed to completely substantiate the thesis I had worked for years to prove—i.e., Joseph Smith was deeply involved in magic and money-digging and that the Book of Mormon was a product of this involvement. No one could possibly have had a greater desire to prove the Salamander letter authentic, and I doubt that many people have invested the time and effort that I have in sifting the evidence. This letter has been constantly on my mind for well over a year. My desire has been to come up with a definite answer concerning its reliability. At the present time, however, I still find myself with some serious doubts. Notwithstanding the extensive tests that the letter has been submitted to and the proclamation by some of the Church’s leading scholars that it is authentic, I can not seem to gain an absolute “testimony” to the validity of the Salamander letter. While I do believe in miracles, I cannot help wondering if this is not just too good to be true. The Salamander letter fits perfectly into my case against the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon, but I have to ask myself this question: if the Mormons brought out a letter which was supposed to have been written in 1830 which said that Joseph Smith saw both The Father and the Son in 1820, and this letter had strong parallels to sources printed at a later date and also contained elements which seemed foreign to the purported author, would I keep silent about the matter? The answer, of course, is no. I would proclaim these findings to the world.

When I originally took a stand against the Salamander letter, some people thought I was just trying to force the Mormon researchers to come out with their research. They felt that as soon as the letter was published I would jump on the band wagon. The truth of the matter, however, is that my statements were made out of a strong conviction, and the release of the letter has done nothing to calm the apprehension I have about the letter’s authenticity. At the present time I feel almost alone. Even the Mormon historians accept the letter, and I am under a great deal of pressure to get into step with the scholars.

As I have indicated in other issues of the Messenger, my doubts about the Harris letter come mainly from the text of the letter and from parallels to other printed documents. While most people seem to feel that physical tests are more important, everyone would concede that if the letter mentioned Joseph Smith watching television or using a flash light, it could not possibly be valid. In that case the evidence from the text would outweigh anything obtained from physical testing. The reader may remember the “Mormon Will” which was supposed to have been written by Howard Hughes. It was found in the Mormon Church Office Building in Salt Lake City. This will left a great deal of money to the Mormon Church and a Mormon named Melvin Dummar. It was later discovered that Dummar himself planted the will in the Church Office Building. Henry Silver, a noted handwriting expert, seemed willing to stake his reputation on the will’s authenticity. A number of experts joined
Silver in proclaiming the will genuine, and the Mormon Church itself funded the side which was trying to prove its authenticity. We took a strong stand against the will. Within a month of the discovery, we published a booklet entitled *Howard Hughes and the Mormon Will*. In this booklet we pointed out parallels between things that had been published just prior to the will’s discovery and also pointed out discrepancies in the text. As it turned out, Melvin Dummar finally confessed that he lied about the will and it was declared a forgery.

It is also interesting to note that in 1972 Clifford Irving claimed to have some letters written by Howard Hughes. Wallace Turner reported that Irving’s “publishers took the handwriting samples to Osborn Associates, a New York firm that specialized in examining questioned documents. The Irving material was compared with known samples of Mr. Hughes’s writing, and the experts said it had all been written by the same person.

“This was not so, as Mr. Irving explained before going to jail to serve a term for fraud. He had written the letters . . .” (*New York Times*, May 3, 1976). Wallace Turner observed that “Handwriting identification is far from an expert science. When it is used in court, expert witnesses frequently take opposite sides on such matters” (*Ibid.*).

While I must admit that I see nothing in the handwriting that would show that the Harris letter is a fraud, I am certainly not qualified to pass judgment upon it. One thing that might cause me some concern is that it appears to have only one word written over the line and no words or letters crossed out. A Joseph Smith letter of this size would probably have about twenty mistakes of this nature. Unfortunately, there is no other material in Harris’s own hand to compare it with.

As far as the form of the double “s” is concerned, I am convinced that anyone who works with documents of this age would be familiar with this. In any case, a person could learn this from our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 33:

> When the letter “s” was repeated in documents of Joseph Smith’s time, as in the word, “glass,” the two letters appeared as a “p.”

The fact that the ink was put on the paper before the paper was folded does not impress me very much. If someone had tried to use a cover sheet from an old letter, the name and address would have been written in a different hand and it would therefore have been unusable.

As far as the examination of the paper itself, Bill Kruger, who performed the test on the Salamander letter, told me that it is possible for a very clever forger to manufacture paper at the present time which will pass through his tests without detection. Dr. Antonio Kantu, who is with the FBI and is considered to be one of the world’s greatest experts on the detection of forgery by testing ink, told me that he could examine the ink to determine if its chemical properties were like those of ink used at this early period, but he would not be able to say for certain that this was actually ink in use in 1830 or if it was added to the paper at that date. He indicated that by merely applying heat to a document, a forger would give the appearance of great age. He knew of no ink test that could be made on the Salamander letter that would be absolutely conclusive.

Before making any final decision with regard to the letter’s authenticity, I would like to do further research with regard to a number of items. For instance, I would like to find out if there is any evidence that someone owned the letter before Lyn Jacobs. I would also like to obtain a copy of the report from the document examiner, and the four-word inscription attributed to Martin Harris by Dean Jessee. So far these important items have not been made available to the public. Furthermore, I have been informed that Brent Metcalfe has a photocopy of a longer inscription attributed to Martin Harris which appears in a Book of Mormon. This inscription was not used in testing the document. Since it might be the longest example of Harris’s handwriting, I feel that it would be important to compare it to the Salamander letter.

Another thing that I feel should be made available is a purported forgery of the 116 pages which were lost from the Book of Mormon manuscript. It was Mark Hofmann himself who told me of this forgery. I feel that it could have a very important relationship to the Salamander letter. The reader will remember that although the Salamander letter removed the divine elements from the story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, it has some of the basic facts of the traditional version. Intertwoven with these facts, however, we find important elements of money-digging. At any rate, Mr. Hofmann claimed that he was aware of a forgery of the 116 pages which were lost from the Book of Mormon (the Book of Lehi) and that these pages contain money-digging interspersed with portions that are similar to the story found in the printed Book of Mormon. I told Mr. Hofmann that this forgery should be made available, but he has never given me the name of the person who is supposed to have it (see *The Money-Digging Letters*, page 21).

If this manuscript really exists, I can see no reason why Mr. Hofmann has suppressed its location. It could throw important light on the origin of the Salamander letter. If, on the other hand, the manuscript does not exist, it does show that the idea of money-digging being inserted into an important Mormon document was in somebody’s mind prior to the discovery of the Salamander letter.
Although I probably did not discuss the matter with Mr. Hofmann until after the discovery of the Salamander letter, he was telling others about it prior to that time, and we reported the story in the *Messenger* in November 1983. The *Sunstone Review*, September 1982, page 18, Mr. Hofmann claimed that he had “spent thousands of dollars in the pursuit” of the “lost 116 manuscript pages.” In any case, I cannot help thinking that there might be some connection between the story of the forged Book of Lehi pages and the Salamander letter.

The item I would like to see most of all, however, is the Cowdery history. The release of this document could answer many questions about the Salamander letter. Since we wrote the first part of this newsletter, Church spokesman Jerry Cahill has admitted that the Church does have the Cowdery history. In an Associated Press story, Michael White reported:

Brent Metcalfe, who researches old Mormon documents for a Utah publishing firm, says the multivolume history by Oliver Cowdery states that it was not Joseph Smith, but his brother, Alvin who first saw the golden plates by using a “seer stone.”...

Church spokesman Jerry Cahill said that Cowdery’s history had been in the church’s possession since around 1900 and probably is locked away in the private vault of the governing First Presidency.

But Cahill said he did not know whether it contained the information described by Metcalfe, and he would not try to find out.

“Frankly, I don’t intend to raise the question. Obviously, it’s in the possession of the church, but what shelf it is on I don’t know,” he said.

He would not speculate on whether the First Presidency would make the history available for study. (*The Oregonian*, May 21, 1985)

It is reported that the Cowdery history may have been dictated by Joseph Smith himself. If this is the case, it could be far more significant than the Salamander letter. In fact, it could be the most devastating document that has ever been discovered. Since it undoubtedly has a good pedigree which would go back to early times, I doubt that I would have any question regarding its authenticity. If any question were to arise, it could be checked with numerous samples from Oliver Cowdery’s pen.

At any rate, I wish to withhold judgment on the Salamander letter until I have done further research concerning it. My mind is still open to any new information. If anyone has any information (whether pro or con) on the subject, I would be very happy to receive it. I would also appreciate any information regarding the discovery or concerning Mark Hofmann and Lyn Jacobs.

Anyone who wishes to learn more about my position should read *The Money-Digging Letters* (Price $1.00), and issues 53 and 55 of the *Messenger* (free upon request).

In conclusion I should say that although I have serious doubts about the Salamander letter, I still stand behind the thesis we presented in *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*. I feel that there is very good evidence linking Joseph Smith to magic.

### Suppressed Letter

On May 10, 1985, the Mormon Church’s newspaper, *Deseret News*, announced what was claimed to be “The Earliest known surviving document written by Joseph Smith Jr. . . .” The article went on to state: “The letter, believed by church leaders to be authentic, was written June 18, 1825, five years before the church was organized.”

The text of the letter was also printed. It reads as follows:

Dear Sir

My father has shown me your letter informing him and me of your Success in locating the mine as you Suppose but we are of the oppinion that since you cannot asertain any particulars you Should not dig more untill you first discover if any valluables remain you know the treasure must be guarded by some clever spirit and if such is discovered so also is the treasure so do this take a hasel stick one yard long being new Cut and cleave it Just in the middle and lay it asunder on the mine so that both inner parts of the stick may look one right against the other one inch distant and if there is treasure after a while you shall see them draw and Join together again of themselves let me know how it is Since you were here I have almost decided to accept your offer and if you can make it convenient to come this way I shall be ready to accompany you if nothing happens more than I know of I am very respectfully

Joseph Smith Jr.

(*Deseret News*, May 10, 1985)

Although there is certainly nothing spiritual about this letter and it obviously relates to magic, it bears a remarkable resemblance to Ezekiel 37:16-17, a prophesy Mormons use to prove the Book of Mormon:

... take thee one stick, and write upon it, for Judah, . . . then take another stick, and write upon it, for Joseph, . . . And join them one to another into one stick; . . .
Cannondale, June 18th, 1825

Dear Sir,

My father has shown me your letter informing him and one of your surgeons in leading the mine as you state, but we are of the opinion that since you cannot ascertain any particular you should not dig more until you first discover if any valuable remains you know the treasure must be guarded by some clever spirit and if such is discovered do also in the treasure so do this take a lead stick one yard long being new but well cleaved at one end and lay it just in the middle and lay it across on the mine so that both inner parts of the stick may look one right against the other one inch distant and if there is treasure after a while you shall see them move and join together again of themselves let me know how it is since you were here I have almost decided to accept your offer and if you can make it convenient to come this way I shall be ready to accompany you if nothing happens more than I know if I am very respectfully,

Joseph Smith Jr.
According to Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, Joseph Smith’s widow, Emma, claimed that at the time he wrote the Book of Mormon, he “could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter; let alone dictating a book like the Book of Mormon . . .” (Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith, 1984, page 26). The 1825 letter hardly seems to support this conclusion. Actually, the spelling in the letter is much better than we would have expected, and for some reason appears to be even better than in some letters written in the 1830s. This is surprising because the testimony Joseph Smith gave in the 1826 trial shows that he received some of his schooling after the date which appears on the letter (June 18, 1825). According to our research, Joseph Smith made only 2.8 spelling mistakes per hundred words in the 1825 letter. From Dean Jessee’s book, The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith, we learn that the first extant letter in the handwriting of Joseph Smith after the 1825 letter is dated March 3, 1831. Using Dean Jesse’s typescript of the letter (pages 230-232), we find that Smith made 7.1 mistakes per hundred words. The next letter is dated June 6, 1832, and contains 4.9 mistakes per hundred words (see pages 238-239). The third letter is dated October 13, 1832. This letter has 6.2 mistakes per hundred words (see pages 252-254).

There is one other document which might be used to make a spelling comparison with the 1825 letter. This is the recently discovered Anthon Transcript. On the back side is some writing which Dean Jessee feels was written by Joseph Smith (see The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith, pages 223-226). Although it is undated, Jessee believes it was probably written in February 1828—just about three years after the 1825 letter was supposed to have been written. This document, which has only 58 words, has 7 spelling errors (12.2 errors per hundred words). This is strikingly different from the 2.8 errors per hundred words in the 1825 letter.

One other thing about the 1825 letter which is somewhat different from Joseph Smith’s other writings is that it does not seem to have any words or parts of words crossed out and no words or parts of words are inserted above the lines. In the three later letters and the Anthon Transcript we find numerous examples of this type of thing. There are, in fact, an average of four words or portions of words added or deleted per hundred words in the four documents. The 1825 letter, therefore, should have about seven of these mistakes to be consistent with the other documents. That the 1825 letter has no examples of this nature could be a cause for concern, and we feel that it should be carefully checked by experts who are qualified to make meaningful judgments with regard to spelling, grammar and style.

Although Mark Hofmann, the dealer who discovered the letter, has not revealed where it came from, the handwriting appears to be the same as that found in the other Joseph Smith letters and writings. Of course we are not handwriting experts and cannot say for certain that it is the same hand. The Los Angeles Times for May 11, 1985, quoted Charles Hamilton, “a prominent New York City autograph collector,” as saying: “... the second I saw this one I recognized it as the Mormon prophet’s signature ...” The Church Section of the Deseret News for May 12, 1985, contained the following:

The 1825 Joseph Smith letter is almost certainly authentic, said Dean C. Jessee, associate professor of Church history and research historian at the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History at BYU. He is a leading expert on early historical documents relating to the Church.

“The document appears definitely to be in the hand of Joseph Smith,” he said. “As such, it is the earliest document we have that is written and signed by the prophet.”

Although it would not necessarily prove the letter authentic, its contents seem to fit well into the context of what we know Joseph Smith was doing at the time. For instance, the letter is addressed to Josiah Stowell. Joseph Smith acknowledged in his history that “In the month of October, 1825, I hired with an old gentleman by the name of Josiah Stowel, ... He had heard something of a silver mine having been opened by the Spaniards ... After I went to live with him, he took me, with the rest of the hands, to dig for the silver mine, ... Hence arose the very prevalent story of my having been a money-digger” (History of the Church, vol. 1, page 17).

Joseph Smith’s use of divination led him into trouble with the law, and while he was working for Mr. Stowell he was brought to trial. In the trial, which was held March 20, 1826, Joseph Smith testified that “he had a certain stone which he occasionally looked at to determine where
hidden treasures in the bowels of the earth were; that he professed to tell in this manner where gold mines were a distance under ground, and had looked for Mr. Stowell several times, and had informed him where he could find these treasures, and Mr. Stowell had been engaged in digging for them.” (See Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 32, for the complete text of the trial.)

As to Joseph Smith’s use of “a hasel stick” to find treasures, C. M. Stafford said that Smith “claimed he could tell where money was buried, with a witch hazel consisting of a forked stick of hazel. He held it one fork in each hand and claimed the upper end was attracted by the money” (Naked Truths About Mormonism, April 1888, page 1).

In the Vermont Historical Gazetteer, 1877, vol. 3, pages 810-819, we find an article on the use of the hazel stick. This article says that Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery “commenced their education with the use of the hazel-rod or forked stick, in searching for hidden treasures—though afterwards they used what they called enchanted stones.”

In a revelation given by Joseph Smith to Oliver Cowdery in 1829, we read that Cowdery had the “gift of working with the rod: behold it has told you things: behold there is no other power save God, that can cause this rod of nature, to work in your hands, . . .” (Book of Commandments, Chapter 7:3). When this revelation was reprinted in the Doctrine and Covenants, Section 8:6-7, the words “the gift of working with the rod” were changed to “the gift of Aaron.” The other mention of the “rod of nature” was also replaced with the words, “this gift of Aaron.” The Mormon writer D. Michael Quinn presents some evidence that this same rod was brought to Salt Lake City and that Brigham Young used it to point out where the temple should be built (Brigham Young University Studies, Fall 1978, page 82).

The Church’s newspaper tried to defuse the explosive contents of the letter by saying:

The use of a device similar to the “dowsing rod” that is still used by some rural societies to find water is not unusual in context of the early 1800s, the First Presidency said. Folk magic was a common phenomenon, and Smith was reflecting the beliefs of the society in which he lived. (Deseret News, May 10, 1985)

Although the publication of the letter in the Mormon Church’s own newspaper would lead one to believe that the Church has been open and straightforward about the whole matter, all the evidence demonstrates just the opposite. Church leaders, in fact, did their best to suppress the letter and were caught in a cover-up situation. In his interview on KUER Radio, Brent Metcalfe related that he first learned of the existence of the 1825 letter in the spring of 1983. Charles Hamilton claimed that Mark Hofmann told him he sold the letter to the Church two years ago:

Charles Hamilton, . . . said Thursday by telephone that he was shown the Joseph Smith letter two years ago by manuscript collector Mark Hofmann of Salt Lake City, . . . “I said it was probably of great historical interest and was worth about $15,000. Hofmann told me he sold it within three weeks to the church for $25,000.” (Los Angeles Times, May 11, 1985)

Although the Church later claimed that it had possession of the letter, in a letter to the editor of the Salt Lake Tribune, May 6, 1985, the Mormon scholar George D. Smith said that it was his understanding that “Gordon B. Hinckley, second counsellor to President Spencer W. Kimball, purchased the letter in 1983 in his own name from collector Mark Hofmann (after authentication by chemical and handwriting analysis).”

If President Hinckley bought the document in his own name, this must have been an attempt to give the Church deniability—i.e., the letter could be safely kept out of the hands of the public, and yet the Church could officially deny that it had it. In any case, last year we became aware of the letter’s existence and discussed the matter with one of the top historians in the Mormon Church. He lamented that the Church had allowed itself to become involved in a cover-up situation with regard to the 1825 letter. In the September 1984 issue of the Messenger we published a typed copy of the text of this letter and commented that we would “withhold judgment concerning its authenticity until we obtain more information concerning it.” As far as we know, the first Mormon scholar to print anything about the letter was Marvin S. Hill of the History Department at Brigham Young University. Professor Hill did not quote the actual text of the letter nor mention where it was located, but he revealed the following:

The 1825 letter to Stowell makes it clear that Joseph, Jr., not his father, is the guiding genius in the money digging business. It is Joseph who answers Stowell’s inquiry. It is he who has the special knowledge and powers, and it is he who makes the decision to join Stowell and lead the search. . . . Joseph, Jr. alone, as far as the record shows, had the talent with the stone that was essential. (Journal of Mormon History, vol. 11, 1984, page 132)

On April 29, 1985, Salt Lake Tribune reporter Dawn Tracy wrote:

A letter reportedly written by Mormon church founder Joseph Smith describing money-digging pursuits and treasure guarded by a clever spirit seems to have disappeared from view.

If authentic, the letter could link Joseph Smith directly—by his own admission—to folk magic. . . .
Dr. Hill said he is convinced the letter is authentic or he wouldn’t have cited the document in the article. He said he doesn’t know where the letter is located now.

“It’s a sad business that the letter is buried,” said Dr. Hill. “With copies of the letter circulating, I can’t see much benefit.”

Research historian Brent Metcalfe said he knows from “very reliable, first-hand sources” the letter exists, and the Mormon Church has possession of it.

Church spokesman Jerry Cahill denied the claim.

“The church doesn’t have the letter,” said Mr. Cahill. “It’s not in the church archives or the First Presidency’s vault.” . . . He said none of the confidential documents is the 1825 letter.

Someone may be playing word games, said George Smith, president of Signature Books, a Mormon publishing house focusing on scholarly publications.

“The church clearly has possession of the letter,” he said. “If the exact question isn’t asked, someone can wink and say the church doesn’t have it.”

No, said Mr. Cahill, the church does not have possession of the letter. (Salt Lake Tribune, April 29, 1985)

George Smith was very disturbed about the Church denying that it had possession of the letter. He was so disturbed, in fact, that he read the letter at a meeting of the Mormon History Association. A few days later (May 6) the Salt Lake Tribune published his letter to the editor. In this letter he revealed that “some scholars have reported seeing it at the church offices, . . . A number of scholars have photocopies of the letter, . . .” When it became apparent to the Church leaders that the letter was going to be published without their consent, they decided to back down and admit the existence of the letter. Jerry Cahill, Director of Public Affairs for the Church, admitted in a letter to the editor that his earlier statement was incorrect:

... staff writer Dawn Tracy correctly quoted my statement to her that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints doesn’t have a letter purportedly written in 1825 by Joseph Smith to Josiah Stowell (or Stoal) either in the church archives or in the First Presidency’s vault.

My statement, however, was in error, for which I apologize and for which I alone am responsible. Some months ago I was asked the same question by another inquirer and made a thorough check before responding. Dawn Tracy called me twice as she prepared her article and I responded without checking again.

When my published statement came to his attention, President Gordon B. Hinckley of the First Presidency of the church, informed me of my error. The purported letter was indeed acquired by the church. For the present it is stored in the First Presidency’s archives and perhaps some day may be the subject of the kind of critical study recent given to the purported letter of Martin Harris to W. W. Phelps. (Salt Lake Tribune, May 7, 1985)

It is very obvious from all this that the Mormon leaders have been caught in a very embarrassing cover-up with regard to the letter and that they only published it because their own scholars were preparing to release it to the press. Since the Church or President Hinckley secretly bought this letter in 1983 and never mentioned its existence, it is obvious that Church leaders intended to suppress it. Time magazine for May 20, 1985, reported that “The church offered no explanation for withholding news of the earliest extant document written by Smith, . . .” John Dart commented:

As it became clear during this week that photocopies of the letter would soon be circulated by sources outside the official church, Cahill announced that the church would discuss the contents and release a photocopy of the letter. (Los Angeles Times, May 11, 1985)

It seems obvious that if the letter had supported the Church in any way, it would have been published immediately in the Deseret News with a large headline announcing its discovery. When Joseph Smith’s mother’s 1829 letter was discovered, Mormon officials proclaimed it to be “the earliest known dated document” relating to the Church, and it was hailed as a vindication of Joseph Smith’s work. Since the letter to Stowell was supposed to have been written by the Prophet himself some four years earlier, we would expect it to receive even greater publicity. Instead, the Mormon leaders buried it and engaged in a cover-up.

“Incredible Crisis”

The Bible strongly condemns the practice of magic. In the book of Deuteronomy we read:

When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.

There shall not be found among you any one . . . that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch,

Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee. (Deuteronomy 18:9-12)
The Mormon leaders have sided with the Bible in declaring that divination and all forms of magic are extremely evil. They have also done their best to cover up Joseph Smith's involvement with magic. Apostle Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

Use of power gained from the assistance or control of evil spirits is called sorcery. Frequently this power is used in divination, necromancy, and witchcraft. . . . Sorcery has been a sinful evil in all ages. . . . sorcerers will be destroyed. . . . they shall be cast into that hell which is prepared for them. . . . and finally, having paid the utmost farthing for their crimes, they shall be debased with a telestial inheritance in eternity. (Mormon Doctrine, 1979, page 747)

Now that a great deal of evidence has come to light linking Joseph Smith to magic, Mormon apologists are trying to play down the serious implication of Smith's participation in the occult. It is claimed, in fact, that Smith's divination with a hazel stick “is not unusual in context of the early 1800s, the First Presidency said. Folk magic was a common phenomenon . . .” (Deseret News, May 10, 1985).

While it may be true that there were many people involved in magic and money-digging in Joseph Smith's time (just as there are many people involved in the occult today), its prevalence should not be exaggerated. The reader will remember that E. D. Howe's book was published in 1834. In this book, Howe linked Joseph Smith to money-digging and the occult. The fact that the book caused Joseph Smith so much trouble shows that these practices were frowned upon by a large portion of the people in his day. Joseph Smith's 1826 trial seems to demonstrate the same thing. In any case, even if everyone else was practicing magic, this would not give a license for a man who professed to be a prophet of God to become involved in it. The Los Angeles Times, May 11, 1985, printed an important observation by Peggy Fletcher:

On the other hand, Peggy Fletcher, publisher-editor of the independent Mormon-oriented magazine Sunstone, questioned the approach by Walker and Howard: “Why does it not make me feel better to hear that everybody was into magic then? I think historians are naive if they think members are going to buy this.”

Although the Mormon leaders are now soft-pedalling their stand against magic, we cannot forget Apostle McConkie's statement that those who are involved in “False religions” are the ones who are “engaging in divination. . . . The Lord's people are commanded not to engage in divination of any sort” (Mormon Doctrine, pages 202-203).

In accepting the letters of Joseph Smith and Martin Harris as authentic, the Mormon leaders find themselves in a very strange position. These two letters and the report concerning the Cowdery history all combine to present a devastating case against the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. In fact, they give strong support to an idea referred to in our book Mormonism, Magic and Masonry, page 40:

Joseph Smith himself seems to have been convinced that there were guardians over the treasures. As we have already shown, in the 1826 trial Jonathan Thompson testified that when he was engaged in money digging with Joseph Smith, Smith claimed that he looked into his seer stone and discovered “distinctly the two Indians who buried the trunk: that a quarrel ensued between them, and that one of said Indians was killed by the other, and thrown into the hole beside of the trunk, to guard it, as he supposed.” After reading this a person can not help but wonder if Joseph Smith transformed the guardian of the treasure into the angel who gave him the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was supposed to have been translated. Support for this idea comes from a number of sources.

On pages 31-32 of the same book, we also quoted information from the affidavit of William Stafford which showed that Joseph Smith used his seer stone to spy on evil spirits:

I, William Stafford. . . . do say, that I first became acquainted with Joseph, Sen., and his family in the year 1820 . . . A great deal of their time was devoted to digging for money: . . . They would say, . . . Joseph, Jr. could see, by placing a stone of singular appearance in his hat, in such a manner as to exclude all light; at which time they pretended he could see all things within and under the earth,—that he could see within the above mentioned caves, large gold bars and silver plates—that he could also discover the spirits in whose charge these treasures were. . . .

Joseph Smith, Sen., came to me one night, and told me, that Joseph Jr. had been looking in his glass, and had seen, not many rods from his house, two or three kegs of gold and silver, some feet under the surface of the earth; and that none others but the elder Joseph and myself could get them. I . . . repaired to the place of deposit. Joseph, Sen. first made a circle, twelve or fourteen feet in diameter. This circle, said he, contains the treasure. He then stuck in the ground a row of witch hazel sticks, around the said circle, for the purpose of keeping off the evil spirits. . . . He next stuck a steel rod in the centre of the circles, and then enjoined profound silence upon us, lest we should arouse the evil spirit who had the charge of these treasures. . . . the old man by signs and motions, asked leave of absence, . . . He soon returned and said, that Joseph had remained all this time in the house, looking in his stone and watching the motion of the evil spirit—that he saw the spirit come up
Joseph Lewis later wrote that he “thought it was a
forced to make a decision with regard to Joseph Smith.
that in 1828 members of the Methodist Church were
available for only $3.00 a copy (please add 10% postage
Masonry
Mormonism, Magic and
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Smith’s “restored” church seems to have been deeply
and a knife which have been preserved until the present	pocket. His brother, Hyrum, had some magic parchments
owned a “Jupiter talisman” which he carried in his
a figment of Joseph Smith’s imagination.
Joseph Smith owned a “Jupiter talisman” which he carried in his
including the ring and as soon as it beheld the cone which we
had formed around the rod, it caused the money to sink.

The reader will remember that in the letter to Josiah Stowell, Joseph Smith said, “the treasure must be guarded
by some clever spirit and if such is discovered so also
is the treasure.” Smith then recommends the use of “a
hazel stick” for divination to discover the presence of
the “treasure.” The reader will notice that in Stafford’s
account a whole “row of witch hazel sticks” are used “for
the purpose of keeping off the evil spirits.”

While the 1825 letter does not mention the gold plates
of the Book of Mormon, it absolutely ties Joseph Smith to
divination and shows that he was tampering around with
evil or “clever” spirits at the very time he was supposed to
be having dealings with the Angel Moroni. This letter
lacks only one thing—i.e., it does not link magic and
money-digging directly to the Book of Mormon plates.
The Salamander letter, however, picks up the story at this
very point and completes the occultic picture. It clearly
points out that the “old spirit” who reveals the gold plates
is one of the clever spirits mentioned in the 1825 letter.
It claims, in fact, that “the spirit says I tricked you again . . .” As if this is not bad enough, on one occasion the
spirit transformed himself from a magic salamander and
violently struck Joseph Smith three times. According to
Brent Metcalfe’s report concerning the Cowdery history,
the “taunting Salamander” prevented Alvin from digging
up the plates. Webster’s Twentieth Century Dictionary
gives this definition of taunt: “1. to reproach with scornful
or insulting words; to jeer at; to upbraid; to deride.” While this violent, tricky and taunting spirit/salamander fits well in an occult setting, it would be
ridiculous to equate it with an angel of God.

If Joseph Smith’s participation in magic had been
limited to the time previous to the Lord calling him, we
could probably excuse the whole matter. Instead, however,
we find that he is deeply involved at the very time the
Angel Moroni is preparing him to receive the gold plates
of the Book of Mormon. In his History he claimed that he
was first visited by the angel in 1823 and that he continued
to meet with the angel every year until he received the
plates in 1827. In the 1826 trial, however, he admitted
that he had been “looking through this stone to find lost
property for three years, . . .” This would mean, then,
that his involvement with the occult started at about the
same time the angel first visited him, and according to the
Mormon scholar Marvin Hill, “Joseph was still digging in
1827 . . . at no time did he give up belief in the usefulness
of his stone to find treasure” (Journal of Mormon History,
vol. 11, 1984, page 130). According to Book of Mormon
witnesses Martin Harris and David Whitmer, Joseph Smith
used the seer stone to translate the Book of Mormon itself
(see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 41-42). He
used the stone to give revelations, and in one of the
revelations he endorsed Oliver Cowdery’s gift of working
with a divining rod. Six years after publishing the Book of
Mormon, Joseph Smith gave a revelation concerning
money-digging. It is actually canonized in the Mormon
Church’s Doctrine and Covenants—one of the four
standard works of the Mormon Church. In Section 111,
verses 1, 2 and 4 we read:

I, the Lord your God, am not displeased with your
coming this journey, . . . I have much treasure in this city
for you, . . . I will give this city into your hands . . . and
its wealth pertaining to gold and silver shall be yours.

Although this revelation was a complete failure, this
did not stop Joseph Smith from giving another revelation
on the same subject. In 1838 Joseph Smith inspected some
mounds “erected by the aborigines of the land, to secrete
treasures,” and sent this revelation to his brother:

Verily thus Saith the Lord unto Hyram Smith if
he will come strate-away to Far West and in=quire of
his brother it shall be shown him how that he may be
freed from de[b]t and ob=tain a grate treasure in the
earth even so Amen (Revelation mailed May 25, 1838,
photographically reproduced in The Personal Writings
of Joseph Smith, page 358)

The “grate treasure,” of course, turned out to be only
a figment of Joseph Smith’s imagination.

Mormon scholar Reed Durham pointed out that Joseph
Smith owned a “Jupiter talisman” which he carried in his
pocket. His brother, Hyrum, had some magic parchments
and a knife which have been preserved until the present
time. As we examine the evidence, we find that Joseph
Smith’s “restored” church seems to have been deeply
rooted in the occult. Our book Mormonism, Magic and
Masonry deals in depth with these issues and also contains
photographs of Joseph Smith’s talisman and the Hyrum
Smith magic parchments and knife. We have demonstrated
beyond all question that this paraphernalia comes from
the occult. One of the Mormon scholars who spoke at
the Mormon History Association publicly recommended
our research on these matters. Mormonism, Magic and
Masonry, which contains a wealth of information, is
available for only $3.00 a copy (please add 10% postage
and handling).

In Mormonism, Magic and Masonry we point out
that in 1828 members of the Methodist Church were
forced to make a decision with regard to Joseph Smith.
He had taken steps to join their church, but they felt his
dealings with the occult made him unfit to be a member.
Joseph Lewis later wrote that he “thought it was a
disgrace to the church to have a practicing necromancer,
a dealer in enchantments and bleeding ghosts, in it. So on Sunday we . . . Told him that his occupation, habits and moral character were at variance with the discipline, that his name would be a disgrace to the church, that there should have been recantation, confession and at least promised reformation—That he could that day publicly ask that his name be stricken from the class book, or stand investigation. He chose the former, and did that very day make request the his name be take off the class book.”

We summarized this section of Mormonism, Magic and Masonry by saying:

With the mounting evidence of Joseph Smith's involvement in magic, members of the Mormon Church are faced with a very weighty decision—i.e., can they accept as a prophet a man who was involved in occult practices at the very time he was supposed to have been receiving revelations from God? From the standpoint of the bible, the question can only be answered no. As one former follower of Joseph Smith expressed it, a person must “come out from the company of Joseph the sorcerer.”

With the evidence that has come forth since 1983, we feel that it is even more imperative for those who want to follow Christ to “come out from among them” (2 Corinthians 6:17). Time magazine for May 20, 1985, reported the following concerning the reaction of Mormons to the new material:

“It’s an incredible crisis of faith for me,” says Mormon Klaus Hansen, who teaches at Queen’s University in Ontario. “It means our historical foundation becomes a nice story that has no connection to reality.” To Denise Olsen, a law student and mother of three in Bountiful, Utah, “it’s another evidence to me that things have gone awry in the church.” A devout Mormon couple in Whittier, Calif., in a letter to friends explaining why they have left the church, say new revelations about the Mormons’ founding prophet have destroyed their belief.

We really expect that the new information with regard to Mormonism and magic will eventually bring thousands out of the Church. This may be the most important development since we began our ministry. Christians should pray diligently that the Mormon people will turn to the Lord and find the strength which is necessary to carry them through this crisis. Jesus himself has given this invitation:

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)

**Cause for Concern**

We have recently become aware of a man who has been making up material and attributing it to Joseph Smith. Since such an individual has the ability to create the text of a document like the Salamander letter, we are making a very serious investigation into this matter. We hope to have more to report on this in the next issue of the *Messenger*.

The reader may have noticed that this is the largest issue of the *Messenger* which we have ever published. In spite of the additional costs involved, we felt that it was extremely important to keep our readers well informed on the new and startling developments that have taken place. It will probably take a great deal more time and money to continue our investigation into these matters. While we hope to continue furnishing accurate and up-to-date information, we do have financial needs that must be met. We would certainly appreciate any donations that our readers are able to make. Remember that all donations are tax-deductible.

**Let Them Starve?**

We have received some criticism of our ministry to help the starving people of the world. One letter expressed concern that the food may not be getting to those who need it. While we can understand this apprehension, we should point out that we are careful to see that the money does not go to questionable organizations.

One criticism that really bothers us, however, is that it is better to let the people starve so that the problem won’t be perpetuated. We feel that this is a very lame excuse and is completely unchristian. The Apostle John dealt with this type of thinking almost 2,000 years ago:

But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? (New King James Version, 1 John 3:17)

If the Lord is willing, we hope to expand our outreach to the needy. In the January 1985 issue of the *Messenger* we stated that we had stepped out in faith to provide support for five children through World Vision. We are happy to report that we have had the funds to meet this need and that we are now adding two more children to the list. We would ask our readers to pray that this work will continue to increase. Psalm 82:3 tells us that we should “Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy.”
Blood Atonement Chosen

In the last issue of the Messenger we told how Daniel and Ronald Lafferty murdered their brother’s wife and daughter by cutting their throats. We pointed out that the Laffertys had been excommunicated from the Mormon Church. They had become what is known as “Mormon fundamentalists”—i.e., believers in polygamy and other doctrines taught by the early leaders of the Church. The Laffertys seem to have been influenced by Brigham Young’s doctrine of “blood atonement”:

Will you love your brothers or sisters likewise, when they have committed a sin that cannot be atoned for without the shedding of their blood? Will you love that man or woman well enough to shed their blood? . . . I have known a great many men who left this church for whom there is no chance whatever for exaltation, but if their blood had been spilled, it would have been better for them, . . . (Deseret News, February 18, 1857)

On page 11 of the March 1985 issue of the Messenger, we pointed out that the Laffertys “could have worked hand in hand with Brigham Young as he put his blood atonement doctrine into practice. Orrin Porter Rockwell, Bill Hickman, John D. Lee and a number of other men caused a great deal of blood to flow in early Utah (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 444-450, 493-515).

In the same issue of the Messenger we printed part of a revelation in which Ronald Lafferty claimed God commanded the murder of his “brother’s wife Brenda and her baby.” We had not seen the complete revelation at that time, but it was printed in the Salt Lake Tribune on April 29, 1985. The complete text lends support to our observation that the Laffertys “could have worked hand in hand” with people like Orrin Porter Rockwell—one of Brigham Young’s “destroying angels.” The revelation states that the Lord had raised up “my servant Todd” to perform the murders and then asked this question concerning Todd: “. . . and is he not like unto my servant Porter Rockwell?”

At the time that we printed the March newsletter, only Daniel Lafferty had been convicted of the murders. On May 8, 1985, the Salt Lake Tribune reported that Ronald Lafferty was “sentenced to die for the throat slashing murders.” He chose death by a firing squad instead of lethal injection. His lawyer pointed out that his client “chose the firing squad ‘because of blood atonement.’”

Books and Videos

Sandra Tanner Video No. 1. Two lectures on Mormonism given at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Price: $30.00

Sandra Tanner Video No. 2. Interview on Mormonism with Milwaukee television station. Price: $20.00

The Tanners on Trial, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Over a hundred large pages with many photographs of original court documents. Price: $5.95

An Index to Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? by Michael Briggs. Price: $2.00


Tract Pack. An assortment of 12 tracts from other publishers. Price: $1.50

Where Does It Say That? by Bob Witte. Contains hundreds of photos from old Mormon publications. Price: $5.95

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Astronomers tell us that sometimes a star will “collapse into itself and become a black hole and, in a sense, exit the universe” (*National Geographic*, June 1983, page 717). William Unruh, a physicist at the University of British Columbia, says that, “You can’t see a black hole. Just its effects” (*Ibid.*, page 735). On page 736 of the same magazine, we read that “Since not even light can escape a black hole, one can never be seen directly.” It is explained that “black holes theoretically occur when matter collapses into an exquisitely compact state. Its gravity grows strong enough to trap everything, including light, within the horizon of its gravitational field. The earth, for instance, would become a black hole, if it could somehow be squeezed to the size of a marble . . . Medium-size black holes result from the collapse of giant stars too massive to stop at the neutron star stage. They just disappear into their dark prisons” (*Ibid.*, pages 734-735).

While we know very little about astronomy or the theories concerning black holes in space, we have observed a somewhat similar phenomenon in Mormon history. Important documents which could throw a great deal of light on Mormon history, seem to mysteriously “disappear into their dark prisons.” The suppressive tendencies of the Mormon leaders with regard to documents might be compared to the gravitational pull of black holes in space. Just as black holes sweep “up stars and gas within their gravitational reach” (*Ibid.*, page 735), the fear of new discoveries coming out which do not fit the traditional views held by the General Authorities of the Church prevents Mormon scholars from bringing important research and documents to public view.

The Secret Vault

In the last issue of the *Messenger*, we demonstrated the role that Mormon leaders have taken in suppressing important documents. For instance, in 1983, Gordon B. Hinckley, a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, secretly acquired a letter which was later declared to be the “Earliest known surviving document written by Joseph Smith, Jr. . . .” Because the document linked Joseph Smith to money-digging and magic, the church leaders decided it would be best to suppress it. Unfortunately for the church, however, copies of the letter got out, and we published a typed copy in the September 1984 issue of the *Messenger*. Instead of admitting that it had the letter, the church decided to “stonewall.” On April 29, 1985, Dawn Tracy reported the following:

Research historian Brent Metcalfe said he knows from “very reliable, first-hand sources” the letter exists, and the Mormon Church has possession of it. Church spokesman Jerry Cahill denied the claim. “The church doesn’t have the letter,” said Mr. Cahill. “It’s not in the church archives or the First Presidency’s vault.” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, April 29, 1985)

Finally, when it became clear that some Mormon scholars had photocopies of the letter and were going to turn them over to the news media, the church backed down, and Jerry Cahill admitted his earlier statement was “in error”:

The purported letter was indeed acquired by the church. For the present it is stored in the First Presidency’s archives . . . (*Salt Lake Tribune*, May 7, 1985)

The First Presidency’s archive or vault, where the 1825 letter was concealed, is undoubtedly the ultimate “black hole.” Documents which are embarrassing to the Mormon Church disappear into this bottomless abyss and are seldom heard of again. The noted Mormon scholar James B. Allen testified in his deposition that the First Presidency’s vault was “very private” (*The Tanners on Trial*, page 132).
Cowdery’s History

Astronomers claim that if a black hole “lies between a distant star and a cosmic observer, the hole will act as a lens. As light rays from the star pass near the black hole, they will be bent by its intense gravity. The bending will create a mirage, and the observer will think he is seeing two stars. Actually, he is seeing what is not there—and not seeing what is” (National Geographic, June 1983, page 736).

The suppression of important documents has created many “black holes” which have seriously distorted our view of Mormon history. One of the most important documents which the Mormon leaders have hidden is the first history of the church by Book of Mormon witness Oliver Cowdery. In a revelation to Joseph Smith, he was commanded to keep this history (see Doctrine and Covenants 21:1). We have been aware of the suppression of this document for many years. Joseph Fielding Smith, who later became the tenth President of the church, had mentioned that the church had “the records written in the hand writing of Oliver Cowdery, the first historian, or recorder of the Church” (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 2, page 201). We tried to get the Mormon leaders to make this important history available in 1961, but our request was turned down. In Mormonism, Magic and Masonry, published in 1983, we related that we had heard that the Cowdery history was in the First Presidency’s vault and that it contained magic characters. The church made no response to this accusation. Finally, on May 15, 1985, the Salt Lake Tribune reported:

A little-known history written by an important early Mormon leader contains an account of Joseph Smith’s brother Alvin finding the gold plates, rather than the Mormon prophet himself, according to a research historian . . . Brent Metcalfe . . . said his source is a private eye-witness account of the Cowdery history. The document tells of Joseph Smith’s brother Alvin first finding the gold plates by means of a stone, according to Mr. Metcalfe.

Mr. Metcalfe quoted the document as saying: “A taunting Salamander appears to Alvin and prevents him and his companions from digging up the gold plates.”

The reader will remember that just two weeks earlier Brent Metcalfe had charged that the church had the 1825 letter. While the church originally denied this accusation, it was later admitted that the letter was in the First Presidency’s vault. In the case of the Cowdery history, the church took a more cautious position:

LDS spokesman Jerry Cahill said the LDS Historical Department does not have the Cowdery history. He said he would not ask members of the church’s ruling First Presidency if the history is locked up in a special presidency’s vault. . . . “I don’t intend to respond to every report or rumor of documents in the First Presidency’s vault,” said Mr. Cahill. “I have no idea if the history is there, nor do I intend to ask. I can’t have my life ordered about by rumors. Where does it end?” (Salt Lake Tribune, May 15, 1985)

Church leaders seem to have taken a position of silence with regard to the Cowdery history. The Brigham Young University paper, The Universe, May 16, 1985, reported:

LDS Church spokesman Jerry Cahill said he would not confirm or deny the contents of the history written by Oliver Cowdery. “Apparently the story says the history is in the First Presidency’s archives but they haven’t released any information about it and I don’t believe they intend to,” he said.

In an interview with Associated Press writer Michael White, Mr. Cahill admitted that the church has possession of the Cowdery history, but he still refused to give any details:

Church spokesman Jerry Cahill said that Cowdery’s history had been in the church’s possession since around 1900 and probably is locked away in the private vault of the governing First Presidency.

But Cahill said he did not know whether it contained the information described by Metcalfe, and he would not try to find out.

“Frankly, I don’t intend to raise the question. Obviously, it’s in the possession of the church, but what shelf it is on I don’t know,” he said. (The Oregonian, May 21, 1985)

There seems to be no excuse for the Mormon leaders withholding the Cowdery history. In the last issue of the Messenger we argued that in not making the Cowdery history available . . . the Mormon Church finds itself in a cover-up situation. According to the Doctrine and Covenants, God Himself instructed Joseph Smith that “there shall be a record kept among you; . . .” it hardly makes any sense for the Mormon leaders to say that God commanded the history to be kept and then lock it up in a vault so that no one can read it. We have always suspected that this history provides no support for Joseph Smith’s First Vision of 1820, and it has recently been reported that it does not support the restoration of the Melchizedek priesthood by Peter, James and John . . .
The “Salamandergate” cover-up even has its own “Deep Throat”—that mysterious and unidentified person who had access to Nixon’s secrets and leaked them to the press. Only a very limited number of people could have had access to the material in the vault of the First Presidency. It is reported that Brent Metcalfe will not name his source for fear that he will get the individual into trouble with the Church.

An Eyewitness

Writing in the Los Angeles Times, June 13, 1985, John Dart reported that the individual who had seen the Cowdery history allowed himself to be interviewed:

Now an allegation is being made that the church possesses a 150-year-old handwritten history that claims that it was the church prophet’s older brother, Alvin, who actually found the golden plates. . . .

Church officials here have been vague in their response to questions about whether they have the history, . . . A highly reliable source told the Times in an interview here, however, that he has viewed it in the church’s headquarters.

The source, who insisted on anonymity in order to preserve his standing in the church, said the Cowdery history and the role it gives Alvin Smith lend further credibility to the documents disclosed earlier, which portray Joseph Smith’s involvement in occult methods to find hidden treasures without any references to religious events so familiar to present-day Mormons. . . .

Church Spokesman Jerry Cahill acknowledged that Joseph Fielding Smith, a church apostle who was church president from 1970 to 1972, wrote 60 years ago, “We have on file in the Historian’s Office the records written in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery, the first historian or recorder of the Church.”

Cahill said, “I presume (they are) in the possession of the First Presidency” because they are not in the history department archives. He added that he would not ask the First Presidency if it has the purported history, saying he does not want to bother that office with questions about rumored or reported documents. A First Presidency staff member had no comment. . . .

The source interviewed by the Times described the Cowdery history as a book bound partly in leather, with marbled cardboard covers measuring about 8 inches by 10 inches in width and height and between half an inch and three-quarters of an inch thick. The pages are lined, he said.

The source said he decided to be interviewed about the history because the Cowdery documents provide corroboration for the salamander references in the Harris letter, which some Mormons are claiming is a forgery.

“I don’t remember the exact wording, but it said that Alvin located the buried gold with his seer stone,” he said. “I remember clearly that it was not a private venture. Alvin had other people with him, including Joseph.”

“There was no mention of a dream beforehand,” he said. The salamander appeared on three occasions, once to Alvin and twice to Joseph,” he added. . . .

. . . the church leadership’s unwillingness to speak further on the issue is being viewed by some as harmful to its public relations. “The church’s silence damages its credibility,” said George Smith . . . owner of the Mormon-oriented Signature Books publishing house.

Indeed, the church got caught with a credibility problem earlier, when it tried to deny that the earliest known letter written by Joseph Smith was in its possession.

“Conspiracy may be a bad word to use,” said the source who claims to have seen the Cowdery book, “but there must have been some sort of agreement that Joseph is the new seer now that Alvin is gone. Certainly the family and Oliver Cowdery knew. I can’t imagine that any more knew, because it’s an important aspect of the founding of the Church and it hasn’t come down in other histories that we know of.” . . . Mormon historian Ronald Walker of Salt Lake City said in an Interview, “If we found out that Alvin is involved, it would not be surprising. There is evidence that (Smith family members) were up on Hill Cumorah digging before 1823.”

Walker has shown that the Smith family was among many Americans who had engaged in a “money-digging” craze during the early 19th Century. “I’m not sure the pieces fit together,” Walker said. “What we need is to get the church to release it, if the church has it.” (Los Angeles Times, June 13, 1985)

As far as we know, Brent Metcalfe and John Dart are the only ones who know who the individual is who saw the Cowdery history. Dart’s article makes it clear that we are dealing with a man, and The Universe for May 16, 1985, informs us that he is one of Brent Metcalfe’s friends. The Universe reports that while Metcalfe was “going through several private collections, he found a firsthand account of someone who had seen this history written by Oliver Cowdery. A friend of Metcalfe, who had access to the church archives, wrote the account, Metcalfe said. He refused to release information about his friend or how the documents came into his friend’s hands.”

A number of Mr. Metcalfe’s friends have had special access to Church documents. For instance, both Dean Jessee and Ronald Walker worked for the Historical Department at one time. Dean Jessee, however, has
publicly denied that he has seen the Cowdery history. According to the *Phoenix Gazette*, May 18, 1985, Jessee said:

... he was unaware of any writings that would indicate that Alvin Smith saw the golden plates, although he said he has not read the Cowdery history. He said he had been under the impression Cowdery’s work had been lost... “Metcalfe’s the world’s foremost authority on this,” Jessee said. “... there’s a lot that’s not available.”

We understand that Ronald Walker has also denied being the “Deep Throat” who exposed the Cowdery history. Brent Metcalfe was at one time a security guard for the Mormon Church and had a number of friends in the Church Office Building. Besides these contacts, it is reported that Metcalfe is well acquainted with Mark Hofmann. Hofmann, of course, was involved in the sale of the Salamander letter as well as the 1825 letter that links Joseph Smith to the occult. There is evidence that Mark Hofmann has had special access to the First Presidency’s vault. (As we pointed out earlier, only the most trusted individuals can see documents from that vault.) On September 28, 1982, the *Seventh East Press* reported that since the discovery of the Anthon transcript, Hofmann has “enjoyed privileged access to otherwise restricted Church archive material, including the First Presidency’s vault. One reason for this privileged access, Hofmann thinks, is the fact that ‘I am not a historian. I’m not going to write an expose of Mormonism.’” Through his discoveries and knowledge of documents, Mr. Hofmann has worked himself into the innermost circle of Mormon historians. He says that “The real reward in the whole business is being able to see things that no one else knows about. It gives me a kick to know that this is original stuff, that no one else on earth has pieced this together or knows what this says. So there’s the pleasure. It’s like being a detective.” (*Sunstone Review*, September 1982, page 17)

Since there are a number of people Mr. Metcalfe has had contact with who could be the source of the information concerning the Cowdery history, we are very reluctant about trying to make a positive identification of the individual. In any case, Metcalfe has revealed that the Cowdery history was actually dictated by Joseph Smith himself. This makes the document of even greater value for those who want to know the truth about Mormonism. It is reported that there is a letter containing information on the contents of the Cowdery history. In addition, it is claimed that there is also a smaller history by Cowdery which is stored in the church’s vault. The most sensational story, however, is that there may be a microfilm of the entire Cowdery history which has escaped the “black hole” of the First Presidency’s vault. If a microfilm does exist and a copy should arrive at Utah Lighthouse Ministry, we would waste no time in preparing it for publication.

**Not Real Motive**

The following is a copy of a letter written to us by George Smith on June 20, 1985:

To the Editors:

In your “Salamandergate” issue (No. 57, June 1985), you incorrectly attributed my motives for presenting Joseph Smith’s 1825 letter to Josiah Stowell before the Mormon History Association. Neither was I “very disturbed about the Church denying that it had possession of the letter” (p. 20), nor would such concern have seemed a pertinent reason to read this letter publicly. While I cannot endorse inaccurate denials of owning documents held in trust for the LDS membership at large, examination of this letter was important primarily for analytical reasons. The 1825 portrayal of Joseph Smith’s occult digging formulas in his own handwriting has singular relevance for Martin Harris’s 1830 “white salamander” letter, the main subject of discussion. The 1825 letter tends to validate Joseph Smith’s voice in Harris’s recital of Joseph’s “salamander” version of finding the gold plates. The letters together establish the use of seer stones, divining rods, and magical formulas to discern the presence of “clever spirits,” hidden treasure, and even the gold plates from which Joseph Smith claimed to translate the Book of Mormon. The 1825 letter is germane in demonstrating that occult practices were concurrent with Mormon origins.

Your article correctly noted that the LDS Church had acquired this earliest Joseph Smith holograph in 1983, following its authentication by Charles Hamilton Autographs, Inc., of New York. After two years of ownership, the last denial was printed in the *Salt Lake Tribune* on April 29, 1985. On May 2, the full text was read before the MHA. The following day, President Gordon B. Hinckley directed LDS spokesperson Jerry P. Cahill to acknowledge Church possession of the letter (*Tribune* 5/6/85), which he did in the May 5 *Deseret News*. The Church then released the text in the May 10 *Deseret News*, and on May 11, the *Los Angeles Times* published a photograph of the handwritten letter.

The yet-to-be-released “First Mormon History,” dictated by Joseph Smith to Oliver Cowdery in 1830, further corroborates Joseph’s “salamander” version of the gold plates story, once used to describe Mormon origins.

George Smith
Fake Documents & The Harris Letter

By Jerald Tanner

In the *Messenger* for June 1985, we reported that we had learned that someone had “been making up material and attributing it to Joseph Smith. Since such an individual has the ability to create the text of a document like the Salamander letter, we are making a very serious investigation into this matter. We hope to have more to report at this time in the next issue of the *Messenger.*”

(As George Smith’s letter pointed out, the Salamander letter was supposed to have been written by Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris in 1830. This letter is very controversial because it links Joseph Smith to the occult.)

The following is a report on the investigation I conducted. On October 6, 1984, a man by the name of Kerry Ross Boren wrote a letter to Dean Jessee, a noted Mormon scholar who was making a critical examination of the Harris letter to determine whether it was authentic. In this letter, Mr. Boren offered important new information which could help Professor Jessee verify the Salamander letter:

I am an inmate at Utah State Prison, . . . My purpose in contacting you at the present time is due to the recent publicity pertaining to the letter of Martin Harris . . . Joseph Smith was my second great grandfather and I have access to, and have had the privilege of, examining some papers and personal effects of Joseph Smith which have never before been seen or published . . . . One of the important things that the information clarifies are the facts behind the Martin Harris letter . . . . I have an expanded version of the “white salamander” story from Joseph’s own account.

If we can trust copies of letters provided by Mr. Boren (they have every appearance of being authentic), Dean Jessee visited him at the prison and also sent him eight different letters. By January 9, 1985, Mr. Jessee seemed to be rather enthusiastic about the matter:

In reading over the material you have sent I see its importance more than ever for a proper understanding of the Harris letter . . . the most harmful thing we can do right now is to remain silent if there is information available that will put Joseph Smith in a better light. . . . there will be all kinds of questions asked, and much criticism brought against the Church. The best ammunition for facing this issue comes from the material you have presented. (Letter dated January 9, 1985)

Even though Dean Jessee seemed to be impressed with the copies of the documents Mr. Boren provided, he did note that “some of the phrasing and usage of words is foreign to Joseph Smith’s literary style. There are also a few contradictions of fact. . . . Being able to see the actual handwriting of the documents would possibly provide answers to these questions” (Ibid.). Mr. Boren only provided his own handwritten copies of the material, and when Jessee asked for xerox copies, Boren replied that he could not “gain access to the original materials until such time as I am released from this place, and therefore can only provide copies of the information . . .” (Letter dated March 17, 1985). The correspondence between Jessee and Boren apparently ended with this letter.

On May 23, 1985, Mr. Boren wrote us a letter in which he made some incredible claims. He related that he had had access to “some of the papyri, translations of portions of the plates, letters, personal history, genealogy, etc.” While I had serious doubts about these claims, I was very interested in any material relating to the forgery of Mormon documents. At that time I was unaware that Mr. Boren claimed to have material similar to the Salamander letter. In any case, I provided a researcher with the information I had about Kerry Ross Boren, and he was able to obtain copies of documents Boren had previously given to Dean Jessee.

One of the documents which Boren provided was his handwritten copy of an account of Joseph Smith’s early visions, which was supposed to have been authored by Smith himself! The account of the First Vision in this document is similar to Joseph Smith’s “Strange Account” of the First Vision (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 145-146). It goes on, however, to say that the Lord revealed “a curious stone” to Joseph Smith which he was to use to find the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. The Lord also told him that when he arrived at the place where the records were buried he would be given “a sign” of a “lowly frog but not just a frog but a white frog . . .” On the appointed day, Joseph Smith went to the hill and “saw a frog of the purest white I had ever seen proceed forth out of a hole in the ground at the bottom of a large stone . . .” Joseph removed the stone and saw “a large room or cavern” which contained “plates of gold” and other “ancient items of curious workmanship . . .” Before he could go into the cavern, however, Joseph “again saw the large white frog and immediately above it in the air a shaft of brilliant light descending [and] an angel appeared in the midst . . . and then said unto me behold my name is Nephi . . .”

Mr. Boren also provided a copy of a letter which was supposed to have been written by Joseph Smith to Isaac Morley in 1835. In this letter Joseph Smith detailed
some of his early money-digging experiences. In another manuscript which is eight pages long, Mr. Boren gives a summary of a document written by Joseph Smith. This is also filled with material concerning Joseph Smith and money-digging.

Mr. Boren provided other documents and a list of 52 different items he has had access to. He claims that he has seen the “Mummy” of Pharaoh Necho, three rolls of papyrus, thirteen separate pieces of papyri, a revelation on polygamy that is “more lengthy and detailed” than the one published by the church, a large stack of “correspondence between early Church figures, including many by and to the Prophet,” a translation of the lost “Book of Lehi” and other lost books, a translation of the Book of Abraham which contains “much not found in the present published version,” and what appears to be original manuscripts of “Newton and also da Vinci.”

Although I was only able to examine copies of a small portion of this purported collection, it did not take me long to conclude that it was spurious. I could plainly see how material was plagiarized from different portions of published material and combined to give some very unique interpretations. Michael Marquardt also examined the purported documents and reached the same conclusion.

In all fairness to Mr. Boren, I should say that I do not know for certain that he made up the documents. He claims that Joseph Smith gave the documents to his “third great-grandfather, Isaac Morley,” for safekeeping and that they have passed down to one of his relatives who has them stored in the basement of a house in California. Although it seems very unlikely, Mr. Boren could have made his copies from material in someone else’s possession. In any case, there is not the slightest chance that the documents could be genuine. They bear all the earmarks of fabrication.

On June 18, 1985, I had a personal interview with Kerry Ross Boren at the Utah State Prison. While much of his story is very difficult to believe, some of his statements seem to have some basis in fact. One of his claims is that he was a ghost writer for the historical part of Robert Redford’s book, The Outlaw Trail, which was published in 1979. While it does not prove his assertion, I found him mentioned at least fifteen times in Redford’s book. In the Forward, Robert Redford gives “special thanks” to “Kerry Boren,” and on page 24 he refers to “Kerry Boren, our historian.” I have found that Mr. Boren has coauthored a book entitled, Footprints in the Wilderness: A History of The Lost Rhoades Mines, and has also written a number of articles for magazines. On page 173 of her book, Butch Cassidy My Brother, Lulu Parker Bentenson refers to “Kerry Ross Boren, a recognized authority on outlaw history, National Center for Outlaw and Lawman History, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.” While some historians do not have much respect for Mr. Boren’s work, it must be conceded that he has a great deal of ability as a writer.

**Proves Letter?**

Mr. Boren’s contention that the material he has copied helps clarify “the facts behind the Martin Harris letter” must be completely rejected. As I have already pointed out, the material Boren has presented bears unmistakable evidence of falsification. Furthermore, he has not produced any real evidence that the original manuscripts even exist.

While Kerry Ross Boren sets his material forward with the claim that it supports the Salamander letter, it could raise the question of whether Boren himself had the ability to produce such a document. In his letter of January 9, 1985, Dean Jessee mentioned an important similarity between the Salamander letter and Boren’s material:

> . . . the reference to Harris’s having a dream and waking with a coin in his hand, and upon seeing the cavern, throwing the coin back (which is also mentioned in the Harris letter), is very important right now for my work on the Harris letter.

The reference which Professor Jessee speaks of reads as follows in the Harris letter:

> I later dream I converse with spirits which let me count their money when I awake I have in my hand a dollar coin which I take for a sign Joseph describes what I seen in every particular says he the spirits are grieving so I through back the dollar.

This statement in the Salamander letter seems incomplete. It does not tell where Harris threw the coin back to. It would be very difficult to throw the coin back into the dream or into the spirit world. Mr. Boren’s material seems to provide a logical answer to this question. In Boren’s summary (“not a verbatim account”) of a manuscript written by Joseph Smith, we find the following:

Martin Harris and Joseph Knight, Sr. came down from Manchester together soon after the treasure was discovered. Harris had had a dream about the Treasure and had awakened with a silver coin in his hand. Taking this to be a sign, he went forthwith to Colesville . . . . Harris had expressed to Knight that he thought Joseph Smith was a fake, and had stolen the treasure from them . . . . but when they confronted Joseph, he related Harris’ dream in detail without being prompted.

Harris would not be content until he had seen the Treasure for himself, to be content that Joseph had not removed any of it. After much persuasion, Joseph agreed to take Harris as far as the place where the buckets of silver coins were located . . . . Upon seeing the piece, Harris was content and tossed his coin back.
The parallels between the two accounts are too strong to be ignored. If it could be established that Boren’s material was in existence before the Salamander letter was discovered in late 1983, it would seem to show that it (the Salamander letter) is a forgery—i.e., a condensed version of the material Boren provided us with. The other explanation, of course, is that the Salamander letter provided structural material for someone with a vivid imagination. In this case, it would not reflect on the Harris letter. Mr. Boren insists that his material is genuine and predates the discovery of the Salamander letter.

While I have not yet found any compelling evidence that Mr. Boren’s material predates the discovery of the Salamander letter, there are some stories in a book he coauthored with Gale R. Rhoades which sound like the account of Harris throwing the coin back. According to Boren and Rhoades, Joe Walker told of going into a sacred mine with Butch Cassidy. He claimed he found a rock that “shined like almost solid gold.” Cassidy, however, “told me anyone who took any part of that gold would have the curse of God placed upon him . . .

“I slipped a small piece of that gold in my pocket but when we stepped outside, Butch drew his gun and told me to put it back. . . . I went back and put that piece of rock—about the size of my hand—on top of one of those leather bags, . . .” (Footprints in the Wilderness: A History of The Lost Rhoades Mines, page 355).

The account of Cassidy chastising Walker for taking the sacred gold sounds similar to Joseph Smith rebuking Harris in the Salamander letter for taking the spirits’ coin. On page 378 of the same book, we read of a man named Joseph R. Sharp who went to the mine and tried to remove the gold. As he “prepared to climb from the mine,” he was met by two Indians—apparently “apparitions delegated to watch over the sacred Ute gold.” One of them “spoke with a voice of authority; calm, yet loud and in perfect English, saying: ‘Put the gold back, Leave here and never return or you will surely die.’

“As quickly as the Indians had appeared, they disappeared, and with no apparent means of departure; vanished, as it were, into thin air! Mr. Sharp was taken aback by this weird display and he tossed the gold back into the mine. . . .” (Footprints in the Wilderness, page 378).

The reader will notice that Mr. Sharp “tossed the gold back into the mine.” In the Salamander letter, Martin Harris throws “back the dollar.” While my copy of the book was not printed until 1984, I have located a copy printed in 1980 which contains the same stories. This would be at least three years before the Salamander letter was discovered.

In the March 1984 issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger, we pointed out that the Salamander letter contains some striking parallels to Mormonism Unvailed (published in 1834) and a manuscript written by Joseph Knight (first published in BYU Studies, Autumn 1976). When I examined the Boren manuscript, which contains the report concerning Martin Harris’s dream, I found parallels to both of these publications. Furthermore, in a note to Dean Jessee, Mr. Boren specifically mentioned the “Willard Chase affidavit” which was published in Mormonism Unvailed and contains important parallels to the Salamander letter. The parallels between Boren’s manuscript and the Joseph Knight account are so strong that they cannot be explained away as mere coincidence. Some of the parallels are even to footnotes which Dean Jessee has provided to go along with Joseph Knight’s account. One of the more interesting parallels (which is also similar to the Salamander letter) is found on pages 5 and 6 of Boren’s manuscript:

. . . the angel instructed him that he could remove the plates one year from that date, if he would obey certain commandments and follow certain instructions. He would be required to bring someone with him. Someone who would be able to remove the plates.

When Joseph inquired as to whom that person would be, the angel told him only to look to the stone for instruction. Upon doing so, he saw Emma Hale, . . .

The reader will notice how similar this is to Joseph Knight’s account:

. . . and the personage appeared and told him he Could not have it now. But the 22nd Day of September next he mite have the Book if he Brot with him the right person. Joseph says, “who is the right Person?” The answer was you will know. Then he looked in his glass and found it was Emma Hale, . . . (Brigham Young University Studies, Autumn 1976, page 31)

Perhaps it is only a strange coincidence that both the Salamander letter and the Boren material have parallels to Joseph Knight’s account and Mormonism Unvailed, but the parallels do raise the question as to whether Mr. Boren or someone who has seen his material could have written the Salamander letter.

Although physical tests which have been made on the Salamander letter seem to show that it is authentic, Lyn Jacobs has stubbornly refused to tell where he obtained
it. The Deseret News, April 28, 1985, said that “The letter was purchased in late 1983 by Jacobs and Mark Hofmann . . .” The crime which Kerry Ross Boren was sent to prison for was apparently committed in August 1983. It would appear, then, that if he had anything to do with the Salamander letter, it would have been before he was jailed in August, 1983. Mr. Boren maintains that he has not had any contact with either Lyn Jacobs or Mark Hofmann. I have no way of knowing whether this statement is true.

The tests which have been performed on the Salamander letter indicate that if it is a forgery, no ordinary person could have produced it. It would have to be the work of a very skilled forger. Only a person familiar with old documents, chemistry and the process of document authentication could prepare a letter that would have a chance of passing the tests the Salamander letter was submitted to. As far as I know, Mr. Boren has never been charged with forgery, and he has not offered to sell me any documents. Boren claims that he is “not an expert in document authentication.” He maintains, however, that “as a genealogist and researcher I have spent most of my life working with such items and am fully capable of recognizing them as being of the period and scope in question.” (Letter dated June 15, 1985) Mr. Boren was obviously at home with old letters and journals. In his manuscript “The High Uintahs,” he spoke of the “Kerry Ross Boren Collection” of documents. The letters in this collection went back to the 1830s. I have been told that Boren even had original Jesse James material. A photograph of a portion of an important letter he discovered relating to Butch Cassidy was published in the Westerner, May-June 1973. One thing that is a little suspicious about the letter is that Boren chose to suppress the names of both the writer and the recipient (see pages 41 and 62).

It is interesting to note that like Joseph Smith, Mr. Boren has spent some time searching for treasures. In the book Footprints in the Wilderness, page 399, we “find a picture of Boren which has labeled: “Author Kerry Ross Boren with metal detector in search of Uintah Mountain treasure.” On pages 415-416 of the same book, Boren and Rhoades wrote:

... the Lost Rhoades Mines; those fabulous and fantastic... veins of pure and enticing gold still exist... Their various estimates range from “enough gold to pay off the national debt” to “enough gold to pave the streets of New York City”. . . .

Should any of our readers someday endeavor an expedition into the Uintahs in a quest for this gold, the authors would wish you the best of luck . . . Who knows? Maybe we’ll see you in the mountains.

Like the Salamander letter, the book by Boren and Rhoades also contains accounts of the treasure being guarded by “the spirits,” and on pages 367-371 we read of “the spirit” who was directing a clairvoyant who was searching for a lost gold mine.

One thing that should be of great concern to scholars is the fact that there seems to be an attempt in the Boren material to duplicate the spelling errors of Joseph Smith. This, of course, shows that there has been a very serious study of the writings of Joseph Smith with intent to deceive. Whether the author of the Boren materials has actually taken the final step and prepared documents which have the appearance of dating back to Joseph Smith’s time is not known. As Mormon documents increase in value, the possibility of forgery will also increase. I have recently learned that another man in Southern Utah has been forging documents relating to the Smith family. The forgeries were so good that they have passed into archival collections.

In my investigation I have been seriously handicapped by secrecy. Mr. Boren maintains that the basement of a house in California contains the original documents from which he made his copies. He claims, however, that he cannot release the location of this house. When I turn to the Salamander letter, I find the same problem. Lyn Jacobs refuses to tell me where he obtained it.

If I had investigative power like the FBI or could subpoena documents, it probably wouldn’t take me long to learn the answer to the question I have concerning Mr. Boren’s relationship to the Salamander letter. If, for instance, I could force Lyn Jacobs or Mark Hofmann to reveal where the Salamander letter was obtained, I might be able to learn if it was really in existence prior to the time Mr. Boren came on the scene. Furthermore, I could compel Mr. Boren to reveal the location of the “original” documents (if any such documents exist) as well as the material he has stored at the prison and material in the possession of his friends. His papers would probably prove very helpful in determining the truth about his claims.

Since I have no power to gain access to the documents and information I need most, I am unable to provide a conclusive answer regarding Mr. Boren’s relationship to the Salamander letter. Perhaps some of those reading this paper can provide help. If anyone has any pertinent information on the Salamander letter, Kerry Ross Boren, Lyn Jacobs or Mark Hofmann, it would really be appreciated.

The information I have used in this article is only a summary of a 10-page report I have written on Mr. Boren and his documents. The entire report is published under the title, Mr. Boren and the White Salamander.
More Discoveries!

In his book, *Nightfall At Nauvoo*, the Mormon writer Samuel W. Taylor commented that “the Salt Lake City Messenger, contains some of the liveliest reading ever to emerge from the city of the Saints.” In the Messenger we have tried very hard to provide information that is both accurate and up-to-date. Fortunately, we have had some very good sources and have been able to break some important stories. For instance, in March 1983 we reprinted a money-digging agreement which Joseph Smith and his father entered into with seven other men and stated that we had heard that “a Mormon researcher had discovered the original handwritten copy” of the document. We commented that the details of the discovery would “probably be announced soon.”

One year later, March 1984, we still had nothing further to report on the money-digging agreement, but we did announce the discovery of the Salamander letter and printed important extracts from it. In the September 1984 issue of the Messenger, we revealed that the Mormon Church had bought a letter which linked Joseph Smith to magic. We said that the letter was dated June 18, 1825, and bore the signature “Joseph Smith, Jun.” We printed a typed copy of the letter in that issue of the Messenger.

As the months passed, we realized that we had announced the discovery of three very important documents, but had no way to absolutely confirm their contents. In fact, we had no way to prove that the money-digging agreement and the 1825 letter even existed. Although we had complete confidence in our sources, we began to wonder if some of our readers might feel that we were listening to too many rumors. Nevertheless, on October 24, 1984, we went even a step further and reported that there was a possibility that William E. McLellin’s copy of Joseph Smith’s revelation to sell the copyright of the Book of Mormon to someone in Canada had been found (see *The Money-Digging Letters*, pages 21-22). (This revelation completely failed and caused Joseph Smith a great deal of embarrassment.) Finally, in the January 1985 issue of the Messenger we wrote that “it has recently been reported that Mark Hofmann has obtained the original Egyptian Papyrus which Joseph Smith used as Fac. No. 2 in the Book of Abraham.”

Since publishing the January 1985 issue of the Messenger, many things have come to light which tend to vindicate our statements concerning these documents. In the June 1985 issue of the Messenger, we were able to print photocopies of both the Salamander letter and the 1825 letter. Although the money-digging agreement has still not been released, the Mormon scholar Ronald W. Walker wrote concerning the “agreement” and said that “A facsimile of the original document has recently been obtained by Salt Lake businessman, Steven Christensen.” (“American Treasure Digging: A Persisting Idea,” unpublished paper, footnote 124)

McLellin Collection

On July 6, 1985, our statement concerning the discovery of the original of Facsimile No. 2 was verified in an article written by Dawn Tracy:

One of the most famous relics in Mormondom—considered by the faithful to be sacred scripture—has been located and sold in Texas. But the manuscript’s location and name of the buyer are secret, according to a collector who discovered the relic and other significant documents.

The relic, called Facsimile No. 2, is part of a collection containing papyrus fragments that members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believe church founder Joseph Smith translated into the Book of Abraham. . . .

Mark Hoffman, a Salt Lake seller of historical autographs and manuscripts, said he located a collection—including Facsimile No. 2—that at one time belonged to William McLellin, an early Mormon apostle. . . .

Mr. Hoffman said other items in the latest find are diaries of William McLellin, including “day-to-day and weekly activities, and papers, letters and affidavits written around the 1830’s.”

“The collection is of considerable historical value in regards to the early [Mormon] church,” he said. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, July 6, 1985)

We had been aware of the possibility of more of the Joseph Smith Papyri coming to light since 1971. In the May 1971 issue of the Messenger, we quoted from a letter which related that Dr. Hugh Nibley had told someone that “there was more papyri found and that it was discovered in Texas. . . . Mention was made by Nibley that Facsimile No. 2 was among the papyri.” Research by Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters led us to believe that the papyri might be in the possession of a Mr. Markham, the owner of Markham’s Trading Post in Cleveland, Texas. Dawn Tracy contacted Mr. Markham’s children, and although she learned that Mark Hofmann had been in contact with their father, they claimed no knowledge of the McLellin documents. If Mark Hofmann did not obtain the McLellin collection from Mr. Markham, it is very likely that he found them in that area of Texas. It appears that J. L. Traughber, who had McLellin’s diaries at the turn of the century, lived in Tyler County, which is not very far from Cleveland, Texas. In a letter written
from Mobile, Tyler County, Texas, on July 11, 1901, Mr. Traughber commented:

I have some little manuscript books written by Dr. W. E. McLellin. I also have his journal for parts of the years 1831-2-3-4-5-6. I have over thirty letters compactly written by Dr. McLellin containing much on the subject of Mormonism. (Handwritten copy made by Michael Marquardt)

The reader will remember that Dawn Tracy said that Mark Hofmann had obtained the “diaries of William McLellin.” These diaries must have been the same ones Mr. Traughber had in his possession in 1901. We have learned also that Mark Hofmann did obtain a copy of the revelation to sell the copyright of the Book of Mormon as part of the McLellin collection. In The Money-Digging Letters, page 22, we told of a letter in which McLellin said he had made a copy of this revelation. The following is taken from a typed copy of this letter in Michael Marquardt’s possession:

But again, Joseph had a revelation for Oliver and friends to go to Canada to get a copy-right secured in that Dominion to the Book of Mormon, it proved so false that he never would have it recorded, printed or published. I have seen and mad (sic) a copy of it, so that I know it existed. (Letter from William McLellin to Joseph Smith III, dated July 1872)

Dawn Tracy reported that Hofmann also obtained “papers, letters and affidavits written around the 1830’s.” We understand that these affidavits and/or statements were given by John and David Whitmer, Martin Harris, Emma Smith and Elizabeth Cowdery. In his letter to Joseph Smith III, McLellin claimed what Joseph Smith did not use the Urim and Thummin in translating the Book of Mormon “but translated the entire Book of M. by means of a small stone. I have certificates to that effect from E. A. Cowdery (Oliver’s widow,) Martin Harris, and Emma Bidamon. And I have the testimony of John and David Whitmer” (Ibid., page 5). Martin Harris’s affidavit could throw important light on the Salamander letter.

The McLellin collection is also supposed to have letters between McLellin and Book of Mormon witness David Whitmer, as well as other letters, documents and four fragments from the Joseph Smith Papyri.

While Mr. Hofmann’s statement that he had acquired the McLellin collection did not appear in print until July 6, 1985, he probably discovered it over three years ago. In an interview published in Sunstone Review, September 1982, Hofmann commented: “I can tell you about some of the things I have sold this last year since the Joseph Smith III blessing. One of my favorites is the 1831 journal of William E. McLellin.” Seventh East Press for September 28, 1982, reported:

. . . Hofmann has bought and sold many other important historical documents that have not come to the media’s attention. . . . Hofmann did not make copies of any of these historically significant documents for Church historians because, in his words, “of course, that would make the document less valuable.” Speaking specifically of the McLellin journal, Hofmann remarked that he was sorry that historians will not soon have the chance to study the journal, but “I am not in the business for historians: I am in it to make a living.”

At the time we read about the 1831 journal we were not aware that this was only part of a large collection. Consequently, we were not too disturbed about the fact that it was being suppressed.

Just before we published the January 1985 issue of the Messenger, an anonymous source informed us that Mr. Hofmann had said that he was selling the original of Fac. No. 2 to the Mormon Church and that it would never be seen again. According to Dawn Tracy, however, “Jerry Cahill stated the church does not own or possess the collection,” and “Brent Metcalfe said . . . evidence suggests the documents are owned by a private individual.” No one seems to know who this “individual” is or where the collection is now located. When the church was still suppressing Joseph Smith’s 1825 letter, George Smith stated that it was his understanding that President Gordon B. Hinckley “purchased the letter in 1983 in his own name from collector Mark Hofmann . . .” We have no additional information to support this accusation, but if President Hinckley bought the letter in his own name, the church leaders could say that the church did not own it. According to the Church Section of the Deseret News, June 30, 1985, “President Hinckley said he acquired” the letter “for the Church.”

In any case, it is not known if the individual who holds the McLellin collection is trying to suppress it for the Mormon Church. Dawn Tracy reported that “Mr. Hofmann said terms of the sale agreement stipulate he is not to divulge the name of the buyer nor the amount of the sale.” In the June 1985 issue of the Messenger, page 9, we quoted Mark Hofmann’s admission that if the church wanted him to, he was willing to help suppress knowledge of the Joseph Smith III Blessing document and “not breathe a word of its existence to anyone . . .” That Mr. Hofmann would even think of allowing such an important document to go into a “black hole” forever is deplorable, to say the least. We hope that the individual who has the McLellin collection will not continue to suppress it.

Archivists who are concerned with authenticating old documents are anxious to learn their provenance, i.e., their origin and how they came into the hands of their present owners. In the case of the Salamander letter, Hofmann and Jacobs refused to provide any information
that would help scholars find out if it has a pedigree which can be traced back to the time it was supposed to have been written. With the McLellin collection, however, we find ourselves in a far better position. We know that J. L. Traughber had McLellin’s journals in 1901, and it may be possible to trace where they went from there. As we have shown, McLellin himself mentions some of the other documents. So far we have not found anything concerning McLellin having the original of Fac. No. 2. Although it has been alleged that McLellin may have stolen it from Joseph Smith in 1838, there is evidence that Smith still had it 1842. In any case, if the original should ever become available, we do have two different drawings to compare it with. In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 335-336, we demonstrated that the circular object found in Fac. No. 2 of the Book of Abraham is in reality a magic disk or hypocephalus which Egyptians placed under the head of a mummy. We have presented good evidence to show that it was damaged when Joseph Smith obtained it and that his reconstruction has been falsified. We believe that the release of the original disc would vindicate our criticism of Fac. No. 2.

Smith’s 1826 Trial

At our request Wesley P. Walters has prepared the following:

1826 TRIAL RECORD RECOVERED

W. P. Walters

On March 20, 1826, four years before he published the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith, Jr. was hauled before the local court in Bainbridge, New York. He was accused of being “a disorderly person and an imposter” because of his claim to locate buried treasure through his peep-stone. The record of that trial, torn from the justice’s docket book and taken to Utah in 1870 by his niece, was published in three independent printings and then the original record disappeared. Consequently, Mormon writers like Francis Kirkham and Dr. Hugh Nibley questioned the authenticity of both the trial and the published record of it.

In 1971 this writer and his associate Fred Poffarl came across the bills which Justice Neely and Constable De Zeng had submitted to the county for this 1826 arrest and trial of Joseph Smith. Justice Neely’s bill listed the case as The People verses “Joseph Smith The Glass looker.” The date and the court costs were the same as that on the printed trial record, the costs totaling $2.68 in both instances. Accordingly, Mormon writers like Donna Hill and Dr. Leonard Arrington came to accept the trial as authentic. However, the original docket record still remained missing.

Recently reliable sources in the Salt Lake area have reported that Mormon document dealer Mark Hofmann of Salt Lake City has acquired this missing record. Several years ago we learned that the last person to have the trial record was Rev. Samuel Johnson Carroll. Rev. Mr. Carroll was the editor of the Methodist periodical, the Utah Christian Advocate and he published the record there. After considerable research we succeeded in tracking down the grandchildren of Mr. Carroll. One granddaughter, Miss Eleanor Carroll of Alamos, Sorora, Mexico, reported that her grandfather’s scrapbook was in storage with some family items in Sedona, Arizona. Lacking funds to bring Miss Carroll back to Arizona to retrieve the scrapbook, we shared this information privately with Mr. Hofmann. According to our sources, Mr. Hofmann followed up on this information, brought Miss Carroll to Arizona and purchased the scrapbook, which did contain the original trial record. A current letter, dated May 29, 1985, from Miss Carroll confirms that the scrapbook was indeed removed from storage and is no longer in her possession. It is not presently known if Mr. Hofmann has sold the document or if he still has it in his possession.

According to the agreement made when the information about the potential location of the document was shared with Mr. Hofmann, he was to supply us with photocopies of the document should the information prove correct. To date there has not been such reciprocation.

About the time this information was shared with Mr. Hofmann, he shared with us the news that he had located the original money-digging agreement of November 1825. This agreement spelled out the shares which Joseph Smith, his father and other members of the money-digging company were to receive if their treasure digging activities proved successful. It was Joseph’s involvement in that business agreement that led to his 1826 trial. According to Mr. Hofmann, it was the plan of Mr. Steven Christensen (who had purchased the 1830 Martin Harris letter telling of Joseph’s money digging activities) to publish the Harris letter along with the 1825 letter of Joseph’s to Josiah Stowell (telling of treasure-guarding spirits), as well as a photo of the 1825 agreement. That work did not materialize and the November agreement remains unpublished.

It is hoped that these valuable historical documents will soon be made public, especially because of the current interest in Joseph Smith’s early activities in magic and money-digging. * * * * *

The reader will notice that Wesley Walters tells of receiving a letter from Eleanor Carroll. In this letter Miss Carroll says nothing about Mark Hofmann, but
only indicates that the scrapbook has been “lost.” If Mr. Hofmann did purchase the scrapbook from her, it is possible that there was a nondisclosure clause written into the sales agreement. If such is the case, she would not be able to reveal where it went to. We really do not know what the truth is about this matter, but we hope that if the record does exist, it will not remain another “black hole” in Mormon history.

Walter’s statement about Steven Christensen having a photocopy of the 1825 money-digging agreement is verified in another article in this issue of the Messenger.

**IRS’s Final Ruling**

On March 30, 1983, the IRS ruled that we were “exempt from Federal Income tax under section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.” This was a temporary ruling, however, and could have been changed if it were determined that we were a “private foundation.” Fortunately, on July 17, 1985, we received our final determination: “. . . you are an organization of the type described in section 509(a) (1). Your exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the code is still in effect. Grantors and contributors may rely on this determination until the Internal Revenue Service publishes notice to the contrary.” We would be happy to provide a copy of this letter to anyone who needs it for tax purposes.

At the present time we are a little behind on our bills, and this is preventing us from getting enough paper to continue our work in an effective manner. We still owe our lawyer over $5,000. Any contributions would be appreciated.

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**BOOKS & VIDEOS**

*Sandra Tanner Video No. 1.* Two lectures on Mormonism given at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. **Price:** $30.00

*Sandra Tanner Video No. 2.* Interview on Mormonism with Milwaukee television station. **Price:** $20.00

*The Tanners on Trial,* by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Over a hundred large pages with many photographs of original court documents. **Price:** $5.95

*An Index to Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* by Michael Briggs. **Price:** $2.00

*Tract Pack.* An assortment of 12 tracts from other publishers. **Price:** $1.50

*Where Does It Say That?* By Bob Witte. Contains hundreds of photos from old Mormon publications. **Price:** $5.95

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**UPDATE ON APPEAL**

On May 15, 1985, the final hearing on our appeal of the Ehat lawsuit was heard before three judges of the 10th circuit court. The hearing went very well for our lawyer. Mr. Ehat’s lawyer, on the other hand, had a difficult time fielding the thorny questions the judges threw at him. We are hopeful that the outcome will be in our favor. The decision could arrive at any time.
LDS DOCUMENTS & MURDER

BY JERALD TANNER

As I left the Salt Lake City Post Office on October 15, 1985, I noticed that the east side of Main Street was blocked off by the police. Later I was to learn that a murder had been committed at the Judge Building—less than a block from where I obtained my mail. Steven F. Christensen, a Mormon bishop, had picked up a box in front of his office which turned out to be a “booby-trapped shrapnel bomb.” Mr. Christensen died instantly. It soon became apparent that the victim was the same man who bought the notorious “White Salamander Letter”—a letter which proved to be embarrassing to the Mormon Church. Later that morning another package exploded killing Kathleen Sheets. This package was addressed to her husband, J. Gary Sheets who was also a bishop in the Mormon Church. Mr. Sheets “had helped fund research that authenticated the [Salamander] letter” (Salt Lake Tribune, October 16, 1985).

Since Sandra and I had been the first ones to print extracts from the Salamander letter, we became somewhat concerned about our safety. The next day a bomb exploded in a car less than two miles from our house. Mark Hofmann, who sold the Salamander letter to Mr. Christensen, was critically injured in this blast. By this time we began to seriously consider the possibility that there was a systematic conspiracy to wipe out those who were bringing out information which was embarrassing to the Mormon church. Because of our connection with the Salamander letter we were deluged with phone calls from the news media and others who were concerned about our safety or just wanted to find out what was going on in Salt Lake City. The next day (October 17) the Deseret News reported a surprising development: “. . . police say Hofmann is considered not just a third victim but also a prime suspect in the Tuesday killings, and others may be involved as well.” Although police have continued to point to Hofmann as the “prime suspect,” no murder charges have been filed. If the situation should change before I finish this article, I will make a note of it. The Salt Lake Tribune for November 20, reported the following:

Mark Hofmann, who investigators continue to call their “prime suspect” in the bombing murders of two people last month, has passed a lie detector test indicating he is telling the truth when he says he did not plant the bombs, his defense attorney said Tuesday.

Mark Hofmann—Bomber or Victim?

Lie detector tests, of course, are usually not used as evidence in court, and so far Mr. Hofmann’s attorney has not allowed police to question him. A federal grand jury did indict Mr. Hofmann “on one count of possession of an unregistered Action Arms Ltd. Uzi machine gun” (Salt Lake Tribune, November 7, 1985), but Hofmann pleaded “not guilty.” This charge is not related to the bombings.

MEETING MR. HOFMANN

I first became acquainted with Mark Hofmann in 1980. Just after he discovered the Anthon transcript (a sheet of paper which is supposed to contain the actual characters Joseph Smith copied from the gold plates of the Book of Mormon), Mr. Hofmann came to our store and discussed the discovery. Although he had served as a Mormon missionary in England, it soon became evident that he did not fully trust the Mormon church leaders. He said, in fact, that he was suspicious that the church might be bugging his phone. He did not claim, however, to have any real evidence about the matter.

In the years that followed Mr. Hofmann would occasionally visit our bookstore and tell of the remarkable discoveries that he was making. In the latter part of 1983 (probably December) I first heard that Mark Hofmann had a letter which was supposed to have been written by Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris. It was dated October 23, 1830, and was addressed to W. W. Phelps. When I learned of the contents of the letter, I realized that it could
deal a devastating blow to the Mormon Church. Sandra and I had previously written a book entitled, *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*. In this book we presented strong evidence that Joseph Smith was involved in money-digging and magic. Martin Harris’ letter seemed to provide new and exciting evidence which supported our thesis. This letter is known as the Salamander letter because Martin Harris wrote that Joseph Smith claimed when he went to get the gold plates for the Book of Mormon, a “white salamander” in the bottom of the hole “transfigured himself” into a “spirit” and “struck me 3 times.”

Fortunately, I was able to obtain some important extracts from the letter and was preparing to print them in the March 1984 issue of the *Messenger*. I was very excited that we at Utah Lighthouse Ministry would be the first to break this important story to the world. While in the midst of compiling evidence to support the authenticity of the Salamander letter, I made a discovery that shook me to the very core. I found that the account of the transformation of the white salamander into the spirit was remarkably similar to a statement E. D. Howe published in *Mormonism Unvailed*. This book, written four years after the date which appears in the Harris letter, told of a toad “which immediately transformed itself into a spirit” and struck Joseph Smith. Even more disconcerting, however, was the fact that other remarkable parallels to the Salamander letter were found just two or three pages from the account of the transformation of the toad into a spirit (see *Mormonism Unvailed*, pages 273, 275 and 276).

Some years before I had encountered similar evidence of plagiarism in Joseph Smith’s *History of the Church*. The Mormon church leaders had always proclaimed that this *History* was actually written by Joseph Smith himself. My research, however, led me to the conclusion that the largest portion of it had been compiled after his death. I found that later Mormon historians had taken portions of newspapers and diaries written by other people and changed them to the first person so that readers would believe that they were authored by Joseph Smith himself. In agreement with my conclusions, Mormon scholars later admitted that over 60% of the *History* was compiled after Smith’s death (see *Mormonism—Shadow at Reality?* pages 127-135).

In any case, parallels I had discovered between the Salamander letter and *Mormonism Unvailed* reminded me very much of the work I had done on Joseph Smith’s *History*. Although what I discovered about the Salamander letter was not conclusive proof that it was a forgery, it was certainly suspicious. It seemed, in fact, to throw a monkey wrench into all my plans concerning the publication of the letter. Since I knew that it was very unlikely that anyone else would realize the significance of these parallels, there was some temptation to keep the matter to myself. I knew, however, that God knew what I had seen, and I began to feel that He had shown me these unpleasant facts to warn me against endorsing the letter. Furthermore, I knew that I would never be satisfied if my case against Mormonism was based on any material which had been forged. It was clear, therefore, that there was only one course of action which I could follow—i.e., print the whole truth in the *Messenger*. In the March 1984 issue, therefore, we raised the question by printing the title, “Is It Authentic?” Under the title we wrote:

At the outset we should state that we have some reservations concerning the authenticity of the letter, and at the present time we are not prepared to say that it was actually penned by Martin Harris. The serious implications of this whole matter, however, cry out for discussion. If the letter is authentic, it is one of the greatest evidences against the divine origin of the Book of Mormon. If, on the other hand, it is a forgery, it needs to be exposed as such so that millions of people will not be mislead. We will give the reasons for our skepticism as we proceed with this article.

On page 4, we wrote: “While we would really like to believe that the letter attributed to Harris is authentic, we do not feel that we can endorse it until further evidence comes forth.”

As soon as I noticed that there were problems with the Salamander letter, I began to realize the serious implications this would have for the study of Mormon history. Prior to Mark Hofmann’s appearance on the scene in 1980, the documents we had used in building our case against Mormonism seemed to have a good pedigree. For instance, the Joseph Smith Papyri were rediscovered in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1967. Although officials at the museum did not acquire the papyri until 1947, they had been aware of them since 1918. The papyri could, in fact, be traced back to the Smith family. The documents which proved that Joseph Smith was tried as a “Glass looker” in 1826 could be traced back to the jail in Norwich, N.Y. Two men, in fact, signed affidavits that they were discovered in the basement of the jail. Joseph Smith’s “Strange Account” of the First Vision, as well as his diaries, could be traced directly to the Church Historical Department where they had been preserved.

When Mark Hofmann came on the scene everything seemed to change. Hofmann was vague about where his finds were coming from, and no one seemed to think of questioning his veracity. The *Deseret News* for October
27, 1985, said that Hofmann’s “reputation regarding documents was impeccable, and his friends in the historical circle defended it.” It was only after I began to have doubts about the Salamander letter, however, that I began to realize that Hofmann was not providing pedigrees for his discoveries. While Mormon scholars felt that the Bible in which Hofmann found the Anthon transcript (it was supposed to have been pasted between two pages) came from the Smith family, Hofmann refused to disclose where he had bought the book. Since book collectors sometimes have a policy of checking out every page of a rare book, I would like to have talked to the collector to see if he remembered anything glued between the pages. With regard to the Joseph Smith III Blessing, Hofmann only said that it came from a descendant of Thomas Bullock. When we pressed Hofmann to reveal which descendant (there must be hundreds), he refused to be of any help. Lucy Mack Smith’s 1829 letter, Joseph Smith’s 1825 letter and Martin Harris’ 1873 letter all seem to have no pedigree. In the case of the Salamander letter, I did learn that Hofmann claimed that it came from a man by the name of Lyn Jacobs. I also learned that Hofmann and Jacobs were working together in the document business. Since the documents were all coming from these two men, it was necessary to focus in upon their backgrounds.

Although the money involved in the sale of Mormon documents would provide a sufficient motive for forgery, I began to wonder if there might be some sort of plan or even conspiracy to control the direction of Mormon history by this method. In any case, while doing research with regard to the Salamander letter, I noticed something about Hofmann’s first discovery that bothered me. This was Charles Anthon’s letter describing the sheet of paper which contained the characters copied from the Book of Mormon. Anthon stated that the “letters . . . were arranged in perpendicular columns, and the whole ended in a rude delineation of a circle divided into various compartments, decked with various strange marks, . . .” This description exactly matched the document which Mark Hofmann found in 1980—i.e., the Anthon transcript. Before Hofmann’s discovery, the church had another old sheet of paper containing Book of Mormon characters. It was believed that this was the sheet Harris had taken to Professor Anthon. Instead of having the characters running in vertical columns, this paper had them going horizontally. Furthermore, it does not have a circular object. When Hofmann made his remarkable discovery, Anthon’s letter was appealed to as evidence that the real “Anthon transcript” had been found. At the time, this seemed to be a good argument for the documents authenticity, but when I later examined E. D. Howe’s *Mormonism Unvailed* in the light of its possible relationship to the Salamander letter, I discovered that Anthon’s letter is printed on page 272 of that book. This could be quite significant because the important parallels to the Salamander letter begin on the very next page (page 273). I could not help but wonder if Howe’s book had provided the creative impulse for both the Anthon transcript and the Salamander letter. I later did a study of the Anthon transcript which suggested that there may be spelling problems in the material written on the back of the document which is supposed to be in the handwriting of Joseph Smith (see *Mr. Boren and the White Salamander*, pages 9-10). Moreover, I demonstrated that there were important parallels in both wording and spelling to “Joseph Smith’s 1832 Account of His Early Life.” The parallels in wording could easily be explained by saying that both documents came from the same author. The parallels in spelling, however, do present a problem because part of the material in the 1832 account is in the hand of Joseph Smith’s scribe.

On August 22, 1984, I printed the first part of the pamphlet, *The Money-Digging Letters*. On page 9, I wrote: “. . . a number of important documents have come to light during the 1980’s. The questions raised by the Salamander letter have forced us to take a closer look at some of these documents.” In the same publication I wrote the following concerning the Salamander letter: “The more we examine this letter attributed to Harris, the more questions we have about its authenticity” (page 6). I went on to show important parallels between other documents and the Salamander letter. I noted that the parallels to the Joseph Knight account (first published in 1976) seem to be extremely important. On page 7, I told of an interview with Martin Harris which was published In 1859:

The interview in *Tiffany’s Monthly* also raises a very serious question about the lack of religious material in the Salamander letter. In the interview, Harris quoted at least five portions of the Bible. He used the words *revelation*, *Moses*, *Scripture* and *Christ* at least once. He used the word *prayed* twice, and mentioned the *devil* four times. The word *angel* or *angels* appears five times. *God* is mentioned seven times, and the word *Lord* appears ten times. In the Salamander letter all of these words are absent. In fact, there is nothing we can find concerning religion. Spirits are mentioned many times in the letter, but they are never linked to God in any way. Instead they are linked to money-digging. They are the guardians of the treasures.

This total lack of religious material seems to be out of character for Martin Harris. A person might try to maintain that Harris was more interested in religion in 1859, but the evidence shows that he was always that way. (*The Money-Digging Letters*, page 7)
On the following page, I charged that Mr. Hofmann had originally tried to sell the Salamander letter “to the Mormon Church for a large amount of money.” Hofmann later told me that it was actually Lyn Jacobs who took the letter to the church. Hofmann seemed willing, however, to admit that he was involved in the decision to sell the letter to the church. However this may be, I went on to state:

In the past Mr. Hofmann acted under the theory that the Church will buy up embarrassing documents to suppress them. This is very clear from his own account of how he handled the discovery of the Joseph Smith III Blessing. In a paper given at the Mormon History Association, Mark Hofmann stated that he did not want “to come across like I was trying to blackmail the Church,” but he acknowledged that if the Church had wanted him to, he would have promised to never tell anyone about its discovery: . . . Hofmann later commented: “It surprised me a bit that the Church didn’t buy it up quick and stash it away somewhere, . . .” (Sunstone Review, September 1982, page 19) . . .

However this may be, it is reported that the Mormon Church felt that Hofmann’s price was too high on the Salamander letter and refused his offer. The document was later sold to Steven Christensen.

We feel that one of the most important tests of the letter’s authenticity is its history since it was written. If Mr. Hofmann will tell historians where he obtained the letter, then it may be possible to trace it back to its original source. (The Money Digging Letters, page 8)

The day following the publication of The Money-Digging Letters (August 23, 1984), Mark Hofmann came to our home and had a long talk with Sandra. He seemed very distressed and hurt that we, of all people, would question his discoveries. He had expected that opposition might come from those in the church, but he was amazed that Utah Lighthouse Ministry had taken a position which was critical to him. Mr. Hofmann tried to explain that he could not reveal the source of the Salamander letter because he had sold it to Christensen. With regard to the Joseph Smith III Blessing, Hofmann indicated that he had given the Mormon Church an affidavit which stated where he had obtained it. He could not reveal the source to the public, however, because the member of the Bullock family from whom he had purchased the document also had important papers concerning Brigham Young’s finances that would be embarrassing to the Church.

Sandra felt that Mark Hofmann was almost to the point of tears as he pled his case as to why we should trust him. He did not make any threats, however, nor did he show any sign of violence. At any rate, Hofmann’s explanations certainly did not satisfy me. On August 25, 1984, John Dart wrote the following in the Los Angeles Times:

. . . unusual caution about the [Salamander] letter’s genuineness has been expressed by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, longtime evangelical critics of the Mormon Church. . . . The Tanners suggestion of forgery has surprised some Mormons, who note that the parallels in wording also could be taken as evidence for authenticity.

The Deseret News for September 1, 1984, reported:

. . . outspoken Mormon Church critics Jerald and Sandra Tanner suspect the document is a forgery, they told the Deseret News.

Jerald Tanner . . . says similarities between it and other documents make its veracity doubtful. . . .

Another disturbing aspect, Tanner said, was the letter seemed out of character for Harris. “In the entire text of the letter, there is no mention of religion . . . If it’s a forgery, then it’s important because there’s a document forger out there.

By the time we printed the January 1985 issue of the Messenger, we had received word that the evidence derived from physical testing seemed to indicate that the Salamander letter was genuine. At that time I wrote the following:

Since I have spent years proving that early Mormonism is linked to magic and money-digging, this news should have brought me a great deal of satisfaction.

On the next page the reader will find a complete text of the Salamander letter. In bolder type I have added quotations from seven publications which resemble portions of the letter. (Colors added to aid referencing.)

The books and articles quoted are as follows:

1. Mormonism Unvailed, by E. D. Howe, 1834
2. Brigham Young University Studies, Autumn 1976
3. New Witness For Christ In America, by Francis W. Kirkham, 1951
4. Tiffany’s Monthly, interview with Martin Harris, 1859
5. A.B.C. History of Palmyra and the Beginning of “Mormonism,” by Willard Bean, 1938
6. Mormonism, Magic and Masonry, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, 1983
7. Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, by B. H. Roberts, 1930
Dear Sir

Your letter of yesterday is received & I hasten to answer as fully as I can--Joseph Smith Jr first come to my notice in the year 1824 in the summer of that year I contracted with his father to build a fence on my property (During the summer of 1824 there was a small leak that soon grew larger. During the fall of 1824 Joseph Smith, sr., and his son, Hyrum, were walling a basement and digging a well for Martin Harris. 5:35) in the corse of that work I approch Joseph & ask how it is in a half day you put up what requires your father & 2 brothers a full day working together he says I have not been with out assistance (Nor was this the only assistance...he [David Whitmer] found to his surprise that he had accomplished more in a few hours than was do in two or three days. 7:Vol.1, p. 126) but can not say more only you better find out the next day I take the older Smith by the arm (I took him by the arm 4:169) & he says Joseph can see anything he wishes by looking at a stone Joseph often sees spirits (This light of the stone....enabled him [Joseph] to see any thing he wished. Accordingly he discovered ghosts, infernal spirits 1:259) here with great kettles of coin money (kettles filled with gold and silver 1:237) it was Spirits who brought up rock (Joseph, Sen. told me...the large stones...we call them rocks...are, in fact, most of them chests of money raised by the heat of the sun 1:233) because Joseph made no attempt on their money I latter dream I converse with spirits which let me count their money when I awake I have in my hand a dollar coin which I take for a sign Joseph describes what I seen in every particular says he the spirits are greived so I through back the dollar In the fall of the year 1827 I hear Joseph found a gold bible I take Joseph aside & he says it is true (They told me that the report that Joseph, Jun. had found golden plates, was true 1:253) I found it 4 years ago with my stone (He found them by looking in the stone 4:169) but only just got it because of the enchantment (the enchantment 1:267) the old spirit come to me 3 times in the same dream & says dig up the gold (after a third visit from the same spirit in a dream he proceeded to the spot 3:v.l, p.151) but when I take it up the next morning the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamannder in the bottom of the hole (after the plates were taken from their hiding place by Jo, he...looked into the hole, where he saw a toad, which immediately transformed itself into a spirit 1:275-76) (Sir Walter Scott says that the old astrologers “affirmed that they could bind to their service, and imprison in a ring, a mirror, or a stone, some fairy, sylph, or salamander, and compel it to appear when called, and render answers to such questions as the viewer should propose. 6:23) & struck me 3 times (and struck him...the spirit struck him again, and knocked him three times or four rods 1:242) & held the treasure & would not let me have it because I lay it down to cover over the hole (that he would cover the place over 2:31) when the spirit says do not lay it down (he had been commanded not to lay the plates down 2:31, footnote 5) Joseph says when can I have it (Joseph says, “when can I have it?” 2:31) the spirit says one year from to day if you obey me (you have not obeyed your orders...come one year from this day 1:242) look to the stone after a few days he looks the spirit says bring your brother Alvin (bring with you your oldest brother 1:242) Joseph says he is dead (he said that he was dead 1:243) shall I bring what remains ("Whereas reports have been industriously put in circulation, that my son, Alvin, had been removed from the place of interment 5:34) but the spirit is gone Joseph goes to get the gold bible but the spirit says you did not bring your brother you can not have it (he went to the place and the personage appeared and told him he could not have it now 2:31) look to the stone Joseph looks but can not see who to bring (Lawrence...asked him to look in his stone, he looked and said there was nothing; 1:243) the spirit says I tricked you again (This rogue of a spirit ...intended it would seem to play our prophet a similar trick 3:v.l, p.290) look to the stone (he told him to look again 1:243) Joseph looks & sees his wife (he looked in his glass and found it was Emma 2:31) on the 22d day of Sept 1827 they get the gold bible--I give Joseph $50 to move him down to Pa (He obtained fifty Dollars in money mid hired a man to move him and his wife to pensylvaniy 2:34) Joseph says when you visit me I will give you a sign he gives me some hiroglyphics I take them to Utica Albany & New York in the last place Dr Mitchel gives me a introduction to Professor Anthon says he they are short hand Egyptian the same what was used in ancent times (taken by Mr. Harris to Utica, Albany and New York; at New York, they were shown to Dr. Mitchell and he referred to professor Anthon who...declared them to be ancient shorthand Egyptian 1:273) bring me the old book & I will translate says I it is made of precious gold & is sealed from view says he I can not read a sealed book--Joseph found some giant silver specticles with the plates (Joseph Smith, through a pair of silver specticles, found with the plates 1:273) he puts them in an old hat & in the darkness reads the words & in this way it is all translated (he put the urim and thummim into his hat and Darkened his Eyes then he would take a sentence and it would apper...Thus was the hol [whole] translated 2:35) & written down--about the middle of June 1829 Joseph takes me together with Oliver Cowdery & David Whitmer to have a view of the plates our names are appended to the book of Mormon which I had printed with my own money-- (The whole expense of publishing an edition of 5,000 copies, was borne by Martin 1:13) space and time both prevent me from writing more at presant if there is any thing further you wish to inquire I shall attend to it

Yours Respectfully

Martin Harris

W W Phelps Esq
Instead, however, I find myself facing a real dilemma. While the tests and the opinions of noted Mormon scholars, seem to indicate that I should relax and enjoy the victory, I still have serious reservations about the document’s authenticity. In fact, I find it very hard to believe that the Martin Harris I have learned about from numerous historical sources could have written the letter. (Salt Lake City Messenger, January 1985, page 4)

I pointed out in that issue of the Messenger [January 1985] that I had recently examined a number of historical sources relating to Martin Harris, and that these references, from early newspapers up until the time of his death, point to the unmistakable conclusion that Harris could hardly open his mouth without talking about religion. That he could write a letter of over 600 words without mentioning the subject seems highly unlikely. This is especially true since the Salamander letter deals with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and gives ample opportunities to bring up the subject. While it is true that Martin Harris believed in money-digging and the superstitions connected with it, it seems very hard to believe that he would write a prospective convert like Phelps and leave out all the divine elements of the Book of Mormon.

On page 9 of the same issue, I showed that an Episcopalian minister by the name of John A. Clark claimed in 1842 that Martin Harris told him the story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon in 1827 and that Clark did not remember Harris saying anything about the white salamander that was transformed into a spirit. Instead, Clark related that Harris told him about a dream Joseph Smith had about an “angel of God” who visited him “while he lay upon his bed.” It seemed inconsistent to me that Harris would tell this story before the Book of Mormon came forth and then refer to an “old spirit” when he wrote the Salamander letter. In this same issue I expressed the hope that scholars would not “side-step” the issue of the pedigree of the Salamander letter and stated that “Too many of the documents which have recently come forth appear to be like Melchisedec, ‘Without father, without mother, without descent, . . .’ (Hebrews 7:3).”

On April 28, 1985, the Salt Lake Tribune reported that the noted document examiner Kenneth Randall proclaimed that the Salamander letter was authentic. Even the Church Section of the Mormon owned Deseret News (April 28) published an article entitled: “1830 Harris letter authenticated.” At the Mormon History Association, Church scholars Dean Jesse and Ronald Walker told of their research which confirmed the authenticity of the letter. The most noted Mormon scholars seemed to completely accept the letter’s authenticity.

In the June 1985 issue of the Messenger, I wrote the following:

. . . At the outset I will state that I originally approached the Salamander letter with a strong bias towards its authenticity. . . . No one could have possibly had a greater desire to prove the Salamander letter authentic, and I doubt that many people have invested the time and effort that I have in sifting the evidence. This letter has been constantly on my mind for well over a year. My desire has been to come up with a definite answer concerning its reliability. At the present time, however, I still find myself with some serious doubts. . . .

When I originally took a stand against the Salamander letter, some people thought that I was just trying to force the Mormon researchers to come out with their research. They felt that as soon as the letter was published I would jump on the band wagon. The truth of the matter, however, is that my statements were made out of a strong conviction, and the release of the letter has done nothing to calm the apprehension I have about the letter’s authenticity. At the present time I feel almost alone. Even the Mormon historians accept the letter, and I am under a great deal of pressure to get into step with the scholars. . . .

Before making any final decision with regard to the letter’s authenticity, I would like to do further research with regard to a number of items. For instance, I would like to find out if there is any evidence that someone owned the letter before Lyn Jacobs. . . .

In conclusion I should say that although I have serious doubts about the Salamander letter, I still stand behind the thesis we presented in Mormonism, Magic and Masonry. I feel that there is very good evidence linking Joseph Smith to magic.

In the same issue (page 13), we stated that if “the letter is a forgery, one is almost forced to the conclusion that it would have to be a recent forgery.” We also stated that “it is unlikely that anyone but a Mormon could have had the knowledge necessary to commit such a forgery.” The following comments appeared on pages 9 and 10:

One problem with allowing the suppression of important information concerning the source of discoveries is that it could encourage forgers to enter the Mormon document business. Since there is already a great deal of money involved in these transactions . . . there would be a temptation to create such documents and palm them off on unsuspecting collectors by merely saying: “I obtained these from a collector in . . .” If we allow this type of thing to go on, it will certainly encourage the forgery of Mormon documents. Since
these documents have an important affect on the religious beliefs of many people, it is crucial that their pedigree be revealed to historians. . . . This whole business of secret dealings with the Church is very disturbing. While dealers have a right to operate in this way, from a historian’s point of view it is deplorable. We can not see any real reason for all the secrecy that surrounds these transactions.

A CONFRONTATION

In the Messenger for August 1985, pages 7-8, I indicated that “Lyn Jacobs has stubbornly refused to tell where he obtained” the Salamander letter. On August 24, 1985, Sandra and I had the very rare opportunity to speak with both Mark Hofmann and Lyn Jacobs. After Marvin Hill had given his presentation at the Sunstone Theological Symposium, we found Hofmann and Jacobs at the back of the room. Both men treated us politely and answered some of our questions. I asked Hofmann and Jacobs if it were true that the letter was obtained for only about $20 from a postmark collector. They indicated that this was true. Since Marvin Hill had indicated that Jacobs may have purchased the letter from a collector by the name of Elwin Doubleday, I asked Mr. Jacobs if this were true. He replied that it was not true. He said he had purchased it from another collector and that collector could not remember where he got the document from. I asked him for the name of the collector from whom he obtained it. His reply was that he could not tell me because the collector had told him not to reveal his name. This, of course, did not ring true. Why would a collector who saw no value in the letter except that it had an early postmark worth $20 ask that his name not be revealed? Common sense told me that a collector would be happy to have other people know that he had such letters for sale. At any rate, Mr. Hofmann then stated that he had been the one who directed Jacobs to the collector. Hofmann, however, did not reveal the name of the collector.

I then asked Mr. Hofmann some very pointed questions that related to the Salamander letter. The answers he gave did not satisfy me, and I felt that Mr. Hofmann knew that I did not believe what he was saying. At one point he looked at me with a sad expression on his face. He seemed to be deeply troubled. It was almost as if he was trying to say, “Please believe what I am telling you.” Unfortunately, I could not believe his answers. They did not square with the facts that I already knew. Although this confrontation was very unpleasant for all of us, I must say that neither Hofmann or Jacobs showed any sign of vindictiveness.

It is reported that at a get-together which occurred late one night after a meeting of the Sunstone Symposium, Hofmann and Jacobs talked freely about the sale of both the 1825 letter and the Salamander letter. The letter attributed to Joseph Smith was sold to President Hinckley for a large sum of money. At that time Hinckley was supposed to have said that it would never see the light of day again. Later the Salamander letter was offered to Hinckley for $100,000 which was to be paid for in one hundred dollar bills. Hinckley rejected the offer. He said that word had leaked out about the 1825 letter and that the General Authorities had decided against continuing to buy up the documents. The Salamander letter was later sold to Steven Christensen for $45,000.

Although I do not know if this report is accurate in all its details, the part about payment in cash reminded me of a conversation I had with Mr. Hofmann on December 15, 1983. At that time Hofmann told me that when he was attempting to place a telephone call late one night, he heard a strange voice on the line which said something like, “Why is he calling out so late?” He said that he feared that agents of the IRS might be tapping his phone because of a problem he was having with them. They were apparently disturbed that he was involved in secret deals which could not be traced with any records. Hofmann said he told them that this was the way that some people he dealt with operated and that the IRS would have to take his word as to the amount of money that exchanged hands in these transactions. Mr. Hofmann did not acknowledge any crime on his part nor did he tell me whether these untraceable deals involved the Mormon church.

POLICE INVESTIGATION

When I began my investigation into the documents and activities of Mark Hofmann, I realized I was taking a very unpopular course. Mormon scholars felt that I was unjustly persecuting Mr. Hofmann. The only one who gave me much help was A. J. Simmonds, manuscripts librarian at Utah State University. Ironically, Mr. Simmonds, like Sandra and myself, is also a non-Mormon.

Although I had no reason to fear that Mr. Hofmann was dangerous, I knew that any time a person tries to uncover fraud there is some danger of retaliation. If the police are correct in their theory that Mr. Hofmann is guilty of murder, Sandra and I may have been in real danger. Although I do not want to pass judgment until I have heard all the facts, if Hofmann is the type of man who would engage in bombings, then the thing that probably saved us from his wrath was that hardly anyone believed my findings. While I have uncovered some important circumstantial evidence indicating fraud, I could not find the hard evidence necessary to convince historians. In the
pamphlet *Mr. Boren and the White Salamander*, I told of my frustration:

In my investigation I have been seriously handicapped by secrecy . . . If I had investigative power like the FBI or could subpoena documents, . . . I could force Lyn Jacobs or Mark Hofmann to reveal where the Salamander letter was obtained, . . .

By the summer of 1985 I felt I had almost exhausted all my human resources. Although I had prayed about the matter from the beginning, I began to fervently seek God’s help. Then a remarkable thing happened. A young man felt the burden of prayer and began to pray with me. He became extremely interested in my problem with the documents and prayed earnestly that God would just open up the way so that the truth about the matter would be revealed.

In my wildest imagination I would never have thought that an investigation would be set into motion by the explosion of three bombs. Although I do not believe that God planned the bombings (they undoubtedly came from the wicked heart of man), the result seemed to me to be a real answer to prayer. While I had previously complained because I did not have “investigative power like the FBI,” now the federal bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the Salt Lake City Police Department and the Salt Lake County Sheriff’s Office are all working together on a major investigation. Mr. Hofmann’s car and home were thoroughly searched and many documents were confiscated by the police. The resulting investigation into Hofmann’s activities has revealed fraudulent activities on his part.

**LOST 116 PAGES**

Immediately after the police searched Mark Hofmann’s home the question of forgery began to arise. The *Salt Lake Tribune* for October 18, 1985, reported:

In fact, Sheriff Hayward and other police officials speculate that Mr. Hofmann may have been involved in a historical document forging scam in which he sold hundreds of thousands of dollars in forged papers to collectors and high LDS Church officials . . .

Mr. Hofmann’s possession of the white-salamander letter, the purported McClellin journals and numerous other documents . . . does raise some interesting questions, the sheriff said—the first being, “Why him?”

“Where does he get them? All of the sudden there’s this one guy who keeps coming up with these things, worth all that money. . . .

“I know for a fact that 50 of us couldn’t find these papers in 50 years if we were looking for them,” the sheriff said. “But he keeps coming up with them.” . . .

Also Thursday, detectives continued to seek and execute various search warrants in hopes of gathering more evidence. Police returned to his house with another search warrant after retrieving some evidence Wednesday night. Among that material, which included blank parchment-like paper, personal documents and clothing, were items which Sheriff Hayward said “that there is speculation that these things could be used in forging documents.”

The *Deseret News*, October 18, 1985, reported that “When police found evidence of forging in Hofmann’s possession, the case took another turn.” On October 20, the *Salt Lake Tribune* revealed the following:

Forgery, according to Chief Willoughby, continues to be a prime consideration as a motive. . . .

Speculation that the controversial 1830 Mormon “white salamander” letter . . . is a forgery has prompted the church to send that letter to the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s laboratory for authentication. Some of the voluminous documents found in both Mr. Hofmann’s home and his burned out car . . . also will be taken to the FBI lab for tests.

After I began having trouble accepting the text of the Salamander letter, I got the uncomfortable feeling that it and other discoveries Mark Hofmann was connected with might be preparing historians to receive a forgery of the “book of Lehi.” This manuscript of 116 pages was supposed to have been lost by Martin Harris. This was to be the opening portion of the Book of Mormon. After its loss, Joseph Smith translated the book of Nephi to take its place. There has always been a great deal of speculation as to what was contained in this manuscript. As far as I am aware, no one knew anything about the contents of the missing pages until Hofmann and Jacobs discovered a letter which was supposedly written by Joseph Smith’s mother, Lucy Smith, on January 23, 1829. As early as 1982, Mr. Hofmann publicly mentioned that he had “spent thousands of dollars in the pursuit” of the “lost 116 manuscript pages” (*Sunstone Review*, September 1982, page 18).

Joseph Smith claimed that Martin Harris was working as his scribe when he dictated the 116 pages which were lost. The handwriting, therefore, on these pages would have to match that of Martin Harris. (It is reasonable to believe, of course, that other scribes could have written some of the pages.) Up until Mark Hofmann arrived on the scene, there was hardly anything that one could compare Harris’ handwriting against. There were a few signatures attributed to him, but no letters actually written in his
own hand. Moreover, there was not even a dictated letter which bore Martin Harris' signature. On October 5, 1982, however, the Mormon church issued a press release which told of the discovery of a letter Harris was supposed to have dictated to his son. The church claimed that it was actually signed by Martin Harris himself. From what I can learn, the letter came through the hands of Mark Hofmann. Its pedigree, however, was never revealed. Although the signature on the 1873 letter looks remarkably like one Harris penned in 1829, I could not help but think that it was too good for a man who was eighty-nine years old and going blind. I checked the 1873 signature against a signature written in 1871 on Harris' application for a U.S. Military pension and found it to be much better. Below is a comparison of the signatures of 1829, 1871 and 1873.

In the Messenger for Jan. 1985, page 10, I indicated that the “1871 signature does raise some questions about the signature on the 1873 letter, . . .” I thought that this was very suspicious. In any case, the 1873 letter was very favorable to the church. This letter seemed to prepare historians for the Salamander letter which followed right on its heels. The Salamander letter not only bore the signature of Martin Harris, but the entire text as well was supposed to be in the hand of Joseph Smith’s early scribe. With the authentication of Harris’ handwriting in the Salamander letter, the stage was well prepared for the ultimate discovery—i.e., the book of Lehi. It is conceivable that this manuscript might be worth millions of dollars. Although we cannot confirm it, it has been reported that at least some pages purporting to be from the book of Lehi were found by police in Hofmann’s possession. It has also been claimed that there were sheets of paper found which appeared to have been used to practice the handwriting of Martin Harris and Emma Smith. (The reader can imagine how embarrassing it would be if a 20th century sheet of paper contained handwriting that matched that found on the Salamander letter.) If attempts to imitate Emma Smith’s handwriting have indeed been found, it would fit very well with the idea of a plan to forge the 116 pages. It is believed that Emma Smith was Joseph Smith’s scribe for some of the first pages of this manuscript. It would be very convincing to have the manuscript begin in Emma Smith’s handwriting and then switch to that of Martin Harris. With respect to Emma Smith’s handwriting, it is interesting to note that the police found a photograph of her handwriting in Hofmann’s possession and it was traced to a museum owned by Mrs. Wilford C. Wood. This photograph would prove helpful to anyone trying to imitate Emma Smith’s handwriting.

It appears that the police feel that there may be something to the theory that Hofmann was planning a forgery of the book of Lehi. The Deseret News for October 23, 1985, reported:

One of the scenarios Willoughby admitted police are seriously investigating is the possibility that the Martin Harris letter, . . . may be forged and that it may be part of an elaborate scheme to set up a much larger forgery or scam. . . .

Police are investigating the possibility that the letter was forged by someone who later intended to forge pages from the 116 pages of missing Book of Mormon manuscript, known as the Book of Lehi—something police say would be worth millions of dollars. Many of those 116 pages are in Harris’ handwriting. . . .

“If (Hofmann) should just happen to come up with pages from the missing manuscript, they would be tested for authenticity against the Salamander letter,” said one police source. If the letter was forged, the manuscript “would be easier to authenticate. It would be worth millions.”

Police say physical evidence has been recovered that may corroborate that theory.

“You bet your bottom dollar,” said Willoughby when asked if police were seriously considering such a scenario.

As I will later show, Hugh Pinnock, of the First Quorum of Seventy in the Mormon church, admitted that he helped Mark Hofmann obtain a loan for $185,000 from First Interstate Bank so he could obtain the McLellin collection. Both Hofmann and Pinnock were interested in the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon. Pinnock, in fact, had a lead with regard to the 116 pages which Hofmann was supposed to have been following up on. Mr. Pinnock claimed that “during the years of 1973 to 1976” he served as “mission president in Pennsylvania” while he was there, “two of our missionaries claimed to have traced out a lady that said she had them, or that her brother had them” (Salt Lake Tribune, October 27, 1985). The mission president who succeeded Pinnock “did some looking around for those 116 pages” but never found them. Hofmann was supposed to have picked up the trail after he found the Anthon transcript. In any case, it is possible that Hofmann could have discussed these missing pages with Pinnock. While I do not know that the book of Lehi had
anything to do with the murders, this manuscript would be worth a tremendous amount of money. This, combined with the secrecy that would surround its transfer to the Mormon church, could very easily lead to disagreements and perhaps even to violence.

**MCLELLIN DECEPTION**

In the last issue of the *Messenger* we told that Mark Hofmann claimed he had obtained some documents known as the McLellin collection. He had mentioned these documents to Sandra on August 23, 1984. Four months later we received an anonymous letter (postmarked December 20, 1984). The letter contained this information:

I am writing you anonymously to tip you off to a cover up by the Mormon church and the document discoverer Mark Hofmann.

A few days ago Mark showed me the original actual Egyptian Papyrus of the round facsimile of the P. of G. P. It is in many pieces and is pasted onto a piece of heavy paper. There are pencil and ink drawings filling in the missing parts. There is another square piece of papyrus pasted on the same piece of paper. Mark told me not to tell anyone about this. He told me it would never be seen again after the church got it. He is keeping a large color photograph.

This letter has been turned over to the Salt Lake County Sheriff’s Office. We do not know whether it was a genuine letter from someone concerned about the suppression of the document or whether it was written by Hofmann or one of his friends for the purpose of giving publicity to the McLellin collection and driving the price up.

In an article published by the *Salt Lake Tribune* on July 6, 1985, Dawn Tracy reported:

Mark Hofmann . . . said he located a collection—including Facsimile No. 2—that at one time belonged to William McLellin, an early Mormon apostle.

While we found evidence from letters written between 1872 and 1901 that Apostle McLellin did have a collection of documents, in the *Messenger* for August 1985, we wrote:

So far we have not found anything concerning McLellin having the original of Fac. No. 2. Although it has been alleged that McLellin may have stolen it from Joseph Smith in 1838, there is evidence that Smith still had it [in] 1842.

Although I cannot say for certain that Mark Hofmann never had any of Apostle McLellin’s papers, his claims now appear to be doubtful. Furthermore, there is strong evidence that he fabricated at least a portion of the so-called McLellin collection. As strange as it may seem, Kenneth Rendell, the man who authenticated the Salamander letter, appears to be the strongest witness against Hofmann with regard to this attempt to deceive.

Just before the bombings occurred, I had become very suspicious that Hofmann did not really have the McLellin collection. I felt that the documents which he claimed to have might be forgeries. I knew, however, that it would be very difficult to forge the fragments of the Joseph Smith Papyri which Hofmann claimed were part of the McLellin collection. I decided to discuss the matter with the Mormon Egyptologist Edward H. Ashment. I told Mr. Ashment that we would have to be very careful about accepting the original of Fac. No. 2. I theorized that it might be possible for a person to obtain a real Egyptian hypocephalus that looked somewhat like the one Joseph Smith used for Fac. No. 2 in the Book of Abraham. The areas which did not agree with the drawing could be broken off or damaged. In this way, I reasoned, another piece of papyrus could be palmed off for the one owned by Smith. Mr. Ashment agreed that it might be possible to buy a hypocephalus, although it would be rather expensive.

While I do not know whether Mr. Hofmann ever actually obtained a hypocephalus, evidence now shows that he did, in fact, obtain some pieces of genuine Egyptian papyrus which he tried to palm off as part of the Joseph Smith Papyri in the McLellin collection. According to the *Deseret News*, October 28, 1985, Kenneth Rendell “said he also sent two pieces of Egyptian papyri to Hofmann on a $10,500 consignment. . . . He said he found it strange that Hofmann wanted something from the first or second-century A. D. containing hieratic script rather than hieroglyphics, which are much more desirable to collectors. He said Hofmann stressed how secret this transaction had to be.” The *Salt Lake Tribune* for October 28, 1985, printed this revealing information:

Detectives removed pieces of papyrus from Mr. Hofmann’s home and burned-out automobile. Officers, acting on a search warrant, also took a piece of papyrus from a safe deposit box used by Mr. Christensen. . . .

Detectives believe that Mr. Hofmann, 31, fragmented either one of both of the 30-inch by 9-inch papyrus scrolls lent to him on consignment by Mr. Rendell in mid-September, and then showed the pieces to various investors, telling them that they belonged to the missing McLellin papers. Some investigators feel that Mr. Christensen, hired as an “authenticator” of these documents by an anonymous buyer, may have told Mr. Hofmann he intended to go to Mr. Rendell for authentication of the Egyptian script, thus threatening to expose the scam.
The papyrus was apparently broken in such a way that it would make it very difficult for an Egyptologist to read the text. This, of course, would help disguise where it came from. In any case, the Deseret News for October 31, 1985, reveals that Mark Hofmann took the fragmented papyrus to the very man with whom I had discussed the possibility of a papyrus switch:

Ashment said he was first contacted by Hofmann in July about the papyri fragments in the McLellin papers. Ashment later photographed one fragment during a meeting in the Church History Library. But Ashment said the fragment did not match previous descriptions of the four papyri purported to be in the McLellin papers. . . . Rendell said the fact that the papyrus was fragmented suggested some sort of illicit dealings. He said there could be no legitimate reason for fragmenting the papyrus because the individual pieces would be worth dramatically less than the whole, which he valued at about $6,000.

“The document in pieces is worth 10 percent of what it is as a complete unit,” Rendell said. “The piece that now remains is worth well under $1,000.”

It is certainly ironic that the very man who authenticated the Salamander letter would turn out to be the one who speaks of fraudulent dealings with regard to the McLellin collection. Mr. Rendell’s statement that breaking up the papyrus greatly diminishes its value is certainly true in any regular transaction. In Mr. Hofmann’s case, however, this would not necessarily be true. That fact that he represented it as a part of the Joseph Smith Papyri greatly enhanced its value. Wade Lillywhite claimed that Mark Hofmann contacted him before the killings and “offered to sell for $100,000 a papyrus document purported to be an ancient papyrus facsimile from the McLellin papers” (Salt Lake Tribune, October 22, 1985). From this it would appear that Mr. Hofmann was greatly inflating the price of common Egyptian papyri by claiming it was part of the McLellin collection. Brent Metcalfe, who was doing some work for Mark Hofmann, acknowledged that Hofmann even deceived him by telling him” that the papyrus once belonged to Apostle McLellin.

**CHURCH INVOLVEMENT**

Up until the time of the bombings, Hofmann’s friends were leaking out all kinds of information concerning what was in the McLellin collection and how damaging it would be to the Mormon church if it fell into the hands of the public. The church leaders apparently became very concerned that the material be suppressed.

The Chicago Tribune for October 25, 1985, printed this interesting information:

SALT LAKE CITY—After questioning a leading authority on rare documents, police here are piecing together a theory that the wave of bombings that hit this city last week was part of a daring scheme to conceal an attempted blackmail of the Mormon church itself.

The scenario revolves around a plan to threaten the church leadership with a collection of artifacts deliberately concocted to appear particularly damaging to the credibility of Mormonism’s founder, Joseph Smith.

After the bombings occurred, a man by the name of Alvin Rust said that Mark Hofmann told him that he was selling the papers to Gordon B. Hinckley, of the First Presidency of the Mormon church:

Alvin Rust, who gave Mr. Hofmann $150,000 to purchase the documents last April, said Mr. Hofmann told him that President Hinckley had agreed to buy the documents for $300,000. . . .

It is apparent from Mr. Rust’s comments and the police investigation that, at some point, negotiations were under way between Mr. Hofmann and the church—either through a general authority or an intermediary buyer—that the LDS Church was attempting to buy the collection, a number of affidavits, letters and ancient Egyptian papyrus that may contain potential embarrassing materials for the church. (Salt Lake Tribune, October 23, 1985)

The Mormon church held a news conference on October 23 in which Gordon B. Hinckley admitted that Mark Hofmann had approached him about the McLellin collection but said that Hofmann “wanted to donate the collection to the church. There was no discussion of our purchasing it” (Salt Lake Tribune, October 27, 1985). However this may be, Mr. Hofmann not only obtained $150,000 from Mr. Rust, but he also approached the church claiming that he needed $185,000 to buy the collection. Apostle Dallin H. Oaks revealed the following:

In late June, Mark Hofmann and Steve Christensen told Elder Pinnock that Hofmann had an option to buy the McLellin collection from a man in Texas for about $185,000. . . .

Elder Pinnock asked me if I thought the church would loan Mark Hofmann $185,000 for this purpose. I said, emphatically not. President Hinckley was in Europe at the time of this conversation. No one else could or would approve such a transaction . . . to have the church involved in the acquisition of a collection at this time would simply fuel the then current speculation reported
The LDS Church was interested in acquiring the McLellin papers . . . but wanted someone to donate them. West said Elder Pinnock approached the client, a Salt Lake man, and asked if he was interested in buying the papers.

It seems obvious that the church wanted someone to buy the collection and keep it secret for some time. During this period the church leaders could deny that they had it. When the pressure subsided, the anonymous buyer could donate it to the church. Apostle Oaks indicated that the church would probably be interested in receiving the collection “at some future time.” After they received the collection, church leaders could still deny that they had bought it. If any McLellin collection ever really existed, it probably would have disappeared into the “black hole” of the First Presidency’s vault forever. At the church press conference, Apostle Oaks said that he told Hofmann the McLellin transaction had “been handled on a confidential basis, . . .” (Salt Lake Tribune, October 27, 1985). According to People magazine, November 4, 1985:

Steve Christensen . . . knew he was wading deeply into intrigue. “I feel like I’m living through an episode of Miami Vice,” he joked to a friend about a deal he was cutting. Four days later Christensen, 31, was dead . . .

The Salt Lake Tribune for October 25, indicated that Christensen wanted the closing of the sale to the anonymous buyer to be handled in a very unusual way with keys to safety deposit boxes being mailed later:

And, Mr. West noted, he did not believe from any conversation with Mr. Christensen that he had yet seen the documents. . . .

Mr. Christensen explained he had paid for safe deposit boxes and that when the deal was closed, the documents would be placed in the boxes and then he would mail the keys to the anonymous buyer after payment was made.

“I told him that was not acceptable. How was I to know [the documents] were ever put in the boxes?” he said.

About seven hours after Steven Christensen was murdered, Mark Hofmann met with Apostle Dallin Oaks. They discussed the possibility of completing the transaction with the anonymous buyer:

Dallin H. Oaks, a member of the Council of the Twelve, said in a memorandum about his meeting with Mr. Hofmann the day of the homicides that he had a conversation “from a potential buyer” referred to him by Elder Hugh W. Pinnock, . . .
Elder Oaks also suggested to Mr. Hofmann that he “ought to get in touch with the buyer’s attorney, who undoubtedly would be wondering what would be happening in view of the news reports about Christensen’s death,” and reminded Mr. Hofmann that another person would have to be found to verify the authenticity of the documents—a task that was to be Mr. Christensen’s, according to Mr. West and the church reports. (Salt Lake Tribune, October 25, 1985)

In the Mormon church’s press conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley said that the church has a “mandate” to obtain important historical documents. Apostle Oaks, however, indicated that the church was “intent on not getting” the McLellin collection:

FRED MOSS: “Fred Moss with KBYU News. I just have a question. Why is the church so intent on getting the papers? Is it to secure them in the right hands so that they are not taken advantage of and make the church look bad? And where does the money come to purchase these letters?”

ELDER OAKS: “Can I answer the first part . . .”

PRESIDENT HINCKLEY: “Yes, go ahead.”

ELDER OAKS: “Again, why, you say, is the church so intent on getting the papers? I thought it was clear from my statement that the church was very intent on not getting the papers, so that there would be no misunderstanding about this. Could you rephrase that question?” (Salt Lake Tribune, Oct. 27, 1985)

From all I can learn about the McLellin transaction, it appears obvious that while church leaders may have been “intent on not getting” the McLellin collection in a way that would become known to the public, they were working behind the scenes to see that the papers were acquired secretly. On November 15, 1985, KUTV News did a story concerning the discovery of Steven Christensen’s diary. Christensen was quoted as saying the following about the McLellin collection: “Elder Pinnock has saved the Church time, money and effort in countering an avalanche of negative publicity should the collection have fallen into the wrong hands.”

Just two months before the bombings we had printed some important information about the purported McLellin collection and condemned Mr. Hofmann’s attitude with regard to the church suppressing documents. We said that this behavior was “deplorable, to say the least” (Salt Lake City Messenger, August 1985, page 10). In the Los Angeles Times for November 8, 1985, we read:

According to Flynn, who often worked with Hofmann on deals, church officials and Hofmann had heard that anti-Mormon groups were “hot on the trail” of the McLellin Collection. Flynn said Hofmann told him the papers were being held by a Texas bank as loan collateral.

“I was told by Mark that President Hinckley was anxious to get this stuff,” Flynn said in an interview. “Evidently, they had caught wind the ‘antis’ were after it, and they were anxious to get it here to Salt Lake as soon as possible.”

About the middle of November it was reported to me that KSL, a television station owned by the Mormon church, had run a brief story at noon concerning Hugh Pinnock offering Mark Hofmann an armored car, an airplane and cash to obtain documents. I discussed this matter with an employee of KSL, who told me that the information came from the diary of Steven Christensen. Mr. Christensen claimed that when Mr. Pinnock offered to provide an armored car and an airplane, Mark Hofmann declined the offer saying that this would not be necessary. Pinnock said that since the transaction was to be made on a day when the banks were to be closed, the individual receiving the cashier’s check would not be able to call and verify that the check was legitimate. He wondered, therefore, if Hofmann would prefer to take cash from a fund that was available. Hofmann, however, thought that this would not be necessary. The fact that Hugh Pinnock felt that an armored car might be necessary to carry out the transaction shows that a large amount of money must have been involved. I would certainly like to know more about this fund.

In any case, if the church leaders had not continued to engage in secret dealings with Hofmann, they would not have found themselves in the embarrassing situation they are in today. The McLellin fraud cost Hugh Pinnock a great deal of money. He claimed that although he was not “legally obligated to the bank,” he felt morally responsible to pay back the balance of the $185,000 loan that Hofmann owed to First Interstate Bank. On October 26, the Deseret News announced that he had repaid the loan out of his own money. This, of course, avoided the sticky situation of the bank taking Hofmann to court and the embarrassing testimony that might follow. It is also obvious that neither Pinnock nor the church would want Hofmann to become an enemy. Alvin Rust, the coin dealer who also lent Hofmann $150,000 to buy the McLellin collection, filed a lawsuit in which he claimed “he was defrauded of $132,000 in the deal for the McLellin papers” (Salt Lake Tribune, November 15, 1985). Hofmann had repaid Mr. Rust $17,900, leaving a balance of $132,100.

RUSH TO OAKS’ OFFICE

That the Mormon church was involved in a highly secret operation (or operations) with Mark Hofmann became obvious at the church’s press conference. Apostle
Oaks claimed that after the bombings began, three different men came to the Mormon Church Administration Building enquiring about what they should tell police:

...just before 3 p.m., Mark Hofmann came to the Church Administration Building and asked for Elder Pinnock, who was out at that time. ... Hofmann came to my office and said he thought the police would question him. What should he say when they questioned him? And I said, “You should simply tell them the truth. You don’t have any reason to believe that this bombing has anything to do with you, do you? And simply tell them the truth.” And then, when he seemed to be questioning whether we should tell them about the McLellin collection, I said, “Look. That’s been handled on a confidential basis, but there’s a murder investigation under way. You should tell the police everything you know and answer every question—and I intend to do the same.”... On Thursday, the following day, Shannon Flynn came to the Church Administration Building... I met with Flynn... In brief, Flynn wanted to know what he should say if he was questioned, and I told him to tell the truth, just as I had told Hofmann.”

On Friday, Alvin Rust came to the Church Office Building... He said, “I know some things. I’ve already talked to the police, but I know some more things.” And I said, “Whatever you haven’t told the police, tell them. Give them everything.”... (Salt Lake Tribune, October 27, 1985)

Alvin Rust was rather upset about Apostle Oaks’ comment concerning him:

“I didn’t run to the church asking what to say to the police,” said Mr. Rust. “I wanted to know about the McLellin papers. I love the church but Elder Oaks’ statement sounded funny.” (Ibid., October 24, 1985)

In any case, the fact that people would have to seek out an Apostle to know what to tell the police certainly reveals that there were secret activities going on. On November 18, the Salt Lake Tribune revealed that it was learned that church security officers had been a step ahead of the detectives in interviewing some of the people:

Early on, when it was learned that LDS Church officials had dealt with one of the victims, the prime suspect and key witness in the killings, the investigators’ lives suddenly became much more difficult. It was learned that some of the people detectives wanted to talk to had been interviewed first by church security officers, and nobody really knew how to approach church general authorities with questions about murder.

The Salt Lake Tribune for October 21, 1985, reported that “Friends of Mr. Hofmann have said he did regular business with President Gordon B. Hinckley, a member of the church’s First Presidency.” At the press conference, President Hinckley admitted that the church had acquired “40-some documents” that came through Mark Hofmann:

I first met Mark W. Hofmann in April of 1980 when he was brought to my office by officers of our Historical Department... he had found what has come to be known as the “Anthon Manuscript” in Joseph Smith’s handwriting... On March 17, 1981, our Historical Department people again came with him to my office with the transcript of the blessing given by Joseph Smith to his son... Since that time, Mr. Hofmann has sold various documents to the church... The church has acquired by purchase, donation, or trade 40-some documents, some of relatively little importance, and some of significance. (Salt Lake Tribune, October 27, 1985)

The Los Angeles Times, November 8, 1985, claimed that “most” of these documents have not been made public. At the press conference, Gordon B. Hinckley said that he bought Joseph Smith’s letter to Josiah Stowell from Mr. Hofmann. In the last issue of the Messenger we told how this letter, purported to have been written by Joseph Smith in 1825, was suppressed for two years by the church. The Tribune for October 20, 1985, reported that even the Mormon Archivist was not told about Hinckley making this purchase:

Don Schmidt, retired LDS Church archivist, said members of the First Presidency didn’t tell him or church historians about the 1825 letter. Nor did they ask him or anyone in his department to authenticate the letter.

It has been alleged that Gordon B. Hinckley bought the 1825 letter in his own name so that the church itself could deny ownership of it. Hinckley was asked about this matter at the press conference:

RICK SHENKMAN: Second thing is, there has been speculation that President Hinckley, that you personally were buying documents from Mark Hofmann, either out of your own funds or using the church funds. Did you in your negotiations with Hofmann ever personally acquire documents from him and were any of the payments ever made in cash?

PRESIDENT HINCKLEY: The payments were made by check and they are fully authenticated, receipted for, on two occasions. Two items. Nothing like the figures you have been hearing today. Relatively small. What’s that?
REPORTER: Excuse me, can you tell us what items were paid for from Hofmann?

PRESENT HINCKLEY: One was the Joseph Smith, Sr. letter to Josiah Stowell and the other, I do not remember.

REPORTER: Can you tell us the price of the letter?

PRESIDENT HINCKLEY: Well, I don’t know that I’m going to tell you the price, but I’m going to tell you that it was nothing like the kind of figures that you’ve talked of this morning. Nothing like that. (Salt Lake Tribune, October 27, 1985)

If it should turn out that some of Hofmann’s documents are forgeries, the Mormon church will suffer great embarrassment. Church leaders not only gave Hofmann money, but they also traded some of the church’s own “historical materials” for his documents (see statement of Gordon B. Hinckley in the issue of the Tribune cited above).

“DEEP THROAT”

In the Messenger for June 1985, we stated that “The ‘Salamandergate’ cover-up even has its own ‘Deep Throat’”—that mysterious and unidentified person who had access to Nixon’s secrets and leaked them to the press.” This individual claims that he somehow got access to the first history of the Mormon church written by Book of Mormon witness Oliver Cowdery and that this history tells that it was Joseph Smith’s brother Alvin who first discovered the gold plates of the Book of Mormon through the use of a seer stone. Alvin, however, was driven away by a taunting salamander. Subsequently, the salamander appeared twice to Joseph Smith. Although the person who gave this report does not say that the salamander was white or that it was transformed into a spirit, it has been used as evidence to support the Salamander letter. The argument, of course, is that the forger could not have known that the Mormon church had an extremely important document mentioning salamanders. Unfortunately, however, from what I can learn it seems very likely that Mark Hofmann and Lyn Jacobs would have had this information prior to the time that the Salamander letter appeared, and it is even possible that one of these two men could have been the mysterious “Deep Throat” who was interviewed by the Los Angeles Times. While some Mormons have tried to deny the existence of the Oliver Cowdery History, Joseph Fielding Smith, who became the 10th president of the church, claimed that the church had it. The Oregonian for May 21, 1985, reported:

Church spokesman Jerry Cahill said that Cowdery’s history had been in the church’s possession since around 1900 and probably is locked away in the private vault of the governing First Presidency. . . .

“. . . Obviously, it’s in the possession of the church, but what shelf it is on I don’t know,” he said.

I have found that as early as 1981 Hofmann and Jacobs were trying to obtain information concerning the contents of the First Presidency’s vault. During the same year, Hofmann claimed that there was a leak of material out of the vault. By 1983 he privately boasted that he had even seen the “seer stone” which is stored in the vault. During the same year Hofmann discussed the Oliver Cowdery History with a friend. In the last issue of the Messenger, we wrote:

There is evidence that Mark Hofmann has had special access to the First Presidency’s vault. (As we pointed out earlier, only the most trusted individuals can see documents from that vault.) On September 28, 1982, the 7th East Press reported that since the discovery of the Anthon transcript, Hofmann has “enjoyed privileged access to otherwise restricted Church archive material, including the First Presidency’s vault. One reason for this privileged access, Hofmann thinks, is the fact that ‘I am not a historian. I’m not going to write an expose of Mormonism.’”

Through his discoveries and knowledge of documents, Mr. Hofmann has worked himself into the innermost circle of Mormon historians.

To my knowledge, only Brent Metcalfe and Los Angeles Times reporter John Dart know the identity of “Deep Throat.” Mr. Metcalfe says that he is one of his friends. While we know that Hofmann is a close friend of Metcalfe, this is not conclusive because Metcalfe has other friends who could have gained access to the vault. John Dart has agreed not to reveal the identity of the man. Therefore, he would neither confirm nor deny that it was Hofmann or Jacobs. If further investigation should establish that Hofmann, Jacobs or even a close friend of these two men is “Deep Throat,” then we would have to take a serious look at the possibility that there was a very treacherous scheme to defraud the Mormon leaders by using their own documents. Deep Throat could have obtained access to the Cowdery History and found that it mentioned salamanders. This, of course, would have provided the important element needed to produce the Salamander letter. Since some of the top Mormon leaders and scholars may have been aware that the Cowdery History mentioned salamanders, they would have taken this as evidence that the Salamander letter was authentic. A forger who had access to materials from the First Presidency’s vault and the Church Archives would have been in an excellent position to produce blackmail-like documents which the Mormon leaders would be willing to buy up in an effort to save the church from embarrassment.
It could, of course, be argued that the Oliver Cowdery History does not mention salamanders, but if this is the case, why has the church failed to produce it so that the false story about it could be squelched? In any case, there certainly must be something very embarrassing in this history that keeps the church leaders from bringing it to light.

A COVER-UP

On November 19, 1985, Brent Metcalfe, who worked as a historical researcher for Mark Hofmann appeared on a television show broadcast by KUED. Mr. Metcalfe claimed he had new and important evidence which helped verify the Salamander Letter. This was an inscription found in an 1830 printing of the Book of Common Prayer. Although the inscription is neither signed nor dated, Mr. Metcalfe claims that Dean Jessee’s preliminary analysis of it demonstrates that it is in the same handwriting that appears in the Salamander Letter. There is a signature at the front of the book, but it is not that of Martin Harris. The signature is that of Nathan Harris. It has been claimed that Nathan was Martin Harris’ brother, but I have not found that he had a brother by that name. Martin Harris’ father was named Nathan and Martin’s brother Emer also had a son by that name. The book has a date of “1833” written at the front and the words “Kirtland, Ohio.” Both Martin Harris’ father and his nephew were living during the year 1833. In any case, the inscription attributed to Martin Harris reads as follows: “If this book should wander and you this book should find please to kindly remember that what you hold is mine.”

It has been claimed that Mormon-owned Deseret Book has had the book since 1971, and that Mark Hofmann could not possibly have had access to it until after the Salamander Letter was discovered. Unfortunately, employees at Deseret Book have been instructed to keep quiet about this book, and therefore I was unable to learn how they knew that Hofmann had no access to it. In any case, Sandra and I had access to a good xerox copy of the inscription for a few minutes and agreed that it is remarkably similar to the handwriting found in the Salamander letter. I am looking forward to obtaining a good clear copy of the inscription so that I can make a more careful comparison.

In the meantime, there are a number of questions that need to be answered. To begin with, if the inscription was really written by Martin Harris, why didn’t he sign his name to it? It would be important, also, to know if Martin ever had the book in his possession. The inscription by the unknown hand says, “this book . . . is mine.” It is claimed that the book actually came down through Emer Harris’ descendants. Deseret Book is supposed to have the pedigree of the book, but employees refused to provide any information on the subject.

However this may be, if the handwriting in the book is verified to be the same as that found in the Salamander Letter, investigators will have to take a very close look at the book itself to see if there are any signs of foul play. It is known that Mark Hofmann obtained this book from Deseret Book before the bombings. On KUED, Brent Metcalfe said that “Mark had, in fact, purchased the book from Deseret Book who had it as early as 1971 . . .” He also said that “Mark Hofmann was, in fact, involved in the sale of it . . .” One person told us that Hofmann bought the book from Deseret Book in September 1985 and resold it to the Church Historical Department in October 1985. The reader will remember that September was the very month that Hofmann bought the papyrus from Mr. Rendell and broke it up for the purpose of deception. Brent Metcalfe says that employees of Deseret Book recall that the poem “was in the book” before they sold it to Hofmann, but they “didn’t pay particular significance to it” because they didn’t know “who the handwriting” belonged to. It is clear, then, that nobody knew that the handwriting was of any real significance until after it was obtained by Mark Hofmann. I feel that this whole transaction is very suspicious. If I were a detective, I would want to take a close look at the book to see if a page has been removed or substituted at the back of the book. If there were a number of blank pages at the back of the book, one could remove the page with the poem on it and rewrite it on the next page in a handwriting like that found in the Salamander Letter. If there were no blank pages following the poem, it would be possible to obtain another old copy of the Book of Common Prayer and substitute a page. Moreover, it would be possible to substitute the entire book and add in the Nathan Harris material at the front of the book. A good forger would make the substitute copy look just like the original. The poem, of course, would have the same words, but the writing would be changed to look like that in the Salamander Letter. It is doubtful that anyone who had seen the original book would remember what the original handwriting looked like. The forger, of course, would not be able to add the signature of Martin Harris after the poem because it would give the whole scheme away. It would, however, at least give the impression that handwriting that looked like that in the Salamander letter had been found in a book which had a pedigree which could be traced to Harris’ family. I do not, of course, know that this is what happened, but I feel that in view of what Mark Hofmann did to the papyrus, we must take a hard look at everything that passed through his hands.
There is something else that I feel I must relate which casts a very bad light on the new discovery. That is that both Mark Hofmann and Brent Metcalfe previously claimed that there was a Book of Mormon inscribed with the longest known sample of Martin Harris’ handwriting and also bearing his signature underneath it. Why, I ask, would they use an unsigned poem if an inscription bearing Harris’ signature had been located?

This inscription was originally mentioned by Mark Hofmann himself months before the Salamander Letter was supposed to have been discovered. The inscription was reported to have been found in an early edition of the Book of Mormon printed in England. Mr. Hofmann mentioned this matter to a scholar on May 8, 1983. This fact was recorded on a piece of paper that very day, and this piece of paper is still in existence. The remarkable thing about the conversation is that Mark Hofmann mentioned the contents of the inscription as containing a statement that Martin Harris had printed the Book of Mormon with his own money. This is a very important parallel to the Salamander Letter which has Harris writing about “the book of Mormon which I had printed with my own money—”

On December 10, 1983, which was after the discovery of the Salamander Letter, Mark Hofmann spoke to the same man about the inscription and the important parallel to the text of the Salamander Letter. In addition to this information being recorded in a contemporary note, I distinctly remember that it was relayed to me. From that time I looked forward to seeing the purported Martin Harris inscription.

In November 1984, after Brent Metcalfe had worked for Steven Christensen as a historical researcher who was attempting to validate the Salamander letter, he came to my house and tried to convince me that my criticism of the Salamander Letter was of no value because he had in his possession a photocopy of Martin Harris’ inscription in the early edition of the Book of Mormon printed in England. Mr. Metcalfe claimed that he had personally compared this with the Salamander Letter and found the handwriting to be identical. In the light of this evidence, he felt that I was foolish to continue criticizing the letter.

When the Mormon History Association met in May 1985, I was expecting Dean Jessee to produce this inscription as his main piece of evidence. Instead, however, he showed slides of samples of Martin Harris’ signature. Although he had one document containing four words and a signature supposed to have been written by Martin Harris, he did not use the longest inscription purported to be in Martin Harris’ handwriting. I was disturbed that this inscription was missing and asked Brent Metcalfe about it. His reply was something to the effect that Jessee had not received it in time to include it in his study. I assumed, therefore, that it was going to be used later. After some time had passed, I asked Mr. Metcalfe again why Dean Jessee was still not referring to this inscription. He replied that Jessee felt that it was unwise to use a photocopy. He wanted to see the original book to be certain that it was not a forgery. Metcalfe said he had the information telling of the book’s location at his home somewhere and was trying to locate it.

On August 24, 1985, I directly asked Mark Hofmann concerning the inscription. He replied that he had never heard of it. I could not imagine that Hofmann would forget the very best evidence for the authenticity of the Salamander Letter. In any case, the scholar Mr. Hofmann had spoken to on at least two occasions concerning the inscription was present during the conversation. Hofmann evidently remembered that he had told him the story, and his memory started to improve. He said that a man by the name of Jerry Kelly might be able to help me locate the book. Hofmann then asked me how I had learned about the inscription. I told him that Brent Metcalfe had told me he had a photocopy. For just a moment, Hofmann seemed to be angry. He regained his composure, however, and said that Mr. Metcalfe always shared with him but had not told him about the photocopy. I replied that Metcalfe was very reluctant to share anything with me, and yet he had told me about it. Later Metcalfe told me that Hofmann talked to him about his mentioning the photocopy to me. He did not reveal what Hofmann had said.

After the bombings (November 13, 1985), Brent Metcalfe came to our home again and tried to convince me of the authenticity of the Salamander Letter. I reminded him of the conversation we had had before about the Martin Harris inscription in the Book of Mormon. To my surprise (Sandra was also present during the conversation), Mr. Metcalfe completely denied that he had ever told me that he had a photocopy of it or had ever seen the inscription. He said that he was still looking for the notes which told where the original book was located. I was absolutely astounded at his answer. My first conversation with him concerning this subject is indelibly written on my mind. Mr. Metcalfe did, in fact, tell me that he had a photocopy and that he had personally compared it with the Salamander Letter and found that the handwriting was identical. He even spoke to me concerning the identical formation of one of the letters found in both documents. Furthermore, I asked him at that time if I could obtain a copy of his photocopy. His reply was that that would not be possible. His response on November 13, 1985, was also contrary to what he told me in our third conversation on the subject. This was that Dean Jessee had said the photocopy could not be used for comparison. They would
need to obtain the original book. I really do not know what
the truth is about this matter. I feel, however, that there
are three possible explanations as to why the purported
inscription has not been brought to light.

One, that it is a forgery that may not pass the critical
examination of experts. Perhaps the proper ink was not
used or the signature was not just right. It could even be
possible that the inscription did not really appear in a
book. All one would have to do is obtain a photocopy of
the front portion of an early English printing of the Book
of Mormon and then add an inscription on the photocopy.
If the photocopy were then recopied, it (the second copy)
would give the impression that the inscription was in the
original book. If this were the case, no original book could
be produced. This might explain why Mark Hofmann
was upset that Brent Metcalfe had told me about the
photocopy and why he had a talk with Metcalfe about
the matter. Hofmann would have known that I would be
pressuring him and the researchers to produce the original
book so that the inscription could be verified. If no such
book existed, it would put Hofmann in an embarrassing
position. On the other hand, if the inscription does exist in
a book and is a forgery which could be detected, it might
destroy the Salamander Letter. The reason for this is that
it was supposed to be in existence months prior to the
discovery of the Salamander Letter, and there is no way
that the forger of the inscription could have known what
Harris’ handwriting would have looked like. (The reader
will remember that Mr. Metcalfe said the handwriting
was identical.) It is interesting to note that Mark Hofmann
claimed that when he was on his “mission to Bristol,
England, I bought several early copies of the Book of
Mormon in old bookstores” (Sunstone Review, September

Two, it is possible, of course, that the inscription is
really in a book and that it is a genuine Harris inscription.
It could, in fact, have been used as a pattern to forge the
Salamander Letter. If this were the case, the reason for
suppressing the inscription would be that the larger the
sample of real Martin Harris handwriting available to
handwriting experts, the more likely they would be to detect
the forgery. Writing in Utah Holiday, December 1985, page
84, Paul Larsen gave this interesting information:

The most crucial test is handwriting. Given the
foregoing, it was the only test that could have actually
authenticated the salamander letter—or, in other words,
verified that it is what it is purported to be—a letter from
Martin Harris. . . . With the salamander letter that presents
a problem, since virtually nothing verified as written in
Martin Harris’s hand is known to exist. . . .

Maureen Casy Owens, a handwriting expert with the
Chicago police, and former president of the American
Academy of Forensic Sciences, was asked by Utah Holiday if a page of writing could be authenticated
from a comparison signature alone. “No,” she responded
without hesitation. “It would require a minimum of two
pages of the subject’s handwriting.”

The consensus of handwriting experts contacted by Utah Holiday is in unequivocal agreement on the
question. In fact, there is, according to those experts, no
way to authenticate the text of the document, given the
lack of Martin Harris’s handwriting.

“I did not authenticate that the document came
from Martin Harris’s hand,” Kenneth Randall now says.
“That would have been impossible with what little I had.
I didn’t even authenticate the signature, even though
there were several Harris signatures, because I didn’t
know for a fact that they were Harris signatures. All
my report said was that the handwriting was consistent
with the handwriting of the time and that there were no
signs of forgery.”

Even though Brent Metcalfe is very intelligent and
knows a great deal about Mormon documents, he is not a
handwriting expert. Mark Hofmann, therefore, could have
shown him a photocopy of such an inscription without fear
of detection. Turning the inscription over to a handwriting
expert, however, would be an entirely different matter.

Three, it is possible that no such inscription ever
existed in a Book of Mormon and that Mr. Hofmann
never had a photocopy. This explanation would not only
cast serious doubt upon the honesty of both Metcalfe and
Hofmann, but it would also present a serious problem to
those who believe in the authenticity of the Salamander
Letter. If the inscription does not really exist, then it is
evident that Mark Hofmann was daydreaming about a
Martin Harris inscription months before the Salamander
letter was even discovered. Strange as it may seem, this
imaginary inscription contained the same information
about Harris publishing the Book of Mormon with his
own money that was discovered later in the Salamander
Letter. The serious implications of this matter cannot be
ignored. If the inscription does not really exist, then one
has to seriously consider the possibility that Mr. Hofmann
himself could have created the text of the Salamander
letter. It is believed by some that Hofmann’s handwriting
is too poor to allow him to make a forgery that would pass
examination. This may be true, but he had association
with at least one man who is reported to be skilled in
calligraphy. Furthermore, Hofmann had thousands of
dollars to work with and could have hired a real expert
to do the job.
Whatever the case may be, it is apparent that what should be the best evidence for the Salamander Letter (if it does, in fact, exist) is being covered up. Instead of bringing forth the signed inscription which also contains an important parallel to the Salamander Letter, Brent Metcalfe and Mark Hofmann have put forth a purported inscription which has neither a signature nor a date. Brent Metcalfe was the only full-time historical researcher who worked for Steven Christensen in authenticating the Salamander Letter. He later worked for Mark Hofmann. Mr. Metcalfe claims that somewhere in his material he has the information concerning the location of the Book of Mormon which has Harris’ signed inscription in it. To me it seems incredible that a historical researcher would not spend the time to locate the most important evidence. I feel that both Brent Metcalfe and Mark Hofmann owe us an explanation.

With the questions that are being raised by the investigation of Mark Hofmann, one would think that if the Salamander Letter is really genuine, Lyn Jacobs would now reveal to the public where it came from. Brent Metcalfe, however, says that the more pressure that is put on Jacobs, the more adamant he is in his refusal to reveal the source.

One man I talked to said that the FBI would be able to date the Salamander Letter by the Carbon 14 method and find out exactly when it was written. An FBI agent, however, stated that this was impossible. The plus or minus factor is too large to provide any meaningful results.

Metcalfe, however, says that the more pressure that is put on Jacobs, the more adamant he is in his refusal to reveal the source.

How specifically, then, can testing of paper and ink be used to date a document?

“Not very,” says Salt Lake forensic document examiner George Throckmorton, of Independent Forensic Laboratories. . . . “All we can determine with ink and paper is if they are consistent with what was used at the time the document was purportedly written. . . .” (Utah Holiday has learned that the paper in the salamander letter was a cotton rag, very common to that day.)

“Cotton rag paper was introduced to Europe from the Orient in about 1100 A.D.,” Throckmorton says. “And it’s still available today. So that’s basically your age range with the paper. It could have been made one year ago or eight hundred years ago. There’s no way to say for sure. If a modern chemical somehow got into it and was detected we would know it was recent.”

Bill Crueger, formerly of the Institute of Paper Chemistry, Appleton, Wisconsin, and considered among the most knowledgeable experts in the country on paper, agrees, “Whatever one man can make another man can, too.” The evaluation of paper, Crueger told Utah Holiday, is “not black and white. . . . There’s a number of people around who make that sort of paper [cotton rag]—it’s quite an art. It’s not illegal to make it. It’s what you do with it afterwards that counts.”

“Whatever one man can make another man can, too.” The evaluation of paper, Crueger told Utah Holiday, is “not black and white. . . . There’s a number of people around who make that sort of paper [cotton rag]—it’s quite an art. It’s not illegal to make it. It’s what you do with it afterwards that counts.”

Ink is “the same thing” claims Throckmorton. “Your iron gallotanic inks [the kind used in the salamander letter] have been around since the seventh century. And they’re still around today. Even if they weren’t, they’re easy to make.”. . .

“All that the ink and paper tests tell you in a case like the salamander letter is whether that document’s ink and paper were consistent with the inks and papers of 1830,” says Throckmorton. “But, you see, the same ink and paper are also consistent with 1985, since both are still available and in use.”. . .

But can’t ink and paper be tested for signs of aging? Both take on certain characteristics as they are exposed to the elements over the years. Paper may yellow or brown and become brittle. Iron gallotanic ink oxidizes and sometimes takes on a brown-reddish tint.

“You can [artificially] age them both,” says Bill Flynn, a forensic document examiner with the Arizona Crime Laboratory. “You can oxidize something by putting it into a pressurized oxygen atmosphere. That would age both the paper and the ink.” Heat can also be used. . . .

Soon an additional verdict may be rendered by the FBI, which has employed . . . one of the most experienced forensic document examiners in the country to look at the letter. He may, of course, be stymied by the same difficulties that plagued Rendell and his team of examiners. (Utah Holiday, December 1985, pages 85-86)

NEW DISCOVERY

As we were preparing to publish this issue of the Messenger, the Salt Lake Tribune (November 28, 1985) reported: “The Tribune has located what may be the McLellin collection, . . .” The discovery of this collection was made possible because of research done by Wesley P. Walters some years ago. Mr. Walters obtained a copy of a letter written by J. L. Traughber on August 21, 1901, from the New York Public Library. Mr. Traughber lived in Mobile, Tyler County, Texas. Michael Marquardt made a typed copy of a portion of this letter, and we printed it on page 10 of the August 1985 issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger:

“I have some little manuscript books written by Dr. W. E. McLellin. I also have his journal for parts of the years 1831-3-4-5-6. I have over thirty letters compactly written by Dr. McLellin containing much on the subject of Mormonism.”
We felt that it was possible that the collection could have been preserved in the “area of Texas” where Mr. Traughber had lived. Dawn Tracy, a reporter for the Salt Lake Tribune followed up the lead furnished by Mr. Traughber’s letter and found at least a portion of the McLellin collection in the possession of his son, H. O. Traughber. While the collection does not appear to have the 1831-36 diaries, it does have the “little manuscript books written by Dr. W. E. McLellin.” I have compared the handwriting of the documents shown in photographs published in the Tribune with copies of letters written by McLellin. Although I am no expert, it does appear to me that the documents bear the handwriting of McLellin. Furthermore, the contents of the material appears to be exactly what one would expect from the hand of McLellin. For example, in his list of 55 reasons he could not be a Utah Mormon, McLellin wrote; “35. Polygamy. Mrs. Joseph Smith, the widow of the Prophet, told me in 1847 that she knew her husband, the Prophet practiced both adultery and polygamy.” This agrees with a letter McLellin wrote to Joseph Smith’s son. The letter is dated July, 1872, and is preserved in the RLDS Archives. This letter agrees in stating that McLellin talked with Joseph Smith’s widow concerning adultery in 1847:

Now Joseph I will relate to you some history, and refer you to your own dear Mother for the truth. You will probably remember that I visited your Mother and family in 1847, and held a lengthy conversation with her, . . . I told her some stories I had heard. And she told me whether I was properly informed. Dr. F. G. Williams . . . told me that at your birth your father committed an act with a Miss Hill—a hired girl. Emma saw him, and spoke to him. He desisted, but Mrs. Smith refused to be satisfied. He called in Dr. Williams, O. Cowdery, and S. Rigdon to reconcile Emma. But she told them just as the circumstances took place. He found he was caught. He confessed humbly, and begged forgiveness. Emma and all forgave him. She told me this story was true!! Again I told her I heard that one night she missed Joseph and Fanny Alger. She went to the barn and saw him and Fanny in the barn together alone. She looked through a crack and saw the transaction!! She told me this story too was verily true. (Letter from William E. McLellin to Joseph Smith III, dated July 1872, typed copy)

Unlike most of the documents discovered by Mark Hofmann, the documents Mr. Traughber has in his possession have a good pedigree stretching back to McLellin himself. There seems to be no reason, therefore, to doubt that the documents are genuine. While most of the material in H. O. Traughber’s possession is in the handwriting of his father, it still throws important light on the subject because it quotes from the original papers of Apostle McLellin. For instance, Traughber quoted McLellin as questioning the restoration of the priesthood by angels:

I joined the church in 1831. For years I never heard of John the Baptist ordaining Joseph and Oliver. I heard not of James, Peter and John doing so. These things were gotten up in after years in order to sustain them in their false priesthoods. (Salt Lake Tribune, December 4, 1985)

The reader will notice the similarity between this quotation and a statement that appears in the letter McLellin wrote to Joseph Smith’s son in 1872.

But as to the story of John, the Baptist ordaining Joseph and Oliver on the day they were baptized: I never heard of it in the church for years, altho I carefully noticed things that were said. And today I do not believe the story.

J. L. Traughber’s papers are extremely important in showing how unlikely it is that Mark Hofmann could have found the large collection of McLellin material he spoke of in the hands of one person in Texas. In one of the documents, Mr. Traughber indicated that the McLellin collection was scattered and some of it was even burned by his wife:

After the death of Dr. McLellan, his widow broke up housekeeping and left Independence, Mo., where they had been living from 1869 to 1883. As she had no particular use for them, she burnt a great many of the Doctor’s papers, and gave away others to persons who asked for them.

I believe that Mr. Hofmann undoubtedly made up the idea of a large and important McLellin collection after reading some of McLellin’s letters located in the RLDS Church Archives. On August 23, 1984, Hofmann told Sandra that he was aware of papers concerning McLellin which were possessed by that church. In McLellin’s letters he speaks of some items he had in his possession. In the July 1872 letter, for instance, McLellin stated:

Now all L.D.Sism claims that Joseph Smith translated the Book [of Mormon] with Urim and Thummim, when he did not even have or retain the Nephite or Jaredite interpreters but translated the entire Book of M. by means of a small stone. I have certificates to that effect from E. A. Cowdery (Oliver’s widow), Martin Harris, and Emma [Smith] Bidamon. And I have the testimony of John and David Whitmer.

From information obtained from Mark Hofmann, Brent Metcalfe helped an LDS Institute teacher compile a list of the material found in the McLellin collection. This list mentions the identical items contained in the McLellin letter: “d. Affidavits he collected about translation of Book of Mormon process: Elizabeth Ann Whitmer Cowdery, John Whitmer, David Whitmer, Martin Harris, and Emma Smith.”
The evidence provided by the papers in Mr. Traughber’s possession seems to show that although Mr. Hofmann knew from McLellin’s 1872 letter that he had these statements about the translation of the Book of Mormon, he never actually obtained them. Brent Metcalfe said on KUED that it was his understanding that some of the affidavits dated back to 1831 and that the one by Emma Smith cast doubt on Joseph Smith’s story of his first vision. Another report given by a local television station claimed that Steven Christensen wrote in his diary that the Emma Smith affidavit was very damaging to the Mormon church. The Traughber papers seem to demonstrate that Hofmann did not know what the Emma Smith statement contained and that he was probably trying to raise the price of the collection by claiming that there was embarrassing information found in it. If Mr. Hofmann really had a document with Emma Smith’s name on it which was exceptionally damaging to the church, I would be inclined to believe that it was a forgery created within the last few years. In any case, Dawn Tracy reported that J. L. Traughber was shown the Emma Smith affidavit by William E. McLellin and copied it “for a book.” The entry originally written by Emma Smith reads:

The first that my husband translated was translated by the Urim and Thummim, and that was the part that Martin Harris lost. After that, he used a small stone, not exactly black, but was rather of a dark color. March 29, 1870. (Salt Lake Tribune, December 3, 1985)

When I read Emma Smith’s statement in the Tribune, I felt that it had a familiar ring. In discussing the matter with Michael Marquardt, he correctly identified it as being a quotation out of a letter Emma Smith wrote to Mrs. Emma Pilgrim. We had printed this statement many years ago from an article by James E. Lancaster in the Saints’ Herald, an RLDS publication. It is found in Mormonism—Shadow of Reality? page 42:

Now the first that my husband translated, was translated by the use of the Urim and Thummim, and that was the part that Martin Harris LOST, after that he USED A SMALL STONE, not exactly black, but was rather a dark color. . . .

The reader will see that the statement is essentially the same as Traughber’s copy made from McLellin’s collection. Michael Marquardt gives the date of the letter as March 27, 1870. Richard Van Wagoner and Steve Walker give the same date in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer 1982, page 67, n. 78. Dawn Tracy’s article lists the date as “March 29, 1970,” but it is very likely that someone has just misread a seven for a nine. William E. McLellin seems to have copied the item from Emma Smith’s letter to Mrs. Pilgrim. Traughber, in turn, copied it into his manuscript and Dawn Tracy recopied it for publication in the Tribune. In the letter to Mrs. Pilgrim, Joseph Smith’s widow even asked about Mr. McLellin. This would indicate that Mrs. Pilgrim was in touch with McLellin. In his letter of July 1872, McLellin referred to the statements he had collected concerning the translation of the Book of Mormon as “certificates.” It may be that when he copied the material from the letter, he had Mrs. Pilgrim certify that it was a correct copy. This might explain why Emma Smith’s statement was later referred to as an affidavit.

While it is true that the statement that Joseph Smith used “a small stone” to translate the Book of Mormon is damaging to the Mormon position since it links Joseph Smith to magic, the fact that it had already been published in Mormonism—Shadow of Reality? and other publications would make it of very little value. That Steven Christensen was so worried about the “affidavit” seems to show that Mr. Hofmann had misrepresented its contents.

The statement of Oliver Cowdery’s widow, which Hofmann claimed he had found, was quoted by McLellin himself in a letter written in February 1870. It has already been published by Van Wagoner and Walker in their article in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer 1982, page 51:

I cheerfully certify that I was familiar with the manner of Joseph Smith translating the Book of Mormon. He translated the most of it at my Father’s house. And I often sat by and saw and heard them translate and write for hours together. Joseph never had a curtain drawn between him and his scribe while he was translating. He would place the director in his hat, and then place his face in his hat, so as to exclude the light.

H. O. Traughber insists that Mark Hofmann never contacted him. Nevertheless, he was summoned to appear before a grand jury investigating the bombings. Whether he can travel to Salt Lake City is in question because his wife has suffered a stroke.

Mr. Hofmann’s attempt to make the contents of the McLellin collection seem very sensational must have been motivated by a desire to extort more money from those who wished to keep it hidden from public view. His claim that some of the Joseph Smith Papyri were in the McLellin collection undoubtedly stems from a rumor that some of the papyri had been found in Texas. We had reported this in the Salt Lake City Messenger in May 1971. We quoted from a letter which related that Dr. Hugh Nibley had told someone that “there was more papyri found and that it was discovered in Texas. . . .” Mention was made by Nibley that Facsimile No. 2 was among the papyri. At first Hofmann only claimed that he had the original of Fac. No. 2 in the Book of Abraham and some fragments of papyri. I have recently learned, however, that just before
The bombings he also asserted that he even had the original of Fac. No. 3. Earlier in this newsletter I related that the Tribune reported Hofmann offered to sell Wade Lillywhite “an ancient papyrus facsimile from the McLellin papers.” Mr. Hofmann wanted “$100,000” for this document. I assumed, of course, that this was Fac. No. 2, but when I called Mr. Lillywhite, he informed me that it was really Fac. No. 3 that Hofmann offered him!

The reader will remember that Mr. Hofmann broke up the papyrus which Kenneth Rendell gave him on consignment. Randall claimed that because the piece was damaged, it would be “worth well under $1,000.” Hofmann had told Brent Metcalfe that this fragment was part of the McLellin collection. The Deseret News, November 30, 1985, reported that “Ashment said, that Hofmann wanted $100,000 for this document. I called Mr. Lillywhite, he informed me that it was really an ancient papyrus facsimile from the McLellin papers.” The same article says:

Many in the historical community attribute to Metcalfe their belief that Hofmann had the McLellin collection and was about to sell it. A number of people told the Deseret News that Metcalfe had told them since January that he had seen photographs of the collection or that he knew that the contents were controversial.

Metcalfe told the Deseret News after the bombings that he had believed Hofmann had the collection and that it was valuable. However, he said, all his information came from Hofmann and he had never seen the collection or photographs of it himself. [Deseret News, November 30, 1985]

On November 28, 1985, the Deseret News printed this information:

Police, however, are convinced Hofmann was involved in double dealings: selling documents he never had to different buyers under the pretext each was buying a valuable collection. He took one buyer with him to New York to buy the documents and even showed him shipping receipts, the police official said. “He then told another buyer the documents were in Texas. He can’t have it both ways.”

Alvin Rust, a Salt Lake coin dealer whose son accompanied Hofmann to New York to buy the papers, said Thursday he has believed all along that Hofmann has not been honest in his business dealings. . . .

“Why was he claiming to have pieces of papyri from the McLellin papers when he in fact bought it from someone else?” the police official asked.

CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Since the bombings, many theories have been put forth to explain what happened. Some people feel that the murders are related to the financial problems Steven Christensen and J. Gary Sheets had with their investment firm CFS Financial Corporation. Another theory is that a Mormon (or Mormons) committed the bombings to retaliate against those who were bringing embarrassing church documents to light. Some even feel that the church itself is involved in the murders. This idea seems to be very popular with those who are opposed to the church. While I must agree that the church was deeply involved in the financial transactions which may have led to the murders, it is rather hard to believe that the leadership of the church would be so foolish as to handle the situation in such a manner. The use of bombs, of course, brought immediate attention to everything church leaders wanted to conceal. It has brought a flood of reporters to Salt Lake City and a great deal of unfavorable publicity to the church. Anything, of course, is possible in such a bizarre case, and if we do find any evidence pointing to the church, we will certainly pursue it.

Still another theory is that the murders were committed by anti-Mormons or liberal Mormons who wanted to stop the sale of the McLellin documents and bring the whole clandestine operation to light. Under this scenario, the first bomb would have prevented the transfer of the documents because Mr. Christensen was supposed to authenticate and appraise them. Former Church Archivist Donald Schmidt was called in the second day to perform Christensen’s task, but the bomb in Hofmann’s car again prevented the transfer of the documents. This scenario would seem to require either intensive surveillance or a traitor among the friends of those involved in the transaction. No one was more concerned about security than Mark Hofmann, and it is highly unlikely that anyone could have learned when he was going to transfer the documents without inside information or electronic surveillance.

The scenario suggested by police is that Hofmann and possibly an accomplice (or accomplices) planted the bombs that killed Mr. Christensen and Mrs. Sheets. They feel that the next day Hofmann was in the process of transporting a third bomb (either to plant it or to get rid of it) when the explosion occurred. At first it was reported that the bomb exploded under the car seat, but this report proved to be false. The injuries Mr. Hofmann suffered obviously did not come from a bomb exploding beneath him. Furthermore, police claim to have a witness who saw the remains of the wrapping paper which surrounded the box in which the bomb was placed before the car burned up. It seems very unlikely that Mr. Hofmann would enter his car with a strange package setting on the seat after what had happened to the two bombing victims the day before. This is especially true in Hofmann’s case because he claimed his life had been threatened. Now it may be
possible that a package could have been placed on the seat in some way so that it could not easily be seen by Mr. Hofmann. The police, however, claim that they have testimony that Hofmann was carrying a package, and they feel that he was placing it on the seat when it exploded. At this time I do not know how good the evidence is that Hofmann brought the package into the car, but if this can be established, it would almost certainly show that he was guilty of the bombings. It could, of course, be possible that he received the package from someone else, but if that were the case, he would know who the murderer was and could have helped the police solve the crime.

However this may be, police claim that the bombs used were pipe bombs placed in shoe-box sized containers with brown wrapping paper around them. The names of the victims were written on the packages with a felt marking pen. The *Deseret News*, December 1, 1985, reported: “Police have maintained that Hofmann was injured by a bomb of his own making, and they claim their evidence is substantial. Following the Oct. 16 blast, investigators searched Hofmann’s car and recovered a number of items, including pieces of pipe, brown butcher paper, a felt marking pen and surgical gloves.” Whether the pipe, wrapping paper and marking pen involved in the bombings are identical with the items found in Hofmann’s car remains to be seen. In all fairness, however, I should say that there is always a possibility that someone else placed the items into the car to frame Mr. Hofmann.

One thing that is particularly troubling, however, is that police found a copy of a book telling how to make bombs in the possession of Hofmann’s associate Shannon Flynn. The *Deseret News* for October 23, 1985, reveals that Hofmann was with Flynn when the book was purchased and that this occurred just days before the bombings:

> About eight months ago, Flynn accompanied Hofmann to purchase a machine gun, which both converted to a fully automatic weapon. Several days before the bombings, the pair purchased “Anarchists’ Cookbook,” a book on how to make bombs, from the Cosmic Aeroplane.

It is true, of course, that everyone who buys the *Anarchists’ Cookbook* does not actually make bombs. Brent Metcalfe, in fact, reports that he saw a copy of this book in the possession of Mormon church security when he worked there. The church has received many bomb threats and may have used the book to inform its personnel concerning the different types of bombs they might encounter. At any rate, it does seem strange that this book would be purchased just days before the bombings. On December 1, 1985, the *Deseret News* printed this information:

> Hofmann’s attorney, Bradley Rich, said last week that it was his understanding that Hofmann and Shannon Patrick Flynn, 27, a friend and associate, had discussed building a bomb.

> Hofmann and Flynn face federal charges of possessing a machine gun, but no charges have been filed in the bombings.

> Flynn’s attorney, James Barber, also said his client obtained two blasting caps earlier this year, but the lawyer declined to say what Flynn did with them. Attorneys for both men said the blasting caps have nothing to do with the bombings.

To my knowledge, police have not yet established exactly what Hofmann’s motive would have been for killing both Steven Christensen and J. Gary Sheets’ wife. Police seem to feel, however, that Christensen may have come to the conclusion that Hofmann was trying to perpetrate a fraudulent deal with regard to the McLellin collection and that Hofmann killed him to prevent exposure. It is possible also that there could have been some tension between Christensen and Hofmann over the $185,000 loan from First Interstate Bank that Hofmann had not paid back. It is claimed, in fact, that “Shortly before the murders Christensen waited in his car several nights in front of Hofmann’s home trying to catch up with him” (*People* magazine, November 4, 1985, page 123). The *Deseret News* for December 8, 1985, reported that “Under pressure from Pinnock, Christensen had gone with Hofmann to collect a $20,000 check which was turned over to the bank.” According to the Salt Lake Tribune, Nov. 28, 1985, Shannon Flynn claimed that “at one point, Mark Hofmann and bombing victim Steven Christensen came to him [his?] home at 12:30 am. to pick up that $20,000 check.” Furthermore, Christensen asked David E. West, the attorney representing the anonymous person who was supposed to buy the McLellin collection, to “add his name to the $185,000 check for Hofmann, . . .” (*Deseret News*, December 8, 1985). Christensen apparently wanted to be absolutely certain that Hofmann would use the check to pay his debt rather than use it for his own purposes. While Steven Christensen was undoubtedly justified in his actions, Mr. Hofmann probably felt that he was overbearing and may have resented his parental-like intrusion into his affairs. Under these circumstances it is easy to believe that there could have been friction between the two men. At this point, however, I have no evidence to show that this would have provided a sufficient motive for such a brutal murder.

While one could possibly theorize that Mark Hofmann would kill Steven Christensen so that he would be able to cash the $185,000 check without having to get his
signature, we cannot prove that Hofmann knew that Christensen had asked for his name to be added to the check. Moreover, it is improbable that Hofmann could have obtained the check anyway unless he had some actual documents or forgeries that Donald Schmidt could have examined.

When it comes to the murder of Kathleen Sheets, I do not know of any reason why Mr. Hofmann would kill her. The package, however, was addressed to her husband, J. Gary Sheets and some have speculated that Hofmann was attempting to throw the investigation away from himself and towards the trouble Christensen and Sheets had with their investors at CFS Financial Corporation. In all fairness, however, it could be argued that a bomb was planted in Hofmann’s car to draw attention away from CFS.

There is another matter that should be considered with regard to J. Gary Sheets. This is the problem concerning a book about the Salamander Letter which never materialized. Before Mark Hofmann sold the Salamander Letter to Christensen, he was very concerned about its contents and how it should be presented to the world. After Christensen bought it, he apparently decided that he wanted it back. The Deseret News for December 8, 1985, claimed that:

Joe Robertson, Christensen’s close friend, Sheets’ son-in-law and a CFS employee, told the Deseret News that ... Christensen told him he was approached by Hofmann, who asked to re-purchase the Harris letter at nearly twice the $40,000 Christensen had paid. “Steve wrestled with selling it back to Mark or giving it to the church.” Christensen told another friend that he donated the letter last April after learning that the church would like to have it.

While Steven Christensen had the Salamander Letter, he and his business partner, J. Gary Sheets, planned to publish a book about it. This undoubtedly made Mr. Hofmann very happy. One of Hofmann’s best friends, Brent Metcalfe, was appointed to do research for this important book. Unfortunately, however, Mr. Sheets became worried about the affect the book might have on the testimony of, Mormons who would read it. According to Linda Sillitoe, “J. Gary Sheets . . . scrapped the Harris letter project when the letter’s contents became known and controversy ensued . . . . The research was discontinued, Metcalfe was removed from the payroll and was asked to return the computer and printer Christensen bought to write the book” (Deseret News, December 8, 1985). The fact that Sheets stopped the project must have been rather disturbing to Mr. Hofmann. In addition, one of his closest friends, Brent Metcalfe, found himself entirely removed from a project which had meant a great deal to him. Hofmann, of course, later hired Metcalfe as a research historian. While most people were not aware that Mr. Sheets stopped the project, Mark Hofmann undoubtedly learned all about it from Brent Metcalfe. Hofmann was probably upset at both Christensen and Sheets for scrapping the Salamander book, but whether this could have played a part in the violence that followed is only a matter of speculation.

While charges still have not been filed against Mark Hofmann, police continue to maintain that he is the prime suspect. Mike Carter wrote:

Despite a polygraph test indicating Mark W. Hofmann told the truth when he said he had no involvement in the bombings that killed two people last month, officials involved in the investigation Wednesday said “all of our evidence points in that direction.” . . .

“We never close our eyes to the possibility that there may be other persons involved or responsible for the killing,” said Salt Lake County Sheriff Pete Hayward. “The reason we have focused our investigation on Mr. Hofmann was because that was where the developments of the case have led us.”

Salt Lake Police Chief Bud Willoughby agrees. (Salt Lake Tribune, November 21, 1985)

While it seems very hard for me to believe that a quiet and mannerly man like Mark Hofmann could be involved in such violent crimes, I have often heard of people who lived very peaceful lives suddenly going berserk over small matters and killing innocent people. Sometimes people keep things within them until they suddenly explode. One thing we do know about Mr. Hofmann is that he was under a great deal of pressure at the time of the murders. Alvin Rust, who loaned Hofmann $150,000 to buy the McLellin papers, claimed that at one point Hofmann came to his shop at the point of tears and told him he was about to lose everything. Hofmann was not only double dealing with regard to the McLellin papers but was apparently doing the same on a Charles Dickens manuscript:

One group, working through Salt Lake City investment counselor Thomas Wilding, gave Mr. Hofmann $300,000 to purchase a rare handwritten manuscript of “The Haunted Man.” At least two other individuals gave $110,000 and $175,000 respectively for a piece of the manuscript, apparently without knowledge of the other investment deal. . . . Mr. Wilding, who said he feels his investors are victims of a fraud, said there is liable to be litigation over the Dickens book as investors attempt to regain their losses. (Salt Lake Tribune, November 8, 1985)
According to the Tribune, November 1, 1985, the notes for $300,000 “came due Oct. 14”—the day before the homicides.

Mr. Wilding said that Mr. Hofmann was to be penalized a total of $4,000 per day, plus interest, after that date due . . . Mr. Hofmann also owed $185,000 to First Interstate Bank . . . He also owed an additional $150,000 to Salt Lake City coin dealer Alvin Rust, . . .

Mark Hofmann was not only having a difficult time financially, but his dishonesty with regard to the McLellin collection was about to catch up with him. His entire reputation as a Mormon document dealer was at stake. Mr. Hofmann had already shown signs of irrational behavior when he broke up the Rendell papyrus for the purpose of deception. Under the mounting pressure, he could have decided to take more desperate action in an attempt to save himself from ruin.

One thing that really bothers me about the whole situation is that Mark Hofmann has refused to talk to police or to submit to a lie detector test administered by the police. His lawyers claim that he is not talking because the police have already made up their mind that he is the prime suspect. While it is certainly true that the police should have been more cautious in their statements to the press, Hofmann’s refusal to talk about the murders does not help the situation. If he is really innocent, then his silence is only tending to help the real murderer (or murderers) to remain at large and to increase the possibility that someone else will be killed. Even if he has no information about the real killer(s), an honest presentation of the facts could possibly help police redirect their investigation. Then they could focus their attention on more profitable areas. If, on the other hand, Hofmann is really guilty, then the less he says the harder it will be to convict him. His statements would only tend to incriminate him.

Although the evidence showing that Hofmann was guilty of fraudulent business dealings seems to be irrefutable, this does not necessarily mean that he is a murderer. It could be possible that he is being framed. While his silence tends to make me suspicious, I will try to keep an open mind. The Bible says that “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him” (Proverbs 18:13). If anyone has any relevant information with regard to this subject, I would appreciate hearing about it. This issue of the Messenger contains only a very sketchy account of the Mark Hofmann story. I am, however, working on a book on the subject.

While we are sending a free copy to everyone on our mailing list, it costs us about ten times as much postage to send an individual copy which does not go bulk rate. This, plus the size of this newsletter, has forced us to put a charge on additional copies. There is still no subscription charge on the Messenger, and we will continue to send out free mailings as the Lord provides. We do, however, welcome donations by those who wish to help in the ministry. All donations to UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY are tax deductible.

We are spending a great deal of time trying to get to the bottom of the Salamandergate scandal. Coming issues of this newsletter will probably have more on the bombings and the Mormon church’s attempt to suppress embarrassing documents.

Still More Developments

After the bomb exploded in Mark Hofmann’s car, investigators learned that Hofmann had a copy of the “Oath of a Freeman.” This is supposed to be the “oldest document ever printed on an American press.” He was trying to sell it to the Library of Congress for 1.5 million dollars. It is claimed that Hofmann bought this document for only $23 from Argosy Bookstore in New York. When I learned about this matter, I felt that this small sheet of paper, with printing only on one side, would have to be one of the greatest finds of the century or else a clever forgery. I reasoned that if a person were forging such an item, it would be easy to print more than one copy. The first copy could be sold for a very large amount of money and the other copies would go for smaller amounts at a later time. At any rate, after police began investigating Hofmann, it was reported to me that they had found three copies. Although police did not mention the broadside by name, they said they were concerned about forgery because they had found a duplication of documents. On December 21, 1993, the Salt Lake Tribune reported that Hofmann did, in fact, have more than one copy:

Shannon Patrick Flynn, however, said Friday that Mr. Hofmann claimed he found two copies of the oath, . . .

The Tribune Friday contacted Dickson D. “Duke” Cowley . . . who said he and another Arizona man were approached in September by Mr. Hofmann and Mr. Flynn, who represented that they were in possession of a second copy of the oath and wanted Mr. Cowley and co-investor Wilford Cardon to buy a 30 percent interest in that document for $175,000.

The Deseret News for December 22, 1993, reported:

Sources in the Salt Lake County attorney’s office and the Salt Lake City Police Department confirmed that, in addition to Hofmann being their prime suspect in bombings that killed two people last October, they are considering fraud and/or forgery charges against him. Richard P. Howard, RLDS Church historian, flew Tuesday to Salt Lake City . . . bringing with him three documents for study. One was the Joseph Smith III blessing. . . .

Allen Roberts, a local architect and historian, said Howard told him Tuesday that all documents relating to Hofmann were being examined. Howard said police told him “they had found a person who could sit down and write out a Joseph Smith III blessing in Thomas Bullock’s handwriting,” according to Roberts.

When I questioned why Hofmann would not tell where he obtained the blessing document, he claimed that he had made an affidavit for the church which revealed its source. On December 22, I was informed that the affidavit gave the name as Allen Bullock of Coalville, Utah, and that no such person could be found.
Writing in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 28, 1985, Dawn Tracy claimed that “Tumultuous times may be ahead as Mormons wrestle with scholarly works challenging traditional stories about the origins of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” James L. Clayton, a Mormon scholar who teaches history at the University of Utah, made this interesting comment:

> There’s confusion swirling around the LDS community on how to handle new documents, appropriate methods to study sacred history and the role of church religion teachers. . . . If you aren’t confused, you may not have the full picture of what’s going on. (*Ibid.*)

As early as 1957, Thomas O’Dea predicted that the Mormon Church was facing a crisis. In *The Mormon Establishment*, pages 153-54, Wallace Turner wrote:

> Dr. Thomas F. O’Dea, a sociologist at Columbia University, who wrote a major study called *The Mormons* . . . said that “Mormonism is in a sleeping crisis. It is a strange crisis, one not easily noticed; a lotus-eating crisis, a sleeping crisis, an unrecognized crisis of prosperity and acceptance. It has met all its crises of adversity. But can it survive its own success?”

Dr. O’Dea claimed that the Church was facing “the threat of apostasy on the part of its intellectuals” (*The Mormons*, page 234). He maintained that “A final loss of the intellectual would be a wound from which the church could hardly recover. A liberalization of belief and an abandonment of traditional positions in faith would transform, if not destroy Mormonism. These potentialities slumber fitfully and insecurely within the present state of prolonged but regularized crisis” (*Ibid.*, page 240).

**LARSON FORCED OUT**

That the crisis has become very severe became evident on September 28, 1985, when the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported:

> One church scholar said he was forced to resign his job after writing a research paper. . . .

Stan Larson, a scripture-translation researcher, said he was forced to resign his job at the church’s Salt Lake City Scripture Translation Division after writing a paper challenging traditional beliefs about the Book of Mormon.

Dr. Larson, who reads Greek, Latin, Syriac and Hebrew, compared passages in the Book of Mormon—sacred scripture to Mormons—with the King James Version and earliest existing biblical manuscripts. He concluded that because translation errors in the King James Version are mirrored in the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith copied passages from the Bible rather than translate Jesus Christ’s Sermon on the Mount from ancient plates.

Linda Olson, a primary president in Mr. Larson’s ward, asked for a copy of the paper from Dr. Larson, and then handed it over to the bishop, Forrest Bitten, who passed it along to church headquarters. Mrs. Olson and Bishop Bitten said church authorities had asked them for the paper.

Dr. Larson said the director of the translation division suspended him from his job the next day. He said he was given an option of immediately resigning with one month’s pay or submitting to scrutiny from two church committees. If either committee reached a negative conclusion, he would be fired, dating back to the day he had met with supervisors. Dr. Larson said he elected to resign.
While the *Tribune* titled this article, “Scholar Who Challenges LDS Beliefs is Forced to Resign,” the Mormon Church’s newspaper, *Deseret News*, carried the following title over its article: “LDS are told they need not fear honest research on the Book of Mormon” (September 29, 1985). Although the *Deseret News* reported that Dr. Larson was forced to resign, it quoted Richard P. Lindsay, public communications managing director for the church, as saying:

The church and its membership have nothing to fear from any honest scholarship which treats the subject of the Book of Mormon, its doctrine and its historical origins, . . .

While the Mormon Church has the right to fire those who do not believe in its teachings, Church leaders have picked an exceptionally bad time to deal with the issue in this manner.

That Joseph Smith plagiarized from the King James Version of the Bible in creating the Book of Mormon is evident to those who have made a careful comparison of the two books. We have cited over 200 places where the Book of Mormon used quotations from the New Testament (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 74-79). Most of these quotations were supposed to have been recorded in the Book of Mormon between 600 B.C. and 33 A.D.—i.e., before the New Testament was even written! Furthermore, we have demonstrated that the early Greek manuscripts of the Bible do not support Joseph Smith’s Inspired Translation of the Bible (Ibid., pages 384-393). For example, in the King James Version, John 1:1 was translated as follows: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” In Joseph Smith’s Inspired Version, this unusual rendition of John 1:1 appears: “In the beginning was the gospel preached through the Son. And the gospel was the word, and the word was with the Son, and the Son was with God, and the Son was of God.” Joseph Smith’s translation is not supported by the ancient Greek manuscripts. In fact, in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 384, we have made our own translation of John 1:1 as it appears in Papyrus Bodmer II, dated about 200 A.D. Our translation confirms the King James Version: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Mormon leaders claim that the Catholic Church altered the Bible and that Joseph Smith was restoring the true text. Since the Bodmer Papyrus predates the time when the Catholic Church came to power, it casts considerable doubt on Joseph Smith’s rendition. Robert J. Matthews, who is considered the Mormon Church’s top authority on the Inspired Revision of the Bible, made this revealing statement:

In the main the passages revised by Joseph Smith are not supported by the three great parchment manuscripts that now enjoy popularity, nor by the thousands of papyrus manuscripts and fragments, nor by the Dead Sea Scrolls. (“Joseph Smith’s Revision of the Bible,” by Robert J. Matthews, 1968, typed copy, page 17)

Stan Larson used a different approach to test the Book of Mormon, but he arrived at the same conclusion as we did—i.e., Joseph Smith was not translating ancient records. Dr. Larson examined the text of a sermon Jesus was supposed to have given to the ancient Nephites which is recorded in the Book of Mormon. It is almost identical to the Sermon on the Mount as published in the King James Version of the Bible. Larson desired to find out if the sermon in the Book of Mormon was an actual translation from the “gold plates” or whether it was merely plagiarized from the King James Version. He knew that the text of the King James Version was based on later manuscripts, and that after it was published much older manuscripts were found. These manuscripts demonstrate that some errors had crept into the Greek text and were preserved in the King James Version. He reasoned, therefore, that if the earlier and better manuscripts supported readings in Joseph Smith’s translation, it would tend to show that Smith was working from an ancient record. If, on the other hand, the errors were perpetuated in Joseph Smith’s “translation,” it would prove that Smith merely lifted his material from the King James Version. If the material was plagiarized from the King James Version, the Book of Mormon could not possibly be “Another Testament of Jesus Christ,” as the Mormon Church maintains.

Dr. Larson found twelve places in the Sermon on the Mount where the top Greek scholars agree that the King James Version is in error because of its dependence on later manuscripts. When Larson compared the Book of Mormon, he found that in every case Joseph Smith blindly copied the errors of the King James Version. The following statements are taken from Dr. Larson’s study:

The text of this BOM [Book of Mormon] sermon provides an ideal opportunity to ascertain its accuracy as a real translation, for Hugh Nibley has suggested that one must test the BOM “against its purported background” in antiquity. If at each of these twelve points the BOM has a variant version differing from both forms of the extant Greek—from both the earliest ascertainable Greek text and the later, derivative Greek text—then one would be unable to pronounce judgment on the BOM version. This is so because the differing text in the BOM could be the way the sermon was delivered in the New World. However, if the BOM text always sides with the secondary Greek text which is demonstrably a later development in the Greek, then this dependence would be strong evidence against the historicity of the
BOM. . . Lastly, if the BOM text supports the better and demonstrably more ancient MSS which have become available in the last 470 years, it would be striking confirmation of the BOM’s historicity. That is to say, if the BOM text departs from the KJV to agree with the original text, it would indeed be independent verification of the BOM as a genuine document from antiquity.

... the question at hand is the historicity of the BOM account, ... It is this writer’s conclusion, arrived at after diligent study of the documents that have been utilized in the analysis of the twelve selected examples, that the historicity of the BOM text of the Sermon on the Mount has not been verified by modern MS discovery. The BOM text does not agree with the earliest Greek text at these twelve points, but does agree with the TR [Textus Receptus] and the KJV. (“The Sermon on the Mount: What Its Textual Transformation Discloses concerning the Historicity of the Book of Mormon,” unpublished manuscript by Stan Larson, pages 24-26)

At the front of this article the reader will find a photograph of a papyrus fragment containing a portion of the Sermon on the Mount. Bruce Manning Metzger lists it as Papyrus 67 (The Text of the New Testament, page 254). Larson, however, feels that it should be identified as Papyrus 64 because it is actually part of the same manuscript. In any case, both scholars agree that it was written about 200 A.D. This papyrus fragment contains the text of Matthew 5:27. In the King James Version this verse reads as follows: “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:”

Adam Clarke, who lived in Joseph Smith’s time, pointed out that the words translated as “by them of old time” were “omitted by nearly a hundred MSS., and some of them of the greatest antiquity and authority; also by the Coptic, Ethiopic, Armenian, Gothic, and Sclavonian versions; by four copies of the old Itala; and by Origen, Cyril, Theophylact, Euthymius, and Hilary. On this authority Wetstetein and Griesbach have left it out of the text.” (Clarke’s Commentary, vol. 5, page 73)

The papyrus fragment spoken of above was found during the present century and confirms Clarke’s suspicion that the five words (translated from two Greek words) were an interpolation to the text. Below is our transcription and translation of the words which appear on the papyrus fragment beginning in the middle of the ninth line and extending to the middle of the tenth line.

![Transcription and Translation](image)

The following shows how the text would have to read on the papyrus fragment to support the translation which appears in the King James Version. The interpolation has been circled.

When Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon, he blindly copied the interpolation “by them of old time” into his book (see 3 Nephi 12:27). Stan Larson feels that the Greek words should actually be rendered “to them of old time” instead of “by them of old time.” He, therefore, accuses Joseph Smith of not only plagiarizing an interpolation but also of using the King James “mistranslation” of these words (see page 26). Larson’s translation appears to be more reasonable.

At any rate, Stan Larson says that the text of the Book of Mormon shows evidence of having been derived from the King James Version after “the italic typeface” was standardized in the 1769 printing. He maintains that “All of these considerations force one to place the origin of the BOM account of the Sermon on the Mount on the historical time-line somewhere after 1769 and before 1830 when the BOM was published. This analysis based on textual criticism independently confirms Krister Stendahl’s discussion from the perspective of redaction criticism and genre criticism that the BOM text of the Sermon on the Mount is not a genuine translation from an ancient language, but rather is Joseph Smith’s nineteenth century targumic expansion of the English KJV text” (pages 30-31).

In footnote 34, Stan Larson shows that Joseph Smith’s Inspired Version of the Bible also failed the test when it was compared with the Greek manuscripts:

Likewise, Joseph Smith’s revision of the KJV, which is known as the Joseph Smith Translation (hereinafter JST) has not been substantiated by modern MS discovery. . . . In each of these twelve secure examples from the Sermon on the Mount the JST fails to agree with the original text . . . In one instance the JST revises the text of the KJV and the BOM in a direction further away from the original text, . . . (page 40)

In 1978 Brigham Young University Studies published an article by Stan Larson. In his recent paper Dr. Larson claims that this article “was censored by Charles Tate, the editor of BYU Studies, who expunged the following statements . . .” Larson proceeded to restore the material which was censored in BYU Studies and then stated:
These points evidently demonstrated too clearly for the editor of BYU Studies that Joseph Smith plagiarized from the KJV when dictating the Biblical quotations in the BOM. (page 41)

Dr. Larson is considered to be one of the top scholars in the Mormon Church. Besides his work in languages, he has become known for his research with regard to the text of the original manuscripts of the Book of Mormon. The church has published articles by him in the official publication, The Ensign (see the issues for September 1976 and September 1977). The September 1977 issue, page 91, referred to him as “coordinator of the standard works translation in the Church Translation Services.”

Stan Larson’s study on the text of the Sermon on the Mount and its relationship to the Book of Mormon is a very scholarly piece of work. Church leaders have apparently realized that the paper is irrefutable. Instead of dealing with the issues, they have decided to get rid of the man.

The Los Angeles Times, October 5, 1985, quoted Dr. Larson as saying:

“I went into New Testament textual studies hoping that when I compared Greek and Syriac manuscripts with the Book of Mormon that I would find support for the Book of Mormon and be able to show its antiquity,” Larson said. “I hoped to find support for the church, but I haven’t, to be honest.”

ATTACK ON M.H.A.

The Mormon History Association was organized in 1965. Its membership has included some of the top historians in the Church. In May 1985 we went back to Kansas City, Missouri to attend the annual meetings of this organization. We were astonished to hear some of the church’s top scholars frankly admit Joseph Smith’s involvement in magic and money-digging. Mormon historians, who had fought these charges for many years, seemed to just cave in under the weight of the evidence.

The Mormon Church had originally given a great deal of support to the Mormon History Association, but now it seems to be backing away from the organization. Dawn Tracy reported:

At BYU, officials are reacting to other reevaluations of church history by “leaning away” from the Mormon History Association, an independent professional organization, and creating a program of their own. . . . Keith Perkins, chairman of the BYU Department of Church History and Doctrine, said officials have established their own symposiums because MHA wasn’t allowing orthodox views to be presented. He said the BYU symposiums “more meet our needs.” Employees may attend MHA meetings but BYU no longer pays travel costs.

“Like me, many people are upset. When I see things I hold sacred attacked, I’m offended,” he said.

Robert J. Matthews, director of the BYU Department of Religious Education, said he has issued a “suggestion, and invitation” to employees to support the BYU program.

“We’re not giving orders,” he said.

“Our invitation didn’t mention MHA but people were obviously aware we are leaning away from the organization.”

Former MHA president Davis Bitton, professor of history, U. of U., called the decision “Isolating and narrow.” He said that for 20 years MHA has not tried to do public relations for the church but also has not participated in anti-Mormonism.

Dr. Matthews and Perkins said they didn’t pressure associate professor Susan Easton to withdraw a paper from MHA’s May symposium to be held in Salt Lake City. When asked why she withdrew the paper, Dr. Easton said “no comment.”. . .

Two employees in the Church Education System, who asked not to be identified, said supervisors have questioned them about papers they’ve published. (Salt Lake Tribune, September 28, 1985)

On June 29, 1985, John Dart reported the following in the Los Angeles Times:

Two women who wrote a biography of Mormon founder Joseph Smith’s first wife say they have been barred from speaking about their research at church meetings although the book has won two Mormon prizes for history.

Linda K. Newell, who wrote “Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith” with Valeen T. Avery, said church authorities “decided to remove the possibility that anyone might interpret our occasional speaking at (Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints) meetings as (amounting to) church endorsement of the book.”. . .

Newell, of Salt Lake City, said that she learned indirectly of the ban from friends and could only find the reasons when she met, at her request, with two members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the church’s top managerial body.

She said the two officials did not dispute the contents of the book, but they said that it conflicted with traditional interpretations of Joseph Smith—“particularly in regard to the initiation of polygamy in the early LDS church and therefore challenged the faith of some Latter Day Saints.”

Avery, a historian with Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, said in a separate interview that their book says that Smith was “dishonest with Emma, taking his friends’ daughters or wives as his wives. Joseph comes across in the book as a human being with flaws in his character.”. . .
“Mormon Enigma,” in its fourth printing since publication last fall by Doubleday, was cited as the best book of 1984 by the Mormon History Assn. and was co-winner of the David W. and Beatrice Evans Award for excellence in Mormon and Western biography. The latter award presentation was made at church-owned Brigham Young University.

Mormon historian Thomas G. Alexander, director of the Charles Redd Center at BYU, said he found the speaking ban “very disturbing.”

We have read *Mormon Enigma* and consider it to be a very good book. It is available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry for $19.95 (mail orders add 10% for postage and handling).

**NOVEL OR HISTORY?**

While we felt that Mormon scholars had yielded a great deal of ground at the meetings of the Mormon History Association in May, by the time the Sunstone Theological Symposium arrived in August, they had retreated even further. (This symposium, which attracts hundreds of Mormon scholars, is not officially connected with the church.) The burning question at the symposium seemed to be whether Joseph Smith really had “gold plates” from which he translated the Book of Mormon and whether the Book of Mormon should be considered as real history. When the question was raised at the first session, C. Jess Groesbeck jokingly responded: “David, I wish you hadn’t asked that question. . . .” In his reply, Levi Peterson pointed out that “There were remarks by those who observed him [Joseph Smith] that he could translate without the plates anywhere around, and we understand now that he translated by peering into the stone in the hat—using the hat to exclude light, so that he could see what was in the stone . . .” Professor Peterson went on to point out that if Joseph Smith didn’t really need the plates to translate, what “difference does it make if they were real or not?” Although many members of the audience seemed to be amused by this statement, it did not really answer the question. Obviously, it does make a great deal of difference whether the plates “were real or not.” Since Joseph Smith claimed that he received the “gold plates” from an angel, and since the Book of Mormon goes into great detail telling how the plates were prepared so they could be translated in the last days, it logically follows that a person cannot question the existence of the plates without making Joseph Smith a deceiver and the Book of Mormon a figment of his imagination. There is really no middle ground here.

At another session Marvin Hill, a professor of history at church-owned Brigham Young University, asserted that the Book of Mormon does not have to be history to be true:

. . . everybody’s questioning whether the plates existed and whether the Book of Mormon is history and so on. The stopping place for all of that is if you believe that Joseph is a prophet and if what he had to say is inspired. The *Doctrine and Covenants* doesn’t have to be history to be true, and my feeling is that the Book of Mormon may not have to be history to be true.

We do not see how Mormon historians can accept the Book of Mormon as true and yet claim that it doesn’t have to be historical. Apparently, what they are trying to tell us is that it is a good religious novel which contains inspiring thoughts, even though it was not written in ancient times as Joseph Smith affirmed. Some of the Mormon scholars who subscribe to the idea that the Book of Mormon is only a religious novel even refer to it as “scripture.” Their definition of scripture, however, is very different from that of a true believer. They are not saying that it is the “word of the Lord,” but only that it is accepted by the people as scripture. It is scripture in the same sense as the Koran or the Rig-Veda. If these historians are asked if Joseph Smith really had the plates, they may reply in the affirmative. They do not, however, believe that the plates date back to the time of the ancient Nephites but that they were created in the 19th century to convince the Book of Mormon witnesses that Joseph Smith really had an ancient record.

Lyn Jacobs, the man who was supposed to have discovered the Salamander letter, also spoke at one of the sessions of the Sunstone Symposium. Even though he indicated that he did not believe the Book of Mormon as history, he said that the church must continue to hold to its historicity:

If we don’t accept it [the Book of Mormon] as historical any longer, . . . then I think what we are doing, then, is . . . questioning the whole validity of the church itself—of Joseph Smith’s stance in it and . . . the stance of the living prophet today, etc. . . . if one still accepts what I do, that it really needs to within the church remain as a historical document—not that I believe that it is one, but nevertheless I think that the church has to remain believing that. It has to continue to believe it’s actual history . . .
ROBERTS’ DOUBTS

The fact that some of Mormonism’s top scholars have lost faith in the Book of Mormon as history certainly presents a serious problem to church leaders. The problem is compounded by the fact that newspapers and publishers have become interested in the subject. Just recently the University of Illinois Press released a book entitled, Studies of the Book of Mormon. This book contains the secret studies that the noted Mormon historian B. H. Roberts made with regard to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. We had already printed these manuscripts in 1980 under the title, B. H. Roberts’ Manuscripts Revealed (see Salt Lake City Messenger, July 1980, pages 11-12). Our publication, however, was of xerox copies of the manuscripts. The new printing by the University of Illinois Press has been nicely typeset with an introduction and footnotes by Brigham A. Madsen. It will undoubtedly have a much wider distribution than our publication.

B. H. Roberts, one of the greatest scholars that the Mormon church has ever produced, is noted for his defense of Mormonism and the Book of Mormon. In his New Witness for God he took a very firm stand on the Book of Mormon’s authenticity:

. . . if the book itself could be proved to be other than it claims to be, . . . then the Church . . . and its message and doctrines, which in some respects, may be said to have arisen out of the Book of Mormon, must fall; for if that book is other than it claims to be; if its origin is other than that ascribed to it by Joseph Smith, then Joseph Smith says that which is untrue; he is a false prophet of false prophets; and all he taught and all his claims to inspiration and divine authority, are not only vain but wicked; and all that he did as a religious teacher is not only senseless, but mischievous beyond human comprehending. (New Witness for God, vol. 2, Preface, as cited in Studies of the Book of Mormon, page 12)

As time passed, B. H. Roberts realized that there were some very serious problems with regard to the Book of Mormon which he was not able to answer. In his secret manuscripts he made these revealing comments:

. . . was Joseph Smith possessed of a sufficiently vivid and creative imagination as to produce such a work as the Book of Mormon from such materials as have been indicated in the preceding chapters . . . That such power of imagination would have to be of a high order is conceded; that Joseph Smith possessed such a gift of mind there can be no question. (Studies of the Book of Mormon, page 243)

In the light of this evidence, there can be no doubt as to the possession of a vividly strong, creative imagination by Joseph Smith, the Prophet, an imagination, it could with reason be urged, which, given the suggestions that are to be found in the “common knowledge” of accepted American antiquities of the times, supplemented by such a work as Ethan Smith’s View of the Hebrews, would make it possible for him to create a book such as the Book of Mormon is. (Ibid., page 250)

If from all that has gone before in Part I, the view be taken the Book of Mormon is merely of human origin; that a person of Joseph Smith’s limitations in experience and in education, who was of the vicinage and of the period that produced the book—if it be assumed that he is the author of it, then it could be said there is much internal evidence in the book itself to sustain such a view.

In the first place there is a certain lack of perspective in the things the book relates as history that points quite clearly to an undeveloped mind as their origin. The narrative proceeds in characteristic disregard of conditions necessary to its reasonableness, as if it were a tale told by a child, with utter disregard for consistency. (Ibid., page 250)

There were other Anti-Christs among the Nephites, but they were more military leaders than religious innovators, yet much of the same kidney in spirit with these dissenters here passed in review; but I shall hold that what is here presented illustrates sufficiently the matter taken in hand by referring to them, namely that they are all of one breed and brand; so nearly alike that one mind is the author of them, and that a young and undeveloped, but piously inclined mind. The evidence I sorrowfully submit, points to Joseph Smith as their creator. It is difficult to believe that they are the product of history, that they come upon the scene separated by long periods of time, and among a race which was the ancestral race of the red man of America. (Ibid., page 271)

In an article published in The Ensign, December 1983, pages 11-19, Professor Truman G. Madsen, of Brigham Young University, tried to minimize the importance of B. H. Roberts’ parallels between View of the Hebrews and the Book of Mormon:

Are there “striking parallels” between the Book of Mormon and Ethan Smith’s 1823 novel, View of the Hebrews, a fictional account of Israelites from the lost Ten Tribes who migrated to the Americas after the destruction of Jerusalem? Elder Roberts confirmed for
his missionaries that any such parallels are abstract, even empty. Aside from the claim of Hebraic backgrounds, only two specific similarities occur: Ethan Smith quotes Isaiah at length and refers to the Urim and Thummim. . . .

Ethan Smith published a book on revelation in 1833, . . . He also republished View of the Hebrews, revised and enlarged, in 1835. Both books were published long after the Book of Mormon began circulation. If critics can claim that Joseph Smith was aware of Ethan Smith’s novel, it surely can also be claimed that Ethan Smith was aware of Joseph Smith’s.

Professor Truman Madsen (not to be confused with Brigham Madsen) made two very glaring errors in his article. The errors are so serious, in fact, that they would lead one to believe that he has never read View of the Hebrews.

1. He referred twice to Ethan Smith’s book as a “novel.” Anyone who has read the book knows that it is not a novel. In the Bibliography to Studies of the Book of Mormon, page 347, we read:

“Ethan Smith’s View of the Hebrews was, of course, not a ‘novel’ in any sense of the word, but was a serious analysis of current archeological discoveries and the known cultural studies of Indian tribes in order to prove the theory that the American Indians were of Israelitish descent.”

2. Truman Madsen also maintained that Ethan Smith “republished View of the Hebrews, revised and enlarged, in 1835 . . . long after the Book of Mormon began circulation.” Dr. Madsen is ten years off on his dating. The correct date appears on the title page as “1825.” This is substantiated in the preface “For The Second Edition” which ends, “Poultney, April 1, 1825.” Instead of the “enlarged” edition being published five years after the Book of Mormon (as Madsen maintains), it actually was in print five years before the Book of Mormon. We have photographically reprinted B. H. Roberts’ own copy of View of the Hebrews. This book, which contains some of Roberts’ handwritten notations, is available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry.

In another article, Professor Madsen claimed that B. H. Roberts was only using “the ‘Devil’s Advocate’ approach to stimulate thought” when he wrote his controversial studies of the Book of Mormon. A careful examination of these manuscripts, however, leads one to believe that Roberts was struggling with grave doubts about the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. The recent publication of B. H. Roberts’ secret manuscripts includes some new and important evidence concerning his frame of mind after he completed his studies. It comes from the “Personal Journal of Wesley P. Lloyd, former dean of the Graduate School at Brigham Young University and a missionary under Roberts in the Eastern States Mission.” Lloyd recorded this revealing information in his journal on August 7, 1933—less than two months before Roberts’ death:

Roberts went to work and investigated it [the Book of Mormon] from every angle but could not answer it satisfactorily to him self. At his request Pres. Grant called a meeting of the Twelve Apostles and Bro. Roberts presented the matter, told them frankly that he was stumped and ask for their aide [sic] in the explanation. In answer, they merely one by one stood up and bore testimony to the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. George Albert Smith in tears testified that his faith in the Book had not been shaken by the question. Pres. Ivins, the man most likely to be able to answer a question on that subject was unable to produce the solution. No answer was available. Bro. Roberts could not criticize them for not being able to answer it or to assist him, but said that in a Church which claimed continuous revelation, a crisis had arisen where revelation was necessary. After the meeting he wrote Pres. Grant expressing his disappointment at the failure and especially at the failure of Pres. Ivins to contribute to the problem. It was mentioned at the meeting by Bro. Roberts that there were other Book of Mormon problems that needed special attention. Richard R. Lyman spoke up and asked if they were things that would help our prestige and when Bro. Roberts answered no, he said then why discuss them. This attitude was too much for the historically minded Roberts. There was however a committee appointed to study this problem, consisting of Bros. Talmage, Ballard, Roberts and one other Apostle. They met and looked vacantly at one and other, but none seemed to know what to do about it. Finally, Bro. Roberts mentioned that he had at least attempted an answer and he had it in his drawer. That it was an answer that would satisfy people that didn’t think, but a very inadequate answer to a thinking man. . . . After this Bro. Roberts made a special Book of Mormon study. Treated the problems systematically and historically and in a 400 type written page thesis set forth a revolutionary article on the origin of the Book of Mormon and sent it to Pres. Grant. It’s an article far too strong for the average Church member but for the intellectual group he considers it a contribution to assist in explaining Mormonism. He swings to a psychological explanation of the Book of Mormon and shows that the plates were not objective but subjective with Joseph Smith, that his exceptional imagination qualified him psychologically for the experience which he had in presenting to the world the Book of Mormon and that the plates with the Urim and Thummim were not objective. He explained certain literary difficulties
in the Book. . . . These are some of the things which has made Bro. Roberts shift his base on the Book of Mormon. Instead of regarding it as the strongest evidence we have of Church Divinity, he regards it as one which needs the most bolstering. His greatest claim for the divinity of the Prophet Joseph lies in the *Doctrine and Covenants*. ("Journal of Wesley P. Lloyd," August 7, 1933, as cited in *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, pages 23-24)

Utah Lighthouse Ministry is selling B. H. Roberts’ *Studies of the Book of Mormon* (paperback edition published by Signature Books). We are also handling another book concerning the relationship of *View of the Hebrews* to the Book of Mormon. This is David Persuitte’s in depth study of parallels between the two books. It is published under the title, *Joseph Smith and the Origin of the Book of Mormon*.

**OVERREACTION?**

The Mormon leaders seem to realize that they are facing serious historical problems. In an article entitled, “Keep the Faith,” Gordon B. Hinckley, of the church’s First Presidency, wrote:

We live at a time when old beliefs and old standards are being challenged. The Church of which we are members is being attacked on many sides. A few dissidents, apostates, and excommunicants have marshaled their resources in an effort to belittle and demean this work—its history, its doctrine, its practices.

There is another group presently receiving wide publicity across the nation. They are poking into all the crevices of our history, ferreting out little things of small import and magnifying them into great issues of public discussion, working the media in an effort to give credibility to their efforts. . . . I plead with you, do not let yourselves be numbered among the critics, among the dissidents, among the apostates. . . .

To all Latter-day Saints, I say, keep the faith. (The *Ensign*, September 1985, pages 4-6)

Just two months before Hofmann and Flynn came to his office to inquire what they should tell police who were investigating the bombings, the Mormon Apostle Dallin Oaks made an attack on the news media and also warned members not to criticize church leaders even if they are wrong:

My fellow teachers: in the six months since I accepted this invitation, there has been a flurry of excitement about Church history. . . . the news media are having a field day. Controversy makes good copy, especially when it concerns a church with some doctrines that diverge sharply from those of mainstream Christianity. . . .

The resulting publicity has stimulated attacks on the Church by seemingly religious persons. . . . I have chosen to speak on how Church history should be read, especially the so-called “history” that comes in bits and pieces in the daily or weekly news media. . . . the news media are particularly susceptible to conveying erroneous information about facts, including historical developments that are based on what I have called scientific uncertainties. . . .

Bias can also be exercised in decisions on what news stories to publish and what to omit. . . .

Criticism is particularly objectionable when it is directed toward Church authorities, general or local. . . . Evil-speaking of the Lord’s anointed is in a class by itself. It is one thing to depreciate a person who exercises corporate power or even government power. It is quite another thing to criticize or depreciate a person for the performance of an office to which he or she has been called of God. It does not matter that the criticism is true. . . .

The Holy Ghost will not guide or confirm criticism of the Lord’s anointed, or of Church leaders, local or general. . . .

Our individual, personal testimonies are based on the witness of the Spirit, not on any combination or accumulation of historical facts. If we are so grounded, no alteration of historical facts can shake our testimonies. ("Reading Church History," 1985 CES *Doctrine and Covenants* Symposium, BYU, August 16, 1985, pages 1, 2, 5, 16, 24-26)

The Mormon scholar L. Jackson Newell has publicly criticized the response by church leaders to the problems:

L. Jackson Newell, dean of liberal education at the University of Utah and co-editor of “Dialogue,” said the increasing cries coming from leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints urging members to be obedient to authority and the escalating action leaders are taking against LDS scholars attack the principles of free inquiry and free expression.

“My concern is that their response . . . itself looms as a grave threat to our traditions, values and doctrines. . . .” We are witnessing systematic efforts to undermine confidence in virtually all unofficial sources of understanding about our past. (Deseret News, August 25, 1985)

**MAGIC NAMES?**

When Fawn Brodie published her book, *No Man Knows My History*, in 1945, the Mormon scholar Hugh Nibley ridiculed her for accepting “the stories of the
same witnesses regarding ‘seer stones, ghosts, magic incantations, and nocturnal excavations.’ Now scandal stories thrive notoriously well in rural settings, while the judgment of one’s neighbors regarding one’s general character over a number of years is far less likely to run into the fantastic. Yet Brodie can reject the character witnesses as prejudiced while accepting the weirdest extravagances of their local gossip” (No Ma’am That’s Not History, pages 11-12).

Today, Mormon scholars find themselves using the same sources which were once ridiculed. At the Sunstone Symposium, Levi Peterson pointed this out:

Ironically, Bushman has found it valid, as Professor Walker has found it, to use the same data which anti-Mormon historian Fawn Brodie employed in No Man Knows My History. And so it’s interesting that her book, which has been vilified for decades, basically is based upon the—utilizes the same sources that now faithful historians will be using, and are using.

We certainly feel that these sources are important and have used them in our publications Joseph Smith and Money-Digging and Mormonism, Magic and Masonry. We feel, however, that scholars will have to be cautious about seeing magic practices in things that could be more easily explained in other ways. The Mormon scholar D. Michael Quinn, for instance, has probably gone too far in this respect. The Deseret News, August 24, 1985, reported:

One Mormon historian says evidence is convincing that Mormon Church founder Joseph Smith and his family were involved in various forms of ritual and folk magic, but that evidence does not diminish his own faith in his religion.

D. Michael Quinn, a Brigham Young University history professor, Friday addressed a session of the Sunstone Theological Symposium. . . .

He said it’s clear that the family of Joseph Smith Sr., including his son, the Mormon prophet, Joseph Smith Jr., believed in and practiced ritual and folk magic. . . .

Smith Sr. gave his sons Joseph, Hyrum and Alvin names with magical significance.

While we do agree that the evidence clearly shows that the Smith family was involved in magic, the claim that Joseph Smith, Sr., gave his children magic names seems to be based on speculation. According to the Salt Lake Tribune, August 25, 1985, Dr. Quinn “cited the biblical Joseph’s use of silver cups for divination.” Quinn believes that Joseph Smith’s father felt that the biblical Joseph was involved in divination, and therefore he named his son after him. This idea comes from the 44th chapter of Genesis. Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt taught that God “sanctified” a “silver” cup and that Joseph actually used it for divination:

The “silver cup” which Joseph in Egypt commanded the steward to put in Benjamin’s sack, in order to try his brethren, was, most probably, sanctified as a Urim and Thummim to Joseph. Hence, Joseph commanded the steward to pursue his brethren, and say to them, “Is not this in which my Lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth?” And when Joseph’s brethren were brought back, he said unto them, “What deed is this that ye have done? Wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?” (Masterful Discourses and Writings of Orson Pratt, compiled by N. B. Lundwall, page 589)

Adam Clarke, a noted Protestant writer, had an entirely different view of the incident. He said it was “not at all likely that Joseph practiced any kind of divination. . . .” (Clarke’s Commentary, vol. 1, page 247). Clarke pointed out that since Joseph was trying to “deceive his brethren for a short time” (his brothers, of course, had previously sold him into slavery), he might pretend to have a cup he used for divining to help convince them that he was a harsh and idolatrous Egyptian governor. In Genesis 42: 7, 9 and 23, we read:

And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spoke roughly unto them; . . . and said unto them, Ye are spies; . . . And they knew not that Joseph understood them, for he spake unto them by an interpreter.

According to Clarke’s view, the statements about divination should not be given any more credence than Joseph’s charge that his brothers were “spies” and had stolen his cup. This interpretation seems to be compatible with the context of Genesis, and although Joseph interprets a number of dreams, there is no mention of a divining cup being used.

In any case, it may be possible that Joseph Smith, Sr. regarded the biblical Joseph as a diviner. The important question, however, is did he name his own son after him for this reason? While there is no way to know for certain, it would seem that the most likely explanation is that Joseph Smith, Sr., liked his own name and decided to bestow it on his son. As to the origin of the name Hyrum, Dr. Quinn felt that it came from Hiram Abif who plays an important role in Masonry. Masonic writers claim that Hiram Abif was the “Hiram” mentioned in 1 Kings 7:13-14. He was “a worker in brass.” Another explanation, however, might be that Hyrum Smith’s name came from “Hiram king of Tyre.” This king was David’s friend and cooperated with Solomon when he built the temple (see 1 Kings 5:1-18). Joseph Smith, Sr., gave one of his other sons the biblical name Samuel. Dr. Quinn has found a magic name which he feels is similar to Alvin. The Bible, however, contains a close parallel in “Alvan” (Genesis 36:23).
Wesley P. Walters, who has recently done some research in the census records, has informed us that the names Joseph Smith, Sr., gave to his sons are typical of those found in the vicinity of Palmyra. Mormon scholar Richard Anderson pointed out that there were other Joseph Smiths in the Manchester area, and . . . one ‘Hiram’ Smith signed Hurlbut’s general Manchester affidavit, . . .” (BYU Studies, Spring 1970, page 292). Under the circumstances, we feel that the claim that Joseph Smith’s father used magic names for his children is not very convincing.

JESUS A MAGICIAN?

In 1978 Dr. Morton Smith charged that Jesus had used a “magical formula” at the time of the “raising of Jairus’ daughter” (Jesus The Magician, page 95). In his attempt to excuse Joseph Smith for the role he played in the magic arts, Dr. Quinn tries to link Jesus to the occult. On August 25, 1985, the Salt Lake Tribune reported:

Professor Quinn stated that the teachings of the occult have long been present to religion and have not been completely rejected by it. . . . He sees in Jesus’ words to the daughter of Jairus in the Gospel of Mark, “Tallitha, cumi,” a magical formula.

To those who are looking for magical formulas, the words talitha cumin (or talitha koum in some versions of the Greek text) may seem to have a mysterious sound. Below is a photograph of a photograph of the Greek text of Mark 5:41 from The Greek New Testament. The two important words have been circled.

To understand the problem here a person must realize that while the Gospels were written in Greek, Aramaic was the language Jesus and his disciples used most frequently. While Mark 5:41 is written entirely in Greek characters, the words talitha cumin are not Greek words. They are actually Aramaic words transliterated into Greek characters. The words mean, “Little girl, arise” (Wycliffe Bible Commentary, page 999; also Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible). The words talitha cumin are certainly not secret magic words for Mark himself tells us that they are “translated” as “Little girl, I say to you, arise” (Mark 5:41). Luke relates the same story but does not use the Aramaic words talitha cumin. He merely says that Jesus took hold of the girl’s hand and said, “Little girl, arise” (Luke 8:54). Mark uses the Greek word korasion for “little girl,” while Luke uses pais. Either word, however, can be properly rendered as child, maid or little girl.

Since Jesus spoke Aramaic, it is not surprising that Mark would leave some of the words in that original language. He also did this on other occasions. When Jesus healed the deaf man, Mark quoted Him as saying, “Ephphatha, that is, be opened” (Mark 7:34). In Mark 14:36 we read: “And he said, Abba, Father . . .” Again, in Mark 15:22 we find the following: “And they bring him into the place Golgotha, which is being interpreted, the place of a skull.” Finally, in Mark 15:34 we read: “. . . Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is being interpreted, My God, my God, why halt thou forsaken me?”

In order to prove that Jesus was reciting a magic formula when he said talitha cumin, one would have to produce some evidence contemporary with Jesus. In his discussion of the matter in Jesus The Magician, Morton Smith fails to bring forth any such evidence. Smith does, however, try to link Mark 5:41 with Acts 9:36-40:

. . . talitha koum . . . became the basis of another phrase—if not an entire story—preserved in Acts 9:36ff. where Peter raises a dead woman conveniently named Tabitha by saying to her in Greek, “Tabitha, get up.” (Tabitha is a mispronunciation of talitha, which the storyteller mistook for a proper name.) (Jesus The Magician, page 95)

While there is a similarity between the words Tabitha and talitha (Tabitha contains the Greek letter beta, while talitha has the letter lambda koum (or cumin) bears no resemblance to the Greek word translated “arise” or “get up” in Acts 9:40. This word is anastethi. Furthermore, there is no evidence that “Tabitha is a mispronunciation of talitha.” In fact, there is convincing evidence from the original languages that it is not a mistake. Acts 9:36 says that the woman was named “Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorkas: . . .” Tabitha is “An Aramaic word meaning gazelle” (The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, page 1142). Dorkas is a Greek word which also means gazelle (Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible). This all makes perfect sense. Peter is calling the woman by name and is telling her to “arise.” Morton Smith’s explanation, however, does not fit any of these facts. He would have us believe that it all arose through a misunderstanding.

In any case, the fact that some Aramaic words were preserved in Mark’s Gospel does not make them a “magic formula.” Even Morton Smith has preserved foreign words in his translation of ancient texts. For instance, on page 70 of Jesus The Magician, he translated from Plato’s writings but when he came to the word goeteia he merely transliterated it into English letters: “. . . in sacrifices and initiations and spells, and all prophecy and goeteia.”
Although Morton Smith, whose work is now used by a number of Mormon scholars who believe that Jesus was a magician, rejected the deity of Jesus, he did maintain that He did perform some “cures” through natural means:

He was born in Palestine, probably within eight or ten years of the beginning of the present era. He grew up in Galilee, was baptized by John the Baptist, formed a band of his own followers, and went about with them mostly in Galilee, but at least once visited Jerusalem and there was arrested and crucified—on these matters the gospels agree; we have no reason to question their reports.

Nor is there any reason to question their unanimous report that Jesus attracted attention as a miracle worker. Rationalists long assumed that miracles do not occur and that the gospel stories of Jesus’ miracles were legendary . . . Jesus’ “exorcisms” and “cures” are now commonly thought to have resulted from the sudden cessation of hysterical symptoms and cognate psychological disorders. . . .

Thus the external framework of Jesus’ life—the what, when, and where—is reasonably certain. Beyond these facts lie difficulties. For instance, some of his disciples thought he rose from the dead. (Ibid., pages 8 and 17)

Morton Smith argued that Jesus was actually a magician who “Initiated his disciples and bound them to himself by magical rites unknown to the prophets, . . . (Ibid., page 163). He also maintained that “Jesus’ exorcisms were accompanied by abnormal behavior on his part. Magicians who want to make demons obey often scream their spells, gesticulate, and match the mad in fury” (Ibid., page 32). Dr. Smith seemed to give some credence to the following:

The rabbinic report that in Egypt Jesus was tattooed with magic spells . . . The antiquity of the source, type of citation, connection with the report that he was in Egypt, and agreement with Egyptian magical practices are considerable arguments in its favor.

Another consideration in its favor is its close connection with the rabbinic report that he was “a madman”—that is, occasionally manic or hysterical. (Ibid., pages 150-151)

On page 47 of Jesus The Magician, Morton Smith argued that the following rabbinic report probably refers to Jesus coming out of Egypt with magic spells tattooed upon his body:

Rabbi Eliezer declared him guilty, but most scholars innocent. Rabbi Eliezer said to them, “But is it not [the case that] Ben Stada brought magic spells from Egypt in the scratches on his flesh?” They said to him, “He was a madman and you cannot base laws on [the actions of] madmen.” Was he then the son of Stada? Surely he was the son of Pandira? Rabbi Hisda [a third-century Babylonian] said, “The husband was Stada, the paramour was Pandira.” [But was not] the husband Pappos ben Judah? His mother was Stada. [But was not] his mother Miriam [Mary] the hairdresser? [Yes, but she was nicknamed Stada]—as we say in Pumbeditha, ‘s’tat da [i.e., this one has turned away] from her husband.”

Although Morton Smith links “the son of Pandira” with another rabbinic story about “Jesus the son of Panteri” (Ibid., page 46), he admits that the reference is confusing. He even states that the original Ben Stada was not Jesus:

. . . the rabbis are generally ignorant of chronology and constantly guilty of absurd anachronisms. . . . The original Ben Stada seems to have been a Jew who advocated some cult involving the worship of deities other than Yahweh. He was entrapped by Jews in Lydda, condemned by a rabbinic court, and stoned. Since Jesus also was accused of introducing the worship of other gods—notably himself—he was nicknamed Ben Stada. Hence it is often difficult to tell to whom the passages on “Ben Stada” refer. (Ibid., page 47)

While the Bible does mention the fact that Jesus was in Egypt, Matthew 2:20 says that he was only a “young child” (paidion) when he was brought back to Israel.

Morton Smith tries to convince his readers that the Apostle Paul also had magic tattoos on his body: “Moreover, Paul claimed to be tattooed or branded with ‘the marks of Jesus,’ Gal. 6:17—most likely, the same marks that Jesus had carried” (Ibid., page 48). The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, page 1298, presents a far more reasonable explanation. It states that the marks which Paul had were “the marks of persecution which he bore in his body, scars suffered for the sake of the Lord Jesus, . . .” Support for this interpretation is found in 2 Corinthians 11:24-25, where Paul himself commented: “Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, . . .”

In his book Jesus The Magician, Dr. Smith seems willing to go to great lengths to prove his case that Jesus was linked to the occult. For instance, he gives this translation of Matthew 27:62-63:

The word Dr. Smith translates as “magician” is planos. Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible gives the meaning as, “roving (as a tramp), i.e. (by impl.) an imposter or misleader:—deceiver, seducing.” (Greek Word No. 4108) While it is true that a magician is a “deceiver,” there are many deceivers who are not magicians. Dr. Smith seems to be forcing his own opinion into his translation. Actually, the New Testament has a
word for a magician or sorcerer. That word is *magos*. It is used, for instance, in Acts 13:6 and 8. On page 69 of his book, Morton Smith says that “The common Greek word for ‘magician’ in Jesus’ time was *goes* (plural *goetes*).” The word *goetes* is found in 2 Timothy 3:13 and is translated as “seducers” in the King James Version: “But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, . . .” This same word, however, can be translated as “wizard,” “waier” or “enchanter.” That Matthew used *planos* instead of *magos* or *goes* seems to destroy Morton Smith’s argument.

Dr. Smith made his own translations of most of the documents used in his book. It is hard to have a great deal of confidence in these translations after we see how he rendered *planos* from the Greek text of Matthew. On page 50 of Jesus The Magician, Smith translated some material from the historian Suetonius who wrote about the Christians around 120 A.D.: “Suetonius is brief: ‘Penalties were imposed on the Christians, a kind of men [holding] a new superstition [that involved the practice] of magic’ . . .” Martin A. Larson, who was convinced that Christianity had its roots in paganism, also quoted Suetonius. The reader will notice, however, that the word “magic” is not mentioned: “Suetonius, after detailing the enormities of which Nero was guilty, lists among his good works that he ‘inflicted punishment on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition’” (The Religion of the Occident, page 308).

Tacitus, the famous Roman historian, wrote concerning the Christian religion in the early part of the second century. He referred to the Romans charging the Christians with “hating all mankind.” Although Dr. Smith could not find a direct charge of magic in the writings of Tacitus, this did not deter him from implying that this is what the Romans had in mind: “. . . hatred of the human race is a charge appropriate to magicians as popular imagination conceived them” (Jesus The Magician, page 52).

About 165 A.D. a pagan by the name of Lucian wrote concerning Christianity. There appears to be nothing in Lucian’s writings to support Morton Smith’s thesis. In fact, Smith himself concedes that “Nothing is said of miracles or magic” (Ibid., page 56).

Before the turn of the third century, Celsus wrote concerning Christianity. Although no copies of his work have survived, about 247 A.D. a Christian writer by the name of Origen “quoted a good deal of it, almost sentence by sentence.” Celsus does give support to the idea that Jesus was a sorcerer, but since he wrote about a century and a half after Jesus’ death, his words do not have the same weight as they would have if they were written by Josephus, Tacitus, Suetonius or Pliny. Furthermore, even Dr. Smith had to admit that Celsus “drew his material from both sides and that he must be used with caution” (Ibid., page 58).

One of the main sources Morton Smith uses to try to prove that Jesus was a magician is magical papyri which were penned many years after the crucifixion of Jesus. While Dr. Smith suggests that “some” of the papyri may have been originally written “at least as early as the gospels,” there is no way to know for certain, and in an article on “Magic in Early Christianity” David E. Aune informs us that “most of the magical papyri come from the third through the fifth centuries A.D. . . .” Morton Smith feels there are many important parallels between the magical papyri and the story of Jesus in the New Testament. If he could show that the papyri predated the lifetime of Jesus his parallels would be more impressive. Although Dr. Smith claims the papyri are basically pagan documents, it is clear that the Bible (either directly or indirectly) had an influence on the authors of these documents. Dr. Smith concedes that there are “references to Jesus in the papyri” (Jesus The Magician, Preface viii), and on page 69 of the same book, he says: “The Jews’ god, Yahweh . . . was particularly famous for his usefulness in magic. In the magical papyri (which contains a sprinkling of Jewish spells, but are mainly pagan documents) his name outnumbers that of any other deity by more than three to one.”

On page 109 of his book, Morton Smith wrote:

Chapter VI showed that the primary characteristic of a magician was to do miracles. In this Jesus evidently excelled. Through all antiquity no other man is credited with so many. The gospels contain well over 200 items about Jesus that directly involve something miraculous . . .

We certainly agree that many miracles are attributed to Jesus in the New Testament. If a person believes that all miracle workers are magicians, then Jesus would have to be described as a “magician.” However, anyone who has done any serious study of the rituals used by magicians knows that they are strikingly different than what we find in the New Testament. They are filled with mysterious names. For example, we find these statements in some of the magical papyri cited in Morton Smith’s book:

“I conjure you by the god of the Hebrews, Jesus, laba, tae, Abraoth, Aia, Thoth,” etc. (page 63)

Spell said to the cup. Say seven [times], “You are wine; you are not wine but the head of Athena. You are wine; you are not wine but the entrails of Osiris, the entrails of Iso Pakerbeth, Eternal Sun o o o . . . i a a a”—To make it compulsive [add] “Abianathanalba akrammacharei e e e, the [angel] put in charge of compulsion, Jacob lao Sabaoth Adonai Abrasax” . . . (page 111)
Adonai, Abrasax, Pinouti and Sabaos [sic], fire the soul and heart of him, Amonios, whom Helen bore, for him, Serapiacus, whom Threpta bore, now, now quick, quick! (page 124)

These complicated and mysterious rituals should be contrasted with stories in the New Testament where Jesus cast out demons:

And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. (Mark 1:25)

For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. (Mark 5:5)

When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. (Mark 9:25)

The absence of all the hocus-pocus of magic is evident in these passages. Dr. Smith tries to explain away the lack of magical ritual by saying it was suppressed. Speaking of the report of Jesus' baptism, he said:

No gospel says anything of any ritual, though the baptism must have been accompanied by prayers and thanksgivings (possibly also by hymns) and effected with some regular form of actions and formula of words. The omission of such elements here—in spite of their importance to the event—should warn us that elsewhere the absence of reference to ritual does not prove that none was used. We have seen that rituals and formulae were apt to be taken as evidence of magic, and therefore to be deleted . . . (Jesus The Magician, page 96)

In discussing the story of the descent of the spirit we showed that its closest parallels are found in accounts of magical rites. Indeed it seems to be an abbreviated version of such a magical account—abbreviated to eliminate the magical traits. (Ibid., page 145)

Dr. Smith gives no manuscript evidence to support his serious accusations. He knows that the New Testament as we have it does not provide the support he needs to prove Jesus was a magician. Therefore, he claims that much of the magic material has been deleted. He seems to feel that even the original authors of the Gospels strove to remove magical elements out of Jesus’ life:

Sometimes it is clear that stories have been revised to get rid of magical details. The exorcism in Mk. 5 is a good example. According to Mark, Jesus makes the demon tell his name. This was standard magical practice; once you knew the name you could use it to order the demon out. But in Mark the exorcism proper has been deleted, so the question is useless. Even that was too much for Matthew; he deleted the question as well (8.29f.). Matthew's consistent deletion of magical traits has been demonstrated by Hull, Hellenistic Magic, 116ff. Such censorship left most references to magical procedure in the gospels scattered and isolated, one term here, another there. (Ibid., page 145)

On page 131, Dr. Smith even spoke of Matthew’s “dislike of magical traits.”

Morton Smith observed:

One of the commonest forms of exorcism was to order the demon out “by the name of” some more powerful being, usually a god whose “true name” or “true” title or function the magician knew. (Ibid., page 35)

David E. Aune, however, pointed out that although Jesus’ disciples used his name to cast out devils “there is no evidence to suggest that Jesus himself invoked the name of God or any other powerful names in the rituals which he used to effect exorcisms and healings, . . .”

Although it would be hard to deny that magic had some influence on the Israelites, the Bible condemns its practice in many places. In the Old Testament we read:

When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.

There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch,

Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee.

Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God.

For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do. (Deuteronomy 18:9-14)

In the New Testament witchcraft is listed among the evil “works of the flesh”:

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,
Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21)

Acts 19:19 informs us concerning some people who “used curious arts” before they were converted. At the time they confessed the Lord, however, they “brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.”

JESUS AND JOSEPH

While Morton Smith would have us believe that Jesus was a magician, the evidence he presents is very weak. It is interesting to compare this evidence with that which has come to light concerning Joseph Smith. To begin with, Dr. Smith has to use a dubious translation of Matthew 27:63 to support his claim that the Jews told Pilate that Jesus was a “magician.” In Joseph Smith’s case, however, we have an original document which proves that he was a “glass looker” and that he was arrested, tried and found guilty by a justice of the peace in Bainbridge, N. Y. in 1826. This document is Justice Albert Neeley’s bill showing the costs involved in several trials held in 1826. The fifth item from the top mentions the trial of “Joseph Smith The Glass Looker.” According to the court record, which was first printed in Fraser’s Magazine in 1873, Joseph Smith himself confessed that “he had a certain stone which he had occasionally looked at to determine where hidden treasures in the bowels of the earth were; that he professed to tell in this manner where gold mines were a distance under ground, . . . and . . . had occasionally been in the habit of looking through this stone to find lost property for three years, . . .” (Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 32).

The 1826 trial proves beyond all doubt that Joseph Smith used a stone which he placed in his hat to try to locate buried treasures. This was, of course, a common practice by magicians and those who were involved in the occult.

In Mormonism, Magic and Masonry, pages 3-17, we have a photograph of a magic talisman which was owned by Joseph Smith and photographs of magic parchments which were owned by his brother Hyrum. Furthermore, we have a revelation which Joseph Smith published in which he endorsed the use of a divining rod. While Morton Smith is unable to find any evidence written during Jesus’ lifetime that would support his claim that He was a sorcerer, we have an abundance of affidavits and statements by people who personally knew Joseph Smith and witnessed his participation in magical activities (see our publications Mormonism, Magic and Masonry and Joseph Smith and Money-Digging).

Morton Smith had to resort to a great deal of speculation and wishful thinking in his attempt to prove that Jesus was a magician. The case against Joseph Smith, however, is built on contemporary documents and testimony which appears to be irrefutable.

BENSON TAKES OVER

The day Mormon historians and other liberal members of the Mormon church have feared for many years has finally arrived. With the death of Spencer W. Kimball, Ezra Taft Benson has become the thirteenth President of the Mormon church. Through the years Mr. Benson has been so dogmatic in his views about politics and religion that he has acquired many enemies. One Mormon, in fact, told us that if Benson ever became President of the church, he would know that there is no truth in Mormonism. Even some of the top leaders of the church have had problems with him. On January 4, 1964, Drew Pearson made the following comment concerning Benson: “Benson has become so extreme in his views that the Mormon Church, of which he is one of the Twelve Apostles, has quietly transferred him abroad to head the church’s European mission” (San Francisco Chronicle, January 4, 1964). President David O. McKay denied the accusation, but the newspapers let the “cat out of the bag” when they published two letters written to Rep. Ralph R. Harding. One of them was written by Joseph Fielding Smith, who became the tenth president of the Mormon church:

I am glad to report to you that, it will be some time before we hear anything from Brother Benson, who is now on his way to Great Britain where I suppose he will be at least for the next two years. When he returns, I hope his blood will be purified. (Salt Lake Tribune, February 21, 1964)

After the death of Joseph Fielding Smith, Mr. Benson rapidly rose to great power within Mormonism. On February 25, 1974, the Brigham Young University’s Daily Universe reported the following:

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — . . . Ezra Taft Benson, . . . said, in an interview this week, it is “entirely possible” the president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) will one day declare support for a political candidate. . . . Benson, . . . said he has never had to separate his religion from his politics.

In 1980, with the failing health of President Kimball, Ezra Taft Benson must have realized that he was very close to becoming “Prophet, Seer and Revelator,” or as the Apostle McConkie phrased it, “king of the kingdom on earth” (Mormon Doctrine, 1979, pages 415-416). At that time Benson made very clear the powers he would have when he became President of the Mormon church:
FIRST: *The Prophet is the Only Man Who Speaks For The Lord in Everything.* . . . We are to “give heed unto all his words”—as if from the Lord’s “own mouth.”


THIRD: *The Living Prophet is More Important to Us Than a Dead Prophet.* . . . The most important prophet so far as you and I are concerned is the one living in our day . . . Therefore the most important reading we can do is any of the words of the Prophet contained each week in the Church Section of the Deseret News, and any words of the Prophet contained each month in our Church magazines. Our marching orders for each six months are found in the General Conference addresses which are printed in the Ensign magazine . . .

Beware of those who would pit the dead prophets against the living prophets, for the living prophets always take precedence.

FOURTH: *The Prophet Will Never Lead The Church Astray.* . . .

FIFTH: *The Prophet is Not Required to Have Any Particular Earthly Training or Credentials to Speak on Any Subject or Act on Any Matter at Any Time.* . . .

SIXTH: *The Prophet Does Not Have to Say “Thus Saith the Lord” to Give Us Scripture.* . . .

SEVENTH: *The Prophet Tells Us What We Need to Know, Not Always What We Want to Know* . . . some so-called experts of political science want the prophet to keep still on politics . . .

NINTH: *The Prophet Can Receive Revelation on Any Matter-Temporal or Spiritual.* . . .

TENTH: *The Prophet May be involved in Civic Matters.*

When a people are righteous they want the best to lead them in government. Alma was the head of the Church and of the government in the Book of Mormon: ... Those who would remove prophets from politics would take God out of government. (“Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophets,” February 26, 1980; full text available in *Following the Brethren*)

Since Ezra Taft Benson is 86 years of age, he will not be able to run for the presidency of the United States. (At one time he told a reporter that “he could have had the American Independent Party vice presidential nomination, but turned it down after consultation with President McKay.”) It seems unlikely, also, that he will be able to make the major revisions in the church that he might have made if he were younger.

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**UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY**
PO BOX 1884
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HOFMANN CHARGED WITH MURDER AND SELLING FORGERIES

In the last issue of the Messenger we reported that Mormon document dealer Mark Hofmann was not only a suspect in the October 15th Salt Lake City bombing’s case but that police were also investigating the possibility that Mr. Hofmann had been selling forged documents to the Mormon Church. On February 4, 1986, a statement was released to the news media which contained this information: “The Salt Lake City Police Department, the Salt Lake County Sheriff’s Department and the Salt Lake County Attorney’s Office today announced the culmination of a three-and-a-half-month investigation into the bombing deaths of Steven F. Christensen and Kathleen W. Sheets.

Mark W. Hofmann has been charged with two counts of first-degree homicide, a capital offense, and 26 other counts.

In the formal complaint (The State of Utah, Plaintiff, v. Mark W. Hofmann, . . .), Mark Hofmann was accused of stealing hundreds of thousands of dollars from Mormon church leaders and other unsuspecting individuals through the sale of forged or nonexistent documents.

ULM’S INVESTIGATION

Nineteen months before local and federal investigators began working on the Salt Lake bombing’s case, Utah Lighthouse Ministry began its own investigation concerning the authenticity of the documents Mark Hofmann was selling the Mormon Church and other collectors. In this inquiry we obtained information from Washington, D.C. and ten different states. We even interviewed a convicted murderer at the Utah State Prison.

Our investigation began in March 1984 when we were first given extracts from the so-called Salamander letter—a letter purportedly written by Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris to W.W. Phelps in 1830. We had just completed a book entitled, Mormonism, Magic and Masonry, in which we presented evidence linking early Mormonism to magic. We felt that the Salamander letter would provide additional evidence to support our case. As we read the extracts from the Salamander letter, however, we were shocked to find that there were important parallels to E. D. Howe’s Mormonism Unveiled, which was first published in 1834—some four years after the Salamander letter was supposed to have been penned. In the Messenger for March 1984 we wrote that we had “some reservations concerning the authenticity of the letter, and at the present time we are not prepared to say that it was actually penned by Martin Harris.”

In the same issue of the Messenger, we pointed out the “disturbing” parallels to Howe’s book and said that although “the average person would have a difficult time forging these things, there are probably a number of people who could do the job. . . . While we would really like to believe that the letter attributed to Harris is authentic, we do not feel that we can endorse it until further evidence comes forth.”

On August 25, 1984, John Dart wrote the following in the Los Angeles Times:

. . . unusual caution . . .has been expressed by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, . . . The Tanners’ suggestion of forgery has surprised some Mormons, who note that the parallels in wording could be taken as evidence for authenticity.

Robert Lindsey wrote the following for the February 16, 1986, issue of the New York Times:

Court documents indicate that some prosecutors in the Salt Lake County Attorney’s office believe Mr. Hofmann’s goal was not only to obtain money from the church through the sale of the documents but also to establish enough credibility that he could shape the world’s perception of Mormonism.

This view is shared by a man here who was the first to suggest that Mr. Hofmann was forging his documents. He is Jerald Tanner, a former Mormon who heads the Utah Lighthouse Ministry, which for decades has been challenging the truth of much of Mormon doctrine.

In an interview, Mr. Tanner said he decided . . . that the Hofmann documents might be forgeries, even though some of them, many purporting to be in the handwriting of early Mormons not previously known to have left
documents, supported his own iconoclastic views of Mormonism.

In a newsletter that he publishes with his wife, Sandra, Mr. Tanner began raising questions about their authenticity, in some cases comparing the texts with known Mormon writings.

But if senior Mormon officials were aware of his warnings, they apparently paid little attention. Several of the church’s highest officials have acknowledged negotiating to acquire documents from Mr. Hofmann until the day of the first two bombings.

Mr. Tanner said it appeared that Mr. Hofmann’s growing credibility as a source of documents was putting him in a position where the documents he presented were considered unassailable. If that continued, Mr. Tanner said, Mr. Hofmann “could control the direction of Mormon history.”

One of the documents that investigators list in the complaint as a forgery is the 1825 letter of Joseph Smith to Josiah Stowell. In the June 1985 issue of the Messenger, page 18, we reported that although we could not find any historical problems with the letter, the spelling seemed to be surprisingly good for the early date that is on the letter. Furthermore, we noticed that the letter did “not seem to have any words or parts of words crossed out and no words or parts of words are inserted above the lines.” We felt this was probably not consistent with other letters written by Joseph Smith and suggested that the letter “should be carefully checked by experts who are qualified to make meaningful judgments with regard to spelling, grammar and style.”

In the same issue of the Messenger we reported that George D. Smith claimed that it was his understanding that “Gordon B. Hinckley, purchased the letter in 1983 in his own name from collector Mark Hofmann . . .” We pointed out that “If President Hinckley bought the document in his own name, this must have been an attempt to give the Church deniability—i.e., the letter could be safely kept out of the hands of the public, and yet the Church could officially deny that it had it.” The complaint makes it clear that Hinckley did, in fact, purchase the letter in his own name. It says that Hofmann “exercised control over the property of President Gordon B. Hinckley by deception” when he sold him the 1825 letter. As long as Hinckley possessed the letter, the church could deny it owned the document, and even after the donation was made, the church could continue to deny that it had purchased the letter. In any case, it is obvious that there was a deliberate cover-up with regard to the 1825 letter.

**STORY CHANGED**

The complaint against Mark Hofmann states that eleven documents which he sold the Mormon church and other collectors are forgeries:

All of the above documents were given to George Throckmorton an experienced questioned documents examiner formerly employed with the Utah State Crime Laboratory, presently employed by the Utah Attorney General Office.

Mr. Throckmorton has done extensive scientific analysis on all of the documents described above and has concluded that none are authentic. (*The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann, page 6*)

The Salamander letter is among the documents listed as forgeries. Originally, Mark Hofmann and Lyn Jacobs claimed that the Salamander letter was discovered and purchased by Jacobs. Writing in *Utah Holiday*, January 1986, page 54, Allen Roberts and Fred Esplin reported: “It was from a New England postmark collector that Jacobs claimed that he obtained . . . the Salamander letter . . . Without disclosing his interest in the content of the letter, Jacobs said he purchased it for about $25, the value of the postmark.”

After investigators began raising the question of forgery with regard to the letter, Lyn Jacobs claimed that it was actually Mark Hofmann who originally purchased the letter. In an interview published in *Sunstone* magazine, Jacobs stated:

**JACOBS:** Unfortunately, my involvement in the discovery of the Martin Harris letter has been somewhat exaggerated . . . it was Mark who actually acquired it . . . I found out that a dentist in Cortland, New York, had a little group of Palmyra letters dating from the 1830s that might be of historical interest. So I called Mark and gave him that tip. Soon afterwards Mark purchased the Martin Harris letter . . .

It was about the middle of December 1983 and I was about to come home for Christmas vacation, so we waited until I got to Utah to discuss what to do with it. He turned the letter over to me and told me he did not wish to become involved with the publicity he felt the letter would probably generate. (*Sunstone*, vol. 10, no. 8, page 15)

When Jacobs was asked if it were true that he “did not see it [the Salamander letter] until Mark showed it to you,” he replied, “Yes” (*Ibid.*, page 19).

The “dentist in Cortland, New York” has been identified as William Thoman. Unfortunately for those who would still believe in the authenticity of the Salamander letter, Dr. Thoman undercuts the entire story by claiming that he never had any dealings with Mark Hofmann after 1982 when Hofmann ran up a bill for $60 which he never paid. Mr. Hofmann, therefore, could not have obtained the letter from him in “December 1983” as Jacobs maintains. Even Kenneth Rendell, who originally authenticated the Salamander letter, now feels that there is a “high likelihood” that it is a forgery. In an interview on KUTV, February 6, 1986, Mr. Rendell commented: I could find no evidence of forgery. I could not prove it was
authentic because there was no handwriting of Martin Harris to compare it to. . . . The FBI report has confirmed . . . there is no evidence to prove it’s a forgery. However, given the circumstances now that the history of the letter apparently is changing this week and that the person [Lyn Jacobs] is saying that it originally came from Hofmann, not from him, and given the circumstances of all these other forgeries, I think whether there is ever any physical evidence to prove it is a forgery, there is a high likelihood that it could be a forgery.

When Mr. Rendell was asked if he was “more suspicious now about the origin of the Salamander letter than you were when you first examined it,” he replied: “Certainly I am. There’s considerably more information now and considerably more evidence now.”

It now appears that both Lyn Jacobs and Mark Hofmann conspired to hide the truth concerning the origin of the Salamander letter. If Jacobs had knowledge that the letter was forged, he would be as guilty as Hofmann of “THEFT BY DECEPTION.” Mr. Jacobs claims that Hofmann was willing to “share any profits” that came from the sale of the document and that he was involved in its sale to Steven Christensen: “. . . I met Steve for the first time at Coordinated Financial Services. By that time, the sale contract had already been written and Mark and I signed it along with a few witnesses. It obligated Steve to pay $40,000 . . .” (Sunstone, page 15). Since Jacobs was deeply involved with Hofmann and was a party to an erroneous story concerning the origin of the Salamander letter, some have suggested that he may be a co-conspirator with Mark Hofmann in forgery. We find the following in the interview with Jacobs in Sunstone (page 19):

SUNSTONE: So as far as you know, no one living can claim to have read it [the Salamander letter] before it came from Mark Hofmann’s hands. You don’t have any first hand knowledge of its actual origins.

JACOBS: If you’re suggesting Mark forged it, it is not possible. Mark Hofmann is not a forger. . . .

SUNSTONE: Some have suggested that you might be a forger.

JACOBS: That’s ridiculous. . . . To my knowledge, such a thing has never been perpetrated either by Mark or myself. . . .

SUNSTONE: How do you suppose these questions of forgery arose?

JACOBS: The reasons for that are difficult for me to ascertain except that people just simply don’t like certain documents. . . . It seems to me it’s only when a document becomes particularly offensive to people or in any way controversial that people decide it’s a forgery. What’s the matter with everyone? . . .

SUNSTONE: One of the most outspoken proponents of the forgery theory has been the Utah Lighthouse Ministry. One would think that with their anti-Mormon mission, they would not question the Martin Harris letter’s authenticity without good reason, especially since it supposedly supports their case against the Church. What do they have to gain?

JACOBS: I’ve always wondered that. . . . So often such documents get stashed away; nobody talks about them anymore, and they just sort of fizzle out of public attention. That’s really what started happening to the Martin Harris [letter]. . . . Well the anti-Mormons may have wanted to keep the thing going by claiming it to be a forgery.

The other possibility is that because certain individuals were crying forgery from the beginning, the anti-Mormons may have become apprehensive about using a document in their ministry which might not be authentic. If it were a forgery, it would make them look like fools.

Lyn Jacobs seems to imply that because “certain individuals were crying forgery,” we were extremely cautious about endorsing the Harris letter. Actually, the truth of the matter is that we were the first to raise the question. Furthermore, Mr. Jacob’s assertion that we wanted to keep the “thing going by claiming it to be a forgery” is absolutely ridiculous. In any case, Sunstone has done a real service for researchers in providing this reveling interview with Jacobs. If any of our readers have additional material or information concerning Jacobs we would be happy to receive it.

As we indicated in the last issue of the Messenger, just before the bombings Mark Hofmann claimed he found a Book of Common Prayer which has a Martin Harris inscription in it. We suggested that this inscription may be a forgery created for the purpose of validating the Salamander letter. It is interesting to note that investigators now say that it is not authentic. It is included in the list of charges as one of the forged documents which were sold to the Mormon church. The list of forgeries also includes the “E. B. Grandin Contract.” This is very interesting because this contract purports to contain one of the earliest and best signatures of Martin Harris. This signature was probably used to validate the Salamander letter.

Investigators indicate that the forgeries began as early as 1980 when Hofmann “discovered” the Anthon transcript. This was a sheet of paper believed to contain copies of the characters which appeared on the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. After we became suspicious of the Salamander letter we reasoned that the Anthon transcript could also be a forgery. In The Money-Digging Letters, Part 1, page 9, published on August 22, 1984, we commented: “. . . a number of important documents have come to light during the 1980s. The questions raised by the Salamander letter have forced us to take a closer look at some of these documents.”

When the Anthon transcript first came forth historians were very excited about what it might reveal. Some people felt it might contain magic characters. We tried very hard to find evidence to support this idea, but we were finally forced to conclude that the “similarities” were not “sufficient to prove the case” (Mormonism, Magic and
Masonry, page 42). We compared the Anthon transcript with many documents and samples of ancient writing, but in the end we found ourselves feeling frustrated and disillusioned with the transcript. Instead of containing anything related to any language, the Anthon transcript appeared to be composed of meaningless doodlings. In the beginning, Mormon scholars were rejoicing over the new find. Dr. Richard L. Anderson, of Brigham Young University, claimed “This new discovery is sort of a Dead Sea School [sic] Equivalent of the Book of Mormon,” . . . ” (The Herald, Provo Utah, May 1, 1980). The noted Mormon scholar Hugh Nibley was quoted as saying: “‘This offers as good a test as we’ll ever get as to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon,’ . . .” (Ibid.). In the same paper, Dr. Hugh Nibley triumphantly announced: “Of course it’s translatable.” According to The Herald:

Nibley also said he counted at least two dozen out of 47 characters in the Demotic alphabet that could be given phonetic value.

“This offers as good a test as we’ll ever get. Nobody could have faked those characters. It would take 10 minutes to see that this is fake.”

On May 12, 1980, the Provo Herald reported:

The Herald called Hugh Nibley to see if he was still confident about his earlier assessments.

“I still say just what I said before. It can be translated.”

In the last issue of the Messenger we related that the story which Mark Hofmann told concerning how he acquired the Joseph Smith III Blessing document did not check out. We first publicly questioned the source of this document on August 22, 1984, when we printed The Money-Digging Letters. Prosecutors now claim that this document is also a forgery.

TOO SENSITIVE

Allen Roberts and Fred Esplin reveal that “Police sources indicate that Steve Christensen’s personal journal records that Elder Hugh Pinnock asked Hofmann to find for him two important items: the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon and something ‘too sensitive to mention,’ that the late ‘Elders Mark E. Petersen and G. Homer Durham were most involved in prior to their deaths’” (Utah Holiday, January 1986, page 58). It has been suggested that the item that is “too sensitive to mention” may be the gold plates of the Book of Mormon or a “seer stone.” Both of these suggestions appear unlikely. One thing that might qualify, however, is evidence that Solomon Spalding or Sidney Rigdon wrote material which Joseph Smith used for his Book of Mormon. Although we have never put a great deal of stock in the theory, many critics of the Mormon church have maintained that Sidney Rigdon stole a manuscript written by Spalding and that this was used to create the Book of Mormon. If this idea could be proven, it would destroy the claim that the Book of Mormon was divinely inspired. Any hard evidence on this subject would certainly be “too sensitive to mention.” Like the 116 lost pages of the Book of Mormon, such “evidence” might be sold to the Mormon church for millions of dollars. This, combined with the secrecy that would surround its transfer to the church, could very easily lead to disagreements and perhaps even to murder.

We have recently learned that investigators have been looking into a document which was in the possession of Hofmann or Jacobs which has the signatures of both Solomon Spalding and Sidney Rigdon on it. The document apparently bears clear evidence of falsification. It has been reasoned, however, that this document could have been used to promote a swindle. In this scenario, the forger would show the buyer the document and point out the evidence of falsification. After establishing his reputation as a good detective with regard to old documents and a seeker after truth, the forger could then say that he had acquired a legitimate document relating to Spalding and/or Rigdon.

However this may be, the fact that Hofmann and Jacobs had an interest in Spalding-Rigdon documents reminded us of a series of events that occurred in 1983. A reporter from one of the largest newspapers in the United States asked us if it was true that the Mormon church had bought the long-lost Spalding manuscript for $6,000,000. We replied that we had no information to support such an accusation. Some time after this, we received a phone call which seemed to explain the source of the rumor. The woman on the phone told us that if we would call a Mr. D____ in St. James, N.Y., within half an hour, he could give us the details concerning the discovery of the Spalding manuscript. The number we were given was 516-862-6448. At first Mr. D. seemed rather indignant about the intrusion and was reluctant to talk about the matter, but with some prompting, he finally told us that he had discovered the lost manuscript. In this and other phone conversations he revealed that he had found the 339-page manuscript in an old piano. He not only claimed he found the manuscript, but he maintained that he also had a sixteen-page document written by Sidney Rigdon in which he confessed the part he played in the whole deception. This was not all, however; he also found an 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon which was marked to reveal the portions which were plagiarized from the Spalding manuscript!

We, of course, concluded that these fantastic claims were ridiculous and published an article concerning this in the Salt Lake City Messenger in November 1983. Later we discussed the matter with Mark Hofmann. He told us that Mr. D. was a “kook” and no credence should be given to his story. Hofmann said that the noted document dealer Charles Hamilton could tell us all about Mr. D.’s bad reputation. Some time later we heard that Mark Hofmann had found the 116 lost pages of the Book of Mormon—i.e., the book of Lehi. We were told that the contents of the book of Lehi were “dynamite.” The manuscript was supposed to contain information about money-digging interwoven
with material that reads like the book of Nephi—one of the books appearing in the published Book of Mormon. When we discussed the matter with Mark Hofmann, he admitted that a manuscript purporting to be the 116 missing pages had been found in Bakersfield, California. He claimed, however, that it was a forgery. In telling about this manuscript, Mr. Hofmann said that a Book of Mormon was found with the manuscript which was marked to reveal which parts of the printed Book of Mormon were the same as those appearing in the unpublished book of Lehi. Mr. Hofmann’s story concerning the marked Book of Mormon sounded strangely similar to Mr. D.’s claim that he found a Book of Mormon which was marked to show the portions which were plagiarized from the Spalding manuscript. We felt that the two stories were so similar that we were almost forced to the conclusion that one was borrowed from the other. This, of course, also raised the question of whether there was some connection between Hofmann and Mr. D. We later wondered if it were possible that Mr. D. was trying to get us to print an article on the matter so that the Mormon church would become concerned and try to buy up the purported Spalding manuscript.

It is also interesting to note that about the same time Church Archivist Donald Schmidt called us on the telephone. He seemed very concerned that we had the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon and were preparing to print them. He claimed that he had been told that one of the editors of this newsletter (Jerald Tanner) had boasted in the library of the Utah State Historical Society that he had the missing pages. We, of course, assured Mr. Schmidt that there was no truth in the statement. In retrospect, we wonder if someone told Schmidt this story to stir the church leaders up so that they would pay a higher price to buy a forged copy of the manuscript.

In his interview in Sunstone, page 13, Lyn Jacobs tells of the report of the discovery of the book of Lehi manuscript in “southern California”:

Mark decided not to attempt to go after the stuff when he found out exactly what it is. It may have something to do with a fictional account supposedly written in the nineteenth century by Sidney Rigdon called “The Book of Lehi.” I suspect that’s what it is. It is certainly not the 116 pages, or Mark would have gone after it.

It is possible that someone could have been making plans to forge as many as three important manuscripts relating to the Book of Mormon. The first is the long-lost Spalding manuscript. The second might be Sidney Rigdon’s rewritten version of the Spalding manuscript, which Jacobs refers to as “The Book of Lehi.” The third, of course, would be the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon in the handwriting of Martin Harris and Emma Smith. Any one of these manuscripts would be worth millions of dollars. While at first glance it would seem unlikely that the Mormon church leaders would be gullible enough to buy more than one of these manuscripts, if a common thread ran through all three manuscripts, such a swindle might be rather convincing. For instance, the Spalding manuscript could be more of a secular history of the Nephites. The Rigdon version of the “Book of Lehi” might contain a great deal of the same material with some religious information interspersed. The final product (the lost 116 pages in the handwriting of Martin Harris) could contain essentially the same material as Rigdon’s manuscript with changes made to fit the vocabulary and style of Joseph Smith. While this all may be just a matter of speculation, an individual who talked privately with one of Mark Hofmann’s close associates just before the bombings informed us that he was told that a manuscript “like” the 116 missing pages of the Book of Mormon had been discovered. Moreover, the fact that police have been investigating a Spalding-Rigdon document makes us even more suspicious.

**COVER-UP FEARED**

Many people are concerned that when Mark Hofmann comes to trial there will be some kind of a cover-up to protect the Mormon church. One fear that has been expressed is that prosecutors might give preferential treatment to the Mormon leaders. Our greatest concern, however, is how Mr. Hofmann’s lawyers will handle their side of the case. From all indications Hofmann is deeply in debt and would have no way of paying for his defense. Since the case is so complicated, his legal fees could mount to a million dollars. While his lawyers were originally talking about setting up a public defense fund, they have now indicated that funds have become available to them. Our fear is that the church could either directly or indirectly provide funds for Hofmann’s defense. While there would be nothing illegal about this, the church certainly has its own vested interest in how the trial is conducted. If Hofmann’s lawyers were to receive money from the church or its leaders, they might feel somewhat obligated not to cause the church any embarrassment with regard to Hofmann’s document dealings with them. Such a move could possibly influence what witnesses Hofmann’s lawyers called and how Church leaders would be questioned. Furthermore, it might make it hard to subpoena documents the church has in its possession. For instance, if the Oliver Cowdery history really talks about salamanders appearing to Joseph Smith, it could be subpoenaed in an attempt to support the claims for the authenticity of the Salamander letter. If the church were paying the legal bills, however, it is unlikely that the lawyers would want to embarrass church leaders by demanding that it become a part of the public record. (It would, of course, be of no help if the prosecution could show that Hofmann had access to it.)

At this point we have no evidence that the church is paying any of Mr. Hofmann’s legal bills. We do know, however, that the church was willing to pay a great deal
of money to get rid of embarrassing documents. It is also reasonable to conclude that church leaders would like to keep their secret dealings with the documents from coming to light. The General Authorities, therefore, will probably do their best to keep on the good side of Hofmann. He knows too much with regard to their secret document deals. Although church leaders could not resist the temptation to suppress embarrassing documents, we hope they have learned their lesson and will not try to influence the course of the trial with their money or power. In any case, the cancellation of Hofmann’s public defense fund is certainly another mystery in this bizarre case. Even if some persons or organizations were willing to give a large amount of money for Hofmann’s defense, we would think that they would let the defense fund be set up first and then pay only the amount which was over that raised through the publicly supported fund.

**CHARGES AVAILABLE**

The Salt Lake County Attorney’s charges against Mark Hofmann are now available in a pamphlet we have published entitled, *The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann*. This 24-page booklet also contains the “probable cause” statements which were deleted when the information was first released by the County Attorney’s Office. This very revealing and controversial document sells for only, $1.00 a copy.

Besides the accusation that documents have been forged, the charges filed against Mark Hofmann contain other important information. For instance, in the last issue of the Messenger we demonstrated that Hofmann obtained a piece of papyrus from Kenneth Rendell and later claimed that it was part of the so-called McLellin collection—i.e., papyrus which Joseph Smith had in his possession and claimed were written by Abraham and Joseph in Egypt. The charges show that Hofmann misrepresented this papyrus to different individuals and tried to sell it to Curt Bench “for $40,000.” Pages 23-24 of *The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann*, contain some very revealing information concerning Hofmann’s document dealings:

On May 9, 1985, Mark Hofmann completed an agreement with Thomas Wilding wherein Thomas Wilding agreed to put up $160,000.00 in order to have Mark Hofmann purchase a Charles Dickens “Haunted Man” manuscript. . . . Later, Mark Hofmann assured Mr. Wilding that the manuscript described above had been purchased by Mr. Hofmann and re-sold to an investor in Japan. Your affiant has learned from Justin Schiller, that Mr. Schiller has possession of the above described manuscript due to the fact that Mr. Schiller invested $170,000.00 of his own funds to purchase the manuscript. Mark Hofmann never gave the monies given to him by Mr. Wilding to Mr. Schiller for the acquisition of the manuscript. . . .

Thomas Wilding . . . gave the following information: On September 12, 1985, Mark Hofmann completed an agreement to purchase the “Oath of a Freeman” from Lynn Jacobs in New York State. This is the first time Mr. Wilding had heard the name, Lynn Jacobs. Mr. Wilding gave Mark Hofmann $170,000.00 in order to purchase the “Oath of a Freeman” from Lynn Jacobs. The next day, Thomas Wilding tried to verify if Mark Hofmann had traveled to New York and found that he had not. It has been determined by your affiant that the monies received by Mark Hofmann in this above described transaction did not go to Lynn Jacobs and that when this transaction was orchestrated by Mark Hofmann, he already had the “Oath” since he purchased it for $25.00 in a rare book shop.

Your affiant was told by Thomas Wilding that on or about the first week in August, 1985, Mark Hofmann completed a sale of what he maintained were Brigham Young Papers and received from Thomas Wilding over $10,000.00 in cash. . . .

On the evening of September 13, 1985 . . . Syd Jensen, Tom Wilding and Mark Hofmann met in Tom Wilding’s office. Mark Hofmann admitted to Mr. Wilding and Jensen that the “Oath of a Freeman,” had not been purchased by Mark Hofmann nor sold by him. Mr. Hofmann further confessed that the money purported to be obtained by Mr. Hofmann to purchase the Charles Dicken’s manuscript as described above had not gone for the purpose intended.

Lastly, that there were no “Brigham Young Papers” and the money obtained to purchase the nonexistent documents had gone elsewhere.

As far as the charges of murder are concerned, the legal papers do not reveal any “smoking gun.” They do, however, have some circumstantial evidence which could place Mark Hofmann in the vicinity of both Christensen’s office and the Sheets’ residence prior to the bombings. Lorie Loftin, one of the witnesses to the explosion of the bomb in Hofmann’s car who is spoken of in the complaint, has charged investigators with distorting her statements concerning what happened prior to the blast (see *Salt Lake Tribune*, February 8, 1986). While it appears that she will not be able to provide any meaningful evidence for the prosecution, the complaint indicates that the bomb was on the seat of the car when it exploded. This would appear to support the charge that Hofmann was transporting the bomb when it exploded. On page 14, the complaint states:

The defendant stated to detective J.F.G. Bell that when he opened his vehicle door, a package fell on to the vehicle floor and he went to grab for it, then there was an explosion. . . .

Investigation by agent Jerry Taylor, an explosives technology expert and reconstruction expert for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms reviewed all the physical evidence and laboratory reports and concluded that the position of the bomb at the time of detonation in
defendant’s car was on the drivers seat, against the console in contrast to defendant’s statement that it was on the floor.

In the last issue of the *Messenger* we reported that the relationship between Steven Christensen and Mark Hofmann was strained by Hofmann’s failure to repay a bank loan and that Hofmann may have strongly resented Christensen’s “parental-like intrusion into his affairs.” The complaint against Mark Hofmann alleges that Christensen was threatening Hofmann with legal action and criminal charges before the bombings:

> . . . Curt Bench knew that Mark W. Hofmann’s personal debts exceeded the hundreds of thousands of dollars owed to several groups of people as a result of document dealings. Around the middle of September, 1985, Mr. Bench saw Mr. Hofmann and observed that Mr. Hofmann was [in a] highly agitated and distraught condition. When Mr. Bench inquired of Mr. Hofmann the reason for this condition, Mark W. Hofmann told Curt Bench that he owed a great deal of money and could be facing serious consequences, including criminal charges, if he could not get his financial problems solved.

Curt Bench was also an acquaintance of Steven Christensen and had been informed by Steven Christensen that he needed Mr. Bench’s assistance in contacting Mark W. Hofmann over a very serious matter which could result in “legal action,” possibly “criminal charges,” and Hofmann would lose his membership in the L.D.S. Church as well as lose his ability to do business with anyone in the L.D.S. Church forever. Steve Christensen told Curt Bench that he wanted Mr. Bench to relay this information to Mark Hofmann even though Steven Christensen had already told Mark Hofmann this as well . . .

> Your affiant has been informed by police investigators and reports that Mr. Robert Pitts, a business associate of Steven Christensen, . . . overheard Steven Christensen say to Mark Hofmann in a loud and agitated voice “You can’t hide that!” This is the only part of the conversation that was overheard due to its loud nature. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Pitts saw Mark Hofmann leave the office in a “solemn mood.” (*The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann*, pages 16-17)

If Steven Christensen had uncovered illegal activities on the part of Mark Hofmann and was threatening criminal charges against him, this could give a motive for murder. Although investigators claim they have a very good case against Mr. Hofmann, they are not revealing what else they know. The preliminary hearing is scheduled for April 14, and more information will undoubtedly become available at that time. One of the prosecutors has said that it will take two weeks just to present the evidence against Hofmann at the preliminary hearing. It is claimed that 20,000 pages of material have been prepared by the prosecution and turned over to Hofmann’s lawyers.

Mark Hofmann’s lawyers still refuse to allow police to question their client. While Hofmann’s silence does tend to make us suspicious, we will try to keep an open mind. There is always a possibility that he is being framed.

Mark Hofmann’s trial for possession of an unregistered machine gun has been delayed because of the murder charges against him. His friend, Shannon Flynn, has changed his plea from innocent to guilty but has not been sentenced.

**TALES OF HOFFMANN**

In the last three issues of the *Messenger* we have discussed the possibility that the Oliver Cowdery history (which has been suppressed in the First Presidency’s vault) may have been the source for the reference to a salamander in the Martin Harris letter. A historian who has talked to Lyn Jacobs claims that Jacobs told him that Mark Hofmann had read the entire Oliver Cowdery history.

Another possible explanation for the appearance of a white salamander in the letter, might be that the forger read E.T.A. Hoffmann’s story “The Golden Flower Pot,” which was reprinted by Dover Publications in 1967 in the book, *The Best Tales of Hoffmann*. This is a story about “the Student Anselmus” who worked for “Archivarius Lindhorst” In this story a rope magically turns into a “white serpent” and attacks Anselmus (page 12). This is similar to the portion of the Salamander letter which tells of a “white salamander” that transforms itself into a spirit and strikes Joseph Smith three times. The Salamander letter speaks of the “old spirit.” The tale of Hoffmann refers to the “old earth-spirit” (page 29). Archivarius Lindhorst is also referred to as “the Old One” (*Ibid.*). As it turns out, the Archivarius was originally “a Salamander” in the “Fairyland Atlantis” (page 45). As punishment for his folly in Atlantis, the Salamander was turned into a man. Anselmus fell in love with the Archivarius’ daughter who was a “green snake.” On page 57 of *The Best Tales of Hoffmann*, Anselmus commented: “But of course you do not believe in the Salamander, or the green snake.” The whole story is filled with magic, and at one point Anselmus tells a witch that “the Salamander will catch you, you vile beet!” (*Ibid.*, page 58).

Since E.T.A. Hoffmann originally wrote this tale in German in the early 19th century, some people have suggested that Joseph Smith may have heard about it. If there is a connection between the Salamander letter and the tale of Hoffmann, it would seem more likely that it came through the paperback edition of *The Best Tales of Hoffmann*, which was printed in 1967.

Although we do not know whether Mark Hofmann traces his roots from E.T.A. Hoffmann (Mark Hofmann only has one f in his name), the name *Hoffmann* on the cover probably would have caught his attention.
LAW SUIT OVER
UNFAIR VERDICT IS OVERTURNED

On April 28, 1983, the Mormon scholar Andrew Ehat filed a lawsuit against us (Jerald and Sandra Tanner) in an attempt to stop publication of some extracts from the diaries of Joseph Smith’s private secretary, William Clayton. Because these diaries contain embarrassing material on the origin of polygamy and other matters, they have been suppressed in the vault of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church. In 1979-80 Mr. Ehat gained access to a copy of the diaries and made the revealing extracts. Ehat tried very hard to keep the material from falling into the hands of the critics of the Mormon church, but a member of a bishopric surreptitiously duplicated a copy which Ehat had given to Lyndon Cook and it was widely circulated by Mormon scholars at Brigham Young University. These extracts subsequently found their way into our hands, and we printed them in the book Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered.

We felt the law did not support Ehat’s charge of copyright violation and cited the following from Section 103(b) of Title 17, United States Code: “The copyright in a compilation or derivative work extends only to the material contributed by the author of such work, as distinguished from the preexisting material employed in the work, and does not imply any exclusive right in the preexisting material.” Since Mr. Ehat’s notes are composed of extracts from “preexisting” material (i.e., the diaries of William Clayton), we felt that he could not claim copyright protection.

On March 21, 1984, Judge A. Sherman Christensen commenced a trial which ended in a very unexpected way. On March 25 the Judge announced that we were correct in saying that Mr. Ehat had no copyright in the Clayton material: “2. That the plaintiff has no copyrightable interest in the so-called Ehat notes nor their ideas nor content, and that plaintiff’s claim against the defendants for copyright infringement should be dismissed with prejudice.” (Court Ruling, page 17) Instead of dismissing the case, however, Judge Christensen apparently felt that we should be punished in some way for printing the sensitive material. He, therefore, awarded $16,000 for what he said was “unfair competition” and damage to Ehat’s reputation. We felt that Judge Christensen’s decision was completely unjust and contrary to the law. Since Christensen was a Mormon, Andrew Ehat’s lawyer, Gordon A. Madsen, apparently felt that he could capitalize on the religious issue. In the depositions he took from us, he asked questions to make it clear that we had left the church and were publishing sensitive church documents. This, of course, could create a great deal of prejudice towards us in the mind of a believing Mormon.

JUDGE THREATENS US

In addition to the $16,000 judgment against us, Judge Christensen said he was going to stop our publication of the Clayton material: “Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered . . . cannot lawfully be continued to be sold and distributed by the defendant . . .” (Court Ruling, page 16). Just four days after making this statement, Judge Christensen began to have doubts about the wisdom of his decision to enjoin the publication, and on April 10, he held a hearing and completely reversed his decision with regard to the injunction. Since Christensen reversed the decision, we concluded that we could continue to sell the publication. On April 29, 1984, we published a full-page advertisement in the Salt Lake City newspapers in which we publicly criticized Judge Christensen’s decision on “unfair competition” and indicated that we would continue selling the publication. We felt that we were well within our rights of freedom of the press guaranteed to us in the Constitution. Incredible as it may seem, however, Judge Christensen granted Ehat’s lawyer a hearing concerning the newspaper article. It is our belief that he only granted the hearing so that he could rebuke us for criticizing his judgment in the newspapers and to try and intimidate us so that we would not continue selling the publication. At this hearing Judge Christensen made some remarkable statements which clearly showed his prejudice against us:

THE COURT: At the time this matter was before me for final decision with respect to injunctive relief, I was persuaded that an injunction would involve too many problems of enforcement and First Amendment rights . . .

The other thing that persuaded me was my assumption that Mr. Tanner was acting in good faith, was a law abiding citizen . . . I really didn’t expect that Mr. Tanner would insist upon continuing to commit what was adjudged to be an unlawful act, . . . not only did he do that, but as I read the article, . . . he really misrepresented the decision of the Court and flaunted his defiance of it . . . . damages of a nature far beyond what were awarded heretofore could well flow from the crafted, misrepresentation of the Court’s judgment . . .

The Tanners . . . had to advertise through misrepresentation their violation and invite the public to contribute to that violation. I guess I’m a little naive. I’m not used to dealing with the kind of people when I accord consideration on balance in faith that there would be at least an attempt to comply with the Court’s ruling. I’m not used to people advertising their noncompliance . . . The Tanners have done about as much as they can to flaunt the judgment of the Court . . . I don’t see that they can do very much else unless they want to publish another advertisement to try and market the matter. But if they do there is relief here . . . In my judgment, the amount of damages as a result of this additional publication under the circumstances I have mentioned may well be
immeasurably more than the damage that was suffered by the plaintiff up to the time of the judgment. . . . the Tanners have done about as well as they could do to justify punitive damages. . . . if the plaintiff suffered in the magnitude of $15,000 for the unlawful misappropriation and publication, the damages could well exceed that by many times because of the emphasis that hadn’t applied before through this public announcement and the Tanners’ flaunting and misrepresentation of the judgment of the Court . . . if and when the case is affirmed, I assume the Tanners can be brought in and a full accounting made as to what other sales they have made which were unlawful. . . . The Tanners will be liable as a matter of law for such damages including punitive damages as may have been additionally caused by their unlawful act. (“Partial Transcript of Proceedings,” May 8, 1984)

It was plain from this hearing that Judge Christensen was trying to intimidate us through threats of awarding vast sums of money to Mr. Ehat so that we would not publicly question his decision. On page 10 of the transcript, he stated that he might award “many times” the “$15,000” (actually $16,000) because of our “public announcement and . . . flaunting and misrepresentation of the judgment of the Court . . . .” This statement is certainly difficult to interpret, but one could get the impression that he intended to award hundreds of thousands of dollars. In any case, we viewed these threats as nothing less than an attempt to keep us from exercising our freedom of speech, and felt that it was deplorable that a judge representing the United States Government would stoop to such methods to keep us from questioning his decisions. We felt that this was not the American way and did not intend to be intimidated by his threats. We believed, in fact, that the Judge’s decision against us and his subsequent threats were a serious miscarriage of justice. The case was appealed to the 10th circuit court to be reviewed by a panel of three judges.

Finally, on December 30, 1985, the U.S. Court of Appeals For The Tenth Circuit ruled in our favor and completely overturned Judge Christensen’s decision:

Andrew Ehat brought this action against Gerald and Sandra Tanner . . . . Judgment was entered against the Tanners, and they appeal. We reverse . . . . Ehat’s complaint asserted claims under the federal copyright statutes, on which the judge granted summary judgment for the Tanners. In addition, the complaint alleged state common law claims for unfair competition and unjust enrichment. Following a bench trial on these claims, the Court entered judgment for Ehat. On appeal, the Tanners assert that the district court erred in awarding damages on Ehat’s common law claims because those claims are preempted by the federal copyright statutes. We agree . . . . State law forbidding others to copy an article “unprotected by a patent or a copyright . . . would interfere with the federal policy, found in . . . the Constitution and in the implementing federal statutes, of allowing free access to copy whatever the federal patent and copyright laws leave in the public domain.” . . . We cannot agree with the district court that Ehat’s state claim was not within the scope of copyright because it was based on his right in the notes “as a physical matter and property.” . . . the court awarded Ehat $12,000 for general damage to his reputation as a scholar-that claim is preempted as well . . . . Ehat “cannot achieve by an unfair competition claim what [he] failed to achieve under [his] copyright claim.” . . . Ehat’s state law claim is preempted. The case is reversed and remanded for further proceedings consistent with this opinion. (“Appeal from the United States District Court for the District of Utah” [D. C. No. 83-0593C], pages 2-4, 6-8)

Andrew Ehat’s lawyer had originally argued before Judge Christensen that if he could not prove that there had been a copyright violation his entire case would fail:

THE COURT: Do you concede that if the law is that the quotations of your quotation from the journal doesn’t violate any proprietary interest of your client that your case fails?

MR. MADSEN: I think it does. I think if they can say this is not copyright material and they therefore are at liberty to print it. (“Hearing to Quash Subpoena Duces Tecum and Objections,” September 6, 1983, pages 10-11)

Mr. Madsen now argues that “uncopyrightable material” is also protected by law. After the U.S. Court of Appeals issued their decision against his client, Madsen submitted a “Petition for Rehearing and Suggestion for Rehearing En Banc.” He asked the Court to “rehear the appeal and reconsider the opinion heretofore rendered in this case . . . .” He claimed that if the decision was allowed to stand, the result would be “intolerable” and “immoral.” On February 10, 1986, the Court of Appeals responded that “the petition for rehearing is denied by the panel that rendered the decision sought to be reheard.

The petition for rehearing having been denied by the panel to whom the case was argued and submitted, and no member of the panel nor judge in regular active service [sic] on the Court having requested that the Court be polled on rehearing en banc, Rule 35, the Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure, the suggestion for rehearing en banc is denied.

This, of course, means that our long nightmare has finally ended. Back in November, 1983, we printed the following in the Salt Lake City Messenger:
Fighting this lawsuit will cost thousands of dollars and a great deal of time, but we feel that it will all work out for our good. The publicity surrounding it has already helped our work a great deal. Some of those who oppose our work have been hoping that the suit will drive us into bankruptcy, but we feel that it will have just the opposite effect. As Joseph told his brothers who had sold him into Egypt, “. . . ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” (Genesis 50:20). In Romans 8:28 we read: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.”

Although Andrew F. Ehat is attempting to destroy our work with a suit which asks damages of up to “the sum of $50,000,” and the costs of the action to the plaintiff, we do not hold any bad feelings toward him. He apparently feels that he is doing the right thing and that he is working to save the Mormon Church.

Now that it is all over, we really want to thank the people who stood with us through this terrible ordeal. The prayers and financial help we received have been a great help and we are rejoicing that the funds came to meet the expenses involved in this whole affair.

**BOMBING VICTIM COULD NOT TESTIFY**

As strange as it may seem, the “white salamander” question even found its way into our court trial. In the “Pre-Trial Order,” Gordon A. Madsen indicated that he was thinking of calling “Steven Christensen,” the man who bought the Salamander letter and was later killed by a bomb, as a witness against us. In the “Trial Brief” Mr. Madsen wrote:

> The deliberateness of defendants is further emphasized by the testimony of Christensen and the defendants that the printing of stolen and unpermissive material has been, and is, a habit with these defendants and is highlighted by the most recent issue of defendants’ publication, *The Salt Lake Messenger*, in which they both advertise the continued sale of the Clayton publication and print excerpts from Mr. Christensen’s [Salamander] letter without permission, knowing full well who owned the document, that the same has not been previously published, and completely disregarding the rights of Mr. Christensen.

At the trial itself the following exchange occurred between Gordon A. Madsen and Jerald Tanner.

Q. Indeed the forepart of that same *Messenger* has some quotes in it from a letter that hasn’t yet been printed that you acknowledge is owned by Mr. Steven Christensen, doesn’t it?

A. It has quotations from a letter, but that has not been stolen.

Q. But your quotations from it were without any permission from Mr. Christensen, were they?

A. I did not need permission from Mr. Christensen because the owner[ship] of the document is in the family, and it’s the family rights would be the descendant[s] of Martin Harris.

Q. You say in your own article that Christensen is the owner of that document, do you not?

A. Yes, but if you would read the copyright law there is a difference between ownership of the document and ownership of the manuscript rights.

Q. What effort did you make to determine who owned the copyrights in that Christensen letter?

A. I’m sure that it’s been so long that no one would.

*(Trial Transcript, pages 391-392)*

Steven Christensen was present at our trial, but because the Judge felt that Mr. Ehat’s lawyer was wasting so much time on irrelevant material, he was unable to call him as a witness. It was lucky for Mr. Madsen that Christensen could not testify. Madsen had tried to play down the idea of a “Mormon underground” which was secretly circulating sensitive church documents. In our attempt to find material that would nullify Steven Christensen’s testimony, we learned that he was deeply involved in this underground. He had even been dealing with some of the church’s worst enemies—i.e. the Mormon fundamentalists, who teach polygamy and the Adam-God doctrine. We had a list of over 2,000 books and manuscripts which Christensen had in his possession at that time and were prepared to question him concerning how he obtained copies of some of the restricted Mormon documents.

We do not believe that Steven Christensen had any manuscript rights to the Salamander letter, but even if he had, we quoted only a few sentences from it in the March 1984 issue of the *Messenger*. This would fall well within the limits of “fair use,” and therefore would not be considered a copyright violation. Furthermore, if Ehat’s lawyer had pressed the matter further, he would have learned that the extracts we published were obtained even before Steven Christensen purchased the letter. They certainly were not stolen. If Christensen had been called to the stand to give testimony, it would have had a disastrous affect on Mr. Madsen’s attempt to minimize the role of the “Mormon underground.” The whole thing, in fact, would have been very embarrassing for Mr. Christensen.

Steven Christensen seems to have been thoroughly converted to the Salamander letter. Instead of listening to the message of caution which we printed in the March 1984 issue of the *Messenger*, he wanted to fight us in court. He continued to believe in Mark Hofmann and his stories concerning the discovery of important Mormon documents for more than a year. Although he seems to
have eventually come to the conclusion that Hofmann was involved in illegal activities, by this time it was too late. If investigators are correct in their theory, it was Christensen’s continued involvement with Hofmann which led to his untimely death.

DESERET FOUNDATION

Another interesting fact that has come out of the investigation of the bombings is that Andrew Ehat, the man who sued us, was employed by Steven Christiansen as a researcher. The Deseret News, for November 17, 1985, reported: “During the time Christensen was Sheets’ right-hand man at Coordinated Financial Services, he employed Ehat as a researcher through the Deseret Foundation, . . . Christensen left CFS hurting financially himself, and Ehat got another job.” When the trial took place Mr. Ehat said that he earned money as “a researcher,” but he did not mention that he was working for the Deseret Foundation. In the Trial Transcript, pages 54-55, he listed some of his expenses. One of them was the “Loss of work, November of 1983 approximately $560, . . .” We were a little puzzled by this statement because when we took his deposition on November 23, 1983, he said he was not employed:

Q. Are you currently employed?
A. No, I’m not employed.
Q. What’s your current source of income?
A. I’m a graduate student. I’ve had a fellowship and GI Bill.” (Deposition of Andrew Ehat, page 5)

We wondered why Mr. Ehat didn’t answer yes to the question of whether he was employed. The reason could be that he did not want to reveal to us his connection with Steven Christiansen and the Deseret Foundation. At the time we found it hard to believe that a man with a family who was struggling to go through school would have the money to press this lawsuit against us. We wonder now if the Deseret Foundation could have been helping Mr. Ehat finance the suit.

So far we have not been able to learn much about the Deseret Foundation. According to the Articles of Incorporation, it is a “non-profit corporation” set up for “charitable, educational and scientific purposes.” It was founded January 18, 1974, by Gary Sheets [whose wife was later killed in the bombings], Robert Raybould and C. Dean Larsen. Although we do not know when Steven Christiansen became involved in the organization, a report dated January 14, 1983, shows that “Steve Christiansen” was a trustee in the organization at that time. While we do not know if it means anything, reports submitted to the State of Utah for 1984-85 show that three members of the Board of Trustees (Steven A. Apple, C. Dean Larsen and Wayne A. Jenson) had offices at “200 North Main” in Salt Lake City. This is the address for the McCune Mansion. The Deseret News for October 17, 1985, reported that just before Hofmann was injured by the bomb, he had come out of “the McCune Center.” The article also states:

Detectives learned upon questioning witnesses . . . that Hofmann was seen carrying a briefcase or package into the building. Another witness said he returned to his car with the item. Police now speculate that the package he carried may have been a bomb, and that when he placed the bomb into his car, it detonated, . . .

If it could be established that Hofmann really did carry a bomb into the McCune Mansion, it would make us very suspicious that the target might have been a member of the Deseret Foundation. This, of course, would raise the question of whether Hofmann had some secret dealings with the Deseret Foundation. If anyone has any additional information on this foundation we would certainly appreciate it if they would contact us.

All those who are interested in obtaining a copy of the Court of Appeals’ decision against Andrew Ehat can obtain it for $1.00. We have just completed a new printing of Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered. This booklet normally sells for $3.00 a copy, but because of our recent court victory we are offering it for only $2.00. We are also selling the The Tanners on Trial (a book that usually sells for $5.95) for only $4.95. This is a very important study of the trial. Both of these specials must be ordered before June 15, 1986 (mail orders add 10%).

Supporting 25 Children

In June 1985 we wrote the following:

If the Lord is willing, we hope to expand our outreach to the needy. In the Jan. 1985 issue of the Messenger we stated that we had stepped out in faith to provide support for five needy children through World Vision. We are happy to report that we have had the funds to meet this need and that we are now adding two more children to the list. . . . Psalm 82:3 tells us that we should “Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy.” Because God has been so gracious in supplying all our needs, we have decided to take another step in faith. In the future we will be supporting 25 children. We really want to thank all of you who have made this move possible. All donations to UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY are TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

ONLY ONE LIFE

In the book of James we read these startling words:

Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit”; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a
vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.
(New King James Version, 4:13-14)

In our home we have the following poem mounted on the wall:

Only one Life,
Twill soon be past.
Only what’s done
For Christ will last.

This sign reminds us of the importance of letting the Lord have his way in our lives. All other things should be secondary. Jesus Himself said, “But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). On another occasion Jesus told of the futility of living one’s life with only selfish goals in mind:

Then Jesus said to His disciples, if anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:24-26)

Although the things of this world seem so very important to us now, some day they will turn to ashes. The Apostle John expressed it very well:

Do not love the world, neither the things in the world If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it, but he who does the will of God remains forever. (1 John 2:1517)

The Lord has promised that if we receive Him as our personal Saviour and allow him to control our lives, we will have great peace here and unspeakable joy in the Kingdom of Heaven:

Do not labor for the food which perishes but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him has God the Father set His seal. (John 6:27)

In God’s perspective it is certainly true that **only what’s done for Christ will last.**

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**VIDEOS AVAILABLE**

**Sandra Tanner Video No. 1.** Two lectures on Mormonism given at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. **Price: $30.00**

(Mail order add 10%)

**Sandra Tanner Video No. 2.** Interview on Mormonism with a Milwaukee television station. **Price: $20.00** (Mail orders add 10%)
After two and a half years of investigation into the documents and activities of the Mormon document dealer Mark Hofmann, we are now able to offer a book on the Salamandergate scandal which rocked Utah and the Mormon Church. This new book is entitled, Tracking the White Salamander—The Story of Mark Hofmann, Murder and Forged Mormon Documents.

“IT IS EXPLOSIVE”

On October 15, 1985, about a year and a half after we began our research into the authenticity of the documents Mark Hofmann was selling the Mormon Church and other collectors, we were startled to learn of two cruel murders. The first victim was a Mormon bishop by the name of Steven F. Christensen. Mr. Christensen picked up a box in front of his office which turned out to be a ‘booby-trapped shrapnel bomb.’ The Deseret News, April 15, 1986, reported:

In testimony Monday, an insurance representative [Janet McDermott] with an office directly across from Christensen’s office testified the force of the bomb blast knocked plaster off the walls of her office and sent glass flying. . . . she immediately ran behind her desk, fearing someone in the hallway had just been shot and that a gunman was in the hallway. “I crouched down,” she said, “I didn’t know what was going on.”

McDermott heard, not the sound of a gunman in the hall, but a “very high-pitched crying—like a little child dying,” she said, her voice cracking with emotion.

She walked out into the hall and found Christensen lying half in, half out of his office doorway. His chest was bloody. The crying noises she had heard were coming from Christensen, but they were much deeper now.

The amount of gun powder used in the pipe bomb together with the nails which were taped around the outside of the pipe insured that Christensen would not survive the blast. It soon became apparent that the victim was the same man who bought the notorious “White Salamander Letter”—a letter which proved to be embarrassing to the Mormon Church. Later that morning another package exploded killing Kathleen Sheets. This package was addressed to her husband, J. Gary Sheets who was also a bishop in the Mormon Church. Mr. Sheets “had helped fund research that authenticated the [Salamander] letter.” The next day a bomb exploded in a car less than two miles from our house. Mark Hofmann, who sold the Salamander letter to Mr. Christensen, was critically injured in this blast.

Mark Hofmann had a reputation for dealing in very controversial Mormon documents. In fact, Brigham Young University Professor Ronald W. Walker recorded the following in his journal on January 18, 1984, after examining the Salamander letter for the first time: “. . . it is explosive . . . It confirms several other documents that have been recently found, indicating the

A revealing study of the Salamandergate scandal. Contains a great deal of information on both the murders and the forgeries. This is the first book to print lengthy extracts from the preliminary hearing. An entire chapter is devoted to the Mclellin collection and its possible relationship to the murders. Another chapter deals with the embarrassing position the Mormon Church finds itself in and the possibility of a cover-up. This book also contains a number of photographs of important documents. The testimony from the hearing also is well worth the price of the book.

** Extra Copies of This Issue Will Be Sent Free **
attended all the sessions of the preliminary hearing. In addition to this, we were able to listen to a copy of the official tapes of the proceedings and to make lengthy extracts. Some of these extracts have been included in this issue of the Messenger.

HOFMANN’S ALIASES

At the preliminary hearing some very startling information came out that seemed to link Mark Hofmann to the construction of the bombs. The evidence showed that Hofmann used the alias “Mike Hansen” when ordering material for his forgery operation and that the same name was used by the person who bought important electronic components which were probably used in the bombs. The name “Mike Hansen” was originally discovered on a manila envelope found in Mark Hofmann’s basement. The name of a company, Utah Engravings, appeared on the opposite side of the envelope. Jorgen Olsen of Utah Engravings “identified the writing on the envelope as his own. He explained that the company uses previously used envelopes to put customer orders in, putting the customer’s name on the reverse side” (Deseret News, April 17, 1986). Olsen said that the name he wrote on the envelope was the name given to him by a customer who ordered an engraved plate for printing. When investigators searched through boxes at Utah Engravings, they found a negative used to make a plate to print the “so-called Jim Bridger notes allegedly sold by Mr. Hofmann to several investors for as much as $5,000.” Hofmann sold the Jim Bridger notes as authentic documents actually signed with the American frontiersman’s “X.” Microscopic examination of the negative, however, proved beyond all doubt that Hofmann’s Jim Bridger notes were nothing but modern forgeries. Negatives for other forged documents were found at other engraving companies:

A Salt Lake engraver testified Thursday he prepared two magnesium printing plates for “Mike Hansen”—a man prosecutors identified in earlier court testimony as Mark W. Hofmann. . . .

Jack Smith, DeBouzek Engraving and Colorplate Co., told the court that on Dec. 5, 1984, a man who said his name was Mike Hansen ordered an engraving plate with the signature of famed American novelist Jack London. On Nov. 1 of the same year, Mike Hansen ordered an engraving that police later found reproduced on the back page of a hymn book belonging to Emma Smith, wife of the founder of the LDS Church.

Prosecutors said Thursday they will tie the two engraving plates to six felony theft and fraud counts Hofmann faces. (Deseret News, April 17, 1986)
Employees of Salt Lake Stamp testified that Mark Hofmann obtained four rubber stamps from them in 1982. These stamps have now been linked to the forgery of notes Mark Hofmann sold which were known as the “Spanish Fork Notes.” In December 1984 a “Mike Hansen” ordered another stamp which was used to falsify a book by Jack London to give it more value. The Salt Lake Tribune, April 18, 1986, reported the following concerning the receipt for this transaction:

The fingerprint of Mark W. Hofmann was found on a receipt bearing the same name investigators believe Mr. Hofmann used as an alias when he allegedly bought components used in last October’s deadly bombings, an expert testified Wednesday.

State Crime Laboratory Latent Print Examiner Scott Pratt told 5th Circuit Judge Paul G. Grant that a single print found on a receipt for a rubber stamp from the Salt Lake Stamp Company that was purchased by a “Mike Hansen” in December 1984 matched the print of Mr. Hofmann’s left hand ring finger.

It was the most substantial piece of evidence thus far in the prosecution’s attempt to link Mr. Hofmann to the purchase of mercury switches and battery packs experts have said are identical to those used in the shrapnel bombs . . .

Barbara Zellner, of the Denver based Cox-Clark Engraving Co., testified that a “Mike Hansen” ordered plates for the Deseret Currency. Investigators later determined that these plates were used to print counterfeit copies of this early Mormon currency. Mark Hofmann made tens of thousands of dollars when he sold these forged notes.

It is interesting to note that “Mike Hansen” gave the following address to the engraving company in Denver: 2730 West 25th Street. When we checked this address on our mailing list of those who receive the Salt Lake City Messenger, we found that it was very close to an address we had—i.e., 3730 West 25th Street in Denver. That the address only differed in the first digit seemed very suspicious. I later learned that the address on my list was that of Mark Hofmann’s brother-in-law. It appears, then, that when Mark Hofmann (using the alias “Mike Hansen”) was asked for an address by the engraving company, he just gave his brother-in-law’s address with one digit altered.

Detective Bell said that there were “a total of three” items seized from Hofmann’s home that had the “Mike Hansen” name on them. One receipt had a date of “1982” on it.

When taken together, the evidence clearly establishes that “Mike Hansen” is Mark Hofmann. One alternative to this conclusion might be to say that Mike Hansen is one of Mark Hofmann’s associates. If this were the case, however, Hofmann would have to know who this individual is because he ended up with and sold the forgeries that came from the plates. This explanation does not really hold water because Mark Hofmann’s fingerprint appears on a “Mike Hansen” receipt.

The link between the bomber Mike Hansen and Mark Hofmann is clearly brought out in an article by Mike Carter:

. . . Detective Bell said, almost a dozen agents were sent out to canvas area Radio Shack stores after an ATF agent, searching the scene of the Sheets homicide for the second time, located a mercury switch identical to a brand sold by the retail electronics firm. In that search, investigators turned up two receipts from different stores for the purchase of mercury switches, battery cases and 12 volt lamps that an ATF agent later testified could be used to test a bomb’s firing circuitry.

One of those receipts has been entered into evidence at the hearing, but the clerk who made the sale was unable to identify Mr. Hofmann as the buyer.

That receipt bears the name “Mike Hansen.” Detective Bell testified the second receipt is made out to “M. Hansen.” The address on the receipts, 2034 E. 3900 South and 2056 E. 3900 South, are vacant lots, he said. (Salt Lake Tribune, April 17, 1985)

At the preliminary hearing it was revealed that “Mike Hansen” was not the only alias Mark Hofmann used. He also used the name “Mike Harris,” and when Detective Bell was asked if there were any other aliases, he said that Hofmann had used the name “Bill Edwards.”

SELLING TEMPLE RITUAL

In earlier issues of the Messenger, we have indicated that the first recollection we had of actually meeting Mr. Hofmann was in 1980. Recently we learned, however, that he may have been in our bookstore on June 16, 1978. On that day a young man came in and showed Sandra a copy of the Second Anointing—a highly secret ritual which was frequently performed in the early Mormon temples but is seldom even mentioned today. He claimed it had belonged to his grandfather and had come down through the family. Stamped at the top of the paper were the words “SALT LAKE TEMPLE,” and next to this was a handwritten notation which read: “Destroy this copy.” The man said he felt we should have a photocopy
of it. He stressed that his family would be very unhappy if they thought that he was turning it over to us, and he claimed that he did not dare reveal his name to us because he belonged to a very prominent Mormon family. Sandra thought that this man was somewhat thinner than Mark Hofmann is today and also that his hair was lighter. Nevertheless, she remembers that he would probably have been about the age that Hofmann was at that time.

In talking with a writer who was doing research concerning Mr. Hofmann’s activities, we learned that investigators were looking into a document concerning the Second Anointing ceremony which A. J. Simmonds had purchased from Mark Hofmann. Mr. Simmonds was kind enough to send us a photocopy of the document and we compared it to the copy that had been given to us. We found that the two were identical. Simmonds revealed that he bought the document from Hofmann for $60 in October 1979—over a year after we were given the photocopy. If Mr. Simmonds’ recollection is correct, Mr. Hofmann must have been the one who brought the document to us. Simmonds seemed to recall that Hofmann told him at the time that he had already given a copy of the document to the Tanners.

Investigators are apparently skeptical concerning the authenticity of the document. The fact that the words “SALT LAKE TEMPLE” are stamped at the top causes us to doubt its validity because Hofmann used rubber stamps in some of his other forgeries. However this may be, Mr. Hofmann’s plan must have been to obtain publicity for the document by getting us to publish it. If this were the case, he was probably disappointed. Since we had no pedigree for the document and didn’t even know the name of the person who gave it to us, we did not feel safe to use it in any of our publications. Except for a few copies we gave to scholars who were interested, it has remained in our files since 1978. One can only speculate on what might have happened if we had taken the bait. Perhaps Mr. Hofmann would have used us as a publisher for his documents. As it turned out, however, the Mormon leaders became the ones who broke the news concerning most of his important “discoveries” at press conferences which they held. As Hofmann became more involved in dealing with the church, he naturally would have been worried that church leaders would find out that he had sold some of the secret temple ritual to Mr. Simmonds. This information could have had a very bad effect on his document business with the church. We have been told that he begged Simmonds not to reveal his part in the transaction.

In February 1984 we began to have some serious doubts concerning Mark Hofmann’s Salamander letter, and in the March 1984 issue of the Messenger we commented concerning our “reservations” concerning its authenticity. We pointed out that there were “disconcerting” parallels to the Salamander letter in the book Mormonism Unvailed, which was published four years after the Salamander letter was supposed to have been penned. It was our questions with regard to the authenticity of the Salamander letter that led us “to take a closer look” at some of the other documents sold by Mark Hofmann (see The Money-Digging Letters, August 22, 1984).

Both Mark Hofmann and Lyn Jacobs originally told us that Jacobs was the one who discovered the Salamander letter. At Mark Hofmann’s preliminary hearing, Lyn Jacobs acknowledged under oath that he had “fabricated” the story that he had obtained the Salamander letter in New England because Mr. Hofmann did not want any publicity:

Q—. . . did you have occasion to tell people that it was—that you were the one who located the item and purchased the item and that Mr. Hofmann was brought in to help you market the item?
A—Unfortunately, that is correct.
Q—And you’re doing this under Mr. Hofmann’s instruction?
A—Not instructions, under his request. Not his request that I fabricate a story, but that his request that I take full responsibility for the document. That was my decision, to fabricate a story several months later.

At the preliminary hearing the evidence against Mark Hofmann’s documents was finally revealed to the public. We had always felt that the best way to examine Hofmann’s documents would be to get them all together and see if there was something they shared in common that could not be found in other 19th century documents. For instance, if it could be shown that the paper or ink was exactly the same in many of Hofmann’s documents, this would certainly cast a shadow of doubt on their authenticity. At the preliminary hearing we learned that experts did, in fact, examine the documents as a group and concluded that there were features that many of the Hofmann documents exhibited which indicated they were forgeries. William Flyn, a noted forensic document expert, testified concerning the research that revealed the documents were forgeries. Mr. Flyn is the
Chief Questioned Documents Examiner for the State of Arizona. He has been with “the Arizona State Lab for 14 years,” and prior to that he served as “the document examiner for the city of Philadelphia” for a period of about four and a half years.

William Flyn claimed he examined “about 461 documents.” In his testimony he disclosed that it was the contents of the ink used on the documents and the attempt to artificially age it that produced a flaky or cracked appearance which gave the whole scam away:

Q—With respect to the ink, did you find any peculiar or abnormal characteristics associated with any of the documents?
A—Yes.
Q—Can you tell us . . . what that would be?
A—Yes. On many of the documents, . . . there appeared a microscopic cracking on the surface of the ink. These appeared on the questioned . . . documents that we were examining.
Q—Besides the cracking, was there any other characteristics?
A—Yes. Under ultraviolet examination, on several of the questioned documents, there was a one-directional running of the inks or a constituent part of the inks, as if they had been wet.
Q—Were you able to determine if there had been any additions on any of the documents—any additional applications of ink?
A—Yes. On several of the documents, there were inks that were not consistent with the body of the document. That is to say that data had been added to the document with a different ink.
Q—Now, . . . besides these characteristics, was there anything common about the documents that you found these characteristics on?
A—Yes.
Q—What was that?
A—These anomalies that I spoke of all occurred on documents that had been dealt by the defendant in the case, Mark Hofmann.
Q—Can you tell us which documents these were?
A—Yes. The documents, in particular, that we found problems with were . . . the Anthon transcript, the Joseph Smith III Blessing, four different white notes, the Lucy Mack Smith document . . . the Josiah Stowell letter of June 18th, 1825, the document we call the E. B. Grandin contract, the Martin Harris–W.W. Phelps document called the Salamander letter, . . . the General Smith, General Dunham (I’m sorry)—Joseph Smith letter, the David Whitmer to Walter Conrad document, the document later called the Betsy Ross letter, the Solomon Spalding–Sidney Rigdon land deed, the letter to Brigham Young from Thomas Bullock, dated June 27, 1865, a promissory note to Isaac Galland from Joseph Smith, a letter called the Maria and Sarah Lawrence letter, the Samuel Smith Bible, the Nathan Harris prayer book, the Bithel ToddPeter and David Whitmer document, and then later there were several types of currency that were also examined.
Q—Did you mention Jim Bridger in that? I’m not sure.
A—The Jim Bridger notes would have been part of the currency . . .
Q—Let me ask you this. Besides these particular ones that you’ve mentioned, associated with Mr. Mark Hofmann, were there any other documents out of the 461 or so that you have examined that exhibit these characteristics?
A—No.
Q—And were there any documents that were not associated with Mark Hofmann that exhibit those characteristics?
A—No.

Mr. Flyn went on to testify that he read in one of the old texts” concerning the “artificial aging of iron gallotannic ink by exposing it to ammonia. . . . After I read that, I made iron gallotannic inks of various types myself and exposed them to . . . both ammonia and sodium hydroxide, and found that . . . it did, indeed, artificially age the inks. . . . The sodium hydroxide, in particular, will immediately take the iron gallotannic inks and turn them a deep rust color on the paper. It wont crack the inks, however. It was not until I began adding some of the additives that were typically added to the inks of that time period, in particular, the sugars and the gums and probably the most . . . commonly used additive in that time period would have been gum arabic, . . .” Flyn explained that gum arabic “was commonly added to the ink to give it body, as a viscosity adjuster to adjust the thickness of the ink, and also as a preservative. . . . When I mixed the iron gallotannic inks and added either the sugars or the gum arabic and then artificially aged them with the sodium hydroxide, I got exactly the same phenomenon that I described in the examination of the questioned documents. The ink both artificially aged and cracked.”

When Mr. Flyn was asked why the ink cracked, he replied:

The cracking effect . . . on the surface of the ink takes place, I believe, because of the viscosity change that the gums and sugars undergo when they go from an acidic state to an alkaline state. . . . And its amazing, under a microscope, you can put a drop of sodium hydroxide on
iron gallotannic ink with gums or sugars and watch the ink crack. It will, as soon as the liquid portion evaporates. What remains will be a dark brown rusted ink with cracked surface morphology.

Flyn explained that the chemicals which cause the ink to artificially age can be put on a document in a number of different ways: “They can be fumed. . . . You can simply tape a document inside a tank and the fumes will attack the ink. You can spray them with a air gun. You can dip them.”

It appears from William Flyn’s testimony that the forger was tripped up by the use of gum arabic or sugars in the ink. Although I do not know that the ink found in the Hofmann documents was composed from the exact ingredients mentioned in the formula in Charles Hamilton’s book (a book found in Hofmann’s house), it is interesting to note that this formula “To Make Black Ink” calls for “one Ounce Gum Arabic” (*Great Forgers and Famous Fakes*, page 267).

Although William Flyn seems to have been the expert who solved the mystery of the cracked ink, George Throckmorton did a great deal of work on the documents. Paul Larson called Mr. Throckmorton “the only forensic document examiner now practicing in the State of Utah” (*Utah Holiday*, December 1985, page 84). In his testimony, Mr. Throckmorton said that “In this investigation, I examined 688 documents that were written in iron gallotannic ink.” George Throckmorton, like William Flyn, testified that when many of Hofmann’s documents were examined under a microscope, they had cracked ink. Mr. Throckmorton described the cracked ink as looking like the “skin of an alligator.” He claimed that “There were a total, if I recall from my memory, of the 688 I observed, 21 that had this characteristic cracking effect.” When Throckmorton was asked where the 21 documents that had cracked ink came from, he replied that it was his understanding that they all came “through Mark Hofmann.” When he was asked if the ink on any of the remaining 667 documents showed evidence of cracking, he responded: “No, there was none.”

George Throckmorton noticed that “many of the documents” had a “characteristic blue hazing effect under ultraviolet examination.” Mr. Throckmorton experimented and found that ammonium hydroxide, which was used by William Flyn to artificially age the iron gallotannic ink, gave the documents a blue hazing effect under ultraviolet light:

> The blue hazing effect which was observed could have been produced in two different manners . . . I noticed in my personal tests that on some of the papers—some of the old papers that we had for experimentation purposes—some of those papers after being dipped or treated with ammonium hydroxide did leave sort of a blue hazing effect under ultraviolet light. Others also when they were treated with a sodium hypochloride solution—a very weak solution—it left a blue hazing effect on the documents. So the hazing effect could have been duplicated by either one of those procedures. I’m not sure which.

It appears, then, that a solution used to age the ink on the Hofmann documents could cause all the peculiar characteristics found on them—i.e., cracked ink, a blue hazing effect under ultraviolet light and a one-directional running of the ink. At the hearing William Flyn testified:

> A—As I’ll use it in my testimony, it [bleeding] refers to a portion of the ink that would normally be invisible but is made visible under ultraviolet light. On several of the documents, . . . some constituent part of the ink . . . ran from the characters. In most instances, it ran in a unidirectional way. That is to say, it appeared that the document had been held vertically and wet so that the running was down, in one direction. It was not even haloing, where the running extended outward evenly in all directions, but rather it was more like a one-directional running.

Mr. Flyn also gave this testimony concerning the one-directional running of the ink:

> Q—. . . Did you find any indications of this same sign of running under ultraviolet light on any of the documents other than the Hofmann documents?
> A—No.
> Q—Out of all the hundreds you examined it was only on the Hofmann documents?
> A—Yes. Of the 461, I did not see it on those documents.

In the book, *Tracking the White Salamander*, a great deal of testimony is given concerning the authenticity of the documents. What we have presented here, however, should be sufficient to convince the reader that the case against the Hofmann documents is based upon very solid scientific evidence.

**SPALDING-RIGDON SCARE**

In the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for April 1986, we printed the following:

Allen Roberts and Fred Esplin reveal that “Police sources indicate that Steve Christensen’s personal journal records that Elder Hugh Pinnock asked Hofmann to
find for him two important items: the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon and something “too sensitive to mention,” that the late “Elders Mark E. Petersen and G. Homer Durham were most involved in prior to their deaths” (Utah Holiday, January 1986, page 58). It has been suggested that the item that is “too sensitive to mention” may be the gold plates of the Book of Mormon or a “seer stone.” Both of these suggestions appear unlikely. One thing that might qualify, however, is evidence that Solomon Spalding or Sidney Rigdon wrote the material which Joseph Smith used for his Book of Mormon. Although we have never put a great deal of stock in the theory, many critics of the Mormon church have maintained that Sidney Rigdon stole a manuscript written by Spalding and that this was used to create the Book of Mormon. If this idea could be proven, it would destroy the claim that the Book of Mormon was divinely inspired. Any hard evidence on this subject would certainly be “too sensitive to mention.” Like the 116 lost pages of the Book of Mormon, such “evidence” might be sold to the Mormon church for millions of dollars. This, combined with the secrecy that would surround its transfer to the church, could very easily lead to disagreements and perhaps even to murder.

We have recently learned that investigators have been looking into a document which was in the possession of Hofmann or Jacobs which has the signatures of both Solomon Spalding and Sidney Rigdon on it. The document apparently bears clear evidence of falsification.

At the Mormon Church’s press conference concerning the bombings, Apostle Dallin Oaks stated: “Mark Hofmann has shown Elder Pinnock a letter that he said was part of the [McLellin] collection . . .” (Salt Lake Tribune, October 27, 1986). When the preliminary hearing was held, it was revealed that the “letter” which Hofmann showed to Mr. Pinnock was actually the mysterious Spalding-Rigdon document which links the two men together. Hugh Pinnock, a member of the church’s First Quorum of Seventy, testified as follows:

Q—Could you tell us what transpired at that meeting?
A—. . . well, he reported he’d been able to get the collection . . . and showed me . . . a document that he reported was from that collection.
Q—Do you know what that item was?
A—It . . . was a deed or some legal document . . . between Asa and Solomon Spalding and Sidney Rigdon and some other parties. It dealt, if I remember correctly, with the transfer of property.
Q—Did he tell you anything else more about that particular item?

Hugh Pinnock seemed to believe that this document was genuine, and he probably realized that it could have a devastating effect if it became known by critics of the church. That Hofmann would show this particular document to Pinnock certainly supports the accusation that he was engaged in “an attempted blackmail of the Mormon church itself.”

As it turns out, the document is a very obvious forgery. Document experts have testified that the names Sidney Rigdon and Solomon Spalding were not on the document when it was originally written and that the date has been changed from 1722 to 1822. Even the altered date, however, presents a serious problem to those who are informed concerning the Spalding-Rigdon theory concerning the origin of the Book of Mormon. Solomon Spalding could not have signed any document in 1822 because he died in 1816!

In any case, although Hofmann represented to Pinnock that the document was part of the McLellin collection, he turned right around and sold it out from under the church. Steven Barnett gave some very revealing testimony concerning the Spalding-Rigdon document. Mr. Barnett claimed that “about the 18th of September, last year” (1985), Mark Hofmann came into Cosmic Aeroplane and showed him “a document with the signature of Sidney Rigdon and a Solomon Spalding.” He said that Mr. Hofmann told him that it was probably going to be a controversial item and that he would sell it to the store for “$2,000.” Mr. Barnett asked for some time to do some research with regard to the Solomon Spalding signature, and Hofmann granted his request. Barnett went on to testify:

Q—What did you do?
A—I researched that evening and found out that the Solomon Spalding had died several years prior to the date on the item.
Q—Okay. What did you do with that information?
A—Mark called me the following day and I just informed him of the discrepancy of the date.
Q—What happened then? Did he respond?
A—Yes. He said that he’d check back with me later in the day.
Q—Did he do so?
A—Yes, he did.
Q—Tell us about that conversation.
A—Well, what he told me was, would I be interested in the item as a Sidney Rigdon autograph?
Q—And your response?
A—I thought that could be arranged but I wouldn’t be able to pay as much money for it as such.
Q—And what did you pay him?
A—Two hundred dollars in two payments.
Q—A total of four hundred dollars?
A—Right.

At the preliminary hearing William Flyn gave this revealing testimony regarding the Spalding-Rigdon document:

Q—And as a result of your examination, were you able to make any findings concerning that document?
A—Yes.
Q—What are those findings?
A—The Solomon Spalding and Sidney Rigdon signatures that appear on that document were written with a different ink than the other text of the document and the other signatures that appear on the document.
Q—Were you able to determine if they were the same inks themselves?
A—Yes. It appears that the Solomon Spalding and Sidney Rigdon inks are the same inks within themselves but different than the remainder of the ink on...that document.
Q—Were you able to notice any other alterations or changes on that document?
A—Yes.
Q—What was that?
A—The date, anno Domini 1822, had been altered.
Q—Can you tell us from what to what?
A—It had been altered from anno Domini 1722 to 1822.
Q—And out of those eight signatures you mentioned, there are two that appear to be of a different ink.
A—Yes.
Q—And that is Spalding and Sidney Rigdon?
A—That’s correct.

In his testimony George Throckmorton brought out the fact that the ink used on the alteration of the date and the two signatures was cracked (indicating, of course, that it was artificially aged). When Mr. Throckmorton was asked with regard to the 1822 date, he replied: “The number eight exhibited not only a cracking effect but also a diffusing or running effect, which was not found on the one or the other twos.” Throckmorton also testified that the “Solomon Spalding signature also exhibited that characteristic cracking.” When he was asked about the Sidney Rigdon signature, he responded: “That was the other place I observed the cracking.” Mr. Throckmorton maintained that except for the three alterations, the document was genuine: “Other than the change of the date—that’s not an accurate date by any means—and also the two signatures, the rest of it appears to be a genuine document.” Throckmorton was absolutely convinced that the document had been falsified: “I do not believe that those signatures nor the date as we discussed was originally put on that document, nor is it from that time period.”

This document is certainly one of the crudest forgeries that Mark Hofmann ever sold. As we have already pointed out, even the altered date of 1822 does not fit historically because Solomon Spalding died in 1816! Another problem with this document is that it locates Spalding and Rigdon together in Connecticut at the time of the transaction. The evidence shows that Spalding spent his last years in Ohio and Pennsylvania, and Sidney Rigdon became a pastor in a Baptist church in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania in 1822. Even if Spalding had been alive in 1822, the only logical place for the two men to sign such a document would be in Pennsylvania. Another serious problem with the document is that the signature of Solomon Spalding does not resemble that found on a deed he signed in 1811. From all this it is obvious that the creator of this document did not do any real homework on the subject.

SCANDAL AFFECTS CHURCH

While some people originally subscribed to the theory that “the bombs were planted by people radically opposed to the teachings of the Mormon Church,” the facts completely discredit such an idea. At this point it appears that the entire Salamandergate scandal grew out of an internal problem which took root within the Mormon Church itself. Almost all of those who played a role in the transactions which brought international attention to Salt Lake City were members of the Mormon Church. Mark Hofmann himself was at one time a missionary for the church. According to the Church Section of the Deseret News, October 20, 1985, “Hofmann . . . served in the England Southwest Mission, 1974-76.” On February 4, 1986, the same newspaper said that on “one mission report of average proselyting hours, Hofmann’s name ranks 49th out of 208 missionaries. Part of the time, Hofmann served in the mission office in Bristol.” Utah Holiday, January 1986, page 53, reported that Hofmann married “in the Salt Lake LDS temple.” In an interview published in Sunstone Review, September 1982, page 19, Mr. Hofmann described himself as “an eighth-generation Mormon, and my mother is a stake
Relief Society president right now.” Some of Hofmann’s closest associates (Lyn Jacobs, Shannon Flynn and Brent Metcalf) were returned Mormon missionaries. Like Hofmann, Brent Metcalf had served his mission in England. Lyn Jacobs was a missionary in Canada, and Shannon Flynn served in Brazil. One of the persons that Hofmann defrauded was Wilford Cardon. Mr. Cardon testified: “Mr. Flynn served a mission in Brazil and I was his mission president from July 1978 until the end of his mission.” Shannon Flynn introduced Mark Hofmann to Wilford Cardon, and Hofmann proceeded to talk Cardon into investing heavily in his schemes. Another faithful Mormon who lost a great deal of money by investing in Hofmann’s forgeries is Brent Ashworth. The Church Section of the Deseret News, June 23, 1985, said that Mr. Ashworth was “bishop of the BYU 82nd Ward.” On July 23, 1986, Brent Ashworth filed a lawsuit against Mark Hofmann in which he claimed that Hofmann had sold him many forgeries and that he had paid $225,100 for the documents:

6. The total amount paid by the plaintiff to the defendant for said documents was $225,100 . . .

16. The plaintiff had acquired a reputation in the community for being an expert in the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and an authority on Church documents. The discovery that the documents which were sold to the plaintiff by the defendant were false and fraudulent and which were created by the defendant for the sole purpose of fraud and deception was equally newsworthy and the public portrayal has caused the plaintiff great embarrassment, humiliation and injury to his reputation and stature in the community, all to his general damage in an amount to be established upon proof. (“Brent Ashworth, Plaintiff, vs. Mark Hofmann, Defendant,” pages 2-3)

Alvin Rust, who invested in the McLellin collection and a number of Hofmann’s other forgeries, has served as a bishop in the Mormon Church. Steven Christensen and J. Gary Sheets, who invested in the Salamander letter and later had bombs delivered to them, were also bishops in the church. (Sheets’ wife, of course, opened the package addressed to him and died in the explosion.)

Mark Hofmann was well acquainted with Wade Lillywhite and Curt Bench who worked at the church’s Deseret Book. Many of Hofmann’s forgeries, in fact, were sold to the church’s bookstore. David Sorenson, who was to purchase the McLellin collection on the day Hofmann was injured, was serving as a mission president. Mr. Hofmann was well acquainted with the former LDS Church Archivist Donald Schmidt and sometimes met with Gordon B. Hinckley, of the church’s First Presidency. Donald Schmidt testified that Hinckley and Apostle Boyd K. Packer often gave approval for the church to purchase Hofmann’s documents.

Hugh Pinnock, of the First Quorum of Seventy, helped Hofmann find a buyer for the McLellin collection and secure a loan of $185,000, and even Apostle Dallin Oaks found himself meeting with Hofmann.

One thing that must be very embarrassing for Mormon Church leaders is that they not only gave Hofmann money for forgeries, but that they also traded genuine material stored in the archives for bogus documents. At the press conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley said that the “Historical Department later traded him other documents of interest for the ‘Anthon Manuscript’” (Salt Lake Tribune, October 27, 1985). Hinckley also said that the Joseph Smith III Blessing “was acquired from Mr. Hofmann with a trade of historic materials . . .” (Ibid.).

The Hofmann documents which were not unfavorable to the Mormon Church were proudly displayed in Church publications. The Church’s Ensign magazine, December 1983, printed an article which was filled with pictures of documents that came through Hofmann. On the other hand, the unfavorable documents which the public were not aware of, were buried in the church’s vaults. In the Salt Lake Tribune, February 6, 1986, we find the following:

Sources close to the investigation have said the church apparently did little to authenticate many of these documents before they were purchased, stating that church historians felt “they had time and all eternity” to check their veracity. “They just wanted them off the streets,” the source said.

Although the story of Mark Hofmann and his document dealing is a real tragedy for everyone involved, it can provide some very helpful insights with regard to Joseph Smith and the origin of the Mormon Church. In fact, it even throws light on the actions of the present leaders of the Church. While it must be admitted that there are many dissimilarities between Mark Hofmann and Joseph Smith, there are some remarkable parallels between the two men. To begin with, Joseph Smith was only in his twenties when he brought forth the Book of Mormon. Because of his age many people have argued that it would have been impossible for him to produce a book like the Book of Mormon without divine help. Mark Hofmann was about the same age when he began making his discoveries. Hofmann’s followers have advanced an argument similar to that used for Joseph Smith—i.e., how could such a young inexperienced
man fabricate so many remarkable documents and fool Church leaders, historians and document experts?

Both Joseph Smith and Mark Hofmann had many devoted followers. It is often argued that the rapid growth and dedication of the early Mormon Church is a strong argument for Joseph Smith’s divine calling. Joseph Smith himself once asserted:

I have more to boast of than ever any man had. I am the only man that has ever been able to keep a whole church together since the days of Adam. . . . Neither Paul, John, Peter, nor Jesus ever did it. I boast that no man ever did such a work as I. The followers of Jesus ran away from Him, but the Latter-day Saints never ran away from me yet. (History of the Church, vol. 6, pages 408-409)

While it is certainly true that Joseph Smith had many people who firmly believed in him, the same could be said of Mark Hofmann. In fact, the leaders of the Mormon Church had a great deal of faith in “Brother Hofmann” (see Deseret News, Church Section, May 3, 1980). In the Salt Lake Tribune, April 19, 1986, Mike Carter referred to the “blind trust of LDS officials in Bombing suspect Mark W. Hofmann . . .” Mr. Carter went on to say that it “was apparent that church leaders, including President Hinckley, trusted Mr. Hofmann implicitly . . .”

Another parallel between Mark Hofmann and Joseph Smith is that they both became famous because of a document they discovered. The Los Angeles Times, November 8, 1985, printed the following:

Indeed, the very founding of Mormonism was based on the discovery of a document of sorts. Church doctrine holds that . . . Joseph Smith was led by an angel named Moroni to a set of golden plates . . . Smith, the Mormons believe, translated a “reformed Egyptian” text on the plates into the Book of Mormon, which supposedly corrects the errors of other Christian religions.

Mark Hofmann, of course, found himself in the limelight when he discovered the Anthon transcript—purported to be Joseph Smith’s own handwritten copy of the characters from the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. Mr. Hofmann went on to discover the first extant letter of Joseph Smith—the 1825 letter to Josiah Stowell. As if this were not startling enough, he found the last extant letter of Joseph Smith, written on the very day of his death. Prior to Hofmann’s time, no one had ever found a letter signed by Martin Harris. Hofmann filled this gap by finding two letters signed by Harris—the Salamander letter of 1830 and the 1873 letter, which was written toward the end of his life. Both letters were extraordinary in their content. The 1873 letter contained a glowing testimony to both the Book of Mormon and the angel who showed Harris the gold plates. The Salamander letter, on the other hand, turned out to be a devastating account of how Joseph Smith found the gold plates. Mr. Hofmann also found the earliest known letter of Joseph Smith’s mother, Lucy Mack Smith. Besides these documents and many others, Hofmann claimed to have the McLellin collection—a collection containing extremely important and sensitive Mormon documents. Hofmann’s finds even went beyond Mormonism. For instance, he found an original Betsy Ross letter. Then, to top it all off, he discovered the “Oath of a Freeman,” the first document printed in colonial America. While the discovery of a copy of the Oath of a Freeman would be astounding enough, Mark Hofmann claimed that he found two copies of the document! Moreover, he said that these copies were worth $1,500,000 each—making a total of $3,000,000.

While Mark Hofmann’s claims almost leave one breathless, they seem insignificant when compared with the claims of Joseph Smith. In The Changing World of Mormonism, we wrote the following about Joseph Smith:

The validity of Mormonism rests upon the claims of Joseph Smith. When he was a young man, his family moved to the state of New York. Within a few miles of his home there was a hill, which Joseph Smith later called the Hill Cumorah. According to Joseph Smith, this was no ordinary hill, for on this hill two of the greatest battles in history were fought. Apostle Bruce R. McConkie says that “both the Nephite and Jaredite civilizations fought their final great wars of extinction at and near the Hill Cumorah . . . which hill is located between Palmyra and Manchester in the western part of the state of New York. It was here that Moroni hid up the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated” (Mormon Doctrine, 1966, page 175).

Apostle McConkie further stated: “It is reported by President Brigham Young that there was in the Hill Cumorah a room containing many wagon loads of plates (page 454). An ordinary person would probably see nothing of importance about this hill, but to the Mormons this is one of the most important places on earth.

While Joseph Smith was digging a well for Clark Chase, he found “a chocolate-colored, somewhat egg-shaped stone” (Comprehensive History of the Church, by B. H. Roberts, vol. 1, page 129). This might have been just an ordinary stone (maybe a little unusual in appearance), but to Joseph Smith it became a “seer stone.” This stone was supposed to have been prepared by God, and through it Joseph Smith received revelations.

Joseph Smith claimed that on the night of September 21, 1823, he had a visitor. But this was no ordinary visitor, it was an angel sent from God. The angel told
Smith that gold plates were buried in the Hill Cumorah. The next day Joseph Smith found these plates, and, if his story is true, he made the greatest discovery in the history of archaeology. Archaeologists have searched for years trying to piece together the history of the ancient inhabitants of this land, but Joseph Smith turned over one stone and found all the answers. Underneath this stone he found a box which held the gold plates. The plates contained “an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang.” More important than this, however, they contained “the fullness of the everlasting Gospel.” According to the Mormon leaders, the Book of Mormon is far superior to the Bible because it contains the “pure” words of Christ. The Bible, they charge, has been altered by wicked priests.

After the Mormon church was organized, Joseph Smith gave a revelation which stated that the Saints were to gather at Jackson County, Missouri. To the Mormon leaders, this was no ordinary land; they taught that it was the place where the “Garden of Eden” was located. Apostle McConkie explains: “The early brethren of this dispensation taught that the Garden of Eden was located in what is known to us as the land of Zion, an area for which Jackson County, Missouri, is the center place” (Mormon Doctrine, page 20).

In Daviess County, Missouri, Joseph Smith found some rocks which he claimed were the remains of an altar built by Adam. McConkie continues: “At that great gathering Adam offered sacrifices on an altar built for the purpose. A remnant of that very altar remained on the spot down through the ages. On May 19, 1838, Joseph Smith and a number of his associates stood on the remains of the pile of stones at a place called Spring Hill, Daviess County, Missouri (Mormon Doctrine, page 21). . . .

In the year 1835 a man came to Kirtland, Ohio, with some mummies and rolls of papyrus. Joseph Smith examined the rolls and stated that “one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt” (History of the Church, vol. 2, page 236). (The Changing World of Mormonism, pages 21-23)

Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham, and it is printed today by the Mormon Church as a part of the Pearl of Great Price—one of the four standard works of the church.

While Mark Hofmann claimed to have some very old and important autographs, Joseph Smith’s collection was far superior. When Josiah Quincy visited Nauvoo in 1844, Joseph Smith showed him the papyrus rolls. Quincy later wrote:

“And now come with me,” said the prophet. . . . Some parchments inscribed with hieroglyphics were then offered us. . . . “That is the handwriting of Abraham, the Father of the Faithful,” said the prophet. “This is the autograph of Moses, and these lines were written by his brother Aaron. Here we have the earliest account of the Creation, from which Moses composed the First Book of Genesis.” (Figures of the Past, by Josiah Quincy, as cited in Among the Mormons, 1958, pages 136-37)

After Joseph Smith’s death the Egyptian papyri were lost. Unfortunately for his claims, however, his collection was rediscovered in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (see Deseret News, November 27, 1967). Egyptologists translated the fragments from the very roll Joseph Smith declared was the Book of Abraham and found that it was nothing but a common Egyptian funerary text known as the “Book of Breathings.” This is a pagan text which has a great deal to do with Egyptian gods and goddesses but has nothing to do with Abraham nor his religion. (For a complete treatment of the Book of Abraham see our book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 294-369-D.)

There is certainly an interesting parallel to Mark Hofmann with regard to this papyrus. It appears that both Smith and Hofmann misrepresented the papyrus they had obtained. Joseph Smith claimed that his papyrus was the Book of Abraham, when in reality it was nothing but a mortuary text written for a dead man named “Osiris Hor.” Mark Hofmann maintained that the papyrus he had was from the Joseph Smith Papyri which had been preserved in the McLellin collection. The truth, of course, was that Hofmann had obtained a common piece of papyrus from Kenneth Rendell.

Although Mark Hofmann’s actions can not be excused in the eyes of the law because of his background, we can not help but feel sorry for him. His involvement with Mormon history certainly could have played an important role in his problems. If we assume that he started out as a true believer in the church, the things he learned from his study of Joseph Smith and early Mormonism could have come as a shattering blow to his faith. Before Mark Hofmann went on his mission for the church, he would have been thoroughly instructed in the importance of Joseph Smith to those who wish to be good Mormons. For instance, in the Doctrine and Covenants, Section 135, verse 3, we read: “Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it. . . . He lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people; . . . ” What a disappointment it must have been to Mr. Hofmann when he found out that Joseph
did not tell the truth concerning his involvement in polygamy. History reveals that by 1844, Joseph Smith had dozens of plural wives, yet when he was accused of having “six or seven young females as wives” on May 3, 1844, Joseph Smith replied:

What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one.

I am the same man, and as innocent as I was fourteen years ago; and I can prove them all perjurers. (History of the Church, vol. 6, page 411)

If Mark Hofmann had learned from his study of history that the first Prophet of his Church had been a man of impeccable honesty, it could have made a great difference in his life. Perhaps he would have continued his study of medicine and become a doctor. Instead, he finds himself accused of deceit and treachery. Alvin Rust claimed that Mr. Hofmann told him four stories with regard to the McLellin collection. In this respect Hofmann was no different than Joseph Smith. In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 143-150, we demonstrated that the Mormon Prophet told a variety of different stories concerning his most important vision—the First Vision of 1820. In a manuscript written in his own hand in 1832, preserved in the Mormon Church Archives, Joseph Smith clearly taught that only one personage (Jesus) appeared to him in this vision. In an entry in Joseph Smith’s diary for 1835, also stored in the Mormon Church Archives, Joseph Smith related a different story. He claimed that there were many personages in the vision. In the official account, written in 1838, Joseph Smith asserted that both God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ appeared to him.

It is very clear that Mark Hofmann knew Joseph Smith deceived his people with regard to the Book of Abraham papyrus. Smith had stated that the papyrus dated back to the time of Abraham and contained his signature. When Egyptologists examined the papyrus they claimed that it was not written until the time of Christ, which would be almost two thousand years after Abraham’s time. Even the church’s most noted apologist, Dr. Hugh Nibley, had to admit that “our Joseph Smith Book of Breathings” was written in the first century AD” (The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, page 3). Is it any wonder that when Mark Hofmann approached Kenneth Rendell concerning some papyrus he could pawn off as that used by Joseph Smith, he asked for “something from the first- or second-century A.D.” (Deseret News, October 28, 1985)?

When it comes to the forgery of historical Church documents, Mark Hofmann could have read a great deal about Mormonism that might be used in an attempt to justify his actions. For instance, Mormon leaders claim that the Book of Mormon is a translation of an ancient history of the Nephites written on gold plates. The internal evidence in the book itself, however, clearly reveals that it is a 19th century production. It appears to have material taken from the Westminster Confession, which was not adopted until 1729 (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 68-69), and also reflects the anti-Masonic controversy which was raging in Joseph Smith’s time (Ibid., pages 69-72). The most devastating evidence against the Book of Mormon, however, is its use of material from the Bible. That Joseph Smith plagiarized from the King James Version of the Bible in creating the Book of Mormon is evident to those who have made a careful comparison of the two books. In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 74-79, we have cited over 200 places where the Book of Mormon used quotations from the New Testament. Most of these quotations were supposed to have been recorded in the Book of Mormon between 600 B.C. and 33 AD. i.e., before the New Testament was even written!

Joseph Smith’s successors also seemed to have little regard for truthful history. The Mormon leaders actually forged the greatest portion (60%) of Joseph Smith’s History of the Church after his death. While it is true that they used carefully selected portions from Joseph Smith’s diaries and letters written by him, other portions were taken from newspapers and diaries written by other people and some material was created specifically to fill in vacancies in the record. The portions taken from other authors were changed to the first person in an obvious attempt to mislead the reader into believing that they were written by Joseph Smith himself. For a more complete treatment of this subject see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 126-142; also our book, Falsification of Joseph Smith’s History.

What Brigham Young and other Mormon leaders did when they fabricated Joseph Smith’s History and claimed that it was written by Joseph Smith “HIMSELF” (History of the Church, vol. 1, title page), is exactly what happened in the production of the Salamander letter. In both cases other documents have been plagiarized to create what appears to be an original document written in the first person singular. While the History of the Church and the Salamander letter both contain a certain amount of material that is historically accurate, neither of them can be really depended upon because the authorship has been misrepresented. The History of the Church, of course, presents a pro-Mormon position, whereas the Salamander letter is anti-Mormon
in content. In both cases, however, the same deceptive method has been used.

Mr. Hofmann must have believed that his “discoveries” would tend to liberalize the Mormon Church as scholars and Church leaders came to accept them, and there is little doubt that this has turned out to be the case. Some Mormon scholars, in fact, have confessed that the Salamander letter served as the catalyst that led them to deeper studies regarding the connection between Mormonism and magic. Now that the documents have been exposed as forgeries, historians may have suffered some loss of credibility with the average member of the church. This would probably tend to strengthen the orthodox position in the church if it were not for another factor—i.e., the loss of credibility that the Mormon leaders have suffered. While it is true that both Mormon and non-Mormon historians were fooled, as a general rule historians do not claim to be inspired by God. The Mormon leaders, on the other hand, claim special guidance from the Lord. According to Ezra Taft Benson, the present Prophet, Seer and Revelator of the Mormon Church, “The Prophet Will Never Lead the Church Astray” (“Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophets,” an address given at BYU, February 26, 1980; printed in Following the Brethren, page 5). President Benson claims that the leaders of the church have special discernment which is far superior to “earthly knowledge”:

FIFTH: The Prophet is Not Required to Have Any Particular Earthly Training or Credentials to Speak on Any Subject or Any Matter at Any Time.

Sometimes there are those who feel their earthly knowledge on a certain subject is superior to the heavenly knowledge which God gives to His Prophet on the same subject. . . . We haven’t yet had a prophet who earned a doctorate degree in any subject, but as someone said, “A prophet may not have his PhD but he certainly has his LDS.” We encourage earthly knowledge in many areas, but remember if there is ever a conflict between earthly knowledge and the words of the prophet, you stand with the prophet and you’ll be blessed and time will vindicate you. (Ibid., page 6)

On page 10 of his address, President Benson said:

NINTH: The Prophet Can Receive Revelation on Any Matter—Temporal or Spiritual.

As I think of President Benson’s statements concerning the special powers of a prophet, I cannot help but remember a photograph of his predecessor, Spencer W. Kimball, the twelfth Prophet, Seer and Revelator of the Mormon Church, which appeared in the Church Section of the Deseret News on May 3, 1980. President Kimball is flanked by Mark Hofmann, President N. Eldon Tanner, President Marion G. Romney, Apostle Boyd K Packer and Apostle Gordon B. Hinckley. Neither President Kimball nor any of the other General Authorities seem to be able to detect anything wrong with either “Brother Hofmann” or the Anthon transcript—a document purported to contain the characters Joseph Smith copied from the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. Although President Kimball was supposed to be a “seer” and have the power to “translate all records that are of ancient date” (Book of Mormon, Mosiah 8:13), he was unable to translate the characters which appear on the Anthon transcript. Instead of using the “seer stone,” he examined the characters which appear on the transcript with a magnifying glass. Not only did he fail to provide a translation, but he was unable to detect that the church was being set up to be defrauded of a large amount of money and many items out of its archives. Moreover, he entirely failed to see the devastating and embarrassing affect this transaction and others which followed would have on the Mormon Church. If ever revelation from the Lord was needed, it was on that day in 1980 when Mark Hofmann stood in the presence of President Kimball.

While the Mormon leaders claim to have the same powers as the ancient Apostles in the Bible, their performance with regard to Mark Hofmann certainly does not match up to that of the Apostle Peter when he caught Ananias and Sapphira red-handed in their attempt to deceive the church with regard to a financial transaction: “But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?” (Acts 5:3).

As President Kimball got older, he became less able to function and President Gordon B. Hinckley took over many of his responsibilities and became to all appearances the acting president of the church. Hinckley, who stood with President Kimball in the 1980 photograph, was deceived on a number of occasions by Mr. Hofmann. He, together with Apostle Boyd K Packer (also shown in the picture), approved many of the deals the church made with Hofmann. It appears that if the Mormon Church was ever led by revelation, it has been lacking since Mark Hofmann came into the church offices with the Anthon transcript. The inability of the Mormon leaders to detect the religious fraud perpetrated upon them raises the question as to their testimony with regard to the Book of Mormon. After all, if they could not determine that Hofmann’s documents—which were only 150 years old—were forgeries, how can we trust their judgment with regard to a record which is supposed to be ten times as old? They
have seen and inspected Mark Hofmann’s documents, but they have never seen the gold plates the Book of Mormon was translated from. While it could be possible that Joseph Smith really had some kind of metal plates, how would the present leaders of the Mormon Church know if they were genuine or fabricated? With regard to the inability of the Mormon leaders to detect that the Hofmann documents were fraudulent, a person might try to argue that these documents were not really important spiritual writings, and therefore the Lord did not see fit to intervene when the General Authorities examined them. The truth of the matter, however, is that they contain extremely important material directly relating to spiritual affairs. The Salamander letter, for example, changes the story of the Angel Moroni appearing to Joseph Smith to that of a cantankerous and tricky “old spirit” who transforms himself from a white salamander and strikes Joseph Smith. Moreover, some of the purported Joseph Smith writings which Hofmann sold to the church contain revelations from the Lord Himself. For instance, the Joseph Smith III Blessing document gives this message from the Lord: “Verily, thus saith the Lord: if he abides in me, his days shall be lengthened upon the earth, but, if he abides not in me, I, the Lord, will receive him, in an instant, unto myself.” The 1838 letter of Joseph Smith to his brother, Hyrum, is in its entirety a revelation purporting to come from the Lord. It begins with the words, “Verily thus Saith the Lord,” and ends with the word “Amen.” The fact that the Mormon leaders were unable to recognize the spurious nature of these revelations casts doubt upon their ability to discern the truthfulness of the other revelations given by Joseph Smith. It has always been claimed that it is virtually impossible for a person to write a revelation that would compare with Joseph Smith’s. It now appears that there is someone who can write revelations comparable to Joseph Smith’s and that it is even possible to get them past the scrutiny of the highest leadership of the Mormon Church.

The Mormon leaders teach that there has been “a restoration of the gospel” through Joseph Smith the Prophet. Smith restored the Book of Mormon and a great deal of other ancient Scripture. All of these purported Scriptures have no provenance—i.e., there is no proof of their existence prior to the manuscripts written on what was modern paper during Joseph Smith’s lifetime. In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 375-376, we wrote the following:

The Apostle Pratt’s statement that there is “more than one thousand times” the amount of evidence to prove the Book of Mormon than to prove the Bible is certainly a misrepresentation. We have already shown that the only evidence for the Book of Mormon is the testimony of the witnesses and that this testimony can not be relied upon.

As far as historical and manuscript evidence is concerned, Joseph Smith’s scriptures have absolutely no foundation. The “records of the Nephites,” for instance, were never cited by any ancient writer, nor are there any known manuscripts or even fragments of manuscripts in existence older than the ones dictated by Joseph Smith in the late 1820’s. Joseph Smith’s Book of Moses is likewise without documentary support. The only handwritten manuscripts for the Book of Moses are those dictated by Joseph Smith in the early 1830’s. Since Joseph Smith’s revelations in the *Doctrine and Covenants* do not purport to be translations of ancient records, we would not expect to find any ancient manuscript evidence concerning them. There is one revelation, however, which purports to be a translation of a “record made on parchment by John and hidden up by himself.” This revelation is found in the *Doctrine and Covenants* as Section 7. There is no documentary support for this revelation. The Book of Abraham purports to be a translation of an ancient Egyptian papyrus. We have already shown, however, that the original papyrus is in reality the Egyptian Book of Breathings and has nothing to do with Abraham or his religion. Therefore, we have no evidence for the Book of Abraham prior to the handwritten manuscripts dictated by Joseph Smith in the 1830’s. It would appear, then, that there is no documentary evidence for any of Joseph Smith’s works that dates back prior to the late 1820’s.

When we turn to the Bible, however, we find a great deal of evidence—some of which dates back more than 2,000 years—showing that the Bible was known and used in early times. While this in itself does not prove that the Bible is divinely inspired, it does give a person a basis for faith.

Mark Hofmann seems to have produced his own “restoration” of religious documents from the past. While he has not pretended to find the signatures of Abraham, Moses and Aaron, he has “discovered” Mormon material which was supposed to have been written as far back as the 1820’s. Mr. Hofmann restored important letters and revelations from Joseph Smith as well as material from other prominent Mormons. Hofmann’s “restoration” was even more convincing than Joseph Smith’s because he not only gave us the text of these significant documents, but he claimed to have the very original copies on paper dating back to the period in which they were supposed to have been written.
The exposure of Mr. Hofmann’s scheme to undermine the Mormon Church does not really help the church. On the contrary, it shows how gullible we all can be and that even the Prophet of the Mormon Church can be deceived. Once the fallibility of the present Prophet, Seer and Revelator is perceived, one begins to wonder about Joseph Smith himself. When the searchlight is focused upon him, we see that he looks remarkably like Mark Hofmann.

The action of the church leaders in buying up and suppressing Mark Hofmann’s documents raises another important question: if they were willing to pay thousands of dollars to buy forgeries which tended to discredit Joseph Smith, how many authentic documents have they bought up and locked away in the church Archives and the First Presidency’s vault? The fact that the General Authorities of the church believed in and bought Mr. Hofmann’s forgeries reveals a great deal about their own thinking concerning the original Prophet. They must have known from other things they have read that Joseph Smith was deeply involved in money-digging and magic or they would not have been so easily persuaded to buy Hofmann’s documents. The impression one gets is that the Mormon leaders know that Joseph Smith was not really like the image the church has presented to the people, but that they must maintain that image at all costs—even if it means they have to buy up and suppress documents.

We are only able to present a portion of the results of our investigation into the Hofmann affair in this issue of the Messenger. For a detailed study see our publication, Tracking the White Salamander.

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**AN ETERNAL COVER-UP**

The Salamandergate scandal reminds us of an article which we published in the January 1975 issue of the Messenger. Even though it was written concerning President Nixon’s problems, it could certainly apply to the Hofmann situation. We cite the following from that article:

> Although the Watergate scandal has really hurt our country, there is a real lesson that we all can learn from it—that is, that it does not pay to try and cover our sins. The Bible warns: “. . . be sure your sin will find you out” (Numbers 32:23). It is true that we can often hide our sins from men, but Jesus tells us that we cannot hide them from God: “. . . there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known” (Matthew 10:26).

> Our former President must have firmly believed that his tapes would never come to light, but through some very strange circumstances they did become public and caused his downfall. This is certainly a tragic example, and we cannot help but feel sorry for him and for his family. Nevertheless, it teaches us that even the President of the United States does not have the power to cover up his sins.

> It is certainly ironical that Richard Nixon should be trapped by his own tapes. The Bible, however, tells us that we all stand in jeopardy of being convicted by our own words at the judgment: “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matthew 12:36-37).

> Although we do not feel that God has a secret tape recorder which he uses to bug us with, we do believe He has knowledge of everything through his Holy Spirit. The Bible says that God not only knows our every word and action but also the “thoughts and intents” of our heart: “For the word of God is quicker, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Hebrews 4:12-13).

> In I Corinthians 4:5 we read that the Lord “will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: . . .” Romans 2:16 tells us that “God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.”

> In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus it is clear that after death our memory will be restored and that if we have continued in sin and selfishness it will condemn us (see Luke 16:25). The Bible tells us that we are all sinners and in need of God’s forgiveness. To refuse to face this fact is to live a life which is founded on cover-up, and this will eventually prove disastrous to our souls. In the story of the Pharisee and the publican Jesus shows that we can appear to be very religious, but if we have not acknowledged that we are sinners in need of God’s grace we are still under condemnation.

> Now, while the Bible teaches that it is impossible for us to cover up our sins, it does state that God Himself can cover them up if we will turn to him and ask for forgiveness:

> But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

> If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (I John 1:7-9)
In Psalms 32:1 we read: “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” This is the cover-up that really works. In Psalms 103:12 we find this statement: “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” Isaiah 43:25 gives this assurance: “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.” Those who have received the Lord into their hearts know the great joy and peace that comes from accepting God’s forgiveness. The Bible says:

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

BOOKS AND VIDEOS

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Capt. Wm. Morgan’s Exposition of Freemasonry. (Photo-reprint of 1827 ed.) One of the works used in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? to compile the parallels between Mormonism and Masonry. Price: $3.00

Mere Christianity, by C. S. Lewis. Good defense and explanation of Christianity. Price: $3.95


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On the morning of January 23, 1987, word began to circulate in Salt Lake City that a major development had occurred in the Mark Hofmann case. That evening the *Deseret News* reported:

A grim-faced Hofmann entered the courtroom about 11 a.m. Friday and with little fanfare entered guilty pleas to two counts of second-degree murder in the slayings of Steven F. Christensen and Kathleen Webb Sheets. Hofmann had been charged with first-degree murder, which carries a possible death sentence, but in the plea agreement prosecutors agreed to allow Hofmann to plead guilty to lesser charges.

He also pleaded guilty to one count of communications fraud and one count of theft by deception involving the Martin Harris letter, better known as the White Salamander letter, and the William McLellin collection, a collection of documents Hofmann sold for hundreds of thousands of dollars but in actuality never possessed.

Tension and emotion flooded the courtroom as Hofmann stood to answer each of the judge’s questions.

“Did you intentionally and knowingly cause the death of Steve Christensen?” questioned Rigtrup. “Yes,” replied Hofmann in a soft, quiet voice.

“Did you intentionally and knowingly cause the death of Kathleen Sheets?” the judge intoned. “Yes,” the defendant replied.

“Do you desire to enter these guilty pleas because you are in fact guilty?” the judge asked.

“Yes,” Hofmann replied.

Hofmann made similar admissions of guilt involving the documents transactions. (*Deseret News*, January 23, 1987)

Judge Rigtrup sentenced Mark Hofmann to “one prison term of 5 years to life and three other prison terms of 1-to-15 years for his role in the bombing deaths of two people and the forgeries and frauds that led to those murders” (*Ibid.*). The judge pointed out the “indiscriminate nature” of the murders. (Mrs. Sheets was killed instead of her husband and a woman in the Judge Building almost picked up the “booby-trapped shrapnel bomb” which killed Steven Christensen.) Rigtrup then said to Mr. Hofmann: “. . . I will recommend that you spend the rest of your natural life at the Utah State Prison” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, January 24, 1987). After the hearing Mark Hofmann was handcuffed and transported to prison.

In making a plea bargain agreement Mr. Hofmann escaped the possibility of the death penalty and was assured that the federal government would drop its charge of possession of an unregistered machine gun. In addition, New York authorities promised that they would not charge him with selling a forged copy of the Oath of a Freeman in their state.
CHILLING CONFESSION

Mark Hofmann had kept absolutely silent concerning the crimes up to the time the plea bargain was being worked out. Jan Thompson reported that at that time he opened up and confessed how he had committed the crimes:

An interview with Mark W. Hofmann was the strangest and most fascinating experience Robert Stott has had as a criminal prosecutor. . . .

“It was chilling to have Hofmann look me in the eye and say he killed Steve Christensen and Kathleen Sheets,” Stott said in a Deseret News interview Saturday.

As Hofmann disclosed the details of how he made and delivered the bombs and how he manufactured the salamander letter and persuaded buyers to invest in the so-called McLellin Collection, Stott compared the information with the state’s evidence. Hofmann’s version of his crime matched the theories and evidence of prosecutors.

“It was disconcerting to realize that this man I was sitting across from had committed these terrible crimes in such a unique fashion. He was brilliant in forging documents and in manufacturing the bombs.”

Hofmann enjoyed sharing the details of his fraud scheme, Stott said.

“When he talks, he doesn’t act like a madman or say nasty things, so it’s easy to forget that he’s a violent killer and to treat him as a next-door neighbor. I had to remind myself that, foremost, Hofmann is a killer, and secondly, he is a swindler and a cheat.

“That’s what makes him so dangerous. When he’s triggered, he can be devastating.”

Hofmann showed little emotion during the interview.

(Deseret News, January 25, 1987)

As part of the plea bargain agreement Mr. Hofmann is supposed to meet with investigators and reveal the details concerning how he forged the other documents. The prosecutors maintain that they will make this material available to the public in a few weeks. We hope to have more on this in the next issue of the Messenger.

As we sit back and reflect about the Salamandergate scandal, we just feel fortunate to be alive. Brent Ashworth, the Mormon bishop who claimed Mark Hofmann sold him $225,100 worth of forged documents, has been quoted as making this comment about Hofmann:

“When I called him a liar or if I questioned one of the documents, he’d lose his temper. Nothing else seemed to make him mad.” (Salt Lake Tribune, January 25, 1987)

Utah Lighthouse Ministry had printed a great deal of material which questioned both Mark Hofmann’s documents and his honesty. Beginning as early as 1984, we suggested that the Salamander letter might be “a forgery” and noted that if this were the case, “it needs to be exposed” (Salt Lake City Messenger, March 1984). By August 1984 we had printed the first part of the booklet, The Money-Digging Letters, in which Mark Hofmann’s major discoveries were questioned and his document dealings condemned. One of the editors of this paper (Sandra Tanner) distributed copies of this material at the Sunstone Theological Symposium. Mr. Hofmann attended this symposium and was grieved when he learned that his integrity was being questioned. The day following the publication of this material (August 23, 1984) Mark Hofmann came to our home and had a long talk with Sandra. He seemed very distressed and hurt that we, of all people, would question his discoveries. He had expected that opposition might come from those in the Mormon Church, but he was amazed that Utah Lighthouse Ministry had taken a position which was critical of him. Mr. Hofmann seemed to be almost at the point of tears as he pled his case as to why we should trust him.

We, of course, knew that it was risky business to publicly question any forger, but we had no idea he was so devious that he would plant a bomb that killed Kathleen Sheets merely as a diversion to cover up his involvement in the murder of Steven Christensen. In retrospect, it appears that we were very fortunate that Mr. Hofmann arrived at our house armed only with arguments as to why we should trust his documents rather than a pipe bomb surrounded with nails.

Both the Los Angeles Times and the Deseret News printed the fact that we were questioning the Salamander letter. Mr. Hofmann grew concerned about our investigation and told an associate he was planning another visit to our house to try to convert us to the Salamander letter. We wonder now if we would have been so bold as to call for the public to send any information to us that they had concerning Mr. Hofmann’s activities if we had known that he was capable of murdering to preserve his document forging operation (see Salt Lake City Messenger, June 1985, page 16 and August 1985, page 8). When we located him at the August 1985 Sunstone Symposium and began to ask probing questions about the Salamander letter, he had a very sad and fearful expression on his face. It almost seemed as if he were trying to say, “Please believe what I am telling you.”

At first the Mormon bishop Steven Christensen trusted Mark Hofmann implicitly. Christensen, of
course, bought the Salamander letter, and when we published extracts from it in the March 1984 issue of the Messenger and indicated the possibility of plagiarism from Mormonism Unvailed and Joseph Knight’s account of the discovery of the Book of Mormon plates, he rejected our research. He even tried to testify in federal court that we had violated his manuscript rights by printing extracts from the letter. Although we were all in the courtroom waiting for Mr. Christensen to step to the witness stand, the judge made it clear that such testimony was irrelevant to the case at hand and Steven Christensen was not allowed the opportunity of testifying against us (see our book Tracking the White Salamander, page 16). Mr. Christensen continued to believe in Mark Hofmann and his stories concerning the discovery of important Mormon documents for more than a year. Although he eventually came to the conclusion that Hofmann was a “crook,” by that time it was too late. When Mr. Christensen threatened to expose Mark Hofmann’s fraudulent dealings with regard to the McLellin collection, Hofmann retaliated by killing him. It seems like a strange twist of fate that the man who opposed the material we presented against the Salamander letter and even tried to testify against us in court would be the very one who later tried to blow the whistle on Mark Hofmann and ended up losing his life. It may very well be that the thing that saved our lives was simply that few people believed what we were publishing. Mr. Hofmann apparently felt that Christensen, who was a Mormon bishop with a great deal of influence, could destroy his Mormon document empire, and therefore he found it necessary to eliminate him. In any case, we feel grateful to God that we are alive and wish to thank those who have been praying for our safety. While we have always thought there was a possibility of being assassinated by someone opposed to our work, we never even considered that a well-mannered man like Mark Hofmann, who professed to be friendly to our work, would turn out to be a cold-blooded killer who would stop at nothing to shut the mouth of his opponents. We just thank God that he was not triggered by the exposes we published concerning his document deals.

Although most people felt that Mark Hofmann was a good Mormon, the evidence that is coming forth now seems to show that although he was a returned missionary, married in the temple and active in the church, he was not a believer. In fact, his close friend Shannon Flynn now says that he was an atheist:

“He was an atheist. He did not believe in God,” Flynn said. “If there is no God, a person obviously can’t believe there is a Christ or Christianity—no life after death.”

Flynn said he knows a lot of atheists who don’t go out and kill people, but this should give people a clue to why Hofmann did the things he did.

“Some people wouldn’t do anything wrong because they think God would punish them. He obviously didn’t worry about the punishment,” the young man said. “While I don’t think that is an excuse for what he did, I think psychologists who talk with him will see he is working from an entirely different frame of reference from most of us.” (Deseret News, January 30, 1987)

Mark Hofmann’s associate Brent Metcalfe has also confirmed Hofmann’s atheistic views and even a member of his family has written: “I think he is an atheist [sic].” His church activities appear to have been used as a cover for his phony document business. Recently it has been noted that Mark Hofmann was able to fool almost everyone with his dual life. Even his best friends now feel that they were used to further his selfish desire for wealth and fame. While Mr. Hofmann was once honored by Mormon and non-Mormon historians, he is now considered a villain—perhaps one of the greatest con men of the 20th century. On February 11, 1987, the New York Times published an article by Robert Lindsey which contained the following:

According to criminal investigators here and court documents, the 32-year-old Mr. Hofmann fooled not only senior members of the Mormon hierarchy but also scores of document collectors around the country and virtually all of the nation’s top forgery experts.

“Mark Hofmann was unquestionably the most skilled forger this country has ever seen,” said Charles Hamilton, a New York document dealer who is widely regarded as the nation’s preeminent detector of forged documents. . . .

Mr. Hamilton said Mr. Hofmann “perpetrated by far the largest monetary frauds through forgery that this country has ever had,” adding, “He fooled me—he fooled everybody.” . . .

Among those fooled by Mr. Hofmann’s documents were hundreds of specialists in Mormon history. . . .

Investigators have said that Mr. Hofmann was as successful in selling forged documents in New York as he was in Utah. They say he may have collected more than $2 million selling rare documents purportedly written or signed by such literary and historical figures as Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, Jack London and Jim Bridger. . . .

After examining the white salamander letter, experts working for the Federal Bureau of Investigation said they could find no evidence that it was forged, a conclusion also made by Kenneth W. Rendell, a Newton, Mass., document dealer who is often ranked with Mr. Hamilton among the nation’s leading detectors of forged documents. . . .
Concluding his assessment of Mr. Hofmann, Mr. Hamilton said: “In a way, two murders are pedestrian crimes. But to fool me, to fool Ken Rendell, to fool the whole world, requires not only forgery but a packaging of himself. He packaged himself as a bespectacled, sweet, unobtrusive, hard working, highly intelligent scholar dedicated to the uncovering of history. Now we know he’s more than he appeared to be.”

While we certainly cannot defend Mark Hofmann’s actions, we must remember that he is still a human being who desperately needs God in his life. If the Lord could change a man like Paul, He could certainly work in Mr. Hofmann’s life. We would urge our readers to pray for both him and his family, and those who would like to send him a word of encouragement can reach him at the Utah State Prison, PO Box 250, Draper, Utah 84020.

**EFFECT ON ULM**

Mark Hofmann’s admission of guilt will undoubtedly have a far-reaching effect on Utah Lighthouse Ministry. Many people have tenaciously held to the theory that the Salamander letter is authentic and that Hofmann was being framed on the murders. Some people apparently felt that we had gone off the deep end or had sold out to the Mormon Church. Although our reasons for believing Hofmann was probably guilty were clearly laid out in our book *Tracking the White Salamander*, only a limited number of people were interested in reading it. When the story broke concerning Mr. Hofmann’s plea bargain, however, the situation was entirely reversed. A local radio station asked us to come on the air and discuss the situation, and we were able to publish a large advertisement for the book in both of the newspapers in Salt Lake City. After that we were flooded with orders for *Tracking the White Salamander*. It soon became obvious that among the people coming to our home or calling on the phone there were quite a number of devout Mormons who were interested in learning more about the Salamandergate scandal. We feel that it is a great privilege to be able to make contact with these people and believe that much good will come from it. On February 2, we received a letter which contained the following:

I am on your mailing list and have thoroughly been fascinated by your latest issues. You have been very accurate in describing what has happened. This helps me when I discuss your extensive research with the Mormons whom I work with. The accurateness of your latest newsletters give you a lot of creditability [sic]. It has opened the door for me to discuss other things with my Mormon co-workers. I am greatly anticipating your book.

One of our critics once argued that we believe “the end (destroying Mormonism) justifies the means (publishing anything which they believe could prove damaging to Mormonism).” Our work regarding Mark Hofmann’s documents certainly belies this accusation, and we feel that many Mormons will eventually come to realize that we are only seeking for the truth. Actually, this has always been our stand. As early as 1967 we published a pamphlet exposing the purported Oliver Cowdery Defence and the “Confessions of Oliver Overstreet” as forgeries. In the Introduction to this pamphlet we wrote:

One of the most serious problems facing a student of Mormon history today is the fact that those who have gone before us have not always been honest. Both Mormon and anti-Mormon writers have sometimes been guilty of deceit. This makes it very difficult to determine what the truth is with regard to some issues. . . . We have spent a good deal of time trying to learn the truth concerning these documents, and although we are not pleased with the results of our research, we feel that it would be dishonest and unfair to the Mormon people to suppress our findings. (*A Critical Look—A Study of the Overstreet “Confession” and the Cowdery “Defence”*)

We sincerely feel that if the case against Mormonism could not be supported with concrete evidence, we would want nothing to do with it.

While the fall of the Hofmann documents may cause some Mormons to have doubts about anything that is critical of the church, it has made many others become concerned about their spiritual leaders. The Mormon Church has always maintained that the current President is a prophet who receives revelations and guidance directly from the Lord. In *Tracking the White Salamander*, page 73, we have a picture of President Spencer W. Kimball, the twelfth President of the Mormon Church. He is flanked by Mark Hofmann, President N. Eldon Tanner, President Marion G. Romney, Apostle Boyd K Packer and Gordon B. Hinckley (who is now a member of the First Presidency). They are all gazing at Mark Hofmann’s first major discovery—a sheet of paper purporting to contain characters which Joseph Smith himself copied from the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. Although President Kimball was supposed to be a “seer” and have the power to “translate all records that are of ancient date” (Book of Mormon, Mosiah 8:13), he was unable to translate the characters which appeared on the transcript. Instead of using the “seer stone,” he examined the characters with a magnifying glass. Not only did he fail to provide a translation, but he was unable to detect that the church
was being set up to be defrauded of a large amount of money and many historical items out of its archives. Moreover, he entirely failed to see the devastating and embarrassing effect this transaction and others which followed would have on the Mormon Church. If ever revelation from the Lord was needed, it was on that day in 1980 when Mark Hofmann stood in the presence of President Kimball and other notable Mormon leaders. The church gave Hofmann $20,000 worth of material from the archives for the sheet containing the forged Book of Mormon characters. It is obvious from this that the Mormon Apostles do not have the same power that Apostle Peter had when he caught Ananias and Sapphira red-handed in their attempt to deceive the church with regard to a financial transaction (see Acts 5:3).

President Gordon B. Hinckley, who is also shown in the photograph, approved many of Hofmann’s deals with the church. It was Hinckley who purchased the forged 1825 letter of Joseph Smith relating to magic from Mark Hofmann for $15,000. This controversial letter was suppressed for two years and the church even denied that it had the letter (see Tracking the White Salamander, pages 86-91). It appears that if the Mormon Church was ever led by revelation, it has been lacking since Mark Hofmann came into the church offices with the transcript of Book of Mormon characters. The inability of the Mormon leaders to detect the religious fraud being perpetrated upon them certainly raises a question with regard to their “testimony” concerning the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.

**NEW ON 116 PAGES**

In the book, Tracking the White Salamander, pages 104-108, we have some important information regarding the possibility that Mark Hofmann was planning to forge (or had forged) the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon. Some time in 1982 or 1983 we heard that Mark Hofmann claimed he had discovered the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript—also known as the Book of Lehi. The reader may remember that Joseph Smith’s scribe Martin Harris borrowed the first 116 pages of the manuscript and lost them. Joseph Smith had not retained a copy of the Book of Lehi and therefore was unable to reproduce an exact copy. Since he feared that his translation of the Book of Lehi might still be in existence and that his enemies might bring it forth to refute his work if he tried to reproduce it, he found himself facing a serious dilemma. To solve the problem Smith claimed he “translated” the Book of Nephi in its place. He said that this book covered the same time period and its contents were even more spiritual than the Book of Lehi. As long as the Book of Nephi gave approximately the same story as was found in the missing 116 pages Joseph Smith did not have to worry about critics finding them. The two books would not have to agree in the exact wording of the story.

In any case, Mark Hofmann claimed that he was searching for the lost 116 pages. In an interview published in Sunstone Review, September 1982, page 18, Mr. Hofmann said that he hoped “the lost 116 manuscript pages exist” and that he had already “spent thousands of dollars in the pursuit of them, . . .” Sometime later Hofmann began confiding in friends that he had finally located the 116 pages of the Book of Mormon and that they were “dynamite.” The manuscript was reported to contain information about money-digging interwoven with material that reads like the published Book of Nephi. When we discussed the matter with Mr. Hofmann, he admitted that a manuscript purporting to be the 116 missing pages had been found in the possession of a woman in Bakersfield, California. He claimed, however, that it was a forgery.

Hugh Pinnock, one of the General Authorities of the Mormon Church, was very interested in the possibility that the missing Book of Mormon pages might still be in existence. Allen Roberts and Fred Esplin claim:

> Police sources indicate that Steve Christensen’s personal journal records that Elder Hugh Pinnock asked Hofmann to find for him two important items: the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon and something “too sensitive to mention,” that the late “Elders Mark E. Petersen and G. Homer Durham were most involved in prior to their deaths.” (*Utah Holiday*, January 1986, page 58)

As we have already stated, Mr. Hofmann told us that he had located a forgery of the 116 pages in California. When we pressed him as to how he knew it was a forgery, he replied that it quoted verbatim things that were peculiar to the “Wright” edition of the Book of Mormon—an edition published after Joseph Smith’s death and used by at least some members of the early RLDS Church. Later when investigators searched Mark Hofmann’s home after the bombings, they found some of his handwritten notes concerning the Book of Lehi. The Mormon bishop Brent Ashworth also preserved some of Mr. Hofmann’s notes concerning the manuscript. The reader will find a photocopy of one page of Mark Hofmann’s notes on the next page. According to Hofmann the “BOOK OF LEHI” began as follows:

> “This record I Lehi make upon plates of gold, & I make it with my own hand, it being a history of my life and of the workings of God.”
MARK HOFMANN’S NOTES FROM THE BOOK OF LEHI

1. The Book of Lehi: “This round I Lehi make upon plates of gold, and I make it with my own hands; it being a history of my life and of the workings of God.”

2. Judgment may at any time befall the Jews.

3. He [God] shall cause to the land certain treasures; the hole of the earth, and out of the earth shall the righteous prosper...” (see Deut. 28:12).

4. Salt was also gold, silver, and jewels (also Is. 66:26).

5. Prophesy of a new land. (public discourse)

6. Prophesy of wars (Machinry of war) Forts

7. Burning of towns (p. 17-18)

8. Earthly-ties (p. 17) Family - only a ‘ LANDFUL’ survival.

21-22-23. And now it came to pass that when Lehi had finished these sayings... but there was one among them... But he was wise and counseled that Alma should be sent out from among them... (compare Wright BOA p. 123 par. 2. Underlined)
Mr. Hofmann had told us that the manuscript told of a mine Lehi had outside Jerusalem which contained many valuable treasures. Hofmann’s note concerning page 4 of the manuscript seems to agree with the information he gave us:

4. “he [God] should cause to be found certain treasures in the hole of the earth, and out of the earth shall the righteous prosper…” Location a secret.

Mark Hofmann originally represented to Brent Ashworth that the manuscript was genuine but later told him that it was a forgery. (Since Mr. Hofmann mentioned the “Wright” edition of the Book of Mormon in the notes he gave to Mr. Ashworth, we must presume that Ashworth obtained them after Hofmann began claiming that the manuscript was a forgery.) Mr. Ashworth realized that even if the manuscript were a 19th century forgery, as Hofmann maintained, it would be a unique forgery which would be of some value. He offered Mr. Hofmann $10,000 for the forged manuscript. Although Hofmann showed him evidence that he had traveled to Bakersfield, he never produced it. Consequently, Mr. Ashworth did not lose the money.

When we discussed the manuscript with Mr. Hofmann, we suggested that it would be an important forgery and that it should be obtained. He replied that the Mormon Church was also trying to obtain it but the church would not pay the amount of money the woman in Bakersfield was asking.

While the handwritten notes Mr. Hofmann made concerning “The BOOK OF LEHI” certainly seem to show that he was working on some type of forgery of the 116 missing pages, they also raise many questions. For instance, was the manuscript ever actually penned or are the handwritten notes extracts of something which only existed in Hofmann’s mind? Why did Hofmann first claim that the manuscript was genuine and then switch to saying it was a 19th century forgery? Could he have made a mistake in the manuscript which someone informed him about that caused him to abort the project? Is it possible that the manuscript was completed and secretly sold and that the story that it was a forgery was only a means of quieting publicity about the sale? Another theory might be that Mr. Hofmann was merely trying to impress the Mormon leaders that he was a great document detective who was only seeking the truth. By claiming that he had detected forgery in a copy of the 116 pages he had found and showing how he had pinned the crime down to someone who possessed a “Wright” edition of the Book of Mormon, Mr. Hofmann could have really impressed church officials with his honesty and skill. This would have thrown them off guard, and when he showed up with a sophisticated forgery of the 116 pages they might have become easy targets for his scheme.

When we began to consider the possibility that the Book of Lehi in Bakersfield might be nothing but a figment of Hofmann’s imagination, we realized that if he ever did create the 116 missing pages and used any quotations from the Book of Nephi, he would probably take into consideration readings obtained from the original manuscript pages of the Book of Mormon. Since changes were made in the text between the manuscript and the first printed version and even more changes were made in later editions, it would be very wise to consult the original manuscripts before making any quotations. From information we have been able to obtain, it appears that Mark Hofmann did, in fact, have a great deal of interest in the original manuscripts of the Book of Nephi and would therefore be in a good position to know how to forge the Book of Lehi so that it would be believable. If a manuscript came forth which purported to be the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon and it contained portions similar to the printed Book of Nephi, a comparison of these portions with the original manuscripts would become very important. If the long-lost manuscript strictly followed the printed version, it might be declared a forgery. If, on the other hand, it contained peculiarities found only in the original manuscripts, this would probably be interpreted as evidence for its authenticity. Hofmann’s earlier work in disproving the manuscript which used quotations from the “Wright” edition could even suggest the idea of making such a comparison with the original manuscripts.

That Mark Hofmann was planning a very sophisticated version of the lost 116 pages seems to be supported by a number of things. To begin with, in 1982 he claimed to find a letter written by Joseph Smith’s mother. This is the only document accepted by the church which reveals anything concerning the contents of the missing pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript. At about the same time, Mr. Hofmann began to discover documents relating to Joseph Smith’s scribe, Martin Harris. This is important because Harris would have been the scribe for most of the 116 missing pages, and up until the time Mark Hofmann came on the scene, no known samples of his writing were available—there were only a few signatures. At first Hofmann only brought forth a letter which was signed by Martin Harris. The text of the letter was supposed to be in the hand of his son. Then came the Grandin contract which the Mormon Church obtained for $25,000. This document also contained only a signature purported to be that belonging to Martin Harris. Finally, in 1983 the Salamander letter came forth. This letter had over 600 words which were supposed to be penned by Harris himself. With the authentication of Harris’ handwriting in the Salamander letter, the stage was well prepared for the ultimate discovery—the Book of Lehi. It is claimed that investigators have in their possession a
Book of Mormon in which every word has been given a number. This would be a massive project because the Book of Mormon is supposed to contain over 269,000 words! It has been speculated that this project might be tied to about 30 file drawers of note cards on the Book of Mormon and that the purpose might be to imitate Joseph Smith’s literary style in the missing 116 pages. While this would seem like a tremendous amount of work, the Book of Lehi could probably be sold to the Mormon Church for millions of dollars!

While the RLDS Church has a complete copy of the Book of Mormon manuscript (the printers copy), the Utah Mormon Church has only a partial copy. We now know that Mr. Hofmann was forging pages that are missing in the Mormon Church’s copy of the Book of Mormon manuscript. Brent Ashworth paid Mr. Hofmann $25,000 for just one sheet that was missing in the church’s copy of the manuscript. The Book of Lehi would obviously be worth much more than pages from known portions of the Book of Mormon, especially if the contents were controversial.

Although it seems very likely that Mark Hofmann was planning to forge the missing Book of Lehi and sell it to the Mormon Church for a large amount of money, at this point we have no evidence to show that the plan was actually carried out. We will, however, be looking for any information that points in this direction. For a more complete treatment of the Book of Lehi story we recommend our book Tracking the White Salamander, pages 104-108.

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BLOOD ATONEMENT

On January 24, 1987, the New York Times printed some strange information concerning the Hofmann case:

SALT LAKE CITY, Jan. 23 — Spurning his father’s appeal that he submit to execution to atone for two 1985 murders, a former Mormon missionary chose instead today to plead guilty to the crimes in return for a sentence of life imprisonment. . . . According to family members, the plea arrangement that spared his life was delayed in recent weeks by the intervention of his father, a Mormon, and other family members who said they believed that if the younger Mr. Hofmann was guilty of the murders he should be executed.

This belief is rooted in the Mormon doctrine of “blood atonement,” which holds that some crimes are so grievous that the crucifixion of Jesus had not redeemed their sins. The crimes that fall under the doctrine, promulgated principally by Brigham Young . . . include murder and adultery . . .

In the end, church experts said, Mr. Hofmann’s father accepted the idea that his son would not have to be executed. In an effort at atonement, Mr. Hofmann, through his attorney, apologized to members of his victims’ families at a meeting Thursday.

In Tracking the White Salamander, pages 148-150, we discuss whether the doctrine of blood atonement could have any effect with regard to Hofmann’s views about taking human life. The story in the New York Times certainly adds an unexpected element to this bizarre case.

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SPECIAL OFFER

Because of Mark Hofmann’s confession and the growing interest in the subject we have decided to have another special offer on the book Tracking the White Salamander—The Story of Mark Hofmann, Murder and Forged Mormon Documents. This book usually sells for $6.95, but if it is ordered before March 31, 1987, the price will be ONLY $5.95 (mail orders add 10% for postage and handling—minimum fee $1.00).

Two and a half years of research went into the productions of this book. It is a thorough investigation into the Salamandergate scandal which rocked Utah and the Mormon Church. Tracking the White Salamander presents a wealth of information on both the murders and the forgeries. An entire chapter is devoted to the McLellin collection and its possible relationship to the murders. This is the first publication to print lengthy extracts from the preliminary hearing. It contains testimony from Hofmann’s associates Lyn Jacobs and Shannon Flynn as well as from document experts and Mormon Church officials. This book has 185 large pages which contain photographs of 16 documents believed to be forgeries. Important and detailed information is also provided concerning the documents. The Salamander letter, the Oath of a Freeman, the 1825 Joseph Smith letter on money-digging, the Anthon transcript, the Joseph Smith III Blessing and many other documents are critically examined.

This book also discusses Mark Hofmann’s deep involvement with Mormon officials and how he virtually blackmailed them into buying up embarrassing documents. It also deals with different theories regarding the scandal and the possibility of co-conspirators and a cover-up. This book is a must for anyone who wants to be well-informed on the Hofmann affair and it implication for the Mormon Church.
NIGHTMARE ENDS
AT THE SUPREME COURT

In the April 1986 issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger* we printed an article entitled, “LAW SUIT OVER—UNFAIR VERDICT IS OVERTURNED.” In this article we told how a man by the name of Andrew Ehat, with the help of a lawyer who represents Brigham Young University’s Religious Studies Center, brought a lawsuit against us in 1983 alleging that we had violated his copyright in printing extracts from Joseph Smith’s private secretary’s diaries which he had typed. Since these diaries contained information which was very embarrassing to the “Mormon leaders they had been suppressed in the First Presidency’s vault for many years. We were brought before a Mormon judge who seems to have been swayed by the plaintiffs arguments that we had printed a great deal of sensitive material from the Mormon Church’s archives. Although the judge had to admit that Mr. Ehat did not really have a copyright interest in the material, he nevertheless awarded Ehat $16,000 for what he called “unfair competition” and damage to his reputation! We knew that there was absolutely no basis in law for this unjust verdict and appealed to the U. S. Court of Appeals For The Tenth Circuit. A panel of three judges examined the case and ruled in our favor:

Andrew Ehat brought this action against Gerald and Sandra Tanner . . . Judgment was entered against the Tanners, and they appeal. We reverse. . . .

Ehat “cannot achieve by an unfair competition claim what [he] failed to achieve under [his] copyright claim,” . . . The case is reversed and remanded for further proceedings consistent with this opinion.

While we firmly believed that this would end the whole matter, we were soon astounded to learn that the case had been appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States. We had previously told Mr. Ehat’s lawyer that we would go to the Supreme Court if necessary to obtain justice, but in view of the weakness of his case, we never expected that he would make such a foolish move. Finally, on October 6, 1986, Joseph F. Spaniol, Jr., Clerk of the Supreme Court of the United States, wrote us a letter stating that Ehat’s “petition for a writ of certiorari is denied.” This, of course, meant that our victory in the U.S. Court of Appeals For The Tenth Circuit was absolutely final. The costs in fighting this suit over a period of three years had mounted to between thirty and forty thousand dollars. In the “Stipulation For Settlement,” pages 1-2, Mr. Ehat acknowledged an obligation to reimburse us for some of the expenses:

1. The plaintiff ANDREW EHAT hereby acknowledges that as a result of the resolution of this action by the United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit, the ruling of this Court after the appeal and the denial of the plaintiffs petition for writ of certiorari to the United States Supreme Court, the defendants have the right to seek against the plaintiff an award from the Trial Court, of the attorneys fees incurred by defendants in this matter.

2. The plaintiff hereby acknowledges that as a result of the resolution of this action by the United States Court of Appeals . . . the plaintiff has an obligation to pay to the defendants the court costs (in an amount to be determined by the Court) that the defendants incurred in this matter.

Although we felt that there was a possibility of forcing Mr. Ehat into bankruptcy, we did not feel that this was the right course to pursue. Mr. Ehat paid us a very modest sum (only a fraction of the costs we had encountered) and we agreed to accept this “in full settlement of any potential obligations.” The final paper was signed October 17, 1986. We just feel thankful to God that the long nightmare is now finally and forever ended, and want to express our appreciation to the people who stood with us through this terrible ordeal. The prayers and financial help were a great encouragement, and we are happy to announce that all the bills are now paid.

JERALD TANNER’S TESTIMONY

One of the editors of this newsletter (Jerald Tanner) is now recording a set of tapes concerning his life and the work of Utah Lighthouse Ministry.
In these tapes Jerald tells some of his early memories concerning growing up as a Mormon in Utah. He discusses his battle with selfishness and pride and his disillusionment with the Mormon Church. He tells of going back to Missouri to search for the “only true church” and his startling discovery that he was a sinner in desperate need of God’s salvation. He goes on to relate how he received Jesus as his personal Saviour and the amazing changes God made in his life.

An account is given concerning how Jerald and Sandra first became acquainted and how God worked in their lives to start a ministry to Mormons. Jerald tells how a Mormon Apostle sternly warned him against starting a work critical of the church and later threatened a lawsuit to prevent important material from being published. He reveals some of the fears he has had and the problems encountered in keeping the work going. He also deals with a particularly traumatic incident in his life which helped convince him of the power of the adversary and the need for constant prayer. In these tapes, Jerald tells of the peculiar ways God has blessed the work of Utah Lighthouse Ministry and expresses his belief that if Christians will pray and be faithful tens of thousands of Mormons will come to know the Lord in a very personal way. Although these tapes were created mainly for the purpose of helping Mormons, they can also be a real encouragement to those who are working with them.

SUPPORTING 100 CHILDREN

In the January 1985 issue of the Messenger we told of our interest in the area of world relief. We related that $1,000 had been designated “for relief work in Africa—i.e., providing food, medical relief, shelter and a demonstration of true Christian love.” At that time we decided to provide monthly support for five children under the World Vision Childcare Partner plan. In the April 1986 issue of the Messenger we reported: “Because God has been so gracious in supplying all our needs, we have decided to take another step in faith. In the future we will be supporting 25 children.”

Since God has continued to bless our work in a marvelous way, we have decided to take an even larger step of faith and expand the ministry TO SUPPORT 100 CHILDREN! While we have some money designated for this work, it is basically a move made on faith that the Lord will continue to provide as the months go by. We still have our regular expenses. It is necessary that we meet these obligations so that we can continue an effective work among the Mormons. We do hope that our friends will pray earnestly about UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY and world relief. While we feel somewhat apprehensive about making this move, we know that God “is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,...” (Ephesians 3:20).

Those who are interested in helping out with this important ministry can send their tax-deductible contributions to UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY, Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110.

OBSESSION WITH LUCIFER?

For years we have pointed out that Dr. Hugh Nibley, the noted Mormon apologist, has been so zealous to prove Mormonism that he has used weak parallels and wishful-thinking in an attempt to establish his case. When Mark Hofmann forged a copy of the Anthon transcript (the sheet that is supposed to contain the characters Joseph Smith copied directly from the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was supposed to have been translated), Hugh Nibley latched onto it with a great deal of enthusiasm and immediately proclaimed: “Of course it’s translatable” (The Provo Herald, May 1, 1980). According to the same paper, “Nibley also said he counted at least two dozen out of 47 characters in the Demotic alphabet that could be given phonetic value.

“...This offers as good a test as we’ll ever get. Nobody could have faked those characters. It would take 10 minutes to see that this is fake.”

Barry Fell, whose work is often used by Mormon scholars to support their theories concerning ancient America, went even further than Dr. Nibley. He claimed that the forged Hofmann transcript actually contained Arabic characters and proceeded to translate them. His translation almost exactly matched the first part of the Book of Mormon!

While those of us who are critics of the Mormon Church may be amused by these examples, we must be very careful not to become so over zealous that we fall into the same trap. Unfortunately, we have noted a tendency in this direction during the last few years. This is especially true with regard to writings and lectures concerning the Mormon temple ceremony. One couple claimed that the Mormons are really calling
upon Lucifer when they repeat the words “Pay lay ale” three times in the temple ceremony. Ed Decker and others picked up on this idea and it was printed in a number of publications which have been circulated throughout the world. It was claimed that the words pay lay ale were taken from the Hebrew language and could be translated: “WONDERFUL LUCIFER.” This is certainly an extremely serious charge. If it could be proven true, it would go a long way toward demonstrating that Mormonism is inspired by Satan.

Because we published an expose of the temple ceremony in our book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? and were constantly being asked about this accusation, we published a statement about the matter on June 29, 1982. It was entitled, PAY LAY ALE An Examination Of The Charge That The Mormons Call Upon Lucifer In Their Temple, by Jerald Tanner. The following appeared on the first page of that statement:

. . . I feel that I owe the public a statement which sets forth my views. Although I do not profess to be a Hebrew scholar, I feel that my research throws some important light on the subject.

Since I have been active in bringing forth evidence against the authenticity of Joseph Smith’s work, I would have been very happy to have found that this new indictment was based on sound research. Unfortunately, however, a careful examination of the evidence has forced me to conclude that the charge is without foundation.

Wesley P. Walters, one of the top authorities on Mormon history who has had some training in the Hebrew language, also felt that the translation “Wonderful Lucifer” was incorrect. He tried to warn against the spread of this idea, but his protest availed nothing. In our statement we pointed out that if the words pay lay ale are really derived from Hebrew, a better rendering would be “WONDERFUL GOD.” While the identification of “wonderful” with “pay lay” is not certain (Wesley P. Walters, in fact feels that it is questionable),

ale does correspond perfectly to a Hebrew word for God, אֵל. It is translated as ‘el and is pronounced ale (see Strong’s Concordance, Hebrew word #410). While the Hebrew word Elohim is usually used for God (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 168), El is also found in many places in the Old Testament.

After we published the statement on pay lay ale, some of the tracts containing the translation “Wonderful Lucifer” were changed. Unfortunately, however, some of those who had previously supported the translation “Wonderful Lucifer” put forth the idea that “the Hebrew translation of these words can be either marvelous false god or marvelous true god.” This of course is incorrect. The word El can only be translated as “God.” The word itself does not give any indication of whether the god spoken of is true or false. It is the same with our English word “God.” It cannot be translated into another language as “false god” or “true God.” It is true, of course, that the context of a statement can help us determine whether it is speaking of a false god. For instance, the words “my god is Satan” would be understood as referring to a false god.

In defense of the translation “Wonderful False God,” it has been claimed that the word El is “a generic term for God” and that it “is the word which is most often used to denote the false gods of the Bible.” Because we did not believe this statement was accurate, we decided to make a test. We looked up all of the passages we could find in the book of Isaiah which used the word El. We found 22 places where the word appeared. When we read the context of these verses, we found that 15 of the 22 were written concerning the God of Israel.

The word El appears as a part of many names found in the Bible. For instance, it is found in Israel and is also part of the name Immanuel. In Isaiah 7:14 we read: “. . . Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and call his name Immanuel.” This name is translated as “with us (is) God [El].”

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Matthew renders this word correctly in the New Testament: “...they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matthew 1:23). We feel it is inconsistent to accept the translation of El as God in this passage and yet maintain it should be translated “False God” in the temple ritual. It should be noted also that the temple ritual itself indicates that the translation of the words pay lay ale is, “O God, hear the words of my mouth.”

It has been suggested that because Lucifer appears just after Adam prays that he is in fact Adam’s god. Actually, a careful examination of this part of the ritual shows that Adam rejects Lucifer’s message. Our reproduction of the temple ceremony as well as that published by Chuck Sackett makes this very clear:

LUCIFER: (arrogantly) I am the God of this world.
ADAM: (unsure, questioning) You, the God of this world?
LUCIFER: Yes, what do you want?

Both versions of the temple ritual quote Adam as saying: “I was calling upon Father” and indicate that Adam spurns Lucifer’s teachings. It should be noted also that in the version published in What’s Going On In There? page 33, Adam directly questions Lucifer’s claim to be the God of this world: “You, the God of this world?” If Adam were really calling upon Lucifer, why would he dispute Lucifer’s claim and say that he was “calling upon Father”?

Some have used Lucifer’s statement that he is “the God of this world” as evidence that the Mormons worship Lucifer. We feel that this is a very poor argument because most Christians feel that Paul was referring to Satan when he wrote: “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (II Corinthians 4:4).

Another item which is used to try to link the temple ceremony to the worship of Lucifer is the fact that the Mormons wear fig-leaf embroidered aprons during the ritual and that Lucifer is supposed to be the one who originally suggested this idea:

LUCIFER: See, you are naked. Take some fig leaves and make you aprons. Father will see your nakedness. Quick, hide. (Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 467)

This portion of the ceremony is dealing with the Garden of Eden and comes before the part in which Adam rejects Lucifer and his doctrine. One of the early accounts of the ritual seems to indicate that it was God who gave Adam and Eve the aprons. Mary Ettie V. Smith claimed that “The Lord then put aprons upon Adam and Eve, and upon us all, made of white linen, illustrated by means of green silk, to represent fig-leaves” (Mormonism: Its Rise Progress, and Present Condition, 1870, page 45). Fanny Stenhouse’s book, Tell It All, 1875, page 364, does not mention the Lord as being present but indicates that Lucifer was not:

Then the devil leaves her, Adam makes his appearance, and Eve persuades him also to eat of the fruit of the tree. After this they make a dumb show of perceiving their condition, and an apron of white linen is produced, on which are sewn pieces of green silk, in imitation of fig leaves, and in these they both attire themselves.

The accounts of the temple ceremony published in the Salt Lake Tribune, February 12, 1906, and in Temple Mormonism, 1931, do not link Lucifer with these aprons. The whole thing appears to be Adam’s idea. The idea that Lucifer instructed Adam and Eve concerning their aprons appears to have been a later addition to the ceremony. While it is not really Biblical, it would be more in accord with the Bible than having God supply the fig-leaf aprons. The fig-leaf covering is generally considered by Christians to represent man’s works which are not acceptable to God.

In any case, while it is true that in the present version of the temple ceremony Lucifer suggests the fig-leaf aprons, we do not feel that this proves that the Mormons worship him. This, of course, does not mean that we feel that the ceremony comes from God. On the contrary, the use of the aprons plainly shows that the ceremony is man-made. If the ritual were inspired by God, the participants would not wear a fig-leaf apron (the symbol of man’s own covering for sin) throughout the ritual. The apron, of course, is worn on the outside of the temple robes. The inconsistency becomes even more apparent when we learn that the temple garment is supposed to represent the “coats of skins” which God made for Adam and Eve. The idea of wearing the fig-leaf covering over the covering provided by God seems to show a great deal of confusion in the minds of those who created the ceremony.

People are often led to believe that those who pass through the temple put on the same type of apron that Lucifer wears. This is simply not true. The apron worn by patrons is green with fig leaves embroidered in it. The Devil’s apron, on the other hand, is not green. It is worn under his suit and only briefly displayed. One man says that it is blue while another claims that it is black with blue thread. Both, however, maintain that it contains two pillars and a checkerboard pattern.
as well as other Masonic symbols. It is supposed to resemble a Masonic apron worn even before the time of Joseph Smith. Those who have observed Lucifer’s apron seem to agree that it not only differs in color from those worn by temple patrons but also has an entirely different design from the fig-leaf pattern. When writers and lecturers tell people that the Mormons put on “Luciferic aprons” which are “similar” to the one worn by the Devil and thus put themselves under “his power and priesthoods,” they are misrepresenting what really goes on. One lecturer claims he has discovered that green is Lucifer’s special color. The Mormons, he maintains, are putting on the Devil’s color when they tie on their aprons. He does not explain, however, why Lucifer does not wear a green apron. It would seem more logical to believe that the apron is green because it represents fig-leaves. Following this man’s line of reasoning concerning the color green, a Mormon might argue that Christians who wear green chorus robes are worshipping the Devil, or that the “wearing of the green” on Saint Patrick’s day is a “Luciferian” plot to get people under his power.

While we agree that portions of the Mormon temple ceremony were borrowed from Masonry (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 484–492) and have roots in the occult, we feel that some people are becoming so obsessed with trying to find “Luciferian” influence in the temple ritual that they have lost sight of reality. Just as Hugh Nibley and Barry Fell strained their eyes to find parallels between the Hofmann transcript and ancient languages, these people are seeing many things that simply are not there. While it is true that the temple ritual tries to link Christians and ministers of other churches to the Devil’s work, a person who carefully reads the temple ceremony will see that the whole thrust of its message is a put down of Lucifer (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 462–473).

Although we certainly do not endorse the penal oaths and the attacks on our religion found in the temple ceremony, we feel that the picture being painted by some Mormon critics is badly distorted.

Notwithstanding the fact that Mark Hofmann’s documents have fallen into disrepute and some Mormon critics have overstated the relationship between “the temple ritual and Satanism, it is certainly true that Joseph Smith and other Mormon leaders were involved in magic practices. Although we have demonstrated this in our book Mormonism, Magic and Masonry, in almost thirty years of research we have never found any secret LDS doctrine in which Lucifer is worshipped as God. If we had found any such evidence we would have been the first to publish it.

At Utah Lighthouse Ministry we encourage people to avoid extremes. We try to present good factual material. It is our belief that the truth will bear its own weight. It does not need to be embellished in any way. For a detailed study of Mormonism and the occult we recommend Mormonism, Magic and Masonry. We especially recommend Appendix A of this book for those who want to keep a good balance on the subject. It is entitled, “The Question of Satanic Influence in the Book of Mormon and the Temple Ceremony.”

IN THE MAIL

Please dont send any more anti Mormon garbage to this address . . . why don’t you find something new to make money on? The Church will grow inspite of you. You are defeating your purpose. . . .

Good luck you will need it especially after this life. Merry Christmas (Letter from California)

I was raised in the Mormon Church and I have always believed it was Gods only true church. My husband and I were married in the Temple and have always been very dedicated to the church. We have been especially involved in missionary work, which brought us into contact with anti-Mormon literature. Much of it was of such poor quality that we quickly disregarded it. When we were given your book The Changing World of Mormonism, however, it was more difficult to deal with.

It took a long time and a lot of research for us to come to grips with the fact that the evidence against the church is overwhelming. It was painful to then have
to accept the fact that the church could not possibly be true, especially after we had given so much of ourselves to the church, but we are glad we took the step.

We realize now that it is due to your straight forward, well-documented and factual approach to Mormon claims that the evidence was able to make an impression upon us. (Letter from Kansas)

I have just gained access to your “The Changing World of Mormonism.” I recognize it for what it is. It is a scholarly work in its limited field. In that it tells the truth it is good. Where it conveys a destructive or false impression it is not good. . . . You have sought and are seeking to destroy. . . . You have sold yourself. . . . there are millions that do not share your view. . . . you will be held accountable for what you do. . . . I suggest you harmonize your work with Jesus Christ or be prepared for what must come. (Letter from California)

I’m reading your . . . “Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?” Very interesting and the greatest book published. I was born a mormon but no longer believe it’s doctrine. . . . I’m so glad I found out the truth about the L.D. S. Church. (Letter from Oregon)

I have read with great interest, your works on Mormonism, as a matter of fact, I can say today, I am an ex-Mormon because of some of your works. Now I share your ministry, with gladness and fervor. I am currently witnessing to the Missionaries . . . (Letter from Wyoming)

As you can see by the heading, we EX RLDS have formed a group here in Independence . . . I thank God for your ministry, Gerald and Sandra, since I wrote to you 2 years ago when I was coming out of the RLDS church and you were kind enough to direct me to other RLDS who I got in touch with and helped me work through all the mess until I found the REAL Jesus! So praise God you are hanging in there and are committed to His work—thanks! (Letter from Missouri)

We have been members of the Mormon Church for the past ten years. We have finally “thought our way out,” so to speak and have asked for our names to be removed from the membership records of the church. We have read your books, The Changing World of Mormonism, and Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? and various other literature. (Letter from Connecticut)

I have finally gotten my name removed from the records of the LDS church, . . . myself and daughters have all accepted Christ this year. . . . I have also found two friends who have recently accepted Christ and left the Mormon Church. We would like to start a group for other LDS members who are questioning or are in the process of leaving the LDS church. (Letter from Wyoming)

It sure marvels me that you help God unwittingly shaking out luke-warm & useless members of the Mormon church and strength[en] the stronger ones. It also encourages me all the more in wanting to join the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints — as soon as I work on quitting smoking and drinks and coffee. (Letter from Washington, DC)

I am a returned missionary, a former Bishops counselor, High Counselor, and Stake Young Mens President. Currently I’m a High Priest and teach the Gospel Doctrine sunday school class in my branch. I just wanted to personally thank you for trying to bring the truth out into the open about my Church. I want the whole truth no matter what. Thank you. You are doing a find job. I really do look forward to each Messenger you send me. (Letter from Tennessee)
TRACKING THE WHITE SALAMANDER

The Story of Mark Hofmann, Murder and Forged Mormon Documents

BY JERALD TANNER

* * SEE SPECIAL OFFER ON THIS BOOK ON PAGE 8 * *
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**UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY**
**PO BOX 1884**
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MORMONISM
AND
PLAGIARISM

For almost thirty years the editors of this newsletter have studied the contents of LDS documents in an attempt to determine the truth about Mormon history. Over the years we have found a number of documents (both Mormon and anti-Mormon) that bear all the earmarks of forgery. The Mormon scholar Hugh Nibley gives this information about forgery in *Since Cumorah*, page 160: “A forgery is defined by specialists in ancient documents as ‘any document which was not produced in the time, place, and manner claimed by it or its publishers.’” Although we do not agree with Dr. Nibley on many things, we feel that the definition he cites with regard to forgery is very good.

One of the most controversial documents that we ever dealt with was the White Salamander Letter—a letter attributed to Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris which cast doubt on the origin of the Book of Mormon. Writing in the *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, March 29, 1987, page 12, Robert A. Jones related the following:

After nearly a year of testing the Salamander Letter’s paper, ink and the handwriting itself, Rendell reported that he could find no indication of tampering or forgery.

Still, there were some who were unsatisfied. The most unlikely of those was Jerald Tanner, a born-again Christian who has conducted a genteel campaign of intellectual warfare against the Mormon Church for 20 years. Operating from a Victorian home in Salt Lake, Tanner and his wife, Sandra, publish the *Salt Lake Messenger*, a newsletter that disgorges any and all items that might discredit the church’s claims to divine origins. A historian at Brigham Young University once remarked that the *Salt Lake Messenger* was read by more people who denied it than any publication in Utah save for *Playboy*.

The Tanners wanted dearly to believe that the Salamander Letter was real. But Jerald had a problem. . . . Tanner was familiar with the accounts of the gold plates contained in a critical 1834 volume titled “Mormonism Unvailed.” The more Tanner looked through the book, the more connections he saw between those accounts and the newly produced letter. . . . Could the Salamander Letter be a modern plagiarism of the old affidavits? It was spooky, and Tanner was suspicious. . . . Tanner . . . said the letter was a fake.

About two years after we began to criticize the Salamander Letter in the March 1984 *Salt Lake City Messenger*, it was revealed that document experts had come to the conclusion it was a forgery. Finally, on January
23, 1987, Mark Hofmann admitted the letter was a fake. In addition, he also pled guilty to two counts of murder. While many Mormons were relieved to find out that the letter is not authentic, the fall of the Hofmann documents does not sweep aside some serious problems that have been uncovered in the Mormon Church’s own documents.

ANCIENT OR MODERN?

One document which we have spent a great deal of time testing is the Book of Mormon. We originally believed that Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon from golden plates by the power of God. It seemed to have a scriptural sound to it, and we were convinced that it was genuine. We were, in fact, trying to find all the evidence we could to support its authenticity. The more we studied the Bible, however, the more problems we began to find. We saw that there were many parallels between the Bible and the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon purports to give a history of a group of people (known as the Nephites) who came to the New World about 600 B.C. and were destroyed around 400 A.D. Since the Book of Mormon claims that the Nephites had portions of the Old Testament, we were not disturbed to find quotations from those Old Testament books in the Book of Mormon. As we became more familiar with the Bible, however, it became obvious that portions of the New Testament which had not even been written yet were used by the ancient Nephites.

We found well over a hundred quotations from the New Testament in the first two books of Nephi alone. These two books were supposed to have been written between 600 and 545 B.C., whereas the New Testament was written in the first century A.D. (For a list of some of these parallels between the New Testament and the Book of Mormon see our book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 73-79.) In the Book of Mormon the writings of Paul, Luke, John and others are quoted extensively hundreds of years before these men were even born!

The ministry of Christ seems to have been the source for a good deal of the Book of Mormon. For instance, the story of Christ raising Lazarus from the dead appears to have had definite influence upon a story concerning Ammon (dated about 90 B.C.) which is found in the Book of Mormon: (1) In both stories a man seems to die. (2) In both cases the servant of the Lord comes to the scene. (3) A period of time elapses in both stories. (4) In both cases there is great sorrow. (5) Martha and the queen use the word “stinketh.” It is significant that this is the only time this word is used in the Book of Mormon and it is only used one other time in the Bible. (6) Both Ammon and Jesus use the word “sleepeth” with regard to the man. This word is only used twice in the Book of Mormon and only appears seven times in the Bible. (7) Ammon and Martha both use the words “he shall rise again.” (8) The conversation between Ammon and the queen contains other phrases that are similar to those used by Jesus and Martha. (9) In both cases the man arose. On page 3 the reader will find a photographic comparison of the two stories. The lines have arrows pointing from the Bible to the Book of Mormon because it is the only possible way the plagiarism could have occurred. The Nephites did not have the King James Version of the New Testament and the Apostle John did not have the Nephite scriptures. The only logical conclusion, therefore, is that sometime after the King James Bible was published in 1611 A.D. someone borrowed from it to create the story in the Book of Mormon. In our publication, The Case Against Mormonism, vol. 2, pages 87-102, we listed 400 parallels between the New Testament and the Book of Mormon, and we feel that we could have found more if we had the time to make a very careful search.

While the evidence of plagiarism we found in the Salamander Letter seems very strong, the evidence against the Book of Mormon on the grounds of plagiarism is much stronger. In fact, it is completely devastating. Although we have read the attempts by Mormon apologists to explain this matter, they just do not hold water. The only reasonable conclusion is that the Book of Mormon did not come from ancient gold plates but rather was written sometime after the King James Version appeared.

Around the beginning of the 20th century, B. H. Roberts, one of the greatest apologists the Mormon Church has ever produced, began to try to work out an explanation for the King James verses in the Book of Mormon. He claimed that it is possible that Joseph Smith did in fact use the King James Version in some cases when he was translating the Book of Mormon plates. B. H. Roberts’ attempt to plow around this serious problem did not impress one reader of the Salt Lake Tribune. On December 6, 1903, the following was printed in a letter to the Tribune:

The only way, therefore, to lift Nephi out of this fatal situation is for Elder Roberts to show that he had, in addition to the Jewish Scriptures, a copy of our English Bible with him back there in the wilderness [in] 600 B.C., or else a copy of Shakespeare. Or else let Mr. Roberts agree with me according to the evidence, that Mr. Nephi was simply a very modern gentleman from New York or Pennsylvania, having in his possession both the Bible and Shakespeare, and then the difficulty is solved.

... if Joseph Smith turned aside to quote from our English Bible, as Elder Roberts admits that he did, then what was to prevent him from putting into the Book of Mormon, when it suited him, quotations...
Selected verses from chapter 19 of Alma in the Book of Mormon (to the left) compared with verses from chapter 11 of John in the Bible (to the right). The verses in the Book of Mormon were supposed to have been written over a century and a half before the book of John was penned. The close relationship between the texts provides evidence that the Book of Mormon story was plagiarized from the King James Version of the Bible.
A comparison of verses from the 7th and 10th chapters of Moroni in the Book of Mormon (to the left) with the 13th and 12th chapters of 1 Corinthians in the Bible (to the right). According to Moroni 7:1, in that chapter Moroni is quoting “the words of my father Mormon, which he spake concerning faith, hope and charity: . . .” In reality the words are plagiarized from Apostle Paul’s letter to the Corinthians (chapter 13), the 10th chapter of Moroni purports to be Moroni’s own words, but it is obvious that they are taken from the 12th chapter of Paul’s letter to the Corinthians. That both Mormon and Moroni would independently come up with almost the same words as Paul over three centuries after he wrote 1 Corinthians seems totally beyond belief. The evidence clearly shows that the author of the Book of Mormon plagiarized the Bible.
from other English books, from Shakespeare, from books on geography and history? . . . What prevented him from putting in his own views? Undoubtedly, that is just what he did, for the book utterly fails. The statement and admission of Elder Roberts gives us all the light we need as to its modern origin and spurious character. (Salt Lake Tribune, December 6, 1903, as quoted in Defense of the Faith and the Saints, vol. 1, pages 347 and 351)

As the years passed, Mormon apologist B. H. Roberts realized that the Book of Mormon problems were more serious than he had previously believed. Consequently, he prepared two manuscripts which he never released to the public. We finally published these secret manuscripts in 1980, and in 1985 the University of Illinois Press came out with a hard bound copy of Roberts’ work under the title, Studies of the Book of Mormon. Although Professor Truman Madsen, of Brigham Young University, maintains that B. H. Roberts was only using the “Devil’s Advocate” approach so that he could “stimulate thought” in these secret manuscripts, a careful examination of Roberts’ work seems to show that his investigation had tended to erode his faith in the Book of Mormon. On page 243 of Studies of the Book of Mormon, B. H. Roberts asked the question of whether Joseph Smith was “possessed of a sufficiently vivid and creative imagination” to produce the Book of Mormon from materials he had available to him. Roberts concluded “that Joseph possessed such a gift of mind there can be no question.” On page 250 Roberts suggested that the “creative imagination” of Joseph Smith combined with the “common knowledge” of his time and a book like View of the Hebrews “would make it possible for him to create a book such as the Book of Mormon is.” Roberts went so far as to admit that in the Book of Mormon “there is a certain lack of perspective in the things the book relates as history that points quite clearly to an undeveloped mind as their origin. The narrative proceeds in characteristic disregard of conditions necessary to its reasonableness, as if it were a tale told by a child, with utter disregard for consistency” (Ibid., page 251).

On page 271, B. H. Roberts conceded that some portions of the Book of Mormon “are all of one breed and brand; so nearly alike that one mind is the author of them, and that a young and undeveloped, but piously inclined mind. The evidence I sorrowfully submit, points to Joseph Smith as their creator. It is difficult to believe that they are the product of history, that they come upon the scene separated by long periods of time, and among a race which was the ancestral race of the red man of America.”

The evidence seems to show that while B. H. Roberts at first rejected the suggestion that appeared in the Salt Lake Tribune that “Mr. Nephi was simply a very modern gentleman from New York or Pennsylvania,” he later came to believe the evidence pointed in that direction. Since B. H. Roberts’ death, many scholars have wrestled with the evidence of plagiarism in the Book of Mormon. As we already indicated, in the early 1960’s the editors of this newsletter struggled with this painful question. Like B. H. Roberts, we were finally forced to admit that “The evidence . . . points to Joseph Smith” as the creator of the stories in the Book of Mormon. In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 63-88, we presented a great deal of evidence to show that the Book of Mormon is a product of the 19th century. This evidence appears to be irrefutable, and many Mormon scholars are coming to the same conclusion.

JOSEPH’S EXPANSIONS?

The reader will remember that the letter printed in the Salt Lake Tribune asked the following questions:

. . . if Joseph Smith turned aside to quote from our English Bible, as Elder Roberts admits that he did, then what was to prevent him from putting into the Book of Mormon, when it suited him, quotations from other English books, from Shakespeare, from books on geography and History? . . . What prevented him from putting in his own views?

The evidence of plagiarism in the Book of Mormon has now forced some Mormon scholars into a very compromised position. Some are even beginning to maintain that the Book of Mormon is both ancient and modern. In the Spring 1987 issue of Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Blake T. Ostler has a very long article which puts forth the point of view that there was an ancient record but Joseph Smith expanded the text with his own comments:

It is my purpose to . . . offer a theory of the Book of Mormon as Joseph Smith’s expansion of an ancient work by building on the work of earlier prophets to answer the nagging problems of his day. In so doing, he provided unrestricted and authoritative commentary, interpretation, explanation, and clarifications based on insights from the ancient Book of Mormon text and the King James Bible (KJV). The result is a modern world view and theological understanding superimposed on the Book of Mormon text from the plates. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1987, page 66)

Although Mr. Ostler seems to be arguing that Joseph Smith possessed ancient gold plates, he admits that “No clearly identifiable ancient sources appear in the Book
of Mormon except as might derive from the King James version of the Bible” (Ibid., page 68). He goes on to state:

*The King James Bible. At least one modern source was undisputably used in the Book of Mormon—the King James Version of the Bible . . . the Book of Mormon adapts many phrases, particularly from the New Testament, to a new context. . . .

Jacob’s speech reinterprets the KJV snippets into a new synthesis on death, resurrection, and the judgment . . . these phrases may represent interpretation of an original text using the KJV New Testament and a nineteenth-century theological framework. Yet it is clear that the KJV New Testament phrases have become part of the structure itself. This mode of using the KJV, replicated throughout the Book of Mormon, suggests that Joseph Smith freely adopted KJV phraseology and concepts to present his “translation.” . . . Joseph Smith clearly used the KJV Old Testament to render the Book of Mormon translation. The Book of Mormon also quotes the KJV Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 5-7. . . .

What, then, may we conclude from the Book of Mormon’s use of modern sources? Only that the Book of Mormon as translated and presented by Joseph Smith relied on the KJV and was influenced by nineteenth-century American culture in rendering its message. . . . it is possible that an ancient source contained on gold plates underlies the Book of Mormon, but Joseph Smith uses the KJV both for language and to clarify, expand, and interpret the thought of the original text. . . . Both ancient and modern sources could have influenced the text published in 1829 without ruling out either. . . .

Many Book of Mormon doctrines are best explained by the nineteenth-century theological milieu. . . . it is likely that Joseph Smith expanded the Book of Mormon . . . some doctrines in the book’s pre-Christian sections are simply too developed and too characteristic of the nineteenth century to explain as pre-exilic ideas. The presence of the KJV in the book is, it seems to me, indisputable. . . .

The expansion theory of the Book of Mormon has far-reaching implications for our ideas of revelation and scripture. . . .

The model of revelation I propose here is that of creative co-participation. It seems to me that the Book of Mormon makes most sense if it is seen as both a revelation to Joseph Smith and as Joseph’s expansions of the text. . . .

It also appears that the usual relationship existing between a translator and an identifiable, objective text did not exist for Joseph Smith, for the ancient text merged with his own thought processes. Though Joseph Smith did not lose self-consciousness, the distinction between the text being revealed and the person receiving the revelation apparently dissolved.

What we have therefore is neither an ancient document nor a translation rendering an ancient document from one language into another. The Book of Mormon as we know it is a “text-as-revelation”—the revelation is the text.

However, the presence of translator anachronisms or expansions in the book show that Joseph Smith imposed an interpretation on the text which was foreign to the ancient text, . . . (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1987, pages 76-80, 102, 108, 109, 111 and 112)

It appears that Blake Ostler is using his expansion theory to solve two very difficult problems in the Book of Mormon—i.e., the presence of modern material in the text and the existence of doctrines which the LDS Church no longer believes:

But the voice heard in revelation is not a solo by God. It is a chorus in which the experience of the prophet and God merges. . . . The Book of Mormon reflects the influence of Joseph Smith’s earliest belief structure in its synthesis of passages from the KJV and contemporary theology with nineteenth-century concerns. Joseph Smith’s interpretive framework was largely derived from Christian Primitivism, a particular orientation within nineteenth-century Protestantism . . . In expressing the message of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith’s revelatory experiences naturally assumed the world view arising from his culture. Later revelations, however, necessitated so much revision in this basic set of assumptions that the paradigm reflected in the Book of Mormon was largely abandoned.

Book of Mormon doctrines of God, human nature, heaven, and hell have been refined, expanded, and perhaps superseded by further light and knowledge. The Book of Mormon doctrine of God, though not explicitly trinitarian, is not the developed tritheism that now characterizes Mormon thinking . . . (Ibid., page 112)

Mr. Ostler seems to feel that he can discern some of the portions which came from an ancient text and the ones which Joseph Smith inserted into the text:

1 Nephi 13-15 can be distinguished as Joseph Smith’s expansion through motif criticism. Its denunciations of the devil’s great and abominable church depend on Revelation and appear to express anti-Catholicism characteristic of nineteenth-century New York . . . These chapters contain ideas foreign to pre-exilic Israelites . . . The expansion can be distinguished from the original text because the angel’s purpose in 1 Nephi 11-12 is to explain the symbolic significance of Lehi’s vision. . . . In 1 and 2 Nephi, Jacob and Enos, however, expansions must come from Joseph Smith . . . Mosiah 3:1-23 (on Christ’s
mission), 4:1-5 (the audience’s conviction of sin), 5:1 (Benjamin’s request for responses), and 6:4-5 (the beginning of Mosiah’s reign), do not reflect the covenant form. In my view, they are better explained as Joseph Smith’s nineteenth-century expansions. . . . Mosiah 3:5-4:8 seems to be nineteenth-century expansions on the atonement stressed at covenant renewal . . . I see the cry for mercy in Mosiah 4:2 as typical of revival preachers and hence a possible expansion by Joseph Smith . . .

The prophetic speech form and metaphors in Abinadi’s diatribe show evidence of an ancient text . . .

At the same time, Abinadi’s prophetic speech is interrupted by clearly identifiable expansions of the text . . . Mosiah 13:28-32 appears to be Joseph Smith’s expansion to clarify Abinadi’s view that the law of Moses was sufficient for salvation by having Abinadi explain that the law of Moses, then sufficient, would not always be so . . .

Mosiah 14-16 are also best explained as Joseph Smith’s expansions or interpolations. . . . Mosiah 15-16 appear to be Joseph Smith’s expansions to explain how God becomes man. Mosiah 15 . . . attempts to answer theological questions that were asked only after the council of Nicea in A.D. 325, and the answer is premised on Anselm’s medieval satisfaction theory. (Ibid., pages 86, 87, 92, 96 and 97)

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 69-72 we demonstrated that the anti-Masonic controversy of the 1820’s is reflected in the Book of Mormon. While Ostler feels that some of this material came from an ancient record, on page 76 of his article, he admits that “Helaman 6:21-30; 8:3-4; 3 Nephi 6:28-30 and Ether 8:10-16, 22-26 appear to be influenced by anti-Masonic terminology and concerns. They may be explained best, it seems to me, as Joseph Smith’s independent commentary on Masonry, sparked by his reflection on Nephite secret combinations.”

On pages 64-65 of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? we told of the revivals which swept through New York in the early 19th century and their effect on the text of the Book of Mormon. In his article in Dialogue, page 87, Mr. Ostler is willing to concede that

A Christian expansion in Mosiah’s speech is detectable on form critical grounds. Mosiah 2-5 would appear to be reminiscent of a nineteenth-century camp/revival meeting on first reading . . .

However, not all of Mosiah 1-6 can be explained as a nineteenth-century camp meeting and conversion experience.

In our book, pages 65-66, we showed that the Book of Mormon’s statements concerning baptism of infants probably came from the controversy that was going on in Joseph Smith’s day. On pages 80-81 of his article, Mr. Ostler admits that the discussion over baptism of infants came from 19th century teachings:

The Book of Mormon also addresses problems that simply were not, and could not be, problems for Israelites. For example, the salvation of infants and those who had not heard the gospel arises only if a soteriology is adopted which excludes the unbaptized or non-Israelites. In Hebrew thought non-Israelites are not thus excluded . . .

Nineteenth-century Methodist theology taught, however, that non-Israelites and the unbaptized could not be saved. The Methodist solution resembles the Book of Mormon’s. John Fletcher . . . a Methodist theologian . . . stated that “Christ died for the entire human race, first to procure absolutely and unconditionally a temporal salvation, for men universally, and secondly, to procure a particular redemption, or an eternal salvation, conditionally for all men, but absolutely for all that die in infancy . . .

Those who accept Blake Ostler’s idea that the discussion of the salvation and baptism of infants was not on the gold plates are forced to the conclusion that Joseph Smith put words into the mouths of the ancient “Nephite” prophets that they never uttered. In Mosiah 15:1 and 25 we read: “And now Abinadi said unto them: . . . little children also have eternal life.” In Moroni 8:1, 2 and 9 we find the following: “An epistle of my father Mormon, written to me, Moroni; . . . My beloved son, Moroni, . . . if I have learned the truth, there have been disputations among you concerning the baptism of your little children. . . . wherefore, my beloved son, I know that it is solemn mockery before God, that ye should baptize little children.”

On page 70 of his article in Dialogue, Mr. Ostler commented: “The prophecies of the discovery of America and the role of a gentile nation in the Book of Mormon can be most reasonably explained, in my opinion, as popular nineteenth-century concepts inserted in the text by Joseph Smith (1 Ne. 13:10-20).” The reader who takes the time to examine the verses cited by Ostler, 1 Nephi 13:10-20, will find that Nephi identifies himself three times in these verses as the actual author of the prophecies. The words “I, Nephi, beheld” are found in verses 16, 19 and 29. What we have in these examples goes far beyond adding some explanatory material to the text. If Blake Ostler’s theory is correct, this would mean that Joseph Smith was actually impersonating the ancient Nephite prophets Abinadi, Mormon and Nephi! That Ostler believes that Joseph Smith was taking the role of Abinadi to present his own views is obvious from his comment about Mosiah 15 on page 97 of his article: “. . . Joseph Smith here addresses, through Abinadi, how the Son can be both fully man and fully God.” It would appear to us that Mr. Ostler’s theory puts the Book of Mormon in the same class as the Salamander Letter. Actually, if Ostler’s theory is taken seriously, the Salamander Letter would be in a
superior position to some portions of the Book of Mormon because it relates a number of historical facts that can be established from other sources. It is true that the letter was not really written by Martin Harris and that Mark Hofmann added some of his own ideas, but most of the letter is based on actual historical facts found in affidavits and early Mormon writings. Hofmann, of course, cannot be commended for his devious work on the Salamander Letter, but at least his document has some basis in fact. The portions of the Book of Mormon which Ostler cites as Joseph Smith’s expansions appear to be made up out of nothing but whole cloth and verses plagiarized from the King James Version of the Bible. Ostler’s theory would have Joseph Smith making up large sections of material which were not based on historical facts and attributing them to the ancient Nephites.

To us the expansion theory seems like a theory of desperation put forth by someone who feels that the Book of Mormon must be salvaged at any cost. It might be compared to Hugh Nibley’s attempt to save the Book of Abraham when Egyptologists found that the papyrus it was translated from was in reality the pagan Book of Unveiled. Hofmann, of course, cannot be commended for his devious work on the Salamander Letter, but at least his document has some basis in fact. The portions of the Book of Mormon which Ostler cites as Joseph Smith’s expansions appear to be made up out of nothing but whole cloth and verses plagiarized from the King James Version of the Bible. Ostler’s theory would have Joseph Smith making up large sections of material which were not based on historical facts and attributing them to the ancient Nephites.

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It might help those who subscribe to the expansion theory of the Book of Mormon to try to apply the same ideas to the Salamander Letter. It could be argued, for instance, that while the letter we have today is not really in the handwriting of Martin Harris, the majority of the text really came from him. Mr. Ostler finds evidence in the Book of Mormon that he feels points to the existence of an ancient record. We can also find plenty of evidence in the Salamander Letter to show that it could be ancient—i.e., could be dated to 1830. We could say, then, that some individual allowed Mark Hofmann to make a handwritten copy of a real letter written by Martin Harris in 1830. The person who let him make the copy has since disappeared and therefore the original cannot be checked against the present copy. This would be equivalent to the story of the angel taking back the Book of Mormon plates so that the text of the printed book cannot be checked. The problem concerning portions of E. D. Howe’s Mormonism Unveiled being found in the letter (which is equivalent to portions of the King James Version of the Bible in the Book of Mormon) could be explained by the expansion theory. That is that Mark Hofmann recopied the letter and added these portions because he thought they were also good history. This would explain how the text could really date back to 1830 and yet have portions that were plagiarized from a book printed four years later. While this might make a good sounding theory on paper, it is doubtful that it would find acceptance among scholars. If we have to admit that Hofmann would use plagiarism to create part of the letter, how can we be certain that the entire letter was not made in this way? It would, in fact, be much easier to get rid of the whole cumbersome theory and just admit that the letter is a forgery. So it is with the Book of Mormon. Once we admit that Joseph Smith used plagiarism and included his own ideas in the book, how can we trust the rest of his “translation”? Such incompetence would throw the entire book into question. It would be much easier to believe that Joseph Smith made up the Book of Mormon.

In the Articles of Faith, written by Joseph Smith himself, we find the following: “8. We believe the Bible to be the word of God so far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.” The reader will note that the Bible is only “the word of God as far as it is translated correctly,” whereas the Book of Mormon is accepted as “the word of God” without qualification. Blake Ostler’s theory would certainly make the 8th Article of Faith out of date. According to this theory, belief in the Book of Mormon would have to be qualified by the possibility of plagiarism of mistranslated verses from the Bible as well as Joseph Smith’s interpolation of his early theological views which were superseded by later revelations.

Mr. Ostler apparently realized that his theory was not very flattering to Joseph Smith’s image as a translator, and therefore on page 111 of his article he indicated that Smith might not have intentionally made the expansions:

It would not be necessary for Joseph Smith to be aware of his expansions and interpretations of the Book of Mormon simply because they were a part of his experience. In fact, he seems to have been unaware of how his nineteenth-century framework and theological categories or past experiences affected the Book of Mormon or his other revelations since he appears to have believed, despite recognitions in revelation to the contrary, that the words used were God’s . . .

While Ostler’s idea that Joseph Smith did not really realize that he was expanding the text may remove the sinister element in some people’s minds, it certainly does not instill confidence in the contents of the Book of Mormon. If Ostler is correct, then it is obvious that at least part of the Book of Mormon is the work of Joseph Smith’s own imagination. The reader will remember that Dr.
Hugh Nibley claimed that a “forgery” is defined as “any document which was not produced in the time, place, and manner claimed by it or its publishers.” If Ostler’s theory is correct, then at least part of the Book of Mormon must be considered as forged material. While it might make some people feel better to believe that Joseph Smith really thought he was translating this material from gold plates, it would not change the fact that the material is spurious.

Actually, Blake Ostler’s thesis concerning the Book of Mormon is quite similar to our own. While he maintains that part of the words attributed to the ancient Nephites really came from Joseph Smith’s creative imagination, the Bible or other sources, we believe that the contents of the entire book are a product of the 19th century. We feel that what Ostler identifies as an ancient text is in reality plagiarism of ideas and verses from the Old and New Testaments of the King James Bible. It is possible, of course, that Joseph Smith may have also used other ancient sources like Josephus which were available in his time. While Mr. Ostler’s theory seems to provide a way of escape from some serious questions about the text of the Book of Mormon, it opens up the floodgate to many other problems. How could a person really trust any of the text once it is admitted that Joseph Smith was capable of putting his own words into the mouths of the ancient Nephite prophets? Once a person goes so far as to admit that Joseph Smith made up part of the story, it is very easy to go one step further and conclude that the Nephites only existed in Joseph Smith’s own fertile imagination. While Mr. Ostler has not followed his research to its logical conclusion, he has presented a very interesting and provocative article. That Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought would print such a long article on this sensitive subject shows that there is a great deal of interest in the subject of the historicity of the Book of Mormon among Mormon scholars.

Even though Blake Ostler does put a great deal of trust in Hugh Nibley’s claim that the Book of Mormon comes from an ancient text, he has not fallen for some of the other sensational claims put forth by Mormon apologists. Concerning the wordprint analysis of the text of the Book of Mormon, he says that this “is a far-from-fixed field” (Ibid., page 101), and goes on to say that the claim that chiasms appear in the Book of Mormon does not prove the text is ancient: “Chiasmus can also be found in some nineteenth-century works, including the Doctrine and Covenants and Book of Abraham . . . Thus, the assumption that chiasmus is an exclusively ancient poetic device appears to be false” (Ibid.). On the same page, Mr. Ostler also frankly admits that “Despite vigorous debate, no concrete evidence exists establishing a Book of Mormon archeology . . .”

On page 97 of his article, Mr. Ostler suggested that in one instance Joseph Smith may have suppressed “Nephi’s own prophecy” and copied some material from the King James Version in its stead. In our opinion, this would mean that Joseph Smith was falsifying the ancient text rather than providing a correct translation. This would certainly be contrary to Joseph Smith’s own statement about the translation. In one case he even cited an angel of God as certifying that the translation was correct:

... we heard a voice from out of the bright light above us, saying, “These plates have been revealed by the power of God, and they have been translated by the power of God. The translation of them which you have seen is correct, and I command you to bear record of what you now see and hear.” (History of the Church, vol. 1, pages 54-55)

In the History of the Church, vol. 4, page 461, we read that Joseph Smith stated he “told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth . . .” Joseph Smith’s own statements certainly do not leave any room for the expansion of the text which Blake Ostler speaks of, nor do they allow for the plagiarism which is apparent to everyone who makes a serious study of the Book of Mormon. As strange as it may seem, Joseph Smith even made an attack on those who translated and transcribed the text of the Bible: “I believe the Bible as it read when it came from the pen of the original writers. Ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests have committed many errors” (History of the Church, vol. 6, page 57). In the Book of Mormon itself the Catholics were charged with altering the Bible:

... thou seest the foundation of a great and abominable church, which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold, they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away.

And all this have they done that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord, that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men.

Wherefore, thou seest that after the book [the Bible] hath gone forth through the hands of the great and abominable church, that there are many plain and precious things taken away from the book. . . . because of the many plain and precious things which have been taken out of the book. . . . because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, an exceeding great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them. (Book of Mormon, 1 Neph 13:26-29)

The Mormon Apostle Mark E. Petersen made these statements concerning the Bible: “Many insertions were made, some of them ‘slanted’ for selfish purposes, while
at times deliberate falsifications and fabrications were perpetrated” (As Translated Correctly, Salt Lake City, 1966, page 4). On page 14 of the same book, Apostle Petersen talked of “deliberate changes, deletions and forgeries” made in the Bible. Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr., the son of the tenth President of the Mormon Church, charged:

The early “apostate fathers” did not think it was wrong to tamper with inspired scripture. If any scripture seemed to endanger their viewpoint, it was altered, transplanted or completely removed from the biblical text. All this was done that they might keep their traditions. Such mutilation was considered justifiable to preserve the so-called “purity” of their doctrines. (Religious Truths Defined, Salt Lake City, 1959, pages 175-176)

Those who accept Blake Ostler’s theory concerning Joseph Smith expanding the text of the Book of Mormon with his own ideas will have a difficult time explaining away the statements by Joseph Smith and other Mormon leaders concerning the evil practice of altering scripture. As we have already stated, our position is that the entire Book of Mormon is the product of Smith’s vivid imagination. Very few people would have the audacity to plagiarize the Bible and other sources to create a book of over 500 pages, claim that it was scripture and then turn around and condemn the Catholics for altering the Bible. This might best be compared with Mark Hofmann’s brazen-faced approach to the Mormon leaders—i.e., using the church’s own archives to obtain material to create forgeries to sell to the church.

As to the charge that the Catholics made serious changes in the Bible, since Joseph Smith’s time many ancient Bible manuscripts have been found. Some of the papyrus manuscripts of the New Testament date back to 200 A.D., and one fragment from the book of John goes back to about 125-130 A.D. With regard to the Old Testament, the Dead Sea Scrolls have provided a great deal of evidence for the text of the Bible. A copy of the Isaiah Scroll is dated about 100 B.C. and a fragmentary copy of the book of Samuel is believed to be 125 to 175 years earlier! These manuscripts reveal that there was no Catholic conspiracy to alter the scriptures as Joseph Smith and other Mormon leaders have charged. We have a great deal of information on this matter in our book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 375-385.

In Mormonism we were always taught that the Bible was corrupted and that we needed Joseph Smith to restore the truth. Now that we understand his methods, it is clear that he just added his own confusion. While we would think that the doctrinal teachings in the Book of Mormon, which is supposed to contain “the fulness of the everlasting Gospel” (Book of Mormon, Preface), could be relied upon, it is obvious that the church has abandoned some of the most important doctrines of the Book of Mormon. Blake Ostler, in fact, says that “Many Book of Mormon doctrines are best explained by the nineteenth century theological milieu.” If this is the case, how do we know that Joseph Smith’s later doctrines are any more reliable? Since he originally claimed that the teachings in the Book of Mormon were the word of God, how can we be certain that his later doctrines didn’t come from sources that he became familiar with after he wrote the Book of Mormon? We known, for instance, that Joseph Smith became a Mason and right after this he brought forth a temple ceremony that has many parallels to Masonry (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 484-492).

So far the Mormon leaders have not been willing to come to grips with the question of plagiarism in the Book of Mormon. This was made very clear in 1985 when Stan Larson lost his job with the church. Dr. Larson, who is considered to be one of the top scholars in the Mormon Church, made a detailed study of 3 Nephi, chapters 12-14, and found unmistakable evidence that this portion of the Book of Mormon “is not a genuine translation from an ancient language” which appeared on the gold plates; instead, he discovered that it was plagiarized from the King James Version of the Bible. He even found that the plagiarism occurred some time after the “1769 printing” of the King James Version. In the September 1977 issue of the church publication, The Ensign, page 91, Stan Larson was referred to as “coordinator of the standard works translation in the Church Translation Services.” After church officials learned of his study, he was forced to resign (see Salt Lake City Messenger, January 1986, pages 26-29).

JOSEPH SMITH’S HISTORY

Twelve years after Joseph Smith published the Book of Mormon, he came out with the Book of Abraham. As we stated earlier, the papyrus he claimed he translated from turned out to be nothing but a pagan document known as the Book of Breathings. In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 365-367 we demonstrated that Joseph Smith plagiarized from the King James Version of the Bible in writing the Book of Abraham. Plagiarism in Mormon Church documents did not cease when Joseph Smith died in 1844. In fact, one of the most ambitious forgeries we have ever encountered occurred during the time Brigham Young was running the church. This is the History of the Church which is still published by the Mormon Church. On the title page to volume 1 it is claimed that it is the “History of Joseph Smith, the Prophet BY HIMSELF.” In the Preface to the History of
A comparison of part of the text from the newspaper, The Wasp, with the History of the Church. There can be no question that the newspaper article has been plagiarized to create part of “Joseph Smith’s History.” Notice that the words have been changed to the first person to deceive the reader into believing Joseph Smith was the author.
the Church, it is asserted that “a history more correct in its details than this was never published,” and that it is “one of the most authentic histories ever written.” As early as 1965 we published a book entitled, *Changes in Joseph Smith’s History*, in which we demonstrated that the History of the Church is anything but “one of the most authentic histories ever written.” On the cover we charged that since the first printing more than 64,000 words had been added or deleted. Even more important, however, was our suggestion that “most of the history was not written by Joseph Smith.” Only a small portion of the History had been published before Joseph Smith’s death, and we concluded from evidence we found in the text that church historians under Brigham Young had made up the largest portion of Joseph Smith’s History after his death. We speculated that Joseph Smith’s diaries were probably used for part of the History, but that church historians interpolated material of their own “and tried to make it appear that Joseph Smith had written it.” This theory was finally confirmed in 1971, when *Brigham Young University Studies* published an article by Dean Jessee. At that time Mr. Jessee was working at the LDS Church Historian’s Office and had access to the manuscript of Joseph Smith’s History and diaries which told how the History was written. In his article Dean Jessee frankly admitted that the manuscript was only completed to page 812 at the time of Joseph Smith’s death. Since there were almost 2,200 pages, this meant that over 60% of Joseph Smith’s History was not compiled during his lifetime! Mr. Jessee also gave this information in his article:

At the time of Joseph Smith’s death [June 27, 1844], the narrative was written to August 5, 1838 . . .

By February 4, 1846, the day the books were packed for the journey west, the History had been completed to March 1, 1843 . . .

The rigors of establishing a new commonwealth in the mountains precluded even the unboxing of the historical records of the Church until June 7, 1853 . . . resumption of work on the History occurred on “Dec. 1, 1853 [when] Dr. Willard Richards wrote one line of History being sick at the time—and was never able to do any more.” . . .

The remainder of Joseph Smith’s History of the Church from March 1, 1843 to August 8, 1844, was completed under the direction of George A. Smith . . .

The Joseph Smith History was finished in August 1856, seventeen years after it was begun. (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Summer 1971, pages 466, 469, 470 and 472)

The Church historians who worked under Brigham Young plagiarized from many sources to complete Joseph Smith’s History. Material was taken from newspapers and diaries written by other people and changed to the first person in an obvious attempt to mislead readers into believing that it was written by Joseph Smith himself. A good example of the plagiarism is found in a comparison of an article from the newspaper, *The Wasp* with the History of the Church. The reader will find both texts in parallel columns on page 11. Our research has led us to conclude that the purported Joseph Smith prophecy concerning the Saints coming to the Rocky Mountains and the famous prophecy concerning Steven A. Douglas are both forgeries added to the History after Joseph Smith’s death. The reader will find a great deal more concerning the falsification of Joseph Smith’s History in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 126-142.

**AVOIDING THE PROBLEM**

The Mark Hofmann affair raises some serious questions for the Mormon Church. For instance, in a statement published by the church, the General Authorities now acknowledge that they were the victims of fraudulent activities:

Like other document collectors throughout the nation, the Church has relied on competent authorities in document acquisition and with the others has been a victim of the fraudulent activities which have now been acknowledged in the courtroom. As earlier announced, the Church acquired forty-eight documents directly from Mark W. Hofmann . . . (*The Ensign*, April 1987, page 77)

It is good to see the Mormon leaders frankly admitting they were victims of fraud. The fact that they acknowledge that they relied only upon “competent authorities in document acquisition” when they acquired the forgeries seems to belie their claim that they are led by revelation. The important question, of course, is why was the Prophet, Seer and Revelator Spencer W. Kimball unable to detect that the church was being deceived when he examined the Anthon Transcript—a document supposed to contain Joseph Smith’s copy of characters from the gold plates of the Book of Mormon—with a magnifying glass? Instead of denouncing Mark Hofmann as a deceiver, as Peter did in the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:3), the “Prophet, Seer and Revelator” allowed Mr. Hofmann to have $20,000 worth of trade items for the forged document. That Spencer W. Kimball and all the other leaders of the church were deceived by Hofmann time after time does not seem to square with their claim to have the same powers as the ancient Apostles in the Bible. At least two of the documents they obtained contain revelations purporting to come from the Lord. It now appears that a wolf in sheep’s clothing can write revelations comparable to Joseph Smith’s and that it is even possible to get them
past the scrutiny of the highest officials of the Mormon Church.

It also seems likely that if Mark Hofmann had not given himself away by planting bombs, the church might have bought an entire book of “scripture” from him. The book we are referring to is the book of Lehi—also known as the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon. In the Los Angeles Times Magazine, April 5, 1987, page 47, Robert Jones claims that “in Hofmann’s house detectives found evidence that the 116 Lost Pages of the Book of Mormon were being prepared.” Hugh Pinnock, the Mormon leader who helped Hofmann obtain a loan for $185,000 to buy the McLellin Collection, was apparently very interested in acquiring the book of Lehi for the church. Robert Jones reported:

The church officer [Hugh Pinnock] smiled and then said there was a favor he would like to ask in return. Christensen recorded the request in his diary:

“Elder Pinnock mentioned to Mark that sometime he would like to talk with him about retaining his services to track down two items. One was revealed as the missing 116 pages. Elder Pinnock was not in a position to reveal the second item. . . . The highest leaders of the church, by all appearances, had succumbed to his talents and were asking for his help. (Ibid., March 29, 1986, page 35)

On page 11 of the same article, Robert Jones reveals: “Hofmann said he thought the 116 pages were out there, somewhere; he was investigating some leads. At one dinner party he told a friend that the church had offered him $2 million for the Lost Pages. He said he thought the offer was low. He would ask $10 million.” One of Mr. Hofmann’s associates has confirmed to us that this story is essentially true—the only difference he noted is that he thought Hofmann said the church had offered him 2 to 3 million dollars for the missing pages. In Tracking the White Salamander, page 108, we reported that one Mormon scholar paid $25,000 for just one leaf” Hofmann had forged from the book of Nephi. We reasoned that since the book of Nephi exists in printed form in the Book of Mormon and the RLDS Church owns the handwritten copy of the manuscript the Book of Mormon was printed from, the lost pages from the book of Lehi “would certainly be worth far more.” According to Mark Hofmann’s associate, this was the very reasoning Hofmann used when he said the offer of 2 or 3 million dollars by the church was not enough for the missing portion of the Book of Mormon. In any case, the bombings ended Mark Hofmann’s career as a document dealer and the Mormon Church was apparently spared the ultimate embarrassment of being caught with a forged copy of the book of Lehi. The church’s own newspaper, Deseret News, had already reported that the Salamander letter had been “authenticated” as having come from the pen of Martin Harris, and since Harris was supposed to be the main scribe for the 116 missing pages, the Salamander letter would have been used to authenticate the book of Lehi.

Although we may never know the full story concerning the 116 missing pages and Mark Hofmann’s plan to sell them to the church, it is obvious that he already had the Mormon leaders in the palm of his hand. In an article written for the Salt Lake Tribune, April 19, 1986, Mike Carter talked of the blind trust the church authorities had in Hofmann:

Convoluted deals involving the attempted sale of million-dollar documents, the manufacturing of plates to counterfeit “Mormon money” and the seemingly blind trust of LDS officials in bombing suspect Mark W. Hofmann dominated the fifth day of his preliminary hearing . . .

It was apparent from Mr. Schmidt’s testimony that the LDS Church relied on its own people—who the historian acknowledged were “not forensic or handwriting experts”—to authenticate the more [part of] almost 50 documents the church purchased from Mr. Hofmann. It also was apparent that church leaders, including President Hinckley, trusted Mr. Hofmann implicitly, to the point where negotiations over the price the church was willing to pay for Hofmann documents reached the offices of the first presidency.

Now that the leaders of the Mormon Church have acknowledged that they were fooled by a young man who was about Joseph Smith’s age when he brought forth the Book of Mormon, they need to take a closer look at Joseph Smith’s remarkable discoveries. While the evidence against Hofmann’s forgeries seems irrefutable, that against the “scriptures” produced by Joseph Smith is much stronger. It is, in fact, absolutely overwhelming. In Chapter 3 of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? we demonstrated photographically the serious textual changes in Joseph Smith’s revelations which are published in the Doctrine and Covenants. Chapter 5 shows how Smith plagiarized the King James Version of the Bible in producing the Book of Mormon and how he borrowed from other sources such as the Westminster Confession. Chapter 22 shows that he mistranslated the Egyptian papyrus which he claimed was the Book of Abraham. This pagan text has nothing to do with Abraham or his religion. Chapter 24 proves that Joseph Smith’s “Inspired Revision” of the Bible finds no real support in the thousands of ancient manuscripts of the New Testament and that the Old Testament portion contradicts the evidence found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. As if this were not bad enough, Chapter 7 shows how Joseph...
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Smith’s successors used plagiarism and falsification to create what they called Joseph Smith’s History “BY HIMSELF.”

Taken as a whole, the evidence clearly shows that the foundational documents of Mormonism are unreliable and must be viewed in the same class with Mark Hofmann’s forgeries. The seriousness of this matter cannot be overemphasized. What would be the difference between Joseph Smith plagiarizing the King James Version of the Bible to create the Book of Mormon and Mark Hofmann appropriating ideas and words from Mormonism Unveiled to write the Salamander Letter? In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 133-135 we discussed how after Joseph Smith’s death the church historians interpolated the prophecy into the History of the Church that the Saints would “become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains.” It is put in the first person (“I prophesied”) in a deliberate attempt to convince the reader that Joseph Smith himself had written it, and was obviously intended to bolster up the claim that the group which went west under Brigham Young was the true church. Mark Hofmann, on the other hand, forged a blessing document which was supposed to have been dictated by Joseph Smith which designated his son as his true successor. There is actually some evidence that Joseph Smith may have named his son as his successor to lead the Mormon Church. Much to Brigham Young’s dismay, Joseph Smith’s son became the prophet for a rival group known as the Reorganized Church. What Mark Hofmann did was supply a handwritten document which seemed to prove that Brigham Young was not the true successor. It would appear that Hofmann used the Mormon Church’s own method to create his forgery—i.e., put his own words into Joseph Smith’s mouth. What is the difference between Brigham Young having his historians insert a forged prophecy to promote his leadership and Mark Hofmann creating a blessing document that said the true successor was Joseph Smith’s son?

We are of the opinion that Mark Hofmann was well aware of the plagiarism and forgery that took place under the early Mormon leaders, and, although his actions cannot be excused, he may have decided to use their methods in an attempt to show what the true history of the church was really like.

Whatever the case may be, the serious nature of the crime of forgery became evident when Mark Hofmann was sentenced to “1-to-15 years” in the Utah State Prison for his deception in selling the forged Salamander Letter. While it could be argued that the early Mormon leaders did not receive the same type of financial remuneration that Hofmann did when he sold his documents, they undoubtedly received many benefits. David Whitmer, one of the three special witnesses to the Book of Mormon, indicated that there was some discussion about receiving a profit when the Book of Mormon was published:

When the Book of Mormon was in the hands of the printer, . . . Brother Hyrum thought they should not wait any longer on Martin Harris, and that the money should be raised in some other way. Brother Hyrum was vexed with Brother Martin, and thought they should get the money by some means outside of him, and not let him have anything to do with the publication of the Book, or receiving any of the profits thereof if any profits should accrue . . . . Brother Hyrum said it had been suggested to him that some of the brethren might go to Toronto, Canada, and sell the copy-right of the Book of Mormon for considerable money: . . . Joseph looked into the hat in which he placed the stone, and received a revelation that some of the brethren should go . . . sell the copy-right of the Book of Mormon . . . but they failed entirely to sell the copy-right, returning without any money. (An Address to All Believers in Christ, by David Whitmer, Richmond, Missouri, 1887, pages 30-31)

Like Mark Hofmann, Joseph Smith seems to have gone through a great deal of money. He was unable to handle it, and in 1842 he petitioned to be declared bankrupt. United States Attorney for Illinois J. Butterfield said that he “defeated Joseph Smith . . . from obtaining the benefit of the Bankrupt Act.” In a letter to C. B. Penrose, Solicitor of the Treasury, dated October 13, 1842, Butterfield said that he had found that Smith was guilty of “fraudulent transfers of his property” to avoid paying his debts (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 534-535). Brigham Young, the second president of the church, became extremely wealthy. Stanley P. Hirshon says that “in the 1870 census he declared personal property worth $102,000 and real estate valued at $1,010,600” (The Lion of the Lord, page 247). Leonard J. Arrington, who later became Church Historian, wrote:

Brigham Young and other church authorities, when need required it, drew on the tithing resources of the church, and at a later date repaid part or all of the obligation in money, property, or services. No interest seems to have been paid for the use of these funds. . . . This ability to draw, almost at will, on church as well as his own funds, was a great advantage to Brigham Young and was certainly one of the reasons for his worldly success. . . . while Brigham Young was probably the largest borrower of funds from the trustee-in-trust, he was certainly not the only one. (“The Settlement of the Brigham Young Estate,” 1877-1879, Reprinted from the Pacific Historical Review, vol. 21, no. 1, February 1952, pages 7-8)

In addition to money, both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young derived a great deal of power over the people who
were converted to Mormonism. If it were not for the questionable documents they published, they probably never would have gained such notoriety. It could be argued, of course, that Brigham Young was not aware of the truth concerning the Book of Mormon. While this may be true, he was directly responsible for the falsification of Joseph Smith’s History. This massive forgery was not completed until August 1856, over a decade after Joseph Smith’s death.

While the present leaders of the Mormon Church had nothing to do with the creation of this spurious history, they have continued to print it without giving any notice that the largest portion of it was not compiled by Joseph Smith. The title page still states that Joseph Smith’s History was written “BY HIMSELF.” In 1975 it did appear that the church was making a move to get an honest history. In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 13-B, we reported that Church Historian Leonard Arrington was appointed to oversee the production of a sixteen-volume sesquicentennial history of the Mormon Church. These volumes were to be authored by prominent Mormon scholars. Contracts were signed with 16 Mormon historians and publication was scheduled for the 150th anniversary of the church (1980). Unfortunately, however, the church leaders decided not to publish the history when they found that the scholars were telling too much. Since they had binding contracts with the authors, they were forced to pay those who had completed their volumes $20,000. That the General Authorities would approve this immense project and then abort it after some of the church’s top scholars spent years working on it shows a total lack of inspiration and a desire to suppress the truth.

Some people felt that when the sesquicentennial history was published the Joseph Smith History would be phased out. As it turned out, Mormons are still stuck with the bogus history, and there is no indication that church leaders will face up to the issue. A statement by Book of Mormon witness David Whitmer concerning the changes in Joseph Smith’s revelations seems to apply equally well to this situation:

You have changed the revelations from the way they were first given . . . You have changed and altered the revelations to support the error of publishing those revelations in a book: the errors you are in, revelations have been changed to support and uphold them. You who are now living did not change them, but you who strive to defend these things, are as guilty in the sight of God as those who did change them. (An Address to All Believers in Christ, page 49)

Now that the Hofmann documents have been discredited and it is plain to see that church leaders have been deceived, Mormons need to take a closer look at the documents that came through the hands of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. Prior to the Salamandergate scandal, many Mormons believed that their leaders could not be fooled by fake documents or con men. It is now evident, however, that they are not infallible and that they make mistakes just like the rest of us. It is painfully obvious that they have no special insight even with regard to documents that are purported to be sacred. They cannot tell a Hofmann letter from a Joseph Smith letter, or even a Hofmann revelation from a revelation given by the Lord. The ward teacher’s message for June 1945 admonished Mormons to let the leaders do the thinking:

Any Latter-day Saint who denounces or opposes, whether actively or otherwise, any plan or doctrine advocated by the “prophets, seers, or revelators” of the Church is cultivating the spirit of apostasy. . . . Lucifer has a very cunning way of convincing unsuspecting souls that the general authorities of the Church are as likely to be wrong as they are to be right. . . . He wins a great victory when he can get members of the Church to speak against their leaders and to “do their own thinking.” . . .

When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. When they propose a plan—it is God’s plan. When they point the way, there is no other which is safe. When they give direction, it should mark the end of controversy. (Deseret News, Church Section, May 26, 1945, page 51)

In Jeremiah 17:5 we read: “Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.” In the light of what has happened in the Hofmann scandal, it is time for the Mormon people to wake up and begin to examine their own faith with a prayerful attitude and an honest heart before the Lord.

For all those who would really like to investigate the truth, we highly recommend our book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? The regular price is $11.95 for soft cover and $14.95 for hard cover, but if it is ordered before June 30, 1987, the price will be only $9.95 for soft cover and $12.95 for hard cover (mail order add 10% for postage and handling).
SALT LAKE CITY MESSANGER

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MORMON APOSTLE DALLIN OAKS UPSET WITH HIS CONFESSION

In earlier issues of the Salt Lake City Messenger we have printed a great deal of information concerning Mark Hofmann and his attempt to embarrass the Mormon Church with his forgeries. Hofmann, of course, finally admitted that he had murdered two people because his fraudulent dealings were about to be revealed and was sent to the Utah State Prison. As part of the plea bargain Mr. Hofmann agreed to meet with the prosecution and give details concerning his crimes. We are now pleased to announce that we have photographically printed the transcripts of Mark Hofmann’s discussions with attorneys from the Salt Lake County Attorney’s Office. They are published in 3 volumes under the title, Hofmann’s Confession.

Just after we published a large advertisement in the two major Salt Lake City papers stating that we would be printing the transcripts, a bizarre development occurred. A man reported to us that he had been told by someone in the County Attorney’s Office that a copyright would be placed on the transcripts. The news media investigated and found that the matter was being discussed. We publicly responded that even if a copyright notice appeared on the transcripts, we would publish them and force the County to take us to court. We had recently won a suit over copyright and were certain that there was no way that what had previously been described as a “public document” could be copyrightable. On July 30, 1987, the Salt Lake Tribune reported:

The Utah Lighthouse Ministry and Bookstore . . . placed a one-half page advertisement in the Salt Lake Tribune announcing that . . . they will be re-printing and undercutting the county attorney’s $60 price by more than $40 for those who want to order early.

That prompted some members of the County Attorney’s Office to begin researching whether the transcript could be copyrighted. But County Attorney David Yocom, who was out of town last week, said Wednesday that he has no intention of copyrighting what he has referred to in the past as a “public document.”

We were very happy to learn of Mr. Yocom’s decision on the matter. Although we felt that we could win a lawsuit, we knew from our experience with the other suit (which we finally won after it was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court), that it would cost a great deal of money to take on the County.

CONFIRMS OUR THEORY

Mark Hofmann’s confessions corroborate the material which we have been printing in the Salt Lake

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City Messenger for almost three and a half years. Our theory that the Hofmann documents may be spurious was criticized by both Mormon and non-Mormon scholars before the bombings. While at first we were impressed with Hofmann’s “discoveries,” we eventually came to have grave doubts about the authenticity of the documents. One of the editors of this newsletter (Jerald) wrote the following in the book, Tracking the White Salamander:

Nineteen months before local and federal investigators began working on the Salt Lake bombing’s case, Utah Lighthouse Ministry began its own investigation concerning the authenticity of the documents Mark Hofmann was selling the Mormon Church and other collectors. In this inquiry we obtained information from Washington, D.C. and ten different states. We even interviewed a convicted murderer at the Utah State Prison.

Our investigation began in March 1984 just after we were given extracts from the so-called Salamander letter. Sandra and I had been acquainted with Mark Hofmann for a number of years before he “discovered” this controversial letter. The first recollection I have of actually meeting Mr. Hofmann was in 1980. . . . Just after he discovered the Anthon transcript . . . Hofmann came to our store and discussed the discovery. Although he had served as a Mormon missionary in England, it soon became evident that he did not fully trust the Mormon leaders. He said, in fact, that he was suspicious that the Church might be bugging his phone. He did not claim, however, to have any real evidence about the matter.

In the years that followed our first meeting Mr. Hofmann would occasionally visit our bookstore and tell of the remarkable discoveries that he was making. In the later part of November 1983 I first heard that Mark Hofmann had a letter which was supposed to have been written by Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris. It was dated Oct. 23, 1830, and was addressed to W. W. Phelps. When I learned of the contents of the letter, I realized that it could deal a devastating blow to the Mormon Church. Sandra and I had previously written a book entitled, Mormonism, Magic and Masonry. In this book we presented strong evidence that Joseph Smith was involved in money-digging and magic. Martin Harris’ letter seemed to provide new and exciting evidence which supported our thesis. This letter is known as the Salamander letter because Martin Harris was supposed to have written that Joseph Smith claimed when he went to get the gold plates for the Book of Mormon, a “white salamander” in the bottom of the hole “transfigured himself” into a “spirit” and “struck me 3 times.”

Fortunately, I was able to obtain some revealing extracts from the letter and was preparing to print them in the March 1984 issue of the Messenger. I was very excited that we at Utah Lighthouse Ministry would be the first to break this important story to the world. While in the midst of compiling evidence to support the authenticity of the Salamander letter, I made a discovery that shook me to the very core. I found that the account of the transformation of the white salamander into the spirit was remarkably similar to a statement E. D. Howe published in Mormonism Unvailed. This book, written four years after the date which appears in the Harris letter, told of a toad “which immediately transformed itself into a spirit” and struck Joseph Smith. Even more disconcerting, however, was the fact that other remarkable parallels to the Salamander letter were found just two or three pages from the account of the transformation of the toad into a spirit (see Mormonism Unvailed, pages 273, 275 and 276).

Some years before I had encountered similar evidence of plagiarism in Joseph Smith’s History of the Church. The Mormon Church leaders had always proclaimed that this History was actually written by Joseph Smith himself. My research, however, led me to the conclusion that the largest portion of it had been compiled after his death. I found that later Mormon historians had taken portions of newspapers and diaries written by other people and changed them to the first person so that readers would believe that they were authored by Joseph Smith himself. In agreement with my conclusions, Mormon scholars later admitted that over 60% of the History was compiled after Smith’s death (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 127-135).

In any case, parallels I had discovered between the Salamander letter and Mormonism Unvailed reminded me very much of the work I had done on Joseph Smith’s History. Although what I discovered about the Salamander letter was not conclusive proof that it was a forgery, it was certainly suspicious. It seemed, in fact, to throw a real monkey wrench into all my plans concerning the publication of the letter. Since I knew that it was very unlikely that anyone else would spot these parallels and realize their significance, there was some temptation to keep the matter to myself. I knew, however, that God knew what I had seen, and I began to feel that He had shown me these unpleasant facts to warn me against endorsing the letter. Furthermore, I knew that I would never be satisfied if my case against Mormonism was based on fraudulent material. It was clear, therefore, that there was only one course of action which I could follow—i.e., print the whole truth in the Messenger. In the March 1984 issue, therefore, we raised the question of forgery by printing the title, “Is It Authentic?” Under this title we wrote:
At the outset we should state that we have some reservations concerning the authenticity of the letter, and at the present time we are not prepared to say that it was actually penned by Martin Harris. . . . We will give the reasons for our skepticism as we proceed with this article.

*(Tracking the White Salamander, pages 2, 4 and 6)*

In the March 1984 issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger* we went on to reveal the disturbing parallels between the Salamander letter and E.D. Howe’s *Mormonism Unveiled* and then noted:

While we would really like to believe that the letter attributed to Harris is authentic, we do not feel that we can endorse it until further evidence comes forth.

This was the first criticism of Mark Hofmann’s documents to appear in print. While we had expected that some Mormon critics might be upset with our insinuation of forgery, we were surprised to find that the top Mormon scholars opposed our research. On August 25, 1984, John Dart wrote the following in the *Los Angeles Times*:

. . . unusual caution about the [Salamander] letter’s genuineness has been expressed by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, longtime evangelical critics of the Mormon Church. . . . The Tanners suggestion of forgery has surprised some Mormons, who note that the parallels in wording also could be taken as evidence for authenticity.

The *Deseret News* for September 1, 1984, reported:

. . . outspoken Mormon Church critics Jerald and Sandra Tanner suspect the document is a forgery, they told the *Deseret News*.

Jerald Tanner . . . says similarities between it and other documents make its veracity doubtful . . .

Another disturbing aspect, Tanner said, was the letter seemed out of character for Harris. “In the entire text of the letter, there is no mention of religion . . . if it’s a forgery, then it’s important because there’s a document forger out there.”

We will probably never know exactly what role our material on Hofmann’s forgeries played in the investigation made by the authorities. One investigator, however, did acknowledge to us that he was asked to test some of our theories. The Salt Lake County Sheriffs Office contacted us not long after Mark Hofmann became the chief suspect in the murders and wanted to know what material we had to establish forgery. After that we had many conversations with investigators. Our printed material was carefully examined by the Salt Lake County Attorney’s Office, and we spent two full days answering questions concerning it and the contacts we had with Hofmann and his associates. We were strongly encouraged to keep in touch with the County Attorney’s Office and give the prosecutors any new ideas or information that came to mind. One of the investigators felt that Jerald should give testimony at Hofmann’s trial. He believed that this would give historical perspective to the case they were trying to build against the documents. Although this investigator seemed to be rather excited about the idea, we seriously doubt that the County Attorney’s Office would have wanted to put a witness on the stand who was so deeply involved in controversy over the truthfulness of Mormonism. In any case, it would have been interesting to demonstrate how closely our evidence, derived from historical investigation, dovetailed with the hard evidence which document experts obtained from physical testing.

Before Hofmann was questioned at the Utah State Prison, we were asked by a detective to prepare a list of questions which we felt investigators should ask him. As it turned out, however, the detectives were not allowed to question Hofmann. The questions were all asked by the prosecutors from the County Attorney’s Office. Since Mr. Hofmann would not allow a detective to join in the questioning concerning the murders, the County Attorney’s Office terminated the interviews.

However this may be, in his confession Mark Hofmann finally admitted that the theory that we had proposed in the March 1984 issue of the *Messenger* for the origin of the Salamander letter was indeed correct. As we stated earlier, we had suggested that Howe’s book, *Mormonism Unveiled* was used and that the toad mentioned there was transformed into a Salamander. Mr. Hofmann gave this testimony:

**Q** And then the language about “the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander in the bottom of the hole and struck me three times”?

**A** Yes, there’s a reference in Howe to Joseph Smith being struck. . . .

**Q** Now the white salamander, you were going to explain that?

**A** I was only going to say that the idea for the white salamander derived from the toad in A. D. Howe’s book. Salamander, from my reading of folk magic, seemed more appropriate than a toad.

. . . .

**Q** What was your significance of what the significance [sic] the white salamander had?
A I don’t believe I saw a reference to a white salamander, only a salamander, but I decided to spice it up.

Q There is two places in there [in Mormonism Unveiled] in reference to the toad.
A Yes.
Q In fact, it says on page 276, “which immediately transformed itself into a spirit.”
A Yes. I thought the word, not wanting to sound like I was plagiarizing [sic] from a book, I used the word transfigured rather than transformed.
Q “And gave him a tremendous blow.”
A Yes.
Q You made three blows out of it, struck him twice or three times I think, rather than gave a tremendous blow?
A Again, I didn’t want to sound like I was copying it word for word.
(Hofmann’s Confession, pages 440 and 445)

It it also interesting to note that Mark Hofmann seems to have used our photographic reproduction of Mormonism Unveiled in creating the Salamander letter:

Q . . . Is that Mormonism Unveiled . . . ?
A Yes.
Q Did you have a copy of your own?
A I had a Xerox copy published by the Tanners.
Q Is that similar to the one I have?
A Yes. (Ibid., page 444)

In the March 1984 issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger, we mentioned a parallel between the Salamander letter and Joseph Knight’s account of the discovery of the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. In later issues we pointed out many significant parallels between the two documents. Since the Joseph Knight account was locked up in the LDS Historical department and was not published until 1976, we felt that this provided strong evidence that the Salamander letter was a modern forgery. If we could have believed that the forgery had been done many years ago, then we would not have been so suspicious of Mark Hofmann. As it was, however, the evidence seemed to point toward Mark Hofmann. We reasoned that if he was not guilty of the forgery, he probably knew who the person was who had done it. In his testimony in the transcripts, pages 508-509, Mr. Hofmann admitted that he had indeed used the Joseph Knight account in his forgery:

Q Are you telling us then that you were aware of that Joseph Knight letter and used some of that information in composing the information in the Salamander letter?
A That’s correct.

When Mark Hofmann was asked where he obtained the paper on which the Salamander letter was written, he replied: “I believe it came from the—It certainly came from a book at the University of Utah Library, I believe from the Niles Register” (Ibid., page 457). In response to a question concerning the lines that appear on the paper, Mr. Hofmann responded: “I forged those with a pen.” The reason for this was to “make it appear to be writing paper rather than an end sheet” (pages 458-59). He said that he probably used “ammonia” to age the ink and noted that the letter was “somewhat mildewed. I would have used bread mold in places to cause the spotting” (page 462). He claimed that the “postmark itself would have been photographed” off of a genuine letter and that the image was transferred to the paper obtained from the book (pages 463-465).

The reader may remember that a few months before the bombings a story was put forth that the Mormon Church had a secret document known as the Oliver Cowdery history which supported the Salamander letter. We became suspicious that the mysterious source of this report might be Hofmann himself. In the August 1985 issue of the Messenger, we suggested that Hofmann might be the “Deep Throat” who leaked the information. In his testimony, Mark Hofmann frankly admitted he “was the deep throat . . . described in the media.” Hofmann was questioned as follows concerning the Oliver Cowdery history:

Q Is there anything to that story?
A No.
Q Is that all a creation of yours?
A That’s pure creation.

A Yes, I was the deep throat or whoever I was described in the media. That [the person who wrote the story in the Los Angeles Times] would have been—

MR. RICH: That was John P.
MR. STOTT: Was it Dart?
A . . . Yes, I think it would have been John Dart is his name. . . . I told him this fabrication. It is purely made up. It’s not based on anything I saw in the First Presidency’s office or elsewhere.

Q The Oliver Cowdery [history] was made up by you?
A Right.

Q Why did you go to John Dart and why did you not go to a reporter and publish it?
A I didn’t. My intention wasn’t to have that happen . . . I said there were a couple reasons for the story. The other, obviously, would have been that part of the Oliver Cowdery History was there was a white salamander as far as Alvin’s involvement and that would have validated the history presented in the forged Salamander letter.

Q Again made up by you?
A Again made up by me. One forged idea to validate another forged idea.

Q Not only then the whole thing was made up but you were aware by people recounting this story it was causing, I suppose, some considerable embarrassment to the LDS authorities?
A Yes.

Q But you went along with it to the point of giving an interview. What were your feelings during this time? Why were you doing that?
A As far as my feelings, there was actually a mixture of emotions. One of which was amusement for the whole idea. As far as the embarrassment to the Church, it is true that it was embarrassing but I was also interested to see how the Church would react to the situation. As far as giving the interview, I ended up consenting but I did it reluctantly . . . it was almost like I ended up getting dragged along with my own creation to past where I wanted to. . . .

(Hofmann’s Confession, pages 451-456)

In our book, Tracking the White Salamander, we devoted an entire chapter to the McLellin collection—a group of documents Mark Hofmann maintained were embarrassing to the Mormon Church. We stated that “All the evidence, therefore, points to the inescapable conclusion that the McLellin collection was only a figment of Mark Hofmann’s imagination” (page 47). Mr. Hofmann himself has now admitted that he never had such a collection:

Q Did you ever attempt to find a so-called McLellin Collection?
A No. (Hofmann’s Confession, page 521)

After we discovered the parallels between the Salamander letter and the book, Mormonism Unvailed, we began to wonder if there might be some sort of plan or even conspiracy to control the direction of Mormon history through forgery. In an article published in the New York Times, February 16, 1986, Robert Lindsey wrote the following:

Court documents indicate that some prosecutors in the Salt Lake County Attorney’s office believe Mr. Hofmann’s goal was not only to obtain money from the church through the sale of the documents but also to establish enough credibility that he could shape the world’s perception of Mormonism.

This view is shared by a man here who was the first to suggest that Mr. Hofmann was forging his documents. He is Jerald Tanner, a former Mormon who heads the Utah Lighthouse Ministry, which for decades has been challenging the truth of much of Mormon doctrine.

In an interview, Mr. Tanner said he decided . . . that the Hofmann documents might be forgeries, even though some of them . . . supported his own iconoclastic views of Mormonism. . . .

Mr. Tanner said it appeared that Mr. Hofmann’s growing credibility as a source of documents was putting him in a position where the documents he presented were considered unassailable. If that continued, Mr. Tanner said, Mr. Hofmann “could control the direction of Mormon history.”

In the transcripts, Mark Hofmann commented concerning the charge that he was trying to rewrite Mormon history:

A I won’t go so far as to say I wanted to change Mormon history. Let me take that back. Maybe I did. I believed that the documents that I created could have been a part of Mormon history. I’m speaking specifically, for example, of the magic-related items. The 1825 Stoal letter, the so-called Salamander Letter. In effect, I guess, the questions I asked myself in deciding on a forgery one of the questions was, what could have been? I had a concept of Church history and I followed that concept. (Hofmann’s Confession, page 113)

On page 130, Mark Hofmann admitted: “. . . my version of the history is not sympathetic with the teachings of the Church.” Mr. Hofmann also stated:

It is true that I wrote the documents according to how I felt the actual events took place. In other words, I believe that Joseph Smith was involved with folk magic, but the idea there was more to keep it in harmony with what I thought potentially genuine, discoverable type documents may say. In other words, to make it fit the history as accurately as possible so that I wouldn’t be found out or whatever. (Ibid., page 427)

FOOLING THE CHURCH

Mark Hofmann is now considered to be one of the greatest con men of the 20th century. On February 11, 1987, the New York Times published an article by Robert Lindsey which contained the following:
“Mark Hofmann was unquestionably the most skilled forger this country has ever seen,” said Charles Hamilton, a New York document dealer who is widely regarded as the nation’s preeminent detector of forged documents. . . .

Mr. Hamilton said Mr. Hofmann “perpetrated by far the largest monetary frauds through forgery that this country has ever had,” adding, “He fooled me—he fooled everybody.” . . .

Among those fooled by Mr. Hofmann’s documents were hundreds of specialists in Mormon history . . . .

Investigators have said that Mr. Hofmann was as successful in selling forged documents in New York as he was in Utah. They say he may have collected more than $2 million selling rare documents purportedly written or signed by such literary and historical figures as Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, Jack London and Jim Bridger . . . .

After examining the white salamander letter, experts working for the Federal Bureau of Investigation said they could find no evidence that it was forged . . . .

In the confession, Mark Hofmann related that he was only in his teens when he fooled the U.S. Treasury Department by electroplating “a mint mark on a coin to make it more valuable to a collector.” He claimed that “a coin dealer . . . couldn’t believe that I could own such a valuable coin in my youth. I think I was only 15 years old. The coin being worth thousands of dollars even back in those days. Anyway a coin dealer sent it in to have it examined and it ended up going to the Treasury Department where it was pronounced genuine. And my feeling was that if the Treasury Department or I should say my rationalization was that if the Treasury Department pronounces it genuine that it is genuine by definition.” Mr. Hofmann went on to say “that’s also when I lost respect for forensic examination, I guess” (Hofmann’s Confession, pages 409-410).

Although Mark Hofmann served on a mission for the Mormon Church and was even married in the temple, he says that he “lost faith in the Mormon Church” when he was right “around the age of 14” (Ibid., page 112). On pages 425-426, Hofmann revealed:

No, that didn’t cause concern in my mind as far as my feelings where it’s not so much what is genuine and what isn’t as what people believe is genuine.

My example would be the Mormon Church, which may be a bad example since I’m sure you’re both believers in it. I don’t believe in the religion as far as that Joseph Smith had the first vision or received the plates from the Angel Moroni or whatever. It doesn’t detract from the social good that the Mormon Church can do. To me it is unimportant if Joseph Smith had that vision or not as long as people believe it. The important thing is that people believe it.

In his youth Mark Hofmann would have been taught that Mormon Church leaders received direct revelations from God. For example, in the Ward Teacher’s Message for June, 1945, we read:

Any Latter-day Saint who denounces or opposes, whether actively or otherwise, any plan or doctrine advocated by the “prophets, seers or revelators” of the Church is cultivating the spirit of apostasy. . . .

It should be remembered that Lucifer has a very cunning way of convincing unsuspecting souls that the general authorities of the Church are as likely to be wrong as they are to be right. This sort of game is Satan’s favorite pastime . . . . He wins a great victory when he can get members of the Church to speak against their leaders and to “do their own thinking.” . . .

When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. When they propose a plan—it is God’s plan. When they point the way, there is no other which is safe. When they give direction, it should mark the end of controversy. God works in no other way. To think otherwise, without immediate repentance, may cost one his faith, may destroy his testimony, and leave him a stranger to the kingdom of God. (Deseret News, Church Section, May 26, 1945, page 5)

According to Ezra Taft Benson, the present Prophet, Seer and Revelator of the Mormon Church, “The Prophet Will Never Lead the Church Astray” (“Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophets,” an address given at BYU, February 26, 1980; printed in Following the Brethren, page 5), President Benson claims that the leaders of the Church have special discernment which is far superior to “earthly knowledge”:

FIFTH: The Prophet is Not Required to Have Any Particular Earthly Training or Credentials to Speak on Any Subject or Any Matter at Any Time.

Sometimes there are those who feel their earthly knowledge on a certain subject is superior to the heavenly knowledge which God gives to His Prophet on the same subject. . . . We encourage earthly knowledge in many areas, but remember if there is ever a conflict between earthly knowledge and the words of the prophet, you stand with the prophet and you’ll be blessed and time will vindicate you. (Ibid., page 6)

On page 10 of the same address, President Benson said: “NINTH: The Prophet Can Receive Revelation on Any Matter—Temporal or Spiritual.”
Mark Hofmann, seems to have finally come to the conclusion that the Mormon Church was not led by revelation and that he could even deceive the “living prophets” and the top Mormon scholars as easily as he did the U.S. Treasury. On page 99 of his confession, Mr. Hofmann said that he could “look someone in the eye and lie” and didn’t believe that “someone could be inspired” in a religious sense as to what “my feelings or thoughts were.” On page 112 he claimed that he “wasn’t fearful of the Church inspiration detecting the forgery.”

Although he claimed his main motive for most of the forgeries was “money,” when he decided to palm off his first major forgery on the church (the Anthon transcript), he was more concerned about the “fame involved” (page 96). The Anthon transcript is supposed to contain Joseph Smith’s own copy of the characters found on the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. Hofmann was later to admit that the paper was in reality “an end page out of a book in the [LDS] Institute Library at Utah State” (page 54). The ink was aged with “hydrogen peroxide” (page 24). Although the paper was already very old it still appeared too white. Hofmann, therefore, ran a hot iron over it to make it appear “well aged” (page 60). Neither the “living prophets” nor the church’s most noted scholars were able to detect the diabolical scheme. In fact, Mr. Hofmann was honored for making the “discovery,” and the church’s Deseret News, May 3, 1980, printed a photograph of Hofmann standing with Spencer W. Kimball, the twelfth Prophet, Seer and Revelator of the Church. Also present were President N. Eldon Tanner, President Marion G. Romney, Apostle Boyd K. Packer and Apostle Gordon B. Hinckley. Neither President Kimball nor any of the other General Authorities were able to detect anything wrong with either “Brother Hofmann” or the Anthon transcript. President Kimball, in fact, is shown making an examination of the transcript with a magnifying glass. In his confession, page 112, Hofmann said that he had “a combination of emotions. There was, of course, a little bit of fear involved since, of course, it was a forged document. There was some excitement involved, a feeling of duping them, I guess.” The church’s most noted apologist, Dr. Hugh Nibley, examined the transcript and claimed that it contained Egyptian characters. He, in fact, triumphantly announced: “Of course it’s translatable” (The Herald, Provo, Utah, May 1, 1980). According to the testimony of Church Archivist Donald Schmidt, the church gave Mr. Hofmann “$20,000” worth of trade items for the transcript.

After the Anthon incident, Mark Hofmann deceived church officials time after time with his phony documents and stories. Just after the bombings, President Gordon B. Hinckley acknowledged that the church had acquired “40-some” documents which came from Hofmann. Later it was admitted that in addition to these documents, Hofmann had given the church about 345 court records. Most of these were “returned to the Circuit Court clerk in Hancock County, Ill.” (Deseret News, April 12, 1986). There seems to have been a question as to whether these documents had been obtained illegally (see Salt Lake Tribune, April 12, 1986). In any case, Mark Hofmann deceived Mormon leaders even after the murders. In the Salt Lake County prosecutors’ summary of their first discussions with Mark Hofmann we find the following:

Hofmann said that he was very good at masking his emotions. As an example, he said that in the afternoon of the 15th he went to Dallin Oaks’ office to see if the McLellin transaction was to proceed. He said that even though Oaks talked and observed him, he fooled Oaks, and Oaks never suspected he was involved in the bombings. He also spoke with Hugh Pinnock in the basement parking lot and fooled him too. (Hofmann’s Confession, page SS-11)

As Mark Hofmann first began developing his nefarious plan to deceive the Mormon leaders, he noticed a weakness in them that he was able to exploit. This was that they were trying to hide the true history of the church from their people. He knew that church leaders were suppressing many early documents because they did not want members of the church to learn of their contents for fear that they would lose faith in Mormonism. Because of this Hofmann reasoned that there would be a market for controversial documents which the church leaders would buy up to suppress. In his confession, page 150, he noted that he felt “a controversial” document “always brings better money.” Hofmann, therefore, perceived church leaders as easy marks for a blackmail type of operation. His plan was to create embarrassing documents and offer them to the church with the pretext that this would keep them from falling into the hands of the “enemy.” The enemy, of course, would be those who would publish the contents of the documents to the world—i.e., Saints Alive, Utah Lighthouse Ministry, Christian Research Institute, etc. His modus operandi was to profess great loyalty for the church leaders while he was in reality stabbing them in the back. He gave this testimony concerning his contact with President Gordon B. Hinckley:

Q What was your purpose for giving it [the Thomas Bullock letter to Brigham Young] to the President?
A Probably the greatest purpose in my mind was to demonstrate to him my concern for the Church, or in other words, possibly, a potentially embarrassing document would not fall into hands that might use it against the Church. And to prepare him for future dealings as far as if my true interest and intent was for the welfare of the Church.

Q Was that something you were using to further your own purposes?
A Yes, it was.

Q Purposes of continuing to deal in similar types of forged documents?
A Yes. (Hofmann's Confession, pages 315-316)

In a speech given at the Brigham Young University Symposium, “Church History and Recent Forgeries,” the Mormon Apostle Dallin H. Oaks tried very hard to make it appear that the church was not trying to suppress documents:

What interested me most was the fact that these forgeries and their associated lies grew out of their author’s deliberate attempt to rewrite the early history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and that so many persons and organizations seized on this episode to attempt to discredit the Church and its leaders. . . .

In the course of this episode, we have seen some of the most sustained and intense LDS Church bashing since the turn of the century. In a circumstance where The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints could not say much without interfering with the pending criminal investigation and prosecution, the Church and its leaders have been easy marks for assertions and innuendo ranging from charges of complicity in murder to repeated recitals that the Church routinely acquires and suppresses church history documents in order to deceive its members and the public. . . .

A February 11, 1987, New York Times feature states:

According to investigators, the church leaders purchased from Mr. Hofmann and then hid in a vault a number of 19th-century letters and other documents that cast doubt on the church’s official version of its history.

This kind of character assassination attributed to anonymous “investigators” has been all-too-common throughout the media coverage of this whole event. . . .

Also conveniently omitted from mention in most of the repetitious media recitals of church suppression of documents is the fact that the most prominent Hofmann documents used to attack the origins of the Church—including Martin Harris’ so-called Salamander letter, Joseph Smith’s treasure-hunting letter to Josiah Stowel, and the Joseph Smith III blessing—were all made public by the Church many months before the bombings triggered the intense public interest in this subject. . . .

In his interviews with the prosecutors, Mark Hofmann has recited the contents of conversations he said he had with President Hinckley. . . . I urge everyone to be thoughtful about who they will believe on conflicts of this nature, General Authorities whose statements about this whole episode have been confirmed by all subsequent investigations, or Mark Hofmann, who is renown for his record of deceit and his efforts to discredit the Church and its leaders. (“Recent Events Involving Church History and Forged Documents,” Brigham Young University, August 6, 1987, typed copy distributed to the news media, pages 1, 2, 4, 5 and 18)

Although Apostle Oaks would lead one to believe that the Mormon Church did not try to suppress Joseph Smith’s 1825 “treasure-hunting letter to Josiah Stowel,” a document which was actually forged by Mark Hofmann, all the evidence points in the other direction. Mark Hofmann’s testimony with regard to this letter seems to fit very well with evidence from other sources:

A I may have shown it originally to Elder Durham I believe and he and I took it to President Hinckley’s office.

Q Why would it have gone to Durham rather than Schmidt? Your other contact seems to have been with Schmidt.
A Only because of its controversial nature.

MR. BIGGS: What did President Hinckley tell you relative to this document?
A He told me that for the time being, or in other words, without giving a date as far as how long this would be in effect, that the Council of the Twelve and the First Presidency and Elder Durham would be the only ones to know about this document.

Q Did he ask you some other questions about who else knew about the document?
A Yes.
Q And did he ask you, does your wife know about the document?
A Yes.
Q What did you say?
A No.
Q Did he ask you, did he say who else knows about it?
A Yes.
Q What did you say?
A I told him that no one else within the Church knew about it. I left open the possibility that someone out of the Church. Obviously, I claimed to have acquired it from someone outside of the Church.

. . . .
MR. STOTT: . . . Did you have a subsequent meeting?

A I believe I had a total of three meetings concerning this document with President Hinkley. The last meeting when he gave me the the [sic] check and made the purchase.

. . . .

MR. STOTT: How did you come to settle on a price?

A I named a price and told him that I believed it was fair, and that that is what I would accept.

Q Was that the $15,000?

A Yes, I believe that was the amount.

. . . .

Q On a Church account?

A Yes.

Q . . . Do you know what he did with with [sic] it [i.e., the letter]?

A I left it with him and he told me at a later time that he handed it to Francis Gibbons with instructions to put it in the vault.

MR. YENGICH: Did you keep a xeroxed copy?

A Yes I did, although I told him that I didn’t.

. . . .

MR. STOTT: Rumors started circulating around that time about the letter. How did those rumors come up?

A Part of them came from me and part of them I believe came through Francis Gibbons . . . I believed at the time that Francis Gibbons had told Dean Jesse something concerning the document.

Q Who did you tell and what did you tell, basically?

A I mentioned the document to Lynn Jacobs, Brent Metcalf and Dean Jesse.

Q Was this something that you were not supposed to talk about once you sold it to Hinkley? Was it an agreement you weren’t going to talk to anybody else or did you feel free to go ahead and talk about it?

A Yes, that was the agreement that I would not talk about it.

Q But you went ahead anyway?

A Yes.

. . . .

Q Dean Jesse obtained a copy of that later on. Do you know where he got the copy?

A Yes. I believe that he obtained a copy from me of the document but I believe that he had a type script beforehand of what the document said.

(Hofmann’s Confession, pages 353-359)

That President Hinckley bought the letter so that it could be suppressed is obvious to anyone who really investigates the matter. The letter was purchased “on or about January 11, 1983” (The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann, page 5), but Church leaders never admitted that they had it until May 7, 1985! In 1984 we obtained a typescript of the letter and published it in The Money-Digging Letters. On page 3 we stated that we would “withhold judgment concerning its authenticity until we obtain more information concerning it.” One would think that after we printed the contents of the letter, the Mormon Church would admit that it had the letter. Instead, however, the church decided to “stonewall.” At about the time we printed the letter, we had a discussion with one of the top historians in the church. He lamented that the church had allowed itself to become involved in a cover-up situation with regard to the 1825 letter. On April 29, 1985, Salt Lake Tribune reporter Dawn Tracy wrote:

A letter reportedly written by Mormon Church founder Joseph Smith describing money-digging pursuits and treasure guarded by a clever spirit seems to have disappeared from view. . . .

Dr. Hill said he is convinced the letter is authentic or he wouldn’t have cited the document . . . he said he doesn’t know where the letter is located now.

“It’s a sad business that the letter is buried,” said Dr. Hill. “With copies of the letter circulating, I can’t see much benefit.”

Research historian Brent Metcalf said he knows from “very reliable, first-hand sources” the letter exists, and the Mormon Church has possession of it.

Church Spokesman Jerry Cahill denied the claim. “The church doesn’t have the letter,” said Mr. Cahill. “It’s not in the church archives or the First Presidency’s vault.” . . . He said that none of the confidential documents is the 1825 letter.

Someone may be playing word games, said George Smith, president of Signature Books, . . . “If the exact question isn’t asked, someone can wink and say the church doesn’t have it.”

No, said Mr. Cahill, the church does not have possession of the letter. (Salt Lake Tribune, April 29, 1985)

On May 6, 1985, the Salt Lake Tribune published a letter George Smith wrote to the editor. In this letter he revealed that “some scholars have reported seeing it at the church offices. . . . A number of scholars have photocopies of the letter. . . .” These photocopies may very well have come from the copy which Mark Hofmann admits that he retained when he turned the letter over to Hinckley. When it became apparent to church leaders that the letter
was going to be published in a major newspaper without their consent, they decided to back down and admit its existence. Jerry Cahill, Director of Public Affairs for the Mormon Church, admitted in a letter to the editor of the Tribune that his earlier statement was incorrect:

... staff writer Dawn Tracy correctly quoted my statement to her that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints doesn’t have a letter purportedly written in 1825 by Joseph Smith ... either in the church archives or in the First Presidency’s vault.

My statement, however, was in error. ... Some months ago I was asked the same question by another inquirer and made a thorough check before responding. Dawn Tracy called me twice as she prepared her article and I responded without checking again.

When my published statement came to his attention, President Gordon B. Hinckley of the First Presidency of the church informed me of my error. The purported letter was indeed acquired by the church. For the present it is stored in the First Presidency’s archives and perhaps some day may be the subject of the kind of critical study recently given to the purported letter of Martin Harris to W.W. Phelps. (Salt Lake Tribune, May 7, 1985)

It is very obvious from all this that the Mormon leaders were caught in a very embarrassing coverup with regard to the letter and that they only published it because their own scholars were preparing to release it to the press. Time magazine for May 20, 1985, reported that “The church offered no explanation for withholding news of the earliest extant document written by Smith, ...” John Dart commented: “As it became clear during this week that photocopies of the letter would soon be circulated by sources outside the official church, Cahill announced that the church would discuss the contents and release a photocopy of the letter” (Los Angeles Times, May 11, 1985). It seems obvious that if the letter had upheld the image of Joseph Smith that church leaders wish to portray to the public, it would have been published immediately in the Deseret News with a large headline announcing its discovery. When Mark Hofmann “discovered” Joseph Smith’s mother’s 1829 letter, Mormon officials proclaimed it to be “the earliest known dated document” relating to the church, and it was hailed as a vindication of Joseph Smith’s work. Since the letter to Stowell was supposed to have been written by the Prophet himself some four years earlier, we would expect it to receive even greater publicity. Instead, the Mormon leaders buried it and engaged in a cover-up. In the Salt Lake Tribune, October 20, 1985, Dawn Tracy revealed that even top Mormon historians, including the Church Archivist, were kept in the dark concerning the purchase of the 1825 letter:

Don Schmidt, retired LDS Church archivist, said members of the First Presidency didn’t tell him or church historians about the 1825 letter. Nor did they ask him or anyone in his department to authenticate the letter.

While Apostle Oaks is correct in stating that the letter was released before the bombings, he “conveniently omitted” (to use his own words) the fact that the letter was suppressed for 28 months and was only released after the press had been furnished with a copy! Mark Hofmann, on the other hand, has admitted that he sold the letter to President Hinckley as part of a blackmail-like scheme and that he broke his agreement with Hinckley by talking about it and by circulating a photocopy. Dallin Oaks asks if we are going to believe Mark Hofmann, “who is renown for his record of deceit” or the “General Authorities” of the church. Although we do not feel that we can put unconditional trust in Hofmann’s confession, in this particular case all the evidence seems to show that he is being forthright about the matter. It appears, in fact, that Apostle Oaks is trying to cover up what really happened with his smooth talk.

One of the documents which the Mormon Church obtained that has still not been released is the Thomas Bullock letter. Mark Hofmann testified:

MR. STOTT: I want to go back on that Brigham Young Letter. ... its dated January 27, 1865 from supposedly Thomas Bullock to Brigham Young. Are you familiar with that?

A Yes, I forged it, in fact.

Q Why did you create that document, and what did you do with it?

A I created it to give validity to the Joseph Smith, 3rd Blessing since it deals with the blessing. What I did with it, I gave it to President Hinkley.

Q What were the circumstances of your giving it to him?

A I made an appointment with him privately. I went in to his office and layed it on his desk. He expressed an interest in it and I left it there.

(Hofmann’s Confession, pages 309-311)

From what we can learn concerning this letter, Thomas Bullock accused Brigham Young of being the type of person who would destroy a document authored by Joseph Smith himself to protect his own position. The church kept this document locked safely away in a vault until prosecutors demanded access to the Hofmann documents. It has been suppressed for six years. Dallin Oaks tries to make it appear that the investigation into the
murrers and forgeries prevented the Mormon Church from speaking about the Hofmann documents it had obtained:

During this same month of January, 1986, the Church turned all of its Hofmann-acquired documents over to the prosecutors, at their request. As a result, the Church could not make its Hofmann documents public to answer those innuendos of suppression without seeming to try to influence or impede the criminal investigation. ("Recent Events Involving Church History and Forged Documents," pages 3-4)

We seriously doubt that the release of the contents of the documents which were taken by the prosecution could have affected justice in the Hofmann case, and it seems unreasonable to believe that the church would not retain photocopies of the items. Even if this were the case, this does not explain why church leaders suppressed the Thomas Bullock letter to Brigham Young for four and a half years before the bombings. Apostle Oaks boasts:

On April 11, 1986, after months of searching in its records and collections, the Church published a complete list of the 48 documents and the groups of court records then known to have been acquired from Mark Hofmann. (Ibid., page 4)

We suspect that the only reason church leaders published a list of documents was that they feared that the facts about these documents were about to be revealed at Hofmann’s preliminary hearing. Notice that the date given by Apostle Oaks was “April 11, 1986.” This was just a few days before the preliminary hearing began, but six months had elapsed since the bombings. Furthermore, the published description of the documents (see Deseret News, April 12, 1986) was obviously prepared by someone who was trying to prevent the controversial nature of the documents from becoming known. The description of the Bullock letter appears as item no. 48 and merely reveals that it is "concerning Bullock’s work in the Historical Department." This innocuous statement concerning the letter veils the fact that Bullock and Young were supposed to have been fighting over the possession of the Joseph Smith III Blessing document and that Bullock did not trust Young’s honesty. Apostle Oaks says that the “list spoke for itself. “ In reality, the descriptions published with the list tend to lull the reader to sleep rather than reveal the true nature of the documents.

With regard to the Salamander letter, Mark Hofmann indicates that he became nervous about approaching the church. He, therefore, allowed his friend, Lyn Jacobs, to pose as the owner of the letter:

Q Wasn’t his dealings mainly with the archivist?
A Yes.

Q Your dealings had actually been with some of the general authorities?
A Right.

Q Why did he believe he could get more than you then?
A My feeling was in offering it to the general authorities if I were to do it it would appear to be almost a blackmail type of attempt just because of the content of the letter and potential embarrassment to the Church, that I wanted to stay away from. He didn’t have any of those feelings as far as if he offended them.

Q Was there any concern on your part that this was maybe one too many documents for you to discover and let somebody else take the credit?
A Yes. That was also in my mind. Yes, I remember also thinking of that fact.

Q . . . . What was the purpose for coming up with the Salamander letter?
A Money. It’s a controversial type document, therefore it would be valuable and it was also, again somewhat of an experiment to see the Church’s reaction as far as, that always interested me.

Q Reaction in what way?
A As far as how they would handle it, if they would purchase it, if they would trust him enough, Lynn enough to keep his mouth shut. To enter into some sort of agreement to keep it confidential. If they would pay his exorbitant price he was demanding for it. . .

Q When you created the document was it your idea to sell it to the Church?
A Yes.

Q Did it surprise you when Lynn came back and said Hinkley wouldn’t buy it?
A No, not given the price that Lynn was asking for it.

Q Now with the Stoal Letter, you were aware that he bought the Stoal Letter and it pretty well had been publicized?
A That’s right.

Q Now, were you at all surprised that he refused to buy the Salamander Letter which was a very similar type document?
A No. Like I say, a lot of it was almost like an experiment, in my mind as far as what his reaction would be. Lynn doesn’t come across as being a faithful Mormon like I do.

Q You did?
A Or at least like I pretended to. I didn’t think that President Hinkley would trust his silence or that he would appreciate Lynn’s manner, or boastfulness or whatever. . .

A I speculate if I would have been the one to offer it that it would have had the same fate is [as?] the Stoal letter.
Q Would you have asked the same thing or different?
A I wouldn’t have asked for nearly the price.

Q Lynn comes back, it’s not sold. What do you do?
A . . . I believe it was the next day Don Schmidt knew about it from Lynn or the next day with Lynn’s meeting with President Hinckley and that morning I believe I told Don Schmidt that I could obtain complete control over it and would be willing to sell it to the Church for a price. I can’t remember, I would get 10 or 15 thousand dollars. Don Schmidt told me that he would check with his superiors.

That same afternoon, in a meeting with Don Schmidt again, he told me that he had talked with G. Homer Durham and I believe higher up, and that they would make that purchase. I told Don Schmidt that I believed that it could be handled confidentially and that Lynn could be sworn to secrecy. I told him that in the morning. Later . . . we had made contact with Steve Christensen and he had agreed to buy it and if, if we wanted to sell it— . . . I believe it was with the statement that if the Church would prefer we could see that it was sold to a faithful member of the Church. If they didn’t want—which I spoke very frankly with Don Schmidt about this but I didn’t talk to anyone higher up than Don Schmidt. That if the Church was afraid of the publicity of the document now that Lynn knew about it and possibly others, that we could arrange to have it sold to a faithful member who we thought would keep it quiet or handle it the way the Church thought would be appropriate but yet not having the Church officially making decisions.

Q Did he get back to you, Schmidt?
A After originally it was agreed the Church would make the purchase for the money that I asked, I can’t remember the exact sum. But then later . . . in talking with his superiors he told me that they thought it would, it might be more appropriate to have that happen to it as far as a faithful member making the purchase. I told him that I would keep him posted as far as the negotiation with this faithful member.

(Hofmann’s Confession, pages 471, 473-479)

In his testimony at the preliminary bearing, Lyn Jacobs said that he asked Gordon B. Hinckley to give him a gold coin valued at “60,000 to over 100,000 dollars” in exchange for the letter (see Tracking the White Salamander, page 162). When President Hinckley would not agree to that, he suggested a trade for a Book of Commandments. This offer was also turned down. Besides the high price which Jacobs asked, the fact that word concerning the 1825 Joseph Smith letter had leaked out may have discouraged Hinckley from trying to suppress the letter. He undoubtedly reasoned that if the church did purchase the Salamander letter, there would be no way to be certain that Jacobs would not talk about it or retain a photograph. An unsuccessful attempt to suppress the letter, of course, would be more damaging to the church than for the church to buy the letter and publish it to the world. Church leaders apparently did not feel that they could trust his silence,” and it was decided that Steven Christensen, who had a reputation of being friendly to the church leaders, should buy the letter for $40,000. In 1985 Christensen donated the letter to the Mormon Church.

If the church leaders had actually bought the letter to suppress it, they could have found themselves in a very compromising situation. While Mark Hofmann has testified that he originally created the Salamander letter to sell to the church, before Jacobs was sent to talk to President Hinckley, Hofmann had considered breaking the news about the letter in a major newspaper like the New York Times. During this time of uncertainty, Mr. Hofmann allowed H. Michael Marquardt to make a partial typescript of the Salamander letter. Hofmann testified as follows on pages 480-81:

Q Did there come a time you actually gave him a transcript of it?
A Yes, he made a transcript of it but I can’t remember the date when that would have been.

. . . .

Q Was your agreement with Steve Christensen and semi with the Church, something to the effect that, you know, it was going to be, the contents or even the idea that there was a letter would remain private with them?
A Yes.

. . . .

Q . . . Did you learn that there was some interest by other people in this?
A Let’s see. Now I think about it I think I did talk to Marquardt before it was offered to the Church or to Steve Christensen . . .

Mr. Marquardt allowed us to obtain a copy of his extracts from the Salamander letter, and it was these excerpts which were printed in the March 1984 issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger. The portions of the letter which Marquardt copied were, in fact, what led us to believe that the letter might be a forgery. As strange as it may seem, our publication of portions of the Salamander letter in March 1984 almost caused a serious altercation with Steven Christensen in federal court (see Tracking the White Salamander, page 16). Mr. Christensen was very upset that we had cited anything from the letter and apparently felt that we had obtained the extracts in
an improper way. He, therefore, determined to testify against us in the Ehat suit—the case which we finally won after it was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. In reality, Steven Christensen did not have any copyrightable interest in the Salamander letter. Furthermore, as we have shown, the extracts we published were obtained by Michael Marquardt directly from Mark Hofmann before Mr. Christensen purchased the letter. The extracts we printed certainly were not stolen. Although Christensen appeared in court ready to testify against us, the Judge felt this type of testimony was irrelevant to the case at hand and Christensen was unable to testify.

Steven Christensen seems to have been thoroughly converted to the Salamander letter. Instead of listening to the message of caution which we printed in the March 1984 issue of the Messenger, he wanted to fight us in court. He continued to believe in Mark Hofmann and his stories concerning the discovery of important Mormon documents for more than a year. Although he seems to have eventually come to the conclusion that Hofmann was involved in illegal activities, by this time it was too late. It was Christensen’s continued involvement with Hofmann which finally led to his untimely death.

After the Salamander letter was published in its entirety by the Mormon Church, the news media widely disseminated the story that Joseph Smith was involved in the occult. This publicity disturbed Mormon leaders. Apostle Oaks was very upset about the matter and on August 16, 1985, he accused the news media of “having a field day.” Since church leaders were very embarrassed by the publicity concerning the Salamander letter, this set up the climate for one of Hofmann’s greatest deceptions—his claim to have the so-called McLellin collection. Hofmann capitalized on the Mormon officials’ fear that the embarrassing documents in the McLellin collection would fall into the hands of the enemies of the church. We have already shown that in his confession Mark Hofmann testified that the McLellin collection never really existed. He also gave this testimony:

Q Let me ask you this: You say you approached President Hinkley directly. Is this before you were introduced to Pinock by Christensen?
A Yes.

MR. STOTT: Do you remember when you first talked to President Hinkley about this?
A President Hinkley, I told him that a person in Salt Lake had gone in with me on it, had put up the money for it. That I was anticipating being able to come up with the money from another source, which didn’t happen. That this other person was getting anxious to get his money out of it and that I might, and I was feeling him out as far as the possibility of getting money from the Church to make the purchase. We left it, after the meeting, we just left it at the point that if things got real desperate or if I needed to get some money to let him know.

Q Was there an idea here conveyed here that the collection would then be sold to the Church or donated to the Church?
A The idea was to prevent it from falling in to the enemy’s hands.

Q What did you tell him about what it contained and what the enemy was doing?
A Not too much. How can I put this?

MR. YENGICH: Put it honestly.
A Well, of course, I basically told him that I could tell him what my fears were concerning its getting in to the enemy’s hands, or whatever. And that I would, if he wanted to know, if he asked the questions or whatever, this was a previous technique or thing that we had done. I guess its almost a way of protecting him from knowing something he doesn’t want to know. And his interest wasn’t so much in having the Church obtain it as having it going someplace where—in fact, I would almost say he almost didn’t want the Church to obtain it, he just wanted to make sure it did not fall in to the enemy’s, hands which was good since I knew I didn’t have it, I knew the Church couldn’t obtain it.

Q Did you tell him there was controversial items?
A Yes.

Q Wasn’t that a problem that Al Rust was saying that, you know, I understand the Church has it and, of course, the Church knew they didn’t have it?
A Yes, no, that didn’t raise a problem in my mind because I knew that Hinkley knew that I was protecting the collection from Rust and anyone else as far as where it was. He knew I had previously told him that I had the material in a safe deposit box in Salt Lake City and that.

See, Hinkley, his concern was that if this disgruntled investor, he wanted to make sure he didn’t reach the point where he would make public or try to obtain the collection.

Q What was in your mind. Because you didn’t have a collection?
A What was in my mind is President Hinkley would be happy if eventually I could tell him that I had seen to it that the document would not fall in to the wrong hands. My speaking with Hinkley, like I said wasn’t so much—, see you have to remember that this
was after the time of the Salamander Letter and the Church was a little bit concerned as far as its public relations in what they were obtaining, if they were trying to buy up embarrassing documents or whatever. He wasn’t so concerned, especially when he found out other people knew about this material, to actually obtain it, as to just see the right people got it. . .

Q The last day or so in June, how many times did you meet with President Hinkley abut the McLellin Collection?
A Altogether?

Q . . . in the last week of June?
A I would guess three times.
Q After meeting with Pinock and up to the bombings, how many times did you meet with President Hinkley about the McClellin Collection?
A I believe once or twice/
(Hofmann’s Confession, pages 527-529, 531, 533 and 534)

In a Mormon Church press conference, held October 23, 1985, Apostle Dallin Oaks revealed that through the influence of Hugh Pinnock, a General Authority in the Mormon Church, Mark Hofmann obtained a loan for $185,000 to obtain the McLellin collection:

In late June, Mark Hofmann and Steve Christensen told Elder Pinnock that Hofmann had an option to buy the McLellin collection from a man in Texas for about $185,000. . .

Elder Pinnock asked me if I thought the church would loan Mark Hofmann $185,000 for this purpose. I said, emphatically not. President Hinckley was in Europe at the time of this conversation. No one else could or would approve such a transaction. . . We discussed whether the church would be interested in receiving the collection as a gift. It was my judgment that the church probably would at some future time, . . . Elder Pinnock inquired whether it would be appropriate to put him in touch with banking officials. I said I saw no harm in that provided it was clearly understood by all parties that the church was not a party or a guarantor and that Hugh Pinnock was not a party or a guarantor to such a loan. . . The bank made the loan to Hofmann. . . The loan came due and it was not paid by Hofmann. . . Elder Pinnock mentioned at that time that he knew of at least two individuals who might be interested in purchasing the collection. . .

I was later informed that a buyer was interested but he wanted to remain anonymous. . . the potential buyer phoned me. . . He also asked whether the church would be interested in receiving it as a gift at some future time if he purchased it and later saw fit to give it. I said I supposed so, . . . (Salt Lake Tribune, October 27,1985)

During the press conference, Apostle Oaks was asked the name of the potential buyer, but he refused to reveal his name, stating only that “he is person who is a member of the church” (Ibid.). At Hofmann’s preliminary hearing, Hugh Pinnock had to reveal that the name of the anonymous buyer was “David Sorenson” and that “He’s a mission president in Nova Scotia, Canada” (Tracking the White Salamander, page 42). The evidence seems to clearly show that the Mormon leaders were trying to get someone to temporarily keep the collection from falling into the hands of the “enemy” until talk about it died down. Then it could be secretly donated to the church. Steven Christensen, who was to authenticate the collection, became aware that Hofmann was a “crook” and threatened him with the possibility that he would go to jail and never be able to deal with the Mormon Church again. These threats undoubtedly led to Christensen’s death.

If church leaders had not continued to engage in secret dealings with Hofmann, they would not find themselves in the embarrassing situation they are in today. Hugh Pinnock claimed that he was not “legally obligated” to repay the bank loan, but he felt morally responsible and paid off the loan with his own money. Apostle Dallin Oaks found himself meeting with Hofmann after the murders:

. . . just before 3 p.m., Mark Hofmann . . . came to my office and said he thought the police would question him. What should he say when they questioned him? And I said, “You should simply tell them the truth. You don’t have any reason to believe that this bombing has anything to do with you, do you? And simply tell them the truth.” And then, when he seemed to be questioning whether we should tell them about the McLellin collection, I said, “Look. That’s been handled on a confidential basis, but there’s a murder investigation under way. You should tell the police everything you know and answer every question—and I intend to do the same.” (Salt Lake Tribune, October 27, 1985)

Apostle Oaks’ statement to Hofmann that the McLellin transaction had “been handled on a confidential basis” seems to show that he was involved in trying to keep the material out of the hands of the “enemy.”

Long before Dallin Oaks became a General Authority, the Mormon leaders were suppressing documents. For instance, in a book written in 1945, Fawn Brodie revealed:

Joseph F. Smith, Jr., the present historian of the Utah Church, asserted to me in 1943 that a revelation foreshadowing polygamy had been written in 1831, but that it had never been published. In conformity with the church policy, however, he would not permit the manuscript, which he acknowledged to be in possession of the church library, to be examined. (No Man Knows My History, page 184, footnote)
Although it was often spoken of by church leaders, this revelation was never revealed to the world until a photocopy leaked out from the Church Historical Department. We were the first to publish it in 1974 (see *Salt Lake City Messenger*, May 1974). The reason it was suppressed was that Joseph Smith recommended that the Mormon elders marry Indians to make their posterity “become white, delightsome and just, . . .” Prior to 1965 the Mormon leaders maintained that Joseph Smith gave only one story of his First Vision. That year, however, it was discovered that he had written an account that had been suppressed which did not include God the Father in the vision. We published this account to the world, and although the church kept silent about the matter for some time, our publication of this “Strange Account” was finally vindicated by a photograph of the document in Brigham Young University Studies (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 145-46). Other examples of important documents which were suppressed by Mormon authorities could be cited, but this should be sufficient to convince the reader that suppression has been a very important principle in the Mormon Church for many years.

Although Dallin Oaks appears to be very indignant that the news media would accuse the Mormon Church of buying up documents to suppress them, he does admit that “the Church closes or restricts access to certain documentary materials” when the donor “has directed that access be restricted or prohibited for a certain period” or when “materials are written or statements are made with the understanding that the communication will not be available to the public for a certain period of time” and then goes on to state: “The laws and ethics of privacy forbid custodians from revealing information that may invade the privacy of living individuals.” Although this might seem quite reasonable, Apostle Oaks carries the matter much further by setting forth a principle which would allow the Mormon Church to suppress any material that would be embarrassing to the church: “In addition, our belief in life after death causes us to extend this principle to respect the privacy of persons who have left mortality but live beyond the veil. Descendants who expect future reunions with deceased ancestors have a continuing interest in their ancestors’ privacy and good name” (“Recent Events Involving Church History and Forged Documents,” page 7). This must have been the rationale that church leaders used when they hid the 1825 letter of Joseph Smith from their own people. They undoubtedly reasoned that since it would hurt Joseph Smith’s “good name” and disturb the Mormon people to have a letter come to light which revealed his involvement in the occult, it would be best to keep it locked away in a vault. This same type of reasoning could be used to suppress the Bible. Would Noah want his descendants to know that he got drunk on wine, or would Lot want his incest revealed? The same might be said of David’s adultery or the account of Peter denying the Lord.

Instead of upbraiding the news media for accusing the Mormon Church of trying to suppress documents, Apostle Oaks should admit the obvious truth: the suppression of material plays a very important role in the church. During the past few years church leaders have become extremely concerned about embarrassing information leaking out. This has greatly hindered the research of some of the church’s top scholars. Professor Ronald W. Walker, who has been working on a book about President Heber J. Grant, wrote the following: “Because current LDS archival policy limits the access and use of materials, particularly those of the presidents of the church, I have been unable to verify many of my footnote citations” (Journal of Mormon History, vol.13, 1986-87, page 38, footnote 1). It is interesting to note that although President Grant has been dead for 42 years, one of the most respected scholars in the church is denied access to his papers.

**REVELATION MISSING**

Apostle Dallin Oaks has lambasted the news media for the way they handled the news concerning Hofmann’s discoveries and crimes. He attacked by name the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *London Times*, the *Salt Lake Tribune* and *Time* magazine. He lashed out against the media for “Mormon-bashing,” the use of “speculation and innuendo,” “character assassination,” and “religious prejudice.” He accused the *Los Angeles Times* of “stone-walling,” “perpetrating a coverup” and “concealing the truth from its readers.” He specifically singled out John Dart who interviewed Mark Hofmann on the Oliver Cowdery history and did not later reveal that Hofmann was the source because he had given him a promise of confidentiality. In answer to Dallin Oaks’ charge against Dart and the *Los Angeles Times*, Dawn Tracy reported the following:

*Times* religion writer John Dart said he asked Hofmann repeatedly though his lawyer to be released from his promise, an assertion confirmed by Hofmann’s attorney Bradley Rich.

“Dart was caught in the middle,” said Mr. Rich.

“He tried. He really tried.” . . .
Mr. Dart said he believed Hofmann’s story because experts had authenticated Hofmann’s documents and church leaders themselves were buying them. And in at least one instance, he said, church officials first denied and then admitted to having a Hofmann document: a now-known forged letter that had Smith digging for money. (Salt Lake Tribune, August 17, 1987)

While Oaks tries to vilify John Dart and the Los Angeles Times for unfair reporting, it should be remembered that Dart was the very first newspaper reporter to write concerning the “Tanners’ suggestion of forgery” (Times, August 25, 1984). It is also interesting to note that the Times for August 8, 1987, revealed that one of the reasons that Mark Hofmann was interviewed concerning the Cowdery History was that “at the time Hofmann was regarded as reliable by top Mormon officials.”

It seems that Apostle Oaks is venting his wrath on the news media in an attempt to draw away attention from the mistakes that he and other Mormon leaders made with regard to Mr. Hofmann. He apparently believes that church leaders should not be criticized for their mistakes. In his speech at the “1985 CES Doctrine and Covenants Symposium,” delivered just two months before the bombings, Oaks warned:

Criticism is particularly objectionable when it is directed toward Church authorities, general or local. . . . Evil-speaking of the Lord’s anointed is in a class by itself. It is one thing to depreciate a person who exercises corporate power or even government power. It is quite another thing to criticize or depreciate a person for the performance of an office to which he or she has been called of God. It does not matter that the criticism is true. . . . David recognized that we are never justified in any gesture or act against the Lord’s anointed. . . . The Holy Ghost will not guide or confirm criticism of the Lord’s anointed, or of Church leaders, local or general. (pages 24-25)

On August 6, 1987, Apostle Oaks asserted:

We now know that Mark Hofmann was adept at planting lies to discredit the Church and that many organizations and persons have been his willing or unwitting accomplices in that effort. . . . Everyone who believed and repeated his lies and used his forged documents was at best an unwitting servant of his efforts to discredit the Church. (“Recent Events Involving Church History and Forged Documents,” pages 15 and 24)

This is certainly a strange statement to be coming from a church official. The church itself printed the text of both the 1825 Joseph Smith letter and the Salamander letter in its own newspaper, the Deseret News (see the Church Section under the dates of April 28 and May 12, 1985). The publication of both of these letters was authorized by the First Presidency of the Mormon Church. Using Dallin Oaks’ logic, we would have to conclude that since the church itself printed “his forged documents,” it was “at best an unwitting servant of his efforts to discredit” Mormonism. That a church which is supposed to be led by direct revelation from God Himself would be an “unwitting servant” to Mark Hofmann’s forgery scheme presents a serious problem to anyone who believes in its divine authenticity.

In his speech, Dallin Oaks spoke of “the caution expressed by Church leaders during a succession of documents discoveries, . . .” Although it is true that by August 16, 1985, Oaks was telling Mormon instructors “to be cautious” about some “newly discovered documents,” he turned right around and tried to ease their fears with regard to the contents of the Salamander letter. He claimed that the words “white salamander” could be reconciled with Joseph Smith’s statement about the appearance of the Angel Moroni:

Another source of differences in the accounts of different witnesses is the different meanings that different persons attach to words. We have a vivid illustration of this in the recent media excitement about the world “salamander” in a letter Martin Harris is supposed to have sent to W.W. Phelps over 150 years ago. All of the scores of media stories on that subject apparently assume that the author of that letter used the word “salamander” in the modern sense of a “tailed amphibian.”

One wonders why so many writers neglected to reveal to their readers that there is another meaning of “salamander,” which may even have been the primary meaning in this context in the 1820s. . . . That meaning is “a mythical being thought to be able to live in fire.” . . .

A being that is able to live in fire is a good approximation of the description Joseph Smith gave of the Angel Moroni: . . . the use of the words white salamander and old spirit seem understandable.

In view of all this, and as a matter of intellectual evaluation, why all the excitement in the media, and why the apparent hand-wringing among those who profess friendship or membership in the Church? (“1985 CES Doctrine and Covenants Symposium,” pages 22-23)

Dallin Oaks’ conjecture concerning the real meaning of the word “salamander” certainly shows the lengths Mormon apologists will go to try and explain away anything that challenges Mormonism. Oaks would have us believe that the news media suppressed the true
meaning of the word. Actually, the news media claimed that the context of the letter showed that the “salamander” mentioned there referred to one of the “elemental spirits” of magic. The confession of Mark Hofmann makes it clear that Oaks was way off base and that reporters were right all along. Speaking of the word “salamander,” Hofmann said:

At the time I chose it only because it was commonly used in folk magic. I didn’t realize until later all the implications other people would associate with it as far as being able to dwell in fire. (Hofmann’s Confession, page 441)

While it may be hard for some to understand why Apostle Oaks is so upset with the news media, those who have seriously studied Mormonism know that he is fighting desperately to save the concept that the church is run by revelation. The Apostle Bruce R. McConkie made these claims concerning revelation in the church:

Our Lord’s true Church is established and founded upon revelation. Its identity as the true Church continues as long as revelation is received to direct its affairs. . . . without revelation there would be no legal administrators to perform the ordinances of salvation with binding effect on earth and in heaven. . . . Since The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord’s true Church; and since the Lord’s Church must be guided by continuous revelation if it is to maintain divine approval; . . . we could safely conclude . . . that the Church today is guided by revelation. . . . the Spirit is giving direct and daily revelation to the presiding Brethren in the administration of the affairs of the Church. . . . The presence of revelation in the Church is positive proof that it is the kingdom of God on earth. . . . For those who reject these revelations there awaits the damnation of hell. (Mormon Doctrine, 1979, pages 646, 647 and 650)

Apostle McConkie also stated: “Members of the First Presidency, Council of the Twelve, and the Patriarch to the Church—because they are appointed and sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators to the Church—are known as the living oracles” (Ibid., page 547) Mark Hofmann has put the claim of revelation in the church to the acid test and found that the so-called “living oracles” are just as fallible as other men. Apostle Oaks and the other Mormon leaders find themselves in a very embarrassing position. At a time when revelation was really needed, they seemed to be completely oblivious to what was going on. Not only did they fail to forsee the threat to the church through revelation, but they ignored the many warnings which appeared in the Salt Lake City Messenger—a publication which they feel is printed by “apostates” or “anti-Mormons.” Robert Lindsey wrote the following:

In a newsletter that he publishes with his wife, Sandra, Mr. Tanner began raising questions about their authenticity, in some cases comparing the texts with known Mormon writings.

But if senior Mormon officials were aware of his warnings, they apparently paid little attention. Several of the church’s highest officials have acknowledged negotiating to acquire documents from Mr. Hofmann until the day of the first two bombings. (New York Times, February 16, 1986)

Apostle Dallin Oaks tried to explain the complete failure of the church’s revelation system in the following manner:

B. Some have asked, how was Mark Hofmann able to deceive Church leaders?

As everyone now knows, Hofmann succeeded in deceiving many: experienced Church historians, sophisticated collectors, businessmen-investors, a lie detector test and analysis by national experts, and professional document examiners. . . . But why, some still ask, were his deceits not detected by the several Church leaders with whom he met?

In order to perform their personal ministries, Church leaders cannot be suspicious and questioning of each of the hundreds of people they meet each year. Ministers of the gospel function best in an atmosphere of trust and love. In that kind of atmosphere, they fail to detect a few deceivers they meet, but that is the price they pay to increase their effectiveness in counseling, comforting, and blessing the hundreds of honest and sincere people they see. (“Recent Events Involving Church History and Forged Documents,” pages 10-11)

Apostle Oaks has not really answered the question. Mr. Hofmann was not meeting with church leaders for “counseling, comforting, and blessing.” He was meeting with them for the express purpose of deceiving them so that they would give him large amounts of money in exchange for his fraudulent documents. Furthermore, he had many visits with high Mormon officials. These meetings went on for years, yet church leaders could not discern the wicked plan that Hofmann had in his heart. While the Mormon leaders claim to have the same powers as the ancient Apostles in the Bible, their performance with regard to Mark Hofmann certainly does not match up to that of the Apostle Peter when he caught Ananias and Sapphira redhanded in their attempt to deceive the church with regard to a financial transaction:

But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? (Acts 5:3)
The Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie claimed that church leaders did have the gift of discernment:

... the gift of the discerning of spirits is poured out upon presiding officials in God’s kingdom; they have it given to them to discern all gifts and all spirits, lest any come among the saints and practice deception. ... There is no perfect operation of the power of discernment without revelation. Thereby even “the thoughts and intents of the heart” are made known. ... Where the saints are concerned ... the Lord expects them to discern, not only between the righteous and the wicked, but between false and true philosophies, educational theories, sciences, political concepts, and social schemes. (Mormon Doctrine, page 197)

The Book of Mormon has stories of how the servants of God used the gift of discernment in ancient America. For instance, in the book of Alma we read how Amulek “silenced Zeezrom, for he beheld that Amulek had caught him in his lying and deceiving, ...” (Alma 12:1). After Zeezrom began to tremble, Amulek informed him concerning the gift of discernment:

Now Zeezrom, seeing that thou has been taken in thy lying and craftiness, for thou has not lied unto men only but thou hast lied unto God; for behold, he knows all thy thoughts, and thou seest that thy thoughts are made known unto us by his Spirit.

And thou seest that we know that thy plan was a very subtle plan, as to the subtility of the devil. ... Now when Alma had spoken these words, Zeezrom began to tremble more exceedingly, for he was convinced more and more of the power of God; and he was also convinced that Alma and Amulek had a knowledge of him, for he was convinced that they knew the thoughts and intents of his heart; for power was given unto them that they might know of these things according to the spirit of prophecy. (Alma 12:3, 4 and 7)

In Heleman 9:25-41 we read how a prophet named Nephi revealed by the power of God that Seantum was the one who murdered his brother Seezoram. He told the people that they would “find blood upon the skirts of his cloak.” When Seantum was examined it was found that the words which Nephi said “were true” and “he did confess.” Some of the people then felt that “Nephi was a prophet” and others said “he is a god, for except he was a god he could not know of all things. For behold, he has told us the thoughts of our hearts, ... and even he has brought unto our knowledge the true murderer of our chiefjudge.”

It is interesting to note that the Prophet Joseph Smith claimed that God Himself warned him of a plan by his enemies to discredit him through forgery. When Smith was in the process of “translating” the Book of Mormon, he allowed Martin Harris to take the first 116 pages of the manuscript and these pages were lost. The pages were never recovered, but according to Joseph Smith he was warned in a revelation that the pages had been altered by his enemies:

And, behold, Satan hath put it into their hearts to alter the words which you have caused to be written, or which you have translated, ... I say unto you, that because they have altered the words, they read contrary from that which you translated and caused to be written; ... on this wise, the devil has sought to lay a cunning plan, that he may destroy this work; ... I say unto you, that I will not suffer that Satan shall accomplish his evil design in this thing. ... yea, I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil. (Doctrine and Covenants, Section 10, verses 10-12,14 and 43)

It would seem that if the same powers were functioning in the church today, the “Prophet, Seer and Revelator” would have received a revelation warning him concerning Mark Hofmann’s “cunning plan” to defraud and disgrace the church. Spencer W. Kimball, who was President of the Mormon Church at the time Hofmann first began deceiving church leaders, was supposed to be a “seer” and have the power to “translate all records that are of ancient date” (Book of Mormon, Mosiah 8:13). The Book of Mormon also says:

... a seer is greater than a prophet ... a seer is a revelator and a prophet also; and a gift which is greater can no man have ... a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light, ... (Mosiah 8:15-17)

When Mark Hofmann brought the Anthon transcript to the church leaders, President Kimball was unable to translate the characters supposed to have been copied from the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. Instead of using the “seer stone,” he examined the characters which appear on the transcript with a magnifying glass. Not only did he fail to provide a translation, but he was unable to detect that the Church was being set up to be defrauded of a large amount of money and many historical items out of its archives. Moreover, he entirely failed to see the devastating and embarrassing effect this transaction and others which followed would have on the Mormon Church. If ever revelation from the Lord was needed, it was on that day in 1980 when Mark Hofmann stood in the presence of President Kimball.
As President Kimball got older, he became less able to function and President Gordon B. Hinckley took over many of his responsibilities and became to all appearances the acting president of the church. Hinckley, who stood with President Kimball in the 1980 photograph, was deceived on a number of occasions by Mr. Hofmann. He, together with Apostle Boyd K. Packer (also shown in the picture), approved many of the deals the Church made with Hofmann.

It appears that if the Mormon Church was ever led by revelation, it has been lacking since Mark Hofmann came into the Church offices with the Anthon transcript. The inability of the Mormon leaders to detect the religious fraud perpetrated upon them raises the question as to their testimony with regard to the Book of Mormon. After all, if they could not determine that Hofmann’s documents—which were only 150 years old—were forgeries, how can we trust their judgment with regard to a record which is supposed to be ten times as old? They have seen and inspected Mark Hofmann’s documents, but they have never seen the gold plates the Book of Mormon was translated from. When it comes right down to it, the Book of Mormon reminds us a great deal of Hofmann’s documents. It shows signs of plagiarism and has absolutely no provenance. No one ever saw it before it showed up in Joseph Smith’s hands, and it was never quoted in any ancient record.

The reader will remember that Apostle McConkie maintained that “the Spirit is giving direct and daily revelation to the presiding Brethren in the administration of the affairs of the Church.” One would think that if such revelation was in operation, Mark Hofmann would have been exposed years before the bombings. With regard to the inability of the Mormon leaders to detect that the Hofmann documents were fraudulent, a person might try to argue that these documents were not really important spiritual writings, and therefore the Lord did not see fit to intervene when the General Authorities examined them. The truth of the matter, however, is that they contain extremely important material directly relating to spiritual affairs. The Salamander letter, for example, changes the story of the Angel Moroni appearing to Joseph Smith to that of a cantankerous and tricky “old spirit” who transforms himself from a white salamander and strikes Joseph Smith. Moreover, some of the purported Joseph Smith writings which Hofmann sold to the Church contain revelations from the Lord Himself. For instance, the Joseph Smith III Blessing document gives this message from the Lord: “Verily, thus saith the Lord: if he abides in me, his days shall be lengthened upon the earth, but, if he abides not in me, I, the Lord, will receive him, in an instant, unto myself.” The 1838 letter of Joseph Smith to his brother, Hyrum, is in its entirety a revelation purporting to come from the Lord. It begins with the words, “Verily thus Saith the Lord,” and ends with the word “Amen.” The fact that the Mormon leaders were unable to recognize the spurious nature of these revelations casts doubt upon their ability to discern the truthfulness of the other revelations given by Joseph Smith. It has always been claimed that it is virtually impossible for a person to write a revelation that would compare with Joseph Smith’s. It now appears, however, that there is someone who can write revelations comparable to Joseph Smith’s and that it is even possible to get them past the scrutiny of the highest leadership of the Mormon Church.

The more we learn about the scope of Mark Hofmann’s subtle plan to deceive the Mormon leaders, the more obvious it becomes that the church is not led by revelation. He, in fact, had church officials so hoodwinked that they allowed him special access to documents that are ordinarily hard to get access to. As early as September 28, 1982, the Seventh East Press reported that since the discovery of the Anthon transcript Hofmann has “enjoyed privileged access to otherwise restricted Church archive material, including the First Presidency’s vault. One reason for this privileged access, Hofmann thinks, is the fact that ‘I am not a historian. I’m not going to write an expose of Mormonism.’” In his confession Hofmann reveals how Earl Olsen granted him the privilege of looking at a document he seems to have used in writing the Joseph Smith III Blessing. Hofmann claims that Olsen “was saying about how I had done so much for the Church, referring to the Anthon Transcript, that ordinarily he wouldn’t do it but he did, . . . (Hofmann’s Confession, page 141). Mr. Hofmann also testified that he even “saw some materials from the First Presidency’s vault . . .” (Ibid., page 453). Hofmann seems to have used his special privileges with regard to church documents to create new forgeries to palm off on unsuspecting church leaders. It would be hard to conceive of a more pernicious scheme. That the Mormon leaders were unable to detect his iniquity even though they met with him from 1980 to 1985 seems to completely destroy their claim to special revelation. Mr. Hofmann believed that his “discoveries” would tend to liberalize the Mormon Church as scholars and church leaders came to accept them, and there is little doubt that this has turned out to be the case. Now that the documents have been exposed as forgeries, historians have suffered some loss of credibility with the average member of the church. This would probably tend to greatly strengthen the
orthodox position in the church if it were not for another factor—i.e., the loss of credibility that the Mormon leaders have suffered. It is possible, in fact, that the exposure of Hofmann’s documents as forgeries could do more harm to the Church in the long run than if the documents were proven authentic.

Although Apostle Dallin Oaks would have us believe that “Criticism is particularly objectionable when it is directed toward Church authorities,” there seems to be no way to get around the fact that they must bear a great deal of the responsibility in the Hofmann affair. If they had been open and forthright about historical documents, Mr. Hofmann would not have approached them with his blackmail-like documents with the idea of obtaining large amounts of money. That Mark Hofmann knew they were suppressing important church documents and were anxious to keep any embarrassing from falling into the hands of church critics set the stage for the tragic events which followed. While Mormon scholars have been blamed for not being more careful, it is the General Authorities of the church who are primarily responsible. For the most part Mormon scholars want an open history and would not have an interest in buying up documents to hide them. We feel that the scholars were honestly trying to learn the truth about the documents. They made no special claims of infallibility. The church leaders, on the other band, who claimed to have special powers of revelation, played into Hofmann’s hands time after time. It appears, in fact, that if it had not been for the suppressive policy of the church, its leaders could have brought Mr. Hofmann’s career to an end long before the bombings.

Fourteen months before the murders we had noted that Hofmann’s career to an end long before the bombings. Authorities of the church who are primarily responsible. For the most part Mormon scholars want an open history and would not have an interest in buying up documents to hide them. We feel that the scholars were honestly trying to learn the truth about the documents. They made no special claims of infallibility. The church leaders, on the other band, who claimed to have special powers of revelation, played into Hofmann’s hands time after time. It appears, in fact, that if it had not been for the suppressive policy of the church, its leaders could have brought Mr. Hofmann’s career to an end long before the bombings.

In his confession, Mark Hofmann testified that he had found a notary who did not require identification and that he himself had forged the affidavit:

Q Was it signed in front of him?
A Yes, I signed it right there.
Q You signed it?
A I signed Alan Bullock’s name.
(Hofmann’s Confession, page 170)

Investigators learned that the name Allen Lee Bullock actually came from a genealogical record of the Bullock family, but Mr. Bullock had not signed the document. In fact, he never had the Blessing Document and had never even met Mark Hofmann. We suspect that Hofmann must have told church officials that he might be able to obtain the embarrassing records concerning Brigham Young for the church from Allen Lee Bullock if they did not bother Mr. Bullock. The reason that church officials asked RLDS Church Historian Richard Howard not to contact Bullock must have been that they wanted to keep these records suppressed from the public. If church leaders had not continued to suppress the name Allen Lee Bullock, we would have been able to contact him a year before the bombings and discover that the affidavit attributed to him was a forgery. This, of course, would have been the type of hard evidence we were looking for which could have led to Hofmann’s arrest and conviction for forgery. If this had occurred, there would have been no McLellin deception, Hugh Pinnock would never have helped Hofmann obtain the loan for $185,000 and Steven Christensen and Kathleen Sheets would probably be alive today. This whole series of tragic events seems to destroy the claim that the Mormon Church is led by revelation. It appears, in fact, that church leaders are more concerned about protecting the image of the church than they are about being forthright with their people.
THE MURDERS

As we indicated earlier, the Salt Lake County Attorney’s Office terminated the discussions with Mark Hofmann when Mr. Hofmann refused to talk if Detective Jim Bell was going to be present. While this is disappointing, the confession which has been released contains a summary of what Hofmann told prosecutors before the plea bargain was finalized. We quote the following from that supplement to the transcripts:

Mark Hofmann . . . said he was extremely knowledgeable in the manufacture of black gunpowder.

. . .

A few months before the October bombings, Hofmann asked Shannon Flynn, a friend, to obtain some blasting caps for him. Hofmann wanted to make a bomb out of nitrate fertilizer and diesel oil. . . . Hofmann threw them away sometime before October, 1985 . . .

Hofmann didn’t remember for sure, but thought that he might have purchased some books on bombs at a gun show that he and Flynn had attended. The idea for the nails packed around the Christensen bomb came from one of the books. Its purpose was to increase the possibility of death . . .

Mark Hofmann then related the following information about the bombings of October 15 and 16, 1985: He knew he was going to make two bombs to kill two people, but at first he wasn’t sure who the victims would be. . . . First he thought that one of the bombs would kill either Thomas Wilding or Brent Ashworth and the second bomb would kill himself. Then he thought that possibly the bombs should be for Steve Christensen and Thomas Wilding, and finally he thought about killing Thomas Wilding and Brent Ashworth with the two bombs. Hofmann stated that it wasn’t until the morning of the 15th of October when he made the bombs that he settled on the actual targets.

On October 5th he made two trips to the Radio Shack at the Cottonwood Mall. On the first trip, he purchased a mercury switch and a D size battery pack. . . . With each visit to Radio Shack, he used the name Mike Hansen. Hofmann thought that he had used the alias “Mike Hansen” as early as 1978. . . . He used the alias in 1979 at the University of Utah Special Collections Library. He also used it at the LDS Church Archives, the Utah State University Archives Special Collections, and the New York Public Library. . . . In Utah he used it at Debouzek, Utah Engraving, Salt Lake Stamp, and at BYU . . .

The end pipe caps, nails and gunpowder were purchased at Allied . . .

After purchasing the bomb components, Hofmann returned home and placed the materials on a blanket in his downstairs den. This was the same room in which he performed his forgery work. . . .

On October 10, 1985, Hofmann went to an area . . . near Grantsville to test fire the bomb components . . . He wasn’t able to perform the test because there was too much snow and mud . . . October 11, he returned to test once more. Into a 1/2 inch pipe . . . he placed gunpowder and a rocket igniter. He connected the wire of the rocket igniter to a 50 foot extension cord, walked back to a small gully, and connected the extension cord to a battery pack. The bomb exploded. He then knew if he were to make a bomb of twice that size he would be able to kill someone with it . . . on October 11, 1985, he felt that it was still going to be Thomas Wilding. Hofmann said he wanted to kill him . . .

On . . . October 14, Hofmann . . . visited with his wife for a little while and then she went to bed. He went into his downstairs room and constructed the bombs. . . . It didn’t take long, probably 2 hours or less to construct the two bombs. . . . He made small holes in the boxes with an ice pick. He threaded the wires from the pipe bombs through the holes and taped them separately onto the outside of the box. Then, if the packages were tipped, the mercury in the switch would complete the circuit and the bombs would explode . . .

He finished the assembling of the bomb packages by writing the names Steve Christensen and Gary Sheets on the packages. He didn’t know Sheets’ address so he looked it up in the phone directory. He underlined Sheets’ address in the directory with the same magic marker that he used to write the names on the boxes . . .

Hofmann stated that it was while constructing the bombs that he finally decided for whom the bombs were intended. He said he wasn’t rational at the time, but decided that Steve Christensen would have to be killed so that the McLellin transaction would not take place . . . The second bomb, with the name Gary Sheets on it, was simply a diversion so that everyone would believe the bombings were the result of CFS business problems.

Hofmann said the thing that attracted him to bombs as a means of killing was that he didn’t have to be there at the time of the killings. He didn’t think he could pull the trigger on someone if he faced them, but he could do it if he didn’t have to be around. . . .

Sometime after 2:45 a.m., Hofmann placed the two bombs and two bags into his van and left for the Sheets’ residence . . . He placed the bomb about five feet from the garage door thinking that a car leaving the area would hit it . . .
Hofmann returned to his house around 3:30 a.m. While he was still downstairs his daughter awoke. His wife, who was upstairs, asked him to take care of the little girl.

Sometime between 6:00 and 6:30 a.m. that morning he went to the Judge Building to deliver the second bomb. He got into the elevator with Hal Passey and Hal’s father. He walked directly to Steve Christensen’s office and placed the bomb package inside the door jam.

Hofmann said the third bomb, the one on October 16, 1985 that exploded in his car, was a suicide attempt. He said he was distraught over the killings the day before. He thought that he deserved death, and it would be the best thing for his family. He also admitted that he had placed a number of inconsequential papers in the car so that people would think that the McLellin Collection, which did not exist, was blown up in the explosion and fire.

On the 16th of October, Hofmann went to Logan to purchase the bomb parts for the third bomb. Hofmann used the name Bill Edwards at Radio Shack in Logan. Hofmann then went up into Logan Canyon and prepared the bomb. He then drove down to Salt Lake. The bomb was in a paper sack on the passenger seat. He put it on the driver’s seat, touched the two wires together, and the bomb exploded.

(Hofmann’s Confession, pages SS-1-12)

Those who are interested in this subject will probably want to read the entire account in our photographic printing of the confession. In the transcript itself, Hofmann does make some comments concerning the murders. On pages 279-280, we find the following:

Q . . . if the American Antiquarian Society had been able to and did vote to purchase your Oath on October 15, 1985 for about a million dollars, what would that have done to the financial hole that you dug yourself into by that time?

A It would have relieved me from it. Hence, I guess you want me to say the bombings would not have taken place.

Q I don’t want you to say that unless it is true.

A I’ll say it since its true.

On page 411 of the transcripts Mark Hofmann said that he would later talk of his “rationalization for the homicides.” Further on in the transcript Mr. Hofmann admitted he made the bombs. His statements seem to agree with the summary of earlier interviews with him:

A Yes, well again this gets into rationalization for the bombs. All along, of course, until the evening that I made them, I didn’t really think that I would end up using them. At least to take a life.

MR. BIGGS: Why is that?

A My rationalization was that I would prepare myself or have that at my disposal but that things would work out. Now, remember, I think we went in to this before, that my thinking was at that time that my life would be taken. In other words, that it would be a suicide attempt. Although, like I say, it was half a joke. Well, joke is not a good word, but it was more thinking that I have the parts, more of a way out, than actually saying to myself when I purchased the parts, this is what I’m going to use them for, these are the people I’m going to take out. None of that was in my mind at that time. As far as the idea of Mrs. Sheets, it hadn’t even entered my mind yet. Who was going to be taken out with me was up in the air, if anyone was to be. (Hofmann’s Confession, page 424)

According to an article by Dawn Tracy, Mark Hofmann may have been thinking of murder at least five months prior to the killings:

And a longtime boyhood friend has told The Tribune that Hofmann discussed ways of killing people with him five months before the bombing deaths . . .

The friend said the two talked about circumstances that would induce someone to kill. Hofmann and his friend then discussed different ways of killing; using a shotgun because Hofmann believed it would be impossible to trace, or planting bombs, according to the friend. (Salt Lake Tribune, March 21, 1987)

It now appears that anyone who posed a threat to Mr. Hofmann’s Mormon document empire may have been in danger of being put to death. Since we had been publishing material which was very critical of Hofmann’s “discoveries” for nineteen months prior to the bombings and publicly calling for people to tell us anything they might know about his dealings, we feel very fortunate to be alive. We had two face to face confrontations with Mr. Hofmann regarding his documents. The first was on August 22, 1984, when he came to our home and talked with Sandra. He seemed very distressed and hurt that we, of all people, would question his discoveries. He had expected that opposition might come from those in the church, but he was shocked that Utah Lighthouse Ministry had taken a position which was critical of his documents. Mr. Hofmann appeared to be almost to the point of tears as he pled his case as to why we should trust him.
In the year that followed we continued to publish material that was critical of Hofmann’s discoveries, and finally on August 24, 1985, we confronted him at the Sunstone Symposium. At that time we questioned him closely with regard to the origin of the Salamander letter. Unfortunately, his answers did not seem to square with the facts we already knew and it must have become obvious to him that we did not believe what he was saying. At one point, he had a very sad and worried expression on his face. He seemed deeply troubled. It was almost as if he were trying to say, “Please believe what I am telling you.” Although Mr. Hofmann did not outwardly show any hostility, this was a very tense and unpleasant experience for all of us. We knew, of course, that whenever someone attempts to uncover fraud there is some danger of retaliation, but we never thought of Mark Hofmann as being a violent man. After the murders we felt very thankful that Mr. Hofmann was not triggered by the exposes we published concerning his document deals. We were very fortunate that Mr. Hofmann arrived at our house armed only with arguments as to why we should trust his documents rather than a pipe bomb surrounded with nails. While we have always thought there was a possibility of being assassinated by someone opposed to our work, we never even considered that a well-mannered man like Mark Hofmann, who professed to be friendly to our work, would turn out to be a cold-blooded killer who would stop at nothing to shut the mouths of his opponents.

RESEARCH VINDICATED

There has been quite a bit of criticism with regard to Mark Hofmann’s confession, and many people wonder if he has told us the truth. One defect, as we have already mentioned, is that it does not tell us enough about the murders. While we wish that Mr. Hofmann had revealed more, we can understand his reluctance. Talking about forgery is entirely different than talking about murder. Very few people would want to have their confession to such gruesome crimes published to the world. In a normal case a murderer is not required to make a public confession of the details of the crime. At one time we were doing research with regard to a man who had committed murder and had entered into a plea bargain agreement. We discovered that there was no public record available detailing the crime. Mr. Hofmann, as we have shown in the March 1987 issue of the Messenger, did go into court and admitted he had committed the murders. Fortunately, the news media were present to record his confession of guilt. In addition, we have a few statements by Hofmann himself in the transcripts and the prosecutors’ summary of what went on at earlier meetings. While we would really like to have hundreds of pages of testimony on the bombings, we do feel fortunate to have what we do.

There is another defect in the transcripts that does disturb us. We had told prosecutors that in order to really convince the public that Mark Hofmann was acting alone in the forgeries, they needed to have him write out a sample of all the different styles of writing found in the forgeries. His known handwriting does not appear to be very good. If he could not match the quality found in the forgeries, we would know that he was not the master forger and that there was a co-conspirator or co-conspirators, which, of course, could even raise questions concerning the murders. It has been claimed that Mark Hofmann did write some samples for investigators and that these samples did satisfy them that he was, in fact, the only one involved in the forgeries which have been charged. Unfortunately, however, these samples were not published with the transcripts, and, strange as it may seem, it was claimed that Hofmann’s attorney had possession of them. We feel that prosecutors need to publish handwritten samples so that people can make their own decision. Although we have no reason to distrust Hofmann’s attorney, it would be better if new samples were taken in the presence of witnesses so that we would know beyond a shadow of a doubt that they had come from Hofmann’s own hand. Furthermore, they should be submitted to noted handwriting experts to verify that all the forgeries were written by Hofmann himself. Until this is done, we cannot be absolutely certain that there were no co-conspirators.

Other than this problem and the lack of material on the murders, we are very impressed with the transcripts. In our wildest imagination we could never have dreamed that Mark Hofmann would make such a detailed confession. For instance, he certainly did not have to tell his true feelings concerning Mormonism, yet he has freely admitted his complete unbelief in the system. From our own investigation into Hofmann’s activities we know that many of the facts he relates are true. In almost every respect he has vindicated the work which we have done on his forgeries during the last three and a half years. Even though we knew that we had good solid evidence, we felt that it was rather daring to publish the book, Tracking the White Salamander, before the case came to trial. If Mr. Hofmann had stone-walled and refused to confess his guilt, we would have had a difficult time convincing some people that the theories published in that book were correct. As it is, however, Mr. Hofmann has confirmed our research. He not only admits that our theory concerning the origin of the Salamander letter is correct, but also that we gave correct sources for the Joseph Smith III Blessing and the Lucy Smith letter. Furthermore, although he refused to discuss the 1873 Martin Harris letter because it was not on the list of items he was charged with forging, the statements he made concerning Walter Conrad, the man who was supposed to receive Harris’ letter, definitely show that the letter is a forgery—something we have tried to prove since 1984.

We do not claim that Tracking the White Salamander will turn out to be the best book on Mark Hofmann. There are, in fact, a number of authors who are far better writers than we could ever hope to be who are working on the subject. We seriously doubt, however, that any major study of Hofmann will be available this year. One of the books probably will not appear in print for at least two or three years. In a review of our book, published in the Salt Lake Tribune, February 15, 1987, Harold Schindler wrote: “As for
Tracking the White Salamander, what Jerald Tanner lacks in writing skills, he makes up for with his close and personal knowledge of many of the principals in this intriguing game of history-mystery. Tracking the White Salamander has 185 pages of fascinating material concerning the crimes which rocked the State of Utah. It is a must for all those who desire to have a good understanding of Mark Hofmann’s confession. It not only has important information obtained from Mark Hofmann’s associates but it also contains lengthy extracts from the preliminary hearing. This testimony alone is worth the price of the book.

Our work with regard to Mormon history has been very difficult since we discovered problems in the Salamander letter. We really want to thank those who have prayed for us during this critical time in our ministry. Since the Hofmann affair has opened up many doors to the Mormon people, we continue to need a great deal of prayer. We especially need prayer that we will be faithful to our ministry and that God will bring many to Himself.

DEViLS ALL OVER?

In the March 1987 issue of the Messenger, we warned that some critics of the Mormon Church have become so obsessed with finding “Luciferian” influence in the temple ceremony that they have lost sight of reality. Since we published that article, things have gone from bad to worse. In a speech given in Salt Lake City on June 29, 1987, Ed Decker discussed the spires on Mormon temples. He charged that “these spires represent something that is so sinister that it makes your flesh crawl when you think about it. . . . they represent an up-side-down nail pointing defiantly toward heaven, as if to impale the Lord Jesus Christ anew when he comes in the clouds. . . . Satan’s spires now rise up from almost every town in the country on LDS chapels . . .” Mr. Decker claimed that at the Capstone Conference new revelations would be forthcoming which “will blow your socks off.” At that conference, William J. Schnoebelen took up where Decker left off. He claimed that “the trapezoidal shape” of the spires on the Salt Lake temple “draw demons like fly paper.” He went on to say: “Now, we are going to attempt to prove that the Salt Lake Temple is, in fact, a perfectly designed habitation of devils, just like is mentioned in the book of Revelations.” In 1985 Mr. Schnoebelen published a booklet entitled, Joseph Smith and the Temple of Doom. Much of this same information has recently been printed under the title, Mormonism’s Temple of Doom. Unfortunately this work is marred by an excessive zeal to link Mormonism to witchcraft. Mr. Schnoebelen seems to have been deeply involved in the occult and claims that he has portions of ceremonies used in witchcraft which bear some remarkable parallels to the Mormon temple ceremony. His most startling examples, however, are only preserved by photocopies of typewritten documents which could not possibly be very old. Our preliminary study of the material leads us to conclude that it is far more likely that portions of the Mormon temple ritual were plagiarized and incorporated into witchcraft ceremonies rather than the other way around. We are planning to publish some evidence concerning this matter and would appreciate any insights that our readers may have.

A cassette tape Jerald recently recorded deals with the danger of going too far in trying to link Mormonism to Satanism. It also deals with questionable methods used by some critics of the church which are tending to harden the hearts of the Mormon people against Christians who are working among them. It is basically a call for a more loving approach to the Mormons. This tape is entitled, Problems in Winning Mormons, and is available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry.

We are also pleased to announce that Jerald Tanner’s Testimony, which was previously available only on cassette tapes, has been printed and is now available.

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In the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for August 1971, we announced the discovery of documents relating to Joseph Smith’s 1826 trial. This remarkable find was made by Wesley P. Walters in the basement of a jail in Norwich, New York. These documents prove that Joseph Smith was a “glass looker” and that he was arrested, tried and found guilty by a justice of the peace in Bainbridge, New York. The importance of these documents cannot be overstated, for they establish the historicity of the account of the trial which was first published in *Fraser’s Magazine* in 1873. This trial shows that the Mormon Prophet Joseph Smith not only engaged in money-digging but that he was also involved in the magical practice of divining with a seer stone. The entire text of the transcript is published in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 32. We will only quote the first two paragraphs of the transcript here:

Warrant issued upon written complaint upon oath of Peter G. Bridgeman, who informed that one Joseph Smith of Bainbridge was a *disorderly person and an imposter*.

Prisoner brought before Court March 20, 1826. Prisoner examined: says that he came from the town of Palmyra, and had been at the house of Josiah Stowel in Bainbridge most of the time since; had small part of time been employed by said Stowel on his farm, and going to school. That he had a certain *stone* which he had occasionally looked at to determine where *hidden treasures* in the bowels of the earth were; that be

professed to tell in this manner where *gold mines* were a distance under ground, and *had looked for Mr. Stowel several times*, and had informed him where he could find these treasures, and Mr. Stowel had been engaged in digging for them. That at Palmyra he pretended to tell by looking at this stone where coined money was buried in Pennsylvania, and while at Palmyra *had frequently ascertained in that way where lost property was of various kinds*: that he had occasionally been in the habit of looking through this stone to find lost property for three years, but of late had pretty much given it up on account of its injuring his health, especially his eyes, making them sore; that he did not solicit business of this kind, and had always rather declined having anything to do with this business.

Mormon writers could see the devastating implications of Wesley Walters’ discovery. To accept the validity of the trial documents would mean that they would be forced to
admit that Joseph Smith was engaging in magical practices at the very time he was being tutored by the Angel Moroni to receive the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. In his book, *The Myth Makers*, the noted Mormon apologist Hugh Nibley had written almost 20 pages in an attempt to discredit the “Bainbridge court record.” On page 142 of Dr. Nibley’s book we find this statement: “... if this court record is authentic it is the most damning evidence in existence against Joseph Smith.”

After we published the news of Wesley Walters’ discovery, Mormon scholars were stunned by the serious implications of the matter. Although Hugh Nibley remained completely silent about the new find, a promising young scholar by the name of D. Michael Quinn publicly responded to our accusations concerning the importance of the discovery. He thought our conclusions about the discovery were “not supported by the evidence.” He said that he accepted the authenticity of the documents found by Walters but denied that they proved the validity of the printed transcript (see Jerald and Sandra Tanner’s *Distorted View of Mormonism: A Response to Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* by a Latter-day Saint Historian, 1977, page 18). In our book, *Answering Dr. Clandestine: A Response to the Anonymous LDS Historian*, pages 11-14, we demonstrated that all the evidence led to the conclusion that the printed transcript of the trial was genuine. A decade has passed since Quinn wrote his rebuttal to us, and we are now happy to report that he seems to have modified his position on the 1826 trial. In a new book published by Signature Books, Dr. Quinn wrote the following:

For many years Mormon writers denied that such a court case occurred... despite contrary evidence... the court record simply adds details to the statement of Smith’s mother that in 1825 Stowell “came for Joseph on account of having heard that he possessed certain keys, by which he could discern things invisible to the natural eye”. ... Other evidence affirms the basic content of the alleged testimony, and, aside from anti-Mormon editorial comments in these published accounts, there is little reason why Mormons should find it necessary to deny the substance of Smith’s and his witnesses’ testimony just because the 1826 court record itself cannot be verified in manuscript form. (*Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 1987, pages 44-46) [2nd Ed., pages 56-57]

Although the title of Dr. Quinn’s rebuttal to us and the title of his new book share the words “Mormonism” and “View,” there is a world of difference in the contents. His new book, in fact, validates much of our research with regard to magic. While we have known for a long time that D. Michael Quinn was one of the best scholars in the Mormon Church, we have gained a far greater respect for both his scholarship and his courage during the 1980s. While many of the Mormon scholars have become extremely quiet since Ezra Taft Benson, who is currently the Prophet, Seer and Revelator of the church, denounced objective Mormon history, Dr. Quinn made a very bold public response:

Central to the apparent demands of Elders Benson and Packer is the view that the official acts and pronouncements of the prophets are always the express will of God. This is the Mormon equivalent of the Roman Catholic doctrine of papal infallibility. ... the Mormon history of benignly angelic Church leaders apparently advocated by Elders Benson and Packer would border on idolatry. 

Ezra Taft Benson and Boyd K. Packer want Church history to be as elementary as possible and as defensive as possible. This is Accommodation History for consumption by the weakest of the conceivably weak Saints, ... A so-called “Faith-promoting” Church history which conceals controversies and difficulties of the Mormon past actually undermines the faith of Latter-day Saints who eventually learn about the problems from other sources. ... In warning Mormon historians against objective history and against telling too much truth about the Mormon past, Boyd K. Packer says, “Do not spread disease germs!” ... The criticism we have received in our efforts would be similar to leaders of eighteenth century towns trying to combat smallpox contagion by locking up Dr. Edward Jenner who tried to inoculate the people, and killing the cows he wanted to use for his vaccine. (*On Being a Mormon Historian*, 1982, pages 14, 15, 18-21 and 23)

D. Michael Quinn, who seems to have become lion-hearted in the defense of honest history, now serves as Professor of American History at the church’s Brigham Young University. Many have wondered why the church leaders have not moved against him. A number of Mormon scholars have been removed from their positions for things that would be considered trivial in comparison with Quinn’s direct and forceful response to the General Authorities. The answer may be that church officials fear the confrontation that would ensue if they tried to remove such a highly respected scholar from his position. Then, too, it has been suggested that if Quinn were fired, Brigham Young University might stand a chance of losing its accreditation. What ever the case may be, Dr. Quinn has stood firmly by his convictions, and his new book,
Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, certainly presents an honest attempt to get to the bottom of this controversy. In the Introduction to this book, page xx [2nd Ed. page xxxviii], Quinn says that he believes in “Gods, angels, spirits, and devils, and that they have communicated with humankind.” He also affirms that he believes in “Jesus as my Savior” and “Joseph Smith, Jr., as a prophet.” While Professor Quinn’s continued belief in Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon in the light of his disclosures concerning magic may be difficult for many of us to understand, it presents an even greater dilemma for the Mormon leaders. How do they deal with someone who brings out devastating information concerning magic in the early church and yet professes a belief in the Prophet Joseph Smith? As far as we know, they have made no attempt to discipline him, although Gordon B. Hinckley, of the First Presidency, seemed to be warning against his book in a conference address:

From the Hofmann episode, Hinckley said another phenomenon has arisen, that of a supposedly “new history” of the LDS Church as distinguished from the “old history.”

He said this rewriting of history represents nothing more than efforts to ferret out elements of folk magic and the occult during the time of church founder Joseph Smith to explain what he did and why.

Hinckley said he has no doubt that folk magic was practiced in the days of Joseph Smith, but that it presents no evidence that the church originated from such superstitions.

The present effort of trying to find some other explanation for the organization of the church, for the origin of the Book of Mormon, and for the priesthood with its keys and powers will be similar to other anti-Mormon fads which have come and blossomed and faded,” he said. (Ogden Standard-Examiner, October 5, 1987)

Although Dr. Quinn says he does not believe that his “analysis disparages Joseph Smith’s integrity or prophetic claims,” he does admit the following:

In what follows most Mormons will not find a story with which they are familiar. Instead, they will discover that Joseph Smith evidently participated extensively in magical pursuits and that he shared with others of his contemporaries a magic world view of the world. For myself, I have found that the “official version” of early Mormon history is sometimes incomplete in its presentation and evaluation of evidence, and therefore inaccurate in certain respects. (Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, Introduction, pages xx-xxi) [2nd Ed. Introduction, pages xxxviii-xxxix]

In 1982 we published our book Mormonism, Magic and Masonry, which contains photographs of some parchments and a dagger which once belonged to Joseph Smith’s brother, Hyrum. On pages 12-15 of that book we definitely linked these items to witchcraft. On pages 2-5 we also reproduced a photograph of a magic talisman which was owned by Joseph Smith himself and printed Dr. Reed Durham’s explanation of its meaning and purpose. It was our opinion that these items provided additional evidence that the Smith family were involved in magic. D. Michael Quinn has reached the same conclusion and has added much additional information regarding the Smith magical paraphernalia:

Beyond the documents indicating that during the 1820s Joseph Smith and his family used divining rods and seer stones as part of the folk magic of treasure seeking, Smith family members themselves provided evidence of their involvement in more esoteric manifestations of Christian occultism. These direct evidences are of two kinds: statements suggesting the family’s participation in these activities, and magic artifacts in the early possession of family members according to Smith descendants, relatives, or their Mormon associates. . . . several of these relics have been preserved through completely separate chains of ownership (i.e., provenance). The magic artifacts attributed to the Smith family and certain statements by family members and early associates either imply or affirm that Joseph Smith and his family believed in and used ritual magic, astrology, talismans, and magic parchments. . . .

Historical understanding cannot grow by ignoring or dismissing evidence that seems unusual or inconsistent with traditional perceptions, . . .

In response to the affidavits of some Palmyra residents that the Smiths in the 1820s neglected their farm and other necessary work in order to dig for treasure, Lucy Mack Smith seemed to confirm that her family practiced ritual magic. In the first draft of her dictated 1845 history she stated, “let not my reader suppose that because I shall pursue another topic for a season that we stopt our labor and went at trying to win the faculty of Abrac[,] drawing Magic circles or sooth saying [sic] to the neglect of all kinds of business [W]e never during our lives suffered one important interest to swallow up every other obligation but whilst we worked with our hands we endeavored to remember the service of & the welfare of our souls” . . . Joseph Smith’s mother did not deny her family’s participation in occult activities but simply affirmed that these did not prevent family members from accomplishing other, equally important work. . . .
By the early 1820s, “Faculty of Abrac” had become a well-known phrase linking magic and divinity. Medieval and early modern magic manuscripts in England used “Abrac” and “Abraca” as one of the names of God in conjurations. As early as 1831, their neighbors stated that both Smith and his father drew circles for treasure hunting.

Confirming these stories, the Hyrum Smith family has preserved as an heirloom the kind of dagger necessary for ritual magic. The first public announcement of its existence was an inventory of Hyrum Smith’s “relics” in an authorized biography which described the artifact as “Dagger. . . . Masonic symbols on blade” (Corbett 1963, 453). Photographs of the dagger have been in print since 1982, and slides of the Smith dagger were screened at a public convention in Salt Lake City in 1985 (Tanner and Tanner 1982a, 3; Tanner and Tanner 1983, 11, 15; Fillerup; figs. 43-44). . . . the inscriptions on the Smith family dagger have nothing to do with Freemasonry and everything to do with ceremonial magic. . . . One side of the Smith family dagger is inscribed with the Hebrew word “Adonay,” next to which are the astrological symbol of Mars and the magic sigil, or seal, for the Intelligence of Mars. The other side of the dagger is inscribed with the magic seal of Mars.

Possession alone may not be proof of use, but in this case Hyrum Smith, by 1844, possessed an instrument designed for drawing the kind of magic circles that Palmyra neighbors claimed the Smiths were drawing on the ground in the 1820s as part of their treasure-digging activities. In addition, Lucy Smith’s manuscript history virtually confirmed the allegation that her husband and son drew magic circles in the 1820s. . . . Hyrum was the obvious heir of his father’s sacred relics at the death of Joseph Sr. . . . Mars (inscribed on the magic dagger) was the “planet governing” 1771, the year of Joseph Smith Sr.’s birth.

That astrology was important to members of the Smith family is also indicated by both friendly and unfriendly sources. Without giving further details, Brigham Young stated in 1861 that “an effort was made in the days of Joseph to establish astrology” (Young Office Journal, 30 Dec. 1861). . . . the Hyrum Smith family also possessed magic parchments inscribed with the astrological symbols of the planets and the Zodiac . . . and the Emma Smith Bidamon family preserved a magic artifact consecrated to Jupiter, the ruling planet of Joseph Smith Jr.’s birth. . . . Two of the Smith family’s magic parchments . . . depend directly on Ebenezer Sibly’s Complete Illustration of the Occult Sciences, . . . the inscriptions on Joseph Smith’s Jupiter talisman indicated its use as an implement in ceremonies of spirit conjuration, and the influential manuscript “Key of Solomon” defined a Jupiter talisman’s use strictly in terms of ceremonial magic: “This defendeth and protecteth those who invoke and cause the Spirits to come” . . . That ceremonial purpose of the Jupiter talisman in Joseph Smith’s possession in 1844 was consistent with the ceremonial purposes of the magic parchments in the possession of his brother Hyrum in 1844 . . . (Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, pages 53-58, 69) [2nd Ed. pages 66-73, 85]

On pages 78-79 [2nd Ed., pages 98, 103, 104], Professor Quinn gives this information:

While the Smith family’s belief in astrology can be demonstrated only circumstantially and inferentially, the Smiths left direct evidence of their practice of ritual magic. In addition to the magic dagger, among Hyrum Smith’s possessions at his death were three parchments—lamsen, in occult terms—inscribed with signs and names of ceremonial magic. . . . Like the dagger, photographs of these magic parchments have been in print since 1982 (de Hoyos 1982, 4-22; Tanner and Tanner 1982a, 1-3; Tanner and Tanner 1983, 6-9; Salt Lake Tribune, 24 Aug. 1985, B-1). . . . The dagger may have belonged originally to Joseph Smith, Sr., and the parchments may be artifacts from the time of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

Dr. Quinn feels that the parchments had a definite relationship to money-digging:

That this “Holiness to the Lord” magic parchment was designed to invoke “good spirits” in connection with treasure seeking is suggested by yet another symbol. Directly to the right of the Raphael figure and above the Tetragrammaton figure are three crosses . . . Although this could be a reference to the crucifixion at Golgotha, Scot defined two separate uses of three crosses, both of which pertain to treasure seeking. First, he specified that “there must be made upon a hazell wand three crosses” as part of “the art and order to be used in digging for monie, revealed by dreames,” and later in his discussion he provided an illustration of a shield-symbol with three crosses at the top to summon a spirit “to tell thee of hidden treasures that be in anie place, he will tell it thee: or if thou wilt command him to bring to thee gold or silver, he will bring it thee” . . . the use of the previously discussed angel symbols from Reginald Scot’s 1665 edition of his Discourse indicates that all three Smith family parchments were created to aid treasure seeking. Immediately before Scot’s chapter that discussed Junbaladace, Nal-gah, and Pah-li-Pah, the last paragraph of the preceding chapter stated, “When Treasure hath been hid, or any secret thing hath been committed by the party; there is
a magical cause of something attracting the starry spirit back again, to the manifestation of that thing. Upon all which, the following Chapters do insist more largely and particularly” . . . Therefore, the three Smith parchments adopted the names and symbols of Junbladace directly (and Nal-gah and Pah-li-Pah through Sibly’s later version) from a chapter of Scot’s 1665 Discourse that provided information about good angels necessary for successful treasure-seeking conjurations. . . . these two lamens of the Joseph Smith family were designed to be used by an unmarried, pure young man or woman in summoning and communicating with a divine spirit as part of a treasure quest. . . . the central purpose of the “Holiness to the Lord” parchment was to enable such a pure youth to summon and communicate with a divine spirit as part of a treasure quest, which both Mormon and non-Mormon sources indicated was a preoccupation of the Joseph Smith family only up to 1827. (Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, pages 107-108, 110-111) [2nd Ed. pages 112-113, 115]

D. Michael Quinn has done a great deal of important research with regard to the provenance of the Smith magic paraphernalia and has shown how these items relate to the magical practices of the time. In addition he has important information on and even pictures of “seer stones” which were supposed to have belonged to Joseph Smith and Book of Mormon witnesses. The reader will remember that the testimony of Joseph Smith in the 1826 trial shows that he used a seer stone in his magical practices of seeking for gold and lost items. At the same trial, Jonathan Thompson testified that Joseph Smith could “divine things by means of said stone.” He claimed that Smith used “his hat” in the process. This, of course, directly links the translation of the Book of Mormon to the magical process Joseph Smith used to find treasures. David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, wrote the following:

I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. . . . One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. (An Address to All Believers in Christ, Richmond, Missouri, 1887, page 12)

The noted Mormon historian B. H. Roberts confirmed that Joseph Smith did indeed use a “seer stone” to translate the Book of Mormon:

The seer stone referred to here was a chocolate-colored, somewhat egg-shaped stone which the Prophet found while digging a well . . . It possessed the qualities of Urim and Thummim, since by means of it—as described above—as well as by means of the interpreters found with the Nephite record, Joseph was able to translate the characters engraved on the plates. (Comprehensive History of the Church, vol. 1, page 129)

On page 39 [page 43 in 2nd Ed.] of his book, Dr. Quinn gives this interesting information:

At a meeting of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on 11 September 1859, “Preside[n]t Young also said that the seer stone which Joseph Smith first obtained He got in an Iron kettle 25 feet under ground. He saw it while looking in another seers stone which a person had. He went right to the spot & dug & found it” (Woodruff, 5:382-83)

On page 199 [page 246 in 2nd Ed.], Quinn discloses the following:

The brown and white stones are the only ones Smith was known to have used in his religious ministry, but Brigham Young told the apostles on 30 September 1855 that Smith had five seer stones. Without describing any of them, Young indicated that Smith obtained three stones before beginning his residence at Nauvoo in 1839, and found two more before his death in 1844 (Bullock 1855).

On page 146 [page 174 in 2nd Ed.], Quinn observes:

Each of these early scribes and witnesses apparently saw no inconsistency in God’s employing the same instrument and technique to translated the Book of Mormon that Smith had used in hunting for buried treasure because they all shared a world view which regarded success with such instruments of folk magic as a divine gift. Non-believers who rejected such a world view and who witnessed the translation at the Whitmer home, scoffed at this religious use of the seer stone . . .

Animal sacrifices were a part of the magic ritual which accompanied money-digging. On page 144 [page 172 in 2nd Ed.] of his book, Quinn gives this information: “A cousin of Smith’s wife Emma reported that Smith ‘translated the book of Mormon by means of the same peep stone, and under the same inspiration that directed his enchantments and dog sacrifices; it was all by the same spirit!’ (H. Lewis 1879).” In The Greater Key of Solomon, page 122, we read that “In many operations it is necessary to make some sort of sacrifice unto the Demons, and in various ways. . . . Such sacrifices consist of the blood and sometimes of the flesh.” The evidence seems to show that Joseph Smith did make sacrifices to the demons. In an affidavit published in 1834, William Stafford, one of the neighbors of the Smith family, reported the following:
Joseph Smith, Sen., came to me one night, and told me that Joseph Smith Jr. had been looking in his glass, and had seen, not many rods from his house, two or three kegs of gold and silver. . . . Joseph, Sen., first made a circle, twelve or fourteen feet in diameter. This circle, said he, contains the treasure. He then stuck in the ground a row of witch hazel sticks, around the said circle, for the purpose of keeping off the evil spirits. Within this circle he made another, of about eight or ten feet in diameter. He walked around three times on the periphery of this last circle, muttering to himself something which I could not understand. He next stuck a steel rod in the centre of the circles, and then enjoined profound silence upon us, lest we should arouse the evil spirit who had the charge of these treasures. After we had dug a trench about five feet in depth around the rod, the old man . . . went to the house to inquire of Joseph the cause of our disappointment. He soon returned and said, that Joseph had remained all this time in the house, looking in his stone and watching the motions of the evil spirit—that he saw the spirit come up to the ring and as soon as it beheld the cone which we had formed around the rod, it caused the money to sink. . . . another time, they devised a scheme, by which they might satiate their hunger, with the mutton of one of my sheep. They had seen in my flock of sheep, a large, fat, black weather. Old Joseph and one of the boys came to me one day, and said that Joseph Jr. had discovered some very remarkable and valuable treasures, which could be procured only in one way. That way, was as follows:—That a black sheep should be taken on to the ground where the treasures were concealed—that after cutting its throat, it should be led around in a circle while bleeding. This being done, the wrath of the evil spirit would be appeased: the treasures could then be obtained, and my share of them was to be four fold. To gratify my curiosity, I let them have a large fat sheep. They afterwards informed me, that the sheep was killed pursuant to commandment; but as there was some mistake in the process, it did not have the desired effect. This, I believe, is the only time they ever made money-digging a profitable business. (Mormonism Unvailed, 1834, pages 238-239)

The reader will notice that it was a “black” sheep that was supposed to have been sacrificed. This is interesting because The Greater Key of Solomon, page 122, says that “Sometimes white animals are sacrificed to the good Spirits and black to the evil.” In any case, the Mormon apologist Richard L. Anderson says that, “If there was such an event of a borrowed sheep, it had nothing to do with dishonesty” (Brigham Young University Studies, Spring 1970, p. 295). On page 294 of the same article, Professor Anderson quotes the following from M. Wilford Poulson’s notes of a conversation with Wallace Miner: “I once asked Stafford if Smith did steal a sheep from him. He said no, not exactly. He said, he did miss a black sheep, but soon Joseph came and admitted he took it for sacrifice but he was willing to work for it. He made wooden sap buckets to fully pay for it.” C. R. Stafford testified concerning the same incident: “Jo Smith, the prophet, told my uncle, William Stafford, he wanted a fat, black sheep. He said he wanted to cut its throat and make it walk in a circle three times around and it would prevent a pot of money from leaving” (Naked Truths About Mormonism, January 1888, page 3).

In the Book of Mormon Joseph Smith condemned animal sacrifices after the death of Christ (3 Nephi 9:19), but according to Wandle Mace, a devout Mormon, he later called for the sacrifice of a lamb in the Kirtland temple: “Joseph told them to go to Kirtland, and cleanse and purify a certain room in the Temple, that they must kill a lamb and offer a sacrifice unto the Lord which should prepare them to ordain Willard Richards a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles” (“Journal of Wandle Mace,” page 32, microfilmed copy at Brigham Young University). While in this instance Joseph Smith wanted the sacrifice made to the Lord, there are a number of accounts which indicate Joseph Smith was offering sacrifices to the demons in his earlier years (see Mormonism, Magic and Masonry, pages 32-34).

D. Michael Quinn has a very good photograph of the “magic dagger” which has come down through the Smith family in his book (see Fig. 43). He speculates that Joseph Smith and his father may have used this dagger when they “drew magic circles in the 1820s.” We feel that this is very likely and would like to suggest that it may have also been used to cut the throats of the animals which were sacrificed to the demons.

Professor Quinn feels that Joseph Smith may have been involved in “spirit conjurations” when he received the visitation concerning the gold plates which he used to translate the Book of Mormon:

Smith began praying late Sunday night on 21 September 1823. According to astrological guides, Sunday night was the only night of the week ruled by Jupiter . . . Jupiter, Smith’s ruling planet, was the most prominent astrological symbol on the Smith family’s golden lamen for summoning a good spirit. . . .

Oliver Cowdery wrote that Smith began praying earnestly that Sunday night about “eleven or twelve” in order “to commune with some kind of messenger” (1835, 1:79). Scot’s frequently cited 1665 instructions for conjuration (the edition upon which the Smith family’s “Jehovah, Jehovah, Jehovah” parchment was based) specified that spirit conjurations should begin “at 11 a clock at night,” and in describing a particular
conjunction “at 11 a clock at night; not joyning to himself any companion, because this particular action will admit of none . . . providing beforehand the two Seals of the Earth, drawn exactly upon parchment . . . but if he desires it, they will engage to bring him the most precious [sic] of their Jewels and Riches in twenty four hours; discovering unto him the way of finding hidden treasures and the richest mines” . . . The Smith’s “Holiness to the Lord” parchment has those two seals . . .

Smith’s prayer “to commune with some kind of messenger” on 21 September 1823 occurred once the moon had reached its maximum fullness the previous day and just before the autumnal equinox. The 1665 edition of Scot’s works . . . specified, “And in the composition of any Circle for Magical feats, the fittest time is the brightest Moon-light” . . . the hour and day in which Smith prayed “to commune with some kind of messenger” was pinpointed in magic books as being ideal for the invocation of spirits. Also, the angel of that hour, Raphael, figured prominently at the center of the Smith family’s most significant lamen . . . which was constructed to aid in a treasure quest . . . Young Joseph walked alone to that hill on 22 September 1823, when the moon was in its second day in Aries, which astrology specified was a day “good to find treasures hid” . . .

Significantly, Oliver Cowdery’s account, the first published history of early Mormonism, sketched a folk magic context for the events of 22 September 1823 on the hill: “he had heard of the power of enchantment, and a thousand like stories, which held the hidden treasures of the earth” . . . Cowdery’s report that Smith was prevented from obtaining the gold treasure by a thrice-repeated “shock [that] was produced upon his system” echoed treasure folklore of the 1820s that treasure-seekers could be “instant[an]eously struck, without attaining their object, as with an electric shock” . . .

All official and unofficial . . . sources agree that Smith was not able to obtain the gold plates on 22 September 1823. Instead, he returned to the hill on exactly the same day each year until 1827. None of these accounts explains why the visits had to occur each year on exactly the same day. Magic provides a possible explanation: “Should nothing result [from the attempt at necromancy], the same experiment must be renewed in the following year, and if necessary a third time, when it is certain that the desired apparition will be obtained, and the longer it has been delayed the more realistic and striking it will be’ . . . (Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, pages 120-122, 125, 133-134) [2nd Ed. pages 143-145, 147-148, 158]

Dr. Quinn points out that a number of teachings in the early Mormon Church bear remarkable similarities to the occult, and even shows that “proxy baptisms on behalf of the dead” had been “in practice among the Christian occult communities of Pennsylvania since 1738” (Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, page 181) [2nd Ed. pages 223-224].

In the Messenger for January 1986, we took exception to some of D. Michael Quinn’s statements about magic which he made in a lecture. On page 35 we noted that his claim that Jesus was using a magic formula at the time of the raising of Jairus’ daughter (Mark 5:41) is not supported by any facts. In addition we felt that his claim that Joseph Smith, Sr., gave his sons magic names was not very convincing. We demonstrated, in fact, that he gave his sons names that were “typical of those found in the vicinity of Palmyra.” In his new book, Dr. Quinn seems to have retained his idea concerning Jesus, but he does not say anything concerning the Smith children having magic names. He does, however, engage in some speculation concerning Book of Mormon names. On page 155 [197-198 in 2nd Ed.] of his book, he notes that the name Alma “also had reference to spirits and to ceremonial magic . . . A seventeenth-century English magic manuscript used ‘Alma’ as one of the names to conjure a treasure guardian spirit . . . and in other English manuscripts of magic . . . ‘Almazim’ and ‘Alma’ were names of a ‘giver of treasure’ . . .” While this is an interesting suggestion, in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 95, we have also noted that this was a woman’s name and that one of Joseph Smith’s neighbors was named “Miss Alma Parker.” (In the Book of Mormon, of course, it is the name of a man.) Quinn’s attempt to relate the name Nephi to magic is not very impressive. He suggests that “the most publicized magic parallel to Nephi was that ‘Nepes’ or ‘Nepesh’ meant the disembodied spirit of men, according to the Cabala . . .” (page 156) [page 198 in 2nd Ed.]. Those who are familiar with Hebrew know that “Nepesh” is the word which is translated as “soul” in Genesis 2:7: “. . . and man became a living soul.” It has a number of different meanings (see Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, Hebrew word #5315). Quinn feels that his “necromantic parallel to the name Nephi may help to explain what has otherwise appeared as a historical puzzle.” This matter is discussed in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 136, where we show that when Joseph Smith began his History, he wrote that the Angel who revealed the Book of Mormon to him said “his name was Nephi.” After Joseph Smith’s death this was changed to read, “his name was Moroni.” Quinn tries to explain this change by saying:

Thus the evidence indicates that after 1830, Mary M. Whitmer, Lucy Mack Smith, and Joseph Smith himself intentionally referred to Moroni as Nephi.
called out by *Magicians and Necromancers,*” these early Mormons may have used the cognate “Nephi” as a generic reference to the messenger Moroni. Documents of 1838 indicate that Joseph Smith was using Nephi and Moroni interchangeably. . . . The appearance of Nephi in the manuscript history about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon seems instead to be Joseph Smith’s conscious substitution of another name for Moroni.

It is very difficult for us to accept this speculation. It is much easier to simply believe that Joseph Smith told contradictory stories. Moreover, as we pointed out in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 72, we found the name “Nephi” in the Apocrypha, which is important because the Apocrypha was included in Joseph Smith’s own Bible. Professor Quinn is correct in saying that Nephi was “a geographic name” in the “Apocrypha.” In the Book of Mormon it is the name of several men, a city, a land and a people. It seems much easier to believe that Joseph Smith simply borrowed the word from the Apocrypha than to try to accept Quinn’s idea and the complicated theory about “a generic” name of the “messenger Moroni.” With regard to the Book of Mormon name “Laman,” Quinn comments:

Although several of Joseph Smith’s scribes during the translation of the Book of Mormon spelled Laman’s name as it has been published from 1830 to the present, one unidentified scribe rendered it “lamen” in writing that portion of the manuscript . . . This was the spelling of the magically inscribed parchment, or lamen, as given in magic works . . . The Smith family had not only one such magical lamen, but three . . . (page 158) [page 200 in 2nd Ed.]

Although there are a few interesting parallels between magical names and those found in the Book of Mormon, the case does not appear conclusive, and Quinn himself says: “But just as there is more than one possible interpretation of Moroni’s name (chap. 5), there are non-magic parallels for the other Book of Mormon names.”

While we feel that Dr. Quinn has tended to minimize the importance of the influence of anti-Masonry on the Book of Mormon, and that he has also engaged in some needless speculation with regard to occultic names and numerology, taken as a whole, his book is a very important contribution to the study of Mormonism and magic. We tend to agree with Richard L. Bushman’s assessment:

This is an ingenious and erudite book which carries us further into the world of magic than any previous work on Mormonism. From now on, anyone dealing with magic in relationship to Mormonism will have to start with Quinn’s study.

**LUCIFER-GOD DOCTRINE**

Since the founding of the Mormon Church there has been a sharp separation between Mormonism and orthodox Christianity. In 1842 the Mormon Prophet Joseph Smith made this serious division between Mormonism and other churches very plain when he claimed that Jesus Christ Himself told him that he “must join none of them [i. e., the other churches], for they were all wrong; and . . . that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; . . .” (*Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith 1:19). A decade after Joseph Smith’s death, Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt answered some questions about other churches:

**Q.** Who founded the Roman Catholic Church?

**A.** The Devil, through the medium of Apostates, who subverted the whole order of God . . .

**Q.** But did not the first Protestant Reformers receive their ordination and authority from the Catholics?

**A.** Yes: and in this manner they received all the authority that their mother church was in possession of; and the mother having derived her authority from the Devil, could only impart that which his Satanic majesty was pleased to bestow upon her. (*The Seer*, page 205)

In 1958 Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie wrote the following under the heading “Church of the Devil”:

1. All churches or organizations . . . which are designed to take men on a course that leads away from God and his laws and thus from salvation in the kingdom of God; and 2. The Roman Catholic Church specifically—singly out, set apart, described, and designated as being “most abominable above all other churches” (1 Ne. 13:5). . . . There is no salvation outside this one true Church, . . . Any church or organization of any kind whatever which satisfies the innate religious longings of man and keeps him from coming to the saving truths of Christ and his gospel is therefore not of God. Such agencies have been and are founded or fostered by the devil who is the enemy to all righteousness. (*Mormon Doctrine*, page 129)

Apostle McConkie went on to call the Catholic Church a “satanic organization” and demonstrated that the Book of Mormon said that “the devil” was “the foundation of it.” He cited 1 Nephi 13:1-10 to prove his point. McConkie’s writings greatly offended the Catholics and in later editions the comments which specifically mentioned
the Catholic Church were removed. He spoke only of “the various branches of the great and abominable church” (1979 printing, page 138). Although the Mormon Church is now more subtle about its attacks on other churches, the secret temple ceremony still gives the impression that their ministers are working for the devil and that at least some orthodox Christian teachings come from him.

Many Christians, on the other hand, who recognize that Mormonism teaches “another gospel” than that which orthodox Christianity preaches, feel that it is one of the organizations that is (to use Apostle McConkie’s words) “founded or fostered by the devil.” This belief has been widely held ever since Mormonism began making its unique claims. During the last several years, however, there has been a movement to make the Mormons appear more dangerous and sinister than any other organization in the world. It is claimed, in fact, that the Mormon Church leaders secretly worship Lucifer and that they are bringing their people under his power and priesthood in the temple ceremony. It is this latest teaching about Mormonism which we will refer to as the Lucifer-God doctrine.

One of the chief advocates of the Lucifer-God doctrine is a man by the name of William Schnoebelen who maintains that he has been deeply involved in the occult for a long time. Among other things, he claims to have become a Witch in 1968, a Spiritualist Minister in 1972, a High Priest and Magus in 1973, a Wizard in 1974, a Master Mason in 1976, a Warlock in the Church of Satan in 1977 and a Gnostic Catholic Bishop in 1978. He also claims to have been in Voodoo and to have received a number of very high degrees in Masonry. In 1980 he received a Master’s Degree in Theology and joined the Mormon Church. Finally, on June 22, 1984, he became a Christian.

Mr. Schnoebelen claims that after he went into witchcraft, he changed his name to “Christopher Pendragon Syn.” According to a Temple Sealing Certificate, his wife was known as “Alexandria Y Apprope Pendragon.” He has furnished us with photocopies of certificates from the School of Wicca, the Mental Science Institute and the Church of Satan. All of these certificates contain the name “Syn.” He says that in 1978 his name was changed back to Schnoebelen. Mr. Schnoebelen has also provided photocopies of documents dealing with his name changes. He claims to have received a Master’s Degree from the Saint Francis Seminary in Milwaukee, and the seminary itself has verified that a man by the name of William Schnoebelen did receive a Master of Theology Degree. We have also confirmed that Mr. Schnoebelen was a member of the Mental Science Institute and have no reason to question his claims concerning the Church of Satan and the School of Wicca.

In any case, William Schnoebelen makes some very startling claims concerning Mormonism and witchcraft. For instance, he insists that the “highest ranking Witch in the USA” told him that Lucifer founded the Mormon Church and that it was prepared so that “witches and occultists” could hide out in it if trouble developed. As if this were not sensational enough, he has also stated that he met with the Mormon Apostle James E. Faust in 1981 and that Faust admitted that the Mormon temple ceremony was a witchcraft ritual and that Lucifer was the god of the temple. This last claim is very difficult for us to believe. Even if Apostle Faust were a Satan worshipper, as Schnoebelen maintains, would he reveal it to someone who had only been in the church for a year? There is really no way to prove or disprove Mr. Schnoebelen’s statements. According to Schnoebelen, the “highest ranking Witch in the USA,” who told him that the Mormon Church was founded by the Devil to protect witches is now dead, and it is unreasonable to believe that Apostle Faust would verify Schnoebelen’s statement even if it were true. We feel that it is just too risky for Mormon critics to accept these two highly significant claims without some additional evidence. An examination of William Schnoebelen’s writings shows that he is given to finding all kinds of trivial parallels between witchcraft and Mormonism. He, in fact, goes to great lengths to link the temple ceremony to Lucifer. Because of this bias, we have a difficult time putting our faith in his report of the conversation with Apostle Faust. It is very possible that Mr. Schnoebelen’s preconceived ideas about the relationship between witchcraft and the temple ceremony could have caused him to misunderstood Faust’s comments.

While Mr. Schnoebelen does not have any document or hard evidence for the two conversations, he has put forth two photocopies which could provide some important evidence linking the Mormon temple ceremony to satanic ritual if it can be established that they are authentic. The first is supposed to be from the “Grimorum Verum.” It has a prayer to the “Lord Lucifer,” and a few paragraphs later contains this blessing:

May you have health in the navel, marrow in the bones, strength in the [word blacked out by Schnoebelen “in the interest of decency”] and in the sinews; and power in the priesthood be upon you and upon your posterity through all generations of time and throughout all eternity.

This is very close to a portion of the temple ceremony which we have produced in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 472:
in research into the LDS endowment.” He went back to seek out some of his “old pupils” to obtain copies of the rites. He “found one isolated and rather strange fellow in Chicago” who gave his “a copy of a copy in his possession which he copied from me in 1977” of the material from the *Grimorum Verum*. The other photocopy from the *2nd Book of Wisdom* he obtained from “a former colleague high priest in Arkansas” (Letter from William Schnoebelen to Jerald Tanner, dated April 13, 1987).

From this it is obvious that the actual copies in Mr. Schnoebelen’s possession cannot be dated prior to 1985. (He was converted to Christianity on “June 22, 1984,” burned his papers at that time and then “about a year” later sought to obtain “copies of the rites.”) Since Mr. Schnoebelen has not provided the names or addresses for either the “rather strange fellow in Chicago” or the “high priest in Arkansas,” there is no way independent of Schnoebelen’s statement that we can actually date the material back beyond 1985.

One thing that is disturbing about Schnoebelen’s statement is that he says he “burnt all my occult and witchcraft materials.” If this is the case, why did he retain the three certificates from the Mental Science Institute, the School of Wicca and the Church of Satan? Photographs of these documents are found on pages 71, 74 and 75 of *Mormonism’s Temple of Doom*, published in 1987 by Triple J Publishers, PO Box 3367, Idaho Falls, ID 83403. We would think that the certificate from the Church of Satan would be deemed especially evil since it tells of Schnoebelen becoming a “Warlock” and having “knowledge of Satanic Theology, and undefiled wisdom of the Black Arts.” It also has the statement that it is done “By all the powers of Hell,” and has the signature of Anton Szandor La Vey, the “High Priest & Magus of the Black Order.” In addition, it has an upsidedown pentagram containing the goat’s head. Speaking concerning the “inverted pentagram,” William Schnoebelen says: “It is just too evil a sign—it draws demons!” (*Ibid.*, page 49). One would think that Mr. Schnoebelen would want to get rid of anything that draws demons. However this may be, we are left with this situation: the originals of the documents which are most important to show parallels to the temple ceremony were burned, whereas the certificates supporting William Schnoebelen’s involvement in the occult were preserved.

One serious problem with Schnoebelen’s material is that there is some evidence of evolution in his text since 1985. Mr. Schnoebelen published the purported extract from the *Grimorum Verum* in 1985 in a publication...
entitled, *Joseph Smith And The Temple Of Doom*. A significant number of changes were made when it was republished in 1986 under the title, *Documentation “Joseph Smith And The Temple of Doom.”* Finally, it appeared in 1987 in *Mormonism’s Temple of Doom*. It is interesting to note that two slightly different versions are found in this same book on pages 35-36 and 41. The one on pages 35-36 is very close to the 1986 printing. The version which appears on page 41 is printed in parallel columns with the temple ceremony. Except for the “obscenity” which Mr. Schnoebelen deleted, it has become absolutely identical to the Mormon ritual.

Below the reader will find a comparison of the way Mr. Schnoebelen’s extract was first published in 1985 with the way it appears today. We have placed the words which have been changed in italics and bold print:

*M[ay you have] health in the navel and marrow in your bones, *l*ust in your [- - -] and in your *s*inew!* **M**ay the power of the priesthood be upon you and upon all your posterity throughout all generations of time and all eternity. (Joseph Smith and the Temple of Doom, 1985, page 11)

Health in the navel, marrow in the bones, *s*trength in the [ . . . ] and in the sinews, *p*ower in the Priesthood be upon me and upon my posterity throughout all generations of time and throughout all eternity. (Mormonism’s Temple of Doom, 1987, page 41)

While the rules regarding quotations would probably allow the first three words (“May you have”) to be dropped and the word “health” to start with a capital letter, we have counted the deletion of these words as a change because the inclusion of the word “you” would clearly reveal that something was wrong with the text. It is obvious that the wording has been changed from the second person singular throughout the quotation to the first person singular. The word “you” certainly would not fit with “me” and “my.” It appears that in the original version the participants in the ceremony do not say these words. They are given to them as a blessing from someone else who is designated as “M.” However this may be, the fact that the text seems to grow closer to the Mormon temple ceremony with time is of some concern. This evolution of the text raises an important question: if this many changes have been made during the brief period in which we have been able to observe it, how many changes may have occurred in the previous decade? Unless Mr. Schnoebelen can provide an earlier text that can be verified, scholars will probably be skeptical of its value.

One test that William Schnoebelen’s documents can be submitted to is whether they are more closely related to the ancient or modern temple ceremony. The Mormon temple ceremony originated in the 1840s at Nauvoo, Illinois. Many important changes have been made in it since that time. For example, it had some bloody oaths which were modified so they would be more palatable to educated people (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*, pages 474-475). If Joseph Smith and Brigham Young borrowed from witchcraft ceremonies in the 1840s, then the text would have evolved further away from that of witchcraft as time passed. This can be clearly demonstrated with Masonic parallels to the temple ceremony. While the Mormon text is still like the Masonic ritual in many places, it has been modified in others so that it is scarcely recognizable. We must assume also, that changes have occurred in witchcraft rituals as time has passed. The two rituals, therefore, would have become more dissimilar as the years passed. Consequently, we should be very suspicious of any text purported to be from witchcraft which resembles the modern version of the temple ceremony more than the older version. If it is more like the modern ritual, then it is very likely that it has been plagiarized from Mormonism rather than the other way around.

We have carefully compared the two most startling portions of William Schnoebelen’s documents with different accounts of the temple ceremony published between 1853 and the present time and found that they closely resemble the modern version of the ceremony. Although we should probably state that the printed versions of the ceremony could have some inaccuracies in them, it still seems highly significant that no evidence whatsoever has been found to show that the Schnoebelen texts agree with the older renditions of the temple ritual. We have printed our study of the comparisons of these texts in a new book entitled, *The Lucifer-God Doctrine*. Those who are interested in the evidence can consult that publication. That no support appears in the earlier versions of the endowment ceremony should be of grave concern to those who want to use these texts to prove the Mormon ceremony came from witchcraft. The evidence seems to demonstrate that the texts are recent productions that are dependant on either a recent printed copy (such as the one in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*) or someone going into the temple to get the text. When we add the fact that these texts resemble the modern ceremony to the questions concerning their provenance and the changes that have been made since 1985, we feel that it would be unsafe to put one’s faith in them.
Some very important information, which could help us understand the William Schnoebelen material, has recently come to light. We tried to locate the Mental Science Institute in March, 1987, by writing to the box number on Mr. Schnoebelen’s certificate. The letter was returned from Minneapolis with the statement: “Attempted —Not Known.” This, of course, caused us some concern. In doing further research with regard to this organization we were referred to Jack Roper, an authority on occultic organizations. Although Mr. Roper did not know where the organization is located today, he assured us that it had existed. He had, in fact, met B.C. “Eli” Taylor, whose name appears on Schnoebelen’s certificate of ordination to be a “High Priest After The Order of Melchizedek” in the Mental Science Institute. Mr. Schnoebelen claims that he was the witch who told him the Mormon temple ceremonies had important “occult power . . . that could be achieved nowhere else.” In any case, Jack Roper indicated that he thought this group had doctrines that were similar to Mormonism. Fortunately, Mr. Roper was familiar with a printed article on the Mental Science Institute. In this article, Gordon Melton mentioned a parallel to “Mormon theology” and gave this revealing information:

**Mental Science Institute.** Eli Taylor, who is the grand master of what is termed druidic witchcraft, is a descendant of Thomas Hartley who was burned at the stake for practicing witchcraft in England in the early 1550’s. . . . The Mental Science Institute was organized in the late 1960’s as a focus for Taylor’s brand of herbal magick.

He traces his particular kind of witchcraft to the druids, and it is thus termed druidic. . . . The Mental Science Institute is the most male oriented of all the Wicca groups and has a theology closely related to Western ritual magick and Christianity. The universe is seen in a series of levels—celestial, terrestrial and telestial. The telestial is divided into sublevels at the top of which is God the Father, followed by the Lord of Lights, arc-angels and angels. Man, animals and plants are on the terrestrial level. At the lowest level, the telestial level, are the mineral, chemical and electrical elements and creative thought. Just as there is a Father, there is a Mother of all men.

In a concept very close to Mormon theology, the Mental Science Institute teaches that the Father must at one time have been a child. The children of God will, in like measure, become gods. Reincarnation is part of that process. . . .

The Mental Science Institute is headquartered in Minneapolis and has covens throughout the Midwest. *A Word to the Wise* is a monthly newsletter. (*The Encyclopedia of American Religions*, 1978, vol. 2, page 285)

This article provides information which seems to show that the Mental Science Institute has borrowed some of its ideas from Mormonism. Besides the parallel concerning the Father having “been a child,” we have the words “celestial, terrestrial and telestial.” Those who are familiar with Mormonism know that Joseph Smith taught that there were three kingdoms in heaven, the celestial, terrestrial and telestial (see *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 76). The idea of three heavens is not unique to Mormonism. For many years we were aware that the mystic Emanuel Swedenborg taught this doctrine before Joseph Smith was born, but we did not know whether Smith could have seen his writings. D. Michael Quinn, however, has furnished information which shows that it is possible that Joseph Smith did have access to Swedenborg’s teachings:

. . . the only pre-1830 advocate of three heavens was apparently Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg. . . . Swedenborg’s publications in England since 1784, and in the United States since 1812, affirmed, “There are three heavens,” described them as “intirely [sic] distinct from each other,” called the first heaven “the celestial kingdom,” and stated that the inhabitants of the three heavens corresponded to the sun, moon, and stars . . . These views were summarized in a front-page article of 1808 at Canandaigua, New York, and in a publication that had been in Joseph Smith’s hometown library since 1817 . . . (*Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 1987, page 174) [2nd Ed., page 217]

While Joseph Smith’s view on three heavens could have been derived from Swedenborg’s writings, the idea that one of the kingdoms was named the “terrestrial” kingdom seems to be unique to Mormonism. (The word terrestrial, of course, actually means earthly.) The fact that the Mental Science Institute used the word terrestrial as a name of one of the levels of the universe leads to the view that this organization was borrowing from Mormonism. The thing that really cinches the matter, however, is the use of the word telestial for the lowest level. It is a well-known fact that this is not a real word. It was, in fact, invented by Joseph Smith in the early 1830s. It is also interesting to note that in Mormon theology the celestial kingdom itself is divided into three levels and that God the Father dwells in the highest level. The Mental Science Institute appears to have also borrowed this concept. Gordon Melton says that this group believes that the “celestial is divided into sublevels at the top of which is God the Father, . . .”
Now that we know that the Mental Science Institute was borrowing from Mormonism, it makes it even more difficult to believe that William Schnoebelen’s typewritten sheets can add any important knowledge concerning the relationship of witchcraft to Mormonism. Even if he could establish that what he has come from witchcraft ceremonies, how would we know that portions of the Mormon temple ceremony were not interpolated into these documents before they came into his hands? It seems obvious that “Eli” was well acquainted with the temple ceremony. Mr. Schnoebelen says that his “witchcraft mentor . . . told me that the highest form of witchcraft was practiced in the Mormon temples” (Mormonism’s Temple of Doom, page 11). Schnoebelen also says that their “witch ‘Master’ told us that the Mormon temple was an especially powerful place to go. . . . there was an occult power to be had in the temple that could be achieved nowhere else . . . .” This would almost lead one to believe that Eli had been in the temple himself, but even if this is not the case, he could have read the expose printed in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? or derived the information from others who had been through the ritual. It is very possible that this “witch,” who thought so highly of the ritual, might borrow portions of it to include in his own ceremonies.

However this may be, it appears that there are so many uncertainties about the typewritten pages which have been put forth to demonstrate the link between Mormonism and witchcraft that they are of little value. They cannot, in fact, be dated with any certainty. On the other hand, the strong parallels between the Mormon temple ceremony and Masonry which we have presented in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 486-489, are documented from books published between 1827 and 1860. A reverse borrowing—i.e., the Masons taking from the Mormons—is impossible since most of the material is from a book written almost two decades before the Mormons even created their ceremonies.

We fear that those who are so diligently seeking for demonic explanations for things that can be explained in other ways may be doing a real disservice to the cause of evangelizing the Mormons. Their strong and often unfounded accusations are making Mormons very bitter against those who are trying to labor among them. In addition, it is causing fear and distrust among some of those who want to witness to the Mormons. They are obviously becoming fearful that they might be dealing with hard-core Satanists. Some people are now afraid to come to Utah because of the wide publicity given to this matter. This is a real shame because what we really need is more dedicated Christians living in Utah. Some of those who have been exposed to this type of teaching are fearful of witnessing to Mormons lest they encounter exceptionally evil and powerful spirits. Although we do believe in demons, we do not feel that the majority of Mormons are actually possessed by them. We are sorry we have to say this, but it seems there are some people who will accept any wild story or theory if it puts the Mormons in a bad light. They reason that since they already know that Mormonism is false, it is all right to use anything that has an adverse effect on the system. The question of whether an accusation is true or false appears to be only a secondary consideration. It almost seems, in fact, that there is a deliberate attempt to make Mormons angry. While we must admit that at the present time this method seems to be producing some results, we feel that the long term effects will be disastrous. Even if several thousand people do leave the Mormon Church through this method, hundreds of thousands will be hardened and it will be very difficult to win them to Christ in the years to come. It is our feeling that if all this time and money had been devoted to a more reasonable approach, we would have very good results and would not have the backlash and bitterness that we have to contend with. We know that the gospel message itself is offensive to those who do not wish to receive it, but why should we add unnecessary stumbling blocks?

In almost thirty years of researching Mormonism we have not found any evidence that the Mormon Church leaders have ever held to a Lucifer-God doctrine. While it may be argued that their belief in a plurality of gods and that men may become gods is satanic because it leads people away from the true God, there is not any evidence to support the accusation that church officials have ever publicly or privately advocated the worship of Lucifer. All the evidence, in fact, points to the contrary. In all of our research regarding Mormonism, which goes back to handwritten documents created in the 1830s, we have failed to uncover any evidence for the Lucifer-God doctrine. On the other hand, we have found numerous references to the Adam-God doctrine (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 173-178D). Some of the material we have had access to is highly sensitive and reveals things that the Mormon Church did not want the world to know. While we have found material showing that Joseph Smith and other early Mormon leaders were influenced by magical practices and that there was a great deal of corruption in the early Mormon Church, we have not found a scintilla of evidence supporting the Lucifer-
God doctrine. If we had found any such evidence, we certainly would have been the very first to publish it! We plead with all those who are currently making these charges to prayerfully consider this matter and at least take the time to read our new booklet, *The Lucifer-God Doctrine*.

**A MAGIC COVER-UP**

The Bible strongly condemns the practice of magic throughout its pages. In Deuteronomy 18:10-13 we read:

> There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch,
> Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard or a necromancer.
> For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee.

In the New Testament “witchcraft” is listed among the evil “works of the flesh,” and the Apostle Paul says that those who “do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21). Acts 19:19 informs us concerning some people who “used curious arts” before they were converted. At the time they confessed the Lord, however, they “brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.”

Throughout the 20th century Mormon leaders have made similar statements about magic in their writings. Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, for instance, made these emphatic declarations:

> Necromancy is that form of divination which attempts to fortell the future by consultation with the dead. Sometimes the term is enlarged to include magic in general. . . . the Lord calls it an abomination and expressly commands Israel to avoid it. (*Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, page 526)

> Use of power gained from the assistance or control of evil spirits is called sorcery. Frequently this power is used in divination, necromancy, and witchcraft. . . . Sorcery has been a sinful evil in all ages. . . . at the Second Coming of the Lord sorcerers will be destroyed. . . . they shall be cast into that hell which is prepared for them . . . and finally. . . . they shall be debased with a telestial inheritance in eternity. (*Ibid.*, page 747)

Most Mormons have not been aware of Joseph Smith’s involvement in the occult because there has been a cover-up. As Wesley P. Walters points out, Joseph Smith himself started that cover-up in the 1830s:

> . . . once he had determined to give up money digging after his close brush with the law in 1826, this occult religious interest made it easy for him to think in terms of producing a religious book from the gold plates he claimed to have discovered through the same stone he had used for his treasure hunting. . . . When Joseph later recounts this early period of his life, he minimizes his money digging as a minor affair of manual labor for an old gentleman named Josiah Stowell, whom he finally “prevailed” with to abandon such useless activity, and the many testimonies to his money digging came to be regarded as slander manufactured to persecute the young prophet of the Lord. That period when he was a sorcerer and glass looker using occult religious practices in a superstitious confidence enterprise is transformed by Joseph into the period of preparation for him to become the instrument of the Lord for bringing forth the fullness of the gospel by the publication of the Book of Mormon. . . . Sadly, his new role of prophet and seer ultimately led him further and further from the Bible's Good News about a Savior who was rich but empowered Himself to the extreme in dying forsaken on a cross for our sins, so that we might become truly rich beyond all dreams of earthly avarice through His free gift of eternal life. (*Joseph Smith's Bainbridge, N. Y., Court Trials*, Part 2, pages 128, 130 and 131)

With the mounting evidence of Joseph Smith’s involvement in magic, members of the Mormon Church are faced with a very weighty decision—i. e., can they accept as a prophet a man who was involved in occult practices at the very time he was supposed to have been receiving revelations from God? From the standpoint of the Bible, the question can only be answered No.

For those who cannot afford D. Michael Quinn’s book on the relationship of Mormonism and magic, we recommend our work, *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*.

**FALSIFYING HISTORY**

We are very happy to report to our readers that all of Joseph Smith’s diaries are now available. A number of years ago we set out to publish Smith’s diaries.
With the help of H. Michael Marquardt, who made the transcriptions from microfilms and photocopies, we were successful in printing the diaries written between 1832 and 1839. Unfortunately, the fact that the Mormon Church would not allow us access to the original diaries and the poor quality of the microfilms which were then available prevented us from publishing the important Nauvoo diaries written between 1842 and 1844. Some people felt that the Mormon Church would never allow these diaries to be published, and although we felt we had a right to publish them, we feared that we might have a costly legal battle with the church. Fortunately, the confrontation never took place, and now Signature Books has printed all of the diaries in one volume. As far as we know, the Mormon Church has not filed a suit against this company. Church leaders apparently realized that even though they have possession of the original diaries, they do not own the manuscript rights. Scott H. Faulring, whom we consider to be one of the best Mormon scholars, made the transcriptions from microfilm copies of the originals which were better than the ones available to H. Michael Marquardt. The Church Historical Department could have made Mr. Faulring’s work much easier by allowing him access to the original documents; instead, however, Faulring sadly admitted that “I was not allowed access to the originals of any of the documents, all of which are currently housed in the archives of the Historical Department, . . .” (Introduction, page xv)

Scott Faulring’s monumental work is published under the title, An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith. Unfortunately, the edition was “strictly limited to five hundred copies.” Signature Book has almost sold out this printing and we were only able to obtain 50 copies. At the present time they are available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry for $50.00 a copy (please add $2.00 for postage and handling on this particular book). While this price may seem high, the value of the first printing of all of Joseph Smith’s diaries will no doubt increase as it becomes a collector’s item. Signature Book previously published a limited edition of the Wilford Woodruff Journals for $400 and we understand that they are now worth twice that amount.

The Joseph Smith diaries are extremely important because of the light they throw on the printed History of the Church. The reader will remember that many years ago, before we had ever seen a microfilm of the diaries, we charged that although the title page for the History of the Church claimed that it was the “History of Joseph Smith, the Prophet BY HIMSELF,” evidence derived from many sources showed that a large portion of it was written after his death (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 126-142D). Dean C. Jessee, who was a member of the staff at the LDS Church Historian’s Office, later admitted that only about 40% of the History was actually written during Joseph Smith’s lifetime, and that 60% was actually authored by church officials after his death! We noted that although Joseph Smith’s diaries were probably used, there was no way to know whether they were accurately cited and that many things had come from diaries, newspapers and other publications written by other people. We produced evidence showing that these entries were altered to the first person to make it appear that they were actually written by Joseph Smith. Later we learned that portions of it were not even based on other people’s written records, but instead on whatever the Mormon leaders felt Joseph Smith should have said. The precarious nature of trying to write Joseph Smith’s history after his death and palm it off as though he were the author is demonstrated by an amusing incident. Under the date of December 26, 1842, the following is recorded in Joseph Smith’s diary: “[At] Home. Sister Emma sick, had another chill” (An American Prophet’s Record, page 258). In a speech delivered at BYU on August 6, 1987, the Mormon scholar Dean Jessee, who is an expert on Joseph Smith’s history, said that the “compiler of the [Joseph Smith] history misread the word chill for the word child, and thereby created an event that did not occur.” In the History of the Church, vol. 5, page 209, the statement concerning Emma’s illness was expanded from seven words to twenty-two, and the chill was transformed into “a son”:

On my return home, I found my wife Emma sick. She was delivered of a son, which did not survive its birth.

The Mormon officials who worked on Joseph Smith History after his death were obviously aware that there was no child living at that time who could have been born on December 26, 1842. They, therefore, made Joseph Smith say that the child “did not survive its birth.” How they were able to determine that this nonexistent child was “a son” rather than a daughter is somewhat of a mystery. While this humorous incident is not really too important as far as history goes, it certainly shows the folly of forging a first-person type of history after someone’s death. In his new book, Trials of Discipleship: The Story of William Clayton, a Mormon, the Mormon scholar James B. Allen acknowledges that Joseph Smith was credited for things he did not do:
Comparing the entries in Clayton’s journal with the History of the Church provides an interesting insight into the way the History was compiled. It is obvious that Clayton was the source for this part. But in the History of the Church Clayton is not mentioned at all—on either date—and Joseph Smith is portrayed as the one selling the property and receiving the money. Clayton, of course, was always acting as Joseph’s agent, and it appears as if whoever compiled this portion of the History of the Church was simply trying to give the prophet credit for doing as much as possible. This is also an example of the way Clayton was frequently subordinated—his activities overshadowed or ignored. But the fact that he was one of those who worked on compiling the History of the Church may be evidence that he willingly took the subordination without complaint. (Trials of Discipleship, page 106)

James B. Allen also made these revealing comments about Joseph Smith’s History:

The history was only partially complete when Joseph died, and it was finally finished in 1858. . . . One problem with Joseph Smith’s published History of the Church, however, is that it does not reflect Joseph himself as much as it reflects the image of Joseph as he was seen by scribes and journalists. The History is written in the first person, as if Joseph were doing the writing, though usually the first person account of an event is really a paraphrase or adaptation of someone else’s account. At times the only essential difference is that “Joseph,” “he,” or “President Smith” is changed to “I.” . . . William Clayton’s journal provided many such entries, which suggests that much of the “first person” Joseph Smith portrayed in the History is, in reality, only the Joseph Smith that William Clayton or someone else saw and heard. Even with that qualification, however, the work is invaluable, but there is a continuing concern whether the history as reported is always the way Joseph saw it or would have written it himself . . .

The Kinderhook episode was only a sidelight, and nothing came of it, but William Clayton made other, much more important, contributions to what became Joseph Smith’s official history. Several entries in Clayton’s Nauvoo Journal were the direct sources for entries in the history. . . . In addition, Clayton was one of several scribes who kept the “Book of the Law of the Lord.” . . . it also contains some manuscript sources used in compiling the History, and about sixty-one pages of this material were written by Clayton, mostly in the third person, and then later transposed to the first person for the sake of the published history. (Ibid., pages 115, 116 and 118)

Mormon apologists have often referred to Joseph Smith’s prophecies concerning the Latter-day Saints coming to the Rocky Mountains and the fact that Steven A. Douglas would aspire to the presidency of the United States but fail if he opposed Mormonism as evidence of Smith’s divine calling. The evidence, however, shows that both these famous prophecies found in the History of the Church are forgeries added after Joseph Smith’s death. The evidence against the Rocky Mountain prophecy is clearly detailed in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?, pages 133-135, and 142B-142C and that concerning the fraudulent nature of the Steven A. Douglas prophecy is found in The Tanners on Trial, pages 18, 19, 134 and 135. For a long time James B. Allen has hoped to find some contemporary evidence for the Douglas prophecy. So far, however, he has found no support for it, and even though he has not completely given up, he admits the possibility that “Clayton, who was still working with the church historians and clerks when the History was being completed, was asked about the prophecy and, drawing on a vivid memory of the occasion, provided the expanded account” (Trials of Discipleship, page 120). A “memory of the occasion,” more than a decade after the purported prophecy is far inferior to a contemporary document. In all likelihood, the prophecy is about as accurate as the information concerning Joseph Smith’s “son, which did not survive its birth.”

The Mormon leaders are now condemning Mark Hofmann as a wicked deceiver for forging documents about Mormonism. They refuse, however, to face the facts concerning their own foundational documents. It appears to us that although Hofmann was lining his own pockets with the money from his forgeries, he was merely following in the footsteps of the early Mormon officials. He was taking actual historical sources and modifying them to the first person and supplying additional material from his own imagination. He felt, in fact, that he was helping restore what he believed to be the true history of the Mormon Church. Is this not exactly what church leaders did to Joseph Smith’s writings after his death? If Mark Hofmann had been alive in Brigham Young’s time, he would have had all the creative qualifications necessary to write Joseph Smith’s History. In fact, instead of being a prisoner, he might have been Church Historian!

• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •
THINK ABOUT IT!

World Vision magazine for October-November 1987, reported this stunning information about our apathy concerning the suffering which is going on in the world:

Early in August of this year, the nation’s news teams rushed to cover the crash of Northwest Airlines Flight 255. As the death toll rose to more than 150, every major newspaper and broadcast station pushed the story to the front and kept it there for days. It dominated the talk at bus stops and barber shops, at dinner tables and business meetings. Collectively, the nation noted it and shuddered.

Meanwhile, in a 24-hour period around the globe, enough children to fill 100 747 planes, died of malnutrition and related illnesses. But this tragedy, so much greater than the first, went almost unnoticed.

So you see why it troubles me that such a crucial movement as child survival is such a well kept secret. The United Nations and the World Health Organization and others have battled for years to hold down the appalling numbers of unnecessary deaths. Yet their work and the continuing crisis make few headlines. Apparently we lack a life-size picture of the problem. We fail to grasp the sheer number of children we are losing.

In the January 1985 issue of the Messenger we told of our interest in the area of world relief. At that time Utah Lighthouse Ministry decided to provide monthly support for five children under the World Vision Childcare Partner plan. This support includes food, medical relief, shelter and a demonstration of true Christian love. In the April 1986 issue of the Messenger we reported: “Because God has been so gracious in supplying all our needs, we have decided to take another step in faith. In the future we will be supporting 25 children.” God continued to bless our ministry and in March 1987 we “decided to take an even larger step of faith and expand the ministry TO SUPPORT 100 CHILDREN!” While we had some money designated for this work, it was basically a move made in faith that the Lord will continue to provide as the months passed by.

Although we cannot report at this time that this ministry has been expanded again, we are very grateful that the Lord has continued to supply the money for the 100 children. At one point our funds were just about exhausted, and this had us very concerned because we have certain obligations we must meet to continue our work among the Mormons. Fortunately, however, the Lord supplied the need in a marvelous way. We do hope that our friends will continue to pray earnestly about this matter and about the effectiveness of our work. We are continually getting good reports from Mormons who have come to know the Lord in a personal way, and we just thank God for this.

Those who are interested in helping out with this important ministry can send their tax deductible contributions to UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY, Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110.

OUR ANCESTRY QUESTIONED

Beginning in 1980, Robert and Rosemary Brown, a Mormon couple who live in Arizona, began questioning the claims of Mormon critics concerning their credentials and ancestry. They started out by showing that D. J. Nelson had a phony Doctor’s degree. They then attacked Walter Martin and Wayne Cowdery. They alleged that Wayne Cowdery was not a descendant of Oliver Cowdery, as he maintained, and that Walter Martin did not descend from Brigham Young. Moreover, they pounced upon Martin’s educational credentials and even questioned that he is an ordained minister. While the Browns certainly have a right to delve into these questions, they have made other serious charges that seem to go beyond the bounds of propriety.

Since we have made no special claims concerning educational credentials, Robert and Rosemary Brown have never questioned us regarding these matters. They have, however, through their attorney, tried to put us on the spot by asking for “genealogical verification” of our claims to be related to Brigham Young, the second president of the Mormon Church, and N. Eldon Tanner, who served in the First Presidency of the church. On August 27, 1982, we were mailed a letter from a lawyer representing the Religious Research Association—Robert Brown is listed as president of this organization. The letter read as follows:

I represent the Religious Research Association. They have asked me to write to you concerning numerous representations of your relationship to the Tanner Family and the Brigham Young Family. I was referred by my clients to a recent article in “Christianity Today” which evidently indicated that Mr. Jerold Tanner was related to LDS Church official N. Eldon Tanner and that Mrs. Sandra Tanner was a great-grand[d]aughter of Brigham Young. My clients have requested me to obtain genealogical verification of these relationships if possible. I would appreciate your response in providing the necessary information.
Although we have never been attacked in print about this matter, we recently received a letter from an individual who said a Mormon missionary maintained that our claims concerning our ancestry were not true. We feel, therefore, that the matter should be answered publicly. The question regarding the relationship of Jerald Tanner to N. Eldon Tanner, who was until recently a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, is answered in two different books. The first is entitled, *Descendants of John Tanner*, compiled by Maurice Tanner. It was published by the John Tanner Family Association in 1942. The second is *John Tanner and His Family*, by George S. Tanner. This book was also published by the John Tanner Family Association in 1974. Since N. Eldon Tanner himself gave a significant amount of money toward the publication of this last book (see Preface, page viii), it is inconceivable that it would contain information about Jerald Tanner if he was not part of the John Tanner family. The following, however, is found in the Introduction to *John Tanner and His Family*.

Other family members who are presently General Authorities are Hugh B. Brown, apostle and one-time counselor to President David O. McKay, and Nathan Eldon Tanner, apostle and counselor to four presidents. Presiding bishop of the church, Victor L. Brown is a descendant of John Tanner through Nathan. . . .

There are, of course, many family members who have done some writing. . . . But there is one couple who are unique because their writing is of an anti-Mormon nature. Jerald and Sandra Tanner are the only active anti-Mormons in the Tanner family the author is aware of. Their writings are quite extensive—the index files of the History Department of the church shows seventeen different publications. John Tanner would probably disapprove of this, as he would disapprove of any activity directed against the church he loved so well. . . . One of the chief traits of most Tanners is the desire to be where things are happening—where the action is. . . . Iona Jackson, daughter of Joseph Smith Tanner, says Brigham Young once commented that when he had a tough job to be done, he tried to find a Tanner. There is plenty of evidence that the Tanners got the job done. (*John Tanner and His Family*, pages 4, 12-13)

John Tanner, who is Jerald Tanner’s great-great-grandfather, joined the Mormon Church two years after it was organized. The following entry appears in Joseph Smith’s *History of the Church*, under the date of September 26, 1833: “Brother Tanner sent his two sons to Kirtland to learn the will of the Lord, whether he should remove to Zion or Kirtland” (vol. 1, page 410). He was “counseled” to come to Kirtland. After he arrived, he gave Joseph Smith a great deal of assistance in temporal matters. Under the date of December 5, 1835, Joseph Smith recorded that “Elder Tanner brought me half of a fatted hog for the benefit of my family” (*History of the Church*, vol. 2, page 327). John Tanner was very wealthy at the time he met Joseph Smith and it has been suggested that Joseph Smith took advantage of his generosity. M. R. Werner, for instance, related the following:

Manna from heaven arrived in the form of John Tanner, a convert from New York. He had been healed of a lame leg by a Mormon elder, and he therefore felt called upon to sell his extensive property in New York State and live in Kirtland. He arrived there just as the mortgage on the Temple ground was about to be foreclosed. It is said that a few days before his arrival the Prophet Joseph and his brethren had assembled in prayer-meeting and asked God to send them a brother with means to lift the mortgage. Perhaps this was so, but perhaps some one had whispered to Joseph Smith that John Tanner had just sold two large farms and 2,200 acres of valuable timber land. Nevertheless, the day after his arrival in Kirtland, Tanner was invited by the Prophet to meet with the High Council. The result of the meeting was that he lent Joseph Smith $2,000, and took his note, lent the Temple Committee $13,000 and took their note, and besides these loans made liberal donations to the Temple Fund. A short time later he signed a note for $30,000 worth of merchandise. And they made him an elder; they should have made him a saint. He has achieved, however, a species of canonization, for he is held up as an example of manly righteousness and noble obedience in Scraps of Biography, a book published by the Mormon Church for its young.

With the help of God and John Tanner the Temple was finally completed, . . . (*Brigham Young*, New York, 1925, pages 91-92)

On pages 74, 75 and 78 of his book, *John Tanner and His Family*, George S. Tanner comments:

The Werner account may be more dramatic than accurate, but that his [John Tanner’s] gifts were considerable is not in doubt, and that it completely broke him financially is beyond question. . . .

It is extremely difficult at this late date to know how much Mormonism cost John Tanner in Kirtland, Ohio, but it was a sizable amount. Nathan tells us that he came to Kirtland with $10,000 in hard money which probably meant silver or gold. In addition he was carrying $13,000 in merchandise which he signed over to the Temple Committee. It is doubtful that any of the loans were ever repaid. . . .
The author is frequently asked what motivated John Tanner to remain loyal to Joseph Smith and the church after having “staked his all on his faith, the Prophet and the Church, and lost.” Those who have not been fired with religious fervor are puzzled to the point of disbelief.

In 1844, John Tanner was called on a political mission to “electioneer for Joseph [Smith] to be the next President” of the United States (see History of the Church, vol. 6, pages 325 and 336). According to the Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia, vol. 4, page 801, before John Tanner started on this “political mission,” he went to see the Prophet Joseph Smith, whom he met in the street. He held the Prophet’s note for $2,000, loaned in 1835, to redeem the Kirtland Temple farm, and in the course of the conversation he handed the Prophet his note. The Prophet not understanding what he meant by it, asked what he would have him do with it, and Father Tanner replied: “Brother Joseph, you are welcome to it.” The Prophet then laid his right hand heavily upon Father Tanner’s shoulder and said: “God bless you, Father Tanner, your children shall never beg bread.” . . . He went upon his mission, and was in the East when the Prophet and Patriarch were assassinated; . . .

In the book, Descendants of John Tanner, the ancestry of Jerald Tanner can be traced. Myron Tanner is listed as a son of John Tanner on page 25. On page 47 Caleb Thomas Tanner is listed as Myron’s son. Caleb is listed on page 129 as the father of George Tanner (not to be confused with George S. Tanner, who wrote the book we have previously cited), and on page 329, a list of George Tanner’s children are given. The second child listed is “Jerald Dee Tanner, born June 1st, 1938 at Provo, Utah.”

N. Eldon Tanner’s descent is listed as follows: John Tanner had a son named Nathan (p. 36). Nathan was the father of John William Tanner (p. 38), who was the father of Nathan William Tanner (p. 93), and on page 255 we find that N. Eldon Tanner was the son of Nathan William Tanner. In addition to the data found in the two books published by the John Tanner Family Association, Michael Marquardt has obtained an “ARCHIVE RECORD” from the L.D.S. Genealogical Library which lists the genealogy from Myron (John Tanner’s son) to George (Jerald Tanner’s father). The information we have given in the two books and the Archive Record verifies the statement in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? concerning the relationship between Jerald Tanner and N. Eldon Tanner.

In the letter from the lawyer of the organization of which Robert Brown is president, it is stated that an article in Christianity Today said “that Mrs. Sandra Tanner was a great-grand[d]aughter of Brigham Young.” Actually, the article in Christianity Today, June 16, 1982, page 31, claims that “Sandra is the great-great-granddaughter of Brigham Young.” In any case, the fact that Sandra is a descendant of Brigham Young is very easy to prove. In fact, Robert and Rosemary Brown’s attack on Walter Martin’s ancestry provides the important keys. On page 282 of their book, They Lie in Wait to Deceive, vol. 3, “Brigham Young Jr.” is listed as Brigham Young’s son by his legal wife, Mary Ann Angell. On page 291 of the same book we read that one of the sources for “Brigham Young and his Descendants” is the “Family records of Viola Young Laxton.” These records “are found on microfilm at the LDS Genealogical Archives in Salt Lake City, Utah, and are available at any of the branch genealogical libraries.” It just so happens that Viola Young Laxton is Sandra Tanner’s aunt and we have a photocopy of a genealogical record showing the ancestry from Brigham Young, Jr., down to Sandra’s mother. As we have already noted, the Browns mention Brigham Young, Jr., (Sandra’s great-grandfather) as being President Brigham Young’s son. Viola Young Laxton’s document shows that Apostle Brigham Young, Jr., married Abigail Stevens and had a son (Sandra’s grandfather) named Walter Stevens Young. Walter Stevens Young married Sylvia Amelia Pearce who gave birth to Georgia Young (Sandra’s mother) in 1915. Georgia Young married Ivan Raymond McGee in 1936. Their daughter, Sandra McGee, married Jerald Tanner in 1959. Sandra remembers visiting her great-grandmother, Abigail Stevens Young, when she was a child and has preserved a clipping from a Salt Lake City newspaper, dated December 7, 1954, which contains this interesting historical information:

Mrs. Abbie Stevens Young . . . widow of Brigham Young Jr. and one of Utah’s first trained nurses, died at her home Monday . . .

The last surviving daughter-in-law of President Brigham Young . . . Mrs. Young married Brigham Young Jr. in the old Salt Lake Endowment House on Oct. 1, 1887. President of the Council of the Twelve, he died in 1903, widowing Mrs. Young, then 33, with seven children.

Since many articles and books have already been written on Brigham Young, the second president of the Mormon Church, we will not take the space to say anything more about him here.

While we disagree with the Browns concerning Joseph Smith and the truthfulness of Mormonism, we do agree that those who write against the Mormon Church
should be willing to submit to an examination of their own claims, ancestry and credentials. While we do not believe that it makes people any more qualified to write on Mormonism if they are descended from prominent Mormons, it would certainly be a blow to our integrity if it could be demonstrated that we lied about our ancestry. In this short article we have clearly demonstrated that our claims can be verified. As the Browns are prone to say after presenting their evidence: CASE CLOSED, November 2, 1987.

* * * BOOKS * * *

Confessions of a White Salamander, by Jerald Tanner. A sequel to Tracking the White Salamander: Contains lengthy extracts from Hofmann’s confession. Price: $3.95

Hofmann’s Confession. A photographic reprint of the transcripts of Mark Hofmann’s confession concerning the forgery of Mormon documents. Three volumes. Price: $25.00

Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, by D. Michael Quinn. Price: $14.95

The Lucifer-God Doctrine, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Price: $1.00

Indian Origins & The Book of Mormon, by Dan Vogel. Shows that the Book of Mormon fits well into “the pre-1830 environment of Joseph Smith.” Price: $8.95


Capt. Wm. Morgan’s Exposition of Freemasonry: (Photo-reprint of 1827 ed.) One of the works used in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? to compile the parallels between Mormonism and Masonry. Price: $3.00

Where Does It Say That? by Bob Witte. Over 100 photos of oft-quoted pages from early LDS sources. Price: $5.95


Mere Christianity, by C. S. Lewis. Good defense and explanation of Christianity. Price: $3.95

Mormon Neo-Orthodoxy: A Crisis Theology, by O. Kendall White, Jr. Price: $11.95


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POLYGAMY AND TRUTH

FROM ITS INCEPTION TO A UNITED STATES SENATE INVESTIGATION

In his book, *Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth*, 1951, page 324, Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe contended that “The record of Joseph’s life is one of honesty, He taught honesty in all affairs; he insisted that his people be honest; . . .” In the single volume edition of *Evidences and Reconciliations*, page 282, Apostle Widtsoe boasted: “The Church ever operates in full light. There is no secrecy about its doctrine, aim or work.” On page 226 of the same book, Widtsoe said that “From the beginning of its history the Church has opposed unsupported beliefs. It has fought half-truth and untruth.” In this article we want to take a close look at Joseph Smith’s doctrine of plural marriage in the light of Apostle Widtsoe’s statements concerning truth.

A TANGLED WEB

The Prophet Joseph Smith was obviously reflecting on the question of whether polygamy was right or wrong when he wrote the Book of Mormon. He ended up taking a very strong stand against it. In Jacob 2:23-24 we read:

But the word of God burdens me because of your grosser crimes. For behold, thus saith the Lord: This people begin to wax in iniquity; they understand not the scriptures, for they seek to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms, because of the things which were written concerning David, and Solomon his son. Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord.

The first edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, printed in 1835, also denounced the practice: “Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy: we declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife, and one woman, but one husband, except in the case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again” (*Doctrine and Covenants*, section 101, verse 4). This denial of polygamy, was printed in every edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* until the year 1876. At that time the Mormon leaders inserted section 132, which permits a plurality of wives. Obviously, it would have been too contradictory to have one section condemning polygamy and another approving of it in the same book! Therefore, the section condemning polygamy was completely removed from the *Doctrine and Covenants*.

The section which was added to the *Doctrine and Covenants* in 1876 was a revelation given by Joseph Smith on July 12, 1843. It is still published in the *Doctrine and Covenants* even though the church has gone back to practicing monogamy. The following is taken from Joseph Smith’s revelation (the reader will notice that it begins by contradicting the statement in the Book of Mormon which said that “David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, . . .”):

\[
\text{Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord justified my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses,}
\]

*** Extra Copies of This Issue Will Be Sent Free ***
David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines—

Therefore, prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you; for all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same.

For behold, I reveal unto you a new and an everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory.

And again, very I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, . . . they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation . . .

Then they shall be gods, because they have no end; . . .

God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife. . . .

Was Abraham, therefore, under condemnation? Verily I say unto you, Nay; for I, the Lord, commanded it. . . .

Abraham received concubines, and they bore him children; and it was accounted unto him for righteousness, . . .

David also received many wives and concubines, and also Solomon and Moses my servants. . . . and in nothing did they sin save in those things which they received not of me.

David’s wives and concubines were given unto him of me, . . .

And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith, receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph, and who are virtuous and pure before me; and those who are not pure, and have said they were pure, shall be destroyed, saith the Lord God . . .

Let no one, therefore, set on my servant Joseph; for I will justify him; . . .

And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood—if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then is he justified; he cannot commit adultery with that that belongeth unto him and to no one else.

And if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given unto him; therefore is he justified. (Doctrine and Covenants, section 132, verses 1-4, 19, 20, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 52, 60-62)

Just when and how the practice of plural marriage started in the Mormon Church has caused much controversy. There is evidence, however, to show that it was secretly practiced when the church was in Kirtland, Ohio, in the 1830’s. In the Introduction to volume 5 of Joseph Smith’s History of the Church, Mormon historian B. H. Roberts reveals that the “date in the heading of the Revelation [July 12, 1843] . . . notes the time at which the revelation was committed to writing, not the time at which the principles set forth in the revelation were first made known to the Prophet.” The Mormon writer John J. Stewart commented: “. . . Joseph as a servant of God was authorized to enter plural marriage, and it is not at all unlikely that he did so in the early or mid-1830’s. Perhaps Nancy Johnson or Fanny Alger was his first ‘plural’ wife at Hiram or Kirtland, Ohio” (Brigham Young and His Wives, page 31). Oliver Cowdery, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, claimed that there was a relationship between Joseph Smith and Fanny Alger but he felt it was an adulterous relationship. In a letter dated January 21, 1838, Cowdery wrote:

When he [Joseph Smith] was there we had some conversation in which in every instance I did not fail to affirm that what I had said was strictly true. A dirty, nasty, filthy affair of his and Fanny Alger’s was talked over in which I strictly declared that I had never deviated from the truth in the matter, and as I supposed was admitted by himself. (Letter written by Oliver Cowdery and recorded by his brother Warren Cowdery; see photograph in The Mormon Kingdom, vol. 1, page 27)

As we have shown, Mormon apologists put the best possible light on this embarrassing situation. Andrew Jenson, who was the Assistant Church Historian, made a list of 27 women who were sealed to Joseph Smith. In this list he talked of “Fanny Alger, one of the first plural wives sealed to the Prophet” (Historical Record, May 1887, vol. 6, page 233).

In any case, Mormon leaders admit that by July 12, 1843, when the revelation was supposed to have been given, Joseph Smith had already acquired plural wives. The revelation itself makes it clear that he was already involved with a number of women besides his wife, Emma: “And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith, receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph, . . .” (verse 52)

The revelation itself (verse 61) makes it clear that the first wife must “give her consent.” Joseph Smith, however, did not follow the rules of his own revelation, for he took plural wives without seeking consent. Emily Dow Partridge, for instance, testified that she and her sister were married to Joseph without Emma’s consent:

. . . the Prophet Joseph and his wife Emma offered us a home in their family. . . . We had been there about a year when the principle of plural marriage was made known to us, and I was married to Joseph Smith on the 4th of March 1843, Elder Heber C. Kimball performing the
ceremony. My sister Eliza was also married to Joseph a few days later. This was done without the knowledge of Emma Smith. Two months afterward she consented to give her husband two wives, providing he would give her the privilege of choosing them. She accordingly chose my sister Eliza and myself, and to save family trouble Brother Joseph thought it best to have another ceremony performed. Accordingly on the 11th of May, 1843, we were sealed to Joseph Smith a second time, in Emma’s presence, . . . From that very hour, however, Emma was our bitter enemy. We remained in the family several months after this, but things went from bad to worse until we were obligated to leave the house and find another home. (Historical Record, vol. 6, page 240)

As we have already indicated, Assistant Church Historian Andrew Jenson listed 27 women who were sealed to Joseph Smith. The Mormon author John J. Stewart, however, states that Smith “married many other women, perhaps three or four dozen or more . . .” (Brigham Young and His Wives, page 31). In No Man Knows My History, Fawn M. Brodie included a list of 48 women who may have been married to Joseph Smith. Stanley S. Ivins, who was considered to be “one of the great authorities on Mormon polygamy,” said that the number of Joseph Smith’s wives “can only be guessed at, but it might have gone as high as sixty or more” (Western Humanities Review, vol. 10, pages 232-233).

In the Preface to the Second Edition of her book No Man Knows My History, Fawn Brodie revealed:

. . . over two hundred women, apparently at their own request, were sealed as wives to Joseph Smith after his death in special temple ceremonies. Moreover, a great many distinguished women in history, including several Catholic saints, were also sealed to Joseph Smith in Utah. I saw these astonishing lists in the Latter-day Saint Genealogical Archives in Salt Lake City in 1944.

Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe admitted that “Women no longer living, whether in Joseph’s day or later, have also been sealed to the Prophet for eternity” (Evidences and Reconciliations, single volume edition, pages 342-343). If the Mormon doctrine concerning plural marriage were true, Joseph Smith would have hundreds of wives in the resurrection!

Some of the Mormon men seemed to have an insatiable desire for plural wives. Wilford Woodruff, the fourth president of the church, was sealed to about 400 dead women. According to the journal of the Mormon Apostle Abraham H. Cannon, a man could have up to 999 wives sealed to him for eternity:

THURSDAY, APRIL 5th, 1894. . . . I met with the Quorum and Presidency in the temple. . . . President Woodruff then spoke “. . . In searching out my genealogy I found about four hundred of my female kindred who were never married. I asked Pres. Young what I should do with them. He said for me to have them sealed to me unless there were more that [than?] 999 of them. The doctrine startled me, but I had it done, . . .” (“Daily Journal of Abraham H. Cannon,” April 5, 1894, vol. 18, pages 66-67; original located at the Brigham Young University Library)

OTHER MEN’S WIVES

The fact that Joseph Smith asked for other men’s wives was made very plain in a sermon given in the Tabernacle by Jedediah M. Grant, second counselor to Brigham Young. In this sermon, delivered February 19, 1854, Grant revealed:

When the family organization was revealed from heaven—the patriarchal order of God, and Joseph began, on the right and on the left, to add to his family, what a quaking there was in Israel. Says one brother to another, “Joseph says all covenants are done away, and none are binding but the new covenants: now suppose Joseph should come and say he wanted your wife, what would you say to that?” “I would tell him to go to hell.” This was the spirit of many in the early days of this Church. . . .

What would a man of God say, who felt aright, when Joseph asked him for his money? He would say, “Yes, and I wish I had more to help to build up the kingdom of God.” Or if he came and said, “I want your wife?” “O yes,” he would say, “here she is, there are plenty more.” . . . Did the Prophet Joseph want every man’s wife he asked for? . . . If such a man of God should come to me and say, “I want your gold and silver, or your wives,” I should say, “Here they are, I wish I had more to give you, take all I have got.” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 2, pages 13-14)

Ann Eliza Young, who had been married to Brigham Young, charged that Joseph Smith was guilty of adultery:

Joseph not only paid his addresses to the young and unmarried women, but he sought “spiritual alliance” with many married ladies . . . He taught them that all former marriages were null and void, and that they were at perfect liberty to make another choice of a husband. The marriage covenants were not binding, because they were ratified only by Gentile laws. . . . consequently all the women were free. . . .

One woman said to me not very long since, while giving me some of her experiences in polygamy: “The greatest trial I ever endured in my life was living with my husband and deceiving him, by receiving Joseph’s attentions whenever he chose to come to me.”
This woman, and others, whose experience has been very similar, are among the very best women in the church; they are as pure-minded and virtuous women as any in the world. They were seduced under the guise of religion, . . .

Some of these women have since said they did not know who was the father of their children; this is not to be wondered at, for after Joseph's declaration annulling all Gentile marriages, the greatest promiscuity was practiced; and, indeed, all sense of morality seemed to have been lost by a portion at least of the church. (Wife No. 19, 1876, pages 70-71)

The Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe admitted that Joseph Smith was sealed to married women, but he claimed that they were not to be his wives until after death:

7. Another kind of celestial marriages seems to have been practiced in the early days of plural marriage. It has not been practised since Nauvoo days, for it is under Church prohibition. Zealous women, married or unmarried, . . . considered their condition in the hereafter. Some of them asked that they might be sealed to the Prophet for eternity. They were not to be his wives on earth, in mortality, but only after death in the eternities. . . . Such marriages led to misunderstandings by those not of the Church. . . . Therefore any ceremony uniting a married woman, for example to Joseph Smith for eternity seemed adulterous to such people. Yet, in any day, in our day, there may be women who prefer to spend eternity with another than their husband on earth. (Evidences and Reconciliations, 1960, page 343)

John A. Widtsoe's statement that Joseph Smith did not live with the married women to whom he was sealed is certainly false. Patty Bartlett Sessions, the wife of John A. Widtsoe, stated:

I was sealed to Joseph Smith by Willard Richards Mar 9, 1842, in Newel K. Whitney's chamber, Nauvoo, for time and all eternity, . . . Sylvia my daughter was present when I was sealed to Joseph Smith. I was after Mr. Sessions' death sealed to John Parry for time on the 27th, March, 1852, GSL City. (Journal of Patty Sessions, as quoted in Intimate Disciple, Portrait of Willard Richards, 1957, page 611)

Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, the wife of Adam Lightner, stated:

Joseph said I was his before I came here and he said all the Devils in Hell should never get me from him, I was sealed to him in the Masonic Hall, . . . by Brigham Young in February 1842 and then again in the Nauvoo Temple by Heber C. Kimball. . . . (Affidavit of Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, as cited in No Man Knows My History, page 444)

In a speech given at Brigham Young University (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 215-216), Mrs. Lightner said that Joseph claimed an "angel" came with a "drawn sword" and told him that if he did not enter into polygamy "he would slay him." She frankly admitted that she "had been dreaming for a number of years that I was his [Joseph's] wife." Since both Joseph and herself were already married, she "felt it was a sin." Joseph, however, convinced her that the "Almighty" had revealed the principle and while her "husband was far away," she was sealed to him.

In a study on Joseph Smith's wives, which we published in Joseph Smith and Polygamy, pages 41-47, Stanley Ivins wrote the following:

22. — MARY ELIZABETH ROLLINS LIGHTNER. Daughter of John Rollins and wife of Adam Lightner . . . Married Lightner on August 11, 1835. Married Joseph Smith in February, 1843. . . . On January 17, 1846 she was sealed to Joseph Smith for eternity and to Brigham Young for time. However she remained with her legal husband and came to Utah with him in 1863.

It would appear, then, that Mary E. Lightner had two different husbands for "time" and a third for "eternity," Mormon writer John J. Stewart confirms this in his book Brigham Young and His Wives, page 89:

17. Mary Elizabeth Rollins. Born April 9, 1818 at Luna, New York; died December 17, 1913. The wife of a non-Mormon, Adam Lightner. Sealed to the Prophet Joseph in February, 1842, at the age of 23, and again January 17, 1846, at which time she was sealed to Brigham for time.

In our publications, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? and Joseph Smith and Polygamy, we present so much evidence that it is hard to escape the conclusion that Joseph Smith and Brigham Young were living in adultery. In an unpublished sermon by President Brigham Young, which has been preserved in the Historical Department of the Mormon Church, he revealed that it was possible for a man who held a "higher power" in the priesthood to take someone else's wife without a divorce:

I will give you a few words of Doctrine, . . . Br Watt will write it, but it is not my intention to have it published; therefore pay good attention, and store it up in your memories. . . . Can a woman be freed from a man to whom she is sealed? Yes, but a bill of divorcement does not free her. . . . How can a woman be made free from a man to whom she has been sealed for time and all eternity? There are two ways. . . . The second way in which a wife can be separated from her husband, while he continues to be faithful to his God and his priesthood, I have not revealed, except to a few
Joseph Smith went to great lengths to conceal his practice of plural marriage. H. Michael Marquardt discovered that he even had a pretended marriage performed to cover up his own marriage to Sarah Ann Whitney. On July 27, 1842, the Mormon Prophet gave a revelation to Newel K. Whitney, that he was to seal his daughter, Sarah Ann, “to Joseph Smith, to be his wife.” In his booklet, *The Strange Marriages of Sarah Ann Whitney to Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet, Joseph C. Kingsbury and Heber C. Kimball*, Mr. Marquardt reveals how he uncovered the fact that Joseph Smith actually performed a “pretended” marriage ceremony between Sarah Ann Whitney and Joseph C. Kingsbury so that his own relationship with her would not be noticed. Mr. Marquardt cited the following from “The History of Joseph C. Kingsbury,” a document that is now in the Western Americana section of the University of Utah Library:

> ... on 29th of April 1843 I according to President Joseph Smith Council & others agreed to Stand by Sarah Ann Whitney as supposed to be her husband & had a pretended marriage for the purpose of Bringing about the purposes of God ...

Marquardt also found that Joseph Smith signed a document in which he stated: “I hereby certify, that I have upon this the 29th day of April 1843, joined together in marriage Joseph C. Kingsbury and Sarah Ann Whitney, in the City of Nauvoo, Illinois.” It seems difficult to believe that a man professing to be a prophet of God would perform a “pretended” marriage to cover up his own iniquity. In his pamphlet, Mr. Marquardt goes on to show that after Joseph Smith’s death, Sarah Ann Whitney continued to live with Joseph C. Kingsbury in this “pretended” marriage—he referred to her as “Sarah my Supposed wife.” While still living with Kingsbury, she married the Apostle Heber C. Kimball. She was married to Kimball for time and sealed to Joseph Smith for eternity in the Nauvoo temple on January 12, 1846. She became pregnant with Apostle Kimball’s child but continued to live with Kingsbury until after the child was born. For more information on these strange marriages see Michael Marquardt’s pamphlet, *The Strange Marriages of Sarah Ann Whitney*. Marquardt’s research has brought into focus the total disregard Joseph Smith had for marriage vows. Not only did he break the sacred vows he took with his first wife, Emma, but he also encouraged Sarah Ann Whitney to take false vows pledging herself to Joseph C. Kingsbury to cover up the fact that she would be having a sexual relationship with Joseph Smith. The marriage ceremony which was supposed to be used at that time contained the following:

> You both mutually agree to be each other’s companion, husband and wife, observing the legal rights belonging to this condition; that is keeping yourselves wholly for each other, and from all others, during your lives. (*Doctrine and Covenants*, 1835 edition, section 101, verse 2)

According to the diary of Joseph Smith’s private secretary, William Clayton, Smith would even go so far as to initiate a fake excommunication from the church to make it appear that he did not believe in polygamy:

> Thursday 19. . . . Prest. J. . . . began to tell me that E. was turned quite friendly & kind. . . . He said it was her advice that I should keep M [Clayton’s plural wife Margaret] at home and it was also his council. Says he just keep her at home and brook it and if they raise trouble about it and bring you before me I will give you an awful scourging & probably cut you off from the church and then I will baptise you & set you ahead as good as ever. (William Clayton’s Diary, October 19, 1843, Andrew Ehat’s typed extracts)

In the Mormon paper, *Times and Seasons*, Joseph Smith actually announced the excommunication of a man who had been preaching polygamy:

> THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1844.

> NOTICE.

> As we have lately been credibly informed, that an Elder of the Church of Jesus Christ, of Latter-day Saints, by the name of Hiram Brown, has been preaching...
polygamy, and other false and corrupt doctrines, in the county of Lapeer, state of Michigan.

This is to notify him and the Church in general, that he has been cut off from the church, for his iniquity, and he is further notified to appear at the Special Conference, on the 6th of April next, to make answer to these charges.

JOSEPH SMITH,
HYRUM SMITH,
Presidents of said Church.

(Times and Seasons, vol. 5, page 423)

An index to the Times and Seasons reveals nothing further regarding Hiram Brown, and he is not mentioned at all in the large index of Joseph Smith’s History of the Church compiled by E. Keith Howick. If Hiram Brown was a real person, this may be an example of the type of fake excommunication mentioned in Clayton’s diary. In any case, it seems to be a strange way to handle an excommunication. It appears to be nothing but propaganda by the Smith brothers to cover their own iniquity.

ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL

After 1852, when the Mormon Church was openly practicing polygamy, the leaders of the church were declaring that it was absolutely essential for exaltation. Joseph F. Smith, who served as the sixth president of the church, made this emphatic declaration concerning the importance of polygamy:

Some people have supposed that the doctrine of plural marriage was a sort of superfluity, or non-essential to the salvation of mankind. In other words, some of the Saints have said, and believe that a man with one wife, sealed to him by the authority of the Priesthood for time and eternity, will receive an exaltation as great and glorious, if he is faithful, as he possibly could with more than one. I want here to enter my protest against this idea, for I know it is false . . . Therefore, whoever has imagined that he could obtain the fullness of the blessings pertaining to this celestial law, by complying with only a portion of its conditions, has deceived himself. He cannot do it. When that principle was revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, . . . he did not falter, although it was not until an angel of God, with a drawn sword, stood before him and commanded that he should enter into the practice of that principle, or he should be utterly destroyed, or rejected . . .

If then, this principle was of such great importance that the Prophet himself was threatened with destruction, . . . it is useless to tell me that there is no blessing attached to obedience to the law, or that a man with only one wife can obtain as great a reward, glory or kingdom as he can with more than one, . . .

I understand the law of celestial marriage to mean that every man in this Church, who has the ability to obey and practice it in righteousness and will not, shall be damned, I say I understand it to mean this and nothing less, and I testify in the name of Jesus that it does mean that. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 20, pages 28-31)

In 1891 the First Presidency and Apostles of the Mormon Church made the following statement in a petition to the President of the United States: “We formerly taught to our people that polygamy or celestial marriage as commanded by God through Joseph Smith was right; that it was a necessity to man’s highest exaltation in the life to come” (Reed Smoot Case, vol. 1, page 18).

Brigham Young made this uncompromising statement on August 19, 1866:

The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 11, page 269)

John Taylor, the third president of the church, claimed that he believed in keeping all the laws of the United States “except one”—i.e., “The law in relation to polygamy” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 20, page 317). Thomas G. Alexander, of Brigham Young University, admitted that “long after the 1879 Reynolds decision, Church members brought to bar for sentencing told federal judges that the law of God was higher than the law of the land and deserved prior obedience. The Manifesto officially ending polygamy as Church practice was not issued until 1890, and excommunication for practicing plural marriage did not come until 1904” (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer 1966, page 128). The Mormons continued to openly preach polygamy until the year 1890. During this period the leaders taught that it was going to be a permanent part of the church and that it would never be stopped. Heber C. Kimball, First Counselor to Brigham Young, emphasized that the “principle of plurality of wives never will be done away, . . .” (Deseret News, November 7, 1855). Kimball also warned:

Some quietly listen to those who speak . . . against the plurality of wives, and against almost every principle that God has revealed. Such persons have half-a-dozen devils with them all the time. You might as well deny “Mormonism,” and turn away from it, as to oppose the plurality of wives. Let the Presidency of this Church, and the Twelve Apostles, and all the authorities unite and say with one voice that they will oppose the doctrine, and the whole of them will be damned. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 5, page 203)
In another discourse, Kimball made this emphatic declaration: “It would be as easy for the United States to build a tower to remove the sun, as to remove polygamy, or the Church and kingdom of God” (Millennial Star, vol. 28, page 190).

Apostle Orson Pratt strongly affirmed that it was absolutely essential that polygamy not be given up by the church:

God has told us Latter-day Saints that we shall be condemned if we do not enter into that principle; and yet I have heard now and then . . . a brother or sister say, “I am a Latter-day Saint, but I do not believe in polygamy.” Oh, what an absurd expression! What an absurd idea! A person might as well say, “I am a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, but I do not believe in him.” One is just as consistent as the other . . . If the doctrine of polygamy, as revealed to the Latter-day Saints, is not true, I would not give a fig for all your other revelations that came through Joseph Smith the Prophet; I would renounce the whole of them, because it is utterly impossible. . . . to believe a part of them to be divine—from God—and a part of them to be from the devil; . . . The Lord has said that those who reject this principle reject their salvation, they shall be damned, saith the Lord; . . .

Now I want to prophecy a little. . . . I want to prophecy that all men who oppose the revelation which God has given in relation to polygamy will find themselves in darkness; the Spirit of God will withdraw from them the very moment of their opposition to that principle, until they will finally go down to hell and be damned, if they do not repent. . . . if you do not become as dark as midnight there is no truth in Mormonism. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 17, pages 224-225)

In the Deseret News for October 10, 1866, President Brigham Young responded to a question which was frequently asked:

“Do you think that we shall ever be admitted as a State into the Union without denying the principle of polygamy?” If we are not admitted until then, we shall never be admitted.

The Mormons did everything they could to escape the federal deputies. Kimball Young gives this information:

In addition to false names, disguises, and ruses, a whole system of information gathering, signaling, and spotting informers was developed. For example, the church authorities would pass the word down to the smaller communities of movements of federal deputies out of Salt Lake City in the direction of any particular town. (Isn’t One Wife Enough? page 396)

Wilford Woodruff, who became the fourth president of the church, had an armed guard to protect him. In a letter written in 1887, Woodruff wrote:

I have a large stout man who goes with me every [where?] night and day [he] carries 2 pistols & a double barrel shot gun and says he will shoot the marshals if they come to take me (Dont tell anybody this) so I am _____ well garded . . . (Letter from Wilford Woodruff to Miss Nellie Atkin, dated Sept. 3,1887, microfilm copy of the original)

By 1890 the church leaders were using bribery to prevent the government from arresting them. Under the dates of October 17 and 18, 1890, Apostle Abraham H. Cannon recorded the following in his journal:

Uncle David came in about noon and told me . . . a deputy marshal . . . told him that there were papers out for my arrest, . . . I got Chas H Wilcken to investigate . . . Bro. Wilcken came and informed me that he had bought Doyle off, and had got his promise that I should not be molested, nor should any other person without sufficient notice being given for them to escape, and to get witnesses out of the way. He gave Bro. Wilcken the names of some 51 persons whose arrest he intended to try to effect . . . A messenger was therefore despatched to give these people warning. Thus with a little money a channel of communication is kept open between the government offices and the suffering and persecuted Church members.

The government increased the pressure against polygamy, but the Mormons were determined to continue the practice. Shortly before the revelation known as the Manifesto (which declared an end to the practice of polygamy) was given, Lorenzo Snow, who later became president of the church, was claiming that no such revelation would ever come. When Snow was on trial for practicing polygamy, Mr. Bierbower, the prosecuting attorney, predicted that if he was convicted, “a new revelation would soon follow, changing the divine law of celestial marriage.” To this Lorenzo Snow responded:

Whatever fame Mr. Bierbower may have secured as a lawyer, he certainly will fail as a prophet. The severest prosecutions have never been followed by revelations changing a divine law, obedience to which brought imprisonment or martyrdom.

Though I go to prison, God will not change his law of celestial marriage. But the man, the people, the nation, that oppose and fight against this doctrine and the Church of God, will be overthrown. (Historical Record, 1886, vol. 5, page 144)
Although Lorenzo Snow said that the “severest prosecutions have never been followed by revelations changing a divine law,” Wilford Woodruff, the fourth president of the church, issued the Manifesto in 1890. He claimed the Manifesto was given to stop the persecution the church would have to go through if the Mormons continued to practice polygamy. He stated:

The Lord showed me by vision and revelation exactly what would happen if we did not stop this practice . . . all ordinances would be stopped . . . many men would be made prisoners . . . I went before the Lord, and I wrote what the Lord told me to write . . . (Evidences and Reconciliations, 3 volume edition, pages 105-106)

Before Wilford Woodruff became president of the Mormon Church, he maintained that the church could not give up polygamy (see Journal of Discourses, vol. 13, page 166). On January 26, 1880, Woodruff even claimed to have a revelation which threatened the United States with destruction if it continued to oppose the “Patriarchal Law”—i.e., plural marriage:

Thus saith the Lord unto my servant Wilford Woodruff . . . it is not my will that mine Elders should fight the Battles of Zion for I will fight your Battles. . . . The Nation is ripened in iniquity and the Cup of the wrath of mine indignation is full, and I will not stay my hand in Judgment upon this Nation . . .

And I say again wo unto that Nation or House or people, who seek to hinder my People from obeying the Patriarchal Law of Abraham which leadeth to a Celestial Glory . . . for whosoever doeth these things shall be damned Saith the Lord of Hosts and shall be broken up & washed away from under Heaven by the Judgments which I have sent forth and shall not return unto me void. (Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, edited by Scott G. Kenney, vol. 7, pages 615-617)

**AN INVESTIGATION**

According to the Mormon historian D. Michael Quinn, Mormon Church leaders considered the possibility of signing a document like the Manifesto on December 20, 1888, and rejected the idea:

After this overwhelming repudiation, Woodruff told the apostles, “Had we yielded to that document every man of us would have been under condemnation before God. The Lord never will give a revelation to abandon plural marriage.” (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1985, page 35)

Because of the fact that Wilford Woodruff had previously taught that polygamy could not be discontinued and had even claimed to have revelations to that effect, the other leaders of the church were confused by his Manifesto. Apostle Cannon’s journal shows that there was division among the highest leaders of the church at the time the Manifesto was issued (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 234).

While the Manifesto was approved by the membership of the church, the Mormon writer Russell R. Rich admits that “not even among the general authorities of the Church was there unanimous support for abolishing the practice” (Brigham Young University Week, Those Who Would Be Leaders, page 71).

In October, 1891, President Woodruff testified that the Manifesto not only prohibited any more plural marriages, but that it also forbid the unlawful cohabitation of those who were already in polygamy. While Wilford Woodruff and other Mormon leaders were publicly stating that members of the church should observe the law concerning unlawful cohabitation, they were secretly teaching that it was all right to break it. The leaders of the Mormon Church, in fact, had promised the government they would obey the law of the land, but many of them broke their promises. Few people, however, realized to what extent until they were called to testify in the “Proceedings Before the Committee on Privileges and Elections of the United States Senate in the Matter of the Protests Against the Right of Hon. Reed Smoot, a Senator From the State of Utah, to Hold His Seat.” Joseph F. Smith, who was the sixth President of the church, testified as follows in the Reed Smoot Case:

The CHAIRMAN. Do you obey the law in having five wives at this time, and having them bear to you eleven children since the manifesto of 1890?

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Chairman, I have not claimed that in that case I have obeyed the law of the land.

The CHAIRMAN. That is all.

Mr. SMITH. I do not claim so, and I have said before that I prefer to stand my chances against the law. (Reed Smoot Case, vol. 1, page 197)

Mr. TAYLER. You say there is a State law forbidding unlawful cohabitation?

Mr. SMITH. That is my understanding.

Mr. TAYLER. And ever since that law was passed you have been violating it?

Mr. SMITH. I think likely I have been practicing the same thing even before the law was passed. (Ibid., p. 130)

The CHAIRMAN. . . . you are violating the law?

Mr. SMITH. The law of my State?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes.

Mr. SMITH. Yes, sir.

Senator OVERMAN. Is there not a revelation published in the Book of Covenants here that you shall abide by the law of the State?
Mr. SMITH. It includes both unlawful cohabitation and polygamy.

Senator OVERMAN. Is there not a revelation that you shall abide by the laws of the State and of the land? Mr. SMITH. Yes, sir.

Senator OVERMAN. If that is a revelation, are you not violating the laws of God?
Mr. SMITH. I have admitted that, Mr. Senator, a great many times here. (Ibid., pages 334-335)

When Senator Hoar was questioning President Joseph F. Smith concerning polygamy, Smith finally stated: “I presume I am the greatest culprit” (page 312).

Charles E. Merrill, the son of the Apostle Marriner W. Merrill, testified that he took a plural wife after the Manifesto and that his father performed the ceremony:

Mr. TAYLER. . . . When was it you married your second wife; that is, the second wife you now have? Mr. MERRILL. In the fall of 1888.

. . .

Mr. TAYLER. And the next marriage took place in 1891? Mr. MERRILL. Yes, sir.
Mr. TAYLER. Who married you in 1891? Mr. MERRILL. My father.
Mr. TAYLER. When were you married? Mr. MERRILL. I could not give you the exact date, but it was in March.
Mr. TAYLER. 1891? Mr. MERRILL. Yes, sir.
Mr. TAYLER. Was your father then an apostle? Mr. MERRILL. Yes, sir. (Reed Smoot Case, vol. 1, pages 408-409)

Walter M. Wolfe, who was at one time professor of geology at Brigham Young College, claimed that the Apostle John-Henry Smith made this statement to him:

“Brother Wolfe, don’t you know that the manifesto is only a trick to beat the devil at his own game?”
(Reed Smoot Case, vol. 4, page 13)

Anthony W. Ivins, who later became a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, was appointed by the church leaders to perform plural marriages in Mexico after the Manifesto. His son, Stanley S. Ivins, told us that his father received instructions after the Manifesto to perform marriages for time and all eternity outside of the Mormon temples. He received a ceremony for these marriages (which Stanley S. Ivins had in his possession). He was sent to Mexico and was told that when the First Presidency wanted a plural marriage performed they would send a letter with the couple who were to be married. Whenever he received these letters from the First Presidency, he knew that it was all right to perform the ceremony. After his father’s death, Stanley S. Ivins copied the names of those who had been married in polygamy into another book and then gave the original book to the Mormon leaders. Wallace Turner writes:

More than fifty polygamist marriages were easily identifiable, beginning in June, 1897, when three men from Utah were married at Juarez, . . . They had crossed over into Mexico just for the marriage ceremony, then went back into the United States. However, Ivins refused to perform marriages for the regular population of the Mormon colonies because the men lacked the letters from Salt Lake City which he considered to be his authority for the ceremony. However, by 1898 polygamous marriages were being performed routinely in Mexico by other Mormon leaders. (The Mormon Establishment, 1966, page 187)

Stanley Ivins claimed that his father continued to perform plural marriages for the church until the year 1904. In the Reed Smoot Case, vol. 4, page 11, Walter M. Wolfe testified that Ovena Jorgensen told him how she had obtained approval from George Q. Cannon, of the First Presidency, to enter into polygamy. Stanley S. Ivins confirmed the fact that his father, Anthony W. Ivins, performed the marriage ceremony. Stanley Ivins related to us that Walter Wolfe’s testimony concerning this marriage hurt the church’s image so much that the First Presidency of the church sent Anthony Ivins a letter requesting him to go back to Washington, D. C. and give false testimony before the Committee on Privileges and Elections of the United States Senate. The First Presidency of the Mormon Church actually wanted him to lie under oath and state he did not perform the ceremony. Stanley Ivins said that even if Walter Wolfe’s testimony did damage the image of the church, his father refused to go back to Washington, D. C. and lie about the marriage.

Frank J. Cannon, a very prominent Mormon who served as United States Senator for Utah, related that just after the death of his brother, Apostle Abraham H. Cannon, in July 1896, his father, George Q. Cannon, told him that it was fortunate for the church that Abraham had died because he had taken Lillian Hamlin as a plural wife. This fact had become known, and he “would have had to face a prosecution in Court.” President Cannon denied that he had anything to do with the marriage (a claim that is inconsistent with facts which have recently come to light) and went on to say:

President Smith obtained the acquiescence of President Woodruff, on the plea that it wasn’t an
ordinary case of polygamy but merely a fulfillment of the biblical instruction that a man should take his dead brother’s wife. Lillian was betrothed to David, and had been sealed to him in eternity after his death. I understand that President Woodruff told Abraham he would leave the matter with them if he wished to take the responsibility—and President Smith performed the ceremony. (Under the Prophet in Utah, pages 176-177)

According to the diary of Abraham H. Cannon, his father, George Q. Cannon, a member of the First Presidency, lamented the fact that his sons could not raise up seed to David through polygamy: “My son David died without seed, and his brothers cannot do a work for him, in rearing children to bear his name because of the manifesto” (Journal of Abraham H. Cannon, April 5, 1894, vol. 19, page 70). From an entry in Apostle Cannon’s diary for October 24, 1894, it would appear that the Mormon leaders had decided that a plural marriage could be performed in Mexico to raise up seed to David. Although the diary has been damaged at this point and a few words are missing, the remaining portion shows that the Mormon leaders did not take the Manifesto seriously:

After meeting I went to the President’s Office and ______ Father [George Q. Cannon] about taking a wife for David. I told him David had taken Annie[.] cousin, through the vail in life, and suggested she might be a good pe______ sealed to him for eternity. The suggestion pleased Father very much, and ______ Angus was there, He spoke to him about it in the presence of the Presidency. ______ not object providing Annie is willing. The Presidents Woodruff and Smith both said[ ] they were willing for such a ceremony to occur, if done in Mexico, and Pres. Woodruff[ ] promised the Lord’s blessing to follow such an act.” (Journal of Abraham H. Cannon, October 24, 1894, vol. 18, page 170; original at Brigham Young University)

The Mormon scholar D. Michael Quinn, professor of American History at Brigham Young University, has found another important reference which he feels proves beyond all doubt that “President Woodruff personally authorized Apostle Abraham H. Cannon to marry a new plural wife…” This reference is also in Apostle Cannon’s own journal:

“Father [George Q. Cannon] also spoke to me about taking some good girl and raising up seed by her for my brother David. . . . Such a ceremony as this could be performed in Mexico, so Pres. Woodruff has said.” (Abraham H. Cannon Journal, October 19, 1894, as cited in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1985, page 62)

It is startling, to say the least, that President Wilford Woodruff approved of and promised “the Lord’s blessing” on the plural marriage which was being planned. This was four years after he published a “solemn” denial of the practice in the Manifesto: “We are not teaching polygamy or plural marriage, nor permitting any person to enter into its practice, . . .” (Doctrine and Covenants, Official Declaration).

It was some two years after the plural marriage was approved by the First Presidency that Abraham Cannon actually took Lillian Hamlin as his plural wife. The evidence indicates that Joseph F. Smith, who became the 6th president of the church, married the couple himself. President Smith denied that he performed the ceremony, but he acknowledged: “I accompanied Abraham H. Cannon and his wife on that trip, and had one of my wives with me on that trip” (Reed Smoot Case, vol. 1, page 111). When President Smith was asked when he first learned that Lillian Hamlin was Apostle Cannon’s wife, he responded: “The first that I suspected anything of the kind was on that trip, because I never knew the lady before” (Ibid.). Like the other Mormon leaders, Joseph F. Smith was supposed to be doing all in his power to prevent the practice of polygamy, yet his testimony gives the impression that he was oblivious to what was going on when he went on the trip with Lillian Hamlin and Apostle Cannon:

Mr. TAYLOR. Did you have any talk on that journey or after you left Salt Lake—after you first heard or learned that Lillian Hamlin was the wife of Abraham Cannon—as to when they were married?

Mr. SMITH. No, sir.

Mr. TAYLOR. Did you have any talk with either of them?

Mr. SMITH. Not in the least.

Mr. TAYLOR. Not in the least?

Mr. SMITH. Not in the least, sir; and no one ever mentioned to me that they were or were not married. I simply judged they were married because they were living together as husband and wife.

. . . .

Mr. TAYLOR. Did you say anything by way of criticism to Abraham Cannon?

Mr. SMITH. No, sir. (Reed Smoot Case, vol. 1, page 128)

Unfortunately, Abraham Cannon’s 1896 journal is not available. D. Michael Quinn informs us that “Apostle Cannon’s 1896 diary is the only volume missing of his many diaries…” (Dialogue: A Journal
of Mormon Thought, Spring 1985, pages 83-84). John Henry Hamlin, however, testified that his sister, Lillian Hamlin, was married to Apostle Cannon. When he was asked who performed the ceremony, he replied: “Well, our understanding was that President Joseph F. Smith married her.” Wilhelmina C. Ellis, who had been one of Apostle Cannon’s wives, testified that Abraham Cannon was not married to Lillian Hamlin until he went on the trip with President Smith:

Mr. TAYLER. What conversation did you have with him then about his going away and about his getting married again? What did he say first about going?

Mrs. ELLIS. He told me be was going to marry her for time, and that she would be David’s wife for eternity.

Mr. TAYLER. What did he say about Miss Hamlin?

Mrs. ELLIS. . . . he said she was going with him and President Smith. (Reed Smoot Case, vol. 2, page 143)

Because her husband was not married to Lillian Hamlin when he left on the trip with Joseph F. Smith and came back as her husband, Mrs. Ellis inferred that President Smith had performed the marriage ceremony. She admitted, in fact, that she had frequently stated that Smith did marry them. Since Abraham H. Cannon had previously written that “Presidents Woodruff and Smith both said they were willing for such a ceremony to occur,” it would be stretching our credulity to believe President Smith’s denial that he knew anything about the marriage. It is difficult, in fact, to deny Frank Cannon’s charge that his father [George Q. Cannon] told him that President Smith performed the ceremony. While those who knew about this marriage usually felt that Joseph F. Smith married the couple “on the high sea” just off the coast of California, Mormon scholar D. Michael Quinn seems confident that the ceremony was performed in the Salt Lake Temple. His research in temple records reveals the following:

When Lillian Hamlin was endowed in the Salt Lake Temple on 17 June 1896, she was sealed by proxy to the deceased David H. Cannon. Abraham H. Cannon was the proxy, and Joseph F. Smith performed the sealing. The next day, the Smiths and Cannons left Salt Lake City for California. Therefore, Joseph F. Smith actually performed his only post-Manifesto polygamous marriage as a proxy ceremony in the Salt Lake Temple for Abraham H. Cannon but could legally claim that he [was] simply officiating in a sealing on behalf of the deceased brother. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1985, page 84)

Professor Quinn bases this argument on the fact that the records of earlier sealings for the dead indicate that “one ceremony united the living woman for eternity to the deceased husband and for time to the proxy husband.” While Quinn’s argument is persuasive, the fact that Joseph F. Smith traveled with the couple after the temple ritual may still leave open the possibility that it was a separate ceremony in California or on the “high sea”—i.e., beyond the boundary of the United States. In any case, Quinn’s discovery of temple records linking President Smith to a sealing ceremony in which both Apostle Cannon and Lillian Hamlin participated just the day before he traveled with the couple seems to sew up the case against Joseph F. Smith.

Apostle Abraham H. Cannon’s journals not only reveal that the Mormon leaders approved of polygamy after the Manifesto, but they also show they were considering the idea of a secret system of concubinage wherein men and women could live together without actually being married:

Father [George Q. Cannon] now spoke of the unfortunate condition of the people at present in regard to marriage. . . . I believe in concubinage, or some plan whereby men and women can live together under sacred ordinances and vows until they can be married. . . . such a condition would have to be kept secret, until the laws of our government change to permit the holy order of wedlock which God has revealed. . . . — — President Snow. “I have no doubt that concubinage will yet be practiced in this church, . . .” — — Pres. Woodruff. “If men enter into some practice of this character to raise a righteous posterity, they will be justified in it . . .” (Journal of Abraham H. Cannon, April 5, 1894, vol. 18, page 70)

As we have shown earlier, Joseph Smith’s revelation on polygamy also said that concubinage was justifiable in God’s sight: “Abraham received concubines and they bore him children; and it was accounted unto him for righteousness, . . .” (Doctrine and Covenants, 132:37).

After making a long and careful study of the Mormon Church’s attitude toward polygamy, the Committee on Privileges and Elections submitted a report in which it claimed that the Manifesto was a deception:

A sufficient number of specific instances of the taking of plural wives since the manifest of 1890, so called, have been shown by the testimony as having taken place among officials of the Mormon Church to demonstrate the fact that the leaders in this church, the
first presidency and the twelve apostles, **connive at the practice of taking plural wives, and have done so ever since the manifesto was issued** which purported to put an end to the practice. . . . as late as 1896 one Lillian Hamlin became the plural wife of Abraham H. Cannon, who was then an apostle . . . The prominence of Abraham H. Cannon in the church, the publicity given to the fact of his taking Lillian Hamlin as a plural wife, render it practically impossible that this should have been done without the knowledge, the consent, and the connivance of the headship of that church.

George Teasdale, another apostle of the Mormon Church, contracted a plural marriage with Marion Scholes since the manifesto of 1890. . . . Charles E. Merrill, a bishop of the Mormon Church, took a plural wife in 1891, . . . The ceremony . . . was performed by his father, who was then and until the time of his death an apostle in the Mormon Church. It is also shown that John W. Taylor, another apostle of the Mormon Church, has been married to two plural wives since the issuing of the so-called manifesto.

Matthias F. Cowley, another of the twelve apostles, has also taken one or more **plural wives since the manifesto.** . . . Apostles Taylor and Cowley, instead of appearing before the committee and denying the allegation, **evade** service of process issued by the committee for their appearance and refuse to appear after being requested to do so, . . . about the year 1896 James Francis Johnson was married to a plural wife, . . . the ceremony in this instance being performed by an apostle of the Mormon Church. To these cases must be added that of Marriner W. Merrill, another apostle; . . .

It is a fact of no little significance in itself, bearing on the question whether polygamous marriages have been recently contracted in Utah by the connivance of the first presidency and twelve apostles of the Mormon Church, that the authorities of said church have endeavored to suppress, and have succeeded in suppressing, a great deal of testimony by which the fact of plural marriages contracted by those who were high in the councils of the church might have been established beyond the shadow of a doubt. Before the investigation had begun it was well known in Salt Lake City that it was expected to show on the part of the protestants that Apostles George Teasdale, John W. Taylor, and M. F. Cowley, and also Prof. J. M. Tanner, Samuel Newton and others who were all high officials of the Mormon Church had recently taken plural wives, and that in 1896 Lillian Hamlin was sealed to Apostle Abraham H. Cannon as a plural wife . . . All, or nearly all, of these persons except Abraham H. Cannon, who was deceased, were then within reach of service of process from the committee. But shortly before the investigation began all these witnesses went out of the country.

Subpoenas were issued for each one of the witnesses named, but in the case of Samuel Newton only could the process of the committee be served. Mr. Newton refused to obey the order of the committee, alleging no reason or excuse for not appearing. It is shown that John W. Taylor was sent out of the country by Joseph F. Smith on a real or pretended mission for the church. . . . It would be nothing short of self-stultification for one to believe that all these important witnesses chanced to leave the United States at about the same time and without reference to the investigation. All the facts and circumstances surrounding the transaction point to the conclusion that every one of the witnesses named left the country at the **instance of the rulers of the Mormon Church and to avoid testifying before the committee.**

It was claimed by the protestants that the records kept in the Mormon temple at Salt Lake City . . . would disclose the fact that plural marriages have been contracted in Utah since the manifesto with the sanction of the officials of the church. A witness who was required to bring the records in the temple at Salt Lake City **refused to do so after consulting with President Smith.** . . . it was shown by the testimony, and in such a way that the fact could not possibly be controverted, that a majority of those who give the law to the Mormon Church are now, and have been for years, living in open, notorious, and shameless **polygamous cohabitation.** The list of those who are thus guilty of violating the laws of the State and the rules of public decency is headed by Joseph F. Smith, the first president, **“prophet, seer, and revelator”** of the Mormon Church, . . .

The list also includes George Teasdale, an apostle; John Henry Smith, an apostle; Heber J. Grant, an apostle; M. F. Cowley, an apostle; Charles W. Penrose, an apostle; and Francis M. Lyman, who is not only an apostle, but the probable successor of Joseph F. Smith as president of the church. Thus it appears that the first president and eight of the twelve apostles, a considerable majority of the ruling authorities of the Mormon Church, are noted **polygamists.** (Reed Smoot Case, vol. 4, pages 476-480)

While the Committee on Privileges and Elections was hampered by the Mormon Church’s attempt to impede the investigation and to suppress evidence, it did find enough documentation to put the church in a very embarrassing position. When we published the 1982 edition of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* we felt that we had enough new evidence to completely disprove the claim that polygamy in the Mormon Church ended
with the Manifesto (see pages 231-244F). We were, of course, somewhat limited in our research because we did not have access to a great deal of important material in the Mormon Archives. Fortunately, however, one of the church’s most qualified historians, D. Michael Quinn, began researching this matter. While he certainly did not have access to all of the secret records of the church, he was entrusted with some extremely important church documents and was able to ferret out enough material to write what many people consider to be the definitive work on the subject. His article is entitled, “LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890-1904.” It is found in the Spring 1985 issue of Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought. Although he claims he still has faith in Mormonism, he believes in honest history and pulls no punches in his presentation. Dr. Quinn gives the following information in his article:

Ninety percent of new polygamous marriages contracted from September 1890 through December 1904 directly involved Church authority . . . On 11 September 1901, the Deseret Evening News branded as “groundless” and “utterly false” the statement of a Protestant minister that “one of the Apostles had recently taken an additional wife,” when in fact four apostles had married plural wives so far that year . . .

The year 1903 was the climax of post-Manifesto polygamy with Church authority. . . . apostles were performing new polygamous marriages in the United States and Mexico, where both the stake patriarch and president were also officiating for residents of the Juarez Stake. The stake president had, furthermore, been authorized by the First Presidency to perform plural marriages for U.S. residents with the necessary letters from Salt Lake City. In addition, for the first time since the establishment of the Canadian settlement of Mormons, the Church president authorized local Church authority to perform plural marriages there for Canadian Mormons. Although those presently unavailable manuscripts would bring further corroboration and precision, sufficient information exists to verify the participation of Church authorities in new plural marriages from September 1890 through the end of 1904. . . . When Byron H. Allred asked for permission to marry the young woman who accompanied him to the President’s office on 4 October 1890, President Woodruff patiently explained the reasons he had issued the Manifesto and then told Allred to move as soon as possible with his intended plural wife to Mexico where Alexander F. Macdonald would perform the ceremony. Anson B. Call was bold enough to come to Woodruff’s own home . . . President Woodruff told him to sell all his property in the United States and move to Mexico with his intended wife. . . . Apostle Young, . . . performed at least five plural marriages there [in Mexico] when he returned in May-June 1894. Among these plural marriages was one for Franklin S. Bramwell, then a stake high counselor, who later wrote, “When I took my second wife I had a letter signed by President Woodruff himself and went to Mexico with a personal letter from Pres. George Q. Cannon.” . . . In June 1897, the First Presidency authorized Juarez Stake President Anthony W. Ivins to perform polygamous ceremonies in Mexico, and in the fall President Woodruff authorized Anthon H. Lund to perform two plural marriages aboard ship, one on the Pacific Ocean and one on the Great Lakes. . . .

Circumstantial evidence indicates that Wilford Woodruff married Madame Mountford as a plural wife in 1897. . . .

In the last year of his life, Wilford Woodruff thus maintained a public stance that was at variance with his private activities regarding polygamy. When Protestant ministers charged the Church with allowing new plural marriages, President Woodruff wrote the editor of the Protestant newspaper that “no one has entered into plural marriage by my permission since the Manifesto was issued.” . . .

The First Presidency’s office not only authorized these post-Manifesto plural marriages in Mexico as performed by the presiding authority there, but also was aware of and recorded the plural marriages that visiting apostles performed in Mexico. . . . during the presidency of Lorenzo Snow in 1901, four apostles (including Brigham Young, Jr.) married plural wives . . . John W. Taylor claimed that he married two plural wives in August 1901 with the permission of the Church president; but the clearest evidence that Lorenzo Snow gave permission individually to the apostles to marry plural wives in 1901 comes from Heber J. Grant, who later wrote: “Before I went to Japan [in July 1901] my President intimated that I had better take the action needed to increase my family,” and Grant’s notebook indicates that President Snow gave this permission on 26 May 1901: “Temple Fast mtg—17 years since Gusta and I married—She willing to have me do my duty. & Pt Snow. . . .”

After George Q. Cannon’s death in April 1901, Joseph F. Smith, as sole counselor, was one who sent prominent Mormons to Matthias F. Cowley for polygamous ceremonies; and upon Lorenzo Snow’s death in October 1901, his successor Joseph F. Smith promoted and protected new polygamous marriages more actively than the two previous Church presidents. . . .
By the fall of 1903, Joseph F. Smith had decided to expand new polygamous marriages even further. . . .

Joseph F. Smith continued the familiar pattern of denying publicly what was happening privately throughout these years. More significantly he was keeping his own counselors and half of the apostles in the dark about what he and the other half were doing to promote new polygamous marriages. . . . Joseph F. Smith divided the Church against itself and apostle against brother apostle over the question of new polygamous marriages. He did it with the best of intent—to preserve "the principle" as well as to protect the institution of the Church by filing official minutes of quorum meetings with repudiations of what he was actually allowing individual Church officers to do with his authorization and blessing as Church president. This allowed plausible denial to the Church's enemies, but the policy created double definitions of authority, sanction, permission, knowledge, validity, loyalty, and truth—a wind that would begin to reap the whirlwind in 1904. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1985, pages 56, 58-60, 62, 65, 72, 73, 90, 93, 95 and 96)

According to Professor Quinn, Heber J. Grant, who served as the seventh president of the church from 1918 until 1948, did not actually go through with the plural marriage which President Snow suggested that he enter into on May 26, 1901 (Ibid., page 73). Nevertheless, Grant did have problems with the law after the Manifesto. In 1899—nine years after Woodruff’s Manifesto—he was convicted of unlawful cohabitation (see the Daily Tribune, September 9, 1899). In 1903 Heber J. Grant had to flee the country to avoid being arrested. According to the testimony of Charles Mostyn Owen, Grant had been boasting about his relationship "with two women as his wives." Mr. Owen "went before the county attorney and swore to an information for him, and a warrant was issued on that information." Before Grant could be arrested, "He left suddenly on the night of the 10th of November last year—1903." Owen said that Grant had gone to England and was still there while the Smoot investigation was going on (see Reed Smoot Case, vol. 2, pages 401-402).

The reader will remember the D. Michael Quinn says that Joseph F. Smith was more actively involved in promoting polygamy after the Manifesto than the other presidents of the church. Professor Quinn has put forth a devastating case against President Smith. This is very interesting because Joseph F. Smith emphatically denied in his testimony given in the Reed Smoot Case that polygamy was ever approved by church leaders after the Manifesto:

Mr. SMITH. . . . It has been the continuous and conscientious practice and rule of the church ever since the manifesto to observe that manifesto with regard to plural marriages; and from that time till to-day there has never been, to my knowledge, a plural marriage performed in accordance with the understanding, instruction, connivance, counsel, or permission of the presiding authorities of the church, or of the church, in any shape or form; and I know whereof I speak, gentlemen, in relation to that matter. (Reed Smoot Case, vol. 1, page 129)

When President Smith was asked if he knew of any plural marriage being performed by church authority in any part of the world since 1890, he responded: “No, sir; I do not” (Ibid., page 177).

If the Committee on Privileges and Elections had possessed the documentation which Dr. Quinn has compiled, Joseph F. Smith would probably have been prosecuted for perjury. On page 98 of his article, Quinn pointed out that President Smith was “risking a perjury indictment by concealing any evidence detrimental to the Church as an institution or to any individual (including himself) who acted in his capacity as a Church official in promoting post-Manifesto polygamy. As President Smith told another prospective witness in the Smoot case, ‘We should consider the interests of the Church rather than our own.’”

Although the senators believed that President Smith was not telling the truth, they also knew that it would be very difficult to prosecute him since he had control over most of the witnesses. Professor Quinn has found evidence that Joseph F. Smith did, in fact, obstruct the investigation by the Committee on Privileges and Elections just as the report had charged:

. . . Joseph F. Smith throughout 1904 maintained that despite his best efforts, the subpoenaed apostles were either too ill or too recalcitrant to testify in the Smoot investigation.

It is far more probable, however, that the Church president did not want the Senate to question anyone who had married and fathered children by post-Manifesto plural wives. . . . President Smith told Apostle [Abraham Owen] Woodruff midway through April conference, “You would not be a good witness,” [and] advised him to “stay in retirement” to avoid a subpoena in Utah, and to prepare immediately to preside over the LDS mission in Germany. . . . Five days after he presented the second Manifesto, Joseph F. Smith instructed California Mission President Joseph E. Robinson to move his two post-Manifesto plural wives and their children from Salt Lake City to Mexico to avoid a subpoena.
A plural wife of John W. Taylor later provided the background to the letters her husband and Apostle Cowley sent to Joseph F. Smith about refusing to testify before the Senate Committee. “He received two contradictory letters in the mail, for him to sign and return. One said he would go to Washington, the other said he would not go to Washington. Nellie cried: ‘John, you don’t intend to place yourself in a trap by signing both those letters, do you?’ He pointed at the signature of President Joseph F. Smith and said, ‘I will do what my Prophet orders me to do.’” President Smith used the letter for each man he felt the circumstances of April 1904 required. . . . President Smith sent George Teasdale to Mexico to avoid testifying. The apostle chafed at this forced exile, and President Smith relented enough to have George F. Gibbs notify Teasdale in August 1904 that he and Apostle Cowley could leave Mexico and speak at three stake conferences in Arizona, provided that the local stake authorities did not publish any reference to their visit in the Deseret News or local papers and that they provide no information on their itinerary. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1985, pages 100-101)

Joseph F. Smith, the sixth president of the church, not only had the power to avoid being indicted for perjury, but was also able to escape prosecution in Utah for many years. It was 16 years after the Manifesto was issued when President Smith was finally convicted of unlawful cohabitation. The church’s Deseret Evening News, for November 23, 1906, reported: “. . . President Smith appeared forthwith and entered a plea of guilty and was fined three hundred dollars. The fine was promptly paid and the defendant discharged.”

TRAIL OF DISHONESTY

While Mormon apologists would have us believe otherwise, untruth and secrecy were used by the church leaders to cover up polygamy. D. Michael Quinn has discovered that in just “thirteen and a half years” after the Manifesto, when the leaders of the church were deeply involved in secretly promoting the practice of polygamy, “the First Presidency individually or as a unit published twenty-four denials that any new plural marriages were being performed” (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1985, page 9).

A careful examination of Mormon history reveals that this pattern of dishonesty stemmed from Joseph Smith himself. Smith always publicly denied the practice, and as we have already shown, he was even willing to perform a fake excommunication to hide the practice. On May 26, 1844, the History of the Church, vol. 6, page 411, reported that Joseph Smith responded as follows to the accusation that he “kept six or seven young females as wives”:

What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one.

I am the same man, and as innocent as I was fourteen years ago; and I can prove them all perjurers.

In his article in Dialogue, page 21, D. Michael Quinn noted that Joseph Smith had “more than thirty plural wives” at the time he made this denial. We have previously cited a notice printed in the Times and Seasons in which both Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum, who was a member of the First Presidency of the church, signed a statement saying Hiram Brown had been cut off from the church for “preaching polygamy, and other false and corrupt doctrines.” The following month, Hyrum Smith wrote the following for the Times and Seasons (March 15, 1844, vol. 5, page 474):

. . . brother Richard Hewitt . . . states to me that some of your elders say, that a man having a certain priesthood, may have as many wives as he pleases, and that doctrine is taught here: I say unto you that that man teaches false doctrines, for there is no such doctrine taught; neither is there any such thing practised here. And any man that is found teaching privately or publicly any such doctrine, is culpable, and will stand a chance to be brought before the High Council, and lose his license and membership . . .

The article on marriage, which was published in the early editions of the Doctrine and Covenants was frequently used by the early Mormon Church to counteract the report that polygamy was being practiced. On September 1, 1842, this statement appeared in the Times and Seasons (vol. 3, page 909):

Inasmuch as the public mind has been unjustly abused . . . we make an extract on the subject of marriage, showing the rule of the church on this important matter. The extract is from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and is the only rule allowed in the church.

“Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy; we declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife, and one woman, but one husband, . . .”

In vol. 4, page 143, of the Times and Seasons, we find the following: “We are charged with advocating a plurality of wives, and common property. Now this is as false as the many other ridiculous charges which are brought against us. No sect have [sic] a greater reverence for the laws of matrimony, or the rights of private property, and we do what others do not, practice what
we preach.” In the *Latter-Day Saints’ Millennial Star*, vol. 3, page 74, the following denial appeared:

But, for the information of those who may be assailed by those foolish tales about two wives, we would say that no such principle ever existed among the Latter-Day Saints, and never will; . . . the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants; and also all our periodicals are very strict on that subject, indeed far more so than the bible.

After Joseph Smith’s death the denials of polygamy continued to come forth in Mormon publications. When someone stated that Joseph Smith taught polygamy, the *Latter-Day Saints’ Millennial Star* (vol. 12, pages 29-30) called it a lie:

12th Lie — Joseph Smith taught a system of polygamy.

12th Refutation. — The Revelations given through Joseph Smith, state the following: . . . “We believe that one man should have one wife.” *Doctrine and Covenants*, page 331.

As late as 1850 John Taylor, who became the third president of the church, denied that the Mormons believed in the practice of plural marriage:

We are accused here of polygamy, . . . and actions the most indecent, obscene, and disgusting, such that none but a corrupt and depraved heart could have contrived. These things are too outrageous to admit of belief; . . . I shall content myself by reading our views of chastity and marriage, from a work published by us containing some of the articles of our Faith. *Doctrine and Covenants*, page 330 . . . “Inasmuch as this Church of Jesus Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication and polygamy, we declare that we believe that one man should have one wife, and one woman but one husband, except in the case of death, . . .” (A tract published by John Taylor in 1850, page 8; found in *Orson Pratt’s Works*, 1851 edition)

On page 23 of his article in *Dialogue*, Dr. Quinn revealed that at the time he made this denial of polygamy “in 1850, John Taylor had married twelve polygamous wives who had already borne him eight children.”

At the beginning of this article we quoted Apostle John A. Widtsoe as saying that Joseph Smith “taught honesty in all affairs, he insisted that his people be honest . . .” Our research concerning polygamy shows that these statements concerning Joseph Smith are wishful thinking. He not only deceived his own wife about polygamy, but was willing to go to almost any length to keep some of his own followers in the dark concerning what he really believed.

Those who were close to him seem to have picked up his deceptive ways and taught them to those who followed. Consequently, the record of at least the first seven presidents of the church is marred by the transgression of the law and duplicity.

On April 6, 1904, President Joseph F. Smith issued what is known as the “Second Manifesto.” This document claimed that since the Manifesto given in 1890, no plural marriages “have been solemnized with the sanction, consent or knowledge of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1985, page 10). Although President Smith’s statement is certainly untruthful, the Smoot investigation put a great deal of pressure on the church leaders and it was not long before the practice of polygamy died out within the church. Unfortunately, however, the insincerity of the Mormon leaders after the Manifesto left such a credibility gap that many Mormons continued to hold to polygamy even after the church withdrew its support of the practice. Like Joseph Smith, they secretly entered into polygamy, and even though the Mormon Church excommunicated a large number of them, the movement did not die out. Consequently, almost a century after Wilford Woodruff issued the Manifesto, there are thousands of people who are still practicing polygamy in Utah. On December 27, 1965, the *New York Times* reported that as “many as 30,000 men, women and children live in families in which polygamy is practiced.” In 1966 the Mormon writer Leonard J. Arrington claimed that this was a “far-fetched estimate.” The following year, however, Ben Merson reported:

“Today in Utah,” declares William M. Rogers, former special assistant to the State Attorney General, “there are more polygamous families than in the days of Brigham Young. At least 30,000 men, women and children in this state are now living in plural households—and the number is rapidly increasing! Thousands now live in the adjoining states of Idaho, Nevada, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona—plus sizable populations in Oregon, California, Canada and Mexico. (*Ladies’ Home Journal*, June 1967, page 78)

Because they claim to go back to the fundamental doctrines of Mormonism, those who believe in practicing polygamy today are usually known as Mormon “Fundamentalists.” The Mormon leaders now find themselves in a very strange situation. On the one hand, they have to uphold polygamy as a righteous principle, but on the other, they have to discourage the members of the church from actually entering into its practice. If they completely repudiated the doctrine of polygamy, they would be admitting that Joseph Smith was a deceiver, and that the church was founded on fraud. If, however, they openly preached and defended the doctrine, many people
would probably enter into the practice and bring disgrace upon the church. Their position is about the same as a person saying, “My church believes in water baptism, but we are not allowed to practice it.” Because of this peculiar dilemma, church officials prefer that there is not much discussion of plural marriage. As long as the Mormon leaders continue to publish Joseph Smith’s revelation on polygamy (Doctrines and Covenants, Section 132), there will, no doubt, be many people who will enter into the practice. They cannot completely repudiate this revelation, however, without destroying their doctrine concerning temple marriage because the two doctrines were revealed in the same revelation. (Temple marriage, of course, is the marriage of a man and woman for time and all eternity in a secret ritual performed only in a Mormon temple.) Although the Mormon Church no longer allows a man to be sealed to more than one living woman, in Mormon doctrine all women who marry for eternity in the temple have to face the possibility that they could end up living in polygamy in heaven without their consent. If the wife should die before her husband, he is allowed to be sealed to another woman for eternity. The woman, however, is not allowed to be sealed to two husbands for eternity. Joseph Fielding Smith, who became the tenth president of the church, explained how the rules of the temple discriminate against women: “When a man and a woman are married in the temple for time and all eternity, and then the man dies and the woman marries another man, she can be married to him for time only” (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 2, page 78). President Smith himself remarried after the death of his first wife, and in the same book, page 67, he remarked: “. . . my wives will be mine in eternity.”

Mormon writer John J. Stewart made it very clear that although the church does not allow a man to have more than one living wife at the present time, the doctrine of plural marriage is still an “integral part of LDS scripture”: . . . the Church’s strictness in excommunicating those advocating and practicing plural marriage today has apparently been misconstrued by not a few loyal Church members as an acknowledgement that the evil falsehoods . . . and other misconceptions about plural marriage, are true, and that the Church’s near silence on the doctrine today is further evidence that it regrets and is embarrassed by the whole matter of plural marriage. Such an inference is, of course, unjustified and unrealistic. The Church has never, and certainly will never, renounce this doctrine. The revelation on plural marriage is still an integral part of LDS scripture, and always will be. (Brigham Young and His Wives, pages 13-14)

MOMENT OF TRUTH

Notwithstanding Apostle Widstoe’s bold assertions concerning the honesty of Joseph Smith and the Mormon Church itself, the evidence with regard to polygamy reveals exactly the opposite. A majority of the church presidents (7 out of 13) who were supposed to have been “prophets, seers, and revelators to the Church,” were involved in a doctrine which led them into breaking the law, adultery, deception, perjury, bribery and a massive cover-up which has continued on until the present time. Since Jesus Himself told us to beware of “false prophets,” and instructed us that we will “know them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:15-16), it seems imperative that we face the truth about Mormonism. There is no way around the problem; the deceptive practices used by Joseph Smith and the other early leaders of the Mormon Church must be recognized for what they are—the “evil fruit” which Jesus attributed to “false prophets.” While we do not agree with much of the material written by President Joseph Fielding Smith, he did make one statement that really gets to the heart of the matter:

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

If Joseph Smith was a deceiver, who wilfully attempted to mislead the people, then he should be exposed; his claims should be refuted, and his doctrines shown to be false, . . . (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 1, pages 188-189)

We sincerely hope that Mormons who read this will see the futility of trusting in leaders who have used so much deceit and cover-up in establishing their work. We pray that they will awaken to the true message of Christ, realizing that in Him, and Him alone, can we have salvation.

IN THE MAIL

As a former Mormon at first it was a heartbreak for me to learn of all the deception. I cried for days and still refused to believe it until I . . . read for myself the very books you had quoted from. But later when I found the real Biblical Jesus my joy far outweighed my heartbreak.

We are both so impressed with your honesty in dealing with all Mormon issues . . . I wish those Mormon people who criticize you and tell you you’re printing lies (they have their heads in the sand) would stop and realize how careful you have been to document everything! . . . A tremendous burden has been released from my shoulders when I found the real Jesus. (Letter from Idaho)

After 30 years of being extremely active in the “Mormon” Church, I no longer believe in the origins of the church as the church teaches it! I have been doing some reading and am grateful for the information that people like you have given so much energy to dispense. THANK YOU. (Letter from California)
I wanted to take this opportunity to write to you and thank you for all the research you have done. Your books have been very informative and well documented. I had been a member of the LDS Church for over 12 years and recently left the Church. My wife had been born and raised in the Church and she has some relatives who are General Authorities. . . . I had served a mission, was married in the Temple, served as a Temple Worker, and was in a Bishopric. I found that coming out of Mormonism would not be easy. But the Lord took us in His hands and we are so grateful that we have come to really know God and the true Gospel, as it is contained in the Bible. (Letter from Colorado)

It was [Mormonism] Shadow or Reality given to me by a good Christian to read, that led me my wife and my family of 5 children out of the Mormon faith. We are whole people now, and are still very grateful for your untiring work! (Letter from California)

First I would like to thank you for your book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? I purchased it in January. I have since left the Church and I am now trying to get my husband to read it. (Letter from New York)

Thank you for your diligent work & ministry to the Mormons. Can you realize how many lives you touch & help begin the process of seeing the errors of Mormonism? I know your work is tedious, & you strive for accuracy & honesty. Your books have helped me tremendously in coming to the Lord, and I want to express my appreciation to you. . . . Nothing in my 25 years as an active temple Mormon can compare in the joy I have now & the great light of knowledge & learning that helps me grow in Christ. (Letter from New Jersey)

A few years ago I came across a copy of your book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? It was instrumental in my leaving the Mormon church. I was a student at BYU at the time. (Letter from New Jersey)

I can’t begin to thank you enough for the vast amounts of information you have produced to help me see the truth. I almost fell into the “web” of Mormonism . . . Jesus Christ is now the #1 love of my life. . . . I really can’t express my love and devotion towards you and your work. (Letter from Texas)

After 26 yrs in Mormonism, I have finally been fully converted to Christianity. I was a high priest, and at one point a counselor in the bishopric. Your books and mailings played a role in helping me to see the falsity of Mormonism. (Letter from California)

Thank you for your honesty, & helping us to find Christ. Please keep sending the Messenger. (Letter from Utah)

ANOTHER GOSPEL?

A number of years ago there was a popular saying that went something like this: “I know you think you understood what you thought I said, but what you heard was not what I meant.” We remember smiling in recognition of the problems we have communicating with one another. For decades Protestants and Catholics have faced a serious problem when talking to their LDS friends about Christianity and the Bible. This was especially brought to our attention recently as we read a speech by Theodore M. Burton, a Mormon General Authority. He recounted a conversation he had with a young stewardess while traveling on a plane to New England:

She told me that she had recently been converted from her former manner of living and was now “saved.” . . . she was now a “born-again Christian.” . . . She said, “. . . I am now on the path of eternal life.” . . . she said, “I have felt a marvelous spiritual change come over me which has purged all evil from my soul.” . . . “. . . I’ve had a sanctification experience, not through any work that I or any other person has done for me, but a work of grace whereby Jesus has pardoned my sins and promised me eternal life. I don’t need any formal church organization to accomplish this. . . .” She added that she had truly been reborn spiritually. From her words, I knew she did not understand what is meant by being “born again” nor what is termed the second birth. (The Ensign, September 1985, page 66)

Later in his speech, Elder Burton observed: “When people of the world speak of being saved, they refer to being saved from death to rise in the resurrection” (page 68). Burton’s comment demonstrates that he did not understand what the young woman was saying. When Christians speak of being born again or saved they are referring to eternal life, not just resurrection. Mormons divide saved by grace and eternal life into separate conditions, Christians do not. Bible verses such as 1 John 5:12-13 and John 3:16-17 portray faith in Christ as the necessary act to receive eternal life. When Christians talk about being saved or born again they understand that to include everlasting life in God’s presence. Mormonism, however, teaches one can be resurrected to a part of heaven—they divide it into three parts—but still not have eternal life! Latter-day Saints believe the only ones enjoying eternal life will be those who have been both baptized into the LDS Church (born again) and married in one of its temples. Spencer W. Kimball, twelfth president and prophet of the LDS Church, taught:
Only through celestial marriage can one find the strait way, the narrow path. Eternal life cannot be had in any other way. The Lord was very specific and very definite in the matter of marriage. (Deseret News, November 12, 1977, Church Section)

In his speech, Theodore M. Burton maintains salvation by grace is that “which Jesus Christ gives to every person who has lived on the earth, and is independent of the works we do. But to be exalted to eternal life and to be able to live the kind of life that God the Eternal Father lives requires not only the gift of grace that Jesus gives to all mankind through his atonement, but that gift coupled with our own obedience and conformity to all the requirements of righteous living prescribed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Exaltation, or the eternal life Jesus spoke about, comes from a partnership with Jesus Christ, which begins in the ordinance of baptism, by which we are reborn, and is developed through a lifetime of righteous living” (The Ensign, September 1985, pages 68-69). Elder Burton also says this on page 68 of the same article: “Thus, through the atonement of Jesus Christ, together with the proper ordinances performed in the proper manner by proper authority and coupled with obedience to the laws and commandments of God, we can be saved from spiritual death and can be exalted to live in the presence of God the Eternal Father.”

Thus we see how differently Mr. Burton and the stewardess were approaching the words “eternal life.” Traditionally, Christians have insisted that God revealed all things necessary for eternal life in the Bible, citing such verses as John 20:30-31: “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” Mormonism, on the other hand, goes far beyond the Bible to the revelations of Joseph Smith for its final word on doctrine.

The language barrier goes very deep and stems from the fact that Mormons have such a totally different concept of God and humans that it colors all their theological statements. In an official LDS handbook titled, Achieving a Celestial Marriage, Mormonism declares its belief in a God who was once a human on another earth, along with his wife, and that they are now resurrected beings who have achieved Godhood:

The gospel of Jesus Christ teaches that man is an eternal being, made in the image and likeness of God. It also holds that man is a literal child of God and has the potential, if faithful to divine laws and ordinances, of becoming like his heavenly parent. . . . God is an exalted man who once lived on an earth and underwent experiences of mortality. . . . The progression of our Father in heaven to godhood, or exaltation, was strictly in accordance with eternal principles, . . . His marriage partner is our mother in heaven. We are their spirit children, born to them in the bonds of celestial marriage . . .

“God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, . . .” (Smith, Teachings, p. 345) . . .

Remember that God, our heavenly Father, was perhaps once a child, and mortal like we ourselves, and rose step by step in the scale of progress, in the school of advancement; has moved forward and overcome, until He has arrived at the point where He now is (Orson Hyde, JD, 1:123). (Achieving a Celestial Marriage, 1976, page 129)

Another LDS manual holds out the hope to faithful LDS that they, too, can one day be Gods over their own earths:

Exaltation is eternal life, the kind of life that God lives. . . . We can become Gods like our Heavenly Father. This is exaltation. . . . Those who live the commandments of the Lord and receive eternal life (exaltation) in the celestial kingdom . . . will become gods. . . . They will have their righteous family members with them and will be able to have spirit children also. These spirit children will have the same relationship to them as we do to our Heavenly Father. They will be an eternal family. (Gospel Principles, published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1986, pages 289-290)

Mormonism maintains God and man are the same species and part of an eternal procession of men becoming gods. Included in this concept is an innumerable host of parent-gods, grandparent-gods, etc., extending back into the past. Christianity, on the other hand, sees God as unique, holy, eternally existing as God from all ages past as well as future. Christians have cited such passages as the following to support this belief:

. . . I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.
I, even I, am the Lord and besides me there is no saviour. (Isaiah 43:10-11)

God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? (Numbers, 23:19)

Writing in Galatians 1:8, the Apostle Paul declared: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” The reader will remember that in our lead article we quoted President Joseph F. Smith as claiming that “an angel of God, with a drawn sword, stood before him [Joseph Smith] and commanded that he should enter into the practice of that principle [i.e., polygamy], or he should be utterly destroyed, or rejected.” Joseph Smith also told this same story to Mrs. Lightner when he tried to persuade her to enter into the practice. While it is possible that Joseph Smith made up this story just to talk young women into going into plural marriage, Paul’s warning in Galatians would lead us to conclude that if such “an angel” did, in fact, appear with “a drawn sword” in hand it would have to be from the wrong source. Paul also warns that “Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14).
While the present Mormon leaders have given up the idea that exaltation comes from plural marriage, as we have already shown, they still maintain that “Eternal life cannot be had any other way” than through celestial marriage in a Mormon temple. In other words, they still cling to the same revelation which Joseph Smith gave to establish polygamy (Doctrines and Covenants, Section 132). This is clearly some “other gospel” than what we find in the Bible. Jesus Himself proclaimed that “whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:15). Moreover, the Apostle John declared: “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God” (1 John 5:13).

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**UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY**

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In the late 1960s William Schnoebeelen, a young man who had always wanted to be a priest in the Roman Catholic Church, decided to enter into the occult. On September 22, 1968 he became a “1st Degree (Gardnerian Tradition) Witch.” He later became very deeply involved in witchcraft, Satanism and voodoo. According to one of his friends, his whole life seemed to revolve around sorcery. In 1973 he changed his name to Christopher Pendragon Syn. According to his own statement, the name “Syn” really stands for sin. At the same time his wife took the name Alexandria y Apprope Pendragon. In the late 1970s Christopher Pendragon Syn legally changed his name back to William Schnoebeelen. Unfortunately, however, this did not end his involvement in the occult.

SYN IN THE CAMP

In July of 1980 William Schnoebeelen and his wife were visited by two Mormon missionaries. While Mr. Schnoebeelen said he told the missionaries that he was raised a Catholic, his wife frankly stated that she was a witch. Within two weeks they were baptized into the Mormon Church. At some point, Mr. Schnoebeelen began exaggerating the truth concerning his involvement in Catholicism, and he eventually had the Mormons convinced that he had served as a “parish priest” in the Roman Catholic Church—a claim which was completely false. The Mormons undoubtedly considered him to be a prize catch who would help bring many others into Mormonism. Little did they realize the embarrassment he would later bring upon the church. One woman seems to have perceived that Schnoebeelen and his wife were involved to some extent in the occult, but she hoped that things would change as they became more familiar with the teachings of the Mormon Church. On January 20, 1984, Mr. Schnoebeelen received a certificate from the School of Wicca for completing a course in “Witchcraft.” He used the alias “Christopher P. Syn” when taking this...
course (see *Mormonism's Temple of Doom*, page 74, for a photograph of this certificate). According to Mr. Schnoebelen's own statement, one of the reasons for doing this was that he did not want the Mormons to find out about his involvement in witchcraft.

Those of us who are involved in ministry to the Mormons are always happy to learn when prominent Mormons dedicate their lives to Jesus Christ and separate themselves from the LDS Church. Mormons, likewise, are anxious to learn of those who leave important positions in other churches to become members of their church. Joseph Smith himself claimed that when he asked Jesus which church he should join, he was told that he “must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and . . . that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; . . .” (*Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith 2:19). Since the Mormons believe that they are the only ones who hold the priesthood and have authority to baptize, they are always looking for stories about ministers from other churches who “see the light” and come into the “only true church.”

Stephen W. Gibson, a Mormon writer who was searching for stories about church leaders who had left other groups to become Mormons, learned about William Schnoebelen’s claim that he was an ex-Catholic priest who was converted to Mormonism. Mr. Gibson decided to have Mr. Schnoebelen write a chapter for his book, *From Clergy to Convert*, which was published by Bookcraft in 1983. The dust jacket on this book claims that Mr. Gibson found fourteen “ministers, priests, nuns, and monks” who were once “confused and dissatisfied” but who now “are confident and fulfilled.” William Schnoebelen’s story is found on pages 67 to 73 of Gibson’s book. In this article Mr. Schnoebelen wrote:

> It’s pretty remarkable when a former Catholic priest marries a former nun, but it’s even more remarkable when they end up joining The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints together. . . .

> My ordination to the [Catholic] priesthood, although ritually impressive, left me feeling somehow empty. After the bishop laid his hands on my head, I felt little difference in myself . . .

> In my active ministry I felt inadequate to help my parishioners with their problems. . . . I had to ask for a leave of absence. . . .

> Alexandria had left her order for the same reasons for which I had left the priesthood. . . . We had both soured so much on the Catholic Church that we could not bear a church wedding . . .

> My wife and I had reached the end of our rope. We prayed on our knees every night for guidance, for some sign of which church to join — much as Joseph Smith had done. . . . two days later, just as we were about to go shopping, the doorbell rang. My wife opened the door to two young men . . . Her face lit up like fireworks: “You’re Mormons, right?” . . . We explained our long spiritual sojourn and told them of their providential timing. We went through the discussions like bullets through tissue paper, and were both baptized within two weeks. . . .

> . . . Not long after, my wife looked on warmly as Bishop George Warner laid his hands on my head and ordained me to the Aaronic Priesthood. At last I found what I had been seeking—the power of the ordination was so evident that I could hardly stand up from the chair. . . . Determined to make it to the Salt Lake Temple to be sealed for time and eternity, we succeeded with help from the members. I will not attempt to describe how wonderful this was—suffice it to say that I had never realized how empty our life was until it had been filled. . . .

> We know that the latter-day gospel is true. That sure knowledge is something only the Holy Spirit can give. No matter how long it takes, it is indeed worth the wait— we testify to that. (*From Clergy to Convert*, pages 67-73)

William Schnoebelen’s “sure knowledge” of the truth of Mormonism did not last very long. He states that on June 22, 1984, he became converted to orthodox Christianity. After his conversion, Mr. Schnoebelen began to consider Mormonism as a great evil which had to be dealt with. While Schnoebelen had kept his ties with witchcraft throughout the period he was a Mormon, at the time of his conversion he seems to have taken a step in the right direction when he burned his occult books and rituals.

We probably would never have known anything about William Schnoebelen if it had not been for Ed Decker of Saints Alive. A number of years ago Mr. Decker felt he had found hard evidence that the God of the Mormon temple is in reality Lucifer in the testimony of a 25-year-old man by the name of Kellie. In a tape recording made with Ed Decker, Mr. Kellie claimed that the Mormon leaders were so impressed with him that they took him through an extremely secret and important temple ceremony that even N. Eldon Tanner, a member of the First Presidency, had never been allowed to participate in. He was, in fact, ordained to be a God. While in the Holy of Holies Kellie observed a rack containing 14 or 15 human skulls. He claimed that in the ritual the blood of “diamond back rattlers” was used and that participants in the ceremony “slit their own wrists.” He also claimed that all those who were ordained to be Gods had the satanic number “666” written on their foreheads in Roman numerals.” While Kellie was at first accepted as an expert on the inside workings of Mormonism, Ed Decker eventually concluded that he
“was either a deceiver or not working with a full deck” (The Lucifer-God Doctrine: Shadow or Reality? by Ed Decker and Bill Schnoebelen, 1987, page 11).

After the fall of Mr. Kellie, Ed Decker was looking for evidence to help shore up his belief concerning the temple ceremony and was apparently very happy to learn about William Schnoebelen. Schnoebelen, with his background in witchcraft and Satanism, seemed to be the missing link that Mr. Decker was hoping to find. Mr. Schnoebelen was invited to speak at the Capstone Conference and Decker published a long article by him which was entitled, “Joseph Smith and the Temple of Doom,” in Saints Alive Journal, Winter 1986. At some point Pastor Jim Spencer became interested in Mr. Schnoebelen’s work and the two collaborated to produce a pamphlet entitled, Mormonism’s Temple of Doom.

With the publication of William Schnoebelen’s material attacking the Mormon Church, he found himself facing a very peculiar situation. On the one hand, he had a work in print which praised Mormonism and was being used to convert people into the church. On the other hand, he had written material which condemned the church and was being used to bring people out of Mormonism. Moreover, in the book From Clergy to Convert he portrayed himself as a very sincere and sensitive parish priest in the Roman Catholic Church, but in Mormonism’s Temple of Doom, page 63, he represented himself as a man deeply involved in witchcraft during the same period of time.

Our Investigation

Although we were completely unaware of the article in which William Schnoebelen claimed he had been a Roman Catholic priest, we were concerned about certain aspects of his story when we first saw a video of his 1986 Capstone Conference lecture. In the March 1987 issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger we warned that some critics of the Mormon Church had become far too obsessed with finding Luciferian influence in the temple ceremony. While we did not specifically mention Mr. Schnoebelen in this issue, it was obviously a warning against the type of thing he was doing. In the September 1987 issue of the Messenger we expressed our deep concern over the claims by William Schnoebelen and Ed Decker concerning the spires on Mormon temples. Ed Decker maintained that they were really “Satan’s spires” and represented “an up-side-down nail pointing defiantly toward heaven, as if to impale the Lord Jesus Christ anew” when he comes in the clouds.” William Schnoebelen claimed that because of the trapezoidal shape of the spires they “draw demons like fly paper.” In the same issue of the Messenger we noted that “Mr. Schnoebelen seems to have been deeply involved in the occult and claims that he has portions of ceremonies used in witchcraft which bear some remarkable parallels to the Mormon temple ceremony. His most startling examples, however, are only preserved by photocopies of typewritten documents which could not possibly be very old. Our preliminary study of the material leads us to conclude that it is far more likely that portions of the Mormon temple ritual were plagiarized and incorporated into witchcraft ceremonies rather than the other way around.”

In the November 1987 issue of the Messenger, we presented evidence against the authenticity of Mr. Schnoebelen’s most important claims. In January 1988, Wesley P. Walters informed us that he had received a call from a woman who had seen the article William Schnoebelen had written while he was a Mormon. She noted that his wife was named Alexandria in From Clergy to Convert, whereas it appeared as Sharon in Mormonism’s Temple of Doom. We were not disturbed over this matter because we knew that Alexandria was actually Sharon’s witchcraft name. Wesley Walters, however, noted that when the two books were compared there appeared to be discrepancies in Schnoebelen’s chronology of events. After purchasing a copy of the book, we examined the article and concluded that it was impossible for him to have become a Roman Catholic priest in the period between his graduation from Loras College and the date he gave for his marriage.

On February 19, 1988, we met with William Schnoebelen for a tape-recorded interview which lasted about three and a half hours. During this interview, Mr. Schnoebelen admitted to us that he had never been a Roman Catholic priest and that a certain amount of deception had been used when he wrote the article. Unfortunately, however, we did not feel Mr. Schnoebelen sufficiently answered the problems. Just before we met with Schnoebelen, he had written a letter in which he claimed that he was not actually “lying” in the article published in From Clergy to Convert. In our tape-recorded interview with Mr. Schnoebelen he made this statement about the LDS article: “. . . there are misdirections in there that were necessary, but I’m not sure there was an outright lie in it.”

After our interview with William Schnoebelen, he was invited on Walter Martin’s satellite radio program which is broadcast in many parts of the United States. In this program Martin made these comments about Mr. Schnoebelen: “Your credentials I don’t think can be fairly challenged. We checked you out ourselves to be honest and we find that what you are talking about is essentially
consistent with Satanism and Mormonism.” Mr. Martin also stated: “I’m not choosing up sides in the controversy of whether or not everything can be proved about you or where you came from or whether or not you’re a charlatan and a fraud, which has been suggested by some in the Christian community, with whom I don’t agree, I might add, in this area.”

Later in the program, Walter Martin brought up the issue of Mr. Schnoebelen’s article in From Clergy to Convert. Unfortunately, there seemed to be a careful attempt to avoid naming who Schnoebelen’s critics were, what the actual problem was or even giving the name of the book which was under discussion. In any case, while Mr. Schnoebelen seemed to be willing to admit that there was some wrong doing, he refused to really face the problem:

MARTIN. Well, you have critics, who for the moment shall remain nameless . . . who say, “You’re a charlatan, you’re a fraud. You have made mistakes. You have published something when you were a Mormon . . . and this particular document contained inaccuracies and, in fact, lies.” Now, how do you respond to that?

SCHNOEBELEN. Well, I respond to that by frankly saying that I was a sinner then . . . at the time I was deeply involved in Mormonism and also still doodling around with the fringe areas of occultism and I had right then not a very good moral sense and what I had in mind when . . . my story appeared in the anthology was that I thought if I could communicate something truthful—at that time I thought it was truthful—about the Mormon Church vis-a-vis my religious background it would help lead people to Mormonism. . . . I wasn’t thinking in terms of deceiving people as much as presenting the truth about my background in the most simple way possible so that those who were seeking truth in Mormonism would be able to find it.

MARTIN. So you didn’t begin with the thesis, “Let us do evil that good may come?”

SCHNOEBELEN. No.

MARTIN. Or the end justifies the mean?

SCHNOEBELEN. No.

Some of William Schnoebelen’s supporters feel that it is wrong to even bring up the issue concerning the deceit used in From Convert to Clergy because this was done before he professed to be a Christian. While we feel that it is wrong to dwell on people’s sins after they have come to Christ for forgiveness, there is another issue here—i.e., Mr. Schnoebelen seems to be trying to sweep the whole matter under the rug and deny the serious implications of what he has done. He has said that he “wasn’t thinking in terms of deceiving people as much as presenting the truth about my background . . . .” Since William Schnoebelen would not come right out and admit that he was lying about the matter, it raises grave questions concerning his ability to distinguish truth from falsehood and will cause many people to also take a very hard look at what he has written after he came out of Mormonism in 1984.

In order to really understand the depth of the deception William Schnoebelen used in his article in From Clergy to Convert, a person must know something about his background. A court record concerning the “Matter of the Change of Name of WILLIAM RICHARD SCHNOEBELEN,” filed in the District Court in Dubuque County, Iowa, dated October 8, 1973, gives his date of birth as “August 24, 1949.” He was, as the article indicates, raised as a Roman Catholic and attended Loras College—a Catholic school in Dubuque, Iowa. The president of Loras College has sent us a letter which claims Mr. Schnoebelen graduated from that school on “May 16, 1971 . . . with a major in music and a minor in education” (Letter dated February 9, 1988). In a letter dated February 2, 1988, Robert L. Ferring, Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Dubuque, said that after Schnoebelen graduated he “did indeed teach for two years in a Catholic High School in this Archdiocese.”

The “Chronology of William Schnoebelen,” published on page 63, of Mormonism’s Temple of Doom, indicates that during this period he was going deeper and deeper into witchcraft. According to Mr. Schnoebelen’s chronology, on “07/29/73” he was sealed in a “Druidic [witchcraft] marriage ceremony” to the woman he later married legally on “05/31/74.” By 1975 William Schnoebelen had descended even deeper into the world of the occult, and on “04/30/75” he entered the “1st Degree” of the “Church of Satan.”

Many people who tell false stories base part of their tales on something that is at least partially true. This seems to be the case in William Schnoebelen’s story. He did, in fact, become involved in some small splinter groups which had broken off from the Roman Catholic Church. On page 70 of Mormonism’s Temple of Doom, a document is produced which shows that on “September 6, 1975” Mr. Schnoebelen was serving in the position of “a Sub-Deacon” in “The Old Roman Catholic Church—English Rite.” On “12/14/75” Mr. Schnoebelen was “Ordained to Catholic Diaconate, American National Catholic Church (Old Catholic Rite)” (Ibid., page 63). One month later “01/15/76” Mr. Schnoebelen claims that he was “Ordained to Catholic Priesthood, American National Catholic Church” (Ibid.). While a person who does not read Latin might feel that this is supported by the certificate which appears on page 68, that certificate is actually relating to his becoming a deacon. In the
taped interview, we asked Mr. Schnoebelen why the certificate stating that he was made a priest was not included:

Jerald Tanner: . . . the priest certificate is missing and —

William Schnoebelen: Yes, it is. That’s ‘cause I cannot find it. It may have been among the things that I burned because I was just shoving stuff [i.e., his witchcraft material] by the handfuls into [the fire]. . . .

Mr. Schnoebelen claims, however, that he can “produce at least two people that were actually present at my ordination” and that he has pictures of the ceremony. Even though Schnoebelen cannot produce a certificate showing he was ordained a priest, we feel that it is possible that this event did occur. We feel, however, that such an ordination would amount to almost nothing because of the unstable situation that existed in the organization in which Schnoebelen claims he was made a priest. According to William Schnoebelen’s own chronology, only a month expired between the time he was made a deacon and the ceremony consecrating him a priest. Furthermore, according to the tape-recorded interview, Mr. Schnoebelen acknowledged that he changed churches within that month! He said that he joined a church headed by Edward M. Stehlik just before he was made a priest:

. . . if you want to turn to page 68 [Mormonism’s Temple of Doom], . . . you will notice that Ed Stehlik’s signature is way down at the bottom here. He was only a priest at this point when I was a deacon. He had not yet received the episcopacy [the office of a bishop]. . . . This was a different corporation. I was ordained a sub-deacon and a deacon under the Old Roman Catholic Church—English Rite which was headed up by Francis Facione, which is the name there of the bishop.

Mr. Schnoebelen went on to state that Edward M. Stehlik was only a priest at the time he became a deacon, but that “when he was made a bishop, he started his own corporation as the American National Catholic Church. You’ve got to realize there are literally dozens of Old Catholic denominations running around. Some of them are just paper churches and some of them are viable congregations. . . . It’s kind of a strange situation because there is no control of it.”

We went to Milwaukee, Wisconsin to investigate the group Schnoebelen was involved with (Stehlik’s group) but could not find any evidence that it still existed. Some of the officials at the Orthodox Catholic Church in America were very helpful to us. They also had their roots in the Old Catholic Church, but had changed the name of their church because of the stigma brought about by other groups that also claimed to be “Old Catholic” churches. They indicated that people had been ordained priests in some of these groups just because they would agree to follow a new leader. They seemed to feel that Stehlik’s church was an extremely weird and unstable group and did not want to be identified with it in any way. They were, in fact, unable to furnish us with the name of anyone who still lived in the area who had been in this group with William Schnoebelen or Edward Stehlik. They felt they had scattered to the four winds.

In his definitive work on the various religions in America, Dr. J. Gordon Melton gave this information concerning the unstable situation in many of the Old Catholic churches:

The story of the Old Catholic churches in America is the story of multiple consecrations, some of them of questionable validity . . . The numerous bishops consecrated since World War II have complicated the picture by seeking, receiving and giving multiple ordinations and seemingly being just as free with excommunications. It is not unusual to find a bishop who had been consecrated in one lineage, being excommunicated and/or renouncing the bishop who consecrated him, and setting up his own church with a second (better?) consecration and/or seeking multiple consecrations from a number of bishops.

Straightening out the lines of succession of Old Catholic bishops in the U.S. can be like trying to put together a jigsaw puzzle. Many of the new bishops refuse to show their consecration documents. In some cases they claim a consecration that never occurred, and at other times they wish to suggest a consecration by a more prominent church than the church in which they were consecrated. (The Encyclopedia of American Religions, by J. Gordon Melton, 1978, vol. 1, pp. 32-33)

The Institute for the Study of American Religion, which is directed by Dr. J. Gordon Melton, has provided us with some very important photocopies of newspaper articles and other material which throws a great deal of light on the instability of the Old Catholic group William Schnoebelen was involved in. We will be using these photocopies in the material that follows.

A Roman Catholic priest is required to have four years of seminary training after college. Mr. Schnoebelen, however, had none of this type of training at the time he was ordained under bishop Stehlik. As we have already shown, his earlier college training was in music and education, and although he probably had some classes in religion at Loras College, this would hardly qualify him to be a priest—at least the type of priest we usually associate with Catholicism.
Some of William Schnoebelen’s defenders argue that he had important spiritual qualifications which made him competent to hold that position. The record, however, shows that he was deeply immersed in witchcraft and Satanism at the very time he was supposed to have been made a priest. How could he possibly have any spiritual qualifications to be a priest? Everything about his record, in fact, shows that he was completely unqualified to preside in such a religious position at that time.

The whole situation in some of the Old Catholic churches at that time reminds us very much of what has happened in some of the groups that have broken off from Mormonism. Men can be ordained to high positions in these groups, but it amounts to almost nothing. The main requirement seems to be a willingness to obey those in charge and work hard for the group. As we have already noted, a number of the Old Catholic churches, like some of the break off groups in Mormonism, had a very poor record when it came to choosing priests or even bishops for that matter. When we asked Mr. Schnoebelen about the slovenly methods of ordination in these groups, he maintained that his ordination was legitimate but conceded that there was a major problem in this area:

In fact, there are many cases of what is called simony, which is when someone simply goes to an Old Catholic bishop and says, “Here is fifty bucks and I’ll make you a priest” . . . they’ll just buy the ordination. . . .

As we have shown, the name of Edward M. Stehlik appears on both of the certificates reproduced in Mormonism’s Temple of Doom, and Schnoebelen also maintained in the taped interview that he was made a priest by “Stehlik and Bishop Julius Massey.” In a letter dated February 9, 1988, he claimed that he served “briefly” under “Bishop Julius Massey; then was up in Milwaukee primarily at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Friary from about ’77-79 under Father David Javore.” Mr. Schnoebelen also acknowledged that a man named Glen Goergen was part of the same group. While William Schnoebelen’s supporters would like us to believe that he was involved with a legitimate Catholic group, the evidence seems to show that Stehlik, Javore and Goergen were very unreliable. The Capital Times, published in Madison, Wisconsin, reported the following on February 5, 1980:

NECEDAH - Members of Necedah’s Van Hoof shrine call them “Archbishop Stehlick, Father Javore and Brother Glen.” But these three latest leaders of the shrine cult have followed a twisted trail of deceit, hypocrisy and outright fraud to this tiny Central Wisconsin village.

When self-proclaimed mystic Mary Ann Van Hoof announced last May that “The archbishop is coming,” she intentionally raised the hopes of her followers . . .

Most expected a visit from Milwaukee Archbishop Rembert Weakland and the announcement that, after years of calling Van Hoof shrine a hoax, the Roman Catholic Church was finally recognizing the claims of Van Hoof, the Necedah farm woman who claims to have frequent visits from the Virgin Mary.

But the man who arrived . . . was Edward Michael Stehlik, a man who has followed a twisted path to religion. . . . in a story in the Capital Times on May 30, Stehlik calls himself the “Archbishop and Metropolitan of North America, American National Catholic Church.” . . . But the story also pointed out that, despite the fancy title, he is not a Roman Catholic priest.

In fact, according to a report aired last month by Milwaukee television station WISN . . . Stehlik’s claims of a Catholic background—that he spent two years studying at St. Nazianz Seminary . . . and four years in a Discalced Carmelite monastery—are pure fiction.

A Channel 12 special news team. . . . spent more than six months investigating Stehlik and the Van Hoof shrine. They found overwhelming evidence that the man who now claims to be an archbishop boasts a long history of deceit, hypocrisy and misrepresentation, including the following:

• Court records show that during the time . . . Stehlik claims to have been in a monastery (1962-68), he was married for the first time. His first wife assured investigators that the couple had been living in the Milwaukee area between 1966 and 1968.

• . . . Stehlik claimed to hold a chemistry degree from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. The university last lists him as a student with sophomore standing . . .

• In a hand-written resume Stehlik gave officials of a Milwaukee Presbyterian church, he states, “My leaning toward homosexuality began during the last years of my married life. I experienced several . . . affairs during that time . . . there are still some men who attract my attention.” Yet the official line of his new church blatantly discriminates against homosexuals and takes a harsh stand against their admission to the priesthood: . . .

• Stehlik claims to have been ordained by Milwaukee Bishop Walter Brown of the Old Catholic Church, a splinter group . . . Yet Brown claims he excommunicated Stehlik for “un-Christ-like behavior” at a Mass.

• Stehlik also claims ordination in another Catholic splinter group— the Old Catholic
Church of Illinois. But he was excommunicated by that group for, among other things, his two marriages and “devil worship.”

But Stehlik is not the only self-proclaimed clergyman playing church in Necedah.

Father David Javore, . . . whom Stehlik appointed pastor of the shrine’s St Joseph the Worker Hall . . . claims he left one seminary because “that order didn’t work with kids like I wanted to.” However, that seminary’s records claim Javore was actually dismissed.

Javore also claims to have been a Pallotine brother. The Pallotines, however, claim that he had taken only temporary vows. Although Javore resigned the order, his superiors wrote back saying his vows would not have been renewed anyway. The reason for their decision was “donations missing and unaccounted for.”

Later, in 1978, while operating a home for retarded adults in Milwaukee, Javore was accused by an associate of receiving more than $6,000 in Social Security payments intended for a retarded adult male, of spending those funds, and being unable to account for them.

Three witnesses first told Channel 12, and later confirmed for the Capital Times, that Javore had mistreated the retarded adult in question, beating him on a number of occasions...

Javore also claims ordination in the Church of Gospel Ministry—and organization which will ordain anyone for a contribution of $15. For another $25, it will “consecrate” you a bishop.

Like Stehlik, Javore was ordained a priest in the Old Catholic church, and—like Stehlik, too—he was later excommunicated.

Perhaps the most controversial of all the Van Hoof shrine’s clergy, however, is Glen Goergen, 36, known . . . as Brother Glen . . .

Goergen’s past, too, contains a long record of deceit, misrepresentation and hypocrisy. . . . most of Goergen’s religious hoaxes have been for mercenary ends.

He claims to have been a religious brother since 1967, but investigators uncovered the following, decidedly unreligious behavior:

• During the period Glen claims to have been a brother, he was married and divorced twice. He . . . served time in jail for nonsupport.
• Court records show that in 1970 Goergen lost a paternity suit and was later arrested for disorderly conduct . . .

And the list goes on: cashing bad checks; losing a civil judgment for beating up and permanently scarring a 16-year-old boy; operating phony dance contests; and setting up a telephone sales campaign and then announcing that he had, without ceremony, made everyone in the phone room a religious brother.

Brother Glen even admitted, . . . that he had taken nude photographs of three Milwaukee area teenage girls “maybe two years ago.” He defended that action by saying, “I was involved in a lot of drugs at that time.” (Capital Times, February 5, 1980)

When we questioned William Schnoebelen concerning “Bishop” Stehlik’s involvement in witchcraft, he replied: “Well, he, in fact, he did seek ordination to the witchcraft priesthood. Yes . . . he was ordained, initiated actually would be a more correct term, a witch . . .” The Milwaukee Journal, December 1, 1979, claimed that the television series revealed that “Stehlik was excommunicated from the Old Catholic Church . . . after he reportedly went to a service dressed in what was described as witchlike garb and babbled unintelligibly. The excommunication also cited his two marriages and devil worship, the programs say.” A priest in the Orthodox Catholic Church in Milwaukee informed us the Stehlik may have been murdered. In our interview with Mr. Schnoebelen, he remarked: “I understand the man has been murdered.”

William Schnoebelen maintained that “Pastor” David Javore, the man he served “under” at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Friary, was “a Franciscan priest.” This claim, of course, now appears to be dubious. In any case, in the interview we had with Schnoebelen, he said that Javore came to them as “a friar, if you will, in search of a bishop, . . .” In his excommunication papers from the Roman Catholic Church of the Ultragenthe Tradition, dated November 27, 1978, Javore was “forbidden to use the title ‘Father’ or to delude the public into thinking he is a Catholic Priest in the active ministry.” He was charged “with impersonating a Franciscan Friar . . . seeking ordination to the Priesthood under false pretenses” and with “associating with those persons involved in devil worship of the occult rites.” In a letter dated December 7, 1978, Bishop Robert William Lane wrote:

David Lawrence Javore has associated himself with one Edward M. Stehlik who claims to be a bishop . . . and also one Christopher Syn, who recently changed his name. . . . Javore has saw fit to associate himself with one Edward M. Stehlik who claims to be a Bishop. Enclosed you will find . . . his formal excommunication from the Church by his lawful superiors, which has never been lifted. . . . the Vicariate of Saint Mary Magdalen - Roman Catholic Church of the Ultragenthe [sic] Tradition is no longer responsible for the actions of anyone residing at Perpetual Help Friary . . . At no time has Edward M. Stehlik, Michael Point, or Christopher Syn been under our Jurisdiction.
David Javore’s excommunication papers noted his claim to be “an ordained minister in the Church of the Gospel Ministry.” The Journal, December 1, 1979, noted that even a television reporter was able to be ordained by the Church of Gospel Ministry for a fee: “Reporter McLauchlan noted that he, too, was ordained by the church after sending in $15. He was also informed that for another $25 he could become a bishop.”

When we questioned William Schnoebelen about the scandal which took place in 1979, he said he resigned from the “friary” in Milwaukee when he realized what was taking place:

Jerald Tanner: Did some kind of a scandal there develop concerning finances and homosexuality?

William Schnoebelen: That’s why I resigned. . . . I resigned just before any of this was made public—as soon as I learned of it.

In the resume referred to by Capital Times, which is signed by Edward Stehlik, he stated that he would not let his “homosexuality become a dominant factor in my life” for fear it might “bring scandal to the Church.” He did admit that he did find himself “being attracted to Bro ____, but nothing has happened as of yet.” When we questioned William Schnoebelen concerning the validity of Bishop Stehlik’s ordinations, he did admit that in one case “because of a homosexual thing, he may have ordained somebody he was very fond of, if you get my meaning.”

In the taped interview, Mr. Schnoebelen admitted that there were some real problems in the group:

People appeal to a bishop for authority, okay, and because of the screwy way some things went we at times had congregations in Eddystone, Pennsylvania. Another time we had a congregation in Atlanta, Georgia. . . . and they would kind of come and go, okay, that would appeal to Ed Stehlik to have his episcopal mantle, if you will, over them. And then something would happen. They’d either get him mad, or they’d do something weird . . . like the guy in Eddystone, Pennsylvania ended up proclaiming himself pope, and so we naturally had to, kind of, get rid of him. So it got a little strange.

In the introduction to Mormonism’s Temple of Doom it is stated that William Schnoebelen had been a “Catholic priest.” In the preface, page 7, however, it is stated that he was “ordained a priest in the Old Catholic Church—English Rite.” Although most people probably believe that this is referring to the Roman Catholic Church, it is good that there was some attempt to clarify the matter. A person who goes to the back of the booklet, page 63, will even find the actual name of the church: “American National Catholic Church.” Nevertheless, William Schnoebelen’s statement (page 7) gives the impression that his ordination was partially because of his education in Roman Catholic schools that he was ordained a “priest”: “I was educated in Catholic schools and received a masters degree in Theological Studies from St. Francis Catholic Seminary in Milwaukee. I was, in fact, ordained a priest in the Old Catholic Church—English Rite.” While it is true that he completed two years training at St. Francis Seminary (a Roman Catholic school), this was almost five years after he was supposed to have been ordained a priest in the American National Catholic Church.

One claim that seems to be missing in Mormonism’s Temple of Doom, which appeared in the Saints Alive Journal, Winter 1986, is that Mr. Schnoebelen claimed to have been a Catholic Bishop in the late 1970s. The article noted that “Bill Schnoebelen has a powerful background,” and went on to say that he was a “Gnostic Catholic Bishop” in “1978.” In Mormonism’s Temple of Doom, page 64, the word “Catholic” is omitted and the year is given as 1977: “07/23/77 7th Degree Gnostic Bishop (Grand Master of the Temple Oto).” In the tape-recorded interview, Mr. Schnoebelen admitted that he had ordained some priests in the American National Catholic Church. Since only bishops can ordain priests, we wondered how he could legitimately do this. Schnoebelen tried to clarify this by stating: “After ‘78 I was a bishop.” He explained that “the fellow who ordained me a bishop was [of the] Vallatte succession—the Gnostic Bishop that you see in the chronology.” The more Schnoebelen tried to clarify the matter, the more outlandish the whole thing began to sound. He stated: “Vallatte, when he traveled through Europe ordained several rather bizarre people . . . who were into the occult, and some of them, in turn, ordained people who, for instance, ordained Aleister Crowley, who was, believe it or not, ordained an Old Catholic bishop . . . and this whole lineage then made it to America by way of Haiti, and . . . the official title of the church is the Ecclesia Gnostica Spiritualis, but I just keep the Latin out of it; I just said Gnostic Bishop.”

The fact that William Schnoebelen mentioned Aleister Crowley as having been “ordained an Old Catholic bishop” through the Vallatte succession seems to provide a very important key to this whole puzzle. A tract published by CARIS entitled, An Open Letter to the Witchcraft and Magical Community (revised 1986), charged that Crowley claimed to be “the Devil’s chief emissary on earth.” In his book, Biographical Dictionary of American Cult and Sect Leaders, 1986, pages 59-61, Dr. J. Gordon Melton gave this information: “Aleister Crowley the most renowned magical practitioner and theoretician of the twentieth century, . . . rebelled against his strict upbringing and earned the label ‘The Beast 666’
(from Revelation 13-18) given by his mother. . . . Crowley met Theodore Ruess, head of a German magical order, the Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.). Crowley was accepted into the highest levels of the O.T.O. and organized a British branch called the Mysteria Mystica Maxima. The O.T.O. taught a form of sex magic . . . . The O.T.O. had previously created ten degrees, including ones for the practice of autoerotic (VIII°) and heterosexual (IX°) sex magic. Crowley’s new rituals added an experimental degree for homosexual . . . . magic (XI°) which he initiated in 1913. . . . he resided first in Tunis and then France, before returning to England for the last fifteen years of his life. By this time he had become a heroin addict, a condition he unsuccessfully fought for many years. . . .

A number of things led us to suspect that William Schnoebelen was ordained a bishop through Crowley’s organization, O.T.O. To begin with, Mormonism’s Temple of Doom, page 64, mentions Schnoebelen receiving the title, “Grand Master of the Temple Oto” when he became a “7th Degree Gnostic Bishop.” On the tape-recording, Schnoebelen pointed out to James Spencer that he should have used capital letters—i.e., OTO in the booklet. We have also seen a document which lists a member of Crowley’s OTO as a “Priestess of [the] Gnostic Catholic Church.” The reader will remember that in Ed Decker’s publication Mr. Schnoebelen himself was referred to as a “Gnostic Catholic Bishop.” In Schnoebelen’s statement which we quoted above, he claimed that the official title of the church was Ecclesia Gnostica Spiritualis. This is extremely interesting because in a booklet entitled, Documentation “Joseph Smith and the Temple of Doom,” Mr. Schnoebelen has reproduced a photograph of a text he claims he used in satanic worship (see Document D). The top line reads: “Liturgia De Ecclesia Gnostica Spiritualis . . . .” Mr. Schnoebelen claims that this text has parallels to the Mormon temple ceremony. In any case, the ritual speaks of the “ineffable King of Hell . . . . I proclaim that Lucifer rules the earth; . . . . and give myself wholly, body and soul, to the iniquities and evil which alone are pleasing to him. . . . I acknowledge him to be the One, True God; . . . .” Although only two of seven pages of this ritual are shown in the pamphlet, the first page says that the “Priestess of the Order should be upon the altar nude,” and it seems logical to assume that this has something to do with the “sex magic” which Crowley established.

It is interesting to note, also, that Mr. Schnoebelen states that “this whole lineage then made it to America by way of Haiti.” This may very well explain the “Voodoo” rites he participated in (see Mormonism’s Temple of Doom, page 64). That William Schnoebelen could receive an ordination in such a bizarre group and feel that it prepared him to serve in an Old Catholic church as a bishop is certainly strange. When we asked Mr. Schnoebelen whether his ordination was really related to witchcraft, he responded: “Well, you could call it witchcraft. It would be more appropriately be called ceremonial magic.”

In the tape-recorded interview we had with Mr. Schnoebelen, he acknowledged that he had ordained some women to be priests—a practice that was not permitted in the Old Catholic church:

Towards the last few years I did ordain some women to the Catholic priesthood when I was a bishop, which was, of course, not supposed to have been done, but I did it anyway. And she [a woman whom we had mentioned] . . . may very well have been one of the ladies that I did lay hands on and ordain a Catholic priest, but her primary function would have been as a witch high priestess.

Mr. Schnoebelen admitted that the requirements for the ordination of these women to be priests did not relate to academic requirements: “The criteria were there, but they were not academic criteria as much as they were do they understand the occult disciplines, can they do the rituals, etc., etc.” It would appear, then, that the requirement to become a priest in Schnoebelen’s church would relate to a person’s knowledge of witchcraft rather than to spirituality or educational requirements. Mr. Schnoebelen even admitted that one woman whom he may have ordained was not even regular in her attendance at church: “She’d show up from time to time . . . she was more into witchcraft. She’d just mainly show up just to be nice to me.” Blaine Hunsaker asked Mr. Schnoebelen an interesting question with regard to the women whom he ordained to be priests in the Old Catholic church:

Blaine Hunsaker: One question, these same women, were they involved in those sexual rites in witchcraft that you described?

William Schnoebelen: Yes, Yes. In order to be a third degree witch you have to go through that. Yes, so obviously they would have been.

The evidence we have given shows that William Schnoebelen was associated with a strange group of people in the American National Catholic Church. This was certainly a very twisted form of Catholicism. Those whom he served under had falsified the truth concerning their credentials. The leaders of this cult were plagued with charges of crime, simony, homosexuality and witchcraft. Mr. Schnoebelen added to this confusion by
bringing in his background of witchcraft and Satanism. The women whom he himself ordained “priests” had, in fact, participated in weird sexual rites. Under these circumstances, it seems safe to conclude that his claims to have been a Catholic priest and bishop amount to nothing at all.

**ROMAN CATHOLIC CLAIMS**

Now that we have given some background concerning William Schnoebelen, the reader will be able to better understand the truth concerning the claims he presented in *From Clergy to Convert*. Mr. Schnoebelen’s attempt to maintain that there are not outright lies in the article is refuted twice in his very first sentence: “It’s pretty remarkable when a former Catholic priest marries a former nun but it’s even more remarkable when they end up joining the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints together.” Since William Schnoebelen’s chronology presented in *Mormonism’s Temple of Doom*, page 63, shows that he was married on “05/31/74,” it is evident that he was not “a former Catholic priest” at that time. Furthermore, the woman he married was not “a former nun.” In the tape-recorded interview, William Schnoebelen tries to get around the problem by saying that he was really referring to his ordination into the American National Catholic Church:

...I never said I was a Roman Catholic priest anywhere in this thing. I said I was a Catholic priest, and I know that it was deceptive but what can I say? I was a sinner... There was not really anything per se deceitful said. It was just the way it was said.

Later in the taped interview, the following exchange occurred:

**James Spencer:** Is the point here that he says he’s a Catholic priest. Is your point that he is trying to somehow imply that he was a Roman Catholic priest...

**Sandra Tanner:** Yes. I think it is very obvious that the whole article is intended to convey the message that he was Roman Catholic.

...Schnoebelen:... There are misdirections in there that were necessary, but yeah, I’m not sure there is an outright lie in it. I mean, if you—

**Spencer:** What’s the misdirection?

**Schnoebelen:** Well, the misdirection—

**Spencer:** There isn’t any misdirection here...

**Schnoebelen:** Just mainly... and this is what I think you’re fishing for, because of the fact that the Old Catholic Church allows a married clergy and the Roman Catholic Church does not, there was a studious lack of dates being given. ... because to both the average Mormon and, of course, to the average Catholic the thought is... that if you’re a Catholic priest you cannot be married, and, of course I was married at the time I received my ordination.

**S. Tanner:** But doesn’t the story, in fact, portray you as a Catholic priest before you got married and your wife a nun before you got married?

**Schnoebelen:** Well, that is the way it ended up. How do I want to put this, I mean, you know—

**Spencer:** Yes or No?

**Schnoebelen:** Yeah, yeah, it does... but—

**S. Tanner:** And that’s not true.

**Schnoebelen:** Well, not by direct statement.

...S. Tanner: The implication of this whole thing is that you are a priest with a parish before you even meet your wife, before you got married.

**Schnoebelen:** I know that. That’s because, as I said, no Mormon or most Catholics to whom, of course, this little propaganda piece would be directed would understand or be able to receive the idea of a married Catholic priest.

...Jerald Tanner:... You were not attempting to present yourself as a Roman Catholic priest in this article?

**Schnoebelen:** No, no.

The evidence clearly shows that William Schnoebelen was not telling the truth in this article when he maintained that he was “a former Catholic priest” and his wife “a former nun,” at the time they got married. The attempt to dodge the issue by claiming that this was really referring to the period they were in the American National Catholic Church does not help at all because they were not even members of this church at the time they got married!

Mr. Schnoebelen’s affirmation in the meeting we held with him on February 19, 1988, that he was not attempting to present himself in the article as a Roman Catholic priest does not fit with the contents of the publication. Anyone who carefully reads the story of William Schnoebelen’s supposed ordination can see that it can only fit the framework of the Roman Catholic Church and that it had to occur before May 31, 1974, when he was legally married. On page 67 of the article in *From Clergy to Convert*, Mr. Schnoebelen claims that both he and his wife were raised “in strict Catholic families.” In the tape-recorded interview, he acknowledged that this was indeed the Roman Catholic Church. At the bottom of the same page, he claimed that before he “entered kindergarten” he wanted to be a “priest.” On page 68, he wrote: “After high school, my wife was attracted to the Franciscan contemplative life,
so she entered the Order of the Poor Clares.” This, of course, is completely false. She may have entered into some type of order in the American National Catholic Church, but this would have been a decade later—after she was married to Schnoebelen. She was certainly never a nun in the sense that most of us understand the word.

On page 68 of the article, Mr. Schnoebelen claims that “my wife and I were caught in the avalanche” of “theological change” which followed “the Second Vatican Council.” This is clearly a reference to the Roman Catholic Church since the American National Catholic Church did not accept rulings which came from the “Vatican Council.” On the same page, William Schnoebelen contends that “College brought me serious doubts about my vocation to the priesthood.” This could only be Loras College, which is definitely a Roman Catholic School. Since we now know that Mr. Schnoebelen did not even graduate from Loras College until May 16, 1971, he would still be four years away from meeting the educational requirements to become a priest. Thus, his ordination could not take place until at least May 1975! This, of course, would have been prevented by the fact that he had married the year before (May 31, 1974). Mr. Schnoebelen, however, attempted to fit his ordination and his experience as a priest functioning in a parish into this time frame:

My ordination to the priesthood, although ritually impressive, left me feeling somehow empty. After the bishop laid his hands on my head, I felt little difference in myself. It seemed I had been ordained to a priesthood which no longer knew precisely what it was, to lead the people in directions that were no longer clear.

In my active ministry I felt inadequate to help my parishioners with their problems. The older people were wonderful, holding as they did to their simple faith and spirituality. But with the younger generation I felt as though I were walking on a paper-thick carpet of despair. More and more edicts came from the bishops, each more bewildering than the last. We could now eat meat on Friday. We no longer had to fast during Lent and Advent. Things previously regarded as grave sins were brushed away, and the supposedly unchangeable grandeur of the Latin Mass was so utterly trivialized as to render it comical (page 68-69).

This whole section was clearly written to describe conditions in the Roman Catholic Church and could have nothing to do with Schnoebelen’s claim that he later functioned as a priest in the American National Catholic Church. A hypothetical case might serve to illustrate the deception Mr. Schnoebelen has used here: suppose a bishop in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints for some reason wanted people to think that he was really a bishop in the Mormon Church. One would have a difficult time condemning him if he merely wrote that he was a “Latter-day Saint” bishop because members of both churches are “Latter-day Saints.” (A minor point might be that the RLDS Church usually capitalizes the word day and does not include a hyphen.) If, however, he were to tell of the great struggles he had with members of his ward when the president of the church gave a revelation allowing blacks to hold the priesthood, we would know that he was deliberately trying to deceive because the president of the RLDS Church gave such a revelation in 1865, whereas the Utah Mormon Church did not receive a revelation to that effect until 1978!

At any rate, we have already shown that the Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Dubuque stated that William Schnoebelen “did indeed teach for two years in a [Roman] Catholic High School in this Archdiocese.” Mr. Schnoebelen, however, would have the reader believe that this occurred after he had served as a parish priest:

The people suffered from too much change too fast. They felt lost, and so did I. “The church is evolving,” I would say when they came to me for help. “We are letting the fresh air of ecumenism blow through the church—we must trust the bishops to know what they’re doing.”

Finally, I had to ask for a leave of absence. My superiors were sympathetic and gave me a job teaching music in a Catholic high school. Even here the “new” church mocked me. The simple solemnity of the Gregorian chant which once accompanied the liturgy was being replaced by rehashed folk music and banal modern tunes on electric guitars and drums (page 69).

William Schnoebelen goes on to say that because he could no longer endure teaching at the Roman Catholic high school, he went to work at a drug rehabilitation center. It was there that he met his future wife who had already “left her order”:

I was forced to direct music that would have been unthinkable in Catholic sanctuaries only a few years earlier.

To keep my sanity, to feel as though I were doing good somewhere, I volunteered to work weekends at a drug rehabilitation center in Dubuque. Here I met my future bride and eternal companion.

Alexandria had left her order for the same reasons for which I had left the priesthood. The bishops were pressuring the contemplative orders to get out in the
world and do something more “relevant” than gardening, praying, and making rosaries. Alexandria had left in disgust, and found herself working beside someone who had similar conflicts with the church. . . . we were married in a civil ceremony on May 31, 1974. (pages 69-70)

After telling all of this story in a Roman Catholic setting, William Schnoebelen then related how he came to learn about the Mormons. At this point Schnoebelen then referred for the first time to a “Catholic Splinter group” he became involved with. His statement concerning this matter makes crystal clear that he had previously been referring to the “mainstream Catholic Church”—i.e., the Roman Catholic Church:

We waited six years! In the meantime, we looked into other churches . . . we even got involved in a Catholic splinter group which made me their priest. I stayed with them for three years, but their fanaticism finally drove us away.

I decided to give the mainstream Catholic Church one more chance, and enrolled in a master’s program at St. Francis Seminary, . . . (page 71)

At the top of the same page, Mr. Schnoebelen claimed that when he called “the number of the Milwaukee Ward [LDS] bishop . . . I identified myself as an ex-Catholic priest interested in joining the Church, . . .” We asked Mr. Schnoebelen about this matter in the tape-recorded interview:

Sandra Tanner: . . . you called to this bishop’s number . . . and say you’re an ex-Catholic priest.

Schnoebelen: Um hum.

S. Tanner: What ex-Catholic priest are you at that point?

Schnoebelen: I was an ex-Catholic who was a priest of the Wicca.

Jerald Tanner: Oh, . . . a Wiccan priest—

Schnoebelen: See, I was already a Wiccan high priest at this time.

. . .

J. Tanner: So, it appears you can substitute Wiccan for Catholic priest?

Schnoebelen: . . . we believed it was the same thing.

J. Tanner: And a —

James Spencer: Who did?

Schnoebelen: Witches generally.

J. Tanner: Yeah, witches generally, but people generally don’t believe that way.

Schnoebelen: No, no . . .

Language would become almost meaningless if we all used this type of reasoning to defend our actions. While we are certainly not apologists for the Roman Catholic Church, we feel that Mr. Schnoebelen gave a very distorted view of his own relationship to that church. He seems to have concentrated on the evils of the Catholics while at the same time making himself appear as the sincere seeker after God. He claimed that a priest taught him that the “miracles of the Bible were actually normal, natural happenings” (page 68). On the same page, he went on to say that he had a professor at the Catholic college he attended “who advocated masturbation, sexual freedom, and Marxist philosophy as the keys to Christian behavior.” This, of course, may or may not be true, but it is Schnoebelen’s attempt to paint himself as a true believer against such a background that is disturbing.

While Mr. Schnoebelen does state that after he left the Catholic priesthood, he and his wife “looked into other churches—it was quite an interesting smorgasbord! Evangelical Christians, Zen, yoga, spiritualism, the Episcopal Church” (page 71), he never tells of joining any other group, and completely suppressed the fact that he was deeply involved in witchcraft while he was at Loras College. Moreover, he completely omitted the information which shows that at the very time he was supposed to be a Roman Catholic priest, he was actually functioning as a “Spiritualist Minister, ADL.” Mormonism’s Temple of Doom, page 63 indicates that he assumed this role on “12/02/72.” In From Clergy to Convert, he maintained that problems in the Catholic Church and the music he was “forced to direct” made it hard to “keep my sanity” (page 69). The truth of the matter, however, seems to be that he was entangled in Luciferian activity. In The Lucifer-God Doctrine: Shadow or Reality? page 29, William Schnoebelen now admits he was “demonized” at the very time the Roman Catholics allowed him “to teach high school.”

On page 69 of From Clergy to Convert, Mr. Schnoebelen claims that he went into the drug rehabilitation center so he could “feel as though I were doing good somewhere, . . .” In the tape-recorded interview, however, he acknowledged that he did this so that he could make converts to witchcraft! On page 70, Mr. Schnoebelen wrote the following concerning the courtship he had with his wife:

We were kindred souls, but the idea of interacting with a woman terrified and excited me at the same time. In spite of it all, we were made for each other.

After a gentle, nine-month courtship, we were married in a civil ceremony on May 31, 1974. We had both soured so much on the Catholic Church that we could not bear a church wedding.

The truth of the matter is that when William first met Sharon at the drug rehabilitation center she was not “a former nun” who “left her order.” In the tape-recorded interview, Mr. Schnoebelen admitted that she
was, in fact, a “married” woman whose “marriage was not doing well.” Her name at that time was “Sharon Mullen” (her maiden name was “Dura”). In any case, the “Chronology of William Schnoebelen,” presented on page 63 of Mormonism’s Temple of Doom, shows that the period Schnoebelen refers to as “a gentle, nine-month courtship” was actually a time when they were living together after a witchcraft “marriage ceremony or ‘handfasting.’” This occurred on “07/29/73,” and they were finally “Legally married” on “05/31/74.” When Mr. Schnoebelen was asked about this, he replied: “We’ve had so many marriages [witchcraft marriages?], I have trouble keeping them all straight. . . . It would have been a courtship in the sense that we weren’t legally married . . . .” He later commented:

I was trying to get her to marry me legally . . . if that isn’t courtship, I don’t know what is. My parents were on my case: “You’re living in sin with a woman who’s not married to you,” and I was trying to get her to marry me, . . .

William Schnoebelen’s article, which appears in From Clergy to Convert, is filled with misrepresentation. It is interesting to note how closely Mr. Schnoebelen’s fabricated story followed the pattern set by the man who was supposed to have ordained him a priest in the American National Catholic Church. In the handwritten resume, which we have mentioned before, Edward Stehlik wrote: “Right after high school[] I went into a Carmelite Monestary . . . where I stayed for the next 6 years of my [i]ife.” We have already shown that at the very time “Stehlik claims to have been in a [Roman Catholic] monastery (1962-68), he was married for the first time, . . . (Capital Times, February 5, 1980) Mr. Schnoebelen’s story is remarkably similar to that given by his “bishop.”

**THE FAUST STORY**

As we have already shown, in the article written for the Mormons, William Schnoebelen began by saying: “It’s pretty remarkable when a former Catholic priest marries a former nun, but it’s even more remarkable when they end up joining The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints together.” After attacking the Catholics, Mr. Schnoebelen moved out of the Mormon camp and joined critics in condemning Mormonism. Again, he presented himself as a man with unique qualifications. In a video of his 1986 lecture at Capstone Conference, he remarked:

. . . because of this somewhat unique background—I don’t think there’s too many people that have gone from being a witch and a Satanist to being a Mormon to being a born-again believer—that I feel that there is something I might be able to add to the . . . dialogue concerning the state of the Mormon temple rituals.

In light of the facts which we now know about his claims concerning Catholicism and in view of the way he handled himself in the tape-recorded interview when he was confronted, we cannot help but wonder if he is still prone to making exaggerated claims. As we have already shown, in the book From Clergy to Convert, Mr. Schnoebelen gives us the false story of his “ordination to the priesthood” in the Roman Catholic Church. He tells how “impressive” the ritual was and how “the bishop laid his hands on my head.” He noted, however, that the ritual “left me feeling somehow empty.” One cannot help but wonder if another story he told after he left the Mormon Church concerning an interview with Apostle James E. Faust is also a fabrication. This story came to light in 1986 when Trinity Evangelical Divinity School was considering a suggestion that William Schnoebelen would be a good speaker to address the Tanner Annual Lectureship on Cults. According to Ruth Tucker, she talked to Mr. Schnoebelen over the telephone and he told her that a Mormon Apostle admitted to him that the Mormon leaders knowingly worship Lucifer in the temple ceremony. She became concerned about the matter, and Jerry Urban, who is on the committee which considers speakers, called Schnoebelen to question him further. Mr. Urban was given permission by William Schnoebelen to tape the interview so that the entire committee would be able to hear what he was claiming. In that interview, Mr. Schnoebelen claimed that the Mormon Apostle James E. Faust admitted in a private interview in 1981 that the Mormon temple ceremony was a witchcraft ritual and that Lucifer was, in fact, the God of the temple. In the tape-recorded interview, Jerry Urban mentioned hearing from Ruth Tucker the report concerning the “conversation with an apostle.” Mr. Schnoebelen responded as follows:

Schnoebelen: . . . we did have a personal interview with one of the twelve apostles . . . because we happened to know the right people . . .

Urban: . . . Who did you talk to out there? . . .

Schnoebelen: Elder Faust.

. . .

Schnoebelen: This is something . . . I’m still debating about whether or not to have really circulated because of the kind of thing he could probably, you know, want to sue us for.

Urban: . . . that’s part of my concern here. In other words, some—

Schnoebelen: I . . . don’t discuss this in any of my public [talks?]—

. . .

Urban: . . . so, then, you talked . . . to this Apostle Faust and—
Schnoebelen: We had an audience or interview . . . and my wife had addressed at that time some troubling questions she had about all these resemblances that she was seeing between the temple ceremony and some of the stuff we had gone through [in witchcraft and Satanism] . . . and I’m giving you an almost exact quote . . . He said that he bore us his solemn testimony that this whole temple ceremony was precisely what she was describing as a witchcraft ceremony . . . and he said that, you know, that the God of the temple is Lucifer.

Urban: Oh, is—is that right?
Schnoebelen: Yes.
Urban: . . . He used that term?
Schnoebelen: Yes . . . in almost all occult and cult groups . . . you will find there is this teaching that there is the milk and the meat . . . and he told us that there are certain people that are calle—like, he referred to my wife as an elect lady . . . he assumed that because of all the experiences she has had that she was specially chosen by Father, who, of course, to him is Lucifer . . . to receive this inner teaching . . . which was that Lucifer was the true God of the Mormon Church and God of the temple . . .

Schnoebelen: . . . this is very common to all these kind of Luciferian cult groups. They believe that, you know, God is Lucifer—Lucifer is good . . . And that he is, in fact, you know, the God of this world . . .

Urban: See, I’m surprised that he used the term Lucifer, you know.

Schnoebelen: You see, you’ve got to realize that their whole thing is turned on end . . . and so for him it wouldn’t be all that blasphemous to say that Lucifer . . . is the true God. . . . That’s what these people sincerely believe.

When we heard the tape Mr. Schnoebelen had allowed Jerry Urban to make for the committee, we found it extremely disturbing and could not believe that Apostle Faust would have made the statements attributed to him, especially since he had just met William Schnoebelen and his wife and they had only been in the church for a year. We found this account by Schnoebelen to be as incredible as the statements which Mr. Kellie made to Ed Decker a number of years ago. Even if Apostle Faust worships Lucifer as the true God, it seems very difficult to believe that he would be so free in admitting it to two strangers who visited his office.

We were also suspicious of the fact that Mr. Schnoebelen was telling the story in private but not mentioning it in his printed works. When we talked to the Apostle LeGrand Richards in 1960, he became very upset and said “I’m warning you, don’t start anything against this church!” We published this statement without fear of a lawsuit. (Apostle Richards did threaten to sue us because we printed extracts from his great grandfather’s journal, but the suit was never filed.) If Apostle Richards had told us in the interview we had with him that he worshipped Lucifer and that he was the God of the Mormon temple ceremony, we would have immediately published it to the world. In fact, we would have felt that it was our duty before God to bring such an admission to light.

In any case, we had grave doubts about William Schnoebelen’s charges against Apostle Faust and felt that if he really believed Faust had said the things he was disseminating secretly, he should put them into print. Mr. Schnoebelen told Jerry Urban that he was “debating” whether to go public about the matter but was concerned that Apostle Faust might “sue.” If Schnoebelen had only been speaking about theories he had with regard to the Mormons worshipping Lucifer, we probably would not have published anything from the tape. As it was, however, Mr. Schnoebelen was definitely asserting that Apostle Faust himself said that “the God of the temple is Lucifer.” We felt that if Mr. Schnoebelen was telling the truth, he could not be sued if he published Faust’s statements. He might, however, face some risk if Faust had some witnesses who would testify otherwise or if Faust had secretly recorded the meeting and the tape did not support Schnoebelen’s charges. Since Schnoebelen appeared to be hiding behind the excuse of a lawsuit, we published his statement about Faust in the first edition of The Lucifer-God Doctrine. We knew that there was no way Mr. Schnoebelen could be sued if we published the information. (In the booklet, we referred to the teaching that the Mormon leaders knowingly worshipped Lucifer as the Lucifer-God doctrine.)

In view of the fact that William Schnoebelen’s statements were tape-recorded, we expected that he would either own up to them or just ignore our publication. Instead, however, William Schnoebelen and Ed Decker responded to us in a way that we would never have expected. In their booklet The Lucifer-God Doctrine: Shadow or Reality? page 14, they accused us of being “unethical” in publishing statements from the tape, and to our surprise, on pages 3-4 they completely and emphatically denied that the Lucifer-God doctrine had been taught:

The very title of the booklet, “The Lucifer-God Doctrine,” is misleading, as is the above positional statement. Neither Ed [Decker] nor Bill [Schnoebelen] nor any other person associated with this ministry has ever taught that Mormon Church leaders knowingly believe in the “Lucifer-God” doctrine. One can, indeed,
speculate about the highest men in Mormonism and how much they know, and how much they are deceived by Satan. . . . It may well be that Mormonism’s leaders are the most trapped of all, caught in an infernal web which they cannot understand. This we cannot know for certain. Because of this uncertainty, we again state at the outset that is not now, nor has it ever been the position of Saints Alive corporately, or Ed Decker and Bill Schnoebelen privately that the LDS leaders at any time operate within a “Lucifer-God” doctrine. Mr. Tanner has set up a straw man to tear down. His inference is that we claim and teach this doctrine and that is simply not true.

In a letter to “Ed & Bill,” dated January 29, 1988, Jerry Urban responded in a kind but vigorous manner to this denial. He had made his own transcription of some of the statements on the tape and had arrived at exactly the same conclusion we had—i.e., that William Schnoebelen had said that Apostle Faust claimed the “God of the temple is Lucifer.” He felt, therefore, that the denial was “not consistent with the discussion and taping.” Although William Schnoebelen and Decker had previously emphasized that no one “associated with this ministry has ever taught that Mormon Church leaders knowingly believe in the ‘Lucifer-God’ doctrine. . . . it is not now nor has it ever been the position of Saints Alive corporately, or Ed Decker and Bill Schnoebelen privately that the LDS leaders at any time operate within a ‘Lucifer-God’ doctrine,” Mr. Schnoebelen admitted in a letter to Jerry Urban that what he said in the tape-recorded interview “could fairly be construed to mean that my position ‘privately’ was that the LDS leaders operated within a LGD [Lucifer-God doctrine].” He went on to reveal something that he felt was on the tape but was not—i.e., that his wife had had a dream about Mormons “worshipping Lucifer in the temple” and that Apostle Faust had acknowledged that this “was true.” In the same letter Mr. Schnoebelen tried to justify his statements about the Lucifer-God doctrine by claiming that he was only “testifying” about the matter; he was not “teaching” it to an audience:

Re: #1; we think that to teach something is to intentionally promulgate it before a public forum, i.e. a classroom, conference or audience. It is also to present material in a fashion which assumes the data to be empirically demonstrable. You can teach the binomial theorem. But a witness on a stand testifying about his or her experiences cannot be said to be teaching—by any stretch of the imagination. This is all I was doing—testifying.

Neither Ed nor I ever taught the LGD. We never presented it as an established fact. We never published it; and in fact the question would never have been known to the LDS people had not Jerald put it into print!

#2 — the problem word here may be “privately.” Perhaps this was an unfair characterization. I certainly admit that what I said (and please remember we do not have the tape) could fairly be construed to mean that my position “privately” was that LDS leaders operate within a LGD. However, this is not the only interpretation. . . . It is not clear to us from these quotes whether the second set of quotes is me quoting Faust or me making observations. However, we would agree that Lucifer IS the god of the LDS church! Hopefully, you do too.

There is, however, a large difference between saying that Lucifer is the god of the LDS church and saying that the LDS leaders KNOW that he is the god of their religion. That is the distinction we keep trying to make, and no one seems to want to let us make it. Even in the case of the Faust interview, all that established is that Faust said that he believed that what Sharon had told him about having a dream (of temple patrons worshipping Lucifer in the temple) was true; and led us to believe that indeed such worship went on in the temple. That’s all. I’m sorry if the tape gave any other impression, but you must remember that I was talking “ad lib” five years after the fact.

Now at most, that only covers one Apostle who may have been expressing a “private opinion.” It is even possible, as Jerald has suggested, that Sharon and I misinterpreted what he said, although she and I have discussed it at great length and honestly don’t believe this to be the case.

In any event, we are only talking about one apostle. That’s all it addresses. I do not publicly or privately believe that all the LDS leaders knowingly worship Satan, and I have never said that . . .

William Schnoebelen’s attempt to claim that he was “only talking about one apostle” in the phone call with Jerry Urban does not match statements that are preserved on the tape. While he only refers to the confession of “one apostle” that “the God of the temple is Lucifer,” a careful examination of his statements makes it clear that he claimed the leaders (plural) of the Mormon Church believed in the Lucifer-God doctrine. He told, for instance, of the “inner teaching” that “Lucifer was the true God of the Mormon Church and God of the temple . . .” He said that “They believe that, you know, God is Lucifer . . .” Schnoebelen also maintained that “these people sincerely believe” that “Lucifer . . . is the true God.”

William Schnoebelen’s attempts to extricate himself from the contradictory statements he has made reminds us of the story of the man who borrowed a jug. After he returned it, the owner found that it was broken and
accused him of being the one who broke it. The man responded that he had not taken it in the first place; that it was already broken when he borrowed it; and, furthermore, that there was nothing wrong with it when he returned it. Mr. Schnoebelen’s excuses with regard to the false statements which appear in the response written by Ed Decker and himself brings to mind his attempt to explain away his false statement that he was an “ex-Catholic priest” by saying that he really was an ex-Catholic and a “Wiccan priest.” In their response to us, page 23, Schnoebelen and Decker say that “the serpent teaches doctrine in Genesis,” and they refer to the “teachings Lucifer gives Eve.” This was certainly not “before a public forum, i.e. a classroom, conference or audience.” Mr. Schnoebelen is splitting hairs over the meaning of a word to defend his statements in the response.

We have always been very critical of the way Joseph Smith and other early Mormon leaders publicly denied polygamy when the evidence shows they were, in fact, practicing it. In the History of the Church, vol. 6, page 411, Joseph Smith is quoted as saying: “What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one. I am the same man, and as innocent as I was fourteen years ago; and I can prove them all perjurers.” On February 1, 1844, Joseph Smith and his brother, Hyrum, went so far as to publish a public announcement that Hiram Brown had been “cut off from the church” for “preaching polygamy, and other false and corrupt doctrines, . . . (Times and Seasons, vol. 5, p. 423). On March 15, 1844, Hyrum Smith, who was a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church and a polygamist at that time, strongly denied that the church leaders were “privately or publicly” teaching plural marriage:

Whereas brother Richard Hewitt . . . states to me that some of your elders say, that a man having a certain priesthood, may have as many wives as he pleases, and that doctrine is taught here: I say unto you that that man teaches false doctrine, for there is no such doctrine taught here; neither is there any such thing practiced here. And any man that is found teaching privately or publicly any such doctrine, is culpable, and will stand a chance to . . . lose his license and membership also: . . .” (Times and Seasons, vol. 5, p. 474)

After the Mormons finally admitted that they were indeed practicing polygamy, their leaders tried to explain away the previous denials in a way that reminds one of William Schnoebelen’s explanations of his statements made regarding the Lucifer-God doctrine. They claimed, for instance, that Joseph Smith and other early Mormon officials were only denying the wicked practice of polygamy, not the righteous system of plural marriage which the Lord had introduced. Mr. Schnoebelen’s denials of holding to the Lucifer-God doctrine, would certainly fall into the same category as the denials the Mormon apologists issued. In fact, the Mormons could say that Joseph Smith was not really “teaching” polygamy, he was merely “testifying” to the women concerning the principle and that they chose to enter into the practice.

It is interesting to note that Ed Decker himself severely condemned the Mormons for using this very type of double talk. In The God Makers, we find a chapter entitled, “Lying Prophets And Apostles.” In this chapter we find the following:

The Brethren lied to deny it was practiced, then lied to establish it as the most sacred doctrine of the Church, then lied again to abandon it. . . . The consistent record of lies and deception leaves us with no choice but to conclude that leaders in the Mormon Church, then and now, have a contempt for truth and honesty when it comes to defending their “Prophet” and their religion. . . . right up to the time of his death. . . . Joseph Smith made repeated public and private denials that he was a polygamist. . . . Joseph Smith was the perjurer. Only false prophets lie. . . . Mormon leaders . . . compounded their sin by public denials that were just plain lies. . . . Joseph Smith had at least four and probably seven times the seven wives he was accused of having! If he lied about this issue, what else would he lie about? How could anyone accept anything he said? Joseph F. Smith . . . tried to call these lies “seeming denials.” His statement betrays the mentality that persists among Mormons even today which allows them to deny the obvious with an apparently good conscience: . . . The brazen hypocrisy and deceit of Mormon Presidents and Apostles can be seen . . . Joseph Smith’s unconscionable contempt for truth is staggering . . . polygamy was being practiced secretly and being lied about publicly. . . . The persistent duplicity of early Mormon Prophets and Apostles involved in the polygamy caper is almost beyond belief. (The God Makers, 1984, pages 146, 149, 152-154, 157-158)

Ed Decker, of course, was correct in stating that the early Mormon leaders did not tell the truth about plural marriage. It seems remarkable to us, however, that Decker and Schnoebelen have done exactly the same thing with regard to the Lucifer-God doctrine. When Wesley P. Walters pressed Mr. Decker on his beliefs concerning the Lucifer-God doctrine, he finally admitted that Mr. Schnoebelen had sent him a manuscript which contained an account of the “Faust visit”:

. . . I do not believe that Bill has stated, even in private, “that Faust admitted that such (LDS Leadership knowingly designing their religion to serve satan) was
the case.” He did say, in private, that One and Only One general authority gave recognition that He and only He understood this.

It was several years ago that I came across the Faust visit in a manuscript Bill sent me from Iowa. It was at that time that I contacted Bill and told him that conversation was undocumentable and therefore unusable and should be stricken from any manuscript. Bill did strike it from the book but, unfortunately mentioned it to Jerry Urban a year later. For that he now considers himself fool of the year .

Bill recalls to the best of his recollection . . . telling Jerry that Faust acknowledged that what Sharon (Bill’s wife) said to him (Faust) about her having dreams in which she saw LDS temple patrons crying out in worship to Lucifer was true, according to “his solemn testimony”. . . . acknowledging Faust’s understanding (HIS ONLY) that Lucifer was the god of the LDS temple ritual.

Now please, Wes . . . you are supposed to be an intelligent man and researcher. What that says and what you said we have taught are two different things. (Letter from Ed Decker to Wesley P. Walters, dated Feb. 9, 1988)

The reader will note that Ed Decker acknowledged that he had read the account of the Faust interview in William Schnoebelen’s manuscript “several years ago.” It is troubling that a man who knew all this could have written the following in the response to us: “. . . it is not now, nor has it ever been the position of . . . Bill Schnoebelen privately that the LDS leaders at any time operate within a ‘Lucifer-God’ doctrine.” The evidence clearly shows that William Schnoebelen held to the idea that the Mormon leaders knowingly worshipped Lucifer and even wrote a manuscript for publication (“Having A Form of Godliness”) which contained that information. Although Ed Decker may have told Mr. Schnoebelen that the Faust interview should be “stricken” from the manuscript, he was apparently convinced that Apostle Faust did tell Schnoebelen that “the God of the temple is Lucifer.” One of the authors of this newsletter (Sandra Tanner) remembers a meeting with Ed Decker at the Christian Embassy Bookstore in Salt Lake City months before Mr. Schnoebelen spoke at Capstone Conference in 1986. At that time Mr. Decker said that he now knew that the Mormon leaders knowingly worshiped Lucifer in the temple. When Sandra protested that this was going too far and warned him that he was skating on very thin ice, Ed Decker responded that a highly reliable informant had given him this information. It now appears that it was William Schnoebelen who had revealed this information to Mr. Decker. In a letter dated January 9, 1988, Ed Decker denied that he “EVER GAVE A TEACHING THAT THE LDS LEADERS BELIEVE AND CONSPIRE THAT LUCIFER IS THEIR GOD AND KNOWINGLY LEAD THEIR PEOPLE INTO HIS BONDAGE, . . .” In the same letter, however, Mr. Decker said: “I may have talked at leadership level about our studies in this area and Sandra may have warned me to be careful. . . .”

Whether it was “a teaching” or only a “testimony,” Sandra definitely remembers Ed Decker making the claim that the Mormon leaders knowingly worshiped Lucifer in the temple and cannot understand how he could say that he never even “privately” held to “the position” that “the LDS leaders at any time operate within a ‘Lucifer-God’ doctrine.” While Jerald was not at this meeting, he distinctly recalls discussing Mr. Decker’s assertion concerning the Mormon leaders knowingly worshipping Lucifer with Sandra immediately after she left Christian Embassy Bookstore. It is even possible that Sandra’s stiff opposition to Ed Decker’s statement about the matter might have had some influence in his decision to tell William Schnoebelen that the interview with Apostle Faust “should be stricken” from his manuscript.

In the tape-recorded interview we had with William Schnoebelen, he admitted that he had circulated his manuscript to a number of people besides Ed Decker—an admission which seems to further undermine his earlier statement that he did not even “privately” promote the Lucifer-God doctrine. When Schnoebelen was asked whether the Faust interview was in the copy of the manuscript which he gave to James Spencer and his wife, he admitted that “it probably is.” James Spencer said that he is planning to print Mr. Schnoebelen’s manuscript but that “there’s no way I would publish that with that statement in there.”

In the presence of Mr. Schnoebelen, Pastor Spencer said that he also remembered him telling the Faust story. He recalled that Schnoebelen told him that he and his wife Sharon, “went into his [Apostle Faust’s] office and she went into the dream that she’d had, and I remembered you saying that she had seen a naked lady in the temple kind of on an altar, and I remember you saying to me that Apostle Faust said to you, ‘I see that you are an elect lady.’”

In a letter to Jerald Tanner, dated February 4, 1988, Ed Decker said that he could not be at the interview with William Schnoebelen, however, he had “asked Blaine Hunsaker to sit in for me.” Mr. Hunsaker was very honest about the whole matter and made some admissions which really hurt the position that both Decker and Schnoebelen had taken in their response to us. Mr. Hunsaker said that William Schnoebelen had told him and his wife “the whole story” of the interview with Apostle Faust “about a year and a half ago.” Mr. Hunsaker, who is with Saints
Alive in Brigham City, Utah, went on to say that he publicly disseminated the story of the Faust interview: “. . . I used it. I used it in tape messages advertized in the newspapers. I didn’t use Bill Schnoebelen’s name in connection with it; I said . . . some of our people have been in conference with Apostle Faust and Apostle Faust had admitted and repeated —” At this point Mr. Hunsaker was interrupted, but he later went on to say that he had wanted William Schnoebelen to make the Faust interview public: “In fact, personally, I was hoping that he would take the boldness and bring it out into the public . . . but he chose not to.”

It was certainly refreshing to hear the straightforward response of Mr. Hunsaker—Ed Decker’s own representative at the meeting. His account completely undermined the denials Decker and Schnoebelen had written in response to us. The reader will remember that on pages 3-4 of the response, they stated:

Neither Ed nor Bill nor any other person associated with this ministry has ever taught that Mormon Church leaders knowingly believe in the “Lucifer-God” doctrine. . . . it is not now, nor has it ever been the position of Saints Alive corporately, or Ed Decker and Bill Schnoebelen privately that the LDS leaders at any time operate within a “Lucifer-God” doctrine.

On the tape recording which Jerry Urban made, William Schnoebelen was very definite about what Apostle Faust had told him: “. . . he said that, you know, that the God of the temple is Lucifer.” Jerry Urban responded: “Oh, is—is that right?” Mr. Schnoebelen replied: “Yes.” Urban then asked Schnoebelen if Faust “used that term?” Schnoebelen’s response was, “Yes.” In the interview we had with William Schnoebelen on February 19, 1988, he did not seem to be as certain about the matter:

Schnoebelen: . . . Faust said, after hearing this account [Sharon’s account of the dream that the Mormon’s were worshipping Lucifer], he said, I bear you my solemn testimony that these things are true. . . . We, of course, thought he meant that [i.e., the dream], and I admit that there are other options open. He never said quote, unquote, Lucifer is the God —

Spencer: He may have been saying to you I bear you my testimony that the Mormon Church is true?

(A at this point everyone began talking at once and nothing can be transcribed.)

Schnoebelen: No, he never said that in so many words to the best of my recollection or Sharon’s.

Jerald Tanner: . . . He never said that Lucifer is the God of the temple?

Schnoebelen: No, no.
promoting the Luciferian theory. That there are “many” esoteric matters concerning the temple and witchcraft which only those close to Schnoebelen can learn is made plain on pages 14-15 of the rebuttal:

In counsel with their pastor and in prayer before God, they [William Schnoebelen and his wife] have chosen not to mention many things about the temple and its association with witchcraft—things far more troubling than what has been published—because they would be too sensational and too disturbing for the average Mormon to hear about.

While we have no reason to doubt that William Schnoebelen and his wife met with Apostle Faust, we cannot accept his story concerning the conversation which ensued. It seems as mythical as his earlier claim that a Roman Catholic bishop “laid his hands” on his head and ordained him to the priesthood.

ELI A MORMON?

In an article published in Saints Alive Journal, Winter 1986, William Schnoebelen wrote:

As a former Mason/Occultist, I joined the LDS Church . . . My teacher, the highest ranking Witch in the USA . . . told us that the LDS church was a place prepared for witches and occultists to hide should the country’s mood change to a conservative one. He told us that Mormonism had been founded by Lucifer to provide a hospitable cover where witches could hide themselves . . . Our witch “Master” told us that the Mormon temple was an especially powerful place to go. . . . Indeed, he told us that there was an occult power to be had in the temple that could be achieved nowhere else . . .

In the Decker-Schnoebelen response to us, page 14, the witch Master’s craft name is given as “Eli” (his real name was Barney C. Taylor), and the organization he headed was known as the Mental Science Institute. Mr. Schnoebelen’s claim that “Eli” was “the highest ranking Witch in the USA,” seems to be a real exaggeration. In the first edition of The Lucifer-God Doctrine, page 5, we pointed out that when “Mr. Schnoebelen speaks of his ‘Witch Master’ as being ‘the highest ranking Witch in the USA,’ this could give the impression to some people that he had power over all other witches in the United States. This, of course, could not possibly be correct because witchcraft is divided up into a number of groups. It is comparable, in fact, to the situation we find in Mormonism. Those who have made a serious study know that there are quite a number of churches that base their teachings on Joseph Smith. Although the President of the Reorganized LDS Church has a certain amount of power in his own church, he has no control over the Utah Mormons. The ‘Witch’ whom Mr. Schnoebelen refers to may have had a great deal of influence in his own group, but there seems to be no reason to believe he had power over the other groups.”

In the Decker-Schnoebelen response, page 14, it is conceded that we were “right in saying that there are many witchcraft groups. Bill has even gone to lengths in his subsequent talks to correct any confusion this statement may have caused. . . . witches, like cultists, have the belief that their form of Wicca is the ‘only, true form of witchcraft.’ . . . The Druidic Craft (Mental Science Institute) taught that all other witches were false. . . . To the devout Mormon, there are no other ‘restored churches,’ even though there are actually more than a hundred. Similarly, to him, all other witchcraft traditions were fake, so Eli was in fact the head of all witches; just as Benson is the prophet of all Mormons.”

In his lecture delivered at Capstone Conference in 1986, William Schnoebelen acknowledged that “witchcraft is sort of like many religions, its fragmented. There’s literally hundreds of ways of practicing it.” He boasted, however, that “this Eli . . . had responsibility over literally thousands of occultists and witches from the Druidic Rite, as it’s called, of witchcraft.” Although Mr. Schnoebelen would have us believe that “Eli” was over “literally thousands” of people, the evidence does not seem to support that claim. Dr. J. Gordon Melton, the noted authority on churches, cults and the occult, claims that the Mental Science Institute was actually a small group. He feels, in fact, that it probably did not have more than one or two hundred members.

In any case, William Schnoebelen claimed that he had a xerox copy of a typed sheet containing a ritual used in the Mental Science Institute where a man and woman were sealed together “for time and all eternity.” This contained wording which is strikingly similar to the Mormon temple ceremony in which couples are also sealed “for time and all eternity” (see our book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 473). We felt that the parallels between the two ceremonies were just too close to be coincidence. In his 1986 lecture at Capstone Conference, Mr. Schnoebelen claimed that the Mental Science Institute rituals “date back to at least the Scottish immigration to Southeastern America in the 1700s, and they are virtually identical to the rights that are used today in the Mormon temple.”

In the first edition of The Lucifer-God Doctrine, we made a careful study of the Mormon temple ceremony and found that the material Mr. Schnoebelen claimed was out of witchcraft resembled the modern version
of the temple ceremony (which we had published in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* in 1972) far more than it did versions published during the 19th century. Since a number of changes had been made in the temple ceremony since it was given in the 1840s, this indicated to us that the material which Schnoebelen claimed was from witchcraft and dated back to “the 1700s” was in reality taken from the Mormon temple ceremony in recent years. In his 1986 lecture at Capstone Conference, William Schnoebelen had this sharp rebuke for those who would be so misinformed as to suggest that the witchcraft material was taken from the Mormon temple ceremony, rather than the other way around: “... I have this to say to them: PHOOEY!”

Even though William Schnoebelen seemed so emphatic in his position that there could not have been a reverse borrowing of the material, the evidence we had uncovered indicated that this was the case. Fortunately, we were referred to Jack Roper, an expert on the occult. Mr. Roper was aware of the Mental Science Institute and had met “Eli” at one time. He thought this organization had doctrines similar to Mormonism and referred us to Jack Roper, an expert on the occult. Roper was aware of the Mental Science Institute and had met “Eli” at one time. He thought this organization had doctrines similar to Mormonism and referred us to an article by J. Gordon Melton which contained the following:

**Mental Science Institute.** Eli Taylor, who is the grand master of what is termed druidic witchcraft, is a descendant of Thomas Hartley... The Mental Science Institute was organized in the late 1960’s as a focus for Taylor’s brand of herbal magick... The universe is seen in a series of levels—celestial, terrestrial and **telesial.** The celestial is divided into sublevels at the top of which is God the Father, followed by the Lord of Lights, angels and angels. Man, animals and plants are on the terrestrial level. At the lowest level, the **telestial** level, are the mineral, chemical and electrical elements and creative thought. Just as there is a Father, there is a Mother of all men.

In a concept very close to Mormon theology, the Mental Science Institute teaches that the Father must at one time have been a child.

This article provides information which seems to show that the Mental Science Institute has borrowed some of its ideas from Mormonism. Besides the parallel concerning the Father having “been a child,” we have the words “celestial, terrestrial and telestial.” Those who are familiar with Mormonism know that Joseph Smith taught that there were three kingdoms in heaven, the celestial, terrestrial and telestial (see *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 76). While Joseph Smith’s view on three heavens could have been derived from Swedenborg’s writings, the idea that one of the kingdoms was named the “terrestrial” kingdom seems to be unique to Mormonism. (The word Terrestrial, of course, actually means earthly.) The fact that the Mental Science Institute used the word **terrestrial** (Eli seems to have dropped the final r from the word) as the name of one of the levels of the universe leads to the view that this organization was borrowing from Mormonism. The thing that really cinches the matter, however, is the use of the word “telestial” for the lowest level. It is a well-known fact that this is not a real word. It was, in fact, invented by Joseph Smith in the early 1830s.

Ed Decker and William Schnoebelen took issue with our research concerning the Mental Science Institute and wrote the following on page 21 of their rebuttal:

> It was good of Mr. Tanner to note that occult researchers Jack Roper and Gordon Melton collaborate both the existence of Eli and his Mental Science Institute, and its strong resemblance to Mormonism. However, with typical misdirection, he then writes: “[Melton’s] article provides information which seems to show that the Mental Science Institute has borrowed some of its ideas from Mormonism.”

> Actually, the article does no such thing. Interestingly enough, Bill was perfectly aware of the Melton book and provided a photocopy of the article to his co-author, Jim Spencer; who came to precisely the opposite conclusion as the Tanners—taking it as a confirmation of Bill’s story. . . .

> All this proves is that LDS and Wiccan theology are close. But Mr. Tanner concludes that it proves he is right and we are wrong. He feels that the use of the word “telestial” by Eli proves that he borrowed from Mormonism rather than vice-versa. . . . It may be that telestial is not a real word, but if anything, that substantiates the claim toward his getting it from witchcraft. . . . Which is more likely, that Smith pulled the word out of thin air or that he got it from one of the many occult associations in Smith’s family?

While Decker and Schnoebelen charged that we were using our “typical misdirection” in stating that the Mental Science Institute borrowed from Mormons, the evidence that this is the case has become irrefutable. On January 13, 1988, Dr. J. Gordon Melton, the author of the article which tipped us off to the Mormon connection, sent us a prepared statement which confirms that the evidence does show that Eli borrowed from the Mormons:

> “During the 1970s while I was researching the NeoPagan community, I had ample opportunity to investigate the teachings of the Mental Science Institute led by Barney Taylor (Eli). All of the evidence suggests...
that Taylor created MSI himself using as content some books on Rosicrucianism, herbolagy, Mormonism, and the occult. Taylor had no discernible traditional roots in any witchcraft prior to the contemporary Gardnerian revival which dates from the 1940s. I can say that beyond any reasonable doubt that any similarity between MSI and Mormonism on matters of teaching is due to Taylor's having taken Mormon ideas and incorporating them in MSI. Taylor does not represent any nineteenth-century witchcraft tradition which could serve as a common source for both his teachings and those of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. During my extensive study of witchcraft in America, I could find no evidence of any witchcraft apart from various mundane magical spells (such as making love potions) being practiced in America. There is no evident evidence of anyone advocating or practicing a consistent witchcraft worldview from which a sophisticated religious teaching such as Mormonism could be derived. Anyone advocating the development of Mormonism out of witchcraft has the burden of proof upon them to establish that any such witchcraft existed."

J. Gordon Melton

At one time an ex-member of the Mental Science Institute gave Dr. Melton a “large file” of material he had acquired while he had belonged to that organization. Among the items was The Second Book of Wisdom—a document of 126 pages by Barney C. Taylor (Eli). This work contains “a series of informative materials, study questions, and practices for the beginner in occult science . . . leading to the Diplome of a Fellow of Mental Science.” We were especially interested in this document because in a letter dated April 13, 1987, William Schnoebelen claimed that the pages he had containing the sealing ritual (the material which is similar to the Mormon temple ceremony) were taken “out of the 2nd Book of Wisdom, a ritual work book of the Druidic Craft of the Wise—aka Druidic Wicca or Mental Science Institute. . . . my copy was destroyed by fire in 1984, but I was able to procure these pages from a former colleague high priest in Arkansas. They were typed by him and sent to me.”

Fortunately, The Institute For the Study of American Religion, which is directed by Dr. Melton, provided us with a xerox copy of The Second Book of Wisdom. This copy, which contains 34 lessons, does not have any material concerning couples being sealed “for time and all eternity”—i.e., the ritual which Mr. Schnoebelen claims came out of “the 2nd Book of Wisdom.” When we questioned William Schnoebelen about The Second Book of Wisdom, he claimed that “it was only available, you see, to the High Priesthood.” Mr. Schnoebelen’s claim seems inconsistent with the cover page which says that it is “for the beginner in occult science.” When we showed Schnoebelen the copy we had received, he looked it over and said: “Well, this is a lot more comprehensive, okay, than what I saw. In fact, this looks like its been kind of worked over and polished up. . . . I recognize things in here.” When he was asked if this was the book referred to as The Second Book of Wisdom, he replied: “I would have no reason to doubt it, No, no.” The question was raised concerning why the material that resembled the Mormon temple ceremony was not in the copy which Dr. Melton obtained. Mr. Schnoebelen responded that “it was” in the copy he had, and he didn’t know “why it isn’t now.

William Schnoebelen went on to state that The Second Book of Wisdom was only “available to a High Priest or a High Priestess.” He had previously written that he destroyed his occult material in 1984 when he became a Christian. This would explain why he had to go back to a “high priest in Arkansas” to obtain copies of some of the pages from that document. He later related, however, that “Sharon’s occult things were at her parents” and therefore “were preserved from destruction” (The Lucifer-God Doctrine: Shadow or Reality? page 18). Since the High Priestess was also supposed to have a copy of The Second Book of Wisdom, we asked Mr. Schnoebelen why her copy had not survived. He replied: “Well, you see, you’ve got to understand something and I hope Jim can verify this for my book; we had a fire in 1974, and all her occult materials were destroyed because . . . the fire bomb was thrown into our attic.” It would appear, then, that there were two fires—Sharon’s copy was destroyed in the fire set by an arsonist in 1974 and ten years later William burned his own copy.

While J. Gordon Melton’s copy of The Second Book of Wisdom does not give any support for the material Mr. Schnoebelen claims was in the document (i.e., the pages concerning the sealing of men and women “for time and all eternity”), it does provide extremely important evidence to show that Mormon words and concepts were used by Eli as structural material for his own peculiar version of “Druidic” witchcraft. For instance, in his translation of the Book of Abraham, Joseph Smith seems to have created a new word by slightly modifying the Hebrew word for star—kokob: “And I saw the stars. . . . and that one of them was nearest unto the throne of God; . . . and the name of the great one is Kolob, because it is near unto me, for I am the Lord thy God: . . . ” (Pearl of Great Price, Book of Abraham 3:2-3). On page 10 of The Second Book of Wisdom, Eli borrowed the word that Joseph Smith had created:
Then one giant yellow sun; a world of very high vibrations, came into the Universe. This was the world of KOLOB, the first.

When we questioned Mr. Schnoebelen about the word “Kolob” found in Eli’s document, he admitted that “he [Eli] used the word Kolob quite frequently . . .”

In the Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 2:25, we read: “Adam fell that men might be and men are, that they might have joy.” In The Second Book of Wisdom, page 66, Eli borrowed the last seven words of this verse, and although he put quotation marks around them, he did not give the source: “Then what should we get out of living? ‘Men are that they might have joy.’”

J. Gordon Melton has also sent us a copy of the Mental Science Institute’s Priesthood Manual. On page 19 of this work, Eli again cited from the Book of Mormon: “People should have fun. Our scriptures say that ‘MEN ARE THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE JOY,’ so have fun.” That Eli would refer to the quotation as being from the “scriptures” is very interesting.

Other things in The Second Book of Wisdom betray that it had roots in Mormonism. Although Eli seemed to avoid naming Mormon publications, on page 77, he expressed the importance of paying tithing and used “the Mormon church” as an example. He claimed that because of its system of tithing the church flourished. Today it is about the seventh in numbers in the United States, but the second in wealth.

Through the Institute for the Study of American Religion, J. Gordon Melton has also provided us with another book written by Eli, The First Book of Wisdom. This book uses the word “Kolob” over a dozen times in the opening section. On page 6, for instance, Eli spoke of the time “when the children of Kolob became Gods in their own solar systems, . . .” This, of course, has a familiar Mormon ring to it. On page 22 we read that “All worlds, celestial, terrestrial, and telestial, are inhabited by beings with physical bodies suited for their worlds.”

Pages 21 and 24 of The First Book of Wisdom contain material that was obviously derived from Mormonism:

. . . the Father must have been a child before He became an adult. . . . The Father therefore must have been a man before he became God . . . God is a perfected man. . . . If God was once a child, he must have had a Father, who also must have had a Father, and so on back into infinity. . . . If Man has a spiritual Father, then he must have had a spiritual Mother. Even though God is a perfected man, he could not become a “Father” without a female spirit to act as Mother and accomplish the miracle of creation. . . . You are a spiritual Being—a child of this celestial family—a child of God—a God in the making. . . . You WILL be like your Father in Heaven. A Creator in your own right. . . . Eternal progress is the law of the universe . . . When the Children of God become adult Gods, they will be required to create their own worlds as schools for their own children.

The reader should compare these statements made by Eli with quotations from the teachings of Joseph Smith and other Mormon leaders:

First, God himself . . . is a man like unto one of yourselves. . . . God himself, the Father of us all dwelt on an earth. . . . You have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves; . . . (Joseph Smith, Times and Seasons, vol. 5, pp. 613-614)

. . . God the Eternal Father was once a mortal man who passed through a school of earth life . . . He became God . . . (Milton R. Hunter, The Gospel Through The Ages, page 104)

. . . our Father in Heaven was begotten on a previous heavenly world by His Father; and again, He was begotten by a still more ancient Father, and so on, . . . (Orson Pratt, The Seer, page 132)

The stupendous truth of the existence of a Heavenly Mother, as well as a Heavenly Father, became established facts in Mormon theology. (Milton R. Hunter, The Gospel Through the Ages, page 98)

. . . God, our heavenly Father, was perhaps once a child, and mortal like we ourselves, and rose step by step in the scale of progress . . . (Orson Hyde, Journal of Discourses, vol. 1, p. 123)

God the Father is a glorified and perfected man. . . . (Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, 1966, page 319)

A careful search of Mormon literature on the teachings concerning God might reveal many more parallels to Eli’s teachings in the First Book of Wisdom. Even more important evidence, however, comes from a statement which appears on page 26 of Eli’s Priesthood Manual:

Gemini Message—“As men are, God once was, until he thought; as God is, men may become, when they think.”

Any real student of Mormonism will recognize that Eli has borrowed from a poem written by Lorenzo Snow.
When we had the tape-recorded interview with William Schnoebelen we pointed out that the evidence clearly showed that Eli borrowed from Mormonism. We noted, in fact, that Eli had lifted material from all the standard works of Mormonism—i.e., the material Mormons accept as scripture. We showed that he used the word “telestial” from the *Doctrine and Covenants*; that he took the word “Kolob” from the *Pearl of Great Price*; and that he quoted directly from 2 Nephi 2:25 in the Book of Mormon. That Eli used two very unique words which Joseph Smith himself had coined seems to be very strong evidence in itself that he was using Joseph Smith’s writings in creating his system of witchcraft. Since Mr. Schnoebelen had claimed that Eli said “the Mormon temple was an especially powerful place to go . . . that there was an occult power to be had in the temple that could be achieved nowhere else,” we felt that Eli must have been a Mormon at one time.

After presenting some of the evidence which led us to conclude that Eli had borrowed from Mormonism to William Schnoebelen, we asked him if Eli had any Mormon books. He replied: “Not that I ever saw.” To our great surprise, however, he made an astounding admission when we asked, “Did Eli . . . ever join the Mormon Church to your knowledge?” Mr. Schnoebelen responded: “. . . he claimed that at one point he had been a Mormon bishop.” Mr. Schnoebelen went on to state: “He indicated that . . . when he had been on the west coast he had found it expeditious to do that at one point.”

If Eli was telling the truth when he told Schnoebelen that he had been a Mormon bishop, he undoubtedly would have gone through the temple a number of times. (We do not, of course, even know for sure that Eli’s real name was “Barney C. Taylor.”) In any case, the evidence clearly reveals that Eli was a student of Mormon theology and his exposure to Joseph Smith’s writings is reflected in the teachings of the Mental Science Institute. While Schnoebelen is unable to show that the material which contains parallels to the Mormon temple ceremony was taken from *The Second Book of Wisdom*, as he previously claimed, we cannot completely discount the idea that Eli would have had such a ceremony in his Mental Science Institute.

In the interview he had with us, Mr. Schnoebelen acknowledged that J. Gordon Melton has “probably done more spade work and knows more people in various witchcraft groups than probably anyone else.” When we asked Dr. Melton if he had encountered any other witchcraft group besides the Mental Science Institute which claimed to have a marriage ceremony wherein couples were sealed together “for time and all eternity,” he replied that he had copies of a number of marriage ceremonies for different groups involved in witchcraft. These ceremonies did not contain such a ritual nor did he have knowledge of any group having such a ceremony. He, in fact, said that the marriage ceremonies were usually for only a short period of time. This might account for the statement made by Mr. Schnoebelen which we have already cited: “We’ve had so many marriages, I have trouble keeping them all straight.”

Although William Schnoebelen admitted that J. Gordon Melton was a good scholar of the occult, he argued that “his knowledge is academic, it’s not experiential.” He went on to say: “I don’t really think that just because, for instance the Druidic rite is the only rite that has these resemblances, necessarily makes it suspect. We were taught that the Druidic rite was the only true form of witchcraft and that all these others were more or less . . . take offs. And other scholars in witchcraft . . . have very much established that the whole of witchcraft was basically stitched together out of whole cloth in the beginning part of this century. Eli, on the other hand, asserted, for what ever it’s worth, . . . that his was the true and that all these others were more or less pretenders.”

In addition to the document which was supposed to have been taken from *The Second Book of Wisdom*, William Schnoebelen claimed he had a “copy of a copy” of a typewritten satanic ritual which is supposed to also resemble a portion of the Mormon temple ceremony (see *Mormonism’s Temple of Doom*, pages 35-36). He claimed that he originally had his own copy in 1977, but since he burned it in 1984, he had to obtain a copy from a “rather strange fellow in Chicago.” This man had been one of his “old pupils” who was of “lower rank” in the organization. One would think that Mr. Schnoebelen might know the name of the satanic group he was affiliated with, but when he was asked about the matter, he responded: “Well, I don’t know the name of the group. I know that it claimed to be affiliated in California. . . . I saw stationery that had the heading on it ‘Thee Brotherhood’ . . . which is I know in subsequent research in actually Melton’s book, it is a known . . . hard core satanic group.” Although Mr. Schnoebelen seemed to be either unable or unwilling to provide any definite source for the document, he
maintained that he participated in this ritual (“I actually did it”). As we have indicated earlier, we feel that this document, or at least part of it, may have come from the organization which Aleister Crowley was associated with, the Ordo Tempori Orientis (OTO). We have also noted that the Ecclesia Gnostic Orientalis appears to be part of Crowley’s organization and that the document which has parallels to the Mormon temple ceremony contains the words: “Liturgia De Ecclesia Gnostica Spiritualis . . .” Since Crowley was chosen “to rewrite the order’s rituals” in 1912 or 1913, this would mean that the Schnoebelen document cannot really be trusted to represent something that dates back to the time of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. We, in fact, feel that even if most of the document can be traced back to Crowley, the small portion which is like the Mormon temple ceremony was probably an interpolation made within the last few years.

In any case, as we pointed out in the Salt Lake City Messenger, November 1987, the text of the purported satanic material resembling the temple ritual has had some deliberate changes made in it between the time it was first made public by Schnoebelen in 1985 and when it appeared in Mormonism’s Temple of Doom in 1987 (see pages 35, 36 and 41). Over a third of the words have either been added, deleted or changed without any indication. While all of us are prone to make mistakes when citing material and it is sometimes easy to accidentally omit a number of words, the changes in this document were obviously intentional. The text, in fact, seems to grow closer to the Mormon temple ceremony with time! This evolution of the text raises an important question: if this many changes have been made during the brief period in which we have been able to observe it, how many changes may have occurred in the previous decade? Unless Mr. Schnoebelen can provide an earlier text that can be verified, scholars will be skeptical of its value.

In the Decker-Schnoebelen response, pages 18-19, they try to explain away the changes in the text:

The 1985 booklet is actually slightly older, being a reworking of a chapter out of the as yet unpublished manuscript by Bill. It was actually written sometime in the fall of 1984. At that time, Bill had not yet acquired the GRIMORUM VERUM text, and despaired of doing so. Therefore, he relied on his memory for the rendering of the incantation in the chapter, which later became the booklet.

In being transformed into a booklet, this oversight was not noted. He had no idea at the time that his work would be subjected to such wide-spread publicity or such intense scrutiny. . . .

The 1986 “documentation” version is, of course, the definitive version—being a photocopy of the page itself. It is very closely matched with the text in the 1987 book by Bill and Jim Spencer. The quotation is from the chart on p. 41 of the book, and is admittedly different. The reader will note that the quote is not attributed and is basically a generic version of the magickal incantation, which (like most magic charms) can be given in either first or second person.

According to this explanation, William Schnoebelen actually “relied on his memory” when he wrote out the text for a manuscript written in the “fall of 1984.” Sometime later, as Mr. Schnoebelen has informed us in a letter, he felt that it was so important that he have the original text that he searched out the “rather strange fellow in Chicago” who gave him a copy of the material. However, when he published Joseph Smith’s Temple of Doom in 1985, he seems to have entirely forgotten that he had actually obtained the typewritten text of the ritual. Instead, of using the document itself, he copied out the text which he had previously “relied on his memory” to restore. When the text finally appeared on page 41 of Mormonism’s Temple of Doom in 1987 it had strangely become almost identical to that found in the Mormon temple ceremony. Decker and Schnoebelen maintain that this version “is basically a generic version of the magickal incantation.” This explanation for the changes in the text put forth in the Decker-Schnoebelen response is very hard to believe. It seems far more likely, in fact, that the text was deliberately altered for the express purpose of making it more like the Mormon temple ceremony.

It appears, then, that the two most significant documents which William Schnoebelen has held up as evidence that the ritual in the Mormon temple ceremony was derived directly from witchcraft and Satanism are tainted by serious problems with regard to the origin and transmission of their texts. All that we have with regard to the satanic document is a typewritten sheet which could have been prepared by anyone. We have no date as to when it was first penned nor any assurance that it was not altered after it was written. Moreover, the text has suffered serious alterations since it first surfaced in 1985.

The document which is purported to be from the Mental Science Institute could not be found in The Second Book of Wisdom. Even if it could be traced back to “Eli,” it would be of no real value in proving a relationship to ancient Druidic witchcraft. Since Eli himself was deeply immersed in Mormon theology and since there seems to be no proof in earlier witchcraft groups of the unique concepts he taught, it would be very hard to believe that the portions of his teachings which so closely resemble Mormonism were derived from some more ancient source.
All of the work about Mormonism and witchcraft which Ed Decker has published for William Schnoebelen and that found in the 1987 printing of Mormonism’s Temple of Doom is seriously flawed by the fact that Schnoebelen has suppressed important information which is vital for a correct understanding of the relationship between Mormonism and witchcraft. Mr. Schnoebelen was aware of the fact that Eli used unique Mormon words such as “Kolob” and “Telestial,” yet he withheld this information from the public. If he had mentioned this, it would have undeniably thrown up a red flag which would have led scholars to question his entire presentation concerning Mormonism and witchcraft. Moreover, Mr. Schnoebelen suppressed the fact that Eli himself had told him that “he had been a Mormon bishop.” Even worse than this, however, is the deliberate attempt to misdirect us from the truth which is found in the Decker-Schnoebelen response, page 19:

He [Tanner] is asking us to believe that it just happened that one group of witches in the hills of Arkansas (where Mormons are as scarce as hen’s teeth) and another group of satanists based in Illinois both happened to borrow elements from the LDS temple endowment independently of each other. Isn’t this the same kind of suppositional research that they charge us with committing?

We feel that it is very likely that the portions of the two documents linking the Mormon temple ceremony to witchcraft and Satanism were actually the products of the same person. Since Mr. Schnoebelen cannot seem to give us any real information to prove his statement concerning the “group of satanists based in Illinois,” this leaves us with the “group of witches in the hills of Arkansas.” This, of course, is referring to Eli’s Mental Science Institute. The Second Book of Wisdom states that Eli lived in North Little Rock, Arkansas. The reader will remember that the Decker-Schnoebelen response maintains that “Mormons are as scarce as hen’s teeth” in the “hills of Arkansas.” The obvious purpose of this statement is to convince people that Eli could not have been a Mormon. Now that we know that Eli told Mr. Schnoebelen that he had, in fact, been a bishop in the Mormon Church, it becomes very obvious that this was an attempt to mislead the reader.

**A SERIOUS SITUATION**

It has been with great sorrow that we have lifted the pen to deal with these issues. We are, in fact, deeply grieved by the whole situation. Nevertheless, we sincerely believe that the type of excesses which we have pointed out in The Lucifer-God Doctrine can have a devastating effect on thousands of people. We have sought God’s help about the matter and have concluded that strong action is necessary to prevent the spread of erroneous information which could undermine people’s trust in material published on Mormonism and Christianity. While we realize that this action will hurt some people, we have concluded that the problem has to be dealt with.

Since the material was not only circulated in Christian churches, but throughout the world by means of the printing press, video and audio tapes, radio, etc., it became a public issue. It was not a private matter like the transgression mentioned in Matthew 18:15-17. We felt that the situation was analogous to that which Paul spoke of in Galatians 2:11-14:

> But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

Apostle Paul felt that Peter had committed a public offense against the “Gentiles” when he separated himself from them. Paul, of course, was a Jew, but God called him to be an Apostle to the Gentiles. He was, therefore, very concerned that the Gentiles receive good treatment and not be made to feel that they were unclean. Because of Paul’s deep love for the Gentiles, he felt that he had to do something publicly to counter Peter’s action. He did not call Peter aside privately, but instead he confronted him “before them all.”

We have found ourselves in a similar position. We have a love for the Mormon people and desire to bring them to the truth. For this reason, therefore, we believe that it would be an injustice to keep silent any longer. As we have noted, Ed Decker and William Schnoebelen responded to our work in a 30-page pamphlet entitled The Lucifer-God Doctrine: Shadow or Reality? While we believe that their charges are without foundation in fact, we feel that it would take too much space to respond in this newsletter. We are, however, preparing a new edition of The Lucifer-God Doctrine, in which we will...
deal specifically with the major charges made against us. Those who want to read the other side of this issue can write to Ed Decker or William Schnoebelen at Saints Alive in Jesus, PO Box 1076, Issaquah, WA 98027 for their response to us. An offering to cover the cost of the material and postage should be included.

There is just one more item that appears in the Decker-Schnoebelen pamphlet (p. 1) that should be addressed here: this is the charge that the *The Lucifer-God Doctrine* is “in its entirety” a “direct attack on Ed Decker, Bill Schnoebelen and Saints Alive.” While it is true that the pamphlet is critical of some of the extreme views held by Decker and Schnoebelen, we do not consider it as an attack on the people in either Saints Alive or Ex-Mormons for Jesus. On the contrary, we feel that there are many fine Christians in these organizations who are also concerned that things have gone too far. In fact, some of the people who have been very closely associated with Ed Decker over the years have voiced their support for what we have done.

While we have no idea what the final outcome of this whole matter will be, we do know that Paul has promised that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28) The scriptures also make it clear that nothing is impossible with God and that sincere prayer is the most important step in obtaining solutions to the problems that confront us: “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

We would ask, therefore, that everyone who is interested in the various ministries to Mormons to pray fervently for all those engaged in the work that they will have discernment and the love that is necessary to point people to the Lord and that we may see tens of thousands of Mormons come to know the truth.

Other ministries are also showing a concern about presenting a balanced picture of Mormonism’s relationship to witchcraft. Wesley P. Walters, who is noted for discovering the original document which proves Joseph Smith was arrested for being a “glass looker” in 1826 and for his excellent work on the First Vision, has become concerned that some have fallen into the trap of trying to derive their understanding of demonic workings from their study of the current practices of witchcraft rather than from biblical teachings on the subject. He feels that if this anti-biblical teaching were widely accepted, it could plunge Christianity back into the superstition which was prevalent in the dark ages. He, in fact, refers to these new ideas as “pseudo-Christian witchcraft.” Wesley Walters has prepared an article in which he shows the serious nature of this error. It will appear in the newsletter published by Personal Freedom Outreach. This publication frequently contains important information on Mormonism as well as on other religious groups. Although there is no charge for the issue containing Wesley P. Walters article, those who are interested in obtaining it should send a donation (to help cover postage and handling) to Personal Freedom Outreach, PO Box 26062, St. Louis, Missouri 63136.

In the September 1987 issue of the *Messenger*, we mentioned that we had prepared a cassette tape which deals with questionable methods used by some critics of the Mormon Church which we feel are tending to needlessly harden the hearts of the Mormons against Christians who are trying to work among them. It is basically a call for a more loving approach to the Latter-day Saints. This tape is entitled, PROBLEMS IN WINNING MORMONS, and is available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry for $3.00 (mail orders please add minimum postage and handling charge of $2.00)

As we indicated earlier, we are preparing a new enlarged edition of *The Lucifer-God Doctrine* which will deal with the major charges made against us in the Decker-Schnoebelen response. We do hope that many of our readers will take the time to read it and become informed on this critical issue.

Lest the reader get the wrong impression concerning our criticism of some recent research on the Mormon temple ceremony, we should state that we have not changed our minds in any way concerning the temple ritual. We do feel that it contains a good deal of occultic material borrowed from Masonry. Furthermore, the temple ceremony tries to link Christians and ministers of other churches to the devil’s work, and the penal oaths which are taken in the temples are contrary to Christianity. In our book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* we devote 44 pages to the temple ceremony and its relationship to Masonry.

The predicament which we have mentioned in this issue of the *Messenger* and the reports we have heard during the past year concerning the fall of two prominent television evangelists because of the exposure of their sins brings to mind an article we printed in the January 1975 issue of the *Messenger*. Although it was written thirteen years ago, its message is so important and relevant to things that are going on today that we have decided to reprint it here.
AN ETERNAL COVER-UP

Although the Watergate scandal has really hurt our country, there is a real lesson that we all can learn from it—that is, that it does not pay to try and cover up our sins. The Bible warns: “... be sure your sin will find you out” (Numbers 32:23). It is true that we can often hide our sins from men, but Jesus tells us that we cannot hide them from God: “... there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known” (Matthew, 10:26).

Our former President must have firmly believed that his tapes would never come to light, but through some very strange circumstances they did become public and caused his downfall. This is certainly a tragic example, and we cannot help but feel sorry for him and for his family. Nevertheless, it teaches us that even the President of the United States does not have the power to cover up his sins.

It is certainly ironical that Richard Nixon should be trapped by his own tapes. The Bible, however, tells us that we all stand in jeopardy of being convicted by our own words at the judgment:

But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.
For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. (Matthew 12:36-37)

Although we do not feel that God has a secret tape recorder which he uses to bug us with, we do believe He has knowledge of everything through his Holy Spirit. The Bible says that God not only knows our every word and action but also the “thoughts and intents” of our heart:

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do (Hebrews 4:12-13).

In 1 Corinthians 4:5 we read that the Lord “will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts...” Romans 2:16 tells us that “God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.”

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus it is clear that after death our memory will be restored and that if we have continued in sin and selfishness it will condemn us (see Luke 16:25). The Bible tells us that we are all sinners and in need of God’s forgiveness. To refuse to face this fact is to live a life which is founded on cover-up, and this will eventually prove disastrous to our souls. In the story of the Pharisee and the publican Jesus shows that we can appear to be very religious, but if we have not acknowledged that we are sinners in need of God’s grace we are still under condemnation.

Now, while the Bible teaches that it is impossible for us to cover up our own sins, it does state that God Himself can cover them up if we will turn to Him and ask for forgiveness:

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.
If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:7-9)

In Psalms 32:1 we read: “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” This is a cover-up that really works. In Psalms 103:12 we find this statement: “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” Isaiah 43:25 gives this assurance: “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.” Those who have received the Lord into their hearts know the great joy and peace that comes from accepting God’s forgiveness. The Bible says:

There fore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.
** ** OTHER BOOKS ** **

Mail Orders Add 10% Handling
$1.00 Minimum Shipping Charge

Confessions of a White Salamander, by Jerald Tanner. A sequel to Tracking the White Salamander. Contains lengthy extracts from Hofmann’s confession. Price: $3.95

Hofmann’s Confession. A photographic reprint of the transcripts of Mark Hofmann’s confession concerning the forgery of Mormon documents. Three volumes. Price: $25.00

Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, by D. Michael Quinn. Price: $14.95

The Lucifer-God Doctrine, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Second edition enlarged and revised. Regular price: $2.00
Pre-publication Special: $1.50

Indian Origins & The Book of Mormon, by Dan Vogel. Shows that the Book of Mormon fits well into “the pre-1830 environment of Joseph Smith.” Price: $8.95


Capt. Wm. Morgan’s Exposition of Freemasonry. (Photo-reprint of 1827 ed.) One of the works used in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? to compile the parallels between Mormonism and Masonry. Price: $3.00

Where Does It Say That? by Bob Witte. Over 100 photos of oft-quoted pages from early LDS sources. Price: $5.95


Mere Christianity, by C. S. Lewis. Good defense and explanation of Christianity. Price: $3.95

Mormon Neo-Orthodoxy: A Crisis Theology, by O. Kendall White, Jr. Price: $11.95


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UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY
PO BOX 1884
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84110
In 1945 Fawn M. Brodie first published her book *No Man Knows My History*. In Appendix A of that work she included what she claimed was a “Record of the trial of Joseph Smith for disorderly conduct, Bainbridge, New York, March 20, 1826” (1971 edition, page 491). This document, which Mrs. Brodie reprinted from a book originally published in 1883, seemed to link Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon Church, to the occult. It, in fact, portrayed the Mormon prophet as a man who deceived the public by looking in a stone placed in his hat to find buried treasures. The leaders of the church were incensed by the publication of this document and denounced it as a forgery. The Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe bluntly stated:

... Joseph Smith is made to confess to all his errors, including treasure hunting, peepstone practices, etc., etc. In fact, it is such a complete self-confession as to throw immediate doubt upon the genuineness of the document. Joseph Smith was not a fool. ... There is no existing proof that such a trial was ever held. (*Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth*, 1951, page 78)

The Mormon Church’s *Deseret News* called it a “spurious” record:

But the alleged find is no discovery at all, for the purported record has been included in other books ... after all her puffing and promise the author produces no court record at all, though persistently calling it such. ... This alleged record is obviously spurious ... It is patently a fabrication of unknown authorship and never in the court records at all. (*Deseret News*, Church Section, May 11, 1946, as cited in *A New Witness For Christ in America*, enlarged edition, pages 430-431)

Fawn Brodie was excommunicated because of her book on Joseph Smith, and through the years Mormon writers have continued to attack her and the court record which she reproduced in her book. As we will later show, one supporter of Joseph Smith even went so far as to forge a document in an attempt to discredit the claim that Joseph Smith was tried in 1826.

In 1971 Wesley P. Walters made a remarkable discovery which verifies the claim that Joseph Smith was a “glass looker” and that he was arrested and brought before a Justice of the Peace for that practice. Since that time, Pastor Walters has contributed a great deal to our knowledge of Joseph Smith’s encounter with the law. Walters has shared with us many of the insights and material which he has gleaned from his study of the laws of the State of New York. His research, in fact, has made this article possible. Pastor Walters will undoubtedly prepare the definitive work on many of the things which we briefly touch on in this issue of the *Messenger*. Just recently H. Michael Marquardt found some original documents which throw important new light on this matter. He has been kind enough to allow us to be the first to publish on this subject. In addition, some Mormon scholars have also added some important observations that have helped us to get a more complete picture of what occurred in 1826.

At this point we are printing the court record in its entirety from its earliest known source, *Fraser’s Magazine*, February, 1873, vol. vii, pages 229-230. Since it will be helpful in understanding the material which will follow, we
recommend that even those who have read it before take the time to go over it again.

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**State of New York v. Joseph Smith.**

Warrant issued upon written complaint upon oath of Peter G. Bridgeman, who informed that one Joseph Smith of Bainbridge was a disorderly person and an impostor.

Prisoner brought before Court March 20, 1826. Prisoner examined: says that he came from the town of Palmyra, and had been at the house of Josiah Stowel in Bainbridge most of time since; had small part of time been employed in looking for mines, but the major part had been employed by said Stowel on his farm, and going to school. That he had a certain stone which he had occasionally looked at to determine where hidden treasures in the bowels of the earth were; that he professed to tell in this manner where gold mines were a distance under ground, and had looked for Mr. Stowel several times, and had informed him where he could find these treasures, and Mr. Stowel had been engaged in digging for them. That at Palmyra he pretended to tell by looking at this stone where coined money was buried in Pennsylvannia, and while at Palmyra he had frequently ascertained in that way where lost property was of various kinds; that he had occasionally been in the habit of looking through this stone to find lost property for three years, but of late had pretty much given it up on account of its injuring his health, especially his eyes, making them sore; that he did not solicit business of this kind, and had always rather declined having anything to do with this business.

Josiah Stowel sworn: says that prisoner had been at his house something like five months; had been employed by him to work on farm part of time; that he pretended to have skill of telling where hidden treasures in the earth were by means of looking through a certain stone; that prisoner had looked for him sometimes; once to tell him about money buried in Bend Mountain in Pennsylvania, once for gold on Monument Hill; and once for a salt spring; and that he positively knew that the prisoner could tell, and did ‘possess the art of seeing those valuable treasures through the medium of said stone; that he found the [word illegible] at Bend and Monument Hill as prisoner represented it; that prisoner had looked through said stone for Deacon Attleton for a mine, did not exactly find it, but got a p— [word unfinished] of ore which resembled gold, he thinks; that prisoner had told by means of this stone where a Mr. Bacon had buried money; that he and prisoner had been in search of it; that prisoner had said it was in a certain root of a stump five feet from surface of the earth, and with it would be found a tail feather; that said Stowel and prisoner thereupon commenced digging, found a tail feather, but money was gone; that he supposed the money

prisoner digging for gold, and had the most implicit faith in prisoner’s skill.

Arad Stowel sworn: says that he went to see whether prisoner could convince him that he possessed the skill he professed to have, upon which prisoner laid a book upon a white cloth, and proposed looking through another stone which was white and transparent, hold the stone to the candle, turn his head to book, and read. The deception appeared so palpable that witness went off disgusted.

McMaster sworn: says he went with Arad Stowel, and likewise came away disgusted. Prisoner pretended to him that he could discover objects at a distance by holding this white stone to the sun or candle; that prisoner rather declined looking into a hat at his dark coloured stone, as he said that it hurt his eyes.

Jonathan Thompson says that prisoner was requested to look for chest of money; did look, and pretended to know there it was; and that prisoner, Thompson, and Yeomans went in search of it; that Smith arrived at spot first; was at night; that Smith looked in hat while there, and when very dark, told how the chest was situated. After digging several feet, struck upon something sounding like a board or plank. Prisoner would not look again, pretending that he was alarmed on account of the circumstances relating to the trunk being buried, [which] came all fresh to his mind. That the last time he looked he discovered distinctly the two Indians who buried the trunk, that a quarrel ensued between them, and that one of said Indians was killed by the other, and thrown into the hole beside the trunk, to guard it, as he supposed. Thompson says that he believes in the prisoner’s professed skill; that the board which he struck his spade upon was probably the chest, but on account of an enchantment the trunk kept settling away from under them when digging, that notwithstanding they continued constantly removing the dirt, yet the trunk kept about the same distance from them. Says prisoner said that it appeared to him that salt might be found at Bainbridge, and that he is certain that prisoner can divine things by means of said stone. That as evidence of the fact prisoner looked into his hat to tell him about some money witness lost sixteen years ago, and that he described the man that witness supposed had taken it, and the disposition of the money:

And therefore the Court find the Defendant guilty.


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The Mormon writer Francis W. Kirkham just could not allow himself to believe that the 1826 court record was authentic. He, in fact, felt that if the transcript were authentic it would disprove Mormonism:

A careful study of all facts regarding this alleged confession of Joseph Smith in a court of law that he had used a seer stone to find hidden treasure for purposes of fraud, must come to the conclusion that no such record was ever made, and therefore, is not in existence. . . . had he [Joseph Smith] made this confession in a court of law as early as 1826, or four years before the Book of Mormon
was printed, and this confession was in a court record, it
would have been impossible for him to have organized the
restored Church. (A New Witness For Christ In America,
vol. 1, pages 385-387)

If a court record could be identified, and if it contained a
confession by Joseph Smith which revealed him to be a poor,
ignorant, deluded, and superstitious person—unable himself
to write a book of any consequence, and whose church
could not endure because it attracted only similar persons
of low mentality—if such a court record confession could
be identified and proved, then it follows that his believers
must deny his claimed divine guidance which led them
to follow him. . . How could he be a prophet of God, the
leader of the Restored Church to these tens of thousands, if
he had been the superstitious fraud which “the pages from
a book” declared he confessed to be? (Ibid., pp. 486-487)

The noted Mormon apologist Hugh Nibley published
a book in which this statement appeared: “. . . if this court
record is authentic it is the most damning evidence in
existence against Joseph Smith” (The Myth Makers, 1961,
page 142). On the same page we read that such a court
record would be “the most devastating blow to Smith
ever delivered.” Because he could see the serious implications of
the matter, Dr. Nibley tried in every way possible to destroy
the idea that the court record was an authentic document.

As we indicated earlier, in 1971 Wesley P. Walters
made an astounding discovery which destroyed many of the
arguments Mormon writers had used to discredit the 1826
court record. While searching through some old records stored
in the basement of the county jail in Norwich, New York,
Wesley Walters and Fred Poffarl discovered two documents
from Bainbridge which confirmed the authenticity of the
printed court record. The most important was Justice Albert
Neely’s bill to the county for his fees in several legal matters
he was involved with in 1826. The fifth item from the top
mentioned the case of “Joseph Smith The Glass looker.”
Below is a photograph of this portion of the document.

The fact that Justice Neely said Joseph Smith was a
“Glass looker” fits very well with the published version
of the legal proceedings. Hugh Nibley and other Mormon
apologists became strangely silent after these documents
were discovered.

**ANOTHER FORGER**

While most Mormon scholars accepted the evidence
which Wesley Walters discovered, an overzealous supporter
of Joseph Smith decided to resort to forgery in an attempt
to discredit the documents. In 1986 Ronald Vern Jackson,
a Mormon researcher who wrote the book The Seer, Joseph
Smith, appeared on the Mormon Church’s television station,
KSL-TV with the startling claim that Justice Neely’s bill had
been altered. He claimed that the name “Josiah Stowell”
originally appeared on the document, but that these words
had been changed to “Joseph Smith.” Although Mr. Jackson
did not directly state it, the implications were clear—Walters
had found a genuine bill referring to Josiah Stowell and that
he had deliberately altered it to discredit the prophet Joseph
Smith! Jackson professes to believe that Mark Hofmann
was not alone in creating forgeries. In an introduction to
his publication of the Mark Hofmann Interviews, Jackson
wrote that he had “very incriminating evidence that others
were involved!” He also declared that “It was a conspiracy
to rewrite L.D.S church history and Mark Hofmann was but
a pawn that was sacrificed to save the King. There are those
who would love to disgrace the L.D.S. church by proving
it’s history to be a sham. And Mark Hofmann was the tool
through which they were going to do it.” He also stated that
“Mark Hofmann was just the tip of the iceberg, . . .” In an
advertisement for his publications, we find the following:
“So incriminating is his [Jackson’s] evidence, information
and documentation in this case, not only of Hofmann, and
his Associates, but of the ‘Wider’ Co-conspiratorial Ring,
that several attempts have been made on his life!” We
understand that Mr. Jackson has hinted that the King of
Mormon document forgery is a minister who lives in the
Midwest. Since Wesley P. Walters pastors a church in Illinois
and is deeply involved in research on Mormon history, it
seems reasonable to believe that Jackson is hinting that he
is the “King.” In any case, Wesley P. Walters made these
observations about Ronald Jackson’s charges:

Recently, Ron Jackson, a pro-Mormon historian from
Bountiful, Utah, appeared on KSL-TV in Salt Lake City
and claimed that the 1826 justice of the peace bill had been
altered. He claimed that when this writer was lecturing in
Salt Lake City in 1976, a friend had inadvertently picked up
some of this writer’s notes and kept them. Accompanying
the notes, he claimed, was a reproduction of the trial bill as
it originally read. Jackson said that instead of reading the
people “vs. Joseph Smith the glass looker,” it originally
read, “vs. Josiah Stowell the glass looker.”

The reproduction bearing the name Josiah Stowell and
purportedly obtained from this writer’s notes shows signs of
forgery. Someone has obliterated parts of “Joseph” and in
a sloppy hand tried to change this to read “Josiah.” He has
left the “S” of “Smith” but obliterated the remainder and
placed the name “Stowell” into that space. The final “ell” in
Stowell appears to have been taken from the name Darnell, which appears further down in the same manuscript, and inserted as the final letters of Stowell. Moreover, the letter “a” in Josiah and the “o” in Stowell do not match the way these letters are formed in the rest of the document, and the crossing of the “t” is quite different. (Personal Freedom Outreach Newsletter, April-June 1986, p. 2)

Below is a comparison of a portion of the Neely bill as it was originally photocopied by Wesley P. Walters (to the left) and the way it was altered to read in the Jackson copy (to the right). The reader will notice that the Jackson copy appears to be a very crude forgery.

It appears that Ronald Jackson would like us to believe the following: that the Neely bill originally read “Josiah Stowell.” Wesley Walters made a photocopy of it and then altered it to read “Joseph Smith.” After we had printed thousands of copies reading Joseph Smith, Walters came to Salt Lake City to speak. For some strange reason he brought the photocopy of the bill reading “Josiah Stowell” with him and left it where Mr. Jackson’s friend could easily get hold of it. The bill subsequently fell into Jackson’s hands and he realized that it read “Josiah Stowell” instead of “Joseph Smith.” This certainly is a very strange story.

According to Pastor Walters, Ronald Jackson’s friend claimed that he did attend the lecture and picked up some of the literature that was setting on a table for distribution to the public, but he did not support the claim that the photocopy he gave to Mr. Jackson read “Josiah Stowell.” Actually, what really happened was that this man picked up some of our printed material which we had placed on a table for those attending Walter’s lecture held at Eisenhower Junior High on April 5, 1976. Ronald Jackson’s claim raises some important questions: 1. Why would Wesley P. Walters alter the original document and yet preserve a photocopy that would discredit his most important find? 2. Why would he bring this photocopy to Salt Lake City almost five years after the discovery and leave it on a table so that it would fall into the hands of an adversary? 3. What explanation can be given for Jackson waiting almost a decade before publishing this matter to the world?

Not too long after Ronald Jackson presented his claims on the Mormon television station, we discovered irrefutable proof that his copy of Justice Neely’s bill was a forgery created from our own printed copy which was distributed at the lecture. We were, in fact, able to find two identifying marks on the page which appear on a great deal of material we printed in the 1970s. At that time we often printed from metal plates which were prepared by a rather unique process which we will not attempt to describe here. Due to scratches in the glass that the original copies were pressed against, two unusual marks appeared on the negatives and were consequently transferred to the metal plates. These annoying marks, of course, appeared on the pages which we printed from the plates. Since we knew they were not part of the original copy, we usually tried to erase them on the original metal plates before printing. In many cases this was difficult to do because the marks were too close to the printed text. Often we would erase only part of the marks and occasionally we would leave the marks rather than run the risk of destroying the text which was close to them. In our threecolume work, The Case Against Mormonism, the reader will find hundreds of examples showing where the marks or portions of them are found on the printed pages. They usually appear about 3 1/2 inches from the left side of the page and about 3 inches from the bottom. (The location could vary somewhat in documents we printed because of the reduction and other factors, but they usually appeared in this location.) Below the reader will find an enlarged portion of page 121 of The Case Against Mormonism, vol. 2, which plainly shows the intrusive marks.

As fate would have it, these very marks appeared on copies of Justice Neely’s bill which we printed for free distribution to the public. They are also found on the photograph which appears on page 13 of our pamphlet Joseph Smith’s 1826 Trial. Unfortunately for Ronald Jackson’s claim, these identical marks are found in the very copy he put forth to discredit Wesley Walters’ work! These marks do not appear on a certified copy of Neely’s bill provided by Edwin M. Crumb from “the Office of the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors, Chenango County, Norwich, New York.” This clearly shows that the forger used a copy which had already been printed on our printing press. We believe that the forger probably used white correction fluid to blot out the upper and lower portions of the letter p in the word Joseph so that it could be changed into an a.

If Ronald Jackson really believes that his idea is correct, he should have a forensic document examiner look at the original bill to see if it has been altered. The type of alteration which his theory proposes is very difficult to make without leaving some evidence. The examiners who worked on the Mark Hofmann case seem to have found alterations Hofmann made in ancient documents easier to detect than those in which he penned the entire document. We, therefore, challenge Mr. Jackson to call in one of the experts who solved the Hofmann case to make an examination of Justice Neely’s bill. If he will do so, we will be willing to pay half the costs involved. In addition, the photocopy of the bill which he has set forth to prove that Josiah Stowell rather than Joseph Smith was arrested should be examined by that expert.
We are convinced that such an examination would show that Jackson’s copy is the bogus document. Besides the evidence which we have presented above, Jackson’s copy of the Neely bill does not show the edge of the top of the bill. This is identical to the printed copies we made in the 1970s. The certified copy clearly shows all four edges. Furthermore, there are certain spots which appear in Jackson’s copy which are in exactly the same places on the printed copies we made.

**FORGERY DEMONSTRATED**

Below is a photographic demonstration that the Jackson document is a forgery.

1 — The two fingers point to the marks made by our plate making equipment.
2 — The same marks as they appear in our printed reproduction of the last case on the Neely bill.
3 — These identical marks as they appear in the Jackson document.
4 — A photograph from a certified copy of the Neely bill provided by Chenango County. Notice that there are no marks on this copy!

These spots were undoubtedly made by dust or something else that was on the glass or lens of our camera. They do not appear in the certified copy. The evidence which we have found with regard to Jackson’s copy is the exact type of evidence which forensic experts used to show that Mark Hofmann’s “Oath of a Freeman” was not authentic.

In addition to the forensic evidence that could be mounted against the Jackson document, there is a great deal of historical evidence that demonstrates that it was made by an incompetent forger. The fact that it was Joseph Smith, not Josiah Stowell, who was brought before the Justice of the Peace was verified by Oliver Cowdery, one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, in 1835. Although Cowdery mistakenly said that Smith was acquitted, he revealed the following:

Soon after this visit to Cumorah, a gentleman from the south part of the State, (Chenango County,) employed our brother . . . This gentleman, whose name is Stowel, resided in the town of Bainbridge, . . . our brother [Joseph Smith] was required to spend a few months with some others in excavating the earth, in pursuit of this treasure. . . .

On the private character of our brother I need add nothing further, at present, previous to his obtaining the records of the Nephites, only that while in that country, some very officious person complained of him as a disorderly person, and brought him before the authorities of the county; but there being no cause of action he was honorably acquitted. (Messenger and Advocate, vol. 2, pp. 200-201)

To claim that Josiah Stowell instead of Joseph Smith was charged with being a “glass looker” flies in the face of everything we know about these two men. Although Stowell was very superstitious, there is nothing to show that he himself was a glass looker. Even the Mormon historian B. H. Roberts conceded that Stowell sought out Joseph Smith because he believed that Smith had a gift to divine where treasure was hidden:

Near Bainbridge was an extensive cave, . . . a local legend had it that it was an old mine formerly worked by Spaniards; and that they had concealed within it much of the treasure they had discovered, . . .

Mr. Stoal believed this legend and had employed men to explore the cave for treasure. Having heard of Joseph Smith’s gift of seership, he came to the Smith residence to employ him in this undertaking. Joseph hired out to Mr. Stoal and went with him . . . where for something like a month they vainly sought to find the “hidden treasure.” (A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, vol. 1, page 82)

Joseph Smith’s own mother wrote that “a man, by the name of Josiah Stoal, came from Chenango county, New York, with the view of getting Joseph to assist him in digging for a silver mine. He came for Joseph on account of having heard that he possessed certain keys, by which he could
discern things invisible to the natural eye" (Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith The Prophet . . . , by Lucy Smith, 1853, pages 91-92).

As early as 1831, A. W. Benton wrote concerning Joseph Smith’s encounter with the law in Bainbridge:

For several years preceding the appearance of his book [the Book of Mormon], he was about the country in the character of a glass-looker: pretending, by means of a certain stone, or glass, which he put in a hat, to be able to discover lost goods, hidden treasures, mines of gold and silver. . . . In this town, a wealthy farmer, named Josiah Stowell, together with others, spent large sums of money in digging for hidden money, which this Smith pretended he could see, and told them where to dig; but they never found their treasure. At length the public, becoming wearied with the base imposition which he was palming upon the credulity of the ignorant, for the purpose of sponging his living from their earnings, had him arrested as a disorderly person, tried and condemned before a court of Justice. (Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate, April 9, 1831, page 120)

Mr. Benton’s statement that it was Joseph Smith who was tried was later verified by Dr. W. D. Purple who attended the legal proceedings (see our work Joseph Smith & Money Digging, pages 23-29). The Jackson document is not only out of harmony with all of these sources, but it also goes against the court record itself which shows that Josiah Stowell was a witness who gave testimony favorable to Joseph Smith. Moreover, it contradicts the bill of Constable Philip De Zeng which Wesley Walters discovered. De Zeng wrote in his bill that he wanted $1.25 for “Serving Warrant on Joseph Smith . . .” He also wrote concerning his “Attendance with Prisoner two days & 1 nigh[t] . . .”

While no real historian could ever be fooled by the forgery which Ronald Jackson is promoting, those who desire to discredit all Mormon critics with any bizarre theory put forth might be taken in by this type of foolishness. Robert Brown, who seems to have a personal mission to destroy the credibility of those who oppose Mormonism, seems to have believed Jackson’s claim. Speaking on KFYI Radio in Phoenix, Arizona, on January 13, 1986, Mr. Brown stated:

I think that you will find in the next few days that the original document that was discovered in a basement of a court house . . . has been altered, and the original document said that Josiah Stowell, who was Joseph Smith’s employer, was the one that was arrested for peepstone gazing and that it was not Joseph Smith.

Fortunately, there are a large number of Mormon scholars who are not so biased in their views. Dean Jesse, who is considered one of the Mormon Church’s top scholars on the writings of Joseph Smith, openly condemned the Jackson document as a forgery. Speaking at the Brigham Young University Symposium on “Church History and Recent Forgeries,” held August 6, 1987, he commented: “In one instance an advocate actually perpetrated a crude forgery of his own, changing Joseph Smith’s name to Josiah Stowell on a document that charged Joseph with glass looking in 1826.”

NEW DISCOVERIES

At the time he did his research in the basement of the jail in Norwich, New York, Wesley P. Walters found the documents in a “disorganized state” and some of them “were so water-stained the entire page was illegible.” Besides the bills which mentioned Joseph Smith, Pastor Walters also discovered other bills and documents which helped to substantiate his major finds. For instance, he found Justice Zechariah Tarble’s bill for 1826. This bill provides some important historical evidence concerning Justice Neely’s bill because Tarble mentioned that he served with Justice Neely and Justice Humphrey in a Court of Special Sessions to try three men who are named in the Neely bill.

Wesley Walters found that there were “four justices of the peace” in Bainbridge, but he was unable to find bills for the other two. He noted, however, that “If the 1826 bills of Justices Bigelow and Humphrey should turn up, there would likewise be cases on those which were tried jointly with Neely as is evident from the constables’ notifying them. . . . when the County Historian has completed the organization of all the bills they may yet show up” (Joseph Smith’s Bainbridge, N.Y., Court Trials, page 150). Wesley Walters encouraged H. Michael Marquardt to do further research with regard to Joseph Smith’s encounter with the law. In May 1988, Mr. Marquardt went back to Norwich, New York, and found the missing bills in the Office of History which is located in the Chenango County Historical Society. These 1826 bills provide strong support for the authenticity of the Neely bill. Justice Humphrey, for instance, wrote that he helped try the three men we mentioned above. The bills of Neely, Humphrey and Tarble, therefore, all confirm that they met in a Court of Special Sessions to try these men.

Michael Marquardt also found the 1826 bill for Justice Levi Bigelow. This bill likewise provides important evidence which helps to substantiate Albert Neely’s bill. Neely listed his fees for the trials of Josiah Evans, Robert Darnell and Ira Church. Justice Bigelow also mentioned being in a Court of Special Sessions to try these very men. Moreover, although Neely seems to have accidentally omitted the date for Josiah Evans trial, both documents agree that Robert Darnell was tried on October 3, 1826, and that Ira Church’s trial occurred on November 9, 1826.

Besides locating the bills of Justices Bigelow and Humphrey, Mr. Marquardt also found Justice Zechariah Tarble’s Docket Book for civil cases from June 17, 1822 to March 7, 1826. It appears to have two lines and a signature by Albert Neely that can be compared with the handwriting in the 1826 bill which mentions Joseph Smith’s case. The reader may remember that Zechariah Tarble was the Justice of the Peace who married Joseph Smith (see History of the Church, vol. 1, page 17).
TRANSCRIPT VERIFIED

Research by Wesley P. Walters and Michael Marquardt’s new discoveries combine to establish beyond any doubt that the transcript of Joseph Smith’s legal difficulties, which was first published in 1873, is authentic.

The original pages of this transcript were still in existence in January, 1886, when the *Utah Christian Advocate* published the following:

The document we print below is interesting to those, who desire historical light on the origin of Mormonism. We received the Manuscript from Bishop Tuttle; and the following, from the good bishop’s pen, explains how he came into possession of the Manuscript:— “The Ms. was given me by Miss Emily Pearsall who, some years since, was a woman keeper in our mission and lived in my family, and died here. Her *father or uncle was a Justice of the Peace* in Bainbridge Chenango Co., New York, in Jo. Smith’s time, and before him was tried. Miss Pearsall tore the leaves out of the record found in her father’s house and brought them to me.”

While Bishop Tuttle could not remember whether it was Emily Pearsall’s father or uncle who was Justice of the Peace in Bainbridge, Stanley S. Ivins solved this problem many years ago when he found that Albert Neely was Miss Pearsall’s uncle (see *History And Genealogy of the Pearsall Family in England & America*, pp. 1143, 1144 and 1151).

The transcript was published three times by different individuals after it arrived in Salt Lake City. As we have already shown, it appeared first in *Fraser’s Magazine* in 1873. It was printed by Bishop Tuttle in the 1883 *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia* and finally appeared in the *Utah Christian Advocate* in 1886. Michael Marquardt’s study of the text of the three different printings leads him to the conclusion that they were all printed from the original pages rather than one borrowing from another. In this regard it is interesting to note that the testimony of Horace Stowell, which was very brief, appears to have been accidentally omitted when the document was first published in 1873. The 1883 version could not have been copied from the 1873 printed version because it includes Horace Stowell’s testimony. The 1886 version also has Horace Stowell’s testimony, but there seems to be evidence that it was also taken directly from the original pages furnished by Justice Neely’s niece, Emily Pearsall. If the 1886 printing were borrowing from the 1883 printing, it would not have the court costs at the end of the document because they were not included in the 1883 publication by Bishop Tuttle. The differences, therefore, seem to provide strong circumstantial evidence that three different individuals saw the original pages and copied from them. At any rate, while the existence of the original pages of the transcript was known from 1873 to 1886, there seems to be no evidence that any Mormon apologist tried to question their authenticity at that time.

The fact that Wesley P. Walters’ discovery of the 1826 bill of Justice Neely confirms the accuracy of the transcript can hardly be disputed by anyone who takes a close look at the evidence. We have already shown that the statement on the Neely bill that Joseph Smith was a “Glass looker” fits very well with the contents of the transcript which has been published. Moreover, Neely’s bill provides some very specific evidence. It states that the trial took place on “March 20, 1826,” and this is precisely the date found in the published account of the trial: “Prisoner brought before Court March 20, 1826” (*Fraser’s Magazine*, Feb. 1873, page 229). In Albert Neely’s bill the fee for this case is listed as “2.68,” and this is the exact figure found in the printed record: “Costs: . . . $2.68.” In light of this evidence, it seems impossible to continue to deny the authenticity of the court record.

In *Joseph Smith's Bainbridge, N.Y. Court Trials*, reprinted by Utah Lighthouse Ministry, pages 137-138, Wesley Walters shows that the court costs listed by Neely at the end of the printed transcript agree very well with costs found on other bills submitted by justices during that time period. We have recently compared the costs found in Neely’s docket book with *The Justice’s Manual; or, a Summary of the Powers and Duties of Justices of the Peace in the State of New-York*, by Thomas G. Waterman, 1825, page 199. Mr. Waterman wrote: “The fees of a Justice for his services in apprehending, binding, committing, &c. for crimes and misdemeanors, are—for every oath, 12 1/2 cents; warrant, 19; recognizance, 25; mittimus, 19; which are audited and allowed by the board of supervisors as county charges.” These charges are in complete agreement with the items found in the pages from Neely’s docket book. In the version we have reprinted from *Fraser’s Magazine*, we read that “Seven witnesses” were sworn for a total of “87 1/2¢.” If 87 1/2¢ is divided by 7, we get exactly 12 1/2¢. This, of course, agrees with the statement in the *Justice’s Manual* that the Justice is to receive “for every oath, 12 1/2 cents.” The same manual gives the amount for a warrant as “19[c].” The Neely document agrees: “Warrant, 19¢.” The recognizance is listed in the manual at “25[c],” and the transcript agrees that Recognisances are billed at “25¢.” The justices are instructed to charge “19[c]” for a mittimus, and *Fraser’s Magazine* likewise lists: “Mittimus, 19c.” From this it is very clear that the published transcript is not something that can be easily dismissed. In our publication, *Joseph Smith’s 1826 Trial*, printed in 1971, we quoted the following from a letter which Wesley P. Walters wrote to us after studying the transcript’s relationship to other documents: “To my mind there is enough agreement here to make the possibility of the document being a forgery out of the realm of possibility. . . . from every angle the whole matter has the ring of genuiness about it” (pages 4-5).

AN EXAMINATION?

Michael Marquardt’s discovery of the bills of Justices Humphrey and Bigelow has thrown some new light on Joseph Smith’s encounter with the law in 1826 and provides additional evidence that the transcript is in reality a report of proceedings before a Justice of the Peace.

During the past few years a question has begun to surface concerning the exact nature of what took place when Joseph Smith appeared before Justice Albert Neely on March 20,
In 1826. From material printed between 1813 and 1829, we conclude that there were two things that could have taken place on that day:

One, Joseph Smith could have appeared before Justice Neely for what was known as “an examination” (see A New Conductor Generalis: Being a Summary of the Law Relative to the Duty and Office of Justices of the Peace, Sheriffs, Coroners, Constables, Jurymen, Overseers of the Poor, &c, &c, Albany, New York, 1819, pp. 141-143). This seems to be like the “preliminary hearing” we have today where the accused is bound over for trial at a later date. A good example of this might be the Mark Hofmann case. After investigating the evidence, Judge Paul M. Grant ruled that there was “probable cause to believe that all the crimes have been committed and there is probable cause to believe that the defendant committed each of the crimes as alleged.” Although Mr. Hofmann could have been sent to jail until the trial, it was decided that he could go free on bail. Before the trial began, Hofmann decided to plead guilty and was sent to prison. It was from recordings of this “preliminary hearing” that we derived much of the evidence presented in our book Tracking the White Salamander.

Two, Joseph Smith could have been tried before a Court of Special Sessions (see Revised Statutes of the State of New York, 1829, Part 4, pp. 711-714). This would have occurred after the “examination.” In a Court of Special Sessions the justice who conducts the original examination is supposed to request “any two justices of the peace of the same county, and to require them to associate with him to try the persons so charged” (Ibid., page 711). This, of course, means that the case would be tried by three justices. If the case was not heard in the Court of Special Sessions, then it would come up in the next Court of General Sessions. Since Wesley P. Walters found that this court only met in February, June and October, it is obvious that the date of March 20, 1826, would not fit for a trial in the Court of General Sessions.

Wesley P. Walters originally believed that Joseph Smith was tried by three justices in a Court of Special Sessions. He did acknowledge, however, that there was a problem with this theory:

In the Sidney (N.Y.) Tri-Town News, August 25, 1971, page 6, the writer regarded the “Mittimus 19¢” as the post-trial order to commit Smith to jail, with Smith allowed to escape on the way to jail. . . . However, the 19¢ charge attached to the mittimus marks it as the pre-trial “commitment for want of bail” . . . and not the post-trial “warrant of commitment, on conviction, twenty-five cents”. . . .

This understanding also opens the unlikely reconstruction that Neely records only the pre-trial examination where the defendant’s and witnesses’ statements are taken . . . (Joseph Smith’s Bainbridge, N.Y., Court Trial, page 140, footnote 36)

In 1985 the Mormon writer Paul Hedengren argued that Joseph Smith’s appearance before Justice Neely was indeed an “examination”: “…it is clear that the fees assigned by Neely for the case of Joseph Smith are for examination, which would occur prior to any trial before the Court of Special Sessions” (In Defense of Faith, by Paul Hedengren, Provo, Utah, 1985, page 207).

The question concerning the exact nature of the Neely docket record was finally answered when Michael Marquardt discovered the bills of Justices Bigelow and Humphrey. We already knew from Wesley Walters research in 1971 that Justice Tarble’s bill did not contain any mention of his helping Neely try the Joseph Smith case in a Court of Special Sessions. Since there were only four justices, this case would have to appear on the bills of both Bigelow and Humphrey. If the idea of a Court of Special Sessions had any merit. Because it appears on neither document, it is now obvious that the court record is for “an examination” before Justice Albert Neely.

DESTROYS OBJECTIONS

Our new understanding of the 1826 court record seems to completely set aside a number of objections Mormon apologists have raised in the past. For instance, the Mormon writer Francis W. Kirkham had this criticism of the Neely record: “This alleged record is obviously spurious because it has Joseph testify first, giving the defense before the prosecution has made its case.” Although Mr. Kirkham may have had a point if the Neely record is viewed as a regular trial, his objection seems to melt away when we look at the printed transcript as “an examination.” The Revised Statutes of the State of New York, published in 1829, seems to indicate that in an examination the “complainant and the witnesses produced in support of the prosecution” are questioned first. After this, “the prisoner” is examined and then “his witnesses” (Part 4, page 708). The 1825 Justice’s Manual, by Thomas G. Waterman, however, differs with regard to the order in which those examined should appear. It plainly states that in an examination the accused is questioned before the witnesses:

After the examination of the accused, all witnesses present are to be examined on oath touching the complaint . . . (page 191)

At the present time we do not know whether the order given in the Revised Statutes was used prior to 1829. Albert Neely, of course, could not have seen this book since it was printed three years after he tried Joseph Smith. It is very possible, however, that he had the Justice’s Manual, which was printed the year before Joseph Smith’s encounter with the law. The Preface to the Justice’s Manual indicated that it was “designed mainly for the use of Justices of the Peace, . . .” In any case, it would appear that Justice Neely used the same order which was printed in that book.

In 1985 the Mormon writer Paul Hedengren acknowledged that under the theory that Neely was conducting an examination, the printed transcript passes muster “…in the 1873 account, the first testimony is reported to come from Joseph Smith. This has been a point of criticism from some who have denied the authenticity of the account, for it does not seem appropriate that in a normal trial, the defendant should be the first to testify or to testify at all. This
objection, however, *is circumvented if the 1873 account is taken to be testimony of the examination* before Judge Neely rather than before the Court of Special Sessions. For the examination before the justice, it is quite appropriate for the defendant to explain his side of the issue first” (In Defense of Faith, page 210).

On page 233 of the same book, Paul Henegren added a very interesting observation concerning the swearing of witnesses:

... what is clear and even explicit is that the legal proceedings upon which the account is based are the examination of Joseph Smith, not a trial before the Court of Special Sessions. The legal bill of the justice is explicitly “to my fees in examination of the above cause.” The amount is precisely what is totaled in the 1873 account and the account itself records that Joseph Smith was examined whereas other witnesses were sworn, which is precisely what we know occurs only in the examination.

Before Michael Marquardt went to New York and found the bills of Justices Humphrey and Bigelow, Wesley P. Walters had convincingly demonstrated to us that we were dealing with “an examination.” In A New Conductor Generalis, 1819, page 142, we learn that in an “examination” the accused is not put under oath but that the witnesses are: “The examination of the prisoner should *not be upon oath.* ... others, whom the justice may call before him to testify. ... *must be upon oath.*” When we scrutinized the 1826 trial record in light of the “examination” theory, we were very impressed with what we found. Instead of saying that Joseph Smith was “sworn,” the transcript printed in 1873 reads:

**Prisoner examined:** says . . .

Although Justice Neely’s docket record neglects to mention whether Jonathan Thompson was “examined” or “sworn,” in every other case his record makes it clear that the witnesses were “sworn”:

**Josiah Stowel sworn:** says . . .

**Horace Stowel sworn.** Says . . . (See both the 1883 and the 1886 printings.)

**Arad Stowel sworn:** says . . .

**McMaster sworn:** says . . .

The Mormon apologist Francis W. Kirkham, who was one of the first to seriously deal with Joseph Smith’s 1826 encounter with the law, contended:

This alleged record of the court does not conform to the requirements of the law . . . It gives a long confession by the defendant, Joseph Smith, which the law does not require. It gives the testimony of five witnesses, whereas, the testimony of any witness is not recorded in a justice of the peace court. . . . The record does not conform with the procedure of a trial. A reasonable conclusion is that the alleged record was written by a person totally unfamiliar with court procedure. *(A New Witness For Christ In America, vol. 1, pp. 384-385)*

As we have already shown, in an “examination” the statement of the accused was taken, and contrary to Kirkham’s claim that the testimony was “not recorded,” there is evidence that relevant material given by both the defendant and the witnesses was to be written down. *A New Conductor Generalis*, 1819, page 141, quotes the following from a New York law:

“Every justice of the peace, before whom any person shall be brought for any treason or felony, or for suspicion thereof, before he commit such person to gaol [i.e., jail], shall take the examination of such prisoner, and the information of those who bring him, relative to the fact, and the same, or so much thereof as shall be material to prove the offence, shall be put in writing by the said justice within two days after the said examination, . . .”

While it might be argued that this only applied to the commission of “treason or felony,” it should be noted that the definition of the word *felony* seems to have changed since Joseph Smith’s time. In the 1828 edition of Noah Webster’s *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, the word *felony* even included those guilty of “petty larceny.” Furthermore, we know that in at least one case, what was written concerning a felony “would seem to extend to all criminal cases” *(A New Conductor Generalis*, page 141). The *Revised Statutes of the State of New-York*, seem to indicate that in 1829 the rules concerning written evidence at an “examination” applied to “any criminal offence” (see Part 4, pp. 706-708). It would appear, then, that Justice Neely was trying to follow regular legal procedure when he recorded the information. We believe, however, that it is possible that what appears in Neely’s docket book would be his own copy (possibly abbreviated) taken from individual sheets which would have been “signed by the witnesses respectively” *(Revised Statutes, page 709)*. These sheets probably would have been turned over to the Court of Special Sessions when it met, whereas the copy appearing in his docket book—prepared for his own use at the trial—would have remained in his possession after the proceedings. This, of course, would have been consistent with the story that the record remained in the Neely family until Albert Neely’s niece, Emily Pearsall, brought it to Utah.

The reader will note from the material quoted above that every word did not need to be written down—only that which was “material to prove the offence.” This tends to nullify another objection to the printed transcript—i.e., the last portion of the Neely record indicates that there were seven witnesses sworn, whereas the document itself only gives the testimony of five. It seems obvious from the law quoted above that if a witness did not give any significant testimony in relation to the case, it was not necessary for the Justice of the Peace to record it. In this regard, it is interesting to note that W. D. Purple, a man who was actually present during the legal proceedings, claimed that Joseph Smith, Senior, also gave testimony. *(The Chenango Union, May 2, 1877)* It is very possible that Joseph Smith’s father did testify at the examination. The statement that seven witnesses were sworn makes plenty of room for him. On the other hand, the fact that it was not necessary to record irrelevant testimony
could certainly explain the absence of his statements in the record. The new information which has been found concerning examinations seems to completely destroy Francis Kirkham’s arguments regarding discrepancies with regard to who testified at the hearing (see A New Witness For Christ In America, vol. 2, pp. 357-358).

JOSEPH SMITH GUILTY?

As we have shown, the Mormon Church’s Deseret News, argued that the court record was “a fabrication of unknown authorship.” In the same article we find the following:

Then the recital is that the court “finds the defendant guilty.” . . . Then, more wonderful still, the record does not tell what the judgment or sentence of the court was. The really vital things which a true record must contain are not there, though there is a lot of surplus verbiage set out in an impossible order which the court was not required to keep. (Deseret News, Church Section, May 11, 1946, as cited in A New Witness For Christ In America, vol. 2, page 431)

While one might think a sentence would be recorded toward the end of a record of proceedings from a Court of Special Sessions, the fact that this was an examination seems to negate this criticism. This matter would have to be settled by the three justices who would later meet to make the final decision concerning the case. Justice Neely had concluded from his examination of Joseph Smith that he was guilty as charged, and the evidence seems to show that he ordered Smith held for trial before the Court of Special Sessions. The Mormon writer Paul Hedengren argues that the use of the words “the Court find the Defendant guilty” in the Neely transcript casts some doubt on the accuracy of the printed text:

If it is an examination, the guilty judgment given at the end of the testimony poses a problem, . . . the judgment of guilty . . . is inappropriate only at the conclusion of a trial before the Court of Special Sessions. . . .

The preponderance of evidence is that the account is at best an account of an examination; yet the judgment of guilt is inappropriate to such proceedings. This is evidence that listing of guilt in the 1873 account does not come [from] the actual legal proceedings but is a later inclusion. (In Defense of Faith, pp. 216-217)

Actually, the appearance of the word “guilty” is not a mark against the authenticity of the printed text. In fact, it seems to fit the terminology used in Joseph Smith’s time. In Acts of a General Nature, Ordered to be Re-printed, at the First Session of the Eighteenth General Assembly of the State of Ohio . . . , Columbus, Ohio, 1820, we read the following concerning an “examining court” declaring a prisoner “guilty”:

Sec. 2. Be it further enacted, That if the judges upon examination find the prisoner guilty of a bailable offence, they shall recognize him or her . . . and in case the prisoner fails to give security, he or she shall be remanded to jail, and in all cases where the prisoner is found guilty, it shall be the duty of the judges to recognize the witnesses on the part of the state, to appear at the next court of common pleas, . . .

It is interesting to note that Joseph Smith’s own diary refers to an examination in Nauvoo, Illinois, as a “trial” in which the defendant was found “guilty”:

Monday Dec[ember] 18[th] . . . Constable Follet returned with Elliot. Trial in the Assembly room for examination . . . [Elliot was] found guilty of Kidnapping and bound over for trial to the Circuit Court in the sum of $3,000. (An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith, edited by Scott H. Faulring, 1987, pp. 432-433)

Some Mormon scholars have recently argued that Joseph Smith was examined before Justice Neely but was exonerated. In a paper entitled, “It’s Time to Halt the Nonsense About Joseph Smith’s So-called ‘1826 Trial,’” page 4, Gerry L. Ensley wrote: “The conclusion is, therefore, inescapable that Smith was found ‘innocent’ at the March 20, preliminary examination.” We cannot agree with this statement. Besides the Neely transcript which shows that Joseph Smith was found “guilty,” the earliest known printed statement by A. W. Benton (1831) indicates that Joseph Smith was “arrested as a disorderly person, tried and condemned before a court of Justice” (Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate, April 9, 1831, page 120). On March 8, 1842, Joel K. Noble, who had acquitted Joseph Smith of some charges brought against him in 1830 (see History of the Church, vol. 1, pages 91-96), wrote a letter in which he spoke of Joseph Smith’s “first trial”—i.e., the case before Justice Neely. According to Noble, Smith “was condemned” at that time (Joseph Smith’s Bainbridge, N.Y., Court Trials, by Wesley P. Walters, Part 2, pages 132-133).

Wesley Walters gives this information:

Both before and during the examination Joseph remained under guard, with Constable De Zeng in “attendance with Prisoner two days & 1 night,” referring to the day of the examination and the day and night preceding. Since the evidence appeared sufficient to show that Smith was guilty as charged, he was ordered held for trial. (Ibid., p. 139)

Walters has also noted that in the summary of Justice Neely’s costs at the end of the printed transcript, he listed a “Mittimus.” This provides very strong evidence that Joseph Smith was condemned at the examination and was facing trial before the Court of Special Sessions. Webster’s 1828 dictionary gives this definition of the word Mittimus: “In law, a precept or command in writing, under the hand or hand and seal of a justice of the peace or other proper officer, directed to the keeper of a prison, requiring him to imprison an offender; a warrant of commitment to prison. 2. A writ for removing records from one court to another.” Constable De Zeng’s bill proves that the mittimus related to the imprisonment of Joseph Smith rather than the “writ for removing records from one court to another.” It plainly states: “10 miles travel with mittimus to take him.” Furthermore, Justice Neely listed a charge for “Recognisances of witnesses.” This also shows that Neely had found Joseph
Smith “guilty” and was turning him over to the “next court having cognizance of the offense.” In the Revised Statutes of the State of New-York, 1829, page 709, we read:

If it shall appear that an offence has been committed, and that there is probable cause to believe the prisoner to be guilty thereof, the magistrate shall bind by recognizance the prosecutor, and all the material witnesses against such prisoner, to appear and testify at the next court having cognizance of the offence, and in which the prisoner may be indicted.

Mormon writer Paul Hedengren seemed to be willing to admit that the machinery had been set in motion for “a trial before the Court of Special Sessions”: “Notice that in anticipation of such a trial, two justices were notified and 12 witnesses subpoenaed, as evidenced by the bill of Constable De Zeng” (In Defense of Faith, page 216). All of the evidence, therefore, indicates that Joseph Smith was in real trouble with the law. In A New Conductor Generalis, 1819, page 109, we read:

A justice of the peace may convict disorderly persons, … to the bridewell or house of correction, at hard labor, for a time not exceeding sixty days, or until the next general sessions. . . .

When a person has been thus committed by a justice, to remain till the next general sessions, if the justices at the sessions adjudge him to be a disorderly person, they may, if they think convenient, order him to be detained, at hard labor, for any future time not exceeding six months, and during his confinement to be corrected by whipping, according to the nature of the offence, as they shall think fit.

Joseph Smith seems to have had three choices: 1. He could face three justices and stand the chance of being “detained, at hard labor” for up to “six months” if convicted. 2. He could have admitted his guilt and struck an agreement with the county. Many times officials who wanted to cut expenses would be willing to let prisoners go if they would agree to leave the county where the crime took place. 3. He could have attempted an escape. This was the method Joseph Smith used thirteen years later in Missouri when he was indicted:

This evening our guard got intoxicated. We thought it a favorable opportunity to make our escape; knowing that the only object of our enemies was our destruction; . . . Accordingly, we took advantage of the situation of our guard and departed, and that night we traveled a considerable distance. (History of the Church, vol. 3, page 321)

The evidence would seem to indicate that Joseph Smith chose either the 2nd or 3rd option, or possibly a combination of the two. We have already shown that Justice Noble claimed that Smith “was condemned” at his “first trial.” Wesley P. Walters wrote:

Mr. Noble succinctly states that the “whisper came to Jo., ‘Off, Off!’” and so Joseph “took Leg Bail,” an early slang expression meaning “to escape from custody.” . . . What is obviously happening is that the justices are privately suggesting to this first offender to ‘get out of town and don’t come back,’ and in exchange they will not impose sentence. . . . Judge Nobel’s statement agrees precisely with an early account of this 1826 trial published just five years after the trial had taken place. It was written by a young medical doctor who lived in South Bainbridge at the time, Dr. Abram Willard Benton, who like Mr. Noble mentions that Joseph had been involved in glass looking, and that he had been “tried and condemned.” Dr. Benton adds that because Joseph was a minor at the time, being 20 years old, “and thinking he might reform his conduct, he was designedly allowed to escape.” Therefore, the court, though it found him guilty of being in violation of the law, had intentionally not imposed sentence as a way of showing mercy on this youthful offender. Young Joseph, aware that returning to the Bainbridge area might find him suddenly sentenced to jail, was careful to return, as Noble puts it, “in Dark corners” and “in the Dark.” (Joseph Smith’s Bainbridge, N.Y., Court Trials, Part 2, page 123)

On page 140 of Part 1 of the same pamphlet, Walters commented: “Another possibility, of course, is that Joseph jumped bail and when the Court of Special Sessions met they may have decided not to pursue the matter further, hoping the youth had learned his lesson.”

**A DISORDERLY PERSON**

An examination of the law concerning “disorderly persons” leads to the conclusion that Joseph Smith would have had a very difficult time avoiding conviction if he had remained for his trial at the Court of Special Sessions. According to A New Conductor Generalis, published in 1819, page 108, the following would be “deemed disorderly persons”:

**All Jugglers;**

All who pretend to have skill in physiognomy, palmistry, or like crafty science, or pretend to tell fortunes, or to discover where lost goods may be found; . . . 1 R. L. 1813. p. 114.

Webster’s 1828 dictionary gives this definition for the word juggle: 1. To play tricks by slight of hand; to amuse and make sport by tricks, which make a false show of extraordinary powers. 2. To practice artifice or imposture. Joseph Smith’s practice of “glass looking” — i.e., using a seer stone to divine things not seen by the natural eye would certainly be viewed as making a “false show of extraordinary powers.” The printed transcript says that Smith was charged with being “a disorderly person and an impostor.” Joseph Smith’s practice of “glass looking” would also fall into the category of a “crafty science” mentioned in the law. Moreover, in the examination before Justice Neely, Smith admitted that he had “been in the habit of looking through this stone to find lost property for three years.” As the reader can see, the law deemed anyone who used a “crafty science . . . to discover where lost goods may be found” as a “disorderly person.” In his docket record, Justice Neely was careful to record the statements concerning Joseph Smith’s “glass looking” and his claim to find “lost goods.” For example, he recorded the following from Jonathan Thompson, a witness
who seemed favorably disposed towards Joseph Smith: “Thompson says that he believes in the prisoner’s professed skill; . . . he is certain that prisoner can divine things by means of said stone. That as evidence of the fact prisoner looked into his hat to tell him about some money witness lost sixteen years ago, and that he described the man that witness supposed had taken it, and the disposition of the money:” The fact that the transcript seems to focus in on the very things that would convict Joseph Smith as a “disorderly person” under the laws of early New York bears witness to its authenticity.

As we have shown, Apostle John A. Widtsoe argued that in the transcript, “Joseph Smith is made to confess to all his errors, including treasure hunting, peepstone practices, etc., etc. In fact, it is such a complete self-confession as to throw immediate doubt upon the genuiness of the document.” (Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth, 1951, page 78) Actually, Joseph Smith was not under oath, and he did not have to confess to anything. Furthermore, in the publication Revised Statutes of the State of New-York, 1829, page 708, we find that “the prisoner shall be informed by the magistrate, that he is at liberty to refuse to answer any question that may be put to him.” While Joseph Smith’s statements may have seemed rather silly to Apostle Widtsoe, the truth of the matter is that Smith found himself on the horns of a dilemma. Since he knew that there were a number of witnesses who would testify concerning his involvement in the “crafty science” of “glass looking,” he could hardly deny the charge. Moreover, Joseph Smith’s own employer, Josiah Stowell was a devout believer in his ability at divination and testified that he “had the most implicit faith in prisoners’ skill.” Jonathan Thompson testified in a similar vein. Ironically, it seems that Smith’s best friends were his worst enemies as far as his attempt to escape the penalty of the law. The more they defended his ability as a diviner, the less chance he had of being acquitted. If Joseph Smith were to deny that he had ability to see the treasures and lost goods in his stone, he would disillusion his closest followers in the money-digging business. Under these circumstances, the best he could do was to try to minimize his involvement. He, therefore, claimed that “of late” he had “pretty much” given up the practice of divination and “that he did not solicit business of this kind, and had always rather declined having anything to do with this business.”

Wesley P. Walters made this interesting comment concerning the matter:

Joseph Smith put himself in the position of meriting such punishment by the line of defense he took at his 1826 trial. According to the docket record, Joseph’s defense at his trial was that he really could discover where lost goods could be found and was therefore not an imposter trying to sponge off the public as a vagrant might do. Such a defense, however, was a virtual admission that he was in violation of the law against “pretending . . . to discover where lost goods may be found.” The court, therefore, after hearing a few witnesses who corroborated that fact, summarily pronounced Joseph “guilty.” (Joseph Smith’s Bainbridge, N.Y., Court Trials, Part 2, page 124)

In Part 1, page 148, of the same pamphlet, Wesley Walters observed:

There is therefore neither a legal nor a factual basis for rejecting the Neely trial record as an authentic record of Smith’s 1826 trial. The main Mormon objection really seems to rest upon an emotional reaction to the admissions Smith makes in the court record, which seem tantamount to making him a religious fraud. However, at the time of the trial it was the only way he could establish that he was not a fraud. The point of the trial was that while he claimed to be a “glass-looker,” he actually only pretended to have such powers and was therefore an “Impostor.” Smith’s only defense against this charge was to claim that he did have such ability, but had never sought customers for it, had used it very little, and really intended to give it up, . . .

**VERY CONVINCING**

Since we began to have doubts about the authenticity of Mark Hofmann’s documents in February 1984, we have published a great deal of material concerning forgeries. The more we examined his documents, the more problems we found. Our work with regard to the Hofmann documents turned out to be a very disillusioning experience. Fortunately, the question of Joseph Smith’s encounter with the law in 1826 has turned out to be just the opposite. The more we have examined the question, the more convinced we have become that both the Neely docket record and the bills found by Wesley P. Walters are authentic.

The new information concerning the Neely docket record being “an examination” and that it conforms to what we should expect to find in such a document greatly strengthens the case for its authenticity. While the Mormon writer Paul Hedengren still feels that it may be a “fabrication,” he is forced to concede that “it is quite clear that the account is not a fabrication composed by someone having no understanding of legal practices or of the legal difficulties encountered by Joseph Smith in 1826. Whoever wrote the 1873 account did so with some detailed knowledge of what actually occurred” (In Defense of Faith, page 232). As far as we can tell, Hedengren seems to accept the bills of Neely and De Zeng which Walters discovered as authentic documents. We feel that since these bills dovetail with the Neely docket record with regard to the nature of the trial (glass looking), the date and the costs, it would be very difficult to believe that the Neely record could be anything other than a transcript of the original document created by Justice Neely in 1826.

While people like Ronald Jackson, who are not well grounded in Mormon history, would try to discredit Walters’ discoveries, there are many things about the Neely and De Zeng bills that show they are authentic. Besides all the evidence that we have presented, it should be noted that Wesley Walters initially seemed to have no idea that the transcript of the legal proceedings took the form of “an examination.” Walters, in fact, strongly believed that the case was decided by three justices in a Court of Special Sessions. He seems to have held this belief for about seventeen years. From this it is obvious that if Walters were creating a forgery, it is likely that he would have tried to bolster his theory in the
bill itself. Instead, the Neely bill seems to support the idea that it was “an examination,” not a special sessions trial, that occurred on March 20, 1826. While Justice Neely listed nine cases on his bill, only two include the word “examination” i.e., the case of Joseph Smith and that of Newel Evans. With regard to the case of “Joseph Smith The Glass looker,” Neely wrote: “To my fees in examination of the above cause.” The names of Joseph Smith and Newel Evans are not found on any of the 1826 bills of Justices Humphrey, Tarble or Bigelow. This, of course, is exactly what we would expect to find if these were examinations rather than trials before a Court of Special Sessions.

While Mormon apologists have labored very hard since 1945 to try to undermine the authenticity of the 1826 court case, their efforts have been in vain. Dale Morgan, Stanley Ivins, Wesley Walters and Michael Marquardt have heaped up a mountain of evidence which seems to be irrefutable.

**THE IMPLICATIONS**

If this were just a case that involved a young man getting into trouble with the law, Mormon critics would be foolish to spend their time rehashing the story. Most people would allow Joseph Smith the right to make a few youthful mistakes without maintaining that it would seriously affect his role as a prophet. The issue, however, is much more serious than just the transgression of an early New York law which many today would regard as antiquated. What is involved here is the question of whether Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God or merely a man entangled in occultic practices. The implications of this matter are very serious indeed. Once we accept the validity of the documents concerning Joseph Smith’s trouble with the law, we are forced to admit that he was engaging in magical practices at the very time he claimed he was being tutored by the Angel Moroni to receive the golden plates of the Book of Mormon.

More important than this, however, is the fact that the Neely transcript undermines the whole story of the divine origin of the Book of Mormon. A careful examination of Joseph Smith’s story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and even the text of the book itself reveals that it is just an extension of the money-digging practices so clearly portrayed in the transcript. For example, the court record shows that Joseph Smith had used a stone placed in his hat to find treasures “for three years” prior to 1826. Now, according to eye witnesses to the translation of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith used this exact method to translate the golden plates. David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, stated: “I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated, Joseph would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. . . . Thus the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man” (An Address All Believers In Christ, Richmond, Missouri, 1887, page 12).

Although Mormon historian B. H. Roberts claimed that Joseph Smith used the Urim and Thummim, he frankly admitted that he sometimes used a “Seer Stone” to translate the plates:

The Seer Stone referred to here was a chocolate-colored, somewhat egg-shaped stone which the Prophet found while digging a well in company with his brother Hyrum, . . . It possessed the qualities of Urim and Thummim, since by means of it—as described above—as well by means of the Interpreters found with the Nephite record, Joseph was able to translate the characters engraved on the plates. (Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, vol. 1, page 129)

Joseph Smith’s father-in-law, Isaac Hale, noticed a definite relationship between the method Joseph Smith used to translate the Book of Mormon and the way he searched for buried treasures. In an affidavit, published in 1834, Hale wrote:

I first became acquainted with Joseph Smith, Jr. in November, 1825. He was at that time in the employ of a set of men who were called “money diggers,” and his occupation was that of seeing, or pretending to see by means of a stone placed in his hat, and his hat closed over his face. In this way he pretended to discover minerals and hidden treasure. . . . young Smith . . . asked my consent to his marrying my daughter Emma. This I refused, and gave him my reasons for so doing; some of which were, that he was a stranger, and followed a business that I could not approve; . . . while I was absent from home [he] carried off my daughter, . . . they were married . . . In a short time they returned, . . .

Smith stated to me that he had given up what he called “glass looking,” and that he expected to work hard for a living. . . . He also made arrangements with my son, . . . to go up to Palmyra, . . . after this, I was informed they had brought a wonderful book of plates down with them. . . . The manner in which he pretended to read and interpret, was the same as when he looked for the “money diggers,” with the stone in his hat, and his hat over his face, while the book of plates was at the same time hid in the woods! (New York Baptist Register, June 13, 1834)

The reader will notice that Joseph Smith claimed he was able to read the Book of Mormon plates without looking at them in exactly the way that Arad Stowell testified that he claimed he could divine the contents of a modern book: “. . . prisoner [Joseph Smith] laid a book upon a white cloth, and proposed looking through another stone . . . turn his head to book, and read.”

There are also other important parallels. For example, Smith claimed that he could find buried gold for the money-diggers and in the case of the Book of Mormon he found gold plates which were buried in the earth. The idea of the Angel Moroni guarding the gold plates before Joseph Smith obtained them seems to have stemmed from a story he told Jonathan Thompson: “Prisoner would not look again, . . . pretending that he was alarmed on account of the circumstances relating to the trunk . . . the last time he looked he discovered distinctly the two Indians who buried the trunk, that a quarrel ensued between them, and that one of said Indians was killed by the
other, and thrown into the hole beside the trunk, to guard it, as he supposed.” (Testimony of Jonathan Thompson) It is hard to resist the idea that the spirit guardian of the treasure was transformed into the Angel Moroni. The idea of treasures slipping into the earth, as testified to by Josiah Stowell and Jonathan Thompson, appears to have been incorporated into the Book of Mormon itself (see our book, *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*, pages 37-39).

That Joseph Smith was ensnared in occultic practices at the very time God was supposed to be preparing him to receive the golden plates of the Book of Mormon seems to place his work in an eerie light, and the fact that he embodied some of these magic elements into his new religion entirely undermines the foundation of Mormonism. We agree with the assessment of the Mormon apologist Francis W. Kirkham. As we have shown, Mr. Kirkham allowed no middle ground. He frankly conceded that if the court record could be proven true, Joseph Smith’s followers “must deny his claimed divine guidance which led them to follow him. . . . How could he be a prophet of God, the leader of the Restored Church to these tens of thousands, if he had been the superstitious fraud he must deny his claimed divine guidance which led them to follow him.” The observation which appears in Hugh Nibley’s book, *The Myth Makers*, is also very close to the truth: “. . . if this court record is authentic it is the most damning evidence in existence against Joseph Smith.” While Dr. Nibley set out to prove that “the whole structure of anti-Mormon scholarship rests on trumped up evidence,” (Ibid., Forward) the tide has turned against him. Not only has the authenticity of the 1826 court record been established since Nibley wrote his book, but a number of discoveries have come to light which are equally, if not more damaging to Joseph Smith’s claims — for example, the “strange account” of Smith’s First Vision which was suppressed by the Mormon leaders for 130 years.

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**A TRESPASSING PATH**

One of the writers of this newsletter recently had an experience with a group hiking on a mountain near Salt Lake City which served as a reminder of how much we need God’s light to help us along the path of life. As it sometimes happens, we started up the trail too late in the day and most of those in the group were caught up on the mountain after the sun went down. Fortunately, however, some flashlights were made available, and we all made it down without any problem. As we descended, however, we could see places where the trail was partially washed out. Because of the flashlights, these sections presented no serious problem, but we could see that it would be very hazardous to try to pass over them in the dark.

This experience brought to mind a story that Catherine Marshall told concerning her husband, Peter Marshall, who served as Chaplain of the United States Senate:

Walking back from a nearby village to Bamburgh one dark, starless night, Peter struck out across the moors, thinking he would take a short cut. He knew that there was a deep deserted limestone quarry close by the Glororum Road, but he thought he could avoid that danger spot. The night was inky black, eerie. There was only the sound of the wind through the heather-stained moorland, the noisy clamor of wild mouf fowl as his footsteps disturbed them, the occasional far-off bleating of a sheep.

Suddenly he heard someone call, “Peter! . . .” There was great urgency in the voice.

He stopped. “Yes, who is it? What do you want?”

For a second he listened, but there was no response, only the sound of the wind. The moor seemed completely deserted.

Thinking he must have been mistaken, he walked on a few paces. Then he heard it again, even more urgently: “Peter! . . .”

He stopped dead still, trying to peer into that impenetrable darkness, but suddenly stumbled and fell to his knees. Putting out his hand to catch himself, he found nothing there. As he cautiously investigated, feeling around in a semicircle, he found himself to be on the very brink of an abandoned stone quarry. Just one step more would have sent him plummeting into space to certain death.

This incident made an unforgettable impression on Peter. There was never any doubt in his mind about the source of that Voice. He felt that God must have some great purpose for his life, to have intervened so specifically. (Ibid., Forward, page 24)

Although we may never have an experience like Peter Marshall, the Lord does give his people light to help them avoid the many pitfalls they encounter in their trip through life. In Colossians 1:13 (New King James Version), we read that God “has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love.” In Psalm 119:105, we find this comforting statement: “Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.” In John 8:12, Jesus declared: “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” In John 12:46, Jesus stated: “I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.”

To live our lives without the light of Jesus leading us through the darkness is to invite disaster. The night is very dark, and the trail of life is strewn with stones and other objects which we will continually stumble over. In addition, the path is washed out in many places, and we never know when we will encounter a drop off which will ruin us spiritually. Moreover, Jesus has made it plain that those who refuse his offer of grace in this life will eventually be “cast out into outer darkness” (Matthew 8:12).

Those of us who have turned our hearts over to Christ, know that he does provide the light we need for guidance in our lives. While we still have problems, we have a great sense of peace, comfort and direction in hard times. We would encourage all those who have not made that decision
to yield themselves to the Lord before it is too late. Jesus himself gives this invitation in Matthew 11:28-30:

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

“For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

CHARGES AGAINST US

During the past year we have been charged with being “unChristian,” misquoting material and being unethical in our writings. We have completed our response to these charges and have published it in the new edition of The Lucifer-God Doctrine. Although we originally stated that the new edition was going to be available at $2.00 a copy, it ended up being four times larger than the first edition. For this reason we have had to raise the price to $4.00. We are, however, having a special offer on this book. If it is ordered before September 15, 1988, the price will be only $3.00 a copy (on mail orders please add shipping charge of $1.00). All those who have been affected by these charges against us should take the time to read our side of the story before drawing any conclusions.

GETTING RICH?

Utah Lighthouse Ministry is a non-profit organization which is supported by both Christians who are anxious to help the Mormons find the truth and members of the Mormon Church who feel that the church is suppressing important information which needs to be in the hands of the public. Mormon apologists have often argued that we (Jerald and Sandra Tanner) are getting rich through the publication of material which is critical of the church. This charge was effectively destroyed in 1983 when a Mormon scholar made an unsuccessful attempt to sue us for copyright violations. During the course of the suit, we were ordered to produce our “1982 and ‘83 tax returns.” To the embarrassment of the critics who had charged that we were getting rich, our tax return for 1982 showed an “Adjusted Gross Income” of only $9,935.83 and the return for 1983 listed our income at $22,285.15 (see photographs in the book The Tanners On Trial, pages 139-140). We made this comment in the March 1985 issue of the Messenger: “Since we both worked full-time [in 1983] for Utah Lighthouse Ministry, this would amount to just over $11,000 each.” At the present time we estimate that the salary we make amounts to less than $6 an hour. Considering the amount of hours we have to work and the stress that comes from this type of ministry, we do not feel that we are taking advantage of the public.

At the present time we find ourselves running a little short (we have not had a pay check for six weeks). We are not desperate, however, because a man has given us some land. Although we could sell it, at the present time the market is so poor that we would have to let it go at a greatly reduced price. Our temporary shortage of funds probably stems from the fact that we have not raised the prices of most of our books over the past several years and that we have been putting out larger issues of the Salt Lake City Messenger and sending them to a greater number of people. We have been mailing out about 14,000 copies to those on our mailing list and giving out thousands more at a later time. Many people feel that this is a very valuable service, but less than 4% of those who receive the newsletter make donations. Fortunately, however, many others buy materials, and this helps us to meet our obligations. Some people have felt that if they do not send support, they should not remain on the mailing list. We do not feel this way at all. In fact, we desire that everyone who is blessed by the Messenger should remain on the list. It does not make any difference whether they can give contributions or buy our material. The most important thing is that the information is disseminated to those who need it.

In March 1987, we extended our ministry to SUPPORT 100 CHILDREN through the World Vision Childcare Partner plan. Although we were able to remain current on this obligation for about a year, we are now three months behind. We are concerned about this but hope to continue this work in the future. We have also been able to provide about 18 hours a week to Rescue Mission work. The work with the Mormons continues to prosper. Many of them are turning to the Lord.

We do hope that our friends will continue to pray earnestly for this ministry for this is the real key to success. We know that God “is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, . . .” (Ephesians 3:20)

Those who are interested in helping out financially with this important ministry can send their tax deductible contributions to UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY, P.O. Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110.

NEW HOFMANN BOOK

Linda Sillitoe and Allen D. Roberts have recently completed their long-awaited book on Mark Hofmann, [Salamander: The Story of the Mormon Forgery Murders] the man who murdered two people and forged Mormon documents. Although we feel that it is unfortunate that the authors have preserved some improper language used by investigators in the case, that is the worst criticism that we can make of the book. Many people felt that since Sillitoe and Roberts were Mormons, they could not write an objective book about the subject. We are happy to report that these fears have been proven groundless. The authors have, in fact, been very objective in their treatment of this sensitive
subject. Not only have they dealt with the mysterious presence of Church Security in the case just after the bombings, but they have also brought to light the fact that the investigators felt church leaders were not telling the truth with regard to certain aspects of the case. For example, on page 129, they report the following concerning an interview investigators had with Gordon B. Hinckley, a member of the First Presidency: “Afterwards, Mike George left Hinckley’s office unexpectedly angry. When he interviewed a bandit he expected lies, not when he interviewed a respected citizen and church leader. He soon realized, however, that his anger was simple—his fellow investigators, born and raised Mormons, were furious.”

In addition to the excellent research of Sillitoe and Roberts, the document expert George J. Throckmorton has a section showing what his examination “of twenty-one Hofmann documents” revealed. Although Salamander: The Story of the Mormon Forgery Murders will normally sell for $17.95, if it is ordered before September 15, 1988, the price will be only $16.95 (mail orders please add 10% for postage and handling).

**EXTRA SPECIAL OFFER!**

Besides the book by Linda Sillitoe and Allen Roberts, two other major books, a mini-series on television and a movie will draw national attention to the Mormon document scandal. At this time we are offering a very special price on the three-volume set entitled, Hofmann’s Confessions, A Photographic Printing of the Transcripts of Salt Lake County Prosecutors’ Interviews With Convicted Forger and Murderer Mark Hofmann. This will probably be a collectors’ item in the years to come. The regular price is $25, but if it is ordered before September 15, 1988, the reader will receive it for only $14.95 (mail orders please add 10% for postage and handling).

**OTHER BOOKS**

Mail Orders Add 10% Handling
$1.00 Minimum Shipping Charge

Are the Mormon Scriptures Reliable? A revision of Harry L. Ropp’s The Mormon Papers, by Wesley P. Walters. **Price: $6.95**

Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, by D. Michael Quinn. **Price: $14.95**


Where Does It Say That? by Bob Witte. Over 100 photos of oft-quoted pages from early LDS sources. **Price: $5.95**


Mere Christianity, by C. S. Lewis. Good defense and explanation of Christianity. **Price: $3.95**

Indian Origins & The Book of Mormon, by Dan Vogel. Shows that the Book of Mormon fits well into “the pre-1830 environment of Joseph Smith.” **Price: $8.95**


Mormon Polygamy—A History, by Richard S. Van Wagoner. **Price: $19.95**
Ferguson’s Two Faces

Mormon Scholar’s “Spoof” Lives on After His Death

The word “spoof” was apparently coined by a British comedian by the name of Roberts around the middle of the 19th century. It is defined as a “hoax, joke, or deception.” The following is the story of a man who felt he had been “spoofed” by the Mormon Church and, by his own admission, decided to “spoof a little hack.” Unfortunately, his “spoof” continued to live on after his death and will probably bring embarrassment to his family and associates for many years to come.

A True Believer

Thomas Stuart Ferguson was born in “Pocatello, Idaho, on 21 May 1915” (The Messiah in Ancient America, 1987, p. 248). He “received degrees in political science and law from the University of California and practiced law in Orinda, California” (Ibid.). Mr. Ferguson also worked with the F.B.I., but his first love seemed to be trying to prove the Book of Mormon through the study of Mesoamerican archaeology. In 1983, J. Willard Marriott wrote a letter in which he commented concerning Ferguson’s dedication to establishing an archaeological base for the Book of Mormon: “We spent several months together in Mexico looking at the ruins and studying the Book of Mormon archaeology. I have never known anyone who was more devoted to that kind of research than was Tom. I remember when he was with the F.B.I., he would arise at 4:30 or 5:00 AM and read the Book of Mormon and information he could find pertaining to it” (Ibid., p. 250). His wife, Ester, recalled that “during their courtship that she was sometimes piqued by his passion for the Book of Mormon and once complained to her mother, ‘I think I’m going out with the Book of Mormon.’ . . . Throughout their married life she staunchly supported her husband’s efforts” (Ibid., p. 250).

On page 251-252 of The Messiah in Ancient America, we read:

In 1975 Thomas Stuart Ferguson wrote a very significant paper relating to Book of Mormon archaeology and geography. Although he was very careful in the wording he used, he later acknowledged that the “real implication of the paper” is that the Book of Mormon is “fictional.” Because we felt that the manuscript is so important we published it under the title, Ferguson’s Manuscript Unveiled. The price is $3.00 a copy (mail orders add $1.00 minimum postage charge).
Mr. Ferguson devoted a great deal of his life trying to prove the Book of Mormon by archaeology and was considered by the Mormon people as a great defender of the faith. He wrote at least three books on the subject. His book, One Fold and One Shepherd, was recommended to one of the authors of this work (Jerald) as containing the ultimate case for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. On the jacket of that book, we find this information about Ferguson:

Thomas Stuart Ferguson, 47, President of the New World Archaeological Foundation, is a distinguished student of the earliest high civilizations of the New World. He, with Dr. A. V. Kidder, dean of Central American archaeologists, first planned the New World Archaeological Foundation in 1952. . . . He raised $225,000 for the field work, incorporated the Foundation (being an attorney), assisted in the initial explorations in Central America and Mexico and has actively directed the affairs of the Foundation since its inception.

Thomas Ferguson worked hard to get the Mormon Church interested in helping with the organization he envisioned. In a letter to Mormon President David O. McKay, dated December 14, 1951, Ferguson wrote: “If the anticipated evidences confirming the Book of Mormon are found, world-wide notice will be given to the restored gospel through the Book of Mormon. The artifacts will speak eloquently from the dust” (The Messiah in Ancient America, p. 257). Although church leaders claimed that they were interested in archaeological studies with regard to the Book of Mormon, they declined to provide any financial help. On January 12, 1952, Ferguson wrote again and promised the First Presidency that he would “take an active part in the Foundation to the end that the Church receives the full benefit of any discovered evidences relating to the Book of Mormon. I anticipate that many important artifacts will be discovered confirming the Book of Mormon” (Ibid., p. 259). Joseph Anderson, secretary to the First Presidency, responded that “The Brethren feel that it may be that no discovery will be made which shall establish the historical value of the Book of Mormon. They incline to feel that the faith now required to accept the book is a very considerable factor in the faith of the Restored Gospel, belief in which is the result of faith therein.” On April 9, 1953, Ferguson wrote a letter in which he again urged the Brethren to financially support the organization:

The source of our income and support for the work can be kept strictly confidential if it is desired. . . . the Church cannot afford to let all of the priceless artifacts of Book of Mormon people fall into other hands. We can make wonderful use of them in missionary work and in letting all the world know of the Book of Mormon. (Ibid., p. 263)

On pages 263-266 of the same book we find the following:

. . . Ferguson’s persistence and persuasiveness paid off . . . Ferguson appealed to his good friend J. Willard Marriott for assistance. The following day Ferguson had an appointment with President McKay which Marriott had arranged. . . . President David O. McKay listened to Tom Ferguson’s proposal and asked the specific amount he was requesting. Ferguson replied, “Only about the amount that it would take to build a chapel.”

President McKay gave him a penetrating glance. “We build $50,000 chapels and $250,000 chapels. Which did you have in mind? Tom Ferguson promptly replied, “A $250,000 chapel.” That was the amount granted, sufficient to underwrite five years’ work in a generous way (1955-1959). . . . It was during this period that Ferguson spent approximately half of his working time away from law, devoting this time to administering the affairs of the NWAF, giving speeches, studying and writing about the archaeology and history of ancient America and their relationship to the Book of Mormon.

It was agreed that the New World Archaeology Foundation would not “discuss direct connections with the Book of Mormon, but rather to allow the work to stand exclusively on its scholarly merits” (Ibid., p. 276). The church provided financial support for this organization for many years. It was eventually “attached to and administered through BYU.”

In a paper entitled, “Thomas Stuart Ferguson, 1915-83,” Fred W. Nelson wrote the following:

Thomas Ferguson has either directly or indirectly influenced thousands of people’s thinking on archaeology. . . . He has had a great influence on professional archaeology through the Department of Archaeology at Brigham Young University, the Gates Collection, and the New World Archaeological Foundation. . . . Ferguson’s legacy in the founding of the Archaeology Department at Brigham Young University, the obtaining of the Gates Collection, and as founder of the New World Archaeology Foundation stands as shining example to us all. (As cited in The Messiah in Ancient America, pp. 282-283)

From all that we can learn, Thomas Stuart Ferguson was a dedicated believer in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon at the time he founded the New World Archaeology Foundation. He really believed that archaeology would prove the Book of Mormon. In a letter dated April 23, 1952, Mr. Ferguson said “the archeological data now available is entirely inadequate”
for testing the Book of Mormon. He predicted, however, that the “next ten years of excavations in Mexico and Guatemala should enable us to make the archeological tests.” For a number of years he was very excited about the progress of the work and seemed certain that the Book of Mormon would be vindicated soon. In his book, One Fold And One Shepherd, page 263, he stated: “The important thing now is to continue the digging at an accelerated pace in order to find more inscriptions dating to Book-of-Mormon times. Eventually we should find decipherable inscriptions . . . referring to some unique person, place or event in the Book of Mormon.” In 1962 Mr. Ferguson said that “Powerful evidences sustaining the book are accumulating.”

**EVIDENCE NOT FOUND**

Although many important archaeological discoveries were made, the evidence he had desired to find to support the Book of Mormon did not turn up. In response to a letter Hal Hougey wrote in 1972 which reminded him that he had predicted in 1961 that Book of Mormon cities would be found within 10 years, Mr. Ferguson sadly wrote:

Ten years have passed . . . I sincerely anticipated that Book-of-Mormon cities would be positively identified within 10 years—and time has proved me wrong in my anticipation. (Letter dated June 5, 1972)

At first it had all seemed so simple; since the Book of Mormon told when the Nephites were in Mesoamerica, all one had to do was find archaeological sites that dated to the period and the Book of Mormon would be established by the evidence. The fact that archaeological research failed to provide the confirmation which Mr. Ferguson expected to find must have weighed very heavily on his mind. The most serious blow to Ferguson’s faith, however, came just after Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Papyri were rediscovered in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This collection, which had been lost for many years, contained the very papyrus from which Joseph Smith “translated” the Book of Abraham. The Book of Abraham is published in the Pearl of Great Price, one of the four standard works of the Mormon Church.

After Mr. Ferguson obtained photographs of the papyrus fragments, he consulted Professors Lutz and Lesko of the University of California. Both these Egyptologists agreed that the papyrus Joseph Smith claimed was the Book of Abraham was in reality the Book of Breathings, an Egyptian funerary text made for a man by the name of Hor (Horus). Ferguson learned that this papyrus had nothing at all to do with the patriarch Abraham or his religion. It was in its entirety a pagan text filled with the names of Egyptian gods and goddesses.

Thomas Stuart Ferguson was shaken to the core by this discovery. When the church’s noted apologist, Dr. Hugh Nibley, began defending the Book of Abraham, Ferguson wrote a letter to another member of the church in which he stated:

Nibley’s articles on the Book of Abraham aren’t worth a tinker—first, because he is not impartial, being the commissioned and paid defender of the faith. Second, because he could not, he dared not, he did not, face the true issue: “Could Joseph Smith translate Egyptian?” . . . By study of the GRAMMAR [Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar], the recovered papyrus, and the illustrations, it is perfectly obvious that we now have the original [sic] manuscript material used by Jos. Smith in working up the Book of Abraham. Prof. Klaus Baer of Univ. of Chicago, Prof. Lutz of U.C. (Berkeley), Prof. Lesko (U.C. Berkeley) and Egyptologist Dee Jay Nelson, all agree that the original manuscript Egyptian text translates into the Breathing Permit of Hor (Egyptian God). . . . The work of the two UC professors was done at my request and is unpublished. All 4 agree with each other, and without having conferred or collaborated. (My UC men did not, and still do not, know that there is any relationship of the manuscript material to the Mormon Church, Joseph Smith, Book of Abraham—or whatever. . . .

Joseph Smith announced, in print (History of the Church, vol. II, page 236), that “one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt . . .” Since 4 scholars, who have established that they can read Egyptian, say that the manuscripts deal with neither Abraham nor Joseph—and since the 4 reputable men tell us exactly what the manuscripts do say—I must conclude that Joseph Smith had not the remotest skill in things Egyptian-hieroglyphics. To my surprise, one of the highest officials in the Mormon Church agreed with that conclusion when I made that very statement to him an Dec. 4, 1970—privately in one-to-one [c]onversation. . . .

The attempts, including Nibley’s, to explain away and dodge the trap into which Joseph Smith fell when he had the audacity to translate the Chandler texts, and keep the original Egyptian texts around, are absurd, in my view. . . .

My views are not for publication or spreading abroad. I am like you—maintaining membership because of the many fine things the Church offers. But facts speak for themselves. I offered the data available to my Stake Pres. recently and he walked away without it—saying he didn’t want to read it. They can hardly excommunicate [sic] us when they won’t look at the evidence.

Of course the dodge as to the Book of Abraham must be: WE DON’T HAVE THE ORIGINAL
That Ferguson would have discussed the matter with Apostle Brown seems very likely since earlier in the letter Ferguson noted that he had received “enlarged photos” of the Joseph Smith Papyri “directly from Hugh B. Brown.” While there is always the possibility that Mr. Ferguson misunderstood Apostle Brown, we seriously doubt that this could have been the case. At any rate, when Ferguson visited with us he seemed to be absolutely convinced that Brown did not believe the Book of Abraham. He was very stirred up over this matter, and we felt that the conversation he had with Apostle Brown probably disturbed him to the point that he decided to make contact with us.

From what we know from other sources, Hugh B. Brown had a very difficult time accepting the anti-Black doctrine—i.e., the teaching that Blacks could not hold the Mormon priesthood. Since this doctrine was chiefly derived from Joseph Smith’s Book of Abraham, it is very possible that Brown acquired serious doubts about the book even before the papyri were rediscovered. Many people believe that when Brown was serving in the First Presidency he tried very hard to convince President David O. McKay to have a revelation which would allow Blacks to receive the priesthood. When Joseph Fielding Smith became president of the church in 1970, Hugh B. Brown no longer found himself in the First Presidency. It was not until 1978 that President Spencer W. Kimball claimed to receive a revelation which removed the curse off the blacks. At any rate, we have evidence to show that Thomas Stuart Ferguson continued to tell the story concerning his conversation with Hugh B. Brown up until the time of his death. Ferguson found himself faced with a dilemma, for the Mormon Church had just given him a large grant ($100,000 or more) to carry on the archaeological research of the New World Archaeological Foundation. He felt, however, that this foundation was doing legitimate archaeological work, and therefore he intended to continue the research. He realized that the organization he had founded to establish the authenticity of the Book of Mormon was now actually disproving the Book of Mormon by its failure to turn up anything concerning a Christian culture existing in Mesoamerica prior to the time of Columbus. One matter which we discussed with Mr. Ferguson was the possibility that he might write something about his loss of faith in the Book of Mormon. He was deeply grieved by the fact that he had wasted twenty-five years of his life trying to prove the Book of Mormon. We indicated to him, however, that this time would not be wasted if he would go public with what he had found. He could, in fact, prevent many others from wasting twenty-five years of their lives trying

VISITS THE TANNERS

The first indication we had that Mr. Ferguson was losing his faith in Mormonism was just after Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Papyri were rediscovered. In 1968 he wrote us a letter saying that we were “doing a great thing—getting out some truth on the Book of Abraham.” This was a significant statement since we were presenting evidence that the Book of Abraham was not a correct translation of the papyrus. Later we heard a rumor that he had received “enlarged photos” of the Joseph Smith Papyri “directly from Hugh B. Brown.” While there is always the possibility that Mr. Ferguson misunderstood Apostle Brown, we seriously doubt that this could have been the case. At any rate, when Ferguson visited with us he seemed to be absolutely convinced that Brown did not believe the Book of Abraham. He was very stirred up over this matter, and we felt that the conversation he had with Apostle Brown probably disturbed him to the point that he decided to make contact with us.

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I must conclude that Joseph Smith had not the remotest skill in things Egyptian-hieroglyphics. To my surprise one of the highest officials in the Mormon Church agreed with that conclusion . . . privately in one-to-one [c]onversation.
to prove the Book of Mormon. He informed us that he had been thinking of writing a book about the matter and that it would be a real “bombshell.”

A few months after Thomas Stuart Ferguson revealed to us that he had come to the conclusion that the book of Mormon was a spurious production, he wrote us a letter in which he said: “I think I will be in SLC in June — and if so, I’ll call on you again. I enjoyed my visit with you... I certainly admire you for the battle you are waging — virtually single handed” (Letter dated March 13, 1971). On a number of occasions when people wrote to him, Mr. Ferguson recommended that they read our publications on Mormonism.

Unfortunately, Thomas Stewart Ferguson seems to have had a very difficult time communicating his loss of faith to those he was close to. He told us, for instance, that he did not dare tell one of his sons the truth about the Book of Mormon because the shock would cause him too much emotional trauma. He felt that he may have to put the matter off until the situation changed. While he no longer believed in the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon, he continued to attend the Mormon Church.

Joseph Smith claimed that Jesus Himself told him that he should “join none” of the churches which were in existence in his day, for “all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt;...” (Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith 2:19). This false concept has led many Mormons to believe that if the Mormon Church is not true, there is nowhere else to turn. Consequently, when they lose faith in Mormonism they are likely to completely lose Faith in the idea of a personal God. Unfortunately, this is what happened to Thomas Stuart Ferguson. In a letter to James Still, dated December 3, 1979, Mr. Ferguson Frankly stated: “I lost faith in Joseph Smith as one having a pipeline to deity—and have decided that there has never been a pipeline to deity—with any man.” Since he had many friends and members of his family in Mormonism and apparently felt comfortable there, he decided to remain in the church. In the same letter Ferguson stated that he still attended Mormon meetings, “sing in the choir and enjoy my friendships in the Church. In my opinion it is the best fraternity that has come to my attention...” With regard to the origin of the Book of Mormon, Mr. Ferguson wrote: “...I give Joseph Smith credit as an innovator and as a smart fellow. I think that Joseph Smith may have had Ixtlilxochitl and View of the Hebrews from which to work.”

Even before our meeting with Mr. Ferguson in 1970, some Mormon scholars were beginning to face the truth with regard to Book of Mormon archaeology. Dee F. Green, who had worked with Ferguson’s New World Archaeological Foundation, was one of the first to openly criticize “Book of Mormon archaeology.” His criticism is very significant because he was at one time deeply involved in archaeological work at the Mormon Church’s Brigham Young University. In 1958-61 he served as editor of the University Archaeological Society Newsletter. In his article, published in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Dee Green made it plain that archaeological evidence did not prove the Book of Mormon:

Having spent a considerable portion of the past ten years functioning as a scientist dealing with New World archaeology, I find that nothing in so-called Book of Mormon archaeology materially affects my religious commitment one way or the other, and I do not see that the archaeological myths so common in our proselytizing program enhance the process of true conversion. . .

The first myth we need to eliminate is that Book of Mormon archaeology exists. Titles on books full of archaeological half-truths, dilettanti on the peripheries of American archaeology calling themselves Book of Mormon archaeologists regardless of their education, and a Department of Archaeology at BYU devoted to the production of Book of Mormon archaeologists do not insure that Book of Mormon archaeology really exists. If one is to study Book of Mormon archaeology, then one must have a corpus of data with which to deal. We do not. The Book of Mormon is really there so one can have Book of Mormon studies, and archaeology is really there so one can study archaeology, but the two are not wed. At least they are not wed in reality since no Book of Mormon location is known with reference to modern topography. Biblical archaeology can be studied because we do know where Jerusalem and Jericho were and are, but we do not know where Zarahemla and Bountiful (nor any other location for that matter) were or are. It would seem then that a concentration on geography should be the first order of business, but we have already seen that twenty years of such an approach has left us empty-handed. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer 1969, pp. 76-78)

In 1975 Thomas Stuart Ferguson finally mustered up his courage and prepared a 29-page paper in response to papers written by Mormon apologists John Sorenson and Garth Norman. It was entitled, Written Symposium on Book-of-Mormon Geography: Response of Thomas S. Ferguson to the Norman & Sorenson Papers. In this response, p. 4, Mr. Ferguson wrote:
With all of these great efforts, it cannot be established factually that anyone, from Joseph Smith to the present day, has put his finger on a single point of terrain that was a Book-of-Mormon geographical place. And the hemisphere has been pretty well checked out by competent people. Thousands of sites have been excavated.

Ferguson pointed out in his paper that the text of the Book of Mormon makes it very clear that certain items should be found in archaeological excavations and that these items are not present in the sites proposed. He noted, for instance, that “Thousands of archeological holes in the area proposed have given us not a fragment of evidence of the presence of the plants mentioned in the Book of Mormon . . .” (p. 7). On page 29 he concluded by saying: “I’m afraid that up to this point, I must agree with Dee Green, who has told us that to date there is no Book-of-Mormon geography. I, for one, would be happy if Dee were wrong.”

In a letter to Mr. & Mrs. H. W. Lawrence, dated February 20, 1976, Thomas Stuart Ferguson made very plain the reason why there is “no Book-of-Mormon geography”:

Herewith is a copy of my recent (1975) paper on Book of Mormon matters. . . . It was one of several presented in a written symposium on Book of Mormon geography [sic]. (My thesis is that Book of Mormon geography involves a lot more than playing with topography and terrain.) The real implication of the paper is that you can’t set Book of Mormon geography down anywhere—because it is fictional and will never meet the requirements of the dirt-archeology, I should say—what is in the ground will never conform to what is in the book.

We felt that Thomas Stuart Ferguson’s manuscript on Book of Mormon archaeology was so important that we published it under the title, Ferguson’s Manuscript Unveiled. It is available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry.

RESULTS OF SPOOFING

Although he had written a paper criticizing Book of Mormon archaeology, Thomas Stuart Ferguson felt that it was generally best for those who doubted the faith to keep their “mouth shut.” In a letter written February 9, 1976, he gave this advice:

. . . Mormonism is probably the best conceived myth-fraternity to which one can belong. . . . Joseph Smith tried so hard he put himself out on a limb with the Book of Abraham, and also with the Book of Mormon. He can be refuted—but why bother . . . It would be like wiping out placebos in medicine, and that would make no sense when they do lots of good. . . .

Why not say the right things and keep your membership in the great fraternity, enjoying the good things you like and discarding the ones you can’t swallow (and keeping your mouth shut)? Hypocritical? Maybe . . . thousands of members have done, and are doing, what I suggest you consider doing. Silence is golden—etc. . . . So why try to be heroic and fight the myths—the Mormon one or any other that does more good than ill?

Perhaps you and I have been spoofed by Joseph Smith. Now that we have the inside dope—why not spoof a little back and stay aboard? Please consider this letter confidential—for obvious reasons. I want to stay aboard the good ship, Mormonism—for various reasons that I think valid. First, several of my dearly loved family members want desperately to believe and do believe it and they each need it. It does them far more good than harm. Belonging, my eyes wide open is actually fun, less expensive than formerly, and no strain at all. . . . I never get up and bear testimony . . . You might give my suggestions a trial run—and if you find you have to burn all the bridges between yourselves and the Church, then go ahead and ask for excommunication. (The day will probably come—but it is far off—when the leadership of the Church will change the excommunication rules and delete as grounds non-belief in the 2 books mentioned and in Joseph Smith as a prophet etc., but if you wait for that day, you probably will have died. It is a long way off—tithing would drop too much for one thing. . . .

I recently wrote a paper concerning the big weak spots in the Book of Mormon, from the archeological point of view and for $5 will make a photocopy of it for you if you wish to read it.

Kindly do not quote this letter and please do not cite me.

If Mr. Ferguson could have seen the results of the “spoof” he played on his family, he might have had second thoughts about the wisdom of such a course. As it turned out, after his death his son, Larry S. Ferguson, was convinced that his father wanted his book One Fold and One Shepherd revised and republished to the world. He talked Bruce W. Warren, of Brigham Young University, into working on the revision, and in 1987 it was published under the title, The Messiah in Ancient America. In the Preface, p. xiii, Dr. Warren wrote the following:

The Ferguson family wanted the new book to be a tribute to Thomas Stuart Ferguson and his abiding testimony of the Book of Mormon and the divinity of the Messiah, Jesus the Christ.
On page xv, Dr. Warren commented: “Finally, the driving force behind the book was Larry Ferguson, with the initial financing for the project coming from his brother, Thomas A. Ferguson.” In the Forward, p. xii, Professor Paul R. Cheesman stated: “With the recent additions by Dr. Bruce W. Warren, this book should reinstate Thomas Stuart Ferguson as a source of enrichment in the fields of study concerning Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon.”

Larry Ferguson maintains that his father discussed the revision of his book before his death. Although we do not really know what Thomas Stuart Ferguson told his son before his death, it seems impossible to believe that he would have wanted it reprinted. While it is only a matter of speculation, it is possible that his son might have asked him why it was not reprinted and that he might have responded by saying it needed to be revised. If Thomas Stuart Ferguson had never leveled with his son concerning his true beliefs about the Book of Mormon, Larry Ferguson would naturally understand his father’s statement to mean that it needed some changes made to reflect archaeological studies that were made since it went out of print. The real meaning of such a statement, of course, would be that it needed to be revised to show that the Book of Mormon “is fictional . . . what is in the ground will never conform to what is in the book” (Letter dated February 2, 1976).

In any case, the new book is seriously flawed because there is no mention of the fact that Ferguson was a complete unbeliever in the Book of Mormon during the last 12 or 13 years of his life. Bruce Warren was undoubtedly aware of Ferguson’s 29-page paper criticizing the Sorenson and Normam papers, but he did not even refer to this important research in the revised publication. If Ferguson were alive today, he would undoubtedly be shocked to find his name attached to a book which contains a map showing “Possible Book of Mormon Locations.” The reader will remember that Ferguson wrote that “there is no Book-of-Mormon geography.”

Thomas Stuart Ferguson’s One Fold and One Shepherd, contained a long list of “cultural elements common to both Bible lands and Mesoamerica” (pp. 57-72). Mormon archaeologist Dee Green felt that Ferguson’s “list of 298 traits . . . are at times so generalized that the list could just as well prove that Book of Mormon people wound up in Southeast Asia” (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer 1969, p. 74). Ferguson, of course, later came to conclude that the items that were mentioned in the Book of Mormon which were not found by archaeologists far outweighed the cultural parallels. Bruce Warren and Larry Ferguson seem to have been completely oblivious to Ferguson’s change of mind and have included his long list of cultural parallels in The Messiah in Ancient America, pages 214-228.

The fact that Thomas Stuart Ferguson was not forthright with members of his family with regard to the Book of Mormon has placed them in a very embarrassing position. They have published a book which will lead people to the conclusion that he was a true believer. The truth, of course, is that Ferguson believed that archaeology disproved the Book of Mormon. The appearance of the revised book with Ferguson’s name on it, has caused scholars to probe into the last years of his life. A great deal of documentary evidence has been discovered to show that from 1970 until his death in 1983 Mr. Ferguson was secretly undercutting the Book of Mormon. In fact, just two months before his death he was working on a project which he felt would show that the Book of Mormon was in reality a 19th century production. The evidence concerning this matter will appear in a forthcoming publication.

One of the authors of this newsletter (Jerald) tried to discuss these problems with Larry Ferguson on KTALK Radio on April 17, 1988. Mr. Ferguson would not admit that his father had lost faith in the Book of Mormon, and when he was presented with evidence, he responded: “If you want to kick my dead father, go ahead.” He maintained that in “February of ‘83” his father “kind of pulled me aside . . . [and] bore his testimony of the Book of Mormon to me.” He also referred to a statement which he said his father had prepared in “the latter part of 1982.” It also appears in The Messiah in Ancient America, page 283:

We have studied the Book of Mormon for 50 years. We can tell you that it follows only the New Testament as a written witness to the mission, divinity, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And it seems to us that there is no message that is needed by man and mankind more than the message of Christ. Millions of people have come to accept Jesus as the Messiah because of reading the Book of Mormon in a quest for truth. The book is the cornerstone of the Mormon Church.

The greatest witness to the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon is the book itself. But many are the external evidences that support it.

The introduction to this statement reads: “In 1982, the year before he died, he included a photo and testimony in several copies of the Books of Mormon that he distributed to non-Mormons” (Ibid.). While we do not know for certain when this statement was first distributed, on August 2, 1983, Thomas Stuart Ferguson’s widow sent a copy of it to Jerry Benson. In a letter which accompanied it, she wrote: “Tom was loyal and faithful
to the Church to his death.\)” The wording of the statement which Mr. Benson received is identical to that reproduced in the book. Below the statement, however, we find the names “Tom and Ester Ferguson.” These names are not handwritten but appear to have been typed on the same typewriter used for the statement itself. From this we can conclude that the statement could have been prepared by either Mr. or Mrs. Ferguson or they could have worked on it together. While it has the picture of the Fergusons which was mentioned above, it is undated.

During the radio program mentioned above, Larry Ferguson was asked about the matter. He replied: “Well, he [Thomas Stuart Ferguson] wrote it in his own hand. You can ask my mother if you want to.” H. Michael Marquardt did just that in a letter to Mrs. Ester Ferguson. She did not respond, but asked her son, Thomas A. Ferguson, to handle the matter. On May 19, 1988, he sent Mr. Marquardt a letter in which he stated: “The type of information you seek is of a very personal nature, and in our judgment it would be inappropriate for us to share it with you. We do not know you nor do we know anything about you. Therefore, we respectfully decline.”

We would prefer to believe that Mrs. Ferguson, who may not have known the truth about her husband’s loss of faith, was the one who prepared this testimony. If, however, there is any evidence that it came from her husband and that it was prepared in 1982, it would only show that he was willing to go to far greater lengths than we had supposed in playing his double game. The reader will remember that in the letter dated February 9, 1976, Mr. Ferguson commented: “I never get up and bear testimony . . .”

On the radio program of April 17, 1968, Larry Ferguson declared: “…if you ever knew my father, that’s one thing he was not a hypocrite.” Mr. Ferguson now finds himself on the horns of a dilemma. If he concedes that the testimony he has published did not really come from his father, he will undermine the book he has spent years in preparing. If, on the other hand, he establishes that his father really wrote it, he will certainly have to give up the claim that his father was not “a hypocrite.” The reason for this is that on January 4, 1983, just after Thomas Stuart Ferguson was supposed to have written the statement, he acknowledged that he was, in fact, engaged in a project which he felt would prove that the Book of Mormon was not an ancient document. To accept the information which Larry Ferguson has put forth would force one to conclude that his father was a real chameleon, continually changing colors as he talked with Mormons and non-Mormons.

Whatever the case may be, we cannot help but sympathize with men like Thomas Stuart Ferguson and B. H. Roberts (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 96D-96G) who labored for many years to prove the Book of Mormon true and then found out that their faith was based on erroneous assumptions. It would have been very difficult for these men to have made a public statement repudiating the Book of Mormon. They would have been considered traitors to the church who allowed themselves to come under the power of the Devil. Nevertheless, when we consider the consequences of remaining silent, we cannot help but feel that both these men made a drastic mistake when they failed to stand up for the truth.

**EVIDENCE COMPARED**

Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt once boasted: “This generation have more than one thousand times the amount of evidence to demonstrate and forever establish the divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon than they have in favor of the Bible!” (Orson Pratt’s Works, “Evidences of the Book of Mormon and Bible Compared,” p. 64).

We feel that this statement is far from the truth. The only support for the existence of the gold plates is the testimony of eleven witnesses, and as we have already shown in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 50-63, there are a number of reasons to doubt their statements. A comparison of the archaeological evidence for the Book of Mormon with the evidence for the Bible clearly shows the weakness of the Mormon position. This, of course, is not to imply that there are no problems connected with biblical archaeology, or that archaeological evidence alone can prove the Bible to be divinely inspired. Frank H. H. Roberts, Jr., of the Smithsonian Institute, commented in a letter written to Marvin Cowan on Jan. 24, 1963: “Archaeological discoveries in the Near East have verified some statements in the Bible referring to certain tribes, places, etc. On the other hand there is no way in which they could verify the narrative parts of the Bible such as the actions, words, deeds, etc. of particular individuals.” In the same letter he continued: “There is no evidence whatever of any migration from Israel to America, and likewise no evidence that pre-Columbian Indians had any knowledge of Christianity or the Bible.”

The noted Mormon apologist Dr. Hugh Nibley frankly admitted that no ancient inscription mentioning the Nephites has ever been found, and that “nothing short of an inscription which could be read and roughly dated would bridge the gap between what might be called a pre-actualistic archaeology and contact with the realities of Nephite civilization” (Since Cumorah, p. 243).
While the Nephites are never mentioned in any ancient inscription, the existence of the Israelites is verified by many inscriptions dating back hundreds of years before the time of Christ. The “earliest archaeological reference to the people of Israel” is a stele of the Egyptian ruler Merneptah, dated about 1220 B.C., which is now in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. Information concerning this stele is given in The Biblical World (pp. 380-381). The following is a translation of a portion of the stele:

**Israel** is laid waste, his seed is not;
Hurm (i.e. Syria) is become a widow for Egypt.

The noted Egyptologist John A. Wilson acknowledged that “an Egyptian scribe was conscious of a people known as Israel somewhere in Palestine or Transjordan” (The Culture of Ancient Egypt, 1965, p. 255).

Many ancient inscriptions mentioning the Israelites have been found, and some inscriptions even give the names of kings mentioned in the Bible. The New Testament mentions a number of rulers that are known to have lived around the time of Christ. For instance, the Bible tells us that Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate. That Pilate was an actual historical person was proved beyond all doubt in 1961 when “an inscription with the name Pontius Pilate was found in the theater excavations” at Caesarea (The Biblical Archaeologist, September 1964, p. 71).

The fact that the Jews were in Palestine at the time the Bible indicates is proven by hundreds of ancient Hebrew inscriptions that have been found on rocks, pieces of pottery and coins. Portions of every book of the Old Testament, except for the book of Esther, have also been found in the collection of manuscripts known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. In addition many inscriptions from other countries verify that the Jews were present in Palestine.

When we turn to the Book of Mormon, however, we are unable to find any evidence at all that the Nephites ever existed. We must agree with the Mormon archaeologist Dee F. Green whom we have already quoted as saying:

The first myth we need to eliminate is that Book of Mormon archaeology exists. . . . Biblical archaeology can be studied because we do know where Jerusalem and Jericho were and are, but we do not know where Zarahemla and Bountiful (nor any other location for the matter) were or are.

**A SINKING SHIP**

In 1973, Michael Coe, one of the best known authorities on archaeology of the New World, wrote an article for Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought. In this article he addressed the issue in a very forthright manner:

Mormon archaeologists over the years have almost unanimously accepted the Book of Mormon as an accurate, historical account of the New World peoples. . . . Let me now state uncategorically that as far as I know there is not one professionally trained archaeologist, who is not a Mormon, who sees any scientific justification for believing the foregoing to be true, and I would like to state that there are quite a few Mormon archaeologists who join this group. . . .

The bare facts of the matter are that nothing, absolutely nothing, has even shown up in any New World excavation which would suggest to a dispassionate observer that the Book of Mormon, as claimed by Joseph Smith, is a historical document relating to the history of early migrants to our hemisphere. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer 1973, pp. 41, 42 & 46)

Since many Mormons have spread the rumor that the Smithsonian Institution uses the Book of Mormon in its archaeological research, the Institution has found it necessary to publish a statement denying this claim. In the four-page document we read as follows:

1. The Smithsonian Institution has never used the Book of Mormon in any way as a scientific guide. Smithsonian archaeologists see no direct connection between the archeology of the New World and the subject matter of the book. (Statement Regarding the Book of Mormon, Spring 1986, p. 1)

In the 1972 edition of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 102-103, we told about Mr. Ferguson reaching the conclusion that the Book of Mormon was a spurious work. We noted that Mormon leaders gave ‘large appropriations’ to support Thomas Stuart Ferguson’s New World Archaeological Foundation. This organization also failed to find evidence to prove the Book of Mormon, and the man who organized it, hoping that it would prove Mormonism, ended up losing his faith in the Church.” When Moody Press reprinted this statement in our condensed work, The Changing World of Mormonism, Robert and Rosemary Brown tried to cause trouble by writing a note to our publisher stating that this was “NOT SO!” Since some of our readers had received letters from Mr. Ferguson telling of his loss of faith and had given us copies, we were able to easily convince Moody Press that our statement was correct. The Browns simply did not know the full story.

At the present time there is a Mormon scholar by the name of Stan Larson who is “writing a biography of Thomas Stuart Ferguson.” He is very interested in knowing the truth about this embarrassing period in
Most of our readers are aware of the fact that for a number of months we have been involved in a disagreement concerning the question of whether the Mormon temple ceremony came from witchcraft and Satanism. The conflict centered around William Schnoebelen, a man who participated in both witchcraft and satanic rites. Mr. Schnoebelen asserted that the Mormon temple ceremony had been taken from these rites. Those who supported Schnoebelen maintained that his works were a reliable guide in helping to determine the truth about the relationship between Mormonism and witchcraft/Satanism. While our research shows that William Schnoebelen actually participated in these evil ceremonies, we concluded that his major documents and evidence did not hold up under critical examination. We felt, in fact, that he had given such a distorted picture of the relationship between witchcraft and Mormonism that we had to take a public stand against his work.

After doing some careful research with regard to the matter, we published our findings in the booklet, *The Lucifer-God Doctrine*. Ed Decker and William Schnoebelen responded to this publication in a paper entitled *The Lucifer-God Doctrine: Shadow or Reality?* On page 4 of their rebuttal, Decker and Schnoebelen state that we are not qualified to deal with the temple ceremony, witchcraft or Masonry because we are “armchair scholars” who are “relatively ignorant of such things.” In response we prepared a new and enlarged edition of *The Lucifer-God Doctrine*. In this publication we presented evidence against the claims William Schnoebelen set forth in the booklet, *Mormonism’s Temple of Doom*. We demonstrated that modern witchcraft, Satanism and Mormonism have borrowed from Masonry, and therefore parallels which Mr. Schnoebelein pointed out between Mormonism and witchcraft/Satanism only demonstrated that these three groups had borrowed from Masonry.

Although the great majority of people who have contacted us on the issue have shown support for our position, a small but vocal minority felt that we made a great mistake in bringing these matters to the attention of the public. Until just recently there seemed no way to settle this matter. Fortunately, as it turned out, Ed Decker and William Schnoebelen appealed to the Christian Research Institute for help. In a letter to us, dated December 7, 1987, Ed Decker wrote: “I have spoken to Dr. Walter Martin regarding the matter and he has agreed to let Christian Research Institute arbitrate this matter. Fortunately, as it turned out, Ed Decker and William Schnoebelen appealed to the Christian Research Institute for help. In a letter to us, dated December 7, 1987, Ed Decker wrote: “I have spoken to Dr. Walter Martin regarding the matter and he has agreed to let Christian Research Institute arbitrate this matter for Saints Alive. CRI and Dr. Martin have an internationally accepted ministry receives from them will be fully and immediately acted upon, to their satisfaction. I can also assume that whatever correction you might need will be just as quickly given. How you act upon any such correction is your own business. I am not asking for your permission in this matter.” In another letter, Mr. Decker explained that he was not really speaking of arbitration: “The one error I made was to make reference to arbitration which is not what we were talking about. This was more in the form of bringing a brother with you when you couldn’t resolve a difference. (Letter to Wesley P. Walters, dated February 9, 1988)

Since we were not consulted as to how or by whom the issue would be resolved, we could hardly be accused of controlling the outcome of the investigation. This was made very clear in a letter Ed Decker wrote to us on Jan. 28, 1988: “. . . we have the Christian right to bring in a third party, such

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**CRI STATEMENT ENDS WITCHCRAFT DISPUTE**

We pray that many will step out in faith and turn their lives over to Jesus that He may reign as King of their hearts. We made the decision to come out of Mormonism and follow the Lord about thirty years ago and have never regretted it for a moment. The peace and joy we have received and the direction we have for our lives surpasses anything that this life has to offer.

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For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s, and of the holy angels.

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For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s, and of the holy angels.
as DR. Martin and CRI . . . Earlier in the letter, I reiterated our decision and need for an reputable organization such as CRI to act as intermediate in this serious matter dealing with our ethics and reputation. . . . We still stand firmly by this decision. . . .” Although we did not believe that Mr. Decker had a right to force us to submit to his own plan regarding a settlement of the dispute, we felt that he did have every right to put his own ministry under CRI’s authority. In any case, we were treated very well by people at CRI. Marian Bodine, for instance, was very kind and helpful to us. When we completed the 1988 enlarged and revised edition of the The Lucifer-God Doctrine, we provided the Christian Research Institute with a copy. This booklet undoubtedly had a great deal to do with the decision which was finally reached.

At the time of the 1988 Capstone Conference we heard that the Christian Research Institute had decided to no longer sell the booklet Mormonism’s Temple of Doom. We felt that this was a step in the right direction. This was soon followed by the release of a three-page statement by Walter Martin printed on the letterhead of the Christian Research Institute. The statement lamented the fact that there had been “needless misunderstandings, corresponding frustrations, and ‘less than charitable’ comments by persons involved in this issue towards those of a different opinion. This is a sad state of affair for the Church at any time, but especially with the Mormon Church watching us. The Scripture clearly demands that we steadfastly avoid sowing such discord among our brethren (Prov. 6:19).”

While the statement was written in a very tactful manner and noted that CRI did “not wish to either explicitly or implicitly impugn the character, motives, sincerity, or integrity of any one individual or the collective ministries that are primarily involved in this disagreement” it did not dodge the real issue. The statement made it very clear that William Schnoebelen’s work on the relationship between witchcraft and the Mormon temple ceremony must be rejected:

The following is an open letter regarding the Saints Alive in Jesus and Utah Lighthouse Ministry’s ongoing dialogue concerning issues stemming from the publication of the booklet, Mormonism’s Temple of Doom. Herein is our position pertaining to some of the views advanced in the booklet.

First, it should be noted that the Christian Research Institute highly values the efforts and contributions that both of the above ministries have made in sharing the Gospel with those trapped in Mormonism . . . We firmly believe that the above organizations are dedicated to sharing the Gospel with those who are lost, particularly Mormons. Thus, we shall not make pronouncements upon anyone’s motives, but only upon the validity of the major claim in question. In short, our only concern is with the overall accuracy of the claims put forth in the formerly mentioned booklet.

Second, we believe that this whole issue has been clouded by a lack of clarity and precision in writings and lectures on this topic. . . . we agree with Mr. Schnoebelen (and Utah Lighthouse Ministry for that matter), that there are similarities and parallels among Mormonism and some forms of modern Witchcraft and Satanism.

However, as Utah Lighthouse Ministry and others have correctly pointed out, what similarities there are stem not from Mormonism borrowing directly from Witchcraft or Satanism, but the commonality that all three have in being heavily influenced by Free Masonry through people who were quite conversant with it, such as Aleister Crowley, Jerald Gardner, Joseph Smith etc.

We understand how and why Mr. Schnoebelen arrived at his conclusion, especially if one grants the key premises to his arguments. We however cannot endorse his premises, nor the overall conclusion as represented in Mormonism’s Temple of Doom. Unfortunately he appears to believe some of the theories put forth by many of those involved with Witchcraft and other types of occultism relating to their alleged longevity. But, these myths have been thoroughly refuted and denied by competent scholars and even many occultists themselves . . .

In conclusion, we pray that all those who have been directly involved in this disagreement will endeavor to keep the bond of Christian unity by the Spirit of God (Eph. 4:3). Finally, let us keep in mind that irrespective of any truth or falsity of the claims espoused in Mormonism’s Temple of Doom, the preponderate weight of Scripture itself is sufficient in and of itself to deem Mormonism a non-Christian cult.

Those who wish to obtain the complete three-page statement can write to Christian Research Institute, PO Box 500, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92693. A donation should be included to cover the cost of handling and mailing.

The CRI statement makes very clear the reason CRI decided to discontinue selling Mr. Schnoebelen’s book. It is summed up in one sentence: “We . . . cannot endorse his premises, nor the overall conclusion as represented in Mormonism’s Temple of Doom.” Fortunately, both Ed Decker and William Schnoebelen have agreed to go along with any decision made by CRI. In The Lucifer-God Doctrine: Shadow or Reality? page 3, they wrote:

Ed spoke to Dr. Walter Martin, Director of Christian Research Institute . . . We fully submitted ourselves and this ministry to them in the matter. We agree to submit to their findings and take whatever action they deem necessary. . . . It is our firm commitment to see this thing dealt with according to Christian principles. We pray that Mr. Tanner will be of the same mind.

We really count the statement by CRI and the agreement by Ed Decker and William Schnoebelen to abide by it as an answer to prayer, and we want to thank all those who joined with us in seeking the Lord about this matter. Although we have really felt the Lord’s help, this whole incident has not been easy on us. We would still appreciate prayer with regard to this matter that there will be complete unity and that tens of thousands of Mormons will come to know the Lord in the near future. We feel, however, that those who have taken an opposite position need a special amount of prayer. They have some very difficult decisions to make, and we should all pray that
they will not become discouraged and will deeply seek the Lord at this critical time.

Since this controversy appears to be over, we are now devoting our time to finishing a new book on Mormonism which we have been working on for some time.

In the new edition of The Lucifer-God Doctrine, which is four times as large as the first edition, we detail the errors which have greatly distorted the views of a number of Mormon critics. In addition, we answer the various charges that have been leveled against us during the recent disagreement.

Although it is not specifically mentioned in the CRI statement, both Decker’s and Schnoebele’s work on Freemasonry is seriously marred by the inclusion of erroneous material on the subject. Wesley P. Walters has demonstrated that the most important quotation from Albert Pike “depended upon” by both Decker and Schnoebele “to establish the Luciferian nature of Masonry” is a 19th century forgery. (We have printed an article by Pastor Walters concerning this subject in the new edition of The Lucifer-God Doctrine entitled, “A Curious Case of Fraud.” This article presents evidence that the notorious Pike lecture containing the statement that “Lucifer is God,” really came from an anti-Masonic hoax “that grew out of the mind of one Gabriel Antoine Jogand-Pages who had a vendetta both against the Masons and the Roman Catholic Church.” This is truly an amazing story regarding “a gigantic hoax” which fooled the public for many years.)

Because we feel that the new edition of The Lucifer-God Doctrine is so important to those working with Mormons, we have decided to extend our special price until October 30, 1988. The regular price of this book will be $4.00, but for those who order before the deadline, the price will be only $3.00 a copy (on mail orders please add minimum shipping and handling charge of $1.00).

**LAST CHANCE AT OLD PRICES!**

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Our most comprehensive and revealing work on Mormonism.

Because of a lack of capital we have been forced to raise the price on our major work on the LDS Church. The price has gone up to $13.95 ($16.95 for hardback). If, however, it is ordered before October 30, 1988, the reader will still receive it for the old price:

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CHURCH FIGHTS BACK!

MORMON LEADERS VERY UPSET BY CHARGES OF COVER-UP

Three major books have now been written regarding Mark Hofmann’s cunning plan to deceive Mormon leaders and document experts with forged documents and the murders he subsequently committed to cover up the crimes. The first book to appear, written by Linda Sillitoe and Allen Roberts was entitled, Salamander—The Story of the Mormon Forgery Murders. The second book, The Mormon Murders—A True Story of Greed, Forgery, Deceit and Death, was written by Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith. The last book, A Gathering of Saints—A True Story of Money, Murder and Deceit, was penned by Robert Lindsey.

These books have generated interest in the work of Utah Lighthouse Ministry and have brought enquiries from different parts of the United States. The treatment given our work in the three books has, in fact, caused some controversy. For instance, in a review of the book by Sillitoe and Roberts, Roger D. Launius suggested that one of its “deficiencies” was that it “glossed over” our work on the Salamander letter:

Salamander . . . still leaves many unanswered questions . . . Why was the Mormon historical community so unwilling to accept the facts of the case and only reluctantly acknowledged that Hofmann was a murderer and that his documents were fakes? I suspect it has something to do with an unwillingness to admit that Hofmann had tricked them. . . . Why, also, were those who raised questions about the documents, particularly anti-Mormon Jerold [sic] Tanner when he pointedly challenged the authenticity of the “Salamander Letter” before the bombings, shouted down so vehemently by historians? Why also was Jerold Tanner’s contribution to determining the “Salamander Letter” forgery completely glossed over in this study? (The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal, vol. 8, 1988, p. 82)

While it is probably true that noted Mormon historians like Leonard Arrington, Dean Jessee or Marvin Hill would have received more attention if they had done the same work on the Hofmann documents, Sillitoe and Roberts do mention that we “expressed doubts about the letter’s authenticity” in the Salt Lake City Messenger long before the bombings. They also state that “Hofmann found Tanner’s challenge to the letter a serious one,” confronted “Sandra Tanner” and told her, “You, of all people, should not be attacking this letter.” (Salamander, pp. 287-288).

In spite of the fact that Roger D. Launius feels that Salamander does not devote enough material to certain subjects, he believes that, “All in all, it is an exceptionally capable, intriguing, entertaining, and significant study of one of the most bizarre episodes in Mormon history.” (Ibid., p. 79) We would certainly have to agree that Salamander is an excellent book. Although it is written by Mormon scholars, it is objective in its treatment of the church.
While Sillitoe and Roberts were criticized for not giving enough attention to our work, Naifeh and Smith have been castigated for paying too much attention to it. David J. Whittaker, Curator, Archives of the Mormon Experience at the Brigham Young University Library, wrote the following in “an abridged version of a longer review essay that will appear in BYU Studies”:

The second volume, *The Mormon Murders*, was released in August 1988. Of the three volume[s] here under consideration, it is clearly the most disappointing. In reading it I was reminded of Peter Bart’s *Thy Kingdom Come* (1981), a novel which . . . presented a picture of the Mormon Church concerned only with money and power, with nothing else really mattering. Truth was a convenient commodity treasured more by the publisher of an anti-Mormon newsletter than the Church leaders. . . .

Naifeh and Smith manage to work into their narrative most of the traditional anti-Mormon themes . . . But their knowledge of LDS history is woefully inadequate. In fact, it is just awful . . . they see conspiracies everywhere, and like Peter Bart they are sure the Church is behind all of them. Jerald Tanner, like Hiram Cobb of Bart’s novel, is their real hero—he seeks and sees the truth, while the Church just wants to suppress it . . .

If *Mormon Murders* has any merit, it is the focus it gives to the case by seeing the whole affair through the eyes of Jim Bell and Ken Farnsworth, the investigators for the Salt Lake Police Department. Much of the detail regarding the case no doubt came from these two individuals, as well as from Gerry D’Elia, and that perspective is of value, even though it tends toward cynicism. Thus the volume does have insight into the inner workings of the police investigation . . . There are insights in this volume, but the overt anti-Mormon bias of the authors, combined with their arrogance and ignorance, must be seen as seriously distorting their perspective and judgment.

Although we are certainly pleased that Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith gave a great deal of attention to our work, we have chosen not to handle their book. It does seem to be rather harsh on some people and contains many unnecessary expletives. Also, we would like to see more evidence before jumping to some of the conclusions they arrived at. Nevertheless, we agree with David J. Whittaker, that *The Mormon Murders* gives some insights which are not found in the other books.

The report concerning our work which is found in this book seems to be generally accurate. There is one matter, however, that should be corrected. On page 144 of *The Mormon Murders*, the following appears regarding the Salamander letter: “In early March, Jerald and Sandra Tanner blew the story open in their monthly newsletter, the *Salt Lake City Messenger*. They called the Harris letter, of which they had seen excerpts, ‘one of the greatest evidences against the divine origin of the Book of Mormon’.” This statement would lead the reader to believe that we were endorsing the Salamander letter in our first publication concerning the matter. The facts are as follows: Our public criticism of the Hofmann documents began in March 1984—seventeen months before the bombings—when we demonstrated that there were significant parallels between E. D. Howe’s book, *Mormonism Unvailed*, and the Salamander letter. We noted that these parallels were strong enough to cause us to question the authenticity of the letter (*Salt Lake City Messenger*, March 1984, pp. 1, 4). About three years after we wrote that statement, Mark Hofmann confessed that he did, in fact, use the Howe book, *Mormonism Unvailed*, as the basis for the Salamander letter.

The quotation found in *The Mormon Murders* is out of context because it omits the first five words of a sentence and conveys a different meaning than we had intended. We did not call the Salamander letter “one of the greatest evidences against the divine origin of the Book of Mormon.” What we did say was as follows:

At the outset we should state that we have some reservations concerning the authenticity of the letter, and at the present time we are not prepared to say that it was actually penned by Martin Harris. The serious implications of this whole matter, however, cry out for discussion. If the letter is authentic, it is one of the greatest evidences against the divine origin of the Book of Mormon. If, on the other hand, it is a forgery, it needs to be exposed as such so that millions of people will not be mislead [sic]. We will give the reasons for our skepticism as we proceed with this article. . . . Although the average person would have a difficult time forging these things [i.e., the handwriting, postal mark and amount of postage paid] there are probably a number of people who could do the job.

Because they apparently did not understand the true message of the March 1984 issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger* (i.e., that the Salamander letter was a very questionable document), Naifeh and Smith made another error. They assumed that “Jerald Tanner” later changed his position and decided the letter “was probably a fake.” Actually, Jerald did not have a change of position. He was telling people that the Salamander letter was probably a forgery as early as February 1984 and became increasingly adamant in that opinion as time passed. On August 22, 1984, we published *The Money-Digging Letters: A Preliminary Report*. This pamphlet presented even stronger evidence of plagiarism in the Salamander letter and other evidence against its authenticity. It also made it clear that Utah Lighthouse Ministry was investigating all of Hofmann’s major finds and called upon him to reveal the source of these discoveries. It was, in fact, this publication that caused a confrontation between Sandra and Hofmann at the time of the Sunstone Symposium in August 1984.

The third book concerning the Hofmann affair was authored by Robert Lindsey who was a veteran reporter for the *New York Times* and also wrote the best-sellers, *The Falcon and the Snowman* and *The Flight of the Falcon*. We first became acquainted with Robert Lindsey when he was writing a story concerning Mark Hofmann for the *Times*. He had been talking to investigators concerning the bombings,
and although they could not give him too much information at that time, they suggested that he would find the correct theory of the case printed in the pages of the Salt Lake City Messenger. Consequently, Mr. Lindsay gave us some good publicity in an article he published:

Court documents indicate that some prosecutors... believe Mr. Hofmann's goal was not only to obtain money from the church through the sale of the documents but also to establish enough credibility that he could shape the world's perception of Mormonism.

This view is shared by a man who was the first to suggest that Mr. Hofmann was forging his documents. He is Jerald Tanner, a former Mormon who heads the Utah Lighthouse Ministry, which for decades has been challenging the truth of much of Mormon doctrine.... In an interview, Mr. Tanner said he decided... that the Hofmann documents might be forgeries, even though some of them... supported his own iconoclastic views of Mormonism.

In a newsletter that he publishes with his wife, Sandra, Mr. Tanner began raising questions about their authenticity, in some cases comparing the texts with known Mormon writings.

But if senior Mormon officials were aware of his warnings, they apparently paid little attention. Several of the church's highest officials have acknowledged negotiating to acquire documents from Mr. Hofmann until the day of the first two bombings. (New York Times, February 16, 1986)

Robert Lindsey became very interested in our work and devoted a good deal of space to it in A Gathering of Saints. In this book, which will be the basis for a major motion picture, Mr. Lindsey not only tells of our research on the Hofmann documents but goes on to make a statement which has caused some consternation among Mormon scholars:

Perhaps only Utah in the last half of the twentieth century could have produced someone like Michael Marquardt or Jerald Tanner. ... Tanner was a machinist turned publisher whose historical research, probably more than that of anyone else except Fawn Brodie, had given birth to what was being called "the new Mormon history." (A Gathering of Saints, page 128)

Nothing could be much more offensive to Mormon historians, who are trying to overcome the displeasure of the church hierarchy, than to suggest that we had any role in the so-called New Mormon History (i.e., truthful and open Mormon history). Davis Bitton, who served as Assistant Church Historian under Leonard J. Arrington, felt that the fact that a Mormon scholar had linked us with the New Mormon History was an important factor in Arrington losing his position as Church Historian and the "decline" of the Historical Division:

It did not help that the decade of our existence was a time when Jerald and Sandra Tanner were publishing a variety of works... Those ex-Mormons had begun their publishing activity before the Historian's Division was ever created, and they would continue it long after. But the two activities were going on simultaneously... We did not sympathize with the Tanners. But in a very vague and general way one can imagine how "the troubles of our Church history" could be seen in terms of both fronts. I was dismayed when an honor's thesis produced by a University of Utah student lumped the work of the historians of the History Division... together with the publications of the Tanners. For him, it was all "the New Mormon History." Guilt by association is a devastating thing, as we discovered. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Autumn 1983, p. 17)

Although David J. Whittaker gave Robert Lindsey very good marks, he felt that he had to respond to what he felt was Lindsey's ignorance concerning "the new Mormon history":

The third volume, A Gathering of Saints, appeared in September 1988. In many ways it is the best of the three volumes. As a story, it reads better than [than?] the other two, and on balance, it presents a more complete account of all the aspects of the case than do the others. Lacking the vituperative approach of The Mormon Murders, it moves deftly through the story with insight and compassion, and it is well organized. ... In general, the volume is much more even-handed in dealing with the role of the LDS Church in the Hofmann story. ...

Of course there are problems: Lindsey has not done his homework on the Danites (p. 204); and no serious Mormon historian would agree with his comments that Jerald Tanner (following Fawn Brodie) gave birth to the "New Mormon history" (p. 128). But these flaws can probably be credited to his status as an outsider to Mormon country and culture.

Although we do not agree with Whittaker's statement that Lindsey "has not done his homework on the Danites," and will leave the reader to decide on the merits of his statement on New Mormon History, we have to agree with most all of his comments concerning A Gathering of Saints. Almost everyone seems to agree that it is an excellent book. In this revealing study of Mark Hofmann's murders and his attempt to blackmail the Mormon Church, Mr. Lindsey deals with such subjects as: the conflicts between Mormon scholars and the church hierarchy with regard to how church history should be handled, the so-called Mormon underground, attempts to cover up evidence in the investigation, conflicts between investigators and church security, and the attempt to suppress embarrassing documents. This book includes revealing extracts from the diaries of Steven Christensen, Kathy Sheets, Ted Cannon and others, plus important new information from a recent interview Hofmann had with one of the investigators.

It is evident that the Mormon hierarchy is very concerned about the Hofmann books, plans for a CBS miniseries and a 20th Century Fox movie concerning the scandal. In the Calendar Section of the Los Angeles Times, Peter H. Brown wrote the following:
The Apostles of the Mormon Church... are casting wary eyes toward Hollywood, hoping for the best but fearing the worst from a trio of productions built around the notorious so-called Mormon Murders.

Most sources within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints interviewed by Calendar acknowledged that their hierarchy is bristling over the very existence of the projects. According to two books on the case, the church hierarchy allegedly tried to dampen the subsequent investigation into church involvement, even to suppress evidence.

Next up is “The Mormon Murders,” an $8-million, fourhour miniseries. It is set to start filming in Utah the second week in January. It will be based partially upon the Steven Naifeh-Gregory White Smith book.

The Fox film, “A Gathering of Saints,” is based on the Robert Lindsey book. The film may begin shooting in late spring or early summer.

Quite naturally, Mormon authorities have taken a guarded attitude to the film projects. “We are aware of them and are watching very carefully,” said Richard P. Lindsay, director of communications for the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints. “But it sounds like a return to the ‘Mormon bashing’ themes of the 1800s when the church was pilloried for sedition and anarchy.”

Other sources within the Mormon media establishment said the church already has begun a battle against what it believes is the most serious attack against the church since the polygamy controversy at the turn of the century.

The church has embarked on a massive study of the books and news articles in an attempt to assemble a master list of errors, misquotes and exaggerations. “Our response to all the allegations made against the church will be made public in about 60 days,” Lindsay said.

The proposed miniseries has generated special fear and loathing—fear of the global consequences of a billion-viewer audience and loathing for the book that spawned it. Lindsay characterized it as “written with such a venom and such a bias that it is an insult to fair-minded Americans.”

(\textit{Los Angeles Times}, Calendar Section, September 18, 1988)

We have been told by Mormons that the reason the Mormon Church leaders do not respond to our books is because they do not believe it is Christian to debate with their critics. We have always believed, however, that the real reason is that they know our case is very strong and that it would do more harm to the church to discuss the issues than to hold their tongue. That the deathlike silent treatment they have given us has been motivated more by an inability to demonstrate error rather than Christian principles is evident by the fact that they have publicly attacked the Naifeh-Smith book. The Mormon Church’s newspaper, \textit{Deseret News}, October 16, 1988, denounced the book in no uncertain terms:

\textit{Mormon Murders} contains “scurrilous descriptions, accusations and willful misrepresentations of the actions and motives of leaders of the LDS Church,” says an LDS Church spokesman.

The malignant meanness of the book is compounded because of its frequent misstatements, attributed to unidentified sources.

Officials of the LDS Church seldom respond publicly to criticism or its leaders. But [Richard P.] Lindsay calls the attack by \textit{Mormon Murders} a return to the Mormon-bashing days.

While we certainly do not consider ourselves apologists for \textit{The Mormon Murders}, we feel that the Mormon Church hierarchy must accept some of the blame for the tone of the book. The fact that church leaders alienated a number of the investigators who worked on the Hofmann case with their secrecy and lack of cooperation must have made a very negative impression on the authors who interviewed them.

In one of the critical articles which appeared in the \textit{Deseret News}, October 16, 1988, Naifeh and Smith are accused of lying with regard to the church’s cooperation with regard to the investigation:

Book: “The church tried to dampen the investigation into Hofmann and to suppress evidence.”

Lindsay: “The church cooperated fully with federal, state and local law enforcement officials, responding to every inquiry and request. All 48 documents acquired from Hofmann were made available to law enforcement officials.”

Unfortunately for the church, the evidence clearly shows that some church leaders were very uncooperative with investigators and seemed to be far more interested in protecting the image of the church. Although they may differ on some details, all three of the books (written by five different authors) agree that this was the case. Since the authors of these three books worked independently of one another and interviewed the same investigators, one is forced to the conclusion that this was the opinion of those who investigated the case. Naifeh and Smith wrote:

Ward’s first action was to help arrange to have a key piece of evidence shipped out of state. By the time the police department knew enough to ask the Church for the so-called Salamander Letter, it was already gone—off to the FBI’s laboratories in Washington, D. C., for a long and very confidential analysis. When the county attorney’s office requested other Hofmann documents, the Church refused to hand them over. Why would they push one sensitive document into the FBI’s hands almost immediately after the bombing and fight to keep other documents out of police hands for weeks? Church spokesmen said they didn’t trust local law enforcement.

But they could trust the heavily Mormon FBI, which worked hand-in-glove with Brent Ward. (\textit{The Mormon Murders}, pp. 295-296)

The real purpose of the meeting [about the documents] was made clear. The Church wanted to know what Throckmorton and Flynn intended to do to their prized possessions. As they pointed out repeatedly, this was an unprecedented situation. They were being asked to open the Church vault to outsiders, to people beyond their...
bureaucratic control, to a non-Mormon, no less. Not that
they trusted Throckmorton any better. . . .

The Church’s dilemma was clear. As later described
by a Mormon in the county attorney’s office, “It was
damaging enough to think that the documents were
genuine and that the first leader of the Church might have
been nothing more than a con man who duped the faithful.
But it would be even more damaging if the documents
turned out to be forgeries, and the current leaders of the
Church had been duped by a con man.”

Caught between a rock and a hard place, the Church
reached for its favorite defense: secrecy. They agreed to
let Throckmorton and Flynn look at the documents, but
they were determined that absolutely no one else should
see them.

That meant that under no circumstances could the two
examiners make photocopies, or copy down the contents
of the documents.

It meant the documents could not leave the Church
premises. Throckmorton and Flynn would be given a
conference room in the historical library. The locks would
be changed, and they would be given the only two keys.

It meant that they would have to enter and leave the
room together. Neither one would be allowed to stay in
the room alone.

It meant that the documents would be brought to
them every morning in a locked briefcase and returned
every night to The Vault, where the briefcase would be
handcuffed to a pipe so that it could not be opened again
until the next day.

The Church lawyer who was doing most of the talking
repeated again and again: “We don’t want these divulged.
We don’t want the writing disseminated.” . . . “I have to
protect Hinckley,” he kept saying. “I have to protect the
Church.” (Ibid., pp. 340-341)

While the statement about U. S. Attorney Brent Ward
turning the Salamander letter over to the FBI to keep it out of
the hands of local investigators seems to be incorrect (the
Deseret News, October 22, 1985, reported that Salt Lake City Police
Chief E. L. (Bud) Willoughby joined with Ward in asking “the
FBI to conduct the tests” and a Salt Lake City detective has
confirmed to us that local authorities wanted the FBI to test
the letter), it is clear from the other books that the church did
not want to make the other documents available to document
examiners. In Robert Lindsey’s book we find the following:

When [Salt Lake County Attorney] Ted Cannon
pressed the church to let his investigators look at the
originals of those that were still in Salt Lake City, a lawyer
for the church said that would be impossible, because
some of the documents were extremely confidential and
the church did not want to risk having them made public.

Cannon said that if the church declined to provide
the documents voluntarily, he would subpoena them—
and indeed, he subsequently did so. But, to head off a
court fight over the subpoena, Cannon surrendered to a
demand by the church’s lawyers to keep the substance of
the documents a secret.

“The content and meaning and interpretations to
be placed upon what is iterated within the documents,”

Cannon wrote to Wilford Kirton, the church’s lawyer, “is
either immaterial or of secondary concern as far as this
investigation is concerned. . . . every reasonable measure
will be employed to secure not only the documents themselves, but the contents thereof, from scrutiny or
discussion by anyone outside the authorized investigative
team. In no case will any member of the investigative
team be permitted to discuss, describe or characterize
the contents of the said documents, or any of them, to
media or indeed any interested party whatsoever, . . .”

Cannon agreed to let church officials maintain a
sign-in/sign-out log identifying everyone who examined
the documents and agreed with the church’s demands
that members of his staff would have to turn over to the
church all notes, photocopies, photographs and negatives
made during examination of the documents. Cannon ended
his letter with an expression of thanks for the church’s
cooperation, a clause that brought snickers from many of
those in the War Room [i.e., the room where investigators
met to discuss strategy in the Hofmann investigation] . . .
George Throckmorton wanted a sample of Harris’s writing
that had never been handled by Hofmann . . .

After being issued a subpoena, the church had
released to Throckmorton and Flynn what it said were
all of the documents it had acquired from Hofmann since
1980, including some that it had previously kept secret.

When the First Presidency’s Vault yielded the letter
presented to Gordon Hinckley by Hofmann in which
Thomas Bullock accused Brigham Young of having tried
to destroy the Blessing of Joseph Smith III, it caught those
in the War Room by surprise.

“What else are they hiding?” Michael George
demanded. “None of the church historians I’ve talked
to—Don Schmidt, Leonard Arrington, Dean Jessee—even
knew this existed. They’ve never heard of it. What else do
they have? Who knows what’s in the First Presidency’s
Vault?” (A Gathering of Saints, pp. 268, 269, 273, 274)

That the LDS Church would fight to keep its secret
historical documents from coming to light is not news to
readers of the Salt Lake City Messenger. In the issue for
November 1983 we reported that after a Mormon scholar
filed a suit against us to prevent us from printing extracts
from the diaries of Joseph Smith’s private secretary, William
Clayton, we subpoenaed the President of the Mormon Church
and/or his representative to appear with the original Clayton
diaries to give testimony on our behalf. On July 22, 1983,
attorneys for the Corporation of the President of the Church
filed a motion which asked that our subpoena “be quashed.”
On September 6 a hearing was held before Judge A. Sherman
Christensen. The Church’s attorney, Wilford W. Kirton,
vigorously opposed the subpoena. He argued:

Now, this is a matter of some serious moment as far
as we are concerned . . . suddenly we find ourselves being
subpoenaed and come in to court and make public certain
writings, which up to the present time remain unpublished.
. . . I represent an organization that is very concerned about
parties attempting to frame issues through which its own
private materials may be discoverable. It has no desire to
submit to the scrutiny of the parties.
Although we won the suit in a higher court, the Mormon Judge who originally ruled against us also denied our request to examine the original documents. In the case where the County Attorney’s Office was seeking documents from the church, it seems rather obvious that they would have eventually obtained the documents. While it is doubtful that church leaders would have actually dared to risk the bad publicity of fighting the County Attorney’s Office in court over the documents, if they contested the subpoena, it would have caused a delay in the investigation. Since the County Attorney’s Office felt that Mark Hofmann was a vicious murderer who might kill again or escape, it apparently felt pressured into striking a special deal with the church. This whole matter seems deplorable. If we had had a number of Hofmann documents which investigators wished to see, we doubt very much they would make a secrecy agreement with us and come to a special room on our premises to examine the documents.

Mormon writers Linda Sillitoe and Allen Roberts also confirmed the fact that the church was uncooperative with regard to the documents:

George Throckmorton worked feverishly to discover whether forgery was a glue that could hold the case together. First, he needed the documents that Hofmann had sold to the LDS church and to other collectors. He would begin with photographs, then move to the originals, he told Dean Jessee. Jessee shook his head. The investigation was unpopular among historians. “Leonard won’t let you have them,” he guessed.

Throckmorton telephoned Leonard Arrington [formerly Church Historian] . . . He knew Arrington had been widely quoted in the press stating that at least five of the Mormon documents Hofmann had discovered were definitely authentic. . . . Throckmorton introduced himself and told Arrington he needed photographs of the Hofmann documents. Arrington said he could offer no help, except to suggest that Throckmorton pursue some other line of inquiry. “You’re on the wrong track,” he advised, as he ended the conversation.

Throckmorton next tried to get the photographs from employees in the church’s archives at the Church Office Building. For a time, prosecutors and investigators had taken their questions directly to the archives staff, but a memo had instructed employees that any contact with investigators or the press should be cleared through church attorneys. Legally, the prosecutors could not fault the procedure, but, practically, the added red tape slowed the investigation.

A number of meetings took place in December between church and CAO [County Attorney’s Office] representatives to discuss the examination of certain documents in the church’s possession. Church attorney Wilford Kirton was leery of allowing investigators access to the papers. “We cannot divulge the content of these documents,” he insisted during one meeting. “It’s my responsibility to protect these documents and President Hinckley.” . . . Finally, Ted Cannon, who had spoken with church attorneys frequently, called Kirton and told him in no uncertain terms that, one way or another, the investigators had to examine church documents. . . .

“Slap them with a subpoena,” D’Elia suggested repeatedly when the bombings team met. . . .

Finally, all parties agreed to meet . . . on December 5, including Apostle Oaks. . . . Stott explained that they needed the originals of the documents Dean Jessee said came from Hofmann. . . .

After some discussion, Oaks agreed. “We need to cooperate,” he said. “We need to be entirely open in this matter, because the church has nothing to hide. We need a subpoena for these documents. Then History will show that the church cooperated.” . . . Oaks and Kirton presented a paper for Throckmorton to sign, stating that his notes, test results, and photographs would be returned to the church. Afterwards, however, Throckmorton told Stott he would not agree to sign anything like that and the subject was dropped. Oaks, his legal experience showing, valued documentation. He requested a letter from the CAO stating that the church had cooperated fully with the investigators. (Salamander, pp. 119-120)

Since Linda Sillitoe, who coauthored Salamander with Allen Roberts, covered the Hofmann story for the church’s Deseret News before she resigned to write the book, it is obvious that the fact that the church fought to keep the documents out of the hands of the investigators is not the invention of vicious anti-Mormon writers.

On pages 301-303 of the book, The Mormon Murders, we find these accusations:

The day after the third bombing, The Word came down from the offices of the First Presidency.

It was quick, but not quick enough . . . before the edict filtered down . . . Detective John Foster. . . . visited Martell Bird [the head of LDS Church Security] . . . He was following up on Hofmann’s statement . . . that he was being tailed by Church Security . . .

Bird denied the story adamantly. . . . When Foster brought him a list of all the owners of trucks resembling Hofmann’s description, Bird pulled out the Church employee records and cross-checked them with Foster’s list. . . . The lead turned out to be a dry hole, but Foster was impressed with Bird’s cooperativeness.

Like the way he offered the information about President Hinckley’s meeting with Mark Hofmann . . . less than two weeks before the bombings. . . . He considered the meeting “insignificant.”

Foster didn’t. . . . He found it strange that a man who supposedly had no involvement with the Church would be visiting its President at seven in the morning . . .

“I was curious about it myself,” Bird admitted when Foster pressed him. “So I went and asked President Hinckley about it. President Hinckley told me it was a guy named Mark Hofmann. ‘He came to tell me about some people who had transcripts of the conference agenda,’ he said.” . . . they are supposed to remain secret until officially released.

Bird continued: “Hofmann was here to tell President Hinckley that somebody had copies of the transcripts and was about to let them out.” Bird said he had checked the Church Administration Building log and that Mark Hofmann had indeed paid a visit to President Hinckley at the unusually early hour of seven.
When Foster told him about it, Ken Farnsworth was astonished that nobody had bothered to inform the police about the meeting—a meeting that might be crucial to understanding the pressures on Hofmann prior to the bombings.

The next day, The Word came down. Foster found that out when he officially requested copies of the Church Administration Building log. “I’d like to get a copy of that sign-in sheet,” he said, “to show that Mark was there on that day.”

Martell Bird called back a few minutes later. “It wasn’t that day. I was mistaken about the day.” He said it was the latter part of September. He offered to provide a photocopy of the sign-in sheet for the right day.

But when Foster went to pick up the photocopy, every entry except the one relating to Hofmann had been whited out. The day-timer had been copied, then expurgated, then copied again, giving the police no way to determine if relevant entries had been whited out along with irrelevant ones.

When he asked for a photocopy of the sheet for October 4, the date originally mentioned, Bird refused. His attitude had completely changed. Instead of eager and cooperative, he had become cool, suspicious, and recalcitrant. Foster recognized the signs. “Somebody’s told him to shut up, or told him that he shouldn’t have ever said anything about it in the first place.”

Although we do not remember reading about this incident in the other books, an investigator has confirmed to us that there was a question with regard to a meeting between President Gordon B. Hinckley and Mark Hofmann which took place sometime between seven and eight o’clock in the morning. He also revealed that the church was requested to provide a photocopy of another page from the Church Administration Building log. The photocopy which was provided contained Mark Hofmann’s name, but the names of other people who were in the building on that day had been deleted! That the Mormon Church would find it necessary to hide such information from the police is certainly strange. We would expect that type of reaction from the CIA or the FBI, but to have a church which proclaims that it operates “in full light” with “no secrecy about its doctrine, aim, or purpose” behave in such a manner makes one rather curious as to what is really going on. It seems even more unusual that there was no attempt to force the Church leaders to produce the original log. While there may not have been anything else of importance in the log, the fact that material was deleted would make one wonder if Hofmann met with Hinckley more than once in one day or if other important figures in the case were in Hinckley’s office that day. The entire log book should have been subpoenaed and thoroughly examined for all meetings between Hinckley and Hofmann as well as others who were in any way associated with Hofmann’s document deals. We seriously doubt that other people in Salt Lake City would have received the preferential treatment which the LDS leaders received in the Hofmann investigation.

While we have no reason to believe that the Mormon leaders had any prior knowledge concerning the bombings, they found themselves in a very unusual predicament. They were at that very time deeply involved in a very secret operation with Mark Hofmann. Hofmann had convinced them that there was a collection of documents known as the “McLellin collection” which was supposed to contain documents about Joseph Smith and early Mormonism that would prove very embarrassing to the church if their contents were revealed to the public. In reality, of course, there was no such collection. Nevertheless, the Mormon leaders were taken in by Hofmann’s story and felt that he was helping them keep this collection out of the hands of the enemies of the church. Hofmann was to sell this collection to a Mormon mission president by the name of David E. Sorenson for $185,000. Sorenson was to hold the collection for some time and then secretly donate it to the church. While Mormon officials knew that they were engaging in a clandestine operation with the express purpose of covering up Mormon history, there seems to have been nothing illegal about the matter.

Unfortunately for the church, however, the McLellin collection turned out to be the key investigators needed to solve the murders. Because Hofmann had no real collection to turn over at the appointed day, he felt it was necessary to plant the bomb that killed Steven Christensen, the man who was to validate the collection. This, of course, would give him an excuse to delay the meeting so that he would not have to produce the collection on that day.

It seems, therefore, that the Mormon leaders and the investigators were on a collision course from the day of the bombings. Church officials felt that in order to prevent embarrassment to the church they had to remain as quiet as possible about the McLellin collection and the role Hofmann, Christensen and Sorenson were playing in its suppression. The investigators, on the other hand, needed this very information to solve the murder case. Although the Mormon leaders’ main concern seems to have been to protect the church, they ended up obstructing the investigation, wasting the valuable time of investigators and, consequently, delaying the arrest of the murderer.

At the time the police began their investigation, the Mormon prophet Spencer W. Kimball was very old and near death and Gordon B. Hinckley seems to have been the acting president of the church. According to Naifeh and Smith, when investigators interviewed Hinckley, they did not feel that he told the truth:

On December 9, Farnsworth interviewed Gordon B. Hinckley. . . .

Duffy Diamond, the sergeant of Homicide . . . picked Ken Farnsworth for the job. He was, to all appearances, a good Mormon . . . The county attorney’s office sent Mike George . . . Hinckley had invited the Church’s lawyer, Wilford Kirton, to join them. . . .

Not surprisingly, the interview produced no revelations. Hinckley’s memory had not improved one jot since the press conference in October. If anything, the controversy had driven details right out of his head. So many truly important things to worry about . . .
Hinckley went on to review his contacts with Hofmann, from the Anthon Transcript to the Kinderhook plates. And, oh, yes, there was something called the McLellin Collection, but he had told Hofmann to take care of Al Rust before he would talk about it. That was the last he could remember hearing about it.

And what about Steve Christensen?

After the press conference at which Hinckley had said he hardly knew Christensen, the police and prosecutors had been flooded with calls from Steve’s friends—good, upstanding members of the Church, even a bishop—who said that wasn’t true. They were confused and angry. Someone like Hofmann might have exaggerated his relationship with Hinckley, but not Christensen.

Hinckley sighed, clearly signaling his exasperation with answering the same questions again and again. He had met with Steve Christensen one time only, on April 12, 1985, when Mr. Christensen donated the Martin Harris letter to the Church. In other words, for the third time, “I don’t know him.”

When they came out of the building, one of the investigators said under his breath, “Why that lying [expletive deleted].” Without blinking, Farnsworth and the FBI man nodded their heads in agreement. George was startled. He was the non-Mormon.


The account of this interview given by the Mormon writers Linda Sillitoe and Allen Roberts does not mention “the FBI man” as being present. Detective Farnsworth, likewise, says that no one from the FBI was present during that particular interview. Nevertheless, Sillitoe and Roberts confirm that the investigators did not believe that Hinckley was leveling with them and were very upset about the matter:

“Can you describe to us your contacts with Steven Christensen?”

“The only time Christensen was in my office was on April 12, 1985, when he donated the Martin Harris letter.”

Despite the note of finality in Hinckley’s voice, the investigators continued to press for more information about Christensen. . . . They tried another tack. “When did you hear that the McLellin collection was controversial?”

“I’m not aware that it was controversial. I don’t remember hearing that.

“Do you have journals or a daytimer that might refresh your memory on some of these points that are so important to the investigation?”

“No, I don’t have anything that would help you. . . . The journal question was only one dead end in the interview. Afterwards, Mike George left Hinckley’s office unexpectedly angry. When he interviewed a bandit he expected lies, not when he interviewed a respected citizen and church leader. He soon realized, however, that his anger was simple—his fellow investigators, born and raised Mormons, were furious. . . .

Later that month George interviewed several of Christensen’s business associates . . . As he questioned, he heard Hinckley’s name mentioned frequently. One man said that Christensen had been pulled from a meeting by a call from Hinckley. A week later, another call to an associate’s office had come from Hinckley’s secretary before Christensen arrived. When Christensen came in, he returned the call, then left immediately. That incident had occurred within a week of the bombings. (Salamander, pp. 128-130)

On pages 90-91 of the same book, Sillitoe and Roberts commented concerning the church’s press conference:

Most disturbed by the press conference were some of Steven Christensen’s close friends and family members. Hinckley’s and Oaks’s statements indicated that both had far more contact with Hofmann—an accused murderer—than with Christensen, his alleged victim. Those near to Christensen that autumn knew that he had rearranged his last months and weeks around the McLellin deal when calls and meetings with church leaders had been frequent. Good Mormons all, Christensen’s mourners tried to believe that the church leaders’ statements held literally to the truth. . . . the overall impression, they felt, misled the public about Christensen’s activity and intent in the months before he died. If there was some reason for this disassociation, why didn’t an explanation—even a private one—come with it?

Investigators also gave Robert Lindsey the impression that Hinckley and other church leaders did not cooperate with their probe of the Hofmann affair:

Although the church informed the press it was cooperating with the investigation, many of the investigators and prosecutors working on the case told a different story when they returned to their offices each night.

When detectives arrived for an interview, church leaders often opened the meeting by inquiring if they were members of the church or, as they were leaving, handed them a hymnal or other publication. Senior church officials refused to meet with the homicide investigators several times unless an FBI agent who was a returned Mormon missionary was present, . . . Saying it was inappropriate for leaders of a religion to disclose such information to civil authorities, several General Authorities declined to provide their diaries to the detectives who wanted to establish when and how frequently Hofmann visited the Church Administration Building.

Early in the investigation, friends of Mark Hofmann and Steven Christensen repeatedly told the detectives that they had been present when Hofmann and Christensen received telephone calls from Gordon Hinckley. Toll records showed Hofmann placed several calls to Hinckley’s office from his car telephone during the week before the bombings, including two calls on the Monday immediately before the explosions. But Hinckley spoke of Hofmann as if he barely recognized his name. Repeatedly when he was asked about the document dealer, Hinckley answered: “I can’t remember.” He said he couldn’t remember what Hofmann had told him about the McLellin Collection, but said he was certain Hofmann had never mentioned that it contained any material that would be embarrassing to the church. . . .
Hinckley and Hugh Pinnock denied Steve Christensen’s claim made to several of his friends shortly before his death that he had been asked to acquire documents for the church. Hinckley said he had met Christensen only once and had only the vaguest recollection of him. . . . He was visibly uncomfortable with the process he was being forced to undergo. He was not accustomed to having to answer questions, nor was he accustomed to being involved in a murder investigation. Clearly, he did not like the prospect of a subpoena to testify in court. (*A Gathering of Saints*, pp. 266-267)

To most members of the prosecution team, it was plain that Mark Hofmann had blackmailed the church. It was equally clear that leaders of the church were terrified that Gordon B. Hinckley would be required to testify against him and would be forced to testify, under oath, about his dealings with Hofmann.

From the first weeks of the investigation, lawyers for the church sought to head off this possibility. . . .

Gordon Hinckley was not summoned as a witness [at the preliminary hearing] after all.

Judge Grant, a devout Mormon, later attributed his absence to the trial attorneys’ concern for Hinckley’s health. But church spokesmen said Hinckley was not ill, and in fact the reasons were more complex than that. Ron Yengich, Hofmann’s lawyer, was no more eager to have the leader of the church that dominated the community raise the specter of his having been blackmailed by his client than the church wanted a man close to its Prophet to appear to have been blackmailed. (*Ibid.*, pp. 311, 318)

Hugh Pinnock, a member of the Mormon Church hierarchy, was deeply involved in the McLellin transaction. He helped Mark Hofmann obtain a very large loan so that the imaginary McLellin collection could be purchased and kept out of the hands of church critics. Mark Hofmann defaulted on the loan, and Hugh Pinnock maintained that he had to pay it off out of his own pocket. Steven Christensen recorded the following in his journal:

Upon reaching Elder Pinnock’s office we were welcomed most graciously. It was remarkable to both Mark and myself that Elder Pinnock was willing to assist to his fullest extent possible with only a brief explanation. It was as though he sensed completely the potential damage which this material would cause in the hands of the enemies of the Church. Within minutes he was able to arrange for Mark to receive $185,000 in the form of a cashier’s check. The check followed a signature promissory note executed by Mark in the favor of First Interstate Bank. (Steven Christensen's Journal, as cited by Robert Lindsey in *A Gathering of Saints*, p. 175)

Steven Christensen also wrote the following concerning Pinnock’s intense desire to see the collection obtained and salted away:

Elder Pinnock left with Mark four phone numbers with which to reach him. The extent of his helpful precautions included his having ready $185,000 in cash should the owner try to break the deal since a cashier’s check may not be deemed “legal tender” on a Sunday without the ability to convert it to cash. He also offered to make available a prop-jet; and/or an armored car for the transportation of the documents; however, Mark dissuaded him. (*Ibid.*, p. 176)

Mr. Christensen also explained in his diary that the documents would be donated to the church and “that the Church’s representatives could say that they were never purchased.” Since it would probably never dawn on anyone to ask if they had been donated, the church could keep its possession of the McLellin collection secret, and although Christensen noted that such a plan was not exactly forthright, “it perhaps saves the Church for the time being from having to offer an explanation on why they won’t release the material and/or be under the necessity of mounting a public relations move to counter the contents of the collection” (*Ibid.*, p. 174).

As the investigation into the bombings got under way, a number of people who knew about the McLellin collection became concerned that the truth might come out. Shannon Flynn, for instance, broke his appointment with Detective Don Bell so that he could rush down to the Church Administration Building to find out how much he should tell police. Sillitoe and Roberts claim that later Detective Bell received a call from someone in LDS church security:

“I understand you’re looking for Shannon Flynn. He’s over here.”

“He had an appointment here at 10:30,” Bell said, wondering why church security was involved. . . . “We can do this the easy way or the hard way. If it’s more important for Shannon Flynn to go to the church than to keep an appointment with police, we’ll do it the hard way.” . . .

Now Don Bell walked down to his office to see Shannon Flynn, who apologized for missing the morning appointment. “I had to go to the church first.”

“Why?”

“To find out what to tell you.”

“What if they told you to tell me nothing.”

“Then I wouldn’t be here talking to you.”

“So obviously they didn’t tell you that.”

“No, they said to come over and tell you the truth. I just didn’t know if they wanted me to tell you all the truth.” (*Salamander*, pp. 57, 61-62)

On page 201 of his book, *A Gathering of Saints*, Robert Lindsey informs us that the day before Flynn met with Apostle Oaks, police had already learned about the loan for the McLellin collection:

On the afternoon of October 16, 1985, a senior executive of the First Interstate Bank in Salt Lake City received a telephone call from a General Authority of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

“Mark Hofmann just got blown up,” the church leader said. “Don’t say anything to anybody about the $185,000 loan to Hofmann.”

Only moments before, a security man at the bank had hung up his telephone after speaking to the Salt Lake City police chief.

“It’s too late,” the bank executive said. “We just called Bud Willoughby and told him we had a $185,000 note outstanding with Hofmann for the McLellin Collection.”
Sillitoe and Roberts report that when detectives arrived to talk with bank officials there was an attempt to suppress Hugh Pinnock's name:

Inside, they were introduced to several banking officials and their attorneys, who were engaged in a hot debate about whether or not they should give detectives the information that prompted their call. . . . Harvey Tanner, head loan officer, acted as spokesman.

Tanner told the detectives, who by then were as baffled as interested, that on June 28, 1985, he had received a telephone call from an important man in the LDS church. He said he was sending over Steven Christensen and his friend Mark Hofmann to get a loan for $185,000, which, Tanner said, the church was authorizing.

Only the detectives' pens edged the silence. “Is that all it takes?” Bell asked. . . .

“Well,” Tanner said, “this had been done in the past and we knew everything was okay.”

Silence fell and heads turned toward a small man wearing bifocals in the back of the room. . . . The man said nothing, and the heads turned toward Tanner again.

Tanner described how Hofmann had filled out the loan application while Christensen observed.

A little odd, Bell thought. “Were you concerned about that?”

“No, because I'd had a call from this man at the LDS church.”

“What's his name?”

“I can't tell you right now.”. . .

Bell. . . looked at Tanner. “This is all you require for a $185,000 loan?”

Heads turned toward the man in back again, and this time he spoke. “No, it is not proper and that's not all it takes to get $185,000.”. . .

Bell looked Tanner squarely in the eye and pressed, “I need to know who the person is at the LDS church. This is a murder case and we need the facts.”

Another debate raged among bank officers and attorneys as to whether that information could be supplied. Finally, the man in back spoke again. “Stop it. Tell him the man’s name.”

In the silence, Harvey Tanner said, “Hugh Pinnock.”. . .

Tanner said when he had called Pinnock he had been reassured that Hofmann was good for the money, the church was behind it, not to worry. “You see,” Tanner added, “we had done business with Pinnock before, obtaining money for the church without the church being involved.” (Salamander, pp. 41-43)

Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith charge that “the day after the bombings” Hugh Pinnock came to Steve Christensen’s house and told his widow, Terri, that he had come to ‘collect’ Steve’s confidential papers on the McLellin Collection. After all, the transaction was a ‘private matter,’ and therefore all materials relating to it should be kept under ‘Church control’” (The Mormon Murders, p. 246). In the Deseret News, October 16, 1988, Christensen’s widow maintained that “This is not true. Pinnock came to offer condolences. . . . Pinnock didn’t come to get the paper. He didn’t know about it. They made that up.” Nevertheless, she acknowledged that she did, in fact, give “him a journal entry of Steve’s regarding the McLellin Collection.” A detective we talked to was rather surprised that Christensen’s widow denied that Hugh Pinnock came to learn about the journal entry. The detective felt that while Pinnock undoubtedly did offer “condolences,” he also wanted to learn what Christensen had written about the McLellin collection. The detective claimed that Terri informed Pinnock that the important entry from her husband’s journal (June 28, 1985) was already out of her control because she had given photocopies to acquaintances. Pinnock left with a photocopy of the entry and Terri turned the journal over to the police.

In any case, Naifeh and Smith go on to make some serious charges against Pinnock:

Don Bell, a sixteen-year veteran of the Salt Lake City Police Department, was already in a bad mood. When it was decided that Pinnock had to be interviewed, one of the Mormon officers in the department had suggested that it be done with kid gloves. “These people are different,” he said. “We have to treat them differently.”. . . Then he called Pinnock’s secretary.

“I’m sorry. Elder Pinnock’s in the Temple.”

“How long will he be there?”

“I don’t know. Who is calling?”

“This is who is calling. I need to talk to him.” The suggestion that Pinnock be given deferential treatment had riled him.

“Is there anything we can do for you?”

“No, there isn’t. I need to talk to him.”

Five minutes later, Bell’s phone rang. But it wasn’t Pinnock, it was Martell Bird, the head of Church Security. “Why don’t you give me the message for Elder Pinnock,” he suggested. . . . “Because I don’t want to give you the message. It has nothing to do with you. I want to talk to him. I can fit it around his schedule, if necessary.” Clearly, this guy needed a shove. “Maybe the easiest thing to do is to get an investigative subpoena and have it served.”

He could hear Bird jump on the other end of the line. “Hold on! We don’t need to do that.”

Twenty minutes later, Pinnock called. “I have the whole afternoon free.”. . .

Bell already knew from an interview at the First Interstate Bank that Pinnock had arranged a loan for Mark Hofmann. Now Pinnock claimed he didn’t know Hofmann. Bell choked back his astonishment and tried again. “Do you know anything about the McLellin Collection and this man who was trying to sell it?”

“Well, wait a minute,” said Pinnock, apparently catching the look on Bell’s face. “I think I do.”. . .

“The McLellin Collection?” Pinnock fumbled with the pronunciation and mused another moment. “I think I remember something about that. There was a guy who came here. Now, I know nothing about him myself, but I remember that some guy came in and said something about a collection. And I remember having to get up and walk down the hall and go into Elder Oaks’s office. And I asked Elder Oaks, ‘Are we interested in a ‘McLellin Collection’ or some kind of collection?’ And he said, ‘No. We’re not buying anything. If the guy wants to donate
something, that’s fine.’ And I back and told the guy, ‘If you want to donate something that’s fine.’

Bell could hardly contain himself. Lies, especially when they came in great clumps like this, could be very entertaining. “You know,” he said, “we have some information that Mr. Hofmann met with President Hinckley.”

Pinnock leaned back in his chair, . . . “You have to understand something . . . People come into this building all the time . . . And they say, ‘We’ve been down there visiting the First Presidency . . . Or, ‘We’ve been visiting President Hinckley.’ . . . Nine times out of ten, they’ve just seen somebody low down on the totempole like me.” . . .

“I’m afraid that’s about it,” Pinnock concluded. “I wish I could give you more help. But I’m sure President Hinckley has never met this man. . . .”

Bell pursued the subject of Steve Christensen. Pinnock said that Steve had been involved in arranging a donation of “some documents” to the Church just before his death. The donor was a private collector in Canada, and Steve was supposed to authenticate the documents.

“What kind of documents?” Bell pressed.

“Oh, some letters from Joseph Smith, something like that . . . The documents were supposed to have been donated the day Steve was killed.”

Bell knew backtracking when he heard it. Pinnock had apparently figured out that Bell was likely to uncover something about the transaction. Then he backtracked on Mark Hofmann.

“You know, that Mark Hofmann you mentioned? I think I now remember that on the 15th, his wife called my secretary and left a message saying he wanted to see me that afternoon to talk about some document collection. But we never had the appointment. There was no need to. After all, the Church wasn’t interested in any collections.”

He was weaving an increasingly tangled web.

On his way to his car, Bell didn’t doubt for a moment that he had been lied to. He only wanted to know why. Back at the department, he told a group of fellow officers about his conversation with Pinnock and other Church officials. “We’ve got some real problems,” he said. “They’re obviously stonewalling us. They’re lying to us. I don’t know what it is, but they’re hiding something.” (The Mormon Murders, pp. 247-250)

When we talked with Detective Don Bell on the telephone on January 5, 1989, he said he had not read The Mormon Murders, but he confirmed that Hugh Pinnock had given him a bunch of “baloney” during the interview.

The account of this interview given by Linda Sillitoe and Allen Roberts in Salamander also indicates that Pinnock was not really leveling with the authorities. Sillitoe and Roberts, in fact, claim that Pinnock would not reveal the name of the mission president who was supposed to buy the McLellin collection:

[Don] Bell arrived at the old granite administration building . . . He asked Pinnock what he knew about Hofmann, but Pinnock wanted to talk about the tragedy of the bombings and how he had known both victims.

“I knew Mark Hofmann through Steve,” he said, eventually coming around to the subject. “At one point I helped him arrange a personal loan he wanted to purchase the McLellin or McCellin—something like that—collection.”

Bell looked hard at him. This scarcely sounded like the church leader described during the bank interview as deeply involved in the McLellin transaction. He said nothing.

“I knew so little about the McLellin or McCellin thing that I had to get up and go see Elder Oaks.” Pinnock smiled cordially. “You’ve heard of Elder Oaks, haven’t you? . . .”

“I asked Elder Oaks if we were interested in this McLellin or whatever. He said, well, he’d heard something about it, but we were not interested, especially not interested in buying it. If someone wished to donate it, that would be fine.

“I called a friend at the bank,” Pinnock continued, “and told him he’d be seeing Steve Christensen and another individual coming over. If everything was in proper order, I said, it would be nice to give this individual a loan. . . .”

Bell put on his sternest face. “You mean to tell me the church was not involved in this transaction.”

“The church was not involved in this transaction,” Pinnock said. Bell noted the answer, then drew an arrow from it to the word “lie.” . . .

Bell wrote furiously, trying to keep up with the words if not the contradictions of Pinnock not knowing Hofmann well or arranging the deal but then offering to restructure the loan completely.

“I . . . suggested that instead of donating the collection we find a buyer.”

“You did?”

“Oh, yes,” Pinnock expanded. “You know, people love to donate things to the church . . . I suggested that he sell it to a party who was friendly to the LDS church.”

“What do you mean?”

“Oh, a lot of times, people friendly to the church make donations. I helped him find a buyer in Canada who would buy the collection and donate it at a later date . . . .”

Pinnock would not tell the name of the buyer but said the attorney’s name was David West, Sr. . . .

Late Thursday afternoon law enforcers . . . met. Both officers and their chiefs attended . . . After Don Bell summarized his interviews, he added his opinion: “The church is stonewalling us.” (Salamander, pp. 58-60, 64, 65)

Naifeh and Smith give this information concerning other interviews investigators had with Hugh Pinnock:

By the time [Jim] Bell and Farnsworth talked to Hugh Pinnock on December 2, the relationship between the Church and the police had turned from chilly to ice cold. Pinnock seemed to understand that: he shook throughout the meeting. In his fourteen years of police work, Farnsworth had never seen anybody more nervous. In a relatively short fifteen-minute exchange—the primary purpose of which was only to reassure him that they were not “out to get him” Pinnock drank what seemed like an entire pitcher of water. Bell wondered how he would handle the real interview the following Friday.
In fact, he was a basket case. With Dallin Oaks and the Church lawyer, Oscar McConkie, looking on in dismay, Pinnock led Farnsworth and questioners from the county attorney’s office and the FBI on a wild three-hour ride through the last five months of his life.

His chronology was a mess: ... Farnsworth ... hardly had a chance to ask a question. He rarely knew what Pinnock was saying. It wasn’t until afterward, when he deciphered his notes, that he began to see the gaping holes and inconsistencies.

It wasn’t that Pinnock hadn’t kept a record. In fact, he had kept a meticulous record, a journal of every phone call, every meeting, with the names of everyone in attendance. ...

So why was the presentation so incoherent? Because Pinnock didn’t have the journal with him.

Farnsworth couldn’t believe it. Instead of reading from his journal, Pinnock had copied onto separate sheets of paper all the ‘relevant’ entries. He even positioned them on the paper so they corresponded to the entries in the journal. The result was an incoherent patchwork of secondhand notes. Whenever somebody expressed confusion, Pinnock would simply say, “This is how it’s written in my journal, but I don’t have the journal here.”

Why didn’t he have the journal?

“I don’t want to show you all those personal things...” he said, shaking just as he had at their last meeting. “I could read from that if I wanted to,” he added defensively. “I could do that.”

But he never did. He just returned to the cryptic entries and read verbatim, without expression. And if anyone asked him to elaborate, he simply said, “I can’t remember.” ...

In retelling the events immediately following the bombings, Pinnock did seem genuinely touched. ... Farnsworth came out of the interview believing Pinnock’s pain was genuine, but little else. “Just not telling all,” he wrote in his notes. (The Mormon Murders, pp. 303-305)

Sillitoe and Roberts make these comments concerning the two interviews:

By December, the investigators needed detailed information from the church leaders who had been involved in the McLellin transaction. ... they planned their strategy carefully.

First, Jim Bell and Ken Farnsworth dropped by Hugh Pinnock’s office to tell him an interview was imminent. Bell announced that he ... was not and never had been Mormon. Farnsworth said that he had been raised a Mormon ... though he was no longer involved in church activity. As they expected, Pinnock turned in his chair and spoke directly with Farnsworth. ... Farnsworth began by explaining that they considered Pinnock an important witness. ... Hard as it might be for Pinnock to believe, Farnsworth added, they were convinced that Hofmann had killed Christensen and Kathy Sheets. “It’s absolutely imperative that we know everything that was happening between you and Steve and between Steve and Mark. We need to know about Hinckley and Oaks and the bank and the telephone calls— all of it. Also, you’d best be prepared to explain in court.”

As Farnsworth talked, Pinnock gradually drained a pitcher of ice water, brushed lint from his trousers, shifted about in his chair, and paced around the desk. Bell could not remember ever seeing a more nervous potential witness.

On the way out of the building, Bell told Farnsworth he would not be coming back. “You get the church guys,” he said. “I’ll deal with the chief’s office.”

Farnsworth agreed. “It’s a good thing we met with Pinnock on his own turf—his desk, his office. Think how nervous he’d have been anywhere else.” Not that any alternative had been discussed.

On December 6, Farnsworth, Mike George, and an FBI agent met with Pinnock in his office, along with church attorney Oscar McConkie. Pinnock read relevant references from his daytimer and personal journal ...

Following the interview, the investigators asked for copies of the relevant entries ... most of the interview fit with the evidence. (Salamander, pp. 124-126)

The account of the last interview by Sillitoe and Roberts gives the impression that Hugh Pinnock had his “daytimer and personal journal” at the meeting. This, of course, contradicts the account given in The Mormon Murders. On January 5, 1989, we discussed this matter with Kenneth Farnsworth—one of the investigators who interviewed Mr. Pinnock. Mr. Farnsworth, who was serving as a detective at the time of the interviews, said that he was very upset with Hugh Pinnock because at the previous meeting he had made it very clear that Pinnock must bring his journal or daytimer to that meeting. Instead, Pinnock showed up with only his own notes of what he felt were relevant entries from the original journal. (Investigators, of course, would have no way of knowing whether these notes were verbatim copies of entries in the journal or if relevant information had been omitted.) When he was asked why he did not bring the original journal, Mr. Pinnock indicated that he had forgotten it! Moreover, neither Pinnock nor Hinckley ever showed investigators their journals or allowed them to obtain photocopies.

On page 236 of his book, Robert Lindsey said that there were “a series of occurrences that convinced many of the investigators that they were being stonewalled by leaders of the church.” The church leaders were so uncooperative with investigators in the initial stages of the investigation that it even led to the suspicion that they might know something about the murders:

On the fifth floor of the Metropolitan Hall of Justice. ... detective Jim Bell spoke at a meeting that had been called to review what detectives knew—and did not know—about the bombings.

He said he suspected the church was concealing information about Hofmann and the murders.

“They’re hiding something; the church is doing everything it can to make this as difficult as possible. I’ve never seen anything like this in a homicide investigation.” (A Gathering of Saints, p. 236)

Robert Lindsey goes on to say that “Ted Cannon [the Salt Lake County Attorney] expected the investigation to lead, one way or another, into the highest echelons of the church, and he was troubled by what that meant. ... Like Bell, D’Elia...
was suspicious of the church and angry at its power in Utah, and he rarely stopped complaining to his colleagues about what he interpreted as efforts by the church to obstruct the investigation and about excessive deference to church leaders. Like Bell, he had been warned about a doctrine in Utah called Lying for the Lord. It held that when a Mormon believed he was doing the work of the Lord, it was not a sin to lie” (Ibid., pp. 238-239).

On page 240 of his book, Robert Lindsey cited the following concerning the investigation from Ted Cannon’s journal: “The real problem is that every single person in it has something to hide . . . the church either misspending church $$ on junk, or at the least embarrassed by the financial part of the papers . . .”

Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith were very suspicious of the role of LDS Church Security in the investigation. On page 44 of The Mormon Murders we find these questions: “Why did Church Security men materialize at the scene of the Hofmann bombing almost instantly? What about the report by the state legislator that Church Security had kept Hofmann under surveillance? That didn’t make them bombers, but it didn’t make them look good either. Did they see it happening and not try to stop it? At least one federal investigator from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms thought it looked more than just suspicious.”

It is possible, of course, that Church Security was tailing Mark Hofmann before the bombings. The leaders of the church must have been very concerned about what Mark Hofmann was doing with the McLellin collection. Rumors had it that he was trying to sell part of the collection before turning it over to the mission president. The reader will remember that Hugh Pinnock was apparently so concerned about the collection falling into the hands of the adversary that he was willing to provide an armored car to transport it. Right after the bomb exploded in Hofmann’s car, someone in Church Security told Alvin Rust “we know all about the McLellin papers” (Salamander, p. 38). Nevertheless, although one can speculate about the matter, it is a different matter to provide hard evidence to show that this was actually the case. That “Church Security men materialized at the scene of the Hofmann bombing almost instantly” does not really prove anything. After all, the Hofmann bombing occurred across the street from the Deseret Gym, which is owned by the Mormon Church itself. It seems reasonable to believe that Church Security would be on the alert after what had happened the day before. Moreover, both the Church Office Building and Temple Square are very close to where the explosion occurred.

One thing that might lead one to believe that Church Security was tailing Hofmann is a statement which appears in Salamander, p. 61:

Don Bell was not the only detective to trip over church security. Jim Bell had his concerns, as well. A church security officer had met him on the sidewalk by the Judge Building Tuesday morning after the bombing, when Bell had gone out for equipment. “We have thick files on Steven Christensen and Mark Hofmann if you’d like to see them,” the officer had said. Bell was not familiar with either name, since at that point the victim had not been officially identified. He asked the agent to take the files to the SLCPD. Later, when he knew who both Christensen and Hofmann were, Bell asked for the files but learned that they had never arrived. When he had checked back with church security, the entire incident was denied.

From reading this, we reasoned that a Church Security officer would have to have known something about the murder if he offered a file on Mark Hofmann at this early time in the investigation when he was not even a suspect. We wondered if it were possible that someone in Church Security followed him to the Judge Building and saw him deliver the package containing the bomb. This theory was shattered, however, when we talked to Jim Bell on January 6, 1989. Detective Bell stated that although the incident actually occurred, Mark Hofmann’s name was not mentioned. Bell, in fact, did not hear Mark Hofmann’s name until Detective Farnsworth told him of a report concerning Hofmann wearing a coat which matched the description of the coat worn by the bomber. The Church Security officer had only claimed that the Mormon Church had a file on Steven Christensen. Bell also felt that since it had been three hours since the bombing and it was a well-known fact that the bomb went off in Christensen’s office, it is likely that Church Security would have figured out the identity of the victim.

While Detective Bell’s explanation seems to remove any evidence that Church Security knew Hofmann was the bomber, it still raises some important questions: Why, for instance, would Church Security have a thick file on Steven Christensen? Would this file have had something to do with Steven Christensen’s liberal views on Mormon history? Or could it have contained important information on the McLellin transaction which would have helped detectives to solve the bombing’s case more rapidly? It is interesting that someone in the church seemed to feel that the Christensen file had to be suppressed, and it is certainly strange that such an important file would never be subpoenaed by investigators.

In any case, while the Mormon leaders want us to believe that the “church cooperated fully” with investigators, the evidence indicates just the opposite. The article in the Los Angeles Times, September 18, 1988, quoted Richard P. Lindsay as saying that the response to “all the allegations made against the church” would be made public “in about 60 days.” According to the Times, it is supposed to be a “master list of errors, misquotes and exaggerations” appearing in “books and news articles.” As we go to press with this issue of the Messenger, no response from the church has appeared. We do not know whether church officials have decided to drop the project and attempt to ride out the storm or if they are still working on this monumental response.
We are pleased to announce the completion of our new book, Major Problems of Mormonism. Although our most comprehensive work, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? has proved to be very effective in bringing many Mormons to the truth, it contains more material than some people wish to read. In addition, we have printed important information in the Messenger and other publications which has not been included in our larger work. For these reasons, we have spent a great deal of time going through our various publications to determine what is the most important material on Mormonism and have finally distilled our thirty years of research down into a 256-page book. The price of only $6.95 ($5.95 if ordered before March 31, 1988—mail orders please add 10%) makes it well within the price range of most people. (Those who wish to give or loan out extra copies to their friends will undoubtedly be interested in the quantity prices: 5 copies for $25.00—10 copies for $41.70.) Although this book is not meant to replace Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? we believe it will eventually become our most popular book.

The following is a condensed and revised printing of Chapter 20 of Major Problems of Mormonism. This chapter is entitled, “The Hereafter,” and deals with the Mormon doctrine of “eternal progression.”

Joseph Smith seems to have been a firm believer in the orthodox teachings of Christianity concerning heaven and hell when he first began his work. Before many years had passed, however, he had developed some very unique doctrines concerning the hereafter.

In 1832 Joseph Smith gave a revelation ( Doctrine and Covenants, Section 76) which stated that heaven was divided up into three different kingdoms—i.e., the celestial, terrestrial and telestial kingdoms. Later he had another revelation which divided the “celestial” kingdom itself into compartments: “In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees; And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage]” ( Doctrine and Covenants 131:1:2). It is clear from this that the only ones who enter into the highest division in the “celestial” kingdom are those who are married for time and eternity in a Mormon temple.

The Mormon doctrine of pre-existence plays an important role in the function of those who obtain the “highest” glory in the “celestial kingdom.” According to Mormon teachings, God and his wife or wives were the parents of all the spirits who later come to be born on earth. In other words, we were all supposed to have been part of one immense family of spirit children in heaven. Those who are accounted worthy to become Gods and Goddesses after the resurrection are likewise to give birth to spirit children throughout all eternity, and these spirits will eventually take bodies on other worlds.

Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt set forth some important details and problems concerning the birth of spirit children to celestial beings:

In the Heaven where our spirits were born, there are many Gods, each one of whom has his own wife or wives . . . Each God, through his wife or wives, raises up a numerous family of sons and daughters; . . . each father and mother will be in a condition to multiply forever and ever. As soon as each God has begotten many millions of male and female spirits, and his Heavenly inheritance becomes too small, to comfortably accommodate his great family, he, in connection with his sons, organizes a new world . . . where he sends both the male and female spirits to inhabit tabernacles of flesh and bones. . . . The inhabitants of each world are required to reverence, adore, and worship their own personal father who dwells in the Heaven which they formerly inhabited. ( The Seer, March 1853, p. 37)

Apostle Pratt estimated that “seventy thousand million [i.e., 70 billion] sons and daughters were born in Heaven, and kept their first estate . . .” Pratt went on to explain that it is “probable that the period required for the formation of the infant spirit, is of the same length as that required in the world for the organization of the infant tabernacle.” ( Ibid., pp. 38-39)

The description given by Mormon leaders of the function of a woman who advances to Godhood reminds us of the role played by a queen bee. The queen bee, of course, produces swarms of offspring—as many as 2,500 a day! Her main purpose appears to be to produce more bees. Mormon scholar Eugene England seems to be repelled by the concept concerning spirit children taught by Apostle Pratt and other “influential Mormons and teachers of religion.” He maintains that if “humans can already produce test-tube babies and clones, God has certainly found more efficient ways to produce spirit children than by turning celestial partners into mere birth machines. To anticipate such a limited, unequal role for women in eternity insults and devalues them” (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Winter 1987, p. 148). While many Mormon women would agree with England, the teaching seems too embedded in Mormon theology to be torn out without endangering the entire doctrine of “eternal progression.” Apostle Bruce R. McConkie made it very plain that spirit children are literally born to the Eternal Father and Mother: “Our spirit bodies had their beginning in pre-existence when we were born as the spirit children of God our Father. Through that birth process spirit element was organized into intelligent entities” (Mormon Doctrine, 1979, p. 750).

Although Mormon theology teaches that a woman can obtain “Godhood,” it is actually a subservient role to her husband. She is still required to “yield the most perfect obedience” to her “great Head”—her husband ( The Seer, p. 159). While her husband will be worshipped by their spirit children and manifest himself to them after they go to an earth to experience mortality, she will apparently have no contact with them there. According to Apostle Orson Pratt, “the children, so far as we are informed, have never been commanded to pray to her or worship her” ( Ibid., p. 159).
Many Mormon women have serious reservations about the concept of having billions of spirit children every time their husbands decide to people another world. They believe that this teaching smacks of confusion and mass production. Mormon leaders, of course, will argue that women will be perfectly happy when they arrive in the heaven described in their theology. Childbirth will not be painful in heaven, and all the other details and problems will be worked out. Even so, since Mormon theology limits Gods and Goddesses to physical bodies, it seems that it would be very difficult for either the “Heavenly Father” or the “Heavenly Mother” to give much individual attention to billions of children.

AN EVER-EXPANDING HELL. In the Bible we read that hell was originally “prepared for the devil and his angels,” but people who refuse to repent and receive the Lord into their lives shall also “go away into everlasting punishment . . .” (Matthew 25:41-46). At the time that Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon, he was firmly committed to the orthodox position concerning hell, and his first major work is filled with this teaching. Later, however, he was influenced by the teachings of the Universalists, who proclaimed that “all men will finally be saved.” In the Book of Mormon he had taught that the wicked would go to an “awful hell” and “endure a never ending torment” (see Book of Mormon, Alma 42:16; Mosiah 3:38-39; 3 Nephi 27:11, 17; Alma 54:7). In spite of the strong teachings concerning hell in the Book of Mormon, by 1832 Joseph Smith had completely repudiated the orthodox position. He claimed, in fact, that the wicked would be saved in the telestial kingdom.

While Joseph Smith tried to destroy the Biblical teaching concerning hell, his doctrine of “eternal progression” seems to create a hell which is infinitely larger than the mind is able to comprehend. The Mormon hell, in fact, turns out to be a place or places of punishment which will continue to claim captives at an increasingly greater rate throughout all eternity.

To begin with, Mormonism teaches that the devil and his angels were born to the Heavenly Father and the Heavenly Mother in the pre-existence as spirit children. In other words, they were originally part of the family of spirits who were to come to earth to receive bodies. Instead, however, they rebelled, were cast out, and became the “sons of perdition.” While Mormons believe that “very few” of the spirits who come to earth will end up in hell, they affirm that all those who followed the devil in the pre-existence are to go to an everlasting hell. Bruce R. McConkie made this statement concerning them: “Their lot is to wallow in wickedness to all eternity. They are spiritually dead eternally” (Mormon Doctrine, 1979, p. 756).

According to a revelation given by Joseph Smith, a “third” of the spirits born to God and his wife became sons of perdition and were thrust down to hell:

... the devil was before Adam, for he rebelled against me, saying, Give me thine honor, which is my power; and also a third part of the hosts of heaven turned he away from me because of their agency; And they were thrust down, and thus came the devil and his angels; And, behold, there is a place prepared for them from the beginning, which place is hell. (Doctrine and Covenants 29:36-38)

Apostle Orson Pratt estimated that there were about 35 billion spirit children of God who were sent to this eternal hell (The Seer, p. 38). Mormon writer Eugene England speaks of “the 80 billion or so people demographers compute will have lived on earth by 2000 A.D.” (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Winter 1987, p. 148). The figure given by Mr. England is similar to that given by Apostle Orson Pratt—i.e., 70 billion. If 80 billion people will eventually live on earth, then it follows that the “sons of perdition” number 40 billion. The number could be even higher, however, because the figure of “80 billion” on earth does not include the millennium.

While Mormon apologists criticize others for believing in the idea of eternal punishment of the wicked, their church’s own doctrine has already consigned 40,000,000,000 or more of God’s own spirit children to eternal damnation. This, however, is just the tip of the iceberg. If the doctrine of “eternal progression” is true, this same thing has already happened on innumerable worlds. In a discourse given February 18, 1855, Apostle Orson Pratt expressed the view that there are already countless Gods and worlds: “If we should take a million of worlds like this and number their particles, we should find that there are more Gods than there are particles of matter in those worlds” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 2, p. 345).

The Mormon couple who looks forward to Godhood should be aware of the serious implications of their theology. If the doctrine of “eternal progression” is true, they will be faced with a great deal of heartache. To begin with, in the hereafter they will vividly recall their pre-existent state in which a third of their own family fought against their Heavenly Father and became sons of perdition. On the positive side, they will have a spirit child who will become the “redeemer” of their earth, but this will be offset to some extent by the fact that one of their other sons will turn out to be a “tempter.” President Brigham Young made this comment about the matter:

Sin is upon every earth that ever was created, . . . Consequently every earth has its redeemer, and every earth has its tempter; and every earth, and the people thereof . . . pass through all the ordeals that we are passing through. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 14, pp. 71-72)

The worst thing of all, however, is that according to Mormon theology the couple who aspire to Godhood will probably have to send billions of their own spirit children to an eternal hell. In the revelation to Joseph Smith which we referred to earlier, Jesus is purported to have said that “a third part” of the spirit children were lost “because of their agency” ( Doctrine and Covenants 29:36). Since part of the eternal plan is to give the spirit children free agency, this opens the door so that the spirits can choose to become sons of perdition. Now, if the current Mormon God suffered a loss of at least 40,000,000,000 children, it seems highly unlikely that those who receive Godhood under him will have a better rate of success. In any case, after the couple goes through this great loss, it will be time to start another world. This same process of having spirit children to populate worlds is supposed to continue throughout all eternity.

To those who have even an elementary understanding of mathematics, it is obvious that the Mormon doctrine of “eternal progression” would create an immeasurable number of sons of perdition. Although Apostle Orson Pratt did not discuss the multiplication of the sons of perdition, he did give some idea of how rapidly the number of worlds and Gods would increase under the Mormon plan:
The fourth generations would people over a trillion, and the fifth over a quadrillion of worlds; while the one-hundredth generation would people more worlds than could be expressed by raising one million to the ninety-ninth power. (*The Seer*, page 39)

The person who accepts the Mormon doctrine of “eternal progression” is forced by mathematics to conclude that eventually quadrillions of worlds will be created by the Gods every second and that this will go on forever and ever. While this idea might really appeal to a man who is interested in obtaining “authority and dominion as the Grand Patriarch of the endless generations of his posterity,” there is a very gloomy downside to the story since every second that passes quadrillions of spirits will become “sons of perdition” and be lost forever, and this number will rapidly increase throughout all eternity!

Although Joseph Smith claimed he was trying to straighten out the Christian world with respect to the hereafter, it seems that he has only produced more confusion. He has separated the one superlative heaven which Jesus taught into a number of different compartments which will cause a segregated condition in the afterlife. While Smith’s doctrine concerning the “sealing” of families together for “time and all eternity” appears to promise that Mormons will have their children in the resurrection, his doctrine of “eternal progression” seems to take them far away. If the children are faithful, they will be off creating their own worlds throughout eternity. Moreover, Joseph Smith’s attempt to evade the Biblical teaching concerning hell led him into such a state of confusion that he ended up creating a hell which looms as an ever expanding black hole sucking in “a third part” of the spirit children of worlds innumerable to eternal destruction.

**OTHER BOOKS**

*Wild Bill* Hickman and the Mormon Frontier, by Hope A. Hilton. Price: $9.95

Religious Seekers and the Advent of Mormonism, by Dan Vogel. Price: $9.95


Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, by D. Michael Quinn. Price: $14.95


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Joseph Smith was certainly not the first to claim revelations or to bring forth a new book purporting to be scripture. For instance, the story of the coming forth of the Koran, the sacred scripture of Islam, bears some interesting parallels to Joseph Smith’s account of the origin of the Book of Mormon. N. J. Dawood, who translated the Koran into English, gave this information concerning its origin:

For Muslims it is the infallible word of God, a transcript of a tablet preserved in heaven, revealed to the Prophet Mohammed by the Angel Gabriel. . . . According to Muslim tradition, one night in Ramadhan about the year 610 [A.D.], as he was asleep or in a trance, the Angel Gabriel came to him and said: “Recite!” He replied: “What shall I recite?” The order was repeated three times . . .

he Koranic revelations followed each other at brief intervals and were at first committed to memory by professional remembrancers. During Mohammed’s life-time verses were written on palm-leaves, stones, and any material that came to hand. Their collection was completed during the caliphate of Omar . . . (The Koran, 1968, Introduction, pp. 9-10)

Mohammed claimed that he was God’s true prophet and that he was restoring true religion to the earth. Twelve centuries later, the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith made a similar claim. He related that he was visited by an angel who revealed that he was chosen to translate the Book of Mormon, a work containing the “fulness of the everlasting Gospel.” Smith, of course, also claimed to be God’s true prophet and said that he was restoring the truth which had been lost through apostasy.

In the published account of his life, Joseph Smith related that he became very disturbed when he was a youth because of the “strife among the different denominations,” and this “cry and tumult” led him to ask God “which of all the sects were right—and which I should join.” He was told that he must “join none of them, for they were all wrong . . . that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt . . . .” (Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith 2:8-19)

N. J. Dawood says that Mohammed was also concerned with the fact that the Jews and Christians had “divided themselves into schismatic sects.” In the scriptures given by Mohammed, we read: “Yet the Sects are divided concerning Jesus . . . Truly, the unbelievers are in the grossest error” (The Koran, translated by N. J. Dawood, Surah 19, p. 34). In Surah 30, page 190, this warning appears: “Do not split up your religion into sects, each exulting in its own beliefs.” In Surah 3, page 398, we read: “The only true faith in Allah’s sight is Islam. Those to whom the Scriptures [i.e., Jews and Christians] were given disagreed among themselves through jealousy only after knowledge had been given them.”

It is interesting to note that the Koran has roots that extend back into both the Jewish and Christian faiths. The Koran, in fact, claims that the Torah—the five books of Moses—was given by Allah: “To Moses We gave the Scriptures, a perfect code for the righteous . . .” (The Koran, Surah 6, p. 428). In Surah 4, page 373, we read: “We have revealed Our will to you as We revealed it to Noah and to the prophets who came after him; as We revealed it to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and David, to whom We gave the Psalms.” The Koran also has quite a bit to say about Jesus and the Gospel. For instance, on pages 381-382, Surah 5, the following appears: “There is guidance, and there is light, in the Torah which We have revealed. By it the prophets who surrendered themselves to Allah judged the Jews, . . . they gave judgement according to Allah’s scriptures . . .

After those prophets We sent forth Jesus, the son of Mary, confirming the Torah already revealed, and gave him
On pages 388-389 (Surah 5) of The Koran, we find the following:

Allah will say: “Jesus, son of Mary, remember the favour I have bestowed on you and on your mother: how I strengthened you with the Holy Spirit . . . how I instructed you in the Scriptures and in wisdom, in the Torah and in the Gospel . . . by my leave, you healed the blind man and the leper, and by My leave restored the dead to life . . .”

The Koran even teaches that Jesus was born of a virgin:

And you shall recount in the Book the story of Mary . . .

We sent to her Our spirit in the semblance of a full-grown man. . . .

“I am the messenger of your Lord,” he replied, “and have come to give you a holy son.”

“How shall I bear a child,” she answered, “when I am a virgin, untouched by man?”

“Such is the will of your Lord,” he replied. That is no difficult thing for Him. “He shall be a sign to mankind,” says the Lord, “and a blessing from Ourselv. That is Our decree.” (The Koran, Surah 19, p. 33)

The Koran, however, teaches that Jesus was not crucified:

They [the Jews] declared: “We have put to death the Messiah Jesus the son of Mary, the apostle of Allah.” They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but they thought they did. . . . Allah lifted him up to His presence; He is mighty and wise. There is none among the People of the Book [i.e., Jews and Christians who possess the Bible] but will believe in him before his death; and on the Day of Resurrection he will be a witness against them. (Ibid., Surah 4, pp. 372-373)

Although the Koran speaks very highly of Jesus, it is diametrically opposed to the New Testament teaching regarding his deity: “People of the Book, do not transgress the bounds of your religion. Speak nothing but the truth about Allah. The Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, was no more than Allah’s apostle and His Word which He cast to Mary: a spirit from Him. . . . Allah is but one God. Allah forbid that He should have a son!” (Ibid., pp. 373-374). In Surah 18, page 90, the idea that Jesus was the Son of God is described as “a monstrous blasphemy.”

Some have suggested that Joseph Smith directly borrowed from Islam. Frances E. Willard, for instance, charged: “Modern Mohammedanism has its Mecca at Salt Lake . . . Clearly the Koran was Joseph Smith’s model, so closely followed as to exclude even the poor pretension of originality in his foul ‘revelations’” (The Women of Mormonism, 1882, Introduction, p. xvi). It is obvious to those who have done research with regard to these two religions that this statement goes far beyond the truth. While the story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon seems to have some interesting parallels to Mohammed’s story, as far as we can determine, the text of the book itself seems to bear no relationship to the Koran. The Book of Mormon, published in 1830, was Joseph Smith’s first major work. By the year 1838, however, there is some evidence that Joseph Smith was sympathetic to Mohammed and seemed to identify with him. In Senate Document 189, page 23, we find this statement in the testimony of George M. Hinkle: “I have heard Joseph Smith, jr. say that he believed Mahomet was a good man; that the Koran was not a true thing, but the world belied Mahomet, as they had belied him, and that Mahomet was a true prophet.” Smith felt that the Mormons had been unfairly persecuted because of their religion. Thomas B. Marsh, who had served as President of the Council of Twelve Apostles in the Mormon Church, gave an affidavit in which he stated:

I have heard the Prophet say . . . if he was not let alone, he would be a second Mohammed to this generation . . . that like Mohammed, whose motto in treating for peace was, “the Alcoran [i.e., the Koran] or the Sword.” So should it be eventually with us, “Joseph Smith or the Sword.” (History of the Church, vol. 3, p. 167)

In 1842, John C. Bennett alleged that Joseph Smith’s system of polygamy “closely resembles [that of] his master and model, Mahomet . . .” (History of the Saints, p. 218). While Bennett’s own character makes his statements somewhat questionable, it is interesting to note that both Mohammed and Joseph Smith gave revelations regarding plural marriage. In the Koran we read:

Wives of the Prophet . . . those of you who obey Allah and His apostle and do good works shall be doubly rewarded . . .

You [Mohammed] said to the man [Zeid] whom Allah and yourself have favoured: “Keep your wife and have fear of Allah.” You sought to hide in your heart what Allah was to reveal [i.e., his intention to marry Zeid’s wife]. You were afraid of man, although it would have been more right to fear Allah. And when Zeid divorced his wife, We gave her to you in marriage, so that it should become legitimate for true believers to wed the wives of their adopted sons if they divorced them, Allah’s will must be done.

No blame should be attached to the Prophet for doing what is sanctioned for him by Allah . . .

Prophet, We have made lawful to you the wives to whom you have granted dowries and the slave-girls whom Allah has given you as booty . . . and the other women who gave themselves to you and whom you wished to take in marriage . . .

You may put off any of your wives you please and take to your bed any of them you please. Nor is it unlawful for you to receive any of those whom you have temporarily set aside. (The Koran, Surah 33, pp. 287-288)

Although the Mormon Church no longer allows its members to practice polygamy on earth, Joseph Smith’s revelation on polygamy is still published in the Doctrine and Covenants, one of the four standard works of the Mormon Church. In this revelation we read:

Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord justified . . . my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines—
Therefore, prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions . . .

And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith, receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph, and who are virtuous and pure before me; and those who are not pure, and have said they were pure, shall be destroyed, saith the Lord God. . . . if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then is he justified; he cannot commit adultery . . . if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given unto him; therefore is he justified. (Doctrine and Covenants, Section 132, verses 1, 3, 52, 61-62)

Joseph Lee Robinson, a faithful Mormon, reported in his journal concerning a sermon which Joseph Smith gave in Nauvoo. Richard S. Van Wagoner gives this interesting information concerning this matter:

Joseph Lee Robinson . . . later remembered the prophet’s discussing possible difficulties missionaries could encounter in “Turkey or India or to a people where it was lawful to have several wives where they practiced Polygamy.” Smith envisioned a Muslim asking, “I have five wives . . . can I bring my five wives there and enjoy them as well as I can here, said the Prophet yes, the laws in Zion are such that you can bring your wives and enjoy them as well as there.” (Mormon Polygamy—A History, p. 48)

Both Mohammed and Joseph Smith had problems with people claiming that their revelations were man-made, and both men combated their critics by challenging them to produce anything that would compare with their revelations. In the Koran we find the following:

This Koran could not have been composed by any but Allah. It confirms what was revealed before it and fully explains the Scriptures. It is beyond doubt from the Lord of Creation.

If they say: “It is your own invention,” say: “Compose one chapter like it.” (The Koran, Surah 10, page 67)

If they say: “He has invented it himself,” say to them: “Invent ten chapters like it. Call on whom you will of your idols, if what you say be true. But if they fail you, know that it is revealed with Allah’s knowledge, and that there is no god but Him. Will you then accept Islam?” (Surah 11, page 132)

In a revelation given November, 1831, Joseph Smith’s God gave a similar invitation to scoffers:

And now I, the Lord, give unto you a testimony of the truth of these commandments . . . seek ye out of the Book of Commandments, even the least that is among them, and appoint him that is the most wise among you; Or, if there be any among you that shall make one like unto it, then ye are justified in saying that ye do not know that they are true; But if ye cannot make one like unto it, ye are under condemnation if ye do not bear record that they are true. (Doctrine and Covenants 67:4, 6-8)

Mohammed seemed to feel that although the Jews received the scriptures from Allah, they had corrupted them. In the Introduction to his translation of the Koran, page 10, N. J. Dawood informs us that

Mohammed . . . firmly believed that he was the messenger of God, sent forth to confirm previous scriptures. God had revealed His will to the Jews and the Christians through chosen apostles, but they disobeyed God’s commandments . . . The Koran accuses the Jews of corrupting the Scriptures and the Christians of worshipping Christ as the son of God . . . having thus gone astray, they must be brought back to the right path, to the true religion preached by Abraham.

In the Koran itself, we read: “Say: ‘Who, then, revealed the Scriptures which Moses brought down, a light and a guide for mankind? The Scriptures which you have transcribed on scraps of paper, declaring some of them and suppressing much, although you have now been taught what neither you nor your fathers knew before?’” (The Koran, Surah 6, p. 422). The Koran claims to bring to light things that were previously suppressed:

People of the Book! Our apostle has come to reveal to you much of what you have hidden of the Scriptures, and to forgive you much. A light has come to you from Allah and a glorious Book . . . Our apostle has come to reveal to you Our will after an interval during which there were no apostles . . . to you We have revealed the Book with the truth. It confirms the Scriptures which came before it and stands as a guardian over them. (Surah 5, pp. 378-379, 382)

Like Mohammed, Joseph Smith taught that the ancient scriptures were given by God but that they were corrupted by men and that things were suppressed. In the Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 13:26, 27, 29, this information appears:

Wherefore, these things go forth from the Jews in purity unto the Gentiles . . . And after they go forth . . . thou seest the foundation of a great and abominable church [the Roman Catholic Church], which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold, they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away. . . . that they may pervert the right ways of the Lord, and they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men . . . because of the many plain and precious things which have been taken out of the book [the Bible] . . . an exceeding great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them.

While Joseph Smith claimed that the Bible was “the word of God” only so far “as it is translated correctly,” he put no such qualification on the Book of Mormon: “. . . we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God” (Pearl of Great Price, The Articles of Faith, Article No. 8). Smith, in fact, “told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth . . .” (History of the Church, vol. 4, p. 461). Joseph Smith, of course, went far beyond the Book of Mormon and produced two other books of scripture—the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price. Like the Koran, therefore, Joseph Smith’s revelations take precedence
over the Bible. Any portion of the Bible which disagrees with the teachings of Joseph Smith is rejected as defective.

In the Koran, Mohammed added many things concerning biblical characters which are not found in the Bible itself. Allah instructed him as follows: “You shall also recount in the Book [the Koran] the story of Abraham: He was a prophet and a saintly man” (The Koran, Surah 19, p. 34). Mohammed, therefore, gave some material concerning Abraham which was not recorded in the Bible. For instance, he related that Abraham’s people tried to kill him because he condemned their idolatry and wicked ways:

And tell of Abraham. He said to his people: “Serve Allah and fear Him. That would be best for you, if you but knew it. You worship idols besides Allah and invent falsehoods, . . . Abraham’s people replied: “Kill him! Burn him!”

But from the fire Allah delivered him. (The Koran, Surah 29, pp. 193-194)

Joseph Smith also revealed information concerning Abraham which is not found in the Bible. In fact, he claimed that he translated an entire book written by the patriarch himself and published it under the title, “The Book of Abraham.” Like Mohammed, Joseph Smith claimed that Abraham’s people tried to kill him and that he was delivered by God in a miraculous way:

My fathers having turned from their righteousness . . . unto the worshiping of the gods of the heathen, utterly refused to hearken to my voice . . . but endeavored to take away my life . . . the priests laid violence upon me, that they might slay me . . . And as they lifted up their hands upon me . . . I lifted up my voice unto the Lord my God, and the Lord hearkened and heard . . . and the angel of his presence stood by me, and immediately unloosed my bands;

And his voice was unto me: Abraham, Abraham, behold, my name is Jehovah, and I . . . have come down to thee, and to take thee away from thy father’s house . . . (Pearl of Great Price, Book of Abraham, 1:5, 7, 12, 15-16)

In the book, The Rocky Mountain Saints, written in 1873, T. B. H. Stenhouse commented: “The student of Mormonism will be struck with the similarity of experience and claims of Joseph Smith and Mohammed” (page 2). Two graduates of the Mormon Church’s Brigham Young University, Arnold Green and Lawrence Goldrup, have written an article on the danger of going too far in making parallels between Mohammed and Joseph Smith. They state, however, that while “comparisons between the Koran and the Book of Mormon are especially strained, a comparison of the Doctrine and Covenants with the Koran has some validity” (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1971, p. 54). On page 57, Green and Goldrup point out a serious doctrinal difference between Mormons and Moslems. They note that Mohammed had an “uncompromising” belief in only one God, whereas Mormons believe “men can attain godhood (D&C 132:20, 37).” We agree that this doctrinal dissimilarity with regard to the Godhead is a serious difference. The Koran, in fact, seems to emphatically condemn the Mormon position: “Never has Allah begotten a son, nor is there any other god besides Him.

Were this otherwise, each god would govern his own creation, each holding himself above the other. Exalted be Allah above their falsehoods!” (The Koran, Surah 23, p. 220). Spencer W. Kimball, the twelfth president of the Mormon Church, certainly did not seem to accept Mohammed’s position with regard to the plurality of Gods. In a broadcast to those serving in the priesthood, President Kimball commented: “Brethren, 225,000 of you are here tonight. I suppose 225,000 of you may become gods. There seems to be plenty of space out there in the universe” (The Ensign, Nov. 1975, p. 80).

While a large number of parallels can be marshaled to support the thesis that Joseph Smith borrowed ideas from Mohammed, there are many dissimilarities and the case is far from conclusive. The parallels seem to relate to concepts rather than any direct lifting of statements from the Koran. (In the book, Major Problems of Mormonism, pages 149-155, we demonstrate that the King James Version of the Bible, which was not published until A.D. 1611, probably had more influence on Joseph Smith’s Book of Mormon than any other book. We note that we found “over a hundred quotations from the New Testament in the first two books of Nephi alone, and these books were supposed to have been written between 600 and 545 B.C.!” The evidence of plagiarism is absolutely overwhelming.)

Although the parallels to Islam may not trouble many members of the LDS Church, they do tend to show that Mormonism is not as unique as some defenders would argue. Mormons often ask how it is possible that an unlearned boy like Joseph Smith could create a religion that would bring in millions of converts and have such an influence upon the world. They feel that the growth of the church demonstrates that God’s hand is in the work. A similar question, however, might be directed back to the Mormons. How can they account for the growth of Islam? After all, for every Mormon there are about a hundred and twenty followers of Mohammed—the 1989 Information Please Almanac, page 400, listed the number of Moslems at about $860,388,300$. If the Koran was not given by revelation from Allah, how could Islam have grown at the rate it did?

In the book, The Messenger, The Life of Mohammed, by R. V. B. Bodley, page 57, we read that there has been a controversy as to whether Mohammed could read at the time he was visited by the Angel Gabriel:

Some say that he was illiterate, others say that he was not.” In any case, Mohammed seems to have spent his youth traveling with trading caravans and has been referred to as a “lowly Arab camel driver.” Despite his lack of education, he was able to produce the Koran—a book which hundreds of millions of people revere as the word of God as well as an important “work of Classical Arabic prose.”

The Koran itself calls Mohammed “the Unlettered Prophet” (Surah 7, p. 253). In the Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 27:19, Joseph Smith is referred to as “him that is not learned.” That Joseph Smith, who came from a humble background, was able to produce works of “scripture” which have influenced millions of people does not prove that he was inspired by God.
He had far more opportunities than Mohammed to acquire knowledge. Mohammed, for instance, lived before the invention of the printing press and therefore had no opportunity to read a printed newspaper, pamphlet or book. Joseph Smith, on the other hand, had access to his family’s newspaper, *The Wayne Sentinel*, as well as many other printed works. Mormon writer Milton V. Backman acknowledged that a library was organized in Manchester in 1817 and that it “contained histories, biographies, geographies, religious treatises, and other popular works of that age” (*Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, p. 32).

**BATTLING SATAN**

A controversy concerning the book, *The Satanic Verses* by Salman Rushdie has been brewing since last fall. After its publication in September, 1988, it was banned in a number of countries. Although Rushdie’s book is a work of fiction, Moslems feel that it ridicules the prophet Mohammed. A number of people were killed and others wounded in protests concerning the book, and the Ayatollah Khomeini publicly called for the assassination of Mr. Rushdie:

Iran’s Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini on Sunday rejected the apology of British writer Salman Rushdie and exhorted Moslems around the world to ‘send him to hell’ for the novel . . . A bounty of $5.2 million has been put on Rushdie’s head by Islamic religious leaders since Khomeini issued the death sentence. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, February 20, 1989)

In an article written by Thomas Lippman, we find this information concerning the controversy *The Satanic Verses* has generated:

Two chapters of Rushdie’s novel retell, in fictionalized form, the story of Mohammed and of the creation of Islam and the creation of the Koran. In his account, the prophet’s name is “neither Mahomet nor Moehammered” but “the Devil’s synonym, Mahound,” a name used in the past as a vulgar slur . . .

Moslems believe Mohammed was illiterate. When the words of the Koran were dictated to him by God, he did not write them down but relayed them to a scribe who recorded them. In “The Satanic Verses,” the scribe is “some sort of bum from Persia by the outlandish name of Salman,” which is Rushdie’s name, and this Salman takes liberties with the wording of the holy book.

“Little things at first,” says the rascal Salman, recounting his work as the prophet’s scribe. “If Mahound recited a verse in which God was described as allhearing, all-knowing, I would write, all-knowing, all-wise. Here’s the point: Mahound did not notice the alterations. So there I was, actually writing the Book, or rewriting, anyway, polluting the word of God with my own profane language. But, my good heavens, if my poor words could not be distinguished from the Revelation by God’s own Messenger, then what did that mean? What did that say about the quality of the divine poetry?” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, February 19, 1989)

While we do not accept the Koran as a revelation from God, we are skeptical of attacking a religion with the use of fictional conversations that cannot be documented with evidence. Salman Rushdie, of course, did not claim that he was giving the true story of how Mohammed received the Koran, but the use of fictional conjectures in a book on such a serious subject does not seem like a very good method. On the other hand, the Ayatollah Khomeini’s order that Rushdie be assassinated is deplorable. Khomeini, of course, does not represent mainstream Moslem thought, and we agree with a statement made by Frances FitzGerald:

“To see the Ayatollah as the representative of Islam,” she said, “is to see the Grand Inquisitor as the representative of Christianity.” (*U.S. News & World Report*, March 6, 1989, p. 30)

If Salman Rushdie had been writing on Mormonism, he would not have had to resort to fiction when writing about “satanic verses.” The first mention of Satan’s attempt to pollute Mormon scriptures appears in the Preface of the first edition of the Book of Mormon. In this Preface, Joseph Smith tells how Satan inspired his enemies to alter 116 pages of the Book of Mormon [the Book of Lehi] so that they could not be used in the printed version:

As many false reports have been circulated respecting the following work, and also many unlawful measures taken by evil designing persons to destroy me, and also the work, I would inform you that I translated by the gift and power of God, and caused to be written, one hundred and sixteen pages, the which I took from the Book of Lehi . . . which said account, some person or persons have stolen and kept from me, notwithstanding my utmost exertions to recover it again—and being commanded of the Lord that I should not translate the same over again, for Satan had put it into their hearts to tempt the Lord their God, by altering the words, that they did read contrary from that which I translated and caused to be written; and if I should bring forth the same words again, or, in other words, if I should translate the same over, they would publish that which they had stolen, and Satan would stir up the hearts of this generation, that they might not receive this work: but behold, the Lord said unto me, I will not suffer that Satan shall accomplish his evil design in this thing: therefore thou shalt translate from the plates of Nephi, until ye come to that which ye have translated . . . I will shew unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the Devil. (Book of Mormon, 1830 edition, Preface)

Although the Preface containing this information concerning Satan’s wicked plans to alter the Nephite scripture has been deleted from modern editions of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith gave a revelation concerning this matter which is still published in the *Doctrine and Covenants* as Section 10. In verse 14, the Lord tells Joseph Smith that he “will not suffer that Satan shall accomplish his evil design in this thing.” The loss of the Book of Lehi is actually presented as a victory for the Lord because the Book of Nephi, which was translated to take its place, is supposed to be even more spiritual. Mormon critics, however, point out that if Satan actually did cause Joseph Smith’s enemies to alter the words, they would have had to produce the original pages to prove
that Joseph Smith could not produce an accurate duplicate of the original. It would be almost impossible to alter the manuscript without detection. The Mormons could have taken the case to court and easily won a significant victory. Critics feel that Joseph Smith probably did not keep a copy of the 116 pages which were lost and would not have been able to reproduce an exact copy of what he had previously written. Therefore, he was forced to claim that the Lord told him that his enemies had altered the pages. In any case, the missing pages were never found.

While Joseph Smith was translating the Book of Mormon, he became concerned that he himself could be deceived and produce satanic verses. Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippett's Avery give this information:

> Once, as he translated, the narrative mentioned the walls of Jerusalem. Joseph stopped. "Emma," he asked, "did Jerusalem have walls surrounding it?" Emma told him it did. "O, I thought I was deceived," was his reply. (Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith, 1984, p. 26)

Joseph Smith claimed that he was given an instrument known as the Urim and Thummim to translate the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. This instrument consisted of "two stones in silver bows" (History of the Church, vol. 1, p. 12).

> Although he used the Urim and Thummim to translated the first 116 pages which were stolen, statements by witnesses to the translation indicate that after the theft occurred, he used a "seer stone." The Mormon historian B. H. Roberts wrote:

> The Seer Stone referred to here was a chocolate-colored, somewhat egg-shaped stone which the Prophet found while digging a well in company with his brother Hyrum. . . . It possessed the qualities of Urim and Thummim, since by means of it—as well as by means of the Interpreters found with the Nephite record, Joseph was able to translate the characters engraved on the plates. (Comprehensive History of the Church, vol. 1, p. 129)

> Seer stones were often used by magicians and money-diggers for divination. Evidence shows that in 1826 Joseph Smith was arrested and brought before a Justice of the Peace in Bainbridge, New York, for using his seer stone, which he placed in his hat to exclude the light, to divine the location of buried treasures (see Major Problems of Mormonism, pp. 122-127).

> David Whitmer, one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, was not ashamed of the fact that Joseph Smith used a seer stone to translate the Book of Mormon. Whitmer, in fact, frankly admitted that Smith followed the occultic practice of placing the stone in his hat to translate the Book of Mormon:

> I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face into the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. . . . Thus the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man. (An Address To All Believers In Christ, Richmond, Missouri, 1887, p. 12)

At first, David Whitmer felt that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God and that his use of the seer stone insured that he was giving true revelations. Just before the Book of Mormon was published, however, Whitmer was greatly shocked to learn that satanic revelations could also come to Joseph Smith through the same stone:

> When the Book of Mormon was in the hands of the printer, more money was needed to finish the printing of it. We were waiting on Martin Harris who was doing his best to sell a part of his farm, in order to raise the necessary funds. After a time Hyrum Smith and others began to get impatient. . . . Brother Hyrum was vexed with Brother Martin, and thought they should get the money by some means outside of him, and not let him have anything to do with the publication of the Book, or receiving any of the profits thereof if any profits should accrue. . . . Brother Hyrum said it had been suggested to him that some of the brethren might go to Toronto, Canada, and sell the copy-right of the Book of Mormon for considerable money: and he persuaded Joseph to inquire of the Lord about it. Joseph concluded to do so. He had not yet given up the stone. Joseph looked into the hat in which he placed the stone, and received a revelation that some of the brethren should go to Toronto, Canada, and that they would sell the copyright of the Book of Mormon. Hiram Page and Oliver Cowdery went to Toronto on this mission, but they failed entirely to sell the copyright, returning without any money. Joseph was at my father’s house when they returned. I was there also, and am an eye witness to these facts. . . . Well, we were all in great trouble, and we asked Joseph how it was that he had received a revelation from the Lord for some brethren to go to Toronto and sell the copy-right, and the brethren had utterly failed in their undertaking. Joseph did not know how it was, so he enquired of the Lord about it, and behold the following revelation came through the stone: “Some revelations are of God: some revelations are of man: and some revelations are of the devil.” So we see that the revelation to go to Toronto and sell the copyright was not of God, but was of the devil or the heart of man. (An Address To All Believers In Christ, 1887, pp. 30-31)

Mormon historian B. H. Roberts made these comments about Whitmer’s accusation:

> . . . May this Toronto incident and the Prophet’s explanation be accepted and faith still be maintained in him as an inspired man, a Prophet of God? I answer unhesitatingly in the affirmative. The revelation respecting the Toronto journey was not of God, surely; else it would not have failed; but the Prophet, overwrought in his deep anxiety for the progress of the work, saw reflected in the “Seer Stone” his own thought, or that suggested to him by his brother Hyrum, rather than the thought of God . . . in this instance of the Toronto journey, Joseph was evidently not directed by the inspiration of the Lord. (A Comprehensive History of the Church, vol. 1, p. 165)

Joseph Fielding Smith, who became the tenth president of the church, was apparently referring to this episode in a press conference in Salt Lake City: “President Smith said he believed, as did LDS Church founder Joseph Smith, that there are three kinds of revelations [sic]: ‘revelations from God, from man and from the devil.’” (Salt Lake Tribune, January 25, 1970)
David Whitmer said that there were “other false revelations that came through Brother Joseph as mouthpiece. . . . Many of Brother Joseph’s revelations were never printed. The revelation to go to Canada was written down on paper, but was never printed” (An Address To All Believers In Christ, p. 31).

The knowledge that Joseph Smith could receive satanic or man-made revelations through the same stone he used to translate the Book of Mormon must have come as a heavy blow to the special witnesses to that book. Oliver Cowdery, one of the Three Witnesses, obviously lost faith in Joseph Smith’s ability to detect satanic or man-made verses in the revelations because he wrote a letter to Smith in which he claimed “he had discovered an error” in one of his revelations (Doctrine and Covenants 20:37). According to Smith, Cowdery said the “quotation . . . was erroneous, and added: ‘I command you in the name of God to erase those words, that no priestcraft be amongst us!’” (History of the Church, vol. 1, p. 105). Although Joseph Smith strongly rebuked Oliver Cowdery, it soon became obvious that the issue concerning satanic verses was not really settled. About three months later, Joseph Smith was surprised to learn that one of the Eight Witnesses to the Book of Mormon [there are two sets of witnesses: the Three Witnesses and the Eight Witnesses] was giving satanic revelations and that other witnesses were being led astray:

To our great grief, however, we soon found that Satan had been lying in wait to deceive . . . Brother Hiram Page had in his possession a certain stone, by which he had obtained certain “revelations” concerning the upbuilding of Zion, the order of the Church, etc., all of which were entirely at variance with the order of God’s house . . . many, especially the Whitmer family and Oliver Cowdery, were believing much in the things set forth by this stone . . . (History of the Church, vol. 1, pp. 109-110)

Although Joseph Smith does not name all of those involved in following these satanic revelations, it could have involved most of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon. He specifically names Hiram Page and Oliver Cowdery and says that “the Whitmer family” were influenced by the revelations from this stone. Five of the Book of Mormon witnesses were from the Whitmer family. In an attempt to settle the matter, Joseph Smith claimed he received a revelation from the Lord that Hiram Page’s revelations came from Satan and that he (Joseph) was the only one who could receive revelations for the church:

Behold, I say unto thee, Oliver . . . no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting Joseph Smith, Jun., . . . for he receiveth them even as Moses. . . . thou shalt be obedient unto the things which I shall give him . . . thou shalt not command him who is at thy head . . . thou shalt take thy brother, Hiram Page, between him and thee alone, and tell him that those things which he hath written from that stone are not of me and that Satan deceiveth him . . . (Doctrine and Covenants 28:1-3, 6, 11)

CHANGING REVELATIONS

Like the fictionalized story of Mohammed which Salman Rushdie has written, Mormonism has a serious problem with changes in Joseph Smith’s revelations. According to Book of Mormon witness David Whitmer, Joseph Smith and some of the other brethren became “spiritually blinded” and made important changes in the revelations. Whitmer claimed that Joseph Smith’s scribe and confidant, Sidney Rigdon, was a thorough Bible scholar, a man of fine education, and a powerful orator. He soon worked himself deep into Brother Joseph’s affections, and had more influence over him than any other man living. . . . Brother Joseph rejoiced, believing that the Lord had sent him this great and mighty man. . . Poor Brother Joseph! He was mistaken about this. . . . Sydney Rigdon was the cause of almost all the errors which were introduced while he was in the church. . . . Rigdon would expound the Old Testament scriptures of the Bible and Book of Mormon (in his way) to Joseph . . . and would persuade Brother Joseph to inquire of the Lord about this doctrine and that doctrine, and of course a revelation would always come just as they desired it. . . . Remember also that “some revelations are of God, some revelations are of man; and some revelations are of the devil.” False spirits, which come as an Angel of Light, are abroad in the earth to deceive, if it were possible, the very elect. Those whom Satan can deceive and lead into error he deceives. (An Address To All Believers In Christ, p. 35)

According to David Whitmer, Sidney Rigdon, like the wicked scribe mentioned in Rushdie’s novel, managed to get his satanic or man-made ideas into Joseph Smith’s revelations. Whitmer felt that Rigdon went even further than this: he was able to convince Smith to change some of the revelations he had already dictated:

I was told that Sidney Rigdon was the cause of those changes being made: by smooth talk he convinced Brother Joseph and that committee that it was all right. . . . I will not accuse those who did it of being fully aware of the grievous error they were making when they added those items—that is, made those changes; I would rather believe that they were spiritually blinded when they did it: and that Satan deceived them, whispering to them that it was all right and acceptable unto God. (Ibid, p. 61)

In a thesis written at Brigham Young University, the Mormon apologist Melvin J. Petersen acknowledged that “Many words were added to the revelations” in the Doctrine and Covenants (“A Study of the Nature of and Significance of the Changes in the Revelations as Found in a Comparison of the Book of Commandments and Subsequent Editions of the Doctrine and Covenants,” Master’s thesis, BYU, 1955, typed copy, p. 147). On pages 162-63 of the same thesis, Mr. Petersen wrote:

. . . Joseph Smith’s language, as found in the revelations credited to him, needed correcting. There were many grammatical errors in the revelations he first published. . . . Joseph Smith in revising the first published commandments, . . . enlarged upon them . . . Certain omissions were made when unnecessary material was deleted from the revelations; also incidents that were past and of no significance except to a few.

While there have been some Mormon writers who have been willing to admit that Joseph Smith’s revelations have
been changed, many have not been that honest. Apostle John A. Widtsoe, for instance, maintained that the revelations “have remained unchanged. There has been no tampering with God’s Word” (Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth, p. 119). Joseph Fielding Smith, who became the tenth president of the church, likewise maintained that there “was no need for eliminating, changing, or adjusting” the revelations (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 1, p. 170).

To properly understand the changes that have been made in the revelations we must understand the history of the Doctrine and Covenants. In 1833 the Mormon Church published the revelations that had been given to the church by Joseph Smith in a book entitled, A Book of Commandments, For The Government Of The Church Of Christ. Mormon writer William E. Berrett explains:

In the latter part of 1831, it was decided by a council of Church leaders to compile the revelations concerning the origin of the Church and its organization. The collection was to be called the “Book of Commandments.” . . . Joseph Smith received a revelation which was made the preface for the new volume and is now Section 1 of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. In this preface we read: “Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful. . . . After accepting the collection as scripture it was voted to print 10,000 copies. (The Restored Church, 1956, p. 138)

The church was unable to finish the printing of the Book of Commandments as they had planned because the printing press was destroyed by a mob. In 1835 the revelations were printed again, and the name of the book was changed to the Doctrine and Covenants. New revelations were added to this book and many of the previous revelations were revised. In modern editions of the Doctrine and Covenants we find the following on the page that follows the title page:

Certain parts were issued at Zion, Jackson County, Missouri, in 1833, under the title, Book of Commandments for the Government of the Church of Christ[,] An enlarged compilation was issued at Kirtland, Ohio, in 1835, under the title, Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter-day Saints[,] Book of Mormon witness David Whitmer said that “Joseph and the brethren” received the Book of Commandments “at first as being printed correctly, but they soon decided to print the Doctrine and Covenants” (An Address to Believers in the Book of Mormon, p. 6). The Doctrine and Covenants was printed in the year 1835. Since the same revelations that were published in the Book of Commandments were put into the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, one would expect them to read exactly the same as when they were first published. This was not the case, however, and David Whitmer objected strenuously to what had been done:

Some of the revelations as they now appear in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants have been changed and added to. Some of the changes being of the greatest importance as the meaning is entirely changed on some very important matters; as if the Lord had changed his mind a few years after he give [sic] the revelations, and after having commanded his servants (as they claim) to print them in the “Book of Commandments.” . . . The revelations were printed in the Book of Commandments correctly! This I know, . . . Joseph and the church received it as being printed correctly. This I know. But in the winter of 1834 they saw that some of the revelations in the Book of Commandments had to be changed, because the heads of the church had gone too far, and had done things in which they had already gone ahead of some of the former revelations. So the book of “Doctrine and Covenants” was printed in 1835, and some of the revelations changed and added to. (Letter written by David Whitmer, published in the Saints’ Herald, February 5, 1887)

In order to show some of the important changes that were made in the revelations, we obtained photographs of the original Book of Commandments (the original book is now supposed to be worth about $50,000). We compared these pages with the revelations as published in the 1966 printing of the Doctrine and Covenants and marked the changes on the photographs. The reader will find photographs of eight pages from the Book of Commandments in our new book, Major Problems of Mormonism.

In his pamphlet, David Whitmer mentions a number of important changes which the early church leaders made in the revelations. While we do not have much room to make a study of the changes here, we will give a few examples. On page 109 of Major Problems of Mormonism, we have a photograph of a page from Chapter 4 of the Book of Commandments. The photograph demonstrates that 154 words have been deleted from verses 5 and 6 of this revelation without any indication. In his BYU thesis, page 140, Mormon apologist Melvin J. Petersen said that “Joseph Smith . . . was dissatisfied with the wording of verses five and six in portraying the concept he had received, and therefore he omitted verses five and six of Chapter four and rewrote in their place verse three of the 1835 edition . . .” Mr. Petersen seemed to feel that Joseph Smith had a perfect right to do this. Although we agree that Smith had a right to revise his own writings, we do not feel that he had a right to revise the revelations which he claimed to be the very words of God. In the very first revelation that was published in the Book of Commandments, verses 2 and 7, we read:

Behold, this is mine authority, and the authority of my servants, and my Preface unto the Book of my Commandments, . . .

Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them, shall all be fulfilled. What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself, and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away . . .

If these were really revelations from God, Joseph Smith could not revise them without discrediting the previous declaration.

On page 110 of Major Problems of Mormonism, we have a photograph of Chapter 6 of the Book of Commandments. This revelation is supposed to contain a translation of a parchment written by the Apostle John. Mormons claim Joseph Smith translated this parchment by means of the Urim and Thummim. When this revelation was published in the Book
of Commandments in 1833, it contained 143 words, but when it was reprinted in the Doctrine and Covenants in 1835, it had been expanded to 252 words. Thus we see that 109 words have been added!

On page 114 of Major Problems of Mormonism, we have a photograph of Chapter 28 of the Book of Commandments. The reader who examines the photograph will notice that over 400 words have been added to this revelation. Part of the interpolation concerns the visitation of Peter, James, and John to Joseph Smith. The Mormon leaders claim that they restored the Melchizedek priesthood. Book of Mormon witness David Whitmer, however, maintained that the Melchizedek priesthood came into the church by a process of evolution rather than by revelation.

In no place in the word of God does it say that an Elder is after the order of Melchisedec, or after the order of the Melchisedec Priesthood. An Elder is after the order of Christ. This matter of “priesthood,” since the days of Sydney Rigdon, has been the great hobby and stumbling-block of the Latter Day Saints. Priesthood means authority; and authority is the word we should use. I do not think the word priesthood is mentioned in the New Covenant of the Book of Mormon. Authority is the word we used for the first two years in the church until Sydney Rigdon’s days in Ohio. This matter of two orders of priesthood in the Church of Christ, and lineal priesthood of the old law being in the church, all originated in the mind of Sydney Rigdon. He explained these things to Brother Joseph in his way, out of the old Scriptures, and got Brother Joseph to inquire, etc. He would inquire, and as mouthpiece speak out the revelations just as they had it fixed up in their hearts. As I have said before, according to the desires of the heart, the inspiration comes, but it may be the spirit of man that gives it. How easily a man can receive some other spirit, appearing as an Angel of Light, believing at the time that he is giving the revealed will of God; . . . This is the way the High Priests and the ‘priesthood’ as you have it, was introduced into the Church of Christ almost two years after its beginning . . . (An Address To All Believers In Christ, p. 64)

The fact that the statement concerning the visitation of Peter, James, and John had to be interpolated into Section 28 of the Book of Commandments when it was reprinted in the Doctrine and Covenants (Section 27) provides evidence to support David Whitmer’s charge concerning the manner in which the Mormon priesthood was established. LaMar Petersen points out the serious nature of the historical problems regarding the restoration of the priesthood. He shows, for instance, that Joseph Smith’s 1842 printing of his History differs significantly from an account printed eight years earlier. He then goes on to state:

The important details that are missing from the “full history” of 1834 are likewise missing from the Book of Commandments in 1833. The student would expect to find all the particulars of the Restoration in this first treasured set of 65 revelations, the dates of which encompassed the bestowals of the two Priesthoods, but they are conspicuously absent. . . .

The notable revelations on Priesthood in the Doctrine and Covenants before referred to, Sections 2 and 13, are missing, and Chapter 28 gives no hint of the Restoration which, if actual, had been known for four years. More than four hundred words were added to this revelation of August 1829 in Section 27 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the additions made to include the names of heavenly visitors and two separate ordinations. The Book of Commandments gives the duties of Elders, Priests, Teachers, and Deacons and refers to Joseph’s apostolic calling but there is no mention of Melchizedek Priesthood, Seventies, High Priests, nor High Councilors. These words were later inserted into the revelation on Church organization and government of April, 1830, making it appear that they were known at that date, but they do not appear in the original, Chapter 24 of the Book of Commandments three years later. Similar interpolations were made in the revelations now known as Sections 42 and 68.

There seems to be no support for the historicity of the Restoration of the Priesthood in journals, diaries, letters, nor printed matter prior to October, 1834. (Problems In Mormon Text, by LaMar Petersen, 1957, pp. 7-8)

The evidence leads us to conclude that David Whitmer’s suggestion that the “two orders of priesthood” in the Mormon Church “originated in the mind of Sydney Rigdon” fits the historical picture far better than the idea of a Restoration by heavenly messengers. For more information on this subject see our work Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 179-182. In addition, the Mormon scholar Dan Vogel has recently written a book, Religious Seekers And The Advent of Mormonism, which has some important information concerning the changes in the revelations relating to priesthood.

Thousands of words were added, deleted or changed in the revelations after they were published in the Book of Commandments and other early Mormon publications. Even after Joseph Smith’s death, the Mormon leaders continued to make changes in his revelations (see Major Problems of Mormonism, pp. 119-121). In spite of the fact that their own revelations have been seriously altered, church officials have been very free in accusing others of making changes. Apostle Mark E. Petersen, for instance, maintained that “deliberate falsifications and fabrications were perpetrated” in the Bible (As Translated Correctly, 1966, p. 4). On page 27 of the same book, Apostle Petersen wrote: “It seems unthinkable to the honest and devout mind that any man or set of men would deliberately change the text of the Word of God to further their own peculiar purposes.”

We certainly agree that it would be dishonest to change the “Word of God,” and this causes us to wonder how Mormon leaders can justify the changes in Joseph Smith’s revelations, since they consider them to be the “Word of God.” Apostle Bruce R. McConkie contended that most of the sections printed in the Doctrine and Covenants “came to Joseph Smith by direct revelation, the recorded words being those of the Lord Jesus Christ himself” (Mormon Doctrine, 1979, p. 206).

Our examination of the revelations revealed that thousands of words were added, deleted or changed. How
can the Mormon leaders explain this? On pages 164-65 of his thesis, the Mormon apologist Melvin J. Petersen argued that Joseph Smith had the “power” to “revise, correct, omit, or change any of his writings in order that he might manifest more clearly what God revealed through him . . . A prophet cannot be justly criticized when he rewrites the commandments he received from God, for he is only doing that which is part of his role as a prophet.”

David Whitmer pointed out the absurdity of such an idea when he wrote:

Is it possible that the minds of men can be so blinded as to believe that God would give these revelations—command them to print them in His Book of Commandments—and then afterwards command them to change and add to them some words which change the meaning entirely? As if God had changed his mind entirely after giving his word? Is it possible that a man who pretends to any spirituality would believe that God would work in any such manner? (Saints’ Herald, February 5, 1887)

David Whitmer was convinced that the portions added to Joseph Smith’s early revelations were “satanic verses” which corrupted God’s word. Furthermore, he completely rejected Joseph Smith’s revelation on polygamy because he believed it came from the devil. Although Joseph Smith’s brother, Hyrum, later accepted the principle of plural marriage, in 1843 he declared that this doctrine was from Satan:

In May 1843 . . . Hyrum, William Law and William Marks . . . were suspicious that their worst fears were true—Joseph was teaching plural marriage . . . Hyrum spoke on 14 May . . . taking as his text Jacob 2 in the Book of Mormon—quoting the verses that are a severe denunciation of polygamy. . . . Hyrum said to the Saints, “If an angel from heaven should come and preach such doctrine, [you] would be sure to see his cloven foot and cloud of blackness over his head.” (Andrew F. Ehat, “Joseph Smith’s Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Question,” Master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, December 1982, p. 56)

Ebenezer Robinson claimed that Joseph Smith’s brother, Don Carlos, stated: “‘Any man who will teach and practice the doctrine of spiritual wifery will go to hell, I don’t care if it is my brother Joseph’” (The Return, vol. 2, p. 287). Joseph Smith’s own wife, Emma, felt that her husband’s revelation on the subject of polygamy was either man-made or from the lower regions. Joseph Smith’s private secretary, William Clayton wrote in his journal that when Joseph and Hyrum Smith came to Emma and read the revelation, she “said she did not believe a word of it and appeared very rebellious” (William Clayton’s Diary, July 12, 1843, typed extracts by Andrew F. Ehat, as cited in Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered, p. 20).

The false revelation concerning the sale of the copyright of the Book of Mormon, the many changes made in the published revelations, and the polygamy revelation all combined to undermine the faith of many important leaders in the early Mormon Church. Even before the revelation on plural marriage was given, a number of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon felt that they could not rely on Joseph Smith. In 1839 John Whitmer, who still maintained that Joseph Smith had showed him some kind of plates, came to question whether Smith’s translation was really correct, Professor Richard L. Anderson, of the Mormon Church’s Brigham Young University, gives this information:

When Turley next asked bluntly why Whitmer now doubted the work, the witness indicated his inability to translate the characters on the plates: “I cannot read it, and I do not know whether it is true or not.” (Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses, p. 131)

All of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon became disaffected with Joseph Smith’s leadership before his death. Martin Harris later joined with the Strangites—an organization which was denounced by the Mormon leaders. Harris even went on a mission for the Strangites, and when he arrived in Liverpool with his associates, the Mormon Church publication, Latter-Day Saints’ Millennial Star, vol. 8, pp. 124-128, said that “A lying deceptive spirit attends them . . . they know that they are of their father, the devil . . .” Mormon apologist Richard L. Anderson admitted that Harris “changed his religious position eight times” during the period when he was in Kirtland, Ohio (see Improvement Era, March 1969, p. 63). At one point he joined the Shakers who believed that “Christ has made his second appearance on earth, in a chosen female known by the name of Anna Lee, and acknowledged by us as our Blessed Mother in the work of redemption” (A Sacred and Divine Roll and Book; From the Lord God of Heaven, to the Inhabitants of Earth, p. 358). Martin Harris claimed to have a greater testimony to the Shakers than to the Book of Mormon. In a thesis written at Brigham Young University, Wayne Cutler Gunnell revealed that on December 31, 1844, “Phineas H. Young [Brigham Young’s brother] and other leaders of the Kirtland organization” wrote a letter to Brigham Young in which they stated: “Martin Harris is a firm believer in Shakerism, says his testimony is greater than it was of the Book of Mormon” (“Martin Harris—Witness and Benefactor to the Book of Mormon,” 1955, p. 52).

Book of Mormon witness Oliver Cowdery left the Mormons and became a member of the “Methodist Protestant Church of Tiffin, Seneca County, Ohio.” G. J. Keen, gave an affidavit in which he said that at the time Cowdery was received into the Methodist Church, “he arose and addressed the audience present, admitted his error and implored forgiveness, and said he was sorry and ashamed of his connection with Mormonism” (The True Origin of the Book of Mormon, by Charles AShook, 1914, pp. 58-59). Evidently the LDS leaders were aware that Cowdery denounced Mormonism when he joined the Methodist Church since they printed a poem which questioned the position that the “Book of Mormon” had been proven untrue “Because denied, by Oliver?” (Times and Seasons, vol. 2, p. 482).

Book of Mormon witness David Whitmer also came out of the Mormon Church in 1838. Whitmer claimed that God Himself told him to leave the Mormons:

If you believe my testimony to the Book of Mormon; if you believe that God spake to us three witnesses by his own voice, than I tell you that in June, 1838, God spake to me again by his own voice from the heavens, and told me to “separate myself from among the Latter Day Saints, for as they sought to do unto me, so should it be done unto them.” . . .
all of the eight witnesses who were then living (except the three Smiths) came out; Peter and Christian Whitmer were dead. Oliver Cowdery came out also. (An Address To All Believers In Christ, pp. 27-28)

Whitmer later gave a revelation in which the Lord was supposed to have told him the Mormons “polluted my name, and have done continually wickedness in my sight” (The Ensign of Liberty, August 1849, pp. 101-104). Whitmer’s revelations present a peculiar problem for Mormon apologists. If they are from God, then they demonstrate that Mormonism is not true. On the other hand, if they are false, they show that David Whitmer gave either man-made or satanic revelations in the name of the Lord! And if this is the case, how can we trust his statement on the Book of Mormon? Mormons ask us to accept David Whitmer’s testimony to the Book of Mormon, but will they accept his revelation that the Mormon Church “polluted” God’s name? Certainly not. Neither will they accept his statement that “God spake to me again by his own voice from the heavens, and told me to ‘separate myself from among the Latter Day Saints.’” David Whitmer never returned to the Mormon Church. While Mormon apologists often argue that we do not have any evidence that David Whitmer ever denied his testimony to the Book of Mormon, they seem to be oblivious to the fact that they do not have any evidence to show that Whitmer ever denied that God told him to leave the Mormons or that he repudiated the other revelations which he gave.

Although Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris changed his mind about religion many times, when he was eighty-eight years old he returned to the Mormon Church in Salt Lake City. There is evidence to show, however, that he was still not satisfied. (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? p. 58)

After Joseph Smith’s death, Oliver Cowdery was rebaptized into the Mormon Church. David Whitmer, however, maintained that Cowdery died believing Joseph Smith was a fallen prophet and that his revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants must be rejected:

I did not say that Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer had not endorsed the Doctrine and Covenants in 1836. . . . I stated that they “came out of their errors (discarding the Doctrine and Covenants), repented of them, and died believing as I do to-day,” and I have the proof to verify my statement. If any one chooses to doubt my word, let them come to my home in Richmond and be satisfied. In the winter of 1848, after Oliver Cowdery had been baptized at Council Bluffs, he came back to Richmond to live . . . Now, in 1849 the Lord saw fit to manifest unto John Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery and myself nearly all the errors in doctrine into which we had been led by the heads of the old church. . . . They were led out of their errors, and are upon record to this effect, rejecting the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. (An Address to Believers in The Book of Mormon, 1887, pp. 1-2)

PROBLEMS ALL OVER

The problems found in Mormon revelations, history and doctrine are so numerous that many volumes could be written. In fact, a number of years ago we compiled a three volume set entitled, The Case Against Mormonism. Subsequently, we wrote two more volumes entitled, The Mormon Kingdom. These five volumes were condensed into our largest selling work, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? Our new book, Major Problems of Mormonism, contains a summary of a great many of these problems as well as new material.

A large number of the problems in Mormonism relate to changes in the text of documents published by church officials. David Whitmer seemed to feel that “satanic verses” had been added to Joseph Smith’s revelations. While others would claim that these are merely man-made additions or deletions, the problem is still very serious. If these revelations were really from God why would he allow them to be falsified?

In the Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith, 2 [Joseph Smith—History], we read Joseph Smith’s story concerning God calling him and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. This story raises serious questions to those who are knowledgeable concerning Mormon history. For instance, in the story of the First Vision, Joseph Smith claimed that “two Personages” appeared to him (verse 17). One of them pointed to the other and said: “This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!” The personages, therefore, were supposed to have been God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, and the Mormons have always used this story to prove that “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s . . .” (Doctrine and Covenants 130:22). The problem, however, is that evidence has come forth from the Mormon Church Archives that Joseph Smith wrote a different account of this vision a number of years before the official account was published. This account was suppressed by the church and only a few people knew of its existence until we published it in 1965. Four years later, Dean C. Jessee, who was “a member of the staff at the LDS Church Historian’s Office,” claimed the “1831-32 history transcribed here contains the earliest known account of Joseph Smith’s First Vision” (Brigham Young University Studies, Spring 1969, pp. 277-278). In a later issue of BYU Studies, Summer 1971, p. 462, Jessee made it clear that this was not only the first extant account of the First Vision, but that it was the only account in “the actual handwriting of Joseph Smith.”

This handwritten document differs drastically from the official version in the Pearl of Great Price. In this account, the Mormon prophet only mentions one personage: “. . . saw the Lord . . .” The context makes it very clear that the personage was Jesus Christ and that Joseph Smith did not include God the Father in his first handwritten account of the vision. Mormon historian James B. Allen commented: “In this story, only one personage was mentioned, and this was obviously the Son, for he spoke of having been crucified” (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Autumn 1966, p. 40). A photograph of this handwritten document by Joseph Smith can be found in Major Problems of Mormonism, p. 56.

The only reasonable explanation for the Father not being mentioned is that Joseph Smith did NOT see God the Father, and that he made up this part of the story after he wrote the first manuscript. This, of course, throws a shadow of doubt upon the entire story. A person who would go so far
Joseph Smith had corrected forty-two pages before his massacre. It is obvious, therefore, that Smith intended to have his followers understand that the angel’s name was “Nephi.” The version which the church has canonized in modern editions of the *Pearl of Great Price* was changed so that there would be no contradictions in the prophet’s stories concerning how he obtained the gold plates.

After Joseph Smith’s death, the Mormon leaders took a free hand to change anything they wanted in his *History*. In spite of the many falsifications made in Joseph Smith’s *History of the Church*, church leaders referred to it as “the most accurate history in all the world, it must be so” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 2, p. 199). Apostle John A. Widtsoe boasted that these volumes prove “that Joseph Smith told the truth. . . . There is in them no attempt to ‘cover up’ any act of his life” (*Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth*, p. 257). Notwithstanding the many claims put forth concerning the accuracy of the *History* by church officials, the truth is that the church broke almost all the rules of honesty in their publication of Joseph Smith’s *History of the Church*. It is a well-known fact that when an omission is made in a document it should be indicated by ellipses points. The church, however, has almost completely ignored this rule; in many cases thousands of words have been deleted without any indication, and in other cases thousands of words have been added without any indication! Some of Joseph Smith’s prophecies that did not come to pass were altered. Many exaggerated and contradictory statements were either changed or deleted without indication. Crucial or inaccurate statements were also deleted. In the first printed version of the History, Joseph Smith cursed his enemies, condemned other churches and beliefs, and called the President of the United States a fool. Many of these extreme statements were omitted or changed. Mormon leaders did not dare let their people see the real Joseph Smith. They falsified the *History of the Church* rather than allow Joseph Smith’s true character to be known.

Many years ago we charged that although the title page for the *History of the Church* claimed that it was the “History of Joseph Smith, the Prophet BY HIMSELF,” evidence derived from many sources showed that a large portion of it was written after his death. Dean C. Jessee, who was a member of the staff at the LDS Church Historian’s Office, later admitted that the manuscript was only completed to page 812 at the time of Joseph Smith’s death. Since there were almost 2,200 pages, this would mean that only about 40% of the *History* was actually written during Joseph Smith’s lifetime, and that 60% was actually authored by church officials after his death! Jessee, in fact, admitted that the *History* was not completed until twelve years after Smith’s death: “The Joseph Smith History was finished in August 1856, seventeen years after it was begun” (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Summer 1971, pp. 466-472). Although Joseph Smith’s diaries were used as one source for the *History*, there was no attempt to accurately follow the text of these diaries. Mormon leaders chose only the portions of the diaries which suited their purposes. Where a portion did not say what they wanted, they altered it or ignored it entirely, sometimes using an entirely...
different source. Furthermore, only certain periods of Joseph Smith’s last six years are covered by extant diaries. To fill in the missing years newspapers and journals of other Mormon leaders were used and much of the material came only from memory. This material was **written in the first person to make it appear that Joseph Smith was the author!**

Mormon apologists have often referred to Joseph Smith’s prophecies concerning the Latter-day Saints coming to the Rocky Mountains and the fact that Steven A. Douglas would aspire to the presidency of the United States but fail if he opposed Mormonism as evidence of Smith’s divine calling. The evidence, however, clearly shows that both these famous prophecies found in the *History of the Church* are forgeries added after Joseph Smith’s death (see *Major Problems of Mormonism*, pp. 85-88). As we have previously noted, in the Preface to the first edition of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith claimed that the Lord told him that “Satan” had put into his enemies’ “hearts to tempt the Lord their God, by altering the words, that they did read contrary from that which I translated and caused to be written . . . I will confound those who have altered my words.” In light of this warning, we wonder how later Mormon leaders could in good conscience alter Joseph Smith’s revelations and other writings after his death.

**ANOTHER TRAP**

Some people feel that Martin Harris’ wife destroyed the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon and consequently have questioned Joseph Smith’s statement that his enemies altered these pages to entrapping him. In any case, in 1843 Joseph Smith’s enemies came up with an ingenious plot to discredit him as a translator. Six brass plates were purported to have been found in a mound in Kinderhook, Illinois. Mormons who saw the plates were impressed by their ancient appearance and felt that they would prove Joseph Smith’s Book of Mormon. In a letter written from Nauvoo, Illinois, dated May 2, 1843, Charlotte Haven said that when Joshua Moore “showed them to Joseph [Smith], the latter said that the figures or writing on them was similar to that in which the Book of Mormon was written, and if Mr. Moore could leave them, he thought that **by the help of revelation he would be able to translate them**” (*Overland Monthly*, December 1890, page 630).

While the Kinderhook plates have often been put forth as evidence for Joseph Smith’s claims concerning the Book of Mormon, there is another side to the story. Evidence now shows that the Kinderhook plates were actually modern forgeries created specifically for the purpose of entrapping Joseph Smith. Joseph Smith accepted these plates as authentic and even claimed that he had translated a portion of them. The evidence comes from the diary of William Clayton, Joseph Smith’s private secretary. The information in Clayton’s journal was deemed so important that it was put in the first person and used as a basis for the story of the Kinderhook plates which is printed in the *History of the Church*, vol. 5, page 372. The following is attributed to Joseph Smith:

> I insert fac-similes of the six brass plates found near Kinderhook, . . .
> I have translated a portion of them, and find they contain the history of the person with whom they were found. He was a descendant of Ham, through the loins of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and that he received his kingdom from the Ruler of heaven and earth.

After the plates were found, nine “citizens of Kinderhook” certified that R. Wiley took the “six brass plates” from “a large mound, in this vicinity.” Unfortunately for the Mormon position, it was later revealed that the plates were forgeries. On April 25, 1855, W. P. Harris, who was one of the nine witnesses to the discovery of the plates, wrote a letter in which he stated that the plates were not genuine:

> . . . I was present with a number at or near Kinderhook, and helped to dig at the time the plates were found . . . I . . . made an honest affidavit to the same . . . since that time, Bridge Whitten said to me that he cut and prepared the plates and he . . . and R. Wiley engraved them themselves . . . Wilbourn Fugit appeared to be the chief, with R. Wiley and B. Whitten. (*The Book of Mormon* by James D. Bales, pp. 95-96)

On June 30, 1879, W. Fugate, who was also one of the nine people who signed the certificate, wrote a letter in which he admitted his part in the hoax:

> I received your letter in regard to those plates, and will say in answer that they are a humbug, gotten up by Robert Wiley, Bridge Whitten and myself . . . We read in Pratt’s prophecy that “Truth is yet to spring out of the earth.” We concluded to prove the prophecy by way of a joke. (Letter of W. Fugate, as cited in *The Kinderhook Plates*, by Welby W. Ricks, reprinted from the *Improvement Era*, September 1962)

At the time of the Civil War, the Kinderhook plates were lost. M. Wilford Poulson, of Brigham Young University, later found one of the original plates in the Chicago Historical Society Museum. The plate which he found has been identified as no. 5 in the facsimiles printed in the *History of the Church.* While Professor Poulson’s research led him to believe that the plate was a forgery, Welby W. Ricks, who was President of the BYU Archaeological Society, hailed the discovery as a vindication of Joseph Smith’s work:

> A recent rediscovery of one of the Kinderhook plates which was examined by Joseph Smith, Jun., reaffirms his prophetic calling and reveals the false statements made by one of the finders. . . .
> The plates are now back in their original category of genuine . . . Joseph Smith, Jun., stands as a true prophet and translator of ancient records by divine means and all the world is invited to investigate the truth which has sprung out of the earth not only of the Kinderhook plates, but of the Book of Mormon as well. (*The Kinderhook Plates*)

In 1965, three years after Mr. Ricks made this triumphant announcement, George M. Lawrence, a Mormon physicist, was given permission to examine and make “some non-destructive physical studies of the surviving plate.” In his “Report of a Physical Study of the Kinderhook Plate Number 5,” George Lawrence wrote: “The dimensions, tolerances, composition and workmanship are consistent with the facilities of an 1843 blacksmith shop and with the fraud stories of the original participants.” Since Mr. Lawrence was only allowed to
make non-destructive tests, some Mormon scholars would not accept his work as conclusive. In 1980, however, the Mormon scholar Stanley P. Kimball was able “to secure permission from the Chicago Historical Society for the recommended destructive tests.” Professor Kimball described the results of the tests in the official Mormon Church publication, *The Ensign*, August 1981, pp. 66-70:

A recent electronic and chemical analysis of a metal plate . . . brought in 1843 to the Prophet Joseph Smith . . . appears to solve a previously unanswered question in Church history, helping to further evidence that the plate is what its producers later said it was—a nineteenth-century attempt to lure Joseph Smith into making a translation of ancient-looking characters that had been etched into the plates . . . As a result of these tests, we concluded that the plate . . . is not of ancient origin. . . . we concluded that the plate was made from a true brass alloy (copper and zinc) typical of the mid-nineteenth century; whereas the “brass” of ancient times was actually bronze, an alloy of copper and tin.

If Joseph Smith had not been murdered in June 1844, it is very possible he might have published a complete “translation” of these bogus plates. Just a month before his death, it was reported that he was “busy in translating them. The new work . . . will be nothing more nor less than a sequel to the Book of Mormon, . . .” (Warsaw Signal, May 22, 1844). The fact that Joseph Smith was actually preparing to print a translation of the plates is verified by a broadside published by the Mormon newspaper, *The Nauvoo Neighbor*, in June 1843. On this broadside, containing facsimiles of the plates, we find the following: “The contents of the Plates, together with a Fac-Simile of the same, will be published in the Times and Seasons, as soon as the translation is completed.”

In any case, it is obvious that Joseph Smith’s work on these fraudulent plates casts serious doubt upon his credibility as a translator of Mormon scriptures like the Book of Mormon and the Book of Abraham. Smith’s translation of characters on the Kinderhook plates was supposed to have revealed that the plates “contain the history of the person with whom they were found. He was a descendant of Ham, through the loins of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and that he received his kingdom from the Ruler of heaven and earth.” Now, in order to derive this much information from the plates it would have been necessary to have “translated” quite a number of the words. A man who could invent such information from bogus plates is just the type of man who would pretend to translate the Book of Abraham from Egyptian papyri which he really knew nothing about or the Book of Mormon from golden plates which he never made available to scholars. Charles A. Shook once observed: “Only a bogus prophet translates bogus plates.” While this may not be the most tactful way of putting it, this is a very serious problem which cannot be brushed aside.

The implications of this whole matter for the story of the Book of Mormon are very serious indeed. Joseph Smith, of course, claimed that he had eleven witnesses who saw the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. Smith, however, was careful not to show them to the public. He did not allow any one who was trained to detect forgery or who had studied ancient languages to examine the original plates. In the case of the Kinderhook plates, however, they were publicly exhibited and many people had a chance to examine them. Both William Clayton and Brigham Young had the privilege of tracing or making an outline of one of the pages in their journals. Furthermore, “the Nauvoo Neighbor press [a Mormon newspaper] had access to them and was thus able to produce facsimiles for the published broadside” (*The Ensign*, August 1981, p. 72). The first three presidents of the Mormon Church, Joseph Smith, Brigham Young and John Taylor, all believed that the Kinderhook plates were authentic. B. H. Roberts stated that “John Taylor, the close personal friend of the Prophet—took the find seriously, and expressed implicit confidence in his editorial that the Prophet could give a translation of the plates. And this attitude the Church, continued to maintain; . . .” (History of the Church, vol. 5, p. 379, footnote). That not one of the first three prophets of the church could tell the difference between ancient plates and plates “cut from a sheet that had been rolled” in the 19th century raises a serious question concerning the validity of the testimony of Joseph Smith’s eleven witnesses concerning the plates of the Book of Mormon.

In their testimony printed in the Book of Mormon, the Eight Witnesses to that book said that the plates had “the appearance of gold.” Mormon historian B. H. Roberts said that the “weight of the plates was doubtless considerable, being of gold, and each plate six by eight inches in width and length, and the whole volume six inches thick” (Comprehensive History of the Church, vol. 1, p. 93). Apostle John A. Widtsoe and Franklin S. Harris, Jr., estimated that “A cube of solid gold of that size, if the gold were pure, would weigh two hundred pounds, which would have been a heavy weight for a man to carry . . .” (Seven Claims of the Book of Mormon, p. 37). This presents a problem because B. H. Roberts says in his history of the church (page 91) that at one time Joseph Smith had to carry the plates “between two and three miles” to his home. During this journey he was watched by his enemies and “three times he was assaulted by as many different persons” along the way. Joseph Smith’s mother said that as “he was jumping over a log, a man sprang up from behind it, and gave him a heavy blow with a gun. Joseph turned around and knocked him down, and then ran at the top of his speed. About half a mile further he was attacked again . . . and before he reached home he was assaulted the third time.” No one was able to catch him, however, and he arrived home with the plates (Joseph Smith’s History By His Mother, a photo reprint of the original 1853 edition, p. 105). In trying to deal with this problem, Widtsoe and Harris suggested that it “is very unlikely . . . that the plates were made of pure gold.” They felt that gold might have been “mixed with a certain amount of copper” and referred to the work of J. M. Sjodahl who said the plates may have “weighted less than one hundred pounds.” Even if the plates weighed only seventy-five pounds, we feel that it is unlikely that Joseph Smith could have carried them for “between two and three miles,” running “at the top of his speed,” jump over a log and fight off three assailants along the way.

It is very possible that the witnesses to the Book of Mormon may have been shown some plates cut from a sheet
of rolled metal which had been coated with gold or something that had the “appearance of gold.” Joseph Smith said that each plate was “not quite so thick as common tin” (History of the Church, vol. 4, p. 537). Martin Harris, on the other hand, maintained that “each of the plates was thicker than the thickest tin.” David Whitmer felt that they were about as thick as “common tin used by tinsmiths.” Mormon apologists might argue that if the plates had only been coated in some way to give them the appearance of gold, the person who made the “engravings” on them would have had a problem convincing others that they were genuine. The tool used to make the engravings would cut down into the metal below and expose the fact that the plates were not really made of gold. Apostle Orson Pratt, however, made a rather strange statement about some type of stain being on the plates where the engraving appeared: “They [the witnesses] describe these plates as being about the thickness of common tin . . . Upon each side of the leaves of these plates there were fine engravings, which were stained with a black, hard stain, so as to make the letters more legible and easier to be read” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 7, pp. 30-31). Such a “black, hard stain” could, of course, prevent the witnesses from noticing that the color of the metal in the engraved portions was different from the rest of the plates.

There is another interesting aspect to the story: Apostle Widtsoe noted that “part of the plates, said to be about two-thirds, was sealed” (Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth, p. 38). The printed Book of Mormon was supposed to have been translated from the unsealed portion—the remaining third. The witnesses were not allowed to look at the other two-thirds of the plates. If the plates were forgeries, it would be very difficult and time consuming to make engravings on the entire stack. By sealing two-thirds of them together, however, it would only be necessary to make engravings on the remaining third. These could be shown to the witnesses and they would probably never suspect that the other two-thirds of the plates did not have engravings on them. (For more information on this matter see The Case Against Mormonism, vol. 2, p. 39.) In any case, since the Book of Mormon witnesses were neither experts in ancient languages nor qualified archaeologists, it would be very easy to fool them with some “kind of makeshift deception.”

While the forged Kinderhook plates present a real dilemma for those who maintain Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, Smith’s purported translation of the Book of Abraham presents an even greater problem because it was canonized as scripture in the Pearl of Great Price. The Egyptian papyrus from which the Book of Abraham was translated was acquired by Joseph Smith in 1835. Smith boldly asserted that it was actually penned by the patriarch Abraham. Since the science of Egyptology was in its infancy at that time, Smith was able to publish a “translation” without fear of exposure. In 1968, however, the very piece of papyrus which Joseph Smith used to produce his “Book of Abraham” was translated by noted Egyptologists Klaus Baer and Richard A. Parker. They found it contained absolutely nothing concerning Abraham. Instead, it turned out to be a pagan funerary text known as the “Book of Breathings”—an Egyptian funerary text filled with pagan gods and practices. The names of at least fifteen Egyptian gods or goddesses are mentioned in this work, but there is not one word about Abraham. Since the verses found in the Book of Abraham did not come from the papyrus as Joseph Smith claimed, some might argue that they were “satanic verses.” Others, of course, would say that they came from Joseph Smith’s own fertile imagination. (For more information on the Book of Abraham see Major Problems of Mormonism, pp. 216-228)

**SATAN STILL AT WORK?**

During the 1980’s an impostor by the name of Mark Hofmann arose and succeeded in laying a snare for church leaders which has led many to question the claim that there is a special pipeline between Mormonism and God. Because his scheme seemed so diabolical, some Mormons have concluded that he was inspired by Satan himself. Mr. Hofmann was a forger who went far beyond producing “satanic verses.” He, in fact, wrote entire documents for the express purpose of deceiving the leaders of the church.

Mark Hofmann, who had served as a missionary for the Mormon Church and was married in the temple, became well-known to the General Authorities of the church in 1980 when he claimed that he found the original Anthon Transcript—a sheet of paper which was supposed to contain characters copied by Joseph Smith himself from the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. The Mormon Church’s newspaper, Deseret News, for May 3, 1980, reported that this was “the oldest known Mormon document as well as the earliest sample of the Prophet’s handwriting.” The Mormon hierarchy were completely sold on the document, and, according to Church Archivist Donald Schmidt, Mr. Hofmann was eventually given “roughly $20,000” worth of items from the Church Archives in exchange for this single sheet of paper and a Bible in which it was supposed to have been found. Mormon leaders and church scholars were elated with Hofmann’s discovery. Hugh Nibley, the church’s most noted apologist, was certain the transcript was genuine and went so far as to proclaim that it contained Egyptian characters which could be translated. The truth, as it later turned out, was that the paper only contained Hofmann’s own doodlings.

Less than a year after Mark Hofmann made his first discovery, the church disclosed that he had uncovered another very significant document. This was a handwritten sheet showing that Joseph Smith designated his son, Joseph Smith III, to succeed him as “A Seer, and a Revelator, and a Prophet, unto the Church.” The Mormon newspaper, Deseret News, March 19, 1981, announced that “[Earl E.] Olson and other LDS officials said they are convinced the blessing is authentic.” This was a very controversial document because it indicated that Joseph Smith III—not Brigham Young—was Joseph Smith’s true successor. Nevertheless, Mormon leaders believed it was genuine and Mark Hofmann was compensated with material from the Church Archives which had a value
“in the neighborhood of $20,000.” After the discovery of the blessing document, Mark Hofmann began turning up an astounding number of important Mormon documents, some of which were very controversial.

In January 1983, Mark Hofmann approached Gordon B. Hinckley with a letter which was purportedly written by Joseph Smith in 1825. The contents of the letter were very embarrassing to the Mormon Church. President Hinckley, therefore, paid Hofmann $15,000 for the letter and hid it in a vault for 28 months. Before the end of 1983, Mr. Hofmann had forged still another letter which humiliated the church and caused many members to question its divine origin. This letter, purported to have been written by Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris, was known as the Salamander letter.

In spite of the warnings which we printed in the Salt Lake City Messenger concerning Mr. Hofmann’s documents, Mormon Church leaders continued to deal with and help Hofmann until the middle of October, 1985. On the 15th of that month, Salt Lake City was rocked with the news that bombs had killed two people. One was a Mormon bishop named Steven F. Christensen. It was later discovered that Mr. Christensen had been working secretly with the Mormon Church and Mark Hofmann to obtain the so-called McLellin collection. Mr. Hofmann had convinced the Mormon leaders that if the McLellin collection fell into the hands of the enemy, it would cause great embarrassment to the church. These documents were to be purchased by an anonymous buyer who would eventually donate them to the church. In this way the documents could be suppressed from the knowledge of the public.

On October 16, a bomb exploded in Mark Hofmann’s car and he was critically injured. At first the police thought Mr. Hofmann was the victim of a cruel bomber. Within a short time, however, they came to believe that Hofmann himself was the bomber and that he was transporting a bomb which accidentally exploded. Mr. Hofmann was eventually charged with murdering Steven Christensen and Kathleen Sheets, the wife of another Mormon bishop. On January 23, 1987, Mark Hofmann pled guilty to the murder charges and also confessed that the Salamander letter was a forgery. He later told of the methods he used to forge many documents and boasted that he had deceived the Mormon leaders.

Mark Hofmann had a very clever plan to fool the Mormon leaders. He forged documents which were both favorable and unfavorable to the church. In addition, he forged a large number which were neutral in their content. The Hofmann documents which were favorable to the Mormon Church were proudly displayed in church publications. The leaders of the Mormon Church had a great deal of faith in “Brother Hofmann” (see Deseret News, Church Section, May 3, 1980).

In the Salt Lake Tribune, April 19, 1986, Mike Carter referred to the “blind trust of LDS officials in bombing suspect Mark W. Hofmann . . .” Mr. Carter went on to say that it “was apparent that church leaders, including President Hinckley, trusted Mr. Hofmann implicitly . . .”

Because they boast of having special guidance from the Lord, the Mormon leaders have lost a great deal of credibility through the Hofmann affair. According to Ezra Taft Benson, the present Prophet, Seer and Revelator of the church, “The Prophet Will Never Lead The Church Astray.” (“Fourteen Fundamentals In Following The Prophets,” as cited in Following The Brethren, page 5.) President Benson also maintained that the leaders of the church have special discernment which is far superior to “earthly knowledge.”

As we think of President Benson’s statements concerning the special powers of a prophet, we cannot help but remember a photograph of his predecessor, Spencer W. Kimball, the twelfth Prophet, Seer and Revelator of the Mormon Church, which appeared in the Church Section of the Deseret News on May 3, 1980. President Kimball is flanked by Mark Hofmann, President N. Eldon Tanner, President Marion G. Romney, Apostle Boyd K. Packer and Apostle Gordon B. Hinckley.

Neither President Kimball nor any of the other General Authorities were able to detect anything wrong with either “Brother Hofmann” or the Anthon transcript which he was palmimg off on them. Although President Kimball was supposed to be a “seer” and have the power to “translate all records that are of ancient date” (Book of Mormon, Mosiah 8:13), he was unable to translate the purported Book of Mormon characters which appear on the so-called Anthon transcript. Instead of using the “seer stone,” as Joseph Smith would have done, he examined the characters with a magnifying glass. Not only did he fail to detect that the characters were only the doodlings of Mark Hofmann, but he was oblivious to the fact that the church was being set up to be defrauded of a large amount of money and many valuable items out of its archives. Moreover, he entirely failed to see the devastating and embarrassing effect this transaction and others which followed would have on the Mormon Church. If ever revelation from the Lord was needed, it was on that day in 1980 when Mark Hofmann stood in the presence of President Kimball.

Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie maintained that church leaders have the gift of discernment:

...the gift of the discerning of spirits is poured out upon presiding officials in God’s kingdom; they have it given to them to discern all gifts and spirits, lest any come among the saints and practice deception. ... even “the thoughts and intents of the heart” are made known. (Mormon Doctrine, 1979, page 197)

While the Mormon leaders claim to have the same powers as the ancient Apostles in the Bible, their performance with regard to Mark Hofmann certainly does not match up to that of Apostle Peter when he caught Ananias and Sapphira red-handed in their attempt to deceive the church with regard to a financial transaction (Acts 5:3).

It would seem that if the same powers were functioning in the Mormon Church today, the “Prophet, Seer and Revelator” would have received a revelation warning him concerning Mark Hofmann’s cunning plan to defraud and disgrace the church. If the Mormon Church was ever led by revelation, it has been lacking since Mr. Hofmann came into the church offices with the “Anthon transcript.”

With regard to the inability of the Mormon leaders to detect that the Hofmann documents were fraudulent, a person might try to argue that these documents were not really important spiritual writings, and therefore the Lord did not
see fit to intervene when the General Authorities examined them. The truth of the matter, however, is that they contain extremely important material directly relating to spiritual affairs. The Salamander letter, for example, changes the story of the Angel Moroni appearing to Joseph Smith to that of a cantankerous and tricky "old spirit" who transforms himself from a white salamander and strikes Joseph Smith. Although non-Mormons could plainly see that this story discredited the Book of Mormon, Mormon leaders tried to pretend that there was really no problem. The church’s Deseret News, Church Section, September 9, 1984, printed an article which stated that the Salamander letter “is no repudiation of Joseph Smith, but rather probably is a further witness of the Prophet’s own account of the discovery of the golden plates.” As late as August 16, 1985, the Mormon Apostle Dallin Oaks spoke of the discovery of the golden plates. “The truth of the matter, however, is that they contain extremely important material directly relating to spiritual matters.”

Some of the purported Joseph Smith writings which Hofmann sold to the church were supposed to contain revelations from the Lord Himself! For instance, the Joseph Smith III Blessing document gives this message from the Lord: “Verily, thus saith the Lord: if he abides in me, his days shall be lengthened upon the earth, but, if he abides not in me, I, the Lord, will receive him, in an instant, unto myself.” The 1838 letter of Joseph Smith, another forgery which the Mormon Church acquired, is in its entirety a revelation purporting to come from the Lord. It begins with the words, “Verily thus Saith the Lord,” and ends with the word “Amen.” The fact that the Mormon leaders were unable to recognize the spurious nature of these revelations casts doubts upon their ability to discern the truthfulness of the other revelations given by Joseph Smith. It has always been claimed that it is virtually impossible for a person to write a revelation that would compare with Joseph Smith’s. It now appears, however, that there is someone who can write revelations comparable to Joseph Smith’s and that it is even possible to get them past the scrutiny of the highest leadership of the Mormon Church.

It now seems incontestable that Mark Hofmann deliberately set out to weaken faith in Mormonism through forgery. Even though Mr. Hofmann’s designs against the Mormon Church did not pan out as he had hoped, he did administer a wound to the church which may never be healed. His close involvement with church leaders has clearly revealed that the church’s claim of latter-day revelation is without foundation.

In his confession, Mark Hofmann said that he could “look someone in the eye and lie” and that he didn’t believe that “someone could be inspired” in a religious sense to know what “my feelings or thoughts were” (Hofmann’s Confession, vol. 1, page 99). On page 112 he boasted that he “wasn’t fearful of the Church inspiration detecting the forgery.” It is evident that Mr. Hofmann has put the claim of revelation in the church to the acid test and found that the so-called “living oracles” are just as fallible as other men. Mormon officials find themselves in a very embarrassing position. At a time when revelation was really needed, they seemed to be completely oblivious to what was going on. Church leaders who claimed to have special powers of revelation, played into Mr. Hofmann’s hands after time. Mark Hofmann did such a good job of convincing church officials that he was trying to help the church that he was given privileged access to material in the archives. Hofmann returned the favor by using the very knowledge he obtained from the documents to create new forgeries to palm off on the church. If the Mormon leaders were truly led by revelation, Mark Hofmann’s nefarious plan could have been thwarted in 1980.

CONCLUSION. While people may debate concerning whether the many changes made in Mormon history and doctrine “are of man” or “of the devil,” one thing is certain: there are too many major problems in the church for one to believe that it is “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth, with which I, the Lord, am well pleased . . .” (Doctrine and Covenants 1:30). The evidence, in fact, clearly shows that the Mormon Church is man-made and is presently led by leaders who do not have the powers which they claim to possess. Those who wish to know more about these important matters should have a copy of our new book, Major Problems of Mormonism.

DEATH THREATS!

On March 11, 1989, the Salt Lake Tribune reported the following: “University of Utah law professor Edwin Firmage has received more than 150 phone calls and several death threats since he said there is no doctrinal basis for the Mormon Church’s restriction against women holding the church’s priesthood.”

While this might give outsiders the impression that modern Utah is as repressive as Iran’s Ayatollah Khomeini, death threats over religious matters are actually very rare in Mormon country. Although there are some extremists, most Mormons are rather peaceful. If we look back into the past history of the church, however, we find that book-burning and death threats were used to keep the people under control. For instance, in 1844 the newspaper, Nauvoo Expositor, published by Mormon dissidents, exposed Joseph Smith’s secret involvement in polygamy. According to the History of the Church, vol. 6, page 445, Joseph Smith’s brother, Hyrum, felt the best way to deal with the matter was to suppress the newspaper: “Councilor Hyrum Smith believed the best way was to smash the press and pit the type.” Joseph Smith agreed with his brother. On page 432, we read: “I [Joseph Smith] immediately ordered the Marshal to destroy it without delay . . .” The “press, type, printed paper, and fixtures” were taken out in the street and destroyed. This action, of course, eventually led to the murder of Joseph Smith.
In early Utah, President Brigham Young ruled with an iron hand, and like Khomenini, Young did his best to stifle religious dissent. In 1853 a man by the name of Gladden Bishop opposed the practice of polygamy and tried to set up a rival sect. On March 27 of that year, Brigham Young stood before the saints in the Tabernacle and publicly threatened the Bishop and his followers:

We have known Gladden Bishop for more than twenty years, and know him to be a poor, dirty curse. . . . Now you Gladdenites, keep your tongues still, lest sudden destruction come upon you. . . . I say, rather than that apostates should flourish here, I will unsheathe my bowie knife, and conquer or die. . . . Now you nasty apostates, clear out, or judgment will be put to the line. . . . If you say it is right, raise your hands. [All hands up.] Let us call upon the Lord to assist us in this, and every good work. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 1, p. 83)

Brigham Young was successful in stamping out the Gladdenites' opposition. The historian Hubert Howe Bancroft noted that within a few months, “most of them set forth for California, the rest recanted, and after the year 1854 we hear no more of this apostasy” (History of Utah, p. 644). While Gladden Bishop escaped with his life, many others were not that lucky. The “sudden destruction” which Brigham Young threatened, fell on many who opposed the Mormons in Nauvoo and early Utah. The documentation concerning this matter is found in Major Problems of Mormonism, pp. 175-205.

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**IF HE WERE SATAN**

In the Spring 1989 issue of Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought an unusual article by Samuel W. Taylor appears under the title, “If I Were Satan.” On page 116, the following is found:

As Satan, I would also encourage Church officials to ignore all attacks on the Church, such as the dedicated campaign of Jerald and Sandra Tanner of the Utah Lighthouse Ministry. I would simply pooh-pooh their violently unfriendly book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality, issued in Salt Lake, together with the condensed version, The Changing World of Mormonism, published in New York [Chicago]. What do we care that the combined sales have been more than 50,000 copies? What does it matter that missionaries are hit with hard questions from readers of these books and are unprepared to answer?

It is ironic that this statement would appear in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought. This journal has never reviewed either of the two books mentioned by Samuel Taylor! Even Lawrence Foster, a critic who feels we are “narrowminded” and “unethical,” observed the following:

Despite the Tanners’ extensive publication record and the hostility that they have aroused over the past two decades, to date virtually no serious public analyses of their work have appeared. When the Tanners’ arguments have been attacked in Mormon publications, as has occurred on many occasions, their names and titles of their writings have almost never been cited. Indeed, until very recently even independent Mormon scholarly journals such as DIALOGUE and Sunstone, which discuss all manner of controversial issues, have largely avoided mentioning the Tanners by name, much less analyzing their work explicitly. (Dialogue, Summer 1984, p. 48)

In a footnote on page 49, Professor Foster wrote:

In a letter to me . . . Lester Bush explained why DIALOGUE ultimately decided not to review the Tanners’ books Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? and The Changing World of Mormonism despite their hope to make such a review: “We simply had no desire to be drawn into a sensational debate based on fragmentary data and in no way governed by any notion of intellectual responsibility.”

Nothing has changed since 1984, and it seems doubtful that Dialogue will publish any review of our new book, Major Problems of Mormonism. However this may be, we have already sold over 500 copies. One ministry has ordered 150 copies and has sold almost two-thirds of these already!

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**NEW TRACT MINISTRY**

For a long time we have felt that our ministry was lacking in the area of providing free tracts on Mormonism and Christianity. Recently, however, we were able to purchase a folding machine and have prepared six tracts that should be of interest to our readers. They are entitled, Jesus and Joseph Smith, Power Over the Entire World, The Fall of the Book of Abraham, The Worst Prison of All, Testing the Book of Mormon, and Joseph Smith and the Kinderhook Plates.

Two of these tracts, The Worst Prison of All and Power Over the Entire World, do not mention Mormonism. Below is the text of one of these tracts.

**Power Over The Entire World**

History is filled with the names of rulers who desired to gain great riches and rule over many people. Alexander the Great, for instance, was able to conquer most of the known world in the 4th century B.C. Napoleon, who has been described as “one of the greatest military geniuses of all time,” crushed those who resisted him and created a vast empire. His success, however, went to his head. He began to believe he was invincible and eventually suffered some disastrous defeats. The battle of Waterloo, of course, ended his dream of conquering the world. He died on an island “alone and deserted by his friends and family, on May 5, 1821.” The 20th century certainly has had its share of those who sought world conquest. Adolf Hitler’s desire for power led to World War II and the death of millions of people.
Although they had many military victories, none of these leaders were able to bring the entire world into subjection to themselves for even a moment. Furthermore, the power and riches they did gain did not last very long. Hitler gained the support he needed in Germany in 1934, but by 1945 he found it necessary to commit suicide because his empire was crumbling. Alexander the Great did not have much time to enjoy the power he had gained. He died when he was only thirty-three years old.

In spite of the fact that no one has yet been able to gain complete control over the world, one cannot help but wonder what it would be like if it were possible to have all the power, fame and riches that the world can offer. Almost two thousand years ago, Jesus reflected on the issue of obtaining that much power and made this startling observation:

For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (NKJV, Matthew 16:26)

There are at least two very important points in this short verse. First, that our selfish drive to obtain pleasure, fame, money or power can lead to the loss of our eternal soul. Second, that our soul is worth more than all the things of this world. Even though we may have great success and riches in this life, if we fail to set our minds on the things of God, we are spiritually bankrupt. Jesus made this very plain in Luke 12:16-21:

Then he spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.
And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’
So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.’
And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.’”

But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’

“So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

In our attempt to find happiness through riches, fame or pleasures, we end up setting aside the things God declares to be the most important. In Matthew 22:37-40 we read:

Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

While Jesus calls upon us to love God and those around us with a sincere love, he cautions us against the love of things that distract us from serving God. As our minds begin to focus more and more on the things of this world, we tend to lose sight of the spiritual things which are truly essential. In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus explained:

Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word [i.e., the word of God], and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. (Matthew 13:22)

The Apostle John warned:

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:15-17)

People think that they will be very happy if they can only obtain certain things, but even if they do acquire them, the pleasure is usually very short-lived. They are soon striving for something else to fill the emptiness of their hearts. When the movie star Barbara Streisand was asked how the “reality of success” measured up to her “childhood dreams of glory,” she frankly replied: “It doesn’t come close. It hasn’t come anywhere near it. The dream—you never achieve it and that’s what is depressing. . . . to me it’s a real drag that you can’t hold anywhere near it. The dream—you never achieve it and that’s what is depressing. . . .”

For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

The Bible informs us that we cannot really serve God until we have been “born again” (John 3:3). It plainly states that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). In chapter 6, verse 23, of the same book, we are informed: “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” What we need, then, is to have Jesus set us free from the chains of sin. Our own “good works” will avail us nothing, we need to pray to The Lord with a sincere heart and turn our life completely over to him. It is only through his “grace” (Ephesians 2:8-10) that we can escape the penalty of eternal separation from God and have a place in his kingdom.

All the things we can acquire in this life amount to nothing when compared with the wonderful salvation that has been
prepared for us. The Apostle Paul observed that we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out” (1 Timothy 6:7). Apostle Peter noted that in the last day “the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.” After emphasizing again that “all these thing will be dissolved” he asked, “what manner of persons ought you to be?” (2 Peter 3:10-11).

When we really think about it, it becomes obvious that while some people may be able to obtain great fame and riches in this life, most of us will have to settle for less. Even if we were able to obtain these things, they would not bring us the lasting happiness we all desire. As we have already shown, Jesus said that the rich man, who was more interested in building bigger barns in which to store his goods than in serving God, was a “fool.” Moreover, Jesus declared that even if someone could gain the whole world that person would be making a tragic mistake which would result in eternal separation from God. Since God places a higher value on one human soul than he does the whole world, one would be very foolish indeed to neglect the eternal salvation which God has provided for the momentary pleasures and riches which this world has to offer.

The following poem brings to mind the importance of having one’s priorities right:

\* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \*

**MISSIONARY WORK**

There are opportunities for those who are interested in volunteering for evangelistic work in Salt Lake City this summer. If interested call (801) 486-3800 or write to: Associated Utah Christian Ministries, PO Box 750, Salt Lake City, UT 84101.

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**OTHER BOOKS**

*A Gathering of Saints: A True Story of Money, Murder and Deceit,* by Robert Lindsey. An excellent account of the forgeries and murderers of Mark Hofmann. **Price: $18.95**

*The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri,* by Stephen C. LeSueur. **Price: $20.00**

“Wild Bill” Hickman and the Mormon Frontier, by Hope A. Hilton. **Price: $9.95**

*Religious Seekers and the Advent of Mormonism,* by Dan Vogel. **Price: $9.95**

*Early Mormonism and the Magic World View,* by D. Michael Quinn. **Price: $14.95**


*Mere Christianity,* by C. S. Lewis. Good defense and explanation of Christianity. **Price: $3.95**


*Know What You Believe—A Practical Discussion of the Fundamentals of the Christian Faith,* by Paul E. Little. **Price: $4.95**
In 1828, Joseph Smith’s enemies fired a shot from ambush at his translation of the Book of Mormon. As Smith looked at the gaping hole in the very heart of the document he had struggled so hard to protect, he seemed to sense that the wound could be fatal. His mother, Lucy Smith, revealed the anguish which flooded Joseph Smith’s mind when he grasped the devastating implications of what had happened:

Martin Harris, having written some one hundred and sixteen pages for Joseph, asked permission of my son to carry the manuscript home with him, in order to let his wife read it . . .

Joseph . . . inquired of the Lord to know if he might do as Martin Harris had requested, but was refused. . . . Joseph inquired again, but received a second refusal. Still, Martin Harris persisted as before, and Joseph applied again, but the last answer was not like the two former ones. In this the Lord permitted Martin Harris to take the manuscript home with him . . . Mr. Harris had been absent nearly three weeks, and Joseph had received no intelligence whatever from him . . . we saw him [Harris] walking with a slow and measured tread towards the house . . . Harris pressed his hands upon his temples, and cried out, in a tone of deep anguish, “Oh, I have lost my soul! I have lost my soul!”

Joseph . . . sprang from the table, exclaiming, “Martin, have you lost that manuscript? . . .”

“Yes, it is gone,” replied Martin, “and I know not where.”

“Oh, my God!” said Joseph, clinching his hands, “All is lost! all is lost! What shall I do? I have sinned . . .” He wept and groaned, and walked the floor continually . . . what could I say to comfort him, when he saw all the family in the same situation of mind as himself, for sobs and groans, and the most bitter lamentations filled the house. However, Joseph was more distressed than the rest . . . he continued, pacing back and forth, meantime weeping and grieving, until about sunset . . .

The manuscript has never been found; and there is no doubt that Mrs. Harris took it from the drawer . . . (Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet, 1853, pp. 117, 118, 120-123)

Joseph Smith’s words, “All is lost! all is lost!,” show the gravity of the predicament he found himself in. He realized that since he had not retained a copy of the 116 pages, he could not reproduce exactly the same material as the first part of the Book of Mormon. It would, therefore, be a book without a beginning! A Mormon critic, M. T. Lamb, succinctly pointed out the dilemma facing Joseph Smith:

The general belief was that she [Mrs. Harris] burned it [i.e., the manuscript]. But the prophet Joseph evidently was afraid she had not, but had secretly hid it, for the purpose of entrapping him, should he ever attempt to reproduce the pages. If the work was really of God, the manuscript could be reproduced word for word without a mistake. If, however, Joseph inspired it himself, his memory would hardly be adequate to such a task, without numberless changes or verbal differences—and thus “give himself away,” since he loudly professed to be all the time aided “by the gift and power of God.” (The Golden Bible, page 119)

The theft of the 116 pages brought the translation of the Book of Mormon to a grinding halt. Joseph Smith claimed that “both the plates [i.e., the gold plates on which the Book of Mormon was supposed to have been
written] and the Urim and Thummim [a sacred device used to translate the plates] were taken” from him (History of the Church, vol. 1, p. 23). Later, however, the plates were restored and he received a revelation purporting to be from Jesus Christ. The Lord told him not to retranslate the missing pages because his enemies had altered them:

Now, behold, I say unto you, that because you delivered up those writings . . . into the hands of a wicked man, you have lost them. . . . you also lost your gift at the same time; and your mind became darkened. . . .

And, behold, Satan hath put it into their hearts to alter the words which you have caused to be written, or which you have translated . . .

Behold, I say unto you, that you shall not translate again those words which have gone forth out of your hands;

For, behold, they shall not accomplish their evil designs in lying against those words. For, behold, if you should bring forth the same words they will say that you have lied and that you have pretended to translate, but that you have contradicted yourself.

And, behold, they will publish this, and Satan will harden the hearts of the people to stir them up to anger against you, that they will not believe my words. (Doctrine and Covenants 10:1, 2, 10, 30-32)

Joseph Smith was informed that about 600 years before the birth of Christ, the Lord had anticipated this very problem. He had, in fact, inspired the ancient prophet Nephi to make another set of plates which covered exactly the same time period as that first set of plates. Mormon writers refer to these plates as the “small plates of Nephi,” and the plates which contained the material for the 116 lost pages are called the “large plates of Nephi.” One matter that is rather confusing is that in a preface to the first edition of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith referred to the 116 missing pages as being from “the Book of Lehi, which was an account abridged from the plates of Lehi, by the hand of Mormon . . .”. Mormon writers, however, argue that Lehi did not actually write anything on the plates; all the writing was done by his son, Nephi: “Aside from employing his name honorifically, this work apparently was not written in any part by Lehi . . .” (S. Kent Brown, Brigham Young University Studies, Winter 1984, p. 21, n. 10).

However this may be, the Lord told Joseph Smith that he could translate the small plates of Nephi and they would take the place of what had come from the large plates of Nephi—i.e., the missing 116 pages. The Book of Mormon would no longer be a book without a beginning. In addition, it was made clear to Smith that the small plates of Nephi dealt more with spiritual matters than the missing pages. Consequently, the loss of the 116 pages was actually set forth by the Mormon Church leaders as a victory for the Lord because the Book of Mormon would be more spiritual than it would have been if the pages had not been stolen!

Mormon critics, on the other hand, do not accept this explanation. They point out that if Satan actually did cause Joseph Smith’s enemies to alter the words, these wicked people would have had to produce the original pages to prove that Joseph Smith could not produce an accurate duplicate of the original. It would be almost impossible to alter the manuscript without detection. The Mormons could have taken the case to court and easily won a significant victory. Critics feel that the simple truth is that Joseph Smith could not reproduce an exact copy of what he had previously written. Therefore, he was forced to come up with the elaborate story about the Lord providing a second set of plates covering exactly the same time period to fill in the missing portion of the Book of Mormon.

GAZING INTO THE BLACK HOLE

A few years ago we published an article entitled “Probing Black Holes in Mormon History.” We noted that astronomers feel that sometimes a star will “collapse into itself and become a black hole and, in a sense, exit the universe.” One physicist said that “You can’t see a black hole. Just its effects.” We quoted one author as saying that “Since not even light can escape a black hole, one can never be seen directly.” We also quoted a statement which explained that “black holes theoretically occur when matter collapses into an exquisitely compact state. Its gravity grows strong enough to trap everything, including light, within the horizon of its gravitational field. The earth, for instance, would become a black hole, if it could somehow be squeezed to the size of a marble. . . . Medium-size black holes result from the collapse of giant stars too massive to stop at the neutron star stage. They just disappear into their dark prisons.”

We noted that although we know “very little about astronomy or the theories concerning black holes in space, we have observed a somewhat similar phenomenon in Mormon history. Important documents which could throw a great deal of light on Mormon history, seem to mysteriously “disappear into their dark prisons.”

At the time we wrote this article, we had no idea that we were going to encounter a massive black hole in the Book of Mormon itself. Significantly, this black hole appears in the very material which replaced the missing 116 pages! It seems obvious from our research that a great deal of material which was originally in the Book of Mormon has disappeared into this bottomless abyss.

We have always believed that there was something strange about this portion of the Book of Mormon, but we were not preparing to scrutinize it in more detail than the rest of the book. Recently, however, we heard of the Mormon Church’s new computer program, The Computerized Scriptures of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We felt that this program would help us in studying the questions of plagiarism and authorship with regard to the Book of Mormon. We installed the program and began to obtain some remarkable results. It was during this period of intense research in the Book of Mormon that a question began to arise concerning the wars in the Book of Mormon—
i.e., why were the accounts of the wars in the later portion of the book given in such great detail, whereas the material replacing the lost 116 pages was so surprisingly sparse with regard to details?

This question aroused our curiosity and we began to look at names, dates, cities, lands, directions, kings, etc. In all of these areas we found an abundance of material in the later books, but scarcely nothing in material coming from the “small plates of Nephi.” This discovery eventually led to the formulation of our theory that there is a black hole in the Book of Mormon:

1 — The first portion of the Book of Mormon originally contained a great deal of information concerning history, wars, kings, names, dates and other matters which no longer appears in that part of the Book of Mormon—i.e. the books that cover the same period. This can be inferred from Nephi’s own description of the contents of the larger plates:

   Upon the other plates [the plates from which the 116 pages were translated] should be engraven an account of the reign of the kings, and the wars and contentions of my people . . . (Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 9:4)

   . . . wherefore, the record of my father, and the genealogy of his fathers, and the more part of all our proceedings in the wilderness are engraven upon those plates . . . I, Nephi, did make a record upon the other plates, which gives an account, or which gives a greater account of the wars and contentions and destructions of my people. (1 Nephi, 19:1 and 4)

   For I, Nephi . . . had spoken many things . . . and also my father . . . many of which sayings are written upon mine other plates; for a more history part are written upon mine other plates. (2 Nephi 4:14)

   And if my people desire to know the more particular part of the history of my people they must search mine other plates. (2 Nephi 5:33)

2 — From the references cited above it would seems very likely that the 116 missing pages contained many names of people, cities and lands. It probably had the names of many kings and the years in which they reigned. Since it was concerned with wars, it would undoubtedly mention the names of the prominent leaders who took part in important battles and when they occurred. The location of where these battles took place would likely appear in the record. This would be entirely consistent with the latter portion of the Book of Mormon.

3 — Since the first 116 pages of the Book of Mormon were lost and Joseph Smith did not have another copy, it would be almost impossible for him to reconstruct all the details he had previously written concerning the ancient Nephites and Lamanites. He would undoubtedly make many mistakes with regard to names, cities, lands, kings, military leaders and battles. While the idea of having a second set of plates from which to translate released him from having to come up with the exact wording he had previously used, it did not free him from the possibility of making mistakes with regard to names, dates, locations and other matters.

4 — Because the first part of the Book of Mormon as it was originally written was supposed to contain “a full account of the history” of Nephi’s people (1 Nephi 9:2), what Joseph Smith dictated to replace the missing pages had to be as vague as possible. To avoid contradicting the 116 pages if they should come to light, the new pages must be very indefinite with regard to details. While these pages would have to cover the same period as the original pages and give some appearance of being history, they would actually have to be very obscure when it came to particulars which Joseph Smith could not clearly remember. Many important things, therefore, which had evaporated from Joseph Smith’s memory would also have to vanish into a rayless and indefinable “black hole” in the Book of Mormon.

Joseph Smith apparently thought that some people might become suspicious that he was trying to sidestep the problem which confronted him. In an attempt to offset any criticism that he was evading the real history of the Nephites and Lamanites, Joseph Smith had Jacob, the second author who wrote upon the “small plates” of Nephi, explain that Nephi had told him that he should “write upon these plates a few of the things which I considered to be most precious; that I should not touch, save it were lightly, concerning the history of this people which are called the people of Nephi . . . he said that the history of his people should be engraven upon his other plates . . . if there were preaching which was sacred, or revelation which was great, or prophesying, that I should engraven the heads of them upon these plates, and touch upon them as much as it were possible, for Christ’s sake . . .” (Jacob 1:2-4). In 1 Nephi 9:3, Nephi explains that he received “a commandment of the Lord that I should make these plates, for the special purpose that there should be an account engraven of the ministry of my people.”

The more material that Nephi and the other writers put in the plates concerning “preaching,” “revelation” and “prophesying,” the less would have to be devoted to the history of the Nephites and Lamanites.

5 — Our theory presupposes that it would be rather easy for Joseph Smith to have remembered the major details of the first part of the 116 missing pages. This portion relates to Lehi and his family leaving Jerusalem and coming to the New World. The names of the main characters would probably be indelibly written upon his memory. As he progressed with the story, however, the names and details would become increasingly difficult to remember. There seems to be some evidence of the black hole beginning in the early chapters of the small plates of Nephi, but when Lehi and his children reach the New World (1 Nephi 18:23), the record becomes far more nebulous. The evidence for the black hole seems extremely strong from this chapter onward and continues until the book of Omni, verse 12—the last book contained in the small plates of Nephi. The black hole, therefore, extends to page 141 of the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon and obscures over four hundred years of the history of the Nephites and the Lamanites!
TESTING THE THEORY

Mormons often quote the following words of Moroni when trying to convert others to the Book of Mormon: “And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 10:4). We would challenge those who believe the Book of Mormon to read the things which follow and also to reread the first portion of the Book of Mormon which was “translated” from the small plates of Nephi. We feel that if they will do this with “a sincere heart” and a prayerful attitude, they will come to the same conclusion that we have reached.

That Joseph Smith seemed to remember a number of the names at the first part of the story becomes obvious as we examine the first book of Nephi. We find the name Nephi in the first verse of chapter one. The name of Nephi’s father, Lehi, appears in verse 5, and his mother’s name, Sariah, is found in 2:5. The names of Nephi’s elder brothers Laman, Lemuel and Sam, are also found in that verse. In 18:7 we read that Nephi had two younger brothers, Jacob and Joseph.

The name of Laban appears in 3:3, and his servant, Zoram, is found in 4:35. A man by the name of Ishmael later joins with Lehi’s family in the wilderness somewhere outside Jerusalem. It appears, then, that only eleven names are given to Nephites or Lamanites within the first book of Nephi. To our knowledge no new names are given to any of these people in the second book of Nephi! This is especially strange in light of the fact that a number of Old Testament characters are referred to by name. For example, Nephi mentions Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Adam, Eve, Zedekiah, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Joseph. Moreover, he even prophetically speaks of Jesus some 600 years before his birth and claims that he knew our knowledge no new names are given to any of these people in the second book of Nephi! This is especially strange in light of the fact that a number of Old Testament characters are referred to by name. For example, Nephi mentions Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Adam, Eve, Zedekiah, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Joseph. Moreover, he even prophetically speaks of Jesus some 600 years before his birth and claims that he knew that “the name of the apostle of the Lamb was John . . . ” (1 Nephi 14:27).

Although Nephi could see far into the future and give the names of people who would live in New Testament times, he seemed to have been oblivious to the names of most of the people he lived with. For example, he did not mention the names of his brothers’ children: “. . . my father . . . called the children of Laman, his sons, and his daughters, and said unto them: Behold, my sons, and my daughters of my first-born . . . after my father had made an end of speaking . . . he caused the sons and daughters of Lemuel to be brought before him . . . he spake unto them, saying: Behold, my sons and my daughters, who are the sons and the daughters of my second son . . . (2 Nephi 4:3, 8, 9). The children of Ishmael also seemed to have no names: “. . . Laman and Lemuel, and the two sons of Ishmael and their families, did rebel against us; yea, against me, Nephi, and Sam, and their father, Ishmael, and his wife, and his three other daughters” (1 Nephi 7:6). It seems that Nephi is almost struggling to keep from giving names: “. . . one of the daughters of Ishmael, yea, and also her mother, and one of the sons of Ishmael, did plead with my brethren, insomuch that they did soften their hearts . . . ” (1 Nephi 7:19).

WOMEN MISSING?

Nephi married one of Ishmael’s daughters, but he did not give her name: “. . . I, Nephi, took one of the daughters of Ishmael to wife; and also, my brethren took of the daughters of Ishmael to wife; and also Zoram took the eldest daughter of Ishmael to wife” (1 Nephi 16:7). While Nephi never mentions his wife’s name, he uses his own name many times in the first two books of the Book of Mormon. In fact, we find the phrase “I, Nephi” eighty-six times! In all fairness, however, it should be noted that there may be more than one factor working here. It appears, in fact, that the entire Book of Mormon almost looks like a black hole when we search for specific references with regard to women. While men seem to play the major roles in the Bible, it does refer to many women. Two of its books, Esther and Ruth, are named after women. We also read of “Judith” at one time (Judges 4:4) and “Huldah the prophetess” (Chronicles 34:22). Those who wrote the books of the Bible certainly felt free to mention women by name and to write concerning their achievements. For instance, we read of “Eve,” the wife of Adam. God Himself refers to Abraham’s wife as “Saria thy wife.” Isaiah married “Rebekah,” and Esau “took to wife Judith.” Joseph married “Asenath,” and Moses’ wife was named “Zipporah.” Saul’s “wife was Ahinoam,” and we also read of “Michal, David’s wife.” In the New Testament we have “Mary,” “Elizabeth,” and Aquila’s “wife Priscilla.” Many of the stories concerning Jesus deal with women, and on a number of occasions Jesus openly commends them. The Apostle Paul used the names of women in his epistles. For instance, in Romans 16:1 he said: “I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea.” In the same chapter he also mentioned Mary, Priscilla, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis and Julia.

In our preliminary research we were only able to find the names of three Nephite, Lamanite or Jaredite women in the Book of Mormon—“Sariah” (1 Nephi 2:5), “Abish” (Alma 19:16) and “the harlot Isabel” (Alma 39:3). The computer revealed that the word her appeared only 79 times in the Book of Mormon. Twenty-six of these references are taken directly from Isaiah, Malachi and Matthew in the Bible. Of the fifty-three which remain, fifteen refer to unnamed queens; seven were used regarding an unnamed daughter of Jared; two relate to Abish; two to an unnamed maid servant; one to Mary, the mother of Jesus; one to Sariah; one to Nephi’s wife; one to the “mother” of “one of the daughters of Ishmael;” one to a widow; one to Zion; one to a goat; one to mercy; one to a sow; one to charity and one to a vessel. Her is also used four times to refer to the earth and twice with regard to “the face of the earth.” It is used three times with regard to cities and seven times in relationship to a “hen.”
The word *she* appears only fifty-six times, and six of these occurrences are from quotations from the Bible. Of the remaining fifty-four, four relate to Jesus’ mother, Mary; five to Sarah; twenty to three unnamed queens; nine to Abish; one to a nameless maid servant; three to the unnamed “daughter of Jared”; one to “wisdom”; two to a “ship”; one to “the face of the earth”; one to “the harlot Isabel” and three to “the mother of abominations . . . the whore of all the earth.”

The fact that the Book of Mormon story says so little about women seems to throw a serious cloud of doubt over Joseph Smith’s claim that it was written by a number of ancient Jewish authors after 600 B.C. The claim is that these men had the ancient books of the Bible—books which contain the names of many women and stories concerning them. If just one of these Nephite authors broke with tradition and tried to suppress almost all information concerning women, we would not be too surprised. As it is, however, the black hole with regard to women seems to extend all the way through the book. The evidence, therefore, seems to show that the Book of Mormon was written by one author.

While Nephi’s reluctance to name his wife could be explained by the theory that the author of the Book of Mormon was not really interested in the things of women, the fact that Nephi does not name any of his own children (see 1 Nephi 18:19), the children of his brothers, nor the children of Ishmael fits well with our idea that he was trying to suppress names so that he would not contradict the missing 116 pages if they should come forth. Nephi does inform us that Ishmael and his own brothers had male children, but he does not give their names. Those who examine later portions of the Book of Mormon will see that Nephi’s silence is inconsistent with the rest of the book. For example, just as we come out of the black hole, we find this reference in Mosiah 1:1: “. . . king Benjamin . . . had three sons; and he called their names Mosiah, and Helorum, and Helaman.”

The books included in the small plates of Nephi are named after their respective authors. It is obvious, then, that if Nephi had passed the plates on to one of his sons, the name of that son would have been revealed. Instead of doing this, however, he gave them to his brother Jacob. The third book in the Book of Mormon, therefore, is called the book of Jacob. The first new name to come into the Book of Mormon after Nephi mentioned the original eleven names appears in Jacob’s record: “. . . after some years had passed away, there came a man among the people of Nephi, whose name was Sherem” (Jacob 7:1). Sherem was a wicked man who taught there “should be no Christ.” Finally, in the last verse of his book Jacob informs the reader that he has a son named Enos to whom he gives the plates. The fourth book, therefore, is known as the book of Enos. Enos mentions his own name in his book and tells us that “an hundred and seventy and nine years had passed away from the time that our father Lehi left Jerusalem” (Enos 1:25). He does not, however, add a single new name to the record. After 179 years we still have only thirteen names! The next book is called the book of Jarom. In this book, Jarom informs us that he is the son of Enos and his son is Omni. He also states that 238 years had passed away. At this point we still have only fifteen Nephite and Lamanite names recorded on the plates. Since eleven of these names were revealed within the first decade of Nephite history, this means that only four new names were added in a period of almost 230 years!

At any rate, the only name that Omni adds to the record is that of his son, Amaron. He also noted that 282 years had passed away. Amaron does not really have anything to say and continues the record in his father’s book. He adds only one new name—that of his brother Chemish—and notes that 320 years had passed away. Chemish does not add any new names to the record. The next writer, Abinadom, identifies himself and says that he is the “son of Chemish.” Abinadom writes two verses but adds no new names to the record.

The final writer to engrave characters on the small plates of Nephi introduces himself as Amaleki, the son of Abinadom. He writes the last nineteen verses in the book of Omni. It seems very obvious from the details that Amaleki gives in this book that Joseph Smith has arrived at or passed by the portion of the manuscript that could be contradicted by anything in the missing 116 pages. In other words, we are on the other side of the black hole. At this point Amaleki boldly introduces many new details. He, in fact, goes so far as to introduce four new names into the story. Anyone who takes the time to examine Amaleki’s verses will be able to see how different they are from the rest of the writing which was supposed to have come from the small plates of Nephi. Even the dedicated Book of Mormon apologist J. N. Washburn seemed surprised by the amount of information contained in the last nineteen verses of the book of Omni. Although Mr. Washburn felt that this portion of the story was “without miscalculation or contradiction,” he could not help but comment on the unusual nature of Amaleki’s verses:

*The last nineteen verses of the Book of Omni provide a different kind of study altogether. They constitute a unit quite unlike anything else in the entire Book of Mormon. . . . These last nineteen verses . . . give the account of the affairs of the Nephite people between the approximate dates 175 and 124 B.C. . . . Few paragraphs go together chronologically. . . .*  

We have now seen that at least seven important items of information some of them essential, are first brought to our attention in the last nineteen verses of the Book of Omni. This, however, does not exhaust the possibilities of this interesting little chapter. Not only are a number of prominent men first named here; not only are we first informed of movements of utmost significance; not only are the three peoples of the Book of Mormon brought together; not only is there vital material concerning records presented here; not only are other valuable matters divulged, but there are also numerous details of vast interest to be found within these three pages. . . .

It must be readily seen that these nineteen verses are unusual. Is it not surprising that so large a number of unrelated fragments are thrown together in this small space? Nowhere else in the entire book is such diverse material found in so crowded a setup. (*The Contents, Structure and Authorship of the Book of Mormon*, 1954, pp. 23, 28-29)
While Mr. Washburn was startled to find the contents of the concluding verses of the small plates of Nephi so unusual, we feel that these last nineteen verses fit very well with our theory of a black hole in the Book of Mormon. Since Joseph Smith knew that he had safely by-passed the danger of being entrapped by the missing 116 pages, he felt that it would be safe to now give historical details. He, therefore, seems to have given us a double dose of information in these last nineteen verses to set the stage for the books which follow.

MISSING KINGS

Nephi was supposed to be the first king of the Nephites (see 2 Nephi 5:18). It is very possible that Joseph Smith forgot the name he had given to the second king in the lost 116 pages. When Jacob refers to Nephi’s successor, he does not give him any name:

Now Nephi began to be old, and he saw that he must soon die; wherefore, he anointed a man to be a king and a ruler over his people now, according to the reigns of the kings. (Jacob 1:9)

This is certainly a strange way to speak of the new king. It is entirely different from the way the ancient Israelites referred to their kings. Not only did they have a great deal to say about them, but they proudly gave their names and the names of their fathers. For instance, in 1 Chronicles 29:26 we read: “Thus David the son of Jesse reigned over all Israel.”

In any case, Jacob went on to say that the people “were desirous to retain in remembrance his [Nephi’s] name” (Jacob 1:11). Therefore, “whoso should reign in his stead were called by the people, second Nephi, third Nephi, and so forth, according to the reigns of the kings; and thus they were called by the people, let them be of whatever name they would” (ibid.). In the fifteenth verse of the same chapter, Jacob informed his readers that “the people of Nephi, under the reign of the second king, began to grow hard in their hearts . . .” This terse reference to the “second king” is the last reference to any king for hundreds of years. It is only after we come out of the black hole (Omni, verse 12) that we encounter the name of another king: “. . . Mosiah, who was made king . . .” Amaleki also mentions a “king Benjamin.” This seems to be the same king referred to in the book of Mosiah.

The reader will remember that kings were supposed to be called “second Nephi, third Nephi, and so forth . . . let them be of whatever name they would,” yet when we come out of the black hole, they are called “Mosiah” and “Benjamin.” This even puzzled the Mormon writer J. N. Washburn: “Was Mosiah one of these kings? If so, why was he not called Nephi X or Nephi XI or whatever he would happen to be? . . . Where, we must ask again, does Mosiah fit into all this? It appears almost certain that he had been a king in the land of Nephi. Why, then, was he not called Nephi?” (The Contents, Structure and Authorship of the Book of Mormon, pp. 24, 27).

DATINGS EVENTS

Although Amaleki speaks of two kings, he still does not give us many details and there is nothing in his portion of the book of Omni concerning dates. In Omni, verse 23, we find this: “Behold, I, Amaleki, was born in the days of Mosiah; and I have lived to see his death; and Benjamin, his son reigneth in his stead.” This should be contrasted with the precision found in later portions of the Book of Mormon. For instance, in Mosiah 29:46 we read: “And it came to pass that Mosiah [apparently the grandson of the Mosiah mentioned by Amaleki] died also, in the thirty and third year of his reign, being sixty and three years old; making in the whole, five hundred and nine years from the time Lehi left Jerusalem.”

In the period following the black hole and the reign of the three kings, the Nephites decide to have judges instead of kings. In the book of Alma the dating becomes very precise. It starts out with “the first year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi” (Alma 1:1), and verse 23 talks of “the second year of the reign of Alma.” This system of dating continues until “an hundred years had passed away” (3 Nephi 2:5). Our examination of the record reveals that at least ninety of these years are mentioned in the Book of Mormon and that specific events are linked to these dates. For example, in Helaman 6:15, we read: “. . . in the sixty and sixth year of the reign of the judges, behold, Cezerom was murdered by an unknown hand as he sat upon the judgment-seat.” After the hundred years had elapsed the Nephites begin dating events from the time of the birth of Christ, and this system continues until “more than four hundred and twenty years” had passed away (Moroni 10:1). The crucifixion of Christ is precisely dated as occurring “in the thirty and fourth year, in the first month, on the fourth day of the month . . .” (3 Nephi 8:5).

When we turn back to the small plates of Nephi, we find an entirely different story. The first date actually appears very early in the record and gives the impression that Nephi planned to be very precise in dating historical matters: “For it came to pass in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah . . . there came many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed” (1 Nephi 1:4). Although the next date given is very precise it does not relate to the history found in the small plates of Nephi. It simply says that Christ would come “six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem . . .” (1 Nephi 10:4). The next date appears in 1 Nephi 17:4 and says that the Lehi’s group spent “eight years in the wilderness.” First Nephi 19:8 tells us again that Christ would come “six hundred years from the time my father left Jerusalem.” The next date does not appear until 2 Nephi 5:28: “And thirty years had passed away from the time we left Jerusalem.” This reference does not relate to anything of historical importance. The verse just before it states: “And it came to pass that we lived after the manner of happiness.” In the 34th verse of the same chapter, Nephi informs us that “forty years had passed away, and we
had already had wars and contentions with our brethren.”
No historical event is mentioned with regard to this date.

In 2 Nephi 25:19, Nephi again tells us that “the Messiah
cometh in six hundred years from the time that my father left
Jerusalem . . . .” The book of Jacob 1:1 indicates that “fifty
and five years had passed away from the time that Lehi left
Jerusalem,” but it gives no historical information. In the
seventh chapter, verses one and two, Jacob tells of a man
who believed there would be “no Christ” coming among the
people. Even this matter is not dated: “And now it came to
pass after some years had passed away, there came a man
among the people . . . .”

A hundred and twenty-four years pass from the time that
Jacob said that “fifty and five years had passed away” and
finally Enos gives a date. This date only seems to relate to
the fact that Enos was becoming old: “And it came to pass
that I began to be old, and an hundred and seventy and nine
years had passed away from the time that our father Lehi
left Jerusalem” (Enos, verse 25). Jarom later noted that “two
hundred years had passed away, and the people of Nephi had
waxed strong in the land” (Jarom, verse 5). In verse thirteen,
Jarom noted that “two hundred and thirty and eight years had
passed away—after the manner of wars, and contentions, and
dissensions, for the space of much of the time.” Thirty-eight
more years pass away and Omni wrote: “. . . two hundred
and seventy and six years had passed away, and we had many
seasons of peace; and we had many seasons of serious war
and bloodshed. Yea, and in fine, two hundred and eighty
and two years had passed away” (Omni, verse 3). The final
date appearing on the small plates of Nephi was written by
Amaron just two verses after Omni’s last date was given:
“. . . three hundred and twenty years had passed away, and
the more wicked part of the Nephites were destroyed.” The
record is then passed on to Chemish. He gives no dates and
passes the small plates on to Abinadom. Abinadom, likewise,
gives no dates and turns over the plates to Amaleki. While
Amaleki gives some historical information, he also fails to
give any dates. He did, however mention that he lived until
the reign of king Benjamin. According to information given
later, Benjamin reigned until 124 B.C. (Mosiah 6:4).

As far as we can determine, there is no historical date of
any importance in the Book of Mormon from the time
that Lehi’s group left the Old World until the reference in
Mosiah 6:4, which informs us that “Mosiah began to reign
. . . in the thirtieth year of his age . . . about four hundred
and seventy-six years from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem.”

There were ample opportunities in the small plates of
Nephi for dates to have been given, but it seems obvious that
the author did not want to tie events to dates. For instance,
one would think that the death of Nephi’s father, Lehi,
would have been important enough for a date and perhaps
some details. Instead, however, Nephi casually writes: “. . .
my father, Lehi . . . waxed old. And it came to pass that he
died, and was buried” (2 Nephi 4:12). The death of Ishmael,
Nephi’s father-in-law, is handled in the same manner: “And
it came to pass that Ishmael died, and was buried in the place
which was called Nahom” (1 Nephi 16:34).

Jacob treated his brother Nephi’s death in the same
fleeting manner: “And it came to pass that Nephi died” (Jacob
1:12). This is certainly one of the shorter verses in the Book
of Mormon. If the words “And it came to pass that” were
not present, it would leave only “Nephi died.” The death
of Sariah seems to have been entirely ignored, and there is
nothing concerning the death of Nephi’s wife. Although we
have not made an intensive search concerning the matter, we
have only found two other cases where Nephite or Lamanite
people (mentioned by name in the small plates) actually die
—i.e., Sherem and king Benjamin. We can infer that Jacob
died because his son says that “he was a just man” (Enos,
verse 1), but no details are given concerning the matter. This
is certainly different from the rest of the Book of Mormon.

Another very strange thing about the small plates of
Nephi is that while the story moves slowly through the years
at first, as we approach the end of the plates, it accelerates
in an almost slapdash manner. The first fifty-five chapters only
move the story ahead “fifty and five years,” but hundreds
of years fly by in the last three chapters. Even the Mormon
apologist J. N. Washburn noted the “astoundingly long
time” that the book of Omni encompasses (The Contents,
Structure, and Authorship of the Book of Mormon, p. 23).
Mr. Washburn seems to feel that “225 crowded years” were
covered in “eleven paragraphs.” The chronology, however,
is very confusing. We feel that a period of about 200 years is
covered between verses one and twenty-three. The footnotes
which the Mormon Church has included in the Book of
Mormon indicate that Jarom ends his book in “361 B.C.” and
that the book of Omni covers a period down to “130 B.C.”
This would mean that 231 years elapse in one small book.
Whatever the case may be, it is remarkable that this important
portion of Nephite history was glossed over in one chapter.

While Mr. Washburn was astounded that so much
time was covered in such a limited number of verses, this
situation fits very well with our black hole theory of the
Book of Mormon. Joseph Smith must have become tired of
trying to fill up the missing portion of the Book of Mormon
with extraneous material. He seems to have had exceptional
powers of imagination and must have found it very difficult
to repress his desire to give specific details concerning the
characters in his book. By the time he came to the book of
Omni, he had already written sixty-four chapters to replace
the missing material. Therefore, as soon as he felt he had
safely passed the point where he could be trapped by the 116
pages, he rapidly brought the project to a screeching halt.

A LOST PEOPLE

The earliest portion of the Book of Mormon, the part
dealing with the Old World, gives one the impression that
the book is going to have a good setting as far as history and
geography are concerned. For instance, it mentions the fact
that Lehi lived in Jerusalem; that Jerusalem was a walled
city; that Zedekiah was the king; that Jeremiah was a prophet
at that time; that Lehi’s group traveled by the Red Sea; that they came to “the sea” (the Indian Ocean?) and departed by ship to the New World.

As soon as Lehi’s group land in the New World serious problems in the account become evident. While the account of their sojourn in the Old World does have some details about their location, things are completely different in the New World. To begin with, the account of their landing is very vague. Instead of giving the details which we would expect, Nephi seemed to be evasive: “And it came to pass that after we had sailed for the space of many days we did arrive at the promised land; and we went forth upon the land, and did pitch our tents; and we did call it the promised land” (1 Nephi 18:23). In the first place, it should be noted that no date is given as to when these people arrived. Moreover, there is no description of where they landed—it could be any place from Alaska to the tip of South America. In verse 25, Nephi gives very specific information concerning the animals which they found, but there is absolutely no information concerning the geography of the region. The same verse informs us that the people “journeyed in the wilderness,” but there is nothing to indicate which direction they traveled in.

In the Old World portion of the Book of Mormon we were told that the group “traveled . . . nearly a south-southeast direction” (1 Nephi 16:13), and the next chapter, 17:1, says that they “did travel nearly eastward from that time forth.” As strange as it may seem, after Lehi’s people land in the New World there is not one statement concerning their traveling in any direction until after we come out of the black hole. There is, in fact, no use of the words north, south, east or west to locate any people or geographical place. The first statement to use directions was written by Amaleki and appears in Omni, verse 22. It is, however, referring to another people, the Jaredites, who were destroyed before Lehi’s group landed in the New World: “. . . their bones lay scattered in the land northward.” From that point on, directions are again used freely in the Book of Mormon. For example, in Mosiah 7:16 we read of “the hill which was north of Shilom . . .”. In 9:14 of the same book we read of “the land of Nephi, away on the south of the land of Shilom . . .”. To emphasize how dark the black hole really is we only have to examine the book of Alma. In that book alone there are over 100 places where directions are used!

Nephi not only neglected to tell us where his people landed and which way they traveled into the wilderness, but he continued to be evasive throughout his record. In 2 Nephi 5:6-8, he wrote concerning his separation from his bothers, the Lamanites: “. . . I, Nephi, did take my family . . . and all those who would go with me. . . . and did journey in the wilderness for the space of many days. And after we had journeyed for the space of many days we did pitch our tents. And my people would that we should call the name of the place Nephi; wherefore, we did call it Nephi.” The reader will notice that we are not told where Nephi and his people started from, what direction they went or even how long they traveled. We only know that they traveled for the “space of many days” and arrived in some other place and “did call it Nephi.” Nephi went on to say he taught his “People to build buildings . . . And I, Nephi, did build a temple; and I did construct it after the manner of the temple of Solomon save it were not built of so many precious things . . .” (verses 15-16).

It is very interesting to note that Nephi never referred to the place where he and his people lived as a “city,” and he did not name even one Nephite or Lamanite city! Before he came to the New World, Nephi spoke of the “city” Jerusalem six times and referred to “the city of Nazareth” two times, but after he came to the New World, he was completely silent with regard to the names of New World cities. As a matter of fact, none of the other writers who followed Nephi through the black hole period mentioned the name of any city. Mosiah 7:1 is the first place that we find the name of a city: “. . . king Mosiah . . . was desirous to know concerning the people who went up to dwell in the land of Lehi-Nephi, or in the city of Lehi-Nephi . . .”

The LDS Church’s computer program gives us some interesting information concerning the use of the word city in the Book of Mormon. It shows that in his two books, Nephi uses the word city twelve times. None of these references, however, relate to the New World. They are all Old World cities referred to by Nephi or in quotations from the prophet Isaiah of the Bible. The Book of Jacob does not contain the word city at all. Neither do the books of Enos, Jarom or Omni. Even the Words of Mormon, which is inserted between Omni and Mosiah, does not have the word city in it. When we reach the book of Mosiah we have a different story. The word city appears twenty times and in the book of Alma it is used 195 times! This, of course, provides a great deal of support for our black hole theory. Joseph Smith did not want to name cities during the portion of the record which replaced the missing 116 pages, but after he bypassed that portion he felt free to use the names of many cities. (Perhaps we should mention here that Mormon scholars feel that Joseph Smith did not translate the small plates of Nephi until he had finished the rest of the book—Words of Mormon through Moroni. In other words, the first part of the Book of Mormon as it presently exists was written last. While we feel that there is some good evidence to support this conclusion, it does not really affect our theory about a black hole in the Book of Mormon.)

We decided to use the church’s computer program to see if we could find anything in the small plates of Nephi which would help us establish some type of geographical or historical base for the story after Lehi’s people reached the New World. We asked the computer to find the following words: shore, shores, sea, seashore, hill, hills, valley, valleys, river, rivers, mount, mountain, mountains, lake, border, borders, bordered, bordering, place and places. The search proved futile. The “place Nephi,” turned up, but as we have already shown, it has no relationship to any known location. The word valley turned up in the section in question, but the context made it obvious that it had nothing to do with geography: “. . . why should . . . my soul linger in the valley of sorrow . . .” (2 Nephi 4:26). The word lake is found four times in the section we call the black hole, but the lake spoken of is the “lake of fire and brimstone”—i.e., hell.
We find it very strange that Nephi can behold “the city of Nazareth” and the Virgin Mary within that city in vision, but he will not give the name of a single city or land in the New World. Moreover, he tells us that his father, Lehi, knew that John the Baptist would “baptize in Bethabara, beyond Jordan . . .” (1 Nephi 10:9), yet his small plates give us absolutely no information concerning rivers, lakes, hills and valleys in the New World. All of the evidence indicates that there was a deliberate attempt to suppress any details that might contradict the 116 missing pages.

**UNRECORDED WARS**

As we have previously noted, Nephi has informed us that the plates from which the 116 pages were translated contained “an account of the reign of the kings, and the wars and contentions of my people” (Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 9:4). In another place, Nephi noted that these plates give “a greater account of the wars and contentions and destructions of my people” (1 Nephi, 19:4).

We have stated that these plates would undoubtedly mention the names of the prominent military leaders who took part in important battles and give the dates and locations of the battles. In addition, they probably would give details of the battles and the number of men lost in combat. Our theory of a black hole in the Book of Mormon suggests that Joseph Smith would not be able to accurately reconstruct all the details he had previously written concerning the wars of the ancient Nephites and Lamanites. Consequently, in the pages he wrote to replace the missing part of the Book of Mormon, he would have to steer clear of military encounters. An examination of the portion translated from the small plates of Nephi reveals that this is the case. Any meaningful details concerning battles are completely avoided.

In 2 Nephi 5:34, Nephi wrote that “forty years had passed away, and we had already had wars and contentions with our brethren.” The reader will notice that absolutely no details are given. In his book, Jacob tells us that Nephi had “wielded the sword of Laban” in the defense of his people (Jacob 1:10). Again, we find no mention of any of the battles he fought in. Jacob also informed the readers that the Lamanites “delighted in wars . . . they sought by the power of their arms to destroy us continually” (7:24). No examples, however, are given by Jacob at this time nor at any other time. The next writer, Amaron, the writer who begins to lead us out of the black hole, revealed that he had seen “a serious war and much bloodshed between the Nephites and the Lamanites. But behold, the Nephites did obtain much advantage over them; yea, insomuch that king Benjamin did drive them out of the land of Zarahemla” (Omni, verse 24). This, of course, does not give us any detailed information about the war or the year or years in which it occurred.

As we get into the book of Mosiah, we begin to get more specific details about battles. Zeniff tells of a battle with the Lamanites in which “we did slay three thousand and forty-three; . . . And behold, to our great sorrow and lamentation, two hundred and seventy-nine of our brethren were slain” (Mosiah 9:18-19). In verse 14 the date is given as “the thirteenth year of my reign,” but since we have no way of knowing when Zeniff began to reign, we can only guess as to when this war was supposed to have occurred.

As the story in the Book of Mormon proceeds, the accounts of the battles become very specific. For example, in the book of Alma we read that in the “eighteenth year of the reign of the judges” the Lamanites were “coming upon” the Nephites. The Nephites, therefore, gathered in the “land of Jershon” (Alma 43:3-4). The “Lamanites came with their thousands . . . into the land of Antionum, which is the land of the Zoramites; and a man by the name of Zerahemnah was their leader” (43:5). The “chief captain over the Nephites . . . was Moroni (43:16). The story concerning this war continues for pages and gives numerous details. For instance, it says that the Nephites concealed themselves. As “the Lamanites had passed the hill Riplah, and came into the valley, and began to cross the river Sidon, the army which was concealed on the south of the hill, which was led by a man whose name was Lehi, and he led his army forth and encircled the Lamanites about on the east in their rear” (43:35). After the fierce battle, the Nephites “encircled” the Lamanites. The Lamanite leader, “Zerahemnah retained his sword, and he was angry with Moroni, and he rushed forward that he might slay Moroni; but as he raised his sword, behold, one of Moroni’s soldiers . . . smote Zerahemnah that he took off his scalp . . . the soldier . . . took up the scalp from off the ground by the hair, and laid it upon the point of his sword, and stretched it forth unto them . . .” (44:12-13).
Zerahemnah, however, was “exceedingly wroth” and continued to urge his people to fight. As it turned out, the Lamanites “were pierced and smitten, yea, and did fall exceedingly fast before the swords of the Nephites …” (44:18). Finally, Zerahemnah surrendered and the war was over.

This story gives a great deal of information. We notice that it gives the date the war was fought; uses the words east, west, north and south; gives the names of five groups of people; mentions eight personal names; gives the names of three lands, a river and a hill. It seems reasonable to believe that this same type of detailed information was given in the 116 pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript which were stolen. Since Joseph Smith did not retain a copy of the stolen portion, he was unable to duplicate it. Therefore, he was forced to leave out any specific military matters in the pages he created to replace those that had been pilfered. It should be noted that the history of Joseph Smith’s life shows that he was fascinated with military matters, and this seems to have been reflected in the Book of Mormon.

In trying to explain why this material is now missing from the first part of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith used the Nephite characters he had created to offer an excuse. We have already shown that he had Nephi say that his other plates contained “a greater account of the wars.” Toward the end of the small plates of Nephi, he had Jarom apologize again for the missing material on the wars: “. . . ye can go to the other plates of Nephi; for behold, upon them the records of our wars are engraven, according to the writings of the kings, or those which they caused to be written” (Jarom, verse 14). The problem, of course, is that we do not have these records, and therefore there is no way that we can check the truth of this statement.

**USING FILLER**

One thing that strengthens the argument that there is a black hole in the Book of Mormon, is the use of a great deal of filler material in the very portion of the story created to take the place of the 116 pages. It seems rather obvious that Joseph Smith did not have any important historical Nephite-Lamanite material to fill in the gap. Consequently, he was forced to insert a conglomeration of odds and ends to use up space.

The Old World portion of the small plates of Nephi does contain some “history.” It gives the story about Lehi being warned to flee from Jerusalem, a very detailed account of how Nephi ends up slaying an evil man named Laban, the flight into the wilderness and building a temple. It also tells how of his being “lifted up upon the cross and slain for the sins of the world.” Nephi then goes on to predict that “a man,” obviously Columbus, would come to the New World.

Chapters 16-18 do give some information about the problems Lehi’s people had in the wilderness; how Nephi was able to build a ship and how they eventually arrive in the New World. It is, of course, at this point that we have a real blackout on meaningful details. Chapter nineteen begins with what seems to be another apology for the lack of details in the small plates of Nephi. Instead of returning to the story concerning his people, Nephi then speaks of the coming of Christ “in six hundred years from the time my father left Jerusalem,” how he would be crucified, etc. By chapter twenty, Nephi seems to have completely run out of words. He, in fact, inserts two chapters of Isaiah (see 1 Nephi, chapters 20 and 21). While he claims that he is copying them from the “plates of brass,” it is obvious to anyone who takes the time to critically examine the matter that the material really comes from the 48th and 49th chapters of the book of Isaiah in the King James Version of the Bible, first printed in 1611 A.D.

In 2 Nephi, the prophet Nephi continues to suppress anything of importance relating to Nephite history. In Chapter 4, Nephi writes his own psalm using portions of scripture from both the Old and New Testaments. Chapter 5 tells of Nephi having more problems with his brothers, fleeing into the wilderness and building a temple. It also tells how “the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon” the Lamanites. He referred to it as “a sore cursing” (verses 21-23). In chapter 6, he includes his brother Jacob’s words concerning the teachings of Isaiah and Old Testament history. Chapters 7 and 8 of 2 Nephi are copied from Isaiah, chapters 50, 51, 52:1-2. Chapters 9 and 10 of 1 Nephi are nothing but a theological exposition by Jacob and have nothing to do with the history of the Nephites or the Lamanites. In Chapter 11, Nephi tells us that both he and his brother Jacob “have seen” their “Redeemer.” In the same chapter, verse 1, Nephi also informs the reader that he is going to “write more of the words of Isaiah, for my soul delighteth in his words.” Nephi then proceeds to quote thirteen chapters of Isaiah (chapters 2 through 14) from the King James Version! This takes us from chapter 12 to 24 in 2nd Nephi.

That Joseph Smith would have to throw in so many chapters of Isaiah as filler shows that he was having a very difficult time trying to find something suitable to replace the material in the lost 116 pages. It is certainly odd that he would leave out significant portions of the history of the Nephites and yet throw in page after page of material from Isaiah. The fact that we already have this material in our Bible makes the situation even more ridiculous.

Although the two books of Nephi were supposed to have been written by a Jew living about 600 years before Christ, Chapters 31-33 contain “the doctrine of Christ.” They contain many references from the New Testament, but nothing concerning the history of Nephi’s people.

The book of Jacob begins with a discussion of the plates. In verses 2-3, Jacob claims that Nephi “commanded” him that he “should not touch, save it were lightly, concerning
the history of this people which are called the people of Nephi... the history of his people should be engraved upon his other plates...” In this first chapter, Jacob gives us the evasive statement that it was “a man”—no name given—whom Nephi selected to be the second king of his people. It is especially strange that Jacob would not reveal the name of the new king since in chapter 7, he gives a known Antichrist the dignity of a name: “whose name was Sherem.”

Like Nephi, Jacob does not give any information which has any real historical value. In Chapter 5 he included an allegory concerning the tame and wild olive trees which was supposed to have been written by an ancient prophet named Zenos before Lehi’s people came to the New World. It was obviously taken from Apostle Paul’s writings found in Romans 11:17-24 and from statements made by Jesus. In the Book of Mormon, however, it has been expanded to take up six pages! It is probably the most repetitious and uninteresting part of the Book of Mormon. It gives the impression that the author is deliberately trying to use up as much space as possible. It is very hard to resist the idea that it is merely filler material.

The book of Enos tells how he was converted to the Lord, but adds nothing of historical importance other than “an hundred and seventy and nine years had passed away...” (verse 25).

While the book of Enos had 27 verses, Jarom completed his record in just 15 verses. He, of course, added nothing important but the information that “two hundred and thirty and eight years had passed away...”

In the the book of Omni we seem to sense a desire to rapidly bring the curtain down on the story told in the small plates of Nephi. While this book has only thirty verses, there are five different authors who write on the plates. This gives an average of just six verses per author. The first author, Omni, was “commanded by my father, Jarom, that I should write somewhat upon these plates, to preserve our genealogy.” He adds nothing of any importance, however, but the name of his son and that 282 years had passed away. He seems to have no spiritual message to write on the plates, and confesses that he is “a wicked man, and have not kept the statutes and the commandments of the Lord as I ought to have done.”

The second writer, Amaron, adds the last date given on these plates. He noted that 320 years had passed, but gave no historical information. Chemish, the third writer, obviously has nothing to say. His writing on the record amounts to only one verse and is almost comical in nature because he seems to have worked so hard to say almost nothing: “Now I, Chemish, write what few things I write, in the same book with my brother; for behold, I saw the last which he wrote, that he wrote it with his own hand; and he wrote it in the day that he delivered them unto me. And after this manner we keep the records, for it is according to the commandments of our fathers. And I make an end.” Abinadom, the fourth writer, completes only 2 verses. Other than the fact that he “saw much war” and took “the lives of many of the Lamanites in the defence of my brethren,” he had virtually nothing to say: “...I know of no revelation save that which has been written, neither prophecy; wherefore, that which is sufficient is written. And I make an end.”

As we have already noted, Amaleki, the fifth and last writer, was apparently on the other side of the black hole. Although he did not give any dates and was still rather vague about some details, it seems that his role was to set the stage for the next act—i.e., Mormon’s abridgment of the large plates of Nephi. He tells of a king Mosiah who was warned by the Lord to “flee out of the land of Nephi” to the “land of Zarahemla.” Mosiah just seems to appear out of nowhere. Nothing is given about his background nor what happened in the “land of Nephi” that caused the Lord to instruct him to flee. We have already shown that the Mormon writer J. N. Washburn was puzzled that Mosiah did not fit the pattern of naming kings that Jacob mentioned. While Mosiah’s sudden appearance and flight into the wilderness may seem strange to some people, it fits very well with the theory that there is a black hole in the Book of Mormon.

Joseph Smith had undoubtedly given a great deal of information in the 116 missing pages concerning the location of cities, lands, hills, etc. in the country where the Nephites had originally settled. Smith apparently felt that this information could trip him up. He probably remembered some of the details of his previous story, but he must have felt that it would be better to wipe the slate clean and place the Nephites in entirely new surroundings. He, therefore, has Mosiah lead his people “through the wilderness” until they come into the “land of Zarahemla” where they encounter “a people who were called the people of Zarahemla.” Strange as it may seem, this people had also been in the New World for almost the same length of time as the Nephites but had not come in contact with them before. They had come out from Jerusalem at the time that Zedekiah, king of Judah, was carried away captive into Babylon” (Omni, verses 12-15).

As the case with Nephi’s flight into the wilderness, Amaleki does not tell us how many people he took with him, how far they traveled into the wilderness or what direction they traveled. In any case, the center of action has been moved from the land of Nephi to the land of Zarahemla. Although some Nephites return to the land of Nephi, the important part of the story moves to this new land of Zarahemla and numerous cities and lands suddenly spring into existence and become part of the military action which goes on. Mormon scholar Fletcher B. Hammond observed: “And thus the Nephites left the land of Nephi to the Lamanites; and the Nephites never again took permanent residence in that land” (“Geography of the Book of Mormon—Where is the Hill Cumorah?” page 9).

Even with Amaleki’s help in getting the Nephites to a new land, the small and large plates of Nephi do not come together in a very smooth manner. The first book abridged by Mormon is the Book of Mosiah. In the book of Omni, Amaleki said that he “was born in the days of Mosiah; and I have lived to see his death; and Benjamin, his son, reigneth in his stead” (verse 23). Mormon’s abridgement of the book of Mosiah mentions two kings, “Benjamin” and “Mosiah,” and the reader might assume that the Mosiah spoken of there was the same man Amaleki was talking about. This
must not be the case, however, because Mosiah 1:2 says that “Mosiah” was one of the “sons” of Benjamin. Apparently, the Mosiah spoken of in the book of Mosiah was a grandson of the Mosiah that Amaleki referred to. One verse that may indicate this, Mosiah 2:32, has Benjamin speaking of “my father Mosiah.” All the information we have concerning the first Mosiah’s reign, then, is found in the brief writings of Amaleki within the book of Omni.

The first part of the Book of Mormon from 1 Nephi to Omni, verse 11, is relatively easy to follow. Although we learn virtually nothing about Nephite history, it is easy to keep the story straight. Beginning with the writings of Amaleki, however, everything changes. From Omni, verses 12-30, to the latter part of Mosiah, the record is filled with confusion. There are so many diverse stories of people never mentioned before and other themes thrown in that the reader’s head is left spinning. While the Mormon writer J. N. Washburn firmly believed in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, he commented that the book of Mosiah contains “the most complicated and difficult part of the whole Book of Mormon.” Washburn went on to state that there “is pyramiding of stories upon stories” and noted that the abridger of the book of Mosiah, Mormon, had “an unobstructed view of the entire series of developments. Indeed, his view is so clear that he appears at times to think that his readers will understand as well as he did, will have something of his omniscience. Lacking it we frequently find ourselves confused” (The Contents, Structure and Authorship of the Book of Mormon, pages 35, 37-38).

A careful examination of the Book of Mormon reveals that it is a very unusual book. The small plates of Nephi account for 142 pages in the 1981 revised edition. On these pages any specifics concerning warfare are avoided like the plague. According to Nephi, the plates from which these pages were derived were reserved so that “the more sacred things may be kept for the knowledge of my people” (1 Nephi 19:5). As soon as we get past these pages, however, we run into many detailed accounts of bloody wars. We are, in fact, given vivid details concerning the entire destruction of two great nations—the Nephites and the Jaredites. While God especially watches over the small plates of Nephi so that we only get what was considered “to be the most precious” information, when we get to the large plates of Nephi, the abridger (Mormon) considers warfare to be one of the most important things. In The Words of Mormon, verse 5, Mormon comments: “Therefore, I chose these things, to finish my record upon them, which remainder of my record I shall take from the plates of Nephi; and I cannot write the hundredth part of the things of my people.” Now, if Mormon cannot give us even “the hundredth part” of the history of his people, it is strange that his God did not inspire him to filter out the war material as he seems to have done in the case of the small plates of Nephi. The only reasonable solution to this problem appears to be the black hole theory of the Book of Mormon. Although Joseph Smith liked to write concerning religion, he was also extremely interested in warfare. He had already written a great deal about it in the 116 pages which were lost, but when he wrote the material to replace these pages, he was forced to suppress military matters for fear that the 116 lost pages might come to light and expose his deception. When, however, he was not shackled by this restraint, he wrote freely on the subject. There can be little doubt that if Smith had not been hindered by the fear of the lost pages coming forth, the Book of Mormon would have been more devoted to warfare and consequently less concerned with spiritual matters.

If our theory of a black hole in the Book of Mormon was only supported by a few facts, we would not advocate it so strongly. As it is, however, every test we can think to apply to it yields the same result. We feel, therefore, that it is an irrefutable argument against the historicity of the Book of Mormon.

**THE FUTURE OF THE BOOK OF MORMON**

In 1984, when we first publicly announced that we had some very serious reservations concerning the authenticity of Mark Hofmann’s famous Salamander letter, some Mormon scholars felt that we were making a grave mistake. We had found evidence that material which appeared in that letter could have been taken from E. D. Howe’s book, Mormonism Unveiled, which was not published until a few years after the Salamander letter was supposed to have been written (see Salt Lake City Messenger, March 1984). Hofmann, of course, later confessed that he did plagiarize from Howe’s book in forging the letter.

We feel that the evidence we now have against the authenticity of the Book of Mormon is at least a thousand times as strong as the textual evidence we had against the Hofmann document. Much evidence of plagiarism in the Book of Mormon was obtained prior to the time that we began working with a computer, but since that time new and important evidence has come to light. It seems, in fact, that the case is now absolutely devastating. We hope to publish our new findings in the near future.

On October 7, 1979, the Provo Herald reported that “Wordprint comparisons [made by two Brigham Young University scholars] between the Book of Mormon and the known 19th century writings of Joseph Smith and Mr. Spalding show conclusively that neither of these persons, authored the book . . . their research indicates that the book was authored by at least 24 different writers, and possibly more, whose styles bear no resemblance to that of Joseph Smith . . . or other 19th century writers whom they examined . . .” In response to the research which these men had done, we commented: “. . . we are very much in favor of computer studies with regard to the Book of Mormon. We would especially like to see a study showing the parallels between the King James Version [of the Bible] and the Book of Mormon. If a computer could actually be programmed to sort out writing styles, it would, no doubt, show more than 24 different authors in the Book of Mormon. We would probably find Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Job, David, Solomon, Ezekiel, Daniel, Jonah, Micah, Malachi,
Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, James, Peter, Jude, etc.” (Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? p. 96-H).

Our recent computer research with regard to plagiarism in the Book of Mormon seems to completely invalidate the arguments set forth by the BYU researchers. The evidence of plagiarism, in fact, is so extensive that it would be impossible to make an accurate study of so-called “noncontextual words.” Such a study might be of value with regard to authors who did not plagiarize large amounts of material, but in the case of the Book of Mormon there is so much material that has been borrowed from other authors that it makes the discovery of “wordprints” almost meaningless. Until all the extraneous material has been removed, no “linguistic fingerprint” is of any real value. While it may be possible to eliminate a great deal of the material plagiarized from the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, the very presence of this material alerts us to the fact that there is likely to be extensive plagiarism from other writings which have not yet been identified.

We have used an entirely different approach than those who have worked with “noncontextual words.” We feel that our method is much more reasonable in view of the evidence of heavy plagiarism in the text of the Book of Mormon. This is to search for certain combinations of words which seem to be strewn throughout the Book of Mormon. The following are just a few of the word combinations which we found: dwindle in unbelief; expedient that; it must needs be; save it were; sufficeth me and would that ye should. So far we have found between three and four hundred different combinations which seem to be scattered in different parts of the Book of Mormon. The recurrence of specific word combinations seems to indicate that these patterns are part of the author’s own peculiar style rather than words borrowed from somebody else. It is true, of course, that they may have initially appeared in some other writing, but the fact that they are repeated a number of times leads us to suspect that they have become part of the author’s style.

When we find a number of different Book of Mormon writers—e.g., Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Moroni and Mormon—all using many of the same unusual word combinations, we begin to suspect that all these books were really written by one person. Our research, in fact, leads us to believe that notwithstanding the fact that the Book of Mormon is filled with portions which have been plagiarized from the Bible, one style of writing can still be identified throughout the entire book. Furthermore, the preponderance of the evidence points towards Joseph Smith as the author.

While the BYU researchers would have us believe that Joseph Smith had nothing to do with creating the text of the Book of Mormon, our computer study yielded strong evidence that Smith was indeed the author. One document which led us to this conclusion was the short account Joseph Smith wrote of his early life in 1832 (see An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith, 1987, edited by Scott H. Faulring, pp. 3-8). This document furnished many peculiar word combinations that matched so well with the Book of Mormon that we could not help but conclude they both were the product of the same mind.

We also compared the preface Joseph Smith wrote for the first edition of the Book of Mormon. As we have already shown, this preface, which is no longer printed in the Book of Mormon, tells the reader concerning the theft of the 116 pages. The style of this document also closely resembles the Book of Mormon. In addition, we compared Section 10 of the Doctrine and Covenants with the Book of Mormon. This section is also written concerning the lost 116 pages and is very important because it is rather long and was written at the very time Joseph Smith was working on the Book of Mormon. Although it was supposed to be a revelation from “Jesus Christ, the Son of God,” the style was found to be remarkably like that found in the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith’s preface to the first edition of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith’s early account of his life. That Joseph Smith, the ancient Nephite prophets and Jesus Christ all sound the same leads us to just one possible conclusion: Joseph Smith was the author of all three documents. We hope to present the evidence concerning this matter in a forthcoming publication.

For a number of years Mormon scholars have boasted that they have detected “chiasmus” in the Book of Mormon. Noel B. Reynolds explains that “chiasmus is a peculiar and long-forgotten literary form present in the very earliest Hebrew writing as well as in other ancient Near Eastern works. In the Hebrew tradition it developed into a rhetorical device in which two sets of parallel elements are presented. The first set is presented 1, 2, 3, etc., but order of presentation is inverted in the second set, 3, 2, 1” (Brigham Young University Studies, Winter 1980, p. 138).

Mormon scholars go to great lengths in their attempts to identify chiasms in the Book of Mormon and reason that what they have found provides proof that the book must be “a product of the ancient world.” Even if it could be established that there are real chiasms in the Book of Mormon, it would not prove anything more than that Joseph Smith borrowed from the style of chiastic passages found in the Bible. We believe, however, that wishful thinking plays a very important role in this fervent search for chiasmus in Joseph Smith’s work. We doubt very much that there is any deliberate attempt at chiastic structure in the Book of Mormon and feel that what has been identified as chiasmus is merely evidence of Joseph Smith’s repetitive style of writing. Our examination of the Book of Mormon shows that Joseph Smith frequently repeated phrases, thoughts and even stories throughout his work. The noted Mormon historian B. H. Roberts made these revealing comments concerning this matter many years ago: “Having seen how strong parallelisms obtains between Jaredite and Nephite peoples . . . it remains in somewhat the same manner to show that a like sameness of repetition or parallelism obtains among the Nephites at different periods . . . I shall hold that what is here presented [concerning various accounts of Anti-Christs among the Nephites] illustrates sufficiently the matter taken in hand by referring to them, namely that they are all of one breed and brand; so nearly alike that one mind is the author of them, and that a young and undeveloped, but piously inclined mind. The evidence I sorrowfully submit, points to Joseph Smith
as their creator. It is difficult to believe that they are the product of history . . . ” (Studies of the Book of Mormon, 1985, pp. 264, 271).

Since Joseph Smith was so repetitive in his style, using the same thoughts and phrases over and over again, Mormon scholars who search long enough are certain to find these recurring elements in an order which they consider to be chiasmic in nature. It is interesting to note, however, that some of the more liberal Mormon scholars claim they have found “chiasms” in Joseph Smith’s own personal writings. This, of course, would tend to strengthen our position that Joseph Smith himself was probably the author of the Book of Mormon. In any case, we hope to deal with this in another publication.

In the light of computer research and the advances that are being made in this field, the future for the Book of Mormon looks very dim indeed. There is already talk of storing the text of an untold number of books on disks so that they can be used in computers. Once this is done, researchers will be able to use “Word Cruncher” or some similar program to compare the text of religious books available in Joseph Smith’s time with the Book of Mormon. Judging from the amount of material plagiarized from the Old and New Testaments, it seems very likely that the Book of Mormon contains material lifted from other sources. We are very optimistic, therefore, that researchers will eventually be able to find many other sources (books, pamphlets or newspapers) which Smith used in writing the Book of Mormon. While we feel that the evidence that has already come to light is absolutely devastating, it will still be very interesting to learn what other material Joseph Smith used.

HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT

The serious implications of what we have found with regard to plagiarism and the black hole in the Book of Mormon cannot be overstated. There are a growing number of members of the Mormon Church who are coming to the conclusion that Joseph Smith gave an erroneous translation of the papyrus he used as the basis for his “Book of Abraham” and that the Book of Mormon is not really history. Many of these people, however, wish to remain in the fellowship of the Mormon Church. It comes as no surprise, then, that some of them have a very difficult time viewing Joseph Smith in the same class as a calculating forger like Mark Hofmann. This is certainly understandable. Who would want to belong to a church whose founder deliberately produced false documents for the purpose of deception? They, therefore, prefer to believe that Joseph Smith was sincerely deceived. They think that he really believed that an angel appeared to him and some of them feel that the Book of Mormon could have been produced through the process of “automatic writing” or “channelling.” It is claimed that some who have engaged in “spirit writing” have produced some remarkable books which seem to be far beyond their natural ability. While many people believe that those who engage in “automatic writing” are actually controlled by a spirit, others would assert that their writings “are totally or partially the result of psychological processes.” In any case, it is asserted that if Joseph Smith was involved in automatic writing, he really could have believed that he was translating an ancient record.

One thing that is very difficult to explain if one resorts to the theory that Joseph Smith was dictating the Book of Mormon by automatic writing is that he also claimed to have ancient golden plates from which he translated. Now, certainly Joseph Smith would know whether or not he actually had these plates. If he did not have them, then it follows that he was not telling the truth. It is possible, of course, that he could have fabricated some sort of plates to fool the Book of Mormon witnesses, but this would also be deception. The suggestion that Joseph Smith was engaged in automatic writing fails to explain his many statements regarding the plates.

Our theory concerning a black hole in the Book of Mormon provides important new information concerning the question of whether Joseph Smith sincerely believed that his major work came from God. While it is very possible that some people who are engaged in automatic writing believe that it comes from some god, spirit or force, Joseph Smith’s actions with regard to the small plates of Nephite demonstrate that he knew very well that the work was spurious. If Smith was using automatic writing and really believed that the pages which he was dictating to replace the lost 116 pages were of divine origin, he probably would have let the words flow and not worried so much about the contents. As it is, however, we see evidence of the deliberate suppression of any type of material which might come into conflict with what he had previously written. Joseph Smith obviously felt embarrassed by the fact that he could not give any detailed historical material and had his characters keep reiterating that the “more history part” appears on the other plates. The whole idea of a second set of plates to replace the lost 116 pages seems to be a devious and calculated attempt to practice deception. The very complexity of the plan and the amount of time spent thinking it up argues against the idea that Joseph Smith was merely misguided.

Scott Dunn indicates that those who practice automatic writing are not engaging in “deliberate deception.” They are “very sincere individuals who are unfamiliar with the latent abilities of the human mind. When they discover that they can rapidly produce writing of a quality superior to their natural powers, they very understandably suppose that such works must come from an outside source” (Sunstone, June 1985, p. 21). In the case of Joseph Smith’s “translation” of the small plates of Nephi, it does not seem that he is producing “writing of a quality superior” to his “natural powers.” On the contrary, except for the first few chapters, it appears that he is setting forth something far inferior to his natural talents. Mormon historian B. H. Roberts conceded that Smith possessed “a vividly strong, creative imagination,” but in Joseph Smith’s work on the small plates we find little evidence of such an imagination. In fact, we find just the opposite; Smith seems unable to create new names, cities, lands, battles or anything very imaginative or exciting. When we pass the black hole, of course, we find all these things in abundance. Therefore, we
must conclude that Joseph Smith was deliberately suppressing his talent when he worked on the small plates. The first portion of the Book of Mormon does not seem to fit very well with the theory of automatic writing. Instead of material flowing forth, it seems that the stream has been dammed up.

With regard to Joseph Smith’s integrity, it could be true that he felt that he was producing a work which would help settle doctrinal disputes and set the world straight on religion. Nevertheless, he must have had some idea that he was practicing deception. In light of the new evidence that has come forth, Smith is beginning to look more and more like Mark Hofmann. The reader will remember that Mr. Hofmann had his own theory about Mormon history and created documents to establish that point of view. Joseph Smith also seems to have had his own assumptions about religion and created books of scripture to substantiate those ideas. Much of his early theology was very good, and his desire to help the Indians was commendable. Nevertheless, as in the case of Mark Hofmann, Smith’s works are not authentic and contain false concepts—e.g., that the Indians were cursed by God with a dark skin. For this reason they must be totally rejected.

We intend to pursue the matters of Book of Mormon authorship and plagiarism as well as evidence of other black holes we have detected in that book in future publications. Although we certainly do not want to give the reader the idea that we are desperate for money or about to fold up, we are experiencing some problems at this particular time because of the lack of funds. Those who are interested in helping us through this period of intensive research on the Book of Mormon can send their tax-deductible contributions to Utah Lighthouse Ministry, P.O. Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110. We feel that this is some of the most important research we have ever been involved in and believe that it will provide important answers for Mormons who are seeking for the truth.

PULL THE RIP-CORD!

The following is taken from our tract, The Worst Prison of All:

Unfortunately, some people have been led to believe that just an intellectual consent that Jesus is the Christ is sufficient for salvation. The Scriptures, however, teach that the devils believe there is a God, but that they have no salvation (see James 2:19). The word “believe,” as it is used in the Bible, has a much deeper meaning. In the Introduction to The Amplified New Testament, we find this information:

What does the word “believe” mean? It is extremely important, for multitudes are pinning their hope of heaven upon it . . . most people believe in Christ—that he lived; that He was a perfect man who sincerely believed Himself to be the Son of God, and that He died on the cross hoping to save sinners. But this is by no means the meaning of the Greek word . . . The Greek word is “pisteuo,” and means, “To adhere to, cleave to; to trust, to have faith in; to rely on”—which summed up in, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,” means an absolute personal reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour.

Intellectual belief is not enough; we must completely rely and trust in Christ. D. Shelby Corlett has said that “We do not believe in Him unless we act on it, unless we give the whole life to Him.” A sailor relies and trusts in his compass because it shows him in which direction he must sail to arrive at his destination. If he ignores his compass and goes in a different direction we would know that he does not really believe in it. A man may claim he believes in honesty, but if he continually steals people’s money and possessions, we know that he does not have a sincere belief. We would, in fact, consider him a hypocrite. The same is true of a person who claims to believe in Christ but lives contrary to His teachings. Those who are in trouble with the law may say they believe in their lawyers, but if they continually disregard the wise counsel given to them, it avails them nothing.

To say we believe in Christ and to refuse to walk in His ways is more foolish than to claim to believe in a parachute and yet jump out of a plane and neglect to pull the rip-cord. Another comparison might be to a man who professes to believe in the value of a life line, but refuses to cling to one when it is offered to him in the middle of a turbulent sea. In effect, the Bible teaches that we are all lost in a raging sea of sin hundreds of miles from shore. God has offered us a life line in Jesus Christ. If we refuse to hold fast to it and try to swim to shore an our own strength, we will perish because we can never swim that far.

If, however, we pray to the Lord with a sincere heart and turn our life completely over to him, we not only escape the penalty of eternal separation from God, but we are promised a place in heaven. While some people seem to believe that heaven will be a boring place, the Scriptures give every reason to believe that it will be a place where everyone will be continually rejoicing. Sorrow, pain and fear will be absent in heaven, and we will live in a state of perfect joy which is beyond our ability to comprehend at the present time. First Corinthians 2:9 contains the following:

But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love him.”

C. S. Lewis wrote the following in his book, The Problem of Pain: “Be sure that the ins and outs of your individuality are no mystery to Him; and one day they will no longer be a mystery to you. The mould in which a key is made would be a strange thing, if you had never seen a key: and the key itself a strange thing if you had never seen a lock. Your soul has a curious shape because it is a hollow made to fit a particular swelling in the infinite contours of the divine substance, or a key to unlock one of the doors in the house with many mansions.” Lewis goes on to say: “Your place in heaven will seem to be made for you and you alone, because you were made for it—made for it stitch by stitch as a glove is made for a hand.”

It will be so pleasant in heaven that we just cannot imagine it now. The happiest times we have ever had in this life are only a preview of what is to come for those who love the Lord. Only God knows what will bring us the greatest joy, and we can be certain that he will provide that for us throughout eternity.
**SPECIAL OFFER**

If ordered before September 30, 1989

**ONLY $9.00**

(Mail orders add 10% for postage and handling)

We are happy to report that all of Joseph Smith’s diaries are again available at Utah Lighthouse Ministry at an astoundingly low price. Many of our readers will remember that these diaries were offered earlier in a very limited hardback edition for $50.00 a copy. We were unable to fill all of our orders, and a newspaper recently reported that the price for those who were lucky enough to find a copy had gone up to as high as $175.00.

Signature Books has now brought our a beautiful paperback edition of this monumental work, *An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith*, edited by Scott H. Faulring. This work includes the 1832 account of Joseph Smith’s life which we mentioned in our lead article. These diaries, which were suppressed for well over a hundred years, provide devastating evidence against the First Vision story as well as proof that Joseph Smith’s *History of the Church*, printed by the Mormon Church, has been falsified.

Other bookstores are selling the diaries for $10.00 a copy, but those who order them from Utah Lighthouse Ministry before September 30, 1989, will receive them at the special price of $9.00 a copy (plus shipping)!

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EXCOMMUNICATION

Mormon Leader Expelled After Charging Church With Racism

On September 2, 1989, the Salt Lake Tribune made this startling announcement:

The only American Indian general authority in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was excommunicated Friday after claiming church leaders are perpetrating a “silent, subtle scriptural and spiritual slaughter” of his race.

George P. Lee, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy since 1975, was stripped of his membership by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles for “apostasy” and “other conduct unbecoming a member of the church.” He is the first Mormon general authority excommunicated in 46 years.

His excommunication is significant because Dr. Lee, a Navajo, was considered a church “success story,” himself a product of the LDS program that places impoverished and disadvantaged Indian children with Mormon families.

He claimed church leaders have “turned their backs” on Native Americans and, in pride and arrogance, are discriminating against the very people Mormon scriptures say they must rely on for salvation.

“There is a racist attitude I could just no longer stand,” Dr. Lee, 46, said in an interview. “It is aimed at the poor, at the Indians . . .

“They have washed their hands of their responsibilities to the Lamanites,” he said. “My conscience would not allow me to go on.” . . .

Dr. Lee was called to the church leadership by President Spencer W. Kimball, who felt he had a “special assignment” from God to help Native Americans. He said Friday he believes the current church administration has betrayed the dead prophet’s trust.

Church leaders have set themselves up as interpreters of the gospel, rather than its followers, he said. It has resulted in pride, Dr. Lee claims.

“I have heard a few of you declare that you are greater than ancient apostles such as Moses, Abraham, Noah, Isaiah, Isaac, Jacob . . . This reflects the attitude of all of you,” Dr. Lee said in the letter. “I have heard one or more of you declare that you can change anything Jesus had said or taught. This also reflects the attitude of all of you.” . . .

On September 10, 1989, the Salt Lake Tribune reported the following concerning how the church authorities reacted to his letter to them:

After reading in person a 23-page letter detailing his concerns, Lee said he was astounded at the speed with which he was ousted. Within minutes, two officials came to his office and told him to turn over all church property, including a credit card and a signed pass with which faithful Mormons gain entry to their temples. “I was stripped of everything,” said Lee, 46, a father of seven who is without pension or immediate job prospect. “It was just absolutely cold.”

In a letter that he read to the church hierarchy (photographically reprinted in our booklet, Excommunication of a Mormon Church Leader), Dr. Lee charged church leaders with materialism, pride and having “an attitude of superior race, white supremacy, racist attitude, pride, arrogance, and[d] love of power, and no sense [of]
obligation to the poor, needy and afflicted. . . . You are loving the Indians and other Lamanites at a distance . . . you are telling the Lamanites that you are No. 1 and they are second class. . . . 6. Love of Money. The rich seem to get richer and the poor get poorer . . . In fact you told me not to talk about [the] poor nor pray for them . . . A lot of our Priesthood leaders depend on being paid to attend important priesthood meetings . . . Of course most of these Brethren would go anywhere in the name of ‘The Lord’s Work’ as long as they are being paid and as long as all of their expenses are being paid. Brethren this would include your board memberships and meetings, royalty from written books, and all donations and gifts from friends, speaking engagements and etc.”

Dr. Lee’s charge of racism is certainly not new. From its earliest days, Mormonism has had some very unusual teachings with regard to race, skin color and blood. When George P. Lee was called to be a member of the First Quorum of Seventy in 1975, the Mormon leaders had a doctrine which denied blacks the priesthood and marriage in the church’s temples. Indians, on the other hand, were permitted to hold the priesthood, and this made it possible for President Spencer W. Kimball to elevate Lee to the position of a General Authority in the Mormon Church.

In 1978 the Mormon Church leaders announced that their prophet, Spencer W. Kimball, had received a revelation which opened up the priesthood to blacks. The doctrine which the Mormon leaders formerly taught concerning blacks was clearly set forth in a letter written by the First Presidency in 1947: “From the days of the Prophet Joseph even until now, it has been the doctrine of the Church, never questioned by any of the Church leaders, that the Negroes are not entitled to the full blessings of the Gospel” (Letter from the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, July 17, 1947, as cited in *Mormonism and the Negro*, by John J. Stewart, 1960, pages 46-47).

Bruce R. McConkie, who later served as an Apostle in the church, made this statement in 1958:

Negroes in this life are denied the priesthood; under no circumstances can they hold this delegation of authority from the Almighty. . . . The gospel message of salvation is not carried affirmatively to them . . .

The negroes are not equal with other races where the receipt of certain spiritual blessings are concerned, particularly the priesthood and the temple blessings that flow therefrom, but this inequality is not of man’s origin. It is the Lord’s doing . . . (*Mormon Doctrine*, 1958, page 477)

After the anti-black doctrine was altered, Apostle McConkie’s book was revised to reflect the change of doctrine (see 1979 *Mormon Doctrine* printing, page 529).

Although the church has never had a doctrine forbidding Indians from holding the priesthood, Mormon theology has always taught that a dark skin is a sign of God’s displeasure. This teaching comes directly from Joseph Smith’s Book of Mormon. In 2 Nephi 5:21, we read that the Lamanites, who were supposed to be the ancestors of the American Indians, were cursed with a black skin: “And he had caused the cursing to come upon them, yea, even a sore cursing, because of their iniquity . . . wherefore, as they were white, and exceeding fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them.” In Alma 3:6 we read: “And the skins of the Lamanites were dark, according to the mark which was set upon their fathers, which was a curse upon them because of their transgression . . .”

Joseph Smith claimed that the Lamanites eventually destroyed the white skinned people (Nephites) and that the American Indians are the descendants of the ancient Lamanites.

Although Mormon theology taught that anyone born with a dark skin was inferior, the Negro was considered to be at the bottom of the scale and therefore could not hold the priesthood. To really understand the anti-black doctrine, however, a person must know something about the Mormon doctrine of pre-existence. One of the basic teachings of the church is that the spirit of man existed before the world was created. From this doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul emerged the idea of some spirits being more noble than others. The Mormon leaders teach that the “more noble” or choice spirits are born as Mormons.

At the time George P. Lee was called to be a General Authority in the Mormon Church, Mark E. Petersen was serving as one of the Twelve Apostles. Apostle Petersen, who died in 1984, held some very strong views concerning Indians and other dark-skinned races. In a speech given at the church’s Brigham Young University, Apostle Petersen gave the following information concerning the doctrine of pre-existence and how it affected the various races:

We cannot escape the conclusion that because of performance in our pre-existence some of us are born as Chinese, some as Japanese, some as Negroes, some as Americans, some as Latter-day Saints. These are rewards and punishments . . . Is it not reasonable to believe that less worthy spirits would come through less favored lineages? Does this not account in very large part for the various grades of color and degrees of intelligence we find in the earth? . . .

Now let’s talk *segregation* again for a few moments. Was segregation a wrong principle? When the Lord chose the nations to which the spirits were to come, determining that some would be Japanese and some would be Chinese and some Negroes and some Americans, He engaged in an act of segregation . . . In placing a curse on Laman and Lemuel [i.e., the ancestors of the Indians in Mormon theology], He engaged in segregation . . . When He forbade inter-marriages . . . He established segregation . . . Who placed the Chinese in China? The Lord did. It was an act of segregation . . . in the cases of the Lamanites [Indians] and the Negroes we have the definite word of the Lord Himself that He placed a dark skin upon them as a curse—as a punishment and as a sign to all others. He forbade intermarriage with them under threat of extension of the curse. (2 Nephi 5:21) . . .

Let us consider the great mercy of God for a moment. A Chinese, born in China with a dark skin, and with all the handicaps of that race seems to have little opportunity. But think of the mercy of God to Chinese people who are willing to accept the gospel. In spite of whatever they might have done in the pre-existence to justify being born over there as Chinsamen, if they now, in this life, accept the gospel and live it the rest of their lives they can have the Priesthood, go to the temple and receive endowments and sealings, and that means they can have exaltation. Isn’t the mercy of God marvelous? Think of the Negro, cured as to the Priesthood . . . This negro, who, in the pre-existence lived the type of life which justified the Lord in sending him to the earth in the lineage of Cain with a black skin . . . In spite of all he did in the pre-existent life, the Lord is willing, if the Negro accepts the gospel . . . he can and will enter the celestial kingdom. He will go there as a servant, but he will get celestial glory. (*Race Problems—As They Affect The Church*, address by Apostle Mark E. Petersen at the Convention of Teachers of Religion on the College Level, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, August 27, 1954)

Ezra Taft Benson, who is now serving as the thirteenth president of the church [1989] and apparently approved the excommunication of George P. Lee, openly opposed the civil rights movement in the 1960’s. The church’s newspaper, *Deseret News*, December 14, 1963, reported:

Former agriculture secretary Ezra Taft Benson charged Friday night that the civil rights movement in the South had been “fomented almost entirely by the Communists.”

Elder Benson, a member of the Council of the Twelve of the Church . . . said in a speech at a public meeting here that the whole civil rights movement was “phony.”
As we have shown, Mark E. Petersen felt that there should be no intermarriage between “Caucasians” and Indians because there would be an “extension of the curse.” The Book of Mormon itself contains this statement: “And the skins of the Lamanites were dark, . . . which was a curse . . . whosoever did mingle his seed with that of the Lamanites did bring the same curse upon his seed” (Alma 3:6, 9). It is interesting to note, however, that Joseph Smith had predicted in the Book of Mormon that after the Indians received Mormonism they would eventually become “a white and delightsome people.” He apparently became so concerned about the Indians becoming “white” that he encouraged intermarriage to speed up the process. Although the church suppressed the fact for well over a century, Joseph Smith even claimed to have a revelation from God encouraging Mormons to marry Indians so that they would eventually become “white.” The important part of the revelation reads as follows:

Verily, I say unto you . . . it is my will, that in time, ye should take wives of the Lamanites and Nephites, that their posterity may become white, delightful and just, and for even now their females are more virtuous than the gentiles.

In 1976 we were able to examine a microfilm of the original revelation, which is in the Church Historical Department, and sometime later obtained a copy of it (appears in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 230-B). Finally, in 1979 Church Historian Leonard Arrington and his assistant Davis Bitton published the important portion of the revelation in The Mormon Experience, page 195.

While President Young never released the 1831 revelation, there is evidence that he was familiar with its teaching that the Indians should be made white through intermarriage. In a book published in 1852, William Hall gave the “substance” of a speech delivered by Young:

“...We are now going to the Lamanites, to whom we intend to be messengers of instruction. . . . We will show them that in consequence of their transgressions a curse has been inflicted upon them—in the darkness of their skins. We will have intermarriages with them, they marrying our young women, and we taking their young squaws to wife. By these means it is the will of the Lord that the curse of their color shall be removed and they restored to their pristine beauty.” (The Abominations of Mormonism Exposed, pp. 58-59)

Although Joseph Smith’s 1831 revelation commanding Mormons to marry Indians to make them “white” was suppressed, recent leaders have continued to teach the Book of Mormon doctrine that the Indians become white when they tam to Mormonism. President Spencer W. Kimball, the church prophet who appointed George P. Lee, strongly endorsed that teaching. In the October 1960 LDS General Conference, Kimball observed:

I saw a striking contrast in the progress of the Indian people today . . . they are fast becoming . . . white and delightful, as they were promised. . . . The children in the home placement program in Utah are often lighter than their brothers and sisters in the hogan. . . . These young members of the Church are changing to whiteness and to delightsomeness. One white elder jokingly said that he and his companion were donating blood regularly to the hospital in the hope that the process might be accelerated. (Improvement Era, December 1960, pp. 922-923)

The reader will notice that Spencer W. Kimball used the Book of Mormon phrase, “a white and delightful people.” This is actually a quotation from 2 Nephi 30:6. Nephi prophesied that in the last days the gospel would be declared to the Indians, and “many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a white and delightsome people.” Mormon critic Gordon H. Fraser, who worked among the Indians for many years, did not accept the claim that the Indians were becoming white. He maintained that the “skin color” of the Indians “has not been altered in the least because of their adherence to the Mormon doctrines” (What Does the Book of Mormon Teach? p. 46). The Mormon leaders were obviously embarrassed about this Book of Mormon doctrine, and three years after President Kimball gave the revelation removing the curse from the blacks, the very verse President Kimball used to support the idea that the Indians were becoming white was altered. As we have shown, the verse originally stated that the Indians “shall be a white and delightsome people.” In 1981 this embarrassing statement was changed to read that the Indians “shall be a pure and delightful people.”

Although this one passage has been altered, the doctrine that God cursed the Lamanites with a black skin is still found in a number of other verses (see 1 Nephi 12:23, 2 Nephi 5:21 and Jacob 3:8). In addition, in 3 Nephi 2:15 we read this concerning some of the Lamanites: “And their curse was taken from them, and their skin became white like unto the Nephites.”

In the 1979 printing of his book, Mormon Doctrine, pages 428-429, Apostle Bruce R. McConkie proclaimed that in the resurrection righteous Lamanites would have their “skin of blackness” changed to “white”:

...a twofold curse came upon the Lamanites . . . “they became a dark, and loathsome, and a filthy people, full of idleness and all manner of abominations” (1 Ne. 12:23). So that they “might not be enticing” unto the Nephites, “the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them” (2 Ne. 5:20-25; Alma 3:14-16). . . . when groups of Lamanites . . . turned to the Lord, the curse was removed from them. . . . a group of Lamantine converts . . . became white like the Nephites (3 Ne. 2:15-16). . . . in our day . . . the “scales of darkness” shall fall from their eyes; “and many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a white and delightful people” (2 Ne. 30:6). Finally, before the judgment bar of God . . . Lamanites and Nephites alike, will be free from the curse of spiritual death and the skin of darkness (Jac. 3:5-9).

In recent years there has been very little discussion concerning the curse of a black skin. The church no longer seems to be proud of its teaching that “a black skin is a mark of the curse of heaven placed upon some portions of mankind” (Juvenile Instructor, vol. 3, p. 157).

One of the most serious problems George P. Lee seems to have had with church authorities related to the question of who possesses the true blood of Israel. From the time of Joseph Smith until the present there has been a great deal said on this subject. In the History of the Church, vol. 3, page 380, we find these puzzling comments by Joseph Smith concerning a heavenly blood transfusion that the Gentiles must have: “. . . as the Holy Ghost falls upon one of the literal seed of Abraham, it is calm and serene; and his whole soul and body are only exercised by the pure spirit of intelligence; while the effect of the Holy Ghost upon a Gentile, is to purge out the old blood, and make him actually of the seed of Abraham. That man that has none of the blood of Abraham (naturally) must have a new creation by the Holy Ghost. In such a case, there may be more of a powerful effect upon the body, and visible to the eye, than upon an Israelite, while the Israelite at first might be far before the Gentile in pure intelligence.”

Brigham Young, the second prophet of the church, declared:

Take a family of ten children, for instance, and you may find nine of them purely of the Gentile stock, and one son or one daughter in that family who is purely of the blood of Ephraim. It was in the veins of the father or mother, and was reproduced in the son or daughter, while all the rest of the family are Gentiles. You may think that is singular, but it is true. . . . Joseph Smith was a pure Ephraimite . . .

Again, if a pure Gentile firmly believes the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and yields obedience to it, in such a case I will give you the words of the Prophet Joseph— “When the Lord pours out the Holy Ghost upon that individual he will have spasms, and you would think that he was going into fits.”
Joseph said that the Gentile blood was actually cleansed out of their veins, and the blood of Jacob made to circulate in them; and the revolution and change in the system were so great that it caused the beholder to think they were going into fits. . . . we are of the House of Israel, of the royal seed, of the royal blood. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 2, pp. 268-269)

The Book of Mormon makes it very clear that Indians are literal descendants of the house of Israel and that they will perform a mighty work in the last times. The Gentiles, on the other hand, are threatened with destruction at the hands of the Indians if they do not repent: “And my people who are a remnant of Jacob [i.e., the Lamanites] shall be among the Gentiles, yea, in the midst of them as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he go through both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver” (3 Nephi 21:12). Instead of playing the major role, the Gentiles who repent will “assist my people, the remnant of Jacob, and also as many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem” (3 Nephi 21:23).

George P. Lee believed the Book of Mormon prediction that his people will play the major role in the last days and felt that the Mormon Church leaders were deliberately trying to circumvent what God had ordained. In the letter which he presented to the hierarchy the day he was excommunicated, he wrote the following:

1. You have set yourself up as a literal seed of Israel when the Lord Jesus designated you as Gentiles or ‘adopted Israel[,]’. You have set yourself up as [the] true seed of Ephraim thereby displacing the true seed of Israel[,].

You have shoved true Israel out of his own home or house and have given great importance and status to your own role as Ephraim . . . Gentiles or “adopted Israel” have set themselves up as true Ephraimites with little or no obligation or sense of responsibility to the Lamanites and other true seed of Israel. This kind of teaching runs counter to the instructions of the Lord Jesus and collides with the will of God. I cannot be a party to this type of policy or doctrine. It is not God’s but man-inspired[,] . . . It is getting to the point where every Gentile that is baptized is told and taught that he is literal seed of Ephraim unless he is a Jew, Indian or Black. This type of teaching encourages an attitude of superior race . . . I cannot be a party to false teaching, teachings which are man-inspired . . . You have come very close to denying that the Book of Mormon is about Lamanites. You have cut out Indian or Lamanite programs and are attempting to cut them out of the Book of Mormon.” (pp. 13-16)

While George P. Lee is probably correct with regard to the teachings of the Book of Mormon concerning Lamanites and Gentiles, from a Biblical perspective both his view and that held by the Mormon leaders seems to be out of step with the teachings of Jesus. In Mark 9:33-37, we read that some of the Lord’s disciples had been arguing over “who should be the greatest.” Jesus, therefore, “called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.” In the book of Matthew 18:1-4, we find that Jesus answered the question of who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven by calling “a little child unto him.” He “set him in the midst of them” and then said: “Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

Apostle Paul made it clear that “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). To waste time debating over who has the “royal blood” seems to be an exercise in futility. It is unlikely that either the Mormon leaders or the Lamanites have the blood of Israel.

While it is undoubtedly true that George P. Lee and his people have suffered a great deal because of the racist views held by some of the present church leaders, Dr. Lee must face the fact that a great deal of the prejudice against Indians originated from the Book of Mormon itself. It is that book which tells of God putting a “curse” on the Lamanites and causing “a skin of blackness to come upon them” so that they would be segregated from those with a “white” skin.

Removing More Seventies

The Mormon leaders claim that they have Seventies because Jesus “appointed seventy” to preach the gospel (see A Marvelous Work and a Wonder, 1979, pp. 144-145). At the 159th general conference of the LDS Church, held April 1-2, 1989, Thomas S. Monson declared that because of the “continued rapid growth of the Church,” it had become necessary “to take additional steps to provide for the expansion and regulation of the Church. We announce, therefore, the organization of the Second Quorum of the Seventy . . .” (The Ensign, May 1989, p. 17). Instead of appointing 140 members (2 times 70), only “a total of 78 Seventies” were initially called to “Both Quorums of the Seventy” (Ibid., p. 1).

One would certainly think that the church would have replaced George P. Lee and filled the two quorums at the October 1989 general conference. Instead, however, 16 other members of the two quorums were either “excused from active service” i.e., put on emeritus status—or completely released. The Salt Lake Tribune, October 1, 1989, reported: “Eight members of the First Quorum of the Seventy were granted emeritus status because of age or health . . . . Eight members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy were released after completing five years . . . .” No new members were called to either quorum. While the Second Quorum of the Seventy was supposed to be set up “to provide for the expansion and regulation of the Church,” the church now seems to have only sixty-one functioning Seventies! Why the church would cut down the number of Seventies at this time is certainly a mystery.

Another curious thing about this matter is the fact that Paul H. Dunn, who once served as one of the seven members of the “Presidency of the First Quorum of Seventy” was “excused from active service” because of age or health. Some people seem to feel that this was not the real reason. They, in fact, believe it was for the “health” of the church. As far as age is concerned, there appear to be sixteen Seventies older than Mr. Dunn who were not put on emeritus status, and while he may have some problems with his health, many of the other General Authorities are not in good health. Apostle Bruce R. McConkie died of cancer, but was never put on emeritus status, and President Spencer W. Kimball had cancer, heart trouble and other problems but remained president of the church. The current president, Ezra Taft Benson, is 90 years old and very feeble, yet he remains in office.

It is suspected that the church leaders felt that Dunn would eventually become a liability to the church because of some investigative reporting which had been done by Lynn Packer. Mr. Packer, a nephew of Apostle Boyd Packer, at one time worked for the church’s television station, KSL. He was working with that station when the Hofmann story broke but was later fired. Packer felt that his aggressive reporting on the Hofmann affair and his earlier work on the Afco scandal played a role in his dismissal. The church simply did not want all the truth to come to light.

Although he was never indicted for any crime, Paul H. Dunn’s reputation suffered because of the Afco affair. The Wall Street
In addition, he came to believe that some of Dunn’s statements in Afco’s involvement were far deeper than was previously reported. This subject after he was dismissed from KSL and found that Dunn’s involvement in Afco was far deeper than was previously reported. In addition, he came to believe that some of Dunn’s statements concerning his earlier life were not true. We contacted Mr. Packer on October 2, 1989, and he informed us that he could make no statement for the Messenger concerning these matters. Packer also refused to discuss a report that he had been threatened with retaliation if he published the story.

Notwithstanding Mr. Packer’s refusal to confirm these matters, we have very good reason to believe that he has been investigating Mr. Dunn. We do not know whether the charges can be proven, but we are very concerned that there may have been an attempt to suppress the truth concerning the Afco scandal. In any case, the church’s release of Paul Dunn from active service at this critical time does look suspicious. If the charges should prove true, it would raise another question: is it fair to merely retire Dunn with full honors while publicly humiliating George P. Lee with excommunication?

MORMON AND ANTI-MORMON FORgeries

Over thirty years have passed since the editors of this newsletter (Jerald and Sandra Tanner) began studying the doctrine and history of the Mormon Church. Not long after starting our research, we began to realize that those who would make a serious examination of Mormonism must pass through a dangerous mine field of false statements, incorrect theories and even falsified or forged documents. Researchers, therefore, have to be extremely careful that they do not put their weight down upon some idea or document that might explode under their feet. While it was shocking enough to learn that Mormon works were filled with a great deal of false information, changes and even outright forgery, we were thoroughly disgusted when we later found that a number of Mormon critics had also resorted to the idea that “the end justifies the means.”

Because they firmly believed that Mormonism was built on sand and therefore dangerous to the people who accepted it, they seemed to feel that they had the right to twist the facts to make their arguments stronger. In some cases documents were actually altered to suit their purposes, and in at least a few cases the forgery of entire documents was perpetrated.

A Bad Experience!

Unfortunately, we know from first-hand experience the devastating effect one of these “land mines” can have on those who really want to present the truth. Early in our ministry, we encountered a copy of a pamphlet entitled, Defence in a Rehearsal of My Grounds for Separating Myself From the Latter Day Saints, purported to have been written by Oliver Cowdery, one of the three special witnesses to the Book of Mormon. In this publication, “Cowdery” related that the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith had given false revelations and had led the church into error. Mr. Cowdery even claimed that “the Redeemer Himself, clothed in glory, stood before” him and said:

“After reproving the Latter Day Saints for their corruption and blindness in permitting their President, Joseph Smith, Jr., to lead them forth into errors, where I led him not, nor commanded him, and saying unto them, ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ when I said it not unto him, thou shalt withdraw thyself from among them.”

We felt that this publication was very significant and should be in the hands of those investigating the truthfulness of Mormonism. As far as we knew at that time, no historian questioned the authenticity of this work. In fact, B. H. Roberts, who was probably the most famous Mormon historian, accepted the Defence as Oliver Cowdery’s work. He claimed that it was published by “Oliver Cowdery” at “Norton, Ohio” in “1839” (see Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, vol. 1, page 163, footnote 11). Since Roberts had access to the documents in the Mormon Church Archives, we felt that he never would have accepted this document if there was any reason to doubt its validity. In addition, Yale University claimed in 1960 that it had a photographic copy “of the original of Oliver Cowdery’s Defence . . .” (Letter dated November 15, 1960).

On the basis of this information, we published the Defence in the early 1960’s. Later, however, Wesley P. Walters tracked down the very copy from which Yale University’s photocopies were obtained. Unfortunately, a careful examination of this copy revealed that it was not the original 1839 publication but a printing put out by R. B. Neal in 1906. According to a letter written by Pastor Walters on April 25, 1967, the photocopies which had been sent to Yale University did not have “the identifying words Title Page of Cowdery’s tract.” Because of this omission, the librarian at Yale was unable to recognize that it was only the Neal printing of the tract. Since B. H. Roberts had mentioned the 1906 printing as well as that done in 1839 we did not think that this invalidated the Defence. Some time after Walters’ discovery, Professor Richard L. Anderson, a Mormon...
scholar, mentioned to us that he had some reservations about the authenticity of the document. We felt that it would be easy to refute Anderson’s arguments and began an intensive study of the Cowdery Defence. To our dismay, however, we discovered that there was no evidence to support the claim that it was written in 1839. We could not find any mention of the Defence in any publication or diary written during Cowdery’s lifetime. In fact, the first statement we found concerning the tract was published more than fifty years after Cowdery’s death when R. B. Neal printed it in 1906.

Even Oliver Cowdery’s close friend David Whitmer (also a witness to the Book of Mormon who became alienated from the Mormon Church) never mentioned the Defence in his An Address to All Believers in Christ, published in 1887. Since Whitmer held views almost identical to those expressed in the Mormon Church) never mentioned the Defence, it seems hard to believe that he would not even mention it.

The 1839 printing of Cowdery’s Defence was supposed to have been done at “Pressley’s Job Office,” in Norton, Ohio, but the evidence against the so-called Overstreet “Confession” is a genuine document.” (A Critical Look, p. 6)

Our work on the Cowdery Defence and the Overstreet “Confession” was not convincing to all historians. Two of the most prominent, Fawn Brodie and Juanita Brooks, both of whom are now deceased, felt we had not proved our case. Although Mrs. Brodie said that she had “read several of your pieces now with great interest, and much admire your scholarship,” she made this comment concerning the Defence: “I regret very much to say that I cannot agree with you about the Cowdery Defence. After the most careful reading, I still believe it to be genuine. . . . I cannot see a forger fabricating this kind of thing . . .” (Letter dated May 10, 1967). Mrs. Brodie had no comment to make concerning the authenticity of the Overstreet “Confession.”

Juanita Brooks disagreed with our work on both documents. Concerning the Defence, she commented:

You have convinced me that the item is genuine and that it was really written by Oliver Cowdery. You did for me what I had intended to do with the Messenger and Advocate letter myself, and the result is clearly that Cowdery was really the author. . . . The language is his, the incidents are his, the message is his. To me, all this pathetic ‘straining at a gnat while you swallow a camel’ is entirely without point. . . . This is CLEARLY the work of Cowdery. . . . To assume that because you cannot find it, such a thing did not exist, is being pretty silly, I think. (Letter dated July 13, 1968)

Before she ever saw our work with regard to the Overstreet Confession, Mrs. Brooks wrote:

I have been told that you consider the Oliver Overstreet confession a hoax? Would you mind telling me how you arrived at this conclusion? The men who testified were all living at the time, all highly respected men, none of them bitter anti-Mormons. And Judge Elias S. Smith was certainly to be trusted! (Letter dated June 27, 1968)

In the letter of July 13, cited above, Mrs. Brooks maintained that the Overstreet “Confession” had been “proved true.”

In A Critical Look, we presented a long list of parallels between wording found in material Cowdery wrote for the Messenger and Advocate and the Defence (see pages 22-26). In most cases parallels would help to establish common authorship, but in this case we felt that it proved just the opposite. We noted that “Some of the phrases taken from the Messenger and Advocate appear unnatural in the Defence. The whole thing, we think, looks like the work of an impostor. If we had found parallels in the letters which are in the Huntington Library, we would be more inclined to think that the Defence is genuine. But since almost all of the parallels are found in the letters published in the Messenger and Advocate, which were available to the general public, we are led to believe that the Defence is spurious.”
While Mrs. Brooks felt that the parallels proved common authorship, the noted Mormon critic Wesley P. Walters recognized the real problem. In a letter dated April 13, 1967, he wrote:

While reading through your list of comparisons of phrases I thought at first that you were going to conclude that the parallels proved Cowdery’s authorship, and as I was reading these, the nearly verbatim agreement of the phrases made me feel that they showed copying rather than common authorship. I was very much in agreement with your conclusions therefore when I arrived at the end and found that you too had drawn this same conclusion.

New Discoveries

Although we felt that we had a very good case against both documents in 1967, we have recently completed some research which throws important new light on the Defence and completely destroys the Overstreet “Confession.”

With regard to the Overstreet document, we have already quoted Juanita Brooks statement that the purported witnesses to the “Confession” and the Judge “were all living at the time.” In another letter to Professor Richard Anderson, dated April 26, 1968, Mrs. Brooks stated that “the men who signed it were alive in 1857, all three prominent and active citizens, men to be trusted, and good-old Elias Smith without imagination or malice enough to swear to a fraud.” She also noted in the letter of June 27, 1968, that “The Overstreet name is quite common in our records,” but had apparently not found anyone with the name “Oliver Overstreet”: “He did not come before the 1850 census, but there is no reason why he should not have come later.”

We did not question Mrs. Brooks’ information concerning the fact that the witnesses and Judge Smith were really historical people. (We respected her as one of the best authorities on the early history of early Utah.) We did, however, question the fact that this proved that the document was genuine. Our reasoning was that a clever forger also could have found the names and used them to give credibility to the document. We felt that it was possible that these names might be found in books on the history of Utah. The names of the witnesses which are given in the Overstreet “Confession” are “John M. Bowlwinkle,” “Jesse W. Fox” and “H. McEwan.” The Judge was listed as “E. S. Smith.” As Mrs. Brooks indicated, this would have to be Elias Smith, who was Judge of the Probate Court at that time.

We had always felt that it did not ring true for the witnesses to bring such a devastating anti-Mormon document before a devout Mormon Judge for his signature. (Smith at one time even served as editor of the church’s official organ, Deseret News.) Those who are familiar with early Utah history know that it would have been dangerous enough for these witnesses to have been engaged in a plan to undermine Brigham Young at that critical time, but to bring the document before one of Young’s most trusted followers to obtain his signature would be asking for trouble.

In any case, we felt that it was possible that some type of document prepared by Judge Elias Smith could have been used to help create the forgery. We began to search in books about early Utah for a document signed by Smith and for the names of the three witnesses. Most books mentioned Elias Smith and some also referred to Jesse W. Fox, but the other names appeared to be difficult to find. It seemed very unlikely, therefore, that we would find all four names in one book. A few weeks ago, however, we struck pay dirt. We not only discovered all of the names in one book, but we also found that they originally appeared in one document! This document is reproduced on pages 501-502 of T. B. H. Stenhouse’s book, The Rocky Mountain Saints, which was published in 1873.

In the Overstreet “Confession,” we find that after completing his statement, Mr. Overstreet signed the document. This is followed by the names of the three witnesses (“John M. Bowlwinkle,” “Jesse W. Fox” and “H. McEwan”) certifying to his handwriting, and last of all the signature of “E. S. Smith” appears. In the document reproduced in The Rocky Mountain Saints, we find that “Jesse W. Fox” signed the original document. Following this appear the signatures of two witnesses, “Henry McEwan” and “John M. Bowlwinkle.” At the very bottom of the document we find the name “E. S. Smith.” The reader can hardly imagine our surprise when we found this document.

It was very clear from this that someone had merely borrowed the names from this document to create the Overstreet “Confession.” Moreover, the bottom portion of the document reproduced by Mr. Stenhouse was obviously used to forge the end of the “Confession.” It reads as follows:

Territory of Utah, County of Great Salt Lake.

“I, E. Smith, Judge of the Probate Court for said county, certify that the signer of the above transfer, personally known to me, appeared this second day of April, A. D. 1857, and acknowledged that he, of his own choice, executed the foregoing transfer. E. SMITH.” (The Rocky Mountain Saints, p. 502)

The reader will notice in the quotation which follows from the Overstreet “Confession” that most of the words are identical with what we have quoted above. There have been a few changes to fit the type of document the Judge was signing. Notice, for instance, that in the genuine document Elias Smith was only certifying to the signature of “Jesse W. Fox,” whereas in the forgery he was referring to three witnesses. This, of course, made it necessary to use the plural form of certain words in the purported Overstreet document:

Territory of Utah

County of Great Salt Lake

I, E. S. Smith, Judge of Probate Court, for the County aforesaid certify that the signers of the above certificate, all three are personally known to me, appeared before me this (7) day of April, A. D. 1857, and severally acknowledged their respective signatures as attached by themselves to the same.

E. S. Smith.
The reader will notice that the two documents are dated only five days apart. The Stenhouse reproduction gives a date of April 2, 1857, whereas the “Confession” bears a date of April 7, 1857. A comparison of the content of the two documents reveals how ludicrous the “Confession” really is. While the “Confession” indicates that Brigham Young was very dishonest (using bribery to fool his own people and encouraging plans for “Milking the Gentiles”), the original document reveals a blind faith in Brigham Young. It is, in fact, a document in which Jesse W. Fox consecrated his property to the Mormon Church! It says:

\[
\ldots \text{I, JESSE W. FOX, \ldots for and in consideration of the sum of One Hundred ($100) Dollars, and the good will which I have to the CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS, give and convey unto BRIGHAM YOUNG, Trustee in trust for said Church, his successor in office, and assigns, all my claim to the ownership of the following described property, to wit: \ldots together with all the rights, privileges, and appurtenances thereunto belonging \ldots and will warrant and for ever defend the same unto the said TRUSTEE IN TRUST, his successor in office, and assigns, against the claims of my heirs, assigns, or any person whomsoever.}
\]

Henry McEwan and John M. Bollwinkel signed their names as witnesses and Elias Smith verified that Jesse W. Fox was “the signer of the above transfer.” The list of property which Mr. Fox turned over to the church included a house, lots, cows, clothing, beds and household furniture. The total value was listed at $2,127. In 1857 this was a great deal of money. From the list, it would appear that Fox consecrated all of his property. T. B. H. Stenhouse comments concerning this matter:

\[
\ldots \text{when they \[the early Mormons\] have increased in faith \"the Lord\" will afford them the opportunity of \"consecrating\" to him all that they possess. Their houses and lands, their chairs and tables, their horses and pigs, their hammers and saws, their buggies and wagons, and all and everything that they own or hope to own, to be deeded over to \"the Lord\" Trustee in Trust—Brigham Young; \ldots The preaching in the Tabernacle and in the ward meetings throughout Utah, at the date of Mr. Fox's consecration, was almost wholly devoted to the Order of Enoch, and many believing souls placed all they possessed for ever beyond their own personal control and robbed their children of their rightful inheritances. (The Rocky Mountain Saints, pp. 501-502)}
\]

While the Fox document completely destroys the Overstreet “Confession,” it does not provide any structural material for the first part of the forged document. We feel, however, that there is convincing evidence that pages 79-80 of George Reynolds' *The Myth of the “Manuscript Found,” or the Absurdities of the “Spalding Story* was an important source for this part of the “Confession.” Reynolds’ book, printed in 1883, contains an article reprinted from the *Deseret News* which had Reuben Miller’s report of what Oliver Cowdery said when he returned to the church. (Those who believed the Overstreet “Confession,” of course, maintained that these were really the words of Oliver Overstreet, the man who supposedly “personated Oliver Cowdery.”)

The account found in *The Myth of the “Manuscript Found,”* page 79, contained this information: “At a special conference at Council Bluffs, Iowa, held on the 21st of October, in the year 1848 . . . Brother Orson Hyde presided . . .” In the “Confession,” this same information is included, although the words are slightly rearranged: “. . . at Council Bluffs, Iowa, on the 21st day of October, 1848, in a conference at which Brother Orson Hyde presided.”

The Reynolds account indicates that “Brother Reuben Miller” was at the conference. The “Confession” also says that “Bro. R. Miller” was present. The Reynolds account says that Reuben Miller made “a verbatim report of his remarks . . .” The “Confession” likewise speaks of “a verbatim record of my remarks . . .” The following short sentence appears in the Reynolds account: “This is true.” In the “Confession” we also find the sentence: “This is true.”

At the top of page 79 of *The Myth of the “Manuscript Found,”* a statement which did not originally appear in the *Deseret News* is found: “Oliver Cowdery is the first of the three witnesses.” In the “Confession” we find an almost identical expression: “Oliver Cowdery, the first of the three Witnesses . . .”

The fact that the Overstreet “Confession” uses a legal document printed by Stenhouse in 1873 seems to indicate that it could not have been written prior to that time, and that it seems to rely on Reynolds’ book makes it very unlikely that it was written before 1883. We actually do not know when the “Confession” first appeared, but in our pamphlet, *A Critical Look,* page 2, we said that we had “heard that it began to be circulated shortly after the turn of the century.”

**One Author?**

After we wrote *A Critical Look,* we began to feel that there was a strong possibility that both the *Defence* and the Overstreet “Confession” came from the same source. Since there has been so much material plagiarized from other sources in both documents, it is unlikely that stylistic analysis can throw much light on the subject. Nevertheless, there are three important similarities between the documents that seem to indicate the documents originated in the same mind.

One, both forgeries relate to Book of Mormon witness Oliver Cowdery. The *Defence* contains views which Cowdery may have held but never put down on paper. The “Confession,” on the other hand, was written to destroy the idea that Cowdery returned to the LDS Church and bore his testimony to the restoration of the priesthood by angels.

Two, the “Confession” reveals the very method that was used to forge the *Defence*. As we have shown in *A Critical Look,* a series of articles which Oliver Cowdery wrote for the *Messenger and Advocate* were used to make the document sound like Cowdery. In the Overstreet “Confession,” Mr. Overstreet claims that to enable him “to know what to say and do, Bro. Miller had me read some articles written by Cowdery . . .”
Three, both documents could leave the reader with the impression that an impersonation had taken place. The Overstreet “Confession” plainly states that Mr. Overstreet “personated Oliver Cowdery.” In the Cowdery Defence, the possibility of Sidney Rigdon impersonating “John the Baptist” seems to be strongly hinted at, although “Cowdery” turned right around and said he was sure that Rigdon “had no part in the transactions of that day. As the Angel was John the Baptist . . .” Notwithstanding the denial, it seems clear that the forger was trying to give the impression that an impersonation had, in fact, taken place. Furthermore, both forgeries discussed the matter of the similarity of the “voice” of a personage who delivered a message. In the Defence, we find the following:

... from his [Joseph Smith’s] hand I received baptism by the direction of the Angel of God, whose voice, as it has since struck me, did most mysteriously resemble the voice of Elder Sidney Rigdon ... When I afterward first heard Elder Rigdon, whose voice is so strikingly similar, I felt that this “dear” brother was to be ... the herald of this church . . .

In the Overstreet “Confession” we read:

“He insisted that I resembled Cowdery so much in form and features, notwithstanding our differences in tone of voice that I could easily personate him ... Bro. Miller ... also gave me some voice drill . . .”

**New Evidence on Forgeries**

While we felt that the evidence against the Defence and the Overstreet “Confession” which we printed in 1967 completely disproved both documents, some have continued to hold to the hope that one or both of these writings might be authentic. The Mormon scholar Marvin S. Hill acknowledged that there was a question with regard to the authenticity of the Defence, but still seemed to hold the door open to the possibility that it might be genuine: “Cowdery’s views may be contained in Defence in a Rehearsal of My Grounds for Separating Myself from the Latter Day Saints . . .” (Quest For Refuge—The Mormon Flight from American Pluralism, 1989, p. 200, footnote 68)

In A Critical Look, pp. 27-31, we suggested that the author of Cowdery’s Defence depended upon David Whitmer’s pamphlet—which is unquestionably a genuine document—for a great deal of the material in his forgery. We noted, for instance, that Book of Mormon witness David Whitmer claimed that God Himself spoke to him “from the heavens, and told me to ‘separate myself from among the Latter Day Saints . . .’” (An Address To All Believers In Christ, 1887, page 27) The words “Separating Myself From The Latter Day Saints” are used as part of the title of the Cowdery Defence. We also pointed out that David Whitmer’s claim that God spoke to him and told him to leave the Mormons probably suggested the vision in the Defence where “the Redeemer Himself” told Cowdery that he should “withdraw thyself from among them.” We listed many other important parallels between the forgery and Whitmer’s pamphlet; and, as we stated earlier, we noted that Whitmer never mentioned Cowdery’s work—a pamphlet which was supposed to have been printed 48 years earlier. It seemed almost inconceivable that Whittmer would not even mention it if it really existed.

Richard Anderson has recently presented some new evidence which tends to confirm our theory that Whitmer’s pamphlet was used to create the Defence. On page 28 of A Critical Look, we related that David Whitmer told of a revelation Joseph Smith gave which commanded some of “the brethren” to go to “Toronto, Canada” and sell the copyright of the Book of Mormon. When the revelation turned out to be false, it caused “great trouble” among the brethren. They wanted to know why it was that God had given them a revelation to sell the copyright in Canada and yet they “had utterly failed in their undertaking.” Whitmer claimed that “Hiram page [sic] and Oliver Cowdery went to Toronto . . .” Professor Anderson, however, has demonstrated that Whitmer made a mistake with regard to the city in which they were supposed to sell the copyright. It was really Kingston. This is verified in a letter written by Hiram Page, the Book of Mormon witness who actually went with Cowdery on the journey (see Quest For Refuge, page 20).

In addition, W. Wyl printed a letter from “Mr. Traughber” (probably J. L. Traughber, the man who preserved the McLellin diaries) which corroborated the essential elements of David Whitmer’s statement about the Canadian revelation but also made it very clear that Page and Cowdery went to Kingston (Joseph Smith The Prophet—His Family And His Friends, 1886, page 311). The forger of the Cowdery Defence, not realizing the problem, slavishly followed Whitmer’s pamphlet into the error.

With regard to the authorship of the forgeries, some new evidence has come to light which has affected our view regarding who wrote the two documents relating to Cowdery. We originally felt that “the author of the Defence was probably a believer in the Book of Mormon who had become disillusioned by David Whitmer’s pamphlet and was not sure what to believe” (A Critical Look, page 27). While we are even more convinced that Whitmer’s pamphlet was used, the evidence which we have recently examined now leads us to believe that it was probably a dedicated “anti-Mormon” rather than a mixed-up believer in the Book of Mormon who forged the Defence.

One thing that has caused us to revise our position is a manuscript entitled, “Sidney Rigdon—The Real Founder of Mormonism,” by William H. Whitsitt. Professor Whitsitt donated the original manuscript to the Library of Congress in 1908. Fortunately, Byron Marchant has made a typescript of about 500 pages of this manuscript, and it is available through Metamorphosis Publishing in Salt Lake City. According to Mr. Marchant there are 1,306 pages in the entire manuscript.

In the material that follows we have used Byron Marchant’s typescript and have followed the page numbering of the original manuscript which Mr. Marchant has supplied in his typescript. We have also examined photocopies of many pages of the manuscript in the Dale Broadhurst Collection at the University of Utah Library, Special Collections.

When one of the editors of this newsletter (Sandra) was examining some of the pages which Mr. Marchant had given us, she made a startling discovery. She found that some
twenty-one years before the Cowdery Defence was published, William H. Whitsitt had suggested that Sidney Rigdon impersonated John the Baptist. In his manuscript, Whitsitt wrote the following:

In case Oliver had not encountered Mr. Rigdon on any other previous occasion, he had certainly received baptism at his hands on the 15th of May, 1829, and it was entirely natural that when a person of so much consequence should exhibit himself a second time, Cowdery should be in a situation to recognize his features. When in the subsequent progress of the movement he was introduced to Sidney, it is perfectly natural that he should have been confirmed in the conclusion that the person who had baptized him and exhibited the plates was none other than Rigdon. (“Sidney Rigdon—The Real Founder of Mormonism,” p. 392-b)

But the name by which Rigdon was most commonly and openly designated was that of “John the Baptist.” (Ibid., p. 232)

The reader will note how similar this idea is to the Cowdery Defence:

... from his [Joseph Smith’s] hand I received baptism, by the direction of the Angel of God, whose voice, as it has since struck me, did most mysteriously resemble the voice of Elder Sidney Rigdon ...

Now, if Cowdery’s Defence had been available in 1885, Whitsitt certainly would have cited it to prove his position that Rigdon impersonated the angel. In any case, this parallel between the Whitsitt manuscript and the Defence is remarkable and certainly raises the question as to whether Whitsitt’s idea was incorporated into the Defence.

The Mormon Church has always maintained that Sidney Rigdon did not become converted to the church until the fall of 1830 (see History of the Church, vol. 1, pp. 121-124). William Whitsitt, however, felt that he needed Sidney Rigdon on the scene much earlier because he believed that Rigdon was the “real founder” of Mormonism. Whitsitt’s manuscript reveals that he was a very strong believer in the Spalding theory concerning the origin of the Book of Mormon. This theory holds that early in the 19th century a minister by the name of Solomon Spalding wrote a manuscript entitled, “Manuscript Found.” Sidney Rigdon in some way obtained this document and it eventually was used by Rigdon and Smith to create the Book of Mormon. (Those who are interested in this theory and the attempt to revive it in the 1970’s should read our book, Did Spalding Write the Book of Mormon? This work includes a reprint of Spalding’s “Manuscript Story.”)

William H. Whitsitt felt that Sidney Rigdon was revising the Spalding manuscript long before Joseph Smith was supposed to have received the gold plates. He maintained that Rigdon “made two separate redactions of the Book of Mormon, the first of these being performed at Pittsburgh and Bainbridge from January 1823 to the autumn of 1826, and the second in or near Harmony township, Pennsylvania in the summer of 1829” (“Sidney Rigdon—The Real Founder of Mormonism,” p. 205-a). Whitsitt professed to be able to tell which parts of the Book of Mormon were written by Spalding and which came from Rigdon. On pages 212-213 of his manuscript, he claimed that when Sidney Rigdon first examined “the volume of Mr. Spaulding,” he found that is was “entirely . . . devoted to the external history of the Nephites and Lamanites . . . to render it suitable for the chiefly religious purpose he had in mind it would be indispensable that he should rewrite the whole of it, leaving out the ‘more history part’ . . . .” He started to do this; however, he “was a lazy scamp,” and when he came to the “close of the Book of Omni his industry failed him . . . .” From that point on, he “returned to the text of Spaulding, only inserting here and there larger or shorter religious harangues set down on separate sheets of paper for the purpose of imparting a religious character to the story.”

Professor Whitsitt had a very active imagination. Like the originator of the Overstreet “Confession” and the Cowdery Defence, Whitsitt seems to have been obsessed with the idea of impersonations. He not only had Sidney Rigdon impersonating John the Baptist, but he also had him posing as the angel who showed the gold plates to the witnesses to the Book of Mormon. The first set of Book of Mormon witnesses was composed of David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris. On page 392 of his manuscript, Professor Whitsitt commented:

It is suspected that Mr. Rigdon was somewhere present in the undergrowth of the forest where the little company were assembled, and . . . could easily step forward at a signal from Joseph, and exhibit several of the most faded leaves of the manuscript, which from having been kept a series of years since the death of Spaulding would assume the yellow appearance that is well known in such circumstances. At a distance . . . the writing on these yellow sheets of paper would also appear to their excited imagination in the light of engravings; Sidney was likewise very well equal to the task of uttering the assurances which Smith affirms the angel was kind enough to supply concerning the genuineness of the “plates” and the correctness of the translation.

The reader will notice that Whitsitt not only had Rigdon impersonating the angel, but he also had him showing the Spalding manuscript in lieu of the gold plates. On page 181, Whitsitt observed: “Whatever secrets Oliver might have acquired or suspected on the occasion of the exhibition of the plates, he kept his own counsels . . . the trial which Joseph had feared so highly, succeeded beyond expectation.” Whitsitt carried the matter even further by claiming that Rigdon fooled the second set of eight witnesses in much the same way. Whitsitt’s imagination seems to have been especially active here because “The Testimony of Eight Witnesses,” which appears in the Book of Mormon, says nothing about an angel being present, only that “Joseph Smith, Jun. . . . has shown unto us the plates . . . .” Professor Whitsitt, however, wrote the following on pages 393-395 of his manuscript:
Whitsitt emphatically wrote: restore either priesthood. On pages 553-554 of his manuscript, angels came from heaven to bring the Book of Mormon or to Whitsitt was strongly committed to the position that no Melchisedek priesthoods by angels from heaven. Professor of Mormon and the restoration of both the Aaronic and wanted to destroy the idea that Oliver Cowdery returned the last part of the Overstreet “Confession.” This, of course, is the book that contains Among them was “T. B. H. Stenhouse, Whitsitt recommended a number of books to his readers. Moreover, in an article published in *The Concise Dictionary of Religious Knowledge and Gazetteer*, 1893, William H. Whitsitt recommended a number of books to his readers. Among them was “T. B. H. Stenhouse, *Rocky Mountain Saints*, New York, 1873 . . .” This, of course, is the book that contains the last part of the Overstreet “Confession.” The creator of the Overstreet “Confession” apparently wanted to destroy the idea that Oliver Cowdery returned to the Mormon Church and bore his testimony to the Book of Mormon and the restoration of both the Aaronic and Melchisedek priesthoods by angels from heaven. Professor Whitsitt was strongly committed to the position that no angels came from heaven to bring the Book of Mormon or to restore either priesthood. On pages 553-554 of his manuscript, Whitsitt emphatically wrote:

> By this introduction of Peter, James and John, Mr. Smith also placed himself on a more advantageous footing with relation to Rigdon. Under the character of “John the Baptist,” Sindey [sic] had ordained the prophet to the Aaronic priesthood . . . But Peter, James and John [who were supposed to have restored the Melchisedek priesthood] were manifestly above “John the Baptist”! . . .

> The Mormons have vexed their ingenuity not a little to decide at what place and time Peter, James and John appeared to the prophet and bestowed the apostleship upon him . . . but the inquiry is entirely futile, since the occurrence never took place in any form, but was merely pretended by Joseph in order to guard himself against possible embarrassments.

It is our belief that one of the major reasons that the Overstreet “Confession” was written was to destroy a statement concerning the Spalding-Rigdon theory of the origin of the Book of Mormon which was attributed to Oliver Cowdery when he returned to the church in 1848. According to the report in *The Myth of the “Manuscript Found,”* page 80, Oliver Cowdery proclaimed that the Book of Mormon “is true. Sidney Rigdon did not write it. Mr. Spaulding did not write it.”

This statement would have been objectionable to anyone who believed that Spalding wrote the Book of Mormon, but William Whitsitt, who had written a large manuscript debunking Mormonism and promoting the Spalding theory, would have found it exceptionally abhorrent. Since he already believed that Rigdon had impersonated angels to convince Cowdery of the truthfulness of Mormonism, he probably would have felt that these words attributed to Cowdery were also spurious. Whether he would go so far as to resort to forgery in an attempt to eradicate the statement is of course another question.

While the Overstreet “Confession” tries to completely destroy the credibility of the attack on the Spalding theory attributed to Cowdery, the *Defence* takes the matter even further by having Cowdery say that the voice of the angel “did most mysteriously resemble the voice of Elder Sidney Rigdon . . .” The effectiveness of this subtle suggestion in the *Defence* cannot be overstated. Although we have never placed much stock in the Spalding theory, at the time we accepted the Cowdery *Defence* as genuine, we felt that this was one of the best evidences for that theory because it came from within Mormonism from a person who really could have known what was going on.

**View on Forgery**

The first part of William H. Whitsitt’s manuscript would certainly give one the impression that he was very opposed to forgery. He, in fact, severely castigated a minister for being involved in producing a document which he felt was a “clumsy fabrication.” This document, which promoted the Spalding argument, turned out to be very embarrassing to those who endorsed that theory. It purported to be a letter written by Solomon Spalding’s widow, Matilda Davison, and was published in *The Boston Recorder* in 1839. The letter charged that Solomon Spalding was trying to get his manuscript published at a printing establishment in Pittsburgh where Sidney Rigdon was employed. This, of course, supplied the “missing link” between Spalding and Rigdon and made it clear that Rigdon could have copied Spalding’s manuscript while it was in the printing office. The Mormons referred to the letter as a “bogus affidavit.” Professor Whitsitt seemed to agree and expressed very strong feelings against it:

> In the face of proofs so strong as those that have just been supplied to the effect that Sidney’s handicraft in Pittsburgh was that of a tanner . . . the statement has been so often repeated that he engaged in a printing office at Pittsburgh . . .

> Nothing was ever heard of Rigdon as being employed in the printing office of Patterson and Lambdin at Pittsburgh until the first day of April 1839. The document containing this singular assertion was subscribed by Matilda Davison . . . this was to turn to a very inferior source, Mrs. Spaulding [Davison [sic]] had imparted all the information she could command to Mr. Howe in the year 1834, and it is marvelous to perceive how
meager was her store . . . she had heard of the “Manuscript Found” by name, but was not aware of its contents; she could not be positive that it had ever been carried to the office of Patterson and Lambdin, and was just as much in the dark to decide whether it had ever been returned; of Sidney Rigdon she knew nothing in the world.

But when her certificate dated the 1st of April 1839 was given to the public, she had meanwhile acquired a considerable access to her knowledge regarding all these topics and especially touching Mr. Rigdon. She affirms: “Sidney Rigdon, who was figured so largely in the history of the Mormons, was at that time connected with the printing office of Mr. Patterson, as is well known in that region, and as Rigdon himself has frequently stated. Here he had ample opportunity to become acquainted with Mr. Spaulding’s manuscript and to copy it, if he chose. . . .”

It is not probable that Mrs. Spaulding (Davison) should have been the author of assertions of this nature. She was too honestly ignorant of these concerns in 1834 to have expressed herself in the above strain in the year 1839. . . . it is absolutely certain that he was not an apprentice in a printing office as early as she intimates. . . . Almost every important allegation that she supplies in the certificate which is presumed to have been composed by Messrs. Ely and Austin is incorrect and misleading. A comparison of the two separate utterances will suggest two conclusions, one or the other of which must be accepted. The first is that the good lady is an unfaithful witness, and the second is that her innocency was employed by some person who wished to do evil that good might come of it.

But no real good has ever come of it; the certificate of 1839, besides introducing a large amount of error into this history, has steadily brought aid and comfort to the Mormons. . . .

If the certificate . . . be rejected as the clumsy invention of the parties who were using her simplicity to accomplish their own ends—and no other course lies open to the student—the public will be deprived of the only evidence it ever possessed to the effect that Sidney was at any time engaged in a printing office . . . (“Sidney Rigdon—The Real Founder of Mormonism,” pages 153-157)

On page 197 of the same manuscript, William Whitsitt charged that if Mrs. Spalding “had been left to her private devices that clumsy ‘April Fool’ would never have vexed the soul of the student. All the blame of this transaction must be laid at the door of other people who abused her simplicity to accomplish purposes of their own. The parties who seem to be directly responsible for this fraud, are the Rev. John Storrs, Pastor of the Congregational Church in Holliston . . . and Mr. D. R. Austin, Principal of the Monson Academy.”

It is interesting to note that the very statement by Spalding’s widow which Professor Whitsitt condemned so strongly became a very important part of a recent attempt to revive the Spalding theory. It is reproduced twice in the book, Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon? by Wayne L. Cowdrey, Howard A. Davis and Donald R. Scales, 1977, pages 42-47, 201-209. On page 207 we read: “Our examination of the so-called ‘problems’ in Mrs. Davison’s testimony show that they can all be answered easily. . . . the basic facts of her affidavit will stand careful examination.”

In any case, although Professor Whitsitt seemed so adamant against forgery or fraud in the case of Spalding’s widow, when he came to “The Question of Rigdon’s Sincerity” in chapter eleven of his manuscript, he seemed surprisingly tolerant:

The Book of Mormon sincerely if not effectually aims to “make for righteousness.” . . . Mr. Rigdon pursued a purpose which he candidly believed would promote the honor of the Lord . . . His own impulse and plan were to his thinking unquestionably good, and with as little question he supposed that both had come from the Lord. . . . the fact remains that notwithstanding what the world conceives to be his evil behavior he kept a good conscience which had no trouble to excuse the conduct of its owner . . . To his mind the truth and authority of this production were entirely independent of Joseph’s connection with it. He was sensible that he had only employed young Mr. Smith as a kind of tool . . . The great position that “Jesus is the Christ,”. . . would stand firm no matter what kind of fate might befall Joseph Smith. . . .

But the allegation will be still laid against the honesty of Mr. Rigdon that he perpetrated a pious fraud. The history of the religious world abounds with instances of pious fraud. In the Old Testament the number of Apocryphal and of pseudepigraphical books is far too large to recount in this place. The same remark also applies to the New Testament. . . . The man who out of hand asserts the knavery, all and singular, of the authors of these productions argues nothing so much as his own imbecility. . . . every man of sober reflection must suspend his judgment touching the conduct of Rigdon until he has weighed all the conditions that may be involved . . . those who will persist in the conclusion that Mr. Rigdon was nothing else than a roguish knave must be content to forego every kind of hope to find a right understanding of his career and character . . . If they relish their voluntary imbecility they are welcome to the benefits it may bring them, but when Sidney is judged, as he has a fair right to be, by the facts, and by his own productions, it becomes probable that he was an honest fanatic. . . .

The question is not whether the production of Rigdon actually “makes for righteousness”; but did he intend that it should “make for righteousness”? The inquiry must be answered in the affirmative; it was not his purpose to earn money or fame from its circulation; he desired to promote the interests of Christ and of the “ancient order of things.” (“Sidney Rigdon—The Real Founder of Mormonism,” pages 466-471)

The question naturally arises as to whether the person who wrote the above might himself commit “a pious fraud” to save the Mormon people from their delusions? Since he already believed that Rigdon and Smith had used impersonation to lead the people into error, would he consider it wrong to create something that might reclaim them? If it was done to “make for righteousness” with no desire “to earn money or fame from its circulation,” would it really be evil to produce such a work? We do not really know the answer to those questions. The circumstances look very suspicious, but it is certainly possible that someone else might have taken advantage of Professor Whitsitt’s ideas to produce forgeries.
Neal's Role

As we indicated earlier, R. B. Neal was the first to print the Cowdery Defence in 1906. Neal claimed to have received his copy of the original in 1905. In a letter dated June 3, 1905, he wrote: “I have before me ‘Oliver Cowdery’s Defence;’ just got it yesterday.” This letter is printed in Wingfield Watson’s Prophetic Controversy. No. 6, or ‘Facts’ for the Anti-Mormons. . . . Mr. Neal certainly realized the importance of the Defence in his work with the Mormons. In a later publication, Neal commented: “No more important document has been unearthed since I have been engaged in this warfare . . .” (“Sword of Laban” Leaflets, No. 11).

Because Neal had a ministry which published “Anti-Mormon” tracts and was the first to bring the Defence to light, a number of Mormons suspected that he really wrote it. Another theory, of course, would be that someone else wrote it and had it typeset and printed by a publisher who had no interest in Mormonism. Since it would have only been sixty-six years since Oliver Cowdery was supposed to have printed it, it would have been easy to make a copy of the pamphlet appear that old by exposing it to the sun, water and dirt. A copy created in this manner could have been sent to Mr. Neal without much fear of exposure.

Like William Whitsitt, R. B. Neal was dedicated to proving the Spalding-Rigdon theory of the origin of the Book of Mormon and felt that the statement about Sidney Rigdon in the Defence was very significant:

... we are not surprised that Cowdery says: “The voice of the angel did most mysteriously resemble the voice of Elder Sidney Rigdon.” This statement of Cowdery’s, solves in a large measure the problem as to the “fine Italian hand” behind ignorant Joseph Smith in this Mormon conspiracy (Oliver Cowdery’s Defence and Renunciation, Anti-Mormon Tracts, No. 9, 1906, pages 17-18).

One very interesting thing about the Defence is that it seems to reflect and even directly quote some material written by R. B. Neal six years before the pamphlet fell into Neal’s hands. In a pamphlet published in 1899, Neal had argued that there was an important contradiction with regard to the restoration of the Mormon priesthood. He demonstrated that one of Joseph Smith’s revelations published in the Doctrine and Covenants (Section 7), and the Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 28: 6-40) affirm that the Apostle John and three members of the Council of Twelve among the Nephites were to remain on earth and “never taste of death.”

R. B. Neal noted that because of this claim, “we must revise the stereotyped answer given by the child to the question of who was the oldest man. Methusaleh is nowhere. John and the three nameless Nephites are over 1,800 years old. . . . These apostles have the keys to both ‘Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods’—the ‘right to baptize’ and ‘to impart the Holy Ghost.’” Mr. Neal then commented that the Pearl of Great Price, one of the four standard works of the church, contained an account of the restoration of the priesthood by Cowdery which said that at the time Joseph Smith began his work, “none had authority from God to administer the ordinances of the Gospel” (Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith — History, 1981 edition, p. 59).

Joseph Smith claimed that “John the Baptist” came from heaven to restore the Aaronic priesthood. R. B. Neal, however, pointed out that one of the “four apostles” who remained on earth should have restored the priesthood and, according to the Mormon Church’s own theology, it was wrong to say that “none” on earth had the authority from God:

Joseph! Oliver! what do you mean? Where, oh, where were the four apostles who held these keys, the keys to both priesthoods? They were on earth, if Joseph and Oliver and the Book of Mormon are not monumental liars. Who took them from earth? Or, who took the right to baptize and to impart the Holy Ghost from them? (The Stick of Ephraim vs. The Bible of the Western Continent; or, The Manuscript Found vs. The Book of Mormon, Part 1, 1899, page 28)

The Defence presents exactly the same argument. It has Cowdery recognizing his error with regard to this matter and claims that he said:

(1) But I certainly followed him [Joseph Smith] too far when accepting, and reiterating, that none had authority from God to administer the ordinances of the Gospel, as I had then forgotten that John, the beloved disciple, was tarrying on earth and exempt from death.

By comparing the quotation below, the reader will notice that a number of words (set in bold type for easy comparison) used in the Defence are identical to wording printed six years earlier by Neal! Although many of these words are borrowed from the Pearl of Great Price, that they would be followed by words concerning John the beloved still being on earth seems too close to be a coincidence.

We learn that none on earth “had authority from God to administer the ordinances of the gospel.” I am quoting Oliver now. This confirms Joseph. John the beloved was on earth . . . (The Stick of Ephraim, p. 28)

It would be very difficult to believe that the parallels in thoughts and wording could have happened by chance. While it does throw a shadow of suspicion on R. B. Neal, there is another possible explanation. It could very well be that someone who read Neal’s The Stick of Ephraim used it to write the Defence. People are far more likely to fall for a forgery if it supports their own beliefs. The noted forger Mark Hofmann demonstrated this within the last few years. One of his customers indicated that he would like to have a letter written by Joseph Smith from the Carthage Jail. While this would be a very rare item, within a short time Hofmann was able to “find” such a letter.

A forger who had read some of R. B. Neal’s writings would certainly be wise to frame the document as near to Mr. Neal’s theories as possible. This would insure that Neal would
give it his full support and a wide distribution. It is interesting to note that Mr. Neal recognized that the document supported his position with regard to “John the Beloved.” When he first published the “Cowdery” tract in Oliver Cowdery’s Defence and Renunciation, pages 15-16, he commented:

We made the same argument years ago that Oliver here makes. It is unanswerable. . . . No wonder Oliver says: “I followed Joseph too far when accepting and reiterating that none had authority from God to administer the ordinances of the Gospel, &c.”

It is hard to believe that Neal himself would bring the matter to light if he was the one who forged the document. Such a statement might make people want to compare Neal’s earlier writings and possibly lead to the discovery that the Defence was forged. On the other hand, however, we have to acknowledge that people who forge documents and commit other crimes do not always use the same type of logic that normal people do.

Looking for Tracks

During our research on these forged documents we have kept our eye open for any connection between William H. Whitsitt and R. B. Neal. At the present time we have no evidence to show that Professor Whitsitt ever provided Neal with information. Nevertheless, it seems possible that these two men could have known about each other. In the Dale Broadhurst Collection at the University of Utah Library, we did find a photocopy from a book which has some interesting information on William Whitsitt. Although the photocopy does not reveal the name of the book, it seems to be a book concerning important religious leaders. In any case, on page 170 we find this information:

Whitsitt, William Heth (Nov. 25, 1841-Jan. 20, 1911), Baptist minister, church historian, and theological seminary president . . . he accepted (1872) the chair of ecclesiastical history in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Greenville, S. C. . . . In 1895 he was elected president of the seminary, which in 1877 had been moved to Louisville, Ky. Under his administration the enrollment surpassed that of any other American theological seminary, and his thorough scholarship and courageous devotion to truth commanded the unstinted admiration of his students.

A statement made by Whitsitt in his article upon the Baptists published in Johnson’s Universal Encyclopaedia (1896) precipitated what was known as “the Whitsitt controversy.” . . . the controversy lasted for four years, increasing in bitterness as the weakness of the arguments of the church successionists became more evident. Many who recognized the principle of academic freedom became convinced that its denominational concord could be gained only through Whitsitt’s withdrawal from the institution, and the trustees of the seminary at length accepted his resignation (1899). After a year[s] rest he accepted the chair of philosophy in Richmond College, Richmond, Va. . . .

While Whitsitt was serving as president of the seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, R. B. Neal was publishing “Anti-Mormon” tracts in Grayson, a town in the eastern part of Kentucky. Only about 150 miles separated the two Mormon critics at that time. Professor Whitsitt later served at Richmond College, which was about 375 miles east of Neal’s home. Since R. B. Neal printed a vast number of tracts, it would seem likely that some would reach the seminary at Louisville or Richmond College in Virginia. On the other hand, in 1891, an article on Mormonism by Whitsitt was published in The Concise Dictionary of Religious Knowledge and Gazetteer. This book was reprinted in 1893. In this article, Professor Whitsitt strongly advocated his views on the Spalding theory. At the end of his selection of books on Mormonism (page 622), Whitsitt indicated that he had written a book about Sidney Rigdon. He referred to, “W. H. Whitsitt, Life of Sidney Rigdon, 1891 (in which will be found the proof of the statements made about the Book of Mormon, etc.).” If R. B. Neal ever saw this article, it probably would have aroused his interest in the manuscript Whitsitt had written.

As it turned out, Whitsitt’s manuscript was never published and in his letter to the Library of Congress, he sadly wrote, “I suppose it will never be in my power to issue the work in print, but I should be glad to leave it in some library where it might be consulted in manuscript . . .” (Letter dated August 28, 1908, Byron Marchant’s transcript). In the same letter, Whitsitt indicated that when his article was published in 1891, he received letters from “many persons in differing portions of the country who had perused it.” Because of their common interests in refuting Mormonism and establishing the Spalding theory it is possible that these two men met or corresponded at some time.

An anthropologist once noted that when just a few scattered fragments of bone from an ancient fossil man are found, some scientists tend to be more dogmatic than when there are a large numbers of bones discovered. This is because there is not a great deal of evidence available to refute any conclusions they might arrive at. This same thing is undoubtedly true with regard to historians. It is easy to write sweeping statements about things that happened long ago when we know there is little to contradict what we set forth as “truth.” In the present case, it would be very easy to pronounce William H. Whitsitt the forger of the Overstreet “Confession” and the Cowdery Defence, and it would probably be very difficult for anyone to disprove the accusation. When it comes right down to it, however, we must admit that we do not have enough pieces to complete the puzzle.

While we can now be certain that the Defence and the “Confession” are forgeries, we must be very careful about jumping to conclusions. The evidence, however, seems to indicate that the Cowdery Defence was written sometime between 1899 and June 3, 1905. A number of things seem essential for its production: One, William Whitsitt’s idea that Sidney Rigdon impersonated John the Baptist. His manuscript containing this idea was written in 1885. Although we are not aware of any other source for this theory, we cannot state for certain that Whitsitt did not hold to the idea at an earlier time or that it could not have come from some other source we are not familiar with. Two, David Whitmer’s An Address to
All Believers in Christ, which was not published until 1887. Three, R. B. Neal’s 1899 printing of The Stick of Ephraim (the pamphlet that maintained that the priesthood should have been restored by the Apostle John rather than John the Baptist).

The Oliver Overstreet “Confession” is more difficult to date. We do know that it was necessary for the forger to have The Rocky Mountain Saints, printed in 1873, and The Myth of the “Manuscript Found,” which appeared in 1883. Whitsitt’s idea of a number of impersonations in early Mormonism, set forth in his 1885 manuscript, cannot be overlooked with regard to this document. Since the “Confession” describes the very method used in producing the Defence, i.e., Overstreet’s use of “some articles written by Cowdery” to imitate his style, it seems reasonable to believe that it was forged after the Defence was written. This, of course, would be sometime after June 3, 1905.

We feel that there are three theories with regard to the authorship of the Cowdery Defence and the Overstreet “Confession”:

One, that they were forged by R. B. Neal. Mr. Neal was a firm believer in the Spalding theory and had the ability to write both documents. Furthermore, in his position with an organization which printed “Anti-Mormon” tracts he could have had access to the printed books necessary to produce the forgeries. For instance, in his booklet, The Stick of Ephraim, page 26, he cited a quotation from “Myth of the Manuscript Found, p. 80.” As we have already pointed out, pages 79-80 of this book were used in creating the “Confession.” We have also noted that Neal wrote a pamphlet in 1899 concerning the restoration of the priesthood and that the same argument was incorporated into the Defence. In this publication, however, Mr. Neal did not refer to the idea that John the Baptist was impersonated by Sidney Rigdon. He, of course, could have later learned of that theory from William Whitsitt or someone who read Whitsitt’s manuscript, but so far we have no evidence to that effect. If our theory is correct that the Defence and the “Confession” were forged by the same individual, it would raise the question as to why Neal never printed the Overstreet “Confession.” He printed many tracts after the Defence, but as far as we have been able to determine, he did not publish the “Confession.” It would seem that a man who played such a prominent role in an organization which printed Anti-Mormon tracts would rush the “Confession” into print if he was, in fact, the author of that document. This would lead us to believe that Neal was merely the “tool” used by a very clever forger.

Two, that the documents were forged by William H. Whitsitt. Professor Whitsitt, like R. B. Neal, had the ability to write the documents in question. Moreover, he had a very active imagination. He was obviously fascinated by the idea of impersonations, and his manuscript contains accounts of three different impersonations by Sidney Rigdon. The “Confession” begins with the words: “I personated Oliver Cowdery . . .” The Defence also hints concerning Rigdon impersonating John the Baptist.

According to this theory, Whitsitt would not have to be personally acquainted with R. B. Neal. He would just have to know that Neal had an extensive Anti-Mormon tract ministry. He would, however, need to have access to a copy of Neal’s booklet, The Stick of Ephraim to use in writing the Defence. Whitsitt could have some copies of the “Cowdery” pamphlet printed, have one “aged” and send it to Mr. Neal, of course, would be very vulnerable to a tract which supported his own beliefs about Mormonism.

Like R. B. Neal, Professor Whitsitt held tenaciously to the Spalding theory about the origin of the Book of Mormon. He had, in fact, written a 1,306-page book dedicated to proving that theory. In his letter to the Library of Congress he said that he found that “such a large amount of money was required to produce the work that I was compelled to desist, . . .” It could be argued that the frustration of never having his masterpiece published led him to seek some other way of getting the message out to the world that Mormonism originated and grew through deceit and impersonations.

William Whitsitt, as we have shown, was familiar with the two books which were used to produce the Overstreet “Confession,” and would have wanted the report of the remarks made by Oliver Cowdery when he returned to the church undermined because it contradicted the Spalding theory and his firm belief that the restoration of the Melchizedek priesthood “never took place.”

Three, that the documents were forged by an unknown person who had access to the Whitsitt manuscript, the writings of R. B. Neal and all of the other writings necessary to commit the forgeries. This explanation, of course, would clear both Whitsitt and Neal of any responsibility for the forgeries.

While it may never be known for certain who forged the Oliver Cowdery Defence and the Oliver Overstreet “Confession,” one thing is very obvious: there was a forger on the loose around the turn of the century who was extremely interested in promoting the Spalding theory. Because of this, we must be especially cautious of any documents relating to that matter which were “discovered” during the latter part of the 19th century or the early part of the 20th century.

While some anti-Mormon writers have been guilty of deceit and forgery, a far greater problem exists in documents printed by the church itself. Joseph Smith and other early Mormon leaders created literally hundreds of pages of forged documents. At the present time, we are working on a book that will demonstrate conclusively that the Book of Mormon is not a translation of an ancient record written on gold plates.

No Fool!

Jim Elliot, who later gave his life in an attempt to bring the Christian message to the Auca Indians, wrote the following:

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep
to gain what he cannot lose.
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A COVER-UP REVEALED

Joseph Smith’s Attempt to Save the Book of Mormon

In the July 1989 issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger, we announced the discovery of a large “black hole” in the first part of the Book of Mormon. We demonstrated that when the first 116 pages of Joseph Smith’s manuscript were stolen, he was unable to accurately reproduce the material he had “translated” from the plates of Lehi. Since he feared that his enemies had not destroyed the missing pages and would bring them forth and point out contradictions if he tried to duplicate the material, he was forced to claim that God ordered him to translate the first part of the Book of Mormon from a different set of plates. Mormons refer to these plates as the “small plates of Nephi.” These “gold plates” covered the same period as the plates of Lehi, but since they were written by another author, the story did not have to be identical to that found in the missing pages. Nevertheless, the evidence shows that even this solution did not completely solve the dilemma that confronted Joseph Smith. Smith apparently could not clearly remember many of the personal names, dates, cities, lands, kings, military leaders and other matters he had previously written about. Consequently, what Smith dictated to replace the missing pages of his book had to be as vague as possible. While these pages would have to cover the same period as the original pages from the book of Lehi and give some appearance of being history, they would actually have to be very obscure when it came to particulars which Joseph Smith could not clearly remember. Many important things, therefore, which had evaporated from Joseph Smith’s memory would also have to vanish into a rayless and indefinable “black hole” in the Book of Mormon.

Our theory with regard to this “black hole” now seems to be well established by the evidence. Not only have Mormon apologists remained silent in the face of the facts that have come forth, but new evidence has come to light which tends to confirm the research which was presented in the July 1989 issue of the Messenger.

One important development relates to a theory held by some prominent Mormon scholars for a number of years. These scholars maintain that the first part of the Book of Mormon was actually written last. They claim that after the 116 pages were stolen, Joseph Smith did not try to fill in the missing material at the start of the book. Instead, he picked up where he had left off and continued until he came to the end of the book. Only after he completed the last part of the Book of Mormon (over two-thirds of the book), did he face the problem of restoring the beginning of his work. Therefore, the first six books in the Book of Mormon—I Nephi through Omni—comprising 142 pages, were written last of all. When we originally did our work with regard to the “black hole,” we did not realize how well this theory coincided with our ideas. Fortunately, during the course of our research a Mormon scholar who has lost faith in the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon shared some of his research with us. We checked his work and found that he had irrefutable evidence that the first part of the book was, in fact, written last. Moreover, this evidence also conclusively proves that Joseph Smith himself was the author of the Book of Mormon.

In a new book we have just completed, Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon, we have combined this important information with our research on the “black hole.” In addition, we have added our computer work on plagiarism—74 pages of photographic proof that the author of the Book of Mormon lifted a great deal of material from the New Testament.

DELETING JESUS’ NAME

The discovery that the first part of the Book of Mormon was actually written last opened up a plausible explanation as to why Joseph Smith felt he had to delete the words Jesus Christ.

AN IMPORTANT NEW BOOK!

Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. A penetrating look at the Book of Mormon which conclusively demonstrates that it was written by Joseph Smith himself and did not come from a translation of gold plates written by ancient Jews. Contains 74 pages of photographic proof that Smith plagiarized extensively from the New Testament of the King James Bible.

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from an early portion of the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi 12:18). We had noted this change years ago in our book, 3,913 Changes in the Book of Mormon, but did not understand the weighty implications of the matter.

One of the most serious problems confronting believers in the Book of Mormon is the emphasis upon Jesus in the Old Testament portion of the Book of Mormon. Even the appearance of the name Jesus Christ in the story hundreds of years before his coming presents a problem. At the time Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon he must not have realized that the words Jesus Christ were derived from the Greek words Iesous Christos. When Smith was charged with using a Greek word in the Book of Mormon, he responded that this was an error: “The error I speak of, is the definition of the word Mormon. It has been stated that this word was derived from the Greek word mormo. This is not the case. There was no Greek or Latin upon the plates from which I . . . translated the Book of Mormon” (Times and Seasons, vol. 4, p. 194). Joseph Smith was aware of the fact that it would be incorrect to have a name derived from the Greek language in the Book of Mormon. He, therefore, argued against the idea put forth by his detractors.

Notwithstanding Joseph Smith’s firm denial, there are names in the Book of Mormon “derived from the Greek.” For example, the name Timothy (3 Nephi 19:4) comes from the Greek language, and the name Jonas (found in the same verse) is the Greek name for Jonah. Moreover, the Greek words Alpha and Omega are found in 3 Nephi 9:18. It is evident also that they have been plagiarized from the New Testament, Revelation 21:6. (The New Testament, of course, was written in Greek.) It is interesting to note that Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie freely admitted that these words are from the Greek language: “ALPHA AND OMEGA . . . These words, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, are used figuratively to teach the timelessness and eternal nature of our Lord’s existence . . .” (Mormon Doctrine, 1979, p. 31).

Even the Mormon Church’s own Bible Dictionary, included with the church’s printing of the King James Version of the Bible, acknowledges that Jesus is the “Greek form of the name Joshua or Jeshua” (page 713) and also states that the “English word Christ is from a Greek word meaning anointed, and is the equivalent of Messiah, which is from a Hebrew and Aramaic term meaning Anointed” (page 609).

If the Book of Mormon had used the words Joshua the Messiah instead of Jesus Christ, it would be far more impressive to scholars. It could be argued, of course, that these words were transliterated into “reformed Egyptian” characters so they could be engraved on the original gold plates, but that the translator chose to use the words Jesus Christ instead because they would be more easily understood by the reader. The problem with the Book of Mormon, however, goes much deeper than just the name of the Messiah. Mormon scholar S. Kent Brown, who seems to be an avid apologist for the Book of Mormon, acknowledges:

Nephi and Jacob use several titles which apparently go beyond what they could have found in the brass plates . . . The following titles and names used by Nephi seem to be more at home in a later era such as that of the New Testament or of early Christianity: Beloved Son . . . Beloved . . . Son of the living God . . . Son of righteousness . . . Son of the most high God . . . Son of God . . . Only Begotten of the Father . . . Jesus Christ . . . Christ . . . true vine . . . light . . . The following names from Jacob fit the same situation: Only Begotten Son . . . Christ . . . Jesus . . . (BYU Studies, Winter 1984, p. 35, n. 40)

A study of the text of the Book of Mormon reveals that although Joseph Smith may not have known that the words Jesus Christ were obtained from the Greek language, for some reason he was concerned about introducing them into the first part of the Book of Mormon between five and six hundred years before the birth of Christ. As we will show, this fear led Smith into producing some contradictory material in the Book of Mormon.

S. Kent Brown argued that Lehi did not know the words Jesus Christ and that they were not revealed until after Lehi’s death:

Did Lehi not know titles such as Son of God and Christ? Regarding both the term Christ and the name Jesus, the answer is a definite no. According to 2 Nephi 10:3, the title Christ was made known to Jacob by an angel only after Lehi’s death. And Nephi makes use of this title only after narrating this experience of Jacob (2 Ne. 11:4). In addition, Nephi mentions the name Jesus for the first time only near the end of his own writings (2 Ne. 26:12) . . . Therefore, we can safely conclude that Lehi did not know these names. (Ibid., pp. 35-36)

Although S. Kent Brown’s statement is essentially correct as it relates to the current edition of the Book of Mormon, when we turn to the original 1830 edition, a serious problem comes to light that completely overthrows Brown’s thesis. The first edition, in fact, makes it clear that the name Jesus Christ was known not only before Lehi’s death, but it was used by Nephi himself before he came to the New World:

And a great and a terrible gulf divideth them; yea, even the word of the justice of the Eternal God, and Jesus Christ, which is the Lamb of God . . . (Book of Mormon, 1830 edition, p. 28)

Since the Book of Mormon later states that the name was first made known to Jacob years after Lehi’s death, in the second edition Joseph Smith had to change the words Jesus Christ to the Messiah. In the 1981 edition we read as follows:

And a great and a terrible gulf divideth them; yea, even the word of the justice of the Eternal God, and the Messiah who is the Lamb of God . . . (Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 12:18)

The printer’s manuscript of the Book of Mormon was also altered to reflect this serious change. From this it is obvious that a deliberate change was made to cover up an anachronistic and embarrassing portion of the Book of Mormon.

After examining the appearances of the words Jesus and Christ throughout the Book of Mormon, we saw some strange
Above is photographic proof that Joseph Smith plagiarized from the book of Revelation. On the left side of the page are verses from the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon. The verses from the Bible (to the right) are taken from the Mormon church’s own official 1987 edition of the King James Version.
patterns which could be explained by the theory that the first part of the Book of Mormon was written last. It seems, in fact, that Joseph Smith never intended to introduce the words *Jesus Christ* into the record of the Nephites until the reign of king Benjamin—just a little over a century before Christ was born. In the book of Mosiah, which would be the first book written after the 116 pages were stolen, king Benjamin gave a moving address to his people in “About 124 B.C.” Just before the address, he told his son Mosiah that he was going to “give this people a name, that thereby they may be distinguished above all the people which the Lord God hath brought out of the land of Jerusalem; and this I do because they have been a diligent people in keeping the commandments of the Lord. And I give unto them a name that never shall be blotted out, except it be through transgression” (Mosiah 1:11-12). In his address, king Benjamin seems to be saying that an angel revealed to him the words “Jesus Christ” and that his people should take upon themselves the name of Christ:

... the things which I shall tell you are made known unto me by an angel from God. . . he said unto me: Awake, and hear the words which I shall tell thee, for behold, I am come to declare unto you the glad tidings of great joy. . . . For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent . . . shall come down from heaven . . . and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay . . . And he shall be called Jesus Christ the Son of God . . . and his mother shall be called Mary. (Mosiah 3:2, 3, 5, 8)

In Mosiah 5:8 and 11, king Benjamin informed his people, “There is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should take upon the name of Christ. . . And I would that ye should remember also, that this is the name that I said I should give unto you that never should be blotted out, except it be through transgression.” Mosiah 6:2 goes on to state that after the address, “there was not one soul, except it were little children, but who had entered into the covenant and had taken upon them the name of Christ.”

This address raises a very serious question with regard to the material appearing in the book of 2nd Nephi which was supposed to have been written over 400 years earlier. Why would king Benjamin have to receive a special revelation informing him of the name of Christ if the plates of Nephi already contained this information? According to Mormon, “Amaleki had delivered up these plates [the small plates of Nephi] into the hands of king Benjamin” (Words of Mormon 1:10). Furthermore, king Benjamin also had the large plates of Nephi. Benjamin himself told his sons that the “plates of Nephi” were “true” and instructed them to “remember to search them diligently” (Mosiah 1:6-7). In the small plates alone, the name “Jesus” appears 10 times and the term “Christ” is found 82 times. In 2 Nephi 25:16 and 26, Nephi plainly wrote that “there is none other name given under heaven save it be this Jesus Christ, of which I have spoken, whereby man can be saved. . . we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.” In 2 Nephi 31:13 we find this: “. . . I know that if ye shall follow the Son . . . witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism . . . then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost . . .”

In light of these references, it seems highly unreasonable to believe that king Benjamin and his people would have been completely in the dark concerning the “name of Christ” before the angel visited Benjamin and revealed this information.

In the books Alma through Mormon the name *Jesus* is used 147 times and *Christ* appears 176 times. Ether, which is next to the last book in the Book of Mormon, uses the name *Jesus* 12 times, and the word *Christ* appears 1-4 times. The last book, Moroni, has *Jesus* 11 times and *Christ* 70 times. By the time Joseph Smith got around to replacing the missing portion of the Book of Mormon, he was thoroughly steeped in the use of the words *Jesus Christ*. He had, in fact, devoted many pages of his work to the visitation of Christ to the Nephites, and it became very difficult for him to suppress the Messiah’s name as he began replacing the material which was originally in the missing 116 pages.

One thing seems very clear; Joseph Smith knew that he should not include the words *Jesus Christ* in his “translation” of the small plates of Nephi because it would contradict the pages he had written in the book of Mosiah. (The reader will remember that in Mosiah he had claimed that an angel revealed these words to Benjamin.) Consequently, they should not appear before the reign of king Benjamin.

Once we have this understanding, it becomes obvious that Joseph Smith was trying very hard to suppress the words “Jesus Christ” in the first books of the Book of Mormon. An examination of the 1st book of Nephi shows the caution Joseph Smith was using with regard to this matter. Prior to the verse where he accidentally inserted the words *Jesus Christ* (1 Nephi 12:18), he attempted to use every other word he could think of to avoid using the name of Jesus. He used the word *God* 36 times; the words *the Lord* 99 times; the words *God of Israel* two times; *Messiah* nine times; *Savior* once; *Redeemer* four times; the words *the Lamb or the Lamb of God* 15 times; the words *Son of God* five times and the *Son* three times. The words *Jesus or Christ* never appear in any of the first 22 printed pages of the Book of Mormon.

The cover-up was working very well until Joseph Smith arrived at chapter 12, verse 18. At that point, however, he seems to have made a slip of the tongue and dictated the words *Jesus Christ*. He apparently did not even realize he had made an error and did not catch this serious mistake when he printed the first edition in 1830. Smith probably did not realize that he had made this Freudian slip until he reread the text of the Book of Mormon for the 1837 edition. As we have shown, at that time he removed the words *Jesus Christ* and the words *the Messiah* took their place in the editions which followed.

In any case, after Joseph Smith made his revealing blunder in 1 Nephi 12:18, he was able to dictate about 55 pages of text before he made a similar mistake. He filled these pages with all sorts of synonyms in his attempt to
Selected verses from the Book of Mormon compared with Bible verses which appear in the King James Version—first printed in 1611 A.D. The case for plagiarism is very convincing. For additional evidence see the 74 pages of photographic evidence in Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon.
avoid mentioning the words Jesus Christ. He used the Lord 204 times (actually more if we add on some pages of Isaiah quoted in this portion of the Book of Mormon). The word God is used 170 times; the words the Lamb or Lamb of God appear 59 times; Messiah is used ten times; Redeemer is found ten times and Savior appears twice. In this portion of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith used some new synonyms. In 2 Nephi 9:5, for instance, we read that “it behooveth the great Creator that he suffereth himself to become subject unto man in the flesh . . .” Verse 6 also uses these same words. In the second chapter of the same book (verses 27 and 28), the Messiah is referred to twice as “the great Mediator.” From the book of Isaiah in the Bible, Joseph Smith derived the words the Holy One of Israel. This is used in 1 Nephi 22:21 as a substitute for Jesus Christ: “And now I, Nephi, declare unto you, that this prophet of whom Moses spake was the Holy One of Israel . . .” These same words are used in 26 other places in the section of the text we are discussing. When we add all of these references to deity in this section of the Book of Mormon, we obtain a total of 486. In this same portion, the computer failed to find a single mention of either Jesus or Christ.

Finally, after dictating 55 straight pages without letting the name of the Messiah escape from his mouth, Joseph Smith stumbled again. In 2 Nephi 10:3, the word Christ slipped out. This time, however, Smith was immediately aware of his mistake. Although this slip of the tongue was not as bad as the first mistake (1 Nephi 12:18, where he used both Jesus and Christ), this time Smith seems to have realized that his scribe had heard him use the word Christ and that “the cat was out of the bag.” He apparently did not want to admit that he had made a mistake. It appears, therefore, that he immediately attempted to correct the problem by claiming that Jacob had the word Christ revealed to him by an angel. The reader will notice how quickly Joseph Smith reacted in his attempt to smooth things over.

And now I, Jacob, speak unto you again . . . our children shall be restored, that they may come to that which will give them the true knowledge of their Redeemer. Wherefore, as I said unto you, it must needs be expedient that Christ—for in the last night the angel spake unto me that this should be his name—should come among the Jews . . . (2 Nephi 10:1-3)

It is interesting to note that the order of things is different than when king Benjamin had the name of the Messiah revealed to him. In that account, Benjamin first tells his people that an “angel of God” appeared to him and gave him an important message. He then says that the angel told him the Savior would “be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God . . .” (Mosiah 3:2 and 8). In Jacob’s account, however, he mentions the fact that an angel had given him the name Christ only after he had let the name slip out of his mouth. When all of the facts are considered, it is difficult to resist the idea that the angel’s message was an afterthought.

After Jacob first mentioned Christ in 2 Nephi 10:3, it did not take him long to use it again. Within two and a half pages the word Christ appears five more times. It should be noted, however, that the word Jesus does not appear at all in Jacob’s address. Nephi first uses this word in 2 Nephi 25:19: “. . . the Messiah cometh . . . and according to the words of the prophets, and also the word of the angel of God, his name shall be Jesus Christ the Son of God.” It would appear that since Joseph Smith had already used the word Christ, he felt it would be pointless to continue to suppress the name Jesus. Like Jacob, Nephi claimed “the angel of God” revealed the Savior’s name. In this verse Nephi also makes a peculiar statement concerning the matter; he comments that the name was found in “the words of the prophets.” If this was the case, why were Nephi, Jacob and king Benjamin all ignorant of this important information until angels revealed it? Furthermore, why would an angel have to give a revelation concerning the matter if it was already found in “the words of the prophets.”

Joseph Smith not only had a very serious problem with regard to the name Jesus Christ in the Book of Mormon, but as Wesley P. Walters observed, he also “lost track of his time-frame” in some portions of the book. In his Master’s thesis, “The Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Mormon,” page 79, Walters notes that there are “several passages in which Joseph had difficulty from time to time trying to have his Book of Mormon characters write about events as still in the future when from Joseph’s vantage point they were already in the past.” Pastor Walters gives some examples on pages 79-80 of his thesis, and H. Michael Marquardt has dealt with this subject in The Use of the Bible In the Book of Mormon, page 5.

A good example of the problem Joseph Smith had is found in the book of 2 Nephi, chapter 31, dated “Between 559 and 545 B.C.”:

And now, I would ask of you . . . wherein the Lamb of God did fulfill all righteousness in being baptized with water? Know ye not that he was holy? . . . Wherefore after he was baptized with water the Holy Ghost descended upon him . . . it shewed unto the children of men the straitness of the path . . . he having set the example before them. (2 Nephi 31: 6-9)

In one place in Mosiah, dated “About 148 B.C.,” Smith seems to have realized he was in the past tense and tried to correct the situation: “And now if Christ had not come into the world, speaking of things to come as though they had already come, there could have been no redemption” (Mosiah 16:6).

WHAT IS MISSING?

After we completed our research with regard to the black hole in the small plates of Nephi we became aware of the fact that the entire Book of Mormon is also lacking a significant number of important things that should be there if the book were really a history of ancient Jewish people in the New World. In our new book, Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon, we explored a number of important things that are either entirely missing or seldom mentioned in the Book of Mormon.

One thing that is strangely lacking in the Book of Mormon is a system of measurements. It appears, in fact,
that a black hole extends throughout the entire book. It is hard to understand why Joseph Smith did not bother to give the ancient Nephites, Lamanites and Jaredites some system of measurements. It is possible that he felt that he might have just been too lazy or preoccupied to design or follow any kind of a system. In Alma 11:4, this statement appears concerning measurement:

...they [the Nephites] did not reckon after the manner of the Jews... but they altered their reckoning and their measure, according to the minds and the circumstances of the people, in every generation, until the reign of the judges...

In any case, our reading of the text of the Book of Mormon produced no examples of the measurement of anything. In Alma 11:7 and 11, we read that "A senum of silver was equal to a senine of gold, and either for a measure of barley, and also for a measure of every kind of grain... A shiblon is half of a senum; therefore, a shiblon for half a measure of barley." We are left completely in the dark, however, as to how much grain is contained in a "measure." We searched with the Mormon Church's computer program to see if we could find something our reading of the text did not disclose. The words which we searched for were as follows: measure, measured, measurement, measures, measuring, length, breadth, width, height, heights, stature, size, distance and depth. These words, of course, produced a great many examples of measurement in the Bible, but the Book of Mormon produced nothing of any value. The closest thing we could find to measurement appeared in Alma 50:2. This verse spoke of "works of timbers built up to the height of a man..." The only other thing we found was in Ether 2:17, where a description of the barges used to bring the Jaredites to the New World is given: "...the length thereof was the length of a tree..." Since trees vary a great deal in their length, this does not give us too much to go on; some trees are only 20 or 30 feet high, whereas some of the giant sequoias in California grow to over 300 feet high. The description given of Jared's barges certainly is not as precise as that given concerning the ark in the Bible: "...the length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits" (Genesis 6:15). According to the computer, the Bible uses the words cubit and cubits 258 times, whereas the word cubit is only found once in the Book of Mormon. In 3 Nephi 13:27, we read: "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" It is interesting to note, however, that even this example was plagiarized from the Bible, Matthew 6:27.

As far as distance is concerned, the New Testament refers to mile and furlongs. The Nephites, on the other hand, seem to have never developed any accurate way to measure distance. Alma 22:32 says that "it was only the distance of a day and a half's journey for a Nephite... from the east to the west sea..." It is true that the Book of Mormon does use the word mile once in 3 Nephi 12:41, but it is obvious that it is plagiarized from Matthew 5:41: "And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."

The Bible has a great deal to say about the weight of various objects. The ancient Hebrews used a balance or scales to weigh their precious metals and other items.

For instance, in Numbers 7:13 we read: "And his offering was one silver charger, the weight thereof was an hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary..." The computer shows that the Bible mentions shekel or shekels 139 times, whereas the Book of Mormon never uses these words. Gerahs are mentioned in the Old Testament, and the words pound and pounds are found in both the Old and New Testaments. These words, however, are not found in the Book of Mormon. The words talent and talents (a talent of silver was equal to 3,000 shekels) appear 66 times in the two testaments of the Bible. The Book of Mormon, however, only has one place where the word talent is found: "...take away their talent... and give unto them who shall have more abundantly" (Ether 12:35). This seems to have been plagiarized from Matthew 25:28-29: "Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance..."

We searched for the following words in both the Bible and the Book of Mormon: weigh, weighed, weigheth, weighing, weight, weightier, weights, scales, balance and balances. The search in the Bible brought forth a great deal of information. The Book of Mormon, however, yielded six references, but none of these had anything to do with the weight or weighing of any object. For instance, Lehim exclaimed: "My heart hath been weighed down with sorrow..." (2 Nephi 1:17), and Nephi wrote: "And then they shall rejoice... and their scales of darkness shall begin to fall from their eyes..." (2 Nephi 30:6) It is also interesting to note that in Joseph Smith's other writings in the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price—which includes the books of Abraham and Moses—we do not find any of the words mentioned above in any way that relates to weighing or the weight of any object. It seems obvious, then, that Joseph Smith had very little interest in any system of weights and this is reflected in his writings.

In an attempt to ascertain if anything was ever actually measured in the Book of Mormon, we searched for the following words: measure, measured, measurement, measures and measuring. While the Bible produced numerous references regarding measurement, other than the two indefinite references in the 11th chapter of Alma (mentioned above), we could find no evidence that people in the Book of Mormon actually measured anything.

While the Book of Mormon gives an abundance of details concerning military matters and some aspects of religion, it is very deficient in a number of important areas. In many respects it is virtually colorless in its description of events and people. Indeed, the word colorless could be applied almost in a literal sense to the Book of Mormon. We, in fact, did a study concerning eleven colors mentioned in the Bible and found the following: the Bible mentions these colors, or words derived from these colors (e. g., red, reddish; green, greenness, etc.), 382 times, whereas the Book of Mormon yielded only 56 instances where these words were used. Moreover, if we eliminate the words black and white from this total, there are only 18 places where we find any other colors. Red appeared the most frequently. It comprises...
15 of the 18 instances mentioned. When we take a closer look at red, however, we find another amazing fact: of the 15 times it appears only two of these instances relate to anything in the New World. These refer to the fact that the Amlicites “marked themselves with red in their foreheads” (see Alma 3:4, 13). The other 13 places where this word is found relate to the sea which the Israelites passed through on their flight from the Egyptians—i. e., the Red Sea (see Exodus 10:19).

The other two colors which appear in the Book of Mormon are scarlet—actually scarlets—and grey. The word scarlets is found twice in 1 Nephi 13:7-8, and was apparently plagiarized from Revelations 18:12. The remaining color, grey, is found just once (1 Nephi 18:18) and seems to have been lifted from the Bible (see Genesis 42:38).

Of more importance, however, are the colors which are completely missing from the Book of Mormon: BLUE, BROWN, CRIMSON, GREEN, PURPLE and YELLOW. That all these colors would be absent from the book is astounding. It is also interesting to note that five of these colors—blue, brown, crimson, purple and yellow—are also missing in Joseph Smith’s writings in the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price. The word green does appear one time in the Doctrine and Covenants and also once in the Pearl of Great Price, but both occurrences seem to have been taken from the Bible.

Our computer search of the Bible for the words colour, coloured and colors—note the British spelling in the King James Version—revealed that they were used 27 times. The same search in the Book of Mormon yielded only the word colors once (see 3 Nephi 22:11). This word, however, has been directly taken from a verse in the Bible (see Isaiah 54:11). The very limited use of colors throughout the Book of Mormon seems to show that it was written by one author who apparently did not pay much attention to colors. Furthermore, the fact that the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price completely omit five of the same colors as the Book of Mormon points to the conclusion that they were all the product of the same mind.

The ancient Israelites were a people who were very interested in music. This interest should certainly be reflected in the Book of Mormon. An examination of the book, however, shows that it was written by a person who had very little interest in music. We searched for the words sang, sing, singed, singer, singers, singeth, singing, sings, song and songs and found that they appeared 268 times in the Bible. These same words are only found 36 times in the Book of Mormon, and further research shows that most of these were derived through plagiarism from the Bible. We have identified 19 places where they were directly copied from the Bible, and of the remaining 17, there are eight cases where they only refer to singing in heaven or singing the song of “redeeming love”—i. e., becoming converted to Christ. We also searched for the words hymn and hymns. While we found four cases in the Bible, the Book of Mormon did not yield any examples of these words. We also searched for the words music, musical, musician, musicians. (In this particular search we included headings found in the Psalms because they are found in the Hebrew text.) These words appeared 73 times in the Bible, but, again, the Book of Mormon yielded no examples of these words being used. It is also interesting to note that Joseph Smith did not use any of these words in the Pearl of Great Price or his revelations printed in the Doctrine and Covenants. The word music appears once in the Doctrine and Covenants (Section 136:28), but it is in a revelation given to Brigham Young.

When it comes to musical instruments, the Book of Mormon is sadly deficient. We searched for the words instrument and instruments and found 24 places in the Bible where they are used with regard to musical instruments. Although the Book of Mormon uses these words, we did not find a single case where they refer to a musical instrument. We searched for the names of specific musical instruments the Israelites used. In the first search we looked for the following instruments: organ, organs, psalteries, psaltery, sackbut, tabret, tabrets, timbrel, timbrels, trump, trumpet, trumpeters, trumpets, trumps and viol. While these words appeared 174 times in the Bible, they are used only seven times in the Book of Mormon. The word trump appears three times, but in every case it is referring to the trump of God. While the word trumpet is found twice, one of these examples (3 Nephi 13:2) has been plagiarized from Matthew 6:2. The only example of any of these musical instruments actually being used is when a Jaredite by the name of Comnor “did sound a trumpet unto the armies of Shiz to invite them forth to battle” (Ether 14:28). It is really surprising that the author of the Book of Mormon, who obviously had a real interest in warfare, never had the Nephites or the Lamanites sound a trumpet.

We also searched for the following musical instruments or words related to them: cornet, cornets, cymbal, cymbals, dulcimer, flute, harp, harped, harpers, harping, harps, pipe, piped, pipers and pipes. The result was that we found these words used 102 times in the Bible. Only two of these words were found in the Book of Mormon, harp and pipe. They both appear in one verse found in 2 Nephi 15:12. An examination of this verse, however, shows that it was plagiarized from Isaiah 5:12 in the Bible. It is obvious, therefore, that the author of the Book of Mormon mentioned none of these musical instruments in his own writing. The same applies to Joseph Smith’s revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants. The Pearl of Great Price does use the word harp in one place (Moses 5:45), but it is obvious that even this is taken from Genesis 4:21.

**JEW OR PROTESTANT?**

An extremely important question concerning the Book of Mormon is whether it was actually written by Jewish writers who understood the laws and customs of ancient Israel or by someone who was raised in the Christian faith as a Protestant during the early part of the 19th century. The authenticity of the Book of Mormon stands or falls on this question.

The Book of Mormon presents what most Christians feel is a very unusual picture of religious life between 600 B.C. and the coming of Christ. It claims that the ancient Nephites actually worshipped Jesus Christ and established Christian churches during this long period before Christ died and
the New Testament was written. Bible scholars find it very hard to accept this claim, and they are even more puzzled when they learn that the Book of Mormon claims that the ancient Nephites also kept the law of Moses at the same time. Between “559 and 545 B.C.” Nephi was supposed to have written the following: “And, notwithstanding we believe in Christ, we keep the law of Moses, and look forward with steadfastness unto Christ, until the law shall be fulfilled. . . . the right way is to believe in Christ . . . And, inasmuch as it shall be expedient, ye must keep the performances and ordinances of God until the Law shall be fulfilled which was given to Moses” (2 Nephi 25:21, 29-30). In his Master’s thesis, Wesley P. Walters takes issue with this type of worship:

The transplantation of New Testament material into the Old disrupts the dispensations that God has established in the unfolding of redemption, and confuses the Old and New Covenants and their respective ordinances. The Book of Mormon is careful to point out that the American Hebrew colony “kept the law of Moses”. . . Yet Christian baptism was said to be taught among the Nephites five hundred years before Christ. . . Furthermore by 147 B.C. a Christian Church is depicted as flourishing, of which people become members through baptism. . . to introduce the New Testament practice of baptism in the name of Christ into the Old Testament period is to confuse the Old and New Covenants and the ordinances connected with each. The Book of Hebrews is very specific that while the Old Testament was in force, the New clearly was not. When the New Covenant had been established, the Old Covenant was abolished (Heb. 8:13, 10:1-9). To introduce the features of the New Covenant into the time period when the Old Covenant was in force is to confuse the two covenants to the extent of rendering them both meaningless. Yet Mormon teaching has followed this pattern first set out in the Book of Mormon. . . . Dr. James D. Bales has well expressed the Book of Mormon’s variance with the biblical teachings concerning the Old and New Covenants: “The two [covenants] could not exist together because he took away the first that he might establish the second. Furthermore, it is evident that the second could not be in force before the first had been taken away. This is evident because the purpose of the taking away of the first was to establish the second. It had to be taken away so the second could be established.” The Book of Mormon, by injecting the New Testament material into the Old Testament period, completely disrupts the biblical pattern so carefully set forth in the Old Testament itself and so faithfully guarded by the New. (“The Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Mormon,” pp. 15-17)

Joseph Smith’s idea of having the Nephites practicing Christianity yet living the law of Moses for hundreds of years seems to be equivalent to a man trying to ride two horses at the same time over rough terrain. Eventually the horses part and the man comes crashing to the ground.

The fact that full-blown Christianity appears far too early in the Book of Mormon and continues to dominate throughout the entire book leads to the conclusion that it was written by someone who at least professed to be a Christian. That person’s familiarity with the New Testament is evident from the 1st book of Nephi until the concluding book of Moroni.

While the Book of Mormon shows a fair knowledge of biblical Christianity and a real interest in the religious topics that were being debated during Joseph Smith’s lifetime, it seems to be almost totally deficient when it comes to the issues which were of great importance to the Jews prior to the time of Christ. The church’s own computer program has helped us to pinpoint some of the areas where the Book of Mormon is sadly lacking with regard to Jewish customs and religion.

NO PASSOVER?

It is a well-known fact that one of the most important items in Judaism is the festival of the passover. While the Jewish people were held in slavery in Egypt, Moses told the elders to “take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover. And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin . . . For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you” (Exodus 12:21 23). The Egyptians did not do this, and consequently lost all their “firstborn.” This judgment upon the Egyptians, of course, convinced Pharaoh that he should let God’s people leave the land. In Exodus 12:14, the Lord told the Jewish people that “this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.”

The importance of the passover to the Jewish people cannot be overstated. Since the Nephites were supposed to have been Israelites who possessed “the five books of Moses” (1 Nephi 5:11), they should have celebrated the passover about six hundred times after they came to America. We would expect, therefore, to find a significant number of references to that festival in the Book of Mormon. A computer search for the words passover and passovers revealed that these words were used 77 times in the Bible. In the Book of Mormon, however, these words are never used at all. It is absolutely astounding that a book purported to have been written by ancient Jewish people would never refer to the passover.

At the time of the passover, the Israelites were supposed to “observe the feast of unleavened bread” (Exodus 12:17). In verse 15, the Lord tells the people that “Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for Whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.” The Bible yielded 43 places where unleavened bread was mentioned, but the Book of Mormon was completely silent about the matter. We also searched for the following words: leaven, leavened, leaveneth and unleavened. While the Book of Mormon never used any of these words, the Bible had 100 places where these words appeared.
Besides the passover with the accompanying feast of unleavened bread, the Jewish men were required to attend two other feasts or festivals—i.e., the feast of weeks (also known as the feast of harvest) and the feast of tabernacles (or feast of ingathering). When we searched in the Bible for the two words feast of, we found 41 places where they refer to Jewish feasts. We found the feast of passover, the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of harvest, the feast of weeks, the feast of tabernacles, the feast of the ingathering, the feast of the seventh month, the feast of dedication, the feast of the Lord and the feast of the Jews. Some of these names, of course, are just different names for the same feasts. In the New Testament we find the word Pentecost used three times. This is the Old Testament feast of weeks. We have, therefore, 44 cases in which Jewish feasts or festivals are mentioned in the Bible, and we feel that a search for just the word feast would bring forth more examples. In the Book of Mormon, however, there is not even one case where a Jewish feast or festival was celebrated in the New World!

The Book of Mormon even seems to be deficient with regard to the “sabbath day.” A search for the words sabbath and sabbaths revealed that they were used 171 times in the Bible, but appeared just five times in the Book of Mormon. It is also interesting to note that three of the five cases (Mosiah 13:16, 18, 19) are derived directly from the Bible, Exodus 20:8, 10, 11. It seems almost incredible that the Book of Mormon, which was supposed to have been written by Jewish people, would almost completely disregard the day which was held so sacred by the ancient Israelites.

Even before the Israelites received the law of Moses, they were practicing circumcision. It was a very important part of the Jewish religion. Genesis 17:14 makes it clear that “the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken the covenant.” The Book of Mormon should have many references to this practice if it is really a history of Jewish people. We searched for the words circumcision, circumcised, circumcision, uncircumcised, uncircumcision, foreskin and foreskins and learned that the Bible uses these words 160 times. These same words only appeared five times in the Book of Mormon. Two of the places where they are found (2 Nephi 8:24 and 3 Nephi 20:36) are taken directly from the Bible, Isaiah 52:1. Two other references (2 Nephi 9:33 and Helaman 9:21) are only referring to the “uncircumcised of heart.” The only remaining reference (Moroni 8:8) is found in one of the very last chapters in the book. It says that after the coming of Christ, he told the Nephites that “the law of circumcision is done away in me.” This is a very strange statement because there seems to be no evidence in the Book of Mormon that it was ever practiced.

The Book of Mormon claims that “I, Nephi, did build a temple; and I did construct it after the manner of the temple of Solomon save it were not built of so many precious things . . .” (2 Nephi 5:16). After this verse, however, Nephi never mentions the temple again. His brother Jacob did use this temple to preach a sermon, but after that we find no mention of any temple for hundreds of years. Mormon scholar John L. Sorenson observed: “Perhaps during the centuries of warfare . . . the original temple fell into disuse . . At least we hear nothing about the temple between Jacob’s day and the time when the Zeniffites reoccupied the land, over 400 years later . . .” (An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon, p. 145).

The ancient Israelites had two altars in their temple—the brazen altar for burnt offerings and the golden altar for burning incense. Altars played a very important role in the religious ceremonies of both the Jews and the people around them who worshipped other gods. Consequently, when we searched for the words altar and altars in the Bible, we found that they were mentioned 433 times. The Book of Mormon, however, only used these words four times. It is also interesting to note that two of these cases (Alma 15:17; 17:4) seem to have nothing to do with altars used in temples to offer sacrifices or burn incense. The word altar in these cases refers to the type of altar used in Christian churches where people pray and confess their sins. This is obvious from Alma 15:17: “. . . the people . . . began to assemble themselves together at their sanctuaries to worship God before the altar . . .” Of the two remaining verses which contain the word altar, one of them (2 Nephi 16:6) was obviously copied from the Bible, Isaiah 6:6. The last verse, 1 Nephi 2:7, does mention the fact that Lehi “built an altar of stones, and made an offering to the Lord . . .” This is the only verse where a Jewish type of altar is mentioned in the entire Book of Mormon. The reader will notice, however, that this altar was built when Lehi was traveling in the “wilderness in the borders which are nearer the Red Sea” (verse 5). It has nothing to do with any altar in the New World. Furthermore, it was only a temporary pile of stones, not an altar in a temple. It is plain, therefore, that the Book of Mormon never refers to either a brazen altar to offer sacrifices in the temple or a golden altar for burning incense.

The author of the Book of Mormon seems to have been almost completely in the dark with regard to the importance of sacrifices and offerings in the ancient Jewish religion. We used the computer to search for the following words sacrifice, sacrificed, sacrificest, sacrifices, sacrificeth, sacrificial and sacrificing. The result was that the Bible yielded 298 cases where these words were used, but the Book of Mormon produced only twenty. Of these twenty, however, nine referred to Christ sacrificing his life, three were related to human sacrifice, two were concerning men sacrificing their own lives, one was concerning the sacrifice of “a broken heart and a contrite spirit” and two were specific instructions by Christ to the Nephites to cease making “sacrifices and your burnt offerings” after the law was fulfilled. There were, therefore, only three references that could relate to someone actually making a sacrifice according to the Jewish law.

We searched for the words offering and offerings and discovered that while they were used 989 times in the Bible, they only appeared 13 times in the Book of Mormon. Of the 13, only four could be linked in any way to the type of sacrifices the Jewish priests offered in their temple, four were directly copied from the Bible, two came from Christ’s
words to end sacrifices and burnt offerings. The last three were concerning the story of Isaac in the Bible, the offering of Christ and the teaching that people should offer their “whole souls” to God. A search for the words burnt offerings yields only five places in the Book of Mormon where these words appear together. All of these were previously found in our search for the words offering and offerings, and as we stated before, two of the five relate to burnt offerings being forbidden after the appearance of Christ to the Nephites. The Bible, on the other hand, has 86 places. The Book of Mormon never uses the words burnt offering (singular), but they do appear 184 times in the Bible.

The only verse in the Book of Mormon that relates to the inhabitants of the New World making burnt offerings is Mosiah 2:3: “And they also took of the firstlings of their flocks, that they might offer sacrifice and burnt offerings according to the law of Moses.” Instead of helping the case for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, this verse actually shows that the author of the Book of Mormon really did not understand the law of Moses. M. T. Lamb points out:

According to the law of Moses the firstlings of their flocks were never offered as burnt offerings or sacrifices. All firstlings belonged to the Lord, de jure, and could not be counted as a man’s personal property—whereas, all burnt offerings, or sacrifices for sin of every kind, must be selected from the man’s own personal property, or be purchased with his own money for that purpose, while all firstlings of the flock, as the Lord’s property, came into the hands of the high priest, and by him could be offered up as a peace offering, not as a burnt offering or a sin offering, himself and family eating the flesh. (See Ex. 13:2, 12 and 22:29, 30; Numb. 3:13; 2d Sam. 24:24; Numb. 18:15-18 and other places.)

This one little blunder, then, proves beyond the chance of question that the Book of Mormon could not have been inspired by the Holy Spirit or by an angel of the Lord. This passage is precisely such a passage as Joseph Smith or any other ignorant man like him might have written; it could not have been found in the book if God, or any angel of the Lord, had had to do with its preparation. (The Golden Bible, pp. 109-110)

That the author of the Book of Mormon would make the serious mistake described above with regard to burnt offerings shows that he was unfamiliar with the biblical material on the subject. Moreover, it appears that he was not even aware of the other kinds of Jewish offerings commanded in the Bible. In the King James Version of the Old Testament we find the following: trespass offerings, meat offerings, drink offerings, wave offerings and peace offerings (see Exodus, chapter 29; Leviticus, chapters 2-5; Numbers, chapter 29; Chronicles, chapter 29). The computer showed that these offerings were mentioned 519 times in the Bible. The Book of Mormon, on the other hand, does not have a single place where any of these important offerings are mentioned!

The Book of Mormon not only fails the test with regard to Jewish sacrifices, but it is also deficient when it comes to the ancient laws concerning ceremonial uncleanness. Under the Mosaic law there were certain things people did that would make them unclean.” For instance, in Numbers 19:11-13, we read: “He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days. He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean . . . Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him . . .” That these laws concerning ceremonial uncleanness were still in effect when Jesus was born is clear from Luke 2:21-23: “And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcision of the child, his name was called JESUS . . . And when the days of her [Mary’s] purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord . . . And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.”

The Old Testament also gave the Jewish people strict laws concerning which type of food was clean or unclean. These instructions are still carefully observed by Jewish people today who only eat “kosher” food—i. e., food that is permitted by their dietary laws.

The author of the Book of Mormon seems to have been oblivious to these laws. While the Bible uses the words clean and unclean 327 times, they only appear in the Book of Mormon 25 times. Eleven of these, however, seem to relate to whether a person is going to heaven or to hell. For instance, in 1 Nephi 15:34, we read that “there cannot any unclean thing enter into the kingdom of God . . . ” In six places the material has been taken directly from the Bible, three relate to unclean spirits and the last five are concerning other matters that have no relationship to the ceremonial laws concerning uncleanness in the Bible.

In our search to find if the Book of Mormon mentioned anything about these ancient laws, we searched for the following words: purification, purifications, purified, purifier, purifieth, purify and purifying. The Bible yielded 49 places where these words occurred. While the Book of Mormon had ten places, eight related to Christ’s purifying work in a person’s life and the other two were derived through plagiarism from the Bible.

Although the Book of Mormon has a great deal of material regarding Jesus Christ and Christianity, it has hardly anything that would relate to the early Jewish religion and customs. We have noted, for instance, that the Nephites never celebrated the passover or any of the other festivals or feasts that were so important to the ancient Israelites. Very little appears about the sabbath day and, as we show in our new book, nothing concerning sabbatical years or jubilee. There seems to be no evidence that circumcision was actually practiced. The Book of Mormon also seems to be sadly deficient with regard to material regarding both tithing and the temple. The author of the Book of Mormon seems to know nothing at all about the laws concerning unclean foods and practices, and sacrifices are almost completely absent. In fact, the only time that the author of the Book of Mormon speaks of burnt offerings he makes a serious mistake.

If Joseph Smith had said that the Nephites had totally changed their beliefs before they came to the New World,
these matters would be easier to understand. Instead, however, the Book of Mormon itself boasts that “the people did observe to keep the commandments of the Lord; and they were strict in observing the ordinances of God, according to the law of Moses, for they were taught to keep the law of Moses until it should be fulfilled” (Alma 30: 3).

All of this evidence leads to the inescapable conclusion that the Book of Mormon was written by someone raised as a Protestant who had very scanty knowledge with regard to Jewish history, religion and customs.

**THE PLAGIARISM QUESTION**

In the July 1989 issue of the *Messenger* we noted that the evidence we now have against the authenticity of the Book of Mormon is at least a thousand times as strong as the textual evidence we had against the Hofmann documents. Much material relating to plagiarism in the Book of Mormon was obtained prior to the time that we began working with the Mormon Church’s computer program, but since that time new and important evidence has come to light.

The idea that the author of the Book of Mormon plagiarized from the New Testament is not new. In his book, *Roughing It*, page 110, Mark Twain made this observation concerning the Book of Mormon:

> The book seems to be merely a prosy detail of imaginary history, with the Old Testament for a model; followed by a tedious plagiarism of the New Testament. The author labored to give his words and phrases the quaint, old-fashioned sound and structure of our King James’s translation of the Scriptures; and the result is a mongrel—half modern gibleness, and half ancient simplicity and gravity.

It is very clear from the contents of the Book of Mormon that while the author was not a trained Bible scholar, he was rather familiar with the contents of the King James Version of the Bible. Although Mormon apologists are reluctant to face the facts, the evidence shows that Joseph Smith had the ability and the biblical knowledge required to write the Book of Mormon. According to Smith’s earliest account of his life, written in 1832, he claimed he began studying the Bible when he was only about 12 years old:

> At about the age of twelve years my mind become seriously imprest (page 1) with regard to the all important concerns for the welfare of my immortal Soul which led me to searching the scriptures ... from the age of twelve years to fifteen I pondered many things in my heart concerning the situation of the world of mankind ... My mind become exceedingly distressed for I become convicted of my sins and by searching the scriptures I found that ... /mankind/ did not come unto the Lord but that they had apostatised from the true and living faith. (An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith, pp. 4-5)

Since this document was written in Joseph Smith’s own hand, it shows that he had all the skill necessary to write a book like the Book of Mormon and also that he had been studying the Bible since he was a child.

Joseph Smith’s mother later wrote that her son told her he could take his “Bible and go into the woods, and learn more in two hours, than you can learn at meeting in two years, if you should go all the time” (*Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet*, p. 90). If Joseph Smith began studying the Bible when he was about 12 years old, as his own statement indicates, he would have had about 10 or 11 years experience with the Bible prior to writing the Book of Mormon.

In his Master’s thesis, Wesley P. Walters made these observations about the text of the Book of Mormon:

> When one begins to read the Book of Mormon, if he is well-acquainted with the Bible, he will at once be impressed with the large scale use of biblical materials in the book. Not only is there an unskilled mimicking of the style of the King James Version, but there is an artificial clarity added to that portion of the Book of Mormon that claims to date from the Old Testament period. This contrived clarity is the result of writing back into that Old Testament period New Testament words, phrases and quotations, as well as the introduction of New Testament concepts and teachings into that time-frame. ... The usual Mormon defense is that such knowledge was supernaturally made known to the people in America, just as God in a vision showed Ezekiel that Jerusalem was about to fall and the temple to be destroyed, or Peter given a vision of Cornelius before he met him in person. Such an explanation might be more readily accepted if the Book of Mormon had presented its material in the format of a vision. Instead it introduces its material in much the same way that a nineteenth century frontier preacher introduced biblical quotations into his sermons. The frequency with which the Book of Mormon introduces this chronologically misplaced material into its text would require that God supernaturally provided this American colony with virtually the entire New Testament text, as well as those portions of the Old Testament which postdated their departure for America. ... passages from the New Testament ... are sprinkled generously into the speeches and sermons of Book of Mormon characters in the same manner as one might find them in the sermons of a Methodist or Baptist preacher of Joseph Smith’s day. This type of usage implies an acquaintance with the New Testament books themselves. Only after knowing the entire work can one select from it appropriate words and phrases to employ in this sermonic manner. It is naive to suggest that in every one of those instances God made known each of those biblical phrases and quotations so that the Old Testament Book of Mormon speakers could work them into their message. It is far more reasonable to believe that the insertions of such phrases and quotes came from one who already had the New Testament in hand before him while composing the Book of Mormon. ... The Book of Mormon is intentionally written by Smith in the King James style, ostensibly so that it would sound like the Bible and be more readily accepted as a companion to it. Moreover, for Joseph to have thrown in numerous biblical phrases so generously while making his “translation”, one can only conclude that he must have been much more conversant with the Bible than Mormons are generally prepared to admit. If he knew the Bible well enough to scatter biblical
phrases freely throughout the Book of Mormon, there is no reason why he could not have composed the book itself. In his revelations there also appears this same type of biblical quotation along with an employment of the King James style. The Book of Mormon’s biblical phraseology, therefore, must be credited to Joseph Smith, and evidences a surprisingly good working knowledge of the Bible. . . .

The really fatal blow to the proposal that the New Testament material in the Old Testament portion of the Book of Mormon is due to Joseph Smith’s employment of such phrases in the process of translating the book is that such material goes much deeper than the mere use of words and phrases. New Testament concepts, interpretations and theology are all worked into the text itself. (“The Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Mormon,” pp. 7, 10-13)

As Wesley Walters has pointed out, the problem with regard to the Book of Mormon is that it has the ancient Nephites making extensive quotations from works that were not even in existence at that time. In fact, in the 1st and 2nd books of Nephi, the writings of the New Testament are cited 600 years before they were written!

The following might help to illustrate the problem facing believers in the Book of Mormon: Suppose, for instance, someone were to come forth with a book which purported to be written by Moses entitled, *The Only True Sayings of Moses*, and in this book the following words were attributed to him: “Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” Two problems instantly come to mind: One, the quotation is identical to the words of Jesus in Luke 12:27. Two, Solomon was not born until Moses had been dead for hundreds of years. Defenders of *The Only True Sayings of Moses* might argue that Moses was the true author of this saying and that Jesus merely borrowed it for his own use. With regard to the problem of Solomon being mentioned, these apologists might use Joseph Smith’s defence that the author was really “speaking of things to come as though they had already come” (Mosiah 16:6). It is doubtful, however, that many people would be very impressed by either one of these arguments. As we see it, the case set forth by Mormon apologists in defence of the Book of Mormon seems to be just as unreasonable.

To those who really consider the matter, it should be obvious that the presence of many portions of the New Testament in the Book of Mormon is more out of place than to find the following words in a speech attributed to George Washington: “Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived equal.” These words alone would be enough to prove the speech a forgery. While less than a century separated George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, in the Book of Mormon we have Lehi quoting from the New Testament book of Revelation almost seven centuries before it was written! (The first quotation appears on the second page of the Book of Mormon and is dated “About 600 B.C.” The book of Revelation is believed to have been written about 90 A.D.)

It is clear that the author of the Book of Mormon was holding a King James Version of the Bible in his hand when he produced it. He, therefore, could not have lived in 600 B.C. When all the evidence is examined, it is evident that he actually lived in 1830—some 2,430 years after Lehi was supposed to have fled from Jerusalem.

The 74 pages we devoted to the study of plagiarism in the Book of Mormon in our new book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, only deals with the small plates of Nephi from the book of 1st Nephi through Omni (the material used to replace the missing 116 pages). This material is dated between 600 B.C. and 130 B.C. All of it, therefore, was supposed to have been written before the time of Christ and also before the New Testament was produced. If we had made an extensive study of the entire Book of Mormon, it would have been at least twice as long.

The noted Mormon scholar Hugh Nibley has said that “a forgery is defined by specialists in ancient documents as ‘any document which was not produced in the time, place, and manner claimed by it or its publishers’” (*Since Cumorah*, p. 160). The material we have published in the first part of our book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, and the parallels to the Bible which appear in the second part of that book furnish irrefutable proof that the Book of Mormon is not the ancient text it claims to be. Regardless of Joseph Smith’s motives for producing the book, it cannot be accepted as a genuine document because it “was not produced in the time, place, and manner claimed by it or its publishers.”

A SELFAHOLIC

At a church service we attended a few weeks ago, a member of our congregation told of attending a meeting of a group of people who were struggling to overcome addiction to drugs and alcohol. He was very impressed by their willingness to admit that their dependence on these items was only a symptom of greater problems within. The man who attended this meeting then told us that even though he was not addicted to alcohol or drugs, he was a recovering “selfaholic.” He went on to explain that all of us are in reality selfaholics.

When we think about it, we realize that this is true and even those who are truly converted to Christ are still recovering selfaholics who are being transformed by God’s power. It is, in fact, the dominating love of self which leads us into sin. Although some people can hide it better than others, none of us can escape the fact that we are by nature very selfish creatures. In Romans 3:23 we read that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (*The New King James Version*).

Speaking of Jesus, J. B. Phillips wrote: “It was pride and self-righteousness and the exploitation of others which called forth His greatest anger. Self-love in fact He saw as the arch-enemy. It was this which must be recognized...
and deliberately killed if a man were to follow His way of constructive love” (Your God Is Too Small, page 91). Jesus made it very clear that the worst thing that can happen to people is for them to end up imprisoned eternally to sin and selfishness: “For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:26). Again, in Matthew 10:28, Jesus made the gravity of the situation very clear: “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

Thomas A. Kempis wrote: “Know that the love of yourself is more hurtful to you than anything else in the world” (Of the Imitation of Christ, p. 42). Because the love of self is more harmful to us than anything else, the Lord tells us to deny ourselves: “Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it’” (Matthew 16:24-25). Speaking concerning the 25th verse, Raymond L. Cramer made this observation:

The phrase, “save his life,” refers to saving it for a selfish purpose, utilizing ability in terms of self-gratification—a self-possessed, self-centered life. Jesus was not talking here about some distant future, but physical, down-to-earth, everyday living. He claimed that anyone who used his life in this way would lose it. The word “lose” means to become empty, void, useless and destructive. That which is capable of being useful becomes a source of insecurity, greed, and a vehicle of hostility if it is used for selfish purposes. Fear and anxiety result when man tries to hang onto his life. He loses what he is trying to save—life itself. (The Psychology of Jesus and Mental Health, page 126)

Charles L. Allen commented:

The best summary of the Ten Commandments is the one Jesus gave: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matthew 22:37, 39). Put God and others first; get something into your mind greater than yourself. In so doing you lose yourself, selfishness is blotted out; instead of making ourselves miserable by what we do not have, we begin to gain the blessed thrill of giving what we can give. (God’s Psychiatry, page 80)

Many people feel that “sin” only occurs when we do wrong to others. The truth of the matter, however, is that our selfishness continually leads us into sins of omission. This is explained in James 4:17: “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.” In Matthew, chapter 25, Jesus declares that those who selfishly ignore the needs of others will be found on his “left hand” in the day of judgment (see verses 31-46). It is very easy for us to see the sins and selfishness of others and fail to comprehend our own wicked condition before God. Jesus expressed it in this way:

“And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck out of your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother’s eye.” (Matthew 7:3-5)

The Pharisees once asked why Jesus ate with “tax collectors and sinners.” Jesus responded as follows: “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (Mark 2:17). Since Jesus made it clear in other verses that the Pharisees themselves were spiritually blind, it is obvious that he was trying to tell them that people must realize their own sinful condition, repent and be born again before they can enter into the kingdom of heaven. The Pharisees simply refused to face this fact. Since they did not believe they were spiritually sick, they had no need of the Great Physician.

In Luke 18:9-14 we read a parable Jesus related the following:

. . . to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

It is very easy to condemn the alcoholic, drug addict, adulterer, murderer or those who commit other flagrant sins and yet refuse to see our own sinful and selfish condition before a holy God. If, however, we confess to God that we are truly selfishaholics who are desperately in need of his mercy, we will be forgiven of all our sins. Those of us who have taken this step of faith must continue to remember that we are only recovering selfishaholics who need Gods power to overcome this addiction to having our own selfish way. Besides trusting in the Lord’s strength, we need to find a support group of other recovering selfishaholics who can encourage us to remain strong in times of temptations. This group is usually known as a “church.” If it is serving its true purpose, a church is actually like a hospital where the Great Physician is working through others to help treat our selfishaholic condition. We, in turn, can encourage others to resist the temptations which selfishaholics encounter.

Those of us who have come to God for healing must be careful that we do not think that we are better than other selfishaholics who have not yet come to accept the truth about their condition. Apostle Paul wrote: “For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you glory as if you had not received it?” (1 Corinthians 4:7). It is only “by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

According to the Bible, those who refuse to acknowledge they are selfishaholics and claim that they “have no need of a physician” will remain in that unhappy condition forever, whereas those who admit they have a problem and turn to God will receive His help in treating this condition and in the next life they will find total deliverance and eternal happiness.
IN THE MAIL

We receive a great deal of encouraging mail from our readers. The extracts from the letters which follow are just a brief sample.

We converted to Mormonism 16 years ago. . . . We subsequently married in the Temple in New Zealand . . . I became a Christian in October last year and my husband followed shortly after . . . two other families have left the Mormon Church which we attended after I witnessed to them that the truth can only be found through Jesus Christ and gave them literature to read. I believe another family who are also close friends of ours and who are currently reading your book “Mormonism—Shadow or Reality” will leave . . . We are so grateful to you and other Christians like you who have dedicated their lives to seeking the truth . . . We feel so full of the spirit of God and we love Jesus with all our hearts. (Letter from Australia)

My husband and I would like to thank both of you for your dedicated research and the enlightening facts regarding the Mormon Church. . . . It saved a marriage and . . . answered numerous questions. . . . we now have an inner peace which cannot be touched by those who would condemn and sadly shake their heads . . . (Letter from Nevada)

I was a very active LDS member for thirteen years; the Lord used your “Shadow or Reality” work to lead me to the point where I began challenging what I had been taught by the church. While I give the real glory and credit to Jesus & the Word of God, the Lord used your work to help in my personal discovery of Jesus and in my freedom from the error of Mormonism. (Letter from California)

Thanks for your help in leaving the Mormons and making the transition to Christianity. (Letter from Pennsylvania)

I was L.D.S. for 5 years . . . I had lots of serious questions that went unanswered until a friend loaned me your books. I am no longer L.D.S. and I am a lot happier . . . Your works are certainly a light shining in the dark . . . (Letter from Georgia)

Thank you so much for all the literature! . . . The information provided helped me to share the truth with a Mormon family I know. They have now begun the journey out of Mormonism—Praise the Lord!! (Letter from California)

*** BOOKS ***

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*The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*, by Stephen C. LeSueur. Price: $20.00

*“Wild Bill” Hickman and the Mormon Frontier*, by Hope A. Hilton. Price: $9.95

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*Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, by D. Michael Quinn. Price: $14.95


*Mere Christianity*, by C. S. Lewis. Good defense and explanation of Christianity. Price: $3.95


IMPORTANT VIDEO

Personal Freedom Outreach has produced a video on Mormonism which we highly recommend. It is entitled, *Mormonism: The Christian View*. The narration is done by Wesley P. Walters. It deals with Mormon history, doctrines, the claim to authority, changes in doctrine, false prophecies, and witnessing suggestions. It is available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry for $24.00 (plus shipping)

MEETING THE NEEDS

Book sales only cover half of the expenses of Utah Lighthouse Ministry. Besides the expenses of the work on Mormonism, we also provide support for 100 children through World vision, those who are interested in helping our ministry can send their tax-deductible contributions to Utah Lighthouse Ministry, PO Box 1884. Salt Lake City, Utah 84110.
A FREE BOOK!

A FREE COPY OF *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon* will be sent with every $20 order as long as copies last. Offer ends April 30, 1990.

**NOTE:** In order to receive this free book you MUST request it when you send your order!

*Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon*, by Dan Vogel provides important evidence demonstrating that the Book of Mormon fits well into “the pre-1830 environment of Joseph Smith.” It shows that the idea that the Indians were descendants of the ancient Hebrews was discussed by many writers prior to the time Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon in 1830.

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**THE SALAMANDER THAT REFUSED TO DIE**

As most of our readers are aware, the Mormon murderer Mark Hofmann fooled his church’s prophets with a batch of forged documents which included a letter about a white salamander that revealed the Book of Mormon to Joseph Smith. Although Mr. Hofmann confessed to his crimes a few years ago, the church leaders cannot put the “salamander scandal” behind them. Since the Mormon leaders claim that they have prophetic powers, many members of the church cannot understand how they could have been fooled.

Hundreds of thousands of copies of books concerning the scandal have now been sold. The latest development is the publication of a paper-back edition of *Salamander: The Story of the Mormon Forgery Murders*, by Linda Sillitoe and Allen Roberts. This excellent study, which used to sell in hard-back binding for $17.95, is now available for $5.95. In addition, we have combined our books, *Tracking the White Salamander* and *Confessions of a White Salamander* into one volume and reduced the price to $6.95. While the Sillitoe-Roberts book gives an excellent account of the Hofmann story, our two books add details that are not found in any of the other books available. For instance, we have a great deal of testimony from Hofmann’s preliminary hearing in the first volume and the most important parts of his confession are cited in the second volume. When these three books were first published, it would have cost the reader $28.85 to obtain them. Because *Salamander* is now available in paper-back and our two books have been combined, we are offering all three for the following price if they are ordered before April 30, 1990:

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In response to Fawn M. Brodie’s book, No Man Knows My History, the noted Mormon apologist Hugh Nibley declared:

Yet of all churches in the world only this one has not found it necessary to readjust any part of its doctrine in the last hundred years. . . . How does Brodie explain the fact that the doctrine which she claims was the haphazard outgrowth of complete opportunism remains the most stable on earth? (No Ma’am That’s Not History, 1946, pp. 46-47)

Although most Mormons have always placed a great deal of weight in Dr. Nibley’s arguments, recent developments within the church itself will undoubtedly cause many to wonder about his claims concerning doctrinal stability. The New York Times gave this startling report in an article which begins on the first page of the issue dated May 3, 1990:

The Mormon Church has changed some of its most sacred rituals, eliminating parts of the largely secret ceremonies that have been viewed as offensive to women and to members of some other faiths.

Last month the church . . . quietly dropped from its temple rituals a vow in which women pledged obedience to their husbands . . . and a portrayal of non-Mormon clergy as hirelings of Satan.

Church officials have confirmed that changes went into effect in mid-April, but the ceremonies are considered to be too sacred, they say, for them to comment further . . . More specific information on the changes has been provided to the news media by Mormons participating in the rituals at the church’s 43 temples around the world and by former Mormons who are critical of the rituals. A number of Mormons who would not discuss details of the rituals verified that these reports were “pretty factual” or “not inaccurate.” . . .

NEW BOOK ON TEMPLE

Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony, 1842-1990, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. This book will contain reprints of early accounts of the temple endowment ceremony so that the reader can see how the ritual evolved over the years. It will also have testimony on the ritual which was given before a committee of the U.S. Senate and evidence showing that Joseph Smith borrowed from Masonry in creating his temple ceremony. Regular Price: $4.00

Pre-publication Special: $3.00
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“I’ve known an awful lot of people who went once and it was years before they’d go back, especially women,” he said.

Bruce L. Olsen, managing director of the church’s communications office in Salt Lake City, denied that the changes were made in response to criticism or social pressure. The Mormon Church believes “in continued and modern revelation,” Mr. Olsen said, so that practices might be changed when “the Lord clarified” church teaching.

But some Mormons see the church as responding, without admitting it, both to critics and to the church’s growth overseas.

Among the critics are many conservative Christians who complain that Mormonism features occult practices.

The Arizona Republic (April 28, 1990) referred to the modifications in the ceremony as “Revolutionary changes.” The same article went on to state:

The changes in the Temple Endowment Ceremony are seen as a move to bring the secret ceremony closer to mainstream Christianity. The changes are the most drastic revisions of the century.

Church officials in Salt Lake City refused to discuss the ceremony, which is shrouded in secrecy. In fact, the church has issued a directive to temple members telling them to refrain from talking about the changes in the ceremony.

Another prominent Mormon, who asked not to be identified, confirmed that portions of the ceremony have been removed.

“The temple ceremony has been significantly abridged,” he said.

Changes in the ceremony include:

A modified version of the woman’s vow of obedience to the husband.

“I think this is in response to the feminist movement in the Mormon Church,” said Sandra Tanner, a former Mormon who now heads Utah Lighthouse Ministries in Salt Lake City.

“Many of the women objected to the obedience.”

An article by Associated Press writer Vern Anderson also noted that the ceremony has “undergone what some view as their most significant changes this century.” He went on to say:

The revisions, effective April 10 in the faith’s 43 temples, are being greeted with enthusiasm by church members who are being read a statement from the governing First Presidency which says the revisions, following a long and prayerful review, were unanimously approved by that three-member body and the advisory Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. (Salt Lake Tribune, April 29, 1990)

On May 5, 1990, the Los Angeles Times printed an article by John Dart. In that article, Mr. Dart reported:

Most Mormon Church members quoted last month in news stories about revisions in the church’s confidential temple ceremony have been summoned for interviews by church officials. One man said he was reprimanded for talking to the press and another was asked to surrender his “temple recommend.” The public communications office of the Church issued a statement Thursday, defending the questioning of members and re-emphasizing the sacred confidentiality of the temples.

REVEALED BY GOD

Mormon leaders have always proclaimed that the temple ritual—often referred to as the “temple endowment” because the recipients are supposed to be “endowed with power from on high”—was given to Joseph Smith, the first Mormon prophet, by revelation. The ordinances in this ritual, which are performed for both the living and the dead (by proxy), are considered to be “most sacred.” A person has to go through these ceremonies before becoming a missionary and those who desire to be married in the temple for “time and eternity” must first have their “temple endowments.”

Mormon theology teaches that those who are married in the temple can eventually become Gods and rule over their own creations. Apostle Bruce R. McConkie affirmed that the righteous who are married in the temple “for time and eternity” have “gained eternal life (exaltation), the greatest of all the gifts of God . . . Those so inheriting are the sons and daughters of God . . . They are joint-heirs with Christ . . . becoming gods in their own right” (Mormon Doctrine, 1979, pp. 117-118). President Joseph Fielding Smith, the tenth prophet of the church, made the matter very clear:

It fills my heart with sadness when I see in the paper the name of a daughter or a son of members of this Church, and discover that she or he is going to have a ceremony and be married outside of the temple of the Lord, because I realize what it means, that they are cutting themselves off from exaltation in the kingdom of God . . . These young people who seem to be so happy now, when they rise in the resurrection—and find themselves in the condition in which they will find themselves—then there will be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, and bitterness of soul . . .
Civil Marriage Makes *Servants In Eternity*. . . . Celestial Marriage Makes *Gods In Eternity*. . . . it is open to us; it is a free gift; it doesn’t cost us anything: *only righteousness, faith, obedience*; and surely we can pay that price. (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 2, pp. 60-63)

Mormons who go through the temple ceremony and are sealed in marriage for eternity believe that they will not only become Gods, but will also continue to have children throughout all eternity. They will people other worlds with their spiritual children and these children will worship and pray to the husband as God. Mormons feel that the God of the Bible was not always God and that he also had to pass through the same endowments to achieve deity. Wilford Woodruff, who became the fourth prophet of the Mormon Church, proclaimed that “the Lord had His endowments long ago; it is thousands and millions of years since He received His blessings . . . . He is far in advance of us” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 4, p. 192).

According to a revelation given by Joseph Smith, those who will not submit to Celestial Marriage are

. . . . appointed angels in heaven, which angels are *ministering servants*, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory . . . . these angels . . . remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not Gods, but are angels of God forever and ever. (Doctrine and Covenants 132:16-17)

Although faithful Mormons have written many articles and books on temples, they have been very careful not to tell what actually goes on in the endowment ritual. One of the most revealing and concise statements, however, comes from comments President Brigham Young made in 1877. These comments were recorded in the diary of L. John Nuttall. The second prophet of the church remarked:

When we got our washings and anointings under the hands of the Prophet Joseph at Nauvoo, we had only one room to work in, with the exception of a little side room or office where we were washed and anointed, had our garment placed upon us and received our new name; and after he had performed these ceremonies, he gave the key-words, signs, tokens, and penalties. Then after, we went into the large room . . . . Joseph Smith divided up the room the best that he could, hung up the veil, marked it, gave us our instructions as we passed along from one department to another, giving us signs, tokens, penalties, with the key-words pertaining to those signs. (Statement of Brigham Young, recorded in the diary of L. John Nuttall, February 7, 1877, as cited in God, Man, And The Universe, by Hyrum L. Andrus, 1968, p. 334)

The reader will notice that President Young mentioned washings, anointings, garments, the new name, the key-words, signs, tokens and penalties. He also stated that there was a “veil” with certain marks on it. On another occasion, Brigham Young made it clear that the endowment contains secret information that the initiated need to get into heaven: “Your *endowment* is, to receive all those ordinances in the House of the Lord . . . . to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, being enabled to give them the key words, the signs and tokens, pertaining to the Holy Priesthood, and gain your eternal exaltation in spite of earth and hell” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 2, p. 31). Those who have actually been through the ceremony affirm that secret grips, signs and key-words are learned during the ceremony which will be needed after death for a person to gain entrance into God’s presence. It is at the “veil” that the Lord himself questions the candidate who desires to enter into his presence.

The fact that the temple ritual was changed by the present leaders of the church will undoubtedly cause serious problems for many devout members of the church who feel that these ceremonies cannot be tampered with. They will probably have a difficult time understanding how the General Authorities can meddle with a sacred ceremony which was supposed to have been given by revelation to Joseph Smith.

The inspired nature of the ritual has been impressed on the minds of the Mormon people since the 1840’s. Even before the Nauvoo temple was built, Joseph Smith gave a revelation foretelling that God himself was about to restore the ancient mysteries that had been lost from the earth:

. . . . build a house to my name, for the Most High to dwell therein. For there is not a place found on earth that he may come to and *restore again that which was lost* unto you, or which he hath taken away, even the fulness of the priesthood. . . . And verily I say unto you, let this house be built unto my name, that I may reveal mine ordinances therein . . . . For I deign to reveal unto my church things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world, things that pertain to the dispensation of the fulness of times. And I will show unto my servant Joseph all things pertaining to this house, and the priesthood thereof, and the place whereon it shall be built. (Doctrine and Covenants 124:27-28, 40-42)

After Joseph Smith received the endowment ceremony, it was accepted as a divine revelation from God. Since that time church leaders have continued to stress that the endowment came from heaven. Apostle John A. Widtsoe, for instance, wrote the following: “Joseph Smith received the temple endowment and its ritual, as all else that he promulgated, by revelation from God” (Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth, Prophet of God, 1951, p. 249). Apostle Bruce R. McConkie wrote the following under the title “Temple Ordinances”: “Certain gospel ordinances are of such a sacred and holy nature that the Lord authorizes their performance only in holy sanctuaries prepared and dedicated for that very purpose. . . . They were given in modern times to the Prophet Joseph Smith by revelation, many things connected with them being translated by the Prophet from the papyrus on which the Book of Abraham was recorded” (Mormon Doctrine, p. 779). The current prophet of the church, Ezra Taft Benson, does not hesitate to affirm that the endowment ritual came by revelation:

The endowment was revealed by revelation and can be understood only by revelation. . . . This temple . . . is a place of revelation. . . . The laws and ordinances which cause men and women to come out of the world and become sanctified are administered only in these holy places. They were given by revelation and are comprehended by revelation. (The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, 1988, pp. 250, 252)

In the past, Mormon leaders have not only taught that the endowment came by revelation, but also that it was not changed since the time of Joseph Smith. Just after the church passed into the 20th century, there was an attempt to remove Mormon Senator Reed Smoot from his seat. These lengthy hearings are usually referred to as the Reed Smoot Case. Although Senator Smoot retained his seat, the hearings proved to be very embarrassing for the church because of the testimony given concerning polygamy after the Manifesto and charges of Mormon Church interference in politics. In any case, when Senator Smoot, who was also an apostle in the church, was
questioned about the endowment ceremony, he responded: “... the endowments have never changed; as I understand it; it has been so testified, and that Joseph Smith, jr., himself was the founder of the endowments” (Reed Smoot Case, vol. 3, p. 185).

On page 140 of the same volume, the following statements by President Joseph F. Smith, the sixth prophet of the church, were entered into the record:

It [the Nauvoo temple] was finished . . . and was dedicated unto the Lord. The ordinances of the house of God were administered therein as they had been taught to the leading authorities of the church by the Prophet Joseph Smith himself. The same gospel, the same ordinances, the same authority and blessings that were administered by the Prophet Joseph Smith, and taught by him to his associates, are now being enjoyed by and taught to the Latter-Day Saints in the four temples . . . When you hear anybody say we have changed the ordinances, that we have transgressed the laws, or broken the everlasting covenants which were entered into under the personal administration of the Prophet Joseph Smith, tell them for me . . . and for all those who are living to-day who received blessings and ordinances under the hands of the Prophet Joseph Smith, that they are in error. The same gospel prevails to-day, and the same ordinances are administered today, both for the living and for the dead, as were administered by the prophet himself and delivered by him to the church.

These statements by President Smith were originally printed in the church’s newspaper, Deseret Evening News, December 1, 1900. President Smith’s son, Joseph Fielding Smith, who served as the tenth prophet of the church in the early 1970’s, printed an affidavit by Bathsheba W. Smith which contained the following:

Near the close of the year 1843, or in the beginning of the year 1844, I received the ordinance of anointing . . . the same day . . . I received my endowment . . . The endowments were given under the direction of the Prophet Joseph Smith . . . there has been no change, to my certain knowledge, in these ceremonies, They are the same today as they were then. (Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage, p. 87)

Mormon leaders have not only taught that their church has not changed its doctrines and ordinances, but they have pointed to changes by other churches as evidence of apostasy. In an editorial published in the Church Section of the Deseret News, June 5, 1965, we find the following:

... God is unchangeable, the same yesterday, today and forever. . . . The great mistake made down through the ages by teachers of Christianity, is that they have supposed they could place their own private interpretation upon scriptures, allow their own personal convenience to become a controlling factor, and change the basis of [C]hristian law and practice to suit themselves. This is apostasy.

The Gospel can not possibly be changed . . . the saving principles must ever be the same. They can never change . . . the Gospel must always be the same in all of its parts . . . no one can change the Gospel . . . if they attempt to do so, they only set up a man-made system which is not the Gospel, but is merely a reflection of their own views . . . if we substitute “any other Gospel,” there is no salvation in it . . . the Lord and His Gospel remain the same—always.

In 1982, W. Grant Bangerter, executive director of the Temple Department and a member of the First Quorum of Seventy, made it very clear that the temple ceremony could not be changed:

“As temple work progresses, some members wonder if the ordinances can be changed or adjusted. These ordinances have been provided by revelation, and are in the hands of the First Presidency. Thus, the temple is protected from tampering.” (Deseret News, Church Section, January 16, 1982)

It would appear that instead of protecting the ordinances, the current First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles have themselves been “tampering” with them. It is interesting to note that the first Mormon prophet, Joseph Smith, proclaimed that the ordinances could never be changed:

Now the purpose in Himself in the winding up scene of the last dispensation is that all things pertaining to that dispensation should be conducted precisely in accordance with the preceding dispensations. . . . He set the ordinances to be the same forever and ever, and set Adam to watch over them, to reveal them from heaven to man, or to send angels to reveal them. (History of the Church, vol. 4, p. 208)

The Book of Mormon itself accuses the Catholics of conspiring to alter the Bible. It bluntly states that “many plain and precious things” have been deliberately removed:

... thou seest the formation of that great and abominable church, which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away. . . . this they have done that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord, that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men. . . . thou seest that after the book hath gone forth through the hands of the great and abominable church, that there are many plain and precious things taken away from the book . . . because of the many plain and precious things which have been taken out of the book . . . an exceedingly great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them. (Book of Mormon, I Nephi 13:26-30)

Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr., the son of the tenth prophet of the church, charged:

The Bible alone is an insufficient guide because the “plainness of the gospel” has been removed. . . . The early “apostate fathers” did not think it was wrong to tamper with inspired scripture. If any scripture seemed to endanger their viewpoint, it was altered, transplanted or completely removed from the biblical text. All this was done that they might keep their traditions. Such mutilation was considered justifiable to preserve the so-called “purity” of their doctrines. (Religious Truths Defined, 1959, pp. 175-176)

Mormon Apostle Mark E. Petersen bluntly stated: “Many insertions were made [in the Bible], some of them ‘slanted’ for selfish purposes, while at times deliberate falsifications and fabrications were perpetrated” (As Translated Correctly, 1966, p. 4).

The current prophet of the church, President Ezra Taft Benson, emphatically proclaimed: “The Book of Mormon is the keystone in our witness of Jesus Christ . . . Unlike the Bible, which passed through generations of copyists, translators and corrupt religionists who tampered with the text, the Book of Mormon came from writer to reader in just one inspired step of translation” (The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, 1988, page 53).

Since Mormon leaders and apologists have freely criticized other churches for making changes and have claimed that their doctrines are “the most stable on earth,” the General Authorities
of the church must have approached the question of changing the
temple ceremony with a great deal of caution. David John Buerger
informs us that when some procedural changes were suggested
in the temple ceremony some years ago, “initial opposition came
from Elder Harold B. Lee due to what he perceived as ‘doctrinal tampering’ “ (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Winter 1987, p. 63). Harold B. Lee later became the 11th prophet of the
church. While minor changes have been made in the ceremony
during the last few decades, they appear insignificant when
compared with those made on April 10, 1990.

We would suspect that the Mormon leaders must have
decided to make the present changes many months ago. Since
“motion pictures have replaced some of the live actors” in most
of the temples, it follows that it would take time to make new
films containing the changes. The Salt Lake Tribune, April 29,
1990, reported that the “new endowment film, the fifth since
the 1950s, incorporates the most recent revisions” (The Story
of the Latter-day Saints, 1976, p. 574). It should also be noted
that it would take time to make new translations of the changes
for the foreign temples. We may never know for certain whether George P. Lee,
who was a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, knew
of the proposed changes in the temple ceremony before his
excommunication was announced in the September 2, 1889,
issue of the Salt Lake Tribune. It is interesting to note, however,
that in a letter “To the First Presidency and the Twelve,” Lee did
mention his concern that other church leaders felt they could change the gospel:

7. I have heard a few of you declare that you are greater
than ancient apostles such as Moses, Abraham, Noah[,] Is[a]iah,
Isaac, Jacob and etc. This reflects the attitude of all of you.
8. I have heard one of [or?] more of you declare that you
can change anything Jesus had said or taught. This also
reflects the attitude of all of you. (Letter by George P. Lee,
photographically printed in Excommunication of a Mormon
Church Leader, page 54)

Less than two weeks before the changes were made in
the temple, President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in
the First Presidency, expressed concern about members of the
church talking about the temple ceremony: “I remind you of
the absolute obligation to not discuss outside the temple that
which occurs within the temple. Sacred matters deserve sacred
consideration. We are under obligation, binding and serious,
to not use temple language or speak of temple matters outside
. . . do not discuss outside of the temple that which occurs in
the temple. . . . when you leave the doors of the House of the
Lord, be true to a sacred trust to speak not of that which is
holy and sanctified” (The Ensign, May 1990, p. 52). It seems
obvious that President Hinckley gave this warning in an attempt
to keep members from talking about the changes which were
to be made in the ceremony ten days later. It is obvious, of
course, that Hinckley’s admonition was not followed by many
members of the church and therefore accounts of the changes
in the ritual made their way to the news media. We had been
told that changes would be made some time before they actually
took place, and members of the church discussed them with us
after they were made.

It is interesting to note that the changes in the temple
ceremony were put into effect immediately after the church’s
general conference had ended (the conference ended April
1st and the changes were made on April 10th). The temple
presidents were apparently given instructions about the changes
before they returned from conference to their work in the various
temples throughout the world. The general membership of the
church, however, left the conference completely in the dark
with regard to what was about to happen to their sacred ritual.
Since it would be six months before another general conference
would take place, any dissenting opinions or discussion of the
changes would have to take place on a local level.

Church leader Joseph Fielding Smith declared that “One
of the greatest blessings given to mankind is the gift of free
agency” (Answers to Gospel Questions, vol. 3, p. 46). As far
as we can determine, faithful Latter-day Saints were given
no chance to exercise their free agency with regard to the changes
made in the endowment ceremony. The method of handling this
whole matter, however, was in accord with a statement which
appeared in the official Mormon publication, Improvement Era,
June 1945 (p. 354): “When our leaders speak, the thinking has
done. When they propose a plan—it is God’s plan. When
they point the way, there is no other which is safe. When they
give direction, it should mark the end of controversy.”

Although it is often ignored, the church actually has a
doctrine of “common consent” which should have applied to
the alterations made in the temple ritual. In a revelation given
by Joseph Smith in July 1830 we find the following: “And
all things shall be done by common consent in the church, by
much prayer and faith, for all things you shall receive by faith.
Amen” (Doctrine and Covenants 26:2). Section 28:13 reaffirms
that “all things must be done in order, and by common consent
in the church . . . .”

Joseph F. Smith, the sixth prophet of the church, testified
as follows in the Reed Smoot investigation: “Mr. Smith.—I
will say this, Mr. Chairman, that no revelation given through
the head of the church ever becomes binding and authoritative
upon the members of the church until it has been presented to the
church and accepted by them” (Reed Smoot Case, vol. 1, p. 96).
Apostle John Henry Smith gave this testimony in vol. 2, p. 321:

Mr. Smith. Yes, sir; he [the prophet] receives revelations;
but the revelations must be accepted by his church by vote.
Mr. Tayler. So that what the Almighty orders depends
on whether the people who are ordered want to do it or not?
Mr. Smith. Yes, sir; there is no force on the Mormon people.

Apostle James E. Talmage likewise testified: “If it is a
revelation it is a revelation, and amounts to just so much; but
as to being a binding law upon the church—a law of practice
and action—it would have to be first adopted by the church to
become such” (Ibid., vol. 3, p. 80).

From the testimony given by the Mormon leaders, a person
would certainly be led to believe that a major revision of the
temple ritual (a ceremony which was supposed to have been
given by revelation) would have to be approved by church
members before it would be binding on the Mormon people
and used in the church’s 43 temples. For the General Authorities
to drop out important portions of a ceremony they claim came
from God himself, seems far worse than what they have charged
the Catholics with doing. After all, the Book of Mormon’s
accusation that the “great and abominable church” removed
many plain and precious things” from the Bible (a charge which
the Mormon leaders cannot prove) relates to portions that would
have been available at one time to everyone that had access to
the Biblical text. The items which were removed from the temple
ceremony were supposed to have been so sacred that they were
never revealed to the world. These secret ceremonies could
only be found in the temples of the Lord. These rituals, in fact, purport to give the information on how men may become Gods!

Mormon leaders who have now passed away would have been shocked at what the present leaders altered or removed from the temple ceremony. Apostle James E. Talmage emphasized:

No jot, iota, or title of the temple rites is otherwise than uplifting and sanctifying. In every detail the endowment ceremony contributes to covenants of morality of life, consecration of person to high ideals, devotion to truth, patriotism to nation, and allegiance to God. (The House of the Lord, 1968, p. 84)

As the newspaper accounts have stated, the Mormon leaders have removed the “penalties” which were previously held to be extremely important and sacred. The reader will remember that we have quoted President Brigham Young as saying that Joseph Smith himself “gave the key-words, signs, tokens, and penalties.” Before the recent changes in the ceremony, it was stressed in the ceremony itself that the penalties were sacred:

We are required to give you the First Tokens of the Aaronic Priesthood. Before doing this, however, we desire to impress upon your minds the sacred character of the First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood, with its accompanying name, sign and penalty, together with that of all the other Tokens of the Holy Priesthood, with their accompanying names, signs and penalties, which you will receive in the temple this day. They are most sacred and are guarded by solemn covenants and obligations of secrecy to the effect that under no condition, even at the peril of your life, will you ever divulge them . . . The representation of the penalties indicates different ways in which life may be taken. (Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? p. 468)

From this it is very clear that the penalties, which have now been removed from the temple ritual, were previously considered to be “most sacred.”

Harold B. Lee, who later became the twelfth prophet of the church, compared the things found in the temple ritual to the “pearls” that Jesus mentioned in Matthew 7:6:

But we say the ordinances are sacred as contrasted with just being secret. . . . the Master said, “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.” . . . in temples like this, there could be revealed that which couldn’t be had otherwise. (Improvement Era, Feb. 1965, p. 123, as cited in Achieving a Celestial Marriage, p. 202)

Other Mormon leaders have also identified the elements of the temple ceremony with the pearls mentioned by Christ. If this were the case, it would appear that the Mormon leaders have now thrown away some of their “most sacred” pearls!

SECRETS LEAK OUT

Joseph Smith swore those who took part in the endowments to secrecy, but because of his practice of plural marriage and other doctrines he taught, many of his followers became alienated from the Mormon Church and some of them revealed the contents of the ritual. An account was published as early as April 15, 1846, in the Warsaw Signal. Increase McGee Van Dusen and his wife exposed the temple ceremony in 1847, and their account was reprinted several times. Many other exposures were printed in the 19th century. As we noted earlier, the Reed Smoot investigation took place just after the turn of the century. At that time many people who had been through the ritual were questioned regarding its contents. While a number refused to talk about it, others spoke concerning what went on in the temples. Their testimony was printed by the United States Government in four volumes.

In 1889 John Moore and W.J. Edgar were denied citizenship because it was believed that they had taken “an oath or obligation incompatible with the oath of citizenship . . .” As in the Reed Smoot investigation, Mormons or those who had formerly been Mormons were called upon to give testimony concerning the temple ceremony. In the “Temple Lot Case,” a dispute over the property on which a temple was to be built, additional testimony was given concerning the ritual. Much of this testimony appears in a large volume entitled, The Temple Lot Case.

On February 12, 1906, the Salt Lake Tribune printed the temple ritual, and in 1931, W. M. Paden published an account of the endowment ceremony in Temple Mormonism—Its Evolution, Ritual and Meaning. In 1964, William J. Whalen printed the ceremony (see Latter-Day Saints in the Modern Day World), and two years later John L. Smith, a Baptist minister, published the ritual in I Visited the Temple.

In 1964, we reprinted Paden’s 1931 publication concerning the temple ceremony. We suspected, however, that there had been some changes in the ceremony over the years. Since we wanted to publish the most accurate account possible, we had a couple who had been through the ritual about fifty times revise Paden’s work. Later, however, a man who had been through the temple approximately 120 times heard that we were preparing to publish the ritual and felt that it was important that the most accurate account possible should be given to the world. He, therefore, volunteered to bring the ceremony right up to date. We published this account in vol. 1 of The Mormon Kingdom in 1969, and later we incorporated this same account into our book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? Tens of thousands of copies have been distributed throughout the world since that time. It was our feeling that Mormons should have the right to know what they were getting into before they were sworn to secrecy and had to take part in the demonstration of the penalties. Although we felt that we were performing an important service for the Mormon people, many people were horrified that we would dare to print the ritual. Nevertheless, a number of Mormon scholars verified that we had produced an extremely accurate account of the ceremony. Many Mormons had a difficult time believing that God would allow anyone to reproduce the ritual and found it hard to believe that a printed copy actually existed. Writing in the Los Angeles Times, May 5, 1990, John Dart commented: “Some candid Mormon officials have acknowledged in interviews that the whole secret ritual was published years ago by church critics Jerald and Sandra Tanner of Salt Lake City.”

The Salt Lake City Public Library obtained a number of copies of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? Unfortunately, however, there was a continual problem with people ripping or cutting out pages which related to the temple endowment. Some people wondered if the church would allow us to continue to publish the ritual. We shared the same concern, but, as it turned out, the Mormons allowed us to continue exercising our freedom of religion and of the press.

In any case, as far as the Mormon Church was concerned, the situation turned from bad to worse. About eleven years after our publication of the ceremony, Bob White and Gordon H. Fraser printed the ritual in a pamphlet entitled, What’s Going On In Here? Later, Chuck and Dolly Sackett published a pamphlet with a similar title, What’s Going On In There? The Sacketts’ pamphlet was unique in that on page 4 of the booklet they claimed that their printing “was transcribed from a tape recording made inside the temple during the actual Endowment ceremony.” While Mormons questioned the ethics of someone secretly recording the ceremony, no one seemed to doubt that the tape recording had actually been made. The Sacketts, who
had previously been deeply involved in genealogy and temple work for the church, went a step further and began duplicating copies of the tape recording so that others could actually hear what went on inside the temple. These tapes were extensively circulated and even played on radio stations.

Another member of the Mormon Church secretly recorded the temple ritual in the Provo temple and a good number of copies of this tape have also been circulated. Many others have published material or made films concerning the endowment ritual. Still others have given lectures about it. The cumulative effect of all the audio and video tapes, lectures, radio programs, films and printed copies of the ceremony being available to the general public has placed the Mormon leaders in a very awkward predicament. They had previously maintained that the temple ritual was so holy that God kept the knowledge of it from the world. Apostle Bruce R. McConkie declared:

So sacred and holy are the administrations performed that in every age when they have been revealed, the Lord has withheld them from the knowledge of the world and disclosed them only to the faithful saints in houses and places dedicated and selected for that purpose. (Mormon Doctrine, p. 227)

To an outsider, it would almost appear that the Mormon leaders and the God they worship have lost all control over the dissemination of the ceremony. The contents of the ritual have been scattered to the ends of the world. Many non-Mormons now know far more about the endowments than the average Mormon. Only adults are permitted to go through the temple, and, according to the Church Section of the Mormon newspaper, Deseret News, January 16, 1982, “two-thirds of the adult members have yet to go through the temple for the first time, said Elder W. Grant Bangerter, executive director of the Temple Department . . .” The same issue of the church’s newspaper also noted that Bangerter said that “Through the history of the Church . . . only a fourth of the members have received endowments . . .”

It is certainly ironic that a person can now easily obtain a non-Mormon publication such as Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? or What’s Going On In There? and find out more about the temple ceremony in a few minutes than most of the Mormons learn in a lifetime! Furthermore, the material available to the public seems to be proliferating as the Mormon Church grows larger.

Mormon leaders are not only faced with trying to explain the availability of a ceremony which they previously asserted was “withheld” from the “knowledge of the world,” but they also will find it very difficult to explain why God did not protect his sacred temple from those who brought in tape recorders to expose the ceremony. It has been a common belief among the Mormons that God’s hand protects the temple and its rituals. Ezra Taft Benson, who is currently the prophet of the church, stated: “I think the temple is the most sacred spot on earth . . . Temples are places of personal revelation” (The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, pp. 250-251). One would think that if the spirit of the Lord flows freely in the temple, deceivers would be detected. In the Old Testament, II Chronicles 26:17-21, we read the story of a wicked king named Uzziah who “went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense.” He was warned that only the priests who were “consecrated to burn incense” were allowed to do so. When he persisted he was “smitten” by the Lord with “leprosy” and was “a leper unto the day of his death.”

Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie maintained that “the discerning of spirits is poured out upon presiding officials in God’s kingdom; they have it given to them to discern all gifts and all spirits, lest any come among the saints and practice deception . . . . . There is no perfect operation of the power of discernment without revelation. Thereby even “the thoughts and intents of the heart’ are made known.” Apostle Mathias F. Cowley told how the gift of discernment protected the temple:

On one of the three days during which the Dedicator Services of the Logan Temple was held, President John Taylor . . . sighted a woman in the crowd whom he did not know but indicated her to President Card and said: “Don’t let that woman come into the assembly; she is not worthy.” . . . Brother Card said to President Taylor: “She couldn’t pass the door keeper without a recommend.” President Taylor replied, “That matters not; she is not worthy.” . . . Brother Card turned her back and later on he went to see her . . . she said there was a man in the ward who was not worthy of a recommend, but the Bishop gave him one . . . This woman happened to meet the man on the street and he asked her how she would like to go to the dedication . . . She said she would like to but could not get a recommend. He said: “I have a recommend and will give it to you for one dollar.” And so she got her recommend by paying this amount. (Temples of the Most High, p. 100)

One would think that if the temples were protected by God and the current Mormon officials were really led by revelation, those who used deception to obtain tape recordings to expose the endowment ceremony would have encountered judgment from God or at least been thwarted in their nefarious plans to discredit the church. The Sacketts, however, report the following:

The tape recording of the Mormon temple Endowment . . . was recorded in the Los Angeles Mormon Temple, and was made using a personal pocket-size tape recorder carried by one of the patrons . . . The patron . . . entered the temple using his own personal temple recommend . . . He was greeted by several temple worker acquaintances who obviously did not know of his excommunication from the Mormon Church, which had been at his own request several months earlier. One of the objectives of this foray was to test the well-known Mormon claim of divinely-assisted temple security. . . . Contrary to popular Mormon belief, not one person in the temple appeared the slightest bit spiritually or supernaturally alert to the presence among them of one whom they classify as an “apostate” and a “son of perdition.” As he departed, the patron was encouraged by a member of the temple Presidency to return again soon. (What’s Going On In There? p. 4)

When we think of this incident with the tape recorder, we cannot help but remember a picture of Mark Hofmann, the man who forged Mormon documents, standing in the presence of the twelfth prophet of the church, Spencer W. Kimball, and four of the apostles. In this photograph, which we have reproduced in our book, Tracking the White Salamander, page 73, the prophet and the apostles appear to be carefully examining what purports to be the prophet Joseph Smith’s copy of characters found on the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. This document, of course, was a forgery, but the Mormon leaders were completely oblivious to that fact. Mr. Hofmann continued meeting with church leaders for about four years for the express purpose of deceiving them so that they would give him large amounts of money in exchange for his fraudulent documents. Church leaders, however, could not discern the wicked plan that Hofmann had in his heart. While the Mormon leaders claim to have the same powers as the ancient apostles in the Bible, their performance with regard to Mark Hofmann certainly does not match up to that of the Apostle Peter when he caught Ananias and Sapphira red-handed in their attempt to deceive the church with regard to a financial transaction: “But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?” (Acts 5:3).

From the time the endowment ritual was first revealed in Nauvoo, Mormon leaders have feared that the contents of the ceremony would become known. It now seems that all of
their efforts to stop the spread of knowledge concerning the endowment ceremony have been completely in vain.

**NO MORE PENALTIES**

We have already noted that the Mormon leaders have now removed the “most sacred” penalties which have been in the temple ceremony since the days of Joseph Smith. We feel that this is a real vindication of our work and of that of the many other ministries laboring with the Mormons. We have always felt that these penalties were not compatible with Christian teachings and have strongly opposed them in print for over twenty years. We have continually expressed our belief that Joseph Smith borrowed the penalties from Masonry after he joined that secret organization. Although Masonry had been very unpopular since the late 1820’s, Smith was not ashamed of his association with the lodge in 1842. The following appears in Joseph Smith’s *History* under the date of March 15, 1842: “In the evening I received the first degree in Free Masonry in the Nauvoo Lodge . . .” (*History of the Church*, vol 4, p. 551). The entry for the following day contains this statement: “Wednesday, March 16.—I was with the Masonic Lodge and rose to the sublime degree” (p. 552).

The Masons had some very bloody oaths in their ritual. Capt. William Morgan, who had been a Mason for thirty years, exposed these oaths in a book printed in 1827. After publishing his book, *Freemasonry Exposed*, Morgan disappeared and this set off the great controversy over Masonry which was still raging when Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon. In any case, on pages 21-22 of his book, Morgan revealed the oath that Masons took in the “First Degree” of their ritual: “. . . I will . . . never reveal any part or parts, art or arts, point or points of the secret arts and mysteries of ancient Freemasonry . . . binding myself under no less penalty than to have my throat cut across, my tongue torn out by their roots . . .” On page 23, Morgan went on to show that the Masons who went through the first degree were also taught to draw “your right hand across your throat, the thumb next to your throat, your arm as high as the elbow in a horizontal position.”

In the past, Mormon leaders have argued against the charge by critics that changes have been made in the temple ceremony. Our examination of the evidence, however, reveals that their statements were not correct. Serious changes have been made in the ritual, and these changes have tended to obscure the fact that the penalties were derived from Masonry. For example, it is clear from many early sources that the promise given when the penalties were derived from Masonry after he joined that secret organization. Although Masonry had been very unpopular since the late 1820’s, Smith was not ashamed of his association with the lodge in 1842. The following appears in Joseph Smith’s *History* under the date of March 15, 1842: “In the evening I received the first degree in Free Masonry in the Nauvoo Lodge . . .” (*History of the Church*, vol 4, p. 551). The entry for the following day contains this statement: “Wednesday, March 16.—I was with the Masonic Lodge and rose to the sublime degree” (p. 552).

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The bloody nature of this oath in the temple endowment was verified by an abundance of testimony given in the *Reed Smoot Case*. For example, in vol. 2, page 78, J. H. Wallis, Sr., testified: “. . . I agree that my throat be cut from ear to ear and my tongue torn out by its roots from my mouth.”

A very important letter has come to light which also confirms the gory wording of this oath in earlier times. It was written by the First Presidency of the Mormon Church (President Wilford Woodruff and his counselors George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith) to Lorenzo Snow, President of the Salt Lake Temple. Some months prior to the time the letter was written, President Woodruff recorded in his journal that he had met with George Q. Cannon, Joseph F. Smith, Lorenzo Snow and other church officials—including representatives who presided over four temples—and “spent three hours in harmonizing the Different M[ode?]s of Ceremonies in giving Endowments” (*Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, October 17, 1893, vol. 9, p. 267). The letter was written about ten months after the entry in Woodruff’s journal and contains this revealing information:

As a result of the conference of the brethren engaged as ordinance workers in the several Temples, held at Salt Lake Temple, some time ago, the following slight corrections have been adopted by us . . .

In the creation on the fifth day a grammatical error occurs. The word “their” is used instead of “its,” the word *there*, therefore, is changes [sic] to its . . .

The words “that my tongue be torn from its roots in my mouth,” were substituted for “from the roof of my mouth.”

(Letter from the First Presidency, August 31, 1894, LDS Historical Department, CR 100, 14, #2, Volume 8:16-17, typed copy)

Some time in the first half of the 20th century, a major change was made concerning the penalties in the endowment ceremony. The bloody wording of the oath mentioned above was entirely removed. Nevertheless, Mormons were still instructed to draw their thumbs across their throats to show the penalty. In the account of the ritual which we published in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 468, the reader can see how the wording was modified to remove the harsh language regarding the cutting of the throat and the tearing out of the tongue:

. . . we desire to impress upon your minds the sacred character of the First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood, with its accompanying name, sign and penalty, together with that of all the other Tokens of the Holy Priesthood, with their accompanying names, signs and penalties, . . . They are most sacred and are guarded by solemn covenants and obligations of secrecy to the effect that under no condition, even at the peril of your life, will you ever divulge them, except at a certain place that will be shown you hereafter. The representations of the penalties indicates different ways in which life may be taken . . .

Adam, we give unto you the First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood . . .

The sign of the First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood is made by bringing the right arm to the square the palm of the hand to the front, the fingers close together and the thumb extended. This is the sign. The execution of the penalty is represented by placing the thumb under the left ear, the palm of the hand down, and by drawing the thumb quickly across the throat, to the right ear, and dropping the hand to the side . . .

Now repeat in your minds after me the words of the covenant, at the same time representing the execution of the penalty.

I, _______ (think of the new name) do covenant and promise that I will never reveal the First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood, together with its accompanying name, sign and penalty. Rather than do so I would suffer my life to be taken.
The recent removal of the penalties from the endowment ceremony by the Mormon leaders has been hailed by liberal Mormons as a step in the right direction. In his article, published in the Salt Lake Tribune, April 29, 1990, Vern Anderson told of Ross Peterson’s response to the removal of the penalties:

In completely removing the penalties from the endowment ceremony, the Mormon leaders have taken out some important vestiges of Masonry which Joseph Smith had borrowed from the Masonic ritual.

The reader will remember that the article in the Los Angeles Times mentioned two other penalties that have been removed from the Mormon temple endowment. These were also derived from Masonry. In the “Second or Fellow Craft Degree,” Masons bound themselves:

... under no less penalty than to have my body severed in two in the midst, and divided to the north and south, my bowels burnt to ashes in the center... The Penal Sign is given by putting the right hand to the left side of the bowels, the hand open, with the thumb next to the belly, and drawing it across the belly, and letting it fall; this is done tolerably quick. This alludes to the penalty of the obligation: “Having my body severed in twain,” etc. (Freemasonry Exposed, pp. 75-77)

Joseph Smith included this Masonic oath in the “First Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood.” Mormons who went through the endowment were instructed to say that if they revealed “any of the secrets of this, the First Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood... we agree that our bodies be cut asunder in the midst and all our bowels gush out” (Temple Mormonism, p. 20). These offensive words were removed from the temple ceremony many years ago, but Mormons continued to execute the sign of the penalty until just recently:

The sign of the first token of the Melchizedek Priesthood or sign of the nail is made by bringing the left hand in front of you with the hand in cupping shape, the left arm forming a square, the right hand is also brought forward, the fingers close together, and the thumb is placed over the left hip. This is the sign. The execution of the penalty is represented by drawing the thumb quickly across the body and dropping the hand to the side. (Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? p. 471)

Finally, in April 1990, this penalty was entirely removed from the temple ceremony.

As we have shown, Joseph Smith received the first three degrees of Masonry on March 15th and 16th of 1842. Less than two months later (May 4, 1842) he gave the endowment ceremonies (see History of the Church, vol. 5, pp. 1-2). The fact that the bloody oaths appeared in the temple ceremony in exactly the same order as in Masonry seems very suspicious. In both cases the first oath mentioned the slitting of the throat and tearing out of the tongue. The second spoke of the cutting open of the breast so that the heart and vitals could be removed, and the third mentioned disembowelment. Moreover, in all three cases the same penalties were demonstrated. This all appears to be too similar to be a coincidence.

Since many of those who took part in the endowment ceremonies were already Masons, Joseph Smith had some explaining to do. He, therefore, maintained that he was restoring the original temple rites which had been lost from the earth.

In the 1931 printing of Temple Mormonism, page 20, we find the following:

“We and each of us do covenant and promise that we will not reveal the secrets of this, the Second Token of the Aaronic Priesthood, with its accompanying name, sign, grip or penalty. Should we do so, we agree to have our breasts cut open and our hearts and vitals torn from our bodies and given to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field...”

The Sign is made by placing the left arm on the square, placing the right hand across the chest with the thumb extended and then drawing it rapidly from left to right and dropping it to the side.

As in the case of the “First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood,” the offensive wording was deleted from the Mormon ceremony a number of decades ago (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? p. 470). The “execution of the penalty,” however, was still retained in the ritual until April, 1990.

In the “Third, or Master Mason’s Degree,” Masons bound themselves:

... under no less penalty than to have my body severed in two in the midst, and divided to the north and south, my bowels burnt to ashes in the center... The Penal Sign is given by putting the right hand to the left side of the bowels, the hand open, with the thumb next to the belly, and drawing it across the belly, and letting it fall; this is done tolerably quick. This alludes to the penalty of the obligation: “Having my body severed in twain,” etc. (Freemasonry Exposed, pp. 75-77)

Joseph Smith included this Masonic oath in the “First Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood.” Mormons who went through the endowment were instructed to say that if they revealed “any of the secrets of this, the First Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood... we agree that our bodies be cut asunder in the midst and all our bowels gush out” (Temple Mormonism, p. 20). These offensive words were removed from the temple ceremony many years ago, but Mormons continued to execute the sign of the penalty until just recently:

The sign of the first token of the Melchizedek Priesthood or sign of the nail is made by bringing the left hand in front of you with the hand in cupping shape, the left arm forming a square, the right hand is also brought forward, the fingers close together, and the thumb is placed over the left hip. This is the sign. The execution of the penalty is represented by drawing the thumb quickly across the body and dropping the hand to the side. (Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? p. 471)

Finally, in April 1990, this penalty was entirely removed from the temple ceremony.

As we have shown, Joseph Smith received the first three degrees of Masonry on March 15th and 16th of 1842. Less than two months later (May 4, 1842) he gave the endowment ceremonies (see History of the Church, vol. 5, pp. 1-2). The fact that the bloody oaths appeared in the temple ceremony in exactly the same order as in Masonry seems very suspicious. In both cases the first oath mentioned the slitting of the throat and tearing out of the tongue. The second spoke of the cutting open of the breast so that the heart and vitals could be removed, and the third mentioned disembowelment. Moreover, in all three cases the same penalties were demonstrated. This all appears to be too similar to be a coincidence.

Since many of those who took part in the endowment ceremonies were already Masons, Joseph Smith had some explaining to do. He, therefore, maintained that he was restoring the original temple rites which had been lost from the earth.
Smith further explained that Masonry, which claimed to go back to King Solomon’s temple, originally had the same ritual but that it had become corrupted. Heber C. Kimball, who later became a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, could not help but see the resemblance between the two ceremonies. In the book, *Heber C. Kimball*, page 85, Stanley B. Kimball gives this valuable information:

Heber thought he saw similarities between Masonic and Mormon ritual. In a letter to Parley Pratt, June 17, 1842, Heber revealed: “We have received some precious things through the Prophet . . . there is a similarity of [preas]t[hood in Masony. Bro. Joseph Ses [says?] Masony was taken from preas[thood but has become degenerated. But menny things are perfect.” Later at a special conference . . . Heber explained further: “We have the true Masony. The Masony of today is received from the apostasy which took place in the days of Solomon and David. They have now and then a thing that is correct, but we have the real thing.”

Mormon apologist E. Cecil McGavin wrote:

If we manifested the belligerent spirit that many of the Masons display, we might say that Masonry is a spurious system descending from Solomon’s Temple. Numerous changes and corruptions have crept in, yet enough of the original remains to bear a few humble resemblances to the true endowment.

In the diary of Benjamin F. Johnson, an intimate friend and associate of Joseph Smith, it is recorded that “Joseph told me that Freemasonry was the apostate endowment, as sectarian religion was the apostate religion.” (*Mormonism and Masonry*, 1947, p. 199)

Dr. Reed C. Durham, a Mormon historian who has served as president of the Mormon History Association, was forced by the evidence to admit that Masonry had a powerful influence on Joseph Smith:

. . . . I am convinced that in the study of Masonry lies a pivotal key to further understanding Joseph Smith and the Church. . . . The many parallels found between early Mormonism and the Masonry of that day are substantial . . . . I believe that there are few significant developments in the Church, that occurred after March 15, 1842 [the day Smith became a Mason], which did not have some Masonic interdependence . . . . There is absolutely no question in my mind that the Mormon ceremony which came to be known as the Endowment, introduced by Joseph Smith to Mormon Masons, had an immediate inspiration from Masonry. This is not to suggest that no other source of inspiration could have been involved, but the similarities between the two ceremonies are so apparent and overwhelming that some dependent relationship cannot be denied. They are so similar, in fact, that one writer was led to refer to the Endowment as Celestial Masonry. (*Mormon Miscellaneous*, October 1975, pp. 13-14)

Some Mormon apologists who are aware of the devastating parallels between Masonry and the Mormon temple endowment believe that when Joseph Smith went through the Masonic ritual, God gave him the spirit of revelation so that he would discern which portions really went back to Solomon’s temple and which parts had been corrupted by later Masons. The prophet, therefore, only incorporated the genuine God-given elements into the Mormon “endowment ceremony.”

Now that the Mormon leaders have completely removed both the gruesome wording and the penalties from the temple ritual, it places these apologists on the horns of a dilemma. If God really instructed Joseph Smith to lift the bloody oaths and penalties from the Masonic ritual and insert them into the endowment ceremony, how can the present leaders of the church, who are supposed to be guided by revelation, tear them out of the temple ritual without offending God? It would appear that either the present leaders of the church feel that they know more than the God who was supposed to have spoken to Joseph Smith, or else they realize that Smith made a serious mistake when he borrowed this embarrassing material from the Masons.

The action of church authorities in dropping out some of the elements which were once believed to be “most sacred” will undoubtedly raise some serious questions in the minds of many faithful LDS people. If Joseph Smith was in error when he included these things, then it is obvious that we have no assurance that the other material he took from the Masons is really inspired. If a portion of the Masonic material he plagiarized is found to be defective, it throws suspicion on all the rest of the Masonic ritual which was incorporated into the endowment, and since there is so much Masonry in the ceremony, it would lead one to the suspicion that the entire ceremony is man-made. In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*, pages 484-492, we presented devastating evidence linking the Mormon temple ceremony to Masonry. The parallels are too close to be swept aside. This same information will be included in our new book, *Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony*, 1842-1990.

Those who maintain that the recent changes were really made because of revelation given to church authorities, should consider another interesting aspect with regard to this question. On February 18, 1987, the church’s own newspaper, *Deseret News*, reported that British Freemasons removed the bloody oaths from their own ceremonies. “Behheading and ripping out the tongue have been abolished by the British Freemasons as penalties for violating the solemn code of the secret society, it was reported. Such punishments have been on the books of Freemasonry for centuries to enforce solemn obligations that inductees to Masonic lodges swear on the Bible to uphold. But, the *Daily Telegraph* said this week, it’s the sort of thing that scares people away from the secret society.”

Now, if British Freemasons realized that their gruesome oaths had a tendency to scare “people away from their secret society” and decided to make a change to accommodate themselves to current thinking, it seems very likely that the leaders of the Mormon Church could also see “the handwriting on the wall.” If this process is termed “revelation,” then it is obvious that the British Freemasons had the revelation first.

**IMPORTANT OMISION**

The *Los Angeles Times*, May 5, 1990, gave this information concerning the removal of the “Five Points of Fellowship” from the temple ceremony:

Also dropped is an “embrace” of a man representing God, who stands behind a ceiling-to-floor veil. Reaching through a slit in the veil, the church member puts his or her hand to the back of the deity and presses against him at the cheek, shoulders, knees and feet with the veil between them. The contact at “five points of fellowship,” including the hand to his back, has been omitted, although the member must still give a secret handshake and repeat a lengthy password.

There can be no question that the “five points of fellowship” were derived from Masonry. The reader can clearly see this from the comparison which follows:

**MASONS:** — He (the candidate) is raised on what is called the five points of fellowship . . . This is done by putting the inside of your right foot to the inside of the right foot of the person to whom you are going to give the word, the inside of your knee to his, laying your right breast against his, your left hands on the back of each other, and your mouths
to each other’s right ear (in which position alone you are permitted to give the word), and whisper the word Mahah-bone. He is also told that Mahah-bone signifies marrow in the bone. (Freemasonry Exposed, pp. 84-85)

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

Lord—This is the sign of the token:

“Health to the navel, marrow in the bones . . .” (Temple Mormonism, page 22)

That the “five points of fellowship” were in the temple ceremony while the Mormons were still in Nauvoo, Illinois, is verified by a reference H. Michael Marquardt pointed out in Heber C. Kimball’s Journal, Nov. 21, 1845 to Jan. 7, 1846. Under the date of Dec. 11, 1845, a scribe wrote of the “second token of the Melchizedek Priesthood, the Patriarchal Grip or Sure Sign of the Nail. When the Lord asks the recipient to “give it [the name] to me?” the response is: “I cannot. I have not yet received it. For this purpose I have come to converse with the Lord through the veil.” The Lord then responds: “You shall receive it upon the five points of fellowship, through the veil.” The Lord gives the vital information and then asks for the name again: “Will you give it to me?” This time the recipient says, “I will, upon the five points of fellowship through the veil . . .” After the secret words are given, the Lord says “That is correct.” Shortly after this, the recipient is allowed to enter into the presence of the Lord in the “Celestial Room.”

In Duncan’s Masonic Ritual and Monitor, page 120, we read that in Masonry the candidate can only receive “the grand Masonic word on the five points of fellowship.” The reader will remember that Heber C. Kimball’s journal for 1845 made it clear that in the Mormon endowment this important key to the Celestial Kingdom was only given “on the five points of fellowship.” We have also shown that up until the revision of the ceremony in April 1990, the Lord would only give this important information “upon the five points of fellowship, through the veil.” Furthermore, the recipient had to give it back to the Lord “upon the five points of fellowship, through the veil.” For almost a century and a half, therefore, the Mormon leaders taught that these secret words could only be whispered in the ear while the Lord and the recipient were touching on all “five points of fellowship.” From what we can learn, those who participate in the ritual still put their “left hands on each other’s backs and whisper the words of the sign,” but they do not put their feet and knees together and all the wording concerning the “five points of fellowship” has been completely deleted. These words previously appeared in four different places—the “Lord” spoke of the “five points of fellowship” twice; “Peter” referred to the “five points of fellowship” once, and the recipient mentioned them once.

While it is good that the Mormon leaders removed this Masonic element from the endowment ceremony, some people who have been involved in temple work feel that the reason it was dropped was because some of the women felt the five points of contact (especially the placing of the “inside of your knee to his”) were too intimate. There were complaints that the men playing the role of the Lord sometimes took advantage of the situation. We were also told that even some of the men felt they had a problem with the “Lord” behind the veil. Since a large number of men have played the role of the Lord in the various temples throughout the world, it is certainly possible that complaints could have been made at various times. The performance of this type of ceremony in any group of people would probably result in some complaints. In any case, it is very possible that the “five points of fellowship” were removed because this part of the ritual seemed awkward or embarrassing to some members of the Mormon Church.

Regardless of the reason for the change, it raises serious questions concerning the inspiration of church officials. If a person was previously compelled to receive the secret information necessary to enter heaven on the five points of fellowship, how can the church leaders now by-pass God’s revealed way which was given by the prophet Joseph Smith. Kim Sue Lia Perkes revealed that:

. . . a former Mormon familiar with the changes said the ceremony’s climax has been eliminated. Removal of that part of the ritual, he said, is the equivalent of taking the Eucharist out of the Roman Catholic Mass.

Not all Mormons are happy with the ceremony changes.

“I certainly have Mormon friends who will see it as a step toward apostasy and an accommodation to the world,” said one practicing Mormon in Utah. (Arizona Republic, April 28, 1990)

DEVIL’S MINISTER GONE

When we first printed the temple ceremony in 1969, we commented on the fact that in the 1906 printing of the endowment, the Devil offered a preacher four thousand dollars a year to work for him. We said that in 1906 this was a great deal of money, but that the Mormons had neglected to give the preacher much of a raise. Therefore, when we printed the ceremony in 1969, and subsequently in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 468, the preacher was still only receiving five thousand dollars a year. In any case, this portion of the ceremony makes it perfectly clear that in the eyes of the Mormon leaders the orthodox Christian religion is the Devil’s religion:

LUCIFER:—Well, if you’ll preach your orthodox religion to this people and convert them, I’ll give you—let me see—five thousand a year.

In Mormonism, Magic and Masonry, page 66, we wrote:

. . . the temple ritual tries to link Christians and ministers of other churches to the Devil’s work. We feel that this is one of the most objectionable things about the ceremony, and we do not feel that a Christian would want to give any support to this type of thing.

Many other Christians protested against this part of the ceremony, and a great deal of pressure has been put on the Mormon leaders to change this part of the endowment. We understand, in fact, that a petition signed by thousands of people demanded that this portion of the endowment be changed.

After this portion of the ceremony was deleted, Vern Anderson wrote the following: “Among the changes . . . a portion of the ceremony with an actor portraying a non-Mormon ‘preacher’ paid by Satan to spread false doctrine has been
eliminated. ‘The general consensus is that it’s a breath of fresh air,’ said Ross Peterson . . . ‘You don’t put down other churches, or imply that they are Satan’s children’” (Salt Lake Tribune, April 29, 1990). We have been told that all the material making fun of both Protestants and Catholics has now been eliminated. The ceremony as it was previously given, not only implied that Protestant ministers were working for the Devil, but also had Lucifer claiming he would buy up “Popes” to help him in his evil work.

Unfortunately, the removal of the portion of the temple ceremony which implies that Christian ministers are working for the Devil does not really solve the problem. The Mormon Church still retains Joseph Smith’s story of the First Vision in his sight in the Pearl of Great Price; Joseph Smith—History, verses 18-19. In this account, Joseph Smith asserted that Jesus himself told him that all other churches were wrong:

My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right . . . I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt . . .

OTHER CHANGES

In the version of the temple ceremony which we published in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 467, the men “covenant and promise” that they will “obey the law of God.” The women, however, agree to obey the law of their husbands:

ELOHIM:—We will now put the sisters under covenant to obey the law of their husbands. Sisters, arise, raise your right hand to the square. Each of you do covenant and promise that you will obey the law of your husband and abide by his council in righteousness. Each of you bow your head and say yes.

SISTERS:—Yes.

We have already shown that since the church leaders revised the endowment ceremony on April 10, 1990, there has been some kind of a change in the covenant women are required to make. It has been stated that they “no longer must vow to obey their husbands” (Salt Lake Tribune, April 29, 1990). While we do not know the wording of the new version, it appears that some of the women are pleased with the changes in the ritual. In the Los Angeles Times, May 5, 1990, we find this:

Lavina Fielding Anderson . . . said she received the revisions “with joy.” “I anticipate further changes with hope and faith,” she said . . . “Some portions of the temple ceremony have been painful to some Mormon women and, in some respects, still are,” she added, without identifying what elements may still be objectionable. Women, for example, still cover their faces with veils at certain points in the ritual, sources said.

Another important change seems to have been made in the sign for the Second Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood. In the ceremony, as printed in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 471, we find this:

The sign is made by raising both hands high above the head and by lowering your hands to the side, saying:

Pay lay ale
Pay lay ale
Pay lay ale

As early as 1969 we pointed out a problem with this:

. . . there seems to have been a change made in this part of the ceremony, for the Salt Lake Tribune, February 12, 1906, gave the words as “Pale, Ale, Ale,” and Temple Mormonism used the words “Pale, Hale, Hale.” (The Mormon Kingdom, vol. 1, p. 138)

However this may be, in another portion of the ceremony (Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? p. 468), it is explained that “Pay lay ale” means “O God, hear the words of my mouth!” In the early 1980’s some critics of the church began to proclaim that in Hebrew these words really mean, “Wonderful Lucifer.” If this were true, this would mean that the Mormons were praying to the Devil in this part of the ceremony. We took very strong exception to this claim and pointed out that there is no way that these words can be translated “Wonderful Lucifer.” We still stand by this research which we presented in detail in our book, The Lucifer-God Doctrine, pages 11-15, 85-86.

In any case, many Mormons must have been bothered when they had to raise and lower their hands repeating the strange words “Pay lay ale” three times during the ritual. According to what we can learn, the Mormon leaders have now replaced the mysterious words with the English words which were mentioned earlier in the ceremony: “O God, hear the words of my mouth!” The fact that four different versions of the sign of the Second Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood have been given over the years certainly raises a question concerning the claim that the endowment was revealed by revelation.

We have been informed by two different sources that the Lecture Before The Veil has been removed. This lecture was previously given to all those who were going through the ritual for the first time. It was not deemed necessary, however, for those who were going through the endowment ceremony for the dead. The words “penalty” or “penalties” were used six times in this lecture, and it referred to the “sectarian minister” who preached false doctrine (i.e., the minister who was employed by Lucifer).

There probably were many other changes made in the temple ceremony which have not been reported yet. There have been different reports regarding how much material was actually removed from the ceremony or changed in some way. The Salt Lake Tribune, April 29, 1990, referred to the rituals “current length of about 90 minutes.” One man noted that just after the changes were made, temple workers were having a very difficult time with the new wording and felt that when they become proficient in the use of the new script, the ceremony might be somewhat shorter than when he went through.

REVELATION OR ACCOMODATION?

Although the Mormon leaders have been extremely quiet about the changes in the temple ceremony, John Dart reported that the following appeared in a statement by church leaders:

“We are a church that believes in modern and continuous revelation, and the changes that were recently made in our temple ceremony are reflective of that process . . .” (Los Angeles Times, May 5, 1990)

An increasing number of Mormons are beginning to believe that what is called “revelation” by church leaders is not really revelation from God, but rather “accomodation” to the views of the world. A number of things which have happened since 1890 lead to that conclusion. The changes concerning polygamy, the blacks and the temple endowment all point in this direction. The process of “modern and continuous revelation” could probably be summed up in the following formula: Criticism of a specific doctrine or practice from without the church + acceptance of that criticism by Mormon scholars and prominent people = “Revelation.”

Take, for example, the practice of polygamy. Joseph Smith claimed to receive a revelation from God on July 12,
1843, stating that plural marriage was to be practiced by the Mormon Church. This revelation is still published in the church’s *Doctrine and Covenants* as Section 132. Interestingly, this system of marriage was an extremely important part of the sealing ceremonies which are still performed in the temple for “time and all eternity.” For many years the Mormon leaders taught that temple marriage and plural marriage stand or fall together. Apostle Orson Pratt, for instance, emphasized that:

... if plurality of marriage is not true, or in other words, if a man has no divine right to marry two wives or more in this world, then marriage for eternity is not true, and your faith is all vain, and all the sealing ordinance[s] and powers, pertaining to marriages for eternity are vain, worthless, good for nothing; for as sure as one is true the other also must be true. Amen. *(Journal of Discourses, vol. 21, p. 296)*

Non-Mormons, of course, vigorously opposed the practice of polygamy. In addition, the United States Government prosecuted Mormons who were engaged in the practice. On Jan. 16, 1886, Lorenzo Snow, who later became the fifth prophet of the Mormon Church, was sentenced to six months in prison. When the prosecuting attorney predicted that if Apostle Snow was convicted, “a new revelation would soon follow, changing the divine law of celestial marriage,” Lorenzo Snow emphatically replied: “The severest prosecutions have never been followed by revelations changing a divine law, obedience to which brought imprisonment or martyrdom. Though I go to prison, God will not change his law of celestial marriage” *(Historical Record, 1887, vol. 6, p. 144)*.

Things went from bad to worse for the Mormon leaders. Pressure not only increased from the outside, but members of the church were swayed by the opposition. John Taylor, who was the third prophet of the church, strongly denounced those who would give up the practice:

God has given us a revelation in regard to celestial marriage. . . . they would like us to tone that principle down and change it and make it applicable to the views of the day. This we cannot do . . . I cannot do it, and will not do it. I find some men try to twist round the principle in any way and every way they can. They want to sneak out of it in some way. Now God don’t want any kind of sycophancy like that. . . . If God has introduced something for our glory and exaltation, we are not going to have that kicked over by any improper influence, either inside or outside of the Church of the living God. *(Journal of Discourses, vol. 25, pp. 309-310)*

Apostle Orson Pratt argued:

God has told us Latter-day Saints that we shall be condemned if we do not enter into that principle; and yet I have heard now and then . . . a brother or a sister say, “I am a Latter-day Saint, but I do not believe in polygamy.” Oh, what an absurd expression! . . . If the doctrine of polygamy, as revealed to the Latter-day Saints, is not true, I would not give a fig for all your other revelations that came through Joseph Smith the Prophet; I would renounce the whole of them. . . . The Lord has said, that those who reject this principle reject their salvation, they shall be damned, saith the Lord . . . I want to prophesy that all men and women who oppose the revelation which God has given in relation to polygamy will find themselves in darkness . . . they will finally go down to hell and be damned if they do not repent. *(Journal of Discourses, vol. 17, pp. 224-225)*

Notwithstanding all of the strong rhetoric used by Mormon leaders, in 1890, Wilford Woodruff, the fourth prophet of the church, suspended the practice of polygamy when he issued the Manifesto (see *Doctrine and Covenants*, Official Declaration 1). President Woodruff proclaimed that the Manifesto was given by revelation from God: . . . the Lord . . . is giving us revelation . . . The Lord showed me by vision and revelation exactly what would take place if we did not stop this practice. If we had not stopped it . . . all ordinances would be stopped . . . and many men would be made prisoners. . . . the God of Heaven commanded me to do what I did do . . . I went before the Lord, and I wrote what the Lord told me to write. . . . *(Evidences and Reconciliations, 3 volumes in 1, pp. 105-106)*

It is obvious from the evidence we present in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 231-234, that President Woodruff yielded to pressures from both non-Mormons and members of his own church and issued the Manifesto which eventually ended the practice of plural marriage within the church.

Prior to June 9, 1978, the Mormon Church had a doctrine which was referred to by outsiders as the “anti-black doctrine” because blacks were forbidden the priesthood. The basis for this doctrine was Joseph Smith’s Book of Abraham (published in the *Pearl of Great Price*, one of the four standard works of the church). Joseph Smith wrote that “from Ham, sprang that race which preserved the curse in the land.” Blacks were identified as descendants of Ham and were “cursed . . . as pertaining to the Priesthood” *(Pearl of Great Price, Book of Abraham, 1:21-26)*. It was taught that even “one drop of Negro blood” would prevent a person from holding the priesthood, marrying for eternity in the temple, or even going through the endowment ceremony (see *Race Problems—As They Affect the Church*, by Mark E. Petersen, August 27, 1954). Bruce R. McConkie, who later became an apostle, bluntly stated:

Negroes in this life are denied the priesthood; under no circumstances can they hold this delegation of authority from the Almighty. The gospel message of salvation is not carried affirmatively to them . . . Negroes are not equal with other races where the receipt of certain spiritual blessings are concerned . . . *(Mormon Doctrine, 1958, p. 477)*

There was a great deal of discussion regarding civil rights in the 1950’s. In 1959 we printed our first criticism of the Mormon doctrine concerning blacks. As early as 1963, we believed that it was likely that the Mormon leaders would have a new “revelation” regarding blacks and printed a sheet entitled, “Will There Be a Revelation Regarding the Negro?” At the bottom of this sheet we predicted: “If the pressure continues to increase on the Negro question, the leaders of the Mormon Church will probably have another revelation which will allow the Negro to hold the priesthood.” Over the years we continued to print a great deal of material on the subject of blacks and the priesthood. Although there were some Mormons who had doubts about the anti-black doctrine, at that time very few were willing to publicly criticize the church. We were ridiculed for the stand which we took, but we persisted in challenging this doctrine and a number of Mormons began to take our work seriously.

Pressure for a change in the doctrine concerning blacks continued to mount both without and within the church. Finally, on June 9, 1978, the Mormon church’s *Deseret News* carried a startling announcement by the First Presidency which said that a new revelation had been given and that blacks would be allowed to hold the priesthood: “. . . we have pleaded long and earnestly . . . supplicating the Lord for divine guidance. He has heard our prayers, and by revelation has confirmed that the long-promised day has come . . . all worthy male members of the church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color.” Shortly after this revelation was received, it became clear that the church’s ban on marriage to blacks had been lifted. On June 24, 1978, the church’s newspaper announced that “the first black man to gain the priesthood” was allowed to go through the temple endowment and was sealed to his wife for time and eternity.
Like the polygamy revelation, the revelation by President Spencer W. Kimball granting blacks the priesthood was given only after tremendous pressure was exerted by non-Mormon critics and members of the church itself.

With regard to the recent revision of the temple ceremony, it is clear that the “revelation” came in the same way as the changes on polygamy and the black doctrine. In the Introduction to our 1964 reprint of Temple Mormonism, we pointed out that “there have been quite a number of changes made since the Temple ceremony was first introduced.” We went on to predict that there would “probably be other changes made in the Temple ceremony as time goes on.”

As we have already shown, after printing Temple Mormonism in 1964, we published an updated version of the endowment ceremony in 1969 in The Mormon Kingdom, vol. 1. This same version was printed in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? in 1972 and is still found in that book. In addition, in our book, The Changing World of Mormonism, published by Moody Press in 1980, we included portions of the endowment ceremony. We have mentioned also that Chuck and Dolly Sackett published the ceremony in a pamphlet and distributed tapes of the actual ceremony. Others also disseminated the ceremony or portions of it in books, pamphlets, tracts, films and tapes.

Although the Mormon Church completely lost control of the situation and had no way to stop the tens of thousands of copies of the endowment which were being distributed throughout the world, most members of the church who felt there was something wrong with the ritual did not dare to openly protest. They feared that they would be strongly reprimanded or even excommunicated if they raised their voices on the issue. In 1987, however, a remarkably frank article by David John Buerger was printed in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, a liberal Mormon publication which is not controlled by the church. In this article, Buerger acknowledged that there were “strong indications that Joseph Smith drew on the Masonic rites in shaping the temple endowment, and specifically borrowed the tokens, signs, and penalties” (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Winter 1987, p. 45).

Mr. Buerger went even further by suggesting that church leaders needed to seriously consider making changes in the ceremony to counter declining rates of attendance at endowment ceremonies:

The number of operating temples has increased dramatically . . . An analysis of ordinance data, however, suggests that rates of temple work have remained relatively constant over the last fifteen years. . . . Members of my own stake made 2,671 visits to the Oakland Temple in 1985, versus 3,340 visits in 1984—a 20 percent drop in activity. . . . Without comparing the policies of stakes in other temple districts, it is impossible to say how characteristic my stake might be.

These declining rates suggest that many Latter-day Saints apparently do not participate extensively in either vicarious or living endowments. The need for reevaluation can at least be discussed. As the history of the endowment shows, specific content and procedural alterations were made in 1845, 1877, 1883, 1893, 1919-27, the early 1960s, and 1968-72. . . .

The feelings contemporary Saints have for the temple certainly merit a careful quantitative analysis by professional social scientists. I have heard a number of themes from people who feel discomfort in one degree or another with elements of the temple ceremony. . . . Probably in no other settings except college organizations, with their attendant associations of youthfulness and possibly immaturity, do most Mormons encounter “secret” ceremonies with code handshakes, clothing that has particular significance, and, perhaps most disturbing to some, the implied violence of the penalties. Various individuals have commented on their difficulty in seeing these elements as “religious” or “inspirational,” originating in the desires of a loving Father for his children. . . . Some are also uncomfortable at the portrayal of a Christian minister as the hireling of Satan . . .

Sixth, the endowment ceremony still depicts women as subservient to men, not as equals in relating to God. For example, women covenant to obey their husbands in righteousness, while he is the one who acts as intermediary to God . . . Some find the temple irrelevant to the deeper currents of their Christian service and worship of God. Some admit to boredom. Others describe their motivations for continued and regular temple attendance as feelings of hope and patience—the faith that by continuing to participate they will develop more positive feelings . . . Often they feel unworthy or guilty because of these feelings since the temple is so unanimously presented as the pinnacle of spiritual experience for sincere Latter-day Saints. . . . The endowment has changed a great deal in response to community needs over time. Obviously it has the capability of changing still further if the need arises. . . . From a strictly functional perspective, the amount of time required to complete a vicarious endowment seems excessive. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Winter 1987, pp. 63, 66-69).

The reader will notice that David John Buerger felt there should be a “careful quantitative analysis by professional social scientists” to find out why attendance at temples has been declining. Although it could have been just a coincidence, it is interesting to note that within months of the publication of Buerger’s article, the Mormon Church made its own survey of the opinions of members concerning temple work. In the Instructions for the Survey of Adult Members in the United States and Canada, the following appears: “. . . we have developed this survey to help us understand your thoughts, feelings, and experiences relating to temple and genealogy activities, . . . along with you, approximately 3,400 other members in the United States and Canada are being asked to participate in this project. . . . We hope that you will feel you can be candid and open in your answers. . . . what you write will be anonymous. We will not be able to associate your name with the questionnaire you complete.” This survey was to be returned in the mail “by MARCH 30th,” 1988.

Although Question 28 asked the person who had been through the endowment ritual if he or she “felt spiritually uplifted by the experience,” it also probed to find out if the “experience was unpleasant” or if the person “was confused by what happened. Q. 29 is worded, “Briefly describe how you felt after receiving your own endowment.” On the photocopy we have in our possession, the respondent has written: “Wierd [sic].” Q. 37-k inquired as to whether the person found “it hard to go to the temple.” Q. 39-b asked if the individual fell “asleep during sessions.” Questions were also asked concerning whether the person really believed “The president of the LDS Church is a loving Father for his children. . . . some are also uncomfortable at the portrayal of a Christian minister as the hireling of Satan . . .”

Although our photocopy of the page containing the “Comments” is faded out and difficult to read, it appears that
the woman who filled out the Survey admitted she had lost faith in the church. This is supported by her answers to Questions 77 and 78. The “main reason for not attending LDS church services” was listed as: “I have some doubts about specific LDS doctrines and teachings.” From all appearances it appears that the Mormon Church’s Survey was a feeler to find out what changes should be made in the ceremony and how they would be received by members of the church.

While many Mormons will undoubtedly stand firm in their faith that the decision to change the ceremonies came by direct revelation from God, the evidence seems to indicate that the publication of the temple ceremony and objections to it by non-Mormons combined with criticism from within the church (as evidenced by David John Buerger’s article in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought) forced the Mormon leaders to issue a survey to find out why temple attendance had fallen off and what members of the church actually felt about the endowment ceremony. The results of that survey must have indicated that a significant number of people were offended by parts of the ceremony. Consequently, a new “revelation” was given to make the ritual more appealing to the Mormon people. This tends to verify the formula that the criticism of a specific doctrine or practice from without the church + acceptance of that criticism by Mormon scholars and prominent people = “Revelation.”

In the early days of the Mormon Church, the word “revelation” had a very different meaning than it does today. Joseph Smith often used the word to refer to some new doctrine or teaching which he claimed God himself had revealed to him. Some of his “revelations” were extremely unpopular, but this usually did not bother him very much. Take, for instance, his “revelation” concerning polygamy. In spite of the fact that many members of the church were violently opposed to the doctrine, he continued to secretly advocate the practice and to take plural wives himself. Unlike the current leaders of the church, he did not feel that it was necessary to take a survey and modify the doctrine to fit the opinions of others. While we do not believe that the “revelation” on polygamy came from God and are very opposed to the practice, we must admit that Smith was not easily swayed by public opinion.

While Joseph Smith used the word “revelation” to refer to controversial new doctrines he brought forth to the church, later prophets have used the same word in an attempt to destroy the very teachings which Joseph Smith claimed were divinely inspired. When President Wilford Woodruff claimed he had a “revelation” to stop the practice of plural marriage in the church, he was not adding any new doctrine. Instead, he was throwing overboard a doctrine Smith taught was essential for salvation. If the information that polygamy should not be practiced was a “revelation,” then Christians actually received it first. Long before Mormonism began, they were condemning the practice.

Some people now point to the “revelation” which Spencer W. Kimball, the twelfth prophet of the church, gave concerning the blacks as evidence that the church is still led by revelation. Nothing could be further from the truth. President Kimball did not reveal any new truth to the world. Instead, he destroyed a doctrine that came from Joseph Smith’s own “Book of Abraham”—a doctrine which the prophets of the church had stubbornly clung to until pressure from within and without the church was so strong that he was forced to yield on the issue. Millions of Christians and even a large number of Mormons had received this “revelation” many years before President Kimball received his answer.

As far as we know, the recent “revelation” that the temple ceremony should be altered has not produced any new or important material. Instead, it is a mutilation of what was supposed to have been revealed by “revelation” to the prophet Joseph Smith. Things that were formerly considered to be “most sacred” were stripped from the ritual. For many years Christians have spoken against the very things which have now been removed. Why did it take so long for Mormon leaders to obtain their “revelation” on the subject? The liberal Mormon David John Buerger seems to have had the “revelation” some time before church leaders changed the ceremony.

It seems that it is very difficult for most faithful Mormons to grasp the significance of what is really going on within the church. The implications are just too devastating for them to face. The following hypothetical illustration may help the Mormon reader put the matter into perspective: If we were to say that God had given us a “revelation” that baptism should no longer be practiced, members of the church would protest that this could not be a true revelation. They would undoubtedly claim that we were merely feigning a “revelation” as a pretext to remove an important ordinance from the teachings of Christ and might even suggest that we were embarrassed about getting wet in front of a crowd.

To those who are paying close attention, it is obvious that the word “revelation” is really being used as a cover-up for what is going on. Church leaders are really destroying the original teachings of Joseph Smith in a very sneaky way. Each time they remove some part that Smith considered vital, they clothe the action by saying it is a new “revelation” from God. When will the people wake up and realize what is going on? We, of course, agree that Joseph Smith’s teachings are filled with errors. We feel, in fact, that sweeping changes need to be made, but we do not believe it is being honest to do it under the guise of “revelation.” Instead, the General Authorities of the church should openly admit that they feel Joseph Smith departed from Christian teachings and then propose a plan to effect the changes that need to be made. It seems obvious, however, that they will not do this because they know they will lose power with the people. It is much easier to say that the prophet has had a new “revelation” and that, of course, marks “the end of controversy.” O. Kendall White has pointed out that the Mormon leaders’ claim of “continuing revelation” is really a mechanism which they use to side-step acknowledging the “errors of the past.” This, of course, leads to the impression that “the church is never wrong.”

Although they would never admit it, it would appear from the changes they made in the temple endowment ritual that the current leaders of the church realize that portions of the ceremony were not from God—at least we assume that they never would have changed these parts if they truly believed they came from God. They must agree, therefore, that we were correct in our assertion that the penalties which they themselves removed from the ceremony were really derived from Masonry. It is certainly sad that with all the evidence they have in their possession that the endowment ritual is man-made, they still choose to remain silent.

**A BAD EXPERIENCE?**

Many people who have been through the Mormon temple endowment later admit that they were shocked by the ceremony because it was so different from anything they had previously encountered in Mormonism. A prominent Mormon educator who served at Brigham Young University told us that when his wife first went to the temple to receive her endowments, she became so upset with the ritual that she refused to go any further and the entire session was delayed while temple workers tried to convince her to go on. Over the years a surprising number of people have told us that they had a very bad experience when
they went through the temple ritual. Many of them said that their first serious doubts concerning the authenticity of Mormonism arose when they went through the endowment ceremony. Couples have told us that they both had very negative feelings during the ceremony but at the time did not dare confide these doubts with each other. We recently received a letter in which the following appears:

We converted to Mormonism 16 years ago when two delightful young missionaries knocked on our door. . . I had been raised in a Christian household. . . We subsequently married in the Temple in New Zealand; an experience we found to be very confusing and frightening and we both wanted to leave, but did not mention this to each other. . . I became a Christian in October last year and my husband followed shortly after. . . We feel so full of the spirit of God and we love Jesus with all our hearts. (Letter from Australia, dated January 11, 1990)

Many people who enter the temple are puzzled as to why they should have to wear specially marked garments for the rest of their lives and learn secret passwords, signs and handshakes to enter into the presence of God. They feel that this is rather childish. As we have shown, David John Buerger has pointed out that these types of things are found in secret lodges and also in “college organizations, with their attendant associations of youthfulness and possibly immaturity.” The endowment ceremony actually gives the impression that God is like a youngster who only allows those who know the secret passwords and signs into his heavenly clubhouse. This is entirely different from anything we find in the New Testament. In John 10:14, 27-28, the following appears: “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. . . My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” Those who really know Christ do not have to worry about remembering any secret words or handshakes. As the Apostle Paul expresses it, those who are alive at his coming will be “caught up together with them [i.e., those who are raised from the dead] in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). This hardly allows any time for questions and answers and a ceremony of passing through the veil. In 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, Paul wrote that “we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump . . .” Apostle John added this comforting thought: “. . . when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). While the temple ritual leads Mormons to believe that God is going to put them through the type of test a Mason has to go through to get into the lodge, Christians believe that at death the entire ceremony and the idea of men becoming Gods needs to be abandoned.

While we do not know what the future holds for Mormonism, we are very encouraged by recent developments. More and more Mormons are beginning to reject the concept that “when the leaders speak, the thinking has been done,” and many of them are turning to the Lord for help. We feel that the recent changes in the endowment ritual will serve as a catalyst in bringing LDS people to the truth. While the discussion of the temple ceremony used to be almost completely taboo, active Mormons are now coming into our bookstore and discussing the matter with us. A number of them, who have recently gone through the temple, have provided important details concerning the changes. We have also received word that they are discussing these matters among themselves. Those of us who have labored for years to bring the truth to the Mormons are excited about the future. We have been ridiculed in the past by those who did not believe our work could have any affect on the leadership of the church. It is our belief that a large number of Mormons are growing tired of blindly following their leaders and that we will see tens of thousands of them turning to the Lord.

For those who are interested in learning more about the endowment ceremony, we recommend our new book, Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony, 1842-1990. . .

WITCHCRAFT CONTROVERSY REKINDLED

In the Salt Lake City Messenger for September 1988, we noted that a statement by Walter Martin of Christian Research Institute had finally ended a controversy between our ministry and Ed Decker. At the heart of the disagreement was a question regarding the influence of witchcraft and Satanism on the Mormon temple ceremony. We felt that although there were
occultic influences in the endowment ritual, Mr. Decker had made some very exaggerated claims in his newsletter. Furthermore, we maintained that a member of his staff, William Schnoebelen, also misrepresented the facts in a booklet he coauthored with James Spencer. This pamphlet is entitled, *Mormonism's Temple of Doom*. Ed Decker had called upon his very close personal friend, Walter Martin and CRI, the organization Martin had founded, to settle the dispute, and Decker and Schnoebelen agreed to submit “ourselves and this ministry to the matter. We agree to submit to their findings and take whatever action they deem necessary.” Walter Martin and his researchers looked into the matter and finally issued a statement which strongly supported our position. In this report, Walter Martin stated:

> Herein is our position pertaining to some of the views advanced in the booklet. . . . we agree . . . that there are similarities and parallels among Mormonism and some forms of modern Witchcraft and Satanism. However, as Utah LightHouse Ministry and others have correctly pointed out, what similarities there are stem from Mormonism borrowing directly from Witchcraft or Satanism, but the commonality that all three have in being heavily influenced by Free Masonry . . .

> We understand how and why Mr. Schnoebelen arrived at his conclusion . . . We however cannot endorse his premises, nor the overall conclusion as represented in *Mormonism’s Temple of Doom*. . . . overall we cannot approve the booklet and all of its conclusions.

We obtained this statement directly from the Christian Research Institute and will provide a free copy of the entire report to anyone who requests it.

In a letter to us dated September 18, 1988, Ed Decker promised that the booklet would be modified to conform to Walter Martin’s criticism:

> This letter is to acknowledge that Christian Research Institute (CRI) has completed its review . . . It is our understanding that they have forwarded a copy of their conclusions to you . . . Our commitment to Dr. Martin was that we would take whatever correction they gave in the matter. To that end, I have met with both Bill Schnoebelen and Jim Spencer with regard to Dr. Martin’s statements about the “Temple of Doom” book. They readily agreed to modify the next printing of the book, which is about due, to report Dr. Martin’s conclusions regarding the historical origins of the temple ritual. Dr. Martin also assured us that CRI would continue to carry the book as soon as that change has been made.

Since Walter Martin and his researchers bluntly stated that they “cannot endorse his [Schnoebelen’s] premises, nor the overall conclusion as represented in *Mormonism’s Temple of Doom;*” we presumed that the booklet would have to be carefully rewritten to pass muster. We accepted Ed Decker’s promise that they would “modify the next printing of the book.” To our surprise, however, when we obtained the new printing, we could not find any changes regarding the important matters which had been brought to their attention by CRI. It is true that a date has been changed from 1970 to 1971 on page 63, and the word “Roman” has been added before “Catholic” on the next line, but these changes are trivial and do not in any way correct the serious errors in the book. Moreover, there was no answer to the weighty charges we had published in the enlarged edition of *The Lucifer God Doctrine*. It would appear that the authors did not want to make any changes which would indicate that they were backing down from their extreme conclusions or that could be used by the Mormons to show dishonesty was used in the first edition.

Since Walter Martin has passed away, we will probably never know exactly what transpired between him and the three individuals with whom we disagreed—Decker, Schnoebelen and Spencer. We do know, however, that they completely ignored the criticism found in Martin’s official CRI statement and at least one of the items which Martin had specifically pointed out to them. In a letter dated February 2, 1989, William Schnoebelen acknowledged:

> . . . we submitted ourselves to Dr. Walter Martin and CRI . . . He disagrees with one statement in my book, on p. 14 which says that “Ample evidence exists to prove that Joseph Smith stole the temple endowment from Masonry or witchcraft.” He would prefer to say that “Mormonism, Freemasonry, and Witchcraft are streams of the same Satanic river.”

Since Mr. Schnoebelen admitted that Walter Martin was displeased with this statement, we would expect the booklet to have been altered to conform to Martin’s suggestion. Instead, however, the statement reads exactly the same as in the old edition: “Ample evidence exists to prove that Joseph Smith stole the temple endowment from Masonry or witchcraft . . .” (see p. 14)

While there was a great deal of talk about submitting to CRI, there seems to have been no action to fit the rhetoric. It would appear that these men originally went to Walter Martin because they felt he would come down heavily on their side of the issue and take us to task. When CRI’s final conclusions agreed with ours, they simply ignored the criticism and refused to submit as they had promised.

At any rate, although we have remained silent in our newsletter concerning this issue since November 1988, those who have opposed our attempt to stop the dissemination of inaccurate information on the Mormon temple ritual have become increasingly vocal. James Spencer, for example, wrote an article entitled, “THE VINDICATION OF TEMPLE OF DOOM” (see *Through the Maze*, Issue No. 23). On May 14, 1990, Ed Decker appeared on the radio program, *The Bible Answer Man*, and made these comments: “Well, we don’t agree on some particular items regarding the Mormon temple ritual . . . The Tanners, Jerald in particular, feels that I’m a little too harsh on that and that I’ve drawn conclusions that shouldn’t be drawn . . . I think that we’ve been vindicated.”

Those who are still supporting *Mormonism’s Temple of Doom* are circulating what William Schnoebelen claims is a copy of a “recent letter from Dr. Martin.” As strange as it may seem, this letter appears to give support to the very booklet Walter Martin had previously disapproved. While it is possible that Martin could have prepared such a statement, reason would tell us that the use of the endorsement would have to be contingent upon the authors modifying the booklet “to report Dr. Martin’s conclusions regarding the historical origins of the temple ritual” (Letter from Ed Decker, September 18, 1988). Since there was absolutely no attempt to correct the false information in the booklet, it is obvious that such an endorsement would be of no value. A member of the staff at CRI, in fact, told us that it was his understanding that *Mormonism’s Temple of Doom* would be revised and he was later shocked to learn that it was not corrected to conform with the truth. He felt that Walter Martin had put his full trust in these men and had no idea that they would not keep their word.

However this may be, a photocopy of the letter which Mr. Schnoebelen mailed on February 2, 1989, contained these words at the end of the letter: “(Signed) Dr. Walter Martin[,] Author, *The Kingdom of the Cults,*” That the word “Signed,” appeared in parentheses, clearly shows that it is not an actual photocopy of the original letter. The original letter, of course, should have Walter Martin’s handwritten signature on it. It is obvious, therefore, that what Schnoebelen sent was a copy of the letter which had been completely retyped. One would think that it would be simpler for Mr. Schnoebelen to make a photocopy
of the original. In addition, it would appear more authoritative with Walter Martin’s own handwritten signature on it. Although there may be some other explanation, we suspect that there is some reason that the original letter has to be suppressed. It could be that the original contained additional information which might be embarrassing to the authors of the booklet. For example, Walter Martin could have detailed how the booklet would have to be revised before they could use the statement. Whatever the case may be, we would like to see the original letter in its entirety or at least a good photocopy of it. A retyped copy of this controversial document is certainly not sufficient.

One would think that after the devastating evidence we printed in The Lucifer-God Doctrine, Ed Decker would be more careful in his public statements concerning Mormonism. Instead, however, he seems to have thrown caution to the wind. On the radio program, The Bible Answer Man, May 15, 1990, Mr. Decker gave a revealing demonstration of his ability to fabricate evidence to support his own opinions. He spoke concerning the film, The God Makers, claiming that he was the moving force behind the production of that film. Mr. Decker apparently felt that he had to impress the listening audience with the effect the film had on slowing down the growth of the Mormon Church. He, therefore, made this fantastic statement regarding a speech given by Mormon Apostle M. Russell Ballard at Brigham Young University on November 14, 1989:

Well, Elder Ballard spoke at BYU . . . and he said that in evaluating the 1980s and the 1990s, he said that the church had planned and expected 10,000,000 people in the church at the end of the 1980s and I remember in the early 1980s that that was spoken of a lot more than it was in the end of the 1980s. . . . he said that the church had only 7,000,000 members and while that’s an outstanding number of people who are in the church today, he said that’s 3,000,000 short of the plan, and that instead of seeing 20,000,000 people—doubling again in the next decade—they could only see like about 14,000,000 people if the trend continued at the pace the church was going today. And he said the reason that the church had not grown[n] was primarily at the foot of the former Mormons and specifically the “God maker” film, and so I feel like that’s what we accomplished.

We were immediately suspicious of Mr. Decker’s statements concerning Apostle Ballard’s speech. The Mormon leaders are always very careful not to say anything that would give comfort to their critics. To make such an admission at a BYU Devotional would be like giving gun powder to the enemy. At any rate, H. Michael Marquardt has provided us with an audio tape of the speech and we checked it out carefully to see if it contained the comments Ed Decker attributed to Apostle Ballard. Unfortunately for Mr. Decker’s credibility, we were unable to find anything concerning The God Makers causing a loss of membership in Ballard’s speech or even anything concerning the church losing 3,000,000 prospective converts. Instead, Apostle Ballard boasted that: “Worldwide church membership has now increased to more than 7,000,000. . . . The day of 50 to 60 thousand full-time missionaries is not far off.” The speech does have one brief mention of The God Makers, but it is only a passing reference to the fact that the church has always had enemies. Mr. Marquardt has transcribed this part of the tape and we have verified its accuracy: “In recent years the church has been attacked openly by producers of the film The Godmakers. A concerted effort by a band of enemies of the church is underway at this very hour.” The speech gives no indication that either The God Makers or the work of any of the church’s critics has had any effect on the growth of the church. Moreover, Apostle Ballard never mentioned anything about the plan to have 10,000,000 members by 1990, nor did he refer to the church’s plan to have 20,000,000 members by the turn of the century.

It was pointed out to us that this erroneous information concerning Apostle Ballard’s speech was also printed in Ed Decker’s Saints Alive in Jesus Newsletter in January 1990. In this issue we find the following:

Elder M. Russell Ballard spoke at BYU according to The Provo Herald of 11/14/89. He announced that the Church had . . . “more than 7 million members . . .” Viewers of THE GOD MAKERS will recall an LDS graph in the early part of the film which predicted that the church would hit 10 million by 1990. Ballard lamented that the church did not meet that membership goal[.] He laid the blame for the failure at the feet of the opposition and specifically blamed the film, THE GOD MAKERS . . . In this decade, the church grew from 4.4 million to 7.0 million. However we praise God that those figures reflect a 3 million member shortfall. We have been led to believe that the spiritual offensive spearheaded by THE GOD MAKERS has cut their planned gains by more than 50%.

The reader will notice that Ed Decker attributed this information to the November 14, 1989, issue of The Provo Herald. This newspaper, like the tape of the address, has absolutely nothing in it that supports the claim that “Ballard lamented that the church did not meet that membership goal,” and raises still another problem. The reader is referred to “an LDS graph in the early part of the film [The God Makers] which predicted that the church would hit 10 million by 1990.” When we examined a video of The God Makers, we found a graph, but it did not have the projected church growth for 1990. It was pointed out to us, however, that it was possible that when the film was transferred to the video that the right side of this graph had been accidentally cut off. A check with a ministry that had a copy of the film revealed that this was the case. The graph did have a projected growth for 1990 as Ed Decker had claimed. This graph, however, did not support Mr. Decker’s conclusion. Instead of 10,000,000 members, the church’s graph predicted a growth of only 6,491,200 by 1990. Since the church’s magazine, The Ensign, listed 7,300,000 members for the last day of 1989, it would appear that church growth had actually exceeded the projection by 808,800. In addition, it is clear from the graph in The God Makers that the projection applies to the end of 1990 not to the end of 1989 as Mr. Decker had assumed. We must, therefore, take into consideration the increase which will take place during this year. In 1989, the church membership increased by 580,000. Since it will probably increase by at least that amount if not more in 1990, we have to add these members to the 808,800. This would give a total of 1,388,800 more members than had been projected for 1990. Since Mr. Decker had claimed that the church had fallen 3,000,000 short of the goal, this would mean that his figures were off by well over 4,000,000!

Now, while we do not doubt that The God Makers had some effect on the growth of the Mormon Church, the church stepped up its missionary program and actually gained more members than it had predicted. There is just no way that we can believe that Mr. Decker’s work, or that of all of the ministries to the Mormons combined, caused “a 3 million member shortfall” in the membership of the church. Ed Decker went even further in his interview on The Bible Answer Man program. As we have shown, he claimed that Apostle Ballard also lamented that because of the damage which had been done, the church would now only have 14,000,000 members by the turn of the century and thus there would be a shortfall of 6,000,000!
It seems only fair to expect any ministry that criticizes the misrepresentations in LDS history and doctrine to be equally concerned about accuracy in its own statements and literature. When we dealt with the changes in Joseph Smith’s story of the First Vision, we were forced to the conclusion that he either deliberately changed his story to fit his evolving theology or he was living in a fantasy world and could not separate the truth from fiction. What can we say with regard to Ed Decker’s report of Apostle Ballard’s speech? Using exactly the same standard as we have used in our study of Mormonism, we feel that the situation looks very grave. Although we do not know what was going on in Mr. Decker’s mind, it is obvious that the truth has been completely distorted. Moreover, some ministries have reprinted this false information and have compounded the problem. They, no doubt, did not have any intention of misleading anyone. Mr. Decker was taken at his word. After all, it is very hard for many people to believe that those engaged in ministries would attempt to pull the wool over the eyes of their readers in this manner. Nevertheless, we simply have to face the truth about the matter.

It would appear that what happened was that Ed Decker received a copy of The Provo Herald and saw that Apostle Ballard had mentioned The God Makers. This, of course, is some type of an achievement because the Mormon leaders hardly ever refer to the works of their adversaries. Mr. Decker must have been extremely impressed by this article and either deliberately set out to deceive or else allowed his imagination to run wild. In any case, he remembered seeing some sort of graph indicating that the church would grow to 10,000,000 members. He felt that it was the graph he used in The God Makers. As we have shown, however, this graph actually projected that by 1990 the church would have only 6,491,200 members. Although we do not know for certain, it may be that Mr. Decker was actually thinking of a graph he saw in the Salt Lake City Messenger or in our book, The Case Against Mormonism, vol. 3, page 164. In the book, two graphs which we prepared are shown. The graphs themselves could not have been the source, but just above the graphs we reported that the Mormons predicted “that if they continue to grow at the same rate they will have 10,000,000 members by 2000 A. D. (Deseret News, Church Section, October 21, 1967, page 1).” If this was the source, Mr. Decker’s memory failed him to some extent. Although the statement concerning “10,000,000 members” fits Decker’s comments, it really referred to the year 2000, not 1990.

With this incorrect information in his mind, Ed Decker reasoned that if the Mormons only had 7,000,000 members by 1990, this would be a “3 million member shortfall.” Since he was convinced that The God Makers had a very significant effect on the Mormon Church, he just knew that this “shortfall” must mainly stem from his work with regard to that film. The next step, of course, was to put all this information into the mouth of a Mormon leader—i.e., Apostle Ballard. This, of course, is the same type of thing that Mark Hofmann did when he forged documents. We are not saying that Ed Decker created any actual document other than his newsletter or even that he did this deliberately. Nevertheless, the facts speak for themselves; a fabricated story has been created by Mr. Decker and it has been widely circulated throughout the land.

Now that Ed Decker’s ability to make up stories has been clearly demonstrated, it raises serious questions concerning many of his sensational claims. On The Bible Answer Man program, May 15, 1990, Ed Decker was asked: “Have you experienced someone actually trying to kill you or is this just sensationalism?” In response to that question, Decker replied that it had nothing to do with sensationalism but, in fact, really occurred: “… it comes with the territory and not very often or highly successful, thank God . . . we just take it with a grain of salt . . . I was poisoned in Scotland . . . it comes with the territory and [is] something you have to learn to live with.” In the Saints Alive in Jesus Newsletter, September 1986, Mr. Decker wrote: “Pray for my health, which has deteriorated badly. The day after Capstone, I came down with Legionnaires’ Disease . . . my body still had not recovered from the Scotland poisoning and the flesh was (and is) weak.” Although Decker was supposed to have been given a dose of arsenic poison which was several times stronger than that required to kill a person, he claimed that God had healed him.

A man who was with Ed Decker at the time of the alleged poisoning has called us from Scotland and expressed his disbelief in Decker’s story. Another man has been seriously investigating this matter and claims to have evidence that the whole story was hatched up. The charge that Mr. Decker has been making up sensational stories to achieve both notoriety and contributions is very serious indeed. If the “Scotland poisoning” really did occur, there should be some witnesses available or evidence in hospital or police records which would verify the story. If Mr. Decker has any evidence to that effect, we would be willing to print it in our next newsletter. If, however, he was not actually tested for arsenic poisoning, then there is no reason to believe the story.

Ed Decker has created a great deal of fear in the hearts of many people with his stories. Many Christians are afraid to come to Utah for fear they might lose their lives. We recently received a very strange call from Mr. Decker in which he claimed he had received an anonymous call from a man who told him he was part of an assassination team that received directions from a member of the First Presidency in the Mormon Church. According to Decker, the man said that three people had been marked for death. One of the authors (Jerald Tanner) was among that number and was to be killed with a bomb. Ed Decker indicated that the individual involved in the conspiracy later felt very bad about the matter and had decided to expose the plot.

We felt that it was very strange that this man—if he really existed—would call Ed Decker because Decker’s name was not even on the hit list. It seemed far more reasonable that he would have contacted the individuals whose lives were in danger. Mr. Decker claimed that the informant told him that his name was not on the list because he had become such a well-known public figure that they did not dare assassinate him for fear of the bad publicity. In any case, we found it very interesting that the Mormon leader who was supposed to oversee the assassination team was the very same man Decker himself had been strongly attacking in his newsletter. Although we can not prove it, we strongly suspect that this entire story, like the story concerning Apostle Ballard, was a figment of Ed Decker’s fertile imagination.

In the book, The Lucifer-God Doctrine, we present a great deal of evidence to show the unreliability of the work on the Mormon temple ceremony which has been published by Ed Decker, William Schnoebelen and James Spencer. Until the objections we have raised in this book have been specifically answered, no one should be deceived into believing that their work has been vindicated. The Lucifer-God Doctrine is available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry.
ANOTHER FREE BOOK!

A Free Copy of *Hearts Made Glad: The Charges of Intemperance Against Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet* will be sent with every $20 order.


**NOTE:** In order to receive this free book you must request it when you send your order!

Our good friend, LaMar Petersen, the author of *Hearts Made Glad*, has donated a large number of copies of his books to help our ministry. This book throws a great deal of light on Joseph Smith’s revelation known as the Word of Wisdom and Smith’s flippant attitude towards it. The Word of Wisdom forbids the use of alcoholic beverages, tobacco, tea and coffee. A Mormon who continues to break the Word of Wisdom is considered weak in the faith. Such disobedience to this revelation can bar a person from the temple. Incredible as it may seem, Mr. Petersen shows the if Joseph Smith the prophet were alive today, he would not be able to enter the temple because of his frequent use of alcoholic beverages—a practice which continued until the day of his death.

**SPECIAL OFFER ON HOFMANN BOOK**

We are very happy to report that Robert Lindsey’s book, *A Gathering of Saints* is now available in paper-back. We feel that this is the best book for the average reader on Mark Hofmann’s forgery of Mormon documents. Reg. $4.95—Special price if ordered before August 15, 1990: $3.95 (add $1.00 minimum postage.)

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**OTHER BOOKS**

*Ferguson’s Manuscript Unveiled.* A very significant paper relating to Book of Mormon archaeology and geography. Ferguson, who spent a great part of his life defending the Book of Mormon, was finally forced to conclude that it was “fictional.” Price: $3.00


*Basic Christianity,* by John R. Stott. A brief examination of the claims of Christ and our response to his call. Price: $3.95

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**Now Available on Cassette Tapes**

For a number of years we have been selling two important video tapes by Sandra Tanner. They are now available on audio tapes for a reasonable price.

*Sandra Tanner Tape No. 1.* Two lectures at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. A helpful overview for those who want to understand Mormonism. Price: $2.00

*Sandra Tanner Tape No. 2.* A one-hour interview on Mormonism with a Milwaukee television station. Includes personal comments about why the Tanners left Mormonism and their faith in Christ. Helpful for both LDS and non-LDS. Price: $2.00

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**UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY**

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As we were working on our new book, *Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony: 1842-1990*, we had a very unexpected thing happen: we were offered a transcript and a tape of the new 1990 revision of the “endowment ceremony.” We, therefore, decided to publish it in our new book together with the 1984 version and show all the changes which had been made in the ritual. This delayed publication for some time, but those who had ordered it and were waiting for their copies were pleasantly surprised when they received the final product. One man, who had asked for a number of copies, made this comment in a letter:

Thank you very much for the copies of your latest book. As ever, your work is excellent! A day or two before the copies arrived I was browsing through *3,913 Changes in the Book of Mormon* and had the thought that it would be nice to see the endowment changes shown in a like manner. Needless to say, I was pleasantly surprised to find that you did exactly that. Everyone with whom I have shared the book is favorably impressed. One Christian family I know is sharing it with another family who is being given the missionary discussions. I’m sure they’ll find it an eye opener. I recommended they share it with the missionaries. I ran into some missionaries myself and brought up that topic, and was surprised to find that one of the elders was new, and had only gone through the 1990 version. He thought I was lying about the old one, because not even his parents told him what had been changed. His companion confirmed what I said, and the new Elder was obviously distressed with the whole issue. One of the last things he said was something like “I believe the Church is true and that the G. A.’s [General Authorities—i.e., the highest leaders of the church] are prophets, but I can’t see God changing the temple ceremony that much, unless it was wrong to begin with.”


The changes which were made in the temple ceremony have stirred up a controversy within the Mormon Church. A number of Mormons who had talked to the news media concerning the changes were called in for questioning. A recent issue of the liberal Mormon magazine, *Sunstone*, reported the following:

Last spring at the April general priesthood meeting when President Gordon B. Hinckley counseled the men in the Church not to discuss the temple ordinances outside of the temple, few realized that his comments were a prelude to that soon-to-be-released new temple film which included changes in the ceremony and a streamlined narrative.

It soon became obvious that Church leaders did not welcome individual Saints commenting to the press about the changes were called in for questioning. A recent issue of the liberal Mormon magazine, *Sunstone*, reported the following:

(Mail orders add 10% — minimum postage $1.00)

*Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony: 1842-1990*, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Contains the actual text of the 1990 revision of the highly secret endowment ritual and other accounts of the ceremony dating back to 1846. Also shows all of the serious changes made in the ceremony in 1990. Price: $5.00

*The Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Mormon*, by Wesley P. Walters. Shows many errors Joseph Smith made in the Book of Mormon and that he was plagiarizing the King James Version of the Bible rather than translating ancient gold plates. Price: $7.00

*Serious Charges Against the Tanners*, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. A response to some weighty accusations that have recently been made. Price: $1.00

Extra Newsletters Free at the Bookstore – By Mail: 5 for $1.00 - 25 for $3.00
Many were talked to by their bishops or stake presidents, some met with general authorities. With two exceptions, all reported that their meetings were pleasant and non-threatening . . .

As word of the questioning spread, some were disturbed at what appeared to be an inquisitional approach by Church leaders toward well-meaning members. Others expressed dismay that members would break their temple covenants by speaking to the press. . . . private conversations disputed just exactly what was covenanted in the temple: whether it was simply not to reveal specific covenants or not to talk about anything in the temple ceremony. . . .

One man’s experience was more than a “visit.” In a meeting with all three seventies in his area presidency, Ross Peterson [co-editor of Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought] was questioned at length about his comments and loyalty to the Church. The presidency referred to clippings from a thick Church file which had been gathered on him since his days in college. As a result of the questioning, Peterson’s temple recommend was taken and further action was intimated if he continued to speak or write on the temple. Later, after he wrote a protest and others petitioned Church leaders, his recommend was restored.

In a similar scene in Cleveland, Ohio, Keith Norman’s bishop reluctantly told him that he had been instructed to deny Norman a temple recommend for one year, after which he could have a recommend if he had repented. When Norman asked of what he needed to repent, his bishop replied, “I don’t know.”

In the end, many are troubled by the systematic censoring of believing members and undoubtedly this episode will be alluded to for years in discussions about the role and prerogatives of the Church and its members. (Sunstone, June 1990, pp. 59, 61)

SERIOUS CHANGES

Since the temple ceremony was supposed to have been given by revelation to the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith, some members of the church, like the young missionary quoted above, are very disturbed that the current church leaders would make changes in the sacred ritual. Although some Mormon apologists would have us believe that the changes were really very minor or were only made so the ceremony could be shortened, the evidence we present in Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony clearly demonstrates that many of the changes were major and affect very important Mormon teachings.

In our last newsletter we noted that in the 1990 version of the temple ceremony the Mormon leaders removed the “penalties” for revealing the secrets. These penalties had previously been considered “most sacred.” We have always felt that these penalties were not compatible with Christian teachings and have strongly opposed them in print for over twenty years.

The evidence shows that the wording with regard to the penalties was originally very strong, but has been altered over the years. In the book, Temple Mormonism, published in 1931, page 18, we find this information concerning the First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood:

The left arm is here placed at the square, palm to the front, the right hand and arm raised to the neck, holding the palm downwards and thumb under the right ear.

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

Sign—In executing the sign of the penalty, the right hand palm down, is drawn sharply across the throat, then dropped from the square to the side.

The bloody nature of this and other oaths in the temple endowment has been verified by an abundance of testimony (see Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony, pp. 16-26). Some time in the first half of the 20th century, however, a major change was made concerning the penalties in the endowment ceremony. For example, those who received the “First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood” no longer agreed to have their throats “cut from ear to ear” and their “tongues torn out by their roots” if they revealed the First Token. Nevertheless, they were still instructed to draw their thumbs across their throats to show the penalty. In the 1984 account of the ritual, which we have published in our new book, pages 77-79, the reader can see how the wording was modified to remove the harsh language regarding the cutting of the throat and the tearing out of the tongue:

. . . we desire to impress upon your minds the sacred character of the First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood, with its accompanying name, sign and penalty, as well as that of all other tokens of the Holy Priesthood, with their names, signs and penalties . . . . They are most sacred and are guarded by solemn covenants and obligations of secrecy to the effect that under no condition, even at the peril of your life, will you ever divulge them, except at a certain place that will be shown you hereafter. The representation of the execution of the penalties indicates different ways in which life may be taken. . . . We give unto you the First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood . . .

The sign is made by bringing the right arm to the square, the palm of the hand to the front, the fingers close together, and the thumb extended. . . . This is the sign. The Execution of the Penalty is represented by placing the thumb under the left ear, the palm of the hand down, and by drawing the thumb quickly across the throat, to the right ear, and dropping the hand to the side. . . .

Now, repeat in your mind after me the words of the covenant, at the same time representing the execution of the penalty.

I, ______, think of the New Name, covenant that I will never reveal the First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood, with its accompanying name, sign and penalty. Rather than do so, I would suffer my life to be taken.

In the new 1990 version of the temple ceremony all mention of penalties has been completely removed. There is nothing said about the thumb being drawn across the throat, and nothing is mentioned concerning “ways in which life may be taken”:

. . . we desire to impress upon your minds the sacred character of the First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood, with its accompanying name and sign, as well as that of all other tokens of theHoly Priesthood, with their names and signs . . . . They are most sacred, and are guarded by solemn covenants and obligations made in the presence of God, angels and these witnesses to hold them sacred and under no condition will you ever divulge them, except at a certain place in the temple that will be shown you. . . . we give unto you the First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood. . . . The sign is made by bringing the right arm to the square, the palm of the hand to the front, the fingers close together, and the thumb extended. This is the sign. . . .
Now, repeat in your mind after me the words of the covenant.

I, ______, think of the New Name, covenant before God, angels, and these witnesses, that I will never reveal the First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood, with its accompanying name and sign. (1990 version of the temple ceremony, as published in Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony, p. 122)

There were two other portions of the temple ceremony which were altered to remove all references to the penalties which were obviously vestiges of the bloody oaths Joseph Smith borrowed from Freemasonry (see Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony, pages 86, 87 and 89).

In our last newsletter we reported the removal of the “Five Points of Fellowship” from the Mormon temple ceremony. Although we had strong evidence that this part of the ritual had been deleted, we did not know exactly what happened in its place. Now that we have the transcript of the 1990 ceremony, we can clearly understand the change that has taken place.

The Five Points of Fellowship was previously an extremely important part of the temple ceremony. It was only “upon the Five Points of Fellowship through the veil” that one could receive the name of the Second Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood, The Patriarchal Grip or Sure Sign of the Nail. This is a highly secret “name”—actually a thirty-six word saying—which only the “Lord” who was behind the veil could give to those who were receiving their endowments. Mormons believe that after they die they will have to give this secret name back to the Lord before he will allow them to pass through the veil into his Presence.

In the book, Temple Mormonism, page 22, the Five Points of Fellowship were described as follows: “The five points of fellowship are given by putting the inside of the right foot to the inside of the Lord’s, the inside of your knee to his, laying your breast close to his, your left hands on each other’s backs, and each one putting his mouth to the other’s ear . . . .” Only when the Lord and the recipient were embracing in this position could the secret name be whispered.

Since the revision of the ceremony in 1990, those who participate in the ritual no longer embrace on the Five Points of Fellowship. They are, in fact, only required to place “left arms . . . upon right shoulders.” They do not put their feet and knees together and all the wording concerning the Five Points of Fellowship has been completely deleted. The words “Five Points of Fellowship” previously appeared in five different places in the ritual—the “Lord” spoke of the “Five Points of Fellowship” twice; “Peter” referred to the “Five Points of Fellowship” twice, and the recipient mentioned them once. Below is a comparison of a portion of the 1984 version with the new revised version:

Lord: You shall receive it upon the Five Points Of Fellowship through the Veil.
(The Officiator demonstrates the Five Points of Fellowship through the Veil with the temple worker who represents the Lord, as each point is mentioned.)

Peter: The Five Points of Fellowship are “inside of right foot by the side of right foot, knee to knee, breast to breast, hand to back, and mouth to ear.” The Lord then gives the name of this token, and asks:

Lord: What is that?
Peter: The Second Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood, the Patriarchal Grip or Sure Sign of the Nail.

Lord: Has it a name?
Peter: It has.

Lord: Will you give it to me?
Peter: I will, upon the Five Points of Fellowship through the Veil. (Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony, pp. 96-97)

The reader will notice that in the 1990 revised version (shown below) all references to the Five Points of Fellowship have been deleted:

Lord: You shall receive it through the Veil.
Peter: It is received as left arms are placed upon right shoulders through the Veil.

(The Officiator places his left arm through the mark of the compass and rests his hand on the right shoulder of the Lord, as the Lord places His left arm through the mark of the square and rests his hand on the right shoulder of the Officiator. The right hands remain clasped in the Patriarchal Grip.)

Peter: The Lord then gives the name of this token, and asks:

Lord: What is that?
Peter: The Second Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood, the Patriarchal Grip or Sure Sign of the Nail.

Lord: Has it a name?
Peter: It has.

Lord: Will you give it to me?
Peter: I will, through the Veil.

(Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony, p. 138)

The reader will notice that in the 1990 revised version all references to the Five Points of Fellowship have been deleted.

Regardless of the reason for the change, it raises serious questions concerning the inspiration of church officials. If a person was previously compelled to receive the secret information necessary to enter heaven on the Five Points of Fellowship, how can the church leaders now by-pass God’s revealed way which was supposed to have been given to the prophet Joseph Smith? Kim Sue Lia Perkes revealed that, “a former Mormon familiar with the changes said the ceremony’s climax has been eliminated. Removal of that part of the ritual, he said, is the equivalent of taking the Eucharist out of the Roman Catholic Mass.

Not all Mormons are happy with the ceremony changes. “I certainly have Mormon friends who will see it as a step toward apostasy and an accommodation to the world,” said one practicing Mormon in Utah. (Arizona Republic, April 28, 1990)

One very important change in the temple ceremony is the removal of a portion of the ceremony in which the Devil hired a Christian minister to preach the “orthodox religion” to the people. This portion of the ceremony made it clear that in the eyes of the Mormon leaders the orthodox Christian religion was the Devil’s religion. In the 1984 version of the temple ritual, the Devil tells the minister that if “you will preach your orthodox religion to these people, and convert them, I will pay you well.” This, of course, led the Mormon people to believe that Christian ministers were really working for the Devil. In Mormonism, Magic and Masonry, page 66, we wrote: “... the temple ritual tries to link Christians and ministers of other churches to the Devil’s work. We feel that this is one of the most objectionable things about the ceremony, and we do not feel that a Christian would want to give any support to this type of thing.” Many other Christians protested against this part of the ceremony, and a great deal of pressure has been put on the Mormon leaders to change it.

In the new version all of the material making fun of both Protestants and Catholics has been completely eliminated. In Appendix B of Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony, we demonstrated that over 700 words were deleted and other words changed to remove the attack on other churches!

Unfortunately, the removal of the portion of the temple ceremony which implies that Christian ministers are working for the Devil does not really solve the problem. The Mormon
Church still retains Joseph Smith’s story of the First Vision in the *Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith—History, verses 18-19. In this account, Joseph Smith asserted that Jesus himself told him that all other churches were wrong:

My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right. . . . I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt . . .

**OATH OF OBEDIENCE**

The Mormon leaders teach that those who receive their endowments and are married in the temple can become Gods. In a speech published in *The Ensign*, Nov. 1975, page 80, Spencer W. Kimball, the twelfth prophet of the LDS Church, made some comments which were broadcast to those men serving in the priesthood of the church: “Brethren, 225,000 of you are here tonight. I suppose 225,000 of you may become gods.”

Because of their belief that God is only an exalted man, Mormon leaders teach that he had a mother as well as a wife. Although Mormons do not worship God’s wife, they teach that she is their “Eternal Mother.” Apostle Bruce R. McConkie explained the doctrine:

Implicit in the Christian verity that all men are the spirit children of an Eternal Father is the usually unspoken truth that they are also the offspring of an Eternal Mother. . . .

This doctrine that there is a mother in Heaven was affirmed in plainness by the First Presidency of the Church . . . they said that “man, as a spirit was begotten and born of heavenly parents, and reared to maturity in the eternal mansions of the Father . . . all men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity. (*Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, p. 516)

The Mormon doctrine of “pre-existence” is very important to those who are married in the temple for time and all eternity. Like the Gods who received their endowments eons ago, those who go through the temple today and are accounted worthy to become Gods and Goddesses will also give birth to spirit children throughout all eternity. These spirits will eventually take bodies on other worlds. In *The Gospel Through the Ages*, 1958, page 120, Milton R. Hunter, who was a member of the Mormon Church’s First Council of the Seventy, wrote:

. . . Joseph explained . . . that the Gods were to be parents of spirit children just as our Heavenly Father and Mother were the parents of the people of this earth.

Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt made it clear that every God would be the father of billions of children. He estimated that “seventy thousand million [i.e., 70 billion] sons and daughters were born in Heaven” to our Heavenly Father. He also stated:

Each God, through his wife or wives, raises up a numerous family of sons and daughters . . . each father and mother will be in a condition to multiply forever. As soon as each God has begotten many millions of male and female spirits . . . he, in connection with his sons, organizes a new world . . . where he sends both the male and female spirits to inhabit tabernacles of flesh and bones. . . . The inhabitants of each world are required to reverence, adore, and worship their own personal father who dwells in the Heaven which they formerly inhabited. (*The Seer*, March 1853, p. 37)

The description given by Mormon leaders of the function of a woman who advances to Godhood reminds us of the role played by a queen bee. The queen bee, of course, produces swarms of offspring—as many as 2,500 a day! Her main purpose appears to be to produce more bees. Apostle Bruce R. McConkie made it very plain that spirit children are literally born to the Eternal Father and Mother:

Our spirit bodies had their beginning in pre-existence when we were born as the spirit children of God our Father. Through that birth process spirit element was organized into intelligent entities. (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 750)

Many Mormon women have serious reservations about the concept of having billions of spirit children every time their husbands decide to serve additional worlds. In any case, Mormon Church leaders proclaim that “Godhood is not for men only, it is for men and women together” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 844). While at first glance it appears that this would make men and women equal, a more careful examination of the doctrine reveals just the opposite. According to Mormon theology, church members follow the same plan of eternal progression as God the Father. Now, if the “Eternal Mother” had really gained equality with her husband, we would expect the Mormons to pray to her. Apostle Orson Pratt, however, made it plain that the Eternal Mother’s Godhood is rather insignificant when it is compared to her husband’s power. She, in fact, is to be in “the most perfect obedience” to her “great head”:

But if we have a heavenly Mother as well as a heavenly Father, is it not right that we should worship the Mother of our spirits as well as the Father? No; for the Father of our spirits is at the head of His household, and His wives and children are required to yield the most perfect obedience to their great Head. (*The Seer*, p. 159)

It would appear, then, that in Mormon theology the claim that a woman can obtain “Godhood” amounts to very little. Like the present “Heavenly Mother,” she will be required to “yield the most perfect obedience” to her “great Head”—i.e., her husband, while she continues to give birth to “many millions” of spirit children throughout all eternity. Mormon theology would seem to teach that women who enter into “Godhood” will find themselves serving their own husbands in eternity rather than the God of the Bible. The more one studies the church’s teaching concerning the Mother God, the more obvious it becomes that women are considered to be spiritually inferior in Mormon theology. Since the church changed the anti-black doctrine, many Mormon women have come to see that they are the ones who will be “second class” citizens in heaven. Mormon leaders used to explain that blacks could not hold the priesthood because they were not valiant in the pre-existence, but no reason has been given for the inferiority of women in Mormon theology.

President Brigham Young once stated: “The man is the head and God of the woman, but let him act like a God in virtuous principles . . .” (*Sermon of Brigham Young*, as quoted in *Journals of John D. Lee*, 1846-47 and 1859, edited by Charles Kelly, 1938, p. 81) The subservient role of women in the Mormon temple ceremony is evident when they come to the veil in the temple. A man representing Elohim (God the Father) brings the men through the veil into the Celestial Kingdom. The women, on the other hand, are brought through by their husbands. This part of the ceremony seems to be an attempt to demonstrate that “man is the head and God of the woman.” In the account of the temple ritual printed in *Hand-Book on Mormonism*, 1882, p. 30, we read that the official who performs the wedding ceremony “tells the man that he must look to God, but the woman must look to her husband as her God, for if he lives in his religion, the spirit of God will be in him, and she must therefore yield him unquestioning obedience, for he is as a God unto her . . .” On page 28 of the same book, we read of an “oath of obedience”:
“The women then took the oath of obedience to their husbands, having to look up to them as their gods. It is not possible for a woman to go to Christ, except through her husband.”

In his article published in 1987, David John Buerger noted that “the endowment ceremony still depicts women as subservient to men, not as equals in relating to God. . . . he is the one who acts as intermediary to God . . .” (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Winter 1987, p. 68). In the 1984 version of the temple ceremony, which is published in Appendix A of Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony, pages 75-76, the men “covenant and promise” that they will “obey the law of God.” The women, however, agree to obey the law of their husbands:

Elohim: We will put the sisters under covenant to obey the law of their husbands. Sisters, arise.

(Female patrons stand as instructed.)

Elohim: Each of you bring your right arm to the square. You and each of you solemnly covenant and promise before God, angels and these witnesses at this altar that you will each observe and keep the law of your husband, and abide by his counsel in righteousness. Each of you bow your head and say yes.

Women: Yes.

Since the church leaders revised the endowment ceremony on April 10, 1990, women “no longer must vow to obey their husbands” (Salt Lake Tribune, April 29, 1990). The new ceremony reads as follows (see Appendix B of Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony, p. 120):

Elohim: We will put each sister under covenant to obey the Law of the Lord, and to hearken to the counsel of her husband, as her husband hearkens unto the counsel of the Father. Sisters, arise.

(Female patrons stand as instructed.)

Elohim: Each of you bring your right arm to the square. You and each of you solemnly covenant and promise before God, angels, and these witnesses at this altar that you will each observe and keep the Law of the Lord, and hearken to the counsel of your husband as he hearkens to the counsel of the Father. Each of you bow your head and say “yes.”

Women: Yes.

The reader will notice that the words “the Law of their husbands” was changed to “the Law of the Lord,” and the words “the law of your husbands” have been altered to read, “the Law of the Lord.” It is also interesting to note some changes a few paragraphs earlier in the ceremony. In one place in the 1984 version, Elohim tells Adam that Eve “will obey your law in the Lord . . .” These words have been modified to, “will obey the Law of the Lord . . .” In the 1984 version, the following paragraph reads: “Eve: Adam I now covenant to obey your law as you obey our Father.” In the 1990 revision this has been changed to read: “Eve: Adam, I now covenant to obey the Law of the Lord, and to hearken to your counsel as you hearken unto Father.”

Another very interesting change concerning women occurs just before the “Law of Obedience.” In the 1984 version we are told of the punishment which is to be inflicted upon both Adam and Eve because of their transgression:

Elohim: Eve, because thou hast hearkened to the voice of Satan and hast partaken of the forbidden fruit, and given unto Adam, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children. Nevertheless, thou mayest be preserved in child-bearing. Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee in righteousness.

Adam, because thou has hearkened unto the voice of thy wife and hast partaken of the forbidden fruit, the earth shall be cursed for thy sake. Instead of producing fruits and flowers spontaneously, it shall bring forth thorns, thistles, briars, and noxious weeds to afflict and torment man. And by the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread all the days of thy life, for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

In the 1990 revision, Eve’s punishment is completely omitted. All of the words which we have emphasized above in bold type were completely deleted:

Elohim: Adam, because thou has partaken of the forbidden fruit, the earth shall be cursed for thy sake. Instead of producing fruits and flowers spontaneously, it shall bring forth thorns, thistles, briars, and noxious weeds to afflict and torment man. And by the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread all the days of thy life, for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

It is very interesting to note that although the Lord’s words to Eve have been entirely omitted (compare Genesis 3:16), Adam is still punished with the same curse found in Genesis 3:17-19. This revision of the temple ceremony cannot be supported from the revelations of Joseph Smith (see Smith’s Inspired Version of the Bible and the Pearl of Great Price, Moses 4:22). In the 1984 version of the endowment, Eve was often overlooked. In the new version her name has been added in twenty-two places.

**OTHER RECENT CHANGES**

Another important change has been made in the sign for the Second Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood. In the 1984 version of the endowment ceremony, as printed in Appendix A of Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony, page 94, we find this:

The sign is made by raising both hands high above the head (Officiator demonstrates.), and while lowering the hands repeating aloud the words:

Pay Lay Ale
Pay Lay Ale
Pay Lay Ale

As early as 1969 we pointed out a problem with this:

. . . there seems to have been a change made in this part of the ceremony, for the Salt Lake Tribune, February 12, 1906, gave the words as “Pale, Ale, Ale,” and Temple Mormonism used the words “Pale, Hale, Hale.” (The Mormon Kingdom, vol. 1, p. 138)

However this may be, in another portion of the temple ceremony, it is explained that “Pay Lay Ale” means “Oh God, hear the words of my mouth!”

A number of years ago a Mormon intellectual informed us that it was his understanding that one of the top scholars in the church had pointed out to church authorities that the words pay lay ale or pe le el could be translated from the Hebrew language as “mouth to God.” This, of course, could be considered to be a condensed version of “Oh God, hear the words of my mouth!” That this translation is plausible can be confirmed by consulting Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary, word #6310—“peh . . . the mouth.” The Hebrew letter Lamed (transliterated in English as l) is often added on the front of words and means “to, at, for” (Hebrew Primer and Grammar, by C. P. Fagnani and A. B. Davidson, page 50).
of Abraham, his son, Larry Ferguson, continues to maintain that he was a true believer.

After Thomas Stuart Ferguson passed away in 1983, Larry Ferguson decided that his father’s book, One Fold and One Shepherd, a work which was written before he lost his testimony, should be revised and republished to the world. He talked Dr. Bruce W. Warren, of Brigham Young University, into working on the revision, and in 1987 it was published under the title, The Messiah in Ancient America. In the Preface, page xiii, Dr. Warren wrote the following: “The Ferguson family wanted the new book to be a tribute to Thomas Stuart Ferguson and his abiding testimony of the Book of Mormon and the divinity of the Messiah, Jesus the Christ.” Warren also revealed that “the driving force behind the book was Larry Ferguson . . .”

Fortunately, Stan Larson, one of the top scholars in the Mormon Church, has made a serious study concerning Thomas Stuart Ferguson’s beliefs during the last years of his life and has reached the same conclusion that we came to—i.e., Ferguson was not a believer in the Book of Mormon nor in the divine authenticity of the Mormon Church. Larson has written a 38-page article concerning this matter entitled, “The Odyssey of Thomas Stuart Ferguson,” which is published in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1990.

Stan Larson has gathered photocopies of many letters written by Thomas Stuart Ferguson which are now available to researchers at the University of Utah in the H. Michael Marquardt Collection, Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library. Although Larson could find a great deal of evidence in letters Ferguson wrote after 1970 that he had completely lost faith in Joseph Smith and the historicity of the Book of Mormon, he found no letters written during this period which supported the divine claims of Mormonism. He, in fact, noted:

When the Thomas Stuart Ferguson papers arrived at the Lee Library at Brigham Young University after his death, they contained absolutely no letters after 1967 that indicate his views on the Book of Mormon, the Book of Abraham, or Joseph Smith. . . . As far as the present collection at BYU is concerned, the fifteen-year period before his death is a blank. In contrast with his publication record in the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s, Ferguson published no new articles or books after 1967, nor did he reprint any of his previous work. If it were not for letters he wrote [i.e., the letters in the Marquardt Collection at the University of Utah], the last years of his life would remain unknown. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1990, pp. 71-72)

In addition to the letters which clearly show Ferguson’s unbelief, Larson has brought to light some extremely important extracts from the journal of Mormon scholar, Ronald Barney, which demonstrate conclusively that just before his death, Ferguson was working on research which he felt discredited Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. We will have more to say about this matter later in this article.

Thomas Stuart Ferguson, who was born in Pocatello, Idaho, on May 21, 1915, devoted a great deal of his life trying to prove the Book of Mormon by archaeology and was considered by the Mormon people as a great defender of the faith. He wrote at least three books on the subject. His book, One Fold and One Shepherd, was recommended to one of the editors of this newsletter as containing the ultimate case for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. On the jacket of that book (1962 edition), we find this information about Ferguson:

Thomas Stuart Ferguson, 47, President of the New World Archaeological Foundation, is a distinguished student of the

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**Ferguson’s Rejection of the Book of Mormon Verified**

In our book, Ferguson’s Manuscript Unveiled, we presented a great deal of evidence showing that the noted Mormon scholar, Thomas Stuart Ferguson, became a complete unbeliever in the Book of Mormon during the last 12 or 13 years of his life. Notwithstanding the fact that there is a collection of letters to a number of different people in which Ferguson declared his disbelief in Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon and the Book
Joseph Smith announced, in print (History of the Church, Vol. II, page 236), that “one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt . . .”. Since 4 scholars, who have established that they can read Egyptian, say that the manuscripts deal with neither Abraham nor Joseph—and since the 4 reputable men tell us exactly what the manuscripts do say—I must conclude that Joseph Smith had not the remotest skill in things Egyptian-hieroglyphics. To my surprise, one of the highest officials in the Mormon Church agreed with that conclusion when I made that very statement to him on Dec. 4, 1970—privately in one-to-one conversation.

The attempts, including Nibley’s, to explain away and dodge the trap into which Joseph Smith fell when he had the audacity to translate the Chandler texts, and keep the original Egyptian texts around, are absurd, in my view. . . .

Of course the dodge as to the Book of Abraham must be:

“We DON’T HAVE THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT FROM WHICH THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM WAS TRANSLATED. I conclude that we do have it and have translations of it.” (Letter by Thomas Stuart Ferguson, dated March 13, 1971)

The first indication we had that Mr. Ferguson was losing his faith in Mormonism was just after Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Papyri were rediscovered. In 1968 he wrote us a letter saying that we were “doing a great thing—getting out some truth on the Book of Abraham.” This was a significant statement since we were presenting evidence that the Book of Abraham was not a correct translation of the papyri. Later we heard a rumor that he had given up Joseph Smith’s Book of Abraham, but this hardly prepared us for his visit on December 2, 1970. At that time, Mr. Ferguson told us frankly that he had not only given up the Book of Abraham, but that he had come to the conclusion that Joseph Smith was not a prophet and that Mormonism was not true. Ferguson felt that our work was important and that it should be subsidized. He told us that he had spent twenty-five years trying to prove Mormonism, but had finally come to the conclusion that all his work in this regard had been in vain. He said that his training in law had taught him how to weigh evidence and that the case against Joseph Smith was absolutely devastating and could not be explained away.

He referred to Dr. Hugh Nibley’s defense of the Book of Abraham as “nonsense,” and told us that just before coming to visit us he had discussed the Book of Abraham with Hugh B. Brown (Brown served as a member of the First Presidency under President David O. McKay). According to Mr. Ferguson, Apostle Brown had also come to the conclusion that the Book of Abraham was false and was in favor of the church giving it up. A few years later Hugh B. Brown said he could “not recall” making the statements Thomas Stuart Ferguson attributed to him. Ferguson, however, was apparently referring to the same incident in the letter of March 13, 1971, when he stated: “I must conclude that Joseph Smith had not the remotest skill in things Egyptian-hieroglyphics. To my surprise one of the highest officials in the Mormon Church agreed with that conclusion . . . privately in one-to-one conversation.” When Ferguson visited with us he seemed to be absolutely convinced that Brown did not believe the Book of Abraham.

In any case, Ferguson found himself faced with a dilemma, for the Mormon Church had just given him a large grant ($100,000 or more) to carry on the research of the New World Archaeological Foundation. He felt, however, that this foundation was doing legitimate archaeological work, and therefore he intended to continue the research. He realized that the organization he had founded to establish the authenticity of

earliest high civilizations of the New World. He, with Dr. A. V. Kidder, dean of Central American archaeologists, first planned the New World Archaeological Foundation in 1952 . . . He raised $225,000 for the field work, incorporated the Foundation (being an attorney), assisted in the initial explorations in Central America and Mexico and has actively directed the affairs of the Foundation since its inception.

The Mormon Church provided hundreds of thousands of dollars to Ferguson’s New World Archaeological Foundation in the hope that it would find evidence supporting the Book of Mormon. This organization was eventually “attached to and administered through BYU.”

From all that we can learn, Thomas Stuart Ferguson was a dedicated believer in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon at the time he founded the New World Archaeological Foundation. He really believed that archaeology would prove the Book of Mormon. For a number of years he was very excited about the progress of the work and seemed certain that the Book of Mormon would be vindicated soon. In his book, One Fold and One Shepherd, page 263, he stated: “The important thing now is to continue the digging at an accelerated pace in order to find more inscriptions dating to Book-of-Mormon times. Eventually we should find decipherable inscriptions . . . referring to some unique person, place or event in the Book of Mormon.” In 1962 Mr. Ferguson said that “Powerful evidences sustaining the book are accumulating.”

Although many important archaeological discoveries were made, the evidence he had desired to find to support the Book of Mormon did not turn up. At first it had all seemed so simple; since the Book of Mormon told when the Nephites were in Mesoamerica, all one had to do was find archaeological sites that dated to the period and the Book of Mormon would be established by the evidence. The fact that archaeological research failed to provide the confirmation which Mr. Ferguson expected to find must have weighed very heavily on his mind. The most serious blow to Ferguson’s faith, however, came just after Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Papyri were rediscovered in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This collection, which had been lost for many years, contained the very papyrus from which Joseph Smith “translated” the Book of Abraham. The Book of Abraham is published in the Pearl of Great Price, one of the four standard works of the Mormon Church.

After Mr. Ferguson obtained photographs of the papyrus fragments, he consulted Professors Lutz and Lesko of the University of California. Both these Egyptologists agreed that the papyrus Joseph Smith claimed was the Book of Abraham was in reality the Book of Breathings, an Egyptian funerary text made for a man by the name of Hor (Horus). Ferguson learned that this papyrus had nothing at all to do with the patriarch Abraham or his religion. It was in its entirety a pagan text filled with the names of Egyptian gods and goddesses.

Thomas Stuart Ferguson was shaken to the core by this discovery. When the church’s noted apologist, Dr. Hugh Nibley, began defending the Book of Abraham, Mr. Ferguson wrote a letter to another member of the church in which he stated:

Nibley’s . . . articles on the Book of Abraham aren’t worth a tinker—first, because he is not impartial, being the commissioned and paid defender of the faith. Second, because he could not, he dared not, he did not, face the true issue: “Could Joseph Smith translate Egyptian?” . . . it is perfectly obvious that we now have the original [sic] manuscript material used by Jos. Smith in working up the Book of Abraham. . . .
the Book of Mormon was now actually disproving the Book of Mormon by its failure to turn up anything concerning a Christian culture existing in Mesoamerica prior to the time of Columbus.

A few months after Thomas Stuart Ferguson revealed to us that he had come to the conclusion that the Book of Mormon was a spurious production, he wrote us a letter in which he said:

“I will be in SLC in June—and if so, I’ll call on you again. I enjoyed my visit with you . . . I certainly admire you for the battle you are waging—virtually single handed” (Letter dated March 13, 1971). On a number of occasions when people wrote to him, Mr. Ferguson recommended that they read our publications on Mormonism.

Unfortunately, Thomas Stewart Ferguson seems to have had a very difficult time communicating his loss of faith to those he was close to. He told us, for instance, that he did not dare tell one of his sons the truth about the Book of Mormon because the shock would cause him too much emotional trauma. (Although we cannot prove it, we suspect that this may have been Larry Ferguson). Ferguson felt that he may have to put the matter off until the situation changed. While he no longer believed in the divinity authenticity of the Book of Mormon, he continued to attend the Mormon Church.

In a letter to James Still, dated December 3, 1979, Mr. Ferguson frankly stated: “I lost faith in Joseph Smith as one having a pipeline to deity—and have decided that there has never been a pipeline to deity—with any man.” Since he had many friends and members of his family in Mormonism and apparently felt comfortable there, he decided to remain in the church. In the same letter Ferguson stated that he still attended Mormon meetings, “sing in the choir and enjoy my friendships in the Church. In my opinion it is the best fraternity that has come to my attention . . . .” With regard to the origin of the Book of Mormon, Mr. Ferguson wrote: “I give Joseph Smith credit as an innovator and as a smart fellow. . . . I think that Joseph Smith may have had Ixtilxochitl and View of the Hebrews as an innovator and as a smart fellow. . . . I think that Joseph Smith may have had Ixtılxochitl and View of the Hebrews from which to work.”

In 1975 Thomas Stuart Ferguson finally mustered up his courage and prepared a 29-page paper in response to papers written by Mormon apologists John Sorenson and Garth Norman. It was entitled, Written Symposium on Book-of-Mormon Geography: Response of Thomas S. Ferguson to the Norman & Sorenson Papers. (We have published Ferguson’s paper in our book, Ferguson’s Manuscript Unveiled.) In this response, page 4, Mr. Ferguson wrote: “With all of these great efforts, it cannot be established factually that anyone, from Joseph Smith to the present day, has put his finger on a single point of terrain that was a Book-of-Mormon geographical place. And the hemisphere has been pretty well checked out by competent people. Thousands of sites have been excavated.” Ferguson pointed out in his paper that the text of the Book of Mormon makes it very clear that certain items should be found in archaeological excavations and that these items are not present in the sites proposed. On page 29 he concluded by saying: “I’m afraid that up to this point, I must agree with Dee Green, who has told us that to date there is no Book-of-Mormon geography. I, for one, would be happy if Dee were wrong.”

In a letter to Mr. & Mrs. H. W. Lawrence, dated February 20, 1976, Thomas Stuart Ferguson made very plain the reason why there is “no Book-of-Mormon geography”: “Herewith is a copy of my recent (1975) paper on Book of Mormon matters. . . . The real implication of the paper is that you can’t set Book of Mormon geography down anywhere—because it is fictional and will never meet the requirements of the dirt-archeology. I should say—what is in the ground will never conform to what is in the book.”

As we indicated earlier, Stan Larson, who studied the matter at great length, reached the same conclusion we did with regard to Thomas Stuart Ferguson’s loss of faith. He stated:

In the middle years of his career, he organized archaeological reconnaissance and fieldwork in the area of Mesoamerica. But in the last years of his career, he concluded that the archaeological evidence did not substantiate the Book of Mormon, and so he reduced (in his mind) the geography of the book to nothing at all in the real world. . . . He had lived his life as a Latter-day Saint expecting to be the instrument of verification, believing that he would find the physical proof that would not only justify his faith in the Book of Mormon but that would convince the world as well. . . . In the end, he was theologically shipwrecked less by his failure to find persuasive archaeological support for the Book of Mormon than by his encounter with the translations of the newly discovered Joseph Smith Egyptian papyri. But though his ship ran aground and floundered, it did not sink, and he managed to salvage what he felt were worthwhile essentials. . . .

Ferguson’s excitement about authenticating the Book of Abraham turned into a nightmare. His former belief system could not withstand the shock of this disillusionment. Not only did Ferguson’s views of the Book of Abraham radically change, but also, domino-like, his belief in the prophetic status of Joseph Smith and the historicity of the Book of Mormon.

Ferguson and his wife, June, had a daughter, Sandra, and a son, Larry, and they had a third child, Thomas, who was born in 1956. Ferguson’s excitement about authenticating the Book of Abraham turned into a nightmare. His former belief system could not withstand the shock of this disillusionment. Not only did Ferguson’s views of the Book of Abraham radically change, but also, domino-like, his belief in the prophetic status of Joseph Smith and the historicity of the Book of Mormon.

Early in December 1970 . . . Ferguson bared his soul to people at opposing ends of the theological spectrum—on the one hand, the liberal apostle, Hugh B. Brown, and on the other hand, the anti-Mormons, Jerald and Sandra Tanner.

Ferguson’s skepticism became public a year and eight months later when the Tanners published an account of his visit with them in the revised edition of Mormonism: Shadow or Reality.

Ferguson never issued any kind of retraction or revision to this account. He frankly discussed his new views in answer both to letters sent to him and to direct questions. . . . Tom Ferguson, in a sense, identified himself as a closet doubter—though one who was willing to write letters from his closet. . . . Ferguson was a man of contrasts. His early enthusiasm for the Book of Mormon . . . changed in the last decade and a half of his life into a skeptical view that placed the source of all Book of Mormon activities in the creative mind of Joseph Smith. After many years of archaeological investigations, Ferguson, disappointed by not finding the long-hoped-for confirmation of the Book of Mormon, concluded that the book was ‘fictional’ and that “what is in the ground will never conform to what is in the book” (Ferguson 1976b). (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1990, pp. 57, 71-73, 85-86)

As we indicated earlier, Stan Larson brought to light some extremely important material from the journal of Ronald O. Barney, Senior Archivist at the Mormon Church Historical Department. Barney had a very revealing interview with Thomas Stuart Ferguson about two and a half months before his death. Barney had his interview with Ferguson on January 4, 1983, and he recorded the matter in his journal on February 15, 1983. Ferguson died the following month (March 16, 1983). On April 19, 1984, Ronald Barney made a typed copy of the information he had recorded in his journal and added some additional recollections regarding the visit he had with Mr. Ferguson on January 4. According to Barney, Thomas Stuart Ferguson confided in him that he was working on a project which he felt would show that the Book of Mormon was in reality a 19th century production.
Stan Larson gives this information concerning the interview:

On 4 January 1983, a little more than two months before his death, Ferguson met Ronald Barney at the LDS Historical Department. Barney told Ferguson he knew of his various publications and asked if he knew how Jerald and Sandra were using his March 1971 letter to James Boyack. This letter contains Ferguson’s earliest known denial of the authenticity of the Book of Abraham. Barney recorded in his journal that Ferguson “began to shift in his chair, got pale and acted as if I was a General Authority that had caught him committing adultery. He apologized all over the place, said the Tanners were creeps, etc.” After Barney expressed his concern for open discussion, Ferguson disclosed his current beliefs: “After having once been once [sic] a defender of the faith he now totally rejects the divine intervention of God in the workings of the affairs of men” (Barney 1983).

A few days later on 10 January 1983, Ferguson wrote to Barney, providing the details of his historical investigations into possible connections between Oliver Cowdery and Ethan Smith, author of View of the Hebrews, a suggested possible source of influence on Joseph Smith . . . (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1990, p. 83)

Ronald Barney claimed that Ferguson was also trying to link Joseph Smith with Sidney Rigdon prior to the publication of the Book of Mormon. It is clear, then, that as Mr. Ferguson entered the last months of his life he was still engaged in a project which he felt would prove that the Book of Mormon was not an ancient document. As late as February 1, 1983, about six weeks before his death, Ferguson wrote Barney a letter in which he indicated that he was still pursuing his critical research into the true origin of the Mormon Church: “I am continuing my research. It is fun and stimulating. I will look forward to meeting with you on my next trip to Salt Lake City” (Ferguson 1983b) (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1990, p. 84).

It is also interesting to note that Mr. Ferguson told Ronald Barney the same story concerning Apostle Hugh B. Brown repudiating the Book of Abraham that he told us some twelve years earlier. In the typed material which Ronald Barney prepared on April 19, 1984, he wrote:

Beyond what is in my journal entry concerning my visit with him on January 4, 1983 I should include these things. Ferguson said that the thing that first led him to seriously question the church was the papyri [sic] purported to be the source of the Book of Abraham. . . . He took the evidence to Hugh B. Brown . . . he said that Brother Brown agreed with him that it was not scripture. . . . He did say that Hugh B. Brown did not believe the Book of Abraham was what the church said it was. I felt as Ferguson was telling me this that he was not making up the story. It appeared that he really believed what he was telling me. (Photocopy of statement by Ronald O. Barney, dated April 19, 1984)

Concerning the material Ronald Barney has brought to light, Stan Larson observed: “These final two letters, together with Barney’s journal and reminiscence, confirm Ferguson’s critical views just two months before his death. This crucial testimony functions like a kingpin to tie the last fifteen years together and is comparable to the Wesley P. Lloyd diary, which reports the non-historical view of the Book of Mormon held by B. H. Roberts just two months before he died (Roberts 1985, 22-24)” (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1990, p. 84).

In spite of the strong evidence that Thomas Stuart Ferguson completely lost faith in Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon, his son, Larry Ferguson, cannot allow himself to face the truth. He continues to promote the sale of The Messiah in Ancient America—a book which continues to proclaim Thomas Stuart Ferguson’s “abiding testimony of the Book of Mormon and the divinity of the Messiah, Jesus the Christ.”

In a letter published in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Fall, 1990, page 9, Larry Ferguson made this claim: “A few years before my father passed away, he, my mother, and I met with a publisher about revising, updating, and publishing One Fold and One Shepherd. The year or so before his death, my father cut back on his law practice and began that revision.” One would think that in a “year or so” of working on the project, Thomas Stuart Ferguson could have completed a fairly good sized manuscript. Stan Larson became curious about this manuscript and asked for permission to examine it. To his surprise, he discovered there was no such manuscript:

At the time of his death Ferguson had not written a single word in a manuscript of revision. His only work on the contemplated revision was about twenty ideas for updating, jotted on small 3M “Post-it” notes. One of these notes suggested including the influence of Ethan Smith’s View of the Hebrews on the text of the Book of Mormon, but this controversial subject is never mentioned in Warren’s revision, The Messiah in Ancient America, even though Ferguson’s radical view on this point was independently supported by Ron Barney. So, while the new book contains thousands of Thomas Stuart Ferguson’s words, they represent his position when One Fold and One Shepherd was published in 1958 or 1962, not his ideas in 1983. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1990, p. 85, footnote 6)

In the same footnote (pages 84-85), Stan Larson makes it clear that The Messiah in Ancient America is a “gross misrepresentation” of Ferguson’s true feelings:

. . . since the title page presents Thomas Smart Ferguson as a coauthor with Bruce W. Warren one must examine this posthumous attribution of authorship . . . Since the clear evidence in his letters indicates that Ferguson denied the historicity of the Book of Mormon and the divinity of Jesus, it is deceptive for Warren to speak of his “abiding” testimony. . . . Warren’s total association with Ferguson during the last fifteen years of his life consisted of a five-minute conversation in 1979. . . . If the book were intended to be a tribute to Ferguson, it should have been dedicated to his memory, rather than have his name printed on the title page as a coauthor. Wishful thinking and fond memories do not change the way things had changed in Ferguson’s thinking. The Messiah in Ancient America attributes fresh authorship to Ferguson, and this kind of an attempted reinstatement of the pre-Book-of-Abraham-papyri Ferguson is a gross misrepresentation of his real views.

Those who are interested in obtaining Stan Larson’s definitive article, “The Odyssey of Thomas Stuart Ferguson,” which was published in the Spring 1990 issue of Dialogue, can write to: Dialogue Foundation, University Station—UMC 7805, Logan, Utah 84322.

In bringing out a book by his father which is favorable to the Book of Mormon, Larry Ferguson had to side-step a great deal of evidence which appeared in letters written by his father. In addition, there are a number of people who could testify concerning Thomas Stuart Ferguson’s complete rejection of the Book of Mormon. The journal of Ronald Barney is especially hard to disregard. The reader will remember that Barney is a Senior Archivist at the Mormon Church’s Historical Department. It seems highly unlikely that someone in his position would make up a false story concerning the last weeks of Ferguson’s life.
That Larry Ferguson was unable to produce an actual manuscript written by his father, Thomas Stuart Ferguson, certainly throws a great deal of doubt upon the claim that *The Messiah in Ancient America* represented his true feelings. Moreover, a manuscript which Thomas Stuart Ferguson wrote which demonstrated that “there is no Book-of-Mormon geography” and a “paucity of specific support” for the Book of Mormon in the findings of archaeologists in the New World has been deliberately ignored in *The Messiah in Ancient America*.

As we indicated earlier, we have photographically reproduced Thomas Stuart Ferguson’s manuscript criticizing the Book of Mormon in our book, *Ferguson’s Manuscript Unveiled*. Ferguson himself said that this manuscript was written to prove the Book of Mormon “fictional.”

WESLEY WALTERS’ HOPE

We had just completed printing Wesley P. Walters’ Master’s thesis and were preparing to go to press with this newsletter, when we received word that he had passed away. We had known for some time that Wesley had serious heart problems, but his death still came as a real blow. Nevertheless, we rejoice in the fact that our good friend and associate in the work has gone home to be with the Lord. While Walters was truly a great scholar, his most important concern was his relationship with his Lord Jesus Christ. Walters also pastored a church in Marissa, Illinois, for as long as we knew him (we first met him in 1961).

Wesley Walters’ contributions in the field of Mormon history were remarkable. He was, in fact, a great detective when it came to ferreting out early Mormon documents. It was Walters who discovered the original document which verified the claim that Joseph Smith was a “glass looker” and that he was arrested and brought before a Justice of the Peace for that practice (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pp. 32-39). In addition, Walters discovered that Joseph Smith’s claim that he had his First Vision in 1820 at the time of a religious revival in Palmyra, New York could not be true. There was no revival in Palmyra that year; it actually occurred in 1824-25 (*Palmyra, New York* could not be true. There was no revival in Palmyra that year; it actually occurred in 1824-25 (*Palmyra, New York* could not be true. There was no revival in Palmyra that year; it actually occurred in 1824-25). Although Mormon scholar Richard L. Bushman tried to refute Walters’ arguments, he acknowledged that Walters had a very important effect on Mormon history:

The Reverend Mr. Walters’ article on the first vision raised quite a stir among Mormon scholars when an early version circulated about a year and a half ago . . . the style of his attack was both refreshing and disconcerting . . . it was free of the obvious rancor characteristic of anti-Mormon writers . . . They cannot resist twisting the knife. Mr. Walters, by contrast, sticks to his facts . . . He candidly presents his argument and bluntly tells Mormons to reevaluate the foundations of their church. That kind of frankness is far more disarming than the more pretentious variety . . . Our consternation was a genuine compliment to the quality of Mr. Walters’ work.

While Mr. Walters has put us on the spot for the moment, in the long run Mormon scholarship will benefit from his attack . . . Mormon historians asked themselves how many other questions about our early history remain unasked as well as unanswered. Not long after we saw his essay, a committee on “Mormon History in New York” sent a group of scholars east for special research . . . Without wholly intending it, Mr. Walters may have done much to advance the cause of Mormon history within the Church as anyone in recent years. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1969, pp. 82-83)

Wesley P. Walters had an extremely important effect upon our own work and that of the other ministries to Mormons. While we have researched many areas of Mormon history, when we talked to Wesley Walters we clearly recognized our own inadequacies. Walters was a real historian in every sense of the word, and for this reason we constantly sought his advice. He not only spent untold hours giving us guidance, but also provided an unending stream of photocopies, microfilms and information concerning Mormon history and documents. Our work would not be in the place it is today without his help. In fact, during some of our hardest years he sent us monthly support to keep the ministry going. Wesley Walters could have acquired a far greater name for himself, but he chose to spend a great deal of his time serving others. He was constantly helping those in other ministries prepare their manuscripts and spent a great deal of his time answering letters and sending photocopies to Mormons and others who had questions. The importance of his work cannot be overstated. While we will really miss him, we thank God that we had the privilege of knowing him and benefiting from his research and wisdom.

Wesley P. Walters received the Lord into his heart long before we met him. His hope for eternal life was firmly based in the atonement and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He recognized that he was a sinner and asked God to forgive him and come into his life. His desire to bring others to know the saviour who had changed his life led him into the ministry. While he was pastoring in New York—the birthplace of Mormonism—he encountered the teachings of the Joseph Smith. His examination of LDS teachings led him to the conclusion that Mormonism was another gospel which was not founded on the teachings of the Bible (see Galatians 1:8).

Pastor Walters’ fervent desire was to bring Mormons to the hope that he had in Jesus Christ. In a tract entitled, *Enticing Words of Man’s Wisdom*, Wesley P. Walters wrote:

The world does not need another man-made, feeling-centered religion by which men try to earn their way to glory through religious deeds and temple ceremonies. It needs to hear the refreshing real gospel, that while our sins have justly brought down upon us God’s great anger and condemnation, His love has brought us eternal salvation and glory by sending His Son to die for our personal sins and guilt. Those who place all their confidence in Him alone, He transforms into new creations and makes them citizens of His true Heavenly Kingdom.

As we indicated earlier, we have just finished printing Wesley Walters’ Master’s thesis, *The Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Mormon*. In this important thesis Walters demonstrated many errors Joseph Smith fell into when he wrote the Book of Mormon. His research makes it clear that in creating that book, Smith was plagiarizing the King James Version of the Bible rather than translating from ancient gold plates. We are selling this 235-page thesis for only $7.00.
When the Apostle Paul wrote to the churches of Galatia, he asked this question: “Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?” (Galatians 4:16) Paul was painfully aware of the fact that his stand for true Christianity was costing him a great deal. Many of those who are engaged in Christian work today are faced with this same problem. The truth does not always make everyone happy. In fact, it can make some people extremely angry. We found this out over thirty years ago when we left the Mormon Church and began publishing material questioning its authenticity. Because of our stand, many people began to proclaim that we were either possessed by the Devil or at least working through his power. We realize the position these people are coming from and continue to love and pray for them in spite of what they might say about us.

Recently, however, we have encountered the same type of charges from critics of the Mormon Church who feel that we are being too soft on the Mormons. Because we have taken a strong stand against sensationalism and inaccurate statements concerning Mormonism, we have found ourselves under attack. Like the Mormons, some of our critics have come to believe that we are demonized and are actually being used by the Mormon Church. In November 1988, we received a letter which contained the following: “I . . . am led to the conclusion that . . . You have never been ‘Set Free’ from the demonic spirit of Mormonism . . . You are, in fact, a plant of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints.”

On August 6, 1990, Ed Decker published a paper in which he suggested that his letters wrote to “Saints Alive . . . Brigham City, Utah, 84[3]02, and ask . . . for a copy of a report . . . prepared for the Body of Christ in Utah regarding the Tanners. . . . I agree that Jerald and Sandra stepped over the line of error into sin . . . ” In the report recommended by Mr. Decker, we are charged with being in “demonic” bondage and with having “been used by the LDS Church”:

We accuse the Tanners of doing major damage to the outreach to the Mormon people for Jesus Christ . . . The Tanners are being used mightily of Satan in this attack to quench the Holy Spirit of God . . . We could not understand why Jerald would not accept Bill’s [Bill Schnoebelen’s] thorough answers—then we saw why. He raised up, his body shaking, and in a different sounding voice, and with his finger pointed at Bill, he shouted, “Take all that occult material and burn it!” . . . Jerald’s eyes were fixed and piercing. We looked at one another, recognizing what this was—a demonic manifestation. We offered ministry to the Tanners to break this spiritual bondage, but they refused . . .

In the past two years, we have heard comments and rumors from independent sources that the Tanners may have been used by the LDS church. We refused to believe such rumors at first . . . Then we read a thesis, in 1989, by Loftes Tryk . . . Mr. Tryk presented a very good case, and his conclusion on the Tanners was, “The Tanners were surely supplied with the selected documents by the church authorities themselves.” . . . the material the Tanners have written is critical and embarrassing, but not very damaging to the LDS church. The evidence is mounting, and it would seem that the Tanners have indeed been used by the LDS church to provide a controlled criticism of the church. (The Tanner Problem, pages 1-2)

We feel that these charges are as serious as any that have ever been leveled against us. At any rate, immediately after we received the document mentioned above, James Spencer, coauthor of Mormonism’s Temple of Doom, issued an attack on our work. In this response, he cited the following from a letter he had written: “The Tanners have been used by our Enemy to sow division. They are loose cannons, firing indiscriminately at their own army” (The Attack on Mormonism’s Temple of Doom, page 20). On pages 31-32 of the same booklet, James Spencer wrote: “Jerald, in resisting us, may well find himself fighting against God . . . What Jerald has done is not only ungodly, it is clearly libelous.” In a letter dated July 20, 1990, Ed Decker supported James Spencer’s accusations against us and suggested that his publisher had “every right to seek legal redress against the Tanners for trade libel.”

James Spencer seemed to be especially upset with us because of some questions we had raised in our last newsletter concerning a letter by the late Walter Martin (dated January 6, 1989) which gave some support to the booklet Mormonism’s Temple of Doom—a book which we had criticized. Mr. Spencer finally released a photocopy of the entire letter. An examination of the document reveals that our questions were justified. The first sentence of the letter, which we had not seen before, shows that the statement was originally authored by Spencer himself and sent to Walter Martin: “Dear Jim, After reading the statement you sent, I made some amendments to it.” While Walter Martin’s signature at the end of the letter does make him responsible for its contents, Mr. Spencer undoubtedly found it somewhat embarrassing that he had to compose the statement for Martin. It seems reasonable to believe that this is the reason that photocopies of the original letter were not circulated.

This previously undisclosed portion of the letter plus other evidence we now have suggests that James Spencer had been pressuring Martin and Christian Research Institute very hard for a statement supporting Mormonism’s Temple of Doom. Martin was very reluctant to contradict the official CRI statement which he himself had approved for distribution. The CRI statement, of course, strongly supported our position on the book. In a letter dated July 27, 1988, Spencer pleaded with Walter Martin to soften his stand. He even accused Martin of being cowardly in the face of spiritual warfare:

When I saw your letter . . . I was shocked, hurt and saddened. You, dear brother, after having convinced us to fly in the face of “nonrockaboatis” have chosen the easy path at our expense. . . . The resulting “chicken soup” is worse than no statement at all. . . . The old quote . . . applies: “If we don’t hang together, it is certain we shall all hang separately.” I call upon you to be courageous in the defense of the brethren in this matter. (Letter from James Spencer to Walter Martin, dated July 27, 1988)

Four months passed without any helpful response from Walter Martin. Finally on November 3, 1988, James Spencer prepared his own statement and sent it to Martin with a letter in which he stated: “My proposal is that you authorize me to insert the accompanying statement on the book. . . . I would ask that you sign one of the statements and return it to me immediately, please.”

Even after all this, Martin did not deal with the matter “immediately.” He, in fact, waited another two months (Jan. 6, 1989) before sending the statement back to Spencer! In any case, Martin’s statement does not replace the official CRI statement which is unfavorable to the book. This is very important because Ed Decker and William Schnoebelen had agreed to submit themselves to the decision of that organization. The official
At the time of its investigation, CRI appointed Craig Hawkins to research the charges regarding the book because he “was the expert in these matters.” Mr. Hawkins answered questions on the CRI radio program “The Bible Answer Man” both before and after Martin’s death. James Spencer, however, questions Mr. Hawkins’ ability in his response to us. We feel that his attack on Hawkins’ expertise is not based on facts. In the pamphlet recommended by Ed Decker, the attack against Craig Hawkins is carried much further. While the authors do not go so far as to say he is demonized, they claim that his opinion with regard to the origin of the temple ceremony “was apparently clouded by his own involvement in the occult.” Hawkins is also accused of working “behind Dr. Martin’s back” in preparing his report (The Tanner Problem, p. 3). Craig Hawkins, however, claims that he has evidence to prove that Walter Martin fully supported his findings concerning the book. With regard to Hawkins “involvement in the occult,” the charge stems from the fact that at one time he practiced martial arts. It appears that anyone who takes a strong stand against the unfounded claims of these people is liable to be accused of being influenced by the occult or of being in league with the Devil. In any case, Craig Hawkins is preparing a response to the charges made against him. He can be contacted at Apologetics Information Ministry, 3855 E. La Palma Ave, Anaheim, CA 92807.

In his critique of our July 1990 newsletter, James Spencer claims that “Walter Martin never told me ever to change one word in Mormonism’s Temple of Doom” (page 8). While Martin or CRI may not have prepared a specific list of changes to be made, common sense should have shown Spencer and Schnoebelen that major changes would have to be made in the booklet if they were to continue printing it.

On page 8 of his attack on us, James Spencer maintained that he “was of the mind that if anybody, at any time, found an important mistake of fact in Mormonism’s Temple of Doom, I would be glad to change it.” In the interview which we had with Spencer and Schnoebelen and in our publication, The Lucifer-God Doctrine, we pointed out major problems in the book. For example, in Mormonism’s Temple of Doom, pp. 12-13, Mr. Schnoebelen made a serious misrepresentation concerning his trip through Freemasonry. Both Spencer and Schnoebelen acknowledged in the tape-recorded interview that the facts were not correctly stated in the book and discussed how the wording would have to be changed to correct this very serious problem. In view of their own statements, which are preserved on tape, we expected that they would correct this misstatement of the facts which appeared in the first edition. To our surprise, however, when we obtained the new printing, we discovered that there was absolutely no attempt to correct the false claims!

Even more important than the flaw in the book which we mentioned above, James Spencer and William Schnoebelen have refused to alter the erroneous information given concerning the relationship between Mormonism and witchcraft (see The Lucifer-God Doctrine, pp. 41-55). How can we reconcile this with Spencer’s statement that he would be “glad to change” any serious error found in the book?

While we do not have room to discuss these matters at length in this newsletter, we are preparing a booklet dealing with them entitled, Serious Charges Against the Tanners. In order to have a good grasp on what is going on in this controversy a person also needs to read our booklet, The Lucifer-God Doctrine.

WAS ED DECKER POISONED?

In the July 1990 issue of our newsletter, we commented concerning a claim by Ed Decker that he was “poisoned in Scotland” in 1986. Although he was supposed to have been given a dose of arsenic poison which was seven times stronger than that required to kill a person, he claimed that God had healed him. We stated that a man who was with Mr. Decker at the time of the alleged poisoning had “called us from Scotland and expressed his disbelief in Decker’s story.” The man mentioned in the article was Sam Burton, an American pastor who is doing missionary work in Scotland. We noted that, “If the ‘Scotland poisoning’ really did occur, there should be some witnesses available or evidence in hospital or police records which would verify the story. If Mr. Decker has any evidence to that effect, we would be willing to print it in our next newsletter.” Ed Decker has faulted us for not asking him for the information we desired before going to press. He has apparently forgotten that the last time we asked for data, he would not send it and told us not to contact him any more: “Please don’t write us any more. If you have something to say, say it to Dr. Martin and CRI or just issue another special edition of the messenger.” Since we had no reason to feel that Mr. Decker had changed his mind about not providing information to us, we took his advice and published our doubts in the next “edition of the messenger.”

It is now clear that Mr. Decker was never hospitalized in Scotland, never contacted the police and did not even consult a doctor until his return from that country some “4 or 5 days” after the incident. Ed Decker has distributed copies of letters from two American pediatricians who give information concerning the purported arsenic poisoning incident. The most important letter comes from Dr. Keith A. Rodaway. He frankly stated his opinion that, “This was arsenic poisoning, which nearly claimed this man’s life.” While the major portion of the letter merely gives facts concerning the poisoning which Mr. Decker “related” to Dr. Rodaway after his return from Scotland, he does claim that he examined Decker and conducted tests: “I interviewed, examined and tested this man on his return to Seattle, from Scotland and Ireland, in March 1986. . . . Blood and urine test[s] were run demonstrating hematocrit of 32, Wbc. 3,700, urinalysis showed +3 blood, +4 protein. Toxic screen revealed arsenic of 27 µg/dl. (normal 0-20 µg/dl.) He developed pustular skin eruption and paresthesias. After appropriate treatment and many prayers Ed has made a full recovery” (Letter from Dr. Keith A. Rodaway, July 19, 1990).

This letter by Dr. Rodaway does indicate that Ed Decker had some kind of a physical problem when he came into his office and a somewhat elevated level of arsenic in his body. Mr. Decker, however, has completely misunderstood the information regarding the arsenic. He seems to feel that the reading of “27 µg/dl” is a fatal dose. In a letter to Jerald, dated August 31, 1990, he made it clear that a person who drank “27 units” would undoubtedly die or at best “become deathly ill like I did and still live.” A doctor in Salt Lake City who examined Dr. Rodaway’s letter, however, pointed out to us that that level of arsenic is not...
sufficient to prove that Decker was poisoned. Two other doctors have also given that opinion.

It is clear from Mr. Decker’s letter that he does not realize that “27 µg/dl” is a relatively small amount of arsenic. The “µg” in Dr. Rodaway’s letter is not referring to a milligram (mg—i.e., one-thousandth of a gram) but rather to a microgram (a millionth part of a gram). It takes 1,000 µg (micrograms) to equal 1 mg (milligram). The lethal dose of arsenic trioxide, an extremely deadly poison, is given as “about 120 mg” in Handbook of Poisoning: Prevention, Diagnosis & Treatment, 1987, page 221. In Courtroom Toxicology, 1981, vol. 3, Arse-9, we read that the “acute ingestion of only 200mg of arsenic trioxide may be fatal to an adult…” When these figures are converted to micrograms by multiplying by 1,000, we have from 120,000 to 200,000 µg.

We have already cited Dr. Keith A. Rodaway’s statement that in Ed Decker’s case “Toxic screen revealed arsenic of 27 µg/dl. (normal 0-20 µg/dl) In Courtroom Toxicology, however, we read that, “Urine arsenic concentrations of unexposed persons may range from 0.01-0.30 mg/L…” (vol. 3, Arse-9) When the higher reading is converted to micrograms (0.30 x 1,000 = 300 µg) and adjusted to deciliters (300 µg ÷ 10 = 30 µg) we find that Mr. Decker’s reading fits within the range of “unexposed persons.” Therefore, according to Courtroom Toxicology, instead of being a fatal dose, 27 µg seems to be 3 µg under the 30 µg limit for “unexposed persons.”

We all have some arsenic in our bodies and the amount can be elevated in a number of ways. Wally Tope pointed out to us that in the book, Courtroom Toxicology, it was stated that just “a seafood meal” could greatly affect arsenic readings in urine samples. We suggested that this should be put to the test. Mr. Tope, therefore, ate a good deal of seafood and submitted to urinalyses. On October 19, 1990, the Nichols Institute Reference Laboratories reported that he had an arsenic concentration of “546” µg/L. When this is adjusted to the amount of arsenic in a deciliter (546 ÷ 10), we find that he had twice as much arsenic in his urine sample as Ed Decker—i.e., 54.6 µg! As we have already shown, Mr. Decker had only 27 µg! Wally Tope suffered no bad effects from what Ed Decker felt was well over the lethal dose.

However this may be, Ed Decker has actually claimed that he was “poisoned twice” in 1986. We have contacted Mr. Decker and asked him to provide documentation concerning this second attempt on his life, but he has refused to do so. The most information we have been able to find concerning this incident appears in a tape-recording of a speech he gave on June 29, 1987. On that occasion Mr. Decker revealed the following: “They can’t kill me… those of you who know me know I got poisoned twice last year—came close to dying both times—shouldn’t of lived.” This account of a second poisoning attempt raises a number of important questions. For example, if Mr. Decker came “close to dying,” why is so little information given concerning it? Where and when did it occur? Are there any witnesses to this poisoning? Was Mr. Decker hospitalized or treated by a physician? It would seem that if there was any evidence regarding this attempted murder, Mr. Decker would have used it in his response to us. It is also interesting to note that both of the doctors who prepared statements for Decker were completely silent about this matter. It seems very difficult to believe that Ed Decker was poisoned twice and “came close to dying” on both occasions, yet was apparently never admitted to a hospital where tests would have verified the poisonings.

Although the details are scanty, Ed Decker has given some information concerning his first poisoning in Scotland. In the Saints Alive In Jesus Newsletter, April-May, 1986, he revealed:

On March 24th, I was in Northern Scotland where I was to do two television specials on Mormonism and Masonry. The television crew was set up to videotape my meetings for rebroadcast. That day, during a luncheon, I was slipped a lethal dose of arsenic in a soft drink. I spent the next six hours in terrible convulsions, yet Jesus protected me from its killing power and gave me the strength and a special anointing to do the meetings.

One question immediately arises: if Ed Decker was “in terrible convulsions” for “six hours,” why was he not rushed to a hospital for treatment? In the book, Poisoning: Toxicology—Symptoms—Treatments, page 190, we find that in cases where a massive dose of arsenic is given, “Convulsions and coma are the terminal signs and death is from circulatory failure.” If Mr. Decker was in convulsions and at the point of death itself, one would think that someone would have had the presence of mind to seek medical help.

Since Ed Decker did not go to a hospital in Scotland to verify the first poisoning and since the urinalysis which was taken “4 or 5” days later does not reveal the large amount of arsenic we would expect for someone who had received a lethal dose, we have to rely on the testimony of witnesses who were in Scotland at the time the incident took place. A great deal hinges on whether he was actually in convulsions and as sick as he claims he was during the period following the poisoning. Fortunately, Wally Tope, of Frontline Ministries, has made a very thorough investigation of the matter and has shared his private notes with us. Mr. Tope had telephone interviews with all of the witnesses who were present at the luncheon with Mr. Decker as well as people he associated with during his trip. A number of these people, who lived in Scotland and Ireland, allowed Mr. Tope to tape-record their statements.

Wally Tope’s work concerning the Scotland poisoning seems to be a very significant contribution to our understanding of the incident. In two telephone conversations with us Pastor Sam Burton, who was present at the time of the purported poisoning, has confirmed the important details concerning his statements which appear in Mr. Tope’s notes (in the material which follows we will refer to these notes as TN).

To begin with, Mr. Tope has found some evidence to indicate that Ed Decker had some physical problem after attending a luncheon on the day he claimed he was poisoned. At that time Mr. Decker was staying with Mr. and Mrs. James Eglinton in Inverness, Scotland. According to Mr. Tope’s notes of a telephone conversation with Mrs. Eglinton (p. 59), she remembered that after Decker returned from the lunch he was sweating and seemed to be in pain. She thought that she remembered him saying that he had eaten a pizza pie which did not agree with him. Mr. Decker’s friend, Eric Clarke, who was present with him at the time, said that they “had lunch at a Pizza Parlour” and that as they were leaving it was clear that Mr. Decker “was in pain and very unwell. We took him back to the home where we were staying and immediately put him to bed” (Statement of Eric Clarke, dated July 20, 1990).

While the evidence shows that Ed Decker did become ill, a serious problem with his story began to surface when Tope tried to verify Decker’s claim that he “spent the next six hours in terrible convulsions.” Mrs. Eglinton could not remember anything about Mr. Decker having convulsions while he was at her house. (TN, p. 59) Like his wife, Mr. Eglinton had no recollection of convulsions. (Ibid., p. 57) The Eglintons seemed to remember that Mr. Decker was only in bed 3 or 4 hours, yet, according to Mr. Decker, the convulsions were supposed to have lasted “six hours.”

There is another element which makes the problem even more serious: Mr. Decker’s doctor, Keith A. Rodaway, mentioned that “Mr. Decker related the sudden onset of severe...
vomiting and diarrhea following a meal . . . had severe abdominal cramps, heart burn and started recurrent [sic] vomiting. Soon watery diarrhea ensued” (Letter dated July 19, 1990). Now, it seems obvious that if Ed Decker did indeed have six hours of “convulsions” together with “severe vomiting and diarrhea,” the family with whom he stayed would have been aware of the problem. Mr. or Mrs. Eglinton, however, could recall neither the “terrible convulsions” nor the “severe vomiting and diarrhea” (TN, pp. 57-60).

In a statement Ed Decker published on August 6, 1990, he claimed that Eric Clarke was “the one man who was with me continually before, during and after my poisoning.” Although Eric Clarke is very supportive of Mr. Decker in a statement he prepared for him on July 20, 1990, the statement itself raises serious questions. In this document, Mr. Clarke said he “travelled to all the meetings with Mr. Decker and stayed in the same homes.” We would expect, therefore, that if the poisoning story were true, there would be some mention of the serious nature of Ed Decker’s illness. As we have already shown, Eric Clarke did mention that Decker was “in pain and very unwell.” Significantly, however, Mr. Clarke mentioned neither the “terrible convulsions” nor the “severe vomiting and diarrhea.” Since Clarke was staying at the same home as Decker, the absence of this important information is highly significant.

Moreover, Eric Clarke makes a very revealing observation which seems to indicate that at the time he was with Ed Decker in Scotland he did not believe that Decker was at the very point of death or even in very serious condition. He, in fact, says that it was only when Decker called him from America and informed him of the doctor’s diagnosis that he understood the gravity of the situation:

> Before we left the room I prayed for him to be well enough to take the meeting that had been arranged for that evening. . . . In the light of his doctor’s later diagnosis this may appear to have been a selfish attitude on my part, but we just didn’t realise how ill he might have been . . . I was shocked to learn of the Doctor’s diagnosis when Mr. Decker phoned me a few days after he had returned home.

Amazing as it may seem, immediately following the “convulsions,” Ed Decker arose from his bed and gave two speeches (one on Mormonism and the other on Masonry) which were preserved on video tapes. Fortunately, Wally Tope was able to obtain a video tape of the second message. Mr. Tope has provided us with an audio tape of the same sermon. When we listened to the tape-recording of Mr. Decker’s speech, we found absolutely no evidence to support the claim that he was having the problems which the doctors’ letters would lead us to believe. In fact, the tape revealed that Ed Decker’s voice was very strong and there was nothing to indicate that he was suffering pain or having any problem at all. It was actually a powerful sermon that he delivered the night of the “poisoning.”

Besides making the video tapes on the day he was poisoned, Mr. Decker spoke publicly on at least three more occasions on that trip. Eric Clarke related that there was another meeting in Scotland: “. . . we just didn’t realise how ill he might have been. He had one more meeting to take before I took him to the airport in Edinburgh” (Statement dated July 20, 1990). The plane Mr. Decker boarded in Edinburgh, however, was headed for Ireland, not America. He had two more speaking engagements there (TN, p. 36).

Dr. Charles Sweigard, who never actually treated Ed Decker, claimed in his letter that, “The Scottish brethren sent him to Ireland where a veterinarian friend said his symptoms resembled arsenic poisoning.” There is an element of truth in this story. Ed Decker did, in fact, visit a veterinarian in Ireland, and this man did give him some type of a remedy. In 1988, Wally Tope was able to track down this veterinarian and question him at great length about Decker’s claim regarding arsenic poisoning. The veterinarian was James McCormick. Mr. McCormick has since passed away, but before his death he allowed Wally Tope to tape-record their conversations. Mr. McCormick, who had picked up Mr. Decker at the airport, did not seem to know anything about him having recurrent vomiting and diarrhea. McCormick said that Decker did complain of being unwell in a general sort of way and noted that he was lethargic and was not eating well. He felt that Mr. Decker may have had some kind of a bug (TN, pp. 33, 34, 36). The statement that James McCormick claimed that Ed Decker’s “symptoms resembled arsenic poisoning” is not supported by the tape-recorded conversation Wally Tope had with him. On the contrary, James McCormick clearly stated that he was a veterinarian surgeon and was well acquainted with the effects of arsenic poisoning. He did not have any reason to believe that Mr. Decker had been poisoned and the treatment which he gave him had nothing to do with the effects of arsenic (TN, page 36). Wally Tope played part of this tape for us, and we can verify that James McCormick completely dismissed the idea of arsenic poisoning.

Pastor Sam Burton, who was present at the luncheon where Mr. Decker was supposed to have received the arsenic, emphatically denied that Decker was poisoned. He felt that the whole thing probably grew out of paranoia (TN, p. 85). Leslie Jappy, who was also at the luncheon, also asserted the story was false (TN, p. 93).

Some people who were close to Ed Decker at the time of the “poisoning” have suggested that it is possible that the symptoms he had were really the result of a bad reaction to a prescription drug he was taking known as Indocin. We will have more concerning this matter and also other important information on the poisoning story in the pamphlet we are working on entitled, Serious Charges Against the Tanners.

Wally Tope is preparing a report on the same subject which will contain photocopies of documents and give actual quotations from those who were with Mr. Decker in Scotland and Ireland and allowed him to tape-record their conversations. His paper on the subject will be published under the title, The Strange Case of Ed Decker’s “Arsenic Poisoning,” and will be available from Frontline Ministries, PO Box 1100, La Canada, CA 91012. The price will be $2.75 plus $1.00 for shipping.

Wally Tope has already brought other important information to light. For example, in our last newsletter we reported that Ed Decker claimed that Mormon Apostle M. Russell Ballard gave a speech in which he admitted that ex-Mormons and “specifically” the film, The God Makers, had caused the church to have “a 3 million member shortfall.” Although we were suspicious of this claim when we first heard it in May 1990, we found that Wally Tope had been working on this question since March when he began examining Mr. Decker’s January 1990 newsletter. Mr. Tope provided us with a photocopy of that issue. Tope, in fact, had already initiated research which led to the discovery that there was a tape available of Ballard’s speech. In addition, he had obtained a photocopy of the Nov. 14, 1989, issue of the Provo Herald which he sent to us. All of the evidence combined to disprove the Ballard story, and Ed Decker and William Schnoebel finally admitted it was erroneous (see Saints Alive In Jesus Newsletter July 1990)
“Our family greatly appreciates the work you are doing to lead people into the truth . . . a friend of ours . . . shared a copy of his *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?* with us. It was a huge help in helping us make the decision to leave Mormonism for our return to true Christianity and a wonderful new church . . . Thank you very much! (Letter from North Carolina)

“I can’t tell you how much I am indebted to you both for showing me the error of my beliefs in Mormonism! I was a fully active member for 19 years, having served a proselyting mission in New Zealand, a Temple Marriage and until my leaving the church served in several leadership roles in both Ward and Stake. . . . I began to doubt the church’s authenticity when speaking to a fellow worker who was a strong Christian . . . I approached my sister who had left the church about 9-10 years earlier after having studied church history with her husband. They were a great help and provided me with a copy of Mormonism—*Shadow or Reality* to read. This book is dynamite! . . . My sister and her husband had been praying fervently for years for myself and my parents (who have served 2 temple missions) to see the light and finally we have . . . I can assure you that the work you are doing is well and truly worthwhile as myself and my parents are living proof.” (Letter from Australia)

“. . . I left the Mormon Church about a year ago (hence my decision to write a book) having been a convert for about three years. I am an Ambulance man now . . . and have faith in Jesus Christ . . . My ‘other half’. . . was a Mormon, in fact I helped her towards her conversion when I was actively involved in missionary work in my local ward, she too is no longer a member . . . I did not study to criticise or prove the church false but to learn of the ‘true church.’ . . . I soon learnt of the infamous Jerald and Sandra Tanner. . . . I . . . had made plans already to serve as a missionary. I decided to go . . . I returned seven months later, and soon afterwards left. On my mission . . . I had written to Utah Lighthouse Ministry and received information that confirmed my doubts . . . When I write about my so-called opposition, it was really from the day of my Endowment . . . In actual fact I was horrified by the temple, I have never felt so far away from God in all my life. I was in a daze for many days. I expressed my feelings with other members. Some were honest enough to admit they felt the same, others implied I must of been unworthy or I should go many times to appreciate it. This I did, twenty or so I believe and I still had the same feeling that it was not of God.” (Letter from England)

“We both wish to thank you for your research and excellent work in exposing the Mormon Church. There are alot of people in Australia (Ex Mormons) who are very grateful to you both for your tremendous research work in exposing the World of Mormonism. Since we have left the Mormon Church we have found out that 15 (Fifteen) people have left the church, and all have come from the same stake that we belonged to. From what we can establish, the information, in [sic] which prompted these people to leave the church, was from your books, *Mormonism Shadow or Reality* and the *Changing World of Mormonism*, both excellent books. We want to let you know that we are grateful to you both for bringing us the truth, it has made us free and alot happier.” (Letter from Australia)

“I really appreciate the work that you are doing. I am a former Mormon that your works helped bring out of the darkness and into the glorious light of the real gospel of Jesus.” (Letter from Ohio)

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About thirty years ago, while browsing through a collection of rare books, we encountered a dusty old book with this sensational title, *Brigham's Destroying Angel: Being the Life, Confession, and Startling Disclosures of the Notorious Bill Hickman, The Danite Chief of Utah*. In this book, Bill Hickman alleged that he had committed murders by the orders of Brigham Young, the 2nd prophet of the Mormon Church, and Apostle Orson Hyde. The appearance of the book was not impressive. It was a rather cheap looking paperback book which was edited by J. H. Beadle. Since we did not know whether we could trust either Hickman or Beadle, we dismissed the book as possibly a work of fiction and felt that it was not anything we could rely on.

We had, of course, heard of the Mormon doctrine of “blood atonement”—i.e., the teaching that certain sins can only be atoned for by the shedding of the sinner’s own blood. This doctrine was explained by Brigham Young in a discourse given September 21, 1856:

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

I know, when you hear my brethren telling about **cutting people off from the earth**, that you consider it is strong doctrine, but it is **not to destroy them**. . . . I know there are transgressors, who if they knew themselves, and the only condition upon which they can obtain forgiveness, would beg of their brethren to **shed their blood**, that the smoke thereof might ascend to God as an offering to appease the wrath that is kindled against them, and that the law might have its course. I will say further; I have had men come to me and offer their **lives to atone for their sins**.

It is true that the blood of the Son of God was shed for sins through the fall and those committed by men, yet men can commit **sins which it can never remit**. As it was in ancient days, so it is in our day. . . . There are sins that can be atoned for by an offering upon an altar, as in ancient days, and there are sins that the blood of a lamb, or a calf, or of turtle doves, cannot remit, but they must be **atoned for by the blood of the man**. That is the reason why men talk to you as they do from this stand; they understand the **doctrine** and throw out a few words about it. You have been taught that doctrine, but you do not understand it. (Sermon by Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 4, pp. 53-54; also published in the Mormon newspaper *Deseret News*, October 1, 1856, p. 235)
On another occasion President Brigham Young explained:

Now take a person in this congregation who has knowledge with regard to being saved . . . and suppose that he is overtaken in a gross fault, that he has committed a sin that he knows will deprive him of that exaltation which he desires, and that he cannot attain to it without the shedding of blood, and also knows that by having his blood shed he will atone for that sin, and be saved and exalted with the Gods, is there a man or woman in this house but what would say “shed my blood that I may be saved and exalted with the Gods?”

All mankind love themselves, and let these principles be known by an individual, and he would be glad to have his blood shed. That would be loving themselves, even unto an eternal exaltation. Will you love your brothers and sisters likewise, when they have committed a sin that cannot be atoned for without the shedding of their blood? Will you love that man or woman well enough to shed their blood? . . .

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

This is loving our neighbor as ourselves; if he needs help, help him; and if he wants salvation and it is necessary to spill his blood on the earth in order that he may be saved, spill it. Any of you who understand the principles of eternity, if you have sinned a sin requiring the shedding of blood, except the sin unto death, would not be satisfied nor rest until your blood should be spilled, that you might gain that salvation you desire. That is the way to love mankind. (Deseret News, February 18, 1857; also reprinted in Journal of Discourses, vol. 4, pp. 219-20)

At the time we first saw Hickman’s confessions we had also read some material concerning the “Danites”—a secret organization which existed during Joseph Smith’s lifetime which was committed to vengeance against the church’s enemies. This band not only targeted the gentiles, but even dealt with dissenters from the church. David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, revealed the following concerning the Danites:

In the spring of 1838, the heads of the church and many of the members had gone deep into error and blindness. . . . In June, 1838, at Far West, Mo., a secret organization was formed, Doctor Avard being put in as the leader of the band; a certain oath was to be administered to all the brethren to bind them to support the heads of the church in everything they should teach. All who refused to take this oath were considered dissenters from the church, and certain things were to be done concerning these dissenters, by Dr. Avards secret band . . . my persecutions, for trying to show them their errors, became of such a nature that I had to leave the Latter Day Saints; . . . (An Address To All Believers In Christ, by David Whitmer, Richmond, Mo., 1887, pp. 27-28)

Mormon apologists were somewhat divided concerning the Danite band. Some denied that it even existed. Others admitted the existence of the secret organization but denied that Joseph Smith was connected with it. Mormon writer William E. Berrett took this position. Although he wanted his readers to believe that Joseph Smith was in the dark concerning what was going on, Mr. Berrett freely admitted that “Such a band as the ‘Danites’ did exist, as historians affirm; . . . The organization had been for the purpose of plundering and murdering the enemies of the Saints” (The Restored Church, 1956, pp. 197-198).

Joseph Smith himself made some very contradictory statements about this organization. On one occasion he said that it existed but claimed that he did not have any knowledge of it at the time (see History of the Church, vol. 3, pp. 178-182). On another occasion, however, Joseph Smith passed the whole thing off by saying, “The Danite system alluded to by Norton never had any existence” (Ibid., vol. 6, p. 165). Fortunately for the cause of truth, some new and important evidence came to light when H. Michael Marquardt was working on a transcript of Joseph Smith’s early diaries—a work which we later published. In 1838, Joseph Smith had his scribe George W. Robinson keep a diary which was called “The Scriptory Book of Joseph Smith Jr President of The Church of Jesus Christ, of Latterday Saints in all the world.” This diary contains a very important entry under the date of July 27, 1838, which has been crossed out. Mr. Marquardt worked very carefully with this portion of the record and was finally able to decipher most of the words. He discovered that the entry related to the Danite band. It not only confirmed the existence of the band but said it was organized for the purpose of making things right and cleansing the Church.

The Mormon scholar Scott H. Faulring, who later transcribed Joseph Smith’s diaries, verified that the reference related to the Danites (see An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith, p. 198). Unfortunately, neither Marquardt nor Faulring were allowed access to the original diaries and therefore had to depend on photocopies and microfilms. Recently, however, two prominent Mormon scholars, Dean C. Jesse and David J. Whittaker published a transcription of this highly significant entry. They also confirmed that the entry relates to the Danites. Moreover, since they had access to the original diary, they were able to decipher a number of words that neither Marquardt nor Faulring could make out. Their transcription of these words, in fact, seems to suggest that the Danites were going to use physical force to set things “right”:

. . . the brethren or Saints . . . have come up hither Thus far, according to the order <Rev?> of the Danites, we have a company of Danites in these times, to put right physically that which is not right, and to cleanse the Church of very great evils, which hath hitherto existed among us inasmuch as they cannot be put to right by teachings & persuasions. This company or a part of them exhibited on the fourth day of July [illegible word] They came up to consecrate by companies of tens, commanded by their captain over ten. (Brigham Young University Studies, Winter 1988, page 14)

While Jesse and Whittaker do not seem to catch the serious implications of their transcription, they acknowledge that there was an attempt to suppress the material in this quotation: “Some of the material in this citation has been crossed out in pencil in the original by a latter hand” (Ibid., p. 37, n. 24).
Joseph Smith’s “Scriptory Book” agrees with other evidence about the Danites. For instance, Reed Peck records: “I heard Avard, on one occasion, say that the Danites were to consecrate their surplus property, and to come in by tens to do so . . .” Joseph Smith’s “Scriptory Book” confirms this when it says that the Danites “come up to consecrate, by companies of tens . . .” While it is extremely interesting that Joseph Smith’s own “Scriptory Book” would contain an entry concerning the Danites, the whole matter is made even more intriguing by the fact that there has been an attempt to obliterate the entry. Joseph Smith’s History of the Church relies on the “Scriptory Book” for the entries of July 26 and 28, but the entry for July 27—i.e., the portion concerning the Danites—has been omitted.

In the Comprehensive History of the Church, vol. 1, pages 500-501, the Mormon historian B. H. Roberts commented about testimony given after the war in Missouri:

"It is in this testimony and principally in the statement of Dr. Avard, that the existence of the “Danites” in the “Mormon” Church is affirmed. Avard declared that about four months before the date of his testimony . . . “a band called the ‘Daughter of Zion’ (afterwards called the ‘Danite Band’) was formed of the members of the Mormon church, the original object of which was to drive from the county of Caldwell all those who dissented from the Mormon church; in which they succeeded admirably and to the satisfaction of all concerned.”"

We were not aware of the devastating evidence concerning the Danites found in Joseph Smith’s “Scriptory Book” at the time we first saw Bill Hickman’s confessions. While we were convinced that there was such a group and that “blood atonement” was actually practiced in early Utah, we were still reluctant to put a great deal of weight in Hickman’s tales. Mormon authors, of course, dismissed Brigham’s Destroying Angel as an example of the type of trash published by early anti-Mormons. Mormon apologist Hugh Nibley suggested that Hickman’s confessions really came from the fertile imagination of the editor, J. H. Beadle:

"Nobody had been able to pin anything on the Mormons until 14 years later, when Bill Hickman came to the rescue with his thrice-welcome “confessions”; . . . a long and lurid catalogue of blood in which every major crime committed in Utah is mechanically and unimaginatively pinned on Brigham Young . . . Hickman, as we shall see, never dreamed of such a thing until Beadle put him up to it . . . Beadle was a professional purveyor of scandal . . . we believe that those tales are Beadle’s invention . . . The patent absurdity of the “Confessions” becomes apparent on the most superficial investigation and grows with every monotonous episode . . . The Hickman stones were not true. (Sounding Brass, 1963, pp. 254, 256, 263-65)"

It was only after we had made a careful study of Mormon history that we became convinced that Hickman’s confessions could not be easily dismissed. We found, for instance, that John D. Lee, who had been a member of the church’s secret Council of Fifty, charged that the Mormon police committed murders for the church and that “Under Brigham Young, Hosea Stout was Chief of Police.” Hosea Stout was a member of the Danite Band and later served as a body guard for Joseph Smith. Besides serving as Chief of Police in Nauvoo, he was an officer in the Nauvoo legion. Fortunately, Hosea Stout’s diary has survived and proves to be one of the most revealing documents that we have had access to. The fact that it was written by a faithful Mormon makes it even more significant. In his diary, Stout frankly tells of some of the violent methods used by the Mormon leaders. For instance, under the date of April 3, 1845, Hosea Stout recorded the following in his diary:

"In the morning I went to the Temple and was roughly accosted by Brs Cahoon & Cutler about a circumstance which took place last night at the Temple. They said that the old Police had beat a man almost to death in the Temple. To which I replied I was glad of it and that I had given orders to that effect in case anyone should be found in the Temple after night and they had only done as they were told, or ordered . . . we concluded to lay the matter before President Brigham Young and get his advice . . . Brother Brigham came to us and we related the matter to him and he approved of the proceedings of the Police and said he wanted us to still guard the Temple to regulate the matters there which was done to our satisfaction and justification. (On The Mormon Frontier, The Dairy of Hosea Stout, vol. 1, p. 32)"

Under the date of January 9, 1846, Hosea Stout recorded: “When we came to the Temple some what a considerable number of the guard were assembled and among them was William Hibbard . . . He was evidently come as a spy. When I saw him I told Scott that we must “bounce a stone off of his head.” to which he agreed we prepared accordingly & I got an opportunity & hit him on the back of his head which came very near taking his life. But few knew anything about what was the matter he left the ground out of his senses when he came to himself he could not tell what had happened to him &c” (Ibid., vol. 1, p. 103). Other entries in Hosea Stout’s diary show that he was a very brutal man (see The Mormon Kingdom, vol. 2, p. 7).

President Brigham Young seemed to delight in the fact that he had some ruthless men who could help him out when violence seemed necessary. In fact, he once boasted: “And if the Gentiles wish to see a few tricks, we have ‘Mormons’ that can perform them. We have the meanest devils on the earth in our midst, and we intend to keep them, for we have use for them; and if the Devil does not look sharp, we will cheat him out of them at the last, for they will reform and go to heaven with us” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 6, p. 176). Brigham Young was undoubtedly referring to men like Orrin Porter Rockwell and Bill Hickman when he made this statement.

As we have already stated, Hickman confessed that he had committed murders which had been ordered by President Brigham Young and Apostle Orson Hyde. In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 444-447, we give evidence that Bill Hickman robbed and murdered the enemies of the church and that he had the approval and protection of Mormon leaders in carrying out his crimes. That the Mormon leaders approved of Hickman’s crimes is clear from the journal of John Bennion. In 1860 Bennion felt that William Hickman and his brother, George Hickman, should be punished for their evil deeds, but he soon learned that Bishop Gardiner “had been bound & could not act” and that Orson Hyde—President of the Twelve Apostles—taught that a man should not be punished for stealing from the “gentiles.” The following is taken from Bennion’s journal:

"Sat 13 went to the city met Bp Gardiner had a talk with him about W. A. Hickmans wicked course for some time past he said that up till now he had been bound & could not act I told him I was not bound neither was I afraid to expose the wickedness of any man that it was my duty to expose we got home about sun down in the evening I met with Bp & councilors & parties concerned [to] try George Hickman for stealing mules when about to commence trial Elder Hyde come
in and by Bp Gardners solicitation he preached and the trial was postponed after meeting Bp council & Elder Hyde had a long talk in my house br Hyde said speaking of stealing that a man may steal & be influenced by the Spirit of the Lord to do it that Hickman had done it years past and that he never would institute a trial against a brother for stealing from the gentiles but stealing from his brethren he was down on it he laid down much teaching on the subject.

S 14th went to meeting at the mill to hear br Hyde . . . he give much good instruction spoke on last nights intention to try Hickman give it as the word of the Lord to set him free for the past, bid him go & sin no more. ("John Bennion Journal," October 13 and 14, 1860, original journal at Utah State Historical Society)

Since this evidence comes from John Bennion’s journal—not from an anti-Mormon or unfriendly source—it cannot be easily dismissed.

In his confessions, Bill Hickman tells that he received orders from Brigham Young through Apostle Hyde to eliminate Jesse Hartley, a man whom the church leaders did not trust:

...I set out with Judge Appleby and Rev. Orson Hyde ... When we had got ... into East Cañon, some three or four miles, one Mr. Hartley came to us from Provo City. This Hartley ... had married a Miss Bullock, of Provo ... at the April Conference, Brigham Young, before the congregation, gave him a tremendous blowing up, calling him all sorts of bad names, and saying he ought to have his throat cut ...

I saw [Apostle] Orson Hyde looking very sour at him, and after he had been in camp an hour or two, Hyde told me that he had orders from Brigham Young, if he came to Fort Supply to have him used up. “Now,” said he, “I want you and George Boyd to do it.” ... Boyd came to me and said: “It’s all right, Bill; I will help you to kill that fellow.” One of our teams was two or three miles behind, and Orson Hyde wished me to go back ... Hartley stepped up and said he would go ... Orson Hyde then whispered to me: “Now is your time; don’t let him come back.” We started, and about half a mile on had to cross the cañon stream ... While crossing, Hartley got a shot and fell dead in the creek. . . . I went on and met Hosea Stout ... I then told him all that had happened, and he said that was good. (Brigham’s Destroying Angel, 1904 reprint, pp. 96-98)

Hickman’s claim that Hosea Stout said “that was good” when he heard of the murder of Hartley reminds us of Stout’s own entry in his diary when he learned that the “police had beat a man almost to death in the Temple.” The reader will remember that Stout arrogantly recorded that he told those who had complained about the matter that he was “glad of it and that I had given orders to that effect . . . ”

In 1872, Bill Hickman made a confession of his crimes to R. N. Baskin. Mr. Baskin, who later served as mayor of Salt Lake City and became a member of the supreme court of the State of Utah, gave this report in his book, Reminiscences of Early Utah, page 150:

The Danites were an organization in the Mormon church. Its existence was stated by Bill Hickman in his confession made to me. He gave me the names of more than a score of its active members, among whom were a number of reputed notorious Danite assassins. He stated that the members were bound by their covenants to execute the orders of the priesthood, and that when a direct order or intimation was given to “use up” anyone, it was always executed by one or more of the members, according to the circumstances of the case. That such an organization existed is conclusively shown by the numerous mysterious murders which were never investigated by the executive officers of the Territory, or any attempt made to prosecute the guilty parties. The Mormon sermons, the confessions of Hickman and Lee, and numerous other circumstances made plain its existence. Hickman confessed to me that he personally knew of thirteen persons having been murdered, some of them by him, and others by various Danites; that at one time he murdered a man by the name of Buck at the personal request of Brigham Young.

In 1979, there was an attempt by former Church Historian Leonard J. Arrington and Hope A. Hilton, a great-granddaughter of Bill Hickman, to undermine Bill Hickman’s confession which was published in Brigham’s Destroying Angel. Their thesis concerning the book was similar to that set forth by Dr. Hugh Nibley. They felt that Hickman had written a manuscript, but that “a skilled anti-Mormon journalists,” J. H. Beadle, had altered it to link Brigham Young and the Mormon hierarchy to the crimes:

Unquestionably, Bill wrote an autobiography that served as the basis for the book. Although it is no longer extant, family members report having seen the manuscript, and Brigham’s Destroying Angel could not have been prepared without such a personal history. On the other hand, enough manuscript material in Bill’s handwriting survives for us to assert with confidence that the published draft of Brigham’s Destroying Angel was not written by Hickman. The style is different, and the editorializing and sensationalizing are alien to Bill’s spirit. . . . unquestionably the autobiography was subjected to tampering, if not ghost-writing, and was almost certainly given a market orientation by Beadle. We are confident that the editorializing and ‘setting the record straight,’ Task Papers in LDS History, No. 28, Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979, Foreword, pp. i-ii)

On pages 33-34 of the same paper, we find the following:

Beadle, who was in the process of writing an anti-Mormon book . . . did edit the manuscript to make it count for the maximum in the anti-Mormon cause, and did introduce phrases that linked Brigham Young and the “Mormon Hierarchy” to criminal activities.

The claim by Arrington and Hilton that Bill Hickman denied the accuracy of the published book is based primarily on the statement of William H. Kimball. There are at least two reasons why this statement seems very questionable: First, it was not “relayed to Orson F. Whitney by Kimball on November 15, 1892): “My book is a lie from the beginning to the end—from the boar through. . . . I was bribed to write that book. I was told that I could make fifty thousand dollars out of it, and that is why I did it.” (Leonard J. Arrington and Hope A. Hilton, “William A. (‘Bill’) Hickman: Setting the Record Straight,” Task Papers in LDS History, No. 28, Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979, Foreword, pp. i-ii)

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was certainly based only on wishful thinking. They did not produce any manuscript evidence to support such a conclusion. Moreover, their own paper contains information which makes their position untenable. On page 53 of their study, they cite the following from a letter written by Brigham Young on September 27, 1871: “They have, I am informed, brought before their exclusive, packed grand jury one Wm. Hickman . . . and, he evidently to save himself from justice, has laid at my door some or all of those crimes . . .”

Now, if Bill Hickman would testify before a grand jury that Brigham Young was guilty of the crimes—and it is very clear that he did give such testimony—why would he hesitate to put the same claim in his manuscript? The evidence clearly shows that Hickman planned to openly testify against the Mormon leaders when they were brought to trial. It also seems naive to assume that the anti-Mormons would be willing to give Hickman a bribe of $50,000 to link the Mormon leaders to his crimes, but accept a manuscript from him which, according to the Arrington-Hilton thesis, provided absolutely no evidence to that effect until it was altered by Beadle.

Fortunately, after writing the paper with Church Historian Leonard Arrington, Hope A. Hilton seems to have done further research on the matter and in a new book on Bill Hickman she has repudiated the idea that J. H. Beadle added the material linking Brigham Young to the crimes. Mrs. Hilton now states:

I do not question whether Hickman actually wrote *Brigham’s Destroying Angel*. It is too accurate in its details to have been written by anyone else . . .

I have relied on Hickman’s *Brigham’s Destroying Angel*: . . . for facts of Hickman’s life that can be corroborated from other sources. . . . Beadle did not have access to Brigham Young’s daily office journal or to other sources available today which confirm many of the book’s first-hand statements. . . . one of the most compelling questions about Hickman is why he implicated Brigham Young, Hosea Stout, William Kimball, and others both in his book and in court. (*Wild Bill* *Hickman and the Mormon Frontier*, 1988, Preface, pp. x-xi)

On page 127 of her book, Hope Hilton wrote: “To his daughter, Katharine Hickman Butcher, Hickman told the truth when he wrote on 7 January 1872 from the Fort Douglas prison: ‘I have written a rough book, but no more rough than true.’” In the preface to her book, p. xi, Mrs. Hilton stated: “. . . avowedly anti-Mormon editor, J. H. Beadle, wrote the preface to the autobiography and the first chapter. He also wrote the bitter diatribe against Young and the Mormons on pages 137-139, probably the first paragraph on page 192, and several other brief inserts, sometimes adding only a single word. Except for these additions, Hickman’s mind and hand are the book’s undisputed source.”

Although there is no reason to believe that Mrs. Hilton is trying to deceive her readers, those who do not have a copy of *Brigham’s Destroying Angel* to refer to may be inclined to believe that Beadle played a larger role in editing the text than he actually did. At the end of the preface the name “J. H. Beadle” appears. The first chapter, likewise, contains a statement that makes it clear that Beadle is the author: “CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTORY HISTORY. BY THE EDITOR.” Pages 137-139 are also separated from Hickman’s writings with the words: “BY THE EDITOR.” It would appear, then, that Mrs. Hilton now believes that only “the first paragraph on page 192, and several other brief inserts,” were added to the text. It is also clear that she is not even certain that Beadle added the paragraph on page 192 because she begins her statement with the word “probably.” Furthermore, she says that “only a single word” is added in some of the “other” places.

It is interesting to note that J. H. Beadle made these comments concerning his role in editing the manuscript:

I then agreed to take charge of his [Hickman’s] manuscript, and, to use his own language, “Fix it up in shape, so people would understand it.” My first intention was to re-write it entirely, speaking of Hickman in the third person; but one perusal satisfied me that it would be far better as he had written it. I have thought it best, also, to preserve his own phraseology nearly exactly, only inserting a word occasionally where absolutely necessary to prevent mistake. . . . I think every critic must admit that our sentimental and religious murderer has a singularly pleasing style.

A perusal of some of the letters of Bill Hickman, which Hope Hilton has included in her book, shows that Hickman was qualified to write such a book.

**HICKMAN’S WORK FOUND?**

The significant change in Mrs. Hilton’s position concerning Beadle’s role in editing Hickman’s book and her comments concerning the matter raise some interesting questions: Why did she make such a major change in her thesis? Is it possible that she has located the original manuscript of *Brigham’s Destroying Angel?* (A Mormon researcher once told us that he was on the track of this manuscript and had traced it to a vault. He did not, however, reveal where this vault was located.) Mrs. Hilton’s statements concerning the matter are rather strange. She gives no reason as to why she has singled out the paragraph on page 192 as “probably” an interpolation by Beadle. (This paragraph seems to contain no significant information.) If she had compared the original manuscript, however, and noted that the paragraph did not appear there, she would be suspicious that it was added by Beadle. She, of course, would not know for certain that Beadle was the author. Anyone who had access to the manuscript could have added the words. Furthermore, those who prepare manuscripts for publication know that sometimes writers send additional material or corrections in letters to their publishers. This uncertainty might force a scholar like Hope Hilton to qualify her comment to say that the paragraph was “probably” added by Beadle.

While this is only a matter of speculation, there is a very strange reference to an important Hickman document in the earlier Arrington-Hilton paper, page 39: “As for manuscript materials, the LDS Church Archives in Salt Lake City has a short holograph autobiography, which we have used without attribution; . . .” While one would think that this would be an extremely significant document for a historian writing about Hickman, in her published book Mrs. Hilton never even refers to this document. It is obvious that something is wrong here. Why do Arrington and Hilton say they are using it “without attribution” in their original paper? Is this document something the church is trying to suppress?

Although Arrington and Hilton claimed that they used the handwritten Hickman autobiography “without attribution,” there is one actual quotation from it on the first page of their paper: “. . . his grandfather told Bill that he had twenty-one blood relations in the War of the Revolution—and not one Tory among them!” The footnote for this citation reads as follows: “From the William A. Hickman Autobiography, holograph manuscript, Hickman Collection, Church Archives, p. 1.” It is very interesting to note that the words cited are similar to the opening page of Hickman’s narrative published in *Brigham’s Destroying Angel*, page 25: “I had, according to my grandfather’s story, twenty-one blood relatives in the Revolutionary War, ‘and not a Tory among them . . .’”
We wonder if it is possible that Arrington and Hilton had access to just a portion of the original manuscript of Brigham’s Destroying Angel at the time they wrote their paper and did not recognize it as such. It could also be possible that someone later compared the original manuscript with the published book but was forbidden to release any information concerning the manuscript’s existence. Unless the church releases the handwritten “Hickman Autobiography” we may never know the truth about this matter.

In any case, in 1979, Arrington and Hilton felt they could “assert with confidence that the published draft of Brigham’s Destroying Angel was not written by Hickman.” Today, however, Hope Hilton feels that “Hickman’s mind and hand are the book’s undisputed source.” Although we would like to know just what evidence brought her to this conclusion, we are very happy that Mrs. Hilton has been honest enough to repudiate the old theory. We feel that her book is a valuable contribution to the study of Bill Hickman. It includes some very important material from the LDS Church Archives which we did not have access to before. Although the research we had done prior to the publication of Hope Hilton’s book had already led us to conclude that Bill Hickman was receiving his orders from Brigham Young and other Mormon leaders, “Wild Bill” Hickman and the Mormon Frontier furnishes a great deal of new information showing that Hickman was deeply involved with church leaders.

On pages 9, 10, 12 and 13 of her book, Mrs. Hilton revealed:

On 6 May [1839], Hickman met Joseph Smith, Jr., who ordered Bill ordained to the Council of Seventy the same day. . . . Hickman seemed a natural choice to be one of the bodyguards of the prophet Joseph. A similar call was extended to Hosea Stout, Orrin Porter Rockwell, and Lot Smith . . . . Dressed in white, surrounding their beloved prophet, these four men would have made an impressive sight. . . . [Brigham] Young assigned Hickman to oversee covert spying activities, to “subdue” the enemies of the church, and to serve as his chief bodyguard. Hickman and others in a tightly knit group served Smith in Nauvoo and Young in Winter Quarters . . . . From 1850 to 1853, they shared the duties of government with Young’s secret political organization, the Council of Fifty. . . . Hickman was not a Mormon during the Danite heyday in Missouri, and there is no reliable evidence that the Danites, as such, survived after 1838 as an organization. However, that some vigilante Mormons, notably Hickman, continued to espouse the Danite philosophy they had been taught by church leaders of “attacking the Gentiles to preserve the Saints” seems apparent.

Some Mormon apologists have tried to make an issue over the fact that Bill Hickman was called a “Danite” on the title page of Brigham’s Destroying Angel. Mrs. Hilton, however, put the matter in perspective when she said that he “continued to espouse the Danite philosophy.” While it is true that the original organization ceased to exist in the late 1830’s, it is also clear that the church had men in early Utah who performed exactly the same function. Mormon writer Klaus J. Hansen says that “several important Danites were among those initiated into the Council of Fifty in 1844” (Quest for Empire, p. 58). He also admits that the Council of Fifty may have been involved in the practice of “blood atonement”:

If, according to this doctrine, a member of the kingdom committed the crimes of murder and adultery, or if he betrayed one of his fellow Mormons to the enemies of the church, or revealed the secrets of the kingdom, he could save his soul only if he expiated for the crime by the shedding of his blood. Blood atonement was, of course, a form of capital punishment, yet because of its theological implications, and because the Council of Fifty was to administer it, the doctrine was surrounded with an aura of mystery, terror, and holy murder. The Council of Fifty heightened the atmosphere of fear and secrecy associated with this practice by conducting cases involving the possibility of blood atonement in utmost secrecy for fear of public repercussions. (Ibid., p. 69)

It seems rather ridiculous to quibble over the word “Danite” when the evidence shows that Bill Hickman functioned in the same way that the Danite band did in Missouri. As a matter of fact, on July 5, 1857, Brigham Young himself used the word “Danite” when referring to “the boys” who took care of unruly people who came to Utah: “If men come here and do not behave themselves, they will not only find the Danites, whom they talk so much about, biting the horses’s heels, but the scoundrels will find something biting their heels. In my plain remarks, I merely call things by their right names” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 5, p. 6). Because of the circumstances surrounding Hickman’s work for the Mormon leaders and in view of Brigham Young’s own statement, we see no reason why a person should be disturbed if he is called a “Danite.” Those who are concerned with this term, however, might refer to Hickman as a Mormon “spy” or one of the first members of “Church Security.”

In the Forward to the 1979 paper by Arrington and Hilton (p. iii), Leonard Arrington indicated that Philip Jordan had “apparently confused Hickman’s Church security assignments with the work of the earlier Danites. These two groups were as much unlike as the Mafia and the FBI . . . . the actions once attributed to the Danites were probably those of individuals or of Mormon security forces—deputy sheriffs, territorial militia, and/or minutemen.” This statement seems rather naive in light of the evidence which was available in 1979. In any case, on page 2 of the same manuscript, we read that Hickman “was chosen as one of a group of twelve men who served as bodyguards and ‘protectors’ of Joseph Smith. He was apparently a ‘regular’ with the Mormon security forces during the period (1843-1844) . . . .” Later in Utah, “Bill Hickman was assigned to lead one of the parties of scouts delegated to ‘spy’ on the [U.S.] Army . . . . Hickman’s intelligence reports to Governor Young show him to have been effective in the tasks assigned to him. Some of his spies disguised themselves as California emigrants and went in among the troops. . . . Bill’s personal assignment, under an official appointment from Brigham Young as Governor, was to ‘keep watch on the Army.’ And apparently Bill did this, and perhaps magnified his calling by keeping watch on its horses as well. At least later stories began to drift in of a group of men, allegedly connected with Hickman, who rustled some of the Army’s livestock” (Ibid., pp. 14, 17, 18).

On page 27 of the same manuscript, we learn that in 1863, Hickman “reported [Colonel Patrick] Connor’s movements and intentions to Brigham Young . . . once more carrying out an important intelligence assignment for the pioneer leader.”

In her published book, Hope Hilton says that “Hickman’s primary assignment was to spy on the church’s enemies in Nauvoo (such as Colonel Williams), although he was also occasionally given orders to execute punishments. Bill Hickman rarely shirked an assignment from Young . . . .” (“Wild Bill” Hickman and the Mormon Frontier, p. 15). On pages 43 and 45, Mrs. Hilton says that in Green River County, Utah, where Hickman served as “county assessor, tax collector, prosecuting attorney, and Utah territorial legislative representative” he “was also Brigham Young’s eyes and ears.” In his published confession, Bill Hickman tells of his meetings with Brigham Young. Mrs. Hilton confirms that Hickman had many contacts
with Young, both by mail and in person. Concerning one meeting Bill Hickman had with Brigham Young, Hilton notes: “Young’s own journal recorded simply, ‘Friday, June 26th, 1857: Spent the forenoon with Brother Hickman who arrived yesterday from the States’” (Ibid., p. 65). On page 84, she gives this information:

During 1858-59, at least two local gangs of horse thieves were operating in Utah: Bill Hickman’s and that of Joachim “Cub” Johnson. . . .

During this time Hickman was serving Brigham Young as one of his spies. Young needed informers to watch the army and to contact prominent Gentiles about their views of the church and chose Hickman.

On page 85, Mrs. Hilton quotes the following from Brigham Young’s journal: “It is rumored that five marshals left Camp Floyd yesterday sworn to arrest or kill Bill Hickman on the spot. Bill was warned and left home in time.”

In the earlier paper, pages 43-44, Arrington and Hilton had questioned the authorship of a story in Brigham’s Destroying Angel concerning the murder of a “half-breed Indian.” They even suggested that “Beadle transposes the event to 1848 [instead of 1849] in order to involve Brigham Young.” In her new book, Mrs. Hilton no longer seems to question the date of the murder or the authorship of the statement:

Most surviving evidence reveals that Bill Hickman, Brigham Young, and Orson Hyde were close friends. Perhaps the events recounted in Hickman’s autobiography account for these bonds. According to his memoir, Hickman killed a half-breed Indian who had joined the Mormon church but subsequently threatened Young’s life. Later, he killed a notorious horse-thief who was seeking revenge against Hyde. Hickman admits to both killings and claims they were the first acts of violence performed at Young’s request. Young gratefully promised to make him “a great man in the Kingdom” sometime later. . . . Hyde would later go to great lengths to defend Hickman . . . In the spring of 1848, Brigham Young left Nebraska . . . he requested that Bill stay behind to protect Hyde . . . (pages 19-20)

After Brigham Young left, Bill Hickman murdered two more Indians. In their 1979 paper, page 43, Arrington and Hilton revealed that Joseph Young, Brigham Young’s brother, wrote him a letter on June 26, 1849, stating that “this bloody fray” reminded him of the tragic scene at Haun’s Mill—“an outrage on the principles of humanity.” The outrage was “unprovoked on the part of the Indians and without council or pretext for such cruelty.” William Hickman is a cold-blooded murderer, and as such he stands before every tribunal of justice in Heaven and on Earth and when the Judge of all the Earth makes inquisition for innocent blood it will be found dripping from the hands of William Hickman.” On June 1, 1849, Apostle Orson Hyde wrote a letter to Brigham Young in which he defended Bill Hickman:

“Brother Hickman has gone to the valley. You may hear some bad accounts of him, but don’t kill him till I come! It may be that my testimony may have a little bearing in his case! He is sometimes a little rash and may shoot an innocent Indian, mistaking him for an Omaha horse thief!” (“Wild Bill” Hickman and the Mormon Frontier, p. 24)

Notwithstanding the fact that Brigham Young was warned by his own brother that Bill Hickman was “a cold-blooded murderer,” he continued to use him in early Utah to rob and assassinate enemies of the church. Mrs. Hilton informs us on page 62 of her book, that in 1857, . . . hands were laid on Hickman’s head and he was given a blessing by church patriarch, John Young: “. . . You shall have power over all your enemies, even to set your feet upon their necks, and no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper . . . If you are faithful you shall assist in avenging the blood of the prophets of God, and assist in accomplishing the great work of the last days . . .”

On April 25, 1865, Bill Hickman wrote a letter to Brigham Young in which he confided:

If you want me to do anything, just let me know it . . . If you want this or that, or whatever you may think, I will try. Or if you want my life you can have it without a murmur or a groan, just let me know late or early. I will be there, and there will be no tale left behind . . . I am on hand. (Ibid., p. 113)

Bill Hickman was known to have killed many people in early Utah, yet he seemed to have been shielded from prosecution by the Mormon Church. Orrin Porter Rockwell was another murderer who received protection from the church. Rockwell was one of the first to become a member of the church and soon became one of Joseph Smith’s intimate friends. In Missouri, he joined the dreaded Danite band, served as a bodyguard for Joseph Smith, and was initiated into the secret Council of Fifty.

Both Hickman and Rockwell participated in the Aiken massacre. Although this slaughter did not involve as many people as the Mountain Meadows Massacre, it was certainly one of the cruelest deeds the early Mormons ever perpetrated. J. H. Beadle gave the following information concerning this cold-blooded transaction:

The party consisted of six men . . . on reaching Kaysville, twenty-five miles north of Salt Lake City, they were all arrested on the charge of being spies for the Government! . . . The Aikin party had stock, property, and money estimated at $25,000. Nothing being proved against them they were told they should be “sent out of the Territory by the Southern route.” Four of them started, leaving Buck and one of the unknown men in the city. The party had for an escort, O. P. Rockwell, John Lot, Miles, and one other. When they reached Nephi, one hundred miles south, Rockwell informed the Bishop, Bryant, that his orders were to “have the men used up there.” Bishop Bryant called a council at once, and the following men were selected to assist: J. Bigler (now a Bishop,) P. Pitchforth, his “first councilor,” John Kink, and Pickton. The selected murderers, at 11 p.m., started from the Tithing House and got ahead of the Aikins’, who did not start till daylight. The latter reached the Sevier River, when Rockwell informed them they could find no other camp that day; they halted, when the other party approached and asked to camp with them, for which permission was granted. The weary men removed their arms and heavy clothing, and were soon lost in sleep . . . the escort and the party from Nephi attacked the sleeping men with clubs and the kingbolts of the wagons. Two died without a struggle. But John Aiken bounded to his feet, but slightly wounded, and sprang into the brush. A shot from the pistol of John Kink laid him senseless. ‘Colonel’ also reached the brush, receiving a shot in the shoulder from Port Rockwell, and believing the whole party had been attacked by banditti, he made his way back to Nephi. With almost superhuman strength he held out during the twenty-five miles . . . ghastly pale and drenched with his own blood, staggering feebly along the streets of Nephi . . . his story elicited a well-feigned horror.

Meanwhile the murderers had gathered up the other three and thrown them into the river, supposing all to be dead. But John Aiken revived and crawled out on the same side, and hiding in the brush, heard these terrible words:

“Are the damned Gentiles all dead, Port?”
“All but one — the son of a b . . . ran.”

Supposing himself to be meant, Aiken lay still till the
Danites left, then . . . set out for Neph . . . To return to Neph offered but slight hope, but it was his only hope . . . He sank helpless at the door of the first house he reached, but the words he heard infused new life into him. The woman, afterwards a witness, said to him, “Why, another of you ones got away from the robbers, and is at Brother Broo de’s.”

“Thank God, it is my brother,” he said, and started on. The citizens tell with wonder that he ran the whole distance, his hair clotted with blood, reeling like a drunken man all the way. It was not his brother, but “Colonel.”

Bishop Bryant came, extracted the balls, dressed the wounds, and advised the men to return, as soon as they were able, to Salt Lake City.

According to the main witness, a woman of Neph, all regarded them as doomed. They had got four miles on the road, when their driver, a Mormon named Wolf, stopped the wagon near an old cabin: informed them he must water the horses; unhitched them, and moved away. Two men then stepped from the cabin, and fired with double-barreled guns; Aikin and “Colonel” were both shot through the head, and fell dead from the wagon. Their bodies were then loaded with stone and put in one of those “bottomless springs”—so called—common in that part of Utah.

Meanwhile Rockwell and party had reached the city [Salt Lake City], taken Buck and the other man, and started southward, plying them with liquor . . . they reached the Point of the Mountain. There it was decided to “use them up,” and they were attacked with slung-shots and billies. The other man was instantly killed. Buck leaped from the wagon, outran his pursuers, their shots missing him, swam the Jordan, and came down it on the west side. He reached the city and related all that occurred, which created quite a stir. Hickman was then sent for to ‘finish the job,’ which he did as related in the text.

_Brigham’s Destroying Angel_, pp. 206-210)

Bill Hickman claimed that he was summoned to Brigham Young’s office. When he arrived, he asked President Young what he wanted. Young answered: “The boys have made a bad job of trying to put a man out of the way. They all got drunk, bruised up a fellow, and he got away from them at the Point of the Mountain, came back to this city, and is telling all that happened, which is making a big stink. He said I must get him out of the way and use him up” (Ibid., p. 128). Hickman goes on to say that the last surviving member of the Aiken party trusted a man by the name of George Dalton. Dalton was able to lure the man out to a secluded spot beyond “the Hot Springs three miles north of the city” where Hickman was waiting in ambush and shot him “through the head” (Ibid., p. 129). The next day Bill Hickman “went to Brigham Young’s, told him that Buck was taken care of, and there would be no more stink about his stories. He said he was glad of it. Buck was the last one of the Aiken’s party . . .” (Ibid., pp. 129-130).

There can be no doubt that the Mormons did take the Aiken party as prisoners and murdered them as related by J. H. Beadle and Bill Hickman. Under the date of November 3, 1857, Hosea Stout recorded the following in his diary: “Cal mail came and six cal prisoners taken at Box Elder supposed spies” (On_the_Mormon_Frontier, The Diary of Hosea Stout, vol. 2, p. 644). On November 9, 1857, Hosea Stout recorded that he himself was “guarding the prisoners from Cal.” Finally, on November 20, 1857, Stout made this very revealing entry in his diary:

O. P. Rockwell with 3 or 4 others started with 4 of the prisoners, which we had been guarding for some days, South to escort them through the settlements to Cal via South route The other two are going to be permitted to go at large and remain till spring and the guard dismissed. (Ibid., p. 645).

Mormon writer Harold Schindler has done an excellent job of compiling the evidence concerning the Aiken massacre. His research leads to the unmistakable conclusion that Rockwell was involved in the bloody deed (see _Orrin Porter Rockwell: Man of God, Son of Thunder_, 1966, pp. 268-279).

Less than two years after the Aiken massacre, U. S. Marshall P. K. Dotson held a warrant for Orrin Porter Rockwell’s arrest. Dotson found it impossible to make the arrest, and Rockwell retained his freedom for twenty years. He was in full fellowship with the Mormon Church during this period, and on June 1, 1873, he was called on a mission to Grass Valley (Ibid., p. 356). Finally, on September 29, 1877, Rockwell was arrested for his part in the Aiken massacre. He was 64 years old at the time. On June 9, 1878, Orrin Porter Rockwell died, and therefore he did not have to face a trial which could have been very embarrassing for the Mormon Church.

Mormon Apostle Orson Hyde, the man who ordered Bill Hickman to kill Hartley and protected him in his crimes, apparently felt that Hickman and Rockwell were like shepherd dogs who protected the Mormon Church. In an address delivered in the Tabernacle on April 9,1853, Apostle Hyde made these chilling hints concerning the matter:

_Suppose the shepherd should discover a wolf approaching the flock, what would he be likely to do? Why, we should suppose, if the wolf was within proper distance, that he would kill him at once . . . in short, that he would shoot him down, kill him on the spot. If the wolf was not within shot, we would naturally suppose he would set the dogs on him; and you are aware, I have no doubt, that these shepherd dogs have very pointed teeth . . .

Now don’t say that brother Hyde has taught strong things, for I have only told you what takes place between the shepherd and the flock, when the sheep have to be protected.

If you say that the Priesthood or authorities of the Church here are the shepherd, and the Church is the flock, you can make your own application of this figure. It is not at all necessary for me to do it.

It is all the same to me whether they want to destroy the flock, or destroy, steal, and carry off the property of the flock . . . the best way to sanctify ourselves, and please God our heavenly Father in these days, is to rid ourselves of every thief . . . It would have a tendency to place a terror on those who leave these parts, that may prove their salvation when they see the heads of thieves taken off, or shot down before the public. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 1, pp. 72-73)

As Bill Hickman became older, it became obvious that he was becoming increasingly difficult to control. His gun fights and public intoxication were becoming very embarrassing to the church. It was evident that he presented a danger to the flock itself. Richard S. Van Wagoner and Steven C. Walker give this interesting information in their book concerning an incident which occurred in 1860:

According to Brigham Young’s office journal, “Mayor Smoot had a conversation with the President about Wm. A. Hickman, observing people see him come in and out the office, and that leads them to suppose he is sanctioned in all he does by the President. He also observed that dogs were necessary to take care of the flock, but if the Shepherd’s dogs hurt the sheep it would be time to remove them.” (A_Book_of_Mormons_, p. 122)
to work for General Patrick Connor in 1863. Hope Hilton says:

Brigham Young distrusted men who accepted government employment and advised Hickman twice during the summer of 1863 to leave Connor’s employ and, as Hickman puts it, to “kidnap Connor, the Irish Ditcher, and send him over into California.” Young, according to Hickman, offered $1,000, plus all expenses. “I stood up to Brigham for the first time ever, and said I would not do it,” Hickman wrote . . . (“Wild Bill” Hickman and the Mormon Frontier, p. 110)

Mrs. Hilton says that Young and Hickman eventually became “irreconcilably hardened towards each other” (Ibid., p. 120). On page 119 of the same book, Hilton stated that Hickman wrote a letter to Young in which “he must have threatened to ‘disclose all.’” Finally, “Without a bishop’s court, trial, or stated complaint, he was denied his church membership on 12 June 1868.”

In 1871, Bill Hickman met will U.S. Marshal H. Gilson and confessed he had committed murder for the church. He then appeared before a Grand Jury and “made a full statement of all the crimes committed in this Territory that I knew of . . .” (Brigham’s Destroying Angel, page 192).

**BRIGHAM YOUNG INDICTED FOR MURDER**

The Mormon historian B. H. Roberts referred to the massacre of the Fancher train which Mormons and Indians committed at Mountain Meadows in 1857 as “the most lamentable episode in Utah history, and in the history of the church” (Comprehensive History of the Church, vol. 4, p. 139). Although we do not have the room to discuss that massacre here, the reader will find a good account of it in our book, Major Problems of Mormonism, pages 193-202. We have already spoken of the massacre of the Aiken party and the slaying of Jesse Hartley for opposing the church. These were certainly not the only cases of blood atonement in early Utah. In Major Problems of Mormonism, page 181, we reported concerning the murders of Ramos Anderson and Dr. Vaun for adultery. John D. Lee tells of other people who were “blood atoned.” In addition, Hosea Stout related that on February 27, 1858, “several persons disguised as Indians entered Henry Jones’ house and dragged him out of bed with a whore and castrated him by a square & close amputation” (On The Mormon Frontier; The Diary of Hosea Stout, vol. 2, p. 653). Two months later both Henry Jones and his mother were “blood atoned” in Payson—all allegedly for incest. James Monroe was murdered for adultery. Three “apostates named Potter, Wilson and Walker,” were arrested by the Mormons for stealing and were shot. Only Walker survived and later he seems to have disappeared. In Springville, Garder G. Potter, William R. Parrish and his son, William B. Parrish were assassinated for apostacy. All of these murders seem to have been committed by people who believed in the “doctrine” of blood atonement (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pp. 545-559).

Due to the secrecy surrounding blood atonement, the reported cases may represent only a portion of those who were actually put to death. R. N. Baskin, who served as a Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Utah, was not sure how many people were blood atoned in early Utah, but he noted:

In the excavations made within the limits of Salt Lake City during the time I have resided there, many human skeletons have been exhumed in various parts of the city. The present City cemetery was established by the first settlers. I have never heard that it was ever the custom to bury the dead promiscuously throughout the city; and as no coffins were ever found in connection with any of these skeletons, it is evident that the death of the persons to whom they once belonged did not result from natural causes, but from the use of criminal means. . . . That the Danites were bound by their covenants to execute the criminal orders of the high priesthood against apostates and alleged enemies of the church is beyond question. . . . How many murders were secretly committed by that band of assassins will never be known, but an estimate may be made from the number mentioned in the confessions of Hickman and Lee, and the number of human skeletons which have been exhumed in Salt Lake City, the possessors of which were evidently murdered and buried without a knell, coffin, or Christian ceremony. (Reminiscences of Early Utah, pages 154-155)

However this may be, an historian who takes an honest look at conditions in early Utah is forced to the conclusion that there is no way all these murders could have been committed and the killers allowed to remain free unless the church itself was involved in a conspiracy. The following statements are taken from “the remarks of Judge Cradlebaugh upon the occasion of his releasing the Grand Jury” from further service in 1859:

This day makes two weeks from the time you were impanelled. . . . the court took the unusual course of calling your attention to particular crimes—the horrible massacre at the Mountain meadows. It told you of the murder of young Jones and his mother, and of pulling their house down over them and making that their tomb, it told you of the murder of the Parrishes and Potter, and Forbes, almost within sight of this court house. . . . The court has had occasion to issue bench warrants to arrest persons connected with the Parrish murder; had them brought before it and examined; the testimony presents an unparalleled condition of affairs. It seems that the whole community were engaged in committing that crime. There seems to be a combined effort on the part of the community to screen the murderers from the punishment due for the murder they have committed.

I might call your attention to the fact that when officers seek to arrest persons accused of crimes they are not able to do so; the parties are screened and secreted by the community. Scarcely had the officers arrived in sight of the town of Springville before a trumpet was sounded from the walls of the town. This, no doubt, was for the purpose of giving the alarm. The officers were there to make arrests. The officers leave the town, and in a short time a trumpet sounds again from the wall for the purpose of announcing that the danger was over. Witnesses are screened; others are intimidated by persons in that community. . . . Such acts and conduct go to show that the community there do not desire to have criminals punished, it shows that the Parishes and Potter were murdered by counsel, that it was done by authority. . . . (The Valley Tan, March 29, 1859, p. 3)

U. S. Marshal P. K. Dotson became very frustrated when he tried to serve warrants on about 40 men involved in the Mountain Meadows massacre, the Aiken massacre and other crimes. He wrote the following in a letter to Judge Cradlebaugh:

I have received from you certain warrants of arrest against many persons, in your Judicial district, charged with murder. . . . I regret to inform you that it is not in my power to execute any of these processes, I have made repeated efforts by the aid as well of the military, as of the civil posse, to execute the warrants last alluded to, but without success. So great is the number of persons engaged in the commission of these crimes, and such the feeling of the Mormon Church, and the community in their favor, that I cannot rely on a civil
posse to aid me in arresting them. . . . (“Journal History,” June 3, 1859, as cited in Orrin Porter Rockwell; Man of God, Son of Thunder, pp. 292-293)

It was obvious to many people in early Utah that Brigham Young was responsible for the death of many people, but with the power he had it would be almost impossible to convict him. After Bill Hickman confessed to committing murders for the church, some felt that there might be a chance of successfully prosecuting President Young for ordering the murder of Richard Yates. Hickman gave this information about the death of Yates:

One Yates, a trader . . . came to Bridger twice, buying beef cattle for the Government. . . . We kept watch of the United States camps every day . . . One day they moved up the creek about four miles, and we saw a vacancy between them and their cattle. We made a rush and drove off seven hundred and fifty head . . .

About this time it was noised about that Yates had let the soldiers have his ammunition, and that he was acting the spy for them. . . . One of the Conover boys . . . saw a lone man traveling. . . . After learning his name, Yates, he marched him to Bridger, where he was placed in the big stone corral and a guard placed over him. . . .

I will here state that the office I held was that of independent captain, amenable to none but the head commanding general or governor, Brigham Young. . . . I was asked to take the prisoner, Yates, to the city with me. . . . He had a fine gold watch and nine hundred dollars in gold . . . we traveled about halfway down Echo Canon to where the general’s headquarters were located . . . I delivered General Wells [a member of the First Presidency under Brigham Young] some letters . . . and asked him what I should do with my prisoner. He said: “He ought to be killed; but take him on; you will probably get an order when you get to Col. Jones’ camp” . . . within three or four miles of the camp, we met Joseph S. Young, a son of Brigham’s . . . He hailed me (I being behind) and said his father wanted that man Yates killed, and that I would know all about it when I got to Jones’ camp.

We got there about sundown, and were met outside by Col. Jones . . . He took me aside and told me he had orders when Yates came along to have him used up . . . Supper was brought to us, and Yates soon went to sleep on his blankets. Flack and Meacham spread their blankets and soon went to sleep also. . . . No person was to be seen, when Col. Jones and two others, Hosea Stout and another man whose name I do not recollect, came to my camp-fire and asked if Yates was asleep. I told them he was, upon which his brains were knocked out with an ax. He was covered up with his blankets . . . and a grave dug some three feet deep near the camp by the fire-light, all hands assisting. Flack and Meacham were asleep when the man was killed, but woke up and saw the grave digging. The body was put in and the dirt well packed on it . . .

The next day I took the nine hundred dollars, and we all went to headquarters. . . . Flack and I went to Brigham’s office. . . . He asked what had become of Yates? I told him. He then asked if I had got word from him? I told him that I had got his instructions at Jones’ camp, and also of the word I had got from his son Jo [Joseph Young]. He said that was right, and a good thing. I then told him I had nine hundred dollars given me to bring in, that Yates had at the time he was captured. I told him of the expense I had been to during the war, and asked him if I might have part of the money? He gave me a reprimand for asking such a thing, and said it must go towards defraying the expenses of the war. I pulled out the sack containing the money, and he told me to give it to his clerk . . . The money was counted, and we left. (Brigham’s Destroying Angel, pp. 122-126)

Brigham Young’s son admitted meeting with Hickman about Yates but claimed it was to save him. Stanley P. Hirshon wrote:

In 1871, Joseph A. Young, the prophet’s son, described to the New York Tribune how he met Hickman at the outskirts of the city and urged him to bring Yates in alive. Hickman, however, told the New York World a different story. Joseph said Young wanted the prisoner “taken care of.” . . . Significantly, neither Joseph nor Hickman denied that Mormons had murdered Yates. (The Lion of the Lord, pages 176-177)

Joseph Young’s statement certainly raises some interesting questions: If an order had not been given that Yates was to die, why would he be urging Hickman to bring him in alive? Moreover, if Joseph Young was really concerned about Hickman bringing in Yates alive, why didn’t the Mormons punish Hickman when he came in without him? The fact that the Mormon leaders did not punish Hickman for this murder seems to show that they were responsible for the crime. That Hickman did not seem concerned about keeping Yates’ death a secret is made plain by a statement written by Dan Jones:

“This Yates was a personal friend of mine, a kind-hearted, liberal man . . . One very cold morning about sunrise, Hickman and two others came to my camp. . . . he took me outside and asked me if I knew Yates. I told him I did. ‘Well, we have just buried him,’ he said.” (Forty Years Among the Indians, as cited by Juanita Brooks in On The Mormon Frontier, vol. 2, p. 643, n. 13)

In the same footnote, Mrs. Brooks commented: “That some Mormons did confiscate Yates’ property is shown in the diary of Newton Tuttle . . . ‘Sat 24 . . . Lewis Robinson got back from Green river he took 48 Horse & colts 36 pair of blankets &c that belonged to Yates . . .’”

J. H. Beadle said that Yates’ “remains have been disinterred from the spot named by Hickman, and the chain of evidence is complete. Hosea Stout, a Mormon lawyer of considerable prominence, who was arrested for complicity in this murder, and on Hickman’s testimony, admits that Yates was killed as a spy; but insists that he was not present and had no knowledge of the transaction; that Yates was delivered to Hickman to be taken to the city, and neither he nor any other officer saw him again” (Brigham’s Destroying Angel, pp. 205-206). That Hosea Stout was on the scene at the time of the murder is verified by his own diary. “Sunday 18 Oct 1857. . . . Some 700 head of the captured cattle passed to day being driven by teamsters who left the enemy. At dark W. A. Hickman came in with Mr Yates a prisoner” (On The Mormon Frontier, The Diary of Hosea Stout, vol. 2, p. 643). There is little doubt that Stout would resort to violence against a man suspected of being a spy. We have previously quoted from Stout’s own diary for Jan. 9, 1846. In that entry Hosea Stout said that he thought “William Hibbard was ‘a spy’ and that ‘I told Scott that we must ‘bounce a stone off his head.’ . . . I got an opportunity & hit him on the back of his head which came very near taking his life” (Ibid., vol. 1, p. 103).

R. N. Baskin, who was responsible for the indictment of Brigham Young, gave this information:

I knew that the indictment of Brigham and others would cause great excitement, especially among the polygamic element of the Mormon church, and if a collision occurred it [sic] would be at the time Brigham was arrested on the charge of murder. To meet such a contingency the United States marshal had appointed about one hundred deputies. . . . I knew that the arrest of anyone except Brigham would not be resisted. I therefore had Hawkins arrested and tried before taking any steps in the other cases. During that trial the street in front of
the courtroom was daily crowded by hundreds of men, many of whom were armed and whose demeanor was most threatening towards the court. . . . Brigham was then arrested on the charge of lewd and lascivious cohabitation, and brought into court. He gave bonds, just as the others were required to do. . . . a few days later I had a warrant issued for his arrest on the murder charge. . . . Evidently some of the marshal’s deputies betrayed him, as Brigham learned of his intended arrest. . . . Brigham finally decided that instead of resisting he would make a journey to “the south” for his health. . . . In the height of the excitement, and when the armed mob was menacing the court, a number of prominent Gentiles called upon me and stated that they had reliable information that, unless the prosecutions were stopped, the prominent Gentiles who had taken an active part in opposing the Mormon ’system’ would be assassinated; that they had been appointed a committee to advise me of the fact and request me to dismiss the cases. I told the spokesman he would make a splendid angel, and as I did not intend to grant the request, he had better prepare to go to Abraham’s bosom. He replied that the matter was “too serious to treat facetiously.” . . . This was not the only time I had been subjected to a fire from the rear by men who should have encouraged instead of opposed me. (Reminiscences of Early Utah, pages 54-56)

Under the date of December 13, 1871, Wilford Woodruff recorded the following in his journal:

. . . spent the Evening at the Presidets office with the Twelve . . . & many others & Expresed our views concerning Presid Brigham Young coming home to stand his trial . . . all thought it wisdom & good policy for him to Come to the City & stand his trial . . . Yet all agreed to leave it with him to decide as the spirit might dictate. (Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, vol. 7, page 45)

Brigham Young finally returned, and on January 2, 1872, Woodruff noted:

. . . the United States Marshall Came to Presidents Youngs office & Served an Inditement upon him for Murders. . . . McKean the Judge Refused Bail But put Presidt Young into the Hands of the Marshall to be Confined in one of Presidt Youngs own Homes. (Ibid., p. 52)

Unfortunately, the case against Brigham Young for murder never came to trial. Harold Schindler states:

. . . the United States Supreme Court handed down a decision in the Englebrecht case which set aside all legal proceedings in Utah during the previous eighteen months and declared null and void indictments found against nearly one hundred and forty persons. The landmark opinion resulted in all charges being dropped against Young, Wells, Stout, Kimball and ironically, Hickman himself. (Orrin Porter Rockwell: Man of God, Son of Thunder, p. 355)

Almost everyone agreed that Bill Hickman had committed many murders. After Hickman became disillusioned with Mormonism, even Apostle Woodruff spoke of his “damnable murders” (Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, vol. 7, p. 36). That Hickman could commit the atrocious crimes he did while the Mormons were in power without being punished seems to show that he was being protected by church leaders. These leaders did everything they could to make it difficult to enforce the law. By the time Hickman confessed to his crimes, the legal system in Utah was in such disarray that neither Young nor Hickman had to stand trial.


The federal decision in Clinton V. Englebrecht provided the legal basis for throwing out 130 indictments found by grand juries drawn in accordance with the practice in United States courts rather than the territorial statutes. This solved nothing, however, because the disputes over the appointment of the territorial marshall tied the hands of the court; the courts became little more than boards of arbitration, and by June, 1874, a backlog of ninety-five cases had built up in Third District Court.

McKean and other Gentiles believed that the Mormons were afraid to allow trials of their brethren accused of murder and other crimes before impartial juries. The judge wrote to U. S. Attorney General George H. Williams in the fall of 1873 complaining that he could neither convict the guilty nor protect the innocent and that Utah had become a “theocratic state, under the vice regency of Brigham Young.”

While all the evidence seems to show that everyone who opposed the Mormon Church in early Utah risked the possibility of losing their property or even their lives, things are different today. The police in Salt Lake City give full protection to both Mormons and Gentiles. Wallace Turner observed:

A modern apostasy can be understood through the story of the Tanner couple. The fact that today they can live comfortably in Salt Lake City, relatively unmolested by the LDS church (beyond a letter or so from anguished apostles) demonstrates as much as anything could the way the church has changed. In the old days, those who disagreed had better be able to defend themselves. (The Mormon Establishment, 1966, p. 163)

The reader will notice that the books Brigham’s Destroying Angel and “Wild Bill” Hickman and the Mormon Frontier make a devastating case against the claim by Mormon apologists that the church had no connection with William Hickman’s crimes. The evidence clearly shows that although President Brigham Young and Apostle Orson Hyde knew that Hickman was a thief and a cold-blooded murderer, he was used to further the interests of the church.

IN THE MAIL

“I read two books in the past year pertaining to Hoffman and his forgeries. . . . the tanner name kept appearing in Gathering of Saints & Mormon Murders—to the extent that I became interested in your writings. I am halfway through your Mormonism [—Shadow or Reality?] . . . and was released sunday as 2nd Coun[selor]— in the . . . ward bishopric . . . about 4 weeks ago I gave a note to the other counselor . . . that said—this will probably be my last Sacrament Service and promptly left the podium . . . I hav[e]n’t returned to church . . .

“As you can imagine—I am going through a difficult time. My wife is very upset . . .

“Thank you for your research—It has been overpowering to me—and answered many of my questions.” (Letter from Texas)

“I wish to thank you warmly for your faithful ministry and sending of printed material of foremost importance to us, keeping us abreast of so many events occurring within and without the Church . . . I have almost finished perusing your last book EVOLUTION ON TEMPLE CEREMONY; it is confirming what I have been feeling for years, so as to lead me
to discontinue attending temple Sessions—the only strong link that keeps me still tied with Mormonism is the Book of M. . . .” (Letter from Switzerland)

“I count you as very special friends, although we’ve never met. Questions that were unresolved in me for years were clarified and openly discussed in your literature. My story, in brief, is that I rebelled against parental and church authority from age 12 to 17 when I was caught up and repented of smoking and drinking, returned to the fold, serve a mission, married in the temple, acquired a PhD . . . had five children . . . was Pres. in a Quorum of Seventy, read much church literature . . . was an officiator in the Oakland Temple, became inactive, rejected both God and Christ, drank again casually at age 36, discovered I was alcoholic at age 40, joined AA and found the spiritual basis for my life that had always eluded me as both child and man. I found God rather soon, but spent several years coming to Christ . . . In AA I discovered that I was bankrupt in all areas of my life: spiritual, mental, moral. When I abandoned myself to God, His Grace entered to expel my obsession and begin to restore me to health. I understood Paul for the first time. Service to others is the key to my life . . . For several years, theological correctness became secondary to recovery and service, but after my mother died . . . I put more time into the search, read much of your literature and on Oct. 31, 1989, I requested that my name be removed from LDS church rolls. This was quietly done soon thereafter. Life is now a coherent whole and my inner peace is great. . . . Thank you for your good work. I feel you have been used as an instrument that could reach me because you are committed to the truth and not merely to a ‘cause.’ The difference is important to me. I have had dear friends in the church advise me that I should suppress my doubts because of the good the church does and because of the good people in it. With far baser motives, some enemies of the church use untruths or distortions to attack it because of the good people in it. With far baser motives, some enemies of the church use untruths or distortions to attack it because of the good the church does and because of the good people in it. With far baser motives, some enemies of the church use untruths or distortions to attack it because of the good the church does and because of the good people in it. With far baser motives, some enemies of the church use untruths or distortions to attack it because of the good people in it. With far baser motives, some enemies of the church use untruths or distortions to attack it because of the good people in it.

There are two basic elements in the Gospel view of sexuality as I interpret it from the scriptures. The first is that sex is good—sexuality, far from being the antithesis of spirituality, is actually an attribute of God . . . In the light of their understanding that God is a procreating personage of flesh and bone, latter-day prophets have made it clear that despite what it says in Matthew 1:20, the Holy Ghost was not the father of Jesus. . . . The Savior was fathered by a personage of flesh and bone, and was literally what Nephi said he was, “Son of the Eternal Father.” (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Autumn, 1967, pp. 100-101)

Brigham Young, the second prophet of the Mormon Church, boldly asserted: “Now, remember from this time forth and for ever, Jesus Christ was not begotten by the Holy Ghost” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 1, p. 51). This statement, of course, is directly contradicted by the Bible, Matthew 1:18 and 20: “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost . . . for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.” It is interesting to note that even the Book of Mormon agrees with the Bible on this matter stating that Mary was to be “overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost . . .” (Alma 7-10)

In spite of these plain statements, Joseph Fielding Smith, the tenth prophet of the church, declared: “They tell us the Book of Mormon and the Bible teach that Christ was begotten by the Holy Ghost. I challenge that statement. The Book of Mormon teaches no such thing! Neither does the Bible” (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 1, p. 19).

In any case, since Christians believe that “God is a Spirit” (John 4:24), they view the conception of Christ as a miraculous event having nothing to do with sex or any physical act. Mormon leaders, on the other hand, consider Christ’s conception as a natural occurrence. Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr., the son of the 10th prophet of the church, made this plain in his book, Religious Truths Defined, page 44: “The birth of the Savior was a natural occurrence unattended with any degree of mysticism, and the Father God was the literal parent of Jesus in the flesh as well as in the spirit.” President Joseph Fielding Smith declared: “Christ was begotten of God. He was not born without the aid of Man, and that Man was God!” (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 1, p. 18).
Apostle Bruce R. McConkie further explained:

These name titles all signify that our Lord is the only Son of the Father in the flesh. Each of the words is to be understood literally. Only means only, Begotten means begotten; and Son means son. Christ was begotten by an Immortal Father in the same way that mortal men are begotten by mortal fathers. (Mormon Doctrine, 1979, pp. 546-547)

And Christ was born into the world as the literal Son of this Holy Being; he was born in the same personal, real, and literal sense that any mortal son is born to a mortal father. There is nothing figurative about his paternity; he was begotten, conceived and born in the normal and natural course of events. . . . Christ is the Son of Man, meaning that his Father (the Eternal God!) is a Holy Man. (Ibid., page 742)

President Brigham Young had this to say concerning the birth of Christ: “The man Joseph, the husband of Mary, did not, that we know of, have more than one wife, but Mary the wife of Joseph had another husband” (Deseret News, October 10, 1866). Apostle Orson Pratt also taught that Mary was God’s wife:

The fleshly body of Jesus required a Mother as well as a Father. Therefore, the Father and Mother of Jesus, according to the flesh, must have been associated together in the capacity of Husband and Wife, hence the Virgin Mary must have been, for the time being, the lawful wife of God the Father: we use the term lawful Wife, because it would be blasphemous in the highest degree to say that He overshadowed her or begat the Saviour unlawfully. It would have been unlawful for any man to have interfered with Mary, who was already espoused to Joseph; for such a heinous crime would have subjected both the guilty parties to death, according to the law of Moses. But God having created all men and women, had the most perfect right to do with his own creation, according to His holy will and pleasure: He had a lawful right to overshadow the Virgin Mary in the capacity of a husband, and beget a Son, although she was espoused to another; for the law which He gave to govern men and women was not intended to govern Himself, or to prescribe rules for his own conduct. It was also lawful in Him, after having dealt with Mary, to give her to Joseph her espoused husband. Whether God the Father gave Mary to Joseph for time only, or for time and eternity, we are not informed. Inasmuch as God was the first husband to her, it may be that He only gave her to be the wife of Joseph while in this mortal state, and that he intended after the resurrection to again take her as one of his own wives to raise up immortal spirits in eternity. (The Seer, Oct. 1953, page 158)

President Brigham Young maintained that “The birth of the Saviour was as natural as are the births of our children; it was the result of natural action. He partook of flesh and blood—was begotten of his Father, as we were of our fathers” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 8, p. 115). In a sermon delivered in the Tabernacle on April 9, 1852, President Young climaxed his teaching with the following explanation:

. . . remember from this time forth, and for ever, that Jesus Christ was not begotten by the Holy Ghost. I will repeat a little anecdote. I was in conversation with a certain learned professor upon the subject, when I replied, to this idea—“if the Son was begotten by the Holy Ghost, it would be very dangerous to baptize and confirm females, and give the Holy Ghost to them, lest he should beget children, to be palmed upon the Elders by the people, bringing the Elders into great difficulties.” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 1, p. 51)

As we indicated earlier, some Mormons are so embarrassed by the teachings of the church concerning the birth of Christ that they would like to see them abolished. Unfortunately for these apologists, President Ezra Taft Benson, the current prophet of the LDS Church, has come down firmly on the side of Brigham Young and the other prophets and apostles. In The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, a book published in 1988, President Benson steadfastly maintains that God was the father of Christ “in the most literal sense”:

A fundamental doctrine of true Christianity is the divine birth of the child Jesus. This doctrine is not generally comprehended by the world. The paternity of Jesus Christ is one of the “mysteries of godliness” comprehended only by the spiritually minded. . . . Thus the testimonies of appointed witnesses leave no question as to the paternity of Jesus Christ. God was the Father of Jesus’ mortal tabernacle, and Mary, a mortal woman, was His mother. He is therefore the only person born who rightfully deserved the title “the Only Begotten Son of God.”. . .

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints proclaims that Jesus Christ is the Son of God in the most literal sense. The body in which he performed His mission in the flesh was sired by that same Holy Being we worship as God, our Eternal Father. Jesus was not the son of Joseph, nor was He Begotten by the Holy Ghost. He is the Son of the Eternal Father. (The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, pages 6-7)

The LDS doctrine concerning the birth of Christ certainly raises more questions than it answers. For instance, in Mormon theology we learn that prior to coming to earth both Jesus and Mary were born to God the Father and His wife in a pre-existent state. From this it is clear that Jesus was the spirit brother of Mary. It has been suggested that since Mary was the spirit daughter of the Father, it would be an act of incest for God the Father to have had a sexual relationship with her. While Apostle Orson Pratt probably would have argued that God’s laws were “not intended to govern Himself,” the idea of God having relations with his spirit daughter who was at that very time betrothed to Joseph seems to be out of step with the teachings of the Bible. We feel that an examination of the Mormon teaching concerning the conception of Christ reveals that it is far closer to paganism that it is to Christianity!
THE WORST WAR?

After we began working on this issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger, war broke out in Iraq. We, of course, feel very bad that a peaceful settlement could not be obtained, but we still pray that something may be worked out to minimize the loss of lives.

As we reflect upon the casualties, sorrow and the devastating consequences of war, we are reminded of a war we are all involved in which is far more important than any earthly war. This is the battle which is taking place with regard to the eternal destiny of our own souls. Jesus explained that there is nothing more important than this matter:

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:26)

Jesus saw things from a far different vantage point than we do, and because of his view of the entire human situation, he made this startling statement:

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matthew 10:28)

The Scriptures teach that we are in the camp of the enemy until we turn our lives over to the Lord. Jesus himself said:

He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. (Matthew 12:30)

We are described as being "alienated" from God:

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,

Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: (Ephesians 4:17)

Many people do not really understand that they are "alienated from the life of God." Others sense that they are estranged from God and wonder why they are not able to find him in their lives. Isaiah 59:1-2 throws important light on why we have become alienated from God:

Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:

But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

J. B. Phillips observed that the “gulf between us and God is not merely an intellectual one . . . but the real gulf lies in the moral realm. You and I, through our own sins and failures, as well as by the infection of the sins of other people, are separated from God by a moral gulf” (Plain Christianity, p. 75).

Romans 3:23 makes it plain that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,” and Romans 3:9 states that all are “under sin.” It is because of our sinful and lost condition that we find that we have no fellowship with God. J. B. Phillips noted:

The Diagnoses of the world’s sickness . . . is that the power to love has been wrongly directed. It has either been turned in upon itself or given to the wrong things. The outward symptoms, and the results, of this misdirection are plainly obvious (at least in other people) in what we call “sin” or “selfishness.” The drastic “conversion” which God-become-Man called for is the reversal of the wrong attitude, the deliberate giving of the whole power to love, first to God, and then to other people. Without this reversal He spoke quite bluntly of a world doomed to destruction. (Your God Is Too Small, page 121)

Because of our sinful condition we do not know the personal God who wishes to have fellowship with us.

Myron Augsburger claims that we have made a prison for ourselves:

When Christ came into this world as our Savior he didn’t come just to save us from the problems we have. He came to save us from the problem that we are. We are the problem. We are hostile toward God. We have walled up our lives against Him to shut Him out. By hundreds of ways we cut ourselves off from every effort of God to get through to us. . . . The wall we have built becomes our own prison. (“The Cross and Forgiveness,” a recorded message by Myron Augsburger)

Besides teaching us that we are “alienated” from God, the Scriptures also reveal that the devil has blinded our minds so that we do not realize our lost condition:

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

Because there was no hope in man, God provided a remedy.

In 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 we read:

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

In “The Cross and Forgiveness,” Myron Augsburger speaks of Jesus as a bridge between God and man:

Jesus Christ didn’t only come into the world to reveal God. He came into the world to be a bridge between God and man—to be a mediator—to put one hand in God’s and the other hand in ours and bring us together. And so it is that one comes to the cross and finds that here God’s forgiveness to overcome man’s estrangement, man’s rebellion, man’s hostility, is expressed at a cost which was carried by Jesus Christ.

In John 8:12, Jesus declares: “. . . I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” Unfortunately, men “loved darkness” and did not want the light which God had sent into the world. In John 3:19-20, the following appears:
And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

J. B. Phillips observed:

Let us look for a moment at Jesus Christ. He was, I believe, God in human form. . . He couldn’t help arousing a genuine sense of sin. You can’t have Light coming into a dark and dirty room without showing up the muddle and mess and dirt! The very presence of one Good Man was bound to show up the weakness and selfishness and sin of the others. (Plain Christianity, page 50)

As a burglar fears a policeman with a flashlight, so we are afraid that the righteous light of Jesus Christ will expose our sin and selfishness. Fortunately, if we will give up and surrender our lives to the Lord we will be saved: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

Some people have felt that just an intellectual consent that Jesus is the Christ is sufficient for salvation. The Scriptures, however, teach that even the devils believe there is a God, but that they do not have salvation (see James 2:19). D. Shelby Corlett wrote:

Faith is more than a mere mental assent to truth. There is no more moral saving benefit in a mere mental acceptance of the truth that Jesus is the Son of God than in the mental acceptance of some scientific truth. Faith is the going out of the whole inner life toward God. We do not believe in Him unless we act on it, unless we give the whole life to Him. To believe in God is a definite attitude of the heart, a surrender, a decision, an acceptance, something active and continuous, bringing a state of confidence and trust in Him. (Christian Security, page 15)

The message given in the Scriptures seems clear: a great spiritual war is going on between the forces of truth and those of evil. If we are not “with” Jesus, we are in the wrong army. We need to flee from Satan’s army and yield ourselves to Jesus Christ. We need to give up light and truth and righteousness and love to Jesus and to our fellow men. (Christian Security, page 15)

The message given in the Scriptures seems clear: a great spiritual war is going on between the forces of truth and those of evil. If we are not “with” Jesus, we are in the wrong army. We need to flee from Satan’s army and yield ourselves to Jesus Christ. We are reminded of the people who lived in Germany at the time of Adolf Hitler. Like the devil, Hitler did not really love his people. He had his own selfish agenda, and in his lust for power he finally brought terrible destruction upon both himself and a large number of his followers. As Hitler gained power, many people could see that there was something wrong. Nevertheless, they allowed themselves to be blinded by the propaganda that was put forth. Many who wanted to stay neutral were swept into the destructive stream of wickedness.

All of us must carefully examine our own lives. Are we really on the Lord’s side? If we are trying to remain neutral we are giving comfort and aid to the enemy. If we are not fully committed to Christ, we need to yield to him before it is everlastingly too late.
MISSIONARY WORK IN UTAH

There are opportunities for those who are interested in volunteering for evangelistic work in Salt Lake City this summer. If interested call (801) 486-3800 or write to Associated Utah Christian Ministries, PO Box 750, Salt Lake City, Utah 84010.

2ND PRINTING ALREADY!

The new book, Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony: 1842-1990, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, has turned out to be such a success that we have already begun a second printing so that we will not run out. This book contains the actual text of the 1990 revision of the highly secret endowment ritual and other accounts of the ceremony dating back to 1846. Also show all of the serious changes made in the ceremony in 1990. **Price: $5.00**

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In 1989, we found ourselves faced with a very serious decision with regard to a story that had been leaked to us concerning charges that Paul H. Dunn, who had served as a General Authority in the Mormon Church for many years, had been deceitful in his writings and speeches. As some of our readers may know, this was not the first time that we found ourselves sitting on a powder keg.

Since we began publishing material regarding Mormonism over thirty years ago, we have brought to light a number of documents which have been suppressed and other important material relating to the Latter-day Saints. Some of it has been extremely controversial. We have, in fact, received letters from two Mormon apostles in which we were threatened with lawsuits if we did not desist from printing certain documents (see photographs of their letters in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 13-14). Although we continued to publish the material, the suits were never actually filed. One Mormon scholar, however, did attempt to sue us and even appealed the case to the Supreme Court of the United States. Fortunately, however, he did not succeed in his endeavor.

Some of the stories we have printed have seriously affected people’s lives and have caused some face-to-face confrontations which have been anything but pleasant. For example, eighteen months before Mark Hofmann murdered Steven Christensen and Kathy Sheets, we suggested that his “Salamander” letter may have been plagiarized from E. D. Howe’s anti-Mormon book Mormonism Unvailed, (see Salt Lake City Messenger, March 1984). Not surprisingly, this led to a weighty discussion with Mr. Hofmann later that year and another confrontation in 1985. On many occasions we have had people try to persuade us to print stories we did not feel were based on reliable evidence. When we received the information regarding Paul Dunn, however, we felt that it was probably true. Nevertheless, we realized immediately that if we published this information, it could have a devastating affect on Mr. Dunn’s life and career. If the story should turn out to be incorrect, we could find ourselves faced with a lawsuit for libel and might have to make a public retraction.

We investigated the matter and weighed the whole situation very carefully. While we felt that Paul Dunn’s deceptive tactics were deplorable, we were even more concerned about the possibility that church leaders were trying to cover up the matter.
We, therefore, decided to run a story concerning the matter in the October, 1989, issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger. At that time we were working on another story concerning the excommunication of George P. Lee, who had been a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy since 1975. On pages 4 and 5 of our newsletter we published a section entitled, “Removing More Seventies.” In that portion of the Messenger we wrote the following:

One would certainly think that the church would have replaced George P. Lee and filled the two quorums at the October 1989 general conference. Instead, however, 16 other members of the two quorums were either “excused from active service”—i.e., put on emeritus status—or completely released. Why the church would cut down the number of Seventies at this time is certainly a mystery.

Another curious thing about this matter is the fact that Paul H. Dunn, who once served as one of the seven members of the “Presidency of the First Quorum of Seventy” was “excused from active service” because of age or health. Some people seem to feel that this was not the real reason. They, in fact, believe it was for the “health” of the church. As far as age is concerned, there appear to be sixteen Seventies older than Mr. Dunn who were not put on emeritus status, and while he may have some problems with his health, many of the other General Authorities are not in good health. Apostle Bruce R. McConkie died of cancer, but was never put on emeritus status, and President Spencer W. Kimball had cancer, heart trouble and other problems but remained president of the church. The current president, Ezra Taft Benson, is 90 years old and very feeble, yet he remains in office.

It is suspected that the church leaders felt that Dunn would eventually become a liability to the church because of some investigative reporting which had been done by Lynn Packer. Mr. Packer, a nephew of Apostle Boyd Packer, at one time worked for the church’s television station, KSL. He was working with that station when the Hofmann story broke but was later fired. Packer felt that his aggressive reporting on the Hofmann affair and his earlier work on the Afco scandal played a role in his dismissal. The church simply did not want all the truth to come to light.

Although he was never indicted for any crime, Paul H. Dunn’s reputation suffered because of the Afco affair. The Wall Street Journal for Nov. 9, 1983, reported: “Paul H. Dunn . . . whose church salary is $40,000 a year, was a director of Afco Enterprises, a real-estate venture until 1978. Afco collapsed four years later; and its owner, Grant C. Affleck, was recently indicted for mail fraud, securities fraud and bankruptcy fraud. Despite Mr. Dunn’s 1978 resignation, records in the U.S. District Court civil suit here show that he continued to have ties with Afco until it entered bankruptcy proceedings in 1982. . . .”

Dunn acknowledged that those stories and others were untrue, but he defends fabrications as necessary to illustrate his theological and moral points. He compares his stories to the parables told by Jesus acknowledging, however, that Jesus’ parables weren’t about himself . . .

Unlike the Mormon apostles mentioned above, Paul Dunn did not send us a letter threatening litigation. He, in fact, did not respond in any way to the questions we had raised. Although we thought that members of the press in Utah would be interested in this story, there seems to have been little interest in getting to the bottom of the scandal. Almost a year and a half passed before we heard more about the matter. As is often the case with important stories regarding the Mormon Church, the news finally broke in a paper published outside of Utah. On February 16, 1991, the Arizona Republic published an article written by Richard R. Robertson which contained the following:

SALT LAKE CITY — Among Mormons, Elder Paul H. Dunn is a popular teacher, author and role model. As a prominent leader of the Church . . . for more than 25 years, he has told countless inspirational stories about his life: Like the time his best friend died in his arms during a World War II battle, while imploring Dunn to teach America’s youth about patriotism.

Or how God protected him as enemy machine-gun bullets ripped away his clothing, gear and helmet without ever touching his skin.

Or how perseverance and Mormon values led him to play major-league baseball for the St. Louis Cardinals.

But those stories are not true.

Dunn’s “dead” best friend isn’t dead; only the heel of Dunn’s boot caught a bullet; and he never played baseball for the St. Louis Cardinals or any other major-league team.

Dunn acknowledged that those stories and others were untrue, but he defends fabrications as necessary to illustrate his theological and moral points.

The church leaders felt that Dunn would eventually become a liability to the church because of some investigative reporting which had been done by Lynn Packer. Mr. Packer, a nephew of Apostle Boyd Packer, at one time worked for the church’s television station, KSL. He was working with that station when the Hofmann story broke but was later fired. Packer felt that his aggressive reporting on the Hofmann affair and his earlier work on the Afco scandal played a role in his dismissal. The church simply did not want all the truth to come to light.

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He compares his stories to the parables told by Jesus acknowledging, however, that Jesus’ parables weren’t about himself . . .

Other Mormon leaders apparently were concerned about this in September 1989, because, within weeks of investigating allegations that his war and sports stories were fabricated, they quietly placed Dunn, 66, on “emeritus” status “for health reasons.”

As a “general authority” since 1964, Dunn had been among the top 90 men who govern the 7.3 million-member worldwide church.

The church also pressured Salt Lake City freelance writer Lynn Packer, a Mormon, not to publish stories about Dunn’s fabrications. In the fall, after the church had terminated Packer’s teaching contract at Brigham Young University for pursuing the story, he provided information he has collected over the past four years to The Republic.

Despite Dunn’s “retirement,” his grandfatherly demeanor and down-home, self-deprecating storytelling style continue to make him a popular public speaker and author.
He also remains the most prolific author among current and former church leaders. He receives royalties from 23 inspirational cassette tapes and 28 books. They are among the more popular items in LDS bookstores.

Dunn said he doesn’t consider it deceitful to exaggerate or alter facts.

He said his technique is to “combine” elements of several true stories to create a single story that will better convey a message and capture an audience’s interest. . . .

“The combining of stories seems justifiable in terms of illustrating a point. My motives are pure and innocent,” Dunn said during an interview in Salt Lake City attended by his attorney and a friend.

“I haven’t purposely tried to embellish or rewrite history. I’ve tried to illustrate points that would create interest,” Dunn explained. “Combining war stories is simply putting history in little finer packages.” . . . Dunn’s retirement occurred within two weeks of the probe into his storytelling practices by top church officials, who had been given copies of Packer’s findings.

Dunn said he cooperated with the church’s investigation but was not advised of its conclusions. He denied that it was connected to his retirement, which he insisted was for poor health that has since improved. . . . the university [Brigham Young University] terminated Packer’s teaching contract, in part because he wanted to publish a story about his findings.

(Arizona Republic, February 16, 1991)

On February 21, 1991, the Salt Lake Tribune ran an Associated Press article by Vern Anderson which contained the following:

Lynn Packer was serving a Mormon mission in Germany in 1964 when he heard 39-year-old Paul H. Dunn had been appointed to the church’s hierarchy. . . . it was Packer’s relentless pursuit of Dunn over most of the 1980s that led to Saturday’s revelation by The Arizona Republic: the church man had fabricated many of the personal and war baseball stories that had fed his reputation as the faith’s most spellbinding speaker and popular author. . . .

Packer himself paid a high professional price for the research on Dunn . . . .

He ultimately lost his teaching position at church-owned Brigham Young University and today, working on a one-year contract at the University of Dortmund in Germany, feels beaten “to a pulp.”

Why did the story that Republic reporter Richard Robertson calls “the worst-kept secret in Salt Lake” take so long to come out?

The answer appears to lie in the church’s effort to avoid a scandal and in Packer’s own vulnerability as a BYU employee without tenure whose wife had been diagnosed with cancer early in 1987.

The combination led, on Sept. 30, 1987, to a “deal” between Packer and a “high church official” in which he withdrew the story he had submitted to United Press International in exchange for a guarantee of continued employment at BYU, according to Packer.

Packer declined to identify the official, but has told others it was his uncle, Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

“Lynn claims he had an agreement with his uncle through his father,” said BYU spokesman Paul Richards. “That the agreement fell apart when he continued to ask questions about Paul Dunn. When he continued to ask questions, Elder Packer felt he had not been true to the agreement.”

Through spokesman Jerry Cahill, Boyd Packer said Wednesday, “There was nothing ever stated. It never happened. There was no such agreement that Lynn Packer would be retained in exchange for no publication.”

In 1986, Lynn Packer . . . decided to freelance a story on Dunn’s involvement with AFCO Enterprises . . . the biggest real estate development in Utah history.

Dunn . . . claimed his tenure as an AFCO director had ended in 1978; Packer sought to prove it had lasted much longer. He also began looking at the veracity of Dunn’s stories . . .

“There isn’t a single significant baseball or war story I could find that was true,” said Packer, who in September 1987 complied under pressure with a BYU administrative request that he inform the church of his allegations. . . . Packer’s department chairman at BYU, Gordon Whiting, told him in a memo dated Sept. 30, 1987, that he should permit church leaders to deal privately with the Dunn matter.

“After providing the information, we accept the judgment of those responsible. We will not take accusations against a General Authority to the media,” Whiting wrote, adding that publication “will damage the church, will damage the university and will damage you.”

Fearing for his job, Packer agreed to the deal he said was offered him that night: don’t publish the story and you can teach at BYU as long as you want.

Packer bridles at suggestions by BYU officials that he was using coercion.

“They can never give you a time or a place when I went to anybody with that story and said, ‘Do this for me or else,’ he said. And I can show you the times and places and dates when they told it just the opposite: ‘Do the story and you’re history.’

Packer maintains that Elders James E. Faust and David B. Haight, Dunn’s immediate superiors in the Quorum of the Twelve, were aware of the arrangement. Like Boyd K. Packer, the pair declined to be interviewed, but denied through spokesman Bruce Olsen there was any deal. . . .

And yet, in a memo to church spokesman Richard Lindsay after the alleged deal was struck, Packer wrote: “I had received assurances, prior to my decision, that my job at BYU would be secure for the indefinite future if I withdrew the story.”

At BYU, Whiting decided in early 1988 not to renew Packer’s contract for the 1988-89 school year . . . .

“I thought the decision was mine to make,” Whiting said. After Packer completed his teaching duties in August 1990, he was given a year’s salary as severance pay, a move that surprised Whiting since it didn’t come out of his departmental budget.

“I think it probably looks to many people . . . like an effort to bribe him not to go with the Paul Dunn story,” Whiting said. . . .

For his part, Whiting said he was pained by ‘the degree to which the university has been pulled into this situation. And I guess I’m also pained at the church being pulled in.

But the church will have to fend for itself and do what it can to rescue its reputation for honesty and integrity. (Salt Lake Tribune, February 21, 1991)

Brigham Young University’s student newspaper, The Daily Universe, carried the story concerning Paul Dunn but later reported there was some strong opposition to the publication of material “which proved to be embarrassing to such a well-liked leader”:

. . . several communications students indicated they were stunned by the number of people they encountered who thought there should not have been any coverage of the information. One writer was even physically hit by someone who objected to the newspaper’s coverage. (The Daily Universe, February 21, 1991)
Paul Dunn’s war stories are even more fantastic than his claims concerning his baseball career. In the Mormon Church’s publication, New Era, August 1975, Mr. Dunn related some of his experiences. In this article we find the following:

A testimony was born . . . I’ve had verification upon verification that this church is true, that Joseph Smith was called and ordained to restore the gospel of Jesus Christ . . . Before I went into combat experience, I had . . . a patriarchal blessing given to me . . . that patriarchal blessing stated in a number of paragraphs that I would live . . . to a ripe old age . . . And one of the paragraphs indicated divine intervention in time of combat.

Now there were 1,000 of us in my combat team who left San Francisco on that fateful journey, and there were six of us who came back 2 1/2 years later. How do you like that for odds! And of the six of us, five had been severely wounded two or more times and had been sent back into the line as replacements. There had been literally thousands of incidents where I should have been taken from the earth by the enemy and for some reason was not. (New Era, August 1975, page 7)

Paul Dunn went on to relate that on one occasion his squad was caught behind enemy lines and took refuge in “a deep shell hole.” The situation was such that they could not spend the night there and were forced to flee through enemy fire. His companions asked him to “lead them in prayer” before they made their attempt to escape. We find the following on page 8 of the article in the New Era:

Well, the zero minute came, and we shook hands, and you never saw 11 men scamper like that before . . . Three or four of the others didn’t get above the surface of the ground; they were cut down with machine guns. One of my good friends was almost cut in two with a burst. . . . A thousand such incidents happened to me in two years of combat experience.

Richard Robertson commented as follows concerning Paul Dunn’s sensational claims:

Elder Paul H. Dunn’s exaggerated stories mention that he:

• Was the sole survivor among 11 infantrymen in a 100-yard race against death, during which one burst of machinegun fire ripped his right boot off, another tore off his ammunition and canteen belt and yet another split his helmet in half—all without wounding him. . . .

“A TANGLED WEB”

In his book, You and Your World, page 96, Paul Dunn told of “a priests adviser” he had when he was sixteen years old. According to Mr. Dunn, this man had a great influence on him “for good”:

We had a wonderful class. . . . as I went to leave . . . he said, “Now listen very carefully and I will teach you one that you’ll always remember.” He said, “Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive.” I’ve never forgotten it.

On page 24 of the same book, Mr. Dunn taught that “honesty” does not always bring “material reward.” He warned, however, that “Envy, dishonesty, and unfairness — all of these are excess baggage, and as such are not worth what it costs to carry them with us.”

Unfortunately, Paul Dunn did not follow the teachings found in his book and became entangled in his own web. His baseball stories, for example, provide ample evidence of his deceitful methods. In his tape, World War II Experiences, which we obtained at the Mormon Church’s Deseret Bookstore, Paul Dunn boasted: “I used to play with [the] Saint Louis Cardinals. That’s true.” In his book, You and Your World, page 128, we find this statement: “I used to play baseball with the St. Louis Cardinals. Now, it takes a lot of preparation to become a big league ball-player.”

In 1973, the church’s Deseret Book Company published a book by Paul Dunn entitled, Discovering the Quality of Success. On page 33 of that book, Mr. Dunn wrote that he went back to school “after five years of professional baseball...” In the Deseret News 1977 Church Almanac, page 74, we read that Dunn “played professional baseball for four years.”

Paul Dunn was obviously using his baseball stories to increase his popularity and to sell more of his books and tapes. The reader will remember that we have cited Lynn Packer as saying, “There isn’t a single significant baseball or war story I could find that was true . . .” Richard R. Robertson gave this information about the matter:

Dunn’s baseball stories are as legendary as his war stories. He has written and told audiences that he signed a contract to play for the St. Louis Cardinals after graduation from high school. . . . But in truth, Dunn never played a game for the St. Louis Cardinals or any major-league team.

The closest he came was playing six weeks “off-roster” in several practice and exhibition games in 1942 for the Pocatello (Idaho) Cardinals, a St. Louis Cardinal farm team. He was cut.

Baseball records show that Dunn signed a professional player contract in 1947 with the Ontario Orioles, in California’s “Class C” Sunset League. But he practiced only a few weeks, played only in the first regular game and then was released. (Arizona Republic, February 16, 1991)

It is obvious, then, that Paul Dunn was never a major-league player nor did he have four or five years experience as a “professional” baseball player. In the article from the Arizona Republic, we find this information: “In the case of his false claim to have played for the St. Louis Cardinals, he said youngsters can relate better to a major-league team than to the farm teams for which he briefly played.”
• Was one of only six in his 1,000-man combat group who survived, and was the only one of the six who wasn’t wounded.

He has since acknowledged that only 30 soldiers in his unit died during the entire war, but he said the exaggeration of numbers is unimportant. (Arizona Republic, February 16, 1991)

Another one of Paul Dunn’s “exaggerated stories” which Richard Robertson mentions in his article in the Arizona Republic is his account of how he “Miraculously survived being run over by an enemy tank, while others were crushed.” We will have more to say about this in our new book—What Hast Thou Dunn?

One of Paul Dunn’s most stirring tales is the story of the death of his good friend Harold Brown. It is found in Mr. Dunn’s tape-recorded message, World War II Experiences. Dunn claimed that on the night of May 11, 1945, Brown, who was “50 to 75 yards” away, was wounded by a shell which landed in his foxhole:

Well, it commenced to get daylight about 5:30 . . . I scampered over to the hole where he was, and it had almost filled up from the rain and . . . it’s all he could do to hold his head out of the water to stay alive. . . . Well, I pulled him out of that muddy hole and got him up on seemingly dry ground, and took off his helmet, loosened the bandoleers around his neck . . . to give him what comfort you can under those conditions and I took a clean canteen of water and washed his face. It was caked with mud and blood. How in the world he lived that night I don’t know. I counted, after his death, 67 shrapnel wounds in him, some large enough to where you could put your whole hand in. And yet, somehow, he had held on, but I found out why. As he lay there, his head limp back in my lap, he said, “Paul, I know this is the end,” and I’d say, “Harold, it isn’t. Just hold on. I’ll get you out of this . . .” “No, this is the end.” . . . He said, “I’ve held on as long as I could, cause I want you to do two things for me if you would.” “Why, I says, you just name it. It’ll be done.” . . .

He said, “If you ever live through this terrible ordeal, will you somehow get word to my mother . . . Will you assure her that I was faithful to the end in the principles she taught me. . . . Will you do it, Paul?” Gosh, would I do it! How thrilled I was to give him what comfort you can under those conditions.

And he said . . . “If you ever have an opportunity . . . to talk to the young people of America, will you tell them for me that it’s a privilege to lay down my life for them.” Now, with that testimony on his lips, he died, as did thousands like him in that night I don’t know. I counted, after his death, 67 shrapnel wounds in him, some large enough to where you could put your whole hand in. And yet, somehow, he had held on, but I found out why. As he lay there, his head limp back in my lap, he said, “Paul, I know this is the end,” and I’d say, “Harold, it isn’t. Just hold on. I’ll get you out of this . . .” “No, this is the end.” . . . He said, “I’ve held on as long as I could, cause I want you to do two things for me if you would.” “Why, I says, you just name it. It’ll be done.” . . .

Unfortunately, this moving story by Paul Dunn is only a fabrication. Richard Robertson revealed the following:

One of Dunn’s most dramatic embellished stories . . . is about the combat death of his closest wartime buddy, Harold Lester Brown. . . .

The problem with the story, Packer discovered, is that Brown didn’t die on Okinawa.

In fact, he hasn’t died yet.

Brown said from his home in Odessa, Mo., that he was perplexed by Dunn’s story.

“Maybe he got me mixed up with someone else,” Brown speculated, although he noted that he and Dunn have stayed in contact since the war—even visiting occasionally . . .

Dunn never has mentioned the story to him, he said.

Dunn didn’t get mixed up. It’s another one of those stories he “combined,” he said.

He said he based the story loosely on the death of another soldier, Phillip Cocroft, who was mortally wounded in a mortar attack that Dunn said he witnessed.

Cocroft didn’t live through the night or die in his arms, Dunn admitted.

Military records confirm that Cocroft died on Okinawa on May 15, 1945.

“I came home many months later, talking to kids in a teaching situation,” Dunn said. “All I did was take Harold Brown’s relationship (with me) and combine it with Ralph [sic] Cocroft’s dying.”

Once he had told the fabricated version of the story, Dunn said, he couldn’t change it.

“Rather than go back and change something where it would be deceitful, I just kept it the same,” he explained. (Arizona Republic, February 17, 1991)

Since Phillip Cocroft “didn’t live through the night or die in his [Dunn’s] arms,” this part of the story could not have applied to him. The tale certainly could not relate to Harold Brown because he is still alive. Moreover, Paul Dunn’s claim that “the very day I got back in this country, before going to my own home, I took a plane back to Missouri and reported to that dedicated family” the details of his friend’s courageous death has to be erroneous. According to the Arizona Republic, Harold Brown lives in Missouri. It seems impossible to believe, however, that Dunn would give a false report concerning Brown’s death to his family. While there may be some details in the story that are true—e.g., there was a war in 1945; Paul Dunn fought in that war; many soldiers were killed—all of the important parts of the tale concerning how God miraculously preserved a soldier with “67 shrapnel wounds” so that Paul Dunn could take an important message concerning patriotism “to the young people of America” have been fabricated.

**CHANGING NAMES**

While Paul Dunn would have us believe that his motives for telling these tall tales were pure, a careful examination of this whole matter does not tend to exonerate him. The Salt Lake Tribune, February 17, 1991, quoted the following from an apologetic statement made by Mr. Dunn: “I have on some occasions changed the names of people involved to provide confidentiality . . .” This statement does not explain his use of the name “Harold Brown” in his story concerning patriotism. Paul Dunn claims that it was actually “Phillip Cocroft” who died on “the island of Okinawa.” Since Cocroft was dead, there would be no reason to protect his confidentiality. It would appear, then, that if Mr. Dunn was trying “to provide confidentiality,” it would have been with regard to the fact that his story was spurious.

In the same statement quoted above, Paul Dunn wrote: “. . . I have never intended to mislead or to aggrandize my own circumstances, and I regret that such an impression may have been given” (Ibid.). Mr. Dunn’s claim that he has not attempted to “mislead” the public is absolutely incredible. One would wonder what he thinks the word “mislead” means. If he was not misleading people, what was he doing?
His statement that he did not intend “to aggrandize my own circumstances” is just as puzzling. It is obvious that his stories concerning his participation in professional baseball and his exaggerated yarns concerning World War II were given to make him more popular and consequently increased the sales of his books and tapes. Furthermore, Paul Dunn has been promoting a new business called “Sports-Values Training Centers.” In his article in the Arizona Republic, Richard Robertson observed that Dunn was “Relying partly on his reputation as a former professional athlete” in setting up this business. It is very doubtful that his tape, World War II Experiences, which is marketed by Covenant Communications, Inc., would have sold so many copies if Mr. Dunn had told only the truth.

Since the evidence against Paul Dunn is so devastating, one would think that the Mormon Church would have immediately stopped all sales of his books at their bookstores. Instead, however, they continued to sell Dunn’s books and tapes. On March 18, 1991, we went to an outlet of the church’s Deseret Bookstore in Salt Lake City and found a large display of tapes and books by Paul Dunn. We bought both books and tapes from the church’s bookstore for our research regarding Dunn’s fabrications. One of the tapes we bought was World War II Experiences. We were especially surprised to find the church still making a profit on a tape which had been so completely discredited.

The First Presidency of the Mormon Church has issued a statement which commends Paul Dunn for the “sacrifices he and his family have made, often at the cost of their own comfort and health.” This same statement maintains that Mr. Dunn was given emeritus status “In consideration of factors of age and health” and skirts around the issue of Dunn’s honesty by saying: “We have no way of fully or finally verifying the accuracy or inaccuracy of the current allegations or accounts that are now under challenge” (Deseret News, February 16, 1991).

THINKING’S BEEN DONE

The leaders of the Mormon Church are often referred to as “the brethren.” The president of the church is supposed to be able to receive revelations directly from God. The LDS Church, therefore, proclaims that it is the only true church led by a “living prophet.” President Brigham Young once boasted: “The Lord Almighty leads this Church, and he will never suffer you to be led astray if you are found doing your duty. You may go home and sleep as sweetly as a babe in its mother’s arms, as to any danger of your leaders leading you astray, for if they should try to do so the Lord would quickly sweep them from the earth” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 9, page 289). Mormons are encouraged to put all their trust in the church authorities and try not to do their own thinking if it conflicts with what the leaders teach. The ward teachers’ message for June, 1945, made the matter very plain:

Any Latter-day Saint who denounces or opposes, whether actively or otherwise, any plan or doctrine advocated by the “prophets, seers, and revelators” of the Church is cultivating the spirit of apostasy. . . . Lucifer . . . wins a great victory when he can get members of the Church to speak against their leaders and to “do their own thinking.” . . .

When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. When they propose a plan—it is God’s plan. When they point the way, there is no other which is safe. When they give direction, it should mark the end of controversy. (Improvement Era, June 1945, page 354)

After the General Authorities of the Mormon Church discovered that Paul H. Dunn had been deceiving the people with his stories, they decided that the matter should not be known by the membership of the church. The people, they reasoned, must not discover that a man whom they had trusted as a church leader was guilty of fabricating stories.

Some newspaper articles contained information suggesting that Mormon Apostle Boyd K. Packer was instrumental in the cover-up of the story concerning Paul Dunn. While we do not have any independent confirmation concerning these allegations, we do know that Apostle Packer believes that negative information concerning General Authorities of the LDS Church should be swept under the rug. In an article which appeared in Brigham Young University Studies, Summer 1981, he warned Mormon scholars against telling too much. Apostle Packer came down hard on those who would point out the “frailties of present or past leaders” and especially warned those “who are employed by the Church” against criticizing the “brethren.” It is not surprising, then, that when Apostle Packer’s nephew, Lynn Packer, continued to pursue the story on Dunn, the church’s Brigham Young University decided to terminate his teaching contract. Richard Robertson wrote the following:

Gordon Whiting, then chairman of the BYU communications department, had warned Packer in a memo that “publication of the Paul Dunn article will damage the church, will damage the university, will damage the department and will damage you.”

Whiting acknowledged that Packer’s contract was not renewed for the 1990-91 school year in part because Packer was violating church and university policies that prohibit public criticism of church leaders, even if the criticism is true. (Arizona Republic, February 16, 1991)

Even though Paul Dunn had fabricated stories, the LDS leaders seemed to feel that it was important to suppress this information because it would hurt the testimonies of church members. Mr. Dunn’s books, speeches and tapes apparently brought many people into the church and strengthened others in their faith. An examination of Dunn’s teachings show that he continually bore witness to the divine origin of the Mormon Church. He claimed, in fact, that he had a special witness that the LDS Church is God’s true church. In his book, Discovering the Quality of Success, page 28, he wrote: “. . . this is His Church that has been restored. Some of us have been given a special witness. So while you struggle and fight and even occasionally get discouraged, have faith in those who know.” In the Preface to his book, You and Your World, Paul Dunn related that during his years “as a General Authority” he frequently bore his witness that “the true Church has been restored in this age and is guided by revelation and a living prophet.”

Now that we know that Paul Dunn fabricated his stories concerning World War II and his relationship with the St. Louis Cardinals, his testimony to Joseph Smith and the Mormon Church has a hollow ring to it. We can hardly understand why church leaders did not immediately withdraw Dunn’s tapes and books from the church’s bookstores when the truth became known. Their inability to deal firmly with this issue leads to the conclusion that they believe the end justifies the means.

DUNN LIKE SMITH?

As we look back into Mormon history we discover that the same type of deception which Paul Dunn used with regard to his stories played a very prominent role in the formation of the
Mormon Church. There are, in fact, very strong parallels between Paul Dunn and Joseph Smith. For example, Paul Dunn was not concerned about the literal truth of his tales. He admitted that he did not feel that it was wrong to “combine” elements of different stories to catch the attention of his audience. He is quoted in the article in the Arizona Republic as saying: “The combining of stories seems justifiable in terms of illustrating a point.”

Paul Dunn seems to have been very impressed with Joseph Smith’s story of his First Vision and referred to it in an article published in the church’s Improvement Era, June 1970, page 70:

That beautiful spring morning in 1820, God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ revealed themselves to a young boy whose name will never perish. That boy was Joseph Smith, the first prophet of this dispensation. . . . the Spirit whispers to us, “He was indeed a prophet.”

This is a remarkable story. David O. McKay, the ninth president of the church, maintained that the First Vision is the very “foundation of this Church” (Gospel Ideals, page 85). In his book Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth, page 19, Apostle John A. Widtsoe emphasized: “The First Vision of 1820 is of first importance in the history of Joseph Smith. Upon its reality rest the truth and value of his subsequent work.” Unfortunately for Mormon apologists, some extremely important information concerning this vision has come to light. The evidence clearly shows that the story evolved and that Joseph Smith added elements which were not in the first handwritten account of the vision.

Prior to 1965, Mormon writers always insisted that Joseph Smith “told but one story” of the First Vision (see Joseph Smith the Prophet, by Preston Nibley, 1944, page 30). This was the account dictated by Joseph Smith to his scribes in 1838-39. It was first published in the Times and Seasons in 1842 and is the official account found in the Pearl of Great Price today. In 1965, however, a much earlier handwritten account was brought to light in an unpublished Brigham Young University thesis by Paul R. Cheesman. We were convinced that this account was written by Joseph Smith and published it to the world in 1965 under the title, Joseph Smith’s Strange Account of the First Vision. Because the document contradicted the official account, some members of the church doubted its authenticity. Although the Mormon leaders would make no public statement concerning the document, Professor James B. Allen, who later became Assistant LDS Church Historian, confirmed its validity and called it “One of the most significant documents of that period yet discovered.” He went on to say that the “manuscript has apparently lain in the L.D.S. Church Historian’s office for many years, and yet few if any who saw it realized its profound historical significance” (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Autumn 1966, page 35).

The Mormon leaders suppressed this important account of the First Vision for over 130 years, but after we printed it, thousands of copies were disseminated throughout the world. Finally, four years after we printed it, Dean C. Jesse, who was “a member of the staff at the LDS Church Historian’s Office,” made a public statement confirming the authenticity of the manuscript and stating that the document was written in 1831 or 1832:

On at least three occasions prior to 1839 Joseph Smith began writing his history. The earliest of these is a six-page account recorded on three leaves of a ledger book, written between the summer of 1831 and November 1832. . . .

The 1831-32 history transliterated here contains the earliest known account of Joseph Smith’s First Vision. (Brigham Young University Studies, Spring 1969, pages 277-78)

In an article printed in Brigham Young University Studies, Summer 1971, page 462, Dean Jessee made it clear that this was not only the first extant account of the First Vision, but it was the only account in “the actual handwriting of Joseph Smith.” Below is the important part of this account taken directly from a photograph of the original document:

. . . the Lord heard my cry in the wilderness and while in the attitude of calling upon the Lord in the 16th year of my age a pillar of light above the brightness of the sun at noon day come down from above and rested upon me and I was filled with the spirit of god and the Lord opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord and he spake unto me saying Joseph my son thy sins are forgiven thee. go thy way walk in my statutes and keep my commandments behold I am the Lord of glory I was crucified for the world that all those who believe on my name may have Eternal life behold the world lieth in sin at this time and none doeth good no not one they have turned aside from the gospel and keep not my commandments they draw near to me with their lips while their hearts are far from me and mine anger is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to visit them according to this ungodliness and to bring to pass that which hath been spoken by the mouth of the prophets and Apostles behold and lo I come quickly as it was written in the cloud clothed in the glory of my Father . . .

A careful examination of this document reveals why church leaders suppressed it for 130 years. While there are a number of contradictions between this account and the official account published by the church, the most serious discrepancy involves the number of personages in the vision. In the later version, which is published in the Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith related: “. . . I saw two personages.” In the first account, however, the Mormon prophet only mentions one personage: “. . . I saw the Lord . . .” The context makes it very clear that the personage was Jesus Christ and that Joseph Smith did not include God the Father in his first handwritten account of the vision. Mormon historian James B. Allen commented: “In this story, only one personage was mentioned, and this was obviously the Son, for he spoke of having been crucified” (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Autumn 1966, page 40).

In his thesis, “An Analysis of the Accounts Relating Joseph Smith’s Early Visions,” page 63, Paul R. Cheesman tried to excuse the fact that the account which was suppressed only mentions one personage by stating: “As he writes briefly of the vision, he does not mention the Father as being present; however, this does not indicate that He was not present.” This explanation does not seem reasonable. Actually, in the first account Joseph Smith quoted the Lord as saying more words than in the official version. If God the Father had really appeared in this vision, Joseph Smith certainly would have included this information in his first account. It is absolutely impossible for us to believe that Smith would not have mentioned the Father if he had actually appeared in the vision. The only reasonable explanation for the Father not being mentioned is that Joseph Smith did not see God the Father, and that he made up this part of the story after he wrote the first manuscript. This, of course, throws a shadow of doubt upon the entire story.

Like Paul Dunn, Joseph Smith decided that the story he had written in 1832 needed some new elements to impress people with how important the vision actually was and to bolster up his own role as a prophet of the living God. What could catch the audience’s interest better than to have both the Father and the Son come down and personally visit him? Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe was highly impressed with Joseph’s final product:
It was an extraordinary experience. Never before had God the Father and God the Son appeared to mortal man. . . . The Father and the Son appeared to Joseph as persons, like men on earth in form. . . . Two personages, the Father and the Son, stood before Joseph. . . . There was no mingling of personalities in the vision. Each of the personages was an individual member of the Godhead. Each one separately took part in the vision.

(See The Second Volume of Joseph Smith—History, page 58.)

While the Bible does not have any story concerning the Father and the Son coming down in the form of two exalted men, Joseph Smith was undoubtedly familiar with the account of the transfiguration: "While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matthew 17:5). The first Mormon prophet must have decided that it would make his story more soul-stirring if he incorporated this element into the narrative. He, therefore, borrowed part of the story from the Biblical account:

So, in accordance with this, my determination to ask of God, I retired to the woods to make the attempt. It was on the morning . . . in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty. . . . I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun . . . . I saw two personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him! . . . I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right. . . . and which I should join.

I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: "they draw near to me for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof." (2 Timothy 4:3, 2 Peter 2:1-12).

By the time Joseph Smith wrote this altered account of the First Vision he had decided that God the Father was an exalted man. He, therefore, incorporated this new theological idea into the vision by emphasizing that he actually "saw two personages." Another element he added to the reworked version was that the vision followed a revival which had just taken place in the vicinity. Wesley P. Walters, however, has conclusively established that no such revival took place in Palmyra in 1820. The revival actually began in the fall of 1824 and continued into 1825 (see our book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 156-162).

In Joseph Smith’s 1835-36 diary there are other accounts of his First Vision which tend to add to the confusion. For instance, in one account Joseph Smith told Erastus Holmes regarding his "juvenile years, say from 6 years old up to the time I received the first visitation of Angels which was when I was about 14 years old" (An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith, 1989, page 39). The Mormon leaders were apparently embarrassed that he did not mention either the Father or the Son. Consequently, in the published History of the Church, vol. 2, page 312, it has been changed to read: "... I received my first vision, which was when I was about fourteen years old . . . ." Another account in the same diary (page 51) has Joseph Smith saying that he "saw many angels in this vision."

For a thorough examination of the many conflicting statements in Joseph Smith’s account of the First Vision see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 143-153.

It seems shocking that Joseph Smith would so drastically alter his story and then claim that it was written "in truth and righteousness" (Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History 1:2). Perhaps, however, we can learn something about his way of thinking from Paul Dunn’s confession regarding the falsification of stories. Mr. Dunn seemed to feel that he was an important religious leader who had a vital message for the world. According to the article in the Arizona Republic, “he doesn’t consider it deceitful to exaggerate or alter facts.” Dunn, in fact, was quoted as saying, “The combining of stories seems justifiable in terms of illustrating a point. My motives are pure and innocent . . . .” Paul Dunn, it would appear, sees nothing wrong with recasting his stories if the modifications help people become better Mormons or more patriotic. In Mr. Dunn’s mind, therefore, the end justifies the means.

In Joseph Smith’s case, he seems to have considered himself the greatest religious leader. He claimed that God specifically chose him to restore the true church to earth. Shortly before his death in 1844, Smith boasted:

If they want a beardless boy to whip all the world, I will get up on the top of a mountain and crow like a rooster. I shall always beat them . . . . My enemies . . . think that when they have my spoke under, they will keep me down: but the fools, I will hold on and fly over them . . . . I will come out on the top at last. I have more to boast of than ever any man had. I am the only man that has ever been able to keep a whole church together since the days of Adam. A large majority of the whole have stood by me. Neither Paul, John, Peter nor Jesus ever did it. I boast that no man ever did such a work as I. The followers of Jesus ran away from Him; but the Latter-day Saints never ran away from me yet. (History of the Church, vol. 6, pages 408-409)

Like Paul Dunn, Joseph Smith modified his stories to enhance his own image. While he criticized his enemies for being dishonest, he somehow felt that he himself was above accountability. He seems, therefore, to have had no qualms about stretching his own stories. He could justify his story of the First Vision in the same way that Paul Dunn rationalized his tales. Certain elements in the story are undoubtedly true. For example, he claimed that he “retired to the woods” to seek God’s answer as to which church he should join. Since this section of the country has many trees, it seems plausible that he could have gone into the woods to pray. In fact, just before Joseph Smith prepared his first handwritten account of the vision, he informed his wife in a letter from Greenville, Indiana, that he had "visited a grove" and had called upon God in “pray[er].” He claimed that he “Shed tears of sorrow for my folly in Suc[cer]ing the adversary of my Soul to have so much power over me,” but went on to state that “God . . . has fo[r]given my Sins . . . .” (Letter by Joseph Smith, dated June 6, 1832; see photographs of pages from this letter in The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith, pages 240-241)

It is interesting to note that this letter contains similarities to Joseph Smith’s earliest account of his First Vision which was written sometime between July 20 and Nov. 27 of the same year (1832). In both cases, Joseph Smith was convicted of his sins and went out in the woods to pray. He diligently sought the Lord and obtained forgiveness of his sins. In the letter he stated that he felt that “God . . . has fo[r]given my Sins . . . .” In his initial account of the First Vision Joseph Smith claimed that the Lord said, “Joseph my son thy sins are forgiven thee.”

The 1832 account, of course, maintains that Jesus Christ appeared to Joseph Smith. Fawn Brodie, however, felt that this might “have been the elaboration of some half-remembered dream stimulated by the early revival excitement and reinforced...
by the rich folklore of visions circulating in his neighborhood” (No Man Knows My History, page 25). She also felt, however, that the presence of deity could have been “sheer invention.” Joseph Smith was certainly not the only one claiming a vision of Christ. In 1816 a minister by the name of Elias Smith wrote a book in which he told how he “went into the woods . . . a light appeared to shine from heaven . . . The Lamb once slain appeared to my understanding . . .” (The Life, Conversion, Preaching, Travels, and Sufferings of Elias Smith, by himself, vol. 1, pages 58-59). Eight years before Joseph Smith wrote his account of the First Vision (March 1, 1824), Alexander Campbell noted that, “Enthusiasm flourishes . . . This man was regenerated when asleep, by a vision of the night. That man heard a voice in the woods, saying, ‘Thy sins be forgiven thee.’ A third saw his Saviour descending to the tops of the trees at noon day” (The Christian Baptist, 1955 reprint, vol. 1, page 148).

Joseph Smith could have decided to incorporate a vision of Christ which someone else had into his own story about obtaining forgiveness for his sins in the woods. This, of course, would be the same type of method which Paul Dunn used. If Smith had actually seen the Lord over a decade earlier, he undoubtedly would have published that fact to the world. As far as we know, no one, including his own family, seemed to know anything about his claim that he saw Jesus in the woods.

In his 1838-39 account of the First Vision, Joseph Smith added additional elements into the story. As we have mentioned before, he linked the First Vision, which he claimed took place in 1820, to a revival which actually occurred in 1824-25. While the revival is an historical fact, Smith’s claim that it took place before the vision and that the dissension which accompanied the revival caused him to ask the Lord which church was right plainly shows that he was fabricating the story.

In the 1838-39 account of the First Vision, Joseph Smith added that when he asked the Lord which of the churches was right, he was told that he “must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt . . .” This idea is very similar to a revelation which Asa Wild claimed to have received many years earlier. It was published in the Wayne Sentinel—the paper to which the family of Joseph Smith apparently subscribed—on October 22, 1823:

It seemed as if my mind . . . was struck motionless . . . before the awful and glorious majesty of the Great Jehovah. . . . He also told me, that every denomination of professing Christians had become extremely corrupt . . . He told me further, that he had raised up, and was now raising up, that class of persons signified by the Angel mentioned by the Revelator, xiv. 6, 7, which flew in the midst of heaven; having the everlasting gospel to preach . . . he said that all the different denominations of professing Christians, constituted the New Testament Babylon . . .

We have already noted that Joseph Smith probably appropriated the words “This is my beloved Son . . . hear . . . him” from the account of the transfiguration found in Matthew 17:5. The most sensational addition, however, was that God the Father was actually physically present with Jesus Christ. There cannot be the slightest doubt that Joseph Smith slipped this part of the story in to promote his more recent theological views concerning God.

Marvin S. Hill, professor of American history at the church’s Brigham Young University, tried to defend the idea that Joseph Smith had a religious experience in the grove, but he had to admit that Joseph Smith’s official 1838-39 account has some real problems. He, in fact, suggested that the 1832 account of the vision was probably more accurate official account and that Joseph Smith may have changed his theological views concerning God:

It seems to me that everybody has approached the issue from the wrong end, by starting with the 1838 official version when the account they should be considering is that of 1832. Merely on the face of it, the 1832 version stands a better chance of being more accurate and unembellished than the 1838 account . . . I am inclined to agree that the religious turmoil that Joseph described which led to some family members joining the Presbyterians and to much sectarian bitterness does not fit well into the 1820 context detailed by Backman. . . . An 1824 revival creates problems for the 1838 account, not that of 1832. . . . If Joseph Smith in 1838 read back into 1820 some details of a revival that occurred in 1824, there is no reason to conclude that he invented his religious experiences. . . . If initially Joseph said one personage came to him in 1820, it became easier for Oliver Cowdery to confuse this visit with the coming of Moroni than it would have been a few years later when Joseph taught emphatically that there were three separate personages in the Godhead. . . . It seems to me that if the Latter-day Saints can accept the idea that Joseph gained his full understanding of the nature of God only after a period of time, instead of its emerging fullblown in 1820, then most of the difficulties with chronology can be resolved. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer 1982, pages 39-40)

Since the Mormon Church has canonized the 1838-39 account of the First Vision in the Pearl of Great Price, it is doubtful that the church will follow Professor Hill’s suggestion concerning giving “priority to the 1832 account” of the vision. At any rate, Thomas G. Alexander, who is also a professor at the church’s Brigham Young University, has also suggested that a theological shift in Joseph Smith’s view concerning the Godhead caused him to change his story from one to two personages (see Line Upon Line, edited by Gary James Bergera, 1989, page 54)

Joseph Smith did not hesitate to add new elements into his stories and often altered or deleted things that did not fit his current ideas. For example, he changed the name of the angel who was supposed to have appeared to him and revealed where the gold plates of the Book of Mormon were deposited. In the Elder’s Journal for July 1838, page 42, Joseph Smith gave the angel’s name as “Moroni.” Four years later, however, when he published his history in the Times and Seasons, the Mormon prophet changed his mind. He decided that the angel was really named “Nephi”: “He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Nephi” (Times and Seasons, April 15, 1842, page 753). In the original 1851 edition of the Pearl of Great Price, the name was also given as “Nephi”:

He called me by name and said unto me, that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Nephi. (Pearl of Great Price, 1851 edition, page 41)

In current printings of the Pearl of Great Price, however, the name of the angel appears as “Moroni”:

He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Moroni;
The original handwritten manuscript dictated by Joseph Smith reveals that the name was originally written as “Nephi,” but that someone at a later date has written the word “Moroni” above the line. In our new book, Flaws in the Pearl of Great Price we present evidence to prove this change was made after Joseph Smith’s death.

Joseph Smith not only changed his stories concerning his visitations from deity and angels, but he also went so far as to alter the revelations which he claimed he received directly from the Lord and dictated to his scribes (see photographic proof in our book, Major Problems of Mormonism, pages 106-121). In a revelation which now appears as Section 27 of the Doctrine and Covenants, Joseph Smith added over 400 words.

AN EXTENSIVE FORGERY

In Major Problems of Mormonism, pages 82-91, we demonstrate that after Joseph Smith’s death, Brigham Young and the other early leaders of the Mormon Church followed the same deceptive path. They, in fact, committed one of the most extensive forgeries we have ever encountered. This was what they claimed was the History of the Church, by Joseph Smith himself. As early as 1965 we questioned whether Joseph Smith was really the author of such a voluminous work—about 2,200 handwritten pages. We suggested, in fact, that large portions were probably derived from other sources and changed to the first person to make it appear that Joseph Smith was the author. This, of course, is the type of thing that Paul Dunn was guilty of—e.g., attributing important patriotic remarks to Harold Brown which Brown did not utter.

It is interesting to note that in his book, You and Your World, page 16, Dunn pointed to the History of the Church as one of the great achievements of Joseph Smith:

He . . . wrote like Paul . . . His writings, letters, and spoken words are so extensive that it seems almost impossible that one man could do so much in so little time. . . . his own history, speeches, and minutes total over 3,200 pages.

In any case, after we published our theory that Joseph Smith never finished his History, Mormon scholars were completely silent concerning the matter for six years. In 1971, however, Dean C. Jessee, of the Mormon Church Historian’s Office published the startling admission that Joseph Smith did not actually finish his History of the Church before his death on June 27, 1844. Mr. Jessee revealed:

Not until Willard Richards was appointed secretary to Joseph Smith was any significant progress made on the History. . . . At the time of Joseph Smith’s death, the narrative was written to August 5, 1838. . . .

By February 4, 1846, the day the books were packed for the journey west, the History had been completed to March 1, 1843. . . . resumption of work on the History occurred on “Dec. 1, 1853 [when] Dr. Willard Richards wrote one line of History being sick at the time—and was never able to do any more.” . . .

The remainder of Joseph Smith’s History of the Church from March 1, 1843 to August 8, 1844, was completed under the direction of George A. Smith. . . .

The Joseph Smith History was finished in August 1856, seventeen years after it was begun. (Brigham Young University Studies, Summer 1971, pages 466, 469, 470, 472)

Dean C. Jessee frankly admitted that the manuscript was only completed to page 812 at the time of Joseph Smith’s death (Ibid., page 457). Since there were almost 2,200 pages, this would mean that over sixty percent of Joseph Smith’s History was not compiled during his lifetime! In an article published in the Journal of Mormon History, Dean Jessee conceded that the bizarre editorial procedures used by the leaders of his church in creating Joseph Smith’s History had a “distorting effect” on the work:

The format gives the impression that the history was written personally by Joseph Smith. A study of original documents, however, shows that much of its content was not the actual product of the Prophet’s mind . . . One notes a marked difference in style between those entries in the History that reflect Joseph Smith’s own thought and those that are the creation of his scribes. . . . since Joseph Smith’s diary did not provide an unbroken narrative of his life, gaps were bridged by using other sources, changing indirect discourse to direct as if Joseph had done the writing himself . . . by transferring other people’s words and thoughts to Joseph Smith, this editorial method produced a distorting effect for those who would study his personality from his personal writings. (Journal of Mormon History, vol. 3, page 37)

In Major Problems of Mormonism, pages 85-88, we show that two of Joseph Smith’s most famous prophecies printed in his History—the prophecy that the Mormons would become “a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains” and the predictions concerning Steven A. Douglas—were actually fraudulently created after his death in an attempt to glorify Joseph Smith’s prophetic ability.

While many Mormons are disgusted with Paul Dunn’s pious forgeries, if they will take a closer look at their own history, they will find that Dunn’s methods are exactly like those used by Joseph Smith, Brigham Young and others who helped establish the LDS Church. The only difference between Dunn and these leaders is that they depended on these methods to a far greater extent. The idea that “the end justifies the means,” of course, falls far short of the Biblical standard. Colossians 3:9 admonishes: “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;” and James 3:14 affirms that we should “lie not against the truth.”

More information concerning the Dunn affair and its implications for members of the Mormon Church will be found in our new publication—What Hast Thou Dunn?

A CONTROVERSIAL BOOK

In 1852, the First Presidency of the Mormon Church authorized Apostle Orson Pratt “to write and Publish Periodicals, Pamphlets, Books, &c., illustrative of the principles and doctrines of the Church...” Pratt’s publication, The Seer, printed in 1853-54, soon stirred up a hornet’s nest when he revealed a great deal concerning the Mormon doctrine of plural marriage. Pratt maintained that both God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ were polygamists and that the Virgin Mary was “the lawful wife of God” (see pages 158, 159, 172). In 1990, Eborn Books published a limited photo-reprint of The Seer together with an index. It is nicely done in a hardback binding and originally sold for $49.95. Fortunately, we were able to obtain 50 copies.
In our new book, *Flaws in the Pearl of Great Price*, we have compiled some very important information concerning the *Pearl of Great Price*, a book accepted by members of the Mormon Church as inspired scripture. It is, in fact, one of the four standard works of the church. Since most of the material contained in the *Pearl of Great Price* was supposed to have been given to the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith by divine revelation, it is considered more accurate than the Bible. The “Book of Moses,” contained in the first part of the *Pearl of Great Price*, purports to give an account of the Creation which God originally gave to Moses and later revealed to Joseph Smith. In the 1965 printing of *Commentary on the Pearl of Great Price*, by George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, page xi, we read:

“We need go no further in our research than to compare the story of the Creation of the earth and Man, and the history thereof down to the time of the Flood as it appears in the Book of Genesis (Old Testament) with these same writings, unimpaired or unmarred by the incidents of time, contained in the *Pearl of Great Price*, the Writings of Moses. At first they both were the same; the one (Genesis) effaced by the wisdom and carelessness of men, the other as it was revealed by God through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

The second part of the *Pearl of Great Price* contains the “Book of Abraham.” It was supposed to have been written on papyrus by Abraham himself about 4,000 years ago! According to Mormon officials, this same papyrus fell into Joseph Smith’s hands and he began translating it in 1835.

The *Pearl of Great Price* also contains Joseph Smith’s “inspired” translation of a portion of the book of Matthew, his own story concerning how God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ appeared to him, and how an angel from God revealed that some gold plates were buried near his home. Smith “translated” these plates and published the contents under the title, The Book of Mormon. The *Pearl of Great Price* concludes with Joseph Smith’s “Articles of Faith.”

The *Pearl of Great Price* was first published in book form in 1851 by Apostle Franklin D. Richards. Prior to Richard’s compilation, portions of the text he used had been published in early Mormon publications. In 1880, the *Pearl of Great Price* was canonized and at that time became one of the four standard works of the church.

“DRAMATICALLY CHANGED”

One of the problems relating to the *Pearl of Great Price* is the serious changes that have appeared in the text since it was published in 1851. Like Paul Dunn’s stories, new elements have been added to the text which were not in the original handwritten manuscript when it was first dictated. The portion of the *Pearl of Great Price* which has had the most drastic alterations made in it is the “Book of Moses.” The Book of Moses is actually only a part of a far larger work known as the “Inspired Version” of the Bible. Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie stressed that the Inspired Version was given to Joseph Smith by revelation:

In consequence, at the command of the Lord and while acting under the spirit of revelation, the Prophet corrected, revised, altered, added to, and deleted from the King James Version of the Bible to form what is now commonly referred to as the inspired Version of the Bible. . . . The first 151 verses of the Old Testament, down to Genesis 6:13, are published as the Book of Moses in the *Pearl of Great Price*. But as restored by the Prophet the true rendition contains about 400 verses and a wealth of new doctrinal knowledge and historical data. . . . the marvelous flood of light and knowledge revealed through the *Inspired Version of the Bible* is one of the great evidences of the divine mission of Joseph Smith. (Mormon Doctrine, 1979, pages 383-384)

Actually, the *Inspired Version of the Bible* has been the source of much embarrassment for the Mormon Church leaders. It was never published during Joseph Smith’s lifetime. In fact, his wife, Emma, retained the manuscript and would not give it to Willard Richards, who had been sent by Brigham Young to obtain it (see History of the Church, vol. 7, page 260). Mormon Church leaders were never able to obtain the original manuscripts of the Inspired Version from Joseph Smith’s widow. She, in fact, turned them over to the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints—an offshoot of the Mormon Church. This was a great blow to the Mormon leaders because they considered the Reorganized Church to be an “apostate” organization.

To the chagrin of the Mormon leaders, in 1867 the Reorganized Church published Joseph Smith’s *Inspired Version of the Bible*. Brigham Young was very opposed to the idea of members of his church receiving the Revision from an “apostate” organization. Apostle Orson Pratt, on the other hand, wanted to accept it, and this caused some conflict with President Young.

After the Inspired Version was published by the Reorganized Church, it became obvious that there were serious discrepancies between it and the chapters the Mormon Church had published in 1851 in the *Pearl of Great Price*. According to James R. Harris, of the Mormon Church’s Brigham Young University, Brigham Young felt that the Reorganized Church’s publication was fraudulent: “The minutes of the School of the Prophets indicate that President Brigham Young regarded the Revision ‘spurious’ and that he brought Elder Pratt to some level of agreement with his position” (Brigham Young University Studies, Summer 1968, page 374, n. 23). President Young, on the other hand, had “high regard” for the first edition of the *Pearl of Great Price* (see The Story of the *Pearl of Great Price*, by James R. Clark, page 205). After President Young passed away, the church leaders completely repudiated his ideas concerning the accuracy of these books, for they changed the text of the *Pearl of Great Price* to agree with the Reorganized Church’s printing of the Inspired Version. In his M. A. thesis, written at Brigham Young University in 1958, James R. Harris acknowledged that “every major change in the American edition [i.e., the 1878 edition of the *Pearl of Great Price*] appears in identical form in the Inspired Revision” (“A Study of the Changes in the Contents of the Book of Moses From the Earliest Available Sources to the Current Edition,” typed copy, page 225).

The fact that the Mormon Church leaders changed the text of the *Pearl of Great Price* to agree with the Inspired Version indicates that they felt the “apostate” Reorganized Church had a more accurate version of the scriptures than they did! They, therefore, put more trust in the publication by the Reorganized Church than they did in the word of President Brigham Young, the second Prophet, Seer and Revelator of the church. It is rather interesting to note that Brigham Young died in 1877, and before a year had passed the new altered edition of the *Pearl of Great Price*...
Price was published. It is also significant that Orson Pratt, the apostle who disagreed with President Young over the accuracy of the Inspired Revision, was the editor of the 1878 edition.

In any case, in his M. A. thesis, James R. Harris freely admitted that the text of the Pearl of Great Price was “drastically” altered in 1878:

Orson Pratt was the Editor of the first American edition of the Pearl of Great Price . . . The American edition was more drastically changed than any previous publication by a member of the Church. (‘A Study of the Changes in the Contents of the Book of Moses . . . typed copy, page 226)

From the standpoint of omissions and additions of words, the American Edition is the most spectacular rendition. . . . Some of the words added to the American edition had impressive doctrinal implications. (Ibid., pages 224-225)

Although James R. Harris admits that serious changes were made in the Pearl of Great Price, he feels that Joseph Smith himself made the changes in manuscripts he worked on before his death. In other words, he believes that when the Mormon leaders changed the text of the Pearl of Great Price in 1878, they were bringing it into conformity with changes Joseph Smith made in the manuscripts during his lifetime. Richard P. Howard, Church Historian for the Reorganized Church, has released information which gives support to Dr. Harris’ idea. Howard, who has had access to the original manuscripts, shows that there were a number of different manuscripts involved in the production of the Inspired Version of the Bible and that Joseph Smith often revised his own revisions and left the manuscripts in a very confused state:

Many texts reveal that the process was not some kind of automatic verbal or visual revelatory experience on the part of Joseph Smith. He often caused a text to be written in one form and later reworded his initial revision. The manuscripts in some cases show a considerable time lapse between such reconsiderations . . .

A considerable number of places in NT #2 [as Mr. Howard now numbers the manuscripts] show that initially Joseph Smith considered certain texts in the King James Version to be either correct or in need of slight revision, but that on later consideration he decided to amend them further. Since the manuscript pages were already written and filled to the extent that the later corrections could not be included, the problem was solved by writing the text out on a scrap of paper and pinning or sewing it to the appropriate manuscript page. (Restoration Scriptures: A Study of Their Textual Development, 1969, pages 93, 96)

Therefore OT #3 represents a third draft manuscript of . . . Genesis 1-7, a second draft manuscript of Genesis 8-24:42a, and a first draft manuscript of the remainder of the Old Testament, although revised considerably by interpolations written in later years between the lines and on separate scraps of paper pinned to the manuscript pages. (Ibid., page 106)

. . . the manuscripts indicate rather clearly that Joseph Smith, Jr., by his continued practice of rerevising his earlier texts (occasionally as many as three times), demonstrated that he did not believe that at any of those points of rerevision he had dictated a perfectly inerrant text by the power or voice of God. . . . It is thus unnecessary and could be misleading to appear to claim “direct” revelation in the determination of the entire text of the Inspired Version as the preface written for the 1867 edition apparently implied. (Ibid., page 151)

Richard P. Howard’s admission that Joseph Smith rerevised his earlier text “occasionally as many as three times” is certainly a serious indictment against Joseph Smith’s work and plainly shows that his “Inspired Version” is anything but inspired. The fact that he could not make up his mind shows that he was tampering with the Scriptures according to his own imagination rather than receiving revelation from God. Mormon writer Truman G. Madsen also admitted that Joseph Smith “often revised a passage, later added to or amended it, and then, in a third attempt, clarified it further” (Improvement Era, March 1970, page 70).

The many changes that had to be made in the “inspired” renderings found in the Pearl of Great Price tend to undermine confidence in Joseph Smith’s work. As we indicated earlier, the most drastic revision of the Pearl of Great Price was made in 1878. In our new book, Flaws in the Pearl of Great Price, we have photographically reproduced the original 1851 edition of the Pearl of Great Price and carefully compared it with the church’s official 1989 printing. All of the changes that have been made have been noted in handwriting. The reader, therefore, can plainly see all of the words that were added, deleted or changed.

MOSES OR JOSEPH?

As one reads the first section of the Pearl of Great Price (the “Book of Moses”) the question arises as to whether the words were actually spoken to Moses by God over 3,000 years ago or if they came from the fertile imagination of someone who lived in the 19th century. To those familiar with the Bible, the phraseology of the document has the ring of ancient scripture. Unfortunately, however, it sounds just too much like the King James Version, which was first published in 1611. Many of the verses, in fact, have been plagiarized from the book of Genesis. We have used the Mormon Church’s own computer program, The Computerized Scriptures of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to help us locate the verses which have been borrowed from the Bible. In Flaws in the Pearl of Great Price, Appendix 2, we show a large number of verses that have obviously been taken from Genesis. The most serious problem, however, is that material has also been taken from the New Testament. In our book, Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon, we have dealt with the presence of New Testament quotations in Joseph Smith’s Book of Mormon, and since the situation is analogous to that found in the Book of Moses, we quote the following from our book:

It is very clear from the contents of the Book of Mormon that while the author was not a trained Bible scholar, he was rather familiar with the contents of the King James Version of the Bible. Although Mormon apologists are reluctant to face the facts, the evidence shows that Joseph Smith had the ability and the Biblical knowledge required to write the Book of Mormon. According to Smith’s earliest account of his life, written in 1832, he claimed he began studying the Bible when he was only about 12 years old. . . .

From letters and comments we have received, it is obvious that many believers in the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon do not have a correct understanding of the plagiarism issue with regard to that book. They often point out that some portions of the Bible are similar or even identical to other portions and feel that this demonstrates there is no problem
with the Book of Mormon using parts of the Bible. It is true, of course, that such similarities do occur. For instance, many of the words of Jesus are taken from the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 8:3 the following words of Moses are given: “... man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth he live.” In Matthew 4:4 these words are attributed to Jesus: “But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Since we have evidence that the book of Deuteronomy was in existence before the time of Christ from the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Septuagint translation of the Bible made in [the] third century B.C., it is obvious that Jesus could have quoted from it. There are, in fact, many quotations from it in the New Testament, and this is the very thing we should expect to find. . . . in the examples we have cited from the Bible, all of the cases of copying can be explained by simply stating the obvious fact that the authors used some known and available work. The problem with regard to the Book of Mormon, however, is that it has the ancient Nephites making extensive quotations from works that were not even in existence at that time. In fact, in the 1st and 2nd books of Nephi, the writings of the New Testament are cited 600 years before they were written! . . .

To those who really consider the matter, it should be obvious that the presence of many portions of the New Testament in the Book of Mormon is more out of place than to find the following words in a speech attributed to George Washington: “Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” These words alone would be enough to prove the speech a forgery. While less than a century separated George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, in the Book of Mormon we have Lehi quoting from the New Testament book of Revelation almost seven centuries before it was written! (The first quotation appears on the second page of the Book of Mormon and is dated “About 600 B.C.” The book of Revelation is believed to have been written about A.D. 90.)

It is clear that the author of the Book of Mormon was holding a King James Version of the Bible in his hand when he produced it. He, therefore, could not have lived in 600 B.C. When all the evidence is examined, it is evident that he actually lived in 1830—some 2,430 years after Lehi was supposed to have fled from Jerusalem. (Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon, pages 75, 79-81)

As we have already pointed out, Joseph Smith’s Book of Moses is also filled with material that has been plagiarized from the New Testament. Moses 6:52, for example, has quotations from a number of New Testament passages. Below we have set this verse in regular type and added similar material found in New Testament verses in bold type inside brackets:

52 And he also said unto him [Adam]: If thou wilt turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, and believe, and repent of all thy transgressions, and be baptized [and be baptized—Acts 2:38], even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth [only begotten of the Father;] full of grace and truth—John 1:14, which is Jesus Christ [which is Jesus Christ—1 Corinthians 3:11], the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come [there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved—Acts 4:12] unto the children of men, ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost [ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost—Acts 2:38], asking all things in his name, and whatsoever ye shall ask, it shall be given you [Whatsoever ye shall ask . . . he will give it you—John 16:23]. (Pearl of Great Price, Book of Moses 6:52)

In Flaws in the Pearl of Great Price, Appendix 1, the reader will find over 150 parallels between the New Testament and the Book of Moses. There are undoubtedly other parallels that could be pointed out, but this should be sufficient to convince the reader of the modern origin of “Book of Moses.” All of the evidence points to the inescapable conclusion that the Mormon prophet was not working with an ancient text dating back to the time of Moses; instead he was borrowing from the King James Version of the Bible. Joseph Smith’s “Book of Moses” clearly bears all the earmarks of a spurious document and reminds us of the works of Paul Dunn. Like Dunn, Smith combined elements from more than one source to create his story of the early history of the world. He appropriated a large number of verses from the Old Testament, modified them to serve his own purposes and then added elements from a number of books in the New Testament.

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? we have a chart showing that there is a great deal of manuscript evidence for the Bible. Some of it, in fact, dates back even before the time of Christ! Joseph Smith’s Book of Moses, on the other hand, is without documentary support. The only handwritten manuscripts for the Book of Moses are those dictated by Joseph Smith in the early 1830’s.

As we have noted earlier, the Reorganized LDS Church has the original manuscripts of the Inspired Revision. Richard Howard, RLDS Church Historian, spent a great deal of time examining these manuscripts and seems to have concluded that the “Christian” material and the idea of putting the narrative into the first person came from the mind of Joseph Smith:

Viewing these subjects as he did from the vantage point of his own Christian background, Joseph Smith quite naturally would have tended to read into the symbolic preChristian language of the Old Testament certain uniquely Christian meanings. Therefore the content of all three of the documents comprising OT #1 . . . reflects the nineteenth century theological terminology of the prophet Joseph Smith. For example, references to the Holy Ghost and to the Only Begotten—terms arising from the early Christian community—help one to see that even at this early stage of development the text in a sense represents Joseph Smith’s studied theological commentary on the King James Version of the early Genesis chapters of the Bible.

This has been most difficult for students to perceive because of his practice, throughout the first . . . and the second . . . documents of OT #1, of phrasing the language in the first person singular, portraying God himself speaking to Moses the very words which, in turn, were apparently being apprehended verbally by Joseph Smith and dictated to his scribe in 1830, nearly three thousand years later. However, Joseph’s heavy reliance on the early seventeenth century Elizabethan English language and style of the King James Version throughout this second document makes this verbal inspiration approach to the language of the early Genesis chapters of his New Translation untenable. This becomes even more apparent when one considers the very complex, centuries-long process culminating in the King James text of 1611. (Restoration Scriptures, page 77)
BOOK OF ABRAHAM

As we have indicated earlier, the second part of the Pearl Great Price contains the “Book of Abraham.” It was supposed to have been written on Egyptian papyrus by Abraham himself about 4,000 years ago! According to Mormon officials, this same papyrus fell into Joseph Smith’s hands and he began translating it in 1835. If the papyrus were really written by Abraham, its discovery was probably one of the most important finds in the history of the world. To say that the papyrus would be worth a million dollars would be greatly underestimating its value, for it would be older than any portion of the Bible.

For many years Joseph Smith’s collection of papyri was lost and there was no way to check the accuracy of his translation. On November 27, 1967, however, the Mormon-owned Deseret News made the startling announcement that the collection had been rediscovered in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The article went on to say: “Included in the papyri is a manuscript identified as the original document from which Joseph Smith had copied the drawing which he called ‘Facsimile No. 1’ and published with the Book of Abraham.” The importance of this find cannot be overemphasized; it, in fact, made it possible to put Joseph Smith’s ability as a translator of ancient Egyptian writing to an absolute test.

Although the Mormon Church tried to slow down the dissemination of material with regard to the Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri, within six months from the time the Metropolitan Museum gave the papyri to the church, the Book of Abraham had been proven untrue! The fall of the Book of Abraham was brought about by the identification of the actual piece of papyrus from which Joseph Smith claimed to “translate” the book.

The identification of this fragment as the original from which Joseph Smith claimed to translate the Book of Abraham has been made possible by a comparison with Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar handwritten documents by Joseph Smith’s scribes which we photographically reproduced in 1966. Noted Egyptologists Richard A. Parker and Klaus Baer have translated this papyrus fragment and found that it is in reality the Egyptian Book of Breathings. Other Egyptologists have confirmed that it is nothing but the Book of Breathings. Even the Mormon apologist Hugh Nibley has admitted this identification. In fact, he has even made his own translation of the text (see The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment, pages 18-45).

It is obvious, therefore, that the papyrus Joseph Smith claimed was the “Book of Abraham” is in reality an Egyptian funerary text known as the “Book of Breathings.” It is a pagan document which is filled with magical practices and the names of Egyptian gods and goddesses. It has absolutely nothing to do with either Abraham or his religion.

As in the case of the “Book of Moses,” Joseph Smith plagiarized extensively from the Old Testament in creating his “Book of Abraham.” He modified many of the verses which he lifted from the King James Version of the Bible. Strange as it may seem, he used quite a number of the same verses he had already incorporated into his “Book of Moses.” In many cases, however, he altered them in a different way than he had in his earlier work. Some of these changes were made because of his study of the Hebrew language, but a significant number were made because he had changed his views of the Godhead.

Toward the end of his life (June 16, 1844), Joseph Smith gave a speech in which he publicly taught that “the [Hebrew] word Eloheim ought to be in the plural all the way through—Gods” (History of the Church, vol. 6, page 476). The word Eloheim is used many times in Genesis. It is found, for example, in Genesis 1:3. It is interesting to compare this verse from the King James Version of the Bible with Joseph Smith’s “translation” in the books of Moses and Abraham. In the Bible we read: “And God said, Let there be light . . .” Joseph Smith changed this to read as follows in Moses 2:3: “And I, God, said: Let there be light . . .” Notice that Joseph has added the word “I,” thus making it even more apparent that the verse is referring to only one God. In the Book of Abraham, however, Joseph Smith completely reversed his position with regard to this matter, for in Abraham 4:3 we read: “And they (the Gods) said: Let there be light . . .” In our book, Flaws in the Pearl of Great Price, we photographically demonstrate how Joseph Smith continued to cast doubt on his earlier work (the Book of Moses) throughout the 31 verses of Abraham, Chapter 4. In this chapter Joseph Smith consistently translated the word Eloheim as “the Gods.” In the same book we also show that Smith added elements from other sources into his Book of Abraham. A good example is the fact that he put the “anti-black” doctrine, which was commonly held in his day, into the mouth of Abraham! Until 1978 the Mormon leaders banned blacks from the priesthood and would not let them be married in their temples. The Book of Abraham 1:21-27 was often used to support this discriminatory doctrine. The Book of Moses was also cited because it states that blacks were put under a curse.

While the Pearl of Great Price is filled with problems, the other two books of scripture which Joseph Smith produced are also laced with serious errors. Mormon apologists, of course, would like us to believe otherwise. Milton R. Hunter, for example, made this fantastic claim concerning Joseph Smith’s works:

The Prophet Joseph Smith produced for the world three new volumes of holy scriptures . . . and, in addition, he revised the Bible. No prophet who has ever lived has accomplished such a tremendous feat. There are only 177 pages in the Old Testament attributed to Moses, while Joseph Smith either translated through the gift and power of God or received as direct revelation from Jehovah 835 [pages]. (Deseret News, Church Section, July 18, 1970, page 14)

While we must agree that Joseph Smith produced a great deal of material that purports to be scripture, it does not appear that this material bears any evidence of divine inspiration. For those who would like to learn more about the problems in Joseph Smith’s “scriptures,” the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants, we recommend our books Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon and Major Problems of Mormonism. For a very detailed study of the changes, plagiarism and other problems found in the Pearl of Great Price the reader should have our new publication Flaws in the Pearl of Great Price.

ARE YOU PART OF THE TEAM?

There are three main groups of people that provide most of the support for this ministry: One, Mormons who are very disturbed with the changes and cover-ups which have plagued their church. While they do not desire to leave Mormonism, they feel that our work is having a good effect upon the church. Two, ex-Mormons who desire to bring their friends to a knowledge
of the truth. Three, Christians who have never been Mormons but have a concern for LDS people and desire to win them to the Lord. These people make it possible for us to carry on this important work.

Since we want a large number of people to read the books and come to the truth, we try to provide them at the lowest possible cost to our readers. Consequently, the money we receive from our books and tapes only covers about half the cost of running Utah Lighthouse Ministry. If it were not for those who provide donations to our ministry, we would be in serious trouble! We consider these people to be a vital part of our team. They are, in fact, making an important investment in the souls of people who have been misled with falsified information furnished by the LDS Church.

Lately, the Lord has really been blessing the work. Mormons are calling us on the phone, coming into the bookstore or writing to us concerning their doubts about the church, and many of these people are turning to the Lord. For example, the following appears in a letter we recently received:

I wanted you to know . . . that my wife, children and myself have, in essence, left the Mormon Church. I am now writing a letter to my bishop that explains our decision. . . . I plan to send copies of that letter to our friends who are still in the Mormon Church . . . In addition to this, each member of my family has accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior . . . we recognize that each of us owe the both of you and your ministry a great deal for getting us to that point. . . . In my opinion, your publications stand as an historically accurate and objectively based factual presentation . . . We . . . are grateful to have found the truth about the Mormon Church and most certainly, the love that Jesus Christ has for each of us.

I have often seen your names and publications labeled as anti-Mormon. In actuality, a more appropriate designation for your work is pro-truth. (Letter from Florida, dated March 4, 1991)

While we have been very pleased with the progress that has been made within the last few years, we look forward to the future with even greater expectations. The Mormons seem to be far more receptive to the message than at any time we can remember. Over a year ago we were surprised to learn that a woman who had left the Mormon Church many years ago had died and left us a good deal of money. She gave this gift because she appreciated the work we had done. We were able to use this money to obtain some very good printing equipment. We can now print almost twice as fast as we could on our old press. In addition, after the pages are printed we now have a sorter which automatically gathers them into books. The pages were previously collated by hand. This was a slow and difficult process. We thank God for this new equipment.

The Mormons are more open to the truth than ever before, and we now have the capability to disseminate the material they need in larger quantities. The Lord willing, we are prepared to move ahead with the work at an accelerated pace. Our readers can have a part in this important work in two different ways: They can remember the ministry in their prayers, and they can also help by providing donations which will help us to reach many more people. This is a non-profit organization and all donations are tax deductible. Send contributions to Utah Lighthouse Ministry, PO Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110.

OTHER BOOKS

(Mail orders add 10% — Minimum postage $1.00)

Serious Charges Against the Tanners, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Price: $1.00

History of Utah: 1540-1886, by Hubert Howe Bancroft. Price: $25.00


Ex-Mormons: Why We Left, edited by Latayne Scott. Personal testimonies of eight ex-Mormons. Price: $7.00

Salamander: The Story of the Mormon Forgery Murders, by Linda Sillitoe and Allen Roberts. An excellent book of Mark Hofmann and his dealings with the church. Price: $5.95

Are Mormon Scriptures Reliable? by Harry L. Ropp (with revision by Wesley P. Walters). Price: $7.00


Quest for Refuge: The Mormon Flight From American Pluralism, by Marvin S. Hill. A surprisingly frank study to come from the pen of a BYU professor. Price: $19.95

Religious Seekers and the Advent of Mormonism, by Dan Vogel. Price: $9.95

Line Upon Line: Essays on Mormon Doctrine, edited by Gary James Bergera. A selection of 16 different essays which shows “the evolution of ideas many Mormons today take for granted. Price: $10.95

"Wild Bill" Hickman and the Mormon Frontier, by Hope A. Hilton. Price: $9.95


Mere Christianity, by C. S. Lewis. Good defense and explanation of Christianity. Price: $3.95


Basic Christianity, by John R. Stott. A brief examination of the claims of Christ and our response to his call. Price: $3.95
MISSIONARY WORK IN UTAH

There are opportunities for those who are interested in volunteering for evangelistic work in Salt Lake City this summer. If interested call (801) 486-3800 or write to Associated Utah Christian Ministries, PO Box 750, Salt Lake City, Utah 84010.

A THIRD PRINTING!

The new book, *Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony: 1842-1990*, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, has turned out to be such a success that we are planning a third printing. This book contains the actual text of the 1990 revision of the highly secret endowment ritual and other accounts of the ceremony dating back to 1846. Also show all of the serious changes made in the ceremony in 1990. **Price: $5.00**

IMPORTANT VIDEO!

Personal Freedom Outreach has produced a video on Mormonism which we highly recommend. It is entitled, *Mormonism: The Christian View*. The narration was done by Wesley P. Walters. It deals with Mormon history doctrines, the claim to authority, changes in doctrine, false prophecies, and witnessing suggestions. It is available for $24.00 (mail orders add 10% for shipping).

AT THE HILL CUMORAH

Berean Christian Ministries will again be coordinating a Christian witness at the Mormon Hill Cumorah Pageant scheduled for July 12-21, 1991. Over 100,000 people attend this Mormon pageant, south of Palmyra, New York. Please mark your calendar to pray for the Christian workers. If you would like to witness to the Mormons and their guests or want more information, send by June 17, 1991, a self addressed, long, stamped envelope to: Berean Christian Ministries, PO Box 1091, Webster, New York 14580.

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A great deal has happened since we began working on the last issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger. For example, on April 23, 1991, we were informed that Darrick Evenson, a Mormon writer who has worked very hard in an attempt to discredit our work, had been unmasked as a deceiver. Mr. Evenson now admits that he was secretly engaged in dishonest practices to gather information which he could use to discredit people or organizations he disagreed with. He, in fact, confessed that he used aliases and a “Trojan horse” technique to carry out his questionable operations.

Some of our readers may remember that this is not the first “Trojan horse” that we have encountered in our work. Those who are familiar with our newsletter may remember that in October 1976 we received a letter from a man known as “Stan Fields.” He claimed he was an “Ex-Mormon for Jesus, and would like to be added to your mailing list . . . God’s blessings on you as you do His work, Sincerely in Christ.” This man spent a great deal of time spying on various people who were critical of the Mormon Church. We later learned that his real name was Steven Mayfield and that he was also working for the FBI at the time he sent us this letter. In 1980, we discovered his deceitful game and the fact that at that very time he was employed at the Mormon Church Office Building. We confronted him on the job and he confessed to his duplicity and consented to a tape-recorded interview (see our publication, Unmasking A Mormon Spy). During the time that Steven Mayfield was carrying out his nefarious operations, he went to great lengths to protect his “cover.” In a letter to Latayne Covett Scott, Mr. Mayfield went so far as to say that the Mormon Church was inspired by the Devil: “I read some of the Tanner’s material and became thoroughly convinced that the Mormon cult the church of my youth, the church of my ancestors was wrong, false, and Satan inspired.” In the same letter, Mayfield went on to complain concerning “the falseness of man-made religion (like Mormonism) which leads men to hell.” After he was exposed, Steven Mayfield admitted that these statements were only made in an attempt to gain the confidence of Mormon critics so that he could spy on them.

Besides the important development with regard to the unmasking of Darrick Evenson, some Mormon scholars at the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (F.A.R.M.S.) became so upset with our book, Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon, that they have published rebuttals. In addition, they have also made a vicious attack against some Mormon scholars who are also convinced that the Book of Mormon is not what it claims to be. We will have more to say about the charges later in this publication.

Evenson’s Claims

The editors of this newsletter (Jerald and Sandra Tanner) probably first became aware of the name Darrick Evenson when we read volume one of They Lie in Wait to Deceive, by Robert and Rosemary Brown. This book was written to show how “anti-Mormons work to obstruct and distort the truth.” While the first edition of this publication did not have anything about Mr. Evenson, after it was revised in 1982, two pages were devoted to a long letter written by Evenson. In this letter, dated October 26, 1981, we find the following:
My name is Darrick Troy Evenson, and I am writing you this letter in appreciation of your new book, "They Lie in Wait to Deceive." I, too, am no stranger to the anti-Mormon campaign of today. . . . I call it simply the "Counter-Mission." To be sure, when I was only a convert of a few months (this was back in February of 1979) I walked into a "Christian" bookstore looking for something that was written by the Church (you can see how naive I was back then). I glanced over to the far wall of the building and noticed dozens of books with the picture of the Salt Lake Temple on them. . . . But when I glanced at the sign above, it said, "Cult/Occult Section." I was confused. I picked up one of the books that were on the shelves and began to read. Something inside of me told me to put it down, but because of intense curiosity I had to read on . . . I read only a short ways into it when I recognized that the Church hadn’t printed that book. I spent about three hours in the bookstore, and I became familiar with all the anti-Mormon books that were there. I walked into that store a joyous person, but I did walk out a confused and embittered person. It struck me with such alarm and seriousness that I made a vow to myself. I vowed that if I had been deceived by the Church (as the Tanner’s and others said), then I wanted to know Who, What, Where, How, and Why! I immediately quit my job and quit school. . . . I took the money that I had saved up in the service to use in my search for the pro or con. I began to read, and I read so much that more and more questions were coming into my head, and no answers as of yet . . . I began to visit other churches. . . . All this time I was totally inactive from the Church. . . . I must now say that it was several times that I confided to my friend that the Church was false; the "evidence" to me then seemed so overwhelming. . . . At the sectarian libraries, there was NOTHING BUT anti-Mormon in regard to the church. However, even after I succumbed to the anti-Mormon propaganda, something inside me (which I recognize now as the Holy Ghost) kept telling me to dig deeper to find the truth. After awhile, I began to regularly study at the Institute libraries . . . One by one the claims of the anti-Mormons began to fall. Eventually, after 17 months of research and study, the last anti-Mormon claim fell. I then asked, in extreme violation of the "Tanner Code of Truth," my Heavenly Father in prayer to confirm my findings. And He did in a most joyful way! Now I have been fully active for more than a year, and I am now saving up for my mission. I want to share my knowledge and joy with others. . . . I read your book and I truly enjoyed it. To be sure many things . . . can point to the truthfulness of the divine mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith . . .

I still study the counter-mission . . . I remember that you mentioned in your book that you found other people who were exposing the counter-mission also. I feel that someday it could be productive for all these individuals to exchange information . . . I wish for a project that would get good, scholarly, apologetical works in the libraries—public libraries. . . . The goals of the counter-generation (the nationwide anti-Mormon campaign) is:

1) To use a well-financed campaign of misinformation to inject doubt, hoping to destroy the faith of the membership of the church; and . . . to halt the exodus of members of other churches into this church—while at the same time making a very good living in the process.

2) To carefully misinform the Christian public as to the origin, beliefs, and ultimate goals of the Church hoping to make it appear unpopular.

To the first goal they have overwhelmingly failed, except the part about “making a good living in the process.” Their campaign is now confined to investigators and new converts. To the second goal I can only say that so long as there exists uninformd people in the world this will persist to some extent. As you know, Christ said that in the latter days men shall persecute the Saints in his name. . . . Each individual must have the evidences presented to him without deceit. I have talked to many ministers who, after I had made my presentation to them, have admitted to me that there “maybe” was some misinformation given against the Church, but such means were justifiable because the “end” was so desirable!

I have been assaulted on several occasions. I am now positive that nothing can halt the counter-mission, for it is not of man alone (if you know what I mean). . . . I am sure there are many who fight against the Church in sincerity. They do so because they have been deceived by the likes of the Martin’s, Tanner’s, and . . . the Nelson’s . . .

Many here in Tacoma are looking forward to your next book. Truly, if there is anything I could do for you (I am quite a researcher), just let me know. Right now I am saving up for my mission; I feel that the joy that this gospel brings is, in me, bursting at the seams, and I must share it with everyone I can. . . . Our testimony is sure, and what a joy it truly brings! . . . (Letter by Darrick Evenson, as printed, in They Lie in Wait to Deceive, by Robert and Rosemary Brown, revised edition, vol. 1, pages 279-280)

Promoting Dissension

Our records show that Darrick Evenson was in contact with us as early as October, 1983, when he was serving as a missionary for the Mormon Church. In 1989, Horizon Publishers published a book by Mr. Evenson entitled, The Gainsayers: A Converted Anti-Mormon Responds To Critics of the LDS Church. On the dust jacket of Evenson’s book we find the following:

When new LDS convert Darrick Evenson encountered anti-Mormon literature for the first time, it devastated him. He naively accepted it as true, and it led him out of the Church into the ranks of the “Ex-Mormons for Jesus.” Darrick learned their “witnessing” approaches and techniques and began functioning with them in the fight against the Mormon Church. But as he became familiar with them and their message, he found himself increasingly uncomfortable in their midst. . . . And though they professed to “love” the Mormons, he found he found the “Ex-Mormon” motivation to be just the opposite. . . . As he encountered more and more instances of falsehoods and deception in the “Ex-Mormon” teachings, his conscience began to work on him more and more. He finally renounced his affiliation with them and returned to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. . . . Darrick is aware that the message and methods of anti-Mormon gainsayers have kept many truth-seekers from hearing and accepting the gospel of Jesus Christ. . . . Anti-Mormon organizations such as “Saints Alive” and “Ex-Mormons for Jesus” are modern gainsayers in the truest sense of the word. . . . The author presents evidence which shows that the same techniques used by those who fought against Christ’s Church in the meridian of time . . . are being used against the Mormons today. Satan's work follows the same patterns down through time. . . .

A powerful chapter is devoted to a presentation of responses to many of the anti-Mormon distortions and misrepresentations currently being used. It is obvious that the author is well acquainted with the nature of yellow journalism used against the Church . . .
Although we had to admit that Darrick Evenson made some points regarding excesses in what is often called “the anti-Mormon” movement, we felt that the claims concerning his affiliation and work with “Ex-Mormons for Jesus” seemed somewhat nebulous. In any case, Mr. Evenson began visiting our bookstore, and it soon became obvious that one of his most important goals in life was to destroy our ministry. He claimed that he was investigating us and had found evidence that we had been very dishonest. Evenson maintained that he was working hand-in-hand with Robert and Rosemary Brown and others who opposed our work. A friend of Darrick Evenson, who is a devout Mormon, told us that in 1988 or 1989 Evenson moved in with the Browns to do research for them. It is unclear whether he was receiving a salary or just board and room. From research that Mike Mistretta has done, he feels that Evenson’s work at that time related to getting negative material for the Browns to use against Ed Decker. It has been suggested that the Browns felt that Mr. Evenson’s research was not progressing as rapidly as they had anticipated and that he left about a week after he moved in with them. Whether he continued working for the Browns is not known, but those involved in other ministries to Mormons claim that Mr. Evenson often represented himself as working for the Browns.

In his attempt to create problems for critics of the Mormon Church, Darrick Evenson has used some very divisive tactics. Mr. Evenson was aware that we have been accused of being secret agents for the Mormon Church and that we have some differences of opinion with Ed Decker. Evenson seized upon these facts and attempted to stir up a serious battle between us. He visited our bookstore and related to Sandra that Mr. Decker had told him he had enough information on Jerald to put him away for life. Since we did not have any confidence in Darrick Evenson, we dismissed this statement as a trick on his part to create problems between the two ministries. Mr. Evenson also told Sandra at that time that he had evidence that Ed Decker was living an immoral life and said that he would give us this material if we would print it. Sandra said that she was not interested in receiving the material.

This incident, of course, made us wonder if Darrick Evenson had told Ed Decker that we had made some inflammatory comments concerning him in the hope that he would say something outlandish about us. Later we learned the truth about the matter. On May 4, 1991, Ed Decker was on Mike Mistretta’s radio program which is broadcast on KHEP in Phoenix, Arizona. (We should probably mention here that Mike Mistretta has provided us with a great deal of important information regarding Darrick Evenson which we have put to good use in this article. Because of financial problems Mr. Mistretta has temporarily suspended broadcasting. He hopes to be back on the air on 1280 AM in October. Any of our readers who would like to help Mike Mistretta can send contributions to Saints Alive In Jesus, PO Box 54762, Phoenix, AZ 85078.) At any rate, Mr. Decker revealed on Mistretta’s program that Darrick Evenson had told him that we had been in contact with the Browns to obtain the “filth” they had on Decker:

About four weeks ago I got a phone call . . . it was Darrick on the phone and he . . . said that he was working as a research assistant for Robert and Rosemary Brown . . . that has been his story for many years with us. . . . At any rate, he called and said he had some very serious filth about me that he was going to expose . . . that he had control of it and that I should make sure that it got out. Darrick said, “I’ll scratch your back if you scratch my back . . . I have the ability to get rid of all this information away from the Browns and the Tanners if you promise that in a little while, in a week or so or a few days something is going to come out about me and you have to keep your mouth shut. If you open your mouth, I’m going to reveal all this. And I said, “Darrick you’re blackmailing me.”

The truth about the matter is that we have not talked to the Browns since 1981 and have not requested any derogatory material about any of the church’s critics from either the Browns or Darrick Evenson. At one time the Browns’ lawyer contacted us in an attempt to force us to retract a statement we had made about them in the Salt Lake City Messenger. Although we refused to back down from our statement, no lawsuit was ever filed. For more information concerning our opposition to the Browns’ work see our publication, Can The Browns Save Joseph Smith. An article by Steve Eaton in the Brigham Young University student newspaper indicated how the Browns felt about us after we wrote this book: “Mrs. Tanner said she will sometimes send people . . . a book . . . titled ‘Can the Browns save Joseph Smith?’ The Browns said the Tanner book will only get the Tanners in trouble. ‘That book is going to hang them,’ Mrs. Brown said” (The Universe, August 10, 1982). Although nine years have passed since the Browns made this threat, they have still been unable to get the noose around our neck.

Unfortunately, however, Darrick Evenson must have convinced Ed Decker that we were in league with the Browns. On Mike Mistretta’s radio program Mr. Decker went on to say that he had to call his pastor “and let him know that he was going to be getting material from the Browns, the Tanners or . . . probably just Darrick that says that I’m having sex with three young women in my office and that I’m committing sodomy . . . .” Mr. Decker also claimed that he had a copy of a tape-recorded telephone conversation with Darrick Evenson in which Evenson told him “that he got that material from Robert and Rosemary Brown . . . that is their material that he got with them to use to destroy me . . . he will release it to the Tanners who are negotiating with the Browns to get the material . . . And I have that on tape.” On the same radio show, Ed Decker said that the publication of material against him is “not a particular problem, but don’t blackmail me first and be on tape because the day the stuff hits the street, the day that Darrick Evenson releases it, is the day that I’ll have him arrested for blackmail.”

As we indicated earlier, we did not receive material about these accusations from Darrick Evenson and have never negotiated with the Browns to obtain any material at all. Even if the Browns had such information, it seems unlikely that they would allow anyone to obtain a copy before publication. We understand that they are very closefisted with regard to their research materials and question the fact that they would allow Darrick to run around the country with copies of such documents. Furthermore, we should point out that Darrick Evenson’s claims cannot be trusted and that he is prone to make rash judgments with regard to people with whom he disagrees. For example, the last time he was in our bookstore, two Christian ladies came in to talk to Sandra about the Mormon
Church. Mr. Evenson, however, took it upon himself to engage them in a heated discussion about Mormonism and Christianity. Evenson became extremely upset and began to make derogatory comments about them. Although he had never met these women before they came into the bookstore, he claimed that he knew they were lesbians and began to use explicit language with regard to their supposed sexual sins. Finally, the situation became so intolerable that Sandra had to ask him to leave the bookstore. (This was only the second time in almost thirty years that we had had to ask a Mormon to leave our store.) Although a statement made on a radio station indicated that Darrick was physically ejected, he actually left under his own power.

**Trojan Horse Toppled**

In his book, *The Gainsayers*, Darrick Evenson’s middle name is abbreviated: “Darrick T. Evenson.” The reader will remember, however, that in the letter Robert and Rosemary Brown published seven years earlier, he referred to himself as “Darrick Troy Evenson.” As we will show, Darrick later assumed the alias, “Troy Lawrence,” to carry out his deceitful work. The word “Troy” is interesting because it fits well with Evenson’s statement that he used a “Troy horse” technique in his secret operations. The reader may remember that in the story of the Trojan War, the Greeks left a huge wooden horse outside the city of Troy. The horse was actually filled with warriors, but the Trojans, not recognizing the trick, desired to have it and breached the wall of their own city to take the horse in. During the night the men who were in the wooden horse came out and the Greek troops destroyed the city of Troy and most of its inhabitants.

Darrick Troy Evenson’s “Troy horse” method of operation was actually working very well until Constance Cumbey began throwing away some back issues of a publication which she had concerning Mormonism. The reader may remember that Constance Cumbey wrote a book attacking the New Age Movement. It was published under the title, *The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow*, and stirred up a great deal of controversy. It is interesting to note that Walter Martin, a well-known critic of the Mormon Church, was one of Cumbey’s most vocal critics and stirred up a great deal of controversy. It is noted that although Darrick claimed “to have been a member” (see back cover of *New Age Messiah Identified*), as Cumbey read about Darrick Evenson in *The Inner Circle*, she recalled that the original manuscript she had looked at had the name Darrick Evenson on it. In a FAX letter to Huntington House Publishers, dated May 1, 1991, Constance Cumbey wrote:

Now as regards Darrick T. Evenson, let’s recap the events. I was contacted . . . last summer about a manuscript you were thinking of publishing. Teresa told me excitedly that this man had been converted out of the New Age and believing in Benjamin Creme’s Maitreya the Christ and had since his conversion gone back into Tara Center, gained access to their computer “working long feverish hours” and learned the identity of the New Age “messiah.”

My immediate counsel to Teresa Trosclair was one of caution. I told her that this type of tactic was often used by New Agers to have Christians scurrying after something that was just not so. Teresa seemed disappointed at my response but asked if I would be willing to talk with the “young man” and review his manuscript. I told her I would be willing to do both, but I was extremely skeptical about the entire business. The manuscript and a tape from Darrick Evenson were sent . . . He continually left messages pressing me for a decision on his manuscript. . . . I was home one evening when I received a phone call from Darrick T. Evenson. Darrick said to me, “I know you can’t endorse my manuscript and I know why. After much prayer, I have decided to withdraw the manuscript and abandon that project. Since I came to the Lord reading your book, I want to help you in anyway I can.” Walter Martin unfairly attacked you and I have talked with Huntington House and they agree with me that it would be good to do a book about it. . . . I thought the new project had splendid possibilities and I did encourage Darrick. He called again asking me to bundle up all my documentation on Walter Martin and send it to him. . . . but I never got around to sending it.

Darrick called me again . . . and said that since it was my work that had brought him out of the New Age Movement . . . that he just wanted to help me in any way possible. I told him . . . I had trouble getting up the steam to continue to do my newsletters. Darrick suggested he could work with me . . . We vaguely agreed to talk more about it in the future. A few weeks later I received a faxed message from Darrick Evenson demanding my mailing list to get out an issue of something he called “World Crusade Journal.” . . . I faxed . . . a message saying “I send my mailing list to nobody, particularly without copy.” . . .

Throughout all of this, I had no idea that you were publishing the book that Darrick told me he had abandoned! . . . I thought nothing more of Darrick Evenson until I was throwing out back issues of *The Inner Circle*, an anti-Mormon paper that has never been kind to me. As you know, I found a 1989 article entitled “The facts on Evenson.” . . . I immediately called Teresa Trosclair to share this with her and rejoice in the fact that the Lord had spared us this particular snare. I heard Teresa groan and I said, “Teresa, you didn’t publish him, did you?” Teresa replied, “15,000 copies.” I said, “Teresa, I warned you.” She said, “I know.” . . . The next day Mark called and vigorously and almost affectionately defended “Troy” (Troy Lawrence) who had always been known to me as Darrick T. Evenson . . . I demanded and received a conference call between “Troy” and Mark Trosclair . . . the next day.

As Mark is witness to on that conference call, “Troy” denied that he in THE GAINSAVERS claimed to have been a former part of Ex-Mormons for Jesus or indeed that he had ever been a Mormon. Mark accepted these lying denials at face value . . .

Ed Decker says he received threats of blackmail for false allegations by Darrick/Troy four weeks ago. This would have exactly coincided with the time I discovered the article that quoted Ed Decker. (FAX letter by Constance Cumbey to Huntington House Publishers, dated May 1, 1991)
Since Darrick Evenson knew that Constance Cumbey was acquainted with Ed Decker and that she was aware of the deceitful game Darrick was playing, he must have realized that it was only a matter of time before Mr. Decker would find out the truth. It seems reasonable, therefore, to believe that this might have led Evenson to contact Decker and threaten him with exposure if he did not keep quiet about the dual role which Darrick himself was playing.

**Not a Mormon?**

We first learned of Darrick Evenson’s duplicity on April 23, 1991, when we received a phone call from Al Kresta. Mr. Kresta has a radio program called “Talk From The Heart” on WMUZ FM in Detroit, Michigan. He said that he was concerned about a man who went by the name of “Troy Lawrence” whom he was about to interview on his program. He had reason to believe that the man’s real name was Darrick Evenson and wondered what we knew about him. Sandra was able to give Mr. Kresta a report concerning the insulting language Darrick had used in our bookstore just the day before.

Before the radio interview took place, Al Kresta read the following comment from the book Darrick Evenson had written attacking the New Age movement: “Someone put in my hands a copy of a little book entitled The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow by Constance Cumbeby. This powerful book precipitated my conversion out of the New Age deception and into the light of Christianity” (New Age Messiah Identified, page 2). Mr. Kresta felt that he should call Cumbeby before the interview and find out what she knew about the author. Cumbeby, of course, informed him of Evenson’s deception. This led Kresta to call us as well as others for more information.

The radio program started out in a peaceful way as Al Kresta began questioning Darrick Evenson about his book and concerning his involvement in the New Age movement. The fireworks, however, began shortly after Kresta asked Evenson if he had written any other books. He replied that he had written another book entitled, The Secret Message of the Zodiac for Here’s Life Publishers. (Here’s Life is a noted Christian publishing company that has published books by Josh McDowell.) Evenson stated that the purpose of that book “was to be like a ‘Trojan horse’ for New Agers.” To Evenson’s surprise, Kresta then asked if he had also published a “book called The Gainsayers?” Evenson responded truthfully to that question: “Yeah, I did.” Kresta then asked if it was true that he was “writing as a Mormon” in that book. The following dialogue then ensued:

**EVENSON:** Well, what I do is I’m also going to do one for the Masons and I’m also going to do one for the Catholics.

**KRESTA:** Are you a Mormon?

**EVENSON:** No, I’m not.

( Interview of Darrick Evenson on Al Kresta’s radio program; transcribed from a tape-recording of “Talk From The Heart,” April 23, 1991)

Darrick Evenson confessed that he had written material “under a few different names.” He then began to show animosity towards Al Kresta and said, “I think it’s very dishonest of you to know that you’re supposed to keep all my aliases that way . . .” Evenson seemed to know that Constance Cumbey had exposed him. He, therefore, launched into an attack on the woman he had praised in his book. He spoke of her “many outrageous reactionary statements.” He went on to say that one organization felt that she was “a nut” and implied that he held the same opinion.

Darrick Evenson told the radio audience that “Constance Cumbey believes that Jerald and Sandra Tanner, who have been preaching against Mormonism for thirty years . . . and who also published another book by Moody Monthly [Moody Press] — she believes that Moody Monthly, Moody Bible Institute, is a Mormon front. She believes that Jerald and Sandra Tanner are actually Mormons because this is what Ed Decker has told her, and she believes it.” Constance Cumbey was listening to the program on her radio and when she heard this statement about us and Moody Press she called Al Kresta on the phone. Mr. Kresta asked her if Moody was a “front for the Mormon Church”? Cumbey responded: “That is pure fiction . . . I’ve never heard that in my life except out of Troy—Darrick Evenson’s mouth just a minute ago. That’s what prompted my phone call to you.”

Later in the interview, Darrick Evenson made this comment to Constance Cumbey: “You told me that Jerald and Sandra Tanner were, in fact, Mormon fronts.” In her reply, Cumbey said, “I never told you that . . . No, I’ve never made such a statement to you.” Evenson then claimed that Cumbey had told him that “the late Dr. Walter R. Martin, was probably . . . a Mormon front.” Although Constance Cumbey admitted that she had serious disagreements with Walter Martin over the New Age Movement, she denied the allegation that she had said he was a “Mormon front”: “No, I never made that statement . . .”

In the same interview Darrick Evenson denied again that he was a Mormon: “I’m not a Mormon. I’m not a Mormon.” On another part of the tape Evenson stated: “I wrote for the Mormons as being a Mason. I wrote for the Mormons as being a Mormon. I wrote for the New Agers as being a New Ager, which I was. I was raised that. I’m also going to write a book for the Catholics.” When Al Kresta asked Evenson if he was going to write as though he were an ex-Catholic, Mr. Evenson responded: “No. I was going to write . . . as if I was a Catholic . . . ” When Kresta continued to point out the deceptive methods that Darrick Evenson was using, Evenson finally became upset with him and emphatically stated, “Sir, sir, you are a liar!” According to Al Kresta, Mr. Evenson later threatened that the station would be hearing from his lawyer.

Now that we know what a treacherous game Darrick Evenson was playing, we wonder if this might help explain how some Mormon critics came to the conclusion that we were really spies who were working for the Mormon Church. Although the idea probably did not originate with Mr. Evenson, he certainly wanted Ed Decker to believe that we were negotiating with the Browns to obtain material against him. After the rumor concerning us secretly working for the Mormon Church was spread about, there was a claim put forth that “in the last few weeks, there has been information from several high level LDS sources” which confirmed the charge. It was alleged that this secret information was “given to two or more people, and on several occasions.” No information, however, was given as to whether this important knowledge was derived from a telephone conversation or delivered in person. It is certainly possible that Darrick Evenson or others working with him in his “Trojan horse” scheme could have impersonated LDS officials. Although we have no real evidence that this did in fact occur, it would certainly be the type of thing that would fit very well in Mr. Evenson’s plan of attack—i.e., to stir up serious trouble between those involved in ministries.

In any case, shortly after Darrick Evenson was interviewed on Al Kresta’s program, he was interviewed on the “Steel On Steel” radio program on KLTT in Colorado. In spite of the fact that he had previously admitted on the Detroit radio station that he was the “Darrick Evenson” who wrote the book The Gainsayers, when he was questioned on KLTT he denied
that fact. He acknowledged, however, that he “deceived” the people in the New Age movement to gain his information. He claimed that he had “also infiltrated other groups in order to get information I need . . . I’ve done that with the Mormons. I’ve done that with the Masons, and I’m trying to do that with the Jehovah’s Witnesses . . .” When he (“Troy Lawrence”) was first asked if he was, in fact, Darrick Evenson, he evaded the issue. He revealed, however, that he had “a number of pseudonyms and I work with a number of individuals.” He went on to state that he would not “reveal who I’m working with; I’m not going to reveal my other pseudonyms.”

Darrick Evenson said that “back in 1987 I started working with individuals for ideas and ways to get material to witness to different cultists and whatever in their hands . . .” When he was asked later in the interview what he knew about Darrick Evenson, he replied: “I’m working with him.” He went on to state, “I’m not that individual.” Shortly after that, however, Constance Cumbey called in on the phone and affirmed that Troy Lawrence and Darrick Evenson “are the same” individual and that “the original [manuscript] copies I have of the book, New Age Messiah Identified, are signed ‘Darrick T. Evenson.’”

On May 20, 1991, Darrick Evenson provided a letter to Huntington House Publishers in which he made the preposterous claim that his book, The Gainsayers, was actually a book which was critical of the Mormon Church. Moreover, notwithstanding his public denial on KLTT, in the letter to Huntington House Mr. Evenson admitted that he and Troy Lawrence were actually the same person. The following is taken from Darrick Evenson’s letter (the original is almost entirely in capital letters):

There have been reports surfacing from certain parties that I, Darrick Evenson (Troy Lawrence) am a Mormon. The rumors of me being a Mormon have been greatly exaggerated!!! In other words, yes, I did write a book supposedly “for” the Mormon Church. However, all one needs to do to recognize my methods is to read the back cover of New Age Messiah Identified. On the back cover it says that I “played the part” of a New Age advocate after my conversion to Christianity. I even helped write several pro-New Age articles. All this was for the same reason a cop pretends to be a drug smuggler, or a spy pretends to work for the other side.

In The Gainsayers I revealed thus far “secret” Mormon Church doctrines that rank-and-file Mormons never see. They read it because it seems to defend Mormonism, but does it? It does condemn certain exaggerations and misinformation by the film “The God Makers” . . . This was the “key” that set the book before thousands of Mormon eyes . . . I used such criticism as the bate . . . The Mormons took it, and now the secret doctrines of Mormonism is being shown to thousands of Mormons who would have never have known otherwise.

Huntington House never knew about “The Gainsayers” until Constance Cumbey told them. I didn’t tell them because I wanted to be a respected Christian publisher before all else . . . and Huntington House just barely printed the book in the first place. I didn’t want to give them one more thing to think about. I wanted to be published! . . .

If I am a Mormon, or a Mason, or a New Ager, or just a guy out for a buck or a laugh, then Huntington House cannot be blamed. . . . I did my homework, and they did their’s to the best of their ability. . . . if I am a Christian, then Decker and Constance has injured a good work for selfish reasons. Keep an eye on both of them for the next few years, and I think you’ll see who has been giving you a line. (Letter by Darrick Evenson to Huntington House Publishers, dated May 20, 1991)

The reader will remember that when Darrick Evenson was on WMUZ Radio, he was asked if he were a Mormon. He replied, “I’m not a Mormon.” When he was asked a second time, he gave the same answer. All of the evidence, however, indicates that Mr. Evenson has been a Mormon for many years.

In the letter published in Robert and Rosemary Browns’ book, They Lie In Wait To Deceive, Darrick Evenson wrote that in “February of 1979” he was “a convert of a few months.” He claimed that for a while he had been disturbed by “anti-Mormon” literature but at the time he wrote the letter (October 26, 1981), he had “been fully active for more than a year, and I am now saving up for my mission.”

In his book, The Gainsayers, Mr. Evenson said that he “served a mission in California” (page 22). Eric Pement has written an article entitled, “Troy Lawrence Identified,” which was published in Cornerstone magazine, vol. 20, no. 95, 1991. In this article (page 16) we find that the Missionary Department of the Mormon Church has confirmed to Mr. Pement that Darrick T. Evenson completed an 18-month mission for the church: “According to the Missionary Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Darrick T. Evenson was a full-time Mormon missionary from July 1983 to January 1985, stationed in San Jose, Calif.”

Our own records show that Evenson had us send material to him in October 1983. The address given was 220 Bery Court #5, Morgan Hills, California. A map shows that Morgan Hills is close to San Jose. In June, 1984, Mr. Evenson sent a letter to Bill McKeever from “Mountain View”—another city located near San Jose.

In order to serve on a mission for the church a man has to be a member of the church in good standing. Moreover, he must be ordained an Elder in the Melchizedek Priesthood and receive his endowments in a secret ritual in a Mormon temple. While serving on his mission he is supposed to use the word “Elder” before his name. In the letter to Mr. McKeever, Darrick Evenson conforms to this pattern. His name is signed, “Elder Darrick Evenson.” From the evidence presented it is evident that Darrick Evenson was indeed a missionary for the Mormon Church.

It seems very curious that Darrick Evenson would now deny the church he has defended for so many years. While we can not be certain of his motive, it may be possible that he wants to spare his church the embarrassment that is certain to follow the unveiling of his duplicity. If Mr. Evenson were able to convince people that he never really was a Mormon, he could place the whole scandal in a different light. In his book New Age Messiah Identified, Evenson would have us believe that he is a “born-again” Christian: “I . . . became a born-again Christian in 1984.” (page ?) On page 47 he describes himself as a “fundamentalist” Christian, and on page 199 he says: “I discovered, to my surprise, that Evangelical Christianity was the only system consistent with the observable facts. After my intellectual conversion, I had a born-again experience.”

Prior to his visit to our bookstore on April 22, 1991, Darrick Evenson continually stressed that Mormonism was the true form of Christianity. This idea is clearly set forth on page 101 of his book, The Gainsayers:

Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God. Joseph the Prophet is the high Prophet of God over the sixth dispensation, and the prophet-herald of Christ. If one rejects the herald the King has sent, he likewise rejects the King that sent him . . . Jesus is the Christ, and Joseph is His Prophet.

In his last visit to our bookstore, Mr. Evenson said that he believed in the Bahai religion and that this group fulfilled one of the prophecies given by Joseph Smith. As we have noted earlier, on this occasion Evenson used some very crude and insulting language to two women who were in the bookstore. Sandra
finally asked him how he could claim to be a Christian and talk that way. He responded: “Who said I claim to be a Christian?” This was a surprising statement to be coming from the mouth of a man who previously claimed to be a member of an organization he felt was Christ’s true church on earth—i.e., Mormonism.

While Darrick Evenson seemed to be denying that he was any type of Christian when he visited our bookstore, he has subsequently maintained on radio stations that he is, in fact, a Fundamentalist Christian who was “born-again” in 1984. If Mr. Evenson could successfully palm off this deception on the public, he would save Mormonism from a great deal of embarrassment. According to this scenario, Evenson would not be a Mormon who had gone astray and deliberately set out to deceive Christian publishers and those who have ministries to Mormons; instead, he would be a “born-again” Christian who used unethical means to try to destroy Mormonism! Instead of being an embarrassment to the Mormon Church, he would be pointed out as a wicked outsider who was persecuting the LDS faith. We, of course, do not believe that it is possible for Mr. Evenson to pull off such a brazen deception. The facts all point in the opposite direction.

It also seems likely that a financial motive might have played a part in Darrick Evenson’s decision to repudiate Mormonism. In his book, The Gainsayers, Mr. Evenson accused ex-Mormons of profiting from their work on Mormonism:

While working in the anti-LDS movement, I also observed several instances in which anti-Mormons tried to fabricate or exaggerate their Mormon backgrounds. They would attempt to establish that they somehow held stature or prominence among the Latter-day Saints before leaving the LDS Church. . . . It also became increasingly clear to me that their deceptive teachings and half-truths were the very antithesis of the gospel of Jesus Christ . . . . their anti-Mormon claims and assertions fell, one by one . . . .

I regained my testimony of the Gospel and Church of Jesus Christ . . . . I was back among the Saints of the Most High . . . . I also discovered that if one will check the statements, claims, and credentials of most of the outspoken anti-Mormon adversaries, he will eventually discover just who is telling the truth and who is opposing the Lord’s work . . . .

The only difference between being an ex-Mormon and being an “ex” anything else is that you can make a profit being an ex-Mormon, even making it a full-time occupation! . . . .

So, if anyone wants to ask the Latter-day Saints what they believe, the Saints are more than happy to tell them. And if anyone wants to know what the anti-Mormons are saying, the Saints will show them what the anti’s are saying in books that weigh both sides of the argument. An offering plate won’t be passed in front of them, and the Saints won’t ask for love offerings or send them a price list! (The Gainsayers, pages 20, 22-25)

It is interesting to note that after he wrote his book, New Age Messiah Identified, Darrick Evenson himself set out to speak in Protestant churches and received “love offerings.” We know that in one church in Arizona he received $50 for a short presentation. Moreover, in the back of his book, he offers his World Crusade Journal for “$12.00” a year and asks for gifts: “We would appreciate any financial support to our ministry; that support will allow us to continue bringing the Gospel of Jesus to New Agers across the nation.”

While Darrick Evenson probably made some money from his book attacking ministries to Mormons, he apparently had far greater success with his books concerning the zodiac and the New Age movement which were published by Christian publishers. We have been told that Mr. Evenson thought that his book, New Age Messiah Identified would bring him about $50,000 the first year and that there were plans to eventually market about 200,000 copies! One of Mr. Evenson’s associates claimed that Evenson felt that he would be financially secure for the rest of his life because of this book. When his mask began to fall off, he found himself faced with a financial dilemma. If he admitted that he was really a Mormon, he would probably lose all royalties from the Christian publishers. He had misrepresented himself to them as someone who was a New Ager and was “born again” in 1984. Since he served as a missionary for the Mormon Church from July 1983 to January 1985, he could not have become an “Evangelical Christian” in 1984.

In his book, The Gainsayers, page 16, he had an entirely different story; he maintained that he attended a “Protestant church” when he was a young man: “I accepted the Lord as my personal Savior when I was fifteen.” According to the chronology Evenson gave in the Browns’ book, this would have been in the mid-1970’s—about eight years earlier than the date given in New Age Messiah Identified, page 7—i.e., “1984”) In The Gainsayers, pages 16-17, he stated that “When I was eighteen, I was invited to services of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints . . . after considerable study and preparation, I was baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints . . . and shortly thereafter, after more prayer and study, I received a personal testimony that Jesus truly was the Christ, and that Joseph Smith was His Prophet.”

In the New Age Messiah Identified, however, Darrick Evenson claimed he was brought up as an occultist:

I was raised a Theosophist . . . I was taught to view Christians, or at least the “fundamentalist” variety, as bizarre, fanatical, ignorant, and, above all, dangerous . . . . In my young adulthood I became an ardent student of the occult. I initiated several of my friends into the occult. Later, after I became a born-again believer, I used the contacts and knowledge that I had in the occult to go “undercover” back into the New Age. (page 46)

Besides these contradictory stories, Darrick Evenson also referred to his own Mormon religion as one of the “cults” that teach false doctrines. We find the following in New Age Messiah Identified:

Here we see a genuine delineation between the truth of the Gospel and the lies of the cults. True Christians believe in the resurrection of the body. Jehovah’s Witnesses, Moonies, all the various cults and aberrations of Christian thought, deny the reality of the physical resurrection. Some Mormons claim to believe in the resurrection of the body, but their error lines up with the esotericists in their belief that God is a man who advanced to a higher level of perfection. Not dissimilar to Creme’s and other secret temple teachings of the esoteric mystery religions. Only those who hold to the Scriptures as God’s revelation, have any chance of not being deceived. (New Age Messiah Identified, page 55)

The Cults are growing at alarming rates: Mormonism, Russellsim (Jehovah’s Witnesses, etc.), and even the lesser cults, such as Armstrongism, are growing so fast that they can’t build churches fast enough to house their converts. . . . Something needs to be done. (Ibid., page 197)

Darrick Evenson’s duplicity is clearly revealed by the following information which has come to light. In his book, The Gainsayers, Evenson vigorously attacks the film, “The God
On page 166 of his book, Mr. Evenson commented: “This chapter has been a brief refutation of some of the major accusations that are the very foundation of the film and book ‘The God Makers’ and other similar anti-Mormon works. Have the gainsayers been accurate in portraying what Latter-day Saints ‘really’ believe? It is obvious that accuracy has not been their objective. Instead, they have intentionally sought to distort the truth and malign the Saints.” Chapter 6 of Evenson’s book is entitled, “The God Makers’ Film: An Example of Extreme Anti-Mormon Propaganda.” This 24-page chapter is devoted to explaining and refuting the charges of the films, “The God Makers” and “Temple of the God Makers.”

One would think that after making such an attack on the two films mentioned above, Darrick Evenson would have nothing but contempt for those who had a part in producing them. As unbelievable as it may seem, however, in the “Acknowledgments” for his new book Mr. Evenson pays tribute to Pat Matrisciana: “I would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for making this book possible: Pat Matrisciana of Jeremiah Films . . .” (New Age Messiah Identified, page 1). It is a well-known fact that Pat Matrisciana’s Jeremiah Films did “The God Makers” and “Temple of the God Makers” for Ed Decker’s organization!

In his article in Cornerstone magazine, page 24, Eric Pement reveals that there is even more to the story:

“Troy Lawrence” met Pat Matrisciana, owner of Jeremiah Films, at a prophecy conference in 1989 and told Matrisciana he was a former New Ager. He said he’d been converted after reading God’s of the New Age, written in 1985 by Pat’s wife, Caryl. “Troy” wanted to publish a new manuscript and needed help finding a publisher. Pat contacted Huntington House on his behalf. (Pat had no idea Darrick/Troy had just published a book attacking Pat’s film Gods of the New Age as a “perverted” portrayal of Mormon doctrine.) Ironically, when his New Age book Messiah Identified came in 1991, “Troy” said he had been converted through reading Constance Cumbey’s Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow in 1984!”

In April, 1991, Darrick Evenson must have realized that his devious past had caught up with him. If he admitted he was really a Mormon who was posing as an orthodox Christian, he stood in danger of losing his royalties, “love offerings” from churches and donations to a so-called non-profit organization he had set up. Mr. Evenson chose to repudiate his connection with Mormonism and maintain that he was really a “born-again” believer in the Evangelical Protestant faith. This desperate action, however, will probably not save Evenson’s reputation as a “Christian” writer.

Although we may never know for certain, we feel that at one time Darrick Evenson really believed the Mormon faith. His book, The Gainsayers, which was published two years before New Age Messiah Identified, may really reflect the views he held at the time he penned it. He probably believed that Mormonism was the only true religion and that those who attack it must be very evil and even satanically inspired. Below are some interesting quotations from the book. The reader will note his fervent appeals for honesty and truth:

The gainsayers of today are well organized and financed. . . . They’re aggressive and rapidly expanding their outreach . . . They spread many false and slanted reports about the Church. Their anti-Mormon propaganda frequently utilizes numerous “yellow journalism” techniques of deception to mislead the perceptions of those who read it. . . .

I was rather upset, and I was determined to speak with the leaders of the ministry in order to set things straight. I was beginning to feel that it wasn’t ethical to use lies in order to destroy what they thought was a lie; it didn’t make sense to me. (The Gainsayers, pages 14, 15, 20)

. . . the truth is that every accusation can be answered to not only refute it, but to bring an added testimony that Jesus is the Christ, and Joseph is His latter-day prophet! . . . it is the work of Satan to oppose the work of God by trying to deceive men into believing that the truth is a lie and his lie the truth. His influence is clearly seen on the anti-Christ movement against the Saints in both former and latter-days! . . .

Who are the gainsayers? Today as in ancient times, they are anti-Christians who do all they can to thwart the true work of God. (Ibid., pages 94-95, 100)

. . . I heard about incidents where Ex-Mormons for Jesus (who probably had never been Mormons) were attending Testimony Meetings at local LDS Church meetinghouses, going up to the microphone, and giving their ‘testimonies’ that Joseph Smith was a false prophet and that the Mormon Church was false as well.

This sickened my very soul! How could anyone who professed to believe in Christ deceptively approach and enter any church with such audacious and deceptive conduct as that? . . . I couldn’t justify this conduct in my heart, to myself, or to my Lord. . . . I spoke with several Ex-Mormons for Jesus . . . I explained to them how I felt and how I couldn’t justify the deception involved in their movement to myself. I began to point out to them the deceptive nature of some of their witnessing techniques and to refute their claims. . . . I kept them on one subject . . . asking them how it could possibly be justified for them to lie and misrepresent in the name of Christ? (Ibid., pages 106-107)

While it could be argued that these comments were only part of an act by Darrick Evenson, we are inclined to believe that they represented his true feelings about Mormonism. We tend to believe that he really felt that Mormonism was true and that he was going to stop the mouths of the “gainsayers.” His zealous and hostile attitude toward Mormon critics might even be compared to Apostle Paul’s confrontations with Christians before he became converted to their faith.

When he began his research Darrick Evenson may have really believed that the Mormon Church was led by revelation. In his book, page 138, he stated: “Sandra Tanner . . . says she knows of a Mormon bishop that doesn’t believe in Mormonism. Again, no name is given.” Mr. Evenson could not seem to believe that this was the case and came down to the bookstore to question her on this matter. She, of course, did not reveal the bishop’s name. While this did not set very well with Evenson, some time later he returned and admitted that he himself had encountered a bishop who did not believe. Like many others, Darrick Evenson could have started out as a true believer, but when he learned how devastating the case is against Mormonism he may have lost faith in all religion.

Non-Profit?

On pages 198-199 of New Age Messiah Identified, Darrick Evenson claimed that he had a publication known as “The World Crusade Journal” and had also set up a nonprofit organization to counter cults and the occult: “The World Crusade Journal is the official publication of The Society for the Propagation
& Revival of the Gospel, Incorporated. You can call us the S.P.R.G. We are named after the first Protestant missionary society: The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG).” One page 201 of his book, Mr. Evenson stated: “All donations to the S.P.R.G. Inc. are tax deductible.” On the next page the address for his non-profit organization is given: “S.P.R.G. Inc., P.O. Box 9535, Tacoma, WA 98409.” Toward the bottom of the page we read that “The Society for the Propagation and Revival of the Gospel, Incorporated, is a non-profit evangelistic organization.”

In a letter to Huntington House Publishers, dated May 2, 1991, Ed Decker claimed that a check with the IRS showed that Darrick Evenson had never set up such an organization: “...we were able to get access to the IRS’s national database for non-profit Corporations this morning... Darrick’s SPRG is nowhere in the system. Name similarity checks showed nothing either... This means that the book offers tax receipts for a non-existent corporation with a fraudulent offer of Federal Tax deductible receipts.” An organization which desires to gain non-profit status has to be incorporated in some state before it can even begin to be considered by the Federal Government. As we have shown, the address Darrick Evenson lists for his “non-profit” organization is in Tacoma, Washington. Mr. Decker, however, claimed on Mike Mistretta’s radio program that a check with the state of Washington revealed no such organization. Both Decker and Mistretta, however, stated that in a tape recorded conversation Mr. Evenson claimed that he had really set the organization up in Arizona. Mike Mistretta, therefore, checked with the state of Arizona and found nothing that even resembled the name that Evenson had given.

Although such an organization was never actually set up in Arizona, information which we have shows that at one time Darrick Evenson was hoping to be involved with Robert Brown in a new non-profit organization in Arizona. This information came from Evenson himself. Mr. Evenson seems to have felt that he could frighten us by revealing what he and other Mormons were planning to do to oppose our work. On June 20, 1988, he called for...it will provide the Saints with reasonable and ...tax deductible contributions...” This certainly seems to make it clear that Darrick Evenson was planning on working hand-in-hand with the Browns in this project. What the Browns thought about the matter might be another story.

In a footnote on page 15 of the document, we read that “many people have contributed to this effort under its former name—the Religious Research Association.” This was an organization which was set up by the Browns, and sometimes hazardous, nature of this work the Committee shall deem some OPERATIONS overt and some covert. It shall be the job of SPECIAL SERVICES to conduct OPERATIONS; meaning activities of a special nature not covered by the other departments of the Committee.

We need your help... Your financial support is needed, so that we may continue to research and publish the truth about those who misrepresent the Church and its teachings. Those that contribute at least $25 will receive one year’s issues of THE WATCHMAN QUARTERLY JOURNAL.

Information will be gathered and organized on the anti-LDS Movement and message. Researchers will then investigate the claims, credentials, and allegations of anti-LDS ministers, their publications, and its impact on the Saints. When the truth is documented it will be prepared and published in either books, cassette tapes, video tapes, pamphlet[s], or by the film media... The Watchtower Committee will serve as the umbrella organization for all groups and individuals who wish to defend the faith. ... #14. SPECIAL SERVICES shall be responsible for the OPERATIONS of the Committee. Because of the sensitive, and sometimes hazardous, nature of this work the Committee shall deem some OPERATIONS overt and some covert. It shall be the job of SPECIAL SERVICES to conduct OPERATIONS; meaning activities of a special nature not covered by the other departments of the Committee.

We need your help... Your financial support is needed, so that we may continue to research and publish the truth about those who misrepresent the Church and its teachings. Those that contribute at least $25 will receive one year’s issues of THE WATCHMAN QUARTERLY JOURNAL.

It is interesting to note that the address given, “P.O. Box 2671, Mesa AZ 85204,” is the same as Brownsworth Publishing Co., Inc. (see the title page of They In Wait To Deceive, vol. 3). This is the publishing company that markets the Browns’ books. The name “Brownsworth” may be a combination of the name Brown with the last six letters of the name of the editor of They Lie In Wait To Deceive volumes. Her name is Barbara Ellsworth. In any case, the phone number listed in the Proposal is the same number listed on the back cover of volumes two and three of the Browns’ books, They Lie In Wait To Deceive: “INQUIRES: (602) 834-5676.” This certainly seems to make it clear that Darrick Evenson was planning on working hand-in-hand with the Browns in this project. What the Browns thought about the matter might be another story.

In November, 1990, Darrick Evenson was in Arizona working on setting up an organization to counter Mormon critics. He no longer used the name “Watchman Committee” — this time it was to be called “Zion’s Camp Committee” or “ZCC.” On November 5, 1990, The Arizona Latter-Day Sun, a newspaper printed for Mormon people, devoted a good deal of space concerning his attempt to organize the committee. We find the following in that article:

Arizona Latter-day Saints are invited to participate in a new organization for the defense of the Faith. The new group is called Zion’s Camp Committee...
Many Arizona Latter-day Saints will remember the work of Robert and Rosemary Brown of Mesa. They have been writing “defense of the Faith” books since 1980. They literally put one well-known anti-Mormon permanently out-of-business.

The Browns will soon have volume four of their “They Lie In Wait to Deceive” series. Volume Four will be an expose of J. Edward Decker and The God Makers film. . . . Dr. Gilbert Scharffs, an Institute instructor at the University of Utah, wrote an exhaustive work entitled “The Truth About The God Makers.” . . . Dr. Scharffs is also now working on the Zion’s Camp Committee.

In 1985 Darrick Evenson, a former anti-Mormon, but now a returned missionary, wrote The Gainsayers. This book too, has proved to be very useful in helping people respond to the anti-LDS movement and messages.

“But haven’t the Brethren warned us not to debate with the anti-Mormons?”

“Yes, indeed, the purpose of Zion’s Camp Committee is not to debate anti-Mormons, but to provide missionaries and members with materials that will help them with investigators and new converts who, inevitably, come into contact with anti-Mormon writings or individuals,” says Evenson.

“The Brethren have stated that we should reply ‘positively’ to our critics. This can only be done if people have the right information, and know how to use it rightly as well. Zion’s Camp Committee has, collectively, hundreds of years of experience in this field.” . . .

A publication is now being prepared for LDS “defenders of the Faith” and their supporters. The newsletter is called “The Latter-day Saints’ Messenger & Advocate.” The Zion’s Camp Committee invites those interested to contact them.

The group is looking for LDS “defenders of the Faith,” and those who wish to support their effort in defending the Faith.

The article went on to refer the reader to “P.O. Box 1186, Provo, Utah 84603.” In addition, it gave a phone number in Arizona where Darrick Evenson could be contacted. The reader will notice that the article mentions a newsletter called “The Latter-day Saints’ Messenger & Advocate.” The Proposal that Mr. Evenson sent to us in 1988 also stated: “THE MESSENGER & ADVOCATE is the Committee NEWSLETTER.”

It is interesting to note that the newspaper article cited above mentioned that Dr. Gilbert Scharffs was “working on the Zion’s Camp Committee.” When we contacted Dr. Scharffs, he seemed to have no recollection of working on this particular committee. He did say, however, that Darrick Evenson had invited him to some of the meetings regarding a new organization he was trying to set up. Out of curiosity Scharffs attended “two or three meetings.” While he told Mr. Evenson that he “would help” him with questions that might arise, he did not want to be an official member of the organization. Later, however, when he read the first issue of The Messenger & Advocate, he was surprised to find his name listed on the “Advisory Board” of the organization.

At any rate, some time after sending us the Proposal, Mr. Evenson came to our bookstore. At that time he had a revised plan for the organization. He made a sketch on a small piece of paper which we still have in our possession. The words, “Watchtower Committee,” which were in the original Proposal, still appeared but they were no longer the name of the organization itself. The name “Zion’s Camp Committee” did not appear on this paper. The name of the organization was to be “S.P.R.G.” The reader will remember that Darrick Evenson later used this abbreviation when appealing for funds in his book, New Age Messiah Identified: “Address all correspondence to: S.P.R.G. Inc., P.O. Box 9535, Tacoma, WA 98409.” On the sheet of paper Evenson left with us he did not specify what the letters “S.P.R.G.” stood for. We have already noted that in the book written for orthodox Christians, Evenson said the letters stood for “The Society for the Propagation & Revival of the Gospel.” Since the organization he informed us about was supposed to be for the purpose of countering Mormon critics and since the LDS Church claims to have the “restored gospel” of Jesus Christ, we speculated that the letters could have stood for something like the following: The Society for the Propagation of the Restored Gospel. An associate of Darrick Evenson confirmed that this was correct.

While we knew that Mr. Evenson wanted to set up such an organization to counter the work of Mormon critics, we had no reason to believe that he had actually set up a corporation. The reader will remember that the records for both Washington and Arizona revealed nothing about Darrick forming a corporation. On July 21, 1991, however, we received a very important phone call from an individual who informed us that he believed that Darrick Evenson did form a corporation in Utah. We found that this information was correct and obtained photocopies of the “Articles of Incorporation.” Mr. Evenson did indeed set up such an organization. Article I of this document reads as follows:

“The name of the corporation shall be the following: THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE RESTORED GOSPEL, INC.” This corporation was “approved on the 5th day of July 1990.”

It is obvious that Darrick Evenson could not reveal to the publishers of his book, New Age Messiah Identified, that he had set up this organization in Utah because its name would clearly show that it was to promote Mormonism, not to fight the New Age movement and other cults! In any event, Utah law requires that there should be three trustees. Mr. Evenson, who was one of the trustees, gave his address as 340 East 600 North, No. 5 in Provo, Utah. Two other men are listed as trustees; one lives in Salt Lake City and the other in Mt. Vernon, Washington. We were particularly interested in the man who lives in Washington. His name is given as “Corbin Volluz.”

When we called Mr. Volluz, who is a lawyer, we found that he was very open and friendly. He said that he was interested in seeing some type of organization being set up to counter Mormon critics and had some interest in what Darrick Evenson proposed to him. He stated, however, that the appearance of his name on the Articles of Incorporation “was not with my consent.” He claimed he had never given Mr. Evenson permission to use his name and was surprised when he got a document from Evenson stating that he was treasurer of the organization! He later sent Darrick a letter asking that he refrain from using his name with regard to the organization.

The Articles of Incorporation are notarized by Martin S. Tanner, a lawyer who has a radio program on religion on KTKK in Salt Lake City. Mr. Tanner also seemed cordial and open about the matter. He said that he prepared the incorporation papers for Darrick Evenson. Although Evenson had to pay the filing fee charged by the state, Mr. Tanner did not charge him for his work on the papers. He did not believe that the organization ever got off the ground. He told Darrick Evenson that he could not claim that donations to the organization were tax deductible until he received approval from the Internal Revenue Service. He had no knowledge as to whether Mr. Evenson ever requested tax exempt status from the IRS.

On July 26, 1991, we checked with the IRS to see if Darrick Evenson had filed a request for a non-profit organization under the name he was using in Utah, “The Society for the Propagation
of the Restored Gospel.” The result was the same as before: no organization using that name has applied for tax-exempt status. It would appear, therefore, that unless Mr. Evenson can come forth with some evidence that there has been a mistake, he is involved in a fraudulent operation which is against the law.

We have recently been given a copy of a “Proposal” drawn up by Darrick Evenson for an organization known as “Zion’s Watchmen Committee.” It is dated “April 1990,” and is similar in many respects to the document we received in 1988. The Zion’s Watchmen Committee is put forth in this proposal as “A Division of The Society for the Propagation of the Restored Gospel. Darrick Evenson is listed on page 11 of this document as the “Director” of the organization. Like the first organization Mr. Evenson tried to set up, the purpose of Zion’s Watchmen Committee was “to counter the campaign of misinformation promulgated by the wealthy and powerful anti-LDS Movement.” This document has a great deal of information on the work of the Browns and indicates that the Browns “Religious Research Association was the forerunner of the Zion’s Watchmen Committee of The Society for the Propagation of the Restored Gospel.”

Death Threats

In the Salt Lake City Messenger for July 1990, we reported that Ed Decker claimed he had received a “call from a man who told him he was part of an assassination team that received directions from a member of the First Presidency in the Mormon Church. According to Decker, the man said that three people had been marked for death. One of the authors (Jerald Tanner) was among that number and was to be killed with a bomb.” We found it very hard to believe that a member of the First Presidency would be involved with an assassination team. That they would use a bomb to commit a murder seemed even more unlikely. The Hofmann scandal clearly demonstrated how much publicity the use of bombs can generate. Would the Mormon leaders be so foolish as to bring national attention to their problems they have with us by using a bomb?

We had almost forgotten about this supposed threat to our lives when Darrick Evenson came into our bookstore on April 22, 1991. After the confrontation which ensued and Mr. Evenson was asked to leave the premises, he made a very strange statement; he referred to the murderous plan mentioned above and suggested that there may really be something to it and that we should take it as being a serious threat. While we still could not believe that a member of the First Presidency [Gordon B. Hinckley] would be involved in such a project, we began to wonder what Evenson knew about the phone call. Could it be possible that he or one of his associates made such a call in an attempt to cause fear and dissension among the ministries? He, in fact, knew that Ed Decker had been leveling serious charges against Hinckley for some time and seemed to be very angry about the matter. Perhaps he wanted Decker to make some foolish move against Hinckley. While we may never know whether Darrick Evenson knew anything about the origin of the mysterious phone call, it seems obvious that he was so upset about being asked to leave our bookstore that he used the incident in an attempt to strike terror into our hearts.

From all that we can learn, Darrick Evenson has a reputation for being very combative. In the interview on Mike Mistretta’s radio program on KHEP, Ed Decker suggested that Darrick Evenson may be a dangerous man:

[have said], “he scares me.” . . . one man said, “you know I’m a married man with four kids, I’m a Mormon but you know my wife gets real nervous around him . . . he scares us.”

Darrick Evenson, however, claims that it is the other way around—he is the one who is being persecuted and “assaulted” by over zealous Mormon critics and people involved in the New Age movement. In his letter to the Browns, They Lie In Wait To Deceive, vol. 1, 2nd edition, page 280, Mr. Evenson claims that some Mormon critics have cursed him “to the eternal flames of Hell to be tortured continually forever. I have even been assaulted on several occasions.”

On the back cover of New Age Messiah Identified, we read:

After years of undercover investigation, late night clandestine meetings and disguised rendezvous with New Age elite, Troy Lawrence unveils the secret plans spawned by the occult hierarchy. Placing his life on the line, this former disciple of Benjamin Creme . . . provides photos of the New Age Messiah . . . “I’ve placed my life in danger to get this information out,” says Lawrence, “we all know what has happened to some who have come out of the New Age movement . . . ”

On page 3 of his book, Darrick Evenson related:

But the paper trail . . . led me from California to Karachi . . . from the Ahmadiyya movement to a small but powerful group called the “Hassassins.” A group so dangerous we derive the term “assassins” from them.

My life has been threatened many times, I have been physically attacked, and I’ve even been the victim of a high-speed chase—all in the hope of silencing me. I have, however, never regretted my decision to go public (not even after I learned that fellow laborer Randall Baer had been mysteriously killed).

Darrick Evenson would have us believe that it was necessary for him to use the alias “Troy Lawrence” because he feared assassination. We, of course, believe that the real reason was that he wished to hide his real identity from Mormons and those who criticized the LDS Church.

In 1990, Mr. Evenson came to the Salt Lake Alliance Church to hear a presentation on Mormonism by Dick Baer. He took offense over what was said and began to interrupt the meeting. The situation became so serious that Pastor Gary Atwood finally had to ask him to leave. Evenson left the building but before doing so threatened that he would “get” the pastor! For some time he paced back and forth on the sidewalk in front of the church as though he were stalking the pastor. Although those who were present feared for Pastor Atwood’s safety, Mr. Evenson finally left the area. Fortunately, he has never returned to the church.

Some of the Latter-day Saints we talked to about Darrick Evenson were concerned about his violent outbursts and even apologized for his behavior. At least two Mormons felt that he could be dangerous to others. One, in fact, suggested that he was like a “keg of dynamite ready to go off.”

Because of Darrick Evenson’s contentious attitude and unpredictable behavior, we have been somewhat concerned about reporting this story. We felt, however, that it was very important for people to have this information. We would ask those who have an interest in our ministry to hold us up in prayer.

In addition, the reader should remember Mr. Evenson in prayer. After all, he has probably experienced a great deal of emotional distress in his long and unsuccessful battle to counter critics of the Mormon Church. He put a great deal of effort into trying to set up a large and powerful organization that would silence the “gainsayers,” and must have been very disappointed when he was unable to rally the support he envisioned. Moreover,
his attempt to establish himself as an important writer on the occult has been brought to a screeching halt by the exposure of his dual identity. Darrick’s greatest need is to find peace with God through submission to Jesus Christ.

**Serious Questions**

Darrick Evenson’s deceitful actions have placed a number of publishers in an embarrassing position. In his article in *Cornerstone* magazine, page 24, Eric Pement informs us that Here’s Life Publishers “has ceased publication” of Evenson’s book, *The Secret Message of the Zodiac*, and that “full credit will be given for returns of Zodiac.” On July 16, 1991, we contacted Huntington House Publishers and were told that *The New Age Messiah Identified*, was “indefinitely” out of stock and that there were no plans to republish it at the present time.

Mormon publisher Duane Crowther, owner of Horizon Publishers, finds himself in a very awkward position. He himself has played an important role in defending the church against its critics. Mr. Crowther, for example, has produced a cassette tape entitled, *Recognizing Techniques of Deception in Anti-Mormon Literature*. In a printed summary of his tape, Mr. Crowther has “Ten Questions to Ask About the Critic.” In this list we find the following:

3. Do I perceive him to be trustworthy, and a person of integrity?
4. Is he a seeker after truth, who refrains from misrepresenting my church’s doctrines and history? . . .
9. Do I feel the Holy Spirit in him, and in me, when he talks to me, or when I read his writings?

Duane Crowther also recommends that when “a critic attacks the Church, evaluate the integrity of both his literature and the critic himself . . .” Mr. Crowther appeals to Christians to be honest about what they promote: “Christians are faced with a growing problem of ethics. Should Christian bookstores stock religious literature which attacks various denominations when those books are shown to rely heavily on yellow journalism techniques? Should individuals read them or quote from them?”

After making these solemn warnings concerning responsibility, Duane Crowther finds himself in the position of being the publisher of a book written by a man who seems to be without principle. One would think that Mr. Crowther would be so convicted by his own statements that he would immediately cease selling the book. Unfortunately, however, this has not been the case. Eric Pement says that “Evenson’s Mormon publisher, Duane Crowther, is uncertain whether he will continue printing *The Gainsayers*. He is aware Evenson is trying to play both sides of the fence, but told one of our researchers he is inclined to reprint the book anyway. He believes many of the arguments defending Mormonism are valid, since he rewrote much of the original manuscript himself to make it suitable for publication. *Gainsayers* is also one of their better-selling books” (*Cornerstone*, page 24).

On July 15, 1991, we called Duane Crowther’s Horizon Publishers and found that his company was still selling copies of Evenson’s book. Moreover, on July 21, 1991, we went to the Mormon Church’s own bookstore, Deseret Book, and found that it was also still selling *The Gainsayers*! The church seems to be very unpredictable with regard to what it will sell or ban. On July 11, 1991, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported:

A fast-selling book . . . was pulled off the shelves at Deseret Book and, according to the author, threatened with shredding this week.

“We think his excuse for these “Trojan horse” methods falls flat for several reasons: First and foremost, it’s biblical. . . . God’s people have “renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness” [2 Cor. 4:2] but have laid aside “all guile [and] hypocrisy” [1 Peter 2:1] . . . if Evenson is doing “undercover” work in Mormonism, Masonry, the Watchtower, etc., he is making false professions and giving false testimony in the process.

We feel that there are still many missing pieces to the Darrick Evenson puzzle. For example, he claimed that “a number of individuals” were involved with him in his “Trojan horse” activities. (We have become aware of another man who professes to be a critic of the Mormon Church but is using an alias. Furthermore, in his writings this man sometimes refers to himself as “The Trojan Warrior.” We have reason to believe that “The Trojan Warrior” is in contact with another man who has used an alias in the past.) Darrick Evenson has stated that he had “a number” of aliases (we only know of “Troy Lawrence”) and that he wrote “under a few different names.” While one of Darrick Evenson’s associates would only confirm what we already knew about Mr. Evenson, he did state that he felt we only knew part of the tale. He claimed that it was an incredible story of intrigue. He frankly admitted that Evenson had infiltrated numerous Christian organizations which we do not know about.
When we printed the fact that Steven Mayfield was spying on Mormon critics, many people contacted us with information concerning him. If any of our readers recognize Darrick Evenson’s picture as someone they know under another name or if they have any letters from him or any additional material concerning him we would appreciate knowing about it. Send any information to Utah Lighthouse Ministry, PO Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110 or call us at 801-485-8894.

Besides the people we have mentioned earlier, we also want to thank a number of Mormons who have helped us by providing information concerning Darrick Evenson. Only one of them tried to talk us out of doing the story. Most of them felt that the story needed to be told to the public, and some even came to us with very important information. Three of the LDS people we talked to made it clear that they did not want their names to appear in the newsletter.

**Mormon Scholars Scolded**

As we indicated earlier, the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (F.A.R.M.S.) has made a vicious attack on some of the liberal Mormon scholars who are expressing doubts about the historicity of the Book of Mormon. These scholars are accused of being wolves in sheep’s clothing, and one writer even refers to them as offering “a Trojan horse” to an unsuspecting Mormon audience. Although the controversy has been simmering for a number of years, it boiled over after Signature Books published a book edited by Dan Vogel entitled, *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture*. This book, which contains contributions from a number of Mormon scholars, did not set well with some of the Mormon professors at the church’s Brigham Young University and others who are involved with F.A.R.M.S. Stephen E. Robinson, chairman of the Department of Ancient Scripture at BYU, was incensed with the book. He compared the views expressed in the work to those of Korihor, the notorious “Anti-Christ” who was “struck dumb” because of his unbelief (see Book of Mormon, Alma, chapter 30). Professor Robinson wrote:

Korihor’s back, and this time he’s got a printing press. Korihor, the infamous “alternate voice” in the Book of Mormon, insisted that “no man can know of anything which is to come” . . . in its continuing assault upon traditional Mormonism, Signature Books promotes with its recent and dubiously titled work, *The Word of God*, precisely these same naturalistic assumptions of the Korihor agenda in dealing with current Latter-day Saint beliefs . . . this is a propaganda piece . . .

Variations on a single theme recur, offered like a Trojan horse, in most of the essays in *The Word of God*. . . .

For years anti-Mormons have hammered the Church from the outside, insisting that Joseph Smith and the Latter-day Saint scriptures he produced were not what they claimed to be. By and large the Latter-day Saints simply ignored these attacks. Whether Signature Books and its authors will convince the Saints of the same hostile propositions by attacking from the inside remains to be seen. . . . What the anti-Mormons couldn’t do with a frontal assault of contradiction, Signature and Vogel would now accomplish with a flanking maneuver of redefinition. . . .

The uniformity of perspective among the essays, the pervasive use of the straw man, and the absence of any opposing viewpoint identify *The Word of God* as a work of propaganda. . . .

I suppose by now it is clear that I did not like this book.

. . . Give me a Walter Martin anytime, a good stout wolf with his own fur on, instead of those more timid or sly parading around in their ridiculous fleeces with their teeth and tails hanging out. Give me “Ex-Mormons for Jesus” or the Moody Bible Tract Society, who are at least honest about their anti-Mormon agenda, instead of Signature Books camouflaged as a “Latter-day Saint” press. I prefer my anti-Mormons straight up. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, 1991, pages 312, 314, 317-318)

Brigham Young University professor Louis Midgley also leveled his sights at Dan Vogel and Signature Books. He asserted that Vogel has not demonstrated “that his stance involves more than a murky sentimentalism or a confidence game aimed at accomplishing covertly what has not been done directly—namely, eradicating by radical transformation the faith resting on Joseph Smith’s prophetic claims” (page 296). On page 299, he charged that Dan Vogel “found a new patron in George D. Smith, owner of Signature Books . . . part of Smith’s effort involves showing that the Book of Mormon is not an authentic ancient history, that is, not simply true.”

Professor Midgley felt that Vogel’s book “leaves the restoration exactly where the enemies of the Church have always wanted it—repudiated” (page 305). Midgley also launched into an attack on *Joseph Smith’s New York Reputation Reexamined*, published by Signature Books, and called the author, Roger I. Anderson, “a career apostate” (page 306).

These articles, printed by F.A.R.M.S., set off a train of events which eventually led to the possibility of a law suit in which Mormon scholars on both sides of the question might have to face each other in court. Finally, however, F.A.R.M.S. decided to back down and issue a carefully worded “Correction or Clarification” in its newsletter:


Also, in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, volume 3, statements are made that could be construed as calling unspecified contributors to *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture* and Signature Books, Inc., “dishonest” and “hard-core anti-Latter-day Saints.” These statements were the reviewer’s interpretation of portions of the book, and no personal connotation was intended.

The opinions expressed in the reviews are those of the reviewers alone and do not necessarily represent the position of F.A.R.M.S. (*Insights: An Ancient Window*, July 1991, page 6)

In an Associated Press story, Vern Anderson reported that F.A.R.M.S. claimed it was not really worried about a suit for libel but issued the statement in “a spirit of reconciliation”:

To his critics, George D. Smith is a shadowy figure of considerable wealth bent on reshaping Mormonism by digging through its past. To colleagues, he’s a shy man of principle in pursuit of truth.

As president of Signature Books, an independent publisher of Mormon-related history and literature, Smith is committed to unfettered historical inquiry....

Mormon Church-owned Deseret Book this month pulled two of Signature’s titles from its shelves. One of them, “Joseph Smith’s New York Reputation Reexamined,” by Rodger Anderson, had been named the Mormon History...
Association’s best first book. The other was “The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture.”

At the same time, F.A.R.M.S. at Brigham Young University issued a “correction or clarification” . . .

The clarification in the F.A.R.M.S. newsletter came after a call from Signature’s attorney. Foundation founder John W. Welch said it was issued in a spirit of reconciliation, not worry that anyone had been libeled.

Indeed, Welch personally believes the Anderson book to be “expressly anti-Mormon” and its publisher as prone as anyone to the bias he claims to abhor.

Signature’s founding in 1981 grew out of the church’s decision to cancel a planned 16-volume history of the faith and to muzzle its own historical department. Smith . . . and his Mormon wife jumped at the chance to publish some of the rejected work. . . .

But if the so-called “apologists” and “revisionists” are merely at odds on the field of Mormon history, they are locked in a relative death grip over what most church members see as the cornerstones of Mormon doctrine . . . . (Salt Lake Tribune, July 22, 1991)

Signature Books has printed some very important works on Mormon history. Those who are interested in receiving a catalogue can write to them at 564 W. 400 N., Salt Lake City, UT 84116. Their phone number is: (801) 531-1483.

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**Tiff Over a Black Hole**

Since we began publishing material on Mormonism in 1959, we have waited in vain for the church to make a response. Although a large number of people have left the Mormon Church because of our publications, church leaders seem to feel that their best policy is silence. Since they apparently cannot find a way to refute our allegations, they believe that the less people know about our publications the better. In an article written in *Utah Holiday*, February 1978, David Merrill observed: “The official attitude of the Mormon hierarchy toward the Tanners has been one of silence and apparent unconcern. They have, however, actively discouraged LDS scholars and intellectuals from jousting with the Tanners . . .”

Prior to the publication of our book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, in 1990, church scholars at Brigham Young University and F.A.R.M.S. followed the church leaders’ advice and studiously avoided locking horns with us. With the publication of our work on the “black hole,” however, they apparently realized that it was time to speak up. After remaining virtually silent for over thirty years, Mormon scholars have suddenly come out like an army to attack us. They have recently published three reviews, containing seventy-five pages, directing our work on the theory of a black hole in the Book of Mormon! These reviews appear in F.A.R.M.S.’ publication, *Reviews of Books on The Book of Mormon*, vol. 3.

While the Mormon apologists who wrote these articles against us are not as vicious in their attack as those who took on the Mormon scholars who they consider to be “disaffected Latter-day Saints,” they are rather condescending in their approach. Furthermore, one of the authors, John A. Tvedtnes, directly accuses us of dishonesty:

> Jerald and Sandra Tanner are two of the best known critics of the Latter-day Saint Church, its doctrines, history, and scriptures. As such, it is strange to see them come out with a book in which they profess themselves to be the “good guys” (my wording) in the anti-Mormon debate. They claim, for example, to have believed in the divine origin of the Book of Mormon as late as 1960, and that they began a sincere search to prove that the book was true, but found more and more evidence that it was not. This, they write, was painful to them (pp. 1, 7). (Reviews of Books on the Book of Mormon, vol. 3, page 188)

In a footnote at the bottom of the same page, John Tvedtnes argues that our account of how we came to disbelieve the Book of Mormon is simply not true:

> These statements are at variance with what Sandra Tanner once told me about how she came to lose her faith as a teenager, and make me wonder how they can criticize Joseph Smith for making similar “changes” in his story.

This is certainly a very serious charge to make against our integrity, and we assure the reader that it is without foundation in fact. What we wrote in our book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, concerning our early belief in the Book of Mormon is absolutely correct. We not only believed in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon in 1960, but we continued to believe in it until 1962. While Mr. Tvedtnes cannot find a scintilla of evidence to support his charge, we have abundant proof that we were supporting the Book of Mormon until near the end of 1962. We have, for example, a book which was given to us by the noted Mormon scholar Francis W. Kirkham. In this book Dr. Kirkham made the following inscription: “To newly found friends and believers in the Book of Mormon. Mr & Mrs Jerald Tanner. Frances W. Kirkham[,] Salt Lake City, Utah[,] July 22, 1960.” Furthermore, in a book “Copyright 1962,” Mormon writer Kate B. Carter wrote the following:

> . . . Jerald Tanner . . . when asked what he and his followers believed, wrote: “We believe the Bible and the Book of Mormon to be the word of God. . . .”

Mr. Tanner has written a number of tracts which he distributes freely on such subjects as the Book of Mormon, Priesthood, Marriage, proof that the Book of Mormon and the Bible agree . . . (Denominations that Base Their Beliefs on the teachings of Joseph Smith, 1962, page 51)

Prior to our marriage in 1959, we had read a tract by David Whitmer entitled *An Address to All Believers in Christ*. Whitmer, of course, was one of three witnesses to the Book of Mormon. We were impressed with his message that the Book of Mormon was authentic but that the church had fallen into some serious errors such as polygamy (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 568, for a statement concerning this matter). Like David Whitmer, who separated himself from the Mormon Church, we continued to believe in the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon and promoted belief in it until 1962. John Tvedtnes seems to feel that there is a contradiction because “Sandra Tanner once told me about how she came to lose her faith as a teenager . . .” There is no misrepresentation here. Sandra was eighteen years old at the time we were married. She was still a teenager until January 1961. She lost faith in the teachings of the Mormon leaders while “a teenager,” but did not lose faith in the Book of Mormon until late in 1962 when she read *The Golden Bible*, by M. T. Lamb.

It is interesting to note that Darrick Evenson was promoting the same theory as John Tvedtnes—i.e., that we were not really believers in the Book of Mormon in the early 1960’s. While we cannot determine whether Mr. Tvedtnes got the idea from Mr. Evenson or vice versa, we do know that Evenson visited F.A.R.M.S. and that a representative from that organization...
attended one of his meetings. In any case, we feel that Mr. Tvedtines and F.A.R.M.S. should publish a retraction concerning this erroneous charge.

Although three Mormon apologists have devoted seventy-five pages to our book, Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon, we cannot see that they have made a dent in the theory. Moreover, some major errors appear in the reviews. We have been working on a detailed response to the allegations found in these reviews. In preparing this response we have discovered a great deal of new evidence to show that the Book of Mormon is not taken from ancient gold plates, but is in reality a 19th-century production. We plan to publish our response to the critics within the next few months.

We feel that Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon is one of the most important studies that we have published and that all our readers should be aware of its contents.

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Walters’ Last Sermon

As the reader may know, Pastor Wesley P. Walters had a great deal to do with bringing to light the true history of Mormonism. He was a man who loved the Mormon people and labored very hard to bring them the truth. The following extracts are taken from his last sermon, “For All The Saints.” It was delivered on October 21, 1990, at the church in Marissa, Illinois, where Walters served as pastor for 33 years:

**WHAT IS A SAINT? Ephesians 1: 1, 2**

1 Paul an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:
2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. . . .

God had already told us in the Old Testament—centuries before Paul ever addressed his letter “To the Saints.”

Psalm 50:5: Gather to me my saints—those who have made a covenant to me by sacrifice.

So a saint is one who has entered into relationship with God by means of a blood sacrifice... It takes on a special meaning of a blood sacrifice for sin—and points to that one perfect bold sacrifice for sin—the Lord Jesus our Messiah.

Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

So a saint is one who looks exclusively to the Son of God and the pouring out of his life’s blood as his only hope for forgiveness. Now in Ephesians, Chapter 1:4-5, Paul elaborates more fully upon what it means to be one of God’s Saints:

For he chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will.

Consider how infinitely small a cosmic speck this earth of ours is—

We are but a blip amidst our galaxy of billions of stars—
And our galaxy is but one of thousands upon thousands of galaxies in the universe that extends beyond where the most powerful of our telescopes can see.

And upon this microscopic speck we call the earth, our world, are some 5 billion of us crawling around—so minute that we can not even be seen from a weather satellite a few thousand miles from our earth. In our vast universe we are by comparison a million times smaller than the smallest electron in an atom.

Yet the mind-boggling thing is that we—who are totally imperceptible in the vastness of space—are not only known to God, but even loved by him from the distant ages of eternity.

That the Mighty God who framed the vastness of the universe should fix his love upon us who are less than a whisper, who are but as a vapor that quickly vanishes—is indeed the enigma of the ages.

Yet he did more than love us in eternity. . . .

We have redemption through his blood—the forgiveness of sins. Can you imagine such a cosmic figure as the Son of God—by whom this vast universe was called into existence—becoming one of us, just so he could pay the price of sin!

This is almost beyond belief. So highly exalted and valued was this person, the Son of God, that (as one theologian expressed it) . . . it would have been a lesser crime to have crucified every man, woman and child who ever lived, or would live, than to have killed the Lord of Glory.

Can you imagine any person of such exaltation and dignity doing this? Let alone the God who made us and against whom we rebelled.

An English poet pictured God as having forgotten this rebelling world. . . . But far from forgetting the world, He was redeeming it. “He loved me, and gave Himself for me.” . . .

Archeologists are always on the lookout for seals, —“le Meleck” — “Belonging to the King” — stamped in the soft clay and fired.

It identifies that vessel as forever belonging to the King—15 centuries later it still bears witness of this.

God has set His seal upon us—He has given His children His stamp of ownership—the Holy Spirit. The Spirit marks us as belonging to God forever.

“They shall never perish!”

What can we say to all this? Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Glory to God! Amen and Amen! . . .

It should break our hearts for gratitude. It should bring tears of devotion to our eyes. It should make our souls sing for joy and leap with praises.

Did you see the Cincinnati Reds when they won the Series? They came out of the dugout, leaping and shouting... and the World Series is nothing compared to what God has won for us in His own Son.

Paul said it so well. “We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” If you are a saint, rejoice! If you are not, then hurry to make a covenant with God through his Son Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Amen.

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**Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony: 1842-1990**, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. contains the actual text of the 1990 version of the highly secret ritual and other accounts of the endowment ritual dating back to 1848. Also shows all of the changes recently made in the ceremony. **Price: $5.00**
OTHER BOOKS
(Mail orders add 10% — Minimum postage $1.00)

Flaws in the Pearl of Great Price, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. This book details many serious problems in Joseph Smith’s Pearl of Great Price. It shows that a great deal of material has been plagiarized from the King James Version of the Bible and that much of this material came from the New Testament. It also has a photo reprint of the first edition of the Pearl of Great Price and shows the changes that have been made in the text. Price: $6.00

Serious Charges Against the Tanners, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Price: $1.00

History of Utah: 1540-1886, by Hubert Howe Bancroft. Price: $25.00


Ex-Mormons: Why We Left, edited by Latayne Scott. Personal testimonies of eight ex-Mormons. Price: $7.00

Salamander: The Story of the Mormon Forgery Murders, by Linda Sillitoe and Allen Roberts. An excellent book of Mark Hofmann and his dealings with the church. Price: $5.95

Are Mormon Scriptures Reliable? by Harry L. Ropp (with revision by Wesley P. Walters). Price: $7.00

Joseph Smith’s New York Reputation Re-Examined, by Rodger I. Anderson. Good response to LDS authors Hugh Nibley & Richard L. Anderson on early statements by Joseph Smith’s neighbors. Price: $9.95

Quest for Refuge: The Mormon Flight From American Pluralism, by Marvin S. Hill. A surprisingly frank study to come from the pen of a BYU professor. Price: $19.95

Religious Seekers and the Advent of Mormonism, by Dan Vogel. Price: $9.95

Line Upon Line: Essays on Mormon Doctrine, edited by Gary James Bergera. A selection of 16 different essays which shows “the evolution of ideas many Mormons today take for granted. Price: $10.95

“All Wild Bill” Hickman and the Mormon Frontier, by Hope A. Hilton. Price: $9.95


Mere Christianity, by C. S. Lewis. Good defense and explanation of Christianity. Price: $3.95


Basic Christianity, by John R. Stott. A brief examination of the claims of Christ and our response to his call. Price: $3.95

UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY
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SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH  84110
On July 2, 1991 we were presented with a copy of a very sensational memo purported to have been written by a General Authority of the Mormon Church. This memo was authored by Glenn L. Pace, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric of the church. It is dated July 19, 1990, and is directed to the “Strengthening Church Members Committee” of the Mormon Church. In the memo Pace states that he has met with “sixty victims” of “ritualist child abuse,” and that “All sixty individuals are members of the Church.”

The contents of the document are so startling that we wondered if it might be a forgery created by someone who wanted to embarrass the church. Because of our concern regarding the memo’s authenticity, we decided not to make it public until we could learn more about it. We did give a copy to a woman who was doing research on incest, and she was able to meet with Glenn L. Pace concerning the matter. She claimed that Pace informed her that he had now interviewed over one hundred victims of ritualistic abuse.

On October 2, 1991, we gave a copy of the memo to another researcher who is very well versed in the operations and history of the Mormon Church. He was very suspicious about the authenticity of the document and noted that he did not think the church had a committee called “Strengthening Church Members Committee.” He decided to call Glenn Pace about the matter. While Pace was not available at that time, he was able to discuss the memo with the secretary. She acknowledged that there is indeed a “Strengthening Church Members Committee,” and was surprised to know that he had a copy of the memo on “Ritualistic Child Abuse.” She informed him that the document was prepared solely for the Committee and that he was not supposed to have a copy. She instructed him, therefore, to destroy his copy of the memo and to tell the person he obtained the copy from that his or her copy should also be destroyed.

We, of course, felt that the memo should be available to members of the church. Therefore, on pages 3-8 of this issue of the Messenger we have made a photographic reproduction from our copy of the document so that those who are interested can inspect it in its entirety and draw their own conclusions. The reader will notice that the words “DO NOT REPRODUCE” are printed by hand on the first page of the memo. These words were already on the copy when we received it.

At this point we do not feel prepared to take any strong position as to the conclusions Bishop Pace has reached with regard to his interviews. We are, in fact, caught on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, it is very hard to believe that such an evil conspiracy has been going on for so long without detection.

We try to be very cautious about accepting stories concerning conspiracies unless strong evidence can be marshaled to support the accusations. We have seen too many people make the mistake of leveling serious accusations against individuals and organizations without carefully considering all of the facts.

On the other hand, however, we have to ask ourselves this question: Can the testimony of so many individuals, that seems to agree on some key points, be totally disregarded? Psychiatrists, of course, would point out that we cannot blindly accept the statements of those who are mentally ill because they sometimes have a difficult time separating reality from fantasy. Since Glenn Pace presents only a general overview of the problem in his report to the Committee, it is difficult to really evaluate his conclusions. It is reported that there is a 40-page report which would throw more light on the issue. Unfortunately, however, it is not available to the public. In any case, if Pace has correctly read the situation and a satanic group like he envisions is functioning within the Mormon Church, it would have to be one of the most diabolical conspiracies in existence today.

Bishop Pace strongly believes that “these activities are real and cannot be ignored” (page 6 of his report) and states that “the Church needs to consider the seriousness of these problems” (page 4). Even though Pace goes so far as to charge that “bishops, a patriarch, a stake president, temple workers, and members of the Tabernacle Choir” may be involved and
that “sometimes the abuse has taken place in our own meetinghouses” (page 5), he does not believe the Mormon Church itself is behind the satanic activity; instead, he feels that “the Church is being used” (page 4). If the activities Pace speaks of are actually taking place, we would tend to agree with his conclusion that the church is the victim of a group of pernicious deceivers. The fact that “a stake president” and “bishops” may be involved does not indicate the church itself is implicated in a conspiracy. It should be pointed out that there are thousands of bishops in the Mormon Church. Nevertheless, as we will explain later, there are some things in LDS Church history and doctrine that make the church vulnerable to infiltration by occultists who wish to use it for their own purposes.

In any case, Glenn Pace must be commended for spending a great deal of time and emotional energy in trying to help these people who are troubled with serious psychological problems. Even if he is unable to prove his theory concerning “Ritualistic Child Abuse” in the Mormon Church, he has had the courage to step out and call this matter to the attention of the leadership of the church.

Aside from the question of whether a group of Satanists are secretly functioning within the framework of the LDS Church, Glenn Pace’s memo raises another important issue—i.e., it brings to light an additional reason for the deletion of some of the oaths which had always been an extremely important part of the Mormon temple ritual. The deletion of these oaths occurred in April 1990. As we will explain later, it is possible that the information that Pace was receiving in his interviews during 1989-90 could have influenced church leaders to remove the oaths. On page 4 of his memo, Bishop Pace noted that “many” of those who had allegedly participated in satanic rites claimed that they had “their first flashback” while “attending the temple for the first time.” When they took the oaths and heard “the exact words” in the temple ceremony that they had previously heard in the satanic ritual, “horrible memories were triggered.”

It is possible that when church leaders became aware of this information, they ordered the offending portions of the ceremony deleted so that they would not continue to have an adverse effect on some church members. Then, too, if satanic rites with similar wording actually existed, the General Authorities of the church may have been concerned that this would eventually become known to the public and cause embarrassment to the church. Whatever the case may be, the oaths which were a vital part of the temple ceremony at the time Glenn Pace began his interviews have been removed.

We have been somewhat apprehensive about bringing Pace’s memo to light because of the effect it could have on other people’s lives. If his conclusions are correct and the perpetrators of these evil deeds are apprehended and brought to justice, we will be very pleased with the result. If, on the other hand, it causes a witch hunt which leads nowhere, we will certainly be disappointed. The serious implications of this whole matter cannot be overstated. We hope that our readers will use good judgment and not spread unfounded rumors. If, however, they do have important information on this subject, they should report it to the proper law enforcement officials.

At the LDS Church’s 161st semi-annual General Conference, the Mormon leaders took a strong public stand against child abuse. On October 7, 1991, the Salt Lake Tribune reported:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints “condemns in the harshest of terms” physical, psychological and sexual abuse, said Thomas S. Monson, second counselor in the First Presidency.

Offenders should be brought to justice for their “wicked and devilish conduct . . . Liars, bullies who abuse children, they will one day reap the whirlwind of their foul deeds,” he said.

Glenn Pace’s suggestion concerning the possibility of an organized conspiracy to sexually abuse children is not new to residents of Utah. In a highly controversial trial, which took place in 1987, a man by the name of Alan B. Hadfield was convicted on seven counts of “sodomizing and sexually molesting his son and daughter” (Salt Lake Tribune, January 13, 1988). In the same newspaper, under the date of December 16, 1987, we find the following:

PROVO—As many as 40 people in the same Lehi neighborhood were implicated as child sex abusers by their own offspring and other children in the area, a therapist testified Tuesday.

Dr. Barbara Snow, the principal therapist who broke an alleged widespread pattern of child sexual abuse centered in one ward of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, spent nearly six hours on the stand during the second day of the trial of Alan B. Hadfield.

Many people felt that Dr. Snow planted ideas of sexual abuse in the minds of the children. A psychiatrist we discussed the situation with said that although he had questions about Dr. Snow’s methods, he talked about the matter with another psychiatrist who had interviewed the children. He was surprised to learn that this man had reached similar conclusions—i.e., that there were probably many people involved in the scandal. Since he has a great deal of respect for this man’s work, he feels there may have been something to the statement that there was an organized sex-abuse ring functioning in Lehi. However this may be, although officials indicated that additional charges might be filed, no one else has been prosecuted for the purported abuse. Many people in Utah still feel that Mr. Hadfield was innocent of the charges and that the accusations made by the children against him and other members of the Mormon ward in which he lived were without foundation in fact. This was certainly a very difficult case and it is very hard to know who was telling the truth.

On January 13, 1988, the Salt Lake Tribune ran a story that indicated that sex-abuse rings might be functioning in other parts of the state of Utah:

A spokesman for the Utah Psychiatric Association has issued a startling message: Organized child abuse is not a far-fetched notion. Adults and youths in organized groups or rings appear to be sexually abusing children in Utah.

Dr. Paul L. Whitehead, public affairs representative for the association in Salt Lake City, said mental-health professionals have identified clusters of sex-abuse groups in several communities in the state. But so far, only one member of what they say is such a group has been brought to trial—and convicted.

At this point the reader should take the time to carefully read Glenn L. Pace’s work on “Ritualistic Child Abuse.” In the pages that follow after our photographic reproduction of the memo, we will try to throw some light on the important matters Bishop Pace has brought to our attention.
MEMORANDUM

Date: July 19, 1990
To: Strengthening Church Members Committee
From: Bishop Glenn L. Pace
Subject: Ritualistic Child Abuse

Pursuant to the Committee's request, I am writing this memorandum to pass along what I have learned about ritualistic child abuse. Hopefully, it will be of some value to you as you continue to monitor the problem. You have already received the LDS Social Services report on satanism dated May 24, 1989, a report from Brent Ward, and a memorandum from myself dated October 20, 1989 in response to Brother Ward's report. Therefore, I will limit this writing to information not contained in those papers.

I have met with sixty victims. That number could be twice or three times as many if I did not discipline myself to only one meeting per week. I have not wanted my involvement with this issue to become a handicap in fulfilling my assigned responsibilities. On the other hand, I felt someone needed to pay the price to obtain an intellectual and spiritual conviction as to the seriousness of this problem within the Church.

Of the sixty victims with whom I have met, fifty-three are female and seven are male. Eight are children. The abuse occurred in the following places: Utah (37), Idaho (3), California (4), Mexico (2), and other places (14). Fifty-three victims are currently living in the State of Utah. All sixty individuals are members of the Church. Forty-five victims allege witnessing and/or participating in human sacrifice. The majority were abused by relatives, often their parents. All have developed psychological problems and most have been diagnosed as having multiple personality disorder or some other form of dissociative disorder.

Ritualistic child abuse is the most hideous of all child abuse. The basic objective is premeditated—to systematically and methodically torture and terrorize children until they are forced to dissociate. The torture is not a consequence of the loss of temper, but the execution of well-planned, well-thought out rituals often performed by close relatives. The only escape for the children is to dissociate. They will develop a new personality to enable them to endure various forms of abuse. When the episode is over, the core personality is again in control and the individual is not conscious of what happened. Dissociation also serves the purposes of the occult because the
children have no day-to-day memory of the atrocities. They go through adolescence and early adulthood with no active memory of what is taking place. Oftentimes they continue in rituals through their teens and early twenties, unaware of their involvement. Many individuals with whom I have spoken have served missions and it has not been until later that they begin to remember. One individual has memories of participating in rituals while serving as a full-time missionary.

The victims lead relatively normal lives, but the memories are locked up in a compartment in their minds and surface in various ways. They don't know how to cope with the emotions because they can't find the source. As they become adults and move into another environment, something triggers the memories and, consequently, flashbacks and/or nightmares occur. One day they will have been living a normal life and the next they will be in a mental hospital in a fetal position. The memories of their early childhood are recalled in so much detail that they once again feel the pain that caused the dissociation in the first place.

There are two reasons why adults can remember with such detail events that happened in their past: First, the terror they experienced was so stark that it was indelibly placed in their mind. Second, the memory was compartmentalized in a certain portion of the mind and was not subjected to the dilution of experiences of ensuing years. When it is tapped, it is as fresh as if it happened yesterday.

The memories seem to come in layers. For example, the first memory might be of incest; then they remember robes and candles; next they realize that their father or mother or both were present when they were being abused. Another layer will be the memory of seeing other people hurt and even killed. Then they remember having seen babies killed. Another layer is realizing that they participated in the sacrifices. One of the most painful memories may be that they even sacrificed their own baby. With each layer of memory comes another set of problems with which they must deal.

Some have said that the witnesses to this type of treatment cannot be trusted because of the victim's unstable condition and because practically all of them have some kind of dissociative disorder; in fact, the stories are so bizarre as to raise serious credibility questions. The irony is that one of the objectives of the occult is to create multiple personalities within the children in order to keep the "secrets." They live in society without society having any idea that something is wrong since the children and teenagers don't even realize there is another life
occurring in darkness and in secret. However, when sixty witnesses testify to the same type of torture and murder, it becomes impossible for me, personally, not to believe them.

I mention multiple personalities because the spiritual healing which must take place in the lives of these victims cannot happen without their priesthood leaders understanding something about it.

The spiritual indoctrination which takes place during the physical abuse is one of the most difficult to overcome. In addition to experiencing stark terror and pain, the children are also instructed in satanic doctrine. Everything is completely reversed: white is black, black is white, good is bad, bad is good, Satan is going to rule during the Millennium.

Children are put in a situation where they believe they are going to die—such as being buried alive or being placed in a plastic bag and immersed in water. Prior to doing so, the abuser tells the child to pray to Jesus to see if He will save her. Imagine a seven year old girl, having been told she is going to die, praying to Jesus to save her and nothing happens—then at the last moment she is rescued, but the person saving her is a representative of Satan. He uses this experience to convince her that the only person who really cares about her is Satan, she is Satan’s child and she might as well become loyal to him.

Just before or shortly after their baptism into the Church, children are baptized by blood into the satanic order which is meant to cancel out their baptism into the Church. They will be asked if they understand or have ever felt the Holy Ghost. When they reply that they have, they will be reminded of the horrible things they have participated in and will be told that they have become a son (or daughter) of perdition and, therefore, have no chance of being saved or loved by our Father in heaven or Jesus.

All of this indoctrination takes place with whichever personality has immered to endure the physical, mental, and spiritual pain. Consequently, there develops within each of these individuals the makings of what I call a civil war. As the memories begin to surface, there are personalities who feel they have given themselves to Satan, and there is no hope for forgiveness. The core person is an active member of the Church, often with a temple recommend. As integration takes place, the civil war begins. Sometimes, in an interview, personalities of the dark side have come out. They are petrified or perhaps full of hate for me and what I represent. Eventually those personalities need to be dealt with spiritually and psychologically.
Most victims are suicidal. They have been brainwashed with drugs, hypnosis, and other means to become suicidal as soon as they start to tell the secrets. They have been threatened all of their lives that if they don't do what they are told their brother or sister will die, their parents will die, their house will be burned, or they themselves will be killed. They have every reason to believe it since they have seen people killed. They believe they might as well kill themselves instead of wait for the occult to do it. Some personalities feel it is the right thing to do.

The purpose of this detail is to stress the complexity of psychological and spiritual therapy for these individuals. Our priesthood leaders, when faced with such cases, are understandably at a loss of how to respond. Orthodox counsel is completely ineffective. For example, some victims have been told that this all happened in their past and that they should put it behind them and get on with their lives. This is just not possible. Part of the spiritual therapy necessary is for priesthood leaders to assist with the conversion process of the personalities who have been indoctrinated into satanism. Victims must integrate their personalities so that they can function as whole persons and be able to deal with their problems and then get on with their lives. Often, some of the parts will begin to act out--perhaps promiscuously--and a good intentioned priesthood leader, following the General Handbook of Instructions, will disfellowship or excommunicate an individual. All this does is reinforce the satanic indoctrination of the victims that they are no good.

I'm sorry to say that many of the victims have had their first flashbacks while attending the temple for the first time. The occult along the Wasatch Front uses the doctrine of the Church to their advantage. For example, the verbiage and gestures are used in a ritualistic ceremony in a very debased and often bloody manner. When the victim goes to the temple and hears the exact words, horrible memories are triggered. We have recently been disturbed with members of the Church who have talked about the temple ceremony. Compared to what is happening in the occult along the Wasatch Front, these are very minor infractions. The perpetrators are also living a dual life. Many are temple recommend holders. This leads to another reason why the Church needs to consider the seriousness of these problems. In affect, the Church is being used.

I go out of my way to not let the victims give me the names of the perpetrators. I have told them that my responsibility is to help them with spiritual healing and that the names of perpetrators should be given to therapists and law enforcement
officers. However, they have told me the positions in the Church of members who are perpetrators. Among others, there are Young Women leaders, Young Men leaders, bishops, a patriarch, a stake president, temple workers, and members of the Tabernacle Choir. These accusations are not coming from individuals who think they recognized someone, but from those who have been abused by people they know, in many cases their own family members.

Whatever the form of abuse our main concern is for the victims, but there are legal ramifications. We are disturbed to receive reports that a scoutmaster has abused the boys in his troop. It is not difficult to imagine what would happen if we learn that a bishop or stake president has participated in the abominations of ritualistic child abuse. Not only do some of the perpetrators represent a cross section of the Mormon culture, but sometimes the abuse has taken place in our own meetinghouses.

I don't pretend to know how prevalent the problem is. All I know is that I have met with 60 victims. Assuming each one comes from a coven of 13, we are talking about the involvement of 800 or so right here on the Wasatch Front. Obviously, I have only seen those coming forth to get help. They are in their twenties and thirties for the most part. I can only assume that it is expanding geometrically and am horrified the numbers represented by the generation who are now children and teenagers.

Another reason for concern is that there are several doctrinal issues that need to be resolved. The Church and society in general are very skeptical as to whether the occult and its activities do exist. There is no First Presidency statement relative to some of the doctrinal issues: What does a priesthood leader tell individuals who come forward and say that they have participated in these rituals—which may include human sacrifice? Should they have a temple recommend? Will they ever be forgiven? There are questions regarding free agency and accountability. Is a person who has been raised in an occult from infancy accountable for things that take place in a dissociated state, even though those acts were committed after the age of eight? I have formed my own opinions to these questions and have done the best I can. However, I don't have the mantle to make these doctrinal and policy decisions. I have relied on the mantle of a bishop regarding discernment and being a common judge.

The few priesthood leaders who have had to face these issues are crying out for help because they don't want to give their own opinions and yet there is no place to go for an answer. A bishop will go to his stake president who says he doesn't believe it is happening and that the member is just crazy. The stake president
might go to an Area Presidency who will react in a similar way. Most people are afraid to surface it to the First Presidency for fear of getting the same reaction and don't want to appear crazy themselves for asking the question.

I hope you will excuse me if I am being presumptuous, but I am concluding this paper with scriptures I feel support my belief that these activities are real and cannot be ignored.

The things I have been writing about go back to Cain and Abel:

And Satan said unto Cain: Swear unto me by thy throat, and if thou tell it thou shalt die; and swear thy brethren by their heads, and by the living God, that they tell it not; for if they tell it, they shall surely die; and this that thy father may not know it; and this day I will deliver thy brother Abel into thine hands.

And Satan swore unto Cain that he would do according to his commands. And all these things were done in secret.

And Cain said: Truly I am Mahan, the master of this great secret, that I may murder and get gain. Wherefore Cain was called Master Mahan, and he gloried in his wickedness. (Moses 5:29-31.)

All of the experiences I have heard about have to do with secrecy, swearing not to tell, murdering to get gain and power:

Wherefore Lamech, being angry, slew him, not like unto Cain, his brother Abel, for the sake of getting gain, but he slew him for the oath's sake.

For, from the days of Cain, there was a secret combination, and their works were in the dark, and they knew every man his brother. (Moses 5:50-51.)

And then in Moses 6:15 we learn that as people began to fill the earth, so did these secret works:

And the children of men were numerous upon all the face of the land. And in those days Satan had great dominion among men, and raged in their hearts; and from thenceforth came wars and bloodshed; and a man's hand was against his own brother, in administering death, because of secret works, seeking for power.
The Book of Mormon is replete with descriptions of these secret murderous combinations as well as prophecies that they will always be with us:

And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself; yea, to that being who beguiled our first parents, who transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light, and stirreth up the children of men unto secret combinations of murder and all manner of secret works of darkness. (2 Nephi 9:9.)

Wherefore, for this cause, that my covenants may be fulfilled which I have made unto the children of men, that I will do unto them while they are in the flesh, I must needs destroy the secret works of darkness, and of murders, and of abominations. (2 Nephi 10:15.)

And there are also secret combinations, even as in times of old, according to the combinations of the devil, for he is the founder of all these things; yea, the founder of murder, and works of darkness; yea, and he leadeth them by the neck with a flaxen cord, until he bindeth them with his strong cords forever. (2 Nephi 26:22.)

In Alma, we find that the Lord commanded some of the prophets not to write any of the secret works, especially of the secret oaths, so that they would not become known by generations to follow, but that they might be warned that they do exist:

And now, I will speak unto you concerning those twenty-four plates, that ye keep them, that the mysteries and the works of darkness, and their secret works, or the secret works of those people who have been destroyed, may be made manifest unto this people; yea, all their murders, and robbings, and their plunderings, and all their wickedness and abominations, may be made manifest unto this people; yea, and that ye preserve these interpreters. . . .

I will bring forth out of darkness unto light all their secret works and their abominations; and except they repent I will destroy them from off the face of the earth; and I will bring to light all their secrets and abominations, unto every nation that shall hereafter possess the land.

And now, my son, we see that they did not repent; therefore they have been destroyed, and thus far the word of God has been fulfilled; yea, their secret abominations have been brought out of darkness and made known unto us.
And now, my son, I command you that ye retain all their oaths, and their covenants, and their agreements in their secret abominations; yea, and all their signs and their wonders ye shall keep from this people, that they know them not, lest peradventure they should fall into darkness also and be destroyed.

For behold, there is a curse upon all this land, that destruction shall come upon all those workers of darkness, according to the power of God, when they are fully ripe; therefore I desire that this people might be destroyed. (Alma 37:21, 25-28.)

In Helaman, the name of Gadianton is introduced and becomes descriptive throughout the Book of Mormon relative to the secret combinations.

But behold, Kishkumen, who had murdered Pahoran, did lay wait to destroy Helaman also; and he was upheld by his band, who had entered into a covenant that no one should know his wickedness.

For there was one Gadianton, who was exceedingly expert in many words, and also in his craft, to carry on the secret work of murder and of robbery; therefore he became the leader of the band of Kishkumen. . . .

And when the servant of Helaman had known all the heart of Kishkumen, and how that it was his object to murder, and also that it was the object of all those who belonged to his band to murder, and to rob, and to gain power, (and this was their secret plan, and their combination) the servant of Helaman said unto Kishkumen: Let us go forth unto the judgment-seat. (Helaman 2:3-4, 8.)

It was true then as it is now that these things were not known by the general populace or by the government:

And it came to pass in the forty and ninth year of the reign of the judges, there was continual peace established in the land, all save it were the secret combinations which Gadianton the robber had established in the more settled parts of the land, which at that time were not known unto those who were at the head of government; therefore they were not destroyed out of the land. (Helaman 3:23.)

In chapter 6, we learn that in spite of the Lord's command to the prophets not to write these things, Satan is capable, and always has been, of revealing his secrets to his followers just as the Lord has revealed His will to the prophets.
And now behold, those murderers and plunderers were a band who had been formed by Kishkumen and Gadianton. And now it had come to pass that there were many, even among the Nephites, of Gadianton's band. But behold, they were more numerous among the more wicked part of the Lamanites. And they were called Gadianton's robbers and murderers. . . .

But behold, Satan did stir up the hearts of the more part of the Nephites, insomuch that they did unite with those bands of robbers, and did enter into their covenants and their oaths, that they would protect and preserve one another in whatsoever difficult circumstances they should be placed, that they should not suffer for their murders, and their plunderings, and their stealings.

And it came to pass that they did have their signs, yea, their secret signs, and their secret words; and this that they might distinguish a brother who had entered into the covenant, that whatsoever wickedness his brother should do he should not be injured by his brother, nor by those who did belong to his band, who had taken this covenant.

And thus they might murder and plunder, and steal, and commit whoredoms and all manner of wickedness, contrary to the laws of their country and also the laws of their God.

And whosoever of those who belonged to their band should reveal unto the world of their wickedness and their abominations, should be tried, not according to the laws of their country, but according to the laws of their wickedness, which had been given by Gadianton and Kishkumen.

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

Now behold, those secret oaths and covenants did not come forth unto Gadianton from the records which were delivered unto Helaman; but behold, they were put into the heart of Gadianton by that same being who did entice our first parents to partake of the forbidden fruit. . . .

Yea, it is that same being who put it into the heart of Gadianton to still carry on the work of darkness, and of secret murder; and he has brought it forth from the beginning of man even down to this time.
And behold, it is he who is the author of all sin. And behold, he doth carry on his works of darkness and secret murder, and doth hand down their plots, and their oaths, and their covenants, and their plans of awful wickedness, from generation to generation according as he can get hold upon the hearts of the children of men. (Helaman 6:18, 21-26, 29-30.)

In light of this scripture, it is naive for us to think these things would not exist in our own generation. We know this is the last dispensation, the dispensation of the fulness of times. Surely Satan would not "pass" on this most important dispensation.

In Helaman 8:1 we learn that people in high places were members of the Gadianton band and secret combinations:

And now it came to pass that when Nephi had said these words, behold, there were men who were judges, who also belonged to the secret band of Gadianton, and they were angry, and they cried out against him, saying unto the people: Why do ye not seize upon this man and bring him forth, that he may be condemned according to the crime which he has done?

We have allegations to indicate that this is true of people in high places today in both the Church and the government who are leading this dual life. The secret combinations were mentioned all through the Book of Mormon. In Mormon 1:18-19 we read that these Gadianton robbers were still alive and well and functioning:

And these Gadianton robbers, who were among the Lamanites, did infest the land, insomuch that the inhabitants thereof began to hide up their treasures in the earth; and they became slippery, because the Lord had cursed the land, that they could not hold them, nor retain them again.

And it came to pass that there were sorceries, and witchcrafts, and magics; and the power of the evil one was wrought upon all the face of the land, even unto the fulfilling of all the words of Abinadi, and also Samuel the Lamanite.

In Mormon 8:27 there is a prophecy that secret combinations will be among us in our time:

And it shall come in a day when the blood of saints shall cry unto the Lord, because of secret combinations and the works of darkness.
The extent of the evil that mankind will perpetrate on another is told in Moroni 9:10:

And after they had done this thing, they did murder them in a most cruel manner, torturing their bodies even unto death; and after they have done this, they devour their flesh like unto wild beasts, because of the hardness of their hearts; and they do it for a token of bravery.

Many of us have read this all of our lives and click our tongues at how awful it would be to live in such a time. Those victims with whom I have spoken testify to these things going on all around us today. In Ether we are told that they will exist amongst us, the gentiles, and we are also warned that we should do something about it:

And now I, Moroni, do not write the manner of their oaths and combinations, for it hath been made known unto me that they are had among all people, and they are had among the Lamanites.

And they have caused the destruction of this people of whom I am now speaking, and also the destruction of the people of Nephi.

And whatsoever nation shall uphold such secret combinations, to get power and gain, until they shall spread over the nation, behold, they shall be destroyed; for the Lord will not suffer that the blood of his saints, which shall be shed by them, shall always cry unto him from the ground for vengeance upon them and yet he avenge them not.

Wherefore, 0 ye Gentiles, it is wisdom in God that these things should be shown unto you, that thereby ye may repent of your sins, and suffer not that these murderous combinations shall get above you, which are built up to get power and gain—and the work, yea, even the work of destruction come upon you, yea, even the sword of the justice of the Eternal God shall fall upon you, to your overthrow and destruction if ye shall suffer these things to be.

Wherefore, the Lord commandeth you, when ye shall see these things come among you that ye shall awake to a sense of your awful situation, because of this secret combination which shall be among you; or wo be unto it, because of the blood of them who have been slain; for they cry from the dust for vengeance upon it, and also upon those who built it up. (Ether 8:20-24.)
In summary, we live in the last dispensation of the fulness of times and Satan is here with his secret combinations in all of the ugliness that existed in previous dispensations. The scriptures prophesy to that reality. I also believe that the scriptures cited and many others that could be quoted argue against our being passive about the problem. I don't want to be known as an alarmist or a fanatic on the issue. Now that I have put what I have learned in writing to you, I feel the issue is in the right court. I hope to take a low profile on the subject and get on with the duties which I have been formally assigned. This is not to say I would not be willing to be of service. Over the last eighteen months I have acquired a compassionate love and respect for the victims who are fighting for the safety of their physical lives and, more importantly, their souls.
TOO SENSATIONAL?

While the report on ritualistic abuse appears to have been written by a man who is very sincere and really believes what he is reporting, many rational people will have a difficult time believing the statement that forty-five of the sixty victims “allege witnessing and/or participating in human sacrifice” (page 1). Although we would not want to claim that this would be impossible, it does seem that it would be very difficult to cover up that many murders. It is possible, however, that there may be a way to reconcile this in the report itself. On page 3, Bishop Pace reported that “Children are put in a situation where they believe they are going to die—such as being buried alive or being placed in a plastic bag and immersed in water.”

If a child only saw someone being buried, but did not witness that the person was later “rescued” (i.e., dug up again), the impression would be left that the person was, in fact, dead. Furthermore, it would be possible to actually stage a fake human sacrifice. Individuals who are cruel enough to bury people alive and then rescue them at the “last moment,” would certainly not hesitate to perform a pretended sacrifice. Since these rituals were supposed to have taken place by the light of “candles,” it would be easy to fool children with a knife having a blade that goes back into the handle instead of penetrating the child. (We are familiar with a magic trick in which a large needle which resembles a sword appears to pass right through a person.) The use of some blood from an animal would help to make the whole thing believable. This, of course, is only speculation on our part.

In his book, The Darker Side of Evil, Corruption, Scandal and the Mormon Empire, page 109, Anson Shupe alleges that in the Hadfield case children told “stories of orgies where participants wore costumes and the adults took photographs. Worship of Satan was demanded.” While we have not had time to examine the transcript of this trial to confirm that Satanism was alleged to have been involved, there are some interesting parallels to Pace’s memo in newspaper reports of the trial. One “little girl talked about one instance when people had cameras hanging from the ceiling, needles being stuck in her, blood being drawn and people coming out of graves” (Salt Lake Tribune, December 16, 1987).

The reader will remember that Glenn Place also wrote concerning the tactic of children being placed “in a plastic bag and immersed in water” to terrorize them (page 3) and also revealed that if they did not do what they are told “their brother or sister will die, their parents will die . . . or they themselves will be killed” (page 4). On December 17, 1987, the Tribune reported an allegation that Hadfield’s son was held under the water:

Whitehead said children who have been sexually abused often have also been threatened. Such was the case of Alan Hadfield’s children, who testified that their father said “he would drown them and kill their mother” if they told. The 12-year-old Hadfield boy testified that when he was younger his father held him at the bottom of a swimming pool to dramatically prove his threat.

We, of course, do not know whether there is any connection between the Hadfield case and Bishop Pace’s research. Although it is possible that Pace could have talked with some individual(s) linked to the Lehi scandal, he specifically said that those he interviewed “are in their twenties and thirties for the most part.” Since the Hadfield trial took place a little less than five years ago, it seems unlikely that these “children” would have been old enough to fit Pace’s description.

In any case, from his interviews Bishop Pace reached the conclusion that a significant number of people must be involved in the occultic activity: “All I know is that I have met with 60 victims. Assuming each one comes from a coven of 13, we are talking about the involvement of 800 or so right here on the Wasatch Front” (page 5). (Salt Lake City is part of the Wasatch Front.) Glenn Pace seems to be multiplying the number of people in each coven with the number of victims he interviewed (60). On page 1 of his report, however, he made it clear that he believes there could be “twice or three times” as many victims—possibly as many as 180. He simply had not had the opportunity to interview them at the time he wrote the report. On page 5, he made this sobering statement: “Obviously, I have only seen those coming forth to get help.” It appears, then, that Pace envisions a large number of people participating in these satanic activities.

FLASHBACKS IN TEMPLE

One of the most interesting parts of Glenn Pace’s report is concerning “flashbacks” which he claims those who have been ritually abused experienced when they went through the Mormon temple ritual for the first time:

I’m sorry to say that many of the victims have had their first flashbacks while attending the temple for the first time. The occult along the Wasatch Front uses the doctrine of the Church to their advantage. For example, the verbiage and gestures are used in a ritualistic ceremony in a very debased and often bloody manner. When the victim goes to the temple and hears the exact words, horrible memories are triggered. We have recently been disturbed with members of the Church who have talked about the temple ceremony. Compared to what is happening in the occult along the Wasatch Front, these are very minor infractions. The perpetrators are also living a dual life. Many are temple recommend holders. (Memo by Glenn Pace, page 4)

No one, of course, is allowed to go through the Mormon temple endowment ceremony without a special recommend. What Glenn Pace is obviously alleging is that some trusted members of the Mormon Church, who have recommends to go through the temple, have been using some of the “exact words” and “gestures” found in the Mormon ceremony in a highly secret satanic ritual which they participate in on other occasions. He gives no information as to where they meet, but in the same memo (page 5) he says that “sometimes the abuse has taken place in our own meetinghouses.”

When Glenn Pace speaks of the “gestures” in the temple ritual, he is undoubtedly referring to the execution of the “penalties.” There can be little question that these penalties were originally derived from Masonry. Joseph Smith himself was a member of that fraternity. We find the following in Joseph Smith’s History of the Church who have talked about the temple ceremony.

The Masons had some very bloody oaths in their ritual. Capt. William Morgan, who had been a Mason for thirty years, exposed these oaths in a book printed in 1827. After publishing his book, Freemasonry Exposed, Morgan disappeared and this set off a great controversy over Masonry. In any case, on pages 21-22 of his book, Morgan revealed the oath that Masons took in the “First Degree” of their ritual: “. . . I will . . . never reveal
any part or parts, point or points of the secret arts and mysteries of ancient Freemasonry . . . binding myself under no less penalty than to have my throat cut across, my tongue torn out by the roots . . . . On page 23, Morgan went on to show that the Masons graphically demonstrated the penalty. They were told to draw "your right hand across your throat, the thumb next to your throat, your arm as high as the elbow in a horizontal position."

There is an abundance of information from early sources to demonstrate that the "The First token of the Aaronic Priesthood" in the Mormon temple ceremony was derived from the oath given in the "First Degree" of the Masonic ritual. In Temple Mormonism, published in 1931, page 18, we find this information concerning the Mormon ritual:

The left arm is here placed at the square, palm to the front the right hand and arm raised to the neck, holding the palm downwards and thumb under the right ear.

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

Sign—In executing the sign of the penalty, the right hand palm down, is drawn sharply across the throat, then dropped from the square to the side.

The bloody nature of this oath in the temple endowment was verified by an abundance of testimony given in the Reed Smoot Case. For example, in vol. 2, page 78, J. H. Wallis, Sr., testified: "...I agree that my throat be cut from ear to ear and my tongue torn out by its roots from my mouth."

Some time in the first half of the 20th century, a major change was made concerning the penalties in the endowment ceremony. The bloody wording of the oath mentioned above was entirely removed. Nevertheless, Mormons were still instructed to draw their thumbs across their throats to show the penalty. In the 1984 account of the ritual the wording was modified to remove the harsh language regarding the cutting of the throat and the tearing out of the tongue:

"The Sign is made by placing the left arm on the square, placing the right hand across the chest with the thumb extended and then drawing it rapidly from left to right and dropping it to the side" (Temple Mormonism, page 20).

As in the case of the First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood, the most offensive wording was deleted from this part of the Mormon ceremony a number of decades ago. The "execution of the penalty," however, was still retained in the ritual until April, 1990.

In the First Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood, Mormons were originally instructed to say that if they revealed "any of the secrets of this, the First Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood . . . we agree that our bodies be cut asunder in the midst and all our bowels gush out" (Temple Mormonism, page 20). The offensive words in this oath were removed from the temple ceremony many years ago, but Mormons continued to execute the sign of the penalty until just recently. In the 1984 account of the ritual the participants were instructed to bring "the left hand in front of you with the hand in cupping shape, the left arm forming a square, the right hand is also brought forward, the palm down, the fingers close together, the thumb extended, and the thumb is placed over the left hip. (Officiator makes sign.) This is the sign. The execution of the penalty is represented by drawing the thumb quickly across the body and dropping the hands to the side." (For a detailed treatment concerning the modification of the temple oaths see our book Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony: 1842-1990.)

Even after the oaths had been modified to remove the bloody wording, the execution of the penalties continued to upset many members of the church. As we indicated earlier, they were finally removed in April 1990. After the execution of the penalties was deleted, John Dart reported the following:

In pleading to never reveal the ritual, Mormons formerly made three motions—drawing one’s hand quickly across the throat, another indicating one’s heart would be cut out and the third suggesting disembowelment.

"That’s why I stopped going to the temple because [the ritual] was so offensive," said a former woman member in Salt Lake City. (Los Angeles Times, May 5, 1990)

If Glenn Pace’s theory is correct, some Mormons who were "living a dual life" reverted to using the type of "bloody" wording which was found in the temple ceremony many years ago. They may have made the wording even stronger than it was in the early Mormon Church. Although they retained some of the "exact words" which were in the modern version of the temple endowment, they changed the ceremony into a satanic ritual.

If this is the case, one can only begin to imagine how terrifying it would be for those who had been ritually abused in satanic ceremonies to encounter some of the same "gestures" and "wording" in what they sincerely believed was the House of the Lord. This certainly seems to be the type of thing that would bring a "flashback" to people who had erased these bad memories from their minds. It is unlikely that Glenn Pace would focus in on this particular issue, which could cause so much embarrassment to the church, if he did not really believe that it is a serious problem. In his memo he seems to be apologetic concerning his discovery: "I’m sorry to say that many of the victims have had their first flashbacks while attending the temple for the first time" (page 4).

As we noted earlier, it is possible that the information that Glenn Pace was receiving in the interviews he conducted in 1989-90 could have influenced church leaders to entirely remove the offensive "gestures" and wording concerning
“different ways in which life may be taken” from the temple ceremony. At the beginning of his memo, Pace spoke of “the LDS Social Services report on satanism dated May 24, 1989, a report from Brent Ward, and a memorandum from myself dated October 20, 1989 in response to Brother Ward’s report.” In his memo, dated July 19, 1990, Pace indicated that he had been working with the victims for the “last eighteen months” (page 12). This would mean that he began his work toward the end of 1988 or early in 1989. It seems likely, then, that before church leaders made the changes in the ritual, they would have been aware that many members of the church who claimed to have been ritualistically abused were having “flashbacks” in which “horrible memories were triggered” when they first went through the temple. It is true, of course, that other members of the church who had never been abused felt that the oaths were unchristian and should be removed. It is possible that these two factors working together resulted in the major changes that were made in the endowment ceremony in April 1990.

In his report, page 5, Glenn Pace informs the reader that members of the satanic group not only do temple work but even serve as “temple workers.” If this is the case, we would presume that these occultists would prefer to work in places where they would have intimate contact with the people going through the ceremonies. Prior to the revision of the temple ceremony in 1990, those who went through the ritual were required to go through what was known as the “Five Points of Fellowship.” This part of the ritual would have been very appealing to a Satanist who desired close physical contact with those who pass through the ceremony. Reporting on changes made in the ceremony, the Los Angeles Times, May 5, 1990, gave this information concerning the removal of the “Five Points of Fellowship” from the temple ceremony:

> Also dropped is an “embrace” of a man representing God, who stands behind a ceiling-to-floor veil. Reaching through a slit in the veil, the church member puts his or her hand to the back of the deity and presses against him at the cheek, shoulders, knees and feet with the veil between them. The contact at “five points of fellowship,” including the hand to his back, has been omitted, although the member must still give a secret handshake and repeat a lengthy password.

There can be no question that the “Five Points of Fellowship” were originally derived from Masonry. In Duncan’s Masonic Ritual and Monitor, page 120, we read that in Masonry the candidate can only receive “the grand Masonic word on the five points of fellowship.” In 1827, fifteen years before Joseph Smith revealed the temple ritual to the Mormons, William Morgan wrote the following concerning the use of the five points of fellowship in Masonry:

> He (the candidate) is raised on what is called the five points of fellowship . . . This is done by putting the inside of your right foot to the inside of the right foot of the person to whom you are going to give the word, the inside of your knee to his, laying your right breast against his, your left hands on the back of each other, and your mouths to each other’s right ear (in which position alone you are permitted to give the word) . . . (Freemasonry Exposed, page 84)

Joseph Smith, of course, participated in this Masonic ritual when he became a Master Mason. It is not surprising, then, that when he created the Mormon temple ceremony he included the Five Points of Fellowship. It is clear from the description of the Five Points of Fellowship in the 1984 version of the temple ritual that Smith borrowed from Masonry:

> Peter: The Five Points of Fellowship are “inside of right foot by the side of right foot, knee to knee, breast to breast, hand to back, and mouth to ear.” (Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony: 1842-1990, page 96)

Since the revision of the ceremony in 1990, those who participate in the ritual are only instructed to place “left arms . . . upon right shoulders.” They no longer are required to be positioned with the “inside of right foot by the side of right foot, knee to knee, breast to breast, hand to back, and mouth to ear.” Furthermore, all the wording concerning the “Five Points of Fellowship” has been completely deleted. These words previously appeared in five different places in the ritual—the “Lord” spoke of the “Five Points of Fellowship” twice; “Peter” referred to the “Five Points of Fellowship” twice, and the recipient mentioned them once. In the 1990 revised version all references to the Five Points of Fellowship have been cut out.

In our book, Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony, page 30, we speculated that the Five Points of Fellowship may have been removed to avoid the possibility that temple workers might become too intimate with those who pass through the ceremony:

> While it is good that the Mormon leaders removed this Masonic element from the endowment ceremony, some people who have been involved in temple work feel that the reason it was dropped was because some of the women felt the five points of contact (especially the placing of the “inside of your knee to his”) were too intimate. There were complaints that men playing the role of the Lord sometimes took advantage of the situation. We were also told that even some of the men felt they had a problem with the “Lord” behind the veil. Since a large number of men have played the role of the Lord in the various temples throughout the world, it is certainly possible that complaints could have been made at various times. . . . it is very possible that the “Five Points of Fellowship” were removed because this part of the ritual seemed awkward or embarrassing to some members of the Mormon Church.

Now that we have read Glenn Pace’s memo, which suggests that some Satanists may be serving as “temple workers,” we wonder if it is possible that church leaders may have been concerned that these people might be using the Five Points of Fellowship for evil purposes. By limiting participants to merely place their “left arms . . . upon right shoulders” church leaders have made it almost impossible for any intimate embrace to take place.

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OCCULTIC INFILTRATION

Our research leads us to believe that some occultists deliberately set out to infiltrate churches or groups to gain converts to their way of thinking. When we were in Milwaukee, Wisconsin we found evidence that people involved in witchcraft had penetrated some of the Old Catholic churches—splitter groups from the Roman Catholic Church. They were using these groups to obtain converts to witchcraft and were involved in weird sexual practices (see our book, The Lucifer-God Doctrine, pages 23-27).

As we noted earlier, there are some things in LDS Church history and doctrine that make the church vulnerable to infiltration by occultists and others who wish to use the church for their own ends. One of the church’s most important problems has been with regard to polygamists. In the past, significant numbers of Mormons became converted to the practice of polygamy through reading the writings of the early leaders of the Mormon Church. Joseph Smith, the first Mormon prophet, declared that God gave him a revelation that he was to enter into the practice. This revelation is still published in the Doctrine and Covenants, one of the four standard works of the church. We find the following in that revelation: “Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph . . . if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then is he justified; he cannot commit adultery . . . And if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery . . . therefore is he justified” (Doctrine and Covenants, Section 132, verses 1, 61-62). Joseph Smith was obedient to the commandment and proceeded to marry dozens of plural wives before he was murdered in 1844.

Today, the Mormon Church does not allow its members to practice polygamy, and those who do so are excommunicated. This, of course, creates a real problem in the minds of many members of the church. They reason that if God commanded the church to practice polygamy through its first prophet, they should be allowed the same privilege. Since church leaders never really repudiated the doctrine itself, teach that it will be lived in heaven, and still retain the revelation on polygamy in the Doctrine and Covenants, many Mormons have secretly entered into the practice. These people are known as Mormon Fundamentalists.

Prior to the time the church received a revelation to let blacks hold the priesthood in 1978, there were a large number of people who were “living a dual role”—i.e., pretending to be good Mormons but living in polygamy and secretly meeting with other Fundamentalists when possible. Unlike the satanic group which Glenn Pace envisions, these people believed most of the doctrines of the church and hoped to reinstate the practice of plural marriage in the church. After the blacks were granted the priesthood, many of the Fundamentalists who were still in the Mormon Church felt that the church had gone so far off course that it was hopeless to try and reform it. They, therefore, decided to give up working secretly within the church and terminated their membership. Nevertheless, we believe that there are probably still many within the Mormon Church who are secretly practicing polygamy and playing a dual role so that they will not be excommunicated.

While most Mormon Fundamentalists are peaceful and seem sincere in their beliefs, there are some very radical people among them. For example, a Fundamentalist group known as The Church of The Lamb of God has been responsible for over 20 murders (see the Houston Chronicle, June 28, 1988).

Charges of sexual abuse have sometimes been leveled against members of Fundamentalist sects. On September 16, 1990, the Salt Lake Tribune published an article which contained the following:

CRESTON, British Columbia—A sexual assault trial unfolding in this tiny community is uncovering the 45-year-old history of a polygamy colony. . . . the colony is home to an estimated 300 people who follow the illegal practice of polygamy.

One male member is facing trial this week in B.C.’s provincial court for sexually assaulting two of his three wives, one stepson and one teen-age girl. He can’t be named under Canadian law to protect the identity of the victims.

The accused’s brother was convicted earlier this year of sexually assaulting his wife’s sister. . . . colony members are part of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, a break-away group from the Mormons.

Four members of a polygamist group in Ogden, Utah were recently charged with sexually abusing children:

OGDEN—Three women members of a polygamist sect were arraigned Thursday morning on charges of sexually abusing children under the age of 14. . . . The purported male leader of the group, Arvin Shreeve, 61, was arraigned last week on two counts of aggravated sexual assault or, in the alternative, sodomy on a child involving two boys under the age of 14. . . . On Aug. 2, police raided seven homes of group members in a north Ogden neighborhood and removed nine children.

Mr. Shreeve later pleaded guilty to sex abuse charges saying that he did not want to have the children put in a position of having to testify in court.

We recently received information indicating that sex abuse and the creation of pornography may be going on in another polygamist group.

It is alleged that the Mormon Fundamentalist, John W. Bryant created his own set of “sacred ordinances” which permitted promiscuity. Steven L. Shields says that at “a young age, John W. Bryant, the Presiding Patriarch of the Church of Christ (Patriarchal), began receiving visions . . . He was given certain knowledge by the Lord which pertained to the temple ordinances” (Divergent Paths of the Restoration, 1982, page 197).

In his book on Mormon polygamy Richard S. Van Wagoner gave the following information:

Like many other Independent Fundamentalists, Bryant first converted to mainstream Mormonism. Obsessed with early Mormon teachings on polygamy, he . . . took a second wife, Dawn Samuels (not her real name). With Dawn set apart as “The High Priestess of the Last Dispensation,” Bryant began bestowing his newly revealed ordinances on others . . . Bryant wrote prolifically while operating a Salt Lake City bookstore. Dawn joined him in highly secretive “sacred ordinances” which soon evolved into sexual rites.

Bryant would conduct a special “marriage ceremony before each time we had intercourse with someone we weren’t married to.” Dawn adds that there were various levels to this procedure . . . For instance, if a single person were sealed into mine and John’s family, then all the sexual rights of marriage existed within that unit as long as John approved.’ This applied to heterosexual and homosexual
couplings. ... the group soon attracted notoriety because of Bryant’s expansion of the third level of ordinances—family sealings. He was sealed within many families, and “soon it was opened up so that sex, even incest, could be with almost anyone, anytime.” (Mormon Polygamy, Second Edition, pages 214-216)

There are a number of Fundamentalist sects in Utah, other states, and also in Canada and Mexico. In the 1960’s it was estimated that there were about 100 such groups. Although most of the individual groups are rather small, it is believed that there are tens of thousands of Fundamentalists. There are a number of things that happened in the early history of the Mormon Church which might tend to attract occultists. For example, in Joseph Smith’s time those who were caught up in magical practices sometimes used “Seer Stones” to find buried treasures. Joseph Smith himself was involved in this practice. In 1826 he was brought before Justice Albert Neely to be examined regarding this practice (see photographic proof in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 32-35). A few years later he used this same method to translate the Book of Mormon. David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, wrote: “I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat; drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing” (An Address To All Believers In Christ, 1887, page 12). Many witnesses confirmed this statement and even the Mormon historian B. H. Roberts referred to the use of a Seer Stone in translating the Book of Mormon (see A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, vol. 1, page 129).

This, of course, reminds one of the practice of crystal gazing which is widely practiced in the occult. In addition, as we have previously noted, Joseph Smith joined the Masonic Fraternity and plagiarized material from its rituals which he used in his temple endowment ceremony. The founders of modern witchcraft also borrowed from Masonic rites. This, of course, has created some important parallels between witchcraft and Mormonism, and some writers have jumped to the conclusion that Mormonism was taken from witchcraft. Actually, Smith borrowed from the Masons in the 1840’s, long before modern witchcraft came into being.

Francis King gives this information:

Without exception all the cult members I have met have believed, or at least pretended to believe, that their magical-sexual-religious rites are of immemorial antiquity. ... It would be nice if this was so, but alas, it isn’t! With one or two dubious exceptions all the covens of the modern witch-cult owe their existence to the activities of Gerald Gardiner, an eccentric Englishman who died in 1964. (Sexuality, Magic and Perversion, page 4)

Noted authority on religion and the occult, J. Gordon Melton, has issued a statement showing that Mormonism was not derived from witchcraft but rather that both had a common ancestor in Masonry. For more information on this matter see The Lucifer-God Doctrine, pages 50, 65, 66. It is true that the Smith family had some magic papers and Joseph Smith himself possessed a Jupiter talisman (see photographs of these items relating to magic and astrology in our book, Mormonism, Magic and Masonry). Nevertheless, we have no data to show that he was part of any witchcraft or satanic group in the early 1840’s when he began working on the temple ceremony. There is, on the other hand, very good evidence to show that Smith borrowed heavily from Masonry in creating his ritual (see our book, Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony: 1842-1990, pages 143-151).

It is possible also that the church’s reputation for promoting polygamy during the 19th century might catch the attention of those in the occult who have radical views on sexual behavior. About thirty years ago we encountered an occultist by the name of William C. Conway who was vying to combine the teachings of Mormonism with those of the Druids. He believed in Joseph Smith and accepted the Mormon Fundamentalist doctrine that polygamy should still be practiced, but combined these beliefs with the teaching of reincarnation. He claimed, in fact, that he had been visited by “Our Druid Brother—the Mormon’s Prophet Joseph Smith Jr. REINCARNATED.” He claimed to have “the Urim and Thummin—also the genuine ‘Seer-stone’” (see The Lucifer-God Doctrine, pages 57-58).

In the late 1960’s a man by the name of Barney C. Taylor founded the Mental Science Institute. Mr. Taylor had been a Mormon who participated in the temple ceremony in 1949. At some point Taylor became deeply involved with the occult and began using the name “Eli.” His Mental Science Institute combined many of the teachings of Mormonism with witchcraft. For example, Joseph Smith seems to have created a new word by slightly modifying the Hebrew word for star—kobol: “And I saw the stars ... and that one of them was nearest unto the throne of God ... And the Lord said ... the name of the great one is Kolob, because it is near unto me ...” (Book of Abraham 3:2-3). Eli, likewise, had a Kolob in his system of Druidic witchcraft: “Then one giant yellow sun; a world of very high vibrations, came into the Universe. This was the world of KOLOB, the first” (The Second Book of Wisdom, page 10).

In a revelation published in the Doctrine and Covenants, Section 76, Joseph Smith revealed that there are three kingdoms in heaven, the celestial, terrestrial and telestial. In his book, The First Book of Wisdom, page 22, Eli also used these three words: “All worlds, celestial, terrestrial and telestial, are inhabited by beings with physical bodies suited for their worlds.” While the final r is missing in “terrestrial,” it is obvious that Eli was borrowing from Mormonism. It is interesting to note that the word “telestial” is not a real word but was coined by Joseph Smith.

It has been claimed by William Schnoebelen, a man who “was ordained and appointed a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek” in the Mental Science Institute, that Eli’s group had a “Wiccan wedding” ritual with similarities to the Mormon temple ceremony. In fact, in a copy of some pages of the document he has provided there are strong parallels to the temple rites. This typewritten document is entitled, “Ye Rite of Handfasting.” In this ceremony, as in the Mormon temple ritual, a man and woman are sealed together “for time and all eternity.” Unfortunately, we have been unable to trace it back to Eli himself or to show that the photocopies of the ritual were made prior to 1985; consequently, we cannot be certain of the document’s authenticity. Nevertheless, it does seem possible that Eli might have incorporated elements of the temple ceremony into his own witchcraft ritual. As we have shown, he had been through the Mormon temple and borrowed heavily from Mormonism in creating other documents we have examined. It has also been alleged by W. Schnoebelen that Eli urged occultists to go through the Mormon temple because he believed it had important “occult power...that could be achieved nowhere else” and had “important Masonic” secrets which had been removed from “American Masonry.”

William Schnoebelen has also brought forth two typewritten pages from another occult ritual which is purported to be from the Grimorum Verum. It is entitled, “Lituria De Ecclesia
Gnostica Spiritualis.” Since it relates to Satanism and Glenn Pace has suggested that Satanists may be operating in the Mormon Church, we felt that we should say something about it. Because it contains parallels to the Mormon temple ceremony some people have been led to believe that this document provides evidence that the Mormon temple ceremony is borrowed from Satanism. In our book, *The Lucifer God Doctrine*, we have clearly shown that such is not the case. A careful examination of the document reveals that it could not date back to the time of Joseph Smith. In fact, we have found that part of it was plagiarized from Aleister Crowley’s “Ecclesiae Gnosticae Catholicae Canon Missae.” It could have been written at any time between 1918 and 1985. At any rate, an examination of the document shows that someone has taken a part of the Mormon temple ceremony and combined it with a satanic document.

William Schnoebelen claims that he obtained it from a “hard core satanic group.” Evidence shows that after working with Eli in the Mental Science Institute, Mr. Schnoebelen wanted to go deeper into the occult: He eventually became a member of Anton LaVey’s organization, “The Church of Satan.” He claims, however, that he did not obtain the document from LaVey’s group but rather another organization that “claimed to be affiliated in California.” On the first page of this document he claims, however, that he did not obtain the document from LaVey’s group but rather another organization that “claimed to be affiliated in California.” On the first page of this document we find the following:

(Let the altar be garbed in solar colors . . . Magister in scarlet with green satin apron. Seven candles lit. A Chosen Priestess of the Order should be upon the altar nude. . . . Other than Magister and Priestess, a Lucifer and Sister are needed.) . . .

M [Magister]: Before the mighty and ineffable King of Hell, and in communion with his children everywhere . . . I proclaim that Lucifer rules the earth; and ratify and renew my covenant to recognize and honor him in all things without reservation: to abjure all pretenions [sic] of righteousness and give myself wholly, body and soul, to the iniquities and evil which alone are pleasing to him, and likewise painful to our pallid adversaries. I acknowledge him to be the One, True God; and desire in return his manifold aid in the successful accomplishment of my lusts, and the fulfillment of my true will.

The seventh page of this same document contains a section which has unquestionably been taken from the Mormon temple ceremony:

M: May you have health in the navel, marrow in the bones, strength in the [word blacked out by Mr. Schnoebelen “in the interest of decency”) and in the sinews; and power in the priesthood be upon you and upon your posterity through all generations of time and throughout all eternity.

The reader will notice that this particular part of this evil ritual is taken from the “Ceremony At The Veil” in the Mormon endowment ceremony:

Lord: . . . “Health in the navel, marrow in the bones, strength in the loins and in the sinews, power in the Priesthood be upon me, and upon my posterity through all generations of time, and throughout all eternity.” (*Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony: 1842-1990*, page 141)

There are two views one may take with regard to the satanic document mentioned above: 1. It is a document created by someone familiar with both the occult and the LDS temple ceremony to be used in an actual satanic ritual. 2. It is a ritual created by someone who is trying to promote the theory that Mormons copied directly from Satanists. (For more information on the Mental Science Institute, Aleister Crowley and the question of the authenticity of the two occultic documents mentioned above see *The Lucifer-God Doctrine*, pages 41-58.)

**THE BEAST AND ABUSE**

If one were to accept the satanic or Luciferian document mentioned above as an actual ritual which was used by occultists, then the question arises as to whether it could have anything to do with Bishop Pace’s theory concerning a satanic group which abuses children. As we noted earlier, we have found definite evidence that the document cited above contains material taken from the writings of Aleister Crowley. In the book, *Magic*, page 130, Crowley wrote: “Before I touched my teens, I was aware that I was The Beast whose number is 666.” The Book of Revelation in the Bible, of course, indicates that the Beast with the number “666” is the Anti-Christ. In any case, Crowley created rituals in which homosexual magic was practiced. William Schnoebelen, as it turns out, was a disciple of Aleister Crowley. In a book Schnoebelen has written he told of his own descent into homosexual magic and how this type of belief could lead one to seek “younger and younger sexual partners.” The following is taken from his book:

I progressed in LaVey’s order and was finally made a Warlock in the Church of Satan . . . I was doing studies in Crowley’s Book of the Law and the Book of Revelations . . . when I read the famous passage in Rev. 13:18 about the number of the Beast . . . I was overwhelmed with a pillar of astral light . . . I KNEW with an unshakable certainty that Rev. 13:18 was the answer I had sought. *Contained within its numerology was the secret that Aleister Crowley was a reincarnation of Jesus Christ!* I was driven to my knees by the sublime beauty of this truth; and felt the power of magick upon me as never before. . . . I was brought in touch with higher ranking satanists from Chicago. I was initiated into their circle by signing a covenant with Satan for my soul. . . . Though the rites now began to include blood sacrifice (including my own) I was not deterred. . . . I knew Crowley had used blood in his rituals . . . I signed a pact in my own blood with Satan. He received complete control of my body and soul. . . . It would take five years of searching and a perilous time in the dreadful crucible of Mormonism, that clever counterfeit of Christianity, before I would really come to know Jesus Christ as my Lord . . . (*Wicca: Satan’s Little White Lie*, 1996, pages 44, 45, 48-49)

We have already documented the pervasive influence of Aleister Crowley upon the beginnings of Wicca . . . most Witches, myself included, find it necessary to study his material and “plug themselves into” the magical current of Crowley’s demon spirit guide, a mysterious being named Aiwass: Aiwass is another name for Set, an Egyptian god . . . (*Ibid.*, page 192)

I have already mentioned the descent into blood rites, but additionally sexual perversity of the vilest sort enthralled many of them. I was not immune either. . . . Many of us became involved in sado-masochism and bondage and discipline. . . .

Sodomy is especially “sacred” to Set . . . It opens what are called the ‘Typhonion’ tunnels, channels through which extremely powerful demons, like the horrible Choronzon, can travel from the “alternate reality” and emerge into this universe and enter the sex partner’s body. . . .
This also explains the sudden meteoric rise of interest in the child as a sexual object, and the terrible seductiveness of child pornography. We often ask ourselves, “How could a person be sexually attracted to a small child?” It does not seem sane or normal, and of course it is not. Yet, throughout his life, Crowley attempted to invoke the Crowned and Conquering Child.

A key element within the Aiwass current and the Left-hand path is that of the beguiling or fascinating child. Crowley’s magical current was designed to compel an interest in ever younger and younger sexual partners . . . Add to this the sexually vampiric belief that the younger the person you abuse, the more power or vitality you can extract from them, and you have a potent recipe which explains the obsession with children. Witches who practice this kind of sexual Tantra believe they are both emotionally and literally stealing the youth of the child they are abusing. . . . My first ritual homosexual experience came through Witchcraft . . .

In the course of that pursuit of “Wisdom,” I got deeper into magical homosexuality and the strange alchemy of perversion. Tragically, I must confess that I began to enter groups where Nazi magick and serious vampirism were practiced and child pornography was also being used and produced. (Ibid., pages 197-200)

While we do not endorse many of the conclusions found in this book published by Chick Publications, our research has demonstrated that this former Satanist was undoubtedly deeply involved in the evil practices he has mentioned. One thing is certain: Mr. Schnoebelen did deceive Mormon officials, and they allowed him to become a member of the church on August 10, 1980. Furthermore, his “testimony” as to the truthfulness of the LDS Church was published by Bookcraft, a company which prints books by the General Authorities of the church and other Mormon writers. As unbelievable as it may seem, it is still being sold at the church’s Deseret Bookstore (see From Clergy to Convert, by Stephen W. Gibson, pages 67-73). The Mormons apparently thought they had made a prize catch when they brought the Schnoebelens into the church. In the book he is referred to as a former “parish priest” and his wife as a former “nun.” One year after he joined the church (August 31, 1981), William Schnoebelen went through the Mormon temple and was sealed to his wife “for time and for eternity.” It should be noted that his wife was also deeply involved in the occult—she was, in fact, a witch.

Mormon Church officials, who are supposed to have special powers of discernment, were totally oblivious to the fact that a Satanist had passed through the temple. Schnoebelen claimed that as he was going through the ritual he was “thinking, boy, these guys are teaching satanism, I mean, I was really on seventh heaven at this point.” He remained in the LDS Church, posing as a faithful Mormon, until 1984. According to his own statement, during this time he was secretly working to promote the occult. In Wicca: Satan’s Little White Lie, page 10, he wrote: “Up to our departure from the city of Milwaukee in 1984, we were presiding over one of the oldest and largest networks of covens in the Midwest.”

Although we may never know what success he had in proselyting Mormons into Wicca and Satanism, Schnoebelen and his wife did penetrate into the church without being detected. Moreover, weird sexual practices—both heterosexual and homosexual—seem to have been practiced in the satanic and witchcraft groups he was connected with. While he did not actually say that he himself was involved in “ritualistic child abuse,” he did indicate that he was indoctrinated into the idea that “the younger the person you abuse, the more power or vitality you can extract from them.”

CONCLUSION

While the material presented in this newsletter does not prove Glenn Pace’s theory concerning a well organized and highly secret satanic group practicing ritualistic child abuse in the LDS Church, it does throw some light on the ability of occultists to infiltrate the church and even the temple itself.

Even though Bishop Pace has laid out a very persuasive argument for the existence of a satanic group in the Mormon Church, it still seems very difficult to believe that a group of the size he envisions could go undetected for so long. Although we are not prepared at this time to declare that such a conspiratorial band really exists, our minds are open to examine any evidence regarding this matter that comes to our attention. If any of our readers have any information that will throw light on this subject, they can mail it to Utah Lighthouse Ministry, PO Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110. We would be especially interested in Pace’s 40-page report. In addition, we would request that our Christian friends pray for us at this time that we may have discernment from the Lord and not jump to any erroneous conclusions.

The fact that portions of the temple ceremony caused “many” people to have devastating flashbacks should be of grave concern to the Mormon people. Even those who do not claim to have been ritualistically abused have been terrified by the oaths. On June 30, 1990, a woman wrote us a letter in which she stated:

Your article brought back old memories for me about my first temple experience in June of 1972 as a convert to Mormonism from Christianity. I, too, felt that what I was doing was wrong. Actually, a feeling of dread came over me as I began to take the blood oaths, and I knew I was doing something that was absolutely against everything Christianity had taught me. The feeling increased . . . and I just kept praying in my mind, “Dear God, just get me out of here alive,” over and over.

While some Mormons seem to be rejoicing that church leaders have finally had the insight to remove some of the offensive wording in the endowment ceremony, they have not faced the serious implications of the whole matter. That important portions had to be trimmed out plainly shows that Mormon Church president Ezra Taft Benson was wrong when he said: “The endowment was revealed by revelation . . .” (The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, 1988, page 250). It is clearly a man-made ceremony which heavily borrowed from Masonry.

Mormonism teaches that only Mormons who receive their endowments and are married for eternity can obtain the highest exaltation in the hereafter. Church leaders declare that “eternal life” only comes through temple marriage. For example, President Spencer W. Kimball, the twelfth prophet of the church, said: “Only through celestial marriage can one find the strait way, the narrow path. Eternal life cannot be had in any other way.” (Deseret News Church Section, November 12, 1977). This teaching is clearly unbiblical. The Bible, in fact, proclaims that “whosoever believeth in him [Jesus] should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:15). It is our prayer that Mormons everywhere will cease trusting in a temple ceremony that is filled with Masonry and man-made ideas and put their complete faith in Jesus Christ—the one who said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).


**OTHER BOOKS**

(Mail orders add 10% — Minimum postage $1.00)

**What Hast Thou Dunn?** by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. The story of how Paul Dunn, an Emeritus General Authority of the Mormon Church, deceived church members with false tales about his baseball career and war record. Also deals with the reluctance of church leaders to deal with the situation and the serious implications for the church. **Price: $2.00**

**Flaws in the Pearl of Great Price**, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. This book details many serious problems in Joseph Smith’s *Pearl of Great Price*. It shows that a great deal of material has been plagiarized from the King James Version of the Bible and that much of this material came from the New Testament. It also has a photo reprint of the first edition of the *Pearl of Great Price* and shows the changes that have been made in the text. **Price: $6.00**

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**UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY**

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**SALT LAKE CITY UT  84110**
In the last issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger* we reported allegations that a satanic cult had taken root in the Mormon Church. This newsletter (November 1991) proved to be the most popular issue we have ever printed. A number of our readers ordered many copies to distribute to their friends. Consequently, we were immediately forced into a second printing of this issue and still have copies available free at our bookstore.

In that issue we photographically reproduced a highly secret memo written by a General Authority of the Mormon Church. This memo was authored by Glenn L. Pace, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric of the church. It is dated July 19, 1990, and is directed to the “Strengthening Church Members Committee” of the Mormon Church. In the memo Pace stated that he had met with “sixty victims” of “ritualistic child abuse,” and that “All sixty individuals are members of the Church.”

On October 25, 1991, Dawn House reported that church spokesman Don LeFevre confirmed that Glenn Pace had indeed written such a memo:

The 12-page report was . . . printed in the November issue of *Salt Lake City Messenger*, a newsletter published by Jerald and Sandra Tanner . . .

Mr. Pace referred calls on the July 1990 memo to the church’s public relations department. Spokesman Don LeFevre declined to discuss internal church reports. But he said Mr. Pace had sent a memo on ritualistic child abuse to a committee called the Strengthening Church Members Committee. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 25, 1991)

We had originally turned over a copy of this memo to the Associated Press and were told that if the memo was authentic, a story would be printed. When it appeared that the Associated Press was dragging its heels (almost three months had passed), we felt that we should print it ourselves. We mailed copies of the *Messenger* to the three major television stations in Salt Lake City, and on October 24, 1991, it became the lead story on the evening news on Channel 4. From what we understand, Paul Murphy, who investigated the story, had been trying to get a statement from the Mormon Church regarding the authenticity of the memo. Just minutes before going on the air, he made one last attempt. He asked a church spokesman if the church was going to deny the authenticity of the memo. The reply was that there would be no denial.

Channel 2, likewise, ran the story on its evening news. Surprisingly, the Mormon Church’s own station, KSL (Channel 5), ran the story on its 10 o’clock newscast. It was, in fact, a frank and accurate account of the contents of the memo and of the serious implications for the church. A number of stories concerning satanic ritual abuse and the Mormon Church were presented on all three of the major stations in the days that followed. The day the story broke all three of the television stations showed pictures of the first page of the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, and this brought a flood of people to our bookstore to pick up copies.

The following day, both the *Salt Lake Tribune* and the Mormon Church’s *Deseret News* printed the story. Both papers also published additional stories in the days that followed. The *Chicago Tribune* later sent a reporter, James Coates, to investigate the story. He wrote an article which contained the following:

SALT LAKE CITY — Top officials of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints say they are investigating reports from members that, as children, they witnessed human sacrifices and suffered “satanic abuse” at the hands of renegade Mormon-affiliated cliques.

Glenn L. Pace, a member of the church’s three-man presiding bishopric, reported in a memorandum . . . that he is personally convinced at least 800 church-affiliated Satanists now are practicing occult rituals and devil worship . . .

Pace’s memo, marked “Do Not Reproduce” at the top, was made public last week by anti-Mormon crusaders Jerald and Sandra Tanner, who also played a key role in publicizing the so-called “White Salamander Letter.”

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**BOOK ON SATANIC ABUSE**

*Satanic Ritualistic Abuse and Mormonism*, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. We are now in the process of preparing a book which will not only have the important material found in issues 80 and 81 of this newsletter, but also significant new information concerning the subject. It will contain a full-size reproduction of Bishop Glenn Pace’s startling memo which set off the controversy regarding Satanic abuse in the Mormon Church. **Regular Price: $5.00**

**Pre-publication Special: **$4.00

Must be ordered before May 31, 1992

(Mail orders please add $1.50 minimum postage)
The letter, which Jerald Tanner exposed as a forgery, made it appear that church founder Joseph Smith had been involved in folk magic . . .

“The Satanists’ ceremonies often are based loosely upon the Mormon church’s own rituals,” Pace wrote.

“For example, the [Mormon church] verbiage and gestures are used in a [satanic] ritualistic ceremony in a very debased and often bloody manner,” he wrote. “When the victim goes to the temple and hears the exact words, horrible memories are triggered.” (Chicago Tribune, November 3, 1991)

This whole matter of ritualistic abuse received additional attention when the television program Inside Edition devoted some time to the subject. This was rather significant because just weeks before the same program had put down some claims of satanic ritualistic abuse in England. Those who produced the program concerning Mormonism seem to have seriously considered Bishop Pace’s claims regarding ritualistic abuse.

**CHURCH’S REACTION**

The Mormon Church has a very good public relations department which carefully protects the church’s image. Consequently, we felt that there might be an attempt to sidestep this embarrassing problem. We reasoned that church leaders might try to throw some doubt on the issue by pointing out that although Bishop Pace was very sincere in his research, some psychiatrists and law officials have been very skeptical concerning claims of satanic ritualistic abuse. Instead, however, the church issued a carefully worded statement which provides support for Pace’s claims. Just one day after the story concerning Satanism in the Mormon Church was reported on television, the church owned Deseret News reported:

> Officials from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints said Friday they are evaluating reports that satanic cults dedicated to sexually abusing children are operating within the church.

The issue arose Thursday with television news reports about an internal church memo suggesting that as many as 800 people may be involved in the practice along the Wasatch Front.

“Satanic worship and ritualistic abuse are problems that have been around for centuries and are international in scope,” said a statement issued Friday by the church public affairs department. “While they are, numerically not a problem of major proportions among members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, for those who may be involved they are serious.”

The church has strived to help local ecclesiastical leaders understand and deal with the issue, the statement said, citing a Sept. 18 message from the First Presidency “reaffirming their concern about such distasteful practices and encouraging vigilance in detecting and treating situations that may arise.” . . . Bishop Pace said satanic abusers in Utah “represent a cross-section of the Mormon culture.” The cults’ members, he wrote, may include Young Women and Young Men leaders, bishops, a patriarch, a stake president, temple workers and members of the Tabernacle Choir. The abuses have even taken place in church meeting houses, he said. (Deseret News, October 25, 1991)

It seems reasonable to believe that if Mormon leaders had any serious doubts about the validity of the accusations of satanic abuse in their church, they would have expressed them at that time. Instead, however, they freely admitted there was a problem. It would appear, therefore, that Mormon officials believe that there is a satanic group operating in the church. While their acknowledgement of the problem does not of itself prove the charges, it certainly adds a great deal of weight to the accusations. Mormon Church leaders undoubtedly know a great deal about what goes on within their own church. Bishops, stake presidents and others would be likely to bring information on ritualistic abuse to their attention. Furthermore, Church Security has ex-FBI agents and others trained in law enforcement who would undoubtedly bring reports of this type of activity to the attention of Mormon officials.

The first page of Bishop Pace’s memo makes it clear that the church has been investigating the problem of ritualistic abuse since at least 1989: “You have already received the LDS Social Services report on satanism dated May 24, 1989, a report from Brent Ward, and a memorandum from myself dated October 20, 1989 in response to Brother Ward’s report. Therefore, I will limit this writing to information not contained in those papers.” There are, therefore, at least three important documents which the church possesses which probably throw important light on this subject. As we understand it, the memo Pace wrote “in response to Brother Ward’s report” is a 40-page document. According to Dawn House, at first Brent Ward would neither confirm nor deny that he had written a report for the church: “The memo [the 12-page report published in the Messenger] refers to an earlier report by Brent Ward, former U.S. attorney for Utah and a Mormon. Mr. Ward said he would neither confirm nor deny the report’s existence” (Salt Lake Tribune, October 25, 1991). The following day, however, Jon Ure wrote the following:

> A former U.S. Attorney for Utah confirmed Friday he conducted research for a report to the Mormon Church on satanic child abuse. . . . Brent Ward . . . said he reported on ritualistic abuse at the request of a Mormon general authority, shortly after Mr. Ward resigned as U.S. Attorney in January 1989. (Salt Lake Tribune, October 26, 1991)

**AN INVESTIGATION**

We are happy to report that immediately after our publication of the Pace memo a great deal of information concerning satanic ritual abuse in the Mormon Church came to light. Victims, who claimed they had been forced to participate in the evil rituals, gave their stories on all three of Salt Lake City’s major television stations. In addition, therapists who were treating victims of the abuse came forth to support the charges. Moreover, it was disclosed that there was a committee that had already been delving into the accusations. On October 25, 1991, the Deseret News reported:

> Bishop Pace is one of 27 community leaders sitting on a ritual-abuse subcommittee of the Governor’s Commission for Women and Families. The committee, whose members also include therapists, law enforcement personnel, attorneys, religious leaders, former U.S. Attorney Brent Ward, an aide to Sen. Orrin Hatch, an assistant attorney general and first lady Colleen Bangerter, has been meeting since February 1990.

The Salt Lake Tribune for November 13, 1991, said that “Noemi Mattis, who co-chairs the governor’s task force . . . holds a doctorate in psychology and is in private practice as a therapist.” The same article quoted Mattis as saying that ritualistic abuse is prevalent: “I know that it is widespread . . .
All I can tell you is that my phone has been filled with people who are calling to say they are survivors or therapists who have patients who are.”

At the time Bishop Pace wrote his report, he claimed he had “met with 60 victims.” On page 1 of his report, however, he made it clear that he believed there could “be twice or three times” as many victims—possibly as many as 180. On page 5, he made this sobering statement: “Obviously, I have only seen those coming forth to get help.” It appears, then, that Pace envisions a large number of people participating in these satanic activities. In a television interview on the program Take Two (Channel 2), Noemi Mattis revealed that she had made the startling discovery that there were actually “360” victims in this area who were being treated for ritualistic abuse! In another interview, which appeared later on the same station, Dr. Corydon Hammond, a psychologist who also served on the governor’s committee on ritualistic abuse, gave a figure of “366.”

In his memo, Bishop Pace referred to “allegations” that “people in high places today in both the Church and the government” are “leading this dual life” (page 10). In his television interview, Dr. Hammond stated that evidence indicated that Satanists had actually encouraged their people to become doctors. These doctors could then provide drugs for use in ritualistic practices and help in brainwashing the children. Noemi Mattis also alleged that Satanists in Utah were being trained as doctors to help carry out illegal activities. (A doctor, for instance, could help cover up the fact that people have been murdered.) Moreover, Mattis indicated that there was evidence that Satanists were being trained as morticians. She also claimed that survivors of the satanic rituals had told of bodies being ground up or burned. These are certainly very serious accusations that are coming from two members of the governor’s committee!

Dr. Hammond further disclosed that victims who didn’t know one another were giving the same names of physicians, law enforcement people and other prominent individuals who participated in the ritualistic abuse.

Noemi Mattis claimed that the governor’s 27-member ritual abuse committee was originally very skeptical of the claims of satanic abuse. As the evidence piled up, however, it seemed obvious that there was reason to call for an investigation. Consequently, on November 22, 1991, the Salt Lake Tribune reported:

Gov. Norm Bangerter has promised to recommend more investigators for the child-abuse unit of the Utah attorney general’s office to look into allegations of ritualistic child sexual abuse. . . . The task force sponsored by the Governor’s Commission on Women and Children recommended the hiring of investigators to look into allegations of ritualistic abuse.

Two days later the Salt Lake Tribune supported Governor Bangerter’s decision to appoint investigators to look into the charges of ritualistic abuse. The Tribune called his plan an “open-minded, compassionate approach” and stated that it “deserves public and legislative support.” On January 25, 1992, the following appeared in the same newspaper: “Gov. Norm Bangerter’s proposal to hire four new investigators in the attorney general’s investigation of ritualistic child abuse allegations has received a legislative budget analyst’s approval.” The same article noted that it would cost $250,000 to fund the investigation for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

A REAL CONTROVERSY

During the past few years there has been a growing controversy regarding claims of satanic ritualistic abuse. The

Psychiatric Times—Medicine & Behavior, published the following:

A debate over the authenticity of “ritual abuse,” the systematic physical and/or emotional torture of an individual by a group, has some psychiatrists pitted against each other. Defenders insist children are being victimized in the name of Satan . . . and tell vivid stories about horrendous sexual, physical, and emotional abuses. Others maintain that many of the stories are the product of emotionally unstable patients . . .

In March, Bennett G. Braun, M.D., began another study to analyze the cases of 50 alleged victims of ritual cults. . . .

Braun admitted that if ritual abuse proves to be a hoax, perpetrated by patients and exaggerated by the media, he and other psychiatrists who have treated hundreds of “victims” might wind up looking like fools. But, he said, that possibility doesn’t intimidate him. . . . “I’d rather make mistakes than ignore what I’m hearing. Nobody wanted to believe that Hitler was committing atrocities either.” (The Psychiatric Times—Medicine & Behavior, April 1991, page 54)

While a large number of Christians believe that satanic ritualistic abuse is a real phenomenon, some Christian writers have expressed skepticism. Bob and Gretchen Passantino, for example, have printed a number of articles in which they criticized the claim that there is a large satanic conspiracy engaged in abusing children. They have been kind enough to send us a good deal of material on the subject which we have carefully considered before preparing this newsletter. At the present time we are not as skeptical of claims regarding satanic ritualistic abuse as the Passantinos; however, we feel that they have done a tremendous job of pointing out that some Christian writers have made false and misleading statements in their treatment of Satanism. We feel that it is important to take these things into consideration when evaluating such a serious matter.

The Christian Research Institute has also provided us with a great deal of material (both pro and con) regarding satanic ritualistic abuse. A number of other people and organizations have sent us material dealing with both sides of the question. We have tried to look objectively at the arguments of those representing both viewpoints and draw our own conclusions. One of the most vocal critics of satanic ritualistic abuse in Utah is David Raskin. In an article published in the Salt Lake Tribune, we find the following:

Gov. Norm Bangerter’s Task Force on Child Abuse is being used to foment mass hysteria in the form of a nonexistent evil called satanic ritualistic child abuse, a noted psychologist alleges.

David Raskin, a University of Utah professor in psychology, said Tuesday state government has become the pawn of those who believe ritualistic child abuse exists despite a lack of supporting evidence.

“These people have built an industry on this: government, money, jobs, insurance. If somebody said, you know you have been led down the primrose path and all of this is fantasy, the budgets disappear, the jobs disappear and people are left very embarrassed,” Mr. Raskin said. (Salt Lake Tribune, November 13, 1991)

While we agree that hard forensic evidence concerning satanic ritualistic abuse is scanty, we find it very difficult to totally dismiss the testimony of so many victims. When Dr. Raskin accuses people of being led down “the primrose path,” it brings to mind the fact that Raskin himself has spent at least some time on that path. In 1985 he was convinced that Mark
Hofmann did not plant the bombs that killed two people. The Salt Lake Tribune, November 20, 1985, reported: “Mark W. Hofmann . . . has passed a lie detector test indicating he is telling the truth when he says he did not plant the bombs, his defense attorney said Tuesday. . . . Dr. David Raskin—a world-renowned polygraph expert and psychologist . . . was one of two experts who verified the Hofmann examination.” Although Hofmann admitted he had made a mistake after Hofmann confessed to the murders, the January 27, 1987, issue of the Salt Lake Tribune reported:

Police and prosecutors . . . still are angry at the doubt sewn in the community by the release of those test results by defense attorneys. . . . Those disclosures “had a huge impact on the public perception of this investigation,” said Salt Lake City Police Detective Ken Farnsworth. And those disclosures not only by the defense lawyer but statements made by the examiners—didn’t do the reputation of the polygraph any good, said several polygraph experts. “I think they did us all a great disservice,” said one licensed polygraph expert who asked that his name not be used.

We feel that Dr. Raskin has been rather harsh in his accusations against therapists and members of the Governor’s Committee. The Salt Lake Tribune also felt that Raskin went too far in his criticism. In an editorial published November 18, 1991, we find the following:

The ugliness of ritualistic abuse is entering another realm. Now Utah scholars, therapists and government officials are hurling mean accusations at one another, confusing an already skeptical public and further imperiling the apparent victims.

David Raskin . . . who himself is paid to refute child-abuse claims in court, contends the state has become a pawn of therapists who would foment hysteria about satanic abuse for financial gain.

While skepticism is justified in any scientific endeavor, quick, cynical dismissal of accounts of ritualistic abuse could prove unconscionably dangerous and cruel to those who might have experienced it. Unless taken seriously, adult victims cannot be effectively treated and child victims cannot be rescued.

In fact, several credible scholars and clinicians, including some at the University of Utah, as well as officials from Utah law enforcement and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints consider ritual abuse, satanic and otherwise, a real threat. Some have contributed to the state task force’s work.

It would be stretching it to say these people are motivated by profit. Time spent on the task force is volunteered.

HUMAN SACRIFICE?

If satanic ritualistic abuse is actually being practiced in Utah, as the evidence seems to suggest, it is possible that some of the ideas came from the teachings of Aleister Crowley. In his book, Of Hoffman’s “a very significant effect on the world of the occult. In his book, Who has been called “the Devil’s chief emissary on earth,” had the ideas came from the teachings of Aleister Crowley. Crowley, Utah, as the evidence seems to suggest, it is possible that some of Hoffman’s “were the normal heterosexual magic of the ninth degree of the O.T.O. . . . the homseexual magic of Crowley’s own devising . . . (Sexuality, Magic and Perversion, page 108). On page 113 of the same book, King speaks of the use of a “goat” in the sexual magic Crowley was engaged in. The goat was eventually used as a “blood-sacrifice.” Crowley even recorded some of his bizarre “sex magic” (including homosexual acts) in his diaries. As some of Crowley’s teaching became known, many people began to consider him the “most evil” man in the world.

In his book, Magick, Aleister Crowley noted that “the highest spiritual working” required the sacrifice of a male child:

It is necessary for us to consider carefully the problems connected with the bloody sacrifice . . . the bloody sacrifice has from time immemorial been the most considered part of Magick. . . .

It would be unwise to condemn as irrational the practice of those savages who tear the heart and liver from an adversary, and devour them while yet warm. In any case it was the theory of the ancient Magicians that any living being is a storehouse of energy . . . At the death of the animal this energy is liberated suddenly.

The animal should therefore be killed within the Circle, or the Triangle, as the case may be, so that its energy cannot escape. . . . For the highest spiritual working one must accordingly choose that victim which contains the greatest and purest force. A male child of perfect innocence and high intelligence is the most satisfactory and suitable victim . . .

Those magicians who object to the use of blood have endeavored to replace it with incense . . .

But the bloody sacrifice, though more dangerous, is more efficacious; and for nearly all purposes human sacrifice is the best . . . The method of killing is practically uniform. The animal should be stabbed to the heart, or its throat severed, in either case by the knife. (Magick, pages 217, 219, 220, 222)

In 1966, Anton Szandor LaVey founded the Church of Satan in San Francisco. Like Aleister Crowley, LaVey took a very strong stand against Christianity. Three years after he founded his church, LaVey published The Satanic Bible. In this book LaVey wrote the following:

6 I dip my forefinger in the watery blood of your impotent mad redeemer, and write over his thorn-torn brow: The TRUE prince of evil—the king of the slaves! . . . I gaze into the glassy eye of your fearsome Jehovah, and pluck him by the beard; I uplift a broad-axe, and split open his worm-eaten skull! (The Satanic Bible, 1969, page 30)

Although LaVey says that “Satanism condones any type of sexual activity which properly satisfies your individual desires—be it heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, if you choose” he claims that “Satanism would not intentionally hurt others by violating their sexual rights. Satanism does not advocate rape, child molesting, sexual defilement of animals, or any other form of sexual activity which entails the participation of those who are unwilling . . . (The Satanic Bible, pages 67, 70). In his book The Satanic Rituals, 1972, page 206, LaVey claimed that “Satanists . . . have no wish to offend further the sensibilities
of the self-righteous by luring apple-cheeked boys and girls into 'unholy rites and unspeakable orgies.' . . . we recognize the importance of working within the legal framework of society.”

Anton LaVey tries to downplay the idea of human sacrifice by Satanists. He, in fact, claims that they would not want to sacrifice a baby:

The use of a human sacrifice in a Satanic ritual does not imply that the sacrifice is slaughtered “to appease the gods.” Symbolically, the victim is destroyed through the working of a hex or curse, which in turn leads to the physical, mental or emotional destruction of the “sacrifice” in ways and means not attributable to the magician. . . .

The only time a Satanist would perform a human sacrifice would be if it were to serve a two-fold purpose; that being to release the magician's wrath in the throwing of a curse, and more important, to dispose of a totally obnoxious and deserving individual.

Under NO circumstances would a Satanist sacrifice any animal or baby! . . .

When a person, by his reprehensible behavior, practically cries out to be destroyed, it is truly your moral obligation to indulge them their wish. (The Satanic Bible, pages 88-90)

Al Carlisle, a Utah State Prison psychologist, does not agree with the statement that Satanists would not “sacrifice any animal or baby.” According to the Salt Lake Tribune, August 3, 1986, Dr. Carlisle said:

... individuals who are at the cult level have no qualms about killing others. “I know one guy who witnessed a dozen sacrifices back east,” he said. “They believe the prime energy in a person is in the blood. They sacrifice the person and believe that those who consume the blood will receive the power.”

Dr. Susan J. Kelley observed that although “devil worship has existed as long as Christianity, modern satanism began as an occult revival in the last century. . . . because Christianity believes that children are special to God, satanism, which negates Christianity, considers the desecration of children to be a way of gaining victory over God . . .” (Cultic Studies Journal, vol. 5, no. 2, 1988, page 229).

After we published Bishop Pace’s memo, some Mormons who were victims of satanic ritualistic abuse contacted us about the matter. The following is taken from a letter by a woman who was involved in the cult:

On the subject of “ritual abuse”—Issue #80 . . . I was such a person who was disfellowshipped, and then excommunicated from the Mormon Church[,] Page 4 of Bishop Glenn L. Pace’s Memorandum describes my situation. To say anything more would be moot. Take care not to “witch-hunt[]].” These groups (Satanic) take great delight in getting people to “chase their own tails”—It’s called “creating chaos”—and this “chaos” is one of the things that makes them thrive. Also note: The Mormons aren’t the only ones to face this—There are Christian denominations all over the U.S. that have had to deal with this . . . If I can be of assistance let me know. (Letter dated November 20, 1991)

The observation that the “Mormons aren’t the only ones to face this” is certainly true. Satanic ritualistic abuse, in fact, is reported in many parts of the country and in a number of churches. Some feel, however, that Utah has a large number of victims reporting ritualistic abuse when that number is compared to the population of the state. An investigation in Utah, where there appears to be a concentration of cases, could undoubtedly throw important light on cases throughout the United States.

Bishop Pace has indicated in his report that Mormon victims claim that they were “baptized by blood into the satanic order which is meant to cancel out their baptism into the Church” (page 3). Since Mormons believe their children do not reach accountability until they are eight years of age, they do not baptize them until they arrive at that age. Significantly, a number of the survivors report ritualistic abuse around the time they were baptized at the age of eight. For example, Dawn House wrote the following concerning one of the victims:

“Perhaps I’ll always remember the baptism because it clicked into my self-esteem,” she said. “One minute I was white and pure, then made to be black. I thought that I can look like I’m pure but I’m really not.”

She remembers a man marking her face and breasts black in a mock religious ceremony, shortly after her baptism in the Church . . . when she was 8 years old.

“My mother told me this was another part of my baptism and to . . . be a good girl. The man took me into a big room and told me to remove my clothes. He put a black cloth over my head and marks on my body.

“We went to another room where adults were dressed in black. There was a star drawn on the floor . . . I was placed in the middle of the star . . . I looked around to see candles and then, a baby calf in a cage. I heard the animal cry, almost like a baby. Part of the ritual was killing the calf.

“I was given a vial of red liquid, perhaps blood, to drink. There may have been a drug in it because I passed out. When I woke up, I was bleeding from the vagina. I remember seeing my mother staring at me, and I wondered why she was doing this to me, but I was too frightened to do or say anything. I was trying so hard to be a good girl.” (Salt Lake Tribune, November 3, 1991)

We were recently told by the mother of one of the survivors that her daughter was gang raped in the basement of a Mormon ward house when she was eight years old. Another victim we talked to claimed that when she was eight years old she was also taken to the basement of a Mormon ward house and raped by a number of men and was forced to drink blood. This woman claims that in her case those involved were not wearing black robes but rather white Mormon temple apparel.

Critics of satanic ritualistic abuse sometimes point out that accounts given by victims throughout the United States and other countries are remarkably similar. From this they conclude that the victims borrowed their stories from accounts given by others. While this has undoubtedly occurred in some cases, it is hard to believe that all of these people are borrowing from others.

The stories given by Mormons regarding Satanic abuse are similar in many respects to those related by victims in other parts of the United States. However, it appears that the rituals have been modified to fit Mormon beliefs. That a number of victims would claim they were “baptized by blood” or abused when they were eight years old seems important. It is highly unlikely that the three women mentioned above knew each other’s stories. They lived in different parts of the United States and were separated by hundreds of miles. It would be interesting to know how many other cases of this phenomenon Glenn Pace found in his research.

Even more significant is the fact that the Satanists appear to have incorporated portions of the Mormon temple ceremony into their rituals. Bishop Pace wrote the following, in his memo:
I’m sorry to say that many of the victims have had their first flashbacks while attending the temple for the first time. The occult along the Wasatch Front uses the doctrine of the Church to their advantage. For example, the verbiage and gestures are used in a ritualistic ceremony in a very debased and often bloody manner. When the victim goes to the temple and hears the exact words, horrible memories are triggered. We have recently been disturbed with members of the Church who have talked about the temple ceremony. Compared to what is happening in the occult along the Wasatch Front, these are very minor infractions. The perpetrators are also living a dual life. Many are temple recommend holders. (Memo by Glenn Pace, page 4)

Satanic ritualistic abuse is so extremely brutal that many of the victims develop amnesia. Their minds simply cannot face what has happened. Later in life, however, something can trigger the horrible memory which has been blocked out. Although they do not involve satanic ritualistic abuse, examples of this were reported in Time magazine, October 28, 1991, page 86:

Last November in Redwood City, Calif., George Franklin was convicted of killing an eight-year-old girl in 1969; the case was based largely on the testimony of his daughter Eileen Franklin-Lipsker, who had repressed the memory of her playmates murder for 20 years. This month in Pittsburgh, Steven Slutzker is scheduled to go on trial for the 1975 fatal shooting of John Mudd Sr. Slutzker was charged after the victim’s son, who was 5 when his father died, claimed he had a flashback memory of the murder. . . . at least a dozen states since 1988 have amended their statute of limitations for bringing charges to allow for delayed discovery of childhood sexual abuse.

On page 87 of the same article we find that Eileen Franklin-Lipsker remembered the murder of her playmate after “A glance from her own six-year-old daughter, who bears a striking resemblance to the murdered child, brought back scenes of the chilling event. Experts say emotional, evocative moments can often exhume long-buried memories.”

Bishop Pace’s statement that “many of the victims have had their first flashbacks while attending the temple for the first time” certainly raises some serious questions. Pace freely admits that when “the victim goes to the temple and hears the exact words, horrible memories are triggered.” It is clear, then, that Bishop Pace is convinced that Satanists are using portions of the Mormon temple ceremony in their abusive rituals. According to Dawn House, the “nightmares” of the victim she interviewed “were triggered when she attended a Mormon temple ceremony for the first time. She said the temple handshakes, oaths and clothes brought back memories. ‘Every time I went, I came back crying,’ she said. ‘My bishop said it was Satan trying to tempt me, telling me I shouldn’t go’” (Salt Lake Tribune, November 3, 1991).

Before Mormons go through the temple endowment ritual they must pass through the washing and anointing ceremonies. A victim of ritualistic abuse told us that she became terrified when she went through the washing and anointing ceremonies. After that her mind blanked out and she went through the rest of the ritual in a zombie-like state.

According to a psychiatrist, a woman he treated reached the part of the Mormon temple ceremony in which a man playing the role of Lucifer threatens those who are going through the ritual that “If they do not walk up to every covenant they make at these altars in this temple this day, they will be in my power” (Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony: 1842-1990, page 127). This undoubtedly triggered a flashback concerning what happened to the woman when she was ritually abused. In satanic ceremonies a man sometimes poses as the devil and, according to one witness, Satanists chant, “Satan has all power.” The idea of someone playing the role of the devil and threatening those going through the temple ceremony that he could have them in his “power” could be terrifying for those who have previously passed through satanic ceremonies. Although the devil is commanded “to depart” in the Mormon temple ritual, the woman mentioned above had already had the flashback and was absolutely devastated by the threat.

We talked to the son of another woman who had been satanically abused. This woman also had her first “flashback” when passing through the Mormon temple ritual and was deeply disturbed by the matter. Unfortunately, her son did not know exactly which part of the ritual caused the trauma.

Since Glenn Pace has stated that “many of the victims” received their first flashbacks in the temple, his research would undoubtedly throw important light on exactly which portions of the ceremony brought back memories of satanic rituals. It should be remembered that Bishop Pace is a General Authority in the Mormon Church. Because of his important position in the church, it seems highly unlikely that he would want to admit that Satanists had been able to infiltrate the church and use “the exact words” of the temple ritual in their degrading ceremonies. One can only conclude that the evidence that this has taken place must be overpowering. Some of this information may be found in Glenn Pace’s 40-page report on the subject.

While Pace’s 12-page report is certainly shocking, the statements made by the victims themselves, which came forth after we published the memo, contain details that are even more appalling. If we accept these accounts as authentic, we are forced to conclude that one of the most diabolical conspiracies one could ever imagine has gained a real foothold right in the shadow of the Mormon temple.

With regard to human sacrifice, Glenn Pace stated in his memo that of the “sixty” people he interviewed, “forty-five victims allege witnessing and/or participating in human sacrifice” (page 1). This would mean that 75% of these Mormons declared that they had witnessed murder! This figure seems to be close to that derived from a study conducted by Walter C. Young, Roberta G. Sachs, Bennett G. Braun and Ruth T. Watkins. They studied thirty-seven different victims of ritual abuse in “four separate hospitals across the country” and found that 83% of the patients claimed they witnessed human sacrifice (“Patients Reporting Ritual Abuse in Childhood: A Clinical Syndrome,” published in Child Abuse & Neglect, vol. 15, page 183).

DEATH OF BABY X

In the last issue of our newsletter we pointed out that it would be extremely difficult to cover up all of the human sacrifices which are alleged to have occurred in satanic rituals. We went on to suggest that it would be possible to actually stage a fake human sacrifice and explained how this could be accomplished. Since making this suggestion, however, we have heard some accounts of human sacrifices which contain such graphic details that it is more difficult to explain them away in this manner. In any case, whether the sacrifices are real or fake, most of the victims believe they have witnessed ritualistic murders and this has a profound effect on their lives.

With regard to David Raskin’s charge that there is a paucity of hard evidence on ritualistic abuse, it is interesting to note that some important information has been uncovered in Idaho.
This information could relate to what has been going on in Utah. From what we can learn, charges of satanic activity have surfaced in Provo, which is the home of the Mormon Church’s Brigham Young University, Salt Lake City, Bountiful, Ogden and Logan. We have been told that Bear Lake is also a place where Satanists are active. This lake begins in northern Utah and stretches up into southern Idaho. To the west of Bear Lake is the town of Rupert, Idaho. Rupert appears to be only about forty miles from the Utah border.

On the first page of his memo, Bishop Glenn Pace wrote that he had questioned three victims from the state of Idaho, and on November 8, 1991, KTVX (Channel 4) reported that Pace had, in fact, interviewed people from the city of Rupert with regard to satanic abuse. This information becomes rather important when we consider the case of “Baby X.” On October 23, 1990, the Seattle Post-Intelligence carried an article concerning the “Killing of Baby X.” In this article we find the following:

RUPERT, Idaho—. . . No deed was fouler than that perpetrated on Baby X.

When her tiny, charred corpse was found in a garbage dump almost a year ago, Baby X was hardly recognizable as human. An autopsy produced an even more horrifying discovery.

Before she was burned, Baby X . . . had been disemboweled and mutilated.

There long had been rumors of satanic cults in southern Idaho, of ritual killing and sacrifice.

But never in the memory of anyone in local law enforcement had the body of a possible victim ever been found. . . . Then, in July, there was a sudden and unexpected development 1,000 miles away, in California. A 10-year-old boy told authorities there he had witnessed the ritual sacrifice of an infant in his home state, in Idaho. . . .

His bizarre story and crude drawings bore striking similarities to a possible Baby X death scene, investigators said . . .

Kerry Patterson, a forensic pathologist . . . was called to assist the county coroner with the autopsy . . .

The remains were those of a girl, no more than 3 weeks old. . . . The abdominal organs had been cut out. Only the lungs and a portion of the upper heart chamber were left. Both feet were cut off, as well as the right arm from the shoulder.

The infant was dismembered before she was burned with gasoline, Patterson concluded.

While it has been suggested the baby could have died of pneumonia and that a predator might have been responsible for the missing body parts, no one seems to contest that the baby’s body was burned.

On January 4, 1991, the South Idaho Press reported that Sgt. Tim Hatcher of the Minidoka Sheriff’s Department traveled to California to interview the boy who claimed he saw a child sacrificed: “Hatcher said . . . that the boy very closely described a scenario similar to the Baby X case. . . . The boy also used words like ‘witch, sacrifice and devil’ and drew a picture of a barrel with fire and a baby, according to Hatcher.”

The boy also claimed that he was a victim of ritual abuse. The following was printed in the Salt Lake Tribune, on September 16, 1991:

RUPERT, Idaho — Authorities say drawings and descriptions by a child questioned in an abuse investigation indicate the child may have witnessed and been a victim of satanic rites. . . . Rupert police obtained the drawings last year. The child drew five pictures for Rupert Police Detective Terry Quinn . . . . The detective was not prepared for what he saw. Ghostly people, some frowning, others blank-faced, fill the pictures. One drawing shows people gathered around a table on which someone lies with male genitals exposed. . . . Another drawing shows two people on a table, hearts exposed. . . . After drawing the pictures, the child explained what they showed, Quinn said. “They put me on a table with a Bible. The devil is there. They pray to the devil. The devil makes these people hurt me. They hurt me so bad. They hurt me in the private parts. They have hurt me so many times.”

On November 8, 1991, KUTV reported that this boy’s house was located only a few miles from where Baby X was found! It is also interesting to note that after we published Pace’s memo, a victim of ritualistic abuse gave her story on KTVX (Channel 4). She claimed that her grandfather (a bishop in the Mormon Church) and her grandmother (who was president of the local ward Relief Society) were leaders in a satanic cult. She maintained that she saw her baby brother murdered and that she was forced to have a ritualistic abortion. As in the case of Baby X, her baby was burned!

WHY IN UTAH?

In the last issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger we stated that we concurred with Bishop Pace’s statement that the Mormon Church was a victim of a group of pernicious deceivers. While we have no reason to believe that the church itself is involved in promoting this evil conspiracy, the extent of satanic ritualistic abuse in Utah seems to raise some important questions about Mormonism.

One, since the Mormon leaders claim to have the same powers as the ancient Apostles in the Bible, why were they unable to detect that “bishops, a patriarch, a stake president, temple workers, and members of the Tabernacle Choir” (Pace Memo, page 5) were involved in these evil practices? Ezra Taft Benson, the thirteenth prophet of the Mormon Church, has boasted that church leaders have special discernment which is far superior to “earthly knowledge.” Why, then, did it take psychiatrists and psychologists to ferret out the facts concerning ritualistic abuse?

Two, why is it that the Mormon Church, which claims to be the only true church on the face of the earth, is so vulnerable to infiltration by occultists?

In the last issue of the Messenger, we pointed out that there are some things in LDS Church history and doctrine that make the church susceptible to deceivers who would use it for their own wicked purposes. One of the church’s most important problems has been with regard to polygamy. Unfortunately, Joseph Smith, the first Mormon prophet, declared that God gave him a revelation that he was to enter into plural marriage. This revelation is still published in the Doctrine and Covenants, one of the four standard works of the church. We find the following in that revelation: “Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph . . . if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then is he justified; he cannot commit adultery . . . And if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery . . . therefore is he justified” (Doctrine and Covenants, Section 132, verses 1, 61-62). Joseph Smith was obedient to the commandment and proceeded to marry dozens of plural wives before he was murdered in 1844.

Today, the Mormon Church does not allow its members to practice polygamy, and those who do so are excommunicated. But since church leaders never really repudiated the doctrine itself, teach that it will be lived in heaven, and still retain the
revelation on polygamy in the *Doctrine and Covenants*, many Mormons have secretly entered into the practice. These people are known as Mormon Fundamentalists. Unfortunately, in some cases the practice of polygamy seems to open up the door for other sexual practices which are extremely harmful to children and young women. We have, in fact, learned that a number of women who are involved in the polygamous movement are also being treated for satanic ritualistic abuse.

From the accounts we have studied, it appears that incest plays an important role in cases of satanic ritualistic abuse. While the present leaders of the Mormon Church condemn incestuous relationships, during the time of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young some strange things were taught concerning this matter. Joseph Smith, for instance, “married five pairs of sisters” and even a “mother” and her own “daughter” (*No Man Knows My History*, page 336). In her book, *Intimate Disciple*, page 317, Mormon writer Clair Noall verified that Smith did marry a mother and her daughter: “Sylvia Lyon, Patty’s daughter and the wife of Windsor J. Lyon, was already sealed to Joseph. This afternoon she was to put her mother’s hand in the Prophet’s.” Fanny Stenhouse, who at one time had been a firm believer in Mormonism and had even allowed her husband to take another wife, wrote the following:

Marriages have been contracted between the nearest of relatives; and old men tottering on the brink of the grave have been united to little girls scarcely in their teens; while unnatural alliances of every description, which in any other community would be regarded with disgust and abhorrence, are here entered into in the name of God . . . It is quite a common thing in Utah for a man to marry two or even three sisters. . . . I know also another man who married a widow with several children; and when one of the girls had grown into her teens he insisted on marrying her also . . . and to this very day the daughter bears children to her step-father, living as wife in the same house with her mother! (*Tell It All*, 1874, pages 468-69)

The anti-Mormon writer Joseph H. Jackson charged that Joseph Smith himself “feigned a revelation to have Mrs. Milligan, his own sister, married to him spiritually.” That Smith believed that a man could be married for eternity to his own sister has been confirmed by an entry added to Joseph Smith’s private diary after his death. It appears under the date of October 26, 1843, and reads as follows:

The following named deceased persons were sealed to me (John M. Bernhisel) on Oct. 26th, 1843, by Pres. Joseph Smith—

Maria Bernhisel, *Sister*—
Brother Samuel’s wife, Catherine Kremer
Mary Shatto (Aunt) . . .
Recorded by Robt. L. Cambell
July 29, 1868[.] (Joseph Smith’s Diary, October 26, 1843, Church Historical Department)

The reader will notice that Bernhisel claimed that he was sealed to his sister by Joseph Smith. Now, if the doctrine of Celestial Marriage were true, in the resurrection John Bernhisel would find himself married to his own sister, Maria Bernhisel!

There is evidence that John Taylor, who became the third prophet of the Mormon Church, promised his own sister that she could be sealed to him. Under the date of February 25, 1889, L. John Nuttal, a very prominent Mormon recorded the following:

Agnes Schwartz & her daughter Mary called this morning to see Prest. Woodruff . . . She said that her brother John the late

President John Taylor had told her some 30 years ago that if she could not be reconciled to continue with any of her husbands she might be sealed to his brother William or himself, and she now wanted to be sealed to him. (*Journal of L. John Nuttal*, vol. 2, pp. 362-63 of typed copy at Brigham Young University Library)

Benjamin G. Ferris, who was Secretary of the Territory of Utah, reported the following concerning Brigham Young’s views on incest:

Their system of plurality has obliterated nearly all sense of decency . . . There are a number of cases in which a man has taken a widow and her daughter for wives at the same time. One has a widow and her two daughters. There are also instances of the niece being sealed to the uncle, and they excite no more attention than any ordinary case. . . . *Brigham Young* stated in the pulpit, in 1852, that the time might come when, for the sake of keeping the lineage of the priesthood unbroken, marriages would be confined to the same families: as, for instance, the son of one mother would marry the daughter of another by the same father . . . Why should not the blood of the priesthood, like that of the Incas, be kept pure? (*Utah And The Mormons*, 1854, pages 252-253)

As early as 1852 Brigham Young, the second prophet of the Mormon Church, did comment on brothers and sisters marrying:

I feel like swearing by the Gods, and all the Holy Angels. I will just keep myself to myself and not mingle with them and I mean to say to my sons and daughters, marry one another and keep together, but that would be considered as treasonable and wicked by the world. I expect they would hang me before they passed sentence on me. (Sermon by Brigham Young, February 22, 1852, as published in *The Teachings of President Brigham Young*, compiled and edited by Fred C. Collier, vol. 3, page 60)

Joseph Smith, of course, contended that “God himself, who sits enthroned in yonder heavens, is a man like unto one of yourselves . . .” (*Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, pages 613-614). He also taught that God was married and had billions of spirit children in the pre-existence. In other words, according to Smith’s theology, we were all born to God and his wife and lived as his sons and daughters before coming to earth. Brigham Young reasoned that since all people who come to the earth were originally brothers and sisters, that there is really no problem with brothers and sisters marrying. On October 8, 1854, Brigham Young made these controversial comments:

Then I reckon that the children of Adam and Eve married each other; this is speaking to the point. *I believe in sisters marrying brothers, and brothers having their sisters for wives. Why? Because we cannot do otherwise. There are none others for me to marry but my sisters. “But you[a] would not pretend to say you would marry your father and mothers daughter.” If I did not I would marry another of my sisters that lives over in another garden . . . Our spirits are all brothers and sisters, and so are our bodies; and the opposite idea to this has resulted from the ignorant, and foolish traditions of the nations of the Earth. . . .

This is something pertaining to our marriage relation. The whole world will think what an awful thing it is. What an awful thing it would be if the Mormons should just say *we believe in marrying brothers and sisters. Well we shall be under the necessity of doing it, because we cannot find anybody else to marry.* (*The Teachings of President Brigham Young*, vol. 3, pages 362, 368)
The strange teachings of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young and other early Mormon leaders concerning polygamy and incest have caused confusion in the minds of many Mormons and may have helped open the way for satanic ritualistic abuse in the church.

**MORMONS & SACRIFICE**

Notwithstanding the fact that Satanist Anton LaVey down plays the idea of animal or human sacrifice, many investigators believe that at least some Satanists are involved in this type of ritualistic activity. We have already quoted Aleister Crowley as saying that “A male child of perfect innocence and high intelligence is the most satisfactory and suitable victim.”

In over thirty years of studying Mormonism we have never found any doctrine which encourages the killing of an innocent child. There are, however, some unusual ideas concerning sacrifice which we should take a look at.

For example, while Joseph Smith condemned the practice of animal sacrifices after the death of Christ in his Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 9:19), he later wrote that, “These sacrifices, as well as every ordinance belonging to the Priesthood, will, when the Temple of the Lord shall be built, and the sons of Levi be purified, be fully restored and attended to in all their powers, ramifications, and blessings” (History of the Church, vol. 4, page 211).

According to Wandle Mace, a devout Mormon, Joseph Smith instructed his followers to offer an animal sacrifice in the Kirtland Temple: “Joseph told them to go to Kirtland, and cleanse and purify a certain room in the Temple, that they must kill a lamb and offer a sacrifice unto the Lord which should prepare them to ordain Willard Richards a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles” (“Journal of Wandle Mace,” page 32, microfilmed copy at Brigham Young University Library). Wilford Woodruff, who later became the fourth prophet of the Mormon Church, claimed that President Brigham Young disclosed that when the temple was completed in Utah, it would have a sacrificial altar: “Under the pulpit in the west End will be a place to Offer Sacrifices. There will be an Altar prepared for that purposes [sic] so that when any sacrifices are to be offered they should be offered there” (Wilford Woodruff’s Journal: 1833-1898, December 18, 1857, vol. 5, page 140).

Although it is clear that the first two prophets of the Mormon Church believed that animal sacrifice would be an important part of the “gospel,” we know of no accounts of any animal sacrifice in Mormonism after the 1840s.

From the evidence we have examined, it appears that Joseph Smith’s interest in blood sacrifices did not originally come from reading the Old Testament but rather from his participation in the occult. Joseph Smith’s involvement in magic practices had always been denied by the Mormon Church until 1971, when Wesley P. Walters discovered an original document which proves that Joseph Smith was a “glass looker” and that he was arrested and examined before a justice of the peace in Bainbridge, N.Y. in 1826. This document is Justice Albert Neeley’s bill showing the costs involved in several trials held in 1826. The fifth item from the top mentions the examination of “Joseph Smith The Glass Looker” (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 34, for a photograph of the complete document).

This document confirmed the historicity of the examination record which had been published since 1873. In this document Joseph Smith admitted that he used a Seer Stone which he placed in his hat to try to locate buried treasures. The reader will no doubt be struck by the similarity to the magical practice of crystal gazing which is widely practiced in the occult. In Joseph Smith’s time magicians and other individuals influenced by the occult used this method to find buried treasures and lost items. In the printed record we read that Joseph Smith said “That he had a certain stone which he had occasionally looked at to determine where hidden treasures in the bowels of the earth were; that he . . . had occasionally been in the habit of looking through this stone to find lost property for three years . . .” (see complete transcript in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 32).

A few years after Smith’s run in with the law, he was using this same method—a stone placed in a hat—to translate the Book of Mormon. David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, wrote: “I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing” (An Address To All Believers In Christ, 1887, page 12). Many witnesses confirmed this statement and even the Mormon historian B. H. Roberts referred to the use of a seer stone in translating the Book of Mormon (see A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, vol. 1, page 129).

Besides the magical stone, the money diggers often offered animal sacrifices to the demons who guarded the treasures. There seems to be a good deal of evidence to show that Joseph Smith and others in his family participated in blood sacrifices in their money digging operation. For example, in an affidavit William Stafford related:

I, William Stafford, having been called upon to give a true statement of my knowledge, concerning the character and conduct of the family of Smiths . . . do say . . . A great part of their time was devoted to digging for money . . . .

Joseph Smith, Sen., came to me one night, and told me, that Joseph Jr. had been looking in his glass, and had seen not many rods from his house, two or three kegs of gold and silver, some feet under the surface of the earth . . . I accordingly consented to go . . . Joseph, Sen. first made a circle, twelve or fourteen feet in diameter. This circle, said he, contains the treasure. He then stuck in the ground a row of witch hazel sticks, around the said circle, for the purpose of keeping off the evil spirits . . . the old man . . . by signs and motions, asked leave of absence, and went to the house to inquire of young Joseph the cause of our disappointment. He soon returned and said, that Joseph had remained all this time in the house, looking in his stone and watching the motions of the evil spirit . . . it caused the money to sink . . . . the old man observed . . . we had made a mistake in the commencement of the operation; if it had not been for that, said he, we should have got the money.

At another time . . . Old Joseph and one of the boys came to me one day, and said that Joseph Jr. had discovered some very valuable treasures, which could be procured only in one way . . . a black sheep should be taken on the ground where the treasures were concealed—that after cutting its throat, it should be led around a circle while bleeding. This being done, the wrath of the evil spirit would be appeased: the treasures could then be obtained . . . I let them have a large fat sheep. They afterwards informed me, that the sheep was killed pursuant to commandment; but as there was some mistake in the process, it did not have the desired effect. This, I believe is the only time they ever made money-digging a profitable business.

(Mormonism Unveiled, by E.D. Howe, 1834, pages 237-239)
For other accounts of Joseph Smith being involved in animal sacrifice (dogs and sheep) to appease the demons see our book *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*, pages 32-34.

**BLOOD ATONEMENT RITUAL**

One of the most unusual teachings found in the early Mormon Church is the doctrine of “blood atonement.” In a manuscript written in 1839, Reed Peck said that the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith claimed he had a revelation in which Apostle Peter told him that he had killed Judas: “He [Joseph Smith] talked of dissenters and cited us to the case of Judas, saying that Peter told him in a conversation a few days ago that [he] himself hung Judas for betraying Christ . . .” (*The Reed Peck Manuscript*, page 13).

Although the doctrine of blood atonement was kept secret at first, when the Mormons were isolated in Utah and had more power, they began to boldly teach that certain people needed to be put to death. For example, on September 21, 1856, President Brigham Young, the second prophet of the church, publicly proclaimed that certain sins could only be atoned for by the shedding of the sinner’s own blood:

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

> I know, when you hear my brethren telling about cutting people off from the earth, that you consider it is strong doctrine, but it is to save them, not to destroy them. . . . I know there are transgressors, who if they knew themselves, and the only condition upon which they can obtain forgiveness, would beg of their brethren to shed their blood, that the smoke thereof might ascend to God as an offering to appease the wrath that is kindled against them, and that the law might have its course. I will say further; I have had men come to me and offer their lives to atone for their sins.

> It is true that the blood of the Son of God was shed for sins . . . yet men can commit sins which it can never remit . . . There are sins that can be atoned for by an offering upon an altar, as in ancient days, and there are sins that the blood of a lamb, or a calf, or of turtle doves, cannot remit, but they must be atoned for by the blood of the man. . . . You have been taught that doctrine, but you do not understand it. (Sermon by Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 4, pages 53-54; also published in the Mormon Church’s *Deseret News*, October 1 1856, page 235)

> Since this sermon was published in the official organ of the Mormon Church and was reprinted in the church’s own publication in England, there can be no doubt that blood atonement was an important doctrine of the church. In addition, there are many other sermons, diaries, and manuscripts which contain information on this doctrine. In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 400-402, we provide documentation to show that there were at least eleven different offenses for which a person could be put to death in early Utah—murder, adultery, immorality, stealing, using the name of the Lord in vain, refusing to receive the gospel, marriage to an African, covenant breaking, apostasy, lying, counterfeiting and condemning Joseph Smith or consenting to his death.

President Brigham Young said that if the Mormons really loved their neighbors they would be willing to kill them to save their souls:

> Now take a person in this congregation . . . and suppose that . . . he has committed a sin that he knows will deprive him of that exaltation which he desires, and that he cannot attain to it without the shedding of blood, and also knows that by having his blood shed he will atone for that sin, and be saved and exalted with the Gods, is there a man or woman in this house but what would say “shed my blood that I may be saved . . .”

> All mankind love themselves, and let these principles be known by an individual, and he would be glad to have his blood shed. That would be loving themselves, even unto an eternal exaltation. Will you love your brothers and sisters likewise, when they have committed a sin that cannot be atoned for without the shedding of their blood? Will you love that man or woman well enough to shed their blood? . . .

> I could refer you to plenty of instances where men have been righteously slain, in order to atone for their sins. . . . I have known a great many men who left this Church for whom there is no chance whatever for exaltation, but if their blood had been spilled, it would have been better for them . . . This is loving our neighbor as ourselves; if he needs help, help him; and if he wants salvation and it is necessary to spill his blood on the earth in order that he may be saved, spill it . . . That is the way to love mankind. (*Deseret News*, February 18, 1857; also reprinted in *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 4, pp. 219-20)

Although Brigham Young equated blood atonement with “loving our neighbor,” it seems obvious that vengeance often played the most important role when the doctrine was actually applied. Joseph F. Smith, who served as the sixth prophet of the church, once admitted that he was about to stab a man if he even expressed approval of the murder of Joseph Smith. Under the date of December 6, 1889, Apostle Abraham H. Cannon recorded the following in his journal:

> About 4:30 p.m. this meeting adjourned and was followed by a meeting of Presidents Woodruff, Cannon and Smith and Bros. Lyman and Grant. . . . Bro. Joseph F. Smith was traveling some years ago near Carthage when he met a man who said he had just arrived five minutes too late to see the Smiths killed. Instantly a dark cloud seemed to overshadow Bro. Smith and he asked how this man looked upon the deed. Bro. S. was oppressed by a most horrible feeling . . . After a brief pause the man answered, “Just as I have always looked upon it—that it was a d___d cold-blooded murder.” The cloud immediately lifted from Bro. Smith and he found that he had his open pocket knife grasped in his hand in his pocket, and he believes that had this man given his approval to that murder of the prophets he would have immediately struck him to the heart. (*Daily Journal of Abraham H. Cannon*, Dec. 6, 1889, pp. 205-206; see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 403, for an actual photograph from the journal)

> If Joseph F. Smith had “struck” the man “to the heart,” the killing would have been considered more an act of vengeance than a ritualistic act. If, on the other hand, a person consented to die for his or her transgressions, the sacrifice could have ritualistic overtones. John D. Lee, who served on the Council of Fifty in the early Mormon Church, told of a case where there was prayer involved. Lee reported that a man by the name of “Rosmos Anderson” committed adultery with his step-daughter. He was “placed under covenant that if they again committed adultery, Anderson should suffer death.” Lee went on to state:
Soon after this a charge was laid against Anderson before the Council, accusing him of adultery with his step-daughter. . . . it was the Bishop’s Council. . . . the Council voted that Anderson must die for violating his covenants. Klingensmith went to Anderson and notified him that the orders were that he must die by having his throat cut, so that the running of his blood would atone for his sins. . . . His wife was ordered to prepare a suit of clean clothing, in which to have her husband buried . . .

Klingensmith, James Haslem, Daniel McFarland and John M. Higbee dug a grave in the field near Cedar City, and that night, about 12 o’clock, went to Anderson’s house and ordered him to make ready to obey the Council. . . . Anderson knelt down upon the side of the grave and prayed, Klingensmith and his company then cut Anderson’s throat from ear to ear and held him so that his blood ran into the grave.

As soon as he was dead they dressed him in his clean clothes, threw him into the grave and buried him. They then carried his bloody clothing back to his family, and gave them to his wife to wash, when she was again instructed to say that her husband was in California. (Confessions of John D. Lee, 1880, pages 282-283)

In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? we have documented that a large number of people were killed in Nauvoo and early Utah because of the church’s teaching regarding blood atonement (see pages 398-404-A, 428-450, 493-515). Since Brigham Young and other church leaders were stressing the doctrine of blood atonement in 1857, it is obvious that this doctrine played a very important role in the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Mormon historian B.H. Roberts called this massacre "one of the most lamentable episodes in Utah history, and in the history of the church."

The Mormons believed that there were people among the emigrants who persecuted them before they came west. Brigham Young had once counseled: “. . . in regard to those who have persecuted this people . . . if any miserable scoundrels come here, cut their throats” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 2, page 311). The Mormons who lived in southern Utah held a “special priesthood meeting” at Cedar City and decided that the emigrants “should be done away with.” The priesthood leaders decided to “stir up the Indians” and have them attack the company. When it became apparent that the Indians could not overpower the emigrants, the Mormons came up with an insidious and cowardly plan to destroy them.

Mormon writer William E. Berrett gave this description of the massacre:

It was a deliberately planned massacre, treacherously carried into execution . . . a flag of truce was sent to the emigrant camp and terms of surrender proposed. The Emigrants were to give up their arms. The wounded were to be loaded into wagons, followed by the women and children, and the men to bring up the rear . . . they were to be conducted by the whites to Cedar City . . . the march began.

. . . The white men at a given signal, fell upon the unarmed emigrant men . . . Only the smallest children were spared. (The Restored Church, 1956, pages 468-469)

In May 1861, Brigham Young visited the site of the massacre. His actions on this trip demonstrated that he approved of the massacre. Wilford Woodruff, who later became the 4th president of the Mormon Church, travelled with Young and wrote the following in his journal:

We visited the Mountain Meadow Monument put up at the burial place of 120 persons . . . A wooden Cross was placed on top with the following words: Vengence is mine and I will repay saith the Lord. President Young said it should be Vengence is mine and I have taken a little. (Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, May 25, 1861, vol. 5, page 577)

Juanita Brooks, who did a great deal of research on the Mountain Meadows Massacre, believed that Brigham Young did not order the massacre. Nevertheless, she felt that Young and Apostle George A. Smith set up the conditions which led to the tragic event. Mrs. Brooks was, in fact, convinced that Brigham Young was involved as an accessory after the fact and took part in a cover-up of the crime. In her book, The Mountain Meadows Massacre, 1970, page 219, she firmly stated her belief that “Brigham Young was accessory after the fact, in that he knew what had happened, and how and why it happened. Evidence of this is abundant and unmistakable, and from the most impeccable Mormon sources.” For more information on the Mountain Meadows Massacre see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 493-515.

INTERESTING PARALLELS

There are a number of similarities between the Mormon practice of blood atonement and the satanic practice of human sacrifice:

1. In both cases human beings are sacrificed to please a deity.
2. Both ceremonies have an emphasis on the importance of blood being poured out. In Mormonism, as we have shown, it was taught that when “blood was spilt upon the ground,” the “smoking incense would atone” for a persons “sins.” While it appears that many people were sacrificed in early Mormonism in a vindictive way, some may have been killed because the early Mormons loved them and did not want them to become “angels to the devil.” Satanists, on the other hand, appear to sacrifice people for purely selfish purposes—in e., they feel that the blood of the person sacrificed gives them power.
3. Cutting a person’s throat is believed to be a good way to put a victim to death in satanic rituals. The early Mormons also used this method on many occasions.

While there are a number of parallels between blood atonement and satanic sacrifice, there are some important differences. One of the most important is that the Mormons did not delight in the sacrifice of children. Some Satanists, on the other hand, seem to find the practice of sacrificing children very appealing. It is true that the early Mormons were implicated in murdering a number of children in the Mountain Meadows Massacre, but the Indians were chosen to actually kill most of them. John D. Lee, who carried the white flag of truce to the emigrants, later revealed that just before the massacre, “Major Higbee reported as follows: ‘It is the orders of the President, that all the emigrants must be put out of the way. President Haight has counseled with Colonel Dame . . . none who are old enough to talk are to be spared.”’ (Confessions of John D. Lee, page 232)

On page 237 of the same book, Lee said that the “Indians were to kill the women and large children so that it would be certain that no Mormon would be guilty of shedding innocent blood—if it should happen that there was any innocent blood in the company that were to die. Our leading men all said that there was no innocent blood in the whole company.”

John D. Lee went on to say that after the massacre he learned that a very small child had been killed: “. . . one little child about six months old . . . was killed by the same bullet.
that entered its father’s breast; it was shot through the head. . . . I saw it lying dead when I returned to the place of slaughter” (page 241). On pages 242-244, Lee also claimed that a Mormon by the name of Knight

brained a boy that was about fourteen years old. The boy came running up to our wagons, and Knight struck him on the head with the butt end of his gun, and crushed his skull. . . . Just after the wounded were all killed I saw a girl, some ten or eleven years old, running toward us . . . she was covered with blood. An Indian shot her before she got with-in sixty yards of us. . . . I walked along the line where the emigrants had been killed, and saw many bodies lying dead and naked on the field, near by where the women lay. I saw ten children . . . they were from ten to sixteen years of age . . . When I reached the place where the dead men lay . . . Major Higbee said, “The boys have acted admirably . . . all of the — — Gentiles but two or three fell at the first fire.” He said that three or four got away some distance, but the men on horses soon overtook them and cut their throats.

The killing of children by the early Mormons at Mountain Meadows seems to have stemmed from the belief that it would have been impossible to perpetuate a cover-up if the older children had been saved. As we indicated earlier, we know of no teaching concerning the sacrifice of children by LDS leaders. Moreover, in all of the cases of blood atonement we have studied we do not know of a single case in which a child was murdered as the result of orders coming from the prophet of the Mormon Church. It has, of course, been alleged that Satanists in fairly high positions in the church have been engaged in sacrificing infants, but so far no one has suggested that the top leadership of the church is involved.

As we have noted earlier, Brigham Young taught that the practice of blood atonement was motivated by love—i.e., the victims were actually going to be saved from becoming “angels to the devil” through the sacrifice of their own lives! While it is hard for any Christian or civilized person to accept the Mormon doctrine of blood atonement, the idea of Satanists or other occultists sacrificing innocent children just so that they can gain power is far more appalling.

**RECENT MURDERS**

Although the Mormon Church seems to have abandoned the practice of blood atonement in the 19th century, some of the Mormon Fundamentalists have continued both teaching and practicing the doctrine. There have been a number of assassinations since 1972 in which the victims’ blood was “spilt on the ground.”

In August 1972, Joel LeBaron was murdered. His brother, Ervil LeBaron was arrested and convicted. Unfortunately, Ervil LeBaron’s conviction was later overturned (Salt Lake Tribune, May 29, 1980), and the shedding of blood continued. The Tribune, December 28, 1974, gave this information:

A woman was reported slain Friday in a new outbreak of fighting between rivals in a dissident religious sect . . . first reports indicated a house was set afire and [the] occupants shot as they ran out. . . . Kraus said as many as 10 other persons were reported wounded . . . The LeBaron family was excommunicated from the Church . . . several years before the sect was formed because of what Mormon church officials said was apostasy and polygamy.

In 1975 another murder occurred in California. One of LeBaron’s disciples, Vonda White murdered a man named Dean Grover Vest. According to the Tribune, July 13, 1978, “In his opening statement in the murder and conspiracy trial . . . Rempel said he would prove that she killed Dean Grover Vest . . . by order of LeBaron to achieve ‘blood atonement.’ Vest was planning on ‘defecting’ from the Church of the Lamb of God at the time of the killing . . .” On July 20, 1978, the Tribune revealed that “Sullivan said LeBaron told him that God said ‘to have a woman, Vonda White, to blood atone him . . . She would . . . fix him a hot meal . . . get behind him and shoot him in the back of the head until he was dead.’” Vonda White was convicted and sentenced to “life in prison” for the blood atonement slaying of Mr. Vest.

In April 1975, Ervil LeBaron had Robert Simons assassinated in Utah. LeBaron continued to order the blood atonement of those who would not accept his leadership, and on November 25, 1978, the Salt Lake Tribune reported that, “Investigators have said he may be responsible for between 20 and 29 slayings stemming from his leadership of the Church of the Lamb of God.”

In 1977, LeBaron had Rulon C. Allred, who was also a Mormon Fundamentalist, blood atoned. According to an article printed in the Tribune on March 4, 1979, two women “went into Dr. Allred’s office with guns blazing, shooting the victim seven times . . .” Years later Rena Chynoweth, a member of a team that was sent to kill Allred, revealed her involvement in the murder. In her book, The Blood Covenant, 1990, page 207, she stated: “I knew the moment had come to do what I was sent there to do. . . . I pulled out the gun, and fired at him. There were seven shots in my clip and I emptied it. I heard him gasp, ‘Oh, my God!’ once as he fell to the floor, bleeding.” It should be noted that Rena Chynoweth was one of LeBaron’s thirteen wives. Fortunately, LeBaron was finally brought to justice in May, 1980, for ordering the murder of Dr. Allred, and on August 16, 1981, he was found dead in his cell at the Utah State Prison. An autopsy was performed but the cause of death was not determined.

The Mormon prophet Brigham Young once said that any man who found his “brother in bed with his wife, and put a javelin through both of them would be justified, and . . . would atone for their sins . . . I would at once do so . . . I have no wife whom I love so well that I would not put a javelin through her heart, and I would do it with clean hands. . . .” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 3, page 247). Ervil LeBaron, likewise, believed that in certain cases a man should blood atone his own wife. Lloyd Sullivan claimed that he had been having problems with his wife, Bonnie, and that LeBaron told him the Lord wanted him to take Bonnie to the “deep south and deep-six her there” (Prophet of Blood: The Untold Story of Ervil LeBaron and the Lambs of God, by Ben Bradley, Jr. and Dale Van Atta, 1981, page 273).

Ervil even went so far as to order the death of his own daughter: . . . Lloyd was in the Perth Street warehouse when he noticed Ervil’s pride and joy, a green-over-white LTD, was sagging measurable. “I wonder if Rebecca’s in the trunk,” Ervil commented idly to Lloyd, who opened the trunk about four inches and was stunned to see Rebecca Chynoweth lying there, blood running from her nose. She was obviously dead.

Later, Ervil . . . instructed Lloyd to tell nephew John Sullivan to get a shovel and bring it over to Thelma Chynoweth’s house immediately . . . Don Sullivan . . . would recall that . . . LeBaron was a passenger in a car Don was driving, when Ervil began a conversation with the blunt statement that he had “gotten rid of Rebecca.” . . . “we sent her a one-way ticket,” LeBaron replied, “she couldn’t get along and the Lord ordered to send her a one-way ticket.” . . . Sullivan was still incredulous at the implication. He later confessed “astonishment at the idea that he could kill his own daughter.” . . . he [Sullivan] pressed as if he were a prosecutor . . .
“The Lord ordered her to be blood-atoned, so He had her blood atoned.” LeBaron replied . . . Ervil said, matter-of-factly, “Rebecca is no longer with us.” (Prophet of Blood, pages 229-31)

Ervil LeBaron’s widow, Rena Chynoweth, points out that the death of LeBaron has not stopped the bloodshed:

Ervil never committed any of the murders himself. He didn’t have to. He had loyal followers like us to carry out his “God-given” commands. Like Charles Manson, he stayed behind the scenes, targeting his victims and sending us, his hardcore disciples, out as his executioners. . . . Now that Ervil is dead, some of his own sons have become avenging angels of his will. The blood-stained hand of Ervil LeBaron has reached beyond his grave.

For the past three years my family and I have been in hiding. My name is on a “hit list” Ervil drew up shortly before his death. What was my “crime”? . . . What were the “crimes” of some of the other victims? The answer is that we were traitors, defectors from Ervil’s flock. We committed the unpardonable sin of breaking away from him. In so doing we, in effect, signed our own death warrants. (The Blood Covenant, page 5)

Rena Chynoweth was not exaggerating concerning the danger facing those who fell out of favor with the LeBaron group. On June 28, 1988, the Houston Chronicle reported the death of four people, two of whom were brothers of Rena:

The hand of a dead man reached out to kill Monday. The first to die was Mark Chynoweth, gunned down in his North Houston appliance store. That killing was followed by Chynoweth’s brother, Duane Chynoweth, and Duane’s daughter, Jennifer, executed when they attempted to deliver a washing machine. The fourth to die was Eddie Marston in Irving, yet another former proselyte of a renegade cult leader . . . Ervil LeBaron lies buried in a north Houston grave, but his sons continue to kill.

The LeBarons are not the only ones who have tried to keep the early Mormon teaching of blood atonement alive. Don and Ron Lafferty were once members of the Mormon Church. Ron Lafferty, in fact, claimed that he “served in three bishoprics” (Salt Lake Tribune, August 11, 1984). Ron acknowledged that he began to have an interest in polygamy based on revelation from God, their suffering does not begin the fact that they try to sweep these things under the rug instead of openly dealing with them leaves the door wide open for occultists who wish to penetrate the Mormon Church.

be cut. He asked Ron if they had to do it that way, he asked, “Can’t we just shoot them?” and Ron said, “No, that it had to be done that way.” On January 11, 1985, the Tribune reported: “The woman, while pleading for her daughter’s life . . . had her throat cut from ear to ear, according to testimony in the trial.”

The description of the murders given in the Salt Lake Tribune on January 8, 1985, reminds one of a blood atonement killing in early Utah which was described by John D. Lee:

. . . Daniel Charles Lafferty . . . told companions it was “no problem” to cut the 15-month-old child’s throat as she lay in her crib. “I felt the spirit . . . it was with me,” he said . . . Chief Utah County Attorney Wayne Watson . . . gave jurors a “road map” of the case . . . “They then slashed her [Brenda Lafferty’s] throat with a 10-inch blade . . . and held her head back so the blood would spill from her body.”

Mr. Watson, his voice cracked with emotion, said that then Dan Lafferty took the razor-edged knife “and walked down the hallway to that bedroom—with the baby crying ‘Mommy!’ ‘Mommy!’—and he cut her throat.”

The teachings of the early Mormon Church on human sacrifice, polygamy and incest could easily be used by Satanists to promote their own agenda. Furthermore, the fact that there are people in Utah who are still involved in these practices makes the state a fertile field for satanic worship. While the sexual abuse and sacrifice of children in satanic rituals seems far more evil than blood atonement and plural marriage, it would certainly be easier for those who believe in these teachings of the early Mormon Church to fall into Satanism. It is true, of course, that the current leaders of the Latter-day Saints are trying to suppress some of the more embarrassing teachings of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. Nevertheless, the fact that they try to sweep these things under the rug instead of openly dealing with them leaves the door wide open for occultists who wish to penetrate the Mormon Church.

THERE IS HOPE

While it is very painful for Latter-day Saints to learn that Joseph Smith, Brigham Young and other leaders of the early Mormon Church brought forth doctrines which could not be based on revelation from God, their suffering does not begin to compare with that experienced by victims of satanic ritual abuse. Whether these victims are Mormons, members of other churches or no church at all makes no difference. They suffer such indescribable pain in both their bodies and their minds that many of them commit suicide. For example, on November 17, 1991, The Herald Journal, published in Logan, Utah, printed an obituary which contained the following:

Michelle Tallmadge, 23, died early Saturday morning Nov. 16, 1991, in Logan. . . . In her childhood Michelle was subject to severe ritualistic abuse. When these memories surfaced at a later age she was never able to resolve the memories with who she wanted to be. After four years of unbearable pain she left this life of her own accord.

Many of those who were victims of satanic ritual abuse have admitted that eventually they became so disturbed in their minds that they participated in ceremonies in which human sacrifices occurred. Some, in fact, have acknowledged that they sacrificed their own child in these rituals. Unfortunately, in Mormonism this presents a perplexing problem because Joseph Smith taught:

A murderer, for instance, one that sheds innocent blood, cannot have forgiveness. David sought repentance at the hand
of God . . . for the murder of Uriah; but he could only get it through hell: he got a promise that his soul should not be left in hell. . . . [Murderers] could not be baptized for the remission of sins for they had shed innocent blood. (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 1942, page 339)

One of the authors [Sandra] recalls that in the late 1950’s her teacher at the Mormon Institute of Religion told her he had a friend who had committed murder. This teacher was rather distraught because his Mormon religion really had nothing to offer to this murderer who had been sentenced to death. Even if he fully confessed and repented, he would never be able to dwell with God in the celestial kingdom. According to Joseph Smith’s theology, he would be forever excluded in the telestial kingdom.

Bishop Glenn Pace seemed to grasp the serious implications of the matter. In his memo, page 5, he asked: “What does a priesthood leader tell individuals who come forward and say that they have participated in these rituals—which may include human sacrifice? Should they have a temple recommend? Will they ever be forgiven? . . . Is a person who has been raised in an occult [setting] from infancy accountable for things that take place in a dissociated state, even though those acts were committed after the age of eight? . . . there is no place to go for an answer.”

Mormonism seems to have no clear answers to these questions. Joseph Fielding Smith, the tenth prophet, claimed:

Through the atonement of Christ all mankind may be saved . . . But man may commit certain grievous sins—according to his light and knowledge—that will place him beyond the reach of the atoning blood of Christ . . . Joseph Smith taught that there were certain sins so grievous . . . that they will place the transgressors beyond the power of the atonement of Christ. If these offenses are committed, then the blood of Christ will not cleanse them from their sins even though they repent. (Doctrines of Salvation, 1959, pages 133-35)

In the 1979 printing of his book, Mormon Doctrine, Apostle Bruce R. McConkie still maintained that “there are some serious sins for which the cleansing blood of Christ does not operate . . .” (page 92).

The LDS teaching that the blood of Christ cannot cleanse from all sin is diametrically opposed to the teachings of the Bible. In 1 John 1:7 we read that “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” While Mormon doctrine concerning the atoning blood of Christ is very confusing, orthodox Christianity holds out a real hope for those unfortunate people who have become so deeply entangled in the occult that they have become involved in human sacrifice. The promise of forgiveness is freely available to all. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

It does not matter how evil our life has been; if we turn to the Lord in true repentance, he will take away our sins and give us a new heart filled with love, joy and peace. We simply have to put our full trust in the fact that God loves us and has provided salvation through Jesus Christ: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

If those who have been involved in satanic ritual abuse or human sacrifice will fully turn themselves over to the Lord, they can be completely forgiven. Those who have committed themselves to the Lord can rest in Psalm 103:11-12: “For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” It is a wonderful feeling to know that we are completely at peace with God and that we longer have to feel guilty for the past. This, of course, does not mean that we have a license to sin in the future. God has, in fact, called us to holy living (see Colossians 3:1-17).

While those who have participated in the evils of satanic ritual abuse often have a hard time believing in God or that he can completely forgive their sins, many Mormons and members of other churches have another misconception that can be spiritually fatal: this is the failure to recognize their own sinful nature. The Apostle Paul pointed out the problem in Romans 3:23: “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Since we all have become trapped in our own sin and selfishness, we all stand in danger of losing our souls if we do not turn to the Lord: “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). Everyone of us, therefore, needs to acknowledge our own sinful and desperate condition before God and accept the free gift of salvation which comes through his grace: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8).

Although it is easy for those of us who have never been involved in satanic ritual abuse to condemn the wickedness of those who have become entangled in it, we should remember that it is only through God’s great mercy that we have been kept from the type of environment that leads people to commit such dreadful acts. Had we found ourselves in the same circumstances, it is likely we would have turned out the same way or even worse! If we fail to recognize our own sinful condition, we become as the Pharisee mentioned by Jesus:

Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. (Luke 18:10-14)

CONCLUSION

In pleading with victims and/or perpetrators of the horrors of ritualistic abuse to turn to Jesus for spiritual healing, we do not mean to discourage them from receiving treatment from qualified therapists. The trauma and confusion caused by ritualistic abuse are so severe that those involved in any way really need professional help. We would urge those who even feel that they may have a problem to seek help from those who are qualified. Our readers should pray for the victims and even the perpetrators of this terrible abuse. The investigators and therapists working in the area of ritualistic abuse certainly need a lot of prayer. Besides the tremendous pressure of trying to help the ritually abused, many of those who counsel with them are fearful for their own safety.

We would solicit the prayers of Christians as we continue to pursue the truth about satanic ritualistic abuse. Pray that we will not be deceived about this important matter. We neither want to minimize nor to exaggerate the extent of this evil. We just want to know the truth about the matter. Pray also for our safety as we look into this dark and sinister area of the occult. One
never knows what to expect when prying into illegal activities. For example, when we suggested in the March 1984 issue of the *Messenger* that Mark Hofmann’s “Salamander letter” was a forgery, we had no idea that he would later kill two people to protect his bogus document business.

We are now in the process of preparing a book entitled, *Satanic Ritualistic Abuse and Mormonism*. This book will not only have the important material found in issues 80 and 81 of the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, but it will also contain significant new information concerning the subject. It will of course have Bishop Glenn Pace’s startling memo which set off the controversy regarding the practice of ritualistic abuse in the Mormon Church.

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**THE LIGHTHOUSE NEEDS A HOME!**

As the ministry has continued to expand we have become increasingly aware that Utah Lighthouse Ministry desperately needs a home of its own so that it can effectively meet the needs of the growing number of people who are searching for the truth. Because we ship a large number of books, tracts and tapes throughout the world, some people who visit our bookstore are surprised to learn that we have a relatively small work area. At the present time, in fact, all of the work is done in our own house and in the garage! Besides the fact that we are running out of space to store the material, the bookstore is far from adequate for the number of people who come in to talk or browse. It is only 16 x 12 feet to begin with and the book cases and desk take up part of this area. The room often becomes so crowded that customers leave before they are able to obtain all of the publications or information they need.

Fortunately, a small house next to ours became available and the ministry was able to obtain it. At first we thought the house was unusable and we were preparing to tear it down and use the lot for a new building. Upon further examination, however, we found that under the stucco there is a good brick structure which is of historical interest. It was probably built toward the end of the 19th century.

At the present time we are thinking of removing the stucco and restoring the house. It would make a very good bookstore and would be much larger than the one in our house. In addition, we would like to add on a building at the back of the house where our publishing and shipping operations could be done in a more efficient manner. At the present time we do not have enough money to complete such a project (around $65,000). We would ask our friends to pray for us that if this is the Lord’s will, he will show us how to proceed. We do have eight acres of land on the bank of the Deer Creek Reservoir, in Heber Valley, which was donated to us a number of years ago. Perhaps some of those who believe in our ministry might be interested in buying this land or donating to our building project.

Utah Lighthouse Ministry is a non-profit organization which ministers to many people and provides support for 44 children through World Vision. Those who are interested in helping our ministry can send their tax-deductible contributions to Utah Lighthouse Ministry, P.O. Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110. Contributions and orders can now be made over the phone (801-485-8894) with Visa or MasterCard.

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**Did Abuse Cause Changes in the Temple Ritual?**

In 1990 we published the book, *Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony: 1842-1990*. At that time we had not heard of Bishop Pace’s memo on ritualistic abuse. After we read the memo, however, it seemed obvious that some of the changes made in the ceremony may have stemmed from the fact that satanists were using portions of the ritual in their ceremonies. The reader will remember that Pace said that this caused some of the victims who had been ritualistically abused to have “flashbacks” when they first went through the Mormon temple ritual: “When the victim goes to the temple and hears the exact words, horrible memories are triggered.” We feel that it is very significant that the LDS Church would make major changes in the ritual just before charges of satanic abuse surfaced. In our publication on the temple ceremony the reader can see why some of these changes had to be made. In addition, we have shown that Joseph Smith borrowed a great deal of his ritual from Masonry. This book contains the actual text of the new (1990) version of the highly secret ritual and other accounts of the endowment ritual dating back to 1846. It also shows all the changes recently made in the ceremony. *Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony: 1842-1990* is available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry for only $5.00 a copy — 2 for $9.00 — 5 for $19.00 — 10 for $30.00 (minimum mailing charge $1.50).
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SOLVING THE MYSTERY OF THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPYRI

A book analyzing Joseph Smith’s translation of the “Book of Abraham” has caused a real stir in Utah. It is written by Charles M. Larson and is entitled, By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus: A New Look At The Joseph Smith Papyri. We understand that before the book was offered for sale, about 30,000 copies were sent without charge to members of the Mormon Church. Almost all the homes in one stake received a free copy. One man told us that his bishop was so upset with the book that he warned members of his ward not to read it. This, of course, made the man very curious and he came to our bookstore to purchase a copy.

Mormon scholars seem to be very worried that Larson’s book will cause members to lose faith in the Book of Abraham. The Mormon apologist John Gee, a researcher for the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (F.A.R.M.S.), has written a review of this book which is published in Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, vol. 4, 1992. While Mr. Gee tries very hard to find some way to belittle Mr. Larson and undermine his work, we do not feel that he has successfully answered the major issues. He, in fact, has made his own mistakes.

For example, on pages 93-94 of his article, Mr. Gee quotes from a cover letter which was sent out with copies of Larson’s books. He notes that the letter says that the book contains “the first ever published color photographs of the Joseph Smith papyri collection.” Gee then asserts that this claim is not true and goes on to state:

...the publishers... are mistaken in thinking that they are publishing the first color photographs of the Joseph Smith papyri. They are nearly a quarter century too late for that, for The Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints published a complete set of color photographs of the Joseph Smith papyri in the February 1968 Improvement Era.

While the photographs in the Improvement Era give the appearance of being “color” reproductions of the papyri (we ourselves once thought they were full-color photographs), the printing was apparently done with sepia ink, a dark brown or reddish-brown ink. This worked fairly well because papyrus is basically brown. Unfortunately, however, some of the papyri contain “rubrics”—portions written in red ink. Wherever rubrics appeared on the papyrus, the characters did not reproduce well in the church’s magazine, The Improvement Era. Instead of being red, they appear to be a very light brown and sometimes fade out to the point that they are hardly readable. In the photographs found in Larson’s book, however, real color printing has been used. Consequently, the rubrics come out red and are very readable.

While Michael Marquardt believes John Gee is wrong about the February 1968 issue of the Improvement Era having real color photographs of the papyri, he feels that the cover of another issue did have a color photograph of one fragment of papyrus, Facsimile No. 1.
It is interesting to note that when the church received the papyri on November 27, 1967, church leaders only allowed four or five black and white pictures to be published. Reed Durham, an instructor at the LDS Institute of Religion at the University of Utah asked if we could furnish photographs of all eleven pieces of papyri for the library at the Institute. We replied we could not obtain copies and wondered why he was not able to obtain them from his own church. He stated that when he contacted the church’s Deseret News, he was told they had a large number of copies of photographs of all the Papyri, but had been ordered not to release them. Later, however, Grant Heward was able to obtain photographs from another source after being refused by the Mormon Church. When the Deseret News learned that Mr. Heward had the photographs, it caused a great deal of excitement, and word went out that photographs had fallen into the hands of the enemies of the church. Mormon leaders knew that if they did not release all the photographs, we would print them.

Evidence seems to indicate that there were originally no plans for any pictures of the papyri to appear in the February 1968 issue of the Improvement Era and that the publication of the photographs of the papyri were inserted at the last minute in a hasty and peculiar manner. In the table of contents on page 1 we read that pages “33-48” are devoted to a section called “Era of Youth.” In the midst of this section, beginning at page 40, the Era of Youth abruptly ends and ten pages of photographs of the papyri are inserted. After this the Era of Youth starts again and continues to page 48 as the table of contents indicated. Two pages of the Era of Youth were deleted at the place where the 10 pages of photographs were added. This, of course, created a problem in the page numbers. To solve this the photographs of the papyri are numbered as pages 40, 40-A, 40-B, etc.

This unusual method of producing the February issue of the church’s magazine seems to show that once word got out that our friend Grant Heward had photographs, the church rushed to get them into print. Church leaders certainly did not want these photographs to appear first in the Salt Lake City Messenger! This hasty attempt to get the pictures into print may have made it expedient to use sepia ink instead of going through the added trouble of making full color pictures.

Although we do not have the space here to deal in depth with John Gee’s arguments, we will examine some of his work and also his sensational claim that papyri have been found that contain the name Abraham. Some of Gee’s other arguments about Joseph Smith’s translation of the Book of Abraham have already been refuted in our book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? Chapter 22.

4,000 YEARS OLD?

According to Mormon writers, the “Book of Abraham” was supposed to have been written on papyrus by the Biblical patriarch Abraham about 4,000 years ago! Mormon apologist Sidney B. Sperry said that “the Book of Abraham will some day be reckoned as one of the most remarkable documents in existence . . . the writings of Abraham . . . must of necessity be older than the original text of Genesis” (Ancient Records Testify in Papyrus and Stone, 1938, page 83). Mormon leaders felt the Book of Abraham was so important that they canonized it as scripture and published it in the Pearl of Great Price—one of the four standard works of the church.

The evidence shows that while Joseph Smith had the Egyptian papyri, he allowed many people to freely examine them. This was entirely different from the secretive attitude he had with regard to the “gold plates” from which he translated the Book of Mormon. He was very careful to keep those plates concealed from the general public. Although Joseph Smith let some of his close associates look at the plates, he never allowed experts to examine them. Naturally, this caused many people to wonder if the Mormon prophet really had the plates he described. Others suggested that he may have had some plates which were fabricated to fool his friends and family but that they were neither ancient nor made of gold. In any case, Smith claimed that he eventually returned the plates to the angel who had brought them. Consequently, there is no way to check Smith’s claim that he translated the Book of Mormon from gold plates.

While one has to depend upon Joseph Smith’s own story and the testimony of the Book of Mormon witnesses concerning the plates, in the case of the Book of Abraham it can be established with certainty that Joseph Smith had some ancient Egyptian papyri which were purchased from Michael Chandler while he was in Kirtland, Ohio. While there is no question about the papyri’s authenticity, many people have had serious reservations regarding the accuracy of Smith’s translation. Unfortunately, while Joseph Smith had the papyri in his possession the science of Egyptology was in its infancy. Therefore, Joseph Smith’s work as a translator could not be adequately tested. To make matters worse, after Smith’s death the Mormon Church lost control of the papyri and it was believed that they were destroyed in the Chicago fire.

Since neither the gold plates nor the Egyptian papyri were available, it appeared that Joseph Smith’s ability as a translator would never be tested. However, on November 27, 1967, the church’s Deseret News announced one of the most significant events in Mormon Church history:

NEW YORK—A collection of papyri manuscripts, long believed to have been destroyed in the Chicago fire of 1871, was presented to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints here Monday by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. . . Included in the papyri is a manuscript identified as the original document from which Joseph Smith had copied the drawing which he called “Facsimile No. 1” and published with the Book of Abraham.

After the papyri were recovered by the church, many Mormons felt that Joseph Smith’s work would be vindicated. Church apologist Hugh Nibley, however, was not optimistic about the matter and warned his people that there was trouble ahead. On December 1, 1967, the Daily Universe, published at Brigham Young University, reported these statements by Dr. Nibley:

“The papyri scripts given to the Church do not prove the Book of Abraham is true,” Dr. Hugh Nibley . . . said Wednesday night. “LDS scholars are caught flat footed by this discovery,” he went on to say.

Since Nibley was supposed to be the Mormon Church’s top authority on the Egyptian language, such a pessimistic assessment must have jolted Mormons who read his comments. After all, anyone could see that there were three rows of hieroglyphic writing on the right side of the papyrus which Joseph Smith used as Facsimile No.1 in his Book of Abraham. In addition, another row of hieroglyphic writing appeared on the left side of the papyrus. Since the papyrus was surrounded by Egyptian writing, how could it fail to prove the Book of Abraham? If Joseph Smith really knew how to translate Egyptian, the writing would prove that the scene found in Facsimile No.1 showed “The idolatrous priest of Elkenah attempting to offer up Abraham as a sacrifice.”

As it later turned out, when the writing found on the papyrus was translated by Klaus Baer, Associate Professor of Egyptology at the University of Chicago’s Oriental Institute, it became clear
that the papyrus was a pagan document which had absolutely no relationship to Abraham. The translation, in fact, revealed that the papyrus was really made for a dead man named “Hor”—after the Egyptian god Horus. Experts who have examined this papyrus agree that it is drawing of Osiris, the Egyptian god of the dead, being prepared for burial by the god Anubis. The fact that this is a funerary papyrus is made clear in Dr. Baer’s translation of the line on the left side of the papyrus: “May you give him a good, splendid burial on the West of Thebes just like . . .” (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Autumn 1968, page 117). Since the text of Joseph Smith’s Book of Abraham says that Abraham survived the attempt to take his life, there would have been no reason to speak of burial. Furthermore, the Egyptians would not have given a sacrificial victim a “splendid burial on the West of Thebes.”

Since the Egyptian papyri did not support Joseph Smith’s Book of Abraham, Hugh Nibley was not anxious for a translation to come forth. In the Spring 1968 issue of Brigham Young University Studies, page 251, Dr. Nibley made this revealing comment: “We have often been asked during the past months why we did not proceed with all haste to produce a translation of the papyri the moment they came into our possession. . . . it is doubtful whether any translation could do as much good as harm.”

We were very disappointed with Hugh Nibley’s attempt to make light of the importance of the Joseph Smith Papyri. We turned to Grant Heward who was studying Egyptian at the time. Mr. Heward had been excommunicated from the Mormon Church because he dared to question the authenticity of the Book of Abraham. Heward was convinced that the papyrus Joseph Smith identified as the Book of Abraham was in reality the Egyptian “Book of Breathings”—a pagan document which was actually a condensed version of the “Book of the Dead.” We were impressed with Heward’s argument and printed his observations in the March 1968 issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger. It seemed like a bold move to make at the time, but within a few months the identification was confirmed by leading Egyptologists.

In addition, Mr. Heward prepared the first rendering of some of the text from the Joseph Smith Papyri which we printed in the same issue of the Messenger. The portion he used was taken from what Joseph Smith identified as the Book of Joseph. In reality, however, Mr. Heward demonstrated that it was taken from the Egyptian Book of the Dead. It related to a dead woman “Transforming into a Swallow.”

It is interesting to note that even though the original Joseph Smith Papyri had been found, leaders of the Mormon Church seemed to have had no desire to produce a translation of the papyri for their people. Like Dr. Nibley, they must have felt that it was “doubtful whether any translation could do as much good as harm.” The three Egyptologists who allowed their work to be published by Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought were not commissioned by the church. Dialogue is actually an independent publication which is not controlled by the church and often prints articles that are disturbing to some of the top leaders of the church.

A DEVASTATING FIND

While the discovery that the papyri Joseph Smith believed contained the Book of Abraham and the Book of Joseph were nothing but pagan Egyptian funerary texts came as a great blow to church leaders, a far more distressing development occurred. Within six months from the time the Metropolitan Museum gave the papyri to the church, the Book of Abraham had been proven untrue! The fall of the Book of Abraham was brought about by the identification of the actual fragment of papyrus from which Joseph Smith claimed to translate the book. The identification of this fragment was made possible by a comparison with Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar—handwritten documents we photographically reproduced in 1966. Charles M. Larson gives this information about this matter:

Smith’s “Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar,” as it has come to be called, had never really been lost or missing. For a long time it was simply ignored, and more recently it had been considered restricted. It was among that portion of early Church records the Mormons managed to take with them when they left Nauvoo in 1846, and it was included in the list of materials recorded in the Church Historian’s Office Journal as having been deposited in the Historian’s vault in Salt Lake City in 1855. . . . as late as 1960 . . . Dr. Sperry remarked at BYU’s Pearl of Great Price Conference that he did not know whether or not the Church authorities would yet allow it to be published, adding that he thought “it would be a little premature, perhaps, to do it now, until we can really do a good job of it.”

Others who had occasion to come into contact with the material apparently disagreed with the Church’s reluctance in the matter. Late in 1965 a microfilm copy of the entire work was “leaked” to Jerald and Sandra Tanner of Modern Microfilm Company (now Utah Lighthouse Ministry). The Tanners were former Mormons who were rapidly gaining a reputation for printing documents relating to Mormonism that, though authentic, made Church officials uncomfortable. By 1966 the Tanners had produced the first complete photomechanical reprint and transcription of the entire Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar. But contrary to what most Mormons evidently expected, publication of the Alphabet and Grammar in no way substantiated Joseph Smith’s ability to translate ancient Egyptian. Quite the opposite, for the book turned out to be nothing but page after page of nonsensical gibberish. Though it had apparently succeeded at one time in impressing unsophisticated minds, the work was unable to withstand the scrutiny of experts.

Professional Egyptologists to whom the Alphabet and Grammar was submitted for examination were quick to point out that the material in Joseph Smith’s notebook bore no resemblance at all to any correct understanding of the ancient Egyptian language. As one of them, I. E. Edwards, put it, the whole work was “largely a piece of imagination and lacking in any kind of scientific value.” He added that it reminded him of “the writings of psychic practitioners which are sometimes sent to me.” (By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus, pages 42-43)

When characters in the original Egyptian papyri were compared with those copied into the translation manuscripts of the Book of Abraham, found in Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar, it became apparent that one piece of papyrus supplied the characters which Joseph Smith claimed to translate as the Book of Abraham! This papyrus was identified in the Mormon Church’s publication Improvement Era, February 1968, page 40-I, as “XI. Small ‘Sensen’ text (unillustrated).” We presented photographic evidence that Joseph Smith used the “Sensen” text to create his Book of Abraham in the March 1968 issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger. In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? we have additional proof that Smith used this papyrus. Surprisingly, Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, asked us to work with Grant Heward to prepare an article presenting the evidence. This article, “The Source of The Book of Abraham Identified,” was published in Dialogue, Summer 1968, pages 92-98.

Egyptologist Klaus Baer accepted this identification without question. Speaking of the “Sensen” papyrus, Dr. Baer wrote:
“Joseph Smith thought that this papyrus contained the Book of Abraham” (*Ibid.,* page 111). In footnote 11 of the same article, Professor Baer observed: “This identification is now certain.” Mormon scholar Richley Crapo spoke of “the startling fact that one of the papyri of the Church collection, known as the Small Sen-Sen Papyrus, contained the same series of hieratic symbols, which had been copied, in the same order, into the Book of Abraham manuscript next to verses of that book! In other words, there was every indication that the collection of papyri in the hands of the Church contained the source which led to a production of the Book of Abraham” (*Book of Abraham Symposium, LDS Institute of Religion, Salt Lake City, April 3, 1970,* page 27).

Although Mormon apologist Hugh Nibley later reversed his position in a desperate attempt to save the Book of Abraham, in 1968 he frankly admitted that Joseph Smith used the “Sensen” papyrus for the text of the Book of Abraham. At a meeting held at the University of Utah on May 20, 1968, Dr. Nibley made these comments:

> Within a week of the publication of the papyri, students began calling my attention . . . to the fact that, the very definite fact that, one of the fragments seemed to supply all of the symbols for the Book of Abraham. This was the little “Sensen” scroll. Here are the symbols. The symbols are arranged here, and the interpretation goes along here and this interpretation turns out to be the Book of Abraham. Well, what about that? Here is the little “Sensen,” because that name occurs frequently in it, the papyrus in which a handful of Egyptian symbols was apparently expanded in translation to the whole Book of Abraham. This raises a lot of questions. It doesn’t answer any questions, unless we’re mind readers.

At one point Dr. Nibley became so desperate to save the Book of Abraham that he suggested the “Sensen” text may have a second meaning unknown to Egyptologists (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 319-320).

In his article in *Dialogue,* pages 111-113, Egyptologist Klaus Baer set forth another serious problem confronting those who would try to save the Book of Abraham: the papyrus Joseph Smith identified as Facsimile No. 1 from the Book of Abraham was originally part of the same scroll which contained the “Sensen” text—i.e., they were both part of the Book of Breathings. The two pieces had been cut apart in Joseph Smith’s time and mounted on paper, but Dr. Baer demonstrated that they fit together perfectly. Dr. Hugh Nibley later acknowledged that they were both part of the Book of Breathings: “It can be easily shown by matching up the cut edges and fibres of the papyri that the text of the Joseph Smith ‘Breathing’ Papyrus (No. XI) was written on the same strip of material as Facsimile No. 1 and immediately adjoining it” (*The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: an Egyptian Endowment,* 1975, page 13).

The text of the Book of Abraham itself demonstrates that the drawing appearing as Facsimile No. 1 was supposed to be at the beginning of the scroll just as Professor Baer’s research has revealed. The original manuscripts of the Book of Abraham, as they appear in *Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar,* reveal that Joseph Smith was using characters from the “Sensen” papyrus when he “translated” the first chapter of the Book of Abraham. In Abraham 1:12 the patriarch Abraham was supposed to have said the following: “And it came to pass that the priests laid violence upon me, that they might slay me also, as they did those virgins upon this altar; and that you may have a knowledge of this altar, I will refer you to the representation at the commencement of this record.” It is clear, therefore, that the picture shown as Facsimile No.1 was the start of the papyrus scroll, and that Joseph Smith was claiming to translate from the very next portion—the Small “Sensen” text.

A larger “Sensen” text follows the Small “Sensen” text. The name “Abraham” does not appear on any of the three pieces of papyri. On the other hand, the Egyptian name Hor appears on every piece. We have found it in at least nine places. Although the original piece of papyrus Joseph Smith used to prepare Facsimile No. 3 is missing, Egyptologists have also found the name “Hor” on the printed facsimile. Professor Baer believes the scene shown in Facsimile No. 3 ended the Book of Breathings which was prepared for the man Hor who had died and needed the magical papyrus which contained the charms which were necessary to reach the “world of the hereafter.”

Hugh Nibley was willing to concede that Facsimile No. 3 was probably part of the original Book of Breathings scroll:

> For the Book of Breathings is before all else, as Bonnet observes, a composite, made up of “compilations and excerpts from older funerary sources and mortuary formulas.” . . .

Of particular interest to us is the close association of the Book of Breathings with the Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham. . . . the text of Joseph Smith Pap. No. XI was written on the same strip of material as Facsimile Number 1; the writing begins immediately to the left of the “lion-couch” scene. The British Museum Book of Breathings[s], “the Kerasher Papyrus,” has both the “lion-couch” scene . . . and a scene resembling our Facsimile Number 3 . . . This stands at the head of the “Kerasher” text, and suggests that our Fac. No. 3 was originally attached at the other end of the Joseph Smith Papyrus, coming after the last column, which is missing . . . the Book of Breathings . . . contains the essential elements of the Egyptian funerary rites from the earliest times . . . The Book of Breathings is not to be dismissed, as it has been, as a mere talisman against stinking corpses; it is a sermon on breathing in every Egyptian sense of the word. (*Brigham Young University Studies,* Winter 1971, pages 158, 160, 162, 164, 166)

All of the evidence adds up to the inescapable conclusion that although Joseph Smith claimed to translate the Book of Abraham from the papyrus he had in his possession, the words that he dictated came from his own imagination. That papyrus, in fact, contains a pagan text having nothing to do with Abraham or his religion. We have counted the names of at least fifteen Egyptian gods or goddesses which appear on the papyrus but it contains absolutely nothing regarding the God of the Bible.

Since the Joseph Smith Papyri were rediscovered and translated by Egyptologists, a number of prominent Mormon scholars seem to have been living in a fantasyland with regard to the Book of Abraham. Instead of facing the truth about Joseph Smith’s work, they have come up with a number of incredible explanations. Dr. Hugh Nibley has led the parade by setting forth all sorts of reasons why a person should go on believing the Book of Abraham even though the evidence clearly shows it is the work of Joseph Smith’s own imagination. Since the discovery of the papyri in 1967, Professor Nibley has stubbornly fought against the truth with regard to the Book of Abraham. Although he put up many smoke screens to try to divert attention from the real issues, he has not been successful in silencing the opposition. In *Sunstone,* December 1979, Edward Ashment, a Mormon Egyptologist who has worked in the Translation Department of the church, demonstrated that Dr. Nibley’s work on the Joseph Smith Papyri was filled with serious errors. He, in fact, demolished Nibley’s arguments at every turn.

In a response, published in the same issue, Hugh Nibley acknowledged that “Since hearing Brother Ashment I have to
make some changes in what I have said already” (Ibid., page 51). On page 49 of the same article, we find this startling statement coming from the church’s chief apologist for the Book of Abraham: “I refuse to be held responsible for anything I wrote more than three years ago.”

GEE’S MAGICAL PAPYRI

One of the more desperate attempts to save the Book of Abraham is the attempt to link it to late magical papyri. John Gee, the Mormon apologist who has criticized Charles Larson’s book, has been trying very hard to promote this view. On page 116 of his rebuttal to Larson, John Gee reported: “David Cameron discovered an Egyptian lion couch scene much like Facsimile I explicitly mentioning the name Abraham.” Mr. Gee has provided research on this subject for an article published by F.A.R.M.S. and has also prepared an article for the church’s magazine, The Ensign.

The “lion couch scene” Gee speaks of is found in the Leiden Papyrus I 384. The F.A.R.M.S. article concerning this matter caused some Mormons to be very excited because it stated that the “lion couch scene” shows “Anubis standing over a person . . .” (Insight: An Ancient Window, September 1991, page 1). Many were undoubtedly led to believe that the “person” on the couch must be Abraham as shown in Facsimile No. 1 of the Book of Abraham. Unfortunately for Mormon apologists, this has not turned out to be the case. Mormon Egyptologist Edward Ashment claimed that it was actually a woman who was lying on the couch. In his article published in The Ensign, July 1992, page 61, John Gee acknowledged that this is the case: “the figure on the lion couch in this papyrus is a woman.”

While many Mormon apologists have argued that Facsimile No. 1 shows a priest with a human head attempting to sacrifice Abraham, it has been obvious to Egyptologists for many years that the standing figure is really the jackal-headed god Anubis preparing the deceased for burial. The rediscovery of the Joseph Smith Papyri shows that the head was missing on the original papyrus, and it is clear that Joseph Smith made an imaginative restoration which is incorrect. In the papyrus John Gee speaks of it is obvious that the woman is being attended by the jackal-headed god. As we have shown, the article in Insights plainly states that it is “Anubis standing over a person . . .”

In The Ensign, Mr. Gee reveals that even the text speaks of the jackal-headed god:

Later in the text we read, “I adjure you spirits of the dead, [by] the dead (pharaohs) and the demon Balsamos and the jackal-headed god and the gods who are with him." . . . The “jackal-headed god” is most likely Anubis, who usually officiates in lion couch scenes . . .

It is obvious, then, that this papyrus provides no support for the sacrificial scene found in Facsimile No. 1.

If this papyrus were dated 2,000 years earlier, the discovery of the name Abraham on it might be significant. It, of course, would not prove the Book of Abraham to be true, but would merely establish that the name “Abraham” was known in Egypt at that time.

One of the problems with the Book of Breathings Papyrus—the text Joseph Smith believed was the Book of Abraham—is that it is not old enough to have been written by Abraham. According to Josiah Quincy, Joseph Smith claimed that the papyrus he had contained the very handwriting of Abraham himself. “That is the handwriting of Abraham, the father of the Faithful . . .” (See Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 321 for additional evidence concerning this matter). A number of Mormon scholars feel that Abraham lived in the twentieth century B.C.

When the Joseph Smith Papyri were rediscovered, it soon became obvious that they were not nearly old enough to support Joseph Smith’s claims concerning the Book of Abraham. Dr. Hugh Nibley admitted that the Book of Breathings only dated back to the first century: “. . . It has now become apparent . . . that our Joseph Smith Book of Breathings is one of a very special and limited and uniquely valuable class of documents clustering around a single priestly family of upper Egypt in the first century A.D.” (The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment, 1975, page 3). Since the Book of Breathings—which, of course, contains the drawing Joseph Smith used for Facsimile No. 1 in his Book of Abraham—was written about 2,000 years after the time of Abraham, the Mormon Church is faced with a serious dilemma.

The magical texts which John Gee uses as evidence for the Book of Abraham present an even greater problem. In the article published in Insights, page 1, it is claimed that the texts “date to about the same time as the Joseph Smith papyri.” According to Edward Ashment, however, they were not written until the third century A.D. In his article published in The Ensign, page 60, Mr. Gee agrees they date “to the third century A.D. . . . “ As we will show, they are so far removed from the time of Abraham that they are of no value.

In 1978 Morton Smith published a book entitled, Jesus The Magician. While we disagreed with his conclusion that Jesus was a magician (see Salt Lake City Messenger, January 1986), Professor Smith presented a great deal of material concerning the type of magical papyri we are dealing with here.

Although we know that Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, the Bible indicates that many of them desired to return. By the fifth century B.C. there was a colony of Jews living at Elephantine in Egypt. Even though these Jews built a temple, it “has been argued by some scholars that the Jerusalem priests regarded the Jews in Egypt as semi-heretical, and therefore did not encourage them in their apostasy” (The Bible and Archaeology, by J. A. Thompson, 1962, page 226).

In any case, we know that by the time of Jesus there was a large Jewish population in Egypt, which was at that time a Roman province. Jesus, himself, was brought to Egypt by his father and mother to escape the rage of Herod. On page 62 of his book, Jesus The Magician, Morton Smith says that “There was a long standing legend that the god of the Jews was a donkey, or donkey-headed. . . . The Jews were among the largest groups of foreigners in Egypt, so their god, Iao, was identified with Seth.”

F. F. Bruce says that “Philo of Alexandria estimated about A.D. 38 that there were at least a million Jews in Egypt and the neighboring territories. We may subject this figure to a substantial discount, but the Jewish population of Egypt was certainly very great. In Alexandria itself at that time one out of the five wards of the city was entirely Jewish and a second was very largely so” (New Testament History, 1980, page 136). Bruce felt that “Christianity had found its way to Alexandria by A.D. 41” (Ibid., page 294).

It is obvious that there would have been a good deal of information available in Egypt concerning the God of Israel and important Biblical characters long before the magical papyri were written. It is no surprise, then, that the names of prominent individuals mentioned in the Bible turn up in the magical texts written in the third century A.D. Many of those who practiced magic wanted to use the names of as many gods and religious leaders as possible and seemed to have little concern about mixing the Hebrew God and Biblical characters with Egyptian gods. C. K. Barrett observed: “Those in particular who practiced magic were willing to

On pages 34-35, Barrett quotes from the Paris Magical Papyrus, written about A.D. 300. This text tells how to exorcise demons. We cite the following from this lengthy text:

The adjuration is this: “I adjure thee by the god of the Hebrews Jesu [Jesus], Jaba, Jae, Abraoth, Aia, Thoth, Ele, Elo, Aeо, Eu, Jibaech, Abarmas, Jabarau, Abelbel, Lona, Abra, Maro . . . I adjure thee by him who appeared unto Osrael [Israel] in the pillar of light and in the cloud by day, and who delivered his word from the taskwork of Pharaoh and brought upon Pharaoh the ten plagues because he heard not. I adjure thee, every daemonic spirit, say whatsoever thou art. For I adjure thee by the seal which Solomon laid upon the tongue of Jeremiah and he spake . . . I adjure thee by the great God Sabaoth, through whom the river Jordan returned backward . . . ”

The reader will notice that the author mixed Jesus in with the Egyptian god Thoth. It is hardly surprising, then, that we would find the name Abraham—one of the most important characters in the Bible—mentioned in the magical papyri. On page 114 of his book, Morton Smith pointed out that, “Jesus’ name was used in spells as the name of a god. So were the names of Adam (PGM III. 146), Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of Moses and Solomon who were famous as magicians.”

On page 63, Morton Smith quotes PGM IV, line 1233:

“Be blessed, God of Abraham. Be blessed, God of Isaac. Be blessed, God of Jacob. Jesus Christ, holy spirit, son of the Father, who art under the Seven and in the Seven, bring Iao Sabaoth. May your power increase . . . until you drive out this evil demon, Satan.”

On page 69, we find this statement by Smith: “The Jew’s God, Yahweh . . . was particularly famous for his usefulness in magic. In the magical papyri (which contains a sprinkling of Jewish spells, but are mainly pagan documents) his name outnumbers that of any other deity by more than three to one.” Smith quotes the following from “an invocation of the world ruler the Good Demon”: “For I have taken to myself the power of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and of the great god-demon Iao Ablanathanalba” (page 102).

In the article published in The Ensign, page 60, John Gee notes that there is a similarity between a verse in the Bible and the magic names used in the papyri. He says: “The first reference occurs in a chapter on how to make a signet ring. One of the steps is to ‘bring a white stone’ and ‘write this name upon it . . . Abraham, friend of m[an].’” This, of course, is similar to Revelation 2:17, which speaks of “a white stone, and in the stone a new name written . . .” It is interesting to note that this is the only mention of “a white stone” in the entire Bible.

The fact that both documents mention “a white stone” with a “name” written on it seems too close to be a coincidence. The book of Revelation, of course, was not written until about A.D. 90. This would be around 2,000 years after the time of Abraham. The implications of this quotation from the book of Revelation in the papyrus are clear: the author of the text in the magical papyrus must have either seen or heard someone read from the book of Revelation. Once it is conceded that the author was acquainted with the book of Revelation, then it is also easy to believe that he or she had access to other information contained in Bible manuscripts and would have known about Abraham. It should also be noted that the magical papyrus speaks of “Abraham, friend of m[an].” This sounds like a quotation from the book of James, which speaks of Abraham as “the Friend of God” (James 1:23).

Speaking of the same papyrus, John Gee says:

“ . . . second instance of Abraham’s name occurs in a description of how to use a ring to obtain “success and grace and victory.” As a part of his invocation, the petitioner says, “O mighty god, who surpasseth all powers, I call upon thee, Ioa, Sabaoth, Adonai, Elohim, [six other names], Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, [82 more names].” The first four names are Hebrew for “LORD of hosts, my Lord, God.” (The Ensign, July 1992, page 60)

The brackets found in the quotation above appear in the original publication. From this it is clear that the name Abraham in this section of the text was only one of ninety-five names that were being invoked! It would appear, then, that the name Abraham was just one of many magic names needed so that the person who recited the spell would be able to use “a ring to obtain ‘success and grace and victory.’”

There seems to be no evidence that the name Abraham came from any ancient Egyptian source or that it had anything to do with the Book of Abraham. Although John Gee’s writings may have given some members of the Mormon Church the idea that evidence had been found to support Joseph Smith’s translation, when the facts are known, it is clear that the magical papyri, dating to the third century A.D., provide absolutely no support for the Book of Abraham. Mr. Gee’s attempt to make a case from these second-rate papyri tends to show how empty-handed Mormon apologists are when it comes to defending the Book of Abraham. Mormon scholars cannot find the name of Abraham on any part of the papyrus which Joseph Smith claimed was written by Abraham himself and even contained Abraham’s own signature. Therefore, they have turned to magical papyri which were written two centuries after the text Smith translated as the Book of Abraham. We find it especially strange that they would make an issue of the name Abraham on other papyri, when it cannot be found on the papyrus scroll Joseph Smith designated as the Book of Abraham.

On page 62 of his article in The Ensign, John Gee acknowledges that the texts he has cited do not really inform us about Abraham or his history:

“Although the Mormon Egyptologist Michael D. Rhodes translated Facsimile No. 2 of the Book of Abraham, he found nothing regarding Abraham. Nevertheless, he has still tried to defend Joseph Smith’s work. Writing in the church’s magazine, The Ensign, July 1988, pages 51-53, Rhodes tried to answer the following question: “Why doesn’t the translation of the Egyptian papyri found in 1967 match the text of the Book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price?” In this article Michael Rhodes clearly laid out the problem which faced the church: “First of all, from paleographic and historical considerations, the Book of Breathsings papyrus can reliably be dated to around A.D. 60—much too late for Abraham to have written it. . . . when one compares the text of the book of Abraham with a translation of the Book of Breathsings; they clearly are not the same.”

Rhodes then proceeds to give possible explanations why the text of the recently discovered papyri does not match the
text in the *Pearl of Great Price.*” One of Rhode’s suggestions is that the “copy of Abraham’s record” which Joseph Smith used “possibly passed through the hands of many scribes and had become editorially corrupted to the point where it may have had little resemblance to the original . . .” For this reason Joseph Smith may have used the “Urim and Thummim, or simply through revelation” revealed what Abraham had originally written.

Michael Rhodes was chosen to write two articles for the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism.* In vol. 1, page 136, Rhodes set forth the idea that Joseph Smith chose pagan drawings as illustrations for his Book of Abraham: “in summary, Facsimile 1 formed the beginning, and Facsimile 3 the end of a document known as the Book of Breathings, an Egyptian religious text . . . The association of these facsimiles with the book of Abraham might be explained as Joseph Smith’s attempt to find illustrations from the papyri he owned that most closely matched what he had received in revelation when translating the Book of Abraham.”

In a letter to a member of the Mormon Church who was troubled with regard to the origin of the Book of Abraham, Michael Rhodes spoke of a theory he proposed in his article in the *Ensign,* July 1988, page 51. Rhodes had stated that it was possible that the Book of Abraham “may have been taken from a different portion of the papyri rolls in Joseph Smith’s possession.” In the letter, however, Rhodes made it clear that he no longer considered that as a very promising option. He went on to give more information concerning the idea that the Book of Abraham did not really come from the papyrus scroll in Joseph Smith’s possession:

> Before I start, let me say that I . . . like you, definitely favor the second; namely that Joseph Smith did not have the actual text of the Book of Abraham before him, but that it was revealed to him . . . The first option I proposed seems pretty unlikely to me now. There is no doubt that the original Papyrus of Facsimile Number 1 belongs to the Book of Breathings text. The name of the owner of the Papyrus, Hor son of Userwer, is found both on this papyrus and in the text of the Book of Breathings . . . although we do not have the original of Facsimile Number 3, the name Hor can clearly be read in the hieroglyphs on this facsimile, and it seems very probable that this illustration was originally located at the end of the Book of Breathings papyrus now in the Church’s possession. I am not ruling it out completely, but I think it is unlikely that Joseph Smith ever had the actual text of the Book of Abraham in his possession . . . This still leaves us with the problem of how Facsimile Number 1, a commonly found representation of the god Anubis preparing the body of Osiris (or the deceased) for burial, that is part of an Egyptian funerary document that was produced nearly 2000 years (about 60 A.D.) after Abraham, can possibly be the illustration Abraham refers to in his book. The best explanation I have for this is that in the original papyrus Abraham, had drawn an illustration of himself being sacrificed on an altar by the priest of Elkenah. In the process of translation, this illustration was revealed to Joseph Smith and he saw that it was similar to the one found at the beginning of the Book of Breathings. Joseph Smith therefore used it (with some modifications) as Facsimile Number One. One of the most obvious modifications is the changing of the head of the god Anubis (who has a jackal’s head) to that of a man. Another is putting a knife in the standing figures hand. (Both the head and the knife are missing in the papyrus as it exists today.)

Joseph Smith may have used the other facsimiles found in the Book of Abraham similarly. I certainty don’t claim this is the only possible explanation; it is simply the best I have been able to come up with so far.

(Letter by Michael D. Rhodes, dated July 10, 1988)

This extraordinary letter gives the reader an idea of how far some Mormon scholars will go in their attempt to save the Book of Abraham. It is also interesting to note that after writing this letter, Michael Rhodes seems to have changed his mind again concerning the question of whether Joseph Smith really had the Book of Abraham papyrus. In his article published in the *Ensign,* July 1988, page 51, Rhodes had held out the hope that the Book of Abraham may “have been taken from a different portion of the papyri rolls in Joseph Smith’s possession”—a portion which has since disappeared.

By the time he wrote the letter cited above, however, he had decided that Smith probably “did not have the actual text of the Book of Abraham before him . . . I think it is unlikely that Joseph Smith ever had the actual text of the Book of Abraham in his possession.” To our surprise, when we read an article by Michael Rhodes printed in *Review of Books,* vol. 4, 1992, we discovered that he seems to have reverted to the idea that Joseph Smith may have had a roll of papyrus. On page 122, Rhodes claimed that “a contemporary source indicates that the scroll of the book of Abraham was not part of the papyri fragments now in the possession of the Church.”

He cites from a letter written by Charlotte Haven in 1843. Haven claimed that Joseph Smith’s mother “opened a long roll of manuscript, saying it was ‘the writing of Abraham and Isaac, written in Hebrew and Sanscrit,’ and she read several minutes from it as if it were English.” Because the papyri the church now has in its possession were supposed to have been cut into sheets by this time and therefore could not have been a “long roll of manuscript,” Rhodes seems to conclude that there was a third roll of papyrus which has been lost. This interpretation, which is also held by John Gee, is erroneous. Significant evidence points to the conclusion that there were only two rolls of papyrus. Joseph Smith’s History contains this information: “On opening the coffins, he [Mr. Chandler] discovered . . . something rolled up . . . which, when examined, proved to be two rolls of papyrus, previously mentioned. Two or three other small pieces of papyrus, with astronomical calculations, epitaphs, &c., were found with others of the mummies” (*History of the Church,* vol. 2, page 349).

Although the text mentions that there were “Two or three other small pieces of papyrus,” Joseph Smith never identifies a third roll of papyrus. Furthermore, while Charlotte Haven’s statement contains some interesting information, it contains a number of factual errors. She says that Mother Smith told Haven that the roll contained the “writing of Abraham and Isaac written in Hebrew and Sanscrit.” Mormon leaders have never claimed that the Book of Abraham was written in “Hebrew and Sanscrit.” Joseph Smith’s History makes it abundantly clear that the Book of Abraham was supposed to be written in “Egyptian characters” (*History of the Church,* vol. 2, page 320).

While Haven’s account says that the roll was written by “Abraham and Isaac,” to our knowledge, Joseph Smith did not claim that Isaac wrote anything in the Book of Abraham. As early as 1969, the Mormon scholar Jay M. Todd saw the discrepancies in Haven’s account and made this observation: “One wonders if Sister Smith were not just throwing out names of languages she had heard; or, one wonders if Charlotte is reporting accurately. Until more evidence is gathered, the sum and value of Charlotte’s report remains clouded on several issues” (*The Saga of the Book of Abraham,* by Jay M. Todd, page 249).

Jay Todd also noted the discrepancy with regard to Haven’s claim that Lucy Smith opened a roll of papyrus. The preponderance of the evidence shows that both rolls had been cut up by the time Charlotte Haven saw them. Her statement,
of course, could be reconciled by claiming that what she meant was that Lucy Smith laid out the various pieces of the document side-by-side so that it appeared in the same order as when the roll was first opened up.

In our book, The Case Against Mormonism, vol. 2, pages 121-122, we give four different accounts by people who saw the original papyri in Nauvoo. Besides citing the letter by Charlotte Haven, we have included accounts by Josiah Quincy, Henry Caswall and an account appearing in a newspaper known as The Quincy Whig. These accounts are written in the period from 1840 to 1844. Charlotte Haven’s account is the only one which talks of “a long role of manuscript” being opened. Because the manuscripts were so very fragile (a number of pieces had already broken off), it would not seem reasonable that Lucy Smith would unroll them time after time to display them to the many visitors who came to see the papyri.

As early as 1840, The Quincy Whig, reported that there were “numerous fragments of Egyptian papyrus” which were in “several frames, covered with glass.” The same paper reported that Joseph Smith said: “‘These ancient records . . . have been unrolled and preserved with great labor and care’” (The Quincy Whig, October 17, 1840, as cited in Ancient Records Testify in Papyrus and Stone, pages 51-52).

When Caswall examined the papyri in 1842, he found the rolls had been cut into “sheets of papyrus” and were kept in “glazed slides, like picture frames” (The City of the Mormons; or, Three Days at Nauvoo, in 1842, pages 22-23).

Both these accounts were written before Charlotte Haven’s letter was penned in 1843. The other account, however, was written by Josiah Quincy, who visited Joseph Smith in 1844. He also claimed that the papyri “were preserved under glass and handled with great respect” (Figures of the Past, 1883, as cited in Among the Mormons, page 136).

In his article in Review of Books, pages 121-122, Michael Rhodes used a statement made by Caswall to support his argument that there may be a third role of papyrus containing the Book of Abraham: “In 1842, the fragments we now have were described as being mounted in ‘a number of glazed slides, like picture frames, containing sheets of papyrus, with Egyptian inscriptions and hieroglyphics.’” He then proceeded to quote Charlotte Haven’s letter to support his thesis of a third roll. If Rhodes had cited more of Caswall’s statement, his argument would have fallen apart. Henry Caswall made it very clear that the very sheets that had been cut up contained the Book of Abraham. We quote the following from Caswall’s book, pages 22-23:

> The storekeeper . . . drew forth a number of glazed slides, like picture frames, containing sheets of papyrus, with Egyptian inscriptions and hieroglyphics. These had been unrolled from four mummies, which the prophet purchased at a cost of twenty-four hundred dollars. By some inexplicable mode, as the storekeeper informed me, Mr. Smith had discovered that these sheets contained the writings of Abraham, written with his own hand while in Egypt. Pointing to the figure of a man lying on a table, he said, “that is the picture of Abraham on the point of being sacrificed. That man standing by him with a drawn knife is an idolatrous priest of the Egyptians.”

It seems obvious from this that Joseph Smith did not possess another roll of papyrus.

John Gee uses the exact argument found in Rhodes’ article on page 107 of his review of Larson’s book. Like Rhodes, Gee fails to provide the important context. He does, however, use the last two sentences of the quote we have cited from Caswall five pages earlier in his article while trying to prove another point (see page 102). Unfortunately, however, even on page 102 he uses ellipsis signs (dots) to omit the statement that “Mr. Smith had discovered that these sheets contained the writings of Abraham, written with his own hand while in Egypt.”

Because of the amount of material between the two quotes and the omission of the important portion regarding the fact that the Book of Abraham roll had been cut into sheets, it is doubtful that one person in a thousand would ever know that Gee’s quotation actually refuted what he was trying to prove.

Many Mormon scholars would probably charge us with dishonesty if we did this sort of thing. In any case, an examination of some of the wording in Gee’s quotation with that found in Rhodes’ article seems to show that one scholar borrowed from the other. Below is a comparison:

> In 1842, the fragments we now have in the Joseph Smith Papyri were mounted in “a number of glazed slides, like picture frames, containing sheets of papyrus, with Egyptian inscriptions and hieroglyphics.” The next year, in 1843, a nonmember named Charlotte Haven visited Lucy Mack Smith and wrote a letter to her own mother about it: “Then she [Mother Smith] turned to a long table . . .” (John Gee, Review of Books, page 107)

> In 1842, the fragments we now have were described as being mounted in “a number of glazed slides, like picture frames, containing sheets of papyrus, with Egyptian inscriptions and hieroglyphics.” The next year, in 1843, Charlotte Haven, a nonmember, visited Joseph Smith’s mother, Lucy Mack Smith and wrote a letter to her own mother about it, saying: “Then she [Mother Smith] turned to a long table . . .” (Michael Rhodes, Review of Books, pages 121-122)

It would appear from the comparison above that one of these two authors did the original research on this quotation but failed to realize that if the quote from Caswall was taken in its entirety, it would refute the entire argument that there was another roll of papyrus. The other author then blindly followed the first into the ditch. We, of course, do not know who made the original mistake, but feel that it resulted from an overzealous attempt to save the Book of Abraham.

Even if Rhodes and Gee could have established that there was a third papyrus, it would not have solved the serious problem faced by the church. The reader will remember that in the Book of Abraham, 1:12, Abraham was supposed to have said that he included a drawing of the attempt to slay him “at the commencement of this record.” Now, it is obvious to all who examine the matter that the drawing in the Book of Abraham matches the drawing found in Hor’s Book of Brethreaths. Both John Gee and Michael Rhodes acknowledge this to be true.

If, then, Joseph Smith had another roll of papyrus which really contained the Book of Abraham, why did he not use the drawing which Abraham himself said he placed at the beginning of that roll? Why would Smith switch over to the pagan Book of Brethreaths and use an illustration (Fac. No. 1) from that roll? The problem goes even deeper: why would the prophet include Fac. No. 3 at the end of the record? The reader will remember that Michael Rhodes said that “the name Hor can clearly be read in the hieroglyphs” on Fac. No. 3 and that this drawing was probably “originally located at the end of the Book of Brethreaths papyrus.” In addition, Smith added Fac. No. 2 in the middle. As we have shown, this is also a pagan document. In the first printing of the Book of Abraham in the Times and Seasons, Joseph Smith called every one of these drawings “A Facsimile From The Book of Abraham.”
The thesis set forth by Rhodes and Gee would actually lead one to believe that the prophet rejected the drawing Abraham himself put at the beginning of his record and added a substitute and two other drawings created by idol worshippers! This in itself would show that Joseph Smith was not inspired when he produced the Book of Abraham.

Brigham Young University scholar James R. Harris concluded that the papyri rediscovered in 1967 did not vindicate Joseph Smith’s work and turned to the idea that the Book of Abraham came through revelation, not through a translation of the papyrus scroll. He even warns members of the church against holding out the hope that a papyrus manuscript may yet be found that will confirm Joseph Smith’s work:

Facsimiles 1 and 3 were created from separate vignettes of a single Sensen text. Facsimile 2 was created from a disk-shaped amulet that was placed under the head of the deceased . . .

It is important to understand, precisely speaking, that in their original context, these illustrations have no connection with the Book of Abraham. The three facsimiles are, in fact, reproductions of real Egyptian documents. (The Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham, A Study of the Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri, 1990, page 5)

These two scrolls appear to have been regarded by Church leadership as scrolls of Abraham and Joseph. An understanding of the content of the papyrus fragments and the manner in which they were used by Joseph and Oliver, makes it very improbable that there are now or ever were any other Abraham or Joseph scrolls in the Joseph Smith Egyptian collection.

If we had some of the missing fragments of these documents there is every reason to believe that they would contain more of the same material as that on the present fragments: spells and formulas to protect the deceased and insure his or her continuation in the future state. . . .

As a caution, if the hope of acquiring an Egyptian text of Abraham is perpetuated as a major possibility, the perpetrators may be guilty of leaving future generations of Latter-day Saints with the same vulnerability that has resulted in many spiritual casualties in this generation. It is to the end that such casualties be diminished that I have undertaken this study. (Ibid., pages 86-88)

The suggestion that Joseph Smith may have obtained the Book of Abraham by way of direct revelation and not from the papyrus is now held by a number of prominent Mormon scholars. The problem with this attempt to escape the serious implications of the evidence furnished by the papyri is that it flies in the face of everything Joseph Smith ever wrote or allowed to be published about the subject. In the History of the Church, Smith made it clear that he had the very writings of Abraham and Joseph in his possession. He even claimed that he received this material through translating the hieroglyphs:

Soon after this, some of the Saints at Kirtland purchased the mummies and papyrus . . . I commenced the translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt . . . (History of the Church, vol. 2, page 236)

Joseph Smith not only said that he was going to translate the records, but he also maintained he produced a “correct translation” of the documents:

The record of Abraham and Joseph, found with the mummies [sic] is beautifully written . . . I have given a brief history of the manner in which the writings of the fathers, Abraham and Joseph, have been preserved, and how I came in possession of the same—a correct translation of which I shall give in its proper place. (History of the Church, vol. 2, pages 348, 350-51)

In his History, Joseph Smith indicated that in 1835 he spent a good deal of time working on his translation of the Egyptian papyri:

The remainder of this month, I was continually engaged in translating an alphabet to the Book of Abraham, and arranging a grammar of the Egyptian language as practiced by the ancients. (History of the Church, vol. 2, page 238)

October 1.—This afternoon I labored on the Egyptian alphabet . . . during the research, the principles of astronomy as understood by Father Abraham and the ancients unfolded to our understanding, the particulars of which will appear hereafter. (Ibid., page 286)

Tuesday, [Nov.] 24.—. . . In the afternoon we translated some of the Egyptian records . . .

Thursday, 26.—Spent the day in translating Egyptian characters from the papyrus . . . (Ibid., page 320)

At the beginning of the handwritten manuscript of the Book of Abraham, Joseph Smith asserted that it was a “Translation of the Book of Abraham written by his own hand upon papyrus and found in the catacombs of Egypt” (see photograph of the first page of the manuscript in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 312).

The introduction to the Book of Abraham still maintains that it was “Translating From The Papyrus, By Joseph Smith” (Pearl of Great Price, The Book of Abraham, Introduction).

In spite of Joseph Smith’s many statements that he translated the Book of Abraham from the Egyptian language, Mormon apologist Hugh Nibley made this astounding assertion: “Joseph Smith never pretended to understand Egyptian, nor that the Book of Abraham was a work of his scholarship . . .” (Brigham Young University Studies, Winter 1968, page 176). In the same article Nibley said that he had “never spent so much as five minutes with the Egyptian Grammar”—i.e., Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar.

A PAGAN BOOK?

The attempt by Mormon scholars to escape Smith’s own statements that he translated the Book of Abraham from the papyrus appears to be a flight from reality. It is clear that they realize there is no way to defend Smith’s work as a translator of Egyptian writing. Consequently, they are forced to resort to some kind of a theory that allows Smith to be a prophet even though his translation does not coincide with what is found on the papyrus. The idea that there was another papyrus scroll which Joseph Smith never had in his possession and that God revealed the text of that papyrus to Smith by revelation seems to stretch one’s credulity beyond the breaking point.

Even if a person could accept this theory, it raises another insurmountable problem: why would God allow his prophet to use three pagan documents (the facsimiles) to illustrate his Book of Abraham? The facsimiles are filled with pictures of and praises to these heathen gods. For example, Mormon scholar
Michael Rhodes has translated Facsimile No. 2 and admits that the text “seems to be an address to Osiris, the god of the Dead, on behalf of the deceased…” (Brigham Young University Studies, Spring 1977, page 274). On page 270 of the same article, Rhodes acknowledges that the same facsimile has a drawing of the “Hawk-headed Re”—the Egyptian sun god. Numerous other gods and pagan scenes are shown on the facsimiles. Rhodes himself admits that there is a “strange assortment of gods, animals, and mixtures of both” on Facsimile No. 2 (Ibid., page 273). To have such an array of pagan gods and activities in a book purporting to have been written by Abraham appears to be in direct contradiction to the first commandment:

I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. (Exodus 20: 2-3)

Charles Larson makes some interesting observations concerning this matter in his new book:

Quite early in the game Dr. Nibley had given the impression that he felt that Mormon people ought to be willing to accept any association that could be found—even to pagan Egyptian mythology if need be—so long as it left open possibilities.

However, Nibley’s approach in this regard is certainly in sharp conflict with the Bible, one of the four LDS standard works. Throughout the Old Testament it is abundantly clear that God took great pains to dissuade the children of Israel from any contact with the false gods and idolatrous practices of their pagan neighbors. . . . God specifically admonished his people to repudiate and completely forsake the gods of Egypt, to whom they had been exposed during their years of captivity there (Joshua 24: 14). The Old Testament records that every time the children of Israel fell into pagan idolatry, they experienced God’s chastening (Judges 2: 2, 3, 11-15).

The New Testament likewise teaches the same principle that God does not use pagan or ungodly vessels to bear His truth. . . .

Since the Joseph Smith Papyri have been identified with absolute certainty as prayers to pagan Egyptian gods that, by biblical definition are ripe with occultism, it is inconceivable, given the holy character of God, that He would associate Himself or His revelation in any way with these pagan religious documents. This fact alone is ample grounds for totally rejecting the Book of Abraham as a revelation from the one True and Living God. (By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus, pages 119-120)

John Gee argues that the Book of Breathings “is addressed to no Egyptian gods; rather, it is addressed to a human individual and reminds him of promises made to him and things he has experienced” (Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, vol. 4, page 100). While this diversionary tactic may be technically correct, those who take the time to read the text will find that the deceased is promised help from Re (the sun god), Uto (the cobra goddess), Nekhbet (the vulture goddess), Geb (the earth god), Shu (the god of air), and other gods and goddesses. (See Klaus Baer’s translation in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Autumn 1968, pages 116-126.) As noted earlier, we found at least fifteen pagan gods and goddesses mentioned on this papyrus!

Moreover, we have shown that the Mormon scholar Michael Rhodes has translated Facsimile No. 2 of the Book of Abraham and acknowledges that the text “seems to be an address to Osiris, the god of the Dead, on behalf of the deceased…” In addition, the rest of the Joseph Smith Papyri contains prayers to pagan deities.

We have to agree with Charles Larson’s statement on page 166 of his book: “. . . It is surely inconceivable that the God of the Bible would compromise his exclusivity as the one, true God by co-mingling His revelation with the idolatrous pagan teachings and rites of Egypt as expressed in the Joseph Smith Papyri.”

RELIGIOUS PORNOGRAPHY?

Figure 7 of Facsimile No. 2 of the Book of Abraham has caused some embarrassment to Mormon officials. In fact, it was considered so “explicit” that it was falsified in some printings of the Pearl of Great Price. In 1981, however, it was restored to match the original woodcut prepared under Joseph Smith’s direction. (In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 341-343, 369-D, we discuss this pornographic drawing in detail and give photographic evidence of the falsification.) Joseph Smith stated that “Fig. 7. Represents God sitting upon his throne, revealing through the heavens the grand Key-words of the Priesthood; as, also, the sign of the Holy Ghost unto Abraham, in the form of a dove.” It is actually an extremely crude representation of the pagan fertility god Min!

We have previously spoken of a letter written to Michael Rhodes by a member of the LDS Church who was troubled with regard to the authenticity of the Book of Abraham. In this letter, dated June 30, 1988, we find the following: “. . . how do you account for the Explanation of the Facsimiles? . . . Figure 7 of Facsimile 2 is described by Joseph as being Heavenly Father with an erection?”, whereas it is really the Egyptian god Min.”

Michael Rhodes did not mention the problem with regard to Fig. 7 in his response. However, in his article published in BYU Studies in 1977, he gave a very honest explanation of this part of Facsimile No. 2:

7. A seated ithyphallic god with a hawk’s tail, holding aloft the divine flail. . . . The seated god is clearly a form of Min, the god of the regenerative, procreative forces of nature, perhaps combined with Horus as the hawk’s tail would seem to indicate. . . . The procreative forces, receiving unusual accentuation throughout the representation, may stand for many divine generative powers, not least of which might be conjoined with the blessings of the priesthood in one’s posterity eternally. (Brigham Young University Studies, Spring 1977, page 273)

The Mormon writer Ian Barber responded to our work with regard to the god Min. He tried to defend the Book of Abraham but had to admit that Fac. 2, Fig. 7, shows an “ithyphallic” god:

The seated god Min in Figure 7 . . . is an ithyphallic deity. The Tanners call this “a pornographic representation,” and remark that it is “hard to believe that Abraham would draw an obscene picture of God.” . . . For the Egyptians, the ritual portrayal of the phallus was not understood to be obscene, but rather symbolic of the divine, generative powers, and it was even respectfully mumified on occasion. The Tanners are correct in implying that such an emphasis would be inappropriate in our contemporary Western culture, and that the explicit portrayal offended Mormon sensibilities is evidenced by the fact that the phallus has been removed from several printings of the Pearl of Great Price . . . (What Mormonism Isn’t, page F-5)

In his book, Abraham in Egypt, Dr. Hugh Nibley acknowledges that Min was an Egyptian sex god who indulged in promiscuity and incest with his family and even his own mother:

As the supreme sex symbol of gods and men, Min behaves with shocking promiscuity. “The Egyptians,” wrote Plutarch, “are accustomed to call Horus ’Min’ meaning visible” referring to the symbol of reproduction publicly
paraded at his festival. . . . The Greeks identified him with the lustful Pan . . . His sacred plants were aphrodisiacal . . . and he is everywhere represented as indulging in incestuous relationships with those of his immediate family . . . The rites of Min were secret, and the Chief Priest was "the Director of the Mysteries of the god in his character of Kamutef," literally the Bull of His Mother . . . His special bull titles always denote his too-intimate relationship with his mother . . . For he is the divine beast, the irrepresible rampart bull ready for anything. In this regard he is the double of Seth, the two occupying prehistoric shrines directly opposite each other . . . Their outstanding characteristic, as Te Velde describes it, is their insistence on going "beyond the bounds" of discretion and morality, completely unrestrained in their appetites and passions . . .

The whip that the Min-images hold with upraised arm is always viewed as a fertility symbol . . . Some Egyptologists have maintained that it signifies that Min took advantage of his mother by brute force, seizing the matriarchal rule of the land by violence and incest . . . What suggested that was his commonest epithet, Ka-mut-ef, "Bull of his Mother," the fide that the youthful successor to the throne went by at the coronation . . . (Abraham in Egypt, 1981, pages 210-211)

That Joseph Smith would identify this promiscuous god who engaged in incest with his own mother as "God sitting upon his throne" shows a complete lack of inspiration.

Unfortunately for Mormon apologists trying to save the Book of Abraham, the problem with regard to the ithyphallic-god Min spills over onto Facsimile No. 1. As we have shown, Dr. Hugh Nibley has pointed out that the expression "Bull of his Mother" is applied to the god Min. When the Egyptologist Klaus Baer translated the original papyrus from which Fac. No. 1 was taken, he found these words: "Min Bull-of-his-Mother" (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Autumn 1968, page 116).

The problem may even go much deeper. Egyptianist Richard A. Parker pointed out that the portion of the original papyrus which was missing when the Mormons obtained it was incorrectly restored by Joseph Smith. According to Professor Parker, the papyrus really contained a sexual scene before the papyrus was damaged:

This is the well-known scene from the Osiris mysteries, with Anubis, the jackal-headed god, on the left ministering to the dead Osiris on the bier. The pencilled (?) restoration is incorrect. Anubis should be jackal-headed. The left arm of Osiris is in reality lying at his side under him. The apparent upper hand is part of the wing of a second bird which is hovering over the erect phallus of Osiris (now broken away). The second bird is Isis and she is magically impregnated by the dead Osiris and then later gives birth to Horus . . . (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer 1968, page 86)

The Egyptologist Klaus Baer agreed with Professor Parker: "He [Osiris] was almost certainly represented as ithyphallic, ready to beget Horus, as in many of the scenes at Dendera" (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Autumn 1968, page 119). Since Facsimile No. 2 shows the ithyphallic god Min, it seems possible that a sexual scene would be shown on Facsimile No. 1. Dr. Hugh Nibley argues against this interpretation, but we have shown that his reasoning is fallacious (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?, page 350). Nibley acknowledges, however, that there are "a number of procreation scenes in which the mummy is begetting his divine successor or reincarnation" (Improvement Era, October 1968, page 78).

In his book, By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus, page 102, Charles Larson restores the scene according to the interpretation given by Egyptologists. Below his restoration, he comments as follows: "Isis, meanwhile, has taken the form of a falcon and hovers over the groin of Osiris who holds his phallus (hence this is known as an ithyphallic drawing) in anticipation of the procreative act which will make Isis pregnant with their son Horus."

John Gee argues that the reconstructed drawing appearing in Charles Larson's book makes no sense: "Not only is his restoration of Joseph Smith Papyrus I obscene, it is impossible . . . . the reconstruction is too crude to have been done by a good artist" (Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, vol. 4, pages 101-102). While Mr. Gee labels Larson's reconstruction as "ocscene" and "impossible," he neglects to mention the fact that it was based on the statements of two noted Egyptologists, Klaus Baer and Richard A. Parker. (It is interesting to note that when Professor Parker translated the important portion of the Book of Breathings, Dr. Hugh Nibley publicly stated that he was "the best [Egyptologist] in America for this particular period and style of writing.")

As to Gee's statement that the drawing in Larson's book is obscene, most Christians would feel that it is more obscene, even blasphemous, to have a drawing of the ithyphallic god Min identified in the Book of Abraham as "God sitting upon his throne" (see Facsimile No. 2, Figure 7).

Instead of attacking Larson's restoration, John Gee should be discussing the false restorations in the facsimiles found in the Book of Abraham. The fact that Joseph Smith instructed Reuben Hedlock to make incorrect restorations in the woodcuts of the Book of Abraham facsimiles is acknowledged by noted Mormon scholars. James R. Harris, who felt that Joseph Smith sometimes operated under the power of inspiration, admitted that this was not always the case: "When he was not inspired, and consequently operated on his own wisdom, Joseph Smith did not demonstrate an ability to interpret or to make appropriate restorations of damaged portions of the documents" (The Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham, A Study of the Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri, page 4).

We have already quoted Michael Rhodes concerning the "obvious modifications" in Facsimile No. 1. Edward H. Ashment also frankly discussed Joseph Smith's false restorations:

It can be clearly ascertained that portions of Reuben Hedlock's Facsimiles 1 and 2 were conjecturally restored. Moreover, according to the diary entry for Friday, March 4, 1842, in the History of the Church, it is apparent that the prophet was connected with their production . . . he probably was not as concerned with having historically accurate restorations of Facsimiles 1 and 2 as he was with having complete pictures to publish in the Times and Seasons. Neither he nor Reuben Hedlock would have known that a standing human body would have a dog's head (Facsimile 1, Fig. 3), nor that a bird would have a human head (Facsimile 1, Fig. 1) . . . . It seems that they completed each damaged section with what was to them logical or important for whatever reason: a man's head on a man's body . . . a bird's head on a bird's body . . . (Sunstone, December 1979, page 44)

The evidence against the Book of Abraham is absolutely devastating. That Mormons would continue to endorse the Book of Abraham in the face of this evidence is almost beyond belief. Charles M. Larson made this comment concerning the sad state of affairs which now exists:

Sometime during the mid-1850s . . . an LDS Apostle named Orson Pratt confidently laid a dramatic challenge before the world: " . . . convince of our errors of doctrine, if we have any,
by reason, by logical arguments, or by the Word of God, and we will be ever grateful for the information, and you ever will have the pleasing reflection that you have been instruments in the hands of God of redeeming your fellow beings from the darkness which you may see enveloping their minds.”

Orson Pratt was no doubt confident that a successful case against the claims of Mormonism would never be presented because one simply did not exist. Over a century-and-a-half of close scrutiny, though, has proven the opposite to be the case. It is this fact which probably best explains why the contemporary LDS Church has shifted from the bold, confrontational stance of Pratt’s day, to one of cautioning members to “rely on faith and not on historical fact” . . . The message coming from LDS spokesmen today appears to be more and more one of accommodation: If facts fail to justify faith (what one wishes to believe), then faith should overrule facts. This sort of thinking is evasive, and must be set aside if any real reckoning with the facts is to take place.

But going back to Pratt, the challenge he made is a valid one, and the tendency of contemporary LDS figures to rationalize away problems instead of confronting them only underlines the fact that serious problems do exist. If error or falsehood within a religious system exists, it should be exposed, and using reason and the Word of God to do so makes a great deal of sense. Exposing error is the right thing to do, as only good can be the ultimate result of people learning the truth.

We are not only justified, then, in examining the evidences challenging the truth of the Book of Abraham which God has graciously allowed to come forth, we are firmly obligated to do so. And it is quite possible that the case against the Book of Abraham is the strongest evidence ever provided to test the truthfulness of Joseph Smith’s claims . . . .

One by one, virtually every Mormon belief about the Book of Abraham once considered essential to its support and regarded as faith promoting, has been shattered by the facts.

Not one trace of reliable evidence has appeared that would support the LDS view of the Book of Abraham as an authentic scripture, while an enormous amount of evidence is available to show that it is a man-made production of the nineteenth century, created by Joseph Smith to support his claim among his people to be a “prophet, seer, and revelator.” . . . When an individual fails to respond openly and honestly to such a problem it only passes the problem—and the pain of dealing with it—to someone else, multiplying ignorance and hurt in the process . . . .

So much potential pain to loved ones and future generations could be avoided! How? By placing truth ahead of convenience, by being honest with ourselves and with others.

The question of meeting challenges to our faith really does matter, because truth matters. The Bible gives us the promise that “the truth shall make you free” (John 8: 32)—and that includes being free from delusion. (By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus, pages 169, 171, 175, 181)

We highly recommend Charles Larson’s new book. We feel that he has done a very good job of presenting the case against the Book of Abraham. He has also examined and refuted some of the theories Mormon scholars have brought forth in their attempts to save Joseph Smith’s work. Besides taking a very close look at mistakes made by Dr. Hugh Nibley, he also deals with misrepresentations and errors in the book written by Robert and Rosemary Brown. This is the first full-size book devoted almost entirely to presenting the evidence against the Book of Abraham. In addition, it contains beautiful color photographs of nine pieces of the Joseph Smith Papyri. By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus: A New Look At The Joseph Smith Papyri is available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry.

ROPER ATTACKS

Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?

In a new publication by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (F.A.R.M.S.), the Mormon scholar Matthew Roper shows deep concern over the effect our book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? has had upon the public:

The first edition of Mormonism: Shadow or Reality? was published by the Tanners in 1963 under the title, Mormonism: A Study of Mormon History and Doctrine. Since that time the Tanners’ Magnum opus has been published in no less than five editions, the most recent being in 1987. In 1980, in an attempt to facilitate wider distribution of their work, they published a condensed version [The Changing World of Mormonism] through Moody Press. Since their debut as vocal anti-Mormons in the early 1960s, the Tanners have produced and distributed numerous other works attacking various aspects of Mormon history, scripture, and doctrine.

There are several reasons why this book merits review. First, the Tanners are considered by their fellow critics to be among the foremost authorities on Mormonism and the Book of Mormon. Their arguments are central to most anti-Mormon attacks on the Book of Mormon today. One recent critic describes Mormonism: Shadow or Reality? as “the heavyweight of all books on Mormonism.” Even some of the more sophisticated Book of Mormon critics will often repeat methodological errors exemplified in the Tanners’ work . . . . This review will focus only on the Tanners’ criticisms of the Book of Mormon in chapters five and six of Mormonism: Shadow or Reality? (pp. 50-125). (Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, vol. 4, 1992, pages 169-170)

THIRTY YEARS OF SILENCE

The reader will notice that in the quotation above Matthew Roper said the book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? “merits review.” This is in sharp contrast with what church officials have said in the past. A spokesman for the church’s Deseret Bookstore wrote: “We do not have a specific response to the Tanner book. Perhaps it does not deserve the dignity of a response” (Letter written January 19, 1977). A man who talked to Mormon Apostle LeGrand Richards claimed that Richards “told me to quit studying materials put out by the Tanner’s . . . . I told him “surely some day there will be an answer to these questions.” He told me there never would be an answer and I should stop my inquiries.”

There was an anonymous rebuttal to Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? printed in 1977 (see our response in Answering Dr. Clandestine: A Response to the Anonymous LDS Historian), but the church itself has never put forth an official response. Since we began publishing material on Mormonism in 1959, we have waited in vain for the church itself to make a response to our work. Although a large number of people have left the Mormon Church because of our publications and many others have been very concerned because their church has not published a rebuttal, Mormon leaders seem to feel that their best policy is silence.

TRIPPING AT THE FIRST HURDLE

While Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? contains over 600 pages of material, Matthew Roper’s response deals with only
The Tanners state, “The Mormon Church claims that the witnesses to the Book of Mormon never denied their testimony. There are, however, . . . statements in Mormon publications which would seem to indicate that the witnesses had some doubts” (page 50). They then quote a statement by Brigham Young: “Some of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon, who handled the plates and conversed with the angels of God, were afterwards left to doubt and to disbelieve that they had ever seen an angel.” Unfortunately the Tanners have left out the rest of the statement, giving the false impression that Brigham Young had reference to the three or eight witnesses. The full quote reads as follows:

“The witnesses of the Book of Mormon, who handled the plates and conversed with the angels of God, were afterwards left to doubt and to disbelieve that they had ever seen an angel. One of the Quorum of the Twelve—a young man full of faith and good works, prayed, and the vision of his mind was opened, and the angel of God came and laid the plates before him, and he saw the angel, and conversed with him as he would with one of his friends; but after all this, he was left to doubt, and plunged into apostasy, and has continued to contend against this work. There are hundreds in a similar condition.”

The Tanners would mislead their readers by using this quotation as evidence against the Book of Mormon witnesses. But none of the eleven were ever members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Brigham Young was referring to one of several other early Mormons who had similar experiences, but not to one of the official Book of Mormon witnesses as the Tanners clearly imply. (Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, vol. 4, 1992, pages 171-172)

Matthew Roper’s accusation concerning this quotation by Brigham Young raises a serious question with regard to the superficiality of his review. If Mr. Roper had examined the very next page (page 51), he would have found a photographic copy of not only the quotation but also the entire page of Brigham Young’s sermon! In the caption below the reproduction we stated: “A Photograph of the Journal of Discourses, vol. 7, page 164. In this sermon Brigham Young claims that some of the witnesses were left to disbelieve that they had seen an angel.”

Now, this certainly raises a question with regard to Matthew Roper’s claim that we were trying to “mislead” our readers. Why would we include a photograph of the document if we were trying to deceive people?

Even if we had not included the photograph of Brigham Young’s statement, there would be no reason for Roper to attack us in the way he did. We, in fact, fail to see how we have misused the quote.

A careful reading of Brigham Young’s statement reveals that he was referring to different cases of apostasy. First he spoke of some of the Book of Mormon witnesses having doubt and disbelief concerning the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was supposed to have been translated and also regarding the angel who showed them the plates. President Young then claimed that a member of the “Quorum of the Twelve” also had an experience in which an “angel of God came and laid the plates before him,” but he later “was left to doubt, and plunged into apostasy.” Young then concludes with the statement that “hundreds” had likewise fallen into a state of unbelief.

The reader will notice that Brigham Young indicated there was more than one witness of the Book of Mormon who had grave reservations about the book. Young, in fact, stated that “Some of the witnesses . . . were afterwards left to doubt and to disbelieve that they had ever seen an angel.” We know, therefore, that President Young felt that two or more of the witnesses had fallen into disbelieve at some point in their lives.

It would appear that Mr. Roper would like his readers to believe that none of the original witnesses ever had seasons of doubt with regard to the Book of Mormon. He seems to be trying to redefine Brigham Young’s statement about “some of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon” so that it does not refer to any of the original eleven witnesses whose names appear in the book. While there may be some exceptions to the rule, we believe that almost all Mormons would think of these eleven men when they read Brigham Young’s words, “the witnesses of the Book of Mormon.” (There are actually two separate statements by the witnesses of the Book of Mormon. The first contains the “Testimony of Three Witnesses”—Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris. These men claim that an angel of God showed the plates to them. The second statement is by eight men who said they saw the plates, although they did not claim that an angel showed the plates to them.)

It is interesting to note that on April 6, 1855, Brigham Young gave another sermon in which he stated that “most of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon have died . . .” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 2, page 249). The reader will notice that President Young used exactly the same words as he did in the quotation cited in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? It is obvious that he was referring to the eleven men whose names appear in the Book of Mormon because he said that most of these witnesses were dead. Research shows that Brigham Young was correct about this matter; by 1855 only four of the eleven witnesses were still alive. Just above the portion we cited, Young indicated that “Martin Harris” was probably still alive, but “Oliver Cowdery has gone to his long home . . .” Harris and Cowdery, of course, were among the witnesses whose names appear in the Book of Mormon.

Although none of the witnesses ever gave a written statement repudiating the Book of Mormon, some of them did seem to have seasons of skepticism about the authenticity of that work. In our book, The Case Against Mormonism, vol. 2, page 16, we give photographic proof that after Oliver Cowdery (one of the three witnesses) was excommunicated from the Mormon Church, he joined the Methodist Church. Mormon writer Richard Anderson admits that Cowdery was affiliated with the Methodists, but he claims that Cowdery did not deny his testimony: “The cessation of his activity in the Church meant a suspension of his role as a witness of the Book of Mormon. Not that his conviction ceased, but he discontinued public testimony . . . he logically affiliated himself with a Christian congregation for a time, the Methodist Protestant Church at Tiffin, Ohio” (Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses, 1981, page 57).

In 1885, G. J. Keen, who was a member of the Methodist Church which Cowdery joined, gave an affidavit in which he stated:

We . . . submitted his name to the church, and he was unanimously admitted a member thereof.

At that time he arose and addressed the audience present, admitted his error and implored forgiveness, and said he was sorry and ashamed of his connection with Mormonism.

He continued his membership while he resided in Tiffin, and became superintendent of the Sabbath School, and lived an exemplary life while he resided with us. (Affidavit quoted in The True Origin of the Book of Mormon, by Charles A. Shook, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1914, pages 58-59)
On July 15, 1841, the Mormon Church’s official publication, *Times and Seasons*, printed a poem which made it clear that the Mormons believed that Oliver Cowdery had denied his testimony to the Book of Mormon. The following appeared in the poem:

Amazed with wonder! I look round
To see most people of our day,
Reject the glorious gospel sound,
Because the simple turn away.

Or prove that Christ was not the Lord
Because that Peter cursed and swore?
Or Book of Mormon not his word
Because denied, by Oliver?

*(Times and Seasons, vol. 2, page 492)*

Martin Harris, who was also one of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon, was excommunicated from the church. Even the noted Mormon apologist Richard Anderson had to admit that his life showed “religious instability.” Professor Anderson also revealed the following:

The foregoing tendencies explain the spiritual wanderlust that afflicted the solitary witness at Kirtland. In this period of his life he changed his religious position eight times, including a rebaptism by a Nauvoo missionary in 1842. Every affiliation of Martin Harris was with some Mormon group, except when he was affiliated with the Shaker belief . . . (Improvement Era, March 1969, page 63)

Martin Harris’ involvement with the Shakers raises some serious doubts regarding his belief in the Book of Mormon. We feel that a believer in the Book of Mormon could not accept these revelations without repudiating the teachings of Joseph Smith. The Shakers, for example, felt that “Christ has made his second appearance on earth, in a chosen female known by the name of Ann Lee, and acknowledged by us as our blessed Mother in the work of redemption” (*Sacred Roll and Book*, page 358).

The Shakers, of course, rejected the Book of Mormon and all of the revelations received by Joseph Smith. They had their own book which they claimed came from heaven. It was entitled, *A Holy, Sacred and Divine Roll and Book; From the Lord God of Heaven, to the Inhabitants of Earth*. More than sixty individuals gave testimony to the “Sacred Roll and Book.” Although not all of them mention angels appearing, some of them tell of many angels visiting them—one woman told of eight different visions. On page 304 of this book we find the testimony of eight witnesses: “We, the undersigned, hereby testify, that we saw the holy Angel standing upon the house-top, as mentioned in the foregoing declaration, holding the Roll and Book.”

Joseph Smith only had three witness who claimed to see an angel. The Shakers, however, had a large number of witnesses who claimed they saw angels and the book. There are over a hundred pages of testimony from “Living Witnesses.”

The evidence clearly shows that Martin Harris accepted the Shaker’s “Sacred Roll and Book” as a divine revelation. Clark Braden made this revealing statement about this matter:

Harris declared repeatedly that he had as much evidence for a Shaker book he had as for the Book of Mormon. *(The Braden and Kelly Debate, page 173)*

There is a Mormon source which indicates that Martin Harris even claimed to have a greater testimony to the Shakers than to the Book of Mormon. In a thesis written at Brigham Young University, Wayne Cutler Gunnell stated that on December 31, 1844, “Phineas H. Young [Brigham Young’s brother] and other leaders of the Kirtland organization” wrote a letter to Brigham Young in which they stated:

There are in this place all kinds of teaching; Martin Harris is a firm believer in Shakerism, says his testimony is greater than that of the Book of Mormon. *(Martin Harris—Witness and Benefactor to the Book of Mormon,* 1955, page 52)*

The fact that Martin Harris would even join with such a group shows that he was unstable and easily influenced by charismatic leaders. We feel, therefore, that his testimony that the Book of Mormon was of divine origin cannot be relied upon. How can we put our trust in a man who was constantly following after strange movements like the Shakers and the Strangites?

David Whitmer, the last member of the group known as the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon, was also excommunicated from the Mormon Church and never returned. While we know of no evidence that he repudiated the Book of Mormon, he rejected the *Doctrine and Covenants*, believed that Joseph Smith was a fallen prophet and claimed that God himself told him that he should leave the Mormon Church:

*If you believe my testimony to the Book of Mormon; if you believe that God spake to us three witnesses by his own voice, then I tell you that in June, 1838, God spake to me again by his own voice from the heavens, and told me to “separate myself from among the Latter Day Saints, for as they sought to do unto me, so should it be done unto them.”*(An Address to all Believers in Christ, 1887, page 27)

Mormons cannot accept this testimony by their own witness without destroying faith in Joseph Smith. In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 57, we present evidence showing that David Whitmer gave a revelation from the Lord which strongly condemned Mormonism.

At any rate, Mr. Roper has also accused us of using “underhanded” tactics when citing from Richard Anderson’s work. In a response we are preparing we will demonstrate that this is not the case. Roper has, in fact, made the same type of error as he did when he accused us of suppressing part of Brigham Young’s quotation. If he had carefully read all of Chapter 5 of our book, he would not have fallen into this serious error. The rebuttal we are now working on will deal with two different attacks on our work by Matthew Roper and also articles by John A. Tvedtnes and L. Ara Norwood.

Since this is the first time that F.A.R.M.S. has attempted to respond to *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* we felt that it would be an excellent time to have a sale on this book. When our book, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, was reviewed by F.A.R.M.S., we had a similar type of sale to get the book “into the hands of as many people as possible.” Mormon apologist Daniel C. Peterson, however, responded as follows: “But maybe the real idea was to make a sale on the old car before the wheels and doors fall off and the customer discovered what a lemon he was looking at” *(Review of Books, 1992, Introduction, page lxxv).* In a footnote on the page before, Peterson said that he accepted Roper’s attack against *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* because he “thought it made a number of important points, and because most contemporary anti-Mormon writers depend heavily upon the Tanners. Attending to the roots seemed an efficient way of dealing with the branches.”

Despite the ridicule we may receive from Daniel Peterson, we sincerely believe that *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* will continue to provide very good transportation for those who want to tour the hidden sites of Mormonism and learn the real truth about the church. While many church members believe the F.A.R.M.S. vehicle gives a good tour of these areas, it actually skirts around some very important areas so that it can stay on the smoother roads of Mormonism.
Satanic Murders

Shortly after finishing the printing of our new book, *Satanic Ritual Abuse and Mormonism*, some new information with regard to Satanism came to light. The first development was the confession of a satanic human sacrifice by two women in Brazil. The following appeared in a newspaper published in Arizona on July 11, 1992:

RIO DE JANEIRO—A Brazilian woman and her daughter have confessed to killing a 7-year-old boy as a sacrifice to the devil in a bloody ritual to help save their family’s fortunes, police said Friday. The women and five other alleged devil worshipers strangled Evandro Ramos Caetano, mutilated his body and drained his blood to offer on an altar to Satan, said Jose Maria Correa, civil police head in Parana state, where the killing occurred.

Police found the boy’s rotting body in a forest near Guaratuba . . . “It was a black-magic ritual involving the number 7,” Correa said . . . . “He was found with his chest slit open . . . It was terrible, indescribable.

In a taped confession to military police, Celina and Beatriz Abage, daughter and granddaughter of Guaratuba Mayor Aldo Abage, said they kidnapped the boy by luring him with candy. In the tape, a transcript of which was printed in *Jornal do Brasil* . . . Beatriz Abage said the boy was sacrificed “to bring more fortune, justice to my family.” Seven alleged participants in the ritual are under arrest, including Celina and Beatriz Abage, and a man police believe was the leader, Osvaldo Marceneiro, known as The Warlock.

The mayor, who has not been directly implicated in the case, has fled, leaving municipal offices in chaos. Angry residents of Guaratuba stoned his house. Correa said police were investigating the disappearance of another child, named Leandro . . . . (*The Arizona Republic*, July 11, 1992)

In our book, *Satanic Ritual Abuse and Mormonism*, we reported that Glenn Pace, the Mormon General Authority who wrote the memo which exposed satanic ritual abuse in the church, interviewed some people in the city of Rupert, Idaho, a city which is located about forty miles from the Utah border. In November, 1989, the remains of a baby were found in a metal drum at a landfill near the city. On October 23, 1990, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* reported that “No deed was fouler than that perpetrated on Baby X . . . Before she was burned, Baby X . . . had been disemboweled and mutilated.” Sometime later a boy who had lived near the landfill where Baby X was found, told authorities that he had witnessed satanic ceremonies in which babies were mutilated and burned. The boy also maintained that his own family was involved with a group of Satanists who participated in the sacrifices and that he also had been ritually abused (see his drawings in *Satanic Ritual Abuse and Mormonism*).

People who live in the area believe that there is a satanic cult that functions in both southern Idaho and northern Utah. It is reported that this group has two High Priests. One, it is claimed, lives in a rural area of Bannock County, Idaho, and goes by the cult name “Rosheebea-Son of Oliver.” The other leader lives in Logan, Utah, and is known as “The Raven.”

In June, 1992, an inconceivably gruesome murder occurred in Burley, Idaho, a city about seven miles from Rupert. Christopher Clark stated that the body of Benito Ruiz Carabeo “was found June 24, carefully disemboweled and placed in five triple-strength garbage bags . . .” (*South Idaho Press*, July 28, 1992). An investigation showed that the body had been cut into fourteen pieces. Two brothers, Luis and Anastacio Rodriguez, were wanted for questioning, but it is feared that they have fled to Mexico. While some feel that this is just another brutal murder, others believe that it is related to the occult. On July 28, 1992, Christopher Clark reported: “From the condition of the body and the death’s correlation to an occult calendar date, authorities have not ruled out a cult motive for the murder” (*Ibid.*).

Sometime before the murder, a woman from Burley came forth seeking protection. She claimed that she had been a member of a satanic cult which mutilated and killed victims. She had come to fear, however, that she might become the next victim of the cult and allowed a video tape to be made of her confession. The video tape was made in the presence of Christopher Clark, Noel Croft and Ralph Barranger. Paul Murphy, of KTVX (Channel 4) in Salt Lake City, was able to gain access to the video and show portions on the evening news on August 14, 1992. The woman maintained that cult members had conspired to commit the murder two years before the crime actually took place: “. . . it was a contract that we’d written in our own blood and we’d signed in our own blood that in two years . . . we would do . . . this big sacrifice.” Paul Murphy commented: “Weeks before the murder, an alleged former cult member did leave a message on video tape. She predicted the date and place of a satanic human sacrifice.”

As noted above, the man was killed either on or very close to “an occultic calendar date,” the Summer Solstice, which occurs on June 21 or 22. Satanists consider the Summer Solstice as a very important Sabbat. It would be an ideal time for a sacrifice. When he was interviewed by Paul Murphy, Rupert’s coroner and mortician, Arvin Hansen, pointed out that the body “was cut into different sections . . . it was cut into different types of cuts like a meat cutter would cut them.” It was also revealed that part of Carabeo’s body had been skinned. In regard to this it is interesting to note that there have been charges that Satanists who perform human sacrifices sometimes skin their victims. There was, in fact, speculation that Baby X “may have been skinned before she was burned” (*Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, October 23, 1990). The woman who predicted that someone would be sacrificed in the area of Burley seemed to be familiar with the practice of skinning the victims. In addition, we have been informed she told of drinking the blood of sacrificial victims. According to Christopher Clark, the same woman told of many human sacrifices being performed by this satanic cult—possibly as many as thirty. She also reported that many of the victims came from the transient population in the Salt Lake City area.

We, of course, do not know for certain that her story is true, but even the Cassia County Sheriff Billy Crystal had to admit that her prediction of a ritual murder at the time of the Summer Solstice was rather remarkable. Sheriff Crystal also acknowledged to Paul Murphy that the Burley case has some resemblance to the ritual sacrifice of fifteen people near Matamoros, Mexico. Murphy noted that Carabeo’s spine had been cut out. This seemed to be a common practice at Matamoros. In *Sacrifice: A Father’s Determination to Turn Evil into Good*, 1990, page 119, we find that “After death, Mark’s body was mutilated. The spine was cut free so the sect could use it as a necklace. Before the men buried the victim, Constanzo ordered El Dubi to cut the legs off at the knee.” The cult believed that necklaces made from the spine would bring good luck and therefore used them in their occultic ceremonies. On page 177 of the same book, we read that the removal of the spine was “a trademark found on bodies.” The sheriff’s statement regarding Matamoros was very interesting to us because we had previously written of a possible connection on pages 67-69 of our book on ritual abuse: “Some people in the Rupert area believe that there is a relationship between the Baby X case and what went on in the city of Matamoros, Mexico, in 1989. They claim, for example, that people from the area have been in Idaho’s Minidoka county and suspect that they may be involved in smuggling drugs.” It has even been suggested that there may have been a synthesis of Satanism and the bizarre practices of the Matamoros cult.
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MORMON LEADERS SUPPRESS “KEY” ITEM IN MURDER CASE

THE TRUE MCLELLIN DOCUMENTS FOUND IN FIRST PRESIDENCY’S VAULT!

On October 15, 1985, a bomb exploded in Salt Lake City, Utah, killing Steven F. Christensen, a Mormon bishop. Later that morning, Kathleen Sheets, the wife of another bishop, was killed when she picked up a package containing a booby-trapped shrapnel bomb. The following day, a Mormon document dealer named Mark Hofmann was seriously injured when a bomb exploded in his car.

After an intensive investigation, it was discovered that Mark Hofmann was the bomber. Hofmann was transporting a third bomb he had constructed at the time of the explosion. Although this bomb was prepared to kill someone else, it accidentally went off in his own car. Hofmann later confessed to the murders and was sent to the Utah State Prison.

In October, 1986, before Mr. Hofmann pleaded guilty, we published the book, Tracking the White Salamander. About two months after Mr. Hofmann pleaded guilty in 1987, we published a second book, Confessions of a White Salamander. In these books we discussed many important details regarding Hofmann’s murders and the forged documents he sold to the Mormon Church and other collectors. Three other books were published the following year. The first book to appear was Salamander: The Story of the Mormon Forgery Murders, by Linda Sillitoe and Allen Roberts, two Mormon historians. The second book was entitled, Mormon Murders, by Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith. The last book, A Gathering of Saints: A True Story of Money, Murder and Deceit, was penned by Robert Lindsey, a reporter for the New York Times.

The authors of all three of these books interviewed investigators and all reached the conclusion that some leaders had not been forthright in their contacts with law enforcement officials. In addition, they felt that the church had been suppressing important documents from its members.

The Mormon Church leaders were very disturbed about the bad publicity and on September 18, 1988, the Los Angeles Times reported that “sources within the Mormon media establishment . . . said the church already has begun a battle against what it believes is the most serious attack against the church since the polygamy controversy... The church has embarked on a massive study of the books and news articles in an attempt to assemble a master list of errors, misquotes and exaggerations. ‘Our response to all the allegations made against the church will be made public in about 60 days,’ [Richard P.] Lindsay said.”

Notwithstanding this public announcement, this “master list of errors, misquotes and exaggerations” has never been made public. Some time later, however, it was announced that Richard E. Turley, Jr., managing director of the LDS Church Historical Department, was writing a book which would give the church’s side of the issue. Mr. Turley’s work has finally appeared under the title, Victims: The LDS Church and the Mark Hofmann Case.
TURLEY’S BOMBHELL!

While Richard Turley seems to have nothing to say about the two books we have written on the subject, he attacks all three of the other books. He does, however, make observations concerning our work on the Salamander letter and other questionable documents. His comments with regard to our work are generally good and contain nothing requiring a response.

One strange thing about the Turley book is that although the index lists thirteen different pages which refer to our work, it does not have a single reference to the three books he is attacking. Moreover, the names of the authors (Sillitoe, Roberts, Naifeh, Smith and Lindsey) never appear in the index. It seems that everything he has written about these authors is found in the footnotes. Mr. Turley apparently does not want these authors or their books to have more publicity than they have already received.

However this may be, in his footnotes Mormon apologist Richard Turley tries to undermine the authenticity of these books. He seems to be especially upset with charges that church leaders were trying to cover up facts during the investigation and does his best to try to smooth over these accusations. Unfortunately for the Mormon Church, however, Mr. Turley’s laborious work of shoring up faith in church leaders comes crashing to the ground when a person reaches page 248 of his book. It is at that point that Turley divulges one of the most embarrassing secrets that a Mormon historian has ever revealed. Mr. Turley begins by saying that “March 1986 brought a startling discovery.” Turley goes on to explain that at that time church officials became aware of the fact that they had an important part of the McLellin collection concealed in the First Presidency’s vault and that it had been there since 1908!

William E. McLellin was one of the original members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the Mormon Church. He was well acquainted with Joseph Smith and other church leaders and knew a great deal about what was going on in the early church. Later, however, he turned against the church and accused Joseph Smith of altering the revelations which are found in the Doctrine and Covenants. The current edition of the Doctrine and Covenants still contains an “Explanatory Introduction” which purports to be the “Testimony of the Twelve Apostles to the Truth of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants.” According to Daniel Macgregor, William McLellin claimed that this “Testimony” was “a base forgery.” (Changing of the Revelations, page 32)

McLellin was very upset that Joseph Smith would change revelations given by God. The Salt Lake Tribune for Oct. 6, 1875, printed this statement regarding McLellin: “His faith was first shaken by the changes made in the revelations. He had been careful to keep copies of the originals, presented proof that all the early revelations were changed three times, and considerably amended before they appeared in their present form.”

In 1838, Oliver Cowdery, one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, claimed that Joseph Smith had “A dirty, nasty, filthy affair” with a young woman named Fanny Alger (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 203-204). William McLellin claimed to have some explosive information on this matter. He asserted that Joseph Smith’s wife, Emma, had told him about this affair. In his book, Mormon Polygamy: A History, 1986, page 6, Richard S. Van Wagoner wrote: “McLellin’s 1872 letter described Alger’s relationship with Joseph Smith. ‘Again I told [your mother],’ the former apostle wrote, that ‘I heard that one night she missed Joseph and Fanny Alger. She went to the barn and saw him and Fanny in the barn together alone. She looked through a crack and saw the transaction!!!’ She told me this story too was verily true.’ McLellin also detailed the Alger incident to a newspaper reporter for the 6 October 1875 Salt Lake Tribune.” In 1852 Mormon Church leaders acknowledged that Joseph Smith practiced plural marriage, but they were silent concerning an incident in the barn.

Those who are familiar with the Hofmann case know that Mark Hofmann falsely claimed that he had discovered the McLellin collection and that he was helping the church obtain the collection so that it would not fall into the hands of the anti-Mormons who would use it to embarrass the church. Since William McLellin had made some startling charges like the one regarding the Fanny Alger affair, church leaders would naturally be nervous concerning what such a collection might contain. In his confession, Hofmann described a conversation he allegedly had with Gordon B. Hinckley, a member of the church’s First Presidency, regarding the McLellin collection:

A Well, of course, I basically told him that I could tell him what my fears were concerning its getting in to the enemy’s hands, or whatever. . . . And his interest wasn’t so much in having the Church obtain it as having it go someplace where—In fact, I would almost say he almost didn’t want the Church to obtain it, he just wanted to make sure it did not fall in to the enemy’s hands which was good since I knew I didn’t have it, I knew the Church couldn’t obtain it. (Hofmann’s Confession, page 529)

Eventually, it was decided that Hugh Pinnock, a General Authority in the Mormon Church, would help Mark Hofmann obtain a loan of $185,000 from First Interstate Bank so that he could go to Texas and obtain the McLellin collection. According to Richard Turley, Pinnock felt that the collection required special protection: “Pinnock offered to arrange for secure transportation of the documents by jet or armored car, but Hofmann said he would send them back to Utah by registered mail, adequately insured” (Victims, page 124). The transaction was to be very confidential. David E. Sorensen, “who had recently been asked to preside over the church’s Canada Halifax Mission,” would buy the collection and hide it away from the enemies of the church. Later, however, he would donate it to the church. Richard Turley reported that “Sorensen later recalled that Pinnock ‘asked if I would listen to a matter of concern to the church’ and determine if I would be in a position or interested in helping.’ . . . Sorensen recalled, ‘Elder Pinnock was interested in seeing if I might purchase the collection. If so, would I consider donating it to the church at a later date.’ . . . Sorensen later remembered saying that he would be happy to help the church if he could but wanted to ‘investigate the matter in a business-like way’” (Ibid., page 136).

Bishop Steven Christensen was supposed to authenticate the McLellin collection for Sorensen on October 15, 1985. Since Mr. Hofmann did not have the collection, he killed Steven Christensen that morning so that the transaction could not take place.

When church leaders later discovered that they already had the most significant part of the McLellin collection hidden in the First Presidency’s vault and that it had been there since 1908, they found themselves on the horns of a dilemma. If they admitted that they had the collection all along, it would prove the charge made by critics that the church suppressed important documents from their people. In the Salt Lake City Messenger for August 1985, we spoke of the “role that Mormon leaders
have taken in suppressing important documents.” We noted that in 1983, Gordon B. Hinckley, a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, secretly acquired a letter - later found to have been forged by Mark Hofmann—which purported to be in Joseph Smith’s own hand and linked the prophet to money-digging and magic. President Hinckley believed the letter was authentic. He paid Mr. Hofmann $15,000 for the letter and then hid it in the First Presidency’s vault.

When researchers learned what happened and said that it was being suppressed, the church decided to “stonewall.” A spokesman for the church said: “The church doesn’t have the letter. . . . It’s not in the church archives or the First Presidency’s vault” (Salt Lake Tribune, April 29, 1985). Finally, when it became clear that some Mormon scholars had photocopies of the letter and were going to turn them over to the news media, the church backed down, and the same spokesman admitted his earlier statement was “in error”: “The purported letter was indeed acquired by the church. For the present it is stored in the First Presidency’s archives . . . .” (Salt Lake Tribune, May 7, 1985).

In the issue of our newsletter cited above, we made this observation: “The First Presidency’s archive or vault, where the 1825 letter was concealed, is undoubtedly the ultimate ‘black hole.’ Documents which are embarrassing to the Mormon Church disappear into this bottomless abyss and are seldom heard of again.’’

The fact that church leaders could lose sight of the McLellin collection in the First Presidency’s vault for almost eight decades shows just how dark it is inside the “black hole’’ which contains the deeper secrets of Mormonism.

The disappearance and rediscovery of the McLellin collection would almost make one wonder if the right hand knows what the left hand is doing at church headquarters. While Mormons might expect this type of thing to happen at some bureaucratic agency, they will have a difficult time explaining how this could happen in a church which is supposed to be led by direct revelation from God. The implications are very serious indeed. For example, how can one explain the fact that Mormon leaders were helping Mark Hofmann obtain a collection from Texas which they already had in their own vault?

In view of the circumstances, it would be very difficult for church leaders to come forth and admit they had made such a serious mistake. On the other hand, however, they faced a far more serious problem if they did not reveal the existence of the McLellin collection. To continue to suppress the existence of the collection would mean that church leaders would have to deliberately keep a key piece of evidence hidden from investigators who were working on the Hofmann case. Unfortunately for the Mormon Church, Richard Turley makes it very clear that church leaders chose to keep law enforcement officials completely in the dark concerning the existence of the McLellin collection.

The importance of this piece of evidence cannot be overstated. While investigators seemed to have a great deal of evidence that Mark Hofmann forged documents and defrauded investors in his schemes, they had a real problem establishing a motive for the murders. At first some investigators believed that the bombings might relate in some way to the Salamander letter. (Hofmann had sold the Salamander letter to Steven Christensen for a great deal of money.) This theory, however, could not be confirmed by any evidence. Christensen apparently believed the letter was genuine and seemed pleased that Hofmann had sold it to him.

The McLellin collection, on the other hand, seemed to provide an explanation for the murder of Steven Christensen. Hofmann’s reluctance to produce the collection was very upsetting to Christensen. Since Hofmann did not have the collection, there was nothing he could do except to continue to give Mr. Christensen excuses. Consequently, friction continued to mount between the two men. At Hofmann’s preliminary hearing, Curt Bench said that about three weeks before the murders, Steven Christensen called him and wanted him to convey a message to Mark Hofmann. Bench testified that Christensen told him that “a member of the First Quorum of Seventy and an apostle . . . were upset because Mark had defaulted on a loan to a bank and had written a check and the check had bounced . . . They were quite upset over this and said some very serious things could happen as a result of that not being taken care of.”

Curt Bench went on to say: “Steve told me that various things could occur if Mark didn’t make good and some of them were he would certainly lose his credibility and credit with the Church and with President Hinckley, that criminal action could be taken, that he could conceivably go to jail, he could also be sued by the bank or even by the Church if the Church was sued. He could lose his membership in the Church . . . . It was very serious. And Steve wanted me to convey that to Mark . . . .” Bench also testified that “Steve used the term crook” when referring to Hofmann. (Tracking the White Salamander, page 24)

Investigators did not believe that Mark Hofmann had the McLellin collection to turn over to Mr. Christensen and felt that this was Hofmann’s motive for killing Christensen—by getting rid of Christensen he could buy some time. They could not, however, actually prove that Hofmann did not have the documents hidden away some place. There was no way to know for certain. If Mr. Hofmann should produce the collection at the time of his trial, it would destroy the motive for murder and could ruin the murder case. The Mormon Church, of course, had the vital information needed by prosecutors in the First Presidency’s vault. Church leaders knew that there was no way that Mark Hofmann could produce McLellin’s diaries because they already had them. It is plain, therefore, that Mormon Church leaders were suppressing some of the most important evidence in the entire case!

A close examination of Richard Turley’s book shows that

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Mormon Church leaders were engaged in a conspiracy of silence with regard to the McLellin collection to save the church’s image. The following quotations from Turley’s book make this very clear:

March 1986 brought a startling discovery. Historical Department personnel seeking information about William McLellin had contacted Dean Jessee. . . . Jessee visited the department and explained to Glenn Rowe that he had found some interesting information about McLellin in his research files. Jessee’s notes referred to correspondence in the department’s uncatalogued Joseph F. Smith collection. The correspondence mentioned McLellin’s diaries and other belongings. . . . Rowe and his staff searched the collection and located letters that amazed church officials.

The first letter had been written by J. L. Traughber of Doucette, Texas . . . Dated January 13, 1908, and addressed to the librarian of the church, the letter explained that Traughber had an original copy of A Book of Commandments . . . what Traughber offered next was even rarer. He wrote, “I also have the Journal, in part, of Elder W. E. McLellin for the years 1831, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.” Traughber said he had tried to get more of the journal from McLellin’s widow, but she had refused to give them up “as she said she did not want some things to be known.” Traughber said he also had some manuscript books that McLellin had written. . . . and offered to sell them for fifty dollars.

On January 18, 1908, President Joseph F. Smith and his counselors wrote to President Samuel O. Bennion of the Central States Mission. The Presidency . . . instructed Bennion on how to handle the offer: “While we have studiously avoided expressing any particular desire on our part to purchase the things mentioned by Mr. Traughber, we desire you to know that we would like very much to possess McClellan’s [sic] Journal, if for no other reason than to prevent the writings of this unfortunate and erratic man, whose attitude after his apostacy was inimical to the Prophet Joseph Smith, from falling into unfriendly hands; and for this reason alone, we feel quite willing to pay the price asked for these things . . . .” The Presidency also suggested that Bennion contact McLellin’s widow to obtain the rest of the journals, even if their acquisition were to cost another fifty dollars.

The letter to Bennion mentioned an interview Joseph F. Smith and another church leader had had with McLellin in 1878, when McLellin had told them he had writings he wished to publish. The Presidency wrote Bennion that the manuscripts . . . might be the same ones McLellin had mentioned in 1878. “We hope they are,” the First Presidency wrote, “as it would be an act of mercy on our part to purchase them, and thus prevent them from being published by unfriendly hands to the injury of innocent people.”

Rowe and his staff also found a February 12, 1908, response from Bennion to the First Presidency. Bennion reported that he . . . had acquired the proffered materials from Traughber. . . . He said he would send all the acquired items to the First Presidency that day by registered mail.

Rowe had kept his new supervisor, Richard Turley, informed about Jessee’s clue and the letters to which it led. Turley told Dean Larsen about the letters, and Larsen informed (apostles) Packer and Oaks, who in turn contacted the First Presidency. When Gordon Hinckley learned of the letters, he asked Francis Gibbons if the First Presidency’s vault contained the items the letters mentioned. Gibbons searched the vault. Hinckley and the other church officials then learned to their astonishment, that the church had owned McLellin’s journals and manuscripts all along.

The journals . . . revealed a man deeply dedicated to his religion. . . . The little manuscript books, on the other hand, typified the later McLellin, an avowed enemy of the church. . . .

Like the materials the Tribune had discovered, the McLellin items found in church possession were not the McLellin collection touted by Hofmann. . . . Unlike the Tribune’s discovery, however, the church’s McLellin materials included a key item from the collection Hofmann claimed to have bought. That item, McLellin’s early journals, confirmed to church officials that Hofmann was a fraud.

The discovered documents did not fall within any of the subpoenas issued to the church, and thus officials were not legally obligated to mention them to anyone. Still, it was apparent they were relevant to the case, and those involved in the discovery felt the documents’ existence should be revealed. Yet disclosing them would not come without a cost. Church officials had sought to dispel the notion that they were buying documents to hide them. Disclosure of the newly discovered McLellin materials, however, would reinforce notions of church suppression because those documents had in fact been bought at the direction of the First Presidency and locked away nearly eighty years earlier, eventually to be forgotten. . . . Alluding in his journal to the day’s remarkable discovery, [Apostle] Oaks wrote, “Today [Boyd K. Packer] & I learned that the Church has some documents that have been unknown until now, but will be of great interest when they are revealed, as they should be prior to the Hofmann trial (in my opinion).”

What church officials did not know was that there would be no trial. (Victims: The LDS Church and the Mark Hofmann Case, pages 248-251)

This is a shocking disclosure to be coming from the pen of Richard Turley, managing director of the LDS Church Historical Department. As the reader will see from the quotation above, Mr. Turley acknowledges that he himself became aware of the fact that the church had the McLellin collection in March 1986. Although Turley practiced law before becoming a historian, he obviously felt it was more important to protect the church than to tell investigators working on the Hofmann case about this important matter. The church continued to suppress knowledge of the collection for six years after it was rediscovered.

Why Turley would reveal the matter at this time is a matter of speculation. It could be that Mr. Turley was bothered by his role in the matter and felt compelled to bring out the truth. On the other hand, there could have been concern that too many people knew what had happened and that the “enemies of the church” would eventually find out about the cover-up and publish the facts to the world. When Mormon leaders are convinced that something embarrassing is about to leak out, they sometimes try to get the information out first. For example, the Mormon Church at first denied that the 1825 letter existed, but then rushed to print it when it was discovered that scholars were preparing to release it to the press. In any case, we are very pleased that Mr. Turley has revealed this information.

After Mormon historian Dean Jessee reported the existence of the correspondence mentioning the McLellin collection, a number of people became aware of the fact that the church had obtained the collection. Church archivist Glenn Rowe received the information from Jessee. Rowe, in turn, reported the matter to Richard Turley and Turley relayed the information to Dean Larsen. Larsen then informed apostles Boyd K. Packer and Dallin H. Oaks about the matter. These two apostles “contacted the First Presidency.” The First Presidency is composed of President Ezra Taft Benson (the Prophet, Seer and Revelator of the church), President Gordon B. Hinckley and President Thomas S. Monson. Francis Gibbons was the one who finally found the McLellin collection in the vault. In addition, members of Glenn Rowe’s staff also knew about the matter.
Although at least a dozen people knew about the McLellin collection, no one seems to have reported the matter to investigators. Those on the lower levels may have felt that church leaders would tell police that the McLellin collection had been found. Instead, the highest leaders of the church chose to remain silent and put the church in a cover-up situation. Since the church is supposed to have a “living prophet,” one would think that he would point out that the information must be reported to investigators.

Furthermore, Apostle Dallin H. Oaks had enough legal knowledge that he should have demanded that a full report be immediately turned over to the police. Richard Turley says that Apostle Oaks “served as a United States Supreme Court clerk, University of Chicago law professor, American Bar Foundation executive director, Brigham Young University president, and Utah Supreme Court justice” (Victims, page 116). Mr. Turley also states that “Oaks’s experience as a lawyer and judge made him sensitive to investigators’ need for any information that might help solve a crime . . . .” (Ibid., page 163).

On page 171 of the same book, Turley reports that after the bombings, Shannon Flynn came to church headquarters and talked with Apostle Oaks. Flynn wanted to know what to tell investigators. Oaks responded, “As soon as I learned that Mark Hofmann had been the object of a bomb, I knew that I had some facts that would help police . . . . I talked to two F. B. I. agents. I told them everything I knew about it. The Church is going to cooperate fully and it has absolutely nothing to hide. Sometimes there are some confidential transactions but this is a murder investigation. Confidentiality is set aside. We will cooperate fully.”

On page 153, Turley tells of Mark Hofmann coming to Apostle Oaks’ office: “Hofmann said he thought bombing investigators might want to question him. He worried about what to tell them. Oaks told him to tell the truth. . . . Oaks said that as far as he knew, Hofmann’s activities with the McLellin collection, though confidential . . . . had nothing to do with the bombing investigation. Police probably would not ask him about the deal. If they did, he should answer truthfully and completely.”

Richard Turley shows that Oaks also gave Alvin Rust similar advice: “[Martell] Bird recorded, ‘He told Brother Rust that he should tell the truth in every instance, and that he should not be worried at all about the Church, because when the facts all come out, the Church will have no need to be embarrassed . . . .’” (page 175).

On December 11, 1985, Apostle Oaks addressed members of the Historical Department. According to Turley, Oaks encouraged employees to be forthright: “Of the bombing investigation, he said, ‘We are like others in that we must cooperate fully in an investigation and tell the truth on all matters material to that investigation’” (page 226).

While at first Apostle Oaks claimed that he told the F. B. I. “everything I knew” about the Hofmann case and freely gave advice to others about how they should be completely honest and provide all relevant information to investigators, when he realized that the church would be embarrassed by the truth, he clammed up just like the other church leaders. While Richard Turley claimed that “Oaks’s experience as a lawyer and judge made him sensitive to investigators’ need for any information that might help solve a crime,” when he saw the church was in danger, he put a bridle on his tongue and joined in the conspiracy of silence.

The reader will remember that Turley quoted this statement from Apostle Oaks’ journal on the day that the McLellin collection was discovered: “Today [Boyd K. Packer] & I learned that the Church has some documents that have been unknown until now, but will be of great interest when they are revealed, as they should be prior to the Hoffmann trial (in my opinion).”

While Turley seems to feel that this entry shows Oaks’ openness, it seems to foreshadow the possibility of a cover-up. The reader will note, for example, that Oaks does not mention the fact that he is talking about the McLellin collection. He merely states: “I learned that the Church has some documents . . . .” Why would he hesitate to identify the documents? If Turley had not revealed that Oaks was talking about the McLellin collection, a person reading his diary today would not know what he was talking about and would assume that whatever the documents were, they had been made available.

Apostle Oaks’ statement that “when they are revealed, as they should be prior to the Hoffmann trial (in my opinion)” seems to suggest that there was a possibility that they would not be revealed prior to the trial. (They, of course, would be of no value to prosecutors after the trial.) The words, “in my opinion” seem to imply that if the other church leaders did not want them available, Oaks would support the decision.

If the church had no plans for a cover-up, Apostle Oaks would have written something like the following: “Today I learned the Church has had the McLellin collection stored in a vault since 1908. Since this is very important to the Hoffmann case, we have called the county prosecutor and informed him of this development. He will pick up the documents in the morning.”

Oaks’ statement that the documents should be revealed “prior to the Hoffmann trial” certainly raises an important question. By March 4, 1986, the day Oaks made the entry in his journal, church leaders were well aware of the fact that prosecutors were preparing for Mark Hofmann’s preliminary hearing. If the prosecution could not produce sufficient evidence at that hearing, Hofmann would be set free and there would be no trial. For this reason investigators were working feverishly to obtain the evidence necessary to be sure that Hofmann would be bound over for trial. The fact that the Mormon Church had rediscovered the McLellin collection would have been extremely important to their case.

Since Apostle Oaks did not mention anything about revealing the McLellin collection “prior to the Hoffmann trial,” it is obvious that church leaders were planning to keep it suppressed at least through the preliminary hearing. The preliminary hearing did not start until April 14, 1986. This gave church leaders almost a month and a half to turn over the McLellin collection to investigators. Instead of coming clean, however, they chose to keep the documents hidden. The General Authorities of the church were already concerned enough about the bad publicity the church would receive during the preliminary hearing and must have hoped that no trial would ever occur. This, of course, is exactly what happened and the church never had to reveal the truth about the McLellin collection to investigators.

Since Salt Lake County prosecutors did not have the important piece of evidence that the church could have provided, their case on the murders was not as strong as it could have been. They were obviously concerned about the strength of their case. Robert Lindsey reported the following: “At the end of a week of testimony, David Biggs [one of the prosecutors] wrote in his journal: ‘I really feel as if we’ve missed the “glue” that connects the pieces of this puzzle together. The pieces don’t seem to want to stay together. We have evidence, motive, murder, but it is all just a degree off. I’m still trying to find out what the problem is’” (A Gathering of Saints: A True Story of Money, Murder and Deceit, page 317).

As we have already shown, Richard Turley has admitted that the McLellin collection in the church vault “included a key
item” which “confirmed to church officials that Hofmann was a fraud.” Turley also acknowledged that “it was apparent they [the McLellin documents] were relevant to the case, and those involved in the discovery felt the documents’ existence should be revealed.” A person certainly does not have to be a lawyer to know that the church should have immediately made these documents available.

Church leaders had publicly stressed how they were cooperating with investigators. In the beginning, the church officials pledged “our fullest cooperation with city, county and federal authorities in the investigation” (Victims, page 165). Hugh Pinnock, the General Authority who helped Hofmann obtain the loan for $185,000, wrote a letter to Steven Christensen’s widow in which he said: “Several of us have talked with law enforcement people. We want them to know whatever is relevant” (Ibid., page 176).

On October 19, 1985, “the church issued its news release . . . ‘From the outset of this investigation,’ the release noted, ‘the Church has cooperated fully with federal, state, and local law enforcement officials, responding to every inquiry and request. The Church will continue to cooperate with law enforcement officials to bring to light any facts that may contribute to this investigation’” (page 177).

A VERY BAD EXAMPLE

Church leaders obviously broke their pledge to “bring to light any facts” that would help investigators. Richard Turley tried to justify the church’s suppression of the records by saying: “The discovered documents did not fall within any of the subpoenas issued to the church, and thus officials were not legally obligated to mention them to anyone” (page 250). This is certainly a very poor excuse. It seems analogous to a person finding a pistol used to commit a murder and then maintaining there was no obligation to turn the gun over to police because it had not been subpoenaed.

Investigators certainly would have subpoenaed the McLellin collection if they had any idea that the church had it. On October 19, 1985, the Mormon Church issued a news release which stressed that the McLellin collection had never been purchased by the church: “So far as we have been able to determine, no Church officials or personnel have ever seen the ‘M’Lellin Collection, nor has it been purchased by the Church, directly or indirectly” (Victims, page 178).

On October 23, 1985, the church held a press conference. According to Richard Turley, President Gordon B. Hinckley said: “I had never heard of the McLellin collection,” Hinckley said, and he asked Hofmann what was in it . . . ‘I have never seen any such collection,’ Hinckley continued, ‘and know nothing about it beyond that’” (Ibid., pages 191-192). Turley quotes Apostle Dalin Oaks as saying the following at the same press conference: “‘Moreover,’ Oaks explained, ‘to have the church involved in the acquisition of a collection at this time would simply fuel the then current speculation reported by the press that the church already had something called the McLellin collection or was trying to acquire it in order to suppress it’” (page 193).

Since Mormon leaders had emphatically stressed that they had never seen the McLellin collection and that the church had not obtained it, law enforcement officers had no reason to think otherwise. When the collection came to light, Mormon officials should have immediately reported the discovery. Instead, however, they took advantage of the fact that investigators were in the dark concerning the matter.

That there was, in fact, a conspiracy of silence is evident from the following: Hugh Pinnock, the General Authority who arranged the loan of $185,000 for Mark Hofmann, was called upon to testify at Hofmann’s preliminary hearing. The following is taken from an official tape recording of the hearing:

ROBERT STOTT—To your knowledge, did any authority in the LDS Church ever obtain or possess the McLellin collection?
HUGH PINNOCK—No.

This would have been a very good time for Mr. Pinnock to have said, “Yes, the McLellin collection has been in our vault since 1908.” Richard Turley tries to explain away this testimony by saying: “He [Pinnock] had not been told about the McLellin materials discovered the previous month” (Victims, page 274). It may be true that Hugh Pinnock was not told about the discovery, but if this is the case, it raises a very important question: why would the other church leaders keep him in the dark about such an important issue. The answer, of course, must be that they were doing their best to hide the information from investigators and feared that if Pinnock knew about the collection he might have to tell prosecutors about it.

HINCKLEY NOT CALLED

Even if Hugh Pinnock did not know about the discovery, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who many believe is really running the church because of President Ezra Taft Benson’s age, knew all about the matter. He was subpoenaed to testify at the preliminary hearing about two weeks after he learned that the church had the McLellin collection in its vault.

Richard Turley gives this interesting information about a meeting Hinckley had with the prosecutors:

Before the preliminary hearing, Hinckley received a visit from prosecutors Bob Stott and David Biggs. Church counsel Wilford Kirton also attended the meeting . . .

Biggs recalled that they told Hinckley why they were there, and then Kirton began to do most of the talking. Eventually, however, the prosecutors explained that they needed to talk to Hinckley so they could find out what his relationship had been with Hofmann. Hofmann had claimed a close relationship with the church leader, telling people that he had Hinckley’s private numbers and could get hold of him day or night, in the country or out. Prosecutors wanted to know when, where, and how many times Hinckley had met with Hofmann and with Christensen.

Hinckley said he had met about half a dozen times with Hofmann, but he could not recall any information about those meetings beyond what he had told investigators earlier. His answers frustrated both Stott and Biggs. “President Hinckley was very little help, extremely little help,” Stott later said. “His memory of the occasions was very poor.” . . . Though he kept a journal, Hinckley had been forced to turn to Francis Gibbons when trying to reconstruct for investigators the meetings he had with Hofmann. (Victims, pages 253-255)

Although we may never know what President Hinckley told the prosecutors concerning the McLellin collection at that time, one thing is certain: he did not reveal that the church had the collection in its vault.

All accounts seem to agree that Mr. Hinckley did not want to testify at the preliminary hearing. Although there were probably a number of reasons why he did not want to be questioned under oath, he must have been very concerned that he would be asked questions which might lead to the disclosure of the rediscovery of the McLellin collection. Richard Turley gives this information:
Because Hinckley was so busy, [church counsel Wilford] Kirton suggested to the prosecutors that they postpone calling him as a witness until the trial itself rather than using him at the preliminary hearing. Hinckley added that he would prefer not to testify. Kirton’s suggestion riled Stott, who thought the attorney was being patronizing. “How old is he?” Stott later asked, recalling the incident. “Anyway, the old experienced lawyer going to tell the young lawyer how to handle the case, I became very incensed at that . . . he’s saying, ‘Why don’t we do it this way? Why don’t we save President Hinckley for the trial and don’t use him at the prelim.’? I got a little upset at that, him trying to tell me how to run my case. And so I just told him, “I’m in charge. I need President Hinckley. And he’ll testify.” . . .

Kirton let it be known explicitly, “Is there some way we could get along without President Hinckley?” Stott recalled. “Is there some way that he could have a deposition or whatever it takes?”

Stott told Kirton the only way the prosecution would consent to have Hinckley not testify at the preliminary hearing would be for the defense to agree to stipulate to what the prosecution wanted Hinckley to testify about if he were present: that he bought the Stowell letter from Hofmann on a certain date for a given price. Kirton and Hinckley asked Stott if he would broach the subject with the defense, and he agreed to do so. (Victims, pages 255-256)

President Hinckley finally got his way and did not have to testify at the preliminary hearing. Robert Lindsey wrote the following regarding Hinckley’s escape from testifying at the hearing:

To most members of the prosecution team, it was plain that Mark Hofmann had blackmailed the church. It was equally clear that leaders of the church were terrified that Gordon B. Hinckley would be required to testify against him and would be forced to testify, under oath, about his dealings with Hofmann.

From the first weeks of the investigation, lawyers for the church sought to head off this possibility. . . . Shortly before the preliminary hearing was scheduled to begin, David Biggs and Bob Stott met with Hinckley. . . .

Hinckley said it was not in the best interests of the church that he be subpoenaed to testify at the preliminary hearing . . . He had far more important things to do as a member of the First Presidency’s Office than to appear in court; Hofmann’s hearing was insignificant compared with the important challenges that he faced in his job . . .

Gordon Hinckley was not summoned as a witness after all.

Judge Grant, a devout Mormon, later attributed his absence to the trial attorneys’ concern for Hinckley’s health. But church spokesmen said Hinckley was not ill, and in fact the reasons were more complex than that. Ron Yengich, Hofmann’s lawyer, was no more eager to have the leader of the church that dominated the community raise the specter of his having been blackmailed by his client than the church wanted a man close to its Prophet to appear to have been blackmailed.

Yengich agreed to accept a statement—a stipulation . . . (A Gathering of Saints, pages 311, 318)

The stipulation itself proves to be embarrassing to the church now that it is known that President Hinckley knew about the rediscovery of the McLellin collection before the stipulation was entered into. According to Richard Turley, the “stipulation, which Biggs noted was ‘prepared and signed by Mr. Yengich and Mr. Stott,’ identified Gordon Hinckley and stated that he met with Hofmann sometime between January 11 and 14, 1983 . . . Finally, it stated that Hinckley ‘has never seen nor possessed nor has any knowledge of the whereabouts of a document or a group of documents known as the McLellin Collection’.” (Victims, page 303)

It is clear, then, that notwithstanding the fact that President Hinckley was fully aware of the rediscovery of the McLellin collection, both the prosecution and the defense understood him to say he never knew anything about any “group of documents known as the McLellin Collection.”

Richard Turley tries to minimize the importance of this by saying that the stipulation was “read into the [court] record without Hinckley ever seeing it. Had he reviewed it, Hinckley could have revised the stipulation to reflect the church’s discovery of McLellin materials in its possession” (Ibid.). The reader will notice that while Turley says that Gordon B. Hinckley “could have revised the stipulation,” he does not go so far as to say that he “would” have revised it. In any case, it is clear that President Hinckley not only refused to provide the important information about the McLellin collection to the prosecution, but his statements made to those who took part in the stipulation led them to believe that he had absolutely no knowledge of the location of any McLellin material.

A DANGEROUS GAMBLE

In holding back the McLellin collection from investigators, the Mormon Church was taking a real risk. As we stressed earlier, Richard Turley admitted that the collection included “a key item” which convinced church leaders “Hofmann was a fraud.” Moreover, Turley acknowledged that this “key item” was “relevant to the case.” This raises a very important question: what if the suppression of the McLellin collection by church leaders made it impossible for prosecutors to get Hofmann bound over for trial? If prosecutors had failed to make a strong enough case, we could have had a cold-blooded murderer walking the streets of Salt Lake City today. Although there is no way of knowing for certain, it is reasonable to believe that Hofmann might murder again.

If church leaders were convinced that Hofmann was a fraud after learning about the McLellin collection, why was Judge Grant not allowed to see this highly significant part of the evidence?

Richard Turley explains that the church hoped that the prosecutors had sufficient evidence without the church revealing the discovery of the McLellin collection: “If the prosecution’s evidence was as strong as some sources had hinted, the preliminary hearing would almost certainly result in Hofmann’s being bound over for trial” (Victims, page 251). Turley, however, tries to show that the church did not have an inside track on what was going on in the Salt Lake County Attorney’s Office: “The cautious distance being kept between church headquarters and investigators meant church officials remained largely unaware of the direction the investigation was taking, except to the extent they could piece together clues from media reports, subpoenas, and other sources” (Ibid.).

Turley reports that on February 6, 1986, Apostle Dallin Oaks expressed doubts regarding the prosecution’s ability to prevail: “Dallin Oaks, who viewed the case with his extensive legal background, began to wonder about the adequacy of the murder case against Hofmann and about whether, even at this late date, the prosecution had filed its charges prematurely. ‘I hope the prosecution has more evidence on the murder charges than the newspaper speculation has hinted,’ he confided in his journal” (Ibid., page 243).

It is certainly deplorable that church leaders would take such a gamble with regard to a person charged with two murders just so they could protect the church’s image. On page 251, Turley
tries to justify this by making this strange statement: “Because a preliminary hearing was not a trial to determine ultimate guilt or innocence, state law would allow prosecutors to try again if they failed during the first hearing to prove probable cause.” Turley seems to be hinting that if the prosecutors did not succeed the first time around, the Mormon Church could bring forth the McLellin collection and a second preliminary hearing could be conducted.

Does Mr. Turley realize the implications of what he is suggesting? The preliminary hearing extended over five weeks causing great pain to the relatives of the victims. In addition, it cost a great deal of money. It seems hard to believe that if prosecutors were unsuccessful in their first attempt to bind Hofmann over for trial, that church leaders would have stepped forward with the McLellin collection. The church was already very upset with the bad publicity it had received. In the *Messenger* for September 1987, page 8, we quoted Apostle Dallin Oaks as saying: “In the course of this episode, we have seen some of the most sustained and intense LDS Church-bashing since the turn of the century. . . . the Church and its leaders have been easy marks for assertions and innuendo ranging from charges of complicity in murder to repeated recitals that the Church routinely acquires and suppresses church history documents in order to deceive its members and the public.”

If church leaders had come forth with the McLellin collection after an unsuccessful preliminary hearing, it would have caused a far greater outcry than they encountered during the early investigation of the bombings. The church would have been accused of covering up and protecting a murderer to save face with the public. A second preliminary hearing would have probably taken a good deal of time to schedule and complete. In the meantime a murderer would have been running loose. Furthermore, investigators and prosecutors would have been incensed at church leaders who had hidden a “key item” from them. Many of them were already upset with the church’s lack of cooperation. Fortunately, Judge Grant did find there was enough evidence to warrant a trial.

Richard Turley makes this peculiar statement regarding the period after the hearing: “When the curtain closed on the preliminary hearing, church officials . . . anticipated a long intermission before the next acts began in the legal drama. While waiting for the curtain to rise again, they continued to cooperate with investigators and prosecutors gathering evidence in the case” (*Victims*, page 307). How Turley can convince himself that the church was cooperating when they were withholding one of the most important pieces of evidence is very difficult to understand. That church leaders would continue to hide this vital information from investigators is almost beyond belief.

**THE PLEA BARGAIN**

The new information about the suppression of the McLellin collection also raises questions regarding the plea bargain which finally ended the Hofmann case without a trial. It seems obvious that church leaders did not want the case to go to trial and were hoping that some kind of agreement could be reached. Although President Hinckley managed to maneuver his way out of testifying at the preliminary hearing, he probably would have been called as a witness at the trial. Hinckley would have been very uncomfortable testifying concerning the McLellin collection when he knew that it was being suppressed in the First Presidency’s vault. Furthermore, Glenn Rowe knew about the rediscovery and it seems likely that he would be called as a witness.

If prosecutors had an airtight case they probably would have sought the death penalty and would not have agreed to the type of plea bargain they entered into. Although we may never know for certain, the fact that the church refused to provide important evidence it had in its possession may have made the prosecutors more willing to accept the agreement and cancel the trial.

**SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS**

The suppressive actions of the top leaders of the Mormon Church have done more damage to the church than the “enemies of the church” could have done in many years. It is going to be very difficult to sweep this matter under the rug. Their actions will undoubtedly haunt the church for many years to come.

As stated earlier, in 1908 Joseph F. Smith, the sixth prophet of the church, ordered that the McLellin collection be purchased by the church to keep it “from falling into unfriendly hands.” If President Smith had made the collection available to researchers instead of suppressing it, its contents would have been known by researchers and Mark Hofmann never could have claimed to have the collection because scholars would have known that it was in the church archives. Consequently, Steven Christensen would not have become involved in trying to obtain the collection from Hofmann and Christensen and Kathleen Sheets would probably be alive today.

In trying to keep Hofmann’s purported McLellin collection from falling into unfriendly hands, Hugh Pinnock followed in the footsteps of President Smith and opened the way for the tragedy when he arranged a loan of $185,000 for Hofmann to purchase the imaginary collection.

As if this is not bad enough, when church leaders discovered the real collection, they were so embarrassed that they kept it hidden from investigators. This conspiracy of silence forced investigators to spend untold hours trying to pin down the truth about the collection. If the church had been forthcoming about the matter, investigators could have spent this time in pursuing more profitable areas. The church’s silence concerning this matter definitely hurt prosecutors and left them with a weaker hand in their dealings with Hofmann’s lawyers.

While it is true that the General Authorities of the Mormon Church have preached openness, honesty and trust in God from the pulpit, when it came right down to it some of the very highest leaders of the church were unable to live up to the lofty teachings they have set forth. They apparently did not believe that the God they serve was able to handle the embarrassing situation the church found itself in. Therefore, they proceeded to protect the church with their own strategy. In their attempt to save the church, they gave an advantage to a man whom they knew was a desperate criminal who was charged with murder. Their behavior with regard to this matter did not match up with their twelfth Article of Faith: “We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.”

While it is true that they did not receive a subpoena for the McLellin collection, it was only because they kept its existence well hidden from the prosecution. Now that this information has come to light, the actions of these leaders speak louder than their words. The message seems to be that the church’s image is more important than the truth, even to the point of withholding key evidence in a murder investigation! We feel that this is a terrible example to set before the youth of the church.
WHAT’S IN THE VAULT?

While Richard Turley stresses the cooperation by church officials during the investigation, the evidence seems to provide a different story. Robert Lindsey relates the following:

. . . Salt Lake City detective Jim Bell spoke at a meeting that had been called to review what detectives knew . . . He said he suspected the church was concealing information about Hofmann and the murders.

“They’re hiding something; the church is doing everything it can to make this as difficult as possible. I’ve never seen anything like this in a homicide investigation.” (A Gathering of Saints, page 236)

Lindsey went on to say that “many of the investigators” felt “that they were being stonewalled by leaders of the church” (Ibid.). On pages 268-269 of the same book, we find this information:

The salamander letter and several other documents Hofmann had sold to the church were still in Washington at the FBI laboratory. When Ted Cannon [Salt Lake County Attorney] pressed the church to let his investigators look at the originals of those that were still in Salt Lake City, a lawyer for the church said that would be impossible, because some of the documents were extremely confidential and the church did not want to risk having them made public.

Cannon said that if the church declined to provide the documents voluntarily, he would subpoena them - and indeed, he subsequently did so. But, to head off a court fight over the subpoena, Cannon surrendered to a demand by the church’s lawyers to keep the substance of the documents a secret.

“The content and meaning and interpretations to be placed upon what is iterated within the documents,” Cannon wrote to Wilford Kirton, the church’s lawyer, “is either immaterial or of secondary concern as far as this investigation is concerned. . . . every reasonable measure will be employed to secure not only the documents themselves, but the contents thereof, from scrutiny or discussion by anyone outside the authorized investigative team. . . .”

Cannon agreed to let church officials maintain a sign-in/sign-out log identifying everyone who examined the documents and agreed with the church’s demands that members of his staff would have to turn over to the church all notes, photocopies, photographs and negatives made during examination of the documents. Cannon ended his letter with an expression of thanks for the church’s cooperation, a clause that brought snickers from many of those in the War Room [i.e., the room where investigators met to discuss strategy in the Hofmann investigation].

Richard Turley acknowledges that there were some problems regarding documents the prosecution wanted and goes so far as to say that at one point Church leaders were preparing to resist a subpoena:

The next morning, [Apostle] Dallin Oaks telephoned Rowe . . . Rowe described the burden the request imposed on the Historical Department and the risks it posed to the 261 books and manuscripts involved. Oaks, in turn, wrote to Thomas Monson of the First Presidency about the request. “It would be a very large burden and risk for the Church to produce 261 books and manuscripts, or to copy them,” Oaks observed. He also doubted the investigators really needed all they were seeking. He recommended that the church go to court to resist the subpoena, even though “our differences with the County Attorney would then become public.” After drafting the letter, Oaks received a telephone call from his fellow Historical Department adviser, [Apostle] Boyd Packer . . . Hinckley and Packer both backed Oak’s recommendation. (Victims, page 248)

As it turned out, the Mormon Church did not go to court to resist any of the subpoenas, but it did impose very unusual restrictions on the use of its documents. This quibbling with investigators over access to documents undoubtedly cost prosecutors a good deal of time that could have been spent on more important matters.

Michael P. George, of the county attorney’s office, felt that President Hinckley was not telling the truth about his dealings with Hofmann. On page 224 of his book, Richard Turley provided this information:

In response to other questions, Hinckley said he knew of no dealings between Hofmann and general authorities of the church beyond those already mentioned. Mike George later explained that “what we were talking about at that time was other dealings involving Hofmann in regards to documents being sold to members of the First Presidency.” When Hinckley said he knew of no others, George did not believe him.

Hinckley answered based on his recollections, supplemented by information provided him by Francis Gibbons and Glenn Rowe. Two pieces of information had eluded church officials, however, in their attempts to reconstruct Hofmann’s dealings with the church. They recalled that the Grandin printing contract had been purchased by the Historical Department using funds provided by the First Presidency. Later research would convince them, however, that the transaction itself was closed in Hinckley’s office.

The other elusive item was the Bullock-Young letter. Hofmann had given it free to Hinckley for the church . . . In the more than four years that had elapsed since the gift, Hinckley had forgotten about it . . . Later, Gibbons would rediscover the Bullock-Young letter and bring it to Hinckley’s attention, but on December 9, 1985, when George and Farnsworth interviewed him, the document had been forgotten.

The Bullock letter was a very controversial Hofmann forgery which church leaders assumed was authentic and suppressed in the First Presidency’s vault. Mark Hofmann had previously sold the Mormon Church a document he had forged in which Joseph Smith blessed his son, Joseph Smith III. According to former Church Archivist Donald Schmidt, Hofmann received material from the archives which was valued “in the neighborhood of $20,000” for the blessing document. This blessing indicated that Joseph Smith III was the prophet’s true successor, not Brigham Young.

In the letter to President Brigham Young, Thomas Bullock indicated that he would not turn over the blessing because he feared Young would destroy it. Bullock told Young that he did not have “licence to destroy every remnant of the blessing which he received from his Father...I will not, nay I can not, surrender that blessing, knowing what its certain fate will be if returned . . .” (Victims, page 61).

This letter tended to put Brigham Young in a very bad light, and therefore Mormon leaders felt it must be suppressed. Turley relates that Mark Hofmann brought the Bullock-Young letter directly to President Gordon B. Hinckley:

After Hinckley read the document, Hofmann said he was a believing, active Latter-day Saint, that he wanted to give the original document to Hinckley, and that he did not want to blackmail the church . . . Hinckley asked, “Are you telling me that you wish to give this document to the Church without cost?”
President Hinckley was obviously fooled by Mark Hofmann’s clever attempt to make him believe he was a faithful Mormon. Since Hofmann told him that he had not even retained a copy of the letter for himself, Hinckley apparently thought that he could hide it in the First Presidency’s vault and that it would never be brought to light.

It seems unlikely that Hinckley would have forgotten such an important transaction with Hofmann. In any case, Richard Turley gives this information about the matter on pages 232-233 of his book:

Also on January 8, Francis Gibbons transferred to Dean Larsen the original and a typescript of the Bullock-Young letter, which Gibbons had rediscovered. . . . It was overlooked until Gibbons happened across it.

The rediscovery of the letter put church officials in an awkward position. Because the letter had been forgotten, it had not been mentioned in the church’s news conference or in previous interviews with investigators. Undoubtedly, its discovery would subject church officials to ridicule. Despite the likelihood of criticism, however, Hinckley directed Gibbons to turn the letter over to investigators. In his memorandum to Larsen, Francis Gibbons wrote, “The brethren understand you will make this letter available to the Salt Lake County Attorney under a subpoena which has been served on the Church to produce all documents in its possession received from Mark W. Hofmann . . .”

Michael George, of the county attorney’s office, was rather upset when he learned of the existence to the Thomas Bullock letter. In A Gathering of Saints, page 274, Robert Lindsey reports what happened when the “rediscovery” of the letter became known:

After being issued a subpoena, the church had released to Throckmorton and Flynn what it said were all of the documents it had acquired from Hofmann since 1980, including some that it had previously kept secret.

When the First Presidency’s Vault yielded the letter presented to Gordon Hinckley by Hofmann in which Thomas Bullock accused Brigham Young of having tried to destroy the Blessing of Joseph Smith III, it caught the War Room by surprise.

“What else are they hiding?” Michael George demanded. “None of the church historians I’ve talked to — Don Schmidt, Leonard Arrington, Dean Jesse — even knew this existed. They’ve never heard of it. What else do they have? Who knows what’s in the First Presidency’s Vault?”

Now that we know that the McLellin collection was also hidden in the First Presidency’s vault, Michael George’s question concerning what else is in the vault seems almost prophetic.

Mormon leaders were not only uncooperative with investigators when it came to providing historical documents, but they were secretive regarding other matters as well. The book, Mormon Murders, claimed that a detective by the name of John Foster wanted to get a copy of a page from “the Church Administration Building log” which showed Hofmann had come to the church offices on a certain day. According to Naifeh and Smith, when Foster “went to pick up the photocopy, every entry except the one relating to Hofmann had been whitened out . . . giving police no way to determine if relevant entries had been whitened out along with irrelevant ones” (page 302).

Richard Turley, on the other hand, maintained that “the log photocopy attached to Foster’s police report has no whitened-out entries. Investigative Information Memo #840 . . .” (Victims, page 439, footnote 1). After making this point, however, Turley turns right around and says that “there was one Administrative Building log page on which extraneous entries were whitened out before being given to police. It was a page for October 15, 1985, that was furnished to investigators who asked when Hofmann met with [Apostle] Dallin Oaks on that day. The unmasked entry answered their question, and they did not ask to see the other entries, which had been whitened out because they were irrelevant to the question and because church officials felt ethically bound to protect church visitors’ privacy unless required by investigators to do otherwise” (Ibid., pages 439-40).

That the Mormon Church would find it necessary to hide such information from the police is certainly strange. We would expect that type of reaction from the CIA or the FBI, but to have a church which proclaims that it operates “in full light” with “no secrecy about its doctrine, aim, or purpose” behave in such a manner makes one rather curious as to what is really going on. It also seems strange that there was no attempt to force the church leaders to produce the original log. While there may not have been anything else of importance in the log, the fact that most of the material was deleted would make one wonder if Hofmann met with Apostle Oaks more than once on the day of the two murders or if other important figures involved with Hofmann or the McLellin transaction were in Oaks’ office that day. The entire log book should have been subpoenaed and thoroughly examined for all meetings between church leaders and Hofmann as well as others who were in any way associated with Hofmann’s document deals. We seriously doubt that other people in Salt Lake City would have received the preferential treatment which the LDS leaders received in the Hofmann investigation.

At any rate, on page 247 of his book, Richard Turley admits that this was not the only time that the church “removed or masked information” provided to investigators:

When Mike George delivered one [subpoena] the next day, the county’s request had expanded to “any records, check slips, logs, cards, or other documentation of visits to the LDS Church Historical Archives and the documents, books, catalogs, letters, information, etc” that Hofmann and five others had used since 1975. . . .

The next day, February 20, a county investigator delivered a subpoena to the church’s Missionary Department asking for missionary records pertaining to Hofmann and one of his associates. . . . library circulation records and missionary records dealt with living individuals and thus raised issues of privacy that were hot topics among legal scholars, librarians, and archivists across the United States. Church officials felt a responsibility to comply with the subpoenas while at the same time fulfilling their legal and ethical responsibility to safeguard the privacy of living individuals. Thus in responding to requests for information, officials sometimes removed or masked information not specifically required by the investigators. When Kirton received the missionary records, he reviewed them and eliminated portions not required by the subpoena. . . . On February 27, Kirton sent the screened materials on to the county.

Although the tide of Richard Turley’s book begins with the word Victims, it is basically the story of only one victim, the Mormon Church. The story of the real victims of the tragedy seems to be glossed over. While we have to agree that the church was a victim of Mark Hofmann’s devious plans, we feel that
Richard Turley, Apostle Dallin Oaks and other church officials have painted a role of martyrdom which does not fit with the facts.

When a person carefully examines the evidence, it becomes evident that church leaders shot themselves in the foot. The Mormon church hierarchy must accept a great deal of blame for the tone of the books and articles which have tended to embarrass the church. The fact that church leaders alienated a significant number of the investigators who worked on the Hofmann case with their secrecy and lack of cooperation seems to have made a very negative impression on the authors who interviewed them.

It seems that the Mormon leaders and the investigators were on a collision course from the day of the bombings. Church officials felt that in order to prevent embarrassment to the church they had to remain as quiet as possible about the McLellin collection Hofmann had dreamed up and the role Hofmann, Christensen and Sorenson were playing in its suppression. The investigators, on the other hand, needed this very information to solve the murder case. Although the Mormon leaders’ main concern seems to have been to protect the church and themselves from embarrassment, they ended up obstructing the investigation, wasting the valuable time of investigators and, consequently, delaying the arrest of the murderer.

TESTING THE PROPHETS

If the leaders of the Mormon Church did not make such extravagant claims concerning their prophetic ability to detect and fight off evil influences, it might be easier to accept the idea that they were martyrs in the Hofmann scandal. Joseph Smith, the first Mormon prophet, maintained that in his youth he had seen a vision of both God and Christ. In this vision he was told that all other churches were corrupt. The following statement by Smith is taken from the Pearl of Great Price, one of the four standard works of the church:

...I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right... and which I should join. I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: “they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.” He again forbade me to join with any of them... (Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History 1:18-20)

Mormon leaders teach that all other churches are in a state of apostasy, More than fifty pages of the Introduction to the History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are devoted to proving that all churches except the Mormon Church are in apostasy. The following is found on page XL: “Nothing less than a complete apostasy from the Christian religion would warrant the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” Church members are taught that only men who hold the Mormon priesthood have the authority to administer in the ordinances of the gospel. Consequently, those who perform baptisms in other churches do not operate with any authority and such baptisms are invalid in the sight of God.

The Mormons, as we have pointed out, claim to be led by revelation from God. Apostle Bruce R. McConkie made these claims regarding Mormon revelation:

Our Lord’s true Church is established and founded upon revelation. Its identity as the true Church continues as long as revelation is received to direct its affairs... without revelation there would be no legal administrators to perform the ordinances of salvation with binding effect on earth and in heaven... Since The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord’s true Church; and since the Lord’s Church must be guided by continuous revelation... we could safely conclude... that the Church today is guided by revelation... the Spirit is giving direct and daily revelation to the Presiding Brethren in the administration of the affairs of the Church... The presence of revelation in the Church is positive proof that it is the kingdom of God on earth. ... For those who reject these revelations there awaits the damnation of hell. (Mormon Doctrine, 1979, pages 646, 647, 650)

Apostle McConkie also stated: “Members of the First Presidency, Council of the Twelve, and the Patriarch to the Church—because they are appointed and sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators to the Church—are known as the living oracles.” (Ibid., page 547)

Unfortunately for church leaders, Mark Hofmann has put the claim of revelation in the church to the acid test and found that the “living oracles” are just as fallible as other men. Because of this, President Hinckley, Apostle Oaks and other Mormon leaders find themselves in a very embarrassing position. At a time when revelation was really needed, they seemed to be completely in the dark as to what was going on.

In his youth Mark Hofmann undoubtedly was taught that Mormon Church leaders were led by revelation and had the gift of discernment to detect deceivers. The prophet Joseph Smith, in fact, claimed he received a revelation from God himself warning him that his enemies were falsifying an important religious document (see Doctrine and Covenants, Section 10). Hofmann, however, finally came to the conclusion that the church was not led by revelation and that he could even deceive the “living prophets” and the top Mormon scholars. In his confession, Mr. Hofmann said that he could “look someone in the eye and lie” and didn’t believe that “someone could be inspired” in a religious sense as to what “my feelings or thoughts were.” He claimed that he “had lost faith in the Mormon Church” and that he “wasn’t fearful of the Church inspiration detecting the forgery.” (Hofmann’s Confession, pages 99, 112)

Not only did church leaders fail to forsee through revelation the threat Hofmann presented to the church, but they completely ignored the many warnings about Hofmann’s documents which began appearing in our newsletter about eighteen months before the bombings. In Victims, page 89, Richard Turley commented about this matter: “Surprisingly, the article [in the Salt Lake City Messenger, March 1984] concluded, “While we would really like to believe that the [Salamander] letter attributed to Harris is authentic, we do not feel that we can endorse it until further evidence comes forth...” ” The Los Angeles Times, August 25, 1984, reported that “The Tanners suggestion of forgery has surprised some Mormons, who note that the parallels in wording... could be taken as evidence of authenticity.” Thirteen months before the murders, September 1, 1984, the church’s own Deseret News printed the fact that “outspoken Mormon Church critics Jerald and Sandra Tanner suspect the document is a forgery, they told the Deseret News.” In an article published in the New York Times after the bombings, Robert Lindsey wrote:

In a newsletter that he publishes with his wife, Sandra, Mr. Tanner began raising questions about their authenticity, in some cases comparing the texts with known Mormon writings. But if senior Mormon officials were aware of his warnings, they apparently paid little attention. Several of the church’s highest officials have acknowledged negotiating to acquire
documents from Mr. Hofmann until the day of the first two bombings. (New York Times, February 16, 1986)

Richard Lindsey has a quotation from Hugh Pinnock, the Mormon General Authority who was working on the McLellin transaction, which indicates that church leaders still believed in Hofmann two or three days after the bombings. Writing on April 17, 1986, Pinnock observed: “It seems that Hofmann has left a trail of evidence. The only effective manner to understand this situation is to realize that M[ark] H[ofmann] was well considered before 10-17 or 18th even though he fooled us all. M[ark] H[ofmann] did not internalize the gospel.” (Victims, page 271)

Apostle Dallin Oaks met with Mark Hofmann just hours after he had killed Kathleen Sheets and Steven Christensen. Oaks never suspected that Hofmann was involved in the bombings and encouraged him to go on with the McLellin transaction. On page 153 of Victims, Richard Turley wrote: “Oaks asked Hofmann if he still intended to proceed with the closing on the collection . . . Oaks told him he ought to get in touch with David E. West, Sorensen’s attorney, who would doubtless wonder how Christensen’s death would affect the transaction. . . . Oaks thanked Hofmann for his work in discovering church documents and for his willingness to sell the McLellin collection to someone ‘friendly to the church.’”

Apostle Oaks later made a feeble attempt to explain why church leaders were unable to detect Hofmann’s evil plans (see Confessions of a White Salamander, page 64). He commented: “But why, some still ask, were his deceits not detected by the several Church leaders with whom he met?” Oaks maintained that Church leaders “cannot be suspicious and questioning” of the many people they meet with every year and noted that if “they fail to detect a few deceivers . . . that is the price they pay to increase their effectiveness in counseling, comforting, and blessing the hundreds of honest and sincere people they see.”

Apostle Oaks never really answered the question. Mark Hofmann was not meeting with church leaders for “counseling, comforting, and blessing.” He was meeting with them for the express purpose of deceiving them so that they would give him large amounts of money and authentic documents in exchange for his fraudulent documents. Furthermore, he had many visits with high Mormon officials. These meetings went on for years, yet church leaders were unable to discern the wicked plan that Hofmann had in his heart.

While the Mormon leaders claim to have the same powers as the ancient apostles in the Bible, their performance with regard to Mark Hofmann certainly did not match up to that of Apostle Peter when he caught Ananias and Sapphira red-handed in their attempt to deceive the church with regard to a financial transaction: “But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?” (Acts 5:3).

In a revelation given by Joseph Smith on March 8, 1831, the Lord warned against being “seduced by evil spirits, or doctrines of devils. . . . beware lest ye are deceived; and that ye may not be deceived seek ye earnestly the best gifts . . . it is given by the Holy Ghost to some to know the diversities of operations . . . to others the discerning of spirits. . . . And to the bishop of the church, and unto such as God shall appoint . . . are to have it given unto them to discern all those gifts lest there shall be any among you professing and yet be not of God” (Doctrine and Covenants 46:7, 8, 16, 23, 27).

Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie proclaimed that church leaders did have the gift of discernment: . . . the gift of the discerning of spirits is poured out upon presiding officials in God’s kingdom; they have it given to them to discern all gifts and all spirits, lest any come among the saints and practice deception. . . . There is no perfect operation of the power of discernment without revelation. Thereby even ‘the thoughts and intents of the heart’ are made known. . . . Where the saints are concerned . . . the Lord expects them to discern, not only between the righteous and the wicked, but between false and true philosophies, educational theories, sciences, political concepts and social schemes. (Mormon Doctrine, page 197)

It would seem that if these powers were really functioning in the church today, the “Prophet, Seer and Revelator” would have received a revelation warning him concerning Mark Hofmann’s “cunning plan” to defraud and disgrace the church. Furthermore, a revelation regarding his deception would have prevented two people from dying.

Spencer W. Kimball, who was the prophet and president of the church at the time Hofmann first began deceiving church leaders, was supposed to be a “seer” and have the power to “translate all records that are of ancient date” (Book of Mormon, Mosiah 8:13). The Book of Mormon also says that “a seer is greater than a prophet . . . a seer is a revelator and a prophet also; and a gift which is greater can no man have . . . a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light. . . .” (Mosiah 8: 15-17).

When Mark Hofmann brought the forged Anthon transcript, which was supposed to contain characters Joseph Smith copied from the gold plates of the Book of Mormon, President Kimball was unable to translate the characters. Instead of using the “seer stone,” he examined the characters which appear on the transcript with a magnifying glass. Not only did he fail to provide a translation, but he was unable to detect that the church was being set up to be defrauded of a large amount of money and many historical items out of its archives. Moreover, he entirely failed to see the devastating and embarrassing effect this transaction and others which followed would have on the Mormon Church. If ever revelation from the Lord was needed, it was on that day in 1980 when Mark Hofmann stood in the presence of President Kimball.

As President Kimball grew older, he became less able to function and President Gordon B. Hinckley took over many of his responsibilities and became to all appearances the acting president of the church. Hinckley, who posed with Mark Hofmann, President Kimball and other church leaders in a photograph taken in 1980, was also deceived on a number of occasions by Mr. Hofmann. He, together with Apostle Boyd K. Packer (also shown in the picture), approved many of the deals the church made with Hofmann.

It appears that if the Mormon Church was ever led by revelation, it has been lacking since Mark Hofmann came into the church offices with the Anthon transcript. The inability of Mormon leaders to detect the religious fraud perpetrated upon them raises a question with regard to their testimony regarding the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. After all, if they could not determine that Hofmann’s documents—which were supposed to be only 150 years old—were forgeries, how can we trust their judgment with regard to a record which is supposed to be ten times as old?

The reader will remember that Apostle McConkie maintained that “the Spirit is giving direct and daily revelation to the presiding Brethren in the administration of the affairs of the Church.” One would think that if such revelation was
in operation, Mark Hofmann would have been exposed years before the bombings. With regard to the inability of the Mormon leaders to detect that the Hofmann documents were fraudulent, a person might argue that these documents were not really important spiritual writings, and therefore the Lord did not see fit to intervene when the General Authorities examined them. The truth of the matter, however, is that they contained extremely important material directly relating to spiritual affairs. The Salamander letter, for example, changed the story of the Angel Moroni appearing to Joseph Smith to that of a cantankerous and tricky “old spirit” who transformed himself from a white salamander and struck Joseph Smith. Mormon Apostle Dallin Oaks tried to reconcile the Salamander letter with Joseph Smith’s account by saying: “One wonders why so many writers neglected to reveal to their readers that there is another meaning of ‘salamander,’ which may even have been the primary meaning. . . . That meaning . . . is ‘a mythical being thought to be able to live in fire.’ . . . A being that is able to live in fire is a good approximation of the description Joseph Smith gave of the Angel Moroni . . . the use of the words white salamander and old spirit seem understandable.” (“1985 CES Doctrine and Covenants Symposium,” pages 22-23) After the Salamander letter was proclaimed a forgery, Apostle Oaks must have been very embarrassed that he ever made such an outlandish statement.

Significantly, some of the purported Joseph Smith writings which Hofmann sold to the church contain revelations from the Lord himself. For instance, the Joseph Smith III Blessing document gives this message from the Lord: “Verily, thus saith the Lord: if he abides in me, his days shall be lengthened upon the earth, but, if he abides not in me, I, the Lord will receive him, in an instant, unto myself.”

Mark Hofmann also forged an 1838 Joseph Smith letter to his brother, Hyrum, which the Mormon Church purchased in 1983. This letter was in its entirety a revelation purporting to come from the Lord. It begins with the words, “Verily thus Saith the Lord,” and ends with the word “Amen.” The fact that Mormon leaders were not able to recognize the spurious nature of these revelations casts doubt upon their ability to discern the truthfulness of the other revelations given by Joseph Smith.

The church has always claimed that it is virtually impossible for a person to write a revelation that would compare with Joseph Smith’s. It now appears, however, that there is someone who can write revelations comparable to Joseph Smith’s and that it is even possible to get them past the scrutiny of the highest leadership of the Mormon Church.

As we have noted earlier, another thing that shows the church’s lack of revelation in times of crisis is the way the rediscovery of the McLellin collection was handled. President Spencer W. Kimball died about three weeks after the bombings, and Ezra Taft Benson became the 13th prophet on November 10, 1986. It was only four months after Benson became president of the church that the McLellin collection was found in the First Presidency’s vault. On page 250 of his book, Richard Turley affirms that this information was reported to the First Presidency in March 1986.

One would think that at this vital period in the church’s history President Benson, “the living prophet,” would have had the insight to inform the other members of the First Presidency that the McLellin collection must be made available to investigators. Instead of Benson receiving the word of the Lord to point the church in the proper way, it seems that the heavens were silent and the Mormon leaders were left to their own devices. While there are probably some Mormons who would suggest that President Benson was led by the Lord to suppress the discovery, we believe that most members of the church would feel that such an idea would be unthinkable.

Some may excuse Benson’s failure in this matter by saying that he was too advanced in age to deal with such problems. While there may be some truth in such an argument (he was 86 years old at that time and just recently turned 93), this explanation does not provide much comfort to the faithful. If Benson is not really capable of leading the church through revelation, who is in control? Although there were six General Authorities in the Mormon Church who were informed about this matter, none of them stepped forward to help investigators!

Although Apostle Dallin Oaks would have us believe that “Criticism is particularly objectionable when it is directed toward Church authorities,” there seems to be no way to get around the fact that they must bear a great deal of the responsibility in the Hofmann affair. If they had been open and forthright about historical documents, Mr. Hofmann would not have approached them with his blackmail-like documents with the idea of filling his pockets with the church’s money. Hofmann’s knowledge of the fact that church leaders were anxious to keep anything embarrassing from falling into the hands of church critics set the stage for the tragic events which followed.

We understand that Lynn Packer, the man who brought to light the story concerning Paul Dunn’s deception, was working on the story concerning the rediscovery of the McLellin even before we became aware of it. It is reported that his article on the subject may appear in the November issue of Utah Holiday magazine. We are looking forward to this article.

Those who wish to know more about the Mark Hofmann case should obtain our books, Tracking the White Salamander and Confessions of a White Salamander.

THE WARNKE PROBLEM

In our book, Satanic Ritual Abuse and Mormonism, we wrote the following: “While we have been aware of the influence of the occult for many years, we were always somewhat suspicious of some of the tales of ex-Satanists. We have always tried to be very cautious about accepting stories concerning conspiracies unless strong evidence could be marshaled to support the accusations. We have seen too many people make the mistake of leveling serious accusations against individuals and organizations without carefully considering all of the facts” (page 1). Unfortunately, we have learned that there is a serious question with regard to Mike Warnke’s story regarding his involvement in Satanism. Warnke is a noted Christian comedian who wrote the book, The Satan Seller. Mr. Warnke claimed that he became a satanic high priest and had 1,500 followers! Warnke, in fact, claimed to be working for the Illuminati.

Christian writers Jon Trott and Mike Hertenstein, who have done extensive research concerning Mike Warnke’s life, claim that they were unable to verify his claims concerning Satanism. They, in fact, feel they have evidence to disprove his published statements. They note, for example, that he started attending San Bernardino Valley College on September 13, 1965, and then make this observation: “Mike writes in The Satan Seller that it was after he started college that he first was introduced to drugs, sex, and finally Satanism. And he continues, it was only after the Satanists threw him out of their coven that he joined the navy. Warnke’s military records say he entered the navy on June 2, 1966. Therefore, whatever happened in Mike’s life regarding Satanism had to have happened between September 13, 1965, and June 2, 1966” (Cornerstone, vol. 21, no. 98, page 9).
This, of course, gives Mike Warnke less than nine months to become a Satanist and advance to his high position in Satanism. Trott and Hertenstein quote the following from Warnke’s book, *Schemes of Satan*: “In my own case, being away from home at college and not having any close friends there meant that almost no one could have known what was happening to me except, of course, the members of the Satanic Brotherhood, and they were not telling!” *(Ibid.)* Trott and Hertenstein go on to reveal the following:

In reality, Mike Warnke simply did what countless other freshmen have done: he found a new circle of friends. We found that new circle, and they were not part of the Satanic Brotherhood. None of these people are mentioned by Warnke in *The Satan Seller* or anywhere else.

Greg Gilbert was one of Mike’s first and closest friends at college. . . . Greg reflects upon the notoriety of his old college roommate. “After Mike became a star, I assumed that since he had gotten this far with his Satan story, he’d always get away with it. I never knew what to do. Who could you tell?” . . .

Greg’s college girlfriend, Dawn Andrews, gave us her assessment. . . . “I remember how upset I was when *The Satan Seller* came out, because what Warnke said was a lie. He has a very fertile imagination.”

Dyana Credelitch was another of Mike Warnke’s college friends introduced by Greg. “After he got famous, I always wanted to write him a letter and say, Mike, remember me? The one you gave the silver cross to? *When were you able to have this coven of fifteen hundred people? Don’t you remember, about the most exciting thing we used to do was play croquet in Greg’s backyard?*” *(Ibid.)*

The same article points out that Mike Warnke became engaged to a woman after he entered college and that she knew nothing about his satanic activities:

> It was there that Lois Eckenrod, a girl who was soon to be his fiancée, joins the story. “Mike and I, met in September or October, that first semester at Valley,” Lois said. “It was only a couple of months before we got engaged. *Hardly a day went by that we didn’t see each other.*”

His friends remember Mike Warnke as thin, with . . . *short hair* . . . Yet Mike says in *The Satan Seller* that when college started . . . His hair, he writes, was already collar length. Within a short time, he claims to have become a full-fledged hippie: “I . . . bought some black pants and freaky shins. My hair was longer than ever, and I bleached it blond . . . ”

“He looked like everybody else,” says Greg. . . .

On his *Mike Warnke Alive!* album, Mike further claims: “I’d had hepatitis four times from shooting up with dirty needles. I had scabs all over my face from shooting up crystal. I was a speed freak. I weighed 110 pounds soaking wet. My skin had turned yellow. My hair was falling out. My teeth were rotting out of my head. I’d been pistol-whipped five or six times. My jaw had been broken. My nose had been almost ripped off. I had a bullet hole in my right leg. Two bullet holes in my left leg.”

Greg Gilbert and the others saw Mike on a daily basis, and say that it is totally impossible for Mike to have had hepatitis, facial scabs from injecting “crystal,” and wounds from being shot three times. “Without us knowing it? *It’s a lie,*” Greg says.

Lois’s reaction to Mike’s tale? “*That’s just make-believe,*” she states. “Mike never fell in with drugs . . . I was training to be a nurse, and I think I would have known if he was using drugs. I wouldn’t have dated Mike if he were drugged.” . . . Tim Smith . . . states he never saw Warnke with *long hair or in the drug-induced emaciated state* he claimed to be during that period . . .

By Christmas of 1965, Mike and Lois were seeing each other on a daily basis. “It was pretty fast that we said we were going to get married,” says Lois. “Within two or three months of school starting, he gave me a rose ring with a diamond in it. It cost $60. He had to make payments on it. . . .”

In *The Satan Seller*, Warnke has gone through his drugs, sex, and promotion to high priest before Christmas of 1965. . . . Shirley Schrader says Mike had Christmas dinner in Crestline with the family. “He didn’t seem emaciated by drugs to me,” she says. . . .

According to *The Satan Seller*, Mike Warnke’s reign as a satanic high priest ends, apparently sometime in the spring of 1966, when Warnke crumpled under the strain of too much responsibility and too many drugs. On a “Focus on the Family” radio broadcast, he described his appearance at this time: “*I had white hair. It was about down to my belt . . . I had six-inch fingernails; I painted them black.*” . . . On the Mike Warnke Alive! album he describes his hair length the night before boot camp: “It hit me just below the pockets.” He continues: “The night before I went to boot camp I went to this party. . . . I smoked a bunch of dope and ate a bunch of reds . . . the girl I was with decided the thing that would really be cute is if she braided my hair . . . She . . . braided it all together, and hung a jingle bell on the end of each braid.”

Lois says she was the girl who gave Mike his going-away party. When she heard this story for the first time in 1979, she was furious. “I couldn’t believe it when I heard that!” she says. “I’m the one who gave him the going-away party! We never touched drugs. *He never had long hair—his hair was short, short, short!*”

Greg and Dawn . . . offered Lois the use of their apartment for the party. *(Ibid.)*

On page 8, *Cornerstone* has a photograph of Mike Warnke reportedly taken April 30, 1966. Instead of showing that he had white hair reaching down to his belt, it supports his fiancée’s claim that his hair “was short, short, short!”

The reader may wonder what effect the charges against Warnke will have on our views regarding Satanic ritual abuse. Actually, we have never cited Mike Warnke as an authority on this subject. Although we had no idea of the depths of the problem, we had heard there might be questions regarding his claims about Satanic involvement. Consequently, we did not consult his books in preparing our material.

Actually, Mike Warnke’s works present a problem with regard to the claim that human sacrifice takes place in Satanic rituals. When he was interviewed on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, Warnke claimed he was never involved in such sacrifices:

> WINfrey: Did you witness killings?

Mr. WARNKE: No, I never did. *I never witnessed a human sacrifice . . . you just heard rumors of it even within the occult . . . *(The Oprah Winfrey Show, September 30, 1986, Transcript #8607, pages 8-9)*

While Mike Warnke claimed he had 1,500 followers in the satanic cult, he stated that he had no first-hand information about human sacrifice. For this reason the book, *The Satanism Scare*, page 130, uses Warnke as a witness against those who hold to the idea of satanic ritual abuse. If Mike Warnke was really involved in an important position in Satanism, his statement that he had no personal knowledge of human sacrifices might throw some doubt on the stories told by the survivors of satanic ritual abuse. Unless, however, Warnke can in some way overthrow the strong case that *Cornerstone* has built against him, his testimony concerning Satanism is of no value to either side of the controversy. Those who would like to know more about the Warnke problem can obtain a copy of *Cornerstone*, vol. 21, no. 98, for $2.00 from *Cornerstone*, 939 W. Wilson Ave., Chicago, IL 60640.
“WE HAVE NO KING BUT CAESAR”

In the Bible, we are told that when Pilate brought Jesus before his enemies, “they cried out, ‘Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!’” Pilate said to them, ‘Shall I crucify your King?’ The chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but Caesar!’ So he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led him away” (New King James Version, John 19: 15-16).

Like the chief priests who lived almost 2,000 years ago, we are all confronted with the question of what we are going to do with Jesus. Are we going to receive him as the king of our lives or crucify him in our hearts? Jesus himself said: “He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters” (Matthew 12:30). God has given each of us a free will so that we can make our own decision. We can either fall down before him and cry out, “My Lord and my God” (John 20: 28), or we can be like those mentioned in a parable who said, “We will not have this man to reign over us” (Luke 19:1).

The Bible says there are eternal consequences involved in this decision. Speaking to those who questioned his divinity, Jesus said:

“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36)

In our natural condition we are not fit subjects for the kingdom of God. In Isaiah 59:1-2 we read:

Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear.
But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.

In his book, Plain Christianity, page 75, J. B. Phillips speaks of the gulf that separates us from God: “For the gulf between us and God is not merely an intellectual one—it is not that God is infinitely wise and we, by comparison, blundering fools, though that is true—but the real gulf lies in the moral realm. You and I, through our own sins and failures, as well as by the infection of the sins of other people, are separated from God by a moral gulf.”

In Romans 3:23 we find that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Because of our sinful condition we do not know the personal God who wishes to have fellowship with us. Fortunately, however, God has prepared a way for our salvation through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross:

And you **He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins**, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:1-10)

Although we usually think of the emperors of Rome when we hear the word “Caesar,” anything which controls our lives and keeps us from coming to the Lord could be considered to be as tyrannical to our soul as Caesar was to the people who lived in the Holy Land during the time of Jesus. When the Pharisees were trying to trick Jesus, they brought him a coin. Jesus looked at it and said:

“Whose image and inscription is this?” They said to Him, “Caesar’s.” And He said to them, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” (Matthew 22:20-21)

If we become enslaved to the desire for money, for instance, we find ourselves worshipping in the court of Caesar. We find these words of Jesus recorded in Matthew 6:19-21:

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break through and steal.
For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The way of Caesar is the popular way. It is disastrous when we put our desires for fame, power or riches above our relationship with the Lord. In John 5:44, Jesus warned: “How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?” While it is certainly worth it, there is a price we have to pay if we desire to follow Jesus:

Then Jesus said to His Disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.
“For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.
**For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?**”

We accepted the Lord into our lives over thirty years ago and have never been sorry for that decision. While life on this earth is not always easy, we have great joy and peace and have received many answers to prayer. Moreover, we look forward to the time when we will have inexpressible joy in the kingdom of heaven.

Instead of saying, “We have no king but Caesar,” we would urge all our readers to turn their lives over to God so that they can say:

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A real controversy has been raging in Salt Lake City ever since the film *The Godmakers II* was shown at a local church. The reason the film created such a heated debate was that it openly accused the acting head of the Mormon Church, President Gordon B. Hinckley, of committing homosexual acts with another man and even with "feminine looking boys . . . about fifteen or sixteen years old . . . just little youngsters, babies." In addition, he was accused of consorting with prostitutes.

**Lawsuit Threatened**

On February 25, 1993, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported the following:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is threatening to take legal action against the producers of the anti-Mormon video "God Makers II." The video 'contains numerous false statements that violate the privacy rights' of Gordon B. Hinckley . . . said Salt Lake attorney Patrick A. Shea this month in a letter to Patrick and Caryl Matrisciana of Jeremiah Films Inc. The statements in question, relating to the personal conduct of President Hinckley, "are entirely false," said Mr. Shea, who is representing the LDS Church. . . . Ed Decker, who narrated the film and helped research and write it, said this is the first legal action the LDS Church has threatened against them.

Even before a lawsuit was threatened, a number of the important ministries to Mormons informed us that they would not carry the video because it was too sensationalistic in its approach. Dick Baer, a prominent critic of the Mormon Church, took issue with the contents of the film when he was interviewed by a newspaper:

A local resident who played a major role in the production of a film a decade ago which classifies Mormonism as a mind-controlling cult is distancing himself from the just released sequel.

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Richard D. Baer . . . says the follow-up to the 1983 movie . . . misses the mark. Baer says "God-Makers II" is sensational and dwells on the bizarre. Baer and Ed Decker . . . parted company in 1984, when Baer began his own organization to, he says, expose the radical differences between Mormonism and traditional Christianity. . . .

"Ed has a penchant to sensationalize, embellish on facts and center on bizarre issues to try to shock people," Baer says. "This film will so turn Mormons off it will be difficult to even talk to them."

Baer is not the only LDS critic refusing to support the new film. For instance, Sandra Tanner, who has written many books about Mormonism, including one that convinced Baer to leave the church, is not endorsing "Godmakers II." (*The Sacramento Union*, Dec. 26, 1992)

As the article cited above indicates, Dick Baer did play a major role in the first film. The reader may remember that Baer was present with Ed Decker in the lengthy scene at the lawyers’ office. Mr. Baer now operates Ex-Mormons and Christian Alliance, PO Box 530, Orangevale, CA 95662. In 1986, the Public Communications/Special Affairs Department of the Mormon Church prepared a list of ten “CRITICS OF THE CHURCH.” Mr. Baer’s name appeared in third place on that list. Because of Dick Baer’s role in the first film and his extensive work with Mormons, his critical evaluation of *The Godmakers II* is very significant.

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**Careful Research?**

Before looking at the charges against President Hinckley, we need to take a look at another part of the video that throws some light on the question of whether the material presented in the film was thoroughly researched. In discussing the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, the narrator (Ed Decker) asserted:
“There is strong evidence that in 1824 Joseph Smith actually had to dig up the body of his dead brother Alvin and bring part of that body with him to the Hill Cumorah in order to gain access to the gold plates on which were written the Book of Mormon.” To further illustrate this startling claim, a repulsive looking drawing of a skeleton is shown!

The truth of the matter, however, is that there is absolutely no evidence to support such an accusation. The idea that Joseph Smith would consider digging up his brother to obtain the plates actually came from the mind of document forger Mark Hofmann and was set forth by him in his infamous “Salamander letter.” In Hofmann’s forgery, the “old spirit” told Joseph Smith to “bring your brother Alvin [to the Hill Cumorah].” Joseph says he is dead shall I bring what remains but the spirit is gone . . . .” The rest of the letter, however, makes it clear that even Mark Hofmann did not go as far as Mr. Decker in saying that the spirit actually required Joseph to dig up his brother’s body.

In 1987, Mr. Hofmann confessed to prosecutors that he forged the Salamander letter. He, in fact, was questioned about the very part of the letter that mentioned Alvin: “Q: What about, ‘shall I bring what remains’, talking about Alvin? A: Part of that was from my own imagination and part was from . . . different stories that I tied together” (Hofmann’s Confession, 1987, pages 441-442). Although Hofmann believed that Joseph Smith was involved in magical practices, he was not able to come up with any evidence that Joseph Smith was commanded to bring his brother’s body to the hill. Since Hofmann’s confession that he forged the Salamander letter has been known for over five years, it seems hard to believe that anyone would still be maintaining that there is “strong evidence” that Joseph dug up Alvin’s remains to please the spirit. In any case, the use of this discredited tale should alert the reader to be careful about accepting statements in Godmakers II without doing further checking.

Ed Decker and others who have brought accusations of immorality against President Gordon B. Hinckley claim that they have hard evidence to support the charges. Our examination of that evidence, however, raises many questions with regard to its validity. While we cannot say with absolute certainty that there is no truth in the accusations, on the basis of the evidence that we have examined, we find the charges difficult to accept. In fact, we find it hard to believe that they would be made public without some confirming evidence from more reliable sources.

Lest the reader should misunderstand our position, we do not wish to be considered apologists for President Hinckley or the Mormon Church. In fact, in the last issue of our newsletter we severely criticized Hinckley and other church authorities for suppressing the McLellin Collection from prosecutors in the Mark Hofmann case. Nevertheless, we feel that it is our duty to present our readers with well-balanced research on this issue. We are deeply concerned about such serious charges being made on evidence that seems questionable. We are very sensitive to this issue because we ourselves have been the target of very malicious stories circulated by members of the Mormon Church.

The evidence against Mr. Hinckley comes from four individuals. The first is Charles Van Dam. Mr. Van Dam made many serious charges against Hinckley in a video tape, made on July 17, 1988. He died of AIDS just months after making his statement. Van Dam maintained he had a homosexual relationship with Hinckley that lasted from “about 1964 to 1966.” He also claimed that Hinckley was involved in sexual parties and “heavy drinking.” Moreover, he charged that Hinckley was a “frequent customer” of prostitutes. Van Dam indicated that he procured prostitutes for Hinckley and that “he wanted wild, kinky girls . . . Girls that wouldn’t mind being tor____ tied up and things like that. He was a kinky man.”

According to Mr. Van Dam, Hinckley would provide the used car lot he (Van Dam) worked for “a hundred thousand, two hundred thousand dollars at a whack” and that “a lot of it” went out to pay for the “girls and guys” involved in the sexual encounters. Finally, however, Hinckley was supposed to have warned Van Dam and others to flee from the state of Utah to avoid an investigation. Later, when Van Dam was in Denver, he received money from Salt Lake City that he felt “had to come from the church.” He bought a liquor store and “two gay bars,” and they were used as fronts to “launder” money for the people in Salt Lake. Eventually, however, the law caught up with Mr. Van Dam. He was called before a grand jury and “went to the penitentiary for telling the grand jury to hang it in their ear, that I wasn’t going to testify against them Salt Lake people.”

A careful examination of Van Dam’s interview raises questions regarding his motive, reliability and competency. For instance, the video shows that he was rather bitter against the Mormon Church because he had been expelled from the church. When Van Dam was asked why he was excommunicated, he responded: “Homosexuality.” Although this would not necessarily invalidate Van Dam’s story, it does raise the question of revenge. Moreover, there is another element in Van Dam’s story that seems improbable. He claimed that Gordon Hinckley, the very man he had previously had sexual relations with, chastised him for his deviant behavior just before his excommunication! Mr. Van Dam claimed that in 1969 or 1970, when he “went up to the Church Office Building to be excommunicated—for an interview,” he found himself in the presence of Hinckley who rebuked him for his homosexual lifestyle. Van Dam claimed that he argued with Hinckley at that time: “I told him, I said, how can you . . . sit in judgment on me, when you’re as big a queer as I am.” Mr. Van Dam said that Hinckley refused to listen to his argument, and he was excommunicated. He went on to state: “They kicked me out of the city—threatened my life.”

It seems very hard to believe that if Hinckley really had a homosexual affair with Charles Van Dam, he would turn right around and help engineer his excommunication. As strange as it may seem, Van Dam also maintains that the church was giving him money to keep him quiet. If this was really the case, why would Hinckley want to have him excommunicated and risk having the whole story come out? This does not make any sense.

One of the most disturbing portions of Charles Van Dam’s story relates to another encounter he supposedly had with Hinckley before he was reprimanded in the Church Office Building. Van Dam maintained that when he was living in California, the following incident occurred: “I was just a deacon . . . they wanted to elevate me to a priest, and in order to do that they’ve got to have a General Authority come down and interview you, and he [Hinckley] came to the stake presidency and to the stake conference . . . .” Van Dam went on to state: “. . . when I walked in and saw him there, I said, ‘there is no way that this man is going to sit in judgment on me.’”

To those who are familiar with Mormonism, this is a preposterous statement. All worthy boys who are 12 years of age can be ordained deacons. At the age of 14 they become teachers, and when they turn 16 they are ordained priests. While the office of priest is a very important office in the Catholic Church, in Mormonism it is just the third step in the lesser or Aaronic Priesthood. Every boy who lives a worthy life is expected to become a priest. Contrary to Van Dam’s statement that “a general authority” of the church has to “interview” those who would be priests, the interview is conducted by the local bishop.
of the ward in which the candidate lives. The *General Handbook of Instructions*, 1983, page 29, makes it very clear that those who seek the office of "Priest, teacher, or deacon" are "INTERVIEWED AND ORDAINED. . . By or under direction of [the] bishop."

Since it is highly unlikely that any such incident could have occurred, a shadow of doubt is cast on the rest of Charles Van Dam's statements concerning Gordon B. Hinckley. With regard to Van Dam's moral character, his own interview seems to speak for itself. He acknowledged participation in criminal activity and admitted he refused to testify before a grand jury. His interview of July 17, 1988, contains no evidence to show that he had repented of his evil activities. In our opinion, viewing this video in its entirety severely weakens Van Dam's story. *The Godmakers II* uses short extracts from another interview, and, of course, none of the problems found in the first video are mentioned.

Another factor that needs to be considered when we look at Charles Van Dam's story is his mental state at the time he was interviewed. One of the problems associated with AIDS is that the patient can suffer from *dementia*. Dementia is defined in *The American Medical Association Family Medical Guide*, page 296, as "an incurable disorder of the brain in which there is a progressive loss of memory and other intellectual functions so that the mind gradually ceases to function normally and the affected person slowly becomes increasingly confused, incapable of sensible conversation, unaware of the surroundings and generally incapacitated." *The Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy*, 1977, page 1542, says that sometimes a person suffering from dementia "may embark on foolish and ill-judged, perhaps illegal activities . . ." In the video interview, Charles Van Dam showed some signs of confusion in telling his story. The interviewer tried to explain why Mr. Van Dam was making confusing statements by admitting that he had "dementia." When he asked Van Dam to explain the disorder, he responded: "Well, it's a forgetfulness that comes with AIDS . . . you lose contact in reality in remembrances — in memory banks back years ago and then all of a sudden they'll come to you." While Van Dam was able to talk fairly well, his own admission about struggling with dementia raises the question of his reliability as a witness. *The Godmakers II* is completely silent concerning the fact that Charles Van Dam suffered from dementia. Moreover, it does not mention anything about his death.

We talked to three non-Mormons who were acquainted with Charles Van Dam before he made the video attacking Gordon B. Hinckley. None of these men seemed to have any personal knowledge about the accusations against Hinckley, and all of them felt that Van Dam was unreliable. One of them, who worked at a used car lot with Van Dam, said that he remembered Van Dam's wild stories concerning his criminal activities. At that time, Van Dam was not implicating the Mormon Church, but claimed he had been working for the Mafia in Chicago. This man felt that Van Dam was prone to telling tall tales.

In *The Godmakers II* three people were used to shore up the charges against Hinckley. These witnesses — Viola (Vi), Ben and Louie — all seem to be of questionable character. William Claudiin was present when these individuals made the affidavits and has given us copies. These statements raise a number of problems that are not discussed in the film.

The first affidavit, dated Sept. 17, 1988, was given by Viola. In her statement she admitted she was having "an affair" with a married man who she said was Gordon Hinckley's friend. She maintained there were "very kinky" parties held at a "house on the East side" but she "wouldn't [sic] take part in it, so, I would have _____take me home. I knew it was time to leave before the kinky things started." This contradicts a statement by Van Dam in his video. He claimed that one night he came home to find a very wild bisexual party going on and that Viola was one of those he found on the premises. At any rate, she recalled that at one time Hinckley "was sitting next to me on a couch with a drink in one hand and his arm around a Girl with the other. . . . They then got up and went into a bedroom. . . . I was much aware of the use of the rooms and what went on inside." Viola made it clear that prostitutes were present at the "kinky" parties. In his affidavit Louie said that "Viola was a favorite of the group . . . ."

Viola apparently knew nothing at that time about a sexual relationship between Hinckley and Van Dam, but she said, "It doesn't [sic] surprise me now to know that Hinckley and Chuck were Bed partners."

Viola admitted that when "the heat started to come down," she "left Salt Lake." While she does not give the reason, in his video Charles Van Dam explained that he and his associates fled to escape the law.

The second affidavit, dated July 8, 1988, was given by a man named Ben. According to Charles Van Dam, he was involved in the scheme to "launder money" in Denver. In any case, Ben claimed that "one night in particular Chas and I came to his house and found all the Bedrooms full — His Booze all drunk and two additional people. . . . on his couch . . . . Chas went Crazy [sic] — yelling [.] Screaming and telling the [expletive deleted] to get . . . out of his house. — I witnessed _______ and Gordon Hin[c]kley running out the Door trying to Put on their pants over their temple Garments — By the Way."

Ben's statement that Charles Van Dam chased Gordon B. Hinckley out into the night under such embarrassing conditions certainly seems hard to believe. As strange as it may seem, Van Dam himself maintained that he did drive Hinckley out of the house in the manner described above.

This does not fit well with the rest of Van Dam's story. As noted earlier, he claimed that Hinckley was providing hundreds of thousands of dollars to support the car lot and the evil activities that were going on. In another place in the 1988 video he said that "the church was definitely involved" in the matter. In *The Godmakers II*, Van Dam related: "I was personally involved with the apostle Gordon Hinckley sexually. We became financially involved in a house at 2213 Lakeline Drive. We bought the house for a party pad, and Gordon Hinckley came up there all the time and I had to arrange women for him, I had to arrange booze for him."

In the 1988 video, Van Dam claimed that the money "was given to me" to buy the house that was to be used for sexual purposes and that finally "the church took it back, or someone took it back and they ended up selling it . . . ." According to his own story, then, it was not really his house and he would not have the right to throw people out who were using it for the purpose for which it was intended. If Gordon Hinckley was really the benefactor, as Van Dam maintained, it seems highly unlikely that Van Dam would treat him in such a humiliating manner. In the video Van Dam portrays Hinckley as a Mafia-like person who would not hesitate to kill to protect his interests. If this were really the case, why would he allow Van Dam to run him off from the premises without retaliating in some way?

Ben's affidavit also raises an important question with regard to these alleged sexual activities actually took place. Viola set the time frame in "the early to mid 1960's, namely 1964 thru 1967 . . . ." Charles Van Dam said that his sexual encounters with Hinckley took place "about 1964 to 1966." Louie's affidavit says that he parted "a lot" with Van Dam, "especially from 1964 to 1966." Ben maintained that "Over a period of 2 1/2 to three
(3) years the activities took place . . . The years of 1964 thru 1966 were the main years that this part took place in Chas Van Dam’s house . . . .

Actually, nothing could have taken “place in” Van Dam’s house during the year 1964, nor in the first eleven months of 1965, because the Salt Lake County Abstracts book and the real estate contract for the house show that it was not purchased by Van Dam until December 1, 1965. This, of course, does not rule out the possibility that these activities were taking place at the car lot or at other locations.

One very important omission in The Godmakers II is that it never gives any indication of when these sordid affairs were supposed to have taken place. The reason may be that the producers did not want viewers to know how long ago it was that these events allegedly occurred. If we can believe Van Dam’s producers did not want viewers to know how long ago it was that supposed to have taken place. The reason may be that the high officials of the church would be carrying on with black prostitutes in front of a number of individuals who might betray him. Even if the prostitutes did not recognize him at first, they might see his picture in newspapers and on television. This hypocritical behavior would certainly raise the possibility of either exposure or blackmail.

The Godmakers II charges that there has been an “extraordinary media blackout” which “stopped the hottest story of the 80’s concerning one of the top Mormons in the world.” Actually, the truth of the matter is that the news media felt that the story was not credible. We were pressured to break the story in our newsletter about four years before The Godmakers II appeared. It was felt that if we published it, the controversy would be picked up by reporters. We refused the offer, and on Jan. 17, 1989 we published an attack against the story entitled, A Statement Concerning Some Charges of Immorality Made Against a Mormon Leader. Since we did not feel that it was right to reveal Gordon Hinckley’s name, we referred to him only as “Elder Accused.” Because of the sensitive nature of the subject and the fact that we might unwittingly add fuel to the fire, we did not advertise the publication. We did, however, give copies to various ministries working with Mormons and people who asked about the charges against Hinckley.

Steven Naifeh was also asked to break the story. The reader will remember that Naifeh co-authored The Mormon Murders, an anti-Mormon book referred to in the Godmakers video. Although Naifeh pulled no punches in his attack on Gordon B. Hinckley in the book, he informed us that he simply could not believe the evidence presented with regard to Hinckley’s sexual improprieties and therefore had no interest in breaking the story.

In a “Special Update Report,” printed in January 1993, Ed Decker candidly admitted that The Godmakers II “is not a film to use in wooing Mormons.” In our opinion, the use of Charles Van Dam’s story distracts from the real reasons why one should oppose Mormonism. To focus on unsubstantiated charges against one of the LDS leaders comes across as sensationalism. It seems to encourage Christians to approach Mormons with derision instead of compassion, and, as Dick Baer has stated, it will “so turn Mormons off it will be difficult to even talk to them.”

The case against President Hinckley seems to be based on some very questionable statements. Since there is no hard evidence to support the accusations, we would advise all those working with Mormons to refrain from disseminating the story. Even if absolute proof should turn up, a Christian would still have to consider the fact that twenty-six to twenty-eight years have passed since the alleged offenses occurred and there is always the possibility that there was repentance and a change of life style during that interval.

If it could be established that the Mormon Church is secretly promoting a doctrine of polygamy, adultery or homosexuality, then it would undoubtedly be our Christian obligation to bring the evidence to light. As it is, however, we only have charges that one General Authority in the Mormon Church has engaged in sexual behavior that is forbidden by the church itself. Mr. Van Dam never suggested that Hinckley taught that this was church doctrine or that he had the approval of other members of the church hierarchy. While we feel that it is important to expose Joseph Smith’s doctrine of polygamy which played an important role in the early history of the Mormon Church, we seriously question whether Christians should be involved in disseminating unsupported charges of immorality.
Joseph Smith claimed that in 1823 an angel appeared to him and stated that gold plates were buried in a hill near his home. The angel explained that the plates contained “an account of the former inhabitants of this continent,” and that they also contained “the fullness of the everlasting Gospel.” Four years later Smith received the plates, and began “translating” them “by the power of God.” The translation was published in 1830 under the title of The Book of Mormon. After translating the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith founded the Mormon Church—a church that now has over eight million members.

Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt declared:

The Book of Mormon claims to be a divinely inspired record. . . . If false, it is one of the most cunning, wicked, bold, deep-laid impositions ever palmed upon the world, calculated to deceive and ruin millions . . . if true, no one can possibly be saved and reject it; if false, no one can possibly be saved and receive it . . .

If, after a rigid examination, it be found an imposition, it should be extensively published to the world as such; the evidences and arguments on which the imposture was detected, should be clearly and logically stated . . . if investigation should prove the Book of Mormon true . . . the American and English nations . . . should utterly reject both the Popish and Protestant ministry, together with all the churches which have been built up by them or that have sprung from them, as being entirely destitute of authority . . . (Orson Pratt’s Works, “Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon,” Liverpool, 1851, pp. 1-2)

Our study of the Book of Mormon has extended over a period of thirty years and has led us to conclude that it is not an ancient or divinely inspired record, but rather a product of the nineteenth century. Mormon apologists, of course, have resisted the evidence set forth in our books, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? and Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon. Although the church itself has been completely silent concerning our work, L. Ara Norwood, Matthew Roper, John A. Tvedtnes, and a few other Mormon apologists have recently assailed our work. We have been preparing a response to these critics that will be available soon.

In the book, Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, vol. 4, 1992, Matthew Roper maintains that some of the nineteenth-century sources we suggested as possible sources for the Book of Mormon are rather weak (see pages 176-192). For many years we have maintained that at the time Joseph Smith “translated” the Book of Mormon there were a number of books that claimed the Indians were the descendants of the ancient Israelites—an idea that is strongly set forth in the Book of Mormon. Mr. Roper acknowledged:

The Tanners correctly point out that the Book of Mormon appeared at a time when many people believed that the Indians were descendants of the lost ten tribes. Books by James Adair, Elias Boudinot, Ethan Smith, and others are fairly representative of the early nineteenth-century literature which supported such an idea. The Tanners suggest that the Book of Mormon was just one of many such books (pp. 81-84). While it is true that general similarities or parallels can be drawn between these works and the Book of Mormon, I believe that the differences are far more significant. (Ibid., page 186)

A Striking Parallel

The reader will notice that in the quotation above Mr. Roper mentioned a book written by James Adair. This book, A History of the American Indians, was originally published in 1775. We have seen quotations from it in other books written in the nineteenth century, but never took the time to examine the book until we encountered a reprint published by Promontory Press. While we noticed that Adair’s book presented “Observations, and arguments, in proof of the American Indians being descended from the Jews,” and a great deal concerning their customs and history, at first we did not see anything that was too impressive. Toward the end of the book, however, we made the startling discovery that it had a portion so similar to the Joseph Smith’s work that we could not escape the conclusion that Joseph Smith either had the book in his hand or a quotation from it when he was writing the Book of Mormon. On pages 337-378, James Adair wrote the following about the Indians:
Through the whole continent, and in the remotest woods, are traces of their ancient warlike disposition. We frequently met with great mounds of earth, either of a circular, or oblong form, having a strong breastwork at a distance around them, made of the clay which had been dug up in forming the ditch on the inner side of the inclosed ground, and these were their forts of security against an enemy . . . About 12 miles from the upper northern parts of the Choktah country, there stand . . . two oblong mounds of earth . . . in an equal direction with each other . . . A broad deep ditch inclosed those two fortresses, and there they raised an high breast-work, to secure their houses from the invading enemy.

In the book of Alma, which is found in the Book of Mormon, we find some extremely important parallels to the writings of Adair in chapters 48, 49, 50, and 53:

Yea, he had been strengthening the armies of the Nephites, and erecting small forts, or places of resort; throwing up banks of earth round about to enclose his armies . . . the Nephites were taught . . . never to raise the sword except it were against an enemy . . . they had cast up dirt round to shield them from the arrows . . . the chief captains of the Lamanites were astonished exceedingly, because of the wisdom of the Nephites in preparing their places of security . . . they knew not that Moroni had fortified, or had built forts of security in all the land round about . . . the Lamanites could not get into their forts of security . . . because of the higness of the bank which had been thrown up, and the depth of the ditch which had been dug round about . . . they [the Lamanites] began to dig down their banks of earth . . . that they might have an equal chance to fight . . . instead of filling up their ditches by pulling down the banks of earth, they were filled up in a measure with their dead . . . And [Moroni] caused them to erect fortifications that they might secure their armies . . . Teancum . . . caused that they should commence laboring in digging a ditch round about the land . . . And he caused that they should build a breastwork of timbers upon the inner bank of the ditch; and they did cast up dirt out of the ditch against the breastwork of timbers . . . (Book of Mormon, Alma, 48:8, 14; 49:2, 5, 13, 18, 22; 50:10; 53:3-4)

The thing that first struck us about the quotation from Adair’s book was the four words, “their forts of security.” These identical words are found in the book of Alma! It is interesting to note that these words are used only once in the Book of Mormon, Alma 49:18, and never appear in the Bible. The three words “forts of security” are found in 49:13, but are never found in any other place in the Book of Mormon or the Bible. The last two words (“of security”) are never found together in the Bible and appear only seven times in the Book of Mormon. Except for one instance (3 Nephi 4:15), all of these are in the book of Alma. It would appear, then, that Joseph Smith latched on to some wording he did not usually use, and the evidence seems to indicate that the source was Adair’s book.

The word “breastwork” (written as “breast-work” in Adair’s work) appears twice in each of the references cited above. The Bible never uses this word, and it appears only three times in the entire Book of Mormon. The other occurrence is in Mosiah 11:11 and has nothing to do with military matters. It was used concerning a pulpit.

The words “which had been dug” are found in both extracts. This word combination is never found in the Bible or in any other place in the Book of Mormon.

Both the Book of Mormon and Adair’s book contain the words “the ditch.” Joseph Smith used this word “ditch” three times in the section concerning the Nephite fortifications but never used them again in the rest of the Book of Mormon. Both quotations use the words “the ditch.” These two words were used again in Alma 62:21, but do not appear in any other part of the Book of Mormon.

We find the words “secure their” in both works. This combination is never found in the Bible and appears only this one time in the Book of Mormon. The words “an equal” are found in both extracts. While they are found in one other place in the Book of Mormon (Mosiah 29:38), they never appear in the Bible.

The three words “against an enemy” appear in both books. Joseph Smith only used them once in the Book of Mormon (Alma 14:14), and this combination never appears in the Bible. Adair uses the expression “mounds of earth.” While Joseph Smith never used these exact words, he did refer to “banks of earth.”

We find it extremely hard to believe that all of these similar word patterns could happen by chance. In addition to the material cited above, there are other similarities between the writings of James Adair and Joseph Smith. For example, the Book of Mormon claims that the ancient Jews who came to the New World were all “white, and exceedingly fair and delightsome . . .” (2 Nephi 5:21). Those who rebelled, however, were cursed with “a sore cursing . . . the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them.” Adair’s book, likewise, talks of a change in skin color: “The Indian tradition says, that their forefathers in very remote ages came from a far distant country, where all the people were of one colour . . .” (page 194).

The Book of Mormon states that before the ancient Nephites left Jerusalem, they had been instructed by the “Lord” to bring with them some “plates of brass” which had the sacred Jewish scriptures engraved upon them.
(1 Nephi 3:3). The plates were carefully protected by the ancient religious leaders and were apparently buried in “the hill Cumorah” along with many other plates (Mormon 6:6). This idea of brass plates being buried could have come from James Adair’s book. On pages 178-179, we find this information:

In the Tucabatches . . . are two brazen tables, and five of copper. They esteem them so sacred as to keep them constantly in their holy of holies . . . Old Bracket, an Indian . . . gave the following description of them: . . . The shape of the two brass plates . . . [was] about a foot and a half in diameter.

He said — he was told by his forefathers that those plates were given to them by the man we call God; that there had been many more of other shapes . . . and some had writing upon them which were buried with particular men; and that they had instructions given with them, viz. they must only be handled by particular people . . . He only remembered three more, which were buried with three of his family . . .

On page 122 of Adair’s book, we find the words, “for the space of three days and nights . . .” This is very close to Alma 36:10, “for the space of three days and three nights . . .” It is also noteworthy that while Joseph Smith uses the words “month” or “months” sixteen times in the Book of Mormon, in one instance he uses the term “moons”; “. . . for the space of nine moons” (Omni 1:21). On page 125 of Adair’s History of the American Indians we find the following “. . . for the space of four moons . . .

We are convinced that Joseph Smith read a number of books and articles about the Indians — especially books equating them with the ancient Israelites. His own mother, Lucy Smith, tells that Joseph had a fervent interest in the ancient Indians before he received the plates from which he “translated” the Book of Mormon:

During our evening conversations, Joseph would occasionally give us some of the most amusing recitals that could be imagined. He would describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent, their dress, mode of travelling, and the animals upon which they rode; their cities, their buildings, with every particular; their mode of warfare; and also their religious worship. This he would do with as much ease, seemingly, as if he had spent his whole life with them. (Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and his Progenitors for Many Generations, 1853, page 85)

Cloud of Darkness!

Robert Williams, of North Wales, discovered an important parallel between the Book of Mormon and the Preface of the King James Bible. The Preface, of course, was written by the translators and was dedicated to “The Most High And Mighty Prince James . . . King Of Great Britain, France, And Ireland, Defender Of The Faith, &c.” While the translators used words and combinations of words in the Preface which are found in the text of the King James Version, they also used language which is not in the biblical text.

If it could be demonstrated that the Book of Mormon contains word combinations peculiar to the Preface, which was not published before 1611, it would cast serious doubt upon the claim that it was written in ancient times by the Nephites. Mr. Williams found other parallels to the Preface and asked us to use our computer to make a more complete search. After completing the research, we felt that there was a strong possibility that Joseph Smith borrowed from it. In the Preface we find the following:

. . . clouds of darkness would so have overshadowed this Land, that men should have been in doubt which way they were to walk . . . the appearance of Your Majesty, as of the Sun in his strength, instantly dispelled those supposed and surmised mists . . . (The Holy Bible, Preface; as printed by the Mormon Church in 1979)

In the Book of Mormon we find two very strong parallels to this part of the Preface:

. . . the cloud of darkness, which had overshadowed them, did not disperse . . . (Helaman 5:31)

. . . the cloud of darkness having been dispelled . . . (Alma 19:6)

The reader will notice that there are some startling similarities: 1. The expression “clouds of darkness” or “cloud of darkness” is not found in the text of the Bible. 2. The word “overshadowed” does not appear in the Old Testament, and the New Testament cannot be appealed to as the source because the ancient Nephites did not have access to it. Joseph Smith, of course, did have the New Testament in his Bible. 3. The word “dispelled” is not found in the Bible and Joseph Smith never used it again in the Book of Mormon.

Another interesting parallel is that the statement in the Preface indicates that the appearance of King James, like “the Sun in his strength, instantly dispelled” the dark mists. The verse in Alma 19:6 was also written concerning a king whose name was Lamoni. It speaks of “the light which did light up his mind . . . yea, this light had infused such joy into his soul, the cloud of darkness having been dispelled . . .” The Preface speaks of both King James and Queen Elizabeth. Although Joseph Smith used the words king or kings 228 times in the book of Mosiah (the book that precedes Alma), he never mentioned a queen until the chapter in question, Alma 19, and while it appears a number of times in the book of Alma, it is not used in any of the other books found in the Book of Mormon. The word “queens” is used in the Book of Mormon, but it is obviously taken from a prophecy in the Bible, Isaiah 49:23, and is not related to any queens living during the period covered by the Book of Mormon.
In our book, Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon, we demonstrated that Joseph Smith had a tendency to plagiarize different expressions from the Bible and then use them over and over again. For example, the phrase “the lamb of God” appears only in the New Testament, John 1:29 and 36. The Mormon prophet latched onto these words and then used them twenty-eight times in the book of 1 Nephi alone! He soon grew weary of them, however, and they only appear six more times in the rest of the Book of Mormon. Smith’s inclination to grab onto expressions and then repeat them is also evident in the rest of the Book of Mormon. Smith’s inclination to plagiarize different expressions from other books or conversations he had with different people, since the Preface is only two pages long, we think that many parallels could prove to be significant.

And it came to pass that they were overshadowed with a cloud of darkness . . . behold the cloud of darkness, which had overshadowed them, did not disperse . . . the Lamanites could not flee because of the cloud of darkness which did overshadow them . . . he saw through the cloud of darkness . . . the Lamanites said unto him: What shall we do, that this cloud of darkness may be removed from overshadowing us? And Aminadab said . . . You must repent . . . and when you shall do this, the cloud of darkness shall be removed from overshadowing you . . . the cloud of darkness was dispersed. And it came to pass that when they cast their eyes about, and saw that the cloud of darkness was dispersed from overshadowing them, behold, they saw that they were encircled about . . . by a pillar of fire.

After this repetitious section of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith never used the words “cloud of darkness” again; instead he used the words “mist of darkness” or “mists of darkness.” It is interesting to note that the word “mists” (plural) is not found in the text of the Bible, but it does appear in the Preface of the King James Bible. It is, in fact, in the very paragraph which mentions “clouds of darkness.”

In addition to the parallels mentioned above, in our computer examination of the Preface we found forty-five word parallels (ranging from two to four words in a row) which are not found in the text of the King James Version. While many of them could have come from Joseph Smith reading other books or conversations he had with different people, since the Preface is only two pages long, we think that many parallels could prove to be significant. The following are just ten examples: “rule and reign over” — “sacred word” — “because the fruit thereof,” — “eternal happiness,” — “it, nay” — “the immediate” — “itself abroad in the” — “great hopes” — “most sacred” — “did never.” Most of the forty-five word combinations are found in the books Alma and Helaman — the very books which contain the parallel concerning the “cloud of darkness.”

New Computer Study

On October 7, 1979, the Provo Herald reported that some Mormon researchers at Brigham Young University had turned to a computer in an attempt to prove that the Book of Mormon is genuine:

Wordprint comparisons between the Book of Mormon and the known 19th century writings of Joseph Smith and Mr. Spalding show conclusively that neither of these persons, authored the book, the scientists say. . . . their research indicates that the book was authored by at least 24 different writers, and possibly more, whose styles bear no resemblance to that of Joseph Smith . . . or other 19th century writers whom they examined . . .

One of the tests went so far as to indicate that “odds against a single author exceeded 100 billion to one,” the statisticians noted in the report.

In the Salt Lake City Messenger for December 1979 we observed that the list of “24 Major Book of Mormon Authors Used in the Study,” seems to be somewhat padded (see The New Era, November 1979, page 11). For instance, we find Isaiah listed as one of the authors. Since Isaiah is a book in the Bible and since the Book of Mormon itself acknowledges that it is quoting from Isaiah, we do not feel that it should be included in this study. If the researchers are going to include Bible authors as part of the list of “Book of Mormon Authors,” they might as well add Moses, Matthew and Malachi (see Book of Mormon, Mosiah 13; 3 Nephi 12-14; and 3 Nephi 24-25).

The BYU researchers stretched the matter even further by including the “Lord” as “quoted by Isaiah” as part of the “24 Major Book of Mormon Authors.” Also included in this list is the “Lord,” “Jesus” and the “Father.” It would appear, then, that the researchers created four “Book of Mormon Authors” out of the Father and the Son! On page 11 of their study in The New Era, the researchers admit: “Since the term Lord can refer either to the Father or the Son, we separated the words attributed to the Lord from those attributed to the Father or to Christ.” This list of “24 Major Book of Mormon Authors,” therefore, appears to be overstated.

In the same newsletter we noted that we were in favor of computer studies with regard to the Book of Mormon and would especially like to see a study showing the parallels between the King James Version and the Book of Mormon. We indicated that a good computer study would probably reveal more than 24 different authors in the book. In fact, we felt that it would probably find words written by Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Job, David, Solomon, Ezekiel, Daniel, Jonah, Micah, Malachi, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, James, Peter, Jude, etc.

When we later did our computer research for the book,
Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon, we demonstrated that there were many quotations from New Testament writers that had been plagiarized by the author of the Book of Mormon. These extracts were found in portions of the Book of Mormon that were supposed to have been written before the time of Christ. For example, we found a good deal of material lifted from the biblical books of Matthew, Revelation, John, Romans, Luke, Acts, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Hebrews, Mark and other New Testament books.

In Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, vol. 3, page 170, Matthew Roper stated: “In their recent book, Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon, Jerald and Sandra Tanner have presented perhaps the most extensive list of alleged plagiarism ever assembled by hostile critics of the Book of Mormon.”

Our computer research with regard to the Book of Mormon does not agree with that done by the BYU researchers. While it is clear that there has been extensive plagiarism in the Book of Mormon, we believe the evidence shows that one style of writing pervades the entire book, and it is the same style found in Joseph Smith’s other scriptural works.

Even some Mormon scholars have questioned the work of the BYU apologists. John A. Tvedtnes, a Hebrew scholar, who has taught at Brigham Young University, the University of Utah and the Brigham Young University Center for Near Eastern Studies, has publicly proclaimed that he does not accept the research. In a response to our work on the Book of Mormon, Tvedtnes spoke of “the stylistic computer studies of the scriptures done at Brigham Young University and in Berkeley, California.” He then frankly stated: “I have my own reasons for rejecting those studies, however, and hope to express them elsewhere” (Ibid., page 229).

Recently another computer study of the Book of Mormon has come to our attention. It is entitled, “A Multivariate Technique for Authorship Attribution and its Application to the Analysis of Mormon Scripture and Related Texts.” The research was done by David I. Holmes, a Senior Lecturer in Statistics at Bristol Polytechnic, and was published by Oxford University Press for the Association for History and Computing. In this article David Holmes explained that he used fourteen large blocks of text from the Book of Mormon (amounting to over 120,000 words), documents written or dictated by Joseph Smith between 1828 and 1833, three samples of approximately 10,000 words from the early revelations printed in the Doctrine and Covenants, text from the book of Isaiah and Joseph Smith’s Book of Abraham. After Holmes finished his study, he was convinced that the claim of multiple authorship in the Book of Mormon was fallacious:

The most impressive statistical analysis carried out on the Book of Mormon is that undertaken by Larsen, Rencher and Layton. . . . The authors conclude that their results all strongly support multiple authorship of the Book of Mormon yet their whole case rests on the assumption that the frequency of occurrence of non-contextual function words is a stylistic discriminator. The article claims that there is no resemblance between the authors of the Book of Mormon and the nineteenth century authors sampled, but the case rests on usage of words such as “unto, behold, yea, forth, verily, lest and nay” which would all naturally be prominent in an archaic biblical-type style, but could hardly be expected to occur with the same frequency elsewhere, even in the early nineteenth century. Against this background, the aim of my research is to complement historical and scientific studies into the authenticity of the Book of Mormon by subjecting it and related Mormon scripture to stylistic analysis. In this paper it is understood that a particularly effective measure for purposes of discrimination between writers is the vocabulary richness of a text. . . .

We may summarize by noting that the analyses have shown that the Joseph Smith and Isaiah samples form distinct and separate clusters, whereas all other samples tend to cluster together. . . .

The formation of the clustering observed here, provides evidence of the utility of the multivariate technique advocated by this study. . . .

An important discovery is the fact that the samples of writings from the various prophets who purportedly wrote the Book of Mormon do not form prophet-by-prophet clusters. The dendrogram in Figure 2 shows that only the two samples from Alma display internal homogeneity . . . There appears to be no real difference between Alma’s vocabulary richness and Mormon’s vocabulary richness within the Book of Alma, a conclusion in direct contradiction to the findings of Larsen and the Brigham Young University team. This study has not found, therefore, any evidence of multiple authorship within the Book of Mormon itself. Variation within samples from the same prophet is generally as great as any variation between the prophets themselves.

Two of the three “revelations” samples are also indistinguishable from the Book of Mormon prophets. . . . The dendrograms and principal components plots place the Book of Abraham text (AB) firmly in the main “prophet” cluster, its nearest neighbour being sample R1 from Moroni. In terms of vocabulary richness, clearly the Book of Abraham is indistinguishable from the Book of Mormon prophets and from samples D2 and D3 of Joseph Smith’s revelations. . . .

It is my conclusion, from the results of this research and the supporting historical evidence, that the Book of Mormon sprang from the “prophetic voice” of Joseph Smith himself, as did his revelations and the text of the Book of Abraham. We have seen that the style of his “prophetic voice” as evidenced by the main cluster of the textual samples studied, differs from the style of his personal writings or dictations of a personal nature. (History and Computing, vol. 3, no. 1, 1991, pages 14, 20-21)

David I. Holmes’ statement that Joseph Smith’s “prophetic voice” differs from that found in private writings
is of course to be expected. In his scriptural writings he was trying to make the wording sound ancient. Wesley P. Walters observed:

In addition to borrowing biblical names and events, the Elizabethan style of the English King James Bible was adopted. Phrases from both the Old and New Testament were frequently borrowed by Joseph Smith. Wording such as “go the way of all the earth,” (Mos. 1:9 / Josh. 23:14), “sackcloth and ashes” (Mos. 11:25 / Dan. 9:3), and “applied your hearts to understanding” (Mos. 12:27 / Pr. 2:2) are found throughout the book. Furthermore, even the material not derived from the Bible was cast into the King James style. Consequently there is a continual use of “thee”, “thou” and “ye”, as well as the archaic verb endings “est” (second person singular) and “eth” (third person singular). Since the Elizabethan style was not Joseph’s natural idiom, he continually slipped out of this King James pattern and repeatedly confused the forms as well. Thus he lapsed from “ye” (subject) to “you” (object) as the subject of sentences (e.g. Mos. 2:19; 3:34; 4:24), jumped from plural (“ye”) to singular (“thou”) in the same sentence (Mos. 4:22) and moved from verbs without endings to ones with endings (e.g. “yieldeth . . . putteth,” 3:19). (The Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Mormon, by Wesley P. Walters, 1990, page 30)

Our own computer study of the Book of Mormon has certainly not been as sophisticated as that of David I. Holmes, but we have reached similar conclusions. We approached the problem from a different angle. After noticing that the same phrases of two or more words appear time after time throughout Joseph Smith’s scriptures, we used the computer to identify hundreds of these groups of words and feel that they provide powerful evidence that the Book of Mormon, the Inspired Version of the Bible, the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price were all the product of one mind.

B. H. Robert’s Doubts

As unbelievable as it may seem to many members of the Mormon Church, the noted Mormon historian B. H. Roberts also came to believe that there was a strong possibility that Joseph Smith borrowed from books that were available to him at the time he wrote the Book of Mormon. Roberts, of course, was one of the greatest scholars the church has ever known. He not only prepared the “Introduction and Notes” for Joseph Smith’s History of the Church (seven volumes), but he also wrote the six-volume work, A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He is also noted for his many works defending the Book of Mormon.

After studying Ethan Smith’s View of the Hebrews, published in 1825, Roberts listed eighteen parallels between it and the Book of Mormon. He wrote two very significant manuscripts which were suppressed for many years because of the fear that the contents would prove harmful to the Mormon Church. Fortunately, we obtained copies of both manuscripts and printed photographs from them in 1979. In 1980 we photographically reproduced both manuscripts under the title Roberts’ Secret Manuscripts Revealed. The manuscripts were later printed by the University of Illinois Press in a hard-back book entitled Studies of the Book of Mormon.

In his secret manuscripts B. H. Roberts acknowledged that Joseph Smith himself could have written the Book of Mormon from the information that was available to him at the time. The deeper B. H. Roberts delved into the relationship between the Book of Mormon and books by Ethan Smith and Josiah Priest, the more his faith in the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon began to erode. In his second manuscript, “A Book of Mormon Study,” B. H. Roberts really began to openly express his own personal doubts about the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. In the extracts which follow the reader will see that B. H. Roberts was seriously disturbed by many things he found in the Book of Mormon:

One other subject remains to be considered in this division . . . viz.—was Joseph Smith possessed of a sufficiently vivid and creative imagination as to produce such a work as the Book of Mormon from such materials as have been indicated in the preceding chapters . . . That such power of imagination would have to be of a high order is conceded; that Joseph Smith possessed such a gift of mind there can be no question. . . .

In the light of this evidence, there can be no doubt as to the possession of a vividly strong, creative imagination by Joseph Smith, the Prophet, an imagination, it could with reason be urged, which, given the suggestions that are found in the “common knowledge” of accepted American antiquities of the times, supplemented by such a work as Ethan Smith’s View of the Hebrews, would make it possible for him to create a book such as the Book of Mormon is. (Studies of the Book of Mormon, pages 243, 250)

If from all that has gone before in Part 1, the view be taken that the Book of Mormon is merely of human origin . . . if it be assumed that he is the author of it, then it could be said there is much internal evidence in the book itself to sustain such a view.

In the first place there is a certain lack of perspective in the things the book relates as history that points quite clearly to an undeveloped mind as their origin. The narrative proceeds in characteristic disregard of conditions necessary to its reasonableness, as if it were a tale told by a child, with utter disregard for consistency. (Ibid., page 251)

There were other Anti-Christs among the Nephites, but they were more military leaders than religious innovators . . . they are all of one breed and brand; so nearly alike that one mind is the author of them, and that a young and undeveloped, but piously inclined mind.
A New Witness for God

Roberts acknowledged that in the Book of Mormon. In his secret writings, however, as their creator. It is difficult to believe that they are the product of history, as their creator. It is difficult to believe that they are the product of history, (Ibid., page 271)

These words did not come from the lips of an uninformed and bias “anti-Mormon” writer, but rather they are the carefully worded pronouncements of the Mormon historian B. H. Roberts — believed by many to have been the greatest apologist the church has ever produced. While Professor Truman Madsen, of the church’s Brigham Young University, has asserted that Roberts was merely using the ‘Devil’s Advocate’ approach to stimulate thought,” a careful reading of the material leads one to the inescapable conclusion that he was in the process of losing faith in the historical claims of the Book of Mormon. Why else would B. H. Roberts have made the comment concerning Book of Mormon stories which we cited above?: “The evidence I sorrowfully submit, points to Joseph Smith as their creator. It is difficult to believe that they are the product of history . . .”

In his earlier faith-promoting work, A New Witness for God, a three-volume work published in 1909, B. H. Roberts insisted that Joseph Smith did not have access to books from which he could create a “ground plan” for the Book of Mormon. In his secret writings, however, Roberts acknowledged that in A New Witness for God he did not take sufficiently into account the work of Josiah Priest . . . Priest himself, indeed, published a book . . . The Wonders of Nature and Providence, copyrighted by him June 2nd, 1824, and printed soon afterwards in Rochester, New York, only some twenty miles distant from Palmyra . . . this book preceded the publication of the Book of Mormon by about six years. At the time I made for my New Witness the survey of the literature on American antiquities, traditions, origins, etc., available to Joseph Smith and his associates, this work of Priest’s was unknown to me; as was also the work of Ethan Smith, View of the Hebrews — except by report of it, and as being in my hands but a few minutes . . . it is altogether probable that these two books . . . were either possessed by Joseph Smith or certainly known by him . . .

Moreover, on subjects widely discussed, and that deal in matters of widespread public interest, there is built up in the course of years, a community of knowledge of such subjects, usually referred to as “matters of common knowledge” . . . Such “common knowledge” existed throughout New England and New York in relation to American Indian origins and cultures: and the prevailing ideas respecting the American Indians throughout the regions named were favorable to the notion that they were of Hebrew origin . . . And with the existence of such a body of knowledge, or that which was accepted as “knowledge,” and a person of vivid and constructive imaginative power in contact with it, there is little room for doubt that it might be possible for Joseph Smith to construct a theory of origin for his Book of Mormon in harmony with these prevailing notions; and more especially since this ‘common knowledge’ is set forth in almost handbook form in the little work of Ethan Smith . . . It will appear in what is to follow that such “common knowledge” did exist in New England, that Joseph Smith was in contact with it; that one book, at least, with which he was most likely acquainted, could well have furnished structural outlines for the Book of Mormon; and that Joseph Smith was possessed of such creative imaginative powers as would make it quite within the lines of possibility that the Book of Mormon could have been produced in that way. (Studies of the Book of Mormon, pages 152-54)

On page 192 of the same book, B. H. Roberts asked this question: “Could an investigator of the Book of Mormon be much blamed if he were to decide that Ethan Smith’s book with its suggestion as to the division of his Israelites into two peoples; with its suggestion of ‘tremendous wars between them’; and of the savages overcoming the civilized division led to the fashioning of chiefly these same things in the Book of Mormon?”

Roberts felt that “the likelihood of Joseph Smith coming in contact with Ethan Smith’s book is not only very great, but amounts to a very close certainty” (page 235). Further on in the same chapter, B. H. Roberts made these observations:

But now to return . . . to the main theme of this writing — viz., did Ethan Smith’s View of the Hebrews furnish structural material for Joseph Smith’s Book of Mormon? It has been pointed out in these pages that there are many things in the former book that might well have suggested many major things in the other. Not a few things merely, one or two, or a half dozen, many; and it is this fact of many things of similarity and the cumulative force of them that makes them so serious a menace to Joseph Smith’s story of the Book of Mormon origin . . .

The material in Ethan Smith’s book is of a character and quantity to make a ground plan for the Book of Mormon . . .

Can such numerous and startling points of resemblance and suggestive contact be merely coincidence? (pages 240, 242)

We feel that all those who are interested in knowing the truth about the Book of Mormon should read B. H. Roberts’ Studies of the Book of Mormon. Although the hardback edition was selling for $35, Signature Books has recently reprinted it in a reasonably priced paperback edition. We normally sell it for $14.95, but if it is ordered before June 30, 1993, the price will be only $13.95. In addition, we are having a sale on our book, Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon. It usually sells for $5.00, but is on sale for only $4.00 a copy. Those who are interested in having a copy of both of these books (a $19.95 value) can obtain them for Only $16.95 if ordered before June 30 (please remember to add 10% of total order or $1.50 for minimum postage and handling on mail orders).
Extracts From Letters Received In 1992

“Last month, I entered the Missionary Training Center in Provo prepared to serve a full-time mission . . . Within two weeks, however, I discovered the MTC is nothing more than an institution for mind control. After realizing the eternal consequences of pursuing blind obedience of a man (the ‘prophet’), I demanded to be excused from my ‘calling’ . . . Please rush me any information you have concerning the LDS Church. I want to correct my knowledge of ‘truth restored.’ ” (Letter from California)

“My wife & I just finished reading your book ‘Changing World of Mormonism’ it is excellent, well documented, unbiased, just excellent! We have been ‘Mormons’ for 17 years. . . . I did not comprehend the degree of fraud & deception . . .” (Letter from Missouri)

“You have one lord & master and he is Satan. You are of contention and against the Savior . . . I will testify against you at the judgment bar — you will be held responsible . . . to avoid any contention I have not included my name. You only need to be told one thing and that is ‘Satan Depart’ . . . you are in it for the money. Is this not of Satan? I pray for you —!” (No address)

“Thank you for all the research you have done, for your wonderful courage . . . I am currently LDS — and am trying to get out . . . My roots are deep so this has not been an easy decision . . . I am reading right now your books, ‘Major Problems of Mormonism’ & ‘Covering Up The Black Hole In The Book of Mormon[.]’

“The more I read the more I look I feel — I have certainly been naive about so much.” (Letter from Idaho)

“My wife and I have been members of the L.D.S. church for 18 and 14 years, respectively. In the last 5 years we felt we were standing still and going nowhere. Naturally we looked at ourselves first, then started to question a few things[.] It went from A to Z rather quickly and we found ourselves unable to continue with our callings, going to the temple, paying tithes, etc., but we still need answers that is why we have got in touch with you hoping you can enlighten us to the truth of many things. We have a strong belief in Jesus Christ and God the father, but after that well, we believe in the Bible & that[.] is it. What first got us going was the fact Joseph Smith was a Mason . . .” (Letter from Australia)

“I left the Mormon Church 1 1/2 [years] ago after many years of activity — Your book ‘Mormonism Shadow or Reality’ proved to me it was wrong . . . I’ve become a born again Christian and am so grateful that I’ve learned the truth before it was too late to do anything about it. I’ve asked to have my name removed from membership . . . Again Thank you from the bottom of my heart.” (Letter from Texas)

“O full of all subtility [sic] and all mischief, thou child of the Devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the lord! . . . I did not ask for your propaganda . . .

“People such as you who do not even have the brain that God gave geese are quite sick. May I suggest that before you do this again you become educated in Israel and in Hebrew so you don’t sound like an illiterate idiot. Because I am not an uneducated child like you probably are . . . you sick and perverted people need to worry about God’s forgiveness.” (Letter from Utah)

“How can I ever thank you enough for the truth that has set me free. I am also a former Mormon born and raised in the Church (5th generation) I am giving my life to my Lord & Savior tonight in a water baptism and I delight in studying the scriptures.” (Letter from Utah)

“I have been reading some [of] your tracts which you sent . . . I have come away from the Mormons and have turned my life over to Jesus.” (Letter from Utah)

“You need to worry about God’s forgiveness.” (Letter from Tennessee)

“I’[m] 20 years old, born under the covenant, as of February of this year, ‘Apostate.’ I removed my name from the records, and know from the Bible that I am Saved. I’ve started a little ‘mini-ministry’ . . .” (Letter from Arizona)

“I have seen you on video tapes from the John Amkerberg [sic] Show . . . Let me first thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the ‘light and knowledge’ that you have given me, my family, and my friends concerning Mormonism. I can’t believe that I swallowed this false religion for so long. I thank My Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus for this awakening. . . . Please find two letters attached. One is our request for removal of our names from the Church records and the other is a standard letter I use to write to my other friends who are still taken with this false doctrine.” (Letter from Florida)
“I first learned of the Tanner’s work seven years ago. It has taken that many years for truth to sink in! . . . As a convert of 30 years you can appreciate my problem. . . . Thank you for your work and fight for truth.” (Letter from California)

“We are subscribers to the Salt Lake City Messenger. My husband is an ex-Mormon and we were both raised in Salt Lake. One of my earliest recollections regarding information about ‘the Church’ not being true was hearing about your husband and you and how you were able to leave it. This was probably in the late 60’s and was the first time I had heard that people could really leave. Your story made such an impact on me. We are ever thankful for your ministry because of the encouragement it gave me to search for the truth, years later my husband, and hopefully the impact we are now having on others for the Lord. . . . Your ministry is so important and we really appreciate receiving the Salt Lake City Messenger.” (Letter from Texas)

“My husband & I recently . . . came onto a book . . . we noticed your names mentioned . . . we started to think seriously of having our names stricken from Church records. Finally, we decided to do a little more research, so we went to a Christian bookstore in Provo called His Place . . . we noticed several books written by you. We bought a few of them Mormonism: Shadow or Reality, Major Problems of Mormonism, 3,913 Changes in the Book of Mormon and Flaws in the Pearl of Great Price. Reading these books led us to check out some books on the Masons.

“Seeing all of the documented evidence against the Mormon Church through reading your books has completely changed our minds about the Church.

“Since our son, ____, was born, we’ve had some pressure from family members to have him blessed, but we had decided that instead of having him blessed as a member of the Church at such a young age, we’d wait until he was older & let him decide for himself what religion he wanted to pursue. Now thanks to you & your books, we can give him a chance to see what the Mormon religion is truly based on.

“We have been completely enthralled in your books since we got them, and have spent hours and hours studying them. We would like to receive your newsletter so we can keep up-to-date with your writings.

“Thanks to you, we’ve opened our eyes to what the Mormons are truly teaching us. Thank you so much for that. Please keep up the good work . . .” (Letter from Utah)

“I recently accepted the Lord Jesus Christ into my life. It will be three months ago on the 14th that I was saved. Before that time I was a Mormon. I almost went on a mission for the LDS Church. The Lord told me not to do it, I mean I had my call and I also went through the temple. . . . The last little while I have been having some problems with my family especially my parents. They just don’t understand why I’m doing what I’m doing . . . It’s really been hard on me, so I turn to my Christian friends for help and then I turn to [the] Lord for help because I know that what my friends can’t help me with, He can. . . .

“I was just writing to see if you could give me any advice or any information on how to face the struggles that I’m having or just becoming stronger in Christ. If you could do that for me I would really appreciate it.” (Letter from Idaho)

“We are on your mailing list for the ‘Salt Lake City Messenger.’ Please remove us from that mailing list. . . . I’m sorry that you feel such a need to spread blatant lies. A Christ-like attitude will get you farther in life.” (Letter from Tennessee)

“As a former Mormon who has accepted Christ and is now studying for the ministry, I am very interested in receiving a list of any publications available through your ministry. Your book, ‘The Changing Face [sic] of Mormonism’ was pivotal to my decision to leave the LDS church. For sixteen years I struggled with the nagging suspicion that the church was built on a foundation of lies and fabrications — reading your book was the coup de grace to my tattered faith in a false prophet.

“Praise God that he has raised up people like you. Your courage, scholarship, and persistence is truly a ‘lighthouse’ to those of us who were chained to such a great deception. I eagerly await hearing from you and learning about how I can support your vital work.” (Letter from California)

“I am a very thankful new Christian that has just come out of mormonism. I recently gave my heart to the Lord & now the battle is with my family.” (Letter from Washington)

“Thank you for your ministry. I was a Mormon for seventeen years and my sweet wife was born and raised Mormon. . . . After the lessons by the missionaries, I honestly believed the Mormon Church was true . . .

“As an F-15 pilot for the Air Force, I left for a remote — tour in Iceland. On my way through Dallas, Texas, I stopped and went through the temple ceremonies by myself for the first time. Never before did I see the darkness and asked myself the question: What are we doing and why? After passing through the vail [sic] into the celestial room, I decided to sit and contemplate and pray about the rituals; before I even began, the Holy Spirit whispered in my ear, ‘Leave, this is wrong.’ I didn’t know who the Holy Spirit was at the time, but that was too vivid and too real. I left and never returned . . .

“Separated by thousands of miles, came the trials of a struggling marriage cause by communication difficulties. At the point of failure, our dear gracious Father let me fall from the skys [sic] by letting me contract multiple sclerosis (M. S.). This meant the end of flying with the wings of man; but,
my new flight with the true Jesus is far more rewarding. . . . In 1991, the Air Force medically retired me at 100 percent disabled. My commander called me in three months prior to my retirement and relieved me of duty because of the difficulties I was having. He told me to go home and take care of my family matters. So I took care of the most important matter; our salvation.

“For three months, II Tim 2:15, Prov 15:28, I Thes 5:21, and John 8:32 was followed; I studied, proved, and sought truth. What I found was that the Mormon Church had the ‘flavor’ of Christianity but lacked substance . . . We now have the ‘true’ Jesus in our lives with the help of Christian ministries like yours bringing the ‘true’ Word to Mormons . . . The names of my family are pulled from the Mormon records and are now on the rolls of a ‘Christian’ church. Thank you for your help!!

“I am bringing God’s Word to all our mormon friends and families. Christian cadets from the Air Force Academy are calling on my help in bringing truth to Mormon cadets leaving on missions. I may be medically retired, but I’m not dead! I will continue to bring the true word of God to mormons . . . Thank you for your ministry.” (Letter from Colorado)

“I was a very active temple ‘worthy’ and temple attending Mormon for 15 years before starting to fully realize the corruption within the Church and even more recently how the occult played such a big role in its origins and practices. Interestingly, it wasn’t until I was exposed to a lot of New Age things in CA and other psychic practices that the light started truly coming on for me about the Mormon Church. I still find myself struggling to unlearn or resolve what I was taught in the Church (Mormon). . . . I . . . have numerous Mormon acquaintances . . . I want to help reach many of them in the future after I get more stable and sure myself of my new and true knowledge of Christ and the actual facts surrounding the Mormon Church.

“Presently I am attending a Bible study meeting and a ‘know your Bible’ meeting as well as church with Bible believing Christians . . . I’m really seeing how much the Mormon Church distorted the Bible even as I read it on my own without Mormon footnotes & commentaries to do my thinking for me.” (Letter from Nebraska)

“I received your letter yesterday and all your pamphlets and copy sheets today. I have finished reading them. I am sick at heart, that I could of been one of the millions that has fallen for this [i.e., Mormonism]. . . . I had even thought to ask you to take my name off the mailing list until these last two mailings. You have been very straightforward with me. That is not what I’ve gotten from the members. . . . How could I of not seen any of this? I have been studying this faith for 2 years. . . .

“My questions started hitting me when I purchased the book ‘Gospel Principles.’ . . . It’s kind of like a lovely Christmas package all wrapped so beautifully but when opened the outer is more pleasant than the inner.

“I use to feel bad toward you because my new friends said that you was wrong. I want to ask your forgiveness and to say I am packing away everything I possess of LDS literature. . . .

“May God keep you in his tender care and guide your feet on the path to help others. . . . My prayers will be with you always.” (Letter from Texas)

“You have been a blessing in my life and also in my wife’s life in more ways than one. When I met my wife she was a devoted mormon. I was a christian that didn’t know what God wanted to do with my life. I was concerned with many of the things she was saying as far as doctrine was concerned but I didn’t know a good way of refuting them. That’s when I bought ‘[Mormonism:] Shadow or Reality.’ That is when I knew what God wanted in my life! I found myself studying the bible much more than just my devotion time and also slowly building a apologist library! At the same time I was witnessing to now my wife and after three months of phone calls (I lived in So. Cal. and she lived in Salt Lake City) she accepted Christ moved down to Cal. and later we got married! I am now . . . going to college and getting my philosophy degree, witnessing and studying on the way! Maybe I can start a Lighthouse up here! . . . You are in our prayers always.” (Letter from Minnesota)

“Thank you so very much for the research and material you sent me in response to our telephone conversation. You were very kind and generous and I appreciate your personal concern. Just to have been able to talk with you and discuss briefly my personal situation gave me an abundance of courage that I need right now. . . .

“I feel ashamed and embarrassed to admit that I was once in the ministry, but over the years became callused to the effects the music ministry had on my life. . . . I saw so much good in the Church that I ‘wanted to believe’ the LDS story. I went for the ‘whole enchilada.’ My wife and I even went back to Nauvoo and the Carthage jail. I ate it up until it finally hit me after a few short visits to the Temple in L. A.

“If there is anything good that has come from this experience, I am now, for the first time in my life, ‘sincerely hungry’ to read the Bible with more interest than I ever had before. I read at least two to four chapters every day. I didn’t read this much when I was in Bible School! Since the Church is still so visibly pres[en]t in my life, it seems I have such a strong and urgent interest in reading and knowing more about the real truth of Joseph Smith and the LDS Church that has taken three years of my life. . . . God bless your efforts.” (Letter from California)
Support the Lighthouse

When we first began our work with the Mormon people we had a very difficult time getting their attention. After thirty years of ministry in Salt Lake City, however, things have really changed. Some members of the LDS Church are now very hungry for the truth and seek us out. Many of these people are turning to the Lord.

If we are able to complete our new bookstore and offices this year, we will be able to reach many more people. The most important thing a person can do for our work is to pray that God will open the eyes of those that we minister to and that He would give us the encouragement and strength to continue.

Since we provide our materials at the lowest possible cost to our readers, the money we receive from our books and tapes only covers about half the cost of operating Utah Lighthouse Ministry. If it were not for those who provide donations to our ministry, we would be in serious financial trouble. We consider these people to be a vital part of our team. They are, in fact, making an important investment in the souls of people who have been misled with falsified information furnished by the LDS Church.

Utah Lighthouse Ministry is a non-profit organization that ministers to many people and provides support for 44 children through World Vision. Those who are interested in helping our ministry can send their tax-deductible contributions to Utah Lighthouse Ministry, PO Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110. Contributions and orders can now be made over the phone (801 465-8894) [Web-editor: and over the internet] with Visa, MasterCard or Discover Card.

Church Hides Documents From Prosecutors

In our last newsletter we revealed that Gordon B. Hinckley and other members of the Mormon hierarchy had important McLellin documents that they deliberately suppressed from prosecutors in the Hofmann murder-forgery case to save the church from embarrassment. We noted that the material was a “key piece of evidence” needed in the investigation. Later we published the book, The Mormon Church and the McLellin Collection, and showed that those involved in the case were disturbed by the church’s attempt to cover up this important matter. We quoted the following from an article written by Lynn Packer:

“Grant said the case may have taken a different course had the church promptly disclosed. He said a significant shift in public opinion against Hofmann might have prompted Hofmann’s attorneys to enter plea negotiations before the preliminary hearing began, rather than after, as they did” (Ibid., page 36).

Gerry D’Elia, one of the prosecutors, was very disturbed by the church’s suppression of the McLellin collection:

“I can’t believe that nobody came forward with it,” says Gerry D’Elia . . . “It was a waste of our time and taxpayers’ money.” Mr. D’Elia believes the information would have helped prosecutors. Knowing the church already had the McLellin collection could have established Hofmann’s motives. “Our biggest problem was the motive — that goes to the heart of the case,” says Mr. D’Elia. (Salt Lake Tribune, October 31, 1992)

We have recently issued a 2nd edition of The Mormon Church and the McLellin Collection. In this edition we have modified our conclusions regarding the Oliver Cowdery history. In the 1st edition we reported that two Mormon officials made comments that indicated the church had that early history. Further investigation, however, leads us to conclude that these officials may have been mistaken about the matter. Those who already have the 1st edition can receive the relevant material free upon request.

Our new book, The Mormon Church and the McLellin Collection, examines William McLellin’s charges against Joseph Smith and the Mormon Church. It contains important extracts from McLellin’s unpublished papers. In addition, it has a great deal of material regarding the church’s suppression of the collection. This book usually sells for $5.00, but if it is ordered before June 30, the price will be only $4.00. (Mail orders please add $1.50 minimum postage and handling.)

BOOKS AND TAPES

(Mail orders add 10% - Minimum postage $1.50)

Sandra Tanner Tape No. 3. Two radio interviews with Sandra. The first deals with the 1990 changes in the LDS temple ceremony. The second discusses problems in the translation of the Book of Abraham. Price: $3.00

Mormonism: The Christian View. A video narrated by Wesley P. Walters. Deals with Mormon history, doctrines, claim to authority, changes in doctrine and witnessing suggestion. Price: $24.00

By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri, by Charles Larson. Demonstrates conclusively that Joseph Smith did not translate the Book of Abraham from the Egyptian papyrus. Price: $11.95

John Doyle Lee: Zealot, Pioneer Builder, Scapegoat, by Juanita Brooks. Contains very important information on the Mountain Meadows Massacre and Brigham Young’s Cover-up. Price: $15.00

Theological Foundation of the Mormon Religion, by Dr. Sterling McMurrin. Price: $9.00

Joseph Smith’s New York Reputation Re-examined, by Rodger L. Anderson. Good response to LDS authors Hugh Nibley and Richard L. Anderson on early statements by Joseph Smith’s neighbors. Price: $9.95

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**BOOKS AND TAPES**

*Continued from page 15*

*(Mail orders add 10% — Minimum postage $1.50)*

**What Hast Thou Dunn?** by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. The story of how Paul Dunn, an Emeritus General Authority of the Mormon Church, deceived church members with false tales about his baseball career and war record. **Price: $2.00**

**Christian Institute for Mormon Studies.** Eight papers from 1991 conference. **Price: $6.95**

**Divergent Paths of the Restoration,** by Steven Shields. Brief history of over 100 churches and organizations claiming Joseph Smith as their founder. **Price: $14.00**


**Why We Left Mormonism,** edited by Latayne Scott. Personal testimonies of eight ex-Mormons, including Sandra Tanner. **Price: $8.00**

**Everything you ever wanted to Know About mormonism,** by John Ankerberg and John Weldon. Paperback. **Price: $13.00**

**New Testament Documents—Are They Reliable?** by F. F. Bruce. A well-researched book by a Greek scholar showing the reliability of the translation of the N.T. **Price: $5.95**

**Mere Christianity,** by C. S. Lewis. Good defense and explanation of Christianity. **Price: $8.00**

**Know What You Believe—A Practical Discussion of the Fundamentals of the Christian Faith,** by Paul E. Little. **Price: $8.00**

**Know Why You Believe—A Clear Affirmation of the Reasonableness of the Christian Faith,** by Paul E. Little. **Price: $9.00**

**Basic Christianity,** by John R. Stott. A brief examination of the claims of Christ and our response to His call. **Price: $5.00**

**Answering Mormons’ Questions,** by Bill McKeever. **Price: $5.95**

**Mormons Answered Verse by Verse,** by David Reed and John Farkas. **Price: $7.00**

**Joseph Smith and the Origins of the Book of Mormon,** by David Persuitte. Harback. **Price: $19.95**

**Joseph Smith’s Response to Skepticism,** by Robert Hullinger. Shows that Joseph Smith himself authored the Book of Mormon to settle the theological arguments of his time. **Price: $18.95**

**The 1838 Mormon war in Missouri,** by Stephen C. LeSueur. Paperback. **Price: $14.95**

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**UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY**  
**PO BOX 1884**  
**SALT LAKE CITY UT  84110**
MORMON INQUISITION?

**LDS LEADERS MOVE TO REPRESS REBELLION**

While the Mormon Church continues to grow at a rapid rate (it now has close to 9,000,000 members [1993]), it is obvious that internal problems are also beginning to mount. Consequently, church leaders have decided to take an uncompromising stand against Mormon historians who wish to tell the unvarnished truth about church history and other dissenters within the church.

**FIVE EXCOMMUNICATED**

In an apparent show of strength just before the October, 1993, General Conference of the Mormon Church, six prominent church members were summoned to stand trial in church courts for apostasy. On October 2, 1993, the Salt Lake Tribune reported concerning the results of those trials:

Three men and three women have been charged with apostasy for their writing and speaking about Mormon subjects. Paul Toscano, Avraham Gileadi, D. Michael Quinn, Maxine Hanks and Lavina Fielding Anderson were excommunicated. Lynne Kanavel Whitesides was disfellowshipped.

**SPECIAL OFFERS**

**OFFERS END DECEMBER 31, 1993**
(Mail orders add shipping charge)

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**PROBLEMS IN THE GOD MAKERS II**
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Both Publications
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Extra Newsletters Free at the Bookstore – By Mail: 5 for $1.00 - 25 for $3.00

During the council, Ms. Whitesides was accused of “creating friction” with her Mormon feminist statements on television. She also was charged with failure to support church leaders by saying, also on TV, she couldn’t “find any evidence of Christ in [Elder] Packer’s last speech.”

She was disfellowshipped... for “conduct contrary to the laws of the church.”...

Lavina Fielding Anderson was excommunicated for a single article in the independent Mormon journal, Dialogue. The LDS Intellectual Community and Church Leadership chronicled episodes of intimidation against Mormon thinkers for the last 20 years. . . .

LDS historian D. Michael Quinn has had three such councils within the last four months. . . .

While he didn’t attend the council, he wrote a defense. “I vowed I would never again participate in a process which was designed to punish me for being the messenger of unwanted historical evidence and to intimidate me from further work in Mormon history,” he wrote.

But he did reaffirm his faith that “Jesus is the Christ, that Joseph Smith was God’s prophet of the Restoration and that Ezra Taft Benson is the prophet, seer and revelator on the Earth today.”

The council was kind. They put him on probation. But in July, the punishment was upgraded to disfellowshipment. This week, while he was in California, his stake leaders excommunicated him. . . . Avraham Gileadi, a conservative theologian and writer, was excommunicated for his writings about the Apocalypse and the Book of Isaiah. He . . . declined to talk with the press about his experience.
Some of those who were excommunicated used to write articles for the church’s official publication, *The Ensign*. D. Michael Quinn, for instance, has written at least six articles for *The Ensign*, and about the same number for *Brigham Young University Studies*. It seems ironic that this man, who was once held in high esteem within the church, is now considered to be an “anti-Mormon.”

It was, in fact, D. Michael Quinn who lifted his pen in 1977 in an attempt to refute our work. Dr. Quinn wrote a pamphlet entitled, *Jerald and Sandra Tanner’s Distorted View of Mormonism: A Response to Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* According to Richard Stephen Marshall, Mormon historian Reed Durham gave him the following information:

> He also said that due to the large number of letters the Church Historian’s Office is receiving asking for answers to the things the Tanners have published, a certain scholar (name deliberately withheld) was appointed to write a general answer to the Tanners. . . . This unnamed person solicited the help of Reed Durham on the project. The work is finished but its publication is delayed, according to what Leonard Arrington told Durham, because they can not decide how or where to publish it. . . . it will probably be published anonymously, to avoid difficulties which could result were such an article connected with an official Church agency. (“The New Mormon History,” by Richard Stephen Marshall, A Senior Honors Project Summary, University of Utah, May 1, 1977, page 62)

As Dr. Durham predicted, Michael Quinn’s work was “published anonymously.” The words, “By a Latter-day Saint Historian,” appear where Quinn’s name should be found on the front cover and the first page of the book. The coming forth of the anonymous rebuttal was shrouded in secrecy. While we knew Zion Bookstore was the distributor of the response, we were unable to find out where the booklets were printed. In almost all books the name of the publisher is listed at the beginning of the book. When we asked Sam Weller, the owner of the bookstore, where he had obtained them, he replied that he did not know! and that it was all a very secret operation. He claimed that he received a letter giving details of how he could handle the pamphlet, but that the writer was not identified. He maintained that he received 1,800 free copies of the pamphlet and was told that he could use any money he made to reprint the booklet.

We talked with Wilfrid Clark, who works for Mr. Weller. Clark claimed that all he knew about the matter was that Zion Bookstore received an anonymous letter containing a key to room in a self storage company on Redwood Road. He said that he personally went to the company and picked up the books.

In our book, *Answering Dr. Clandestine: A Response to the Anonymous LDS Historian*, pages 1-6, we show how we broke through the maze to learn that D. Michael Quinn was the author of the rebuttal. This identification was confirmed by David Mayfield, who worked for the Historical Department of the church at the time the rebuttal was being prepared.

Those who were in authority over Quinn must have had a great deal of trust in him; otherwise, they would not have allowed him to work on such a secret project which could cause the church great embarrassment if the details of it became known.

An organization known as Mormon Miscellaneous, located at 8912 South 700 East, Sandy, UT 84070, still reprints and sells Dr. Quinn’s rebuttal to us. Now that Quinn has been excommunicated from the Mormon Church, it will be interesting to see if this organization will continue to sell the pamphlet. It would seem that there should at least be some attempt to clarify what has taken place. Instead of the words, “By a Latter-day Saint Historian” appearing at the front of the booklet, it should read something like, “By an Ex-Latter-day Saint Historian.”

While D. Michael Quinn still maintains his belief that Joseph Smith was a prophet, he has obviously become more critical of the church leaders suppressing important documents. In the booklet he prepared in 1977, he criticized us for being upset that the General Authorities of the church were suppressing important documents from their people:

> An extension of the Tanners’ selective use of evidence is the fact that they often make assertions and draw conclusions without referring to evidence that qualifies, challenges, or refutes their argument. For example, they berate the LDS Church for “Suppression of Records.” . . . the Tanners cast the LDS Archives in a sinister light because it was closed to the public for many decades, but fail to comment that this closed-archive practice is not only consistent with the policy of most businesses (including the richly historical Hudson’s Bay Company), but also with that of most religious and charitable organizations. (*Jerald and Sandra Tanner’s Distorted View of Mormonism: A Response to Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 13-14)

Not long after Dr. Quinn wrote the statement cited above, he had his own first-hand encounter with the suppressive policies of the church and did not like what he experienced. In his research Quinn discovered that for a number of years after the 1890 Manifesto, which was supposed to stop the practice of polygamy, a number of prominent church leaders and others were secretly given permission to take plural wives. Quinn pursued information concerning this subject but found that church leaders would not allow him to examine some important documents in the First Presidency’s vault. In his article, “On Being a Mormon Historian (and its Aftermath),” D. Michael Quinn wrote the following:

President Hinckley telephoned in June 1982 to say that he was sympathetic about a request I had written to obtain access to documents in the First Presidency’s vault but that my request could not be granted . . .

In May 1984 my college dean told me he had been instructed by “higher authority” to ask me not to publish a paper I had just presented to the Mormon History Association. It was a historical survey of the public activity of general authorities in business corporations. The dean apologized for having to make this request. I agreed not to publish my presentation and told no one about the incident.

In 1985, after *Dialogue* published my article “LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890-1904,” three apostles gave orders for my stake president to confiscate my temple recommend . . . I was told that three apostles believed...
I was guilty of “speaking evil of the Lord’s anointed.” The stake president was also instructed “to take further action” against me if this did not “remedy the situation” of my writing controversial Mormon history. . . . I told the stake president that this was an obvious effort to intimidate me from doing history that might “offend the Brethren”[i.e., the highest leaders of the church] . . . The stake president also saw this as a back-door effort to have me fired from BYU. . . .

I find it one of the fundamental ironies of modern Mormonism that the general authorities who praise free agency, also do their best to limit free agency’s prerequisites — access to information, uninhibited inquiry, and freedom of expression. (Faithful History: Essays on Writing Mormon History, edited by George D. Smith, 1992, pages 90-93, 95)

D. Michael Quinn finally found the church leaders’ attempt to control their history so repressive that he felt he could no longer do research at the church archives:

In June 1986 the staff of the church historical department announced it was necessary to sign a form which Elder Packer declared gave the right of pre-publication censorship for any archival research completed before signing the form. I and several others refused to sign the form and have not returned to do research at LDS church archives since 1986. (Ibid., page109, footnote 52)

D. Michael Quinn has shown a great deal of courage throughout his ordeal with church leaders and officials at Brigham Young University. In 1981, he did something that very few Mormon scholars dared to do: he publicly took issue with Apostles Ezra Taft Benson and Boyd K. Packer, two of the most powerful leaders of the Mormon Church. To make things even worse for Quinn, Benson became president of the church in 1985.

It was on November 4, 1981, that Quinn delivered a monumental address before a student history association at Brigham Young University. In the Salt Lake City Messenger, March 1982, we called it “One of the best speeches ever given by a Mormon historian.” Newsweek referred to it as a “stirring defense of intellectual integrity.” In this speech, Dr. Quinn revealed that church officials “viewed with understandable misgiving this burgeoning exploration of Mormonism’s fluid past,” and then went on to make these significant comments:

The concern of these Church leaders has not been assuaged by the fact that contemporary with the proliferation of Mormon historians and histories there has been a shift in anti-Mormon propaganda from doctrinal diatribe to the polemical use of elements from the Mormon past to discredit the LDS Church today. In reaction to this confluence of developments, two members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (Ezra Taft Benson and Boyd K. Packer) have specifically identified Latter-day Saint historians as the source of difficulty. . . . General authorities in recent years have criticized Mormon historians for republishing in part or whole out-of-print Church publications such as the 1830 Book of Mormon, the Journal of Discourses (edited and published for thirty-two years under the auspices of the First Presidency), and statements taken from former Church magazines published for the children, youth, and general membership of the Church. It is an odd situation when present general authorities criticize historians for reprinting what previous general authorities regarded not only as faith-promoting but as appropriate for Mormon youth and the newest converts.

Elder Packer specifically warns against historians using “the unworthy, the unsavory, or the sensational,” from the Mormon past, merely because it has been previously published somewhere else, and he berates historians for their “exaggerated loyalty to the theory that everything must be told.” But this raises the question of personal honesty and professional integrity. If a historian writes about any subject unrelated to religion, and he purposely fails to make reference to pertinent information of which he has knowledge, he is justifiably liable to be criticized for dishonesty. . . .

In connection with Elder Packer’s counsel to avoid reference to previously published sensitivities, Elder Benson warns historians against environmental explanations of the background of revelations and developments in LDS history . . .

Like the questions of previously published items, a historian writing about a non-religious subject would be considered inept at best and dishonest at worst if he described someone’s innovation or contribution without discussing the significance of previously existing, similar contributions and ideas of which the historical person was undoubtedly aware. If a Latter-day Saint historian discusses the revelation to Joseph Smith about abstinence from tobacco, strong drinks, and hot drinks, and then fails to note that during the 1830s religious reformers and social reformers were involved nationally in urging abstinence from these identical things, any reader has cause to criticize the historian’s accuracy, to question his motives, and to doubt any affirmation the historian might give to the revelation’s truth. . . . If we write Mormon history as though its revelations and developments occurred without any reference to surrounding circumstances, we undermine the claims for the Restoration of living prophets . . . Boyd K. Packer demands that Mormon historians demonstrate and affirm that “the hand of the Lord [has been] in every hour and every moment of the Church from its beginning till now.” . . . Mormon historians may share the convictions of the Nephite prophets and Boyd K. Packer that the “hand of the lord” operates throughout history and that “His purposes fail not,” but they also have an obligation to examine the evidence, reflect upon it, and offer the best interpretations they can for what has occurred in Mormon history. . . .

A more serious problem of Mormon history is involved in the implications of Boyd K. Packer’s demand that historians demonstrate that “the hand of the Lord [has been] in every hour and every moment of the church from its beginning till now.” Every Mormon historian agrees with Ezra Taft Benson that “we must never forget that ours is a prophetic history,” but there are serious problems in the assertion or implication that this prophetic history of Mormonism requires “the hand of the Lord” in every decision, statement, and action of the prophets. . . . Central to the apparent demands of Elders Benson and Packer is the view that the official acts and pronouncements of the prophets are always the express will of God. This is the Mormon equivalent of the Roman Catholic doctrine of papal infallibility. . . .

Mormon historians would be false to their understanding of LDS doctrines, the Sacred History of the Scriptures, the realities of human conduct, and the documentary evidence
of Mormonism if they sought to defend the proposition that LDS prophets were infallible in their decisions and statements. . . . the Mormon historian has both a religious and professional obligation not to conceal the ambivalence, debate, give-and-take, uncertainty, and simple pragmatism that often attend decisions of the prophet and First Presidency, and not to conceal the limitations, errors, and negative consequences of some significant statements of the prophet and First Presidency. In like manner, however, the Mormon historian would be equally false if he failed to report the inspiration, visions, revelations, and solemn testimonies that have also attended prophetic decisions and statements throughout Mormon history.

A few critics have been more specific in their criticism of Mormon historians who portray the human frailties of LDS leaders. Ezra Taft Benson observes that Mormon historians tend “to inordinately humanize the prophets of God so that their human frailties become more evident than their spiritual qualities,” and Boyd K. Packer has recently made the following comments about a Mormon historian’s talk: “What that historian did with the reputation of the President of the Church was not worth doing. He seemed determined to convince everyone that the prophet was a man. We knew that already. All of the prophets and all of the Apostles have been men. It would have been much more worthwhile for him to have convinced us that the prophet was a prophet; a fact quite as true as the fact that he was a man. He has taken something away from the memory of a prophet. He has destroyed faith.”

This is, in part, related to the infallibility question. Elder Packer criticizes historians for eliminating the spiritual dimension from their studies of prophets, and he accuses such historians of distortion for failing to deal with such a fundamental characteristic. Yet Elders Benson and Packer also demand that historians omit any reference to human frailty (aside from physical problems, I suppose) in studies of LDS leaders, and emphasize only the spiritual dimension. Elder Packer quite rightly observes that omitting the spiritual, revelatory dimension from the life of a Church leader would also deny the existence of the spiritual and revelatory, but it is equally true that omitting reference to human weaknesses, faults and limitations from the life of a prophet is also a virtual denial of the existence of human weaknesses and fallibility in the prophet. Must Church history writing portray LDS leaders as infallible, both as leaders and as men? This is not the Sacred History we know.

Sacred History (which is contained in the Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price) is an absolute refutation of the kind of history Elders Benson and Packer seem to be advocating. Sacred History presents the prophets and apostles as the most human of men who have been called by God to prophetic responsibility. Sacred History portrays the spiritual dimensions and achievements of God’s leaders as facts, but Sacred History also matter-of-factly demonstrates the weaknesses of God’s leaders. Examples are the scriptural accounts of Abraham’s abandonment of his wife Hagar and son Ishmael, Noah’s drunkenness, Lot’s incest, Moses’ arrogance, Jonah’s vacillation, Peter’s impetuosity and cowardice. . . . Moreover, the Doctrine and Covenants contains frequent condemnations of Joseph Smith by the Lord. Sacred History affirms the reality of divine revelation and inspiration, but also matter-of-factly demonstrates that God’s leaders often disagree and do not always follow His revelations consistently. . . .

According to the standards of history apparently required by Ezra Taft Benson and Boyd K. Packer, such a writer of Scriptural Sacred History is suspect at best and faith-destroying at worst. . . . The recent biography of Spencer W. Kimball is virtually Sacred History in its presentation of a loveably human prophet of God, whereas the Mormon history of benignly angelic Church leaders apparently advocated by Elder Benson and Packer would border on idolatry.

Ezra Taft Benson, Boyd K. Packer, and Professor Midgley accuse Mormon historians of writing Church history to accommodate non-Mormon scholarship, but Elder Packer, in particular, advocates another type of Accommodation History. He assails the philosophy and conduct of Mormon historians because their objective Church history “may unwittingly be giving ‘equal time’ to the adversary,” and because such history “may be read by those not mature enough for ‘advanced history’ and a testimony in seedling stage may be crushed.” . . . Boyd K. Packer is not advocating the gradual exposure of the Saints to historical truth. He excludes that possibility by warning historians against publishing objective history even in professional journals that “go far beyond the audience that they have intended, and destroy faith,” and he assails Mormon historians who “want to tell everything whether it is worthy or faith promoting or not.” Elder Packer is not advocating Paul’s doctrine of milk before meat, but he demands that Mormon historians provide only a church history diet of milk to Latter-day Saints of whatever experience. . . . a diet of milk alone will stunt the growth of, if not kill, any child.

Aside from urging the kind of Church history that would not surprise or offend even the newest convert, Boyd K. Packer urges that historians write Church history from a siege mentality to deny any information that enemies of the Church could possibly use to criticize the Church. By this standard, most of the Old Testament, the Gospel of John, many of Paul’s epistles, and the Book of Revelation would never be approved for inclusion in the Bible. . . . Why does the well-established and generally respected Mormon Church today need a protective, defensive, paranoid approach to its history that the actually embattled earlier Saints did not employ?

Ezra Taft Benson and Boyd K. Packer want Church history to be as elementary as possible and as defensive as possible. This is Accommodation History for consumption by the weakest of the conceivably weak Saints, for the vilest of the conceivably vile anti-Mormons, and for the most impressionable of the world’s sycophants. . . .

The Accommodation History advocated by Elders Benson and Packer and actually practiced by some LDS writers is intended to protect the Saints, but actually disillusions them and makes them vulnerable. . . . The tragic reality is that there have been occasions when Church leaders, teachers, and writers have not told the truth they knew about difficulties of the Mormon past, but have offered to the Saints instead a mixture of platitudes, half-truths, omissions, and plausible denials. Elder Packer and others would justify this because “we are at war with the adversary” and must also protect any Latter-day Saint whose “testimony [is] in seedling stage.” But such a public-relations defense of the Church is actually a Maginot Line of sandy fortifications which ‘the enemy’ can easily breach and which has been built up by digging lethal pits.
into which the Saints will stumble. A so-called “faith-promoting” Church history which conceals controversies and difficulties of the Mormon past actually undermines the faith of Latter-day Saints who eventually learn about the problem from other sources... In warning Mormon historians against objective history and against telling too much truth about the Mormon past, Boyd K. Packer says, “Do not spread disease germs!” To adopt the symbolism of Elder Packer, I suggest that it is apostates and anti-Mormons who seek to infect the Saints with disease germs of doubt, disloyalty, disaffection, and rebellion. These typhoid Marys of spiritual contagion obtain the materials of their assaults primarily from the readily available documents and publications created by former LDS leaders and members themselves. Historians have not created the problem areas of the Mormon past; they are trying to respond to them. Believing Mormon historians like myself seek to write candid Church history in a context of perspective in order to inoculate the Saints against the historical disease germs that apostates and anti-Mormons may thrust upon them. The criticism we have received in our efforts would be similar to leaders of eighteenth century towns trying to combat smallpox contagion by locking up Dr. Edward Jenner who tried to inoculate the people, and killing the cows he wanted to use for his vaccine.

The central argument of the enemies of the LDS Church is historical, and if we seek to build the Kingdom of God by ignoring or denying the problem areas of our past, we are leaving the Saints unprotected. (On Being A Mormon Historian, by D. Michael Quinn, 1982, pages 2, 8-10, 13-14, 16-22; revised and reprinted in 1992 in Faithful History: Essays On Writing Mormon History, pages 69-111)

In the “Aftermath” which appears in Faithful History, Michael Quinn stated that after he gave this talk, he was warned by “active and inactive Mormons, and even non-Mormons” not to publish this essay. Nevertheless, he gave Sunstone permission to publish it. The “publicity resulted in meetings with my college dean and with a member of the First Presidency.... Neither Dean Hickman nor President Hinckley gave direct instructions, but both advised against publication of ‘On Being a Mormon Historian.’ A few days later, I asked Sunstone’s editors not to print the already-typeset essay.” (Faithful History, page 89)

When we discovered that Sunstone was not going forward with the publication of this important speech, we suspected that a great deal of pressure was being exerted to suppress Dr. Quinn’s essay. Since we felt that no publisher connected with Mormonism would dare print the speech, we published it ourselves in early 1982. Quinn did not ask us to do it, and we had no communication with him—either directly or indirectly—regarding the subject. We published it because we believed the Mormon people had a right to know what was going on in their church.

Church leaders were distressed with Quinn when Newsweek ran a story entitled, “Apostles vs. Historians,” on February 15, 1982. Quinn reported that one of the church leaders warned him that Apostle Boyd K. Packer, whom he had criticized in his speech, could remain vengeful long after having a disagreement: “A few days later, a general authority invited me to his office. He warned me that he found Elder Packer to be easily offended and vindictive years afterwards” (Faithful History, pages 89-90).

On page 103 of the same book, footnote 22, Michael Quinn told of an experience he had with Apostle Boyd K. Packer:

When Elder Packer interviewed me as a prospective member of Brigham Young University’s faculty in 1976, he explained: “I have a hard time with historians because they idolize the truth. The truth is not uplifting; it destroys. I could tell most of the secretaries in the church office building that they are ugly and fat. That would be the truth, but it would hurt and destroy them. Historians should tell only that part of the truth that is inspiring and uplifting.”

Although he did not use the same graphic example, in a speech given in 1981, Apostle Boyd K. Packer made these comments:

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

Historians seem to take great pride in publishing something new, particularly if it illustrates a weakness or mistake of a prominent historical figure. . . .

The writer or the teacher who has an exaggerated loyalty to the theory that everything must be told is laying a foundation for his own judgment. . . .

That historian or scholar who delights in pointing out the weaknesses and frailties of present or past leaders destroys faith. A destroyer of faith . . . places himself in great spiritual jeopardy. He is serving the wrong master, and unless he repents, he will not be among the faithful in the eternities . . .

In the Church we are not neutral. We are one-sided. There is a war going on and we are engaged in it. (Brigham Young University Studies, Summer 1981, pages 263-264, 266-267)

Interestingly, many Mormon intellectuals feel that Apostle Boyd K. Packer is the moving force behind the present purge going on in the church. An Associated Press article mentioned that, “The actions came just months after Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles identified feminists, homosexuals and intellectuals as the three dangers facing The Mormon Church” (Salt Lake Tribune, September 20, 1993).

Church officials, however, have denied that the excommunications have been directed from the highest levels of the church and claim that it is local leaders who have instigated the trials. It seems highly unlikely, however, that so many prominent people would be called in by local leaders in such a short period of time. The whole thing seems to be orchestrated from above. As indicated above, it appears that the timing of the purge was related to the General Conference of the Mormon Church. Church leaders seem to be making a statement that those who continue to question the authority and policies of church will be cut off.

Some important information regarding Apostle Packer’s involvement in the purge came to light on October 10, 1993, when the Arizona Republic printed the following:
. . . a small but influential number of “saints” claim their leaders are silencing legitimate internal debate in the name of maintaining doctrinal purity, conformity, obedience and faith. . . .

The situation is complicated by the fact that the church’s president and prophet, 94-year-old Ezra Taft Benson, is silenced by infirmity.

Benson’s counselors and quorums run church affairs. Critics claim that the void has robbed the church of direction and perhaps even of divine inspiration, and that ambitious elders may be leading the Brethren astray. . . .

Dallin Oaks, 61, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles . . . said the sanctions were not part of an orchestrated effort to silence critics.

“There is no purge,” said the former BYU president, who has dismissed critics as “publicity hounds” and “wolves.”

However, Oaks did not deny that Boyd K. Packer, a senior apostle may have improperly met with the leader of a church court hearing excommunication proceedings against author and lawyer Paul Toscano.

Toscano, 48, an outspoken women’s rights supporter, was “ex’d,” as church members call excommunication, on Sept. 19.

In addition, Oaks acknowledged that the Strengthening the Members Committee, which some members liken to an intelligence agency but which Oaks calls a “clipping service,” may have monitored speeches, writings and activities of those suspected of apostasy and passed on material to church officials.

“Elder Packer does not have the authority to make church policy,” Oaks said of the man many dissidents believe plays a key role in the crackdown. . . .

Oaks said that “Elder Packer is having any conversations with” the court, “it is outside the normal channels and . . . if he gave a directed verdict (against Toscano), that is contrary to policy and irregular, and it is contrary to what I know about Elder Packer and the way he operates.”

Packer acknowledged Thursday that he met in July with fellow church leader Loren Dunn and Toscano’s stake president, Kerry Heinz, to discuss Toscano. He said Heinz requested the meeting.

“We talked doctrine and philosophy,” Packer said. “I did not instruct him to hold a disciplinary council and absolutely did not direct a verdict. That is against church policy. When he (Heinz) left, I did not know what he would do.” . . .

Last month, John Beck, 33, of Provo, resigned the church and quit his job as a BYU business professor.

“My problems had to do with the ethics of the university,” he said, “which comes down to their not telling the truth. They are firing people not for the reasons they say.”

His wife, Martha Nibley Beck, 30, daughter of famed pro-church scholar Hugh Nibley, said she left her job as a BYU sociology professor in July after the school removed Carol Lee Hawkins as leader of the Women’s Symposium . . .

“The church is moving toward social isolation,” Martha Beck said . . .

BYU spokeswoman Margaret Smoot said that the removal of Hawkins was routine . . .

However, Smoot’s predecessor, Paul Richards, 57, who left BYU last year, ridiculed that notion . . . “The church wants to portray this image of being unified in all it does. . . . It wants Mormons to be unquestioning—something I believe goes against church teachings and portrays a great insecurity.

“I worked in public affairs for the church for 13 years, and I had to lie all the time, and this has really battered my faith.” (Arizona Republic, Oct. 10, 1993)

The same issue of the Arizona Republic revealed that the Mormon prophet’s grandson had decided to leave the church because of the church’s misrepresentation of the facts:

Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist Steve Benson—first grandchild of Ezra Taft Benson, the ailing head and prophet of the Mormon Church—has resigned from the church. . . . His wife of 16 years, Mary Ann Benson, 36, also resigned. . . . The Bensons said they resigned to protest what they believe is an increasingly intolerant church leadership. . . .

He said the example set by his conservative, outspoken 94-year-old grandfather . . . gave him the fortitude to make an emotionally wrenching split from the church.

“There is an old Mormon hymn,” he said in explaining his resignation, ‘Do what is right, let the consequence follow, battle for freedom in spirit and might.’

“In order to be truly obedient, one must be allowed the right to think, question, doubt, and search for truth. The modern church is intolerant of these God-given rights. . . . I didn’t leave the church. The church left me.”

Mary Ann Benson said leaving the church was “painful, yet exhilarating.”

“Since I’ve left, I feel very empowered and free, free to define my relationship with God, follow my purpose in life and free to finally find peace,” she said.

Steve Benson said he believes one sign of the church’s “dysfunctionality” was reaction to his statements in July on his grandfather’s infirmity.

At that time, Benson said he believed that due to his failing health, his grandfather was incapable of exerting any true leadership.

“I hated to see the church manipulate him and . . . use him to falsely prop up the notion that he is actively leading the church,” he said.

“Local church leaders called me in to explain my actions. I received anonymous letters, some hateful, from church members—in essence damning me to hell and telling me I was possessed by the devil.” (Arizona Republic, Oct 10, 1993)

The following day, October 11, 1993, the Salt Lake Tribune reported some other statements made by Steve Benson:

“I could not, in good conscience, be in an organization that was destroying the spirituality of the very souls of its members,” Mr. Benson said Sunday. “In the name of freedom of religion, the church has turned freedom of speech on its head.”

“[I left] because of the current atmosphere of fear, intolerance and intimidation in this dark period of the church we’re groping through now,” he said. . . .

“I felt the church had put a theological plastic bag over my head that was spiritually and intellectually suffocating me,” he said. . . .
Be [by?] refusing to be silenced, and by leaving a church he believes to be run by a “corrupt” leadership, he said he has lived up to his grandfather’s expectations.

The next day an article written by Vern Anderson of The Associated Press reported a new development. The article was captioned, “Oaks Lied To Protect Fellow Apostle”:

The grandson of Mormon Church President Ezra Taft Benson contends that a church apostle lied in order to cover up a more senior apostle’s role in the excommunication of a Mormon dissident.

Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist Steve Benson said Monday his decision last week to resign from the church was based in part on Elder Dallin H. Oaks’ statements to a reporter about Elder Boyd K. Packer.

Elder Oaks admitted late Monday he “could not defend the truthfulness of one of the statements” about Packer, who is considered by many to be behind the church’s recent crackdown on dissidents.

Oaks told Arizona Republic reporter Paul Brinkley-Rogers on Oct. 1 that he had “no knowledge” of whether Packer had met with Kerrin Heinz, the local ecclesiastical leader for ... Paul Tascano, before Heinz excommunicated Tascano on Sept. 19.

However, in a “personal and confidential” letter to Oaks on Oct. 6, Benson reminded the apostle that in a private meeting Sept. 24, Oaks had told Benson he was “distressed and astonished” that Packer had met with Heinz.

He quoted Oaks as saying of Packer, “You can’t stage manage a grizzly bear,” and added that “it was a mistake for Packer to meet with Heinz and a mistake for Heinz to ask for the meeting.”

Benson said he was making his letter to Oaks public because he was fed up with church leaders shading the truth.

In an interview Monday evening, Oaks declined to confirm or deny most of Benson’s assertions about a pair of private interviews the church prophet’s grandson had in September with Oaks and Elder Neal A. Maxwell, another member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

However, Oaks, a former Utah Supreme Court justice, acknowledged that his single statement to reporter Brinkley-Rogers about having no knowledge of the Packer-Heinz meeting was one “I could not defend.”

“It was not a truthful statement,” Oaks said.

Benson’s letter to Oaks had warned the apostle that unless he set the record straight, Benson would feel no obligation to honor the promise of confidentiality he had earlier given Oaks and Maxwell.

Oaks called The Republic’s reporter that night and retracted the “I have no knowledge of whether he [Packer] did” statement.

Oaks did not retract other statements in the interview... that Benson had alleged—and Oaks denies—were false or deliberately misleading.

Oaks ... stressed that Benson at least three times had assured him and Maxwell that their meetings ... were confidential and would never be publicly discussed.

“I think that Steve Benson is just going to have to carry the responsibility for whatever he relates about a confidential meeting,” Oaks said.

Benson said he felt acutely the moral dilemma of having promised confidentiality, but then having seen deliberate efforts to mislead the public about Packer’s role in the Toscano affair.

“I had to decide to be a party to the cover up or be faithful to my own convictions,” Benson said. “I had to let Elder Oaks walk a plank of his own making.” (Salt Lake Tribune, October 12, 1993)

The more church leaders said on the subject, the worse it began to look for Oaks, Packer and other church leaders. Apostle Packer eventually revealed that he had the approval of the Council of the Twelve Apostles to meet with Heinz. On October 17, 1993, the Salt Lake Tribune reported:

Mormon Church Apostle Boyd K. Packer said he had the endorsement of the Council of the Twelve Apostles when he met with an ecclesiastical leader who later excommunicated a member of the church.

Packer told the church-owned Deseret News Friday that when stake president Kerrin Heinz asked through a midlevel church official to meet with Packer, Packer asked his fellow apostles in a meeting whether he should.

“...I felt there may be some sensitivity about his request,” Packer said.

Since Apostle Oaks is a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, he must have known about this meeting even before it occurred. The fact that he told Steve Benson about the meeting after it took place, shows that it was on his mind and that he was deeply concerned about the matter. In light of the above, the fact that Oaks was not forthright about the matter casts a very bad light on the whole affair.

Apostle Dallin Oaks allowed his own church’s newspaper to interview him about the matter. Notwithstanding the fact that Oaks had shot himself in the foot, he proceeded to attack the Associated Press:

“Life isn’t fair,” Elder Oaks said. “Somebody said that time heals all wounds. But it’s also true that time wounds all heels,” he added in jest. But in a serious tone, Elder Oaks ... said he feels “wounded” by an Associated Press story that he said dwelled on his admission that he made a statement he couldn’t defend, and downplayed his efforts to promptly correct his unintentional error.

“It impugned my integrity and seriously distorted the account of the facts as it was presented,” Oaks said in an interview this week.

The apostle said he didn’t willfully mislead a news reporter. He explained that he had misspoken during an hour-long interview and when he was notified of that, he called the reporter to retract a “statement I could not defend.”

In his interview with the Deseret News, [Steve] Benson said what Elder Oaks told him didn’t square with what was said to the reporter. ... he transmitted a confidential letter to Elder Oaks pointing that out. Benson said he also warned that if the apostle did not “set the record straight” he would no longer feel obligated to keep their discussion confidential. ... Elder Oaks said, he reviewed the transcript of his interview with the
reporter and found he couldn’t defend his comment about having no knowledge of Packer meeting with Heinz.

“How do you make a statement like that? I can’t give any better explanation than the fact that I was talking a mile a minute and I just said something that on mature reflection I (concluded), ‘I can’t defend the truthfulness of that,’” Elder Oaks said. . . . after later learning that Elder Oaks left intact the other comments that troubled Benson, Benson said he followed through on his threat to go public. (Deseret News, October 16, 1993)

Apostle Oaks would apparently like people to believe that he merely made a mistake when he said he did not know Apostle Packer met with Heinz. This, of course, is very difficult to believe. Ironically, Oaks himself has released a partial transcript of his interview with The Arizona Republic which establishes beyond all doubt that he was not forthright about the matter:

Oaks: “As for Elder Packer, Elder Packer does not have a specific responsibility for any area in the church. . . . So, if Elder Packer is having any conversations with Kerry Heinz, it is outside the normal channel. That’s all I can say. I have no knowledge of whether he did. But if he did and if he gave a directed verdict or anything like that, that is contrary to policy. It is irregular and it’s contrary to what I know of Elder Packer and the way he operates.” (Salt Lake Tribune, October 17, 1993)

As we have shown, Apostle Oaks tried to divert attention away from his fallacious statement by attacking the Associated Press. Oaks claimed the story “impugned my integrity and seriously distorted the account of the facts . . . .” The Associated Press responded as follows:

Bill Beech, bureau chief for The Associated Press in Salt Lake City said the AP story was based on a tape-recorded interview with Oaks, was accurate and made no distortions.

Though Packer said Friday that he had the support of the Council of the Twelve in meeting with Heinz, Benson wrote in an Oct. 6 letter to Oaks that Oaks had told him “it was a mistake for Packer to meet with Heinz and a mistake for Heinz to ask for the meeting.” . . . in another letter Friday to Oaks, Benson appealed to the apostle to correct what Benson believes are other conflicts between Oak’s private version and the public statements about Packer’s involvement.

“You were provided an opportunity to set the record straight completely,” he wrote. “You chose only to correct one of three falsehoods.” (Salt Lake Tribune, October 17, 1993)

Apostle Dallin Oaks finally became so upset over the charge that he had lied that he did something very few General Authorities have done in recent years: he wrote an article regarding the matter which was published in the Salt Lake Tribune on October 21, 1993. In this article Apostle Oaks said, “I did not lie to the reporter,” and went on to declare: “My perception of this matter is simple. I have been the victim of double-decker deceit: 1, betrayal of promises of confidentiality, and 2, false accusations of lying.”

While Apostle Oaks maintained that there is no orchestrated effort to silence critics in the church and that, “There is no purge,” the evidence all seems to point in the opposite direction. Allen Roberts, coeditor of Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, commented as follows:

Elder Dallin Oaks has attempted to persuade the public that “there is no purge” on the reasoning that six lost people are of no numerical consequence given the church’s membership of 8.5 million. Recently excommunicated historian Michael Quinn had this to say about Elder Oaks’ notion that it takes more than six people to constitute a purge: “That is like saying there wasn’t a purge at Tiananmen Square because only 200 people were killed out of one billion Chinese.” . . . The purge is more widespread and far greater in scale than any have heretofore reported. (Private Eye Weekly, October 20, 1993)

The Religion Section of the Salt Lake Tribune, October 16, 1993, contained an article entitled, “More Stories Point to LDS Leaders As Source of Dissident Crackdown.” In this article Peggy Fletcher Stack presented some important information which seems to establish that there is indeed a “purge” going on and that it is being directed from the highest levels of the church. In our new book, The Mormon Purge, we have more information regarding this important subject.

While we believe that the Mormon Church and other organizations have every right to excommunicate those who will not conform to its teachings, it is extremely disturbing that the Mormon leaders would work in a clandestine manner to accomplish their purpose. As one of the dissidents has pointed out, the top officials have tried to shield themselves, giving the appearance that they are benign, good-natured individuals, while those on the lower levels have to take all the blame for the excommunications. It may be true that the top leaders of the church felt that it is necessary to remove some members to preserve the church, but they should have had the courage to stand up and accept responsibility for their actions.

Now that the cover-up seems to be unraveling, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have issued a statement which seems to indicate that the excommunications will continue. In this statement we find the following:

We have the responsibility to preserve the doctrinal purity of the church. We are united in this objective. . . .

The longstanding policy of church discipline is outlined in the Doctrine and Covenants: “We believe that all religious societies have a right to deal with their members . . . according to the rules and regulations of such societies. . . . They can only excommunicate them from their society, and withdraw from them their fellowship.” (Doctrine and Covenants 134:10.). . . .

The general and local officers of the church will continue to do their duty and faithful church members will understand. (Salt Lake Tribune, October 17, 1993)

Although a statement like this coming at a time of tenseness in the LDS Church is likely to silence many church members, it could also cause further dissension. In view of the backlash which has already occurred because of the excommunications, it remains to be seen whether church leaders will continue with the purge.
One thing that is obvious about the whole affair is that many members of the church are becoming polarized over the issues and the rhetoric is becoming louder. For example, Allen Roberts wrote the following:

All fingers seem to point to Elder Boyd Packer, acting president of the twelve apostles, as the prime force behind what has been called the “Mormon Inquisition.” While Elder Packer, nicknamed “Darth Packer” by the irreverent because of his cold and detached personal style, is a far cry from Torquemada (the 15th century Inquisitor General of the Spanish Inquisition), his speeches, instructions to lower ranking authorities, and direct contacts with local leaders have shown him to be the prime orchestrator of top-level-organized punishment. . . . Raised by an authoritarian German father, Packer and his brothers entered the military during World War II instead of serving missions. This military influence had an indelible impact on Packer’s view of the church, according to a close family acquaintance, “He sees the church as an army. He is one of its generals and the members are privates who should march in step and do what they are told without question.” (Private Eye Weekly, October 20, 1993)

On October 18, 1993, the Salt Lake Tribune revealed the following:

A threat apparently intended for excommunicated LDS historian D. Michael Quinn was delivered by phone Saturday night to the home of the wrong Michael Quinn.

The baby sitter of Michael D. Quinn answered the phone call . . . Michael D. Quinn, who is a member of the Elders Quorum in his ward in Bountiful, explained:

“The 15 year-old baby sitter answered the phone and a male voice asked for Michael Quinn. She said he could not come to the phone. . . .

“The man told her to give me this message, ‘I’m tired of the statements he’s making about the LDS Church. I’m tired of hearing him criticize the church. He’d better start keeping to himself if he doesn’t. I have his phone number and I know where he lives. I’ll come get him. I hate him. He stinks.’ Then he hung up. . . .

Angered by the threat after he spoke to the nonhistorian, Mr. Quinn, the historian, said Sunday:

“Threatening phone calls are a new low in the current atmosphere of repression in the LDS Church. I hold Apostle [Dallin H.] Oaks personally responsible for inciting such sick-minded Mormons. Apostle Oaks publicly stated that the feminists and scholars excommunicated in September were actually wolves. Utah sheepherders kill wolves rather than allow them to wander around and kill sheep. Elder Oaks has increased the paranoia of Mormons toward differences of opinion and dissent. I refuse to remain quiet while. . . Oaks and [Apostle] Boyd K. Packer demonize anyone they don’t agree with. It would have been more Christian of Apostle Oaks to describe excommunicated persons as ‘lost sheep.’ That might have avoided giving encouragement to the self-appointed vigilantes in the Mormon community.”

THE THINKING HAS BEEN DONE

In our book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 183-84, we present a number of statements from Mormon leaders which clearly teach blind obedience to the authorities of the church. One of the most controversial is a Ward Teachers’ Message which appeared in the official organ of the church, The Improvement Era, in 1945:

Any Latter-day Saint who denounces or opposes, whether actively or otherwise, any plan or doctrine advocated by the “prophets, seer, and revelators” of the Church is cultivating the spirit of apostasy. Lucifer...wins a great victory when he can get members of the Church to speak against their leaders and to “do their own thinking” . . .

When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. When they propose a plan—it is God’s plan. When they point the way, there is no other which is safe. When they give direction, it should mark the end of controversy. (The Improvement Era, June 1945, page 354)

Mormon apologists, who do not want to face the fact that their leaders require very strict obedience to their counsel, have found a letter written by the eighth president of the church, George Albert Smith, which they feel invalidates the quotation cited above. It was published in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1986, pages 38-39. President Smith was responding to a question by a Unitarian minister who was upset by the article which appeared in the Mormon Church’s official organ.

In response, President Smith wrote: “I am pleased to assure you that you are right in your attitude that the passage quoted does not express the true position of the Church.”

President Smith’s letter raises a very serious question: why did Smith write this letter to a private individual, who was not a member of the church instead of making a public correction in the church’s Improvement Era? If the article did not really represent the position of the church, Smith should have demanded a retraction. Mormon apologists have been unable to point to any public statement by Smith repudiating the article.

It should be noted also that this notorious Ward Teachers’ Message was also printed in the church’s newspaper, Deseret News, Church Section, on May 26, 1945. It is clear, then, that the Latter-day Saints read this message in both the Deseret News and The Improvement Era. Moreover, the ward teachers presented this lesson in the homes of the Mormon people.

Unfortunately, the Mormon Church has a history of giving out false statements to those who are not members of the church when embarrassing information comes to light. Moreover, there have been times when even members of the church have been deliberately deceived about what was going on by church leaders to protect the image of the church. It was Joseph Smith himself who set the example in this regard.

Mormon Church records clearly show that Joseph Smith was deeply involved in the secret practice of polygamy while he was in Nauvoo, Illinois, yet on May 26, 1844, just a month before he was murdered, he absolutely denied any connection with the practice:

What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one. I am the same man, and as innocent as I was fourteen years ago; and I can prove them all perjurers. (History of Church, vol. 6, page 411)
Joseph Smith actually had far more than seven wives when he made this statement. Those who will take the time to examine the church’s own *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 132, will find that Smith had already received plural wives when he gave the revelation on the subject in 1843. In that revelation we find the following:

And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith [Joseph’s wife], receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph, and who are virtuous and pure before me . . .

And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood if any man . . . have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given unto him; therefore is he justified. (*Doctrine and Covenants* 132:52, 61-62)

For more information on the false statements regarding polygamy by Joseph Smith and other Mormon leaders see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*, pages 245-248. After the Manifesto, almost fifty years later, the top Mormon leaders publicly proclaimed that they were not allowing any more polygamous marriages. These statements, however, were absolutely false (see pages 231-244b of the book cited above). As noted above, D. Michael Quinn found himself in serious trouble with church leaders for revealing the truth about this matter.

The belief that the interests of the Mormon Church are sometimes more important than the truth has continued right up until the present time. We have already shown that Apostle Dallin Oaks told Steve Benson in private that he knew Apostle Packer met with Kerry Heinz, but when Oaks was asked about the matter by the press, he claimed he had no knowledge about such a meeting.

While we may never know exactly what was on President George Albert Smith’s mind when he wrote the letter to the minister, it is obvious that his public silence concerning this serious matter left the Mormon people with the strong impression that they should never question the decisions of the leaders of the church.

The purge which is now going on in the Mormon Church tends to demonstrate that the present leaders of the church want their people to believe that, “When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. When they propose a plan—it is God’s plan. . . . When they give direction, it should mark the end of controversy.”

The statement made in *The Improvement Era* in 1945 appears to be the basis for a statement which appeared in the church’s publication, *The Ensign*, some thirty-three years later. In an address given by Young Women General President Elaine Cannon in 1978 we find the same type of reasoning:

Tonight President Kimball extends an invitation . . . for all of us as women to follow him as he follows the Savior. . . . He is our leader, in all the world of would-be leaders, who can guide us back to the presence of God. . . . Personal opinions may vary. Eternal principles never do.

When the prophet speaks, sisters, the debate is over. . . . we emphatically and happily declare, “I will be obedient! I will help strengthen others that they may be so too!” (*The Ensign*, November 1978, page 108)

The following year, 1979, the First Presidency Message, written by President N. Eldon Tanner, First Counselor in the First Presidency, endorsed Elaine Cannon’s statement as an important truth regarding Mormonism:

Recently . . . Young Women President Elaine Cannon made the following statement: “When the Prophet speaks . . . the debate is over.” (*The Ensign*, November 1978, p. 108)

I was impressed by that simple statement, which carries such deep spiritual meaning for all of us. Wherever I go, my message to the people is: Follow the prophet . . .

It is difficult to understand why there are so many people who fight against the counsel of the prophet . . .

Latter-day Saints should be able to accept the words of the prophets without having to wait for science to prove the validity of their words. We are most fortunate to have a living prophet at the head of the Church to guide us . . .

True Latter-day Saints . . . know that the messages of the prophet have come from the Lord and have the concurrence of all the General Authorities . . . Whose side are we on? *When the prophet speaks the debate is over.* (*The Ensign*, August 1979, pages 2-3)

The reader will notice the close agreement between the statement made in 1945 and the one which appeared in 1979. The 1945 Ward Teachers’ Message contained this statement: “When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. . . . When they give direction, it should mark the end of controversy.”

The 1979 First Presidency Message reads: “*When the prophet speaks the debate is over.*” As far as we can determine, the same basic message—that church members are to give unquestioned obedience to the pronouncements of the church—appears in both statements.

**NON-FUNCTIONAL PROPHETS**

Mormon leaders maintain that the LDS Church is “the only true church” upon the face of the earth. Moreover, it is claimed that the church is led by direct revelation from God through the “living prophet,” who is also the president of the church. No one else can give revelations to the church.

In our book, *The Changing World of Mormonism*, published by Moody Press in 1980, page 439, we pointed out that the Mormon Church had been confronted with some serious problems and that the ability to deal with these issues was complicated by the fact that some of the Mormon leaders were very old. David O. McKay, the ninth prophet, lived to be ninety-six years old. He was in very poor health toward the end of his life and was hardly in any condition to function as prophet, seer and revelator for the church.

Instead of appointing a younger man after McKay’s death, church leaders chose Joseph Fielding Smith who was ninety-three years old. Smith lived to be ninety-five, and the leadership of the church passed to Harold B. Lee who was seventy-three years old. Lee lived less than two years and Spencer W. Kimball became president. Kimball lived to be ninety years old, but was in very poor health toward the end of his life and could not really lead the church. Ezra Taft Benson became president of the church in 1985. Although he is now ninety-four he is still sustained as the living prophet.
The way the Mormon hierarchy is structured there seems to be little hope of younger leadership, and even less hope for any new revelations from the “living prophet.” The problem is that the president of the Council of the Twelve Apostles always becomes prophet of the church. Since this system is based on seniority, it is almost impossible for younger men to move to the top.

Interestingly, the average age of the last five prophets of the church was eighty-one years when they attained that position. This should be contrasted with the fact that Joseph Smith was only in his twenties when he assumed the role of prophet of the Mormon Church. The present system, therefore, seems to insure that only a man who is already old can become prophet. The effect of this policy is that those who are appointed prophets are very likely to become senile or in bad health during their presidency.

The Mormon system works in such a way as to bring a man into the highest office in the church at the very time when he is least competent to adequately perform his duties. While the highest leaders of the church have forced many of those on lower levels to retire (i.e., go on emeritus status), they will not retire themselves and the “living prophet” is never removed no matter how incompetent he becomes.

It has become very obvious that at the present time the Mormon Church does not really have a functioning prophet. The whole claim that the church is superior to all others because it has a “living prophet” now seems to be in jeopardy. Although church leaders have tried very hard to cover up the seriousness of the situation, the truth is becoming widely known to the Mormon people.

As we have shown above, when Steve Benson publicly questioned the fact that his grandfather was capable of leading the church, he was called in to explain his actions. On July 10, 1993, three months before Steve Benson left the church, Vern Anderson of the Associated Press reported that President Ezra Taft Benson’s grandson was deeply concerned regarding his grandfather’s growing problem of senility:

As Mormon Church President Ezra Taft Benson approaches his 94th birthday, the years have stilled his voice, clouded his mind and raised questions about the faith’s rigid order of succession.

Attired in a sweatshirt and fed by others, Benson spends his days in supervised seclusion in an apartment overlooking Temple Square. He is an infirm retiree in a church that doesn’t officially retire its “prophet, seer and revelator.”

The incongruity struck a 13-year-old Benson great—grandson the other day as he poured his breakfast cereal: “Dad, why do they call him prophet when he can’t do anything?”

The boy’s father is Steve Benson, a practicing Mormon who won a Pulitzer Prize this year for the political cartoons he draws . . .

His son’s question is one reason Benson decided to speak openly for the first time about his grandfather’s decline . . .

A more compelling motivator, however, is what he believes are misleading efforts by the church’s hierarchy to preserve an image of a more vibrant Ezra Taft Benson, an image less problematic for the core Mormon belief in a literal prophet of God.

“I believe the church strives mightily to perpetuate the myth, the fable, the fantasy that President Benson, if not operating on all cylinders, at least is functioning effectively enough, even with just a nod of the head, to be regarded by the saints as a living, functioning prophet,” he said.

That is not the grandfather Benson saw when he visited in March from Arizona, or whom he has seen struggle with encroaching senility during much of his 7-year administration.

“The last time I saw him he said virtually nothing to me,” said Benson . . . “He looked at me almost quizzically, as if he were examining me.”

In earlier visits, the former U.S. agriculture secretary . . . could manage at least a word or two. . . .

Benson, who has not spoken in public for more than three years, was already suffering memory loss when he assumed the presidency in 1985 at age 86. His grandson said facing church audiences became a frightening experience for a man who once had relished the pulpit.

While some church “general authorities” are retired at 65, the granting of emeritus status does not extend to the faith’s 12 apostles or three-member First Presidency, the belief being God will choose his leaders and the length of their service.

Steve Benson sees the practice as needlessly impractical. “I don’t think God would expect us to be bound legally or structurally to a system that obviously isn’t working,” he said.

Gordon B. Hinckley, Benson’s first counselor, has taken pains in recent sermons to stress the church does not face a leadership crisis. . . .

A request to interview Hinckley or an apostle about the church’s pattern of succession was declined through spokesman LeFevre . . . Steve Benson, 39, said it has been some time since his grandfather has been capable of participating in any way in the administration of the church’s affairs, although that is “an image that people deeply, almost desperately want to believe.”

“And I’m not demeaning or ridiculing that desire to believe. I’m just saying that what the church is presenting to the members to believe is not factual,” he said. (Salt Lake Tribune, July 10, 1993)

The Arizona Republic, July 13,1993, published an article containing the following:

The grandson of the Mormon Church’s president is being battered and praised by Mormons for revealing last week that the aged Ezra Taft Benson cannot physically or mentally lead the Church . . . The Arizona Republic’s political cartoonist, has received numerous telephone calls from Mormons, who clearly are split on the issue. . . .

One woman left a message for Benson saying that although he spoke the truth, he never should have made his opinions public.

Some members in wards . . . prayed Sunday for their church leader, affirming their faith in his leadership despite Benson’s statements that his grandfather, at 93, is “not in the loop” and cannot attend to church affairs. . . .

Don LeFevre, spokesman for the 9 million-member church, said . . . that Benson’s counselors review major church decisions with the prophet at his home, where he must be tended with round-the-clock care.
Steven Benson said the notion that the president’s two counselors, Gordon Hinckley and Thomas Monson, could review anything with his grandfather is nonsense.

“The debate is so emotional because it is a matter of trust,” Benson said. “If the church hides the truth about nonfunctional prophets, members then may ask, ‘What else is the church hiding?’”

In an article appearing in the Salt Lake Tribune, July 21, 1993, Steve Benson was quoted as saying: “The point I was trying to make is that President Benson is the prophet in title only, not in role. President Benson is not carrying out his role. “He can’t,” the grandson, an active Mormon, said Tuesday.”

The fact that President Benson’s counselors did not have a great deal of confidence in his ability to function became evident when documents filed with the state of Utah were examined by the Salt Lake Tribune:

Documents on file with the state of Utah are strong evidence that the parent corporation of the Mormon Church no longer is being directed by its president, Ezra Taft Benson.

It is the first time since the corporation was founded 70 years ago that anyone other than the church president has obtained total authority over Utah’s most powerful corporation.

The documents, at the Utah Department of Commerce, were signed with a machine that duplicates the signature of 94-year-old President Benson. They were filed six months before President Benson . . . made his last public speech.

Church leaders said this week the filings and the use of a signature machine were routine, and done with President Benson’s approval. . . . Today, the corporation owns all church assets—including a multibillion-dollar portfolio of financial and property holdings. . . .

Entitled “Certificates of Authority” and dated May 23, 1989, the documents say Presidents Hinckley and Monson can keep those complete powers—even if President Benson becomes disabled or is determined by a court to be incompetent. . . . the church made no announcement of the change. It has continued to portray President Benson as the ultimate power behind church affairs. . . .

Fran Fish, notary public administrator for the state Department of Commerce, said signatures written by machine are legal . . .

Still, Ms. Fish . . . said use of a signature machine on state corporate filings “is certainly out of the norm.” . . . Steve Benson . . . has said that his aging grandfather no longer possesses the mental faculties to handle church affairs.

“The church has misrepresented the condition of President Benson and stated flatly that his role as prophet has in no way been impeded,” Steve Benson said this week. “My grandfather has become a storefront mannequin while the business of the store is conducted behind closed doors.”

He said a signature machine has replaced his grandfather’s hand on all personal and family correspondence.

“Evidently,” Steve Benson said, “the signature machine had not been programmed to sign, ‘Grandpa.’” (Salt Lake Tribune, August 15, 1993)

Mormon Church leaders appear to be on the horns of a dilemma with regard to their non-functional prophet, Ezra Taft Benson. On the one hand, it is maintained that only a revelation given to the prophet could change this extraordinary policy of the church. On the other hand, however, President Benson is obviously incapable of giving such a revelation. Vern Anderson observed: “The strict apostolic succession—which church spokesman Don LeFevre said would require a revelation from ‘the Lord to his prophet’ to change—has fostered a gerontocracy” Salt Lake Tribune, July 10, 1993).

While the present situation with regard to President Benson must be very perplexing to the General Authorities of the Mormon Church, a worse scenario might be if the apostle with the most seniority were already mentally incompetent when installed as prophet. In view of the way medical advancements are lengthening people’s lives, it is even conceivable that a “prophet” might live for a quarter of a century without contributing anything to the church.

It is apparent that the Mormon Church’s claim to be led by a “Prophet, Seer, and Revelator,” is not substantiated by the facts. The Bible relates that the prophet Moses lived to be extremely old, but it goes on to say that “his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated” (Deuteronomy 34:7). We certainly cannot say this of most of the recent prophets of the Mormon Church. While it is claimed that these men are “living prophets,” they seem to become mere figureheads as they advance in age.

The Mormon forger Mark Hofmann put the “living prophet,” President Spencer W. Kimball, to the acid test and demonstrated that the so-called “living oracles” are just as fallible as other men. At a time when revelation was really needed in the church, Kimball seemed to be completely oblivious to what was really going on. President Kimball was unable to detect that the documents Hofmann was selling to the church were forgeries.

Two of the documents even contained revelations purportedly written by Joseph Smith himself, yet Kimball had no knowledge that they were spurious. After President Kimball died, the prophet Ezra Taft Benson had no spiritual insight regarding the matter. He failed to realize that the documents were forgeries, and church officials made it very difficult for investigators to examine the documents.

Moreover, during the criminal investigation that followed after Hofmann killed two people, the Mormon Church discovered that it had the real McLellin Collection in its vault. This would have provided very important evidence of fraud on Mark Hofmann’s part because he was trying to sell them items they already had in their own vault. Instead of coming forth with information regarding the collection, church leaders decided to suppress this evidence from investigators. Mormon Church official Richard Turley has acknowledged that this matter was brought to the attention of the First Presidency, and Apostles Boyd K. Packer and Dallin H. Oaks. While one would assume that only the “living prophet” could make such an important decision, we do not have any hard evidence that Benson made the decision to cover up the existence of the collection. If Ezra Taft Benson was responsible for the cover-up, it was a terrible decision which caused embarrassment to the church. On the other hand, if his counselors in the First Presidency and Apostles Oaks and Packer did not consult him, it would tend to provide further evidence that the “living prophet” is only a figurehead. For much more information regarding this matter see our book, The Mormon Church and the McLellin Collection, pages 1-16.
As we have shown, Mormon leaders tell their people that “When the prophet speaks the debate is over.” We feel that this type of absolute obedience can be very dangerous. In Jeremiah 17:5 we find this admonition: “Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, whose heart departeth from the Lord.”

As we were preparing this newsletter, it became more obvious all the time that we would not have the room to include many significant items concerning the purge that is going on in the Mormon Church. It seems that new developments are occurring almost every day. Consequently, we decided to do a book on the subject which should be of great interest to our readers. A very important part of this book will deal with the suppression of the 16-volume sesquicentennial history of the Mormon Church. Extremely important church documents including a secret memorandum to President Gordon B. Hinckley—have been turned over to us detailing the duplicity Mormon officials used when they squelched the history which many trusting Mormon historians had spent untold hours preparing.

Our new book regarding the Mormon Church’s attempt to silence its historians and other dissidents is entitled, The Mormon Purge. We are offering a special price on this book. It will normally sell for $3.00, but if it is ordered before December 31, 1993, the price will be only $2.00! On the first page of this newsletter the reader will find an extra special offer if this book is ordered in conjunction with the book, The Godmakers II. (Mail orders please add $1.50 minimum postage.)

GOD MAKERS II LAWYER THREATENS TANNERS WITH SUIT

Unfortunately, our last newsletter regarding the video The God Makers II, has stirred up a real hornet’s nest. While we tried to be very accurate and tactful in our presentation, in an article entitled, “The Tanners Strike Again,” J. Edward Decker exclaimed:

One would think that I’d have developed some sort of immunity by now. Truth is, having felt the prick of both, I’d rather take my poison in a coke glass than from the pen of a some so-called brother and sister in Christ. I’m just about fed up with them. Arsenic is a whole lot easier to swallow. . . . they are out to rip the God Makers movie to shreds . . . It’s these constant two-by-fours across the back of my head that are starting to get me mad . . . the Tanners state with a straight face, “Nevertheless, we feel that it is our duty to present our readers with well-balanced research on this issue.” I’m sorry but that is just plain Hogwash! Either the Tanners are the greatest dupes in the business or bald faced liars. I’m weary of giving them the benefit of the doubt. (Saints Alive in Jesus newsletter, March-April, 1993)

Ed Decker sent a copy of his newsletter to a lawyer named Douglas A. Wallace. Wallace, in turn, wrote us a threatening letter in which he stated:

As you may already know, I represent Ed Decker, Bill Claudin, Patrick and Caryl Matriscianna [sic] as well as Jeremiah Films in connection with “God Makers II.” . . .

As attorney for “God Makers II,” et al, I can say that the most disappointing thing that could happen with regard to the film is the failure of the “CHURCH” . . . to actually file a lawsuit for slander. . . . It would be the epitome of my life to defend such a lawsuit for I have lived these past 58 years for no reason other then to expose the Mormon Menace.

If the “CHURCH” fails to bring such action, then I will be looking elsewhere to expose the fraud by seizing opportunity to file a lawsuit against slanderous, spurious articles such as you have written. (Letter from Douglas A. Wallace, dated April 10, 1993)

In spite of the threat of a lawsuit we completed a 94-page book concerning the video entitled, Problems In The Godmakers II. While we do not wish to argue with the accusations made by Ed Decker and Douglas Wallace in this newsletter, those who read the book will find our side of the story.

Since our last newsletter we made two extremely important discoveries which throw important light on the validity of the video:

One, while the video charges that Gordon B. Hinckley, a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, was involved with prostitutes and had a homosexual affair with a man named Charles VanDam in the 1960s, we have had contact with a man who was closely associated with VanDam during the “mid 1970’s.” This man says that VanDam was not telling the same story at that time. He maintains that although VanDam told him about his wild parties with a Mr. Hinckley, it was not President Gordon B. Hinckley!

In a letter, dated May 10, 1993, VanDam’s former associate affirmed: “He [VanDam] was not a stable person. . . . He lived in extreme exaggeration of lies - fantasy & a violent temper . . . He boasted & bragged to me that it was . . . [another Hinckley] not the Gen[eral] Authority that he partied with!!!” We have verified the fact that this man was closely associated with Mr. VanDam. It would appear, then, that the chief witness against Gordon B. Hinckley changed his story sometime after the mid 1970’s. We found numerous other problems with VanDam’s statements.

Two, one of the most moving and important portions of the video involves the death of a woman named Lillian Chynoweth. While the video leads the viewer to believe that she was murdered, the truth of the matter—verified by the Houston Police Department—is that Lillian committed suicide!

Since we completed the book we have become aware of the fact that lawyers for both Jeremiah Films and the Mormon Church have been making some very serious charges. For example, in a letter to Patrick A. Shea, the lawyer representing the Mormon Church, Douglas Wallace charged:

There are issues relating to regular prostitutionual sexual servicing of Mr. Hinckley at the Hotel Utah along with other Authorities on the day of their regular weekly meetings in the Salt Lake Temple, and there are issues relating to assault and attempted murder of the prostitute and the murder of a young male following a verbal confrontation with Mr. Hinckley over the severity of his abuse of the young boy. (Letter from Jeremiah Films’ lawyer Douglas Wallace, dated March 5, 1993)
It is interesting to note that William Claudin, who spearheaded the investigation directed at Gordon B. Hinckley, was very forthright with us concerning what he learned about the charges of church leaders being furnished with prostitutes in the Hotel Utah. On May 7, 1993, he frankly admitted that when further investigation was done, it became apparent that the prostitute who related the story was not telling the truth about certain things. Although he still believed there could be some truth to the accusations, he felt that it was best to withdraw her testimony about Hinckley and other church leaders. For more information on this matter see Problems in the Godmakers II, page 34. We have no further information regarding the charge that a young man was murdered.

On March 18, 1993, the lawyer representing the church, responded to Wallace, Claudin, Decker and the Matriscianas. In this two-page letter he seems to assert that Patrick Matrisciana, of Jeremiah Films, tried to blackmail the church:

I understand that Mr. Matrisciana is a “businessman” to quote his own words. His offer for me to simply buy the raw tape of “God Makers II,” and thus solve the problem of any distribution of the false information was, and is, clearly unacceptable. I rejected the first offer and would not accept this type of extortion as a means of resolving this dispute. . . .

Mr. Claudin has not responded directly but in his wanderings in Southern Utah continues to promote the video and makes representations regarding an “X-rated God Makers II” video which will be coming out shortly. (Letter from Patrick A. Shea, dated March 18, 1993)

It is unlikely that any deal was struck between the church and Jeremiah Films because the film company later produced a 27-minute video entitled, The Truth About Mormon President Gordon B. Hinckley, which was taken from the 6 to 8 hours of “raw tape” which Jeremiah Films had in its possession. (V. Leah Walker has informed us that when she called Jeremiah Films on May 5, 1993, she was told that all of the footage except for the 27 minutes used in the video mentioned above, was destroyed. See her letter in Problems in the Godmakers II, pages 21-22.) In any case, in our opinion the 27-minute video really adds nothing to what appeared in the video, The God Makers II. Instead, it demonstrates Charles VanDam’s tendency to exaggerate.

It is certainly obvious that some very serious charges involving criminal behavior have been made by lawyers on both sides of the controversy.

Even though we have been threatened with a lawsuit for expressing our opinion on The God Makers II, we do not feel that we can remain silent about problems in the video. Since we are convinced that it is a very important matter, we are offering a special price on our book, Problems in the Godmakers II. Although this book normally sells for $4.00, if it is ordered before December 31, 1993, the price will be only $3.00. On the first page of this newsletter the reader will find an extra special offer if this book is ordered in conjunction with the book, The Mormon Purge. (Mail orders please add $1.50 minimum postage.)

WHY WE LEFT THE CHURCH

Like Steve and Mary Ann Benson, over thirty years ago we found it necessary to ask Mormon officials to strike our names from the roles of the Mormon Church. Our research revealed that there have been many serious changes made in Joseph Smith’s revelations and other material printed by the church. In addition, we found many other serious problems. Below is a condensed version of our statements as they appear in our book, The Changing World of Mormonism.

Statement by Sandra Tanner. Since I was born and raised in the Mormon Church, and am a great-great-grandchild of Brigham Young, I had very strong ties to the Mormon faith. . . . As a teenager my life centered around the Mormon church. Because I was active and paying my tithing I thought I was in pretty good standing with God. I knew I sinned but I felt my activity in church would somehow outweigh what I did wrong. I believed (as the Mormons teach) that I was inherently good. I had no fear of God’s judgment. Besides the things that were wrong in my own life, I began to have doubts about my church. . . .

When I started college I enrolled in the Mormon Institute of Religion class. I started asking questions in class, trying to find answers to my doubts. But one day my institute teacher took me aside and told me to please stop asking questions in class. There was a girl attending the class who was thinking of joining the church and I was disturbing her with my questions. What a surprise! I had hoped to find answers to the many things that were bothering me and now I had been silenced.

Shortly after this I met Jerald and we began studying the Bible and Mormonism together. As we studied I began to see the contradictions between the Bible and the teachings of the Mormon church.

I had grown up thinking that Brigham Young was one of the greatest men that ever lived. . . . Then Jerald had me read some of Brigham Young’s sermons in the Journal of Discourses on blood atonement. I was shocked! I knew what Brigham Young was saying was wrong but I couldn’t reconcile these sermons with the things I had always been taught concerning him. . . .

Jerald also showed me the changes that had been made in Joseph Smith’s revelations. The thought kept coming to me that if God had actually given those revelations to Joseph Smith why would they need rewriting? Surely the Creator of the universe could say it right the first time!

As I studied I not only found errors in Mormonism, I also began to comprehend there was something wrong in my own life. As I studied God’s Word I realized I was a sinful hypocrite. In spite of my sins I had thought I was right with God. Yet the Bible says: “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).

God reaches out to man, not because he deserves it, but because God loves him. John wrote: “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). Paul wrote: “But God, who is rich in mercy. . . . even when we were dead in sins, hath
I now want to share with you the particular events of the day I surrendered my heart and life to Jesus Christ:

Early one morning (October 24, 1959) I decided to listen to the radio for a while. I turned to the Christian radio station and listened to a sermon. The minister was preaching on the great love of God and the mercy offered to us through Jesus Christ. Nothing ever struck me with such force. I opened my heart to God and accepted Christ as my own personal Saviour. The Holy Spirit flooded my soul with such joy that I wept for over an hour. . . . How glorious to know Christ died for my sins so I could have a new life in Him.

Our lives testify to all we meet whether or not we are truly Christians. Paul wrote: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23).

Statement by Jerald Tanner. I was born and raised in the Mormon church, and before I was eight years old I felt that it was the only true church. . . . My conviction was so strong that I was shocked to hear a boy in Sunday school say that he didn’t know for certain that the church was true. I felt that it was strange indeed for a person to be a member of the Mormon church and yet not know it was the only true church.

I believed very strongly that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God and that I belonged to the only true church. When I was about eighteen years old I had to face reality. I can remember that the first time I saw David Whitmer’s pamphlet, An Address to All Believers in Christ, I threw it down in disgust. After throwing it down, however, I began to think that perhaps this was not the right way to face the problem. If David Whitmer was wrong in his criticism of Joseph Smith, surely I could prove him wrong. So I picked up the pamphlet and read it through. I found that I could not prove David Whitmer wrong, and that the revelations Joseph Smith gave had been changed. . . .

Since that time I have found more and more proof that the church in which I was raised is in error. The most important thing that I found, however, was not that the church was in error, but that I myself was in error. I found that I was a sinner in need of a Saviour. The Mormon church had taught me good morals, but they had not taught me much concerning the power of Christ that could change my life. There was much talk about Joseph Smith, but very little talk about Christ. Consequently, I began to think I had the power within myself to overcome sin, I didn’t see how much I needed the help of God to overcome it. So I turned from one sin to another until I was deeply in bondage to sin. I found no help in the Mormon church; they were too busy preaching about the glory of the church, Joseph Smith, etc. They were too busy singing “praise to the man who communed with Jehovah” and “We thank thee O God for a prophet” to tell me about the Saviour I needed so badly. . . . there was almost nothing in the services that could give life and peace to my dying soul. . . . if Christ had been preached instead of Joseph Smith, I would, perhaps, have received Christ into my life in the Mormon Church. As it was, however, I was nineteen years old before I heard the true message of Christ preached, and that was in another church. A short time later I received Christ into my life and found peace, joy, and deliverance from sin. As the Apostle Paul expressed it: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

After we left the LDS Church we published a great deal of material concerning Mormonism and eventually set up Utah Lighthouse Ministry. Many Mormons have come to know the Lord in a personal way through this material.

KEEP THE LIGHT ON!

Besides the work on Mormonism, Utah Lighthouse Ministry provides support for forty-four children through the World Vision relief program. As we indicated in our last newsletter, the money we receive from our books and tapes only covers about half the cost of operating Utah Lighthouse. If it were not for the donations to our ministry, we would be in serious financial trouble. We consider those who help us with our expenses to be a vital part of our team. Even more important, however, are the prayers of those who support this ministry. Please pray that God will open the eyes of those we minister to and that he would give the encouragement and strength we need to continue in this difficult work.

Utah Lighthouse is a non-profit organization. Those who are interested in helping our ministry can send their tax-deductible contributions to Utah Lighthouse Ministry, PO Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110. Both contributions and order can now be made over the phone (801) 485-8894 with Visa, MasterCard or Discover Card.

BOOKS AND TAPES

(Send $11.95 for a complete order)

Sandra Tanner Tape No. 3. Two radio interviews with Sandra. The first deals with the 1990 changes in the LDS temple ceremony. The second discusses problems in the translation of the Book of Abraham. Price: $3.00

Mormonism: The Christian View. A video narrated by Wesley P. Walters. Deals with Mormon history, doctrines, claim to authority, changes in doctrine and witnessing suggestion. Price: $24.00

By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri, by Charles Larson. Demonstrates conclusively that Joseph Smith did not translate the Book of Abraham from the Egyptian papyrus. Price: $11.95
**BOOKS AND TAPES**

(Continued from page 15)

(Mail orders add 10% — Minimum postage $1.50)

*Faithful History*, edited by George D. Smith. This book contains D. Michael Quinn’s speech which infuriated Mormon officials. **Price: $18.95**

*The New Mormon History*, edited by D. Michael Quinn. Mormon leaders are very distressed with historians who write “New Mormon History. Contains 15 essays. **Price: $18.95**

*What Hast Thou Dunn?* by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. The story of how Paul Dunn, an Emeritus General Authority of the Mormon Church, deceived church members with false tales about his baseball career and war record. **Price: $2.00**

*Christian Institute for Mormon Studies*. Eight papers from 1991 conference. **Price: $6.95**

*Divergent Paths of the Restoration*, by Steven Shields. Brief history of over 100 churches and organizations claiming Joseph Smith as their founder. **Price: $14.00**


*Why We Left Mormonism*, edited by Latayne Scott. Personal testimonies of eight ex-Mormons, including Sandra Tanner. **Price: $8.00**

*Basic Christianity*, by John R. Stott. A brief examination of the claims of Christ and our response to His call. **Price: $5.00**

*Mormons Answered Verse by Verse*, by David Reed and John Farkas. **Price: $7.00**

*Answering Mormons’ Questions*, by Bill McKeever. **Price: $5.95**

*New Testament Documents—Are They Reliable?* by F. F. Bruce. A well-researched book by a Greek scholar showing the reliability of the translation of the N.T. **Price: $5.95**

*Mere Christianity*, by C. S. Lewis. Good defense and explanation of Christianity. **Price: $8.00**

*Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons*, by Pastor Mark Cares. Good introduction to Mormon culture and beliefs, with helpful insights on witnessing. **Price: $11.00**

*Know What You Believe—A Practical Discussion of the Fundamentals of the Christian Faith*, by Paul E. Little. **Price: $8.00**


*Joseph Smith’s Response to Skepticism*, by Robert Hullinger. Shows that Joseph Smith himself authored the Book of Mormon to settle the theological arguments of his time. **Price: $18.95**

*Theological Foundation of the Mormon Religion*, by Dr. Sterling McMurrin. **Price: $9.00**

*Joseph Smith’s New York Reputation Re-Examined*, by Rodger I. Anderson. Good response to LDS authors Hugh Nibley and Richard L. Anderson on early statements by Joseph Smith’s neighbors. **Price: $9.95**

*The 1838 Mormon war in Missouri*, by Stephen C. LeSueur. Paperback. **Price: $14.95**

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**UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY**

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The battle began in the year 1830 when the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith published the Book of Mormon. Smith proclaimed that an angel had revealed that the ancient inhabitants of the New World had written a religious history on gold plates and that God had given him the power to translate the record. Moreover, the prophet maintained that “the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book” (History of the Church, vol. 4, page 461).

Besides his assertion that the Book of Mormon was far superior to the Bible, he charged that the Bible had been changed by “Ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests . . .” (History of the Church, vol. 6, page 57).

Furthermore, Joseph Smith boldly proclaimed that all other churches were false and that Mormonism was the only true religion. He claimed, in fact, that both God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ appeared to him bringing the message that all other churches “were wrong”: “I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight . . .” (Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History 1:19).

No Middle Ground

Joseph Smith’s uncompromising attack on traditional Christianity led to a great deal of conflict with those who did not accept his beliefs. Not surprisingly, Smith’s adversaries began to study the Book of Mormon and protested that they found some serious errors in the book. The Mormon Church, on the other hand, continued to proclaim that the Book of Mormon was the most important and accurate book on earth. For example, Apostle Orson Pratt declared:

The Book of Mormon claims to be a divinely inspired record . . . If false, it is one of the most cunning, wicked, bold, deep-laid impositions ever palmed upon the world, calculated to deceive and ruin millions . . . if true, no one can possibly be saved and reject it: if false, no one can possibly be saved and receive it . . .

If, after a rigid examination, it be found an imposition, it should be extensively published to the world as such; the evidences and arguments on which the imposture was detected, should be clearly and logically stated. . . .

But on the other hand, if investigation should prove the Book of Mormon true . . . the American and English nations . . . should utterly reject both the Popish and Protestant ministry, together with all the churches which have been built up by them or that have sprung from them, as being entirely destitute of authority . . . (Orson Pratt’s Works, “Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon,” Liverpool, 1851, pages 1-2)

After the death of Joseph Smith and the first apostles, the Mormon Church continued to proclaim the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. The church has greatly prospered since the days of these early leaders and now claims to have about 9,000,000 members [1994].

Like other believers in the Book of Mormon, we originally accepted the work at face value and felt that the book contained “the fulness of the everlasting Gospel.” In fact,
we were convinced that it would be the tool God would use to bring sincere people throughout the world to true Christianity. When we began our research with regard to Mormonism, we sincerely wanted to silence the critics and prove that the Book of Mormon came from the hand of God. Although it was very painful at first, our eyes were eventually opened to perceive that there were some serious problems in Joseph Smith’s major work.

Our study led us to the conclusion that the Book of Mormon is not an ancient or divinely-inspired record, but rather a product of the nineteenth century. Since the early 1960’s we have published a number of books following Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt’s advice to state “clearly and logically” the “evidences and arguments on which the imposture was detected.”

LDS Scholars Very Upset


An article written by David Merrill pointed out that the Mormon leaders tried to restrain church scholars from dealing with our publications: “The official attitude of the Mormon hierarchy towards the Tanners has been one of silence and apparent unconcern. They have, however, actively discouraged LDS scholars and intellectuals from jousting with the Tanners...” (Utah Holiday, February 1978, page 7).

A spokesman from the church’s Deseret Bookstore wrote: “We do not have a specific response to the Tanner book. Perhaps it does not deserve the dignity of a response” (Letter written Jan. 19, 1977).

A man who talked to Mormon Apostle LeGrand Richards claimed that Richards “told me to quit studying materials put out by the Tanner’s... I told him ‘surely some day there will be an answer to these questions.’ He told me there never would be an answer and I should stop my inquiries” (Letter dated August 13, 1978).

Since we began publishing in 1959, the LDS Church has never put forth any official rebuttal. We have waited in vain for thirty-five years for the church itself to make a response to our work. Although a large number of people have left the Mormon Church because of our publications and many others have been very concerned because their church has not published a rebuttal, Mormon leaders seem to feel that their best policy is silence. Since they apparently cannot find a way to successfully refute our allegations, they evidently believe that the less people know about our publications the better. Consequently, they have maintained a conspiracy of silence for thirty-five years while we have continued to distribute books throughout the world.

Prior to the publication of our book, Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon, church scholars at Brigham Young University and F.A.R.M.S. followed the church leaders’ advice and studiously avoided dealing with our publications. With the publication of our work on the “black hole,” however, they apparently realized that our ideas were having a significant impact upon some Mormon scholars and that it was time to speak up. After remaining almost silent for over three decades, Mormon scholars suddenly came out like an army to attack us. The plan was to have a number of scholars simultaneously tear into our work. Between 1991 and 1993 there were seven critical reviews which appeared in F.A.R.M.S. publications. Besides the four responses to Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon, there were two rebuttals to Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? and a response to our book, Archaeology and the Book of Mormon. All of these articles were specifically written to counter our work regarding the Book of Mormon.

In one of the reviews BYU scholar Matthew Roper showed deep concern over the effect our book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? has had upon the reading public:

The first edition of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? was published by the Tanners in 1963 under the title, Mormonism: A Study of Mormon History and Doctrine. Since that time the Tanners’ magnum opus has been published in no less than seven editions, the most recent being in 1987. In 1980, in an attempt to facilitate wider distribution of their work, they published a condensed version [The Changing World of Mormonism] through Moody Press. Since their debut as vocal anti-Mormons in the early 1960s, the Tanners have produced and distributed numerous other works attacking various aspects of Mormon history, scripture, and doctrine.

There are several reasons why this book merits review. First, the Tanners are considered by their fellow critics to be among the foremost authorities on Mormonism and the Book of Mormon. Their arguments are central to most anti-Mormon attacks on the Book of Mormon today. One recent critic describes Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? as “the heavyweight of all books on Mormonism.” Even some of the more sophisticated Book of Mormon critics will often repeat methodological errors exemplified in the Tanners’ work. . . . This review will focus only on the Tanners’ criticals of the Book of Mormon in chapters five and six of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? (pp. 50-125). (Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, vol. 4, 1992, pages 169-170)

It is interesting to note that in the quotation above Matthew Roper said the book Mormonism—Shadow or
“Reality? “merits review.” This, of course, is in sharp contrast with what church officials have said in the past.

Although Daniel C. Peterson, editor of Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, denied that F.A.R.M.S. had an organized campaign directed against our work, he did acknowledge that something had to be done to keep our work from spreading:

Ah, they will respond, but why “three reviews, containing seventy-five pages”? . . . The Tanners are manifestly impressed by the sheer bulk of the reviews, and by the number of reviewers. . . . To set the record completely straight on the issue at hand here, I originally asked two reviewers to look at the Tanners’ book . . . a third, unsolicited review arrived, which I happened to like. So I published it, as well. However, the Tanners will probably see the lengthy review [of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?] appearing at pp. 169-215 of the present volume as evidence that I speak with forked tongue, and that there is indeed a new F.A.R.M.S. campaign against them. Why, otherwise, review a book published in 1987? But, again, the piece printed here was an unsolicited submission. I accepted it because I thought it made a number of important points, and because most contemporary anti-Mormon writers depend heavily upon the Tanners. Attending to the roots seemed an efficient way of dealing with the branches. (Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, vol. 4,1992, p. lxxiv)

In our newsletter, The Salt Lake City Messenger, for August 1991, we announced we were preparing a detailed rebuttal to the F.A.R.M.S. articles. Unfortunately, after we began working on this book, a number of important matters came up which delayed the publication of our response. Consequently, scholars at F.A.R.M.S. began to boast that we were not able to deal with their scholarship. For example, Professor Daniel C. Peterson triumphantly proclaimed that the book, Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon, (“and other books by the Tanners dealing with the Book of Mormon have been subjected to lengthy and devastating criticism . . . but the Tanners have failed to reply. One suspects they cannot (Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, vol. 6, no. 1, 1994).

Contrary to Peterson’s assumptions, we have no reason to fear the criticism set forth by Mormon scholars and feel we have successfully answered their objections in our new book, Answering Mormon Scholars. Furthermore, we have also been working on a second volume which will respond to other accusations made against our work. Our 179-page response, Answering Mormon Scholars, regularly sells for $6.00 but is now available at a special price of $5.00 if ordered before August 15, 1994.

A Condescending Review

The most condescending review of our book, Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon, was done by Tom Nibley. This review, which was published in Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, vol. 5, 1993, was recommended in the F.A.R.M.S. publication, Insights: An Ancient Window, July 1993: “Reviews in volume 5 cover a wide range of topics . . . Several of the reviews examine works critical of the Book of Mormon. One of the most engaging of these reviews is a spirited look by Tom Nibley at the Tanners’ Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon.”

On page 274 of this rebuttal, Tom Nibley goes out of his way to make it clear that he is the son of noted Mormon scholar Dr. Hugh Nibley: “Shortly after the papyri were turned over to the Church they were given over to the tender mercies of one Hugh Winder Nibley (yes, the one sometimes referred to by me, my brothers and sisters as ‘Daddy’). . . .”

In his article Tom Nibley has a number of terms which he uses to refer to us in a mocking manner:

“our sagacious swamis” page 275
“our super sleuths” page 275
“our learned mentors” page 276
“our gallant pedagogues, the Tanners” page 278
“the febrile brains of our dedicated cognoscenti” page 278
“our honored exegetes” page 279
“our meritorious mentors” page 280
“our learned oracles” page 282
“our revered gurus” page 283
“our perspicacious pedagogues” page 283
“our canny counselors” page 283
“our erudite educators” page 284
“professorial pedagogues such as, well—the Tanners!!!” page 284
“our formidable savants” page 285
“our transcendent tutors” page 287

Although we feel that Mr. Nibley has every right to ridicule us, we wonder why the editors of Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, which is supposed to be a scholarly publication, would allow such disdainful material to appear in their publication.

Tom Nibley acknowledges that he is not really a scholar and is not familiar with much of the material we deal with:

In my ramblings through Hollywood and environs in search of employment I occasionally encounter a gentleman named Robert Pierce (we’re actors who often audition for the same parts) who has made something of an avocation out of studying anti-Mormon literature. As I have taken exception to some of the things he has said, he provided me a copy of Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Of the Tanners, he informed me, “They are specifically known for their thoroughness and non-ad hominem approach.” And he challenged me to examine their work.

The gauntlet having thus been thrown, I thought, “I
might as well pick it up.” So let’s take a look at the Tanners and their thrilling expose... I make no claim to being a scholar and am not familiar with much of the literature with which the Tanners work, but there are some things they bring up that I do know something about. (Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, vol. 5, 1993, page 273)

Tom Nibley’s own admission that he is “not familiar with much of the literature” which we deal with is certainly true. A very good example of his lack of knowledge regarding our work is found on page 288 of Review of Books on the Book of Mormon. He strongly asserts that we grab on to “any straw that they think might break the Church’s back, although they take pains to distance themselves from things like the Spalding manuscript and Mark Hofmann, things that have been completely debunked.”

Tom Nibley, of course, is referring to the Mormon forger Mark Hofmann, who sold many forged documents to the Mormon Church and other collectors. His statement would give the reader the impression that after Hofmann’s documents were “debunked” we distanced ourselves from the forgeries. The truth of the matter, however, is that we were the first ones to publicly cast doubt on Mark Hofmann’s documents.

About eighteen months before the police and federal officials began investigating Mr. Hofmann, we printed the fact that we had serious reservations about his Salamander letter. Under the title, “Is It Authentic?” we published the following in our newsletter, The Salt Lake City Messenger:

At the outset we should state that we have some reservations concerning the authenticity of the letter, and at the present time we are not prepared to say that it was actually penned by Martin Harris. ... We will give the reasons for our skepticism as we proceed with this article. (Salt Lake City Messenger, March 1984, page 1)

We went on in the same newsletter to reveal disturbing parallels between the Salamander letter and E. D. Howe’s Mormonism Unvailed, published in 1834, and then noted:

While we would really like to believe that the letter attributed to Harris is authentic, we do not feel that we can endorse it until further evidence comes forth. (Ibid., page 4)

The Salamander letter was supposed to have been written by Martin Harris, one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon in 1830, just months after the Book of Mormon was first published. The contents of this letter were very embarrassing to the Mormon Church. In Joseph Smith’s official story of how he received the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated he said that the Angel Moroni (the name was given as Nephi when Joseph Smith printed the story in the Times and Seasons) appeared to him and revealed the location of the plates. In Hofmann’s forgery, however, Harris claimed that Smith told him that when he went to get the plates, instead of an angel appearing, a “white salamander” in the bottom of a hole “transfigured himself” into a “spirit” and “struck me 3 times.”

While we expected that some anti-Mormon critics might be upset with our insinuation of forgery, we were surprised to find that some of the top Mormon scholars opposed our research. On August 25, 1984, John Dart wrote the following in the Los Angeles Times:

... unusual caution about the letter’s genuineness has been expressed by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, longtime evangelical critics of the Mormon Church. ... The Tanners’ suggestion of forgery has surprised some Mormons, who note that the parallels in wording also could be taken as evidence for authenticity.

On September 1, 1984, the Mormon Church’s own Deseret News reported:

... outspoken Mormon Church critics Jerald and Sandra Tanner suspect the document is a forgery, they told the Deseret News. ... Jerald Tanner ... says similarities between it and other documents make its veracity doubtful.”

In the months that followed, we printed a great deal of material questioning the authenticity of the Salamander letter (see the Salt Lake City Messenger for September 1984, January 1985, June 1985, August 1985). On August 22, 1984, we published the first part of a booklet entitled, The Money Digging Letters. In this pamphlet we made it clear that we were investigating all of Mark Hofmann’s major discoveries. The next day Mr. Hofmann came to our bookstore to defend his documents. He appeared to be almost to the point of tears as he pled his case as to why we should trust him. It was about fourteen months later that Hofmann committed two murders that led to his arrest.

On February 23, 1987, Mark Hofmann appeared in court and confessed he had murdered two people and forged documents. When Mr. Hofmann later made a more detailed confession of his crimes for the County Attorney’s Office, he admitted that he had indeed used Howe’s book, Mormonism Unvailed. This, of course, vindicated the theory we had proposed three years earlier in the March 1984 issue of the Messenger.

If Tom Nibley really did not know what happened in the Hofmann case before, he should have found out when he read Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon, pages 1-7, where we discussed both Mormon and anti-Mormon forgeries. The facts regarding Mark Hofmann’s forgeries were clearly set forth in that part of the book. Whether Mr. Nibley misunderstood the material presented, or deliberately distorted the facts is hard to determine. What is clear, however, is that his appraisal of the situation is not supported by the facts. He claims that we are “naive and credulous when it comes to grabbing any straw” that they think might break the Church’s back ...” (page 288). The Mark Hofmann affair, however, demonstrates just the opposite.
A Fierce Battle Within

While there have always been people in the Mormon Church who had doubts about the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, most of them have been afraid to publicly express them for fear they might be ostracized or even excommunicated from the church. Significantly, even the noted Mormon historian B. H. Roberts became very skeptical of the Book of Mormon during the last decade of his life. Although he did not publicly express his doubts, Roberts did prepare two important manuscripts that were suppressed for many years because of the fear that the contents would prove harmful to the Mormon Church.

We were able to obtain copies of Roberts’ secret manuscripts and published them in 1980 under the title Roberts’ Manuscripts Revealed. Five years later the University of Illinois Press printed these manuscripts in a book entitled, Studies of the Book of Mormon, and in 1992 Signature Books published a paper-back edition. Mormon scholar Truman G. Madsen acknowledged that the manuscripts were indeed prepared by B. H. Roberts but maintained that Roberts was merely playing “the ‘Devil’s Advocate’ approach to stimulate thought” (see Brigham Young University Studies, Summer 1979, pages 440-42).

We cannot agree with Professor Truman G. Madsen’s assessment of this matter. A careful reading of Roberts’ manuscripts leads one to believe that he was in the process of losing faith in the divine origin of the Book of Mormon. Although Roberts may have started out merely playing the part of the “Devil’s Advocate,” he seems to have played the role so well that he developed grave doubts about the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. In his secret manuscripts B. H. Roberts made these revealing comments:

One other subject remains to be considered in this division . . . viz.— was Joseph Smith possessed of a sufficiently vivid and creative imagination as to produce such a work as the Book of Mormon from such materials as have been indicated in the preceding chapters . . . That such power of imagination would have to be of a high order is conceded; that Joseph Smith possessed such a gift of mind there can be no question . . .

In the light of this evidence, there can be no doubt as to the possession of a vividly strong, creative imagination by Joseph Smith, the Prophet, an imagination, it could with reason be urged, which, given the suggestions that are found in the “common knowledge” of accepted American antiquities of the times, supplemented by such a work as Ethan Smith’s View of the Hebrews, would make it possible for him to create a book such as the Book of Mormon is. (Studies of the Book of Mormon, pages 243, 250)

If from all that has gone before in Part 1, the view be taken that the Book of Mormon is merely of human origin . . . if it be assumed that he is the author of it, then it could be said there is much internal evidence in the book itself to sustain such a view.

In the first place there is a certain lack of perspective in the things the book relates as history that points quite clearly to an undeveloped mind as their origin. The narrative proceeds in characteristic disregard of conditions necessary to its reasonableness, as if it were a tale told by a child, with utter disregard for consistency. (Ibid., page 251)

There were other Anti-Christs among the Nephites, but they were more military leaders than religious innovators . . . they are all of one breed and brand; so nearly alike that one mind is the author of them, and that a young and undeveloped, but piously inclined mind. The evidence I sorrowfully submit, points to Joseph Smith as their creator. It is difficult to believe that they are the product of history, that they came upon the scene separated by long periods of time, and among a race which was the ancestral race of the red man of America. (Ibid., page 271)

A careful reading of the material cited above leads one to the inescapable conclusion that B. H. Roberts had serious doubts about the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. It is hard to believe that a sincere believer would make the comment concerning Book of Mormon stories which we cited above: “The evidence I sorrowfully submit, points to Joseph Smith as their creator. It is difficult to believe that they are the product of history . . .”

These revealing words did not come from the lips of an uninformed and bias “anti-Mormon” writer, but rather they are the carefully-worded pronouncements of the Mormon historian B. H. Roberts — believed by many to have been the greatest defender of the faith that the church has ever produced.

B. H. Roberts’ opinion regarding the Book of Mormon must carry a great deal of weight because he had access to some of the most important records in the church archives. According to Richard S. Van Wagoner and Steven C. Walker, Roberts “Became senior president of the First Council of Seventy” and was appointed “assistant Church historian in 1901 . . .” (A Book of Mormons, 1982, pages 246-247). James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard inform us that “In May 1901 President Joseph F. Smith appointed B. H. Roberts to edit Joseph Smith’s History of the Church for republication” (The Story of the Latter-day Saints, 1976, page 447). Roberts also wrote the six-volume Comprehensive History of the Church.

The book, Studies of the Book of Mormon, set forth a document which contains compelling evidence that Roberts was struggling with serious doubts about the authenticity of the Book of Mormon right up until the time of his death in 1933. This information comes from the “Personal Journal of Wesley P. Lloyd, former dean of the Graduate School at Brigham Young University and a missionary under Roberts in the Eastern States Mission.”
of regarding it as the strongest evidence we have of Church Divinity, he regards it as the one which needs the most bolstering. His greatest claim for the divinity of the Prophet Joseph lies in the Doctrine and Covenants.” (“Private Journal of Wesley P. Lloyd,” August 7, 1933, transcribed from photographs of the handwritten journal reproduced in the F.A.R.M.S.’ publication, Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon? 1986, by Truman G. Madsen and John W. Welch)

This appears to be the last important statement B. H. Roberts made on the Book of Mormon before his death. Although Roberts had spent a good portion of his life defending the Mormon Church, he became very disturbed with the church’s suppressive policy as he reached the end of his life. According to Lloyd’s journal, Roberts even “offered to resign” his position as a General Authority of the Mormon Church over the problems he was having with the church.

That B. H. Roberts did not have faith in all of Joseph Smith’s claims has been verified by some significant information which came to our attention in 1992. One of the most important declarations that Joseph Smith made was that John the Baptist appeared to him and Oliver Cowdery in 1829 and restored the Aaronic Priesthood. According to D. Michael Quinn, a noted authority on Mormon history who had access to sensitive church documents, Joseph F. Smith, the sixth president of the church, claimed that Roberts doubted the reality of this important tenant of the church. Dr. Quinn also demonstrated that Roberts had a serious dispute with Heber J. Grant, the seventh prophet of the church, regarding the alteration of church history:

. . . B. H. Roberts, a seventy, had problems directly involved with the writing of Church history. In November 1910, Church President Joseph F. Smith told the Salt Lake Temple fast meeting that Elder Roberts doubted that Joseph had actually received a priesthood restoration from John the Baptist. Church president Heber J. Grant also required B. H. Roberts to censor some documents in the seventh volume of the History of the Church. Elder Roberts was furious. “I desire, however, to take this occasion of disclaiming any responsibility for the mutilating of that very important part of President Young’s manuscript,” Roberts replied to President Grant in August 1932, “and also to say, that while you had the physical power of eliminating that passage from the History, I do not believe you had any moral right to do so.” (Sunstone, February 1992, pages 13-14)

Many years ago we were amazed to learn that a prominent Mormon scholar stated she believed in the Book of Mormon but did not accept the story of the gold plates. We felt that such a thing could not be possible because it would mean that Joseph Smith’s story concerning how he obtained and protected the plates would be fraudulent. In our way of thinking, if Joseph Smith did not actually receive gold plates from an angel of God, it would be unreasonable to accept the “translation” that is printed in the Book of Mormon.

The conversation then drifted to the Book of Mormon and this surprising story he related to me. . . . a Logan man by the name of Riter persuaded a scholarly friend who was a student in Washington to read thru and to criticize the Book of Mormon. . . . Riter sent the letter to Dr[.] Talmadge who studied it over and during a trip east ask[ed] Brother Roberts to make a careful investigation and study and to get an answer for the letter.

Roberts went to work and investigated it from every angle but could not answer it satisfactorily to himself. At his request Pres. Grant called a meeting of the Twelve Apostles and Bro. Roberts presented the matter, told them frankly that he was stumped and ask[ed] for their aide [sic] in the explanation. In answer, they merely one by one stood up and bore testimony to the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. George Albert Smith in tears testified that his faith in the Book had not been shaken by the question. . . . No answer was available. Bro[.] Roberts could not criticize them for not being able to answer it or to assist him, but said that in a Church which claimed continuous revelation, a crisis had arisen where revelation was necessary. After the meeting he wrote Pres. Grant expressing his disappointment at the failure . . . It was mentioned at the meeting by Bro[.] Roberts that there were other Book of Mormon problems that needed special attention.

Richard R. Lyman spoke up and ask[ed] if they were things that would help our prestige and when Bro[.] Roberts answered no, he said then why discuss them. This attitude was too much for the historically minded Roberts[.]. . .

After this Bro[.] Roberts made a special Book of Mormon study. Treated the problem systematically and historically and in a 400 type written page thesis set forth a revolutionary article on the origin of the Book of Mormon and sent it to Pres[.] Grant. It[‘]s an article far too strong for the average Church member but for the intellectual group he considers it a contribution to assist in explaining Mormonism.

He swings to a psychological explanation of the Book of Mormon and shows that the plates were not objective but subjective with Joseph Smith, that his exceptional imagination qualified him psychologically for the experience which he had in presenting to the word the Book of Mormon and that the plates with the Urim and Thummim were not objective.

He explained certain literary difficulties in the Book . . . These are some of the things which has made Bro[.] Roberts shift his base on the Book of Mormon. Instead
Mormon. We have since learned that many Mormons who say they believe the Book of Mormon, actually feel that there were not any ancient Nephites or Lamanites in the New World, but that Joseph Smith himself authored the book. They feel, however, that although the Book of Mormon is not historical, it does contain many good teachings and therefore can be considered as “scripture.”

Just a few months ago, we were very surprised to hear Van Hale, a noted defender of the Mormon Church, express doubts about the historicity of the Book of Mormon. Mr. Hale, who co-hosts a radio show on KTKK in Salt Lake City, was asked what he really believed about the story of the Nephites and Lamanites mentioned in the Book of Mormon. In response, Hale affirmed that he believed that the Book of Mormon is inspired scripture, but then went on to explain that when he served on a mission for the church, he had a book containing pictures of ancient American ruins which he felt proved the Book of Mormon to be historically true. Later, however, as he began to study the matter he realized that the evidence did not prove the Book of Mormon to be true. After many years of diligent study he finally came to lean toward the view that the Book of Mormon is “an inspired parable” (KTKK Radio, February 6, 1994).

During the past few years a number of Mormon scholars have become increasingly vocal about their doubts regarding the historicity of the Book of Mormon. Even though they know they may face excommunication, they continue to publicly express their views.

**Wolves In Sheep’s Clothing?**

While we knew that Mormon scholars were very upset with us, the treatment we received was mild compared with the wrath poured out on some of the church’s own scholars by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies. For a number of years it has been evident that many of those associated with F.A.R.M.S. have been very disturbed with Mormon scholars who expressed doubts about the Book of Mormon. In 1991, F.A.R.M.S. launched a vicious attack against some of the more liberal scholars who were expressing doubts about the historicity of the Book of Mormon. They were accused of being wolves in sheep’s clothing and of even offering “a Trojan horse” to an unsuspecting Mormon audience. Stephen E. Robinson, chairman of the Department of Ancient Scripture at BYU, was incensed with the book, *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture*, published by Signature Book. He compared the views expressed in the work to those of Korihor, the notorious “Anti-Christ” who was “struck dumb” because of his unbelief (see Book of Mormon, Alma, chapter 30). Professor Robinson declared:

> Korihor’s back, and this time he’s got a printing press. Korihor, the infamous “alternate voice” in the Book of Mormon, insisted that “no man can know of anything which is to come” . . . In its continuing assault upon traditional Mormonism, Signature Books promotes with its recent and dubiously titled work, *The Word of God*, precisely these same naturalistic assumptions of the Korihor agenda in dealing with current Latter-day Saint beliefs. . . . this is a propaganda piece . . .

For years anti-Mormons have hammered the Church from the outside, insisting that Joseph Smith and the Latter-day Saint scriptures he produced were not what they claimed to be. Whether Signature Books and its authors will convince the Saints of the same hostile propositions by attacking from the inside remains to be seen . . . What the anti-Mormons couldn’t do with a frontal assault of contradiction, Signature and Vogel would now accomplish with a flanking maneuver of redefinition . . .

I suppose by now it is clear that I did not like this book. . . . Give me a Walter Martin anytime, a good stout wolf with his own fur on, instead of those more timid or sly parading around in their ridiculous fleeces with their teeth and tails hanging out. Give me “Ex-Mormons for Jesus” or the Moody Bible Tract Society, who are at least honest about their anti-Mormon agenda, instead of Signature Books camouflaged as a “Latter-day Saint” press. I prefer my anti-Mormons straight up. (Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, vol. 3, pages 312, 314, 317-318)

The following year, Professor Daniel C. Peterson, editor of Review of Books, warned of an “anti-Mormon” movement within the church itself:

> We have seen that George D. Smith and Signature Books reject the title “anti-Mormons.” . . . Are “anti-Mormons” mere mythical beasts, the stuff of persecution-fixated Latter-day Saint imaginations? If not, how would we recognize an “anti-Mormon” if we saw one? . . .

Nobody would suggest for a moment that George D. Smith and Dan Vogel fit the traditional “anti-Mormon” mold in all respects. There are a number of differences between them and the late “Dr.” Walter Martin, and between them and the Tanners . . .

In the past, anti-Mormon attacks almost invariably came from outside the Church; for the most part, they still do. For the first time since the Godbeite movement, however, we may today be dealing with a more-or-less organized “anti-Mormon” movement within the Church. With “anti-Mormon Mormons,” as Robert McKay puts it . . .

Should we be concerned about the possibility of unwholesome opinions, even enemies, within the Church? Jesus certainly seemed to think that internal enemies were a possibility. “Beware of false prophets,” he said, “which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matthew 7:15). . . . So the possibility of enemies among the membership of the Church seems established. (Review of Books, vol. 4, pp. liv-lvi)

In 1993 a book was published which caused a great deal of consternation among scholars at Brigham Young University and F.A.R.M.S. They obviously feared that it could have a profound effect on those who believe in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. The book,
New Approaches to the Book of Mormon, was edited by the Mormon scholar Brent Lee Metcalfe. Brent Metcalfe had formerly served as a missionary for the Mormon Church and later worked for Church Security. Ironically, like us, Mr. Metcalfe started out as an apologist for the Book of Mormon. Metcalfe not only believed in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, but he strongly supported the leaders of the church.

Sometime around 1979, after he had returned from his mission, Brent Metcalfe began coming to our bookstore to argue with us about the truthfulness of Mormonism. Although he was just a young man at that time, it did not take long for us to perceive that he was one of the strongest defenders of the Mormon Church that we had encountered. It was obvious, in fact, that if he kept up his research, he would soon be a formidable opponent.

Unfortunately for Mormon scholars, as Brent Metcalfe continued his research, he began to see serious problems in the Book of Mormon and finally concluded it was not an actual historical account written by the ancient Nephites.

When New Approaches to the Book of Mormon was published, defenders of the Mormon Church realized that they were confronted with a very serious problem indeed. Consequently, F.A.R.M.S. reacted in an unprecedented manner by launching a massive attack — rebuttal containing 566 pages (see Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, vol. 6, no. 1, 1994). This volume of Review of Books has fourteen authors dealing with the ten scholars who wrote essays for New Approaches to the Book of Mormon.

Since this two-pound tome contains 120 pages more than the book it is answering, it is obvious that F.A.R.M.S. is deeply concerned about the effect the work edited by Brent Metcalfe will have on the public.

While Brigham Young University professor Louis Midgley was very displeased with both Brent Metcalfe and New Approaches to the Book of Mormon, he made this revealing comment about the book:

The most imposing attack on the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon has been assembled by Brent Lee Metcalfe. . . . the publication of New Approaches is an important event. It marks the most sophisticated attack on the truth of the Book of Mormon currently available either from standard sectarian or more secularized anti-Mormon sources, or from the fringes of Mormon culture and intellectual life. (Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, vol. 6, no. 1, 1994, pages 211-214)

New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology normally sells for $26.95, but if it is ordered from Utah Lighthouse before August 15, 1994, the price will be only $23.95 plus postage. (Note—this book is written in scholarly language and may be difficult for some people to understand.)

Vern Anderson, a reporter for The Associated Press, noted that the response prepared by F.A.R.M.S. to New Approaches to the Book of Mormon seemed to be rather spiteful in tone:

When Brent Metcalfe compiled a book of essays last year suggesting that Mormonism’s founding scriptures wasn’t the ancient history it purports to be, he expected some criticism.

Nearly a year later, he’s getting it, in a vitriolic volume that exceeds his own book by 100 pages and seeks to expose him as a faith-destroying secularist masquerading, badly, as a well-meaning pursuer of historic truth. . . .

“Pseudo-pious,” “shoddy pseudoscholarship,” “deceptive and specious” and “distorted” are just some of the barbs aimed at Metcalfe and other contributors to New Approaches to the Book of Mormon . . .

Metcalfe and the nine other essayists in New Approaches — most of them at least nominal Mormons — place the Book of Mormon squarely in the 19th century. Most, including Metcalfe, see it as entirely Smith’s creation. A few agree it is frontier fiction but believe it contains inspired truths.

The essayists . . . question the book’s authenticity on a variety of levels — textual, archaeological, demographic and linguistic. (Salt Lake Tribune, March 19, 1994)

As the battle between liberal Mormon scholars and those supporting F.A.R.M.S. became more intense, some of the rhetoric became very harsh. Since Brent Metcalfe was the editor of New Approaches to the Book of Mormon, he became a special target of ad hominem attacks by Mormon scholars. Consequently, a good deal of innuendo and ridicule were heaped upon him.

For example, Brigham Young University professor Daniel C. Peterson, who edits the Review of Books, ridiculed Mr. Metcalfe for what he perceived to be his gullibility in promoting the documents forged by Mark Hofmann (Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, vol. 6, no. 1, 1994, pages 528-529, 544-545, 551). Unfortunately, in his attempt to castigate Brent Metcalfe, Peterson failed to tell his readers that the Mormon Church itself bought many of Hofmann’s documents and church leaders supported him until the very end.

Furthermore, some of the church’s top scholars helped validate the very documents which later turned out to be forgeries. How, then, can Professor Peterson single out Brent Metcalfe for failure to detect Hofmann’s deceit? One would think that Peterson would be far more concerned that the leaders of the church, who are supposed to be inspired by God to detect evil conspiracies, would fall for Hofmann’s nefarious deception. It is clear, therefore, that Peterson has used a double standard in making his accusation against Metcalfe.

Moreover, we should also point out that Daniel Peterson, who serves on the Board of Directors of F.A.R.M.S., fails to tell his readers that F.A.R.M.S. itself was deeply involved with promoting Hofmann’s forged documents. In fact, the staff at F.A.R.M.S. accepted the Salamander letter as an authentic document. This, of course, is understandable since Mark Hofmann was a very clever forger. The problem,
However, is that these scholars went much further. While it should have been obvious to anyone who carefully read the letter that it contained a devastating blow to the Mormon Church, the scholars at F.A.R.M.S. became apologists for the letter. The Foundation proceeded to whitewash the contents of the letter so that it would appear acceptable to the Mormon people. In a F.A.R.M.S. Update entitled *Moses, Moroni, and the Salamander*, we find the following:

> Martin Harris’ letter [the Salamander letter] . . . has dismayed some people. *Harris talks of a “white salamander” which was “transfigured” into “the spirit” otherwise known to us as the Angel Moroni . . . as new research is showing, the salamander has been thought for millennia to have supernatural and extraordinary powers . . . Obviously, much has changed culturally since 1830. Some of us may wince at the suggestion that an angel of God should be associated with, or described as, a salamander. But to people then, no image or description would better fit the appearance of a brilliant white spiritual being, once a valiant soldier, now dwelling in a blazing pillar of light, shockingly pure and glorious, speaking with the voice of God while flying through the midst of Heaven, than the salamander! Moroni should be flattered . . .

Still, it was predictable that people would not understand this. (*Moses, Moroni, and the Salamander*, June 1985)

While Brent Metcalfe clearly recognized that the contents of the Salamander letter discredited the Book of Mormon, scholars at F.A.R.M.S. went so far as to suggest that the Salamander letter provided additional support for the Book of Mormon! In the Church Section of the Mormon newspaper, *Deseret News*, June 2, 1985, the following was printed:

> The recently discovered Martin Harris letter . . . adds evidence to support Harris’ account of his interview with Prof. Charles Anthon, according to researchers at the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS). . . .

> John W. Welch, president of the foundation, said the phrase “short hand Egyptian” is a scholarly term that Harris probably would not have learned on his own.

> “The phrase almost certainly came from Anthon,” declared Welch. “It is a very precise term that was used by scholars in the 1820s and would have been known to just a few students of ancient languages . . . it is highly unlikely that the phrase was part of Harris’ vocabulary.”

In the F.A.R.M.S. publication, *Why Might a Person in 1830 Connect an Angel With a Salamander?* page 1, footnote 1, the staff reported that they had found “further evidence in favor of the authenticity of the [Salamander] letter” in the portion of the letter which mentioned short hand Egyptian. Actually, the appearance of these words in the Salamander letter did not help establish its authenticity. On the contrary, it only demonstrated that the forger of the letter plagiarized these words from a letter by W. W. Phelps which was published in *Mormonism Unvailed*, page 273.

In our opinion, F.A.R.M.S.’ unusual response to the salamander scandal raises the question of how far its researchers will go to save Joseph Smith. The fact that they tried so desperately to explain away the obvious occultic implications of the Salamander letter causes us to have serious apprehension concerning their work.

In view of the failure of church leaders, F.A.R.M.S., and Mormon historians to detect that Hofmann was forging documents and selling a “nonexistent” McLellin collection, it seems incredible that Professor Daniel Peterson would point his finger at Brent Metcalfe.

**A Disgusting Joke?**

Brigham Young University professor William J. Hamblin, who also serves on the Board of Directors at F.A.R.M.S., was very upset with Brent Metcalfe. His anger against Metcalfe led him into making a very offensive mistake. When he prepared his response to Mr. Metcalfe, he included what he termed “a joke” which eventually caused embarrassment to F.A.R.M.S., Brigham Young University and the Mormon Church. Associated Press writer Vern Anderson wrote an article concerning the matter which was published in the church’s own newspaper:

> The salvos contained in the 566-page “Review of Books on the Book of Mormon” come as no surprise, given the longstanding animus between scholars associated with FARMS, many of them professors at church-owned Brigham Young University, and those published by the independent Signature Books. . . . Recently a review by BYU history professor William Hamblin containing an *encrypted message* “Metcalfe is butthead” — was hastily edited out after the “Review” had gone to press. (*Deseret News*, March 22-23, 1994)

As we understand it, “Butthead” is an animated character that appears on MTV and is known for his crude and stupid behavior.

After reading that the demeaning comment “was hastily edited out after the ‘Review’ had gone to press,” we closely examined our copy of *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 6, no. 1, to see if any remnants of the acrostic remained in the book. To our surprise, we found that even after the article was revised, twelve of the original sixteen characters remained (see pages 434-442 of the F.A.R.M.S. publication). In this particular acrostic the first letter of each paragraph was used to form the words. (It should be noted, however, that if a paragraph was part of a quotation from another source, it was not counted as part of the acrostic.)

Below we show the original message Professor William Hamblin wrote and the way it was later altered in an attempt to cover up his vindictive attitude toward Brent Metcalfe. The reader will note that in the modified version we have shown letters that have been changed with asterisks:
METCALFE IS BUTTHEAD
MET **FE I' BUT* HEA*

It seems evident that those who were more sensible at F.A.R.M.S. realized that Hamblin’s so-called “joke” could have a very serious effect on the foundation and scrambled to correct the problem. According to Brent Metcalfe, the book had already gone to press when the encrypted message was discovered. William Hamblin seems to have realized that he made a very serious error in judgment and tried to pacify Mr. Metcalfe by claiming it was only a joke:

I am writing to apologize for my private practical joke. Whenever I write a paper Dan Petersen [Daniel C. Peterson] will be editing, I always include a joke or two for his enjoyment — fake footnotes, comments about space aliens and the golden plates, etc. The acrostic was simply a light-hearted joke for Dan’s amusement. . . . (Computer message by William Hamblin, dated March 14, 1994)

Brent Metcalfe wrote the following concerning Professor Hamblin’s attempt to belittle him:

When I heard rumors that William J. Hamblin, FARMS board member and BYU historian, had a caustic encryption in his review . . . I summarily dismissed them. Surely no legitimate scholar would stoop to such an inane level. However, it seems that I underestimated Hamblin’s “scholarly” prowess. In the latest “Review of Books on the Book of Mormon” Hamblin had the first letter of succeeding paragraphs spell out the message:

“METCALFE IS BUTTHEAD”

I say “Hamblin HAD” because the “Review” has gone back to press to rectify Hamblin’s demeaning remark. I have been told that Daniel C. Peterson, FARMS board member and “Review” editor, approved its inclusion — I am unaware of other FARMS board members who may have known. Frankly, I’m stunned. Hamblin and Peterson’s behavior is contrary to all Mormon ethics I was taught.

Do Hamblin and Peterson’s methods typify the brand of “scholarship” FARMS, BYU Department of History, and BYU Department of Asian and Near Eastern Languages cultivates and endorses? Evidently some have shifted from apologist to misologist. (Computer message by Brent Metcalfe, dated March 8, 1994)

If BYU professor Daniel C. Peterson did approve the publication of the rude statement, as Metcalfe claims, this would mean that at least two members of the F.A.R.M.S. Board of Directors were involved in the so-called “joke.” In this regard, it should be remembered that Professor Hamblin acknowledged that he always included “a joke or two for his [Peterson’s] enjoyment. . . . The acrostic was simply a light-hearted joke for Dan’s amusement.” Hamblin apparently believed that Professor Peterson would find the “joke” amusing.

On March 9, 1994, The Daily Herald, published in Provo, Utah, printed an Associated Press article concerning the bizarre incident:

SALT LAKE CITY— Independent Mormon scholar Brent Metcalfe is shaking his head over a practical joke . . .

Metcalfe edited the 1993 “New Approaches to the Book of Mormon,” published by Signature Books, which raised the hackles of many traditional scholars into the scripture that is foundational of the Mormon faith.

Indeed, the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, or FARMS, planned to release on Wednesday a 600-page book rebutting the essays in Metcalfe’s book.

And thereby hangs the tale.

According to Metcalfe, the rude message was to have been spelled out in the first letter of the first words of the opening paragraphs of an article written for the FARMS book by William Hamblin, a history professor at Brigham Young University.

The coded message was to have read, “Metcalfe is butthead,” Metcalfe said. He said he learned about it from someone who had seen the article.

Metcalfe said that according to the, er, scuttlebutt, FARMS learned about the encryption just as the volume was going into print, quickly halted the press run and rewrote and reprinted the offending pages.

But FARMS editor Brent Hall would not confirm that Tuesday.

“The book will be out tomorrow. The book that will come out tomorrow will not have that,” Hall said.

“We had some problems with the book — footnote problems, binding problems, and an article that we thought needed some revision, which was done.”

Was the article Hamblin’s?

“That was the article,” Hall said. . . .

Both Hamblin and Peterson seem to be very skillful in making ad hominem attacks on those with whom they differ. Since Professor Peterson serves as editor of Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, he sets a very bad example for contributors to that publication. Anyone who examines the articles written by Daniel C. Peterson, William Hamblin, Louis Midgley, and some of the other Mormon scholars will see that they have sometimes been mean spirited in their attempt to save the church.

Although Metcalfe is a powerful debater, in the book he has edited he has not used the vitriolic type of approach which appears so frequently in Review of Books on the Book of Mormon. Professor William Hamblin accused Metcalfe of “academic immaturity” on page 522 of his response. We feel that Hamblin should take a careful look at his own writings. If we had written the tasteless acrostic mentioned above and had directed it at William Hamblin or Daniel C. Peterson, we would never hear the end of it. These scholars certainly use a double standard when they deal with those they perceive to be enemies of the church.

Plagiarism From John?

On page 76 of Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon, we printed photographic proof that Joseph Smith plagiarized from a New Testament book in writing his Book of Mormon. The material was taken from the eleventh
chapter of the book of John. This portion of John’s book relates the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

The parallels between the two stories are astounding:

**One** — In both stories a man seems to die and a period of time elapses:

And it came to pass that after two days and two nights they were about to take his body and lay it in a sepulchre. (Bible, John 11:17)

Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already. (Book of Mormon, Alma 19:1)

**Two** — Both Martha and an unnamed queen use the words “he stinketh”:

. . . others say that he is dead and that “he stinketh . . .” (Alma 19:5)

. . . by this time he stinketh . . . (John 11:39)

**Three** — Both Ammon and Jesus use the word “sleepeth” with regard to the man:

. . . he sleepeth . . . (Alma 19:8)

Lazarus sleepeth . . . (John 11:11)

**Four** — Both Ammon and Jesus say that the man will rise again:

. . . he shall rise again . . . (Alma 19:8)

Thy brother shall rise again. (John 11:23)

**Five** — As we will show below, the conversation between Ammon and the queen contains phrases that are strangely similar to those used by Jesus and Martha.

**Six** — In both cases the man arose:

. . . he arose . . . (Alma 19:12)

he that was dead came forth . . . (John 11:44)

The fact that there are so many parallels between Alma 19 and John 11 is almost impossible to explain unless one admits that plagiarism is involved. There are not only many similar thoughts, but even the use of uncommon words and expressions. It seems obvious, too, that the author of the Book of Mormon was plagiarizing from the Bible rather than the other way around. The Nephites could not have had the King James Version of the New Testament, and the Apostle John certainly did not have the Nephite scriptures. The only logical conclusion, therefore, is that sometime after the King James Bible was published in A.D. 1611, someone borrowed from it to create the story in the Book of Mormon. Not surprisingly, the evidence clearly points to Joseph Smith the Mormon prophet.

Unfortunately, John Tvedtnes, who has criticized our work in the F.A.R.M.S. publication *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, could not accept what should be obvious to unbiased observer and protested as follows:

The Tanners compare four verses (Alma 19:1, 5, 8, 12) from the account of the raising of King Lamoni with the story of the raising of Lazarus in John 11, from whence they believe it was plagiarized. There are, to be sure, some similarities, since, in each case, someone was brought back from the dead. But the Tanners have gone too far. Even a cursory glance at their schematic comparison (p. 76) shows that the order of events is quite different in the two accounts. There are also substantive differences. For example, while Lamoni had been lying (presumably dead) on his bed for two days and two nights (Alma 19:1), Lazarus had been dead and buried for four days (John 11:17). The Tanners’ use of selected verses from both accounts stacks the evidence of plagiarism in their favor. When one compares the complete accounts from Alma and John, the parallels seem insignificant indeed.

Nevertheless, one can say that if the parallels are all valid, because of their number alone, they could be taken as prima facie evidence that the account in Alma 19 was taken from John 11. It behooves us, therefore, to examine each of the supposed parallels to determine their validity.

The Tanners point, for example, to the fact that Lazarus had “lain in the grave” (John 11:17) and that the people were about to “lay [Lamoni’s body] in a sepulchre” (Alma 19:1). But where else would one lay a dead body? (Or do they expect Joseph Smith to have written “toss it”!!) If Joseph Smith copied from John, why didn’t he use the word “grave,” rather than “sepulchre”? . . .

The idea of the dead stinking (Alma 19:5; John 11:39) is not exclusive to John; it is found in Isaiah 34:3. So, too, the use of the term “sleep” in the sense of “die” (Alma 19:8; John 11:11) is found in several Old Testament passages (Deuteronomy 31:16; 2 Samuel 7:12; 1 Kings 1:21; Psalms 13:3; Jeremiah 51:39, 57; Daniel 12:2).

The words “he shall rise again,” common to Alma 19:8 and John 11:24, are the only strong point in the Tanners’ case. Though the phrase is used six times in the Old Testament, it is never used of the dead. But its very existence in pre-Nephite texts weakens the case for plagiarism from John 11.

There are several weak parallels which are made even weaker by virtue of the fact that the ones we have noted above are invalid. (*Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, 1991, pages 226-227)

John Tvedtnes’ first comment concerning the charge of plagiarism from the book of John contains an error. He states “The Tanners compare four verses (Alma 19:1, 5, 8, 12) from the account of the raising of King Lamoni with the story of the raising of Lazarus . . .” Actually, as those who examine our photograph will see, we used five verses from Alma, chapter 19.

While we would not even mention this matter under normal circumstances, John Tvedtnes has criticized us for minor mistakes even claiming that we have either “covered up” evidence or that our “attention to detail is surely to be questioned.” In this case, however, Tvedtnes has failed to notice that in our photograph we have included Alma 19:9, a verse which contains thirty-nine words. Significantly, this one verse has four extremely important parallels which Joseph Smith took from John 11:25-27.
In the three verses from the book of John we find the following:

Jesus said unto her . . . Believest thou this? She saith unto him . . . I believe that . . .

Alma 19:9 reads:

. . . Ammon said unto her: Believest thou this? . . . she said unto him . . . I believe that . . .

While we have never claimed that our comparison of the stories regarding Lazarus and Lamoni uses only words found in the book of John or the New Testament, it is very interesting to note that the words “Believest thou this,” cited above, are only found once in the entire Bible and this is in John 11:26!

As we have shown above, in John Tvedtnes’ criticism of our work he commented: “The idea of the dead stinking (Alma 19:5; John 11:39) is not exclusive to John; it is found in Isaiah 34:3. So, too, the use of the term ‘sleep’ in the sense of ‘die’ (Alma 19:8; John 11:11) is found in several Old Testament passages (Deuteronomy 31:16; 2 Samuel 7:12; 1 Kings 1:21; Psalms 13:3; Jeremiah 51:39, 57; Daniel 12:2).”

John Tvedtnes seems to be skirting around something very important here. Notice that while he uses the words “stinking” and “sleep,” he fails to cite the actual words found in our study — i.e., “stinketh” and “sleepeth.” The word “stinketh” is only used twice in the entire Bible. Furthermore, what we actually have is a two word parallel, “he stinketh.” These two words are never used together in the entire Bible except in John 11:39! Furthermore, Joseph Smith never used the word “stinketh” again in the Book of Mormon. The word “sleepeth” is only used seven times in the Bible. It seems incredible to believe that by coincidence the phrase “he stinketh” and the word “sleepeth” would appear in one chapter of the book of John and later be found together in just one chapter of the Book of Mormon.

In his response John Tvedtnes asked: “If Joseph Smith copied from John, why didn’t he use the word ‘grave,’ rather than ‘sepulchre’? Tvedtnes seems to have a very simplistic view of plagiarism. Clever plagiarists, of course, try to be careful not to make their writings so similar to the source material that they are detected. The Mormon forger Mark Hofmann, for example, borrowed heavily from a book written by E. D. Howe when he wrote his notorious Salamander letter. The book stated that when Joseph Smith described his trip to acquire the gold plates which contained the Book of Mormon, he claimed that he “looked into the hole, where he saw a toad, which immediately transformed itself into a spirit . . .” In the Salamander letter, however, Hofmann wrote that Joseph Smith said that “when I take it up the next morning the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander in the bottom of the hole . . .” In view of this information, we might ask Tvedtnes the following question: “If Mark Hofmann was copying from a book which mentioned a toad, why didn’t he use the word “toad,” rather than the words “white salamander?”

In his confession Mr. Hofmann explained that “the idea for the White Salamander was derived from the toad in . . . Howe’s book. Salamander, from my reading of folk magic, seemed more appropriate than a toad.” He went on to say he “decided to spice it up.” Hofmann also explained that “not wanting to sound like I was plagiarizing from a book, I used the word transfigured rather than transformed” (for a more complete statement about the plagiarism involved see our book, Confessions of a White Salamander, pages 12-13).

As noted above, in his criticism of our work regarding Lazarus and Lamoni, John Tvedtnes charged that “There are also substantive differences. For example, while Lamoni had been lying (presumably dead) on his bed for two days and two nights (Alma 19:1), Lazarus had been dead and buried for four days (John 11:17).” This, of course, could easily be explained by comparing Hofmann’s method of slightly modifying the language in his forgeries. On the other hand, however, it should also be pointed out that the words “two days” are also found in John 11:6: “. . . he [Jesus] abode two days in the same place.” It is certainly possible that Joseph Smith borrowed these words when he wrote Alma 19:1 and 5.

In his review of our work John Tvedtnes asserted:

The words “he shall rise again,” common to Alma 19:8 and John 11:24, are the only strong point in the Tanner’s case. Though the phrase is used six times in the Old Testament, it is never used of the dead. But its very existence in pre-Nephite texts weakens the case for plagiarism from John 11.

John Tvedtnes has made a serious mistake with regard to this matter. The words “he shall rise again” appear only once in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in the New Testament (a total of four times in all). This phrase, however, is never found in the Old Testament! We carefully checked this matter with the church’s computer program, The Computerized Scriptures of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We do not know how Tvedtnes was able to discover the phrase “six times in the Old Testament.” Exodus 21:19 and Isaiah 24:20 have the two words “rise again,” but the four-word parallel, “he shall rise again,” is never found in the Old Testament. We even checked this matter in Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible. This study also yielded no occurrences of that phrase in the Old Testament. In addition, Michael Marquardt checked out the matter on his computer and was unable to find the references John Tvedtnes mentioned.

It is obvious, then, that John Tvedtnes saw six references, containing twenty-four words, that are just not there. The reader will remember that Tvedtnes argued that the “very existence” of the four-word phrase “in pre-Nephite texts weakens the case for plagiarism from John 11.” Now that the facts are known, it is obvious that it is Tvedtnes’ argument that has been weakened. Contrary to his assertion, this phrase never appears in “pre-Nephite texts.”
As noted above, on page 226 of his rebuttal, John Tvedtnes charged: “The Tanners’ use of selected verses from both accounts stacks the evidence of plagiarism in their favor.” Those who take the time to carefully examine the evidence will see that this charge is without foundation. Because of Tvedtnes’ assertion that we have stacked the deck in our favor we decided to do a more detailed study of the matter.

We reasoned that if Joseph Smith was borrowing from the book of John when he wrote the material concerning the raising of king Lamoni in the book of Alma, there might be supporting evidence in other material which appears near Alma, chapter 19. Consequently, we made a careful examination of chapters 18, 19 and 20 of the book of Alma. This study provided very strong evidence that our original conclusions were correct: Smith had indeed relied heavily on the Gospel of John when he wrote these three chapters of Alma in the Book of Mormon.

We searched for phrases of two or more words which are not found in the Old Testament. Although we were particularly interested in finding phrases from the book of John, we also included many other references from other New Testament books which may have been borrowed by Joseph Smith in writing these three chapters which are found in the Book of Mormon. While we would not claim that we discovered every parallel in our study, we found 166 parallels! We have published this study in our new book, Answering Mormon Scholars.

Since the two-or-more-word phrases which appear in the study are not found in the Old Testament, it seems clear that there has been a great deal of plagiarism from the New Testament. Although it is true that some of the 166 examples may only be coincidences, there are far too many strong parallels to brush the matter aside. The 166 examples, of course, were found in just three chapters of the Book of Mormon. It is very significant that the events mentioned in the Book of Mormon were supposed to have occurred about 90 B.C., which is about 120 years before Jesus even began his public ministry. Moreover, the books of the New Testament were not written until years after that time.

Among the 166 examples we noted in the three chapters of the Book of Mormon, we found forty-seven parallels to the book of John. Some of them provide strong evidence of plagiarism. Our discovery of significant parallels between the Book of Mormon and the Gospel of John led us to make an extensive comparison between the writings of John and the Book of Mormon. What we found was really astounding: the Book of Mormon is filled with quotations from the book of John. In addition to the Gospel of John, the epistles of John (found toward the end of the New Testament) were also plagiarized in Joseph Smith’s work. Significantly, even Smith’s Doctrine and Covenants is permeated with material from the writings of John. Although we do not have the room to present this significant material here, we hope to be able to print it sometime in the future.

In Answering Mormon Scholars we demonstrate that time after time defenders of Mormonism who have written for F.A.R.M.S. have utterly failed to understand our arguments and have reached erroneous conclusions. We highly recommend this book to those who want to know our side of the debate.

Mormon Prophet Dies

Ezra Taft Benson, the thirteenth prophet of the church, died on May 30, 1994. Howard W. Hunter, who is 86 years old and in poor health, was chosen to be the fourteenth Prophet, Seer and Revelator of the Mormon Church. Gordon B. Hinckley and Thomas S. Monson have been retained as counselors in the First Presidency.

Inventing Mormonism

We are pleased to announce that the long-awaited book, Inventing Mormonism, by Wesley P. Walters and H. Michael Marquardt is now available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry. Many years ago it became evident to us that Walters and Marquardt were two of the most knowledgeable researchers on Mormonism that we had ever encountered. Because of their expertise on the subject we constantly sought their advice. Without the insights, material and encouragement they freely gave us, we would have had a far more difficult time preparing our own work on Mormonism.

After years of painstaking research on Mormon history and doctrine, Walters and Marquardt decided to write a book on the origin of Mormonism. Unfortunately, however, before the work was completed Wesley Walters passed away. Since that time, H. Michael Marquardt has worked diligently with Walters’ widow, Helen Walters, to complete this important project. Mrs. Walters had helped Wesley in his research and had developed a good understanding of his thinking about early Mormonism.

The reader may remember that Wesley Walters made two of the most important discoveries regarding Mormonism. First, that the revival which supposedly led Joseph Smith to pray and receive a visitation from God and Jesus Christ in 1820 did not occur at that time. Walters found historical evidence that the revival actually occurred in 1824-25! This, of course, undermined the whole story of the First Vision and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

Second, Walters discovered Justice Albert Neely’s bill showing the costs of a court case involving Joseph Smith which took place in Bainbridge, New York, in 1826. This remarkable discovery of the original bill verified a transcript of the examination which was printed in 1873. Mormon
officials had always claimed the transcript was a forgery. Before the discovery Dr. Hugh Nibley was especially adamant that the transcript was not authentic. In his book *The Myth Makers*, we find this revealing statement: “...if this court record is authentic it is the most damning evidence in existence against Joseph Smith.” Dr. Nibley’s book also states that if the authenticity of the court record could be established, it would be “the most devastating blow to Smith ever delivered...” (*The Myth Makers*, 1961, page 142). Mormon scholars now accept the evidence concerning Joseph Smith’s run-in with the law. The testimony given at the examination was especially devastating because it linked Joseph Smith to money-digging and proved that he was involved in the occultic practice of looking in a seer stone to find buried treasure. Justice Neely, in fact, referred to Smith as “Joseph Smith The Glass Looker” in the bill he wrote. Some years after Wesley Walters discovered the Neely bill, H. Michael Marquardt went back to New York and discovered additional evidence verifying the authenticity of the document Walters had found.

We highly recommend the book *Inventing Mormonism: Tradition and the Historical Record* to those who want to know the truth about the origin of Mormonism.

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**Mormon Purge Continues**

Since we published the last issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, the Mormon Church has continued to excommunicate those who publicly express dissenting opinions. For example, on April 9, 1994, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported: “David P. Wright, a professor of Biblical Studies and Hebrew at Brandeis University who questioned the origins of the Book of Mormon, has been excommunicated from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” Wright had formerly taught at the church’s Brigham Young University before he was dismissed. He wrote a very interesting article for the book, *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, in which he argued that Joseph Smith plagiarized from the Bible to create the Book of Mormon. He also noted that “there is evidence that Smith’s other ‘ancient’ compositions are not actually ancient but arise out of his interactions with biblical texts and religious ideas of his period” (*New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, page 207).

Two weeks after David P. Wright’s excommunication was revealed in the Tribune, the *Washington Post* reported:

A Fairfax County man who works as a lawyer for the Central Intelligence Agency was excommunicated from the Mormon church yesterday for conducting a newspaper letter-writing campaign about the history and teachings of his religion... Barrett said he has done nothing wrong. “It is kind of ironic. I’m fairly well-received at the CIA when I counsel them we have to tell the truth. When I try to tell these same principles to church leaders, I have a big problem.” (*Washington Post*, April 23, 1994)

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**Is There Something Better?**

About thirty-four years ago we became acquainted with the noted Mormon scholar Francis W. Kirkham. On July 22, 1960, Dr. Kirkham gave us a copy of his book, *A New Witness for Christ in America*, and inscribed the following on one of the pages: “To newly found friends and believers in the Book of Mormon. Mr. & Mrs. Jerald Tanner.”

As noted earlier, at that time we were zealous believers in the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. It all seemed so simple: we would spend our days proclaiming the genuineness of the book, and God would vindicate his own work by bringing many people to the knowledge of the truth. As it turned out, however, we began to encounter problems in the Book of Mormon which made it increasingly difficult to continue on the course we had planned for our lives. Surprisingly, the more familiar we became with the Bible, the more questions we had concerning the Book of Mormon. While the basic doctrines of the Book of Mormon seemed to be in agreement with the Bible (we cannot say this for many of the doctrines Joseph Smith later brought into the church), the wording found in the Book of Mormon appeared to be so strikingly similar to that found in the Bible that it raised the specter of plagiarism.

As we carefully examined the issue, it became evident that the author(s) of the Book of Mormon had copied from the King James Version of the Bible. This, of course, presented a serious problem to our faith because the King James Version was not printed until 1611 A.D. It troubled us deeply that the Book of Mormon prophet Nephi, who lived almost 600 years before Christ, parroted some of the language of Apostle Paul, who lived after the coming of the Lord.

We had an extremely difficult time dealing with what we had discovered. When we began our research, we sincerely wanted to prove the Book of Mormon true and to silence the critics. The Book of Mormon itself admonished us to “ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.” (Moroni 10:4) Consequently, we spent a great deal of time praying for God’s direction in the matter, but he did not “manifest the truth of it” to us. In fact, the more we looked into the matter, the more evidence we found against its authenticity. God seemed to be telling us something we did not want to hear, and we found it extremely painful to face the facts which we encountered. With God’s help, however, we carefully examined the issue and concluded that the Book of Mormon is not authentic. Our study, which
has stretched over a period of more than thirty years, has brought forth a mountain of evidence substantiating our conclusions regarding the Book of Mormon (see our books Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? and Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon).

While many people tried to talk us out of our decision to lay aside the Book of Mormon, we found a peace and joy in biblical Christianity that is far greater than anything we sacrificed in giving up the Book of Mormon. Many years have passed since we mustered up our courage to face the facts. Even though we had to make a number of adjustments in our lives and thinking, we have never regretted our decision.

While we still have trials and disappointments, our belief in Christ has given us strength and peace in knowing that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Those of us who have turned our hearts over to Christ, know that he provides the light we need for guidance in our lives in this world. We would encourage all those struggling with the problems of Mormonism to lay aside that burden and put their trust in Christ. Jesus Himself gives this invitation in Matthew 11:28-30:

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Building A Home
For the Lighthouse

In the March, 1992, issue of our newsletter we reported: “As the ministry has continued to expand we have become increasingly aware that Utah Lighthouse Ministry desperately needs a home of its own so that it can effectively meet the needs of the growing number of people who are searching for the truth. At the present time, in fact, all of the work is done in our own house and in the garage! . . . the bookstore is far from adequate for the number of people who come in to talk or browse. . . . The room often becomes so crowded that customers leave before they are able to obtain all the publications or information they need.”

Since the time we wrote the above, we were able to fix up another garage to work in. Nevertheless, we are rapidly running out of space. Fortunately, the ministry already owns a piece of land next door and we have decided to move out in faith and begin the building. The architect has completed the blueprints and a number of companies have given us a bid. The high bid was $200,000, but the three lowest bids were around $153,000. The electrical work, which will be done by another company, and other expenses will probably run the bill up to about $160,000. At the present time, Utah Lighthouse Ministries has only $25,000 set aside for building and another $43,700 has been promised by the end of Summer. Fortunately, the ministry can borrow $86,000 to complete the project. Perhaps some of those who believe in this ministry might be interested in donating to our building project. Although we do not like to face it, we realize that we will not be around forever and would like to see the Lighthouse have its own home so that the ministry can continue after we are gone.

Utah Lighthouse is a non-profit organization which ministers to many people and provides support for 44 children through World Vision. Those who are interested in helping our ministry can send their tax deductible contributions to UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY, PO Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110. Both contributions and orders can be made over the phone (801-485-8894) with Visa, MasterCard or Discover Card.

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**BOOKS AND TAPES**

(Mail orders add 10% - Minimum postage $1.50)

**Answering Mormon Scholars**, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Shows conclusively that the Book of Mormon is not an ancient document. **Special Price: $5.00**

**Inventing Mormonism**, by H. Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters. An important discussion of Joseph Smith’s early years and the origin of Mormonism. **Special Price: $24.95**

**New Approaches to the Book of Mormon**, edited by Brent Metcalfe. BYU professor Louis Midgley says this is “the most sophisticated attack on the truth of the Book of Mormon” that is currently available. **Special Price: $23.95**

**Sandra Tanner Tape No. 3.** Two radio interviews with Sandra. The first deals with the 1990 changes in the LDS temple ceremony. The second discusses problems in the translation of the Book of Abraham. **Price: $3.00**

**Mormonism: The Christian View.** A video narrated by Wesley P. Walters. Deals with Mormon history, doctrines, claim to authority, changes in doctrine and witnessing suggestion. **Price: $24.00**

**By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri,** by Charles Larson. Demonstrates conclusively that Joseph Smith did not translate the Book of Abraham from the Egyptian papyrus. **Price: $11.95**
BOOKS AND TAPES

(Continued from page 15)

(Refunds less 10% on returns)


The New Mormon History, edited by D. Michael Quinn. Mormon leaders are very distressed with historians who write “New Mormon History. Contains 15 essays. Price: $18.95

The Mormon Purge, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. A revealing account of how the LDS Church is attempting to silence its historians and other dissidents with threats of excommunication and other reprisals. Includes information from secret church documents. Price: $3.00


Divergent Paths of the Restoration, by Steven Shields. Brief history of over 100 churches and organizations claiming Joseph Smith as their founder. Price: $14.00


Why We Left Mormonism, edited by Latayne Scott. Personal testimonies of eight ex-Mormons, including Sandra Tanner. Price: $8.00

Basic Christianity, by John R. Stott. A brief examination of the claims of Christ and our response to His call. Price: $5.00

Mormons Answered Verse by Verse, by David Reed and John Farkas. Price: $7.00

New Testament Documents—Are They Reliable? by F. F. Bruce. A well-researched book by a Greek scholar showing the reliability of the translation of the N.T. Price: $5.95

Mere Christianity, by C. S. Lewis. Good defense and explanation of Christianity. Price: $8.00

Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons, by Pastor Mark Cares. Good introduction to Mormon culture and beliefs, with helpful insights on witnessing. Price: $11.00


After Mormonism What? Reclaiming the Ex-Mormon’s Worldview for Christ, by Latayne Scott. Price: $8.00

Joseph Smith’s Response to Skepticism, by Robert Hullinger. Shows that Joseph Smith himself authored the Book of Mormon to settle the theological arguments of his time. Price: $18.95


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THE GODS OF MORMONISM

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (commonly referred to as the Mormon Church) now claims to have 9,000,000 members and proclaims itself to be the only true church. Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie emphatically declared:

This Church is “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth” (D. & C. 1:30), the only organization authorized by the Almighty to preach his gospel and administer the ordinances of salvation, the only Church which has power to save and exalt men in the hereafter. . . . There is no salvation outside this one true church, the Church of Jesus Christ. (Mormon Doctrine, 1979, pages 136, 138)

JOSEPH SMITH’S VISION

Besides claiming that the Mormon Church is the only true church in existence today, Mormon leaders also assert that they alone have the correct understanding regarding the Godhead. Joseph Smith, the first prophet of the Mormon Church, affirmed that he had a vision in 1820 which demonstrated that the Father and the Son were two separate and distinct personages:

So, in accordance with this, my determination to ask of God, I retired to the woods . . . I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. . . . When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all descriptions, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other —This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!

My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. . . . I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong)—and which I should join.

I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: “they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.”

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He again forbade me to join with any of them . . . I went home . . . I then said to my mother, “I have learned for myself that Presbyterianism is not true.” (The Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History 1:14, 16-20)

Because of Joseph Smith’s story of the First Vision, and other statements made by him, Mormons believe that God Himself is actually an exalted man. In 1883, George Q. Cannon, a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, emphasized the importance of Smith’s vision:

The first account we have of the visitation of divine beings in this dispensation, is the account that is given to us by the Prophet Joseph Smith himself, concerning the visit of the Father and the Son. . . . the very conception of the nature of God—that is, of His characteristics—had entirely faded from the human mind, and He was deemed to be something other than He is. . . . There was no man scarcely upon the earth that had a true conception of God; the densest ignorance prevailed; and even ministers of religion could not conceive of the true idea, and there was mystery associated with what is called the Trinity—that is, with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. But all this was swept away in one moment by the appearance of the Almighty Himself—by the appearance of God, the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ, to the boy Joseph . . . In one moment all this darkness disappeared, and once more there was a man found on the earth, embodied in the flesh, who had seen God . . . Faith was again restored to the earth, the true faith and the true knowledge concerning our Creator . . . This revelation dissipated all misconceptions and all false ideas, and removed the uncertainty that had existed respecting these matters. The Father came accompanied by the Son . . . Joseph saw that the Father had a form; that He had a head; that He had arms; that He had limbs; that He had Feet; that He had a face and a tongue with which to express His thoughts . . . it seems that this knowledge had to be restored as the basis for all true faith to be built upon. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 24, pages 371-372)

Although Joseph Smith’s account of the First Vision sounds very impressive to those who do not know the whole story regarding this vision, a thorough historical investigation has demonstrated conclusively that it cannot be used to support the Mormon doctrine regarding God. Surprisingly, in 1965 we learned that there was another account of the First Vision written by Joseph Smith himself. When this account is compared with the official version published by the church, it becomes glaringly apparent that there are irreconcilable differences.

Moreover, this account was written in 1832, which is several years prior to the official version Joseph Smith dictated to his scribe. The official version was written about 1838, but it was not published until 1842. Consequently, the 1832 account is considered by historians to be the most accurate account of Joseph Smith’s story.

We first published this early account of the First Vision in 1965 under the title, Joseph Smith’s Strange Account of the First Vision. Because the document was so unusual, some members of the Mormon Church doubted its authenticity. Although the Mormon leaders would make no public statement concerning the document, Professor James B. Allen, who later became Assistant Church Historian, admitted that the document was genuine. In an article published in 1966 he commented:

One of the most significant documents of that period . . . is a handwritten manuscript . . . by Joseph Smith. It contains an account of the early experiences of the Mormon prophet and includes the story of the first vision. . . . the story varies in some details from the version presently accepted . . . The manuscript has apparently lain in the L.D.S. Church Historian’s office for many years, and yet few if any who saw it realized its profound historical significance. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Autumn 1966, page 35)

Mormon leaders suppressed this account of the First Vision for over 130 years, but after we printed it thousands of copies were circulated throughout the world. Finally, four years after we published the document, Dean C. Jessee of the Church Historian’s Office made a public statement confirming the authenticity of the manuscript:

On at least three occasions prior to 1839 Joseph Smith began writing his history. The earliest of these is a six-page account recorded on three leaves of a ledger book, written between the summer of 1831 and November 1832. . . . The 1831-32 history transliterated here contains the earliest known account of Joseph Smith’s First Vision. (Brigham Young University Studies, Spring 1969, pages 277-278)

In an article written in 1971, Dean Jesssee confirmed that the account was actually penned by Joseph Smith: “This is the only known account of the vision in his own hand. Most of his writings were dictated, which is not to say that other accounts are less authentic” (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1971, page 86).

A careful examination of this document reveals why the Mormon leaders never published or referred to it. Below is the important portion of this account of the First Vision taken directly from a photograph of the original document. The reader will notice that while this early account speaks of Jesus appearing, it never even mentions God the Father:

. . . the Lord heard my cry in the wilderness and while in the attitude of calling upon the Lord in the 16th year of my age a piller of light above the brightness of the sun at noon day come down from above and rested upon me and I was filled with the spirit of god and the Lord opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord and he spake unto me saying
Joseph my son thy sins are forgiven thee. go thy way walk in my statutes and keep my commandments behold I am the Lord of glory I was crucified for the world that all those who believe on my name may have Eternal life behold the world lieth in sin at this time and none doeth good no not one they have turned aside from the gospel and keep not my commandments they draw near to me with their lips while their hearts are far from me and mine anger is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to visit them according to this ungodliness and to bring to pass that which hath been spoken by the mouth of the prophets and Apostles behold and lo I come quickly as it was written of me in the cloud clothed in the glory of my Father .

Joseph Smith, therefore, decided to embellish his account. To catch the audience’s interest better than to have both the Father and the Son appeared to Joseph as persons, like men on earth in form. They spoke to him as persons. . . .

From the early days of Christianity, the erroneous doctrine of the nature of God had led to . . . the conception that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the Godhead, were One, a unity. . . .

This false doctrine was laid low by the First Vision. Two personages, the Father and the Son, stood before Joseph. The Father asked the Son to deliver the message to the boy. There was no mingling of personalities in the vision. Each of the personages was an individual member of the Godhead. Each one separately took part in the vision. (Joseph Smith: Seeker After Truth, Prophet of God, 1951, pages 4-7)

Now that Joseph Smith’s 1832 handwritten account of the First Vision has come to light, Apostle Widtsoe’s arguments come crashing to the ground. It is clear that the official account Smith wrote six years later was embellished to fit his changing view of God. When Joseph Smith published the Book of Mormon in 1830, his views concerning God were similar to those held by Christian ministers of his day. Although Smith believed that there was only one God when he “translated” the gold plates of the Book of Mormon, he later decided that there were two Gods and eventually concluded that there were many Gods.

The fact that Joseph Smith’s first written account of the First Vision only mentioned one personage is consistent with what he believed about God when he dictated the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon, proclaimed that Christ was God Himself manifest in the flesh:

And now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people. And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son . . . And thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God, suffereth temptation, and yieldeth not to the temptation . . . (Book of Mormon, Mosiah 15:1, 2, 5)

The Book of Mormon tells of a visitation of the Father and the Son to the “brother of Jared,” but the account is not speaking of two separate personages. Only one personage appears, and this personage says:

Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have light . . . they shall become my sons and my daughters. (Ether 3:14)
Mormon scholar Melodie Moench Charles acknowledges that it is difficult to reconcile the teachings regarding God found in the Book of Mormon with the present teachings of the church. She argues, in fact, that at least some of the teachings of the Book of Mormon regarding God go even beyond the orthodox Trinitarian doctrine in emphasizing the oneness of God:

Recently when I was teaching the Book of Mormon in an adult Sunday school class we discussed Mosiah 15. . . . I said that I saw no good way to reconcile Abinadai's [sic] words with the current Mormon belief that God and his son Jesus Christ are separate and distinct beings. I suggested that perhaps Abinadai's understanding was incomplete.

The class response included defenses of revelation and prophets . . . and accusations that I was crossing the line of propriety and wisdom to suggest that a prophet could teach incorrect doctrines about God. Some people appreciated a public acknowledgment of an obvious difference between Book of Mormon doctrine and current church doctrine. A few friends said things like, "I don't care what they say about you. I've wondered about that passage for a long time, and I'm glad somebody pointed out that it's not what we teach today." But many class members thought the lesson inappropriate and upsetting, and soon I was demoted to teaching nursery. . . .

When we explore what the Book of Mormon says, its christology or doctrines concerning Christ differ from the christology of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since at least the 1840s. . . .

Book of Mormon people asserted that the Father and Christ (and the Holy Ghost) were one God. When Zeezrom asks Amulek, "Is there more than one God?" Amulek, who learned his information from an angel, answers, "No" (Alma 11:28-29). At least five times in 3 Nephi, Jesus says that he and the Father are one. Emphasizing that oneness with a singular verb, Nephi, Amulek, and Mormon refer to "the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, which is one God" (2 Ne. 31:21; Alma 11:44; Morm. 7:7, emphasis added).

This is common trinitarian formula. . . .

In isolation the Book of Mormon's "which is one God" statements sound like orthodox trinitarianism, but in context they resemble a theology rejected by orthodoxy since at least 215 C.E., the heresy of modalism (also known as Sabellianism). Modalists believed that for God to have three separate identities or personalities compromised the oneness of God. Therefore, as Sabellius taught, "there is only one undivided Spirit; the Father is not one thing and the Son another, but . . . both are one and the same" (Lonergan 1976, 38). Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three labels for the different functions which the one God performed. . . . The Book of Mormon often makes no distinction between Christ and God the Father. For example, Jesus in 3 Nephi talked about covenants which his father made with the Israelites, and yet beyond anything he claimed in the New Testament he also claimed that he was the God of Israel who gave them the law and covenanted with them . . .

The Book of Mormon melds together the identity and function of Christ and God. Because Book of Mormon authors saw Christ and his Father as one God who manifested himself in different ways, it made no difference whether they called their god the Father or the Son. They taught that Jesus Christ was not only the one who atoned for their sins but was also the god they were to worship. He was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the God of Israel and the Book of Mormon people. . . .

Like the Book of Mormon, Mormonism before 1835 was largely modalistic, making no explicit distinction between the identities of the Father and the Son. Yet Mormonism gradually began to distinguish among different beings in the Godhead. This means the christology of the Book of Mormon differs significantly from the christology of the Mormon church after the 1840s. . . .

The current theology that most Mormons read back into the Book of Mormon is tritheism: belief in three Gods. Joseph Smith and the church only gradually came to understand the Godhead in this way. When he translated the Book of Mormon, Smith apparently envisioned God as modalists did: he accepted Christ and Christ's father as one God. In his first written account of his "first vision" in 1832 Smith told of seeing "the Lord"—one being. . . .

Later, in 1844, Smith said, "I have always declared God to be a distinct personage—Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and or Spirit, and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods". . . . Mormon history does not support Smith's claim about what he taught earlier. Documents from early Mormonism reflect that Smith went from belief in one god to belief in two and later three gods forming one godhead. . . .

Book of Mormon theology is generally modalistic. In the Book of Mormon, God and Jesus Christ are not distinct beings. (New Approaches to the Book of Mormon, 1993, pages 82, 96-99, 103-104, 110)

When all the evidence is carefully examined it becomes obvious that Joseph Smith interpolated his later view regarding God the Father into his story of the First Vision. Consequently, Mormons who are not acquainted with the evidence still rely on the later account to prove that God the Father is an exalted man.

There are other serious problems with the official account of the First Vision. For example, Smith's reworked version stated that the vision followed a revival which had taken place in his neighborhood in 1820. Wesley P. Walters, however, conclusively established that no such revival took place in Palmyra in 1820. The revival actually began in the fall of 1824 and continued into 1825 (see Inventing Mormonism, by H. Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters, pages 15-41). The 1832 account, of course, did not even mention such a revival.

In addition, Joseph Smith's 1835-36 diary contains other accounts of his First Vision which tend to add to the confusion. For instance, in one account Joseph Smith told Erastus Holmes regarding his "juvenile years, say from 6 years old up to the time I received the first visitation of
Angels which was when I was about 14 years old” (An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith, page 59).

Mormon leaders were apparently embarrassed that Smith spoke of angels but neglected to mention either the Father or the Son in this account! Therefore, in the published History of the Church, vol. 2, page 312, the statement has been changed to read: “... I received my first vision, which was when I was about fourteen years old...” Another account in the same diary (page 51) has Joseph Smith saying that he “saw many angels in this vision.” (For a thorough examination of the many conflicting statements in Joseph Smith’s accounts of the First Vision see our book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 143-153.)

Marvin S. Hill, professor of American history at the church’s Brigham Young University, tried to defend the idea that Joseph Smith had an important religious experience in the grove, but he had to admit that Joseph Smith’s official 1838 account has some real problems. He, in fact, suggested that the 1832 account of the vision was probably more accurate than the official account and that Joseph Smith may have changed his theological views concerning God:

It seems to me that everybody has approached the issue from the wrong end, by starting with the 1838 official version when the account they should be considering is that of 1832. Merely on the face of it, the 1832 version stands a better chance of being more accurate and unembellished than the 1838 account. . . I am inclined to agree that the religious turmoil that Joseph described which led to some family members joining the Presbyterians and to much sectarian bitterness does not fit well into the 1820 context detailed by Backman. For one thing, it does not seem likely that there could have been heavy sectarian strife in 1820 and then a joint revival where all was harmony in 1824. In addition, as Walters notes, Lucy Mack Smith [Joseph Smith’s mother] said the revival where she became interested in a particular sect came after Alvin’s death, thus almost certainly in early 1824. . . . An 1824 revival creates problems for the 1838 account, not that of 1832. . . .

At any rate, if Joseph Smith in 1838 read back into 1820 some details of a revival that occurred in 1824, there is no reason to conclude that he invented his religious experiences. . . .

Giving priority to the 1832 account also makes it more understandable why Oliver Cowdery got his story tangled. . . . If initially Joseph said one personage came to him in 1820, it became easier for Oliver Cowdery to confuse this visit with the coming of Moroni than it would have been a few years later when Joseph taught emphatically that there were three separate personages in the Godhead.

The Tanners make much of the argument that Joseph Smith changed his view of the Godhead. There is a good deal of evidence that his understanding grew on many points of theology . . . If, as the Tanners argue, Joseph grew in his understanding of the nature of the Godhead, this does not provide evidence of his disingenuousness . . .

It seems to me that if the Latter-day Saints can accept the idea that Joseph gained his full understanding of the nature of God only after a period of time, instead of its emerging fullblown in 1820, then most of the difficulties with chronology can be resolved. . . . As James Allen shows, Joseph never cited his vision with respect to the nature of the Godhead. This use of the vision came long afterward. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer 1982, pages 39-41)

Since the Mormon Church canonized the 1838 account of the First Vision in the Pearl of Great Price (one of the four standard works of the church), it seems very doubtful that the church will follow Professor Hill’s suggestion about giving “priority to the 1832 account” of the vision. In any case, Thomas G. Alexander, who is also a professor of American history at BYU, agrees that a theological shift in Joseph Smith’s view concerning the Godhead caused him to change his story from one to two personages:

One of the barriers to understanding Mormon theology is the underlying assumption by most Latter-day Saints that doctrine develops consistently, that ideas build cumulatively on each other. As a result, older revelations are usually interpreted by referring to current doctrinal positions. This type of interpretation may produce systematic theology and may satisfy those trying to understand and internalize the current doctrine, but it is bad history since it leaves an unwarranted impression of continuity and consistency. . . .

The Book of Mormon tended to define God as an absolute personage of spirit who, clothed in flesh, revealed himself in Jesus Christ (see Abinadi’s sermon to King Noah in Mos. 13-14). . . . there is little evidence that early church doctrine specifically differentiated between Christ and God. Indeed, this distinction was probably considered unnecessary since the early discussion also seems to have supported trinitarian doctrine. Joseph Smith’s 1832 account of his first vision spoke only of one personage and did not make the explicit separation of God and Christ found in the 1838 version. The Book of Mormon declared that Mary “is the mother of God, after the manner of the flesh,” which was changed in 1837 to “mother of the Son of God.” Abinadi’s sermon in the Book of Mormon explored the relationship between God and Christ . . .

The “Lectures on Faith” differentiated between the Father and Son more explicitly, but even they did not define a materialistic, tritheistic godhead. In announcing the publication of the Doctrine and Covenants, which included the lectures, the Messenger and Advocate commented that it trusted the volume would give “the churches abroad . . . a perfect understanding of the doctrine believed by this society.” The lectures declared that “there are two personages
who constitute the great matchless, governing and supreme power over all things —by whom all things were created and made.” They are “the Father being a personage of spirit” and “the Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, a personage of tabernacle, made, or fashioned like unto man, or being in the form and likeness of man, or, rather man was formed after his likeness, and in his image.” The “Articles and Covenants” called the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost “one God” rather than “Godhead,” a term Mormons use today to separate themselves from trinitarians.

The doctrine of the Holy Ghost in these early sources is even more striking compared to our point of view today. The “Lectures on Faith” defined the Holy Ghost as the mind of the Father and the Son, a member of the Godhead but not a personage, who binds the Father and Son together (D&C [i.e., Doctrine and Covenants], 1835 ed., 53-54). This view of the Holy Ghost likely reinforced trinitarian doctrine by explaining how personal beings like the Father and Son become one god through the noncorporeal presence of a shared mind. (Line Upon Line, edited by Gary James Bergera, 1989, pages 53-55)

TRILLIONS OF GODS?

The Bible teaches the oneness of God. In the book of Isaiah 44:8 we read: “Is there a God beside me? Yea, there is no God; I know not any.” In addition, the Bible reveals that “God is a Spirit” (John 4:24). The Book of Mormon also says that God is a Spirit. In Alma 18:26-28, the following is found:

And then Ammon said: Believeth thou that there is a Great Spirit? And he said, Yea, And Ammon said: This is God.

By the year 1844, however, Joseph Smith had completely abandoned the teachings regarding God which he had incorporated into the Book of Mormon. In the Mormon publication, Times and Seasons, he boldly proclaimed that God was just an exalted man and that men could become Gods:

First, God himself, who sits enthroned in yonder heavens, is a man like unto one of yourselves, that is the great secret. . . . I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined that God was God from all eternity. . . . God himself; the Father of us all dwelt on an earth the same as Jesus Christ himself did . . . You have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves . . . No man can learn you more than what I have told you. (Times and Seasons, vol. 5, pages 613-614)

Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt, who received his teachings regarding the nature of God from Joseph Smith, made this statement regarding the plurality of Gods:

If we should take a million of worlds like this and number their particles, we should find that there are more Gods than there are particles of matter in those worlds.” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 2, page 345)

Apostle Pratt’s comments make it very clear that there are at least trillions of Gods.

The Mormon Church teaches that God the Father had a Father, and that God’s Father also had a Father, and so on. Brigham Young, the second prophet of the church, declared:

He [God] is our Father—he Father of our spirits, and was once a man in mortal flesh as we are, and is now an exalted being . . . there never was a time when there were not Gods . . . It appears ridiculous to the world, under their darkened and erroneous traditions, that God has once been a finite being . . . (Journal of Discourses, vol. 7, page 333)

Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt made it clear that God was once in a fallen state, died and was redeemed from the grave:

The Gods who dwell in the Heaven have been redeemed from the grave in a world which existed before the foundations of this earth were laid. They and the Heavenly body which they now inhabit were once in a fallen state . . . they were exalted also, from fallen men to Celestial Gods to inhabit their Heaven forever and ever. (The Seer, January 1853, page 23)

We were begotten by our Father in Heaven; the person of our Father in Heaven was begotten on a previous heavenly world by His Father; and again, He was begotten by a still more ancient Father; and so on, from generation to generation, from one heavenly world to another still more ancient, until our minds are wearied and lost in the multiplicity of generations and successive worlds, and as a last resort, we wonder in our minds, how far back the genealogy extends, and how the first world was formed, and the first Father was begotten. But why does man seek for a first . . . why then, do you seek for a first personal Father in an endless genealogy? (Ibid., September 1853, page 132)

In a speech published in the Mormon Church’s publication, The Ensign, November 1975, page 80, Spencer W. Kimball, the twelfth president of the church, made some revealing comments which were broadcast to those serving in the priesthood:

Brethren, 225,000 of you are here tonight. I suppose 225,000 of you may become gods. There seems to be plenty of space out there in the universe. And the Lord has proved that he knows how to do it. I think he could make, or probably have us help make, worlds for all of us, for every one of us 225,000.

The Mormon Apostle LeGrand Richards commented as follows in a letter written in 1966: “There is a statement often repeated in the Church, and while it is not in one of the
Mormon leaders teach that both men and women can attain godhood. Apostle McConkie said that godhood “is not for men only, it is for men and women together” (Mormon Doctrine, page 844). While at first glance it appears that this would make men and women equal, a careful examination of the doctrine reveals just the opposite.

According to Mormon theology, church members follow the same plan of eternal progression as God the Father. Now, if the “Eternal Mother” had really gained equality with her husband, we would expect Latter-day Saints to pray to her. Although there are a small number of Mormons who actually do pray to the Eternal Mother, the vast majority of the church look with disdain at such a practice. Furthermore, church leaders have strongly rebuked those who engage in such a practice.

Apostle Orson Pratt made it plain that the Eternal Mother’s godhood is rather insignificant when compared to her husband’s power. She, in fact, is to be in “the most perfect obedience” to her “great head”—her husband:

But if we have a heavenly Mother as well as a heavenly Father, is it not right that we should worship the Mother of our spirits as well as the Father? No; for the Father of our spirits is at the head of His household, and his wives and children are required to yield the most perfect obedience to their great Head. It is lawful for the children to worship the King of Heaven, but not the “Queen of heaven.” . . . we are nowhere taught that Jesus prayed to His heavenly Mother . . . (The Seer, page 159)

It would appear, then, that in Mormon theology the claim that a woman can obtain “godhood” amounts to very little. Like the present “Heavenly Mother,” she will be required to “yield the most perfect obedience” to her “great Head.”

Mormon theology seems to teach that women who enter into “godhood” will find themselves serving their own husband in eternity rather than the God of the Bible. The more one studies the church’s teaching concerning the Mother God, the more obvious it becomes that women are considered to be spiritually inferior in Mormon theology.

Joseph Smith taught that heaven is divided into three different kingdoms—the celestial, terrestrial and telestial. The celestial is the most glorious of the three, and it, in turn, is divided into “three heavens or degrees” (Doctrine and Covenants 131:1). Only those who marry in the Mormon temple and live a worthy life can enter into the highest degree of the celestial kingdom. In the resurrection these faithful Mormons become Gods and Goddesses.

All those who do not make it into this highest level are not allowed to marry or engage in sex. They “remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and henceforth are not gods, but are angels of God forever and ever” (Doctrine and Covenants 132:17).

On the other hand, those who are accounted worthy of the highest glory remain married and are allowed to
procreate children forever. These Gods and Goddesses give birth to spirit children throughout all eternity, and these spirits eventually take physical bodies on other worlds.

Milton R. Hunter, who was a General Authority in the church, wrote the following: “... Joseph explained ... that the Gods were to be parents of spirit children just as our Heavenly Father and Mother were the parents of the people of this earth” (*The Gospel Through the Ages*, 1958, page 120).

Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt set forth some important details and problems concerning the birth of spirit children to celestial beings:

> In the Heaven where our spirits were born there are many Gods, each one of whom has his own wife or wives, raises up a numerous family of sons and daughters . . . each father and mother will be in a condition to multiply forever and ever. As soon as each God has begotten many millions of male and female spirits, and his Heavenly inheritance becomes too small, to comfortably accommodate his great family, he, in connection with his sons, organizes a new world, after a similar order to the one which we now inhabit, where he sends both the male and female spirits to inhabit tabernacles of flesh and bones. . . . The inhabitants of each world are required to reverence, adore, and worship their own personal father who dwells in the Heaven which they formerly inhabited. . . . The number of the sons and daughters of God, born in Heaven before this earth was formed, is not known by us. They must have been exceedingly numerous . . . The amount of population now on the globe, is estimated in round numbers at one thousand million. If we take this estimation for the average number per century, during the seven thousand years of its temporal existence it will amount to seventy thousand millions [i.e., 70 billion] . . . It will be seen, from this estimation, that about seventy thousand million sons and daughters were born in Heaven, and kept their first estate . . . If we admit that one personage was the Father of all this great family, and that they were all born of the same Mother, the period of time intervening between the birth of the oldest and the youngest spirit must have been immense. If we suppose, as an average, that only one year intervened between each birth then it would have required, over one hundred thousand millions of years for the same Mother to have given birth to this vast family. . . . Should the period between each birth, be one hundred times shorter than what is required in this world, (which is very improbable,) it would still require over one thousand million of years to raise up such a numerous progeny. . . . But . . . it is altogether probable that the period required for the formation of the infant spirit, is of the same length as that required in this world . . . If the Father of these spirits, prior to his redemption, had secured to himself, through the everlasting covenant of marriage, many wives . . . the period required to people a world would be shorter . . . if it required one hundred thousand million of years to people a world like this . . . it is evident that, with a hundred wives, this period would be reduced to only one thousand million years. (*The Seer*, March 1853, pages 37-39)

Apostle Pratt’s description of the function of a Mormon woman who advances to godhood reminds one of the role played by a queen bee. The queen bee, of course, produces swarms of offspring—as many as 2,500 a day! Her main purpose appears to be to produce more bees.

Brigham Young University scholar Eugene England is repelled by the concept concerning spirit children taught by Apostle Pratt and other “influential Mormons and teachers of religion.” He maintains that God must have a better way “to produce spirit children than by turning celestial partners into mere birth machines. To anticipate such a limited, unequal role for women in eternity insults and devalues them” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Winter 1987, page 148).

While many Mormon women would agree with England, the teaching seems too deeply embedded in Mormon theology to be torn out without endangering the entire doctrine of “eternal progression.”

Many Mormon women have serious reservations about the idea of having billions of spirit children every time their husbands decide to people another world. They believe that this teaching smacks of confusion and mass production. Mormon scholar Melodie Moench Charles has publicly expressed her opposition to the teaching:

> Nineteenth-century Mormon theology shows a pre-occupation with attaining power and status in the millennium and in heaven. . . . I find this heavenly structure neither reasonable nor appealing. . . . Creating includes not only making a world, but peopling it with one’s spouse. . . . From Joseph Smith he [Parley P. Pratt] “learned the true dignity and destiny of a son of God . . . It was from him that I learned that the highest dignity of womanhood was, to stand as queen and priestess to her husband, and to reign for ever and ever as the queen mother of her numerous and still increasing offspring” . . .

Our theology currently gives women no hope that their participation in priesthood will ever be great enough to allow them to create anything but children. Some women might be excited by the possibility of providing the womb through which a never-ending stream of children would be born, but I am not. . . . England rightly called this limited, unequal role for women in eternity ‘absurd’ “humiliating” and “degrading” . . .

Our temple ceremony has some further limiting, unequal, and degrading implications for women’s heavenly existence. . . . people being married [in the temple] are symbolically brought into heaven by a male playing the role of God. A man is brought into heaven by an anonymous male temple worker playing that role. But a woman is brought into heaven by her husband playing the role of God to her. So not only does the temple ceremony suggest that women reach God through their husbands, but that husbands, on some level, act as god to their wives. . . .

An essential part of this theology of marriage in
heaven is polygamy. While it is unlikely that the Church will again promote polygamy in mortality, it is still a vital part of Mormon heaven. . . . As long as Doctrine and Covenants 132 remains in our scriptural canon, heavenly polygamy is a part of Mormon theology.

Heavenly polygamy, more than anything else in our theology, reduces people to things. . . . The greater the number of wives and children a man has in heaven, the greater his power, kingdom, and eternal glory. In the worst materialistic sense rather than in the best metaphorical sense, wives and children were a man’s riches. Benjamin F. Johnson remembered that “the Prophet taught us that Dominion & power in the great Future would be Commensurate with the no[,] of ‘Wives, Children & Friends’ that we inherit here” . . .

Rather than seeing any compelling reason to think that we must populate heavenly kingdoms into existence so that these kingdoms can be our eternal reward, I see a compelling reason not to believe that God authored this system. It again reduces people to things. . . . Each spirit child is one more being for its parents to be sovereign Lords over . . .

Heavenly Mother is not an equal partner with Heavenly Father in any sense. . . . Since she has no sphere of operations, she has no power. . . . I can’t see any reason now to let such a degrading concept of the female deity continue to exist without protest. . . . She has no self apart from her husband. . . .

I can’t change the reality of what heaven is. My wishing, hoping, and needing won’t make it what I want it to be. But neither does Brigham Young’s or Joseph Smith’s. I believe that they and other Mormon males projected their own needs and desires into heaven, and that their heaven probably does not resemble actual heaven any more than my ideal heaven does. . . .

I have said all of this not to complain, but rather to encourage Church members and leaders to rethink our theology of heaven. The nineteenth-century Mormon men who fleshed out the theological skeleton provided by scriptures and revelation fleshed it out according to their own cultural prejudices. . . . their prejudices and their needs should no longer be misread as representing heavenly reality: they are time-bound, not eternal. It is time to reject those aspects of Mormon heaven that are uninspired, unreasonable, unfair, damaging, and serve no virtuous end. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Autumn 1988, pages 76, 78-82, 84-86)

While some Mormons are disturbed with the idea that women who reach the highest exaltation in the hereafter become “mere birth machines,” it seems evident that church leaders are not interested in changing the doctrine. In the Mormon Church’s publication, Doctrines of the Gospel Student Manual, Joseph Fielding Smith, the tenth prophet of the church, was quoted as saying:

“Parents will have eternal claim upon their posterity and will have the gift of eternal increase, if they obtain exaltation. . . . a man and his wife when glorified will have spirit children who eventually will go to an earth like this one. . . . There is no end to this development; it will go on forever. We will become gods and have jurisdiction over worlds, and these worlds will be peopled by our own offspring. (Doctrines of the Gospel Student Manual, Church Educational System, 1986)

GOD AND CHRIST POLYGAMISTS?

On July 12, 1843, the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith claimed that the Lord gave him a revelation stating that polygamy should be practiced in the church:

Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord justified my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines—

Behold, and lo, I am the Lord thy God, and will answer thee as touching this matter.

Therefore, prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions . . .

For behold, I reveal unto you a new and everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory. . . .

And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith [Joseph Smith’s wife] receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph, and are virtuous and pure before me; and those who are not pure, and have said they were pure, shall be destroyed, saith the Lord God. . . .

And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood —if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another . . . he is justified; he cannot commit adultery with that that belongeth unto him and to no one else.

And if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given unto him; therefore is he justified. (Doctrine and Covenants, Section 132, verses 1-3, 52, 61-62)

Although the revelation only specifically mentions that a man can have “ten” wives, the favorable reference to the wives of king Solomon (a noted polygamist mentioned in the Bible who had a vast number of wives) leads to the conclusion that a man can have more than ten wives. Joseph Smith certainly did not limit himself to ten wives. In fact, in 1887, Assistant Church Historian Andrew Jenson made a list of 27 women who were sealed to Joseph Smith. (Historical Record, vol. 6, page 233). More recent research, however, demonstrated that the number 27 was too small. Mormon author John J. Stewart disclosed: “. . . he married Louisa Beaman at Nauvoo . . . he married many other women, perhaps three to four dozen or more . . .” (Brigham Young and His Wives, 1961, pages 30-31). On page 96 of the same book, Stewart noted that Joseph Smith also had “150 dead
women . . . sealed to him; also a few women who were sealed to him after his death."

Since the leading authorities of the Mormon Church believed that polygamy was commanded by God, it became easy for them to believe that both God and Christ were polygamists. Jedediah M. Grant, Second Counselor to Brigham Young, asserted: “A belief in the doctrine of a plurality of wives caused the perseverance of Jesus and his followers” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 1, page 346).

In 1961, Mormon writer John J. Stewart affirmed that “plural marriage is the patriarchal order of Marriage lived by God and others who reign in the Celestial Kingdom” (Brigham Young and His Wives, page 41).

Even though the current Mormon leaders are very quiet about the matter, a belief in the doctrine of Celestial Marriage almost compels a person to also believe that God is a polygamist. While church leaders no longer allow the practice of polygamy here on the earth, they maintain that it will be lived in heaven. President Joseph Fielding Smith remarried after the death of his first wife, and in his book, Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 2, page 67, he remarked: “... my wives will be mine in eternity.” Harold B. Lee, the eleventh president of the church, also remarried after his wife’s death and was looking forward to a polygamous relationship in heaven.

My lovely Joan was sent to me:
So Joan joins Fern
That three might be, more fitted for eternity.
“O Heavenly Father, my thanks to thee”
(Deseret News 1974 Church Almanac, page 17)

The reader will remember that Apostle Pratt proclaimed that a God who had a hundred wives would far outdistance a God with just one wife. In The Seer he made mathematical calculations to prove his point:

Therefore, a Father . . . could increase his kingdoms with his own children, in a hundred fold ratio above that of another who had only secured to himself one wife. As yet, we have only spoken of the hundred fold ratio as applied to his own children; but now let us endeavor to form some faint idea of the multiplied increase of worlds peopled by his grandchildren, over which he, of course, would hold authority and dominion as the Grand Patriarch of the endless generations of his posterity. If . . . only one million of sons were redeemed to the fulness . . . they, in their turn, would now be prepared to multiply and people worlds the same as their Father . . . While their Father, therefore, was peopling the second world, these millions of redeemed sons would people one million of worlds, . . . the number in the third generation amounts to one billion three million and three worlds. The fourth generation would people over a trillion, and the fifth over a quadrillion of worlds; while the one-hundredth generation would people more worlds than could be expressed by raising one million to the ninety-ninth power. Any mathematician who is able to enumerate a series of 595 figures will be able to give a very close approximation to the number of worlds peopled by the descendants of one Father in one hundred thousand million of years, according to the average ratio given above. Now this is the period in which only one world could be peopled with one wife. While the Patriarch with his hundred wives, would multiply worlds on worlds, systems on systems, more numerous than the dust of all the visible bodies of the universe, and people them with his descendants to the hundredth generation of worlds; the other, who had only secured to himself one wife, would in the same period, just barely have peopled one world.

(The Seer, March 1853, page 39)

Using Apostle Pratt’s reasoning and the fact that Mormonism teaches that those who go through the temple ceremony can become Gods, it is clear that if God the Father is a monogamist, Presidents Joseph Fielding Smith and Harold B. Lee, with their two wives will eventually have more spirit children and more kingdoms than the God of Israel! Since Joseph Smith and Brigham Young had hundreds of women sealed to them, their power would increase much more rapidly. According to the “Journal of Abraham H. Cannon,” April 5, 1894, President Wilford Woodruff, the fourth president of the church, said he had himself sealed to “about four hundred of my female kindred.” Apostle Cannon also noted in his journal that a man could have up to “999” wives sealed to him for eternity. If anyone actually did take that many wives, he would by-pass them all!

Some Mormons who believe that God is married seem to be shocked when they find out that the early church leaders taught that He was a polygamist. The fact that they are embarrassed by the matter seems to show that they do not really believe that polygamy is a righteous practice.

In spite of unrelenting pressure from the Federal Government, the Mormons continued practicing polygamy into the first decade of the twentieth century. (The Manifesto of 1890 was supposed to end the practice, but church leaders continued to secretly perform plural marriage ceremonies until 1904.)

Before yielding the practice Mormon leaders had uncompromisingly proclaimed that the church would never cease the practice of polygamy on earth. For example, Apostle Orson Pratt argued that “if plurality of marriage is not true or in other words, if a man has no divine right to marry two wives or more in this world, then marriage for eternity is not true, and your faith is in vain, and all the sealing ordinances and powers pertaining to marriages for eternity are vain, worthless, good for nothing; for as sure as one is true the other also must be true” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 21, page 296). (For more on this subject see our book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 202-244F)

Although Mormon Church leaders no longer sanction the practice of polygamy on earth, it remains an important part of their doctrinal view regarding the hereafter. In Mormon doctrine all women who marry for eternity in the temple have to face the possibility that they could end up
living in polygamy in heaven without their consent. If the wife should die before her husband, he is allowed to be sealed to another woman for eternity. The woman, however, is not allowed to be sealed to two husbands for eternity. Joseph Fielding Smith, who served as the tenth prophet, explained how the rules of the temple discriminate against women: “When a man and a woman are married in the temple for time and all eternity, and then the man dies and the woman marries another man, she can be married to him for time only” (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 2, page 78).

NO VIRGIN BIRTH?

The idea that God is merely an exalted man has led Mormon leaders to proclaim a doctrine about the birth of Christ which is very shocking to orthodox Christians. Since Christians believe that God is a Spirit, they view the conception of Christ as a miraculous event having nothing to do with sex or any physical act. Mormon theology, on the other hand, teaches that God is an exalted man and that Christ was conceived through a sexual act between Mary and God the Father. In other words, the birth of Christ is considered a natural, rather than a miraculous occurrence.

Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr., made this plain in his book, Religious Truths Defined, page 44: “The birth of the Savior was a natural occurrence unattended with any degree of mysticism, and the Father God was the literal parent of Jesus in the flesh as well as in the spirit.”

President Joseph Fielding Smith declared: “Christ was begotten of God. He was not born without the aid of Man, and that Man was God” (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 1, page 18).

Apostle Bruce R. McConkie did not hesitate to make this matter crystal clear:

These name-titles all signify that our Lord is the only Son of the Father in the flesh. Each of the words is to be understood literally. Only means only; Begotten means begotten; and Son means son. Christ was begotten by an Immortal Father in the same way that mortal men are begotten by mortal fathers. (Mormon Doctrine, 1979, pages 546-547)

And Christ was born into the world as the literal Son of this Holy Being; he was born in the same personal, real, and literal sense that any mortal son is born to a mortal father. There is nothing figurative about his paternity; he was begotten, conceived and born in the normal and natural course of events . . . Christ is the Son of Man, meaning that his Father (the Eternal God!) is a Holy Man. (Ibid., page 742)

It would be extremely difficult to side-step the serious implications of Apostle McConkie’s statement. When he states that Christ was “begotten, conceived and born in the normal and natural course of events,” this could only mean that he was conceived by a sexual act with Mary, not through a miraculous operation of God.

Mormon writer Carlfred B. Broderick discussed the sexual element regarding the birth of Jesus:

There are two basic elements in the Gospel view of sexuality as I interpret it from the scriptures. The first is that sex is good—sexuality, far from being the antithesis of spirituality, is actually an attribute of God . . .

In the light of their understanding that God is a procreating personage of flesh and bone, latter-day prophets have made it clear that despite what it says in Matthew 1:20, the Holy Ghost was not the father of Jesus. . . . The Savior was fathered by a personage of flesh and bone, and was literally what Nephi said he was, “Son of the Eternal Father.” (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Autumn, 1967, pages 100-101)

President Brigham Young implied that Mary was actually the wife of God: “The man Joseph, the husband of Mary, did not, that we know of, have more than one wife, but Mary the wife of Joseph had another husband” (Deseret News, October 10, 1866). Apostle Orson Pratt confirmed that Mary was, in fact, the “wife of God” and also went on to try to justify what would seem to be an immoral act:

The fleshly body of Jesus required a Mother as well as a Father. Therefore, the Father and Mother of Jesus, according to the flesh, must have been associated together in the capacity of Husband and Wife; hence the Virgin Mary must have been, for the time being, the lawful wife of God the Father: we use the term lawful Wife, because it would be blasphemous in the highest degree to say that He overshadowed her or begat the Saviour unlawfully. It would have been unlawful for any man to have interfered with Mary, who was already espoused to Joseph; for such a heinous crime would have subjected both the guilty parties to death, according to the law of Moses. But God having created all men and women, had the most perfect right to do with his own creation, according to His holy will and pleasure: He had a lawful right to overshadow the Virgin Mary in the capacity of a husband, and beget a Son, although she was espoused to another; for the law which He gave to govern men and women was not intended to govern Himself, or to prescribe rules for his own conduct. It was also lawful in Him, after having dealt with Mary, to give her to Joseph her espoused husband. Whether God the Father gave Mary to Joseph for time only, or for time and eternity, we are not informed. Inasmuch as God was the first husband to her, it may be that He only gave her to be the wife of Joseph while in this mortal state, and that He intended after the resurrection to again take her as one of his own wives to raise up immortal spirits in eternity. (The Seer, October 1853, page 158)

Brigham Young maintained that “The birth of the Saviour was as natural as are the births of our children; it
was the result of natural action. He partook of flesh and blood—was begotten of his Father, as we were of our fathers” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 8, page 115).

Some Mormons, who are either not well informed on church doctrine or are so ashamed of the church’s doctrine on the birth of Jesus that they try to deny its existence. Unfortunately for these apologists, President Ezra Taft Benson, the thirteenth prophet of the church, came down firmly on the side of Brigham Young and the other prophets and apostles. In The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, a book published in 1988, Benson steadfastly maintained that God was the father of Christ “in the most literal sense”:

A fundamental doctrine of true Christianity is the divine birth of the child Jesus. This doctrine is not generally comprehended by the world. The paternity of Jesus Christ is one of the “mysteries of godliness” comprehended only by the spiritually minded.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints proclaims that Jesus Christ is the Son of God in the most literal sense. The body in which he performed His mission in the flesh was sired by that same Holy Being we worship as God, our Eternal Father. Jesus was not the son of Joseph, nor was He Begotten by the Holy Ghost. He is the Son of the Eternal Father. (The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, 1988, pages 6-7)

The LDS doctrine concerning the birth of Christ certainly raises more questions than it answers. For instance, in Mormon theology we learn that prior to coming to earth both Jesus and Mary were born to God the Father and His wife in a pre-existent state. From this it is clear that Jesus was the spirit brother of Mary. It has been suggested that since Mary was the spirit daughter of the Father, it would be an act of incest for God the Father to have had a sexual relationship with her.

While Apostle Orson Pratt probably would have argued that God’s laws were “not intended to govern Himself,” the idea of God having relations with his own spirit daughter, who was at that time betrothed to Joseph, seems to be out of step with the teachings of the Bible and morally repugnant. A careful examination of the Mormon teaching concerning the conception of Christ reveals that it is far closer to paganism than it is to Christianity!

SWITCHING GODS

The Adam-God doctrine was a natural outgrowth of the teaching that God is merely an exalted man and that there are a vast number of Gods. Although the doctrine was not publicly proclaimed until 1852, Adam was held in high esteem at the very beginning of the Mormon Church. Joseph Fielding Smith said that he did not “accuse Adam of a sin. . . . it is not always a sin to transgress a law” (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 1, page 114). Sterling W. Sill, who served as an Assistant to the Council of the Twelve, made this defense of Adam’s transgression: “Under Christ Adam yet stands at our head. . . . Adam fell, but he fell in the right direction. He fell toward the goal. . . . Adam fell, but he fell upward” (Deseret News, Church Section, July 31, 1965).

It was on April 9, 1852, that Brigham Young, the second prophet of the Mormon Church, startled the Christian world by publicly proclaiming that God had revealed to him that the Mormons were to switch Gods. According to President Young, Adam was “the only God with whom we have to do”:

Now hear it, O inhabitants of the earth, Jew and Gentile, Saint and sinner! When our father Adam came into the garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial body, and brought Eve, one of his wives, with him. He is MICHAEL, the Arch-angel, the ANCIENT OF DAYS! about whom holy men have written and spoken—He is our FATHER and our God, and the only God with whom we have to do. Every man upon the earth, professing Christians or non-professing, must hear it, and will know it sooner or later. . . . the earth was organized by three distinct characters, namely, Eloheim, Yahovah, and Michael, these three forming a quorum . . . perfectly represented in the Deity, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 1, pages 50-51)

Although some members of the Mormon Church had a hard time accepting Brigham Young’s revelation concerning Adam, the church’s publication Latter-Day Saints’ Millennial Star, vol. 16, page 534, made it very clear that it was indeed a doctrine which had to be accepted:

Concerning the item of doctrine alluded to by Elder Caffall and others, viz., that Adam is our Father and God, I say do not trouble yourselves . . . If, as Elder Caffall remarked, there are those who are waiting at the door of the Church for this objection to be removed, tell such, the prophet and Apostle Brigham Young has declared it, and that it is the word of the Lord.

Brigham Young continued to teach the Adam-God doctrine until his death in 1877. In 1873, he publicly declared that the doctrine had been revealed to him by God Himself:

How much unbelief exists in the minds of the Latter-day Saints in regard to one particular doctrine which I revealed to them, and which God revealed to me—namely that Adam is our Father and God . . . Our Father Adam helped to make this earth . . . He brought one of his wives with him . . . Then he said, “I want my children who are in the spirit world to come and live here. . . . I once dwelt upon an earth something like this, in a mortal state. . . . I want my children that were born to me in the spirit world to come here and take tabernacles of flesh that their spirits may have a house, a tabernacle, or a dwelling place as mine has,” and where is the mystery? (Deseret Evening News, June 14, 1873)

Brigham Young’s declaration that the inhabitants of
earth were in reality Adam’s spirit children demonstrates beyond all doubt that he intended to strip God the Father (Elohim) from his rightful place and put Adam in charge of the world. Young seems to have believed that Elohim was the Grandfather God. Consequently, he felt that Mormons should direct their prayers to Adam.

President Brigham Young not only taught that Adam was the God whom Mormons should worship, but he also claimed that Jesus Christ was his son. In his notorious address delivered on April 9, 1852, Young asserted:

“When the Virgin Mary conceived the child Jesus, the Father had begotten him in his own likeness. He was not begotten by the Holy Ghost. And who is the Father? He is the first of the human family. . . . Jesus, our elder brother, was begotten in the flesh by the same character that was in the garden of Eden, and who is our Father in Heaven. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 1, pages 50-51)

Wilford Woodruff, who became the fourth prophet of the church, recorded these interesting statements in his journal:

He [Brigham Young] said that our GOD was Father Adam. He was the Father of the Savior Jesus Christ—Our God was no more or less than ADAM. (“Wilford Woodruff Journal,” February 19, 1854)

. . . [Orson Pratt] could not believe that Adam was our God or the Father of Jesus Christ—President Young said that he was . . . (Ibid., September 17, 1854)

. . . President Brigham Young . . . said Adam was Michael the Archangel & he was the Father of Jesus Christ & was our God & that Joseph [Smith] taught the Father of Jesus Christ & was our God or the Father of Jesus—President Young said that he was . . . (Ibid., December 16, 1869)

Just before his death, Brigham Young reaffirmed his teaching that Adam was God the Father and that Jesus was his son. On February 7, 1877, L. John Nuttall recorded the following in his journal:

Wed 7 . . . Prest Young was filled with the spirit of God & revelation & said . . . Father Adam’s oldest son (Jesus the Savior) who is the heir of the family is Father Adam’s first begotten in the spirit world, who according to the flesh is the only begotten as it is written. (In his divinity he having gone back into the spirit world, and come in the spirit to Mary and she conceived . . . . (“Journal of L. John Nuttall,” vol. 1, pages 18, 21; a photograph from the original journal is found in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 178-D)

Mormon leaders continued to believe in the Adam-God doctrine after Brigham Young’s death. As late as June 23, 1889, George Q. Cannon, a member of the First Presidency, was still teaching that “Jesus Christ is Jehovah” and that “Adam is His Father and our God” (“Daily Journal of Abraham H. Cannon,” vol. 11, page 39). Fortunately, the doctrine fell into disrepute, and members of the church who continued to believe it were actually excommunicated. In a speech given on June 1, 1980, Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie declared that “The devil keeps this heresy alive . . . anyone who has received the temple endowment and who yet believes the Adam-God theory does not deserve to be saved.”

Church leaders became very embarrassed by the Adam-God doctrine and tried to cover up the fact that it had been taught for many years. While the General Authorities of the Mormon Church emphatically denied that earlier leaders taught the Adam-God doctrine, we marshaled a great deal of evidence in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? which was absolutely irrefutable. A number of other scholars gathered even more material. Finally, Apostle Bruce R. McConkie caved in under the weight of the evidence and admitted almost everything we had written in our book. In a letter to Eugene England, written in 1981, McConkie conceded that Brigham Young taught the Adam-God doctrine and also acknowledged that it was a false doctrine:

This may be the most important letter you have or will receive. . . . I want you to know that I am extending to you the hand of fellowship though I hold over you at the same time, the scepter of judgment . . . . On Sunday, June 1, 1980, I spoke at one of the multi-stake firesides. . . . I, of course, indicated the utter absurdity of this [Adam-God] doctrine and said it was totally false. . . . I have received violent reactions from . . . cultists in which they have expounded upon the views of Brigham Young and others . . . They have plain and clear quotations saying all of the things about Adam which I say are false. The quotations are in our literature and form the basis of a worship system followed by many of the cultists who have been excommunicated . . . As it happens, I am a great admirer of Brigham Young . . . He was called of God. . . . He completed his work and has gone on to eternal exaltation. . . .

Yes, President Young did teach that Adam was the father of our spirits, and all the related things that the cultists ascribe to him. . . . He expressed views that are out of harmony with the gospel. But, be it known, Brigham Young also taught accurately and correctly, the status and position of Adam in the eternal scheme of things. What I am saying is, that Brigham Young, contradicted Brigham Young, and the issue becomes one of which Brigham Young we will believe. . . . As for me and my house, we will have the good sense to choose between the divergent teachings of the same man. . . . If we believe false doctrine, we will be condemned. If that belief is on basic and fundamental things, it will lead us astray and we will lose our souls. . . . people who teach false doctrine in the fundamental and basic things will lose their souls. The nature and kind of being that God is, is one of these fundamentals. I repeat: Brigham Young erred in some of his statements on the nature and kind of being that God is and as to the position of Adam in the plan
of salvation, but Brigham Young also taught the truth in these fields on other occasions. . . . he was a great prophet and has gone on to eternal reward. What he did is not a pattern for any of us. If we choose to believe and teach the false portions of his doctrines, we are making an election that will damn us. . . . it is my province to teach to the Church what the doctrine is. It is your province to echo what I say or to remain silent. . . . If I err, that is my problem; but in your case if you single out some of these things and make them the center of your philosophy, and end up being wrong, you will lose your soul. . . .

Now I hope you will ponder and pray and come to a basic understanding of fundamental things and that unless and until you can on all points, you will remain silent on those where differences exist between you and the Brethren. (Letter from Apostle Bruce R. McConkie to Eugene England, dated February 19, 1981; photographically reproduced in our book LDS Apostle Confesses Brigham Young Taught Adam-God Doctrine)

It seems strange that Apostle McConkie would write such a threatening letter to Eugene England. As far as we know, England never taught the Adam-God doctrine. He merely had a disagreement with McConkie over the issue of whether God continues to progress in knowledge. McConkie apparently digressed onto the subject of the Adam-God doctrine because he was deeply disturbed about that matter. In any case, now that Apostle McConkie has admitted that “President Young did teach” the Adam-God doctrine, Mormons should seriously consider the grave implications of the matter.

According to Mormon prophet Brigham Young, his teaching that Adam was “the only God with whom we have to do,” was a “doctrine” which God Himself revealed to him. The reader will remember that he first publicly proclaimed the doctrine in 1852. Twenty-one years later he emphatically declared that the Adam-God doctrine was revealed to him by the God of heaven. As we have shown above, the Mormon Church’s own newspaper reported that President Brigham Young spoke of “one particular doctrine which I revealed to them [the Latter-day Saints], and which God revealed to me—namely that Adam is our Father and God . . ..” (Deseret Evening News, June 14, 1873).

To admit that Brigham Young, the Prophet, Seer and Revelator of the church, could attribute a false revelation to God and cling to it so tenaciously for a period of 25 years undermines the church’s claim that the living prophet cannot lead the Saints astray.

The teaching of the Adam-God doctrine is clearly a violation of the commandment, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). In his book, Mormon Doctrine, 1979, page 270, Apostle McConkie said: “There is no salvation in the worship of false gods. For such false worship the Lord imposed the death penalty in ancient Israel (Deut. 13:6-11).” Since McConkie himself admitted that Brigham Young taught the Adam-God doctrine and said that those who have been through the temple ceremony and believe that doctrine do “not deserve to be saved,” we do not see how he can still maintain that Brigham Young was “a mighty prophet.” It is obvious that an unbiased person can only reach one conclusion—i.e., that Brigham Young was a false prophet who tried to lead his people into serving another god.

CONCLUSION: In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 163-178D, we show that although the Mormon leaders claim to have all the answers concerning the Godhead, a careful examination of their teachings reveals that they themselves are in a serious state of confusion. The honest investigator soon finds that the answers they give do not solve the real problems and that many of the answers are built upon the sandy foundation of change or falsification. The evidence clearly shows that the Mormon concept of God changed from a belief in one God to a plurality of Gods and finally culminated in the Adam-God doctrine—a doctrine that was later abandoned because it was considered blasphemous.

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IN THE MAIL

Below are extracts from some of the hundreds of letters we have received during 1994:

This letter is sent to you as a voice of warning, to inform you that God will not permit you or your household to continue spreading wholesale destruction to the inhabitants of our society, through your militant aggression, by being in the same situation as Korihor placed himself in. Your fate will be just as dreadful. [Korihor was a Book of Mormon character who was so evil that he was “struck dumb” and was eventually “trodden down” by the Zoramites until “he was dead.”]

In the sight of God, your sins are worse than Benito Mussolini or Adolf Hitler, and your discipline will be much more severe, for you will be turned over to the buffeting of Satan both here and in the hereafter, where you will receive drastic punishment to where you will feel it’s greater than you can stand.

Hitler or Mussolini did not interfere with a person’s endeavor to learn the genuine truth about the Gospel of Jesus Christ as you do. Their punishment will be much lighter than yours. . . . I am now a personal witness of your causing innocent living beings of being deceived. . . .

At this time, I being authorized by God, spiritually wash my hands and stamp the dust off my feet as a living testimony against you, because of your illiterate way of diverting souls from the truth. . . . you are turned over to the buffeting of Satan to suffer, in his power, and to receive your just due as God deems suitable for your situation. . . .

These things I now say and declare to you and your household by the authorization of God’s Holy Priesthood, and in the Holy Name of Jesus, Amen.” (Letter from Utah, unsigned, but probably written by a Mormon Fundamentalist—i.e., a polygamist)
Rejoice! With your help & God’s power, another person is out of the LDS Church & he is raring to go to win other Mormons to Christ. As he told me, every time there was a dilemma, I was able to provide answers & that was only due to the literature you provided to me. You are truly a God send! (Letter from Washington)

We appreciate your ministry tremendously. You helped us & our two sons & families leave the Mormon Church. We were fifth generation members . . . (Letter from Mormon Church)

You are in my prayers daily and I want to thank you for all the help your books etc have been for me. My 4 teenage boys have also left the church and my husband has stopped attending.” (Letter from Texas)

Thank you more than I can express for your unswerving diligence in your ministry. Your book “Major Problems of Mormonism” was a real eye opener (mind opener) for me. I’ll be blunt—the mormon church would have all mormons believe that you are evil people sent from hell . . . an acquaintance of mine lent me the aforementioned book . . . Its not an easy book for a mormon to read. I believe most of the claims you make in your book and no longer intend to be a mormon. . . . I know that there is life beyond mormonism. (Letter from Canada)

I am a former mormon who was saved from darkness because people like you care enough to print the truth. (Letter from Washington D.C.)

Thank you so much for your book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? (And at such a good price!) That has got to be the best book of its kind on the market. (Letter from California)

It was your materials that enabled me to reject Joseph Smith as prophet and to leave Mormonism. The Brand I was a member of was the R.L.D.S. . . . I have since become a Christian . . . (Letter from Missouri)

. . . I am profoundly moved by your work. I . . . listen to your tapes over & over for it brings joy to my heart to know the truth. My wife & I sent three boys on missions . . . (Letter from Indiana)

I feel you people are a wonderful “support group.” I have become very solid in my unshakable commitment to follow Christ . . . (Letter from Utah)

My wife, _____, has spent the last two years removing herself from the Mormon church and she has found your work very helpful during her studies. We both particularly like the balanced approach you bring to your research, as opposed to the vindictive style of some of the church’s critics. (Letter from Australia)

Please pray for our outreach to the Mormon people and for other ministries and individuals who are laboring to bring Mormons to the Lord.

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**BOOKS AND TAPES**

(Mail orders add 10% - Minimum postage $1.50)

**Answering Mormon Scholars**, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Shows conclusively that the Book of Mormon is not an ancient document. **Price: $6.00**

**Inventing Mormonism**, by H. Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters. An important discussion of Joseph Smith’s early years and the origin of Mormonism. **Special Price: $27.00**

**New Approaches to the Book of Mormon**, edited by Brent Metcalfe. BYU professor Louis Midgley says this is “the most sophisticated attack on the truth of the Book of Mormon” that is currently available. **Special Price: $25.00**

**Out of the Cults and Into the Church: Understanding & Encouraging Ex-Cultists**, by Janis Hutchinson. **Price: $10.00**
Sandra Tanner Tape No. 3. Two radio interviews. Contains information about the 1990 changes in the Mormon temple ceremony and the false translation of the Book of Abraham. Price: $3.00

Questions to Ask Your Mormon Friend: Challenging the Claims of Latter-day Saints in a Constructive Manner, by Bill McKeever & Eric Johnson. Price: $9.00

How to Rescue Your Loved One from Mormonism, by David A. Reed & John R. Farkas. Price: $9.00

Mormonism: The Christian View. A video narrated by Wesley P. Walters. Deals with Mormon history, doctrines, claim to authority, changes in doctrine and witnessing suggestions. Price: $24.00


The New Mormon History, edited by D. Michael Quinn. Mormon leaders are very distressed with historians who write “New Mormon History. Contains 15 essays. Price: $18.95

Divergent Paths of the Restoration, by Steven Shields. Brief history of over 100 churches and organizations claiming Joseph Smith as their founder. Price: $14.00


Answering Mormons’ Questions, by Bill McKeever. Price: $7.00

Why We Left Mormonism, edited by Latayne Scott. Personal testimonies of eight ex-Mormons, including Sandra Tanner. Price: $8.00

Basic Christianity, by John R. Stott. A brief examination of the claims of Christ and our response to His call. Price: $5.00

Mormons Answered Verse by Verse, by David Reed and John Farkas. Price: $7.00

New Testament Documents—Are They Reliable? by F. F. Bruce. A well-researched book by a Greek scholar showing the reliability of the translation of the N.T. Price: $5.95

Mere Christianity, by C. S. Lewis. Good defense and explanation of Christianity. Price: $8.00

Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons, by Pastor Mark Cares. Good introduction to Mormon culture and beliefs, with helpful insights on witnessing. Price: $11.00


After Mormonism What? Reclaiming the Ex-Mormon’s Worldview for Christ, by Latayne Scott. Price: $8.00


UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY
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LEGACY: A DISTORTED VIEW OF MORMON HISTORY

The Mormon Church’s official magazine, The Ensign, printed the following in 1993:

Imagine that you have just completed a tour of Temple Square in the heart of Salt Lake City, Utah. The guide suggests that you walk across the street and view Legacy, a new motion picture shown exclusively at the Joseph Smith Memorial Building. . . .

You decide to visit the building and view the film. As you walk into the 500-seat theater, sit down, and see the 31-foot by 62-foot screen before you, you suspect that Legacy will be no ordinary motion picture. And you are right.

Lights dim, and Legacy, produced under the direction of the First Presidency, begins. Original music . . . performed by the Tabernacle Choir and the Utah Symphony, fills the theater on six-channel surround sound. The images on the huge screen before you are sharper and brighter than you have ever seen—the result of being filmed on 70-millimeter film at an accelerated frame rate. At the same time you are viewing the film in English, foreign visitors wearing headsets are listening to the film in any one of four languages . . . via an infrared transmitter system built into the theater.

Soon you realize that the story and spirit of Legacy are as powerful and different as its technical advances. . . . Through Legacy we can be totally swept away in time and space as we meet early members of the Church—trek with them across the prairies, cry with them as they bury their dead, and rejoice with them as they marry and have children. . . . Most of the dialogue spoken by the main characters came from pioneer journals or letters. Everything the Prophet Joseph Smith says in the film is quoted from something that he actually said or wrote.

As the lights in the theater come back on, you realize that Legacy is more than a review of historical facts—it is a journey of the human heart back through time, an opportunity to figuratively walk alongside the early Saints and, with them, discover our own legacy of faith. (The Ensign, July, 1993, pages 32, 34)

IT MAKES YOU CRY!

The authors of this newsletter, Jerald and Sandra Tanner, were told that Legacy is such a powerful film that it brings many people to tears. Since we write about Mormon history, we felt
that we should take the time to see this film. In addition, we thought it would be especially interesting to us because it purports to tell the “legacy” of our own ancestors—Sandra is the great-great-granddaughter of the Mormon prophet Brigham Young, who brought the Mormons to Utah, and Jerald is a descendant of John Tanner, who helped the prophet Joseph Smith in the early days of Mormonism.

To say that this is a “powerful” film seems to be an understatement. The film vividly shows scenes after scene of Mormons being persecuted or murdered. We were, in fact, deeply moved by Legacy and found it very difficult to hold the tears back. The acting in the movie is excellent and the scenery is beautiful.

Unfortunately, however, there is a down side to this impressive movie. The film does not accurately portray Mormon history because it only shows one side of the story. It entirely omits the reasons why the early Mormons were driven from place to place. For example, the film shows the mob destroying the Mormon printing press in Independence, Missouri, and the people being driven out. What the film fails to show, however, is that before the trouble occurred Joseph Smith gave revelations indicating that the Mormons would possess the land owned by the old settlers.

In one of his revelations Joseph Smith revealed that Independence was the “center place” of Zion: “Wherefore, this is the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion. And thus saith the Lord your God... Behold, the place which is now called Independence is the center place; and a spot for the temple is lying westward, upon a lot which is not far from the courthouse” (Doctrine and Covenants 57:2-3).

In another revelation Joseph Smith quoted the Lord as saying: “And thus, even as I have said, if ye are faithful ye shall assemble yourselves together to rejoice upon the land of Missouri, which is the land of your inheritance, which is now the land of your enemies” (Doctrine and Covenants 52:42).

In still another revelation we find that those who opposed Mormonism would be “plucked out”: “And the rebellious shall be cut out of the land of Zion, and shall be sent away, and shall not inherit the land. For, verily I say that the rebellious are not of the blood of Ephraim, wherefore they shall be plucked out” (Doctrine and Covenants 64:35-36).

While we feel the mob’s actions cannot be justified, it is certainly understandable that the old settlers would be upset with the influx of Mormons who claimed they were sent by God to take over the land. For example, if a large flood of immigrants were to suddenly come into a city like Logan, Utah, proclaiming that God had given them the city because it was the land of their inheritance, it is likely that the Mormons who lived there would be very concerned about the matter. Although the Mormons are a peaceful people, it is likely that under these circumstances serious problems might develop.

David Whitmer, who was one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, wrote the following:

The main reason why the printing press was destroyed, was because they published the Book of Commandments. It fell into the hands of the world, and the people of Jackson county, Missouri, saw from the revelations that they were considered by the church as intruders upon the land of Zion, as enemies to the church, and that they should be cut off out of the land of Zion and sent away. The people seeing these things in the Book of Commandments became the more enraged, tore down the printing press, and drove the church out of Jackson county. (An Address to All Believers in Christ, by David Whitmer, Richmond, Missouri, 1887, page 54)

Since Joseph Smith had put his prophetic reputation on the line by claiming that the Lord had told him that Independence would be the “center place” of Zion, he was unable to admit defeat. Consequently, he decided to try to reinstate the Mormons in Jackson County by making war on the wicked “Gentiles” (i.e., non-Mormons) who had thwarted his plans. Smith even claimed that on December 16, 1833, he received a revelation from God to attack his enemies:

And now, I will show unto you a parable, that you may know my will concerning the redemption of Zion. A certain nobleman had a spot of land, very choice

And the enemy came by night, and broke down the hedge; and the servants were affrighted, and fled; and the enemy destroyed their works...

And the lord of the vineyard said unto one of his servants: Go and gather together the residue of my servants, and take all the strength of mine house, which are my warriors...

And go ye straightway unto the land of my vineyard; for it is mine; I have bought it with money.

Therefore, get ye straightway unto my land, break down the walls of mine enemies; throw down their tower, and scatter their watchmen.

And inasmuch as they gather together against you, avenge me of mine enemies, that by and by I may come with the residue of mine house and possess the land. (Doctrine and Covenants 101:43-44, 51, 55-58)

Another revelation given by Joseph Smith stated that “the redemption of Zion must needs come by power; Therefore I will raise up unto my people a man [later identified as Joseph Smith], who shall lead them like as Moses led the children of Israel... . Therefore let my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., say... . Gather yourselves together unto the land of Zion... . And inasmuch as mine enemies come against you... . ye shall curse them... . And my presence will be with you even in avenging me of mine enemies... .” (Doctrine and Covenants 103:15-16, 22, 24, 26).

Joseph Smith was able to raise the army as he was commanded. It was referred to as “Zion’s Camp.” Significantly, however, his attempt to “break down the walls of mine enemies; throw down their tower, and scatter their watchmen” completely failed. Reed Peck commented as follows in a manuscript written in 1839:

In accordance with the interpretation of this parable Joseph Smith called for volunteers collected about 210 “Warriors” and marched to Clay County under arms, but the cholera on the second day after their arrival dispersed them and all hopes were destroyed of “redeem[ing] Zion” for the present, but to console the Mormons under this disappointment, Joseph Smith, before he returned from the campaign prophesied publicly to them, that “within three years they should march to Jackson County and there should not be a dog to open his mouth against them”... (The Reed Peck Manuscript, page 3)
Mormon writer Max Parkin observed: “The Camp, however, failed to accomplish its objective of reinstating the distressed Saints and it further aided in festering the sore of unpopular public opinion the Mormons already had in Ohio” (Conflict at Kirtland, 1966, page 129).

None of Joseph Smith’s prophecies regarding the redemption of Zion came to pass and there seems to be little hope that the Mormons will ever possess the land.

Unfortunately, the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith never seemed to learn how to get along with those he called “Gentiles.” Consequently, there was conflict everywhere he led the Saints. After the affair at Independence, Smith tried very hard to make Kirtland, Ohio, an important center for Mormonism. The church’s publication, Messenger and Advocate, April 1837, vol. 3, page 488, stated that Joseph Smith gave “a prophesy saying this place must be built up, and would be built up, and that every brother that would take hold and help secure and discharge those contracts that had been made, should be rich.”

John Whitmer, one of the eight witnesses to the Book of Mormon, wrote the following in his history of the church: “In the fall of 1836, Joseph Smith, Jun., S. Rigdon and others of the leaders of the Church at Kirtland, Ohio, established a bank for the purpose of speculation, and the whole church partook of the same spirit . . . .” (John Whitmer’s History, chapter 20, pages 21-22). Although Joseph Smith encouraged his followers to support this bank, the Mormon writer John J. Stewart had to admit that the Kirtland Safety Society, “became bankrupt” (Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet, 1966, page 110). Mormon historian B.H. Roberts commented: “The “Kirtland Safety Society” enterprise ended disastrously” (Comprehensive History of the Church, vol. 1, pages 401-402).

Joseph Smith’s prophecy that Kirtland would be built up by the Mormons completely failed, and instead of the people becoming rich, many of them became destitute. According to the History of the Church, vol. 3, page 1, Joseph Smith was “obliged to flee . . . . on horseback, to escape mob violence . . . .” Smith left Ohio owing thousands of dollars to his creditors. Mormon writers Marvin S. Hill, C. Keith Rooker, and Larry T. Wimmer acknowledge that Joseph Smith’s big financial mistake was setting up an “unchartered bank”:

In the past it has been suggested by most Mormon authors that the reason for the lack of a charter was religious persecution. Joseph Smith himself declared “Because we were ‘Mormons,’ the legislature raised some frivolous excuses on which they refused to grant us those banking privileges they so freely granted to others.” There is little evidence that the Church in this instance was subject to religious persecution . . . . In 1835, all requests for additional charters were refused, while in 1836 only one of seventeen requests was granted. . . . just over a month after the restructuring of the Society and its commencement of business, law suits were commenced against Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and others seeking a forfeiture judgment in the sum of $1,000 against each defendant for alleged violations of the 1816 Ohio statute prohibiting unauthorized banking . . . . The Smith and Rigdon cases were tried by a jury in October 1837, resulting in a judgment of $1,000 plus small costs against each. . . .

Examination of the court records establishes that Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were properly charged, tried by jury, and found to have violated the statute. This finding, of course, implicitly held the entire Society activity wholly unlawful, and made it impossible for it to survive, even had survival been otherwise possible. . . . The inability of the bank to meet his expectations and its eventual failure cost him (Joseph Smith) dearly in terms of credibility and personal resources. . . . While he may have been encouraged in his decision by various groups, and by bad professional advice from lawyers, ultimately the responsibility for the decision to proceed with the bank was his. . . . In the face of numerous lawsuits and threats upon his life, Joseph Smith chose the alternative of fleeing Kirtland—a personal defeat since he fled not only creditors, but also had to leave behind the temple and the community he had gathered. (Brigham Young University Studies, Summer 1977, pages 437-38, 458)

The fact that Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were both fined $1,000 for engaging in this “unlawful” activity may not seem too serious until a person considers the fact that a thousand dollars was a great deal of money in the 1830’s.

Not surprisingly, Legacy, totally ignores all evidence that Joseph Smith and the early Mormons made serious mistakes and contributed to some of the situations that culminated in violence. Those who created this film seem to have been bent on giving a one-sided depiction proving that the early Mormons were always in the right and were only persecuted because they believed the Book of Mormon and followed righteous principles. While it is undoubtedly true that most of the Mormons were peaceful people who took their religion seriously, some of the leaders of the church and also some in lower positions were greedy for power and misused public trust.

QUINN’S NEW BOOK

Recently an important new book by D. Michael Quinn was published by Signature Books. It is entitled, The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power. Although the first printing of 3,000 copies sold out shortly after it appeared, the second printing is now available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry (see special offer on page 1 of this newsletter). This is a monumental work on the early history of Mormonism that throws a great deal of light on why the early Mormons seemed to draw persecution to themselves. Dr. Quinn obtained a Ph.D. in history at Yale University and was formerly Professor of American social history at the church’s Brigham Young University. He wrote at least six articles for the church’s official publication, The Ensign, and about the same number for Brigham Young University Studies. In addition, he has published some important books. He was considered one of the church’s top scholars until he dug too deeply into Mormon history.

Dr. Quinn knows a great deal about the true history of the church because he had an inside track at the Historical Department under Dr. Leonard Arrington, who was formerly Church Historian. In a speech Quinn gave in 1981, he noted that he had “spent a decade probing thousands of manuscript diaries and records of Church history” that he “never dreamed” he would see.
On January 20, 1995, Associated Press writer Vern Anderson reported the following regarding Quinn’s work:

SALT LAKE CITY (AP)—Mormons today may not recognize the contradictory, sometimes violent early church of their ancestors depicted in a new book based in part on documents the church now keeps locked up.

“Nineteenth century Mormonism was not polite,” unlike the congenial 20th century faith, says author D. Michael Quinn.

Indeed, the rough-and-ready frontier Mormonism described in Quinn’s 660-page “The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power,” bears about as much resemblance to the modern church as a prickly pear to a hothouse orchid.

The contrast helps explain the discomfiture of later generations of Mormon leaders with aspects of the early church founded in 1830 by Joseph Smith. Quinn details how that unease led to official doctoring of the historical record after Smith’s death in 1844. . . .

Quinn’s book . . . is based on 30 years of research in Mormon history. And for 15 of those years, Quinn enjoyed free access to the vast archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Since 1986, however, church leaders, unhappy with the secular bent of the so-called New Mormon History, have sharply restricted access.

“My experience in the early 1970s was like a kid in a candy store. Every day was Christmas,” Quinn recalled in an interview. “I had no idea at the time I would be the only outside researcher who ever saw these documents. Years later, I saw that was the case.”

What he found there, and in many other archives, was the ingredients for a “warts and all” revisionist history that startlingly supplements the sanitized official accounts—designed to be faith-promoting—that are familiar to most Mormons.

For example: . . . In attempting to establish his kingdom of God, Smith embraced a set of what Quinn calls “theocratic ethics” that placed Mormon priesthood authority above civil law. At times, primarily after Smith’s death, those ethics sanctioned public denials of actual events, counterfeiting and stealing from non-Mormons, threats and physical attacks against dissenters, killing and castration of sex offenders, murdering of anti-Mormons and bribery of government officials. (Herald and News, Klamath Falls, Oregon, January 20, 1995)

D. Michael Quinn’s desire to tell the truth about Mormon history eventually cost him his membership in the Mormon Church. Mormon scholar Allen Roberts wrote:

Leaders repeatedly make it clear that they alone are authoritative in matters of church policy and belief. Even in the area of history, leaders attempt to control depictions of the Mormon past, advocating “faithful history” and condemning historical findings, however true, revealing information contrary to the sanitized, apologetic, church-approved histories. Quinn, for one, was not excommunicated because his history writing was inaccurate. He was cut off because his findings did not reinforce pictures the church has painted of its past. (Private Eye Weekly, October 20, 1993, page 12)

A FIGHTING PROPHET

In his book, The Mormon Hierarchy, Quinn points out that as time went on Joseph Smith became progressively concerned about having a large army and sought for military power:

Zion’s Camp did not redeem Zion, but it transformed Mormon leadership and culture. In February 1834, the Kirtland high council elected Joseph Smith as “commander-in-chief of the armies of Israel.” This was one of the first acts of the newly organized high council which thus acknowledged Smith’s religious right to give God’s command to “go out unto battle against any nation, kindred, tongue, or people.” Zion’s Camp was the first organization established for the external security of Mormonism. A year later, the military experience of Zion’s Camp (rather than any ecclesiastical service) was the basis upon which Smith said he was selecting men for the newly organized Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the Seventy. Unlike other American denominations, “the church militant” was a literal fact in Mormonism, not just a symbolic slogan. (The Mormon Hierarchy, page 85)

Unlike the gentle and soft spoken man shown in Legacy, Joseph Smith was without question a fighting prophet. He not only liked to wrestle and prove his strength, but he sometimes kicked people and struck them very hard. D. Michael Quinn observed that Smith was a “church president who physically assaulted both Mormons and non-Mormons for insulting him . . .” (The Mormon Hierarchy, pages 261-262).

Under the date of March 11, 1843, we find this entry in Joseph Smith’s History: “In the evening, when pulling sticks, I pulled up Justus A. Morse, the strongest man in Ramus, with one hand” (History of the Church, vol. 5, page 302). Two days later the following was recorded: “Monday, 13.—I wrestled with William Wall, the most expert wrestler in Ramus, and threw him” (Ibid., 302). Under the date of June 30, 1843, we find this: “I feel as strong as a giant. I pulled sticks with the men coming along, and I pulled up with one hand the strongest man that could be found. Then two men tried, but they could not pull me up . . .” (Ibid., page 466).

Mrs. Mary Ettie V. Smith claimed that “the Prophet Joseph Smith had one day broken the leg of my brother Howard, while wrestling . . .” (Mormonism: Its Rise, Progress, And Present Condition, page 52).

John D. Lee related that one day Joseph Smith and some of his men were wrestling. Because it was “the Sabbath day” Sidney Rigdon tried to break it up. Joseph Smith, however, “dragged him from the ring, bareheaded, and tore Rigdon’s fine pulpit coat from the collar to the waist; then he turned to the men and said: ‘Go in, boys, and have your fun’ ” (Confessions of John D. Lee, pages 76-78).

Jedediah M. Grant, a member of the First Presidency under Brigham Young, told of “the Baptist priest who came to see Joseph Smith. . . . the Baptist stood before him, and folding his arms said, ‘Is it possible that I now flash my optics upon a man who has conversed with my Savior?’ ‘Yes,’ says the Prophet, ‘I don’t know but you do; would not you like to wrestle with me?’ That, you see, brought the priest right on to the thrashing
floor, and he turned a Somerset right straight. After he had whirled round a few times, like a duck shot in the head, he concluded that his piety had been awfully shocked. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 3, pages 66-67).

While this may have seemed funny to President Grant, Joseph Smith had a violent temper which could lead to physical violence. His close friend Benjamin F. Johnson made this observation after Smith’s death:

And yet, although so social and even convivial at times, he would allow no arrogance or undue liberties. Criticisms, even by his associates, were rarely acceptable. Contradictions would arouse in him the lion at once. By no one of his fellows would he be superseded. . . one or another of his associates were more than once, for their impudence, helped from the congregation by his foot.

. . . He soundly thrashed his brother William . . . While with him in such fraternal, social and sometimes convivial moods, we could not then so fully realize the greatness and majesty of his calling. (Letter by Benjamin F. Johnson to Elder George S. Gibbs, 1903, as printed in The Testimony of Joseph Smith’s Best Friend, pages 4-5)

Mormon writer Max Parkin refers to a court case against Joseph Smith in which Calvin Stoddard, Joseph Smith’s brother-in-law, testified that, “Smith then came up and knocked him in the forehead with his flat hand—the blow knocked him down, when Smith repeated the blow four or five times, very hard—made him blind—that Smith afterwards came to him and asked his forgiveness . . .” (Conflict at Kirtland, citing from the Painesville Telegraph, June 26, 1835).

Parkin also quotes Luke S. Johnson, who served as an apostle in the early Mormon Church, as saying that when a minister insulted Joseph Smith at Kirtland, Ohio, Smith, “boxed his ears with both hands, and turning his face towards the door, kicked him into the street,” for the man’s lack of charity” (Ibid., page 268).

In the History of the Church for the year 1843, we read of two fights Joseph Smith had in Nauvoo:

Josiah Butterfield came to my house and insulted me so outrageously that I kicked him out of the house, across the yard, and into the street. (History of the Church, vol. 5, page 316)

Bagby called me a liar, and picked up a stone to throw at me, which so enraged me that I followed him a few steps, and struck him two or three times. Esquire Daniel H. Wells stepped between us and succeeded in separating us. . . I rode down to Alderman Whitney . . . he imposed a fine which I paid, and then returned to the political meeting. (Ibid., page 524)

On August 13, 1843, Joseph Smith admitted that he had tried to choke Walter Bagby: “I met him, and he gave me some abusive language, taking up a stone to throw at me: I seized him by the throat to choke him off” (Ibid., page 531).

After he became president of the Mormon Church, Brigham Young commented, “if you had the Prophet Joseph to deal with, you would think that I am quite mild. . . He would not bear the usage I have borne, and would appear as though he would tear down all the houses in the city, and tear up trees by the roots, if men conducted to him in the way they have to me” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 8, pages 317-318).

While Mormon writer John J. Stewart claimed that Joseph Smith was “perhaps the most Christ-like man to live upon the earth since Jesus himself,” this conclusion is not supported by Joseph Smith’s History: “I am not so much a ‘Christian’ as many suppose I am. When a man undertakes to ride me for a horse, I feel disposed to kick up and throw him off, and ride him” (History of the Church, vol. 5, page 335).

In addition to choking, kicking people out of houses and churches, knocking them in the head, boxing their ears, and tearing their clothing, the evidence indicates that he threatened people’s lives. Dr. Quinn reported the following:

In an incident about which Smith’s personal diary and official history are completely silent, he was acquitted in June 1837 of conspiring to murder anti-Mormon Grandson Newell. The silence may be due to the fact that two of Smith’s supporting witnesses in the case, both apostles, acknowledged that the prophet discussed with them the possibility of killing Newell. Apostle Orson Hyde testified that “Smith seemed much excited and declared that Newell should be put out of the way, or where the crows could not find him; he said destroying Newell would be justifiable in the sight of God, that it was the will of God, &c.” Hyde tried to be helpful by adding that he had “never heard Smith use similar language before,”. . . Apostle Luke S. Johnson acknowledged to the court that Smith had said “if Newell or any other man should head a mob against him, they ought to be put out of the way, and it would be our duty to do so.” However, Johnson also affirmed: “I believe Smith to be a tender-hearted, humane man.” Whether or not the court agreed with that assessment, the judge acquitted Smith because there was insufficient evidence to support the charge of conspiracy to commit murder. (The Mormon Hierarchy, pages 91-92)

One of the biggest problems that confronted Joseph Smith was disension within the ranks of his own church. Mormon historical records demonstrate that Smith not only felt that he was superior in physical strength to most men, but he also believed he had the inside track with God. He even went so far as to boast that he had been more successful than Jesus Himself in setting up a church:

If they want a beardless boy to whip all the world, I will get on the top of a mountain and crow like a rooster: I shall always beat them. . . I have more to boast of than ever any man had. I am the only man that has ever been able to keep a whole church together since the days of Adam. A large majority of the whole have stood by me. Neither Paul, John, Peter, nor Jesus ever did it. I boast that no man ever did such a work as I. The followers of Jesus ran away from Him, but the Latter-day Saints never ran away from me yet. (History of the Church, vol. 6, pages 408-409)

With an exalted attitude like that it is easy to believe that Joseph Smith would have trouble with many people. As his friend Benjamin F. Johnson pointed out, “Contradictions would arouse in him the lion at once.” Instead of handling things in a calm and orderly way, he would often resort to violence, name calling, and slander. This, of course, made many enemies within and without the church.
This is far different than the way the Mormon leaders operate today. For example, since October, 1993, the church has been purging prominent scholars and feminists who have written things that embarrass the church. The leaders, in fact, have taken an uncompromising stand against those who wish to tell the unvarnished truth about church history and other issues. Many scholars were questioned, and some were either excommunicated or disfellowshipped from the church. The purge has continued, and in December, 1994, Brent Metcalfe, editor of *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon,* was excommunicated for questioning the authenticity of Joseph Smith’s Book of Mormon.

While it is true that some church scholars connected with Brigham Young University and FARMS have belittled the scholars who have been reprimanded or excommunicated, the top leaders of the church have been rather careful not to further antagonize those who have been disciplined.

Joseph Smith, on the other hand, did everything he could to blacken the character of those he perceived as enemies. Even the publications of the church were often used to make slanderous and insulting accusations against those who objected to the way Smith handled things. Joseph Smith even went so far as to attack the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon in a letter he wrote “to the Church” on December 16, 1838: “Such characters as McLellin, John Whitmer, David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, and Martin Harris are too mean to mention; and we had liked to have forgotten them” (*History of the Church,* vol. 3, page 232). David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, and Martin Harris, of course, were the three special witnesses to the Book of Mormon, and John Whitmer was one of the set of eight additional witnesses who bore witness to the existence of the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was “translated.”

In the same letter Joseph Smith called David Whitmer a “dumb ass”: I would remember William E. McLellin, who . . . professes to be much of a prophet, has no other *dumb ass to ride but David Whitmer . . .* he brays out cursings instead of blessings. Poor ass! Whoever lives to see it, *will see him and his rider perish* like those who perished in the gainsaying of Korah, or after the same condemnation” (*Ibid.*, page 228).

While the early Mormon people bitterly complained when the “Gentiles” drove them out, they did exactly *the same thing to some of their own people* when they opposed Joseph Smith’s plans. In June, 1838, three of the Book of Mormon witnesses, former apostle Lyman E. Johnson, and William W. Phelps were sent a *very threatening letter* which accused them of serious crimes and ordered them to leave Far West, Missouri, at once. D. Michael Quinn shows that this letter was authorized by some of the highest leaders in the Mormon Church:

> On 17 June 1838, first counselor Sidney Rigdon preached his “Salt Sermon” as a *warning that Mormon dissenters would “be cast out and trodden under foot of men.” . . .* Rigdon was restating what a revelation of February 1834 had authorized the First Presidency to do to Mormons who “hearken not to observe all my words” (*D&C* 103:8-10). The next day second counselor Hyrum Smith and his Uncle John Smith (assistant counselor in First Presidency) joined with Danite leader Sampson Avard (as first signer) and eighty other Danites in a threatening letter to Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, John Whitmer, Lyman E. Johnson, and William W. Phelps . . .

Regarding this Danite expulsion of prominent Mormon dissenters, Counselor Rigdon told Apostle Orson Hyde at Far West that “it was the imperative duty of the Church to obey the word of Joseph Smith, or the presidency, without question or inquiry, and that if there were any that would not, they should have their throats cut from ear to ear.” (*The Mormon Hierarchy*, page 94)

The reader will notice the Quinn claims over eighty “Danites” signed the letter. The noted Mormon writer William E. Berrett explained:

> Such a band as the “Danites” did exist, as historians affirm; but that Joseph Smith had nothing to do with it and exposed the participants when he became aware of it, is equally well-confirmed. History further affirms that Dr. Avard himself was the author of the organization . . . The organization had been for the purpose of *plundering and murdering the enemies of the Saints.* (*The Restored Church*, 1958, pages 197-198)

Although there has always been a great deal of evidence that the Danite Band existed and that Joseph Smith was involved in it, many Mormon scholars were unable to face the serious implications of admitting the prophet was involved in this nefarious organization. The Joseph Smith journals, which contained important information regarding the Danites, were suppressed by the church leaders for about 140 years. Fortunately, however, we obtained access to a microfilmed copy of these diaries in 1976, and H. Michael Marquardt began to transcribe them. Eventually, with Marquardt’s careful work of transcription, we were able to print the extant diaries from 1832 to 1839.

When Mr. Marquardt was transcribing the 1838 diary, he made a very significant discovery concerning Joseph Smith’s involvement with the Danites. He found a portion of the diary which had been crossed out in a deliberate attempt to hide the fact that the Danites were a church organization which Joseph Smith supported. Although it was difficult work, Marquardt was able to transcribe a good portion of the material which someone had tried to obliterate. Since Mr. Marquardt did not have access to the original Joseph Smith diary, he was unable to transcribe all of the words.

Fortunately, in 1988 Mormon scholars Dean C. Jessee and David J. Whittaker published the important entry in Joseph Smith’s journal. Since Jessee and Whittaker were able to transcribe portions of the entry which Marquardt could not read, it seems obvious that they worked from the original journal. We do know, in fact, that for many years Jessee has been allowed access to the original Joseph Smith diaries. In any case, the two Mormon scholars quote Joseph Smith’s journal as saying:

> Some time past the brethren or Saints have come up day after day to consecrate, and to bring their offerings into the store house of the lord, to prove him now herewith and see[e] if he will not pour us out a blessing that there will not
be room enough to contain it. They have come up hither. Thus far, according to the order <Rev?> of the Danites, we have a company of Danites in these times, to put right physically that which is not right, and to cleanse the Church of very great evils which hitherto existed among us insomuch as they cannot be put to right by teachings & persuasions. This company or a part of them exhibited on the fourth day of July [illegible word] They come up to consecrate by companies of tens, commanded by their captain over ten. (Brigham Young University Studies, Winter 1988, page 14)

The threatening letter the Danites sent to the dissenters contained the following:

To Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, John Whitmer, William W. Phelps, and Lyman E. Johnson, greeting:

Whereas the citizens of Caldwell county have borne with the abuse received from you at different times . . . until it is no longer to be endured . . . out of the county you shall go, and no power shall save you. . . . there is but one decree for you, which is depart, depart, or a more fatal calamity shall befall you . . . we will put you from the county of Caldwell: so help us God. (Letter quoted in Senate Document 189, February 15, 1841, pages 6-9)

Book of Mormon witness John Whitmer, who was threatened by the Danites in the letter cited above, wrote the following in his history of the church:

Joseph Smith, Jr., S. Rigdon, and Hyrum Smith moved their families to this place, Far West, in the spring of 1838. As soon as they came here, they began to enforce their new organized plan, which caused dissensions and difficulties, threatenings and even murders. Smith called a council of the leaders together, in which council he stated that any person who said a word against the heads of the Church, should be driven over these prairies as a chased deer by a pack of hounds, having an illusion to the Gideonites, as they were termed, to justify themselves in their wicked designs. Thus on the 19th of June, 1838, they preached a sermon called the salt sermon, in which these Gideonites understood that they should drive the dissenters, as they termed those who believed not in their secret bands, in fornication, adultery or midnight machinations. . . . They had threatened us, to kill us, if we did not make restitutions to them, by upholding them in their wicked purposes and designs. . . . to our great astonishment, when we were on the way home from Liberty, Clay County, we met the families of Oliver Cowdery and L. E. Johnson, whom they had driven from their homes, and robbed them of all their goods, save clothing, bedding, etc.

While we were gone Jo. and Rigdon and their band of Gadolions kept up a guard, and watched our houses, and abused our families, and threatened them, if they were not gone by morning, they would be drove out, and threatened our lives, if they ever saw us in Far West. (John Whitmer’s History, page 22)

Book of Mormon witness David Whitmer, who was also threatened in the letter from the Danites, gave this information about the troubles in Far West:

If you believe my testimony to the Book of Mormon; if you believe that God spake to us three witnesses by his own voice, then I tell you that in June, 1838, God spake to me again by his own voice from the heavens, and told me to “separate myself from among the Latter Day Saints, for as they sought to do unto me, so should it be done unto them.” In the spring of 1838, the heads of the church and many of the members had gone deep into error and blindness. I had been striving with them for a long time to show them the errors into which they were drifting, and for my labors I received only persecutions. In June, 1838, at Far West, Mo., a secret organization was formed. Doctor Avard being put in as the leader of the band; a certain oath was to be administered to all the brethren to bind them to support the heads of the church in everything they should teach. All who refused to take this oath were considered dissenters from the church, and certain things were to be done concerning these dissenters, by Dr. Avard’s secret band. I make no farther statements now; but suffice it to say that my persecutions, for trying to show them their errors, became of such a nature that I had to leave the Latter Day Saints; and, as I rode on horseback out of Far West, in June, 1838, the voice of God from heaven spake to me as I have stated above[.] (An Address to All Believers in Christ, by David Whitmer, pages 27-28)

This statement by one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon poses a real problem for Mormon apologists. Those who reject Whitmer’s statement that, “God spake to me again by his own voice from the heavens, and told me to ‘separate myself from among the Latter Day Saints,’” are forced to conclude that one of the most important witnesses to the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon printed a false account of God telling him to “separate” himself from the Mormons. Significantly, although Whitmer still believed in the Book of Mormon, he was convinced that Joseph Smith was a false prophet and never returned to the Mormon Church.

However this may be, the fact that the Mormon leaders violated the civil rights of their own people by driving out dissenters from their midst caused many non-Mormons to conclude that they were dealing with a very dangerous group. As they heard reports by those who were driven out, they became increasingly fearful of the Mormons.

Legacy completely skirted around this important issue which contributed to the conflict. Furthermore, absolutely nothing was said about the secret band of Danites and the fear they created among those who lived near the Mormons.

In addition, the film has a scene showing Lilburn W. Boggs, who was governor of Missouri, issuing an “extermination order” on October 27, 1838. Governor Boggs wrote: “The Mormons must be treated as enemies, and must be exterminated or driven from the State if necessary, for the public peace” (The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints, by Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, 1979, page 44).

While it is true that Governor Boggs did issue such a deplorable order, there is much more to the story. Actually,
President Sidney Rigdon, who was “set apart March 18, 1833, as first counselor in the First Presidency by Joseph Smith” (see Essentials in Church History, 1942, page 660) suggested that there could be “a war of extermination” three months prior to the time Boggs issued his order. On July 4, 1838, President Rigdon delivered a very inflammatory speech. Mormon historian B.H. Roberts commented: “This oration by Sidney Rigdon has always been severely criticized as containing passages that were ill-advised and vehemently bitter. Especially those passages which threatened a **war of extermination** upon mobs should they again arise to plague the saints” (History of the Church, vol. 3, page 42, footnote).

An extract from Rigdon’s speech is published in Roberts’ Comprehensive History of the Church, vol. 1, page 441. After speaking of the persecution that church members had suffered, President Rigdon went on to say:

“But from this day and this hour we will suffer it no more. We take God and all the holy angels to witness, this day, that we warn all men, in the name of Jesus Christ to come on us no more for ever, from this hour we will bear it no more; our rights shall no more be trampled on with impunity; the man, or the set of men who attempt it, do it at the expense of their lives. And that mob that comes on us to disturb us, it **shall be between us and them a war of extermination**; for we will follow them until the last drop of their blood is spilled; or else they will have to exterminate us, for we will carry the seat of war to their own houses and their own families, and one party or the other shall be utterly destroyed. . . . We this day, then, proclaim ourselves free with a purpose and determination that never can be broken, No, never! No, Never! No, never!”

One page 443, of the same volume, B. H. Roberts acknowledged that Joseph Smith himself approved of the speech:

The **unwisdom of the utterance** has been quite generally recognized by our writers, and by them responsibility for it has been placed upon the rather fervid imagination of Sidney Rigdon, who delivered the speech, and who quite generally is supposed to have been mainly or wholly responsible for it. This is **not true**. The speech was carefully prepared . . . and read by other presiding elders of the church before its delivery. It immediately appeared in The Far West, a weekly newspaper . . . and was also published . . . on the press of the Elders’ Journal. **Joseph Smith in his journal speaks of it approvingly**; and in the Elders’ Journal, of which he was the editor, and in the editorial columns under his name, the speech is approvingly recommended to the saints. In view of these facts, if the “declaration” was of doubtful propriety, and unwise and impolitic, responsibility for it rests not alone on Sidney Rigdon, but upon the authorities of the church who approved it, and the people who accepted it by their acclamation.

When Sidney Rigdon later fell into a state of apostasy, the other Mormon leaders tried to blame him for their troubles in Missouri. President Brigham Young went so far as to state: “Elder Rigdon was **the prime cause of our troubles in Missouri**, by his fourth of July oration” (Times and Seasons, vol. 5, page 667).

There can be no doubt that Joseph Smith and other Mormon leaders made a serious mistake when they approved Rigdon’s speech. This speech undoubtedly helped trigger the violence that erupted in Missouri.

During the conflict that ensued Joseph Smith’s Danites were engaged in plundering and burning houses. Smith, however, denied the plundering and asserted that the anti-Mormons “**fired**” their own houses “and then reported to the authorities of the state that the ‘Mormons’ were burning and destroying all before them” (History of the Church, vol. 3, pages 163-164). His brother Hyrum also charged that the anti-Mormons, “not being able to incense the ‘Mormons’ to commit crimes, they had recourse to this stratagem to set their houses on fire . . . the ‘Mormons’ **did not set them on fire** . . .” (Ibid., pages 408-409).

Unfortunately, neither Joseph nor Hyrum were telling the truth about this matter. The evidence concerning the burning of houses and plundering by the Mormons is irrefutable. Statements made by faithful members of the church provide devastating evidence against the statements made by Joseph and Hyrum Smith. For example, Benjamin F. Johnson, a Danite, who later served on Joseph Smith’s highly secret Council of Fifty, commented:

I started . . . and fell into rank with a company of near twenty mounted men . . . I soon learned our destination was to Taylor’s on Grand River, about nine miles above, where it was said arms and ammunition were held for the use of the mob. . . . There were two men with a number of women and children, and all affirmed that there was nothing of the kind there. . . . Our captain ordered a search in the cornfields . . . which soon resulted in the discovery of arms and ammunition and of their falsehoods. The females hastily took from the houses what they could carry, and here I might say there was almost a trial of my faith in my pity for our enemies . . . Among the women was one, young married and apparently near her confinement, and another with small children and not a wagon, and many miles away from any of their friends, and snow had begun already . . . to fall. My sympathies were drawn toward the women and children, but I would in no degree let them deter me from duty. So while others were **pillaging for something to carry away**, I was doing my best to protect . . . the lives and comfort of the families who were dependent on getting away upon horseback. . . . While others were doing the **burning and plunder**, my mission was of mercy . . . Before noon we had set all on fire and left upon a circuitous route towards home. (My Life’s Review, 1947, pages 38-39)

Oliver Boardman Huntington, another faithful church member, who was only fourteen years old at the time he was initiated into the Danite order, wrote the following:

Open hostilities had previously commenced on both sides, by the mobs burning one or two houses. . . . it was my natural turn to glory in excitement . . . I wished and desired to be in the midst of the scene; and often in vain spent tears, implored my father to let me go with the scouting parties. . . . At the time that Galeton was **to be burned**, I pleaded with father to let me go; but to no effect. On the appointed day I went to the top of the hill . . . and cast my eyes in the direction of Galeton . . . and saw the smoke rising towards Heaven, which filled me with ambition, the love of excitement, tumult and something new. . . . The next day I went to Bishop
Knights and saw the plunder, and O what lots, I . . . heard them tell, in what order they took the place . . . The store they burned, but the goods were preserved. (“Oliver Boardman Huntington Journal,” pages 31-32, typed copy, Utah State Historical Society)

Speaking of the Danites, D. Michael Quinn noted that, “As of 4 September 1838, Danite John N. Sapp estimated their number at 800-1,000” (The Mormon Hierarchy, page 479). Through his meticulous research Quinn has identified about 230 of these Danites by name (Ibid., pages 479-485). Quinn’s book has some important new information about the Danite band.

In our book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 428-450, we have a great deal of material regarding the Danites and their nefarious activities.

The film Legacy shows an attack on the Mormons by the Missourians at Haun’s Mill. According to Joseph Fielding Smith, who later became president of the church, seventeen people were killed (Essentials in Church History, page 235). Two of the victims were boys under ten years of age. Joseph Fielding Smith cited the History of Caldwell County which said that an old man was wounded in the attack and then “frightfully mangled.” It was reported that he was mutilated with “a rude sword, or corn knife” (Essentials in Church History, page 235). On the same page, Smith spoke of “the diabolical deeds” of the members of the militia. He did, however, acknowledge on page 234 that “the executioners were principally seeking for the men, and let most of the women escape.”

There is, of course, no way that a person can justify this bloody deed. Dr. Quinn was very disturbed by the “brutality of the anti-Mormon” militia that “attacked the LDS settlement at Haun’s Mill,” but he put the matter into perspective by showing that the action of the Danites at the Battle of Crooked River led to the slaughter at Haun’s Mill:

In the skirmishes that both sides called “battles,” Mormons used deadly force without reluctance. Benjamin F. Johnson wrote that Danite leader (and future apostle) Lyman Wight told his men to pray concerning their Missouri enemies: “That God would Damn them & give us pow[er] to Kill them.” Likewise, at the beginning of the Battle of Crooked River . . . Apostle David W. Patten (a Danite captain with the code-name “Fear Not”) told his men: “Go ahead, boys; rake them down.” The highest ranking Mormon charged with murder for obeying this order was Apostle Parley P. Pratt who allegedly took the careful aim of a sniper in killing one Missourian and then severely wounding militiaman Samuel Tarwater. This was after Apostle Patten received a fatal stomach wound. In their fury at the sight of their fallen leader, some of the Danites mutilated the unconscious Tarwater “with their swords striking him lengthwise in the mouth, cutting off his under teeth, and breaking his lower jaw; cutting off his cheeks . . . and leaving him [for] dead.” He survived to press charges against Pratt for attempted murder. . . .

A generally unacknowledged dimension of both the extermination order and the Haun’s Mill massacre, however, is that they resulted from Mormon actions in the Battle of Crooked River. Knowingly or not, Mormons had attacked state troops, and this had a cascade effect. Local residents feared annihilation: “We know not the hour or minute we will be laid in ashes,” a local minister and county clerk wrote the day after the battle. “For God’s sake give us assistance as quick as possible.” Correspondingly, the attack on state troops weakened the position of Mormon friends in Missouri’s militia and government. Finally, upon receiving news of the injuries and death of state troops at Crooked River, Governor Boggs immediately drafted his extermination order on 27 October 1838 because the Mormons “have made war upon the people of this state.” Worse, the killing of one Missourian and mutilation of another while he was defenseless at Crooked River led to the mad-dog revenge by Missourians in the slaughter at Haun’s Mill. (The Mormon Hierarchy, pages 99-100)

From the above it seems obvious that the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith made a very serious mistake when he approved Sidney Rigdon’s speech which threatened that if the Mormons were attacked, there would be “a war of extermination; for we will follow them until the last drop of their blood is spilled; or else they will have to exterminate us . . .”. Although Bogg’s order to the troops was similar to the Rigdon speech in that he incorporated the word “exterminated,” when it came right down to it, the Mormons were offered a flag of truce.

John Taylor, the third president of the Mormon Church, said that when Joseph Smith was finally pinned down by the militia (he used the word “mob”), Smith acted like he did not want the conflict to end:

Some 25 years ago, in Far West . . . there were not more than about 200 of us in the place. . . Joseph . . . then led us out to the prairie facing the mob and placed us in position; and the first thing we knew a flag of truce was seen coming towards us. . . Joseph Smith, our leader, then sent word back . . said he, “Tell your General to withdraw his troops or I will send them to hell.” I thought that was a pretty bold stand to take, as we only numbered about 200 to their 3,500 . . . (Journal of Discourses, vol. 23, page 37)

Joseph Smith’s bold attitude was undoubtedly just for show, for John Corrill related that, “Smith appeared to be much alarmed, and told me to beg like a dog for peace . . .” (A Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints, by John Corrill, 1839, page 41). Reed Peck confirmed Corrill’s statement (see our book, The Mormon Kingdom, vol. 1, page 75). This book contains a great deal of information regarding the war in Missouri and other confrontations the early Mormons had with their neighbors.

Although some Mormons were massacred at Haun’s Mill in Missouri, members of the church got their revenge in 1857 when some people from Missouri passed through Utah. In the book, The Mormon Experience, written by former Mormon Church Historian Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, we read the following about the Mountain Meadows Massacre:

The one exception was the Francher train, a company of overland immigrants from Arkansas and Missouri that passed through Utah in August 1857 just when Mormon tempers and fears were at a fever pitch. In a remote, grassy valley in the south of Utah this company was virtually annihilated by a combined force of Mormon militia and Indians. (The Mormon Experience, page 167)
The authors go on to point out that the Francher train had “a few hangers-on known as Missouri wildcats, who . . . made profane, provocative boasts that they had participated in the Haun’s Mill Massacre . . . Some 120 persons were killed by Mormon militiamen and Indians working together” (Ibid., pages 167-168).

Like the early Mormons in Missouri, the people in the Francher train were offered a flag of truce. Unfortunately, however, these early Mormons were far more treacherous than the Missourians who allowed the Mormons to leave the state. In this case the flag was only used as a means to get the people to surrender their arms so they could be slaughtered. Joseph Fielding Smith admitted:

“It was determined by those making the attack that no emigrant should live who could tell the tale. . . . [John D.] Lee induced the emigrants to surrender under the promise of protection and conveyance to a place of safety. They were led to a place where the Indians were in ambush, and at a given signal a volley of shots rang out, both Indians and white men participating in the outrage. (Essentials in Church History, page 516)

In her book, The Mountain Meadows Massacre, the noted Mormon scholar Juanita Brooks stated that although the Mormon prophet Brigham Young did not order the massacre, he “was accessory after the fact, in that he knew what had happened, and how and why it happened. Evidence of this is abundant and unmistakable, and from the most impeccable Mormon sources” (The Mountain Meadows Massacre, 1970, page 219). Brooks also reveals that Brigham Young protected the perpetrators from the law.

The journal of Wilford Woodruff, who later became the 4th president of the Mormon Church, makes it clear that while President Brigham Young publicly condemned the massacre, he actually believed that God approved of the diabolical deed:

We visited the Mountain Meadow Monument put up at the burial place of 120 persons . . . The pile of stone was about 12 feet high . . . A wooden Cross was placed on top with the following words: Vengeance is mine and I will repay that with the Lord. President Young said it should be vengeance is mine and I have taken a little. (Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 1833-1898, vol. 5, page 577)

TROUBLE IN NAUVOO

After the Mormons left Missouri they founded a city in Illinois which Joseph Smith called Nauvoo. Unfortunately, the people that moved to Nauvoo began to have serious trouble with their neighbors. One of the practices that really offended outsiders was the practice of polygamy. On July 12, 1843, Joseph Smith set forth a revelation which made it clear that he and other church members should enter into plural marriage and that the doctrine was very important for their salvation. Although Mormons no longer practice plural marriage, the current edition of the Doctrine and Covenants still has the revelation on polygamy. Section 132, verses 61-62, contains the following:

And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood—if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouses the second . . . he cannot commit adultery . . . And if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given unto him; therefore he is justified.

Mormon scholar Allen Roberts pointed out that in Legacy there has been an attempt to sanitize the history of the church:

The recent church movie, Legacy, shown in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building . . . is an example of the church approach. It portrays the life of a real historical figure, Mary Elizabeth Rawlins Lightner, and uses quotes from her actual journal. She befriended the prophet, converts to Mormonism and eventually marries a young Mormon man. What the movie doesn’t tell is that in 1842, after repeated propositions, she became one of Joseph Smith’s polygamist wives. (Private Eye Weekly, October 20, 1993, page 12)

Richard S. Van Wagoner, a Mormon who is an authority on polygamy, gives this information:

Mary Elizabeth Rollins, married to non-Mormon Adam Lightner since 11 August 1835, was one of the first women to accept the ‘cestial marriage’ teachings of the prophet. “He was commanded to take me for a wife,” she declared . . . “I was his, before I came here,” she added . . . Brigham Young secretly sealed the two in February 1842 when Mary was eight months pregnant with her son, George Algernon Lightner. She lived with Adam Lightner until his death in Utah many years later. In her 1880 letter to Emmeline B. Wells, Mary explained: “I could tell you why I stayed with Mr. Lightner. . . . I did just as Joseph told me to do, as he knew what troubles I would have to contend with.” (Mormon Polygamy: A History, 1989, page 43)

It seems clear that there was more than just polygamy involved here; Joseph Smith had obviously taken another man’s wife. D. Michael Quinn made it clear that Mary was not the only married woman Joseph Smith took: “These entries refer to Zina D. Huntington (Jacobs) and Mary Elizabeth Rollins (Lightner). Both were plural wives of Joseph Smith despite their continued marriages to other men” (The Mormon Hierarchy, page 401).

Later in Utah, Jedediah M. Grant, second counselor to President Brigham Young, gave a sermon in the Tabernacle in which he confirmed that Joseph Smith asked for other men’s wives:

When the family organization was revealed from heaven—the patriarchal order of God, and Joseph began, on the right and on the left, to add to his family, what a quaking there was in Israel. Says one brother to another, “Joseph says all covenants are done away, and none are binding but the new covenants; now suppose Joseph should come and say he wanted your wife, what would you say to that?” “I would tell him to go to hell.” This was the spirit of many in the early days of this Church. . . .

What would a man of God say, who felt aghast, when Joseph asked him for his money? He would say, “Yes, and I wish I had more to help to build up the kingdom of God.” Or if he came and said, “I want your wife?” “O yes,” he would say,
“here she is, there are plenty more.” . . . Did the Prophet Joseph want every man’s wife he asked for? He did not . . . If such a man of God should come to me and say, “I want your gold and silver, or your wives,” I should say, “Here they are, I wish I had more to give you, take all I have got.” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 2, pages 13-14)

Since most people who lived in Illinois in the 1840’s were very opposed to polygamy and adultery, Joseph Smith’s new teaching regarding “the patriarchal order of God” was bound to cause a great deal of conflict. Despite the fact that Smith attempted to hide these strange practices and even publicly denied them, leaks occurred and the secret became known. Just about a month before his death Joseph Smith was charged with adultery. The following appears in Smith’s History:

A. A. Lathrop came to my clerk, Dr. Richards, and told him an officer was on his way with an attachment for him, and that the grand jury had found a bill against me for adultery, on the testimony of William Law; he had come from Carthage in two hours and thirty minutes to bring the news. (History of the Church, vol. 6, page 403)

Not surprisingly, the film Legacy completely glossed over the reason Joseph Smith was murdered and the Mormons were forced to leave Illinois. As noted above, the film did show the wicked anti-Mormon mob destroying the Mormon printing press in Independence, Missouri. What the film failed to show was the fact that Joseph Smith ordered the destruction of a printing press in Nauvoo in a futile attempt to cover up his own questionable behavior.

In addition to the problems regarding polygamy and adultery, Joseph Smith built up a large militia which terrified the non-Mormons in Illinois. D. Michael Quinn stated:

the Nauvoo Legion was no ordinary militia. By 1842 the legion had 2,000 troops, by far the largest single militia in Illinois. Within two years, the Nauvoo Legion had nearly 3,000 soldiers. By comparison the U.S. army had less than 8,500 soldiers that year. (The Mormon Hierarchy, page 106)

A careful look at Joseph Smith’s actions in Nauvoo certainly raises a question of whether he was becoming more concerned about gaining political and military power than he was about spiritual matters. For example, in 1844 the secret Council of Fifty decided to run Joseph Smith for the presidency of the United States. Just a short time before this, Joseph Smith had stated that he did not want to participate in politics:

. . . but as my feelings revolve at the idea of having anything to do with politics, I have declined, in every instance, having anything to do on the subject. . . . I wish to be let alone, that I may attend strictly to the spiritual welfare of the Church. (History of the Church, vol. 5, page 259)

Even though Joseph Smith made this statement in 1843, in 1844 he announced that he was a candidate for the presidency of the United States. The elders of the church were actually called to electioneer for Smith. Brigham Young stated: “It is now time to have a President of the United States. Elders will be sent to preach the Gospel and electioneer” (History of the Church, vol. 6, page 322).

Joseph Smith seems to have desired to lead a large army, for he prepared a “Petition to the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States, dated 26th March, asking the privilege of raising 100,000 men to extend protection to persons wishing to settle Oregon and other portions of the territory of the United States . . .” (History of the Church, vol. 6, page 282). In this document we find the following:

Section 1. Be it ordain . . . that Joseph Smith . . . is hereby authorized and empowered to raise a company of one hundred thousand armed volunteers . . .

Sec. 2. And be it further ordained that if any person or persons shall hinder or attempt to hinder or molest the said Joseph Smith from executing his designs in raising said volunteers . . . [he] shall be punished by a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars . . . or by hard labor on some public work not exceeding two years, or both . . . (History of the Church, vol. 6, page 277)

D. Michael Quinn pointed out that the “Council of Fifty” sanctioned this “extraordinary proposal.” Obviously, this bizarre petition was rejected by Congress. In any case, this request would lead one to wonder just why Joseph Smith would want such a large army. The fact that his secret Council of Fifty was involved in the matter certainly raises some interesting questions. Why would he want an army almost twelve times larger than the U.S. Army?

A non-Mormon newspaper, The Warsaw Signal, printed the following: “How military these people are becoming! Every thing they say or do seems to breathe the spirit of military tactics. Their prophet appears, on all great occasions, in his splendid dress[,] signs his name Lieut. General, and more titles are to be found in the Nauvoo Legion, than any one book on military tactics can produce . . . Truly fighting must, be a part of the creed of these Saints” (Warsaw Signal, July 21, 1841).

To make the situation even worse, Joseph Smith went so far as to have himself ordained “King.” The noted Mormon scholar Kenneth W. Godfrey stated:

Antagonism toward the Mormon Prophet was further incited when it was correctly rumored, that he had been ordained “King over the Immediate House of Israel” by the Council of Fifty. This action was wrongly interpreted by non-Mormons to mean that he was going to attempt to overthrow the United States government by force . . . his kingly ordination only incensed the populace, and his untimely death became even more inevitable. (Brigham Young University Studies, Winter 1968, pages 212-213)

Dr. Quinn’s book contains some revealing information concerning this matter:

Two days after this general conference Smith became Mormonism’s theocratic king. The kingdom’s clerk William Clayton wrote that during the 11 April 1844 meeting “was prest. Joseph chosen as our Prophet, Priest and King by Hosannas.” Clayton did not describe what happened immediately after this secret sustaining vote by the Council of Fifty a later revelation to the Council of Fifty affirmed that God called Smith “to be a Prophet, Seer and Revelator to my Church and Kingdom; and to be a King and Ruler over Israel.” . . .
As one researcher notes, admitting only three gentiles to the Council of Fifty was certainly “a poor representation” on Smith’s part “if he expected the Council soon to be in control of the world.” . . . However, in functional terms this non-Mormon participation was an unparalleled development, because they became privy to Mormonism’s greatest secret. . . . the three non-Mormons voted for and witnessed Smith’s ordination as “King, Priest and Ruler over Israel on the Earth.” Smith believed that no one, not even non-Mormons, would disclose this event because he had administered a secrecy oath to each.

The oath of secrecy began at the preliminary meeting on 10 March when Smith’s diary stated: “Joseph required perfect secrecy of them.” By June disaffected members disclosed that: “For the time being, this was to remain a perfect secret until God should reveal to the contrary,” and they claimed that Smith “swore them all to present secrecy, under the penalty of death!” . . .

Official minutes described the Council of Fifty’s initiation ceremony as “the Charge, the name, & Key word, and the Constitution, and Penalty.” George Q. Cannon, the council’s later recorder, “read the minutes of the 1st organization which did sanction the ‘penalty.’” . . . Mention of a “Penalty” in the Council’s official minutes corroborates the 1844 claim of dissenters that the Fifty had an obligation of “secrecy, under the penalty of death.”

The Daughters of Zion (Danites) of Missouri also had passwords and a penal oath of secrecy, and former Danites accounted for one-third of the men Smith admitted into the Council of Fifty. (The Mormon Hierarchy, pages 124, 128-129)

Unfortunately for Joseph Smith, William Law, who had served in the First Presidency of the church, turned against him.

D. Michael Quinn reported:

On 10 May 1844 Smith’s former counselor William Law and his fellow religious dissenters distributed a prospectus for their newspaper, the Nauvoo Expositor. It advocated repeal of Nauvoo’s charter and proposed to reveal “gross moral imperfections” in Nauvoo. This was nothing new. . . .

However, there was a disturbing reference in the prospectus about Nauvoo’s “SELF-CONSTITUTED MONARCH.” If Smith doubted that this vague statement hinted at betrayal by one of the Fifty, he did not want to risk even the possibility of disclosure. . . . he took no action to forcibly suppress the pre-announced publication of the Expositor’s first issue the next month. Smith no longer seemed greatly concerned that the dissident publication would reveal secrets about his polygamy and would advocate repeal of Nauvoo’s charter. Such publicity did not justify his taking the risk of attacking freedom of the press.

However, he got a shock when the first issue of Nauvoo Expositor appeared on 7 June. Law and associates proclaimed: “We will not acknowledge any man as king or lawgiver.” The first issue promised that details of all its allegations would appear in the next edition. . . .

Smith realized that Council of Fifty members had betrayed him. He could not allow the Expositor to publish the secret international negotiations masterminded by Mormonism’s earthly king. . . . The Nauvoo Expositor demonstrated that one or more members had violated their “charge” and oath of secrecy, and Smith no longer trusted the Council of Fifty as an institution. Without that trust his grand designs for the Kingdom of God collapsed.

On 22 June 1844 Smith told the Clerk of the Kingdom that he could burn all the records of the Council of Fifty. The council’s King, Priest, and Ruler over Israel on Earth did not care what William Clayton did with the Fifty’s minutes, as long as they did not fall into the hands of the church’s enemies. (The Mormon Hierarchy, pages 138-140)

Joseph Smith finally concluded that the Nauvoo Expositor must be destroyed. While Smith was very worried that the Expositor would disclose the secrets of the Council of Fifty, he was also concerned about the newspaper revealing more information regarding his secret practice of polygamy. Although Joseph Smith and other Mormon leaders emphatically proclaimed that the charges concerning plural marriage were a lie, eight years after Smith’s death the church published the revelation on polygamy. The publication of this revelation proved beyond all doubt that the statements in the Expositor were true. Thus it is clear that the Expositor was condemned on the basis of false testimony given by Joseph and Hyrum Smith. A photographic reprint of the Nauvoo Expositor is available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry (see book list on page 15 of this newsletter).

In a synopsis of the proceedings of the Nauvoo City Council we find the following:

Mayor [Joseph Smith] said, if he had a City Council who felt as he did, the establishment (referring to the Nauvoo Expositor) would be declared a nuisance before night . . .

Councilor Hyrum Smith [Joseph’s brother] believed the best way was to smash the press and pi the type. (History of the Church, vol. 6, pages 441-445)

The Nauvoo City Council blindly followed Joseph Smith’s wishes and ordered the press destroyed. The following is recorded in Joseph Smith’s History under the date of June 10, 1844:

The Council passed an ordinance declaring the Nauvoo Expositor a nuisance, and also issued an order to me to abate the said nuisance. I immediately ordered the Marshal to destroy it without delay . . .

About 8 p.m., the Marshal returned and reported that he had removed the press, type, printed paper, and fixtures into the street, and destroyed them. (History of the Church, vol. 6, page 432)

Charles A. Foster, one of the publishers of the Expositor, wrote the following in a letter dated June 11, 1844:

Mr. Sharp: —I hasten to inform you of the unparalleled outrage, perpetrated upon our rights . . . a company consisting of some 200 men, armed and equipped, with muskets, swords, pistols, bowie knives, sledgehammers, &c, assisted by a crowd of several hundred minions . . . marched to the building, and breaking open the doors with a sledge-hammer, commenced the work of destruction and desperation.
They tumbled the press and materials into the street, and set fire to them, and demolished the machinery with a sledge hammer, and injured the building very materially. We made no resistance; but looked on and felt revenge, but leave it for the public to avenge this climax of insult and injury. (Warsaw Signal, June 12, 1844)

Mormon writer William E. Berrett declared:

The destruction of the Nauvoo Expositor . . . proved to be the spark which ignited all the smoldering fires of opposition into one great flame. . . . It offered . . . a legal excuse to get the Prophet and other leaders into their hands. The cry that the “freedom of the press” was being violated, united the factions seeking the overthrow of the Saints as perhaps nothing else would have done. (The Restored Church, page 255)

The Mormon historian B. H. Roberts seemed willing to concede that Joseph Smith was acting outside the law when he ordered the Expositor destroyed:

The legality of the action of the Mayor and City Council was, of course, questionable, though some sought to defend it on legal grounds; but it must be conceded that neither proof nor argument of legality are convincing. On the grounds of expediency or necessity the action is more defensible. (History of the Church, Introduction to vol. 6, page XXXVIII)

D. Michael Quinn told what happened in the days which followed:

At midnight on 22 June, Smith, his brother Hyrum, Willard Richards, and bodyguard Porter Rockwell slipped quietly out of Nauvoo and crossed the river . . . The prophet’s departure appalled the faithful Mormons he left behind. . . . Even the secret elite of Mormonism felt deserted. Reynolds Cahoon and Lorenzo D. Wasson, both members of the Council of Fifty, accused Smith of cowardice for leaving Nauvoo. He responded, “If my life is of no value to my friends it is of none to myself,” and he returned to Nauvoo to stand trial in Carthage, Illinois.

Smith was broken in spirit when he entered Carthage Jail charged with treason. . . .

To Smith, the kingdom was dead . . . a trusted Mormon gave him final verification of treachery in the Council of Fifty. The man reported that disdissant Wilson Law was saying that “the kingdom referred to [in Daniel] was already set up and that he [Joseph Smith] was the king over it.”

The morning of 27 July [sic], Smith sent an order . . . to Major-General Jonathan Dunham to lead the Nauvoo Legion in a military attack on Carthage . . . Dunham realized that such an assault by the Nauvoo Legion would result in two blood baths—one in Carthage and another when anti-Mormons (and probably the Illinois militia) retaliated by laying siege to Nauvoo for insurrection. To avoid civil war and the destruction of Nauvoo’s population, Dunham refused to obey the order and did not notify Smith of his decision. . . .

About 5 p.m. on Thursday, 27 June 1844, more than 250 men approached the Carthage Jail . . . Within moments three prisoners were desperately trying to secure the upper room’s door with bare hands and wooden canes against a cursing mob shooting randomly inside. Joseph Smith fired back with a six-shooter pistol at the attackers in the doorway, wounding three of them. . . . The man the murderous vigilantes knew as a church president, mayor, militia commander, U.S. presidential candidate, and Master Mason leaped out the second-floor window shouting, “O Lord my God!”

Mormonism’s king was dead. (The Mormon Hierarchy, pages 140-141)

As noted above, Legacy fails to deal with any of the problems that led to the conflict in Nauvoo. While Legacy is a very exciting film, it is a distortion of the true history of early Mormonism. It is, in fact, nothing but a propaganda film created specifically to bring the uninformed into the Mormon Church and to strengthen the testimonies of those who are already in the church.

FLEETING PROPHETS?

In April, 1995, Gordon B. Hinckley was sustained as the 15th prophet of the Mormon Church. President Hinckley was eighty-four years old at the time he became the “living Prophet” of the church. While he appears to be in good health and of sound mind, it seems unlikely that he will be effective in his position for very many years.

In our book, The Changing World of Mormonism, published by Moody Press in 1980, we pointed out that the church has an extremely serious problem. While church leaders maintain that it is absolutely necessary to have a “living Prophet” to guide the Saints and receive revelation for the church, it is obvious that some of these prophets were so old that they became only figureheads before their deaths:

During the past few years Mormon leaders have been faced with some serious problems. Their response to these problems plainly shows that they are not led by revelation. Several of these problems appear to be complicated by the fact that some of the Mormon leaders are very old. David O. McKay, the ninth president of the church, lived to be ninety-six years old. But he was in very poor health toward the end of his life and was hardly in any condition to function as prophet, seer and revelator for the church. Instead of appointing a younger man after McKay’s death, church leaders chose Joseph Fielding Smith who was ninety-three years old. Smith lived to be ninety-five, and the leadership passed to Harold B. Lee who was seventy-three years old. Lee lived for less than two years and Spencer W. Kimball became president. . . .

The way the Mormon hierarchy is structured there seems to be little hope of a younger leader, and apparently less hope for any new revelation. The claim of being led by a “living Prophet” has for a long time appeared to be just an idle boast. (The Changing World of Mormonism, page 439)

As we had suggested, the seriousness of the situation became more and more apparent as time went on. The problem is that the Mormon leaders have set up a tradition which has become almost like the “law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not” (Daniel 6:8). Church leaders believe that the man who has seniority in the Council of the
Twelve Apostles is the one who should become the “living Prophet” of the church. This often means that those who take on the mantle of the prophet do so at a time in their lives when they are least competent to adequately perform their duties. They are often impaired both physically and mentally when they reach the highest office in the church.

Spencer W. Kimball, the 12th president of the church, whom we mentioned above, was in bad shape toward the end of his life. Nevertheless, he continued as a figurehead president until he died at the age of ninety. Ezra Taft Benson became the 13th president of the church in 1985. As Benson became older it became obvious that he was not really leading the church. On July 10, Vern Anderson of the Associated Press reported that President Benson’s grandson, Steve Benson, was deeply concerned regarding his grandfather’s growing problem of senility:

As Mormon Church President Ezra Taft Benson approaches his 94th birthday, the years have stilled his voice, clouded his mind and raised questions about the faith’s rigid order of succession.

Attired in a sweatsuit and fed by others, Benson spends his days in supervised seclusion in an apartment . . . He is an infirm retiree in a church that doesn’t officially retire its “prophet, seer and revelator.”

The incongruity struck a 13-year-old Benson great-grandson the other day as he poured his breakfast cereal: “Dad, why do they call him prophet when he can’t do anything?”

His son’s question is one reason [Steve] Benson decided to speak openly for the first time about his grandfather’s decline . . .

A more compelling motivator, however, is what he believes are misleading efforts by the church’s hierarchy to preserve an image of a more vibrant Ezra Taft Benson, an image less problematic for the core Mormon belief in a literal prophet of God.

“I believe the church strives mightily to perpetuate the myth, the fable, the fantasy that President Benson, if not operating on all cylinders, at least is functioning effectively, even with just a nod of the head, to be regarded by the saints as a living, functioning prophet,” he said.

That is not the grandfather Benson saw . . . in March . . . whom he has seen struggle with encroaching senility during much of his 7-year administration.

“The last time I saw him he said virtually nothing to me,” said Benson . . . “He looked at me almost quizzically, as if he were examining me.”

Benson, who has not spoken in public for more than three years, was already suffering memory loss when he assumed the presidency in 1985 at age 86. His grandson said facing church audiences became a frightening experience for a man who once had relished the pulpit . . . Steve Benson, 39, said it has been some time since his grandfather has been capable of participating in any way in the administration of the church’s affairs, although that is “an image that people absorb clouded by the years.”

In the same interview, Steve Benson observed: “I don’t think God would expect us to be bound legalistically or structurally to a system that obviously isn’t working. . . .” Steve Benson’s words seem to be almost prophetic. On May 30, 1994, his grandfather died. Instead of changing this unusual system, church leaders choose Howard W. Hunter, who was 86 years old and in poor health, to be the 14th prophet. Hunter was so weak at the time that he became the “living Prophet” that he had a difficult time speaking, and within nine months he was dead.

Historian D. Michael Quinn pointed out that the Mormon Church faced a succession crisis after Joseph Smith’s death because Smith had not made it clear how his successor should be appointed. Church officials went so far as to falsify some documents to slant opinion to their point of view. Dr. Quinn commented:

A scholarly advocate of Brigham Young acknowledges that only “approximately half of those who were members of the Church at the death of Joseph Smith did follow the Twelve through all the difficulties of the succession-exodus period [of 1844-52].” A church which loses 50 percent of its previous members within eight years is in a severe crisis. (The Mormon Hierarchy, page 242)

Quinn believes that this great apostasy in Brigham Young’s time caused church leaders to be fearful that there could be another split. Consequently, to prevent this the General Authorities decided to go with a system of seniority. This system makes it very difficult for a power struggle over who should be the “living Prophet” to develop.

The Bible relates that the prophet Moses was extremely old at the time of his death. Nevertheless, it also reports that at the time of his death, “his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated” (Deuteronomy 34: 7). In the case of the Mormon prophets, however, it is very obvious that as they grow older they become infirm and senile like other men. There seems to be no special protection for these “living prophets.” Joseph Smith became the prophet of the Mormon Church when he was only about twenty-five years old. Today, it is very difficult for a man to achieve that high position until he is somewhere between seventy to ninety years old. Things have certainly changed!

As the Bible says, it is dangerous to put our trust in man: “Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord” (Jeremiah 17:5). Instead of putting all their trust in men being called to head the church. He also demonstrates that there has been some opposition to the policy within the highest ranks of the church.
OCCULTIC RITUAL ABUSE

In 1991, we published a secret memo written by Glenn L. Pace, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric of the Mormon Church. Pace claimed that he personally interviewed “sixty victims” of ritualistic child abuse who “are members of the Church.” He went on to state that “Forty-five victims allege witnessing and/or participating in human sacrifice. The majority were abused by relatives, often their parents.” Mr. Pace then related that these victims were subjected to horrific torture and brainwashing. Surprisingly, the victims told Pace that the perpetrators were “Young Women leaders, Young Men leaders, bishops, a patriarch, a stake president, temple workers, and members of the Tabernacle Choir.” These accusations are not coming from individuals who think they recognized someone, but from those who have been abused by people they know, in many cases their own family members.

Interestingly, the Mormon Church did not try to deny that there was a problem but instead maintained that it was only a very small percentage of church members who had been subjected to this abuse.

In 1994, two and a half years after we published the Pace Memo, the Salt Lake Tribune reported that allegations of Satanic ritual abuse were reported in a Mormon Church in Oklahoma. In a letter to Gordon B. Hinckley, signed by Merradyth and Jack McCallister, we find the following:

In June of 1963, my husband Jack, had been sexually molested by his bishop (Samuel H. Gardener) [a bishop of the Oklahoma First Ward who died in 1967] for two years between 15-17. . . . In June of 1993, our son, Scott, was 23 years old and recently returned from an honorable mission. He told my husband about being sexually molested between the age of 15-17 by his bishop . . . . (Letter dated March 23, 1994)

The McCallisters’ son also accused his former bishop of ritually abusing him. Interestingly, on February 26, 1994, the Oklahoma newspaper, The Yukon Review, reported that the former bishop had been “charged with soliciting another person to commit an act of lewdness after a December incident at a University of Oklahoma men’s restroom.”

The McCallisters could not be silenced by the local Mormon Church leaders, and Merradyth was excommunicated from the church. Her husband, Jack, who was himself a former bishop, left the church over the matter. Another member of the church, Mary Plourde, who accused the former bishop and other church leaders of ritually and sexually abusing her children, was also excommunicated because she would not keep silent about the problem. Still another woman, Cinda Rhoton, reported she and her children were victims of ritual abuse. Both the former bishop and her ex-husband allegedly took part in the abuse.

We have obtained important information about this matter and have published it in our new book, Occultic Ritual Abuse: Fact or Fantasy? In addition, this book contains a great deal of information on the subject of sexual abuse, the effect of incest and ritual abuse on victims, people who develop multiple personalities and other serious mental problems because of abuse, repressed and restored memories, and the attempt by the False Memory Syndrome Foundation and others to undermine the credibility of those who are trying to help survivors. See our special offer on Occultic Ritual Abuse: Fact or Fantasy? on the first page of this newsletter.

THE NEW LIGHTHOUSE

We are very happy to report that the new Utah Lighthouse building is almost finished. Although it has been a long and bumpy drive, we are now very close to the end of the road. We want to extend our thanks to all those who have helped us reach this point. While the ministry had to borrow over $60,000, it does not have to pay interest on this amount. Nevertheless, we would like to get this loan paid off as soon as possible. Those who are interested in helping with this or the general work of the ministry should be aware that Utah Lighthouse is a non-profit organization. In addition to our work with Mormons, we provide support for 44 children through World Vision.

While we deeply appreciate the financial contributions that we receive, we strongly believe that PRAYER is the most important thing. As Apostle Paul admonished: “Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving” (Colossians 4:2).

BOOKS AND TAPES

(Mail orders add 10% - Minimum postage $1.50)


The Nauvoo Expositor — Joseph Smith tried to suppress this newspaper because it told the truth about polygamy and other practices. This act led to Smith’s death. This is a photomechanical reprint of the original. Price: $2.00 — 5 for $8.00 — 10 for $14.00


Inventing Mormonism, by H. Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters. An important discussion of Joseph Smith’s early years and the origin of Mormonism. Special Price: $27.00

New Approaches to the Book of Mormon, edited by Brent Metcalfe. BYU professor Louis Midgley says this is “the most sophisticated attack on the truth of the Book of Mormon” that is currently available. Special Price: $25.00
BOOKS AND TAPES
(Continued from page 15)
(Mail orders add 10% — Minimum postage $1.50)

Out of the Cults and Into the Church: Understanding & Encouraging Ex-Cultists, by Janis Hutchinson. Price: $10.00

Salt Lake City Messenger

Sandra Tanner Tape No. 3. Two radio interviews. Contains information about the 1990 changes in the Mormon temple ceremony and the false translation of the Book of Abraham. Price: $3.00

Questions to Ask Your Mormon Friend: Challenging the Claims of Latter-day Saints in a Constructive Manner, by Bill McKeever & Eric Johnson. Price: $9.00

How to Rescue Your Loved One from Mormonism, by David A. Reed & John R. Farkas. Price: $9.00

Mormonism: The Christian View. A video narrated by Wesley P. Walters. Deals with Mormon history, doctrines, claim to authority, changes in doctrine and witnessing suggestions. Price: $24.00


The New Mormon History, edited by D. Michael Quinn. Mormon leaders are very distressed with historians who write “New Mormon History. Contains 15 essays. Price: $18.95

Divergent Paths of the Restoration, by Steven Shields. Brief history of over 100 churches and organizations claiming Joseph Smith as their founder. Price: $14.00


Why We Left Mormonism, edited by Latayne Scott. Personal testimonies of eight ex-Mormons, including Sandra Tanner. Price: $8.00

Basic Christianity, by John R. Stott. A brief examination of the claims of Christ and our response to His call. Price: $5.00

Mormons Answered Verse by Verse, by David Reed and John Farkas. Price: $7.00

Answering Mormons’ Questions, by Bill McKeever. Price: $7.00

New Testament Documents—Are They Reliable? by F. F. Bruce. A well-researched book by a Greek scholar showing the reliability of the translation of the N.T. Price: $5.95

Mere Christianity, by C. S. Lewis. Good defense and explanation of Christianity. Price: $8.00

Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons, by Pastor Mark Cares. Good introduction to Mormon culture and beliefs, with helpful insights on witnessing. Price: $11.00


After Mormonism What? Reclaiming the Ex-Mormon’s Worldview for Christ, by Latayne Scott. Price: $8.00

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JOSEPH SMITH’S USE
OF THE APOCRYPHA

In 1968, we did a study of the relationship between the Book of Mormon and the Apocrypha. Our research led us to believe that Joseph Smith borrowed material from the Apocrypha in creating his Book of Mormon. Recently, we took a closer look at the Apocrypha and discovered additional evidence which provides even stronger support for the theory that Smith used it. Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie gave this information regarding the Apocrypha:

Scholars and Biblical students have grouped certain apparently scriptural Old Testament writings, which they deem to be of doubtful authenticity or of a spurious nature, under the title of the Apocrypha. There has not always been agreement as to the specific writings which should be designated as apocryphal . . .

These apocryphal writings were never included in the Hebrew Bible, but they were in the Greek Septuagint . . . and in the Latin Vulgate. . . .

The Apocrypha was included in the King James Version of 1611, but by 1629 some English Bibles began to appear without it, and since the early part of the 19th century it has been excluded from almost all protestant Bibles . . . it is apparent that controversy was still raging as to the value of the Apocrypha at the time the Prophet began his ministry. (Mormon Doctrine, 1979, page 41)

On March 3, 1826, the following appeared in the Wayne Sentinel, the newspaper Joseph Smith’s family subscribed to: “. . . it appears . . . that the unhappy controversy about the expediency of publishing the Apocryphal books with those of the Old and New Testament, has at length ended; and that the General Committee of the Bible Society, in London, have determined henceforward, wholly to exclude the Apocrypha from their editions of the Sacred Scriptures.” On June 2, 1826, the same newspaper noted that the “apocryphal books are so called from the Greek word, which signifies ‘hid,’ or ‘concealed;’ because their origin, their real authors, times, and places are unknown. They are undoubtedly of great antiquity . . . But they do not claim to be, and have no title to be considered inspired.”

Although Protestants were questioning the worth of the Apocrypha, Joseph Smith showed a good deal of interest in it. In fact, when he purchased a Bible in the late 1820’s he picked one which contained the Apocrypha. Mormon scholar Reed Durham mentioned this purchase in his dissertation: “The Bible used for Joseph Smith’s Revision was purchased in E. B. Grandin’s Bookstore in Palmyra, New York; on October 8, 1828; it was a large family Bible . . . It was an edition of the Authorized Version ‘together with the Apocrypha,’ which was located between the two testaments, and was an 1828 edition, printed in Cooperstown, New York, by H. and E. Phinney Compan.” (“A History of Joseph Smith’s Revision of the Bible,” by Reed C. Durham, Jr., Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1965, page 25). Wesley P. Walters, however, claimed that the actual date of purchase was October 8, 1829, not October 8, 1828.

THE SEARCH FOR NEPHI

It is important to note that although the name “Nephi” is not found in either the Old or New Testaments of the Bible, it is one of the most important names in the Book of Mormon. Those who followed Nephi when his brothers rebelled against him were called Nephites. Mormon writers have spent a great deal of research on the subject of Nephi and his people. In this issue, we will be featuring some special offers and information on the changing world of Mormonism.
First, consider a few Egyptian names, setting off the Book of Mormon names (BM) against their Old World equivalents (OW). . . Nephi (BM), founder of the Nephite Nation.

Nehi, Nehri (ow), famous Egyptian noblemen.

Nfy was the name of an Egyptian captain. Since BM insists on “ph” Nephi is closer to Nihpi, original name of the god Pa-Nephi, which may even have been Nephi. (Lehi in the Desert and The World of the Jaredites, by Hugh Nibley, 1952, pages 27, 29)

Dr. Wells Jakeman, a noted Brigham Young University scholar, did not seem to agree with Hugh Nibley’s statement that Nephi may have derived his name from the Egyptian “god Pa-nepi.” He felt that it was unlikely that Lehi would have named his son after this Egyptian animal god Panepi, the ‘Apis-bull’ (a ‘Nile-god of fertility and the animal representative of Ptah, a god of the dead.”

Dr. Jakeman argued that the name Nephi “is Lehi’s rendering of the Egyptian name of the personification or ‘god of grain in Egyptian belief . . .’” For more information about this matter see Wells Jakeman publication, Stela 5, Izapa, Chiapas, Mexico, University Archaeological Society, Special publications No. 2, 1958, pages 38-42)

While Mormon scholars were diligently seeking to find evidence that Nephi is an Egyptian name, we discovered the actual name in the King James version of the Apocrypha.

The word “Nephi” is found hundreds of times in the Book of Mormon. In fact, it first appears as the second word in the Book of Mormon: “I Nephi having been born of goodly parents . . .” (1 Nephi 1:1). At least four men in the Book of Mormon are named Nephi. It is also the name of four books in the Book of Mormon, a city, a land, and a people.

While most Mormon writers tended to ignore our discovery for many years, in 1994 the Mormon scholar John Gee wrote:

Even if the word “Nephi” appears once in the King James Version of the apocrypha, it still does not prevent it from deriving from the proper milieu. (Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, vol. 6, no. 1, page 105, note 177)

The FARMS publication, Insights, November 1992, contained an article which acknowledged that “the name

Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? *** NOW ON CD-ROM ***

Research Application International has recently put the text of our Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? on a CD-ROM disk entitled LDS Classics. It also contains the text of the 1830 Book of Mormon, the 1833 Book of Commandments, the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, the original 1851 Pearl of Great Price, The Seer; View of the Hebrews, and four other books. This disk should be exceptionally helpful for those who wish to search for words and subjects found in Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? and the other books.

LDS Classics normally sells for $50.00, but if it is ordered from Utah Lighthouse Ministry before February 29, 1996, the price will be only $40.00. Mail orders please include 10% postage and handling.

Nephi is also found in the Apocrypha in 2 Maccabees. . . it is possible that Joseph Smith was acquainted with the name from that source.”

Since there is no way to prove the conjectures set forth by Mormon scholars concerning the origin of the name Nephi, and since we have found the actual name in the Apocrypha, this should settle the issue of its origin.

It is important to note that according to the Book of Mormon, Nephi came to the New World not long after 600 B.C., which, of course, is many centuries before the word Nephi was written in the Apocrypha. The edition of the Apocrypha which we are using in this article was published in 1812 in The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments: Together With the Apocrypha, by Merrifield and Cochran. This Bible gives a date “Before Christ 144” for the book of 2 Maccabees. Modern biblical scholars Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix think that it was written c. 110-70 B.C. Another Bible commentary suggests that it may have been written around 50 B.C.

The Mormon Church has included a Bible Dictionary in its publication of the King James Version of the Bible. On page 611 of that dictionary we read that 2 Maccabees “is inferior to that book [i.e., 1 Maccabees] both in simplicity and in accuracy because legends are introduced with great freedom.”

In the Apocrypha the word “Nephi” appears at the end of a legend regarding a mysterious “thick water” that miraculously produced fire. According to the story, when the Jews were “led into Persia” the priests “took the fire of the altar privily, and hid it in an hollow place of a pit without water . . .” Many years later Neemias sent men “of the posterity of those that had hid it to the fire: but when they told us they found no fire, but thick water; Then commanded he them to draw it up, and to bring it; and when the sacrifices were laid on, Neemias commanded the priests to sprinkle the wood, and the things laid thereupon, with the water. When this was done, and the time came that the sun shone, which afore was hid in the cloud, there was a great fire kindled, so that every man marvelled” (2 Maccabees 1:19-22).

The Apocrypha goes on to reveal that “when the sacrifice was consumed, Neemias commanded the water that was left to be poured on the great stones. When this was done there was kindled a flame: but it was consumed by the light that shined from the altar” (verses 31-32).

At the conclusion of this story we find the following:

Then the king, inclosing the place, made it holy, after he had tried the matter.

And the king took many gifts, and bestowed thereof on those whom he would gratify.

And Neemias called this thing Naphthar, which is as much as to say, A cleansing: but many men call it Nephi.

(2 Maccabees 1:34-36)

With regard to the statement that a fire was kindled on some stones, it is interesting to note that in the very first chapter of the Book of Mormon, verse 6, we read that Nephi’s father, Lehi, had a revelation in which fire appeared on a rock:

. . . as he prayed unto the Lord, there came a pillar of fire and dwelt upon a rock . . .

Notice how similar this is to a statement in 2 Maccabees 2:10:

. . . as when Moses prayed unto the Lord the fire came down. . .
Our computer research of the Bible does not reveal any wording that is as close to this portion of the Book of Mormon as the Apocrypha. In addition, as we have shown above, in one case where Neemias was present, the sacred water kindled a fire upon “stones” (2 Maccabees 1: 31-32). Interestingly, the fire Nephi’s father saw was “upon a rock” (1 Nephi 1:6). It should also be noted that in the next chapter (1 Nephi 2:7) we read that Lehi “built an altar of stones, and made an offering unto the Lord . . .” The evidence clearly points toward plagiarism from the Apocrypha.

**WRITTEN IN EGYPTIAN?**

The first few chapters of the Apocrypha, 2 Maccabees, seem to have provided some important structural material for Joseph Smith’s Book of Mormon. For example, in the very first chapter of the Book of Mormon, verse 2, Nephi makes the startling announcement that although he and his family were Jews, he was not going to make his record in the Hebrew language, but rather in “the language of the Egyptians.” Moreover, Nephi also claimed that a man named Laban, who lived in Jerusalem, had already made a copy of the Old Testament written in Egyptian on Plates of Brass. Since the Bible makes it clear that the Jews had once lived in Egypt and had been made slaves while they were there, they despised the Egyptians. Consequently, faithful Jews certainly would not want their sacred scriptures to be written in that language.

Even J. N. Washburn, a dedicated defender of the Book of Mormon, acknowledged that the claim that the Egyptian language was used presented a real problem:

The point at issue is not that Father Lehi, the Jew, could read and understand Egyptian, though that is surprising enough . . .

No, the big question is how the scripture of the Jews (official or otherwise) came to be written in Egyptian. It is hardly enough to say that the Jews had a long and intimate association with Egypt. That was long before the days of most Hebrew scriptures. Nor does it help very much to remind ourselves that probably the Egyptian characters require less space than the Hebrew, since we have little knowledge of other Hebrew sacred writings preserved in that language . . .

If I were to suggest what I think to be the most insistent problem for Book-of-Mormon scholarship, I should unquestionably name this one: account for the Egyptian language on the Plates of Brass, and the Brass Plates themselves! (*The Contents, Structure and Authorship of the Book of Mormon*, page 81)

Joseph Smith was apparently oblivious to the problem he created when he spoke of the sacred records being written in the Egyptian language. We believe that it is likely that the Apocrypha played a role in bringing Smith to the decision that the Book of Mormon should be written in Egyptian. It seems significant that the very first verse found in 2 Maccabees mentions the Jews in Egypt, and that the second verse in the Book of Mormon speaks “of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians.”

In the text of 2 Maccabees we find this statement: “The brethren, the Jews that be at Jerusalem, and in the land of Judea, wish unto the brethren the Jews that are throughout Egypt, health and peace” (2 Maccabees 1:1). In verse 10 of the same chapter we read: “. . . the people that were at Jerusalem . . . sent greeting . . . to the Jews that were in Egypt.”

In a “word for word reprint” of the original 1611 King James printing of the Apocrypha, and in the 1812 edition we are using, there is an introduction to the first chapter of 2 Maccabees which contains this statement: “A letter from the Jews at Jerusalem to them of Egypt . . .” (In the original King James Version the word “Jews” is spelled “Iewes.”) The introductory statement is interesting because the four-word phrase “the Jews at Jerusalem” is found later in the Book of Mormon, 4 Nephi 1:31. Although this phrase is found once in the New Testament, it never appears in the Old Testament.

These statements concerning correspondence between the Jews in Jerusalem and the Jews in Egypt could have caused Joseph Smith to think about the Egyptian language. Smith may have reasoned that since there were Jews living in Egypt, they may have learned the Egyptian language. This, in turn, could have led him to believe that these Jews actually wrote the sacred scriptures in that language.

Other factors, which we will not take the time to discuss here, could also have played a part in Smith’s claim that the Book of Mormon was written in Egyptian. In any case, since the Jews already spoke the Hebrew language, to have them write the Book of Mormon in the Egyptian language would be about as unparalleled as for the present prophet of the Mormon Church to order that future printings of the Book of Mormon should be in the Chinese language.

Even the prophet Moroni lamented that “if we could have written in Hebrew, behold ye would have had no imperfection in our record” (Mormon 9:33).

Mormon scholar Dr. Hugh Nibley maintained that the writing found in the Book of Mormon was derived from the Egyptian script known as demotic. He acknowledged, however, that demotic is “the most awkward, difficult, and impractical system of writing ever devised by man!” (*Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites*, 1952, page 16).

**RECORDS & ABRIDGMENTS**

In the very first verse in the Book of Mormon, the prophet Nephi claimed that he was going to “make a record of my proceedings in my days.” This is interesting because in the first verse in the second chapter of 2 Maccabees, we read: “It is also found in the records, that Jeremy the prophet commanded them that were carried away to take of the fire . . .”

In 1 Nephi 13:40 we find the words “in the records.” A parallel is found to this in 2 Maccabees 2:1, where we find the words: “in the records.” This three-word parallel is never found in the Old or New Testament of the King James Bible.

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In the second chapter of 2 Maccabees we read concerning the abridgment or condensation of five books into one:

All these things, I say being declared by Jason of Cyrene in five books, we will assay to abridge in one volume... to us that have taken upon us this painful labour of abridging, it was not easy... Leaving to the author the exact handling of every particular, and labouring to follow the rules of an abridgment... But to use brevity, and avoid much labouring of the work, is to be granted to him that will make an abridgment. (2 Maccabees 2:23, 26, 28, 31)

This idea of making an abridgment seems to have had a strong influence on Joseph Smith. In the very first chapter of the Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 1:17, Nephi wrote: "Behold I make an abridgment of the record of my father... after I have abridged the record of my father then will I make an account of mine own life."

The reader will notice that both the Apocrypha and the Book of Mormon contain the words "make an abridgment."

Joseph Smith’s title page for the Book of Mormon proclaims that it is “an account written by the hand of Mormon upon plates taken from the plates of Nephi[,] Wherefore, it is an abridgment taken from the Book of Ether also, which is a record of the people of Jared . . ." (The Words of Mormon 1:3). In The Words of Mormon 1:3, we read that Mormon “made an abridgment from the plates of Nephi . . . " In Mormon 5:9, we find these words: "... I write a small abridgment, daring not to give a full account of the things which I have seen . . ." Moroni, his son also wrote an abridgment: “Now I, Moroni, after having made an end of abridging the account of the people of Jared, I had supposed not to have written more . . ." (The Book of Moroni 1:1).

It would seem, then, that the Apocrypha created a real interest in abridgments in the mind of Joseph Smith and that he became rather obsessed with the idea of making abridgments. Significantly, the Bible never uses the words abridge, abridged, abridging nor abridgment.

We noted above that the Book of Mormon speaks of the Hebrew scriptures being translated into the Egyptian language and engraved on plates of brass. This is mentioned in 1 Nephi 3:3: “For behold, Laban hath the record of the Jews and also a genealogy of my forefathers upon plates of brass.” It is likely that this idea also came from the Apocrypha. In the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus 50:3, we read of “plates of brass.” Although those particular plates may not have had writing upon them, in 1 Maccabees 8:22 the following appears: “And this is the copy of the epistle which the senate wrote back again in tables of brass, and sent to Jerusalem . . .” (verses 18-19, 27)

Chapter 14 of 1 Maccabees we find the following:

They wrote unto him, in tables of brass, to renew the friendship and league which they had made with Judas and Jonathan his brethren: Which writings were read before the congregation at Jerusalem. . . So then they wrote it in tables of brass, which they set upon pillars in mount Sion. . .” (verses 18-19, 27)

THE TREASURY OF LABAN

In 1 Nephi 3:2-5, we are told that after Lehi left Jerusalem he “dreamed a dream,” in which the Lord told him that Nephi and his brethren must return and obtain the “plates of brass” from an evil man named Laban. Unfortunately, Laban thwarted the plan and would not allow Nephi and his brethren to take the plates which were stored in “the treasury of Laban” (1 Nephi 4:20). Since these plates contained the sacred scriptures and important genealogical information, they were a very valuable treasure. As it turned out Nephi had to kill Laban and kidnap one of Laban’s servants so that he could take the plates from his treasury (1 Nephi 4:18, 31).

Interestingly, 2 Maccabees, chapter 3, contains a story about a treasury and an attempt to plunder its contents. A man named Apollonius was told “that the treasury in Jerusalem was full of infinite sums of money . . .” (verse 6). Apollonius, in turn, told a certain king, who did not respect the wishes of the Jewish people, about the money. This “king chose out Heliodorus his treasurer, and sent him with a commandment to bring him the foresaid money” (verse 7). The people of Jerusalem were very opposed to the plundering of the treasury and “called upon the Almighty Lord, to keep the things of trust safe and sure . . .” (verse 22).

In spite of the pleas, Heliodorus executed that which was decreed. Now, as he was there present himself with his guard about the treasury, the Lord of spirits, and the Prince of all power, caused a great apparition, so that all that presumed to come in with him were astonished at the power of God, and fainted, and were sore afraid. . . And Heliodorus fell suddenly unto the ground, and was compassed with great darkness . . . Thus him that lately came with a great train, and with all his guard, into the said treasury, they carried out . . . Then straightforward certain of Heliodorus’ friends prayed Onias that he would call upon the most High to grant him his life, who lay ready to give up the ghost. (2 Maccabees, 3:23-24, 27-28, 31)

The story of Heliodorus trying to plunder the treasury begins in the third chapter of 2 Maccabees and the account of Nephi getting the plates of brass out of Laban’s treasury also begins in the third chapter of the current edition of the Book of Mormon (the chapters in the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon were much larger). In any case, both stories are approximately the same distance into the text.

There are enough similarities between the two stories to make one believe that Joseph Smith was borrowing from the Apocrypha. Those who take a careful look at the two narratives will notice that in both cases it is the followers of the God of Israel who finally prevail.

Nephi and his brothers made two unsuccessful attempts to obtain the plates but both times Laban threatened them with death and drove them away. On the second attempt Laban took their gold and silver and precious things (1 Nephi 3:24-26).

In spite of these problems, one night Nephi “crept into the city and went forth towards the house of Laban.” As he came near the house of Laban he “beheld a man, and he had fallen to the earth before me . . .” (1 Nephi 4:7). This, of course, resembles 2 Maccabees 3:27, where we were told that “Heliodorus fell suddenly unto the ground . . .” In both cases God was responsible for their fall. While Heliodorus saw
“a great apparition,” Laban fell because he “was drunken with wine.” According to 1 Nephi 4:10-11, God had planned that Laban would fall so that Nephi could kill him: “And it came to pass that I was constrained by the Spirit that I should kill Laban . . . And the Spirit said unto me again: Behold the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands.”

Consequently, Nephi claimed that he “took Laban by the hair of the head, and I smote off his head with his own sword” (verse 18). Even though this would seem to have created a rather bloody mess, Nephi said that “after I had smitten off his head . . . I took the garments of Laban and put them upon mine own body; yea, even every whit; and I did gird on his armor about my loins” (verse 19).

Nephi then proceeded “unto the treasury of Laban.” On the way he “saw the servant of Laban who had the keys of the treasury. And I commanded him in the voice of Laban that he should go with me into the treasury. And he supposed me to be his master, Laban, for he beheld the garments and also the sword girded about my loins. . . . And I spake unto him as if it had been Laban. And I also spake unto him that I should carry the engravings, which were upon the plates of brass, to my elder brethren, who were without the walls. . . . And it came to pass that when the servant of Laban beheld my brethren he began to tremble . . . And now I, Nephi, being a man large in stature . . . therefore I did seize upon the servant of Laban, and held him, that he should not flee. And it came to pass that I spake with him . . . that if he would hearken unto our words, we would spare his life. . . . And it came to pass that we took the plates of brass and the servant of Laban, and departed into the wilderness, and journeyed unto the tent of our father” (1 Nephi 4:21, 23-24, 30-32, 38).

The reader will notice that in the quotation given above Nephi used the words “of the treasury.” While this three-word phrase is never found in the King James Bible, it does appear in 2 Maccabees 3:40:

A person might wonder what caused Joseph Smith to link the plates of brass with a treasury. The answer may be found in 1 Maccabees 14:48-49:

So they commanded that this writing should be put in tables of brass, and that they should be set up within the compass of the sanctuary in a conspicuous place; Also that the copies thereof should be laid up in the treasury, to the end that Simon and his sons might have them.

While this reference does not specifically state what the “copies” were written on, the original was written on brass plates, and this certainly could have led Joseph Smith to write a story concerning plates of brass in the treasury of Laban. Interestingly, this reference (1 Maccabees 14:48-49) is found only about two pages before the book of 2 Maccabees, which contains the story of Heliodorus’s attempt to plunder the treasury in Jerusalem.

It would appear, then, that Joseph Smith borrowed from both First Maccabees and Second Maccabees in creating this tale. The reader will notice, however, that Smith has turned the story around somewhat. While the Apocrypha has an ungodly man failing in his attempt to plunder the treasury at Jerusalem, the Book of Mormon states that it was a servant of God who tricked Laban’s servant into allowing him to take the “plates of brass” from the treasury. Significantly, in both stories it is the ungodly who are brought to the ground—one is beheaded and the other “lay ready to give up the ghost.” It really comes as no surprise that in both cases the godly prevailed against the wicked.

BORROWING FROM JUDITH?

It is hard to escape the conclusion that Joseph Smith borrowed from the books of First and Second Maccabees in creating his story about Laban. In addition, it appears that he also took material from the book of Judith—the fourth book in the Apocrypha. In the Illustrated Davis Dictionary of the Bible, page 44, we find this comment about the book of Judith:

The narrative contains misstatements, anachronisms, and geographical absurdities. It is doubtful if there is any truth in the story . . . it may have existed as early as 175 to 100 B.C., say four or six hundred years after the event it professed to record. By that time to say that Nabuchodonosor, apparently Nebuchadnezzar, reigned in Nineveh, instead of Babylon (Judith i. 1), would not look so erroneous as it would to a contemporary of the great king.

In this tale a woman by the name of Judith is a heroine who saves Israel from Holofernes the chief captain of king Nabuchodonosor’s army.

As we have shown in our book, Covering up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon, pages 14-15, Joseph Smith downplayed the role of women in his Book of Mormon. Although the Book of Mormon sometimes refers to women mentioned in the Bible, it contains the names of only three Nephit, Lamanite or Jaredite women. While Smith had very little to say about women in the Book of Mormon, it appears that he was very interested in the story of Judith. Since he did not want the hero of the tale to be a woman, he apparently decided to attribute material written about Judith to Nephi.

As we indicated above, Laban was a very wicked man. While the name Laban is found in the Bible, it is interesting to note that right in an important part of the story of Judith she mentions the name “Laban” (see Judith 9:26). This, of course, could have suggested the name to Joseph Smith.

In any case, there are a number of other important parallels between Judith and the story of Nephi.

A LIST OF PARALLELS

In view of the evidence it seems obvious that Joseph Smith read at least portions of the Apocrypha before writing the book of First Nephi. He was apparently familiar with the book of Judith and both First and Second Maccabees. From these three books he absorbed portions that he combined into one story in the Book of Mormon. Below are thirty-two interesting parallels between material found in the three books of the Apocrypha and the Book of Mormon. While these parallels contain a good deal of material not mentioned above, there is also some repetition. Those who really want to understand how strong the case of plagiarism is should take the time to carefully read all thirty-two of the parallels below.

The reader will notice that in the study that follows we refer to the Book of Mormon by the three letters BOM, and the word Apocrypha is abbreviated to APO.
1. As noted above, both the book of Nephi and the book of 2 Maccabees use the word “Nephi” in their opening chapter.

   **BOM:** Nephi (1 Nephi 1:1)
   **APO:** Nephi (2 Maccabees 1:36)

2. There is, in fact, a significant parallel in wording between 2 Maccabees and the Book of Mormon in that both books use the words “the place” and “call it Nephi.”

   **BOM:** And my people would that we should call the name of the place Nephi; wherefore, we did call it Nephi. (2 Nephi 5:8)
   **APO:** Then the king, inclosing the place, made it holy . . . many men call it Nephi. (2 Maccabees 1:34, 36)

3. As pointed out above, the name “Laban” occurs in both Judith and the Book of Mormon.

   **BOM:** Laban hath the record (1 Nephi 3:3)
   **APO:** Laban his mother’s brother (Judith 8:26)

4. Both Nephi and Judith were very devout servants of the Lord.

   **BOM:** Nephi . . . was favored of the Lord (Mosiah 10:13)
   **APO:** she feared God greatly (Judith 8:8)

5. Both stories speak of a wicked man who wanted to destroy God’s people.

   **BOM:** Laban . . . sent his servants to slay us (1 Nephi 3:25)
   **APO:** The next day Holôfernes commanded all his army . . . to make war against the children of Israel. (Judith 7:1)

6. In both cases the people were in great fear.

   **BOM:** Laban . . . is a mighty man, and he can command fifty, yea, even he can slay fifty; then why not us? (1 Nephi 3:31)
   **APO:** God hath sold us into their hands, that we should be thrown down before them with thirst, and great destruction. (Judith 7:25)

7. Both Nephi and Judith counseled their associates to be strong.

   **BOM:** Therefore let us go up; let us be strong like unto Moses (1 Nephi 4:2)
   **APO:** Now, therefore, O brethren, let us shew an example to our brethren (Judith 8:24)

8. Both claimed that God’s strength did not depend upon numbers.

   **BOM:** the Lord . . . is mightier than all the earth, then why not mightier than Laban and his fifty (1 Nephi 4:1)
   **APO:** For thy power standeth not in multitude, nor thy might in strong men . . . a saviour of them that are without hope. (Judith 9:11)

9. Both Nephi and his brethren and Judith and her maid went on a secret mission for the Lord.

   **BOM:** we came without the walls of Jerusalem. And it was by night; and I caused that they should hide themselves without the walls . . . I Nephi, crept into the city and went forth towards the house of Laban. (1 Nephi 4:4-5)
   **APO:** Thus they went forth to the gate of the city of Bethulia . . . the men of the city looked after her, until she was gone down the mountain, and till she had passed the valley, and could see her no more. (Judith 10:6, 10)

10. In both cases the wicked man was delivered into the hands of the servant of the Lord.

    **BOM:** I beheld a man, and he had fallen to the earth before me (1 Nephi 4:7)
    **APO:** And Judith was left alone in the tent, and Holôfernes lying along upon his bed (Judith 13:2)

11. In both cases the wicked man was drunk.

    **BOM:** he was drunken with wine (1 Nephi 4:7)
    **APO:** he was filled with wine (Judith 13:2)

12. In both cases the servant of the Lord took hold of the wicked man’s weapon.

    **BOM:** took Laban by the hair of the head (1 Nephi 4:18)
    **APO:** took hold of the hair of his head (Judith 13:7)

13. In both cases the servant of the Lord took hold of the wicked man’s hair.

    **BOM:** and I smote off his head with his own sword (1 Nephi 4:18)
    **APO:** she . . . took down his fauchion from thence (Judith 13:6)

14. In both cases the wicked man’s head was cut off with his own weapon.

    **BOM:** and I smote off his head with his own sword (1 Nephi 4:18)
    **APO:** And she smote twice upon his neck . . . and she took away his head from him (Judith 13:8)

15. In both cases the servant of the Lord returned to those who were waiting without being caught.

    **BOM:** I went forth unto my brethren, who were without the walls (1 Nephi 4:27)
    **APO:** Now, when the men of her city heard her voice, they made haste to go down to the gate of their city (Judith 13:12)

16. Both Nephi and Judith made off with some of the wicked man’s possessions.

    **BOM:** I took the garments of Laban and put them upon mine own body; yea, even every whit; and I did gird on my armor about my loins. . . . we took the plates of brass and the servant of Laban, and departed into the wilderness (1 Nephi 4:19, 38)
    **APO:** they gave unto Judith Holôfernes’ tent, and all his plate, and beds, and vessels, and all his stuff (Judith 15:11)

17. When the people learned of the success of the mission they rejoiced.

    **BOM:** they did rejoice exceedingly (1 Nephi 5:9)
    **APO:** the people shouted with a loud voice, and made a joyful noise in their city (Judith 14:9)
18. In both cases the people offered burnt offerings to the Lord.

**BOM:** they did . . . offer sacrifice and burnt offerings
(1 Nephi 5:9)

**APO:** they offered their burnt-offerings (Judith 16:18)

19. Both Nephi and Judith use a similar expression.

**BOM:** his tens of thousands (1 Nephi 4:1)

**APO:** he came with ten thousand (Judith 16:4)

20. Nephi was raised in a house in Jerusalem, but before he killed Laban, his father took the family into the wilderness and they lived in tents. Judith also lived in a house. After her husband’s death, however, she made a tent which she put on top of her house. Later she cut off Holofernes’ head in his own tent.

**BOM:** he [Nephi’s father] departed into the wilderness. And he left his house . . . and took nothing with him, save it were his family, and provisions, and tents . . . my father dwelt in a tent . . . (1 Nephi 4:5)

**APO:** So Judith was a widow in her house three years and four months. And she made her a tent upon the top of her house . . . And she fasted (Judith 8:4-6)

21. In both 1 Nephi and Judith we find the words “three days,” “valley,” and “to the tent of.”

**BOM:** when he had traveled three days in the wilderness, he pitched his tent in a valley . . . I, Nephi, returned . . . to the tent of my father (1 Nephi 2:6; 3:1)

**APO:** Thus they went straight forth in the valley; and the first watch of the Assyrians met her . . . and they brought her to the tent of Holofernes . . . she abode in the camp three days, and went out in the night into the valley (Judith 10:11, 17; 12:7)

22. In both accounts the servant of the Lord changes apparel.

**BOM:** I took the garments of Laban and put them upon mine own body; yea, even every whit (1 Nephi 4:20)

**APO:** She . . . pulled off the sackcloth which she had on, and put off the garments of her widowhood . . . her countenance was altered, and her apparel was changed (Judith 10:2-3, 7)

23. Both Nephi and Judith used trickery to obtain the desired result.

**BOM:** I took the garments of Laban and put them on . . . I went forth unto the treasury of Laban . . . I saw the servant of Laban who had the keys of the treasury. And I commanded him in the voice of Laban that he should go with me into the treasury. And he supposed me to be his master, Laban . . . I spake unto him as if it had been Laban. And I also spake unto him that I should carry the engravings, which were upon the plates of brass, to my elder brethren . . . And he, supposing that I spake of the brethren of the church, and that I was truly that Laban whom I had slain, wherefore he did follow me (1 Nephi 4:19-24)

**APO:** Then said Holofernes unto her, woman, be of good comfort . . . Judith said unto him, Receive the words of thy servant . . . and I will declare no lie to my lord this night. And if thou wilt follow the words of thine handmaid, God will bring the thing perfectly to pass by thee; and my Lord shall not fail of his purposes . . . And I will lead thee through the midst of Judea, until thou come before Jerusalem; and I will set thy throne in the midst thereof (Judith 11:1, 5-6, 19)

24. Both Laban and Holofernes were slain while others were sleeping.

**BOM:** And it was by night . . . I, Nephi, crept into the city and went forth towards the house of Laban (1 Nephi 4:5)

**APO:** Now when the evening was come, his servants made haste to depart, and Bagoas shut his tent without, and dismissed the waiters from the presence of his lord; and they went to their beds: for they were all weary, because the feast had been long. And Judith was left alone in the tent, and Holofernes lying along his bed (Judith 13:1-2)

25. Both 1 Nephi and the book of Judith contain a similar expression.

**BOM:** left gold and silver, and (1 Nephi 3:16)

**APO:** left her gold and silver, and (Judith 8:7)

26. As we mentioned above, the very first verse found in 2 Maccabees mentions the Jews in Egypt. The second verse in the Book of Mormon contains Nephi’s incredible statement that the book would be written in the Egyptian language. The letter mentioned in the Apocrypha may have led Joseph Smith to conclude that it would be acceptable to claim his book of sacred scriptures was written in Egyptian.

**BOM:** I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians (1 Nephi 1:2)

**APO:** The brethren, the Jews that be at Jerusalem, and in the land of Judea, wish unto the brethren the Jews that are throughout Egypt, health and peace. (2 Maccabees 1:1)

27. We have also mentioned that the introduction to the first chapter of 2 Maccabees contains a four-word phrase which is also found in the Book of Mormon.

**BOM:** the Jews at Jerusalem (4 Nephi 1:31)

**APO:** the Jews at Jerusalem (Introductory statement at the start of 2 Maccabees)

28. In the second verse of the Book of Mormon Nephi says that he is going to make a “record.” 2 Maccabees 2:1 speaks of some “records” which told of a commandment given by Jeremy the prophet. A three-word parallel is found later in 1 Nephi.

**BOM:** in the records (1 Nephi 13:40)

**APO:** in the records (2 Maccabees 2:1)

29. In the very first chapter of the Book of Mormon, Nephi says he is going to make an abridgment of his record. This is suspiciously like a portion of 2 Maccabees. There is an interesting three-word parallel in the two accounts.

**BOM:** make an abridgment. (1 Nephi 1:17)

**APO:** make an abridgment. (2 Maccabees 2:31)
30. Both 1 Nephi and 1 Maccabees refer to a “treasury,” plates or tables “of brass,” and use the word “commanded.”

BOM: I went forth unto the treasury of Laban... I saw the servant of Laban... And I commanded him... that he should go with me into the treasury. I also spake unto him that I should carry the engravings which were upon the plates of brass, to my elder brethren (1 Nephi 1:20, 24)

APO: So they commanded that this writing should be put in tables of brass, and that they should be set... in a conspicuous place. Also that the copies thereof should be laid up in the treasury, to the end that Simon and his sons might have them. (1 Maccabees 14:48-49)

31. The reader will remember that 2 Maccabees, chapter 3, contains a story about the “treasury in Jerusalem” and Heliodorus’ attempt to plunder its contents. Laban’s treasury was also in Jerusalem. Both Nephi and Heliodorus had to travel to Jerusalem in their attempt to obtain access to the treasury.

BOM: I spake unto my brethren, saying: Let us go up again unto Jerusalem... I Nephi, crept into the city and went forth towards the house of Laban (1 Nephi 4:1, 5)

APO: the king chose out Heliodorus... and sent him with a commandment to bring him the foresaid money. So forthwith Heliodorus took his journey... And when he was come to Jerusalem, and had been courteously received of the high priest... he declared wherefore he came (2 Maccabees 3:7-9)

32. Both Laban and Heliodorus were brought to the ground so they could not thwart the work of the Lord.

BOM: as I came near unto the house of Laban I beheld a man, and he had fallen to the earth before me... And when I came to him I found that it was Laban (1 Nephi 4:7-8)

APO: And Heliodorus fell suddenly unto the ground, and was compassed with great darkness (2 Maccabees 3:27)

LIKE SALAMANDER LETTER

Interestingly, twenty-eight of the thirty-two parallels to the Apocrypha are found in the first five chapters of the Book of Mormon. It will be very difficult for Mormon scholars to explain this extraordinary cluster of similarities. It seems obvious that the only answer to these remarkable parallels is that Joseph Smith borrowed from the Apocrypha in creating his Book of Mormon.

The way that Joseph Smith plagiarized portions of the Apocrypha and incorporated them into the Book of Mormon bears a remarkable resemblance to the work of the notorious Mormon forger Mark Hofmann (see our book, Tracking the White Salamander). Hofmann fooled the Mormon officials to his Book of Mormon. In this letter Harris was supposed to have written that when Joseph Smith went to get the gold plates for the Book of Mormon, a “white salamander” in the bottom of the hole “transfigured himself” into a “spirit” and “struck me 3 times.” This was in stark contrast with Joseph Smith’s story that an angel from heaven revealed the plates to him.

Mormon scholars accepted this letter as authentic. The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS), an organization that is allowed to use “office space” and “campus facilities” at the church’s Brigham Young University, strongly supported the authenticity of the Salamander letter.

We found the Salamander letter to be a very perplexing document. When we were first told about the contents of the letter in November, 1983, we realized that it could deal a devastating blow to the Mormon Church. We had previously written a book entitled, Mormonism, Magic and Masonry, in which we presented strong evidence that Joseph Smith was involved in money-digging and magic. Martin Harris’s letter seemed to provide new and important evidence supporting our thesis.

Fortunately, we were able to obtain some revealing extracts from the letter and were preparing to print them in the March 1984 issue of the Messenger. We were very excited that we at Utah Lighthouse Ministry would be the first to break this important story to the world. While in the midst of marshaling evidence to support the authenticity of the Salamander letter, we made a discovery that shook us to the very core. We discovered that the account of the transformation of the white salamander into the spirit was remarkably similar to a statement E. D. Howe published in the book, Mormonism Unvailed. This book, written four years after the date which appears in the Harris letter, told of a toad “which immediately transformed itself into a spirit” and struck Joseph Smith. Even more disconcerting, however, was the fact that other remarkable parallels to the Salamander letter were found two or three pages from the account of the transformation of the toad into a spirit in Howe’s book (see Mormonism Unvailed, pages 273, 275-276).

While our original plan was to use the Salamander letter as evidence against Joseph Smith’s work, the evidence of plagiarism was so clear that we felt it was important to publish the material we had discovered. We pointed out some of the serious problems with the letter in the March, 1984, issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger and then made this statement: “While we would really like to believe that the letter attributed to Harris is authentic, we do not feel that we can endorse it until further evidence comes forth.”

After that we published a number of newsletters questioning Hofmann’s documents. The Mormon Church’s newspaper, Deseret News, for September 1, 1984, reported that “outspoken Mormon Church critics Jerald and Sandra Tanner suspect the document is a forgery, they told the Deseret News. Jerald Tanner... says similarities between it and other documents make its veracity doubtful.”

In an article published in the New York Times, Robert Lindsey wrote the following after he learned that investigators suspected the Hofmann documents were forgeries: “In a newsletter that he publishes with his wife, Sandra, Mr. Tanner began raising questions about their authenticity, in some cases comparing the texts with known Mormon writings. But
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If senior Mormon officials were aware of his warnings, they apparently paid little attention. Several of the church's highest officials have acknowledged negotiating to acquire documents from Mr. Hofmann until the day of the first two bombings. (New York Times, Feb. 16, 1986)

When Mark Hofmann finally confessed that the Salamander letter was a forgery, he admitted that we were right in saying that he plagiarized from E. D. Howe's book in creating the document. The following is taken from Hofmann's confession:

Q: Now the white salamander, you were going to explain that?
A: I was going to say that the idea for the White Salamander derived from the toad in A. [sic] D. Howe's book. Salamander, from my reading of folk magic, seemed more appropriate than a toad. (Hofmann's Confession, 1987, page 440)

While the FBI's examination of the Salamander letter revealed nothing wrong with the document, two document experts were eventually able to produce convincing evidence that it was forged.

A member of the Salt Lake County attorney's office asked one of the editors of this newsletter (Jerald) if he would testify for the prosecution regarding documents at Hofmann's trial. As it turned out, however, after the preliminary hearing Mark Hofmann plead guilty to murder and forgery and the case never came to trial.

As noted above, the method Mark Hofmann used to create his Salamander letter is strikingly like Joseph Smith's use of material from the Apocrypha in his Book of Mormon. In both cases, material was taken from another book that was readily accessible to the plagiarist, and in both cases the author was careful to change the sources extracted just enough so that it would be difficult for the reader to discern the origin of the information.

In both cases the most revealing evidence is the clustering of similarities. In Hofmann's case we find that he borrowed important information from pages 273 and 276 of E. D. Howe's Mormonism Unveiled. He also plagiarized from a number of other pages in the same book (see our book, Tracking the White Salamander, page 7, for other sources he used in creating his forgery). Material drawn from a number of different pages of Howe's book (as well as other books) all comes together in the Salamander letter.

Joseph Smith also plagiarized from a number of pages in the Apocrypha. As noted above, a very significant cluster of structural material appears to have been taken from 1 Maccabees chapter 14 and 2 Maccabees, chapters 1 through 3. This material was incorporated into the first few chapters of the Book of Mormon. Like Hofmann, Joseph Smith also borrowed other material from the source he was using—i.e., the Apocrypha.

Interestingly, the Apocrypha contained in Protestant Bibles is not a very large collection of material when compared with the Old and New Testaments. While the old Bible we are using contains approximately 950 pages, the Apocrypha takes up less than 150 of those pages.

Although we have not had the time to make a thorough study of the relationship between the Apocrypha and the Book of Mormon, we feel that it is possible that other material or phrases from that collection of material may have been used by Joseph Smith. We did find what appears to be a significant number of parallels in wording between the early chapters of the book of Mosiah and the Apocrypha. This, however, was only a cursory examination. The book of Alma also had a number of interesting similarities.

WAS IT A COINCIDENCE?

There is another intriguing similarity between the Apocrypha and the Book of Mormon which could be significant. In the very first book of the Apocrypha, 1 Esdras, we find a date printed at the side of the first page which indicates that the narrative related began "Before Christ 623."

Surprisingly, this places the account within the very period when Lehi lived at Jerusalem, which was not long before the destruction of that city. Since Joseph Smith used a good deal of material from the Apocrypha in the first few chapters of the Book of Mormon, one might ask the question as to whether 1 Esdras influenced his decision regarding the time frame he utilized to bring Lehi's people to the New World. We do know that 1 Esdras 8:2 speaks of a man named Ezias, and as we will show below, the same name appears in the Book of Mormon.

The heading for the first chapter of 1 Esdras, speaks of king Zedechias (spelled Zedekiah in the Old Testament). It refers to Josias and "his successors unto Zedechias, when Jerusalem &c. was destroyed." On the very first page of the Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 1:4, Nephi relates that "in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah . . . there came many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed."

Although Lehi's group left Jerusalem just before the destruction of the city, Lehi claimed he had a vision in which he learned that "Jerusalem is destroyed" (2 Nephi 1:4). Later on in the Book of Mormon there is another statement regarding the destruction of Jerusalem: "... and now we know that Jerusalem was destroyed . . . . " (Helaman 8:20). The reader will notice how close this wording is to that found in the heading to the first chapter of the apocryphal book of 1 Esdras: "Jerusalem &c. was destroyed."

It certainly seems possible that the book of 1 Esdras may have given Joseph Smith some historical background which he could use for his story concerning Lehi's flight from the Old World. Nevertheless, if the Apocrypha provided the original spark for this idea, the Mormon prophet undoubtedly went to the Old Testament to get the King James spelling for the names he used. Furthermore, it is likely that he may have read somewhat concerning Jeremiah in the Old Testament. In his Book of Mormon Smith used the phrase "of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah," and this same wording is found in the book of Jeremiah 28:1.

We have already mentioned the spelling difference between Zedechias and Zedekiah. It should also be mentioned that Jeremiah is spelled Jeremy in the Apocrypha. The reader may remember that 2 Maccabees also spoke of the prophet Jeremy. While this spelling is not used in the Old Testament, the prophet Jeremiah is referred to twice as Jeremy in the New Testament (see Matthew 2:17, 27:9).
It is interesting to note that while Joseph Smith did not use the name “Jeremy” in the Book of Mormon itself, in September, 1832, he gave a revelation in which he incorporated that name into a revelation concerning priesthood: “. . . And Elihu [received the priesthood] under the hand of Jeremy; And Jeremy under the hand of Gad . . .” (Doctrine and Covenants 84:9-10). The Mormon Church’s Bible Dictionary contains this notation: “There was another Jeremy who lived near to the time of Abraham, and who held the Melchizedek Priesthood. Nothing more is known of him today.” Joseph Smith may have extracted this name from the Apocrypha or from the book of Matthew. In any case, we have been unable to find anything regarding a “Jeremy” who lived close to the time of Abraham.

However this may be, in the Apocrypha we find both Zedechias (Zedekiah) and Jeremy (Jeremiah) mentioned in the first two chapters of 1 Esdras:

So after a year Nabuchodonosor . . . made Zedechias king of Judea and Jerusalem . . . And he did evil . . . and cared not for the words that were spoken unto him by the prophet Jeremy from the mouth of the Lord . . . And after that king Nabuchodonosor had made him to swear by the name of the Lord he forswore himself, and rebelled . . . he transgressed the laws of the Lord God of Israel . . .

Nevertheless the God of their fathers sent by his messengers to call them back . . . But they had his messengers in derision . . . they made a sport of his prophets; So far forth, that he, being wroth with his people for their great ungodliness, commanded the kings of the Chaldees to come up against them; Who slew their young men . . . and spared neither young man nor maid . . .

As for the house of the Lord, they burnt it, brake down the walls of Jerusalem . . . and the people that were not slain with the sword he carried into Babylon; Who became servants to him and his children, till the Persians reigned, to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremy . . .

In the first year of Cyrus king of the Persians, that the word of the Lord might be accomplished, that he had promised by the mouth of Jeremy, The Lord raised up the spirit of Cyrus the king of the Persians, and he made proclamation . . . Saying, Thus saith Cyrus . . . The Lord of Israel, the most high Lord, hath made me king of the whole world, And commanded me to build him an house at Jerusalem . . . If therefore there be any of you that are of his people . . . let him go up to Jerusalem . . . and build the house of the Lord of Israel . . .” (1 Esdras 1:45-48, 50-53, 55-57; 2:1-5)

We have already noted that the name Ezias, comes from the Apocrypha, 1 Esdras 8:2. While at first glance this may not seem too significant, it is, in fact, extremely important because the name appears in a verse in the Book of Mormon which mentions both the prophet Jeremiah and the fact that “Jerusalem was destroyed”:

And behold, also Zenock, and also Ezias, and also Isaiah, and Jeremiah, (Jeremiah being that same prophet who testified of the destruction of Jerusalem) and now we know that Jerusalem was destroyed according to the words of Jeremiah. O then why not the Son of God come, according to his prophecy? (Helaman 8:20)

Since the name Ezias is only found one time in the entire Book of Mormon, it seems remarkable that it appears in a section of the Book of Mormon which contains information about Jeremiah and the fall of Jerusalem. The most reasonable explanation seems to be that as Joseph Smith was reading from the Apocrypha (1 Esdras) concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, he continued to read or browse until he encountered the name Ezias in the second verse of chapter eight. For some reason he liked the name and decided to include it in his own book. While the Apocrypha gives no information about Ezias, Joseph Smith elevated him to the position of an important prophet who spoke in Old Testament times. Interestingly, this name does not appear anywhere in the Old or New Testament!

It is also possible that Joseph Smith’s curiosity concerning the Apocrypha led him to make a theological mistake regarding Jesus Christ. While many of the ancient Israelis believed that the Messiah would come, neither the name “Jesus” nor the title “Christ” can be found anywhere in the Old Testament. It was not until just before the birth of Christ that the angel announced that Mary’s baby would be called Jesus (Matthew 1:21).

Joseph Smith, however, came to believe that the Savior was referred to as “Jesus Christ” even during the time when Adam was on the earth. In Smith’s Book of Moses we read: “And he [God] called upon our father Adam by his own voice, saying: I am God . . . he also said unto him: If thou wilt turn unto me . . . and repent of all thy transgressions, and be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is Jesus Christ . . . ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost . . .” (Pearl of Great Price, Book of Moses 6:51-52).

Joseph Smith’s mistaken idea may have come from reading in the Apocrypha, 2 Esdras 7:28-29:

For my son Jesus shall be revealed with those that be with him, and they that remain shall rejoice within four hundred years. After these years shall my Son Christ die, and all men that have life.

In the Book of Mormon the prophet Nephi wrote the following:

For according to the words of the prophets, the Messiah cometh in six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem . . . his name shall be Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (2 Nephi 25:19)

It seems likely that when Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon he blindly followed the idea set forth in the Apocrypha of revealing Jesus’s name before it was actually made known to the world. Since the story in 2 Esdras purports to take place about 400 years before the time of Christ, Joseph Smith apparently assumed that this dating was accurate. This, of course, was a very serious mistake which apparently led Smith into the mistaken notion that centuries before Christ people were accustomed to hearing the words “Jesus Christ” used by followers of the Lord. In reality, however, this was not the case.

The evidence seems to suggest that 2 Esdras was actually written after the time of Christ. In the Illustrated Davis Dictionary of the Bible, page 43, we read: “2 ES’DRAS. This
is in quite a different style from 1 Esdras. . . a date from about A.D. 88 to about A.D. 117, is generally accepted.” This, of course, would be well after the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Although, the Mormon Church’s own Bible Dictionary does not attempt to give a date, it does say that “Many scholars feel that book was composed in the first century A.D.” (page 610). Even if it could be established that the book was written earlier, Bible scholars have noted that it has interpolations taken from New Testament scriptures. Consequently, 2 Esdras is a very poor book to rely upon to try to prove that people in Old Testament times used the words “Jesus Christ.”

**ROBERTS AND ESDRAS**

Surprisingly, B. H. Roberts, the noted Mormon historian and defender of the church, came to have serious doubts about the Book of Mormon. Roberts was one of the greatest scholars the church has ever known. He not only prepared the “Introduction And Notes” for Joseph Smith’s History of the Church (seven volumes), but he also wrote the six-volume work, A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He is also noted for his many works supporting the Book of Mormon.

When B. H. Roberts read the book View of the Hebrews, a book written by Ethan Smith in 1825, he was shocked by the parallels he found to the Book of Mormon:

One other subject remains to be considered in this division . . . viz.—was Joseph Smith possessed of a sufficiently vivid and creative imagination as to produce such a work as the Book of Mormon from such materials as have been indicated in the preceding chapters . . . That such power of imagination would have to be of a high order is conceded; that Joseph Smith possessed such a gift of mind there can be no question . . .

In the light of this evidence, there can be no doubt as to the possession of a vividly strong, creative imagination by Joseph Smith, the Prophet, an imagination, it could with reason be urged, which, given the suggestions that are found in the “common knowledge” of accepted American antiquities of the times, supplemented by such a work as Ethan Smith’s View of the Hebrews, would make it possible for him to create a book such as the Book of Mormon is. (Studies of the Book of Mormon, Edited by Brigham D. Madsen, 1985, pp. 243, 250)

While reading the book, View of the Hebrews, B. H. Roberts encountered quotations taken from 2 Esdras. (This, of course, is the same apocryphal book we have been discussing.) Roberts felt that he had discovered some significant parallels between 2 Esdras, chapter 13, and the book of Ether—a work found near the end of the Book of Mormon. B. H. Roberts wrote the following about the similarities:

Both the Book of Mormon and Ethan Smith’s View of the Hebrews bring their people to the New World by migrations from the old. . . . Ethan Smith, accepting the general idea extant in his day that America was peopled via Bering Strait, thought it possible that “the lost tribes” of Israel might as well have come that way as any other people from Asia . . . The Book of Mormon peoples, both Jaredites and Nephites, are brought by way of the sea. In one respect, however, the migrations of the Jaredites and of Ethan Smith’s ‘lost tribes’ are strikingly similar, and the fact is mentioned in both cases in language nearly identical—both people are brought into a land “where never man dwelt.” . . . Ethan Smith, in working out his theory that the American Indians are the “ten lost tribes” of Israel, takes his account of the migration of that people from the Apocryphal book of Esdras (II Esdras 13). . . .

Let us now turn to the Book of Mormon account of the Jaredite migration to the New World. . . .

It is to be noted first of all that a consultation is had among those to whom the journey is proposed, in both cases. . . . in both cases the motive of removal was a religious one . . .

The journey in both cases was to the north. . . . In each case the journey of the two people was to be a long one. In the case of Ethan Smith’s Israelites it was “of a year and a half’s” duration. In the case of the Jaredites, it required 344 days to cross the great sea. . . . let us here be reminded that what is sought in this study is not absolute identity of incidents, and absolute parallel of conditions and circumstances all down the line; but one thing here and another there, that may suggest another but similar thing in such a way as to make one a product of the other, as in the above parallel between the journey of the Jaredites and Ethan Smith’s Israelites. Such as the motive for their journey being the same; the direction of the journey in both cases being northward; both people entering a valley at the commencement of their journey; both of them encountering many bodies of water in their journey; the journey in both cases being an immense one; and to a land, in the one case, “where never man dwelt”. . . . and in the other case, “into a quarter where there never had man been” (Ether 2:5). Where such striking parallels as these obtain, it is not unreasonable to hold that where one account precedes the other, and if the one constructing the later account has had opportunity of contact with the first account, then it is not impossible that the first account could have suggested the second; and if the points of resemblance and possible suggestion are frequent and striking, then it would have to be conceded that the first might even have supplied the ground plan of the second.

Also let it be borne in mind, that the facts and the arguments employed here are cumulative and progressive, and that we have not yet reached the end of the story. (Studies of the Book of Mormon, pages 183-186)

We believe that B. H. Roberts made an important find with regard to the relationship between the apocryphal book of 2 Esdras and the Book of Mormon. His parallel “where never mankind dwelt” (2 Esdras 13:41) with the book of Ether’s “where there never had man been” (Ether 2:5) is a remarkable discovery which is supported by addition evidence which Roberts brought forth.

A paper-back edition of Roberts’s Studies of the Book of Mormon is available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry for only $14.95 (plus shipping charge).

Our cursory examination of 2 Esdras, 13:42-56, revealed a number of interesting parallels. For example, verse 43 contains the words “by the narrow passages.” In the book of Mormon, Alma 50:34, we find the words “by the narrow pass;” and in Mormon 2:29 we read about “the narrow passage.” No parallel wording is found in the King James Bible.
A four-word parallel “and now when they” appears in 2 Esdras, 13:46, and the Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 16:32. This phrase is not found in the Bible.

The words “sawest thou” are found in both 2 Esdras, 13:47, and the Book of Mormon, Ether 3:9. This phrase only appears in the Bible twice.

The phrase “are they that are” is not found in the Bible, but it is found in both 2 Esdras, 13:48, and the Book of Mormon, Alma 14:7.

The words “defend his people” appear in both 2 Esdras, 13:49, and the Book of Mormon, Alma 48:13, but are lacking in the Bible.

The book of 2 Esdras, 13:52, contains the words “are in the deep of the sea,” and we find the following in the Book of Mormon, Alma 3:3, “are in the depths of the sea.” There is no strong parallel to this in the Bible.

The words “diligence unto” are not in the Bible, but they are found in both 2 Esdras, 13:54, and the Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 29:4.

Verse 56 of 2 Esdras, 13, uses the phrase “thee mighty,” and these identical words are found in the Book of Mormon, Helaman 10:5. They are, however, lacking in the Bible.

It is difficult for us to believe that all of these parallels to the Book of Mormon could have occurred by accident when the same wording falls within just 14 verses of the apocryphal book of 2 Esdras.

THE BROTHER OF JARED

B. H. Roberts’s research with regard to the apocryphal book of 2 Esdras led us to seek other parallels to the book of Ether. This book was named after Ether, a Book of Mormon prophet who lived to see the destruction of the Jaredites. The main character in the book, however, was a man who brought the Jaredites from the Tower of Babel to the New World. Surprisingly, when Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon, he did not give this important man a name; he was referred to simply as “the brother of Jared.” Later, however, Joseph Smith supposedly said his name was “Mahonri Moriancumer.”

In any case, both Esdras and the brother of Jared were mighty prophets who diligently prayed and received visits from the Lord. Esdras related the following: “And it came to pass . . . there came a voice out of a bush . . . and said, Esdras, Esdras! And I said, Here am I, Lord” (2 Esdras 14:1-2). In the Book of Mormon, Ether 2:4, we read: “. . . the Lord came down and talked with the brother of Jared; and he was in a cloud, and the brother of Jared saw him not.”

Both Esdras and the brother of Jared go up upon a mount. In 2 Esdras 3:23 we read: “I Esdras received a charge of the Lord upon the mount Oreb, that I should go unto Israel; but when I came unto them, they set me at nought, and despised the commandment of the Lord.”

The brother of Jared, likewise, went up upon a mount, spoke with the Lord, and was told to go back down: “And it came to pass that the brother of Jared . . . went forth unto the mount, which they called the mount Shelem . . . And the Lord commanded the brother of Jared, to go down out of the mount from the presence of the Lord . . . ” (Ether 3:1; 4:1)

Both Esdras and the brother of Jared were shown innumerable people and things that would happen in the last times. In 2 Esdras 2:42 we read: “I Esdras saw upon the mount Sion a great people, whom I could not number . . . ” In 2 Esdras 8:63 we find: “Behold, O Lord, now hast thou shewed me the multitude of the wonders, which thou wilt begin to do in the last times . . . ”

The Lord showed the brother of Jared “all the inhabitants of the earth which had been, and also all that would be; and he withheld them not from his sight, even unto the ends of the earth . . . Behold, I [Moroni] have written upon these plates the very things which the brother of Jared saw; and there never were greater things made manifest than those which were made manifest unto the brother of Jared” (Ether 3:25; 4:4).

Both Esdras and the brother of Jared supposedly saw Jesus Christ long before he came into the world. As we mentioned above, 2 Esdras 7:28-29 mentions “my son Jesus” and “my Son Christ.” In 2 Esdras 2:43, 47, we read: “And in the midst of them there was a young man of a high stature, taller than all the rest, and upon every one of their heads he set crowns, and was more exalted; which I marvelled at greatly. . . . So he answered and said unto me, It is the Son of God, whom they have confessed in the world.” In 2 Esdras 13:32 we find: “and then shall my son be declared, whom thou sawest as a man ascending.”

In the Book of Mormon we find the following regarding the brother of Jared’s encounter with Jesus Christ:

And the veil was taken from off the eyes of the brother of Jared, and he saw the finger of the Lord . . . And the Lord said unto him: Because of thy faith thou hast seen that I shall take upon me flesh and blood; and never has man come before me with such exceeding faith as thou hast; for were it not so ye could not have seen my finger. Sawest thou more than this? And he answered: Nay; Lord, show thyself unto me. . . . And when he had said these words, behold, the Lord showed himself unto him, and said . . . Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son . . . Wherefore, having this perfect knowledge of God, he could not be kept from within the veil; therefore he saw Jesus; and he did minister unto him.” (Ether 3:6, 9-10, 13-14, 20)

Both Esdras and the brother of Jared are commanded to write the revelations they received. The phrase “shall write” is found only twice in the Bible. Interestingly, however, it is used in both 2 Esdras and the book of Ether. Esdras wrote: “But if I have found grace before thee, send the Holy Ghost into me, and I shall write all that hath been done in the world since the beginning . . . ” (2 Esdras 14:22). In the Book of Mormon we read that “the Lord said unto the brother of Jared . . . And behold, when ye shall come unto me, ye shall write them . . . ” (Ether 3:21).

Similar wording, which is not present in the Bible, is found in 2 Esdras and the book of Ether. In Ether 4:16 we find the words “caused to be written.” 2 Esdras 15:2 contains the words “cause them to be written.”

As indicated above, the revelations received by Esdras and the brother of Jared were extremely important. In both cases the Lord warned these prophets that they were not to reveal certain things they had written. The Lord told the brother of Jared that he should “not suffer these things . . . to go forth unto the world, until the time cometh that I shall glorify my name in the flesh . . . ye shall write them and shall seal them up, that no one can interpret them; for ye shall write them in a language that they cannot be read” (Ether 3:21-22).
In 2 Esdras 12:37 the prophet Esdras is instructed to "write all these things that thou hast seen in a book, and hide them: And teach them to the wise of the people, whose hearts thou knowest may comprehend and keep these secrets." In chapter 14 of the same book, the Lord instructed Esdras to take five men which are ready to write swiftly; And come hither, and I shall light a candle of understanding in thine heart, which shall not be put out, till the things be performed which thou shalt begin to write. And when thou hast done, some things shalt thou publish, and some things shalt thou shew secretly to the wise . . .

So I took the five men, as he commanded me, and we went into the field, and remained there . . . The Highest gave understanding unto the five men, and they wrote the wonderful visions . . . As for me, I spake in the day, and I held not my tongue by night. In forty days they wrote two hundred and four books. And it came to pass, when the forty days were fulfilled, that the Highest spake, saying, The first that thou has written publish openly, that the worthy and unworthy may read it: But keep the seventy last, that thou mayest deliver them only to such as be wise . . . For in them is the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the stream of knowledge. (2 Esdras 24-26, 37, 42-47)

We have already explained that Ether was the last Jaredite prophet. The Book of Mormon says that the prophet Ether told the people “all things, from the beginning of man . . .” (Ether 13:2). Esdras, likewise, said that he wanted to write “all that hath been done in the world since the beginning . . .” (2 Esdras 14:22).

THE TREE OF LIFE

The apocryphal book of 2 Esdras may have furnished some material for Lehi’s vision of “the tree of life” which is found in the very first book of the Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi, chapter 8. In chapters 11 and 12 of the same book Nephhi related that he also saw a similar vision.

In making the suggestion that material may have been borrowed from the apocrypha, we do not want to give the reader the impression that this was Joseph Smith’s only source. In fact, in our book Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon, we have presented irresistible evidence that Smith plagiarized a great deal of material from the New Testament book of Revelation in the pages of 1 Nephi (see pages 87, 91, 94, 95-98, 100-101, 103, 105, 107-108 of our book). The damaging thing about this plagiarism from the book of Revelation is that Joseph Smith has Lehi and Nephi quoting this New Testament book almost seven centuries before it was written! This in itself tends to discredit the Book of Mormon.

Although it is obvious that the book of Revelation was the main source for Joseph Smith’s story regarding the “tree of life,” Esdras certainly could have supplied supplementary material. Like the Nephite prophets, Esdras wrote concerning the tree of life. In 2 Esdras 2:12 we read that “They shall have the tree of life for an ointment of sweet savour; they shall neither labour, nor be weary.” In 7:53 we read that “there should be shewed a paradise, whose fruit endureth for ever . . .” In the next chapter we find: “For unto you is paradise opened, the tree of life is planted . . .” (2 Esdras 8:52).

In the Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 8:10-11, Lehi reported: “And it came to pass that I beheld a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy . . . the fruit thereof . . . was most sweet, above all that I ever before tasted.” After seeing the same vision, Nephi wrote: “. . . I beheld that the rod of iron . . . was the word of God, which led to the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life . . .” (1 Nephi 11:25).

Both Esdras and Lehi had inspired revelations and dreams. Like Joseph of the Old Testament, Esdras wrote: “And it came to pass . . . I dreamed a dream by night . . .” (2 Esdras 13:1). Nephi used similar wording when he wrote the following about his father’s vision of the “tree of life”: “And it came to pass . . . he spake unto us, saying: Behold, I have dreamed a dream; or, in other words, I have seen a vision” (1 Nephi 8:2).

While the book of Revelation provided a great deal of the information Joseph Smith needed for his vision of the tree of life, it does not contain the word “field.” Lehi claimed that in the vision he saw a “field.” The word “field” is mentioned a number of times in 2 Esdras. For example, at one time when Esdras was receiving revelations, he was commanded to “go into a field of flowers, where no house is builded, and eat only the flowers of the field . . .” (9:24). In verse 26, he said that he “did eat of the herbs of the field, and the meat of the same satisfied me.” Later, Esdras wrote: “But I remained still in the field seven days, as the angel commanded me . . .” (12:51). Lehi maintained that the field he saw in his vision was “a large and spacious field” (1 Nephi 8:9). In 2 Esdras 7:6 we read that a “city is builded, and set upon a broad field . . .”

In his vision the prophet Lehi saw “a great and spacious building” standing “as it were in the air . . .” (1 Nephi 8:26). The prophet Esdras was commanded “to go into the field, where no foundation of any building was” (2 Esdras 10:53). The account goes on to say that he was shown a very large and beautiful building and instructed to go in “and see the beauty and greatness of the building, as much as thine eyes be able to see . . .” (2 Esdras 10:55). The reader will notice a parallel here; the Book of Mormon uses the word “great” in referring to the building, and the Apocrypha speaks of the “greatness” of the building.

As Lehi watched the vision of “the tree of life,” he saw that two of his sons did not partake of “the fruit.” Consequently, “he exceedingly feared for Laman and Lemuel; yea, he feared lest they should be cast off from the presence of the Lord” (1 Nephi 8:35-36). Lehi also noted that many others “fell away into forbidden paths and were lost” (1 Nephi 8:28). Esdras, likewise, was deeply concerned about the people who were lost. In one of his visions Esdras was told to not be “curious how the ungodly shall be punished . . .” To this Esdras replied, “that there be many more of them which perish, than of them which shall be saved . . .” (2 Esdras 9:13, 15). At one point Esdras was told that he was to ask “no more questions concerning the multitude of them that perish” (2 Esdras 8:55).

There is one short portion of 2 Esdras which could have provided a number of words found in the “tree of life” vision:

And I said, Speak on my God. Then said he unto me, The sea is set in a wide place, that it may be deep and great. But put the case the entrance were narrow, and like a river, Who then could go into the sea to look upon it . . . if he went not through the narrow, how could he come into the broad? A city is builded, and set upon a broad field, and is full of all
made this comment to Esdras: “because in the Book of Mormon we read: “And it came to pass the possibility one could “fall” is mentioned. This is significant which was hazardous to those passing over the path. In fact, what desirest thou order, “What water, path, broad, field, and the phrase to look upon. The reader will remember also that we have previously mentioned that a great “building” and “the tree of life” are also found in 2 Esdras.

One thing that is especially interesting about Esdras’ vision is the material found in two of the verses in 2 Esdras 7:7-8 which we have cited above: “The entrance thereof is narrow, and is set in a dangerous place to fall, like as if there were a fire on the right hand, and on the left a deep water: And one only path between them both, even between the fire and the water, so small that there could but one man go there at once. . . .”

Lehi’s account of “the tree of life” reveals that there was a strait and narrow path and that many “were pressing forward, that they might obtain the path which led unto the tree by which I stood” (1 Nephi 8:20-21). The Apocrypha indicates that only one man at a time can follow the “path through the “dangerous place.” The Book of Mormon also seems to imply that those who walk on the “narrow path” must go single file. It says that there was “a rod of iron” which “extended along the bank of the river, and led to the tree” and that those who wished to be saved had to cling “to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree” (1 Nephi 8:19, 24).

In the account in 2 Esdras we are told that “on the left” of the path there was “like as if there were” some “deep water” which was hazardous to those passing over the path. In fact, the possibility one could “fall” is mentioned. This is significant because in the Book of Mormon we read: “And it came to pass that many were drowned in the depths of the fountain . . .” (1 Nephi 8:32).

There are other parallels between the wording in 1 Nephi, chapters 8, 11 and 12, and 2 Esdras. For example an “angel” made this comment to Esdras: “It is the Son of God . . .” (2 Esdras 2:4). In 1 Nephi 11:7 we also find the words, “It is the Son of God.”

The words “what thou desirest” are found in 2 Esdras 4:43. In 1 Nephi 11:2, 10, we find the same words in a different order, “What desirest thou.”

In 2 Esdras 5:2 the phrase “thou seest” appears. The same words are found in 1 Nephi 11:18.

The words “multitudes of peoples” are found in both 2 Esdras 5:27 and 1 Nephi 11:31.

The term “these words said he unto me” appear in 2 Esdras 6:30. In 1 Nephi 11:24 we read, “These words, he said unto me.”

In 2 Esdras 9:38 the phrase “with a loud voice” is used. The same words appear in 1 Nephi 11:6

The words “the meaning of the. . .” appear in 2 Esdras 10:40. They are also found in 1 Nephi 11:21.

In 2 Esdras 10:44 we find the words “whom thou seest.” The same words are found in 1 Nephi 11:18.

The words “And I saw, and” appear in 2 Esdras 11:2. The same words appear in 1 Nephi 11:32.

In 2 Esdras 11:36-37 we find the words “said unto me, Look . . . And I beheld.” The same words appear in 1 Nephi 11:24.

In 2 Esdras 12:10 the following wording appears: “And he said unto me, This is the interpretation . . .” In 1 Nephi 11:10-11 we find similar wording: “And he said unto me: What desirest thou? And I said unto him: To know the interpretation . . .” The reader will notice that in the parallel above the two books contain seven words that are identical.

The words “gathered together to” are found in 2 Esdras 13:8. The same words appear in 1 Nephi 11:28.

We suspect that there are many other parallels between the Book of Mormon and the Apocrypha which would require a sophisticated computer program to ferret out. What we really need is a careful computer examination of two, three or more word parallels between the Book of Mormon and the Apocrypha. In the meantime we feel that we have demonstrated important connections between Joseph Smith’s Book of Mormon and the Apocrypha. We, of course, have already noted that when Smith bought a Bible it contained the Apocrypha.

Edward Stevenson, one of Joseph Smith’s followers, made this statement concerning Smith’s view of the Apocrypha:

Opening the Bible to the Apocrypha, he [Joseph Smith] said, “There are many precious truths in these books,—just as true as any of the Bible—but it requires much of the Spirit of God to divine the truths from the errors which have crept into them.” (The Juvenile Instructor, September 15, 1894, page 570)

At the time Joseph Smith was revising the Bible he even claimed to have a revelation from the Lord concerning the Apocrypha. In the Doctrine and Covenants Smith wrote:

Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you concerning the Apocrypha—There are many things contained therein that are true, and it is mostly translated correctly; There are many things contained therein that are not true, which are interpolations by the hands of men. . . . Therefore, whoso readeth it, let him understand, for the Spirit manifesteth truth; And whoso is enlightened by the Spirit shall obtain benefit therefrom; And whoso receiveth not by the Spirit, cannot be benefited. Therefore it is not needful that it should be translated. Amen. (Doctrine and Covenants, section 91)

Those who want to know more about the Apocrypha may be interested in knowing that we have copies of the King James Version of the Apocrypha available for $9.00 a copy (plus shipping charge).
EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS

“I can’t thank you enough for what has happened to my son who went on a mission last AUG. He left the mission last week and left the church too. Someone had left a copy of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality in the apt. that they moved into. He read it and two weeks later left all behind. I had tried to talk him out of the Mormon bit and especially the mission but he wouldn’t listen. Your book accomplished everything INSTANTLY. I can’t imagine how that book got to be in that apt. at that time but I expect its nothing short of a miracle. God bless you both.” (Letter from Oregon)

“I am a prior Mormon myself and your work was instrumental in my leaving ‘the church.’ You do the tedious research and investigation that most Christians don’t have the time to do full-time. Your materials have helped me in my witnessing and church classes.” (Letter from Alabama)

“I appreciate the work you’re doing. Your ministry helped me to leave Mormonism and become a true Christian.” (Letter from Hawaii)

“. . . I’ve read your book The Changing World of Mormonism and got a lot out of it. I just recently left the Mormon Church and became a Born Again Christian . . . I was a member for 24 years . . . I’m really interested in starting a ministry in my new church in the area of helping Mormons find Christ . . .” (Letter from Ohio)

“I have been wavering about the church after reading some of your literature passed to me by a friend. This has finally clinched it for me & after being active for 50 years I will never go back . . . I am so grateful to you both for the hard work & effort . . . I have made my decision & I thank my Heavenly Father & you people for being there to help me . . . I finally feel so much better about myself . . . but I am sorry that I . . . wasted so much time.” (Letter from Alberta, Canada)

“I want to thank you so much for your precious work . . . I am 24 years old, 5th generation Mormon. In the past couple of years I’ve had so many doubts about the church, and all my questions went unanswered! My bishops told me not to worry about such things . . . After reading ‘A Gathering of Saints’ and ‘The Changing World of Mormonism’ I am positive it is very wrong. My fiancé was taking the [missionary] lessons & you’ve helped us both get out!! Now I’ve given material to my friend . . . who has been doubting since she was married in the L.V. Temple three years ago. She’s ready to leave now too . . . I am so scared of the reaction I will have . . . But I feel so free now I can find the true Christ!!” (Letter from Nevada)

“I can’t say all the words of thanks on this little paper. But please know that your hard work has been an instrument through which God was finally able to reach me . . . Thank you Sandra for giving my now husband a tape & words of encouragement. I’m so glad he didn’t give up on me!” (Letter from Utah)

“I myself am a former Mormon Missionary who left my mission . . . I’ve accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Personal Savior and been born Again.” (Letter from Pennsylvania)

IN THE LIGHTHOUSE AT LAST!

We are very happy to report that we have finally moved into the new Utah Lighthouse building at 1358 South West Temple—just one door south of the house we used for over thirty years to carry on our ministry to Mormons. We want to extend our thanks to all those who have helped us reach the end of this long and dusty road. We were so crowded in our former location that it was hard to function effectively.

Those who are interested in helping us reach the Mormon people should be aware that Utah Lighthouse is a non-profit organization. In addition to our work with Mormons, we provide support for 44 children through World Vision. Those who are concerned about helping this ministry can send their tax-deductible contributions to UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY, PO Box 1884, Salt Lake City, UT 84110. Both contributions and orders can be made over the phone (801-485-0312) with Visa, MasterCard, or Discover Card.

We deeply appreciate the financial contributions that we receive. Nevertheless, we strongly believe that PRAYER is the most important thing and that it will bring thousands of Mormons to the truth. As Apostle Paul admonished: “Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving” (Colossians 4:2).

BOOKS AND TAPES

(Mail orders add 10% - Minimum postage $1.50)

Occlultic Ritual Abuse: Fact or Fantasy? by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Price: $6.95


The Nauvoo Expositor — Joseph Smith tried to suppress this newspaper because it told the truth about polygamy and other practices. This act led to Smith’s death. This is a photomechanical reprint of the original. Price: $2.00 — 5 for $8.00 — 10 for $14.00

Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess, by Richard S. Van Wagoner. Reg. $28.95 — Special Price: $27.00

Inventing Mormonism, by H. Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters. An important discussion of Joseph Smith’s early years and the origin of Mormonism. Special Price: $27.00

New Approaches to the Book of Mormon, edited by Brent Metcalfe. BYU professor Louis Midgley says this is “the most sophisticated attack on the truth of the Book of Mormon” that is currently available. Special Price: $25.00
BOOKS AND TAPES
Continued from page 15
(Mail orders add 10% — Minimum postage $1.50)

Out of the Cults and Into the Church: Understanding & Encouraging Ex-Cultists, by Janis Hutchinson. Price: $10.00
Sandra Tanner Tape No. 3. Two radio interviews. Contains information about the 1990 changes in the Mormon temple ceremony and the false translation of the Book of Abraham. Price: $3.00
Questions to Ask Your Mormon Friend: Challenging the Claims of Latter-day Saints in a Constructive Manner, by Bill McKeever & Eric Johnson. Price: $9.00
How to Rescue Your Loved One from Mormonism, by David A. Reed & John R. Farkas. Price: $9.00
Mormonism: The Christian View. A video narrated by Wesley P. Walters. Deals with Mormon history, doctrines, claim to authority, changes in doctrine and witnessing suggestions. Price: $24.00
Divergent Paths of the Restoration, by Steven Shields. Brief history of over 100 churches and organizations claiming Joseph Smith as their founder. Price: $14.00
Why We Left Mormonism, edited by Latayne Scott. Personal testimonies of eight ex-Mormons, including Sandra Tanner. Price: $8.00
Basic Christianity, by John R. Stott. A brief examination of the claims of Christ and our response to His call. Price: $5.00
Mormons Answered Verse by Verse, by David Reed and John Farkas. Price: $7.00
Answering Mormons’ Questions, by Bill McKeever. Price: $7.00
New Testament Documents—Are They Reliable? by F. F. Bruce. A well-researched book by a Greek scholar showing the reliability of the translation of the N.T. Price: $5.95
Mere Christianity, by C. S. Lewis. Good defense and explanation of Christianity. Price: $8.00
Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons, by Pastor Mark Cares. Good introduction to Mormon culture and beliefs, with helpful insights on witnessing. Price: $11.00
After Mormonism What? Reclaiming the Ex-Mormon’s Worldview for Christ, by Latayne Scott. Price: $8.00

MANY MORE BOOKS!!!

We have many other books which are not listed in this issue of the Messenger. A complete book list will be sent free upon request by writing to us at Utah Lighthouse Ministry, PO Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110.
Many of our readers may be puzzled by the title of this article. When speaking of FARMS we are not referring to places where people cultivate the soil or milk cows, but rather to an organization known as the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies. This Foundation goes by the acronym FARMS. It is a non-profit organization that claims to be independent of the Mormon Church yet vigorously defends its teachings. The term “antimormonoid” will be explained below.

“SHADOWS OF REALITY”

It is obvious that many of those who write for FARMS view us and others who question Mormon doctrine with contempt. Professor Louis Midgley, of Brigham Young University, refers to us as, “the Tanners (those shadows of reality who operate the anti-Mormon Utah Lighthouse Ministry).” (Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, vol. 5, page 152)

In a footnote on page 139 of the same book, Professor Midgley refers to Mormon critics as “antimormonoids”: “This is typical of the exaggerations of the extremist faction of antimormonoids . . . The more moderate faction of antimormonoids is best illustrated by the late Reverend Wesley P. Walters, who generally tended to be more circumspect on such matters.” On the following page, Midgley admits that the term “antimormonoids” is “a somewhat contemptuous label formulated by BYU Professor Daniel C. Peterson.” Interestingly, Peterson serves as editor of the FARMS publication, Review of Books on the Book of Mormon.

Professor Midgley says he is amused by the actions of “antimormonoids” and is “hooked” on the practice of observing their odd behavior:

... The dreadful formulaic and pedestrian character of anti-Mormon literature, the prosaic business of incompetents endlessly quoting each other and hence erecting an ever more rickety house of cards, the constant repetition of borrowed bromides ... is all entertaining, at least to me. ... One might even say I am hooked on the stuff. I have even corresponded with some of those “antimormonoids.” My wife warns me about the utter futility of such behavior. She is not mollified by my descriptions of the amusing side of anti-Mormon literature. ... I occasionally resolve to leave the stuff alone. But ... like one who cannot pass the swinging doors of a bar, I am back into it again. (Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, pp. 139-140)

For the most part Mormon leaders have quietly tried to avoid dealing with those who have raised questions regarding such things as the practice of polygamy in early Mormonism, the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, and other problems.

While two Mormon apostles sent letters stating that they would sue us, both of them backed off when they found that we would not acquiesce to their threats to cease publishing certain information they did not want their people to know about (see photographs of their letters in our book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 12-13). A student at the church’s Brigham Young University did file a lawsuit against us, and even though he was supported in his endeavor by the university’s Religious Studies Center the suit was unsuccessful.

Notwithstanding the intimidation that was used to keep us from revealing the truth, Mormon leaders have never put forth...
any official rebuttal. While we have waited in vain for some type of response, they have maintained a conspiracy of silence for thirty-seven years.

In 1982, Apostle Marvin J. Ashton pleaded with his people to simply ignore those who find fault with the church:

Whether accusations, innuendoes, aspersions, or falsehoods are whispered or bluntly shouted, the gospel of Jesus Christ reminds us that we are not to retaliate nor contend. . . . we declare there is no time for contention. . . . Probably we will never be free of those who are openly anti-Mormon. Therefore, we encourage all our members to refuse to become anti-anti-Mormon. (The Ensign, November 1982, page 63)

FARMS TO THE RESCUE

Some Mormons could not go along with the silent treatment that the church was using against us and other critics. They were disturbed about the failure of the Mormon leaders to openly discuss the issues. In the September-October 1981 issue of The Sunstone Review the following advertisement appeared:

FOR SOME time there has been concern about the impact of Sandra and Jerald Tanner’s Mormonism—Shadow or Reality (and its recent Moody Press version, The Changing World of Mormonism). No thorough, formal, direct response has been published, though a number of articles have been written dealing with specific aspects of their criticism. A project is now being organized to formulate an answer to the Tanners and to other prominent critics of Mormonism . . . Anyone interested in contributing to this effort should outline his or her specialty and send the information to: The Tanner Project, P.O. Box 191, Calabasas, Cal. 91302-0191.

The reader will notice that only a number for a post office box was given for “The Tanner Project.” This clandestine move to destroy our work was carried on with great secrecy. At first we could not learn from the Post Office who had rented the box, but we were told that a “pen name” was apparently being used. Later, however, we were informed that a man by the name of Scott S. Smith was involved, and that he was using the alias “Steven Scott” to carry on his activities.

When we told a man who had previously corresponded with Scott Smith that we believed Smith was using an alias, the alias “Steven Scott” to carry on his activities. Later, however, we were informed that a man by the name of Scott S. Smith was involved, and that he was using the alias “Steven Scott” to carry on his activities.

When we told a man who had previously corresponded with Scott Smith that we believed Smith was using an alias, he decided to do some investigating on his own. Surprisingly, Mr. Smith did not try to deny the charge, and the man who interviewed him sent us a report on the matter:

This night (Aug. 1, 1982) I personally talked to Scott Smith on the telephone about the Tanner project . . . He says he was part of the first working group of people who started the project and opened the P.O. Box.

LDS CLAIMS

Under the Search Light
Recorded Message (801) 485-4262
(Message is three to five minutes)

Smith told me he did not want to say who was the main coordinator of the project . . . Smith says there are about three dozen people who have access to the P.O. Box . . .

When asked if he used the name Steven Scott, he said: “I used the name, but so did others.” . . . He says there is a lot of switching and barrowing [sic] of names, and admits to using other peoples’ names. He says others have used his name. The reason for all this? To confuse the Tanners! He says they want to make the Tanners go off on wild goose chases [sic] trying to figure out who is who and who is doing what . . . I hope this helps. (Letter dated August 1, 1982)

On August 19, 1982, we had a very interesting conversation with Scott Smith concerning “The Tanner Project.” Mr. Smith confirmed the admissions he had made on August 1, 1982. Later, in a letter to us Scott Smith wrote:

Your March SLCM just arrived. Its account of The Tanner Project is essentially accurate for what it covers . . . pseudonyms were used for the logical reasons you cited and a few of the participants were people you would know and respect. . . . inevitably a “definitive response” to your work will be published. . . . In any event, while I heartily disagree with your conclusions I do appreciate the generally civil way you go about your work, which distinguishes it from some of your allies. (Letter from Scott S. Smith, dated April 22, 1983)

Like the people involved in “The Tanner Project,” John L. Sorenson, who is an emeritus professor of anthropology at the church’s Brigham Young University, was also convinced that something had to be done to counter our work. Dr. Sorenson has served as a director at FARMS, and is probably the most well-known defender of “Book of Mormon Archeology.” Sorenson seemed deeply concerned with the effect our work was having upon members of the church. In a handwritten note made before “The Tanner Project” was exposed, Professor Sorenson boasted:

Some of us here are talking about holding a conference with enough experts taking on the Tanners’ garbage to blow them out of the water.

In the Salt Lake City Messenger for March, 1983, we wrote:

Now that we have exposed the dubious foundation of “The Tanner Project,” we doubt that any respectable Mormon scholars will want to associate their names with it. The Tanner Project seems doomed to failure. The Mormon leaders, of course, are trying to prevent a confrontation because they know a discussion of the issues will hurt the Church.

For some time after this debacle Mormon scholars backed away from dealing with the issues. In fact, almost a decade passed before FARMS entered into the fray. Prior to the publication of our book, Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon, church scholars at Brigham Young University and FARMS carefully followed the church leaders’ advice and studiously avoided dealing with our publications.

With the appearance of our work on the “black hole,” however, they decided that something had to be done. After
remaining virtually silent for over thirty years, Mormon scholars came out like an army to attack us. The plan was like that envisioned by Professor Sorenson—i.e., to have a number of scholars simultaneously tear into our work. Between 1991 and 1996 there were ten critical reviews directed against our work in FARMS publications!

Fortunately, our work was carefully done and we easily survived the torpedoes directed against our ship. Professor Sorenson’s belief that we could be blown “out of the water” certainly has not come to pass. In fact, Utah Lighthouse Ministry has expanded its operations. Those who are interested in our response to FARMS should read our books, Answering Mormon Scholars, Volumes 1 and 2. We just finished the second volume and are now working on the third (see special offer on the front page). Actually, the additional research we did in our rebuttal to the charges directed against us has led us to uncover many other problems in the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith’s other works which we had not been aware of when FARMS launched its attack.

Brigham Young University professor Daniel C. Peterson, editor of the publication, Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, made it clear that as far as ministries to Mormons are concerned we are the primary target of FARMS. In a review of a book written by John Ankerberg and John Weldon, Peterson made this caustic comment: “But among all the apostates and scandal-mongers and professional enemies of the Latter-day Saints who are their sources, one name looms far above the rest. That name is ‘Tanner’. ” (Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, vol. 5, page 20).

Speaking of his decision to accept an article written against us, Dr. Peterson wrote: “I accepted it because I thought it made a number of important points, and because most contemporary anti-Mormon writers depend heavily upon the Tanners. Attending to the roots seemed an efficient way of dealing with the branches” (Review of Books, vol. 4, page lxxiv, footnote 186).

In this statement Peterson is obviously suggesting that it is necessary to try to destroy our work (“the roots”) so that it will not be spread abroad by other “anti-Mormon writers,” whom he refers to as “the branches.”

Although FARMS is very concerned about our work, it is even more worried about a movement that is developing within the Mormon Church itself. Professor Daniel Peterson has admitted that there is a significant problem in the church itself. Peterson is exceptionally worried about the publications being distributed by Signature Books:

We have seen that George D. Smith and Signature Books reject the title “anti-Mormons.”

In the past, anti-Mormon attacks almost invariably came from outside the Church; for the most part, they still do. For the first time since the Godbeite movement, however, we may today be dealing with a more-or-less organized “anti-Mormon movement within the Church.” With “anti-Mormon Mormons,” as Robert McKay puts it. . . . (Review of Books, vol. 4, pp. liv-liv)

In 1993, Signature Books came out with a book which caused great consternation among Mormon Church leaders and defenders of the faith. It is entitled, New Approaches to the Book of Mormon, Explorations in Critical Methodology. It was edited by Brent Lee Metcalfe who was eventually excommunicated for questioning the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. In addition, David P. Wright, one of ten authors who wrote articles in New Approaches to the Book of Mormon, was also excommunicated from the church. Wright holds a Ph.D. in Near Eastern Studies and was on the faculty at Brigham Young University. Dr. Wright is now a professor of Biblical Studies and Hebrew at Brandeis University. Interestingly, before he was fired from Brigham Young University, Wright wrote a review of a book for FARMS (see Review of Books, vol. 1, pages 10-17).

After New Approaches was published, FARMS produced a 566-page book in an attempt to refute the book (see Review of Books, vol. 6, number 1). In vol. 6, number 2, Daniel C. Peterson acknowledged that the previous issue was “wholly dedicated to commenting upon New Approaches to the Book of Mormon.” Moreover, since that time writers for FARMS have continued to attack Brent Metcalfe and others who had a part in writing the book. The assault has continued right up to the 1996 publication of Review of Books, vol. 8, number 1.

In our newsletter, The Salt Lake City Messenger, June 1994, we reported that one noted writer for FARMS, Professor William Hamblin, was so angry with Metcalfe that he created an acrostic reading “METCALFE IS BUTTHEAD.” The encrypted message was to appear in the massive attack on New Approaches to the Book of Mormon. Fortunately for FARMS, someone discovered what was about to appear and cooler heads prevailed. According to an article in the March 9, 1994, issue of the Provo paper, The Daily Herald, “Metcalfe said that according to the, er, scuttlebutt, FARMS learned about the encryption just as the volume was going into print, quickly halted the press run and rewrote and reprinted the offending pages.”

FARMS is obviously deeply concerned that there may be a significant erosion of faith among Mormon scholars. Brigham Young University professor Louis Midgley, who previously expressed that he was “hooked” on observing “antimormonoids,” was very displeased with both Brent Metcalfe and New Approaches to the Book of Mormon. Nevertheless, he made a revealing comment about the book:

The most imposing attack on the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon has been assembled by Brent Lee Metcalfe. . . . the publication of New Approaches is an

**THE BEACON**

**MONTHLY SUPPORT GROUP**

**FOR THOSE LEAVING OR QUESTIONING MORMONISM**

2nd Sunday of the Month at 7:00 pm

Utah Lighthouse Ministry
1358 S. West Temple, SLC
important event. It marks the most sophisticated attack on the truth of the Book of Mormon currently available either from standard sectarian or more secularized anti-Mormon sources, or from the fringes of Mormon culture and intellectual life. (Review of Books, vol. 6, no. 1, pages 211-214)

Associated Press writer Vern Anderson described the situation very plainly in an article he wrote:

But if the so-called “apologists” and “revisionists” are merely at odds on the field of Mormon history, they are locked in a relative death grip over what most church members see as the cornerstones of Mormon doctrine. . . . (Salt Lake Tribune, July 22, 1991)

There can be no doubt that FARMS is intent on undermining the expanding influence of Signature Books. In addition, FARMS wishes to destroy the work of Utah Lighthouse Ministry and that of other ministries working with Mormon people. Furthermore, as we will show below, they are willing to spend a great deal of money to accomplish their goals.

Utah Lighthouse Ministry is actually a small organization that has only four people who work full time. Most of our time is spent on such things as waiting on customers, receiving phone calls from throughout the world, printing and collating books, processing mail orders, answering letters and many other mundane operations. This, of course, leaves us with little time to do original research. Nevertheless, we are confident that our work will stand the test of time. We stand on the promise of Apostle Paul:

What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31)

While FARMS has a great deal of money and many professors who give their time and support to the Foundation we do not fear its power. We believe that truth will eventually prevail.

SEVEN MILLION DOLLARS!

According to a catalog published by FARMS for the years 1988-89, the organization was incorporated in the state of California in 1979. It is “an independent, non-profit, tax-exempt organization.” FARMS claims that it “does not speak on behalf of any other organization. The opinions expressed in the articles and books it distributes are not necessarily the opinions of anyone except the authors.” The Foundation’s publication, Insights: An Ancient Window, May 1991, indicates that for a donation of “$500 to $100,000 per year” a person can become a member of the organization’s “Liahona Club.”

FARMS undoubtedly receives a great deal of support from affluent members of the church. For example, on page 6 of the FARMS publication Insights, June 1995, we find the following:

Karen and Alan Ashton of Orem, Utah, have established a significant FARMS endowment to support the timely implementation of new projects. Their generous gift will ensure that important new research opportunities are not missed while waiting for funding to become available . . .

This new funding and the increased amount of research it will support both necessitate and make possible the creation of new projects and the supervision of ongoing projects . . .

Brother Ashton is president of the BYU 14th Stake and is recently retired as chairman of the board of WordPerfect Corporation . . .

Brother and Sister Ashton have long been enthusiastic supporters of scholarly research on the Book of Mormon. This new gift combined with gifts from other FARMS donors raises support for such efforts in the LDS community to an exciting new level.

While the foundation claims that it is not in any way controlled by the Mormon Church, it acknowledges that it has offices at the church’s Brigham Young University: “The Foundation’s funds come from private donations, with the exception of the use of five offices in the Amanda Knight Hall kindly provided by Brigham Young University.” In addition, FARMS has worked closely with the church’s Deseret Book Company: “The Foundation is co-publisher with Deseret Book Company of a series of scholarly studies on the Book of Mormon, including the Collected Works of Hugh Nibley.”

FARMS also worked with the church’s Deseret Book Company in producing John L. Sorenson’s book, An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon.

The publication, Insights, August 1995, had an article entitled, “Upgrading the FARMS-BYU Connection.” This article indicated that the bond between FARMS and BYU is growing even stronger:

The unique and productive relationship that Brigham Young University and the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies have enjoyed for nearly fifteen years has recently been elevated to a new level of cooperation. . . . the BYU Board of Trustees has now endorsed a protocol between BYU and FARMS that expands the range of opportunities for cooperation on scholarly work on the Book of Mormon and related topics.

The active involvement of almost a hundred BYU scholars in a wide range of FARMS projects demonstrated the need for a university policy regarding these kinds of faculty activities . . .

This new agreement extends to FARMS an invitation to use a full range of campus facilities . . . And it indicates that BYU will cooperate with the Foundation in its efforts to obtain better space to house the rapidly expanding FARMS activities, perhaps even allowing FARMS to build a new building on campus: “BYU and FARMS will work together in locating—and possibly building suitable space on or near the campus.” . . . The enhanced level of cooperation between BYU and FARMS mean that more faculty members from more departments will likely be involved in scriptural research in the future.

It is interesting to note that “the BYU Board of Trustees” was agreeable to helping out FARMS. According to the Encyclopedia of Mormonism, vol. 1, pages 220-221, “BYU functions under the direction of the Church through a board of trustees that includes the First Presidency, the general presidents of the women’s auxiliary organizations and selected General Authorities.” Obviously, then, the link between FARMS and BYU could never be approved without the consent of the highest leaders of the church.

On November 20, 1995, F.A.R.M.S sent out a letter informing its supporters that they needed a great deal of money to build a research center. The following is taken from that letter:
In the last newsletter we announced the campaign to raise the funds to build the Book of Mormon Research Center. . . . Your help is needed. Many of you have already responded with generous contributions for which we are grateful, but more is needed. Local building costs are escalating rapidly. Presently the architects estimate the project will cost some seven million dollars. . . . We invite those of you who have abundant means to be very generous. . . . Please don’t delay.

A very impressive brochure was sent with the letter soliciting donations:

The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies is pleased to announce the construction of its new Book of Mormon Research Center. . . . FARMS scholars approach their research with a firm conviction of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and of the gospel of Jesus Christ as restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. . . . They publicize their findings for the benefit of serious students of the scriptures, as well as those who are investigating the Book of Mormon or who may be questioning its authenticity. . . . The library will be a resource center containing computers, books, and help for students working on papers and projects about the Book of Mormon. . . . The lecture hall . . . will be used for lectures on the Book of Mormon and other scriptural topics . . . The area will also be designed as a studio for filming lectures and presentations for broadcast and video production. . . . FARMS also maintains a site on the Internet, where users worldwide can go for answers. . . . Located on the southern periphery of Brigham Young University, the building will be a house “set on a hill” . . . the Book of Mormon Research Center is intended to be a landmark that draws attention to our rich scriptural heritage and invites all to come unto Christ. (FARMS. brochure)

One portion of the brochure that is especially interesting to us acknowledges that the Foundation is actively involved in countering critics of the church:

**A significant portion of FARMS’s work is devoted to setting the record straight with regard to anti-Mormon literature.**

It appears that FARMS has vast resources that will be used to criticize our work and the work of other critics of the church. We, of course, do not have millions of dollars to fight off such an attack. Nevertheless, we will do our best to counter their assault.

As we pointed out above, for a long period of time Mormon Church leaders tried to discourage their people from attempting to answer our work or the work of other critics of the church. A magazine article written by David Merrill pointed out that the Mormon leaders tried to restrain the church’s scholars from dealing with our publications: “The official attitude of the Mormon hierarchy towards the Tanners has been one of silence and apparent unconcern. They have, however, actively discouraged LDS scholars and intellectuals from jousting with the Tanners. . . .” (Utah Holiday, February 1978, page 7). A spokesman from the church’s Deseret Book Store wrote: “We do not have a specific response to the Tanner book. Perhaps it does not deserve the dignity of a response” (Letter written Jan. 19, 1977).

A man who talked to a leading Mormon authority, Apostle LeGrand Richards, claimed that Richards, “told me to quit studying materials put out by the Tanner’s . . . I told him ‘surely some day there will be an answer to these questions,’ He told me there never would be an answer and I should stop my inquiries” (Letter dated August 13, 1978).

Interestingly, while Apostle Richards said there never would be a rebuttal, and a spokesman for the church’s Deseret Book Store maintained that, “Perhaps it does not deserve the dignity of a response,” when the scholars for FARMS first attacked our work it became clear that things had changed. FARMS writer Matthew Roper showed deep concern over the matter when he reviewed a small portion of our book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? In fact, Roper frankly acknowledged that the book did merit review:

There are several reasons why this book merits review. First, the Tanners are considered by their fellow critics to be among the foremost authorities on Mormonism and the Book of Mormon. Their arguments are central to most anti-Mormon attacks on the Book of Mormon today. One recent critic describes Mormonism: Shadow or Reality? as “the heavyweight of all books on Mormonism.” (Review of Books, vol. 4, pages 169-170).

It appears, then, that Mormon Church leaders have finally come to see the utter futility of a conspiracy of silence. Unfortunately, however, instead of coming forth to directly deal with the issues and publishing a rebuttal under the church’s own name they seem to have dropped the ball into the hands of FARMS. This was a very clever move indeed.

Since the church owns Brigham Young University, it could have easily stopped the “anti-anti-Mormon” work of FARMS which is taking place on the BYU campus. The church leaders, then, must be in agreement with what FARMS is attempting to do. The fact that there is a plan to build a seven million dollar building on the campus certainly points to a close alliance with FARMS.

In addition to the support given by BYU, there are many faithful members of the church who would be willing to give money to FARMS if they thought it would silence the antimormonoids.

The Mormon Church is apparently very happy with the work done by FARMS. The church seems to be in a no-lose situation. If, on the one hand, the Foundation should make serious mistakes, the church would not be held responsible. On the other hand, if Mormon scholars present material that convinces people of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon, the church will benefit from the work.

In any case, the scholars involved with FARMS take great pride in their Foundation. They strongly believe that no other organization on earth can compete with their knowledge of the Book of Mormon. They are convinced that as far as human wisdom is concerned they are the ultimate experts on the subject. Consequently, they are very offended if anyone ignores or is ignorant of the research emanating from FARMS.
ROPERS UNFAIR ATTACK

In their attempt to discredit our work the FARMS-BYU scholars have used statements made by Dr. Lawrence Foster, a non-Mormon scholar who is very upset with us. As we will demonstrate below, the use of Foster as a witness against us is very unfair.

FARMS writer Matthew Roper seems to take a great deal of pleasure in quoting Foster’s negative comments regarding our work. Foster’s work is also cited against us by FARMS writers Professor William J. Hamblin and L. Ara Norwood. Dr. Gilbert Scharffs, who has served as director of an LDS Institute of Religion, and Richard I. Winwood, a former Mission President, also use Foster’s work against us. In a letter from FARMS, dated November 20, 1995, we find that Richard Winwood is now the Chairman of the Building Committee.


Lawrence Foster cannot believe that our work is motivated by our desire to please God and help Mormons find the truth. Instead, he speaks of “the intensity and bitterness of the Tanners’ feelings.” The following are some samples of the expressions he uses in the two articles and the Mormon History Association speech when speaking of us: “Jerald’s . . . deep bitterness;” “Jerald’s disillusionment and bitterness;” “harsh rhetoric of their attacks;” “long quotations interspersed with purple prose;” “the Tanners clearly are a party to unethical activity themselves;” “The Tanners seem to be playing a skillful shell game;” “abrasive and offensive methods;” “the Tanners . . . own confusion and thin skin;” “the Tanners’ naive view;” “their abrasive writing style;” “their hostility;” and “Their own bitterness and sense of outrage.”

It is clear from the language that Lawrence Foster uses when speaking of us that he believes that we are driven by a very deep sense of anger. He seems to see animosity in almost everything we do. In our opinion, however, Foster is projecting his own anger upon us.

In any case, in an article published by FARMS, Matthew Roper seemed to be elated that Foster attacked us:

Reading their rebuttal, I was reminded of several observations made by non-LDS historian Lawrence Foster a few years ago. With the Tanners, “Every bit of evidence, even if it could be most plausibly presented in a positive way, is represented as yet another nail in the coffin being prepared for the Mormon Church. . . . Even when they backhandedly praise objective Mormon historical scholarship, they do so primarily as a means of twisting that scholarship for use as yet another debater’s ploy to attack the remaining—and in their eyes insurmountable—Mormon deficiencies.” Speaking of the Tanners’ reaction to an earlier critique of their work by an anonymous historian, Foster reflects, “One is amused at the exaggerated sense of self importance that the Tanners’ rejoinder reveals. . . . The Tanners’ own response would seem to be the best possible vindication of the argument . . . that they lack a sense of balance and perspective.”

Concerning the Tanners’ allegation that there has been a conspiracy of silence, “what accounts for this reluctance [among both conservative and liberal scholars] to discuss the Tanners,” asks Foster in his most recent evaluation of the Tanners’ work.

“The Tanners’ answer is simple: The Mormon church is afraid of them. In their view, it has been engaged in a “conspiracy of silence” because it cannot answer their objections. The Tanners argue that if the church were to try systematically to answer their objections, it would realize the error of its ways and collapse. By failing to deal with them directly, the church, in the Tanners’ opinion, is providing yet another proof of its underlying fraudulence and repressive mind control. This interpretation fails to deal with many complex factors that have contributed to Mormon reticence about discussing the Tanners in print. The most obvious point is that neither conservative nor liberal Mormons think that the Tanners are really serious about wanting a truly open discussion or considering approaches that differ from their own chip-on-shoulder, anti-Mormon mindset. On the other hand, the Tanners have repeatedly demanded that Mormonism live up to standards of rectitude impossible for any human organization to achieve or else give up its truth claims. On the other hand, the Tanners simultaneously tell the Mormon church that even if it were somehow able to live up to its impossibly high standards, it would still be false because it is not normative Christianity as they understand it. . . . Faced with such resolute unwillingness to consider anything Mormonism does in a positive light or to engage in a constructive dialogue about differing approaches, the Mormon Church, as an organization, has understandably chosen to ignore the Tanners as much as possible. . . . The Church sees no advantage in engaging in vitriolic polemic with virtual unknowns and thereby giving them publicity.”

While we find many objectionable things in Professor Foster’s comments cited above, there is only item thing we will mention here. Foster states: “The Tanners argue that if the church were to try systematically to answer their objections, it would realize the error of its ways and collapse.” Those who take the time to read Foster’s statements will notice that he gives no reference for his statement. We do not know where Foster obtained this idea. We certainly do not believe that our arguments could cause the “collapse” of the Mormon Church. The church is far too large to crumble. We do believe, however, that the material we have printed could have a significant affect on many Mormons.

Matthew Roper’s article in Review of Books is a shortened version of his original paper. FARMS, however, printed it in its entirety in a 71-page report. We will refer to it, therefore, as the Longer Review. Roper quoted the following statement by Foster in that review:

“The Tanners have reacted to serious scholarly efforts to analyze their work in much the same way that they criticize the Mormon church for reacting to them—by trying to ignore criticisms that they cannot answer effectively. For instance, in 1982 the Tanners did not respond at all to my request for an interview with them as background for a scholarly paper I was writing on them. After more than a month of waiting—and
This statement came as a total surprise to us. We had never heard one word concerning such a "press release" before we were informed of Foster’s article published in Differing Visions. In his article in Dialogue, published ten years earlier, Foster did not refer to threatening us with an unfavorable press release if we did not meet with him. As we will demonstrate below, the idea that Foster forced us into agreeing to an interview is absolutely false.

In the first place, we had no reason to fear his work. In fact, his letter to us seemed to be very positive and led us to believe that he would be fair with us:

I am writing to ask for your help and suggestions on a project that may be of considerable interest...I plan to propose a paper for the 1983 session of the Mormon History Association which would deal with your life and work. To date I have not seen any objective scholarly assessments of your research and writing which appear fully satisfying. Yet your writings, reprints, and other activities certainly have been of the utmost importance to the development of new approaches to Mormon history during the past two decades. As neither a Mormon nor an anti-Mormon, I believe that I am in an unusually good position to provide an independent assessment of your work and its significance.

Everything in this letter led us to believe that Foster was going to make a fair assessment of our work and that it would be to our advantage to meet with him. Furthermore, we received a telephone call from a member of the Mormon History Association indicating that such a presentation would help promote our work.

While it would not be accurate to say that we have responded to everyone who has sought an interview, in this case we were excited about the offer. The Mormon History Association had studiously disregarded our work since its inception. In his article published later in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Foster acknowledged that this was the case:

Despite the Tanners’ extensive publication record...to date virtually no serious public analyses of their work have appeared. When the Tanners’ arguments have been attacked in Mormon publications, as has occurred on many occasions, their names and the titles of their writings have almost never been cited. Indeed, until very recently even independent Mormon scholarly journals such as Dialogue and Sunstone, which discuss all manner of controversial issues, have largely avoided mentioning the Tanners by name, much less analyzing their work explicitly. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer 1984, page 48.)

We were certainly pleased to learn that the Mormon History Association was finally going to discuss the research we had spent years compiling. Therefore, one of the authors of this newsletter (Sandra) wrote to Foster and told him that we were agreeable to the interview.

Unfortunately, however, the letter Foster sent to us contained two addresses—one for the Georgia Institute of Technology and another for Yellow Springs, Ohio, where he would apparently be spending most of his time. The Yellow Springs address was on the backside of the letter, and Sandra most likely used the address found on the letterhead on the first page.

Foster later explained that he had used the Georgia Institute of Technology letterhead to convince us that he was a responsible scholar. Sandra seems to recall that the post office was unable to deliver the letter and that it was eventually returned to us. In any case, the date for the interview was agreed upon and we were looking forward to Foster’s visit.

When Foster finally came for the interview in May, 1982, one of the first things he asked was why we had not answered his letter. Sandra explained what had happened, and we both remember that at that time Mr. Foster seemed completely satisfied with the explanation.

What we did not know at the time we received Foster’s letter was that he had been deeply involved with a number of prominent Mormon historians and was very sympathetic to the problems these historians were facing. Some of the Mormon leaders had become extremely upset with Church Historian Leonard J. Arrington because he and other members of the Church Historical Department were attempting to tell the truth about Mormon history.

Dr. Arrington was eventually removed from his position and sent to Brigham Young University. Assistant Church Historian Davis Bitton later discussed “the series of experiences that led to the demise of the History Division,” and indicated that our work helped to contribute to “the demise”:

It did not help that the decade of our existence was a time when Jerald and Sandra Tanner were publishing a variety of works...We did not sympathize with the Tanners. But in a very vague and general way one can imagine how “the troubles of our Church history” could be seen in terms of both fronts. I was dismayed when an honor’s thesis...lumped the work of the historians of the History Division...together with the publications of the Tanners. For him, it was all “the New Mormon History.” Guilt by association is a devastating thing, as we discovered. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Autumn 1983, pages 16-17)
It is doubtful that the liberal historians who had gained a foothold in the Church Historical Department could have survived even if we had not been publishing at that time. Nevertheless, because of these problems some of the Mormon historians became very antagonistic toward us and wanted to blame us for their troubles.

In 1977, the Church Historical Department made one serious attempt to destroy our credibility when it secretly published a booklet entitled, *Jerald and Sandra Tanner's Distorted View of Mormonism: A Response to Mormonism —Shadow or Reality?* Interestingly, D. Michael Quinn was designated to write the response. Quinn was a promising young Mormon historian at that time.

The publication of the pamphlet turned out to be a real disaster because those involved did not dare reveal that the Church Historical Department was responsible for its publication. Consequently, neither the name of the author nor the publisher was mentioned anywhere in the book. As we have explained in a rebuttal to the pamphlet, the publication was distributed in a clandestine fashion. Wilfrid Clark, who was working for Zion Bookstore, told us he received an anonymous letter containing a key to a room in a self storage company. He went to that location and picked up 1,800 free copies of the booklet!

Our response to this work appeared in a publication entitled, *Answering Dr. Clandestine: A Response to the Anonymous LDS Historian.* In this booklet we identified Quinn as the author. Even Lawrence Foster had to admit that “The Tanners convincingly link the anonymous critique to D. Michael Quinn and the LDS Church Historical Department . . .” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1984, p. 51).

As it turned out, Dr. Quinn later became a powerful spokesman for those advocating truthful Mormon history. His willingness to stand up against the highest church leaders who wanted to suppress church history eventually led those in authority to put so much pressure upon him that he felt that he had to leave his position at Brigham Young University. Finally, Dr. Quinn suffered the ultimate disgrace: he was excommunicated from the church!

Some of the FARMS-BYU scholars turned on Quinn and viciously attacked him and his work. Strange as it may seem, however, Mormon writers like Matthew Roper continue to use Quinn’s anonymous rebuttal in an attempt to refute us. They are careful, of course, not to reveal that Quinn is the author of that pamphlet.

At any rate, our rebuttal to the pamphlet obviously caused both Michael Quinn and Leonard Arrington a great deal of embarrassment. Although we felt we did a good job in handling the issue, Lawrence Foster thought that we had been too hard on Dr. Quinn and was very angry about the matter.

Significantly, in 1981, long before D. Michael Quinn was excommunicated, he gave a speech entitled, *On Being a Mormon Historian.* In his lecture he courageously criticized the Mormon leaders for suppressing the true history of the church, and was planning on publishing the speech in *Sunstone* magazine. Church officials, however, warned him against printing the address. When we learned that the church was trying to suppress publication of the speech, we decided to publish it ourselves. The *Seventh East Press* had already printed some of the most damaging portions of the speech. The only reason we published the speech was that we felt that it was extremely important and should be made available to members of the church.

Unfortunately, Foster was convinced that our publication of the document was an act of hostility and that we were actually seeking to get Quinn excommunicated or in serious trouble. Nothing could be further from the truth. While Foster is correct in saying that we were originally upset with Quinn when we learned that he had written the rebuttal, about four years had passed.

By that time the anonymous rebuttal had turned out to be a complete fiasco, and we were much more disturbed by the suppressive policies of the Mormon Church, than we were with D. Michael Quinn. In fact, we were elated that he had the courage to speak out. His work on the anonymous rebuttal proved to be of little value to devout Mormons, since it was published anonymously and since he had to concede that there were many problems in Mormon history.

Unfortunately, when Foster arrived at our house we soon learned that he had a deep animosity towards us because he felt we had mistreated Dr. Quinn. Although we were kind to Foster during the interview, he was rather hostile towards us and there was nothing that we could say to him that would change his opinion.

After reading Foster’s inaccurate comments concerning us in *Differing Visions*, we asked him if he would consent to a tape-recorded telephone interview. Foster agreed and the interview took place on March 21, 1995.

When we asked him why he had never mentioned the so-called “press release” when his article was published in *Dialogue*, he responded: “I was really trying to avoid polemizing the issue . . . I didn’t bring up the issue because I didn’t think it was terribly germane at that point . . .”

If it was irrelevant in 1984, one would wonder why it became so important in 1994. We felt that it was an *ad hominem* attack on us influenced by his own anger towards us and doubted that it would serve any useful purpose to answer his attack. We felt that we had more than enough arguments with Mormons and that it would be foolish to get side-tracked into a argument with a non-Mormon who professes to be neutral. If he had claimed that we made serious textual errors in our work, we certainly would have responded at the time.

In any case, the fact that we did not give Foster any publicity must have festered in his mind for a long time. In the 1994 version of his article he wrote: “Subsequent to the publication of my article . . . the Tanners have never directly alluded to it in print, nor have they ever written to me to express approval or disapproval of any aspect of it” (*Differing Visions*, page 362, n. 20).

Actually, we did tell Foster we were displeased with his article when he asked us about it, and he, in turn, sent us a number of demeaning letters. Foster’s long-suppressed anger over the fact that he had not received the attention he had expected seems to have finally surfaced.

The reader will remember that in his printed statement, Foster claimed that it was “After more than a month of waiting” that he began to be concerned that we might not meet with him. However, in a letter to us, dated Feb. 15, 1995, Foster acknowledged that it may have been even less than a month: “I . . . waited, if my memory is correct, for three to four weeks.”

Foster admitted that he had not found his original correspondence: “I still don’t have . . . the direct correspondence located but there is no question that it is somewhere . . . it
probably will surface before I die . . .” In another conversation with Foster, however, he indicated that he may not have saved any of his correspondence with us. We, in fact, had to provide him with a photocopy of his first letter to us which was written in 1982.

Since so much time had elapsed, it was hard for us to remember all the details about what had happened in 1982, and Foster’s mind seemed to be just as fuzzy. He asked Jerald some questions about how the interview was eventually set up:

> Do you have any indication of when you actually responded to me? . . . we made some sort of contact. Did you call me? I don’t think you did. I thought you must have sent me something, but I don’t remember.

We discussed the possibility that Sandra’s letter to Foster may have been delivered to Georgia Tech instead of Yellow Springs, Ohio: Lawrence Foster: “You think you could have sent something off to Georgia Tech and not gotten to me?” Jerald Tanner: “Oh, yeah, I think we sent it to Georgia Tech . . . and I think the letter was returned.” Lawrence Foster: “Oh, really. Well that’s too bad. . . . I apologize if . . . I’ve made more of this than it was.”

Foster acknowledged that he “was back and forth between Georgia Tech and . . . southern Ohio” and that he “came back a couple of times briefly” to Georgia Tech. This whole situation regarding the two addresses, may have led to the letter being returned to us.

However this may be, Mr. Foster could have corrected the whole situation by simply making a phone call to us. Within just a few minutes we could have told him exactly when we could meet with him. Instead of doing this, he resorted to a very bizarre way of dealing with the problem—he began to call other individuals. For instance, he first called H. Michael Marquardt in Sandy, Utah. In his letter to us Foster said, “I called Michael Marquardt . . . and asked him if he knew why I was getting no response from you.”

In his article in Differing Visions Foster claims that Mr. Marquardt told him that we were afraid to meet with him: “I learned through a mutual acquaintance [identified in Foster’s letter as Michael Marquardt] that the Tanners were uneasy about meeting with me and had not decided whether they would agree to an interview.”

We were certain that Mr. Marquardt would not tell Foster such a thing because we had never indicated that we were “uneasy” about meeting with him. Significantly, Marquardt claims that he did not make such a statement to Mr. Foster. He had absolutely no reason to believe that we were running from Foster. Mr. Marquardt, however, did call us and inform us that Foster had called him, and he indicated that he thought it was very strange that Foster would call him about the interview instead of us.

Lawrence Foster then made another unusual move; instead of calling us, he called George D. Smith, who later presided over the session of the Mormon History Association in which Foster read his paper regarding our work. According to Smith, Foster spoke very rapidly and displayed a good deal of hostility toward us. He claimed that he was having a great deal of difficulty getting us to consent to have an interview with him. Smith then asked Foster why he didn’t do “the obvious thing”—i.e., pick up the telephone and call us about the matter.

In our taped-recorded interview with Lawrence Foster, Jerald asked him this question: “If the answer was delayed in the mail—you didn’t get it—did you ever attempt . . . to call us on the phone?” Foster answered:

> Well, I was . . . in a residence in . . . southern Ohio, doing research . . . I did not have as good access as I would have liked to that. . . . I probably should have called you, but I guess quite frankly I believed in putting everything in writing so that I could . . . verify it because of your propensity for making capital issues out of very minor things. . . . Perhaps in retrospect I should have called you earlier . . .

Significantly, in his letter to us in 1982, Dr. Foster did not indicate that he was in any rush to receive an answer to his letter. He, in fact, wrote that he would not be in Salt Lake City until “May 9 through . . . May 14.” Since his letter was dated Feb. 15, there was well over two months to set up the exact date of the interview. In the tape-recorded interview, however, Foster indicated that he thought he was coming to Salt Lake City in April. After we pointed out that he had made a mistake, he commented as follows:

> . . . maybe . . . I was jumping the gun there, but, anyhow you’re right that I should have called you on the phone. . . . I’ve always been a little bit shy on the phone myself, and I prefer—especially if I have something that is controversial—to do it by correspondence. . . . almost anything that is connected with you is controversial by either you make it controversial or other people make it controversial.

It is obvious that he had a great deal of fear that we would not consent to an interview. His concern was not justified. Even if we had known he was hostile, we would have met with him to find out why a non-Mormon scholar, who professes to be neutral, would hold so much resentment against us.

In his tape-recorded interview with us, Lawrence Foster stated:

> Well, I would have called you eventually, but it did seem to me that I was used to working with correspondence . . . especially on . . . potentially sensitive topics . . . I really did not feel that I wanted to get into a premature exchange with you at that point.

**THE ABORTED PRESS RELEASE**

On February 15, 1995, Mr. Foster finally sent us the copy of the press release which he says he wrote himself:

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

The controversial anti-Mormon writers, Jerald and Sandra Tanner, have repeatedly attacked the Mormon Church for its alleged secrecy and refusal to answer their letters. Recently, however, the Tanners themselves refused to be interviewed by the noted non-Mormon scholar, Lawrence Foster, of the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta. Foster is currently working on a major study analyzing the Tanners’ life and work.
He requested that they meet with him during his week-long visit to Utah, May 6-14, but they refused.

“The situation is really ironical,” Foster comments. “For years the Tanners have been constantly attacking the Mormon Church for its supposed secrecy. Now when they have the opportunity of presenting their case to a recognized scholar who is preparing a thorough treatment of their life and work, they won’t even agree to be interviewed. I can only conclude that if one uses the Tanners’ own standards of judgment, they must be afraid that they have something to hide or else that in a candid interview they would be unable to state their case persuasively. I still hope, of course, that the Tanners will change their minds and agree to be interviewed. But their actions so far don’t speak very highly for their confidence in the correctness of their own cause.”

Foster is the author of the highly acclaimed recent book, Religion and Sexuality, published by Oxford University Press. In that book, he provides the first detailed study of the origin and development of Mormon polygamy that has been written by a non-Mormon who had full access to the LDS archival holdings on polygamy in Salt Lake City. Praise for the study has come from LDS, non-Mormon, and RLDS scholars alike, who have described it as the first truly objective treatment of this controversial subject. Foster hopes to do a similarly objective treatment of the Tanners. “It is hard, though,” he concludes, “when they won’t even agree to meet with me or cooperate in any way. I just can’t see how they can hope to maintain any credibility when they are so secretive about themselves and what they are doing.”

In our opinion it seems highly unlikely that people in the news media would have paid any attention to this self-serving “press release.” They certainly were not very interested in our work in 1982. However this may be, in our telephone interview with Foster he related the following:

I don’t believe that I ever gave him [George Smith] a copy of it [i.e. the press release], no . . . this was sort of an exercise. I figured, look, if the Tanners are not going to meet with me, if they’re not even going to respond to me, and they’ve been complaining all these years about other people not responding to them, well, I’m going to hit them back and give them a little taste of their own medicine. And if I have to do that . . . I’ll get quite a bit of . . . publicity out of it, if I have to do that, but . . . my goal all along was to get an interview with you.

We were absolutely stunned when we learned that Lawrence Foster was claiming that he had only agreed to meet with him after he had threatened to release a statement to the news media attacking our credibility. Neither one of us had ever heard about such a “press release.” Foster made it very clear in the tape-recorded interview that he never told us about the press release.

Michael Marquardt was also disturbed by the statement and claimed he did not know anything about the matter until he looked at the book, Differing Visions. We asked Foster about this and he responded that although he had called Marquardt on the phone, “I certainly didn’t tell him that I was thinking of . . . drafting a press release . . .”

In his letter of Feb. 15, 1995, Foster mentioned that George Smith was the one who could have conveyed the message concerning the press release to us. When we checked with Mr. Smith, he remembered Foster was very angry with us, but had no recollection of the press release. Furthermore, and even more important, Smith does not remember informing us about the so-called press release. It is obvious that unless someone informed us about the press release it could not possibly have anything to do with our agreement to meet with Foster.

In any case, in the interview with us Foster admitted that he probably didn’t give Smith a copy of the press release and was not even certain that he had mentioned it to him:

. . . I don’t think I sent him a press release. I think I talked with him about it, and I think I asked him if he . . . knew . . . if there was some reason why you wouldn’t want to meet with me, or something. But . . . again . . . I can’t document [it]—look, peoples’ memories are often fallible after a matter of months or a year . . . and I can’t—I was . . . in a very different environment doing research, in a very different location, and as you can see I have trouble even locating . . . the original written correspondence, which I am sure I have, but I’m still trying to track it down.”

Mr. Foster also stated: “I did mention that I was thinking of doing that, as I recall, and then again I don’t know for sure. It’s been, again, a long time, but my recollection is that . . . I at least floated the idea of a press release to . . . George Smith.”

To Lawrence Foster’s credit, after we thoroughly explained the situation, he was willing to concede that he could have been mistaken about the matter:

I apologize then for that particular thing which would be an error then . . . it gives the wrong impression on that . . . I wish we could get the actual dates straight on . . . when these different things happen[ed], but it may be hard to reconstruct that unless I’ve got some notes in my files somewhere.

Mr. Foster, in fact, went so far as to acknowledge that there may have been inaccuracy in his charge against us:

Well, again, I made a supposition then that was incorrect . . . in my note 20. I may not have mentioned the press release. I think I talked with him about the idea of doing it, but I certainly didn’t send him the actual item . . . Well, I’m sorry if . . . there’s been any inaccuracy in that note.

When Foster speaks of note 20 in the book, Differing Visions, he is referring to the very note that Matthew Roper uses in an attempt to undermine our work.

While we are relieved that Foster acknowledged the error, we do hope that he will ask the publishers of Differing Visions to remove this spurious note from the book.

As noted above, a simple phone call from Lawrence Foster would have saved him a great deal of embarrassment. At any rate, we do not accuse Foster of lying. He seems, however, to have allowed his anger to dominate his thinking. Before we discussed the matter with him, he probably really believed that he had to force us to submit to an interview with him.
WHY USE FOSTER?

While we can understand why some Mormons might enjoy reading Lawrence Foster’s attack on us, it seems absolutely incredible that the FARMS-BYU scholars would use Foster as a witness against us. Don’t they realize that Foster is as opposed to some of the most important beliefs of the Mormon Church as he is to our work? In the tape-recorded interview with Foster he said: “. . . If you follow . . . my article correctly, you’ll see that I’m criticizing both you and the Mormons in various ways.”

In the same interview Foster frankly stated: “My interest in Mormonism is . . . in what really happened with Joseph Smith or with these various things, and I [it?] doesn’t matter to me whether the official line is right or wrong . . . the official line is almost always wrong if you get down to specifics.”

Interestingly, Lawrence Foster acknowledged that he found our work on Mormon polygamy to be “very useful” when he was writing his book, Religion and Sexuality: The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community:

By compiling most of the major published sources bearing on controversial topics in Mormonism, the Tanners have highlighted issues which need to be resolved. For example, I found their study of Mormon polygamy very useful as a compilation of primary evidence on that topic when I was preparing my study, Religion and Sexuality. . . . their prior search of the literature saved me much time and alerted me to issues I would need to resolve. The impact of the Tanners’ publication of primary Mormon printed documents also must not be underestimated. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer 1984, page 47)

On page 338 of his book, Religion and Sexuality, note 20, Foster wrote: “The assiduous anti-Mormon writers Jerald and Sandra Tanner have collected a few examples of slayings in Utah that were carried out in the classic blood atonement style . . . Jerald and Sandra Tanner, The Mormon Kingdom, 2 vols.”

Professor Foster mentioned our book, Joseph Smith and Polygamy, a number of times in his work. He also referred to other books we had printed.

In his book, Religion and Sexuality, page 296, note 15, Foster said he had come “to the conclusion that the Book of Mormon is probably best understood, at least in part, as a trance-related production.” He also said that in his opinion Joseph Smith was “acting as an unusually gifted trance figure . . .” (Ibid.)

In our tape-recorded interview with Foster he made it clear that he believed the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith became involved in polygamy because he, “had some sort of sex drive . . . it is probably not too hard to figure out that he had a sex problem, too . . . anybody who takes, let’s say, arguably twenty to thirty to [or?] more women as plural wives presumably has an ample sex drive.”

In his book, Religion and Sexuality, page 126, Foster commented: “To be sure, no serious scholar would deny that sex drives influenced the introduction of polygamy.”

Lawrence Foster also believes that the evidence shows that Joseph Smith was an adulterer:

Finally, what accounts for the apparent discrepancies between theory and practice in the early development of polygamy, particularly the evidence that Joseph took a number of plural wives who already had living husbands? . . . According to Mormon and non-Mormon accounts, Emma [Joseph Smith’s wife] attempted to keep track of Joseph Smith’s possible liaisons and head them off. . . .

Although admissions of unorthodox marital relations are obviously a highly personal matter, many of Joseph Smith’s plural wives testified explicitly that they had full sexual relations with him. Emily D. P. Partridge said she “roomed” with Smith . . . she also admitted that she had “carnal intercourse” with him. . . .

Apparent discrepancies between belief and practice were numerous during the chaotic early days of the development of polygamous practice. Perhaps the most severe conceptual difficulties are raised by the strong evidence that Joseph Smith took as plural wives a number of women who had living husbands and that he asked some of his closest followers to give him their wives as well. . . . If one accepts Latter-day Saint sources, it seems clear that Smith had full sexual relations with some women who were at the same time legally the wives of other men. Based on such evidence, it is also clear that Smith did ask some of his followers to give him their wives, whatever his motives in such cases may have been. (Religion and Sexuality, pages 151, 155-156)

JOSEPH MENTALLY ILL?

A number of years ago we read in a newsletter published by people interested in Mormon history that Lawrence Foster was at a hotel in Salt Lake City arguing with Mormon scholars about whether Joseph Smith was mentally ill. Later, Foster called us and wanted to know if we had any information to support his hypothesis. Surprisingly, in 1993, Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, published an article by Foster which set forth his belief that Joseph Smith might have been mentally ill. On page 15, Foster emphasized “that the analysis presented here about Joseph Smith’s possible tendencies toward manic-depressive mental states is not intended as anything but an hypothesis.”

In his article Foster suggests that Joseph Smith’s involvement in polygamy may, in fact, have been the result of his having manic-depression:

To place this issue into a larger context, let us return to the perspectives of William James . . . and realize that religious prophets, including Joseph Smith, are in some sense, at least initially, “sick,” “disturbed,” or “abnormal.”. . . Why did Joseph Smith feel so preoccupied with introducing plural marriage among his followers . . . Was there some hidden psychological key that could help make sense of this seemingly obsessive drive? . . . A variety of factors including . . . Joseph Smith’s own strong sex drive all made plural marriage an idea with considerable power for the Mormon prophet . . . Was Smith, as some of his previously most loyal followers at the time asserted, losing touch with reality during his final months in Nauvoo?

A compelling psychological approach to explaining this and other puzzling features of the Mormon prophet’s behavior during this period was suggested to me by a Mormon psychiatrist, Dr. Jess Groesbeck . . . gradually the
We seriously doubt that Foster was trying to offend the Mormons. In fact, he probably felt that his work would help Mormon intellectuals to replace the official story of the church with something more believable.

If the First Vision is viewed as an hallucination, and the revelation to establish polygamy as a natural result of manic-depression, then one can be more sympathetic with Joseph Smith’s strange behavior. Under this hypothesis many things about Joseph Smith can be explained. For example, in our interview with Foster he stated that it could account for, “Joseph Smith’s ferocious anger in . . . the last couple of years of his life.” It could also help explain why Smith became the “head of his own private army, became ‘king’ of his secret Kingdom of God . . . [and] ran for president of the United States . . .”

The idea that Joseph Smith was mentally ill has been around for a long time. In discussing theories about the origin of the Book of Mormon, Francis W. Kirkham, a Mormon writer, mentioned one of the anti-Mormon theories: “The Book of Mormon was written by Joseph Smith, a person subject to epileptic fits in early life and later to other pathological mental conditions” (A New Witness For Christ in America, 1951, vol. 1, page 350). Dr. Kirkham then cited the following from the book, The Founder of Mormonism, written by Isaac Woodbridge Riley in 1902:

Thurlow Weed, when first Joseph submitted to him the Book of Mormon, said that he was either crazy or a very shallow impostor. There is no call for so harsh a judgment . . . There is a truer and, at the same time, more charitable explanation—it is, in a word, that Joseph Smith, Junior, was an epileptic.

While we have always been somewhat cautious about promoting the idea that Joseph Smith had mental problems, we must admit that Foster’s work is impressive and certainly merits serious discussion. Although we do not feel competent to say that Joseph Smith was afflicted with manic-depression, it does seem that there was something seriously amiss in his life.

It is interesting to note that Joseph Smith’s grandfather, Solomon Mack, seemed to suffer from fits. He even wrote a book detailing some of his fits, “severe accidents,” and unusual visions he received. In his book, A Narraïte [sic] of the Life of Solomon Mack, Joseph Smith’s grandfather wrote:

I afterwards was taken with a fit, when traveling with an axe under my arm . . . I was senseless from one until five p.m. When I came to myself . . . I was all covered with blood and much cut and bruised. When I came to my senses I could not tell where I had been nor where I was going. But by good luck I went right and arrived at the first house . . . (As cited in Joseph Smith’s New England Heritage, by Richard L. Anderson, 1971, page 43)

Although Dr. Anderson mentions that, “There were also ‘some fits’ among his later disorders,” he rejects the idea that he was “afflicted with hereditary epilepsy, which too neatly explains his grandson’s visions as epileptic seizures, with flashing lights and lapses into unconsciousness. But the case of neither grandfather nor grandson fits such speculation” (Ibid., page 13).

According to Harold I. Kaplan and Benjamin J. Sadock’s Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry/IV, . . . “The increased activity often takes the form of sexual promiscuity, political involvement, and religious concern. . . . Delusions and hallucinations are not unusual. . . . It is quite common for the person to communicate with God and to have it revealed that he or she has a special purpose or mission. Patients frequently describe themselves as an ‘organ’ of God through whom God speaks to the world.”

In the various forms of manic-depressive illness, the manic highs alternate in bipolar fashion with periods of depression. . . .

How do descriptions of psychological mania square with Joseph Smith’s actions during the last three years of his life . . . To anyone who has worked closely with the records of the Mormon prophet’s life during those final years, the parallels are striking . . .

Most obvious is the Mormon prophet’s extraordinary expansiveness and grandiosity throughout this period. During the last year of his life . . . Smith served as mayor of Nauvoo and head of his own private army, became ‘king’ of his secret Kingdom of God . . . ran for president of the United States . . . and was the “husband” in some sense of dozens of wives . . .

In no area were Joseph Smith’s manic qualities more evident than in his efforts to introduce and practice polygamy during the last three years of his life. The point at which Joseph Smith began systematically to introduce polygamy to his closest associates has strong suggestions of mania . . . his subsequent surge of activity [sic] with the sixteen or more women with whom he appears to have sustained sexual relations as plural wives (the full number may have been much greater) is even more suggestive of the hypersexuality that often accompanies manic periods. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Winter, 1993, pages 4, 7, 9-13)

Lawrence Foster’s hypothesis that Joseph Smith may have been mentally ill would be a very hard pill for the FARMS-BYU scholars to swallow. To many Mormons the idea that Joseph Smith was not mentally competent is far more offensive than calling him a fraud. Most people prefer to believe that they are too intelligent to be misled by someone who is mentally ill. Consequently, some Mormons would consider this to be the ultimate insult to their intelligence.
In a footnote on page 166, Anderson says that “It is even possible that Solomon used ‘fit’ in the early sense of ‘a mortal crisis, a bodily state (whether painful or not) that betokens death.’”

Nevertheless, Solomon Mack described so many accidents in his book that it would make one wonder if there was something seriously wrong with the man.

In any case, in the official account of Joseph Smith’s First Vision he wrote:

> . . . I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction. (Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History, verse 15)

Joseph Smith described the remarkable vision he saw and then went on to say:

> When I came to myself again, I found myself lying on my back, looking up to heaven. When the light had departed, I had no strength; but soon recovering in some degree, I went home. ( Ibid., verse 20)

While Joseph Smith claimed that he saw an actual vision, there is a similarity to his grandfather’s experience in that both of them were overpowered and passed out. Interestingly, both Joseph and his grandfather used the expression, “When I came to myself” (compare verse 20 with Solomon Mack’s account cited above).

Another account of the vision appears in Joseph Smith’s 1835 dairy. This account contains some eerie material about a strange noise Joseph heard that was not published in the official version:

> My tongue seemed to be swollen in my mouth, so that I could not utter. I heard a noise behind me like some person walking towards me. I strove again to pray but could not. The noise seemed to draw nearer. I sprung up on my feet and looked around, but saw no person or thing that was calculated to produce the noise of walking. (An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith, edited by Scott H. Faulring, 1987, page 51)

It is interesting to note that some of those who suffer from epilepsy claim they hear “peculiar sounds” just prior to an attack (see The American Medical Association Family Medical Guide, 1987, page 289). Whatever the case may be, the fact that Joseph Smith claimed he heard the sound of “some person walking towards” him whom he was unable to see is certainly weird.

Some critics of the LDS Church claim that the spooky elements of the vision, such as Joseph Smith being “seized upon by some power which entirely overcame” him, the “thick darkness,” and the attempt to “bind” his tongue prove that the vision was demonic. Mormons, on the other hand, maintain that God thwarted an attack by Satan and gave Joseph a wonderful vision. Foster’s hypothesis gives another alternative: Joseph Smith may have suffered from an hallucination.

Joseph’s First Vision experience was not the only time that he passed out. Later, Joseph Smith claimed he was visited in the night three times by an angel who told him about the gold plates. Joseph wrote:

> I shortly after arose from my bed, and, as usual, went to the necessary labors of that day; but, in attempting to work as at other times, I found my strength so exhausted as to render me entirely unable. My father, who was laboring along with me, discovered something to be wrong with me, and told me to go home. I started with the intention of going to the house; but, in attempting to cross the fence out of the field where we were, my strength entirely failed me, and I fell helpless on the ground, and for a long time was quite unconscious of anything.

The first thing that I can recollect was a voice speaking unto me, calling me by name. I looked up, and beheld the same messenger . . . (Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History, verses 48-49)

It is also interesting to note that both Solomon Mack and Joseph Smith claimed they prayed for God’s forgiveness. Both maintained that they had a spiritual experience in which they saw a bright light in their house on more than one occasion. Mack wrote:

> I was distressed to think how I had abused the Sabbath and had not taken warning from my wife. About midnight I saw a light about a foot from my face as bright as fire; the doors were all shut and no one stirring in the house. I thought by this that I had but a few moments to live, and oh what distress I was in. I prayed that the Lord would have mercy on my soul and deliver me from this horrible pit of sin. . . . I was in distress.

Another night soon after, I saw another light as bright as the first, at a small distance from my face, and I thought I had but a few moments to live. (As cited in Joseph Smith’s New England Heritage, page 54)

Joseph Smith wrote that after he had his First Vision, he was severely tempted:

> . . . I was left to all kinds of temptations; and mingled with all kinds of society, I frequently fell into many foolish errors, and displayed the weakness of youth, and the foibles of human nature; which, I am sorry to say, led me into divers temptations, offensive in the sight of God. . . . on the evening of the above-mentioned twenty-first of September, after I had retired to my bed for the night, I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies . . .

While I was thus in the act of calling upon God, I discovered a light appearing in my room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noonday, when immediately a personage appeared at my bedside . . . The room was exceedingly light . . . He called me by name . . . He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates . . .

> After this communication, I saw the light in the room begin to gather immediately around . . . the room was left as it had been before the heavenly light had made its appearance. I lay musing on the singularity of the scene . . . when in the midst of my meditation, suddenly discovered that my room was again beginning to get lighted, as it were, the same heavenly messenger was again by my bedside. (Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History, verses 28-30, 32-34, 43-44)

Joseph Smith, of course, also asserted that when he had his first vision he “saw a pillar of light exactly over my head,
above the brightness of the sun . . . " (Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History, verse 17) While it is only a matter of speculation, if Foster is correct in his hypothesis regarding manic depression, the fact that Joseph Smith wrote, “When I came to myself again, I found myself lying on my back, looking up into heaven” (verse 20) could be significant. As he was lying there on the ground the rays of the sun may have seemed like a blinding light shining in his eyes. Since Smith claimed the vision occurred in the woods early in the spring, and that he was “looking up into heaven,” it is certainly possible that the sun shining down through the branches could have given him the impression he was having a vision.

In addition to these parallels, both Smith and his grandfather had an experience in which they believed they were addressed by God or Christ. Solomon Mack wrote: “. . . I was called by my Christian name . . .” (pages 54-55). Smith also stated: “One of them spake unto me, calling me by name . . .” (verse 17).

If Joseph Smith experienced hallucinations, as Foster seems to believe, it would go a long way towards explaining why his story of the First Vision contains so many glaring contradictions. In the first account, which he wrote in 1832, he said there was only one personage present in the vision: the Lord Jesus Christ (see An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith, pages 5-6).

In the version written in 1835, Smith maintained that there were two persons whom he did not identify. In addition, however, he also said that he “saw many angels in this vision . . .” (Ibid., page 51). Finally, in the official account published in 1842, Smith claimed that he saw both God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ! This account omits the presence of angels in the vision.

Besides a number of other contradictions, Smith claimed that the vision occurred at the time of a revival in the Palmyra-Manchester area. In his official account he claimed that the First Vision took place “early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty.” Wesley P. Walters, however, demonstrated conclusively that there was no such revival in the Palmyra-Manchester area. In fact, Walters found hard evidence that the revival did not occur until the fall of 1824! For a great deal more about problems in the First Vision see our book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 143-162-D, or Inventing Mormonism, by H. Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters.

If Joseph Smith suffered from seizures and hallucinations, it would make it easier to understand why he could not tell a consistent story about the First Vision. As we have shown above, in Joseph’s official account of the vision he said he felt that he was “doomed to destruction.” He also revealed that he “was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction . . .”

In his book, Hearts Made Glad: The Charges of Intemperance Against Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet, LaMar Petersen wrote the following:

Joseph’s associates sometimes spoke of his paleness when “in vision” or when receiving a revelation. A daughter of Adaline Knight Belnap recorded her mother’s impression of the Prophet in an instance of spiritual (spirituous?) passivity. “How well she remembers one day before her father died (Vinson Knight) of a little excitement in school. The children were busy when the school room door was carefully opened and two gentlemen entered, carrying the limp form of Joseph Smith. The children all sprang to their feet, for Brother Joseph lay helpless in their arms, his head resting on his brother’s shoulder, his face pale as death, but his eyes were open, though he seemed not to see things earthly. The teacher quieted them by telling them that Brother Joseph was in a revelation, and they were carrying him to his office above the schoolroom. (Hearts Made Glad, 1975, page 206)

While there is no question that Joseph Smith and other early Mormon leaders did use alcoholic beverages (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 405-413), this strange incident could be viewed as evidence supporting Foster’s hypothesis of manic depression.

While one can only speculate on whether Joseph Smith inherited mental problems, it is certainly possible that traumatic events he experienced could have had a serious effect upon him. For example, when he was just a young boy, he had an extremely bad infection in his leg. According to his mother, it finally came to the point that the doctors were convinced that “amputation is absolutely necessary in order to save his life.” His mother, however, requested the doctors make “one more effort” to save the leg.

Joseph’s mother went on to state that he refused to take any brandy or wine before the operation. Consequently, he had nothing to kill the pain. According to Mrs. Smith, the operation was horrific:

The surgeons commenced operating boring into the bone of his leg, first on one side of the bone where it was affected, and then on the other side, after which they broke it off with a pair of forceps or pincers. They thus took away large pieces of the bone. When they broke off the first piece, Joseph screamed out so loudly, that I could not forbear running to him . . .

When the third piece was taken away, I burst into the room again—and oh, my God! what a spectacle for a mother’s eye! The wound torn open, the blood still gushing from it, and the bed literally covered with blood. Joseph was as pale as a corpse . . . (Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith The Prophet, and his Progenitors for Many Generations, by Lucy Smith, 1853, pages 63-65)

Although Joseph Smith dictated his recollection of the operation for his History of the Church, it was never included in the published History. While we noticed this story in a microfilm of the History in the 1960s, it was not available to the public until 1970. Mormon scholar Reed Durham finally published it in Brigham Young University Studies, Summer 1970, pages 481-482.

Joseph Smith claimed that the illness came upon him when he “was five years old or thereabouts” and said that he “endured the most acute suffering for a long time . . .” When amputation was suggested he responded: “. . . as young as I was, I utterly refused to give my assent to the operation, but consented to the Trying an experiment by removing a large portion of the bone . . .”

Smith went on to claim that he suffered persecution at this early period of his life, which, of course, was years before he had his First Vision:

. . . I was reduced so very low that my mother could carry me with ease.

After I began to get about I went on crutches till I started for the State of New York where my father had gone
for the purpose of preparing a place for the removal of his family, which he affected by sending a man after us by the name of Caleb Howard . . . We fell in with a family by the name of Gates who were travelling west, and Howard drove me from the waggon and made me travel in my weak state through the snow 40 miles per day for several days, during which time I suffered the most excruciating weariness and pain, and all this that Mr. Howard might enjoy the society of two of Mr. Gates' daughters which he took on the wagon where I should hive [sic] Rode, and thus he continued to do day after day [sic] after day through the Journey and when my brothers remonstrated with Mr. Howard for his treatment to me, he would knock them down with the butt of his whipp [sic].—When we arrived at Utica, N. York Howard threw the goods out of the waggon into the street and attempted to run away with the Horses and waggon, but my mother seized the horses by the reigns. On the way from Utica, I was left to ride on the last sleigh . . . I was knocked down by the driver, one of Gate's Sons, and left to wollow [sic] in my blood until a stranger came along, picked me up, and carried me to the Town of Palmyra. (Brigham Young University Studies, Summer, 1970, pages 481-482)

Dr. Reed Durham noted that this document is found in Joseph Smith, 'History,' Book A-1, pp. 131-132, located in the LDS Church Historian's Office . . . (Ibid., page 480)

In her book, Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith, page 69, Mrs. Smith did mention the trouble she had with Mr. Howard and also stated that he mistreated "my children, especially Joseph. He would compel him to travel miles at a time on foot, notwithstanding he was still lame."

Interestingly, however, she says nothing about her son's incredible claim that he walked in his "weak state through the snow 40 miles per day for several days . . ." Moreover, Mrs. Smith is silent with regard to the fact that Joseph claimed he was "knocked down by the driver . . . and left to wollow [sic] in my blood until a stranger came along, picked me up, and carried me to the Town of Palmyra."

The question might be raised as to whether Joseph Smith was exaggerating or hallucinating. On the other hand, although it is difficult to believe, his mother may have forgotten the incident.

It does not seem possible that Joseph Smith, who was "still lame" from the operation, could have walked "40 miles per day for several days" in the condition he was in after his operation. Mormon writers state that the operation was so severe that Joseph Smith walked with a slight limp for the rest of his life.

Joseph Smith's statement that he "was five years old or thereabouts" when he had the operation is incorrect; he was actually just over seven years old at the time. Mormon writer LeRoy S. Wirthlin shows that Joseph's mother places the date "of two of Mr. Gates' daughters which he took on the wagon . . ." Moreover, Mrs. Smith is silent with regard to the fact that Joseph claimed he was "knocked down by the driver . . . and left to wollow [sic] in my blood until a stranger came along, picked me up, and carried me to the Town of Palmyra."

The next morning I went to see Elder Rigdon, and found him crazy . . . they had dragged him by his heels . . . so high from the ground that he could not raise his head from the rough, frozen surface, which lacerated it exceedingly; and when he saw me he called to his wife to bring a razor . . . to kill me. Sister Rigdon left the room, and he asked me to bring his razor . . . he wanted to kill his wife; and he continued delirious some days.

A few years later, Sidney Rigdon was still threatening peoples lives. In the Mormon Church's newspaper, The Nauvoo Neighbor, December 4, 1844, Apostle Orson Hyde reported:

Elder Rigdon has been associated with Joseph and Hyrum Smith as a counselor to the Church, and he told me in Far West that it was imperative of the Church to obey the word of Joseph Smith, or the presidency, without question or inquiry, and that if there were any that would not, they should have their throats cut from ear [to] ear.
After Smith’s death, Rigdon was finally excommunicated from the church. In his book, *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess*, Richard S. Van Wagoner, presents rather convincing evidence that Rigdon was suffering from severe manic depression—the same affliction Lawrence Foster would like to link to Joseph Smith.

If the FARMS-BYU scholars are going to use Lawrence Foster as an authority against us, they should also inform their readers that Professor Foster believes that *Joseph Smith was an adulterer* and suggests that he may have been mentally ill.

**FOSTER DISDAINS OUR BELIEFS**

Mormon defenders who use Foster to criticize us should also make it clear that one of the main problems Foster has with us is that he simply does not like our religious beliefs. This is very important to note because some of the very things Foster objects to are found in Mormonism.

In his article in *Dialogue*, Summer 1984, page 36, Foster makes this very clear: “. . . I am equally critical of the *narrowminded Protestant fundamentalism* which the Tanners have substituted for the Mormonism that they decry.” Speaking of us, Foster also says he feels a “deep sadness that they are still largely unable to pass beyond that *narrow, pharisaical Mormon literalism* with which they grew up and which sees only the external shell of religion and not its deeper internal spirit” (Paper by Lawrence Foster, read at the Mormon History Association, May 6, 1983, typed copy, page 25).

Foster is not disturbed with us because we belong to some strange cult. Instead, we are criticized because we believe in traditional Christianity—the same religion that is embraced by many millions of people throughout the world. Because we do not go along with Foster’s views on religion, he feels that our research on Mormonism is of little value.

On the last page of his article in *Differing Visions* Foster wrote: “Until the Tanners are prepared to use consistent standards of judgment for their own faith as well as that of others, their stance cannot be taken seriously by scholars or by the general public” (page 365). Professor Foster is very dogmatic about this matter. Foster clearly desires to pressure us into changing our beliefs about Christianity.

Professor Foster is extremely dogmatic about this matter. While he does not openly attack Christianity, he is obviously trying to get us to conform to his *disbelief* in some of the principal doctrines of Christianity.

Foster likes to use the phrase “*narrowminded Protestant fundamentalism*” when referring to our religion. This, of course, is an attempt to discredit us. While he would probably like to be referred to as a liberal Christian, he does not seem very liberal in his stance towards those who believe in orthodox Christianity. He is, in fact, more like a *fundamentalist* who simply cannot tolerate dissenting opinions.

Although some liberal Christians can sometimes be a little condescending to us, we generally get along well with them. In Foster’s case, however, *there is no middle ground*. If we do not accept his conclusions regarding religion, he resorts to ridicule.

While we disagree strongly with some of Foster’s opinions, we feel that he has every right to publicly express his views. In fact, we believe that both liberal Christians and non-Christians often have important things to say. For example, in the past many orthodox Christians as well as Mormons opposed equal rights for blacks. It is obvious now that this was a serious mistake. They should have listened carefully to what non-Christians and liberals were saying about that important matter.

However this may be, Dr. Foster is convinced that he has far more mature views regarding religion than we do. He, in fact, believes that he has developed a “*distinctive sense of mission*” to make people “become better Methodists, Catholics, Jews, Buddhists, Mormons, or whatever” (*Dialogue*, Autumn 1983, page 90).

Consequently, although he believes that “*narrowminded*” Protestants like us should be silent about Mormonism, he apparently feels that it is his prerogative to criticize the Mormons and to help set the church on the right course. For example, in an article printed in *Dialogue* Foster wrote:

My perspective corresponds neither to that of most Mormons nor of most anti-Mormons . . . I shall deal briefly with one topic which constitutes the crux of my personal difference with conventional Mormonism—the Latter-day Saint concept of true religious authority . . . . Joseph Smith made the mistake of trying to set up a new religious system which would be free of all the flaws of the old imperfect systems. In my opinion, he inevitably failed . . .

Following the death of Joseph Smith . . . Mormonism gradually moved away from its prophet’s powerful, albeit incomplete, vision . . . The message has been watered down until for many it is like eating a *poor pabulum*—a pabulum characterized by the belief that simply by following Church leadership unquestioningly one will have achieved true faith. At times Mormonism appears to be a public relations shell without substance. Like the biblical Pharisees whom Jesus so sharply criticized, Mormons increasingly define themselves in terms of external behavior—not smoking, not drinking, and paying tithe—rather than seeking to understand the inner spirit which alone gives such actions meaning.

Perhaps the ultimate irony is that Joseph Smith, who introduced the temple ceremonies so important to Mormonism, would today be unable to participate in those ceremonies himself because of his own behavior. For Smith was no teetotaler; on numerous occasions throughout his life, he drank beer and wine. Indeed, he once planned to set up a bar in his Mansion House in Nauvoo. Only Emma’s refusal to countenance the action forced him to back down. Yet today, how many Saints are piously judgmental of anyone who deviates even an iota from official Church policy. So often Mormons do all the right things for all the wrong reasons. They strain out gnats and swallow camels.

Today I see in Mormonism a growing fear, a loss of true confidence in the Mormon message . . . Many Mormons, even at the highest levels of the Church, have recently begun to argue that there is simply “no middle ground”—one is either 100 percent Mormon or 100 percent anti-Mormon. While such statements are palpably and demonstrably false, they are nevertheless dangerous, especially for naive Saints . . . Commitment and challenge are vital to any faith, but let us not carry commitment to such pathological extremes that we retreat permanently into foxholes and accuse anyone who doesn’t share our curious preference of being an enemy. Such an approach makes not only *for bad religion*, but for bad history as well. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Autumn 1983, pages 92, 96, 97)
In a letter to us, dated August 24, 1989, Mr. Foster wrote: “I read with interest your most recent discussion of the alleged ‘black hole’ in the Book of Mormon . . . I wonder if orthodox Christianity of the sort that I assume you espouse does not have a ‘black hole’ as great as or greater than anything in Mormonism in its story of the Resurrection.”

When the noted scholar Wesley P. Walters read Foster’s letter to us, he wrote the following in response:

The impression I carried away is that only if one rejects orthodox Christianity he allowed to point out falsehood in another religion. You surely did not intend to imply that anyone, except orthodox Christians, can fault Jim Jones as a false religious leader . . . . The Tanners have made their own independent study of Christianity and concluded that the position of orthodox Christianity does stand up intellectually and historically. It seems to me very arbitrary on your part for you to insist that only if they accept the conclusion of Mr. Fuller . . . conclusions that you find pleasing to your frame of mind, then alone would they be entitled to study, know or speak about material in the field of Mormonism. I hope, therefore, that in the future you can find it in your heart to deal with more charitableness in speaking of their work.

Lawrence Foster apparently thinks that we have not spent much time researching the claims of Christianity. Actually we have spent thousands of hours researching and writing about important issues like evolution, textual criticism, seeming contradictions in the Bible, and other controversial subjects. While we certainly do not claim that we have all the answers, we feel that there is sufficient evidence to place our faith in Christianity. Those who are interested in our views on the subject should read our book, A Look at Christianity.

Lawrence Foster wrote that his mother did not agree with the conservative views held by the Methodists, and that he “received both a thorough grounding in Mother’s literary and religious approach to the Bible and full biblical refutations for the arguments of fundamentalist Christianity. As a teenager, I participated regularly in church services, choir, and youth groups, yet my propensity for raising uncomfortable questions continually embroiled me in controversy. For example, I was such a disruptive influence for my conservative eighth-grade teacher that by mutual agreement I opted out of the class and spent my time in the church library reading The Interpreter’s Bible on the Book of Job . . . . It became increasingly clear to me that no specific beliefs and practices are necessarily important in themselves; what really matters is the meaning that they hold for the worshiper . . . . Though I might intellectually reject a literalistic interpretation of the Christmas story, for example, I would always feel deeply the joy of the Christmas spirit, with its message that God can work through even the most lowly and unpromising circumstances” (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Autumn 1983, pages 89-90).

We do not know exactly what Foster believes about Jesus. In our interview with him he stated his “faith does not rest on the Virgin Birth” and also commented: “What I’m saying is if you’re going to criticize somebody else you should apply it to yourself. . . . in my paper on Joseph Smith and possible manic depression, I . . . bring in several religious figures including George Fox . . . and Jesus Christ as possible parallels.”

Although Foster admitted that there was very little historical evidence to go on, he wrote that, “one cannot help speculating that the most influential of all religious founding figures, Jesus of Nazareth, called the Christ by his followers, may have been subject to manic-depressive tendencies. . . . Jesus’ actions riding into Jerusalem on a donkey . . . or scourging the money changers from the temple, when juxtaposed with Jesus’ profound depression shortly before his final arrest . . . could raise the question of whether something more than normal mood swings may have been present during Jesus’ experience” (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Winter 1993, page 20).

We feel that the hypothesis that Jesus may have suffered from manic-depressive tendencies is very flimsy indeed. If it is true that Jesus knew that he was going to be betrayed by Judas, take upon himself the sins of the world, suffer and be crucified in a very cruel manner, as the Bible asserts, then it is no wonder that he would have “profound depression” just before his death. If Foster had evidence that Jesus often suffered from deep depression, his argument would be more convincing.

Although it is true that Jesus drove the moneychangers out of the temple, there is no evidence that he hurt anyone. Jesus, in fact, is portrayed in the Bible as being against violence and revenge. In Matthew 5:44, we read: “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which dispitefully use you . . .”

Joseph Smith the Mormon prophet, on the other hand, was prone to violence. While Mormon writer John J. Stewart claimed that Joseph Smith was “perhaps the most Christ-like man to live upon the earth since Jesus himself,” this conclusion is not supported by Joseph Smith’s History: “I am not so much a ‘Christian’ as many suppose I am. When a man undertakes to ride me for a horse, I feel disposed to kick up and throw him off, and ride him” (History of the Church, vol. 5, page 335).

Unlike the gentle and soft spoken man portrayed in the Mormon film, Legacy, Joseph Smith was without question a fighting prophet. He not only liked to wrestle and prove his strength, but he sometimes kicked people and struck them very hard. Historian D. Michael Quinn observed that Smith was a “church president who physically assaulted both Mormons and non-Mormons for insulting him . . .” (The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power, 1994, pages 261-262).

Jedediah M. Grant, a member of the First Presidency under Brigham Young, told of the Baptist priest who came to see Joseph Smith. . . . the Baptist stood before him, and folding his arms said, “Is it possible that I now flash my optics upon a man who has conversed with my Savior?” “Yes,” says the Prophet, “I don’t know but you do; would not you like to wrestle with me?” That, you see, brought the priest right on to the thrashing floor, and he turned a somerset right straight. After he had whirled round a few times, like a duck shot in the head, he concluded that his piety had been awfully shocked . . . (Journal of Discourses, vol. 3, pp. 66-67)

Joseph Smith’s close friend, Benjamin F. Johnson, made this observation after Smith’s death:

And yet, although so social and even convivial at times, he would allow no arrogance or undue liberties.
Mormon writer Max Parkin refers to a court case against Joseph Smith in which Calvin Stoddard, Joseph Smith's brother-in-law, testified that, “Smith then came up and knocked him in the forehead with his flat hand—the blow knocked him down, when Smith repeated the blow four or five times, very hard—made him blind—that Smith afterwards came to him and asked his forgiveness ...” (Conflict at Kirtland, citing from the Painesville Telegraph, June 26, 1835).

Parkin also quotes Luke S. Johnson, who served as an apostle in the early Mormon Church, as saying that when a minister insulted Joseph Smith at Kirtland, Ohio, Smith, “boxed his ears with both hands, and turning his face towards the door, kicked him into the street,” for the man’s lack of charity” (Ibid., page 268).

In the History of the Church for the year 1843, we read of two fights Joseph Smith had in Nauvoo:

Josiah Butterfield came to my house and insulted me so outrageously that I kicked him out of the house, across the yard, and into the street. (History of the Church, vol. 5, page 316)

Bagby called me a liar, and picked up a stone to throw at me, which so enraged me that I followed him a few steps, and struck him two or three times. Esquire Daniel H. Wells stepped between us and succeeded in separating us. . . . I rode down to Alderman Whitney . . . he imposed a fine which I paid, and then returned to the political meeting. (Ibid., page 524)

On August 13, 1843, Joseph Smith admitted that he had tried to choke Walter Bagby: “I met him, and he gave me some abusive language, taking up a stone to throw at me: I seized him by the throat to choke him off” (Ibid., page 531).

After he became president of the Mormon Church, Brigham Young commented, “if you had the Prophet Joseph to deal with, you would think that I am quite mild. . . . He would not bear the usage I have borne, and would appear as though he would tear down all the houses in the city, and tear up trees by the roots, if men conducted to him in the way they have to me” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 8, pp. 317-318).

In addition to choking, kicking people out of houses and churches, knocking them in the head, boxing their ears, and tearing their clothing, the evidence indicates that he threatened people’s lives. For documentation see The Mormon Hierarchy, Origins of Power, pages 91-92.

The Testimony of Joseph Smith’s Best Friend, pages 4-5)

Criticisms, even by his associates, were rarely acceptable. Contradictions would arouse in him the lion at once. By no one of his fellows would he be superseded. . . . one or another of his associates were more than once, for their impudence, helped from the congregation by his foot. . . . He soundly thrashed his brother William . . . While with him in such fraternal, social and sometimes convivial moods, we could not then so fully realize the greatness and majesty of his calling. (Letter by Benjamin F. Johnson to Elder George S. Gibbs, 1903, as printed in The Testimony of Joseph Smith’s Best Friend, pages 4-5)

While it is true that Lawrence Foster has slapped us down a number of times in his articles and letters, we should probably point out that he has also made some good statements about us and indicated that our work has had a significant effect on Mormonism. Below are a few examples:

By contrast to the often-harsh rhetoric of their attacks on Mormonism, in person they can be kind, even gentle individuals. Disciplined, hard-working, and committed, they might seem to be almost an ideal model for Mormon missionaries . . . (Differing Visions: Dissenters in Mormon History, page 349)

Yet if the Tanners’ own work falls short as history, it nevertheless has helped stimulate historical studies. Jerald is a brilliant analyst of detail, with an almost uncanny ability to spot textual inconsistencies that demand explanation. His analysis showing that a pamphlet denunciation of Mormonism attributed to Oliver Cowdery was, in fact, a clever forgery, is only one example of research and analysis that would do credit to any professional historian. More recently and significantly, Jerald stood almost alone among those studying Mormon history in publicly raising doubts about the authenticity of the ‘Salamander letter,’ purportedly describing Joseph Smith’s early experiences that led to the production of the Book of Mormon. The vast majority of Mormon scholars had accepted as genuine this and other documents that subsequently have been shown to be forged by Mark W. Hofmann. Jerald, despite his desire to find evidence discrediting the conventional Mormon story, felt that something did not ring true about the letter, and he was prepared to voice his doubts publicly. The letter seemed to him too close to expectation to be correct.

The impact of the Tanners’ publication of primary printed documents also must not be underestimated. (Ibid., pages 351-352)

Yet the Tanners have been more than simply gadflies; in curious and often indirect ways, their work has also been a factor helping to stimulate serious Mormon Historical writing . . . their criticisms have highlighted issues that professional Mormon historians, operating from a very different perspective, have also sought to address. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer 1984, page 35)

Jerald and Sandra Tanner are without doubt among the most complex and multi-faceted of all the figures whom I have encountered in Mormon history, past or present . . .

From the very beginning the Tanners’ concerns were not simply doctrinal but also social. Jerald’s fierce opposition to Mormon racism, for example, has been a recurrent motif throughout his career . . . Although much of the motivation behind such publication appears to have been the polemical one of embarrassing present-day Mormons by showing the inconsistencies and changes in Mormonism since its earliest years, the larger impact of such efforts, as some Mormon historians have observed, has been to give Mormons back their heritage and to encourage serious scholarly attention to the fascinating early days of the Mormon movement . . . .

Among the most critical of the Tanners and their methods have profited, at least indirectly, because the Tanners’ allegations have spurred them to begin their own investigations into vital and still incompletely understood topics . . .

A number of those scholars who are most critical of the Tanners and their methods have profited, at least indirectly, because the Tanners’ allegations have spurred them to begin their own investigations into vital and still incompletely understood topics . . .
of reasons lie behind the Mormon church’s decision to try to publicly ignore the Tanners. Basically the Tanners have adopted a brilliant, two-pronged debaters ploy which is exceedingly difficult to handle without greater knowledge and sophistication than most church leaders appear to possess. . . .

Every organization, especially if it is highly authoritarian, is dependent for its ongoing health and vitality on its critics . . . Ralph Nader has made inestimable contributions to the health and vitality of American Business even though most businessmen cannot stand him personally. By repeatedly, effectively and with incontrovertible evidence alerting the public to illegal, shoddy and dangerous business practices, Nader has spurred many different enterprises to improve their products, making them safer and more competitive. . . .

Jerald and Sandra Tanner have functioned with regard to Mormonism in much the same way that Ralph Nader has functioned with regard to American business. The Tanners have challenged the Mormon church. If it really believes in its own history, to find out what that history really was. They have challenged the Mormon church . . . to correct its sectarian provincialisms, such as the former policy of excluding Blacks from full church membership. Such challenges have obviously not been popular, yet through them the Tanners have prodded the church to begin, however haltingly and imperfectly to develop a more realistic sense of itself. I would imagine, for example, that much of the flowering of Mormon historical studies in the 1970s, which has helped to give at least some Mormons a richer and more vital knowledge of their own heritage, has been more than tangentially related to the desire of Latter Day Saint historians to prove the Tanners wrong by showing that a full and honest history of the Latter Day Saints can indeed be written. Much like the irritating grain of sand in the oyster, the result has been a pearl. . . .

My opinion is that the long-term interests of the Church . . . would best be served by moving as expeditiously and fearlessly as possible to admit frankly the truth of those factual points on which Jerald and Sandra Tanner are indisputably correct. . . .

My basic advice to Mormons who would refute the Tanners is simply this: Take the log out of your own eye and then you will be able to see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye. . . .

Jerald and Sandra Tanner are real people. Not devils with horns, cloven hooves and tails. They have suffered much in devoting their lives to what has in so many ways often been a difficult and thankless crusade. . . . the Tanners probably care far more for the Mormon church and [than?] do the great majority of those Saints who have never rebelled or thought seriously about their faith. . . . would not the most constructive response be not to treat them as a tabooed and difficult subject, but rather to try to involve them and their considerable talents and dedication in constructively discovering and telling the true story of Mormonism, with both its failings and its achievements. (Paper by Lawrence Foster, read at the Mormon History Association, May 6, 1983, typed copy, pages 6, 10-11, 14-15, 20-21, 25, 28-30)

Lawrence Foster’s articles concerning us fluctuate back and forth between praise and condemnation. It is almost as if they were written by two different people. If the FARMS-BYU scholars wish to use him as a witness against us, they should at least tell the whole story about how he really feels about Joseph Smith and Mormonism.

We plan to give Dr. Lawrence Foster a chance to respond to our criticism in the next issue of the Messenger.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS

“Just the fact that ‘Mormons’ don’t go around raising ‘hell’ and trying to stir up problems with other religions like I have seen your organization do—repeatedly leads me more than ever to believe that the LDS Church is the only true Church . . . Why don’t you just admit that you worship Satan and NOT GOD. . . . Please take my name off your mailing list.” (Letter from Sandy, Utah)

“I joined the Mormon Church in 1978. I am now going through the process of mentally getting myself away from the church. It is very hard on me. I really, really thought the church was true until I read Mormon Enigma & your book that you’ve put together. . . . I really don’t consider your literature for the most part to be anti-Mormon because I find most of it just to be quotations of the church leaders themselves. That is what is so sad, & it is the most damning.” (Letter from Louisiana)

“Thanks (in part) to your research, I have realized that I have been deceived for the first 27 years of my life. As a BYU graduate and returned missionary, I’m glad that I won’t have to live the rest of my life under a veil of deception. Keep up the good work.” (Letter from California)

“Just want to say thanks for your ministry. You helped me find the truth about Mormonism. . . . May God’s great love continue to lift you up as it does me! Your sister in Christ.” (Letter from Idaho)

“I’ve written to you twice many years ago . . . your research work and specially Mormonism, Shadow or Reality? have been instrumental in my leaving the L.D.S. Church — You have been kind enough to send, for many years the Salt Lake City Messenger which I read . . . from cover to cover as soon as I get it out of the mail box. It has blessed me many times and ‘amazed me’ many times at your relentless research of Mormon history and your pursuit of historical truth — who knows how many people have seen the light through your work.” (Letter from California)

“I can’t begin to tell you how amazed I was, after writing to you just for information on a book I was interested in, (Mormonism Shadow or Reality?) . . . I didn’t realize that I would hit a gold mine on information on Mormonism. . . . I was studying with missionaries, then got baptized, and then left the church all within about 6 months. . . . I welcome any suggestions for material to help me learn. I am a seeker of truth.” (Letter from Washington)
Those who would like to help us reach the Mormon people should be aware of the fact that Utah Lighthouse Ministry is a non-profit organization. In addition to our work with Mormons, we provide support for 44 children through World Vision, and furnish some help to a local Rescue Mission. Those who are concerned about helping this ministry can send their tax-deductible contributions to UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY, P. O. Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110. Both contributions and orders can be made over the phone (801-485-8894 or 801-485-0312) with Visa, MasterCard or Discover Card.

While we deeply appreciate the financial support that we receive, we strongly desire your prayers. We believe they will bring thousands of Mormons to the truth. As Apostle Paul admonished: “Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving” (Colossians 4:2).

BOOKS AND TAPES

(Mail orders add 10% — Minimum postage $1.50)

Occultic Ritual Abuse; Fact or Fantasy? by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Price: $6.95


Inventing Mormonism, by H. Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters. An Important discussion of Joseph Smith’s early years and the origin of Mormonism. Special Price: $27.00

New Approaches to the Book of Mormon, edited by Brent Metcalfe. BYU professor Louis Midgley says this is “the most sophisticated attack on the truth of the Book of Mormon” that is currently available. Special Price: $25.00

Out of the Cults and Into the Church: Understanding & Encouraging Ex-Cultists, by Janis Hutchinson. Price: $10.00

Sandra Tanner Tape No. 3. Two radio interviews. Contains information about the 1990 changes in the Mormon temple ceremony and the false translation of the Book of Abraham. Price: $3.00

Questions to Ask Your Mormon Friend: Challenging the Claims of Latter-day Saints in a Constructive Manner, by Bill McKeever & Eric Johnson. Price: $9.00

How to Rescue Your Loved One from Mormonism, by David A. Reed & John R. Farkas. Price: $9.00

Mormonism: The Christian View. A video narrated by Wesley P. Walters. Deals with Mormon history, doctrines, claim to authority, changes in doctrine and witnessing suggestions. Price: $24.00

Why We Left Mormonism, edited by Latayne Scott. Personal testimonies of eight ex-Mormons, including Sandra Tanner. Price: $8.00

Basic Christianity, by John R. Stott. A brief examination of the claims of Christ and our response to His call. Price: $5.00

New Testament Documents—Are They Reliable? by F. F. Bruce. A well-researched book by a Greek scholar showing the reliability of the translation of the N.T. Price: $7.00

Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons, by Pastor Mark Cares. Good introduction to Mormon culture and beliefs, with helpful insights on witnessing. Price: $11.00


After Mormonism What? Reclaiming the Ex-Mormon’s Worldview for Christ, by Latayne Scott. Price: $8.00

MANY MORE BOOKS!!!

We have many other books which are not listed in this issue of the Messenger. A complete book list will be sent free upon request by writing to us at Utah Lighthouse Ministry, PO Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110.

UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY
PO BOX 1884
SALT LAKE CITY UT 84110
Stan Larson, who was a scriptural exegete for Translation Services of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons), has recently published a book entitled, *Quest for the Gold Plates: Thomas Stuart Ferguson’s Archaeological Search for the Book of Mormon.*

In this book Dr. Larson dealt with the vexing question of whether Thomas Stuart Ferguson, who organized the New World Archaeological Foundation and devoted himself to proving the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, had eventually lost faith in that book and in Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet. As many of our readers may know, Ferguson wrote the well-known book, *One Fold and One Shepherd.*

**FERGUSON AND ARCHEOLOGY**

In the introduction to his book, pages XIII-XIV, Larson noted:

In the fall of 1977 I first heard from a fellow church employee in the LDS Translation Services Department in Salt Lake City that Ferguson no longer believed in the historicity of the Book of Mormon. To me this unfounded rumor — for so I considered it — seemed absolutely unbelievable, for I had over the years faithfully followed Ferguson’s writings on the Book of Mormon. . . . I decided to verify or falsify this assertion by contacting Ferguson himself. . . . I first talked about my having read Cumorah — Where?, Ancient America and the Book of Mormon and One Fold and One Shepherd — and then I hesitantly mentioned that I had heard that he had reached some very critical conclusions concerning the Book of Mormon. With no bitterness but with a touch of disappointment, Ferguson agreed with this statement and openly discussed with me his present skepticism about the historicity of the Book of Mormon, the lack of any Book of Mormon geography that relates to the real world, and the absence of the long-hoped-for archaeological confirmation of the Book of Mormon.

After Ferguson’s death in 1983, a controversy developed with regard to whether he really lost faith in Joseph Smith’s work. His son, Larry Ferguson, insisted that his father maintained a testimony to the Book of Mormon up until the time of his death. On page 4 of his book, Stan Larson reported:

On the other side, Jerald and Sandra Tanner . . . presented a completely different image of Ferguson. First of all, the Tanners reproduced Ferguson’s study of problems in Book of Mormon geography and archaeology that he had prepared for a written symposium on the subject. The Tanners entitled this 1988 publication *Ferguson’s Manuscript Unveiled.* At the same time the Tanners published an article . . . in the September 1988 issue of their *Salt Lake City Messenger.* . . . the principal interest of the Tanners is in documenting his purported disillusionment and loss of faith by recounting his visit to their home in December 1970 and by quoting from seven letters which Ferguson allegedly wrote from 1968 to 1979.

Like Stan Larson, we were very surprised when we learned that Thomas Stuart Ferguson had doubts about Mormonism. We also had a copy of his book, *One Fold and One Shepherd.* A believer in the Book of Mormon had recommended it as containing the ultimate case
for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. The first indication we had that Mr. Ferguson was losing faith occurred almost a decade before Stan Larson questioned Ferguson about his skepticism regarding the Book of Mormon.

This was just after Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Papyri were rediscovered. As we mentioned in the 1972 edition of our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* in 1968 Ferguson wrote us a letter saying that we were “doing a great thing — getting out some truth on the Book of Abraham.” This, of course, was a significant statement since we were presenting strong evidence that Joseph Smith’s Book of Abraham was not a correct translation of the papyri.

Later we heard a rumor that Ferguson had given up the Book of Abraham. This, however, hardly prepared us for his visit to our home on December 2, 1970. At that time, Mr. Ferguson told us frankly that he had not only given up the Book of Abraham, but that he had come to the conclusion that Joseph Smith was not a prophet and that Mormonism was not true! Ferguson told us that our work was important and that it should be subsidized. He also told us that he had spent twenty-five years trying to prove Mormonism, but had finally come to the conclusion that all his work in this regard had been in vain.

He said that his training in law taught him how to weigh evidence and that the case against Joseph Smith was absolutely devastating and could not be explained away. Speaking of Joseph Smith’s First Vision, Ferguson commented that when Cheesman and *Brigham Young University Studies* made available the strange accounts of the vision (accounts coming from the lips of Joseph Smith that had been suppressed by the church for about 130 years) they completely destroyed his faith in Mormonism. He felt that instead of helping the cause, these contradictory accounts caused serious confusion. He stated that the Mormon scholars had shot the bird, plucked out its feathers and left it “dead and naked on the ground.”

Ferguson referred to Dr. Hugh Nibley’s defense of the Book of Abraham as “nonsense,” and told us that just before coming to visit us he had discussed the Book of Abraham with Hugh B. Brown (Brown served as a member of the First Presidency under church president David O. McKay). According to Mr. Ferguson, Brown had also come to the conclusion that the Book of Abraham was false and was in favor of the church giving it up. A few years later Hugh B. Brown said he could “not recall” making the statements Ferguson attributed to him. Ferguson, however, was apparently referring to the same incident in a letter dated March 13, 1971, when he stated:

I must conclude that Joseph Smith had not the remotest skill in things Egyptian-hieroglyphics. To my surprise one of the highest officials in the Mormon Church agreed with that conclusion . . . privately in one-to-one [c]onversation.

About thirteen years after Thomas Stuart Ferguson informed us that Hugh B. Brown did not believe in the authenticity of the Book of Abraham, he told the same story to Ronald O. Barney who worked at the LDS Historical Department:

Ferguson said that the thing that first led him to seriously question the church was the papyri purported to be the source of the Book of Abraham. He said he took a photograph of the papyri to a couple of friends of his that were scholars at Cal., Berkeley. They described the documents as funeral texts. This bothered Ferguson in a serious way! Later he said that he took the evidence to Hugh B. Brown. . . . After reviewing the evidence with Brother Brown he [Ferguson] said that Brother Brown agreed with him that it was not scripture. He did not say or infer [imply] that it was his evidence that convinced Brother Brown of this conclusion. But nevertheless, he did say that Hugh B. Brown did not believe the Book of Abraham was what the church said it was. (*Quest for the Gold Plates*, page 138)

On page 165, footnote 13, Stan Larson gave additional information regarding this matter:

Barney, interview with Ferguson, typed on 19 April 1984. Barney then recorded his own reaction to Ferguson’s recounting of this episode with Brown: “I felt as Ferguson was telling me this that he was not making up the story. It appeared that he really believed what he was telling me.”

When Ferguson visited us he was adamant in his claim that President Brown did not believe in the Book of Abraham. He was very stirred up over this matter, and we felt that the conversation he had with Brown probably disturbed him to the point that he decided to visit us.

From what we know from other sources, Hugh B. Brown had a very difficult time accepting the Mormon teaching that blacks could not hold the priesthood nor be married in Mormon temples. Since this doctrine was chiefly derived from Joseph Smith’s Book of Abraham, it seems likely that Brown acquired serious doubts about the book even before the papyri were rediscovered and translated. It was not until 1978 that President Spencer W. Kimball claimed to receive a revelation which removed the curse from the blacks.

One matter which we discussed with Mr. Ferguson was the possibility that he might write something about his loss of faith in the Book of Mormon. He was deeply grieved by the fact that he had wasted twenty-five years of his life trying to prove the Book of Mormon. He informed us that he had, in fact, been thinking of writing a book about the matter.

Stan Larson wrote the following concerning this matter:

After going through all this internal turmoil, Ferguson decided to publish his new ideas concerning the origin of the Book of Mormon in a final book. A tantalizing string of evidence exists, showing that Ferguson had indeed researched and written another book-length manuscript and had decided to move ahead with publishing it. He had told Jerald and Sandra in December 1970 that “he had been thinking of writing a book about the matter and that it would be a real ‘bombshell.’” Throughout the 1970s and the early 1980s Ferguson spent an immense amount of his spare time working on this new project. His basic assumption during this period was that the Book of Mormon was not an ancient document, but a product of the nineteenth century. . . .

In February 1983 Ferguson . . . told Pierre Agrinier Bach, a longtime friend and archaeologist, that ‘he was working on a project, a manuscript which would (according to him) expose Joseph Smith as a fraud’ and that his manuscript was almost completed. It would be a bombshell on the Book of Mormon, showing both positive and negative evidence from Mesoamerican archaeology, but concluding that the Book of Mormon was
produced through Joseph Smith’s own creative genius and through his use of contemporary sources, including Ethan Smith’s View of the Hebrews and Sidney Rigdon.

Ferguson’s unexpected death in 1983 stopped his efforts, and, inexplicably, his final manuscript has to date never surfaced. . . . Wishful thinking and fond memories do not change the way things had changed in Ferguson’s thinking. The anecdotal theory of Ferguson’s having faith, losing it, and regaining it is just not supported by any available evidence from Ferguson himself. . . . Two short sentences in Ferguson’s last known letter illustrate his persisting inquisitiveness: “I am continuing my research. It is fun and stimulating.”

These final two letters, together with Barney’s two journal entries, confirm Ferguson’s critical views just two months before his death in 1983. . . . several of his friends — who were aware of his change of attitude — counseled him not to publish his “Bombshell” manuscript which was strongly critical of the Book of Mormon. (Quest for the Gold Plates, pages 157-158, 160, 162-163)

It is certainly a shame that the manuscript Ferguson was working on is not available to the Mormon people. Unfortunately, however, there were individuals who did not want it to come to light.

Dr. Larson also wrote the following regarding Ferguson:

Ferguson admitted that the problem that first made him “seriously question the Church was the papyri purported to be the source of the Book of Abraham.” Like falling dominoes, his belief in the prophetic status of Joseph Smith and the historicity of the Book of Mormon also collapsed. At first Ferguson still believed that Joseph Smith had been a true prophet of God in 1829 when he translated the Book of Mormon, but he decided that Joseph Smith had become a fallen prophet by 1835 when the Egyptian scrolls and mummies arrived in Kirtland. However, Ferguson, the logical lawyer, continued thinking: since the English text of the Book of Abraham cannot be considered a translation of the Egyptian papyri, maybe the Book of Mormon is not a real translation of an ancient document. Ferguson’s conviction concerning the Book of Mormon was devastated as the chain reaction continued. (Ibid., page 134)

Ferguson’s skepticism first became public . . . when the Tanners published an account of his visit with them in a revised edition of their Mormonism—Shadow or Reality: . . . Though this passage by the Tanners was pointed out to Ferguson many times, he never denied their account of his loss of faith. (Ibid., pages 139-140)

He [Ferguson] then recommended to them [Mr. and Mrs. Harold W. Lawrence] a short reading list: an article about “Joseph Smith’s First Vision,” Mormonism—Shadow or Reality, The True Believer, and No Man Knows My History. Since these works significantly affected Ferguson, he evidently felt that they would be valuable for them to read. (Ibid., page 153)

Likewise, Ferguson responded to Sorenson’s earlier geographical study — which was titled with the question “Where in the World?” — by answering that Book of Mormon geography exists nowhere in the real world. Describing his own 1975 study, Ferguson divulged that “the real implications of the paper is that you can’t set Book of Mormon geography down anywhere — because it is fictional and will never meet the requirements of the dirt-archaeology.” In his view the Book of Mormon is not a translated account of historical peoples, but a fictional story concocted by Joseph Smith, perhaps with the assistance of one or two others. . . . Ferguson found that the known archaeology of Mesoamerica does not fit the requirements of the Book of Mormon. This raised for him serious questions about the antiquity of the volume. From his youth he had assumed that the Book of Mormon was historical — and had believed in it intensely — but during the last thirteen years of his life Ferguson maintained that that assumption was wrong and the best explanation was found in Joseph Smith and his nineteenth century environment. (Ibid., pages 214-215)

On pages 251-52 of The Messiah in Ancient America, published in 1987, we read that “Tom Ferguson first approached the President of Brigham Young University, Howard S. McDonald, about establishing a Department of Archaeology. . . . Tom Ferguson was able to convince officials of BYU of the benefit to the University of having such a department.”

Ferguson also worked very hard to get the Mormon Church interested in helping him with the organization he envisioned — i.e., the New World Archaeological Foundation. At first church leaders were not excited about the project.

Although Ferguson apparently received no financial help from the church to begin with, he “scraped together $3,000, a painfully small sum but sufficient to fund the year’s short field expedition” (Ibid., page 260). Later, however, the church began supporting the Foundation. On one occasion Ferguson asked President David O. McKay for “$250,000” and received it (Ibid., page 264-265).

When Ferguson came to our house in 1970, he indicated that he had been faced with a dilemma; he had just received a large grant from the church ($100,000 or more) to carry on the research of the New World Archaeological Foundation. Although he no longer believed in the Book of Mormon, he felt that the Foundation was doing legitimate archeological work. Consequently, he decided to accept the money and continue the work. He, of course, realized that the organization he had founded to confirm the authenticity of the Book of Mormon was now beginning to cast serious doubt upon the Book of Mormon because archeologists were unable to turn up anything relating to a Hebrew or Christian culture existing in Mesoamerica prior to the time of Columbus.

Eventually, the Mormon Church’s Brigham Young University took over the New World Archaeological Foundation and Ferguson “became secretary of the board of directors and held that position until his death in 1983” (The Messiah in Ancient America, page 277).

Dr. Stan Larson has certainly written an interesting book regarding Thomas Stuart Ferguson’s struggle to know the truth about Mormonism. In addition to this, however, he analyzes the current problems in Book of Mormon archaeology and geography. Moreover, Larson gives some very good information regarding the Egyptian papyrus Joseph Smith claimed to translate as the “Book of Abraham.” He clearly shows that it is a
spurious book and demonstrates Smith’s inability to correctly translate the writing which appeared on the scrolls.

Stan Larson is a very careful scholar who is not intimidated by the FARMS-BYU scholars. He, in fact, deals with a number of their arguments and shows the weakness of their position. The reader will find that we are offering Quest for the Gold Plates: Thomas Stuart Ferguson's Archaeological Search for the Book of Mormon for a limited time at a special price (see the first page of this newsletter).

MORMONISM’S PROBLEM WITH CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Mormonism is to be commended for strongly stressing chastity and encouraging its members to avoid any type of sexual sin. When we were members of the church we were taught these wise principles. Nevertheless, Mormon officials today seem to be having some serious problems regarding how to handle the sexual abuse of children.

The following appeared in the Salt Lake Tribune on August 28, 1996:

BECKLEY, W. VA. — A lawsuit accusing the Mormon Church of failing to intervene when it knew a member was abusing his daughter should be heard in federal court, a judge has ruled.

U.S. District Judge Elizabeth Hallanan said Monday the $750 million lawsuit deals with a crucial constitutional issue.

The lawsuit, filed by a woman . . . of Alaska, alleges church leaders knew of sexual abuse her ex-husband inflicted on her daughter but did nothing about it until his arrest in 1994.

James Adams Jr. of Crab Orchard was sentenced to up to 185 years in prison in February for molesting the girl and her brother between 1989 and 1994. His son was 8 and his daughter was 5 when the abuse began.

The lawsuit names the church and church officials along with Raleigh General Hospital in Beckley, Adams’ employer. Kenneth Holt, the former head of Raleigh General, was a church member. . . .

The lawsuit said national leaders failed to instruct West Virginia church officials in dealing with the abuse once they learned of it. The victim’s attorneys have said they plan to delve into church teachings and the church’s handling of sexual-abuse allegations.

The lawsuit originally was filed in Raleigh County Circuit Court, but church lawyers argued questions about the separation of church and state should be heard in federal court.

On September 12, 1996, The Idaho Statesman published an unusual story under the title, “Allegation Against Bishop Investigated.” It was alleged that a Mormon doctor had sexually abused many of his patients and that a cover-up had taken place in Rexburg, Idaho, the home of the Mormon Church’s Ricks College. The newspaper reported the following:

Bonneville County officials are investigating a report that a Mormon Church official tried to discourage a girl from testifying that then-Rexburg physician LaVar Withers sexually abused her.

No charge has been filed, and the LDS official, Ucon-area Bishop Dean Andrus, denies the allegation. For two years, Andrus has served as the lay leader of the Milo Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Ward near Idaho Falls.

“I absolutely am not (guilty),” Andrus said. “This is not accurate.”

Andrus declined to answer further questions. He was set to meet Wednesday with investigators . . . . Special Prosecutor Dan Hawkley, whose handling of the case led to Withers’ plea-bargained agreement to plead guilty to a single battery charge, said Andrus may have violated Idaho’s anti-witness intimidation law. That statute carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison.

“It was serious misconduct,” Hawkley said.

Withers is to begin serving a 30-day sentence today at the Madison County jail. After more than a year of denying allegations that he sexually abused female patients, Withers pleaded guilty to a single battery count, which referred to numerous victims . . . during the period from 1965 through 1995, when he retired under pressure from the State Board of Medicine.

Hawkley had charged him with a series of felony charges before agreeing to accept a guilty plea to the misdemeanor Monday . . . . Withers will serve a 30-day period in confinement, pay $15,000 in fines and spend two months on probation — in lieu of a suspended four-month jail term.

Throughout the case, some victims have alleged that Mormon Church officials ignored their pleas for help or actually discouraged them from pursuing charges against the doctor.

Hawkley said he learned of the allegation against Andrus last week. His client said the church official expressed concern that her testimony would cause harm to Withers. The session occurred Aug. 11 at Andrus’ church offices, he said . . . .

Meanwhile, some of the women who accused Withers of molesting them filed a class-action lawsuit against him. The suit, filed Wednesday in Blackfoot, could cost Withers millions of dollars if the number of plaintiff’s expands. For now, five women are listed as plaintiffs.

More than 117 women have told the Rape Response and Crime Victim Center of Idaho Falls that Withers abused them.

Because the conviction covered a 30-year period, women with allegations too old to prosecute under the statute of limitation were able to testify at Withers’ sentencing hearing. . . .

The lawsuit seeks at least $25,000 for each woman named in the suit to cover “mental anguish and emotional harm.”

About nine months before Dr. Withers pled guilty to the abuse, The Idaho Statesman brought forth a mountain of evidence pointing to his guilt. The paper was very disturbed that there was a cover-up and wanted to know why no charges had been filed. In the issue for December 10, 1995, we find the following:

Embarrassed by the intimate nature of the assaults and afraid of being ostracized by those who won’t believe them, most of the women didn’t tell anyone who could have put Withers out of business. The few who did found what the others feared: Their complaints were met with almost universal denial.
by doctors, Mormon Church officials, regulators, local law enforcement and the Idaho attorney general’s office.

It’s a story eerily similar to a case in Lovell, Wyo., where a family doctor was accused — and eventually convicted — of raping Mormon women in the privacy of his office, and with the initial complicity of a community, church and law enforcement officials.

Another article in the same issue explained why many Mormon women were reluctant to come forward:

The LaVar Withers story is unfolding in a predominantly Mormon community where church values of deference to men and respect for authority are as much a part of the culture as the religion.

Deep down within Mormon theology lies a fundamental difference that separates the sexes: Most men are members of the church’s priesthood, agents of God on Earth; no woman ever can be.

It’s a sharp distinction that spills into everyday life for many Mormon women and creates a respect for men and a willingness, in some cases, to let men control.

“Since leaders in the priesthood have more authority and since no woman ever has the priesthood, no woman ever has as much authority as most men in her life,” said Lavina Fielding Anderson, an excommunicated Mormon who still attends her ward in Salt Lake City and sings in the choir.

“She is still down on the totem pole and, in some cases, at the bottom of the totem pole.”

That fundamental difference could make it almost impossible for some Mormon women to step forward to acknowledge they’d been sexually abused by another church member.

“You wouldn’t have been believed in the past,” said Marybeth Raynes, a Mormon and licensed marriage and family therapist in Salt Lake City. “Or, if you were believed, you would be told it would embarrass the church or that your job is to forgive.”

Push too hard, and there’s the risk of being chastised for not supporting the church, putting church membership in jeopardy and even risking eternal salvation. (Ibid., page 10A)

At least two of Dr. Withers’ victims were only thirteen years old when he molested them (see page 8A).

On the same page we read that “Dr. LaVar Withers and the state’s medical board struck a secret deal in July 1995. Give up your medical license, the board told the Rexburg doctor, and no one will ever hear what went on behind closed doors. But word of the deal leaked.”

On Page 7A of the same paper the following appears:

Religion, more than history or agriculture, is the common bond among Rexburg residents, 90 percent of whom are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The mayor, City Council members and many law enforcement officials are Mormons. So is Withers. And so are most of his alleged victims.

Knowing that their church leaders work closely together to solve problems in the community, Mormon women felt they could turn to church leaders.

Joan filed a complaint with the chief regulatory agency for doctors . . . A devout Mormon, she took another step in January. She contacted Withers’ stake president, Rexburg dentist G. Farrell Young. . . .

“He told me not to go to the police until he had a chance to deal with it,” Joan said.

Joan waited one month before turning to Rexburg police. Months passed without a response from Young . . .

Young will not discuss Withers. But he defends his counsel to Joan. “I may have said do not go to the police immediately. Let me take care of it here. I was hoping to find out more about it.”

It seems disgraceful that a doctor who abused so many women and even children over a period of about thirty years could get off with just a slap on the hand.

JOSEPH SMITH AND WOMEN

Unfortunately, Joseph Smith, the first Mormon prophet, seems to have had a sexual problem that significantly affected the lives of many of those who converted to his church. All of the evidence points to the inescapable conclusion that Smith was unsatisfied living with just one wife. Consequently, he declared that God gave him a revelation that he was to enter into plural marriage.

The revelation regarding polygamy is still published in the Doctrine and Covenants, one of the four standard works of the church. The following is taken from that revelation:

Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph . . . if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then is he justified; he cannot commit adultery . . . And if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery . . . therefore is he justified. (Doctrine and Covenants, Section 132, verses 1, 61-62)

Joseph Smith, of course, was obedient to the “revelation” which he dictated and proceeded to marry dozens of plural wives before he was murdered in 1844. The prophet also instructed many other Mormon men to enter into polygamy. Since the laws did not allow such a practice, there was a great deal of deceit practiced by Smith and his followers.

Today, the Mormon Church does not allow its members to practice polygamy. However, since church leaders never repudiated the doctrine itself, teach that it will be lived in heaven, and still retain the revelation on polygamy in the Doctrine and Covenants, many Mormons have secretly entered into the practice. These people are known as Mormon Fundamentalists because they cling tenaciously to some of the fundamental doctrines taught by Joseph Smith and Brigham Young — doctrines that the church now wishes to disregard.

Today, Mormons who are caught practicing polygamy are excommunicated. There are a large number of Mormon Fundamentalists who have severed all connections with the Mormon Church and have their own leaders. On the other hand, we believe that there probably are still many within the Mormon Church who, like Joseph Smith, are secretly practicing polygamy and playing a dual role so that they will not be excommunicated.

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Unfortunately, although there are many polygamists who treat their families well, the practice of polygamy opens the door for other sexual practices which are extremely harmful to children and young women.

While the present leaders of the Mormon Church condemn fornication, adultery, and incestuous relationships, during the time of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young some strange things were taught concerning this matter. Joseph Smith, for instance, “married five pairs of sisters” and even a “mother” and her own “daughter” (No Man Knows My History, page 336). In her book, Intimate Disciple, page 317, Mormon writer Clair Noall verified that Smith did marry a mother and her daughter: “Sylvia Lyon, Patty’s daughter and the wife of Windsor J. Lyon, was already sealed to Joseph. This afternoon she was to put her mother’s hand in the Prophet’s.”

Unfortunately, Joseph Smith’s desire to obtain many wives led him to take other men’s wives. George D. Smith wrote:

Beginning in 1841, Joseph Smith took as plural wives several married women, as if exercising a variant of the feudal droit du seigneur: a king’s right to the brides in his domain. This option was presented to the married woman as a favor to her. A woman who wanted higher status in the celestial kingdom could choose to leave a husband with lower status in the church, even if she had been sealed to him, and become sealed to a man higher in authority.

On October 27, 1841, Smith was married for eternity to Zina D. Huntington, Henry B. Jacob’s wife . . . On December 11, 1841, the prophet married Zina’s sister, Prescindai Huntingdon, who had been married to Norman Buell for fourteen years and remained married to Buell until 1846. Prescindia then left Buell and married Heber C. Kimball ‘for time,’ that is until the end of her life. In the afterlife, ‘for eternity,’ she would revert to Joseph Smith.

Smith married Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner in February 1842, when she was already married . . . Apparently, Smith had planned to marry her long before her marriage to Adam Lightner . . . After her celestial marriage to Joseph, Mary lived with Adam Lightner until his death in Utah . . . In April 1842, two months after the Lightner ceremony, Nancy Marinda Johnson married Joseph Smith while her husband, Orson Hyde, was on a mission to Jerusalem. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1994, pages 10-11)

On February 19, 1854, Jedediah M. Grant, second counselor to President Brigham Young delivered a sermon that made it very plain that Joseph Smith did ask for other men’s wives:

What would a man of God say, who felt aright, when Joseph asked him for his money? He would say, “Yes, and I wish I had more to help to build up the kingdom of God.” Or if he came and said, “I want your wife?” “O yes,” he would say, “here she is, there are plenty more.” . . . Did the Prophet Joseph want every man’s wife he asked for? He did not . . . If such a man of God should come to me and say, “I want your gold and silver, or your wives,” I should say, “Here they are, I wish I had more to give you, take all I have got.” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 2, page 14)

While non-Mormons would tend to consider Joseph Smith’s marriages to other men’s wives as adultery, many faithful Mormons try to justify Smith’s actions in various ways. It is apparent, however, that the system of polygamy he set up was very detrimental to young women and children. Smith, in fact, even married a fourteen-year-old girl, Helen Mar Kimball, when he was thirty-seven years old! Most people would consider this child abuse.

Moreover, Joseph Smith went so far as to take two young women into his house, become their personal guardian, and then lure them into becoming his wives. Mormon scholars Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery wrote:

The Lawrence sisters had come to Nauvoo from Canada without their parents in 1840 when Maria was about eighteen and Sarah fifteen. Emma and Joseph offered them a home. According to William Law’s account, the girls had inherited about eight thousand dollars in “English gold.” Law said, “Joseph got to be appointed their guardian,” . . . Joseph’s history dated May 30, 1843, reads, “I superintended the preparation of papers to settle the Lawrence estate,” and four days later the “accounts of the Lawrence estate were presented to the probate judge, to which he made objection.” (Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith, 1984, page 144)

In 1981, Andrew F. Ehat, a Mormon scholar who is very knowledgeable about early Mormon history, wrote his Master of Arts thesis at Brigham Young University. It is entitled, “Joseph Smith’s Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Question.” Speaking of Joseph Smith, Ehat wrote:

In particular, he knew his responsibility as guardian to the Lawrence Estate could be misunderstood given the fact that he was sealed to Maria Lawrence — a fact that made him particularly vulnerable to William Law.

In June 1841, Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith and William Law had assumed the responsibility of the deceased Edward Law’s estate valued at $7,750.06. Joseph was named as guardian of the Lawrence children. Somehow during his period of indecision, William Law found out that Maria Lawrence was sealed as a wife to Joseph; in fact, Law, he later stated, found Joseph in a compromising situation with Maria on 12 October 1843. Two weeks later, 26 October 1843, Joseph ostensibly sealed Maria for time to John M. Bernhisel . . . But in January 1844, Joseph apparently felt this would no longer calm the angered William Law. The day after Joseph and William’s final confrontation, Joseph began arrangements to relinquish the estate affairs entirely. . . . Undoubtedly, if William Law, one of the appointed trustees of the estate, “claimed” that Joseph had not only extorted the funds of the estate, but had also committed adultery with the eldest child of whom he was personal guardian, that would make an explosive expose. . . . What was said and done in public was guarded and carefully worded in order to protect both the Church and his faithful colleagues as they entered practices illegal in the sight of man yet covenants they were assured were commanded by God. . . . Law appeared before the first sitting of the Grand Jury of the Hancock County circuit court to swear out charges against Joseph. Law filed charges and presented such evidence that the Grand Jury
George D. Smith did a great deal of research on polygamy in the early years of Mormonism. He discovered that Joseph Smith was not only sealed to a fourteen-year-old girl, but also to a fifteen-year-old girl and to two girls who were sixteen years old. All of these sealings to young girls occurred when Joseph Smith was between thirty-seven and thirty-eight years of age. In his article George Smith included a list of 153 men who took plural wives in the early years of the Mormon Church. When we examined this list, we noted that two of the young girls were only thirteen years old when they were lured into polygamy. Thirteen girls were only fourteen years old. Twenty-one were fifteen years old, and fifty-three were sixteen years old when they were secretly enticed into this degrading lifestyle.

Fanny Stenhouse, who at one time had been a firm believer in Mormonism and had even allowed her husband to take another wife, wrote the following:

It would be quite impossible, with any regard to propriety, to relate all the horrible results of this disgraceful system. . . . Marriages have been contracted between the nearest of relatives; and old men tottering on the brink of the grave have been united to little girls scarcely in their teens; while unnatural alliances of every description, which in any other community would be regarded with disgust and abhorrence, are here entered into in the name of God . . .

It is quite a common thing in Utah for a man to marry two or even three sisters. . . . I know also another man who married a widow with several children; and when one of the girls had grown into her teens he insisted on marrying her also . . . and to this very day the daughter bears children to her step-father, living as wife in the same house with her mother! (Tell It All, 1874, pages 468-469)

Because of the practice of polygamy there was a shortage of women in Utah. The competition for those who were not married became intense, and many men were marrying girls who were very young. On page 607 of her book, Stenhouse commented about the matter: “That same year [1872], a bill was brought into the Territorial Legislature, providing that boys of fifteen years of age and girls of twelve might legally contract marriage, with the consent of their parents or guardians! In stating this disgraceful fact, I feel certain that the reader who never lived among the Saints and is not versed in Utah affairs will think that I must be mistaken in what I say. It is, however, I am sorry to say, only too true, and the records of the Legislature will bear me witness. The fact was stated in the New York Herald of January 27, 1872” (Ibid., page 607).

An entry added to Joseph Smith’s private dairy after his death confirms that Smith believed a man could be married for eternity to his own sister. It appears under the date of October 26, 1843, and reads as follows:

The following named deceased persons were sealed to me (John M. Bernhisel) on Oct[ober] 26th 1843, by President Joseph Smith: Maria Bernhisel, sister; Brother Samuel’s wife, Catherine Kremer; Mary Shatto (Aunt) . . . [eight other names follow]
The fact that Apostle Cannon received this information about brothers and sisters marrying from Lorenzo Snow is very significant because Snow later became the fifth president of the Mormon Church.

The illegal practice of polygamy with all the deception that it entailed certainly took its toll on Mormon women and also made its mark on Mormon men. The betrayal and abuse that some of the women suffered is almost beyond belief. The early marriages and the strange idea that brothers and sisters might some day marry, certainly was a blight upon the early Mormon Church. Some who deal with sexual abuse in the church today wonder if the teachings of the early church may have trickled down to the present time.

THE MORMON ALLIANCE

On July 4, 1992, an organization known as The Mormon Alliance was formed for the purpose of countering “spiritual and ecclesiastical abuse in the Church and to protect the Church against defamatory actions.” This organization is composed of both Mormons and former Mormons who have been excommunicated from the church for disagreeing with some of the opinions promulgated by the leaders of the church.

At first members of the Mormon Alliance were mainly concerned about reporting incidents of spiritual and ecclesiastical abuse. As it turned out, however, they were deluged with accounts of sexual abuse and information indicating that this abuse was sometimes swept under the rug. Because of this development, the Mormon Alliance decided to compile a book containing over 300 pages of material relating to sexual abuse in the Mormon Church. It was published under the title, Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance, vol. 1, 1995.

One thing that has alarmed many people is the accounts of Mormon bishops who have either engaged in sexual abuse or have failed to properly deal with the matter when it was brought to their attention. One woman recently reported to us that her husband was a bishop who sexually abused their children. She had to leave him to protect the children.

We, of course, do not mean to imply that most Mormon bishops are involved in sexual abuse or cover it up. The great majority of the bishops are sincere people who would never want to be involved in this type of abuse or in any type of a cover-up. Nevertheless, the word has gotten out that there is a problem in the Mormon Church. In fact, NBC has contacted us about this matter and we have turned over some information to those who are investigating the situation.

One disturbing thing that has been reported to us on a number of occasions is that when some bishops have conducted worthiness interviews with members of their ward they have asked questions regarding sexual matters that go far beyond the bounds of propriety. For example, one man reported to us that when he was young, both he and the girl he was going with felt they were becoming too intimate and went to the bishop for help. Instead of just giving the counsel they needed, the bishop questioned them at great lengths, asking all kinds of questions regarding what went on. The man described the questioning as “pornographic,” and said he felt that the bishop was actually enjoying the interrogation.

Another woman reported to us that when she went to the bishop for a temple recommend she was questioned extensively regarding her sexual relations with her own husband. The questioning became very explicit. Finally, she informed the bishop that she felt the interrogation was highly improper and said that she would not answer any more questions without her husband being present. When she later discussed the matter with her husband, he stated that the bishop had not asked him about details of their sexual life. Instead, he had willingly given him a temple recommend! She, of course, felt that the bishop was grilling her to satisfy his own interest in sexual matters.

The Mormon Alliance mentioned “a bishop [that lived in Oklahoma who] had been ‘legendary’ among the youth for asking sexually explicit questions during worthiness interviews. One young woman refused to be interviewed unless her father was present. The youth sarcastically nicknamed him ‘Bishop Triple-X’ because of the types of questions he asked, and his motto was, ‘You’re not worthy until I say you’re worthy.’ “ (Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance, vol. 1, page 271, footnote 1)

Bishops begin interviewing children when they are young. Mormon children are supposed to be interviewed by the bishop when they are eight years old to see if they are ready for baptism. When a boy reaches the age of twelve, he is interviewed by a bishop to see if he is worthy to receive the Aaronic Priesthood. This interview is conducted behind closed doors.

These interviews continue as the boy advances in the priesthood. Unfortunately, some Mormon bishops have been accused of using these interviews as an opportunity to sexually abuse young men. Since the bishop is supposed to have special authority from God, sexual advances by the bishop tend to greatly confuse young men. Furthermore, it is very difficult for those who are abused to accuse the bishop of wrongdoing. Consequently, they tend to bottle up their feelings.

Jack McCallister, who was formerly a bishop in the Mormon Church, felt that it was very improper for one individual to be alone with a young man and ask all kinds of questions related to sexual matters:

Standard Church policy is that two priesthood officers must be present to handle Church funds, a check and balance system to prevent financial error and inhibit the temptation to steal. And the Church conducts regular financial audits. How many priesthood officers are required to conduct a personal worthiness interview with a youth? One. And there are no procedures for auditing the actions of these leaders for inappropriate behavior. (Case Reports, page 205)

Jack McCallister was especially concerned about these “worthiness interviews” because he himself was abused by his bishop in his office. He related the following:

We were the only ones in the meetinghouse. We shook hands and he put his arms around me. He told me how much the Lord loved me. He felt directly inspired tonight to call me down to his office. . . . He asked if we could pray together before we talked. He said a lot of really nice things about me to God . . . I felt very special and very humble. It was one of the most beautiful, heartfelt, eloquent prayers that I’ve ever heard on my behalf,
asking the Lord to bless me, watch over me, care for me, and assuring the Lord of what a fine wonderful young man I was. . . . Then we sat down in two chairs in front of his desk. He pulled his chair up really close to mine, looked me straight in the eyes through his pink-tinted bifocal lenses. I could see he still had tears in his eyes from the prayer. “What sincerity!” I thought. “Maybe some day I can learn how to talk to God with such powerful impressive prayer language.” (Ibid., pages 167-168)

After some conversation about temporal matters, the bishop proceeded to discuss sexual matters with him and eventually molested him. This abuse caused severe trauma to Jack. He wrote:

“I couldn’t figure out what was going on. He was the bishop. I was the obedient but unworthy servant. He was God’s chosen leader on earth. Whatever he did was directly authorized by God. My thoughts raced around. (Ibid.)

Jack McCallister decided to keep the matter secret. Even though he eventually became a bishop, his suffering did not end. To add to his own pain, he learned that his own son was also victimized by another Mormon bishop. In a letter to Gordon B. Hinckley, the current president of the Mormon Church, Jack and his wife Merradith, expressed their dismay that things were being swept under the rug:

In June of 1963, my husband Jack, had been sexually molested by his bishop (Samuel H. Gardener) [a bishop of the Oklahoma First Ward who died in 1967] for two years between 15-17. He was afraid to tell me because I wouldn’t love or respect him. After we had been married about four months, he told me what had happened and how ashamed he felt. . . . I believed him.

In June of 1993, our son, Scott, was 23 years old and recently returned from an honorable mission. He told my husband about being sexually molested between the age of 15-17 by his bishop (Ronald W. Phelps). Scott was ashamed to talk about it prior because he feared the negative reaction of others . . . I believed him.

In September of 1993, the three of us talked to our Stake President, Gary James NEWMAN. Scott both told and graphically demonstrated the sexual abuse he suffered . . . The details and manner of the molestation were discounted and minimized by Pres. NEWMAN. He told us he couldn’t believe such a thing was true. . . . we also wrote you a letter explaining the details of the situation and asking for direct intervention and investigation into the matter from Church Headquarters. We heard nothing. . . . only silence. Our pain increased. We talked with other members and parents to see if they were aware of anything that had happened to their family members. We formed an emotional support group for survivors of sexual abuse. . . . We felt only contempt for us by Pres. NEWMAN. He threatened us to “either stop talking to the Church members about this or I’ll draw up the papers to have you excommunicated for failure to sustain your leaders and apostasy.” He told us . . . they couldn’t accept Scott’s word over a priesthood leader held in high esteem . . .

Because Pres. NEWMAN was not willing to hear our cries for help and told us to “do what you have to do . . . but stop talking to the members of the Church about this or I’ll excommunicate you,” we went to the police and filed felony charges against Ron Phelps . . . The police informed us until there was more evidence developed, it would be difficult to prosecute the case. They believed Scott and recognized the deception used by typical pedophiles with multiple victims. . . .

A criminal background check revealed Ron Phelps had been arrested for indecent exposure prior to being called as Bishop in 1980 [the charges were later dropped]. He was recently arrested in an Oklahoma University restroom in Norman Oklahoma on December 3, 1993. He did “unlawfully, willfully and wrongfully solicit, induce and entice one John Bishop, an undercover police officer, to commit an act of lewdness contrary to the form of the Statutes in such cases made and provided, and against the peace and dignity of the State of Oklahoma.” (Copy enclosed) We thought it was important to notify others with this public information to protect their children . . . (Letter dated March 23, 1994)

Neither President Hinckley nor other church leaders in Salt Lake City were anxious to go to bat for the McCallisters.

Significantly, according to a statement made on television, the McCallisters filed felony charges against Ronald Phelps on September 13, 1993, over two months before he was arrested at the University of Oklahoma on December 2, 1993!

On April 20, 1994, The Yukon Review reported that Phelps “pleaded guilty to two misdemeanors for outraging public decency. . . .” Local church leaders, however, seem to have been oblivious to the importance of these charges being made against Phelps prior to his arrest. In his zeal to hush up the whole matter Stake President Gary J. Newman sent a letter to Merradith McCallister threatening her with excommunication:

This letter is to inform you that the Stake Presidency is considering formal disciplinary action against you, including the possibility of disfellowship or excommunication . . . (Letter dated July 29, 1994)

On August 2, 1994, Bishop Larry A. Morgan sent a letter to Mrs. McCallister informing her that she had been excommunicated: “It was the decision of the Council that you, Merradith McCallister, are hereby excommunicated from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for conduct contrary to the laws and order of the Church.”

Jack McCallister beat church leaders to the punch and withdrew his membership. In a letter to Bishop Morgan, dated July 24, 1994, he wrote: “I refuse to bow down before this false image. I refuse to be intimidated into silent consent. I refuse to place the reputation of the church ahead of the safety of our children. I refuse to protect child sexual molesters in high places.”

Mary Plourde, who also was a member of the church when Phelps was bishop, was very disturbed regarding the charges of sexual abuse and refused to be silent about the matter even though she was threatened with excommunication. On August 9, 1994, bishop Larry A. Morgan sent her a letter that contained the following: “It was the decision of the Council that you, Mary Snow Plourde, are hereby excommunicated . . . .”

Since Jack McCallister’s son did not have an eyewitness to testify that Ronald Phelps was guilty of sexually abusing him, we can understand why Mormon Church officials in Oklahoma
would have a very difficult time trying to determine who was telling the truth. The fact that Phelps was arrested for his sexual behavior and pled guilty makes us very suspicious that Scott McCallister was indeed telling the truth.

It is evident that church leaders made a very serious mistake when they decided to excommunicate church members who were unable to keep silent. These people sincerely believed they were doing their Christian duty. Before the excommunications took place an attorney, Floyd W. Taylor, warned Stake President Gary J. Newman that it would be foolish to cut people off from the church to silence them:

This firm has been counseling with Jack and Merradyth McCallister . . . There is more than enough here to put reasonable minds on inquiry. It is regrettable that you and the Church council appeared to be bent on a course of silencing the allegations of parents and victims of possibly abusive conduct perpetrated by persons affiliated with your Church, instead of listening with open minds and trying to find solutions.

I am Roman Catholic. As you know, my church has experienced multiple charges of sexual abuse by clergy against minors. My church’s initial reaction was cover-up. The result was a plethora of lawsuits and astronomical liability losses. One Archdiocese is teetering on the edge of bankruptcy. Please do not interpret this as a threat of litigation. I am trying to make a plea to common sense and ask that you look upon the experience of the Catholic Church and not follow the same path. The Catholic Church today has reversed its initial course and is openly acknowledging the problem and is trying to do something about it. Your Church should at least be open to the possibility that these allegations may have some substance and that investigating the allegations is a more appropriate way of handling them than trying to silence the accusers through threats of disfellowshipped and excommunication.

If the McCallisters and others who are accusing LDS officials of unspeakable acts are right, your Church will profit from listening and taking action to protect your most valuable asset, your children. . . . It is not my desire to be perceived as a legal threat to the LDS Church. The McCallisters love their religion and wish the Church no harm. Since they truly believe what they have alleged; and, if what they are saying is true, the worst thing they could do to your Church would be to become part of a cover-up which would jeopardize the safety of countless Mormon youngsters and open your Church up to the kind of legal quagmire the Catholic Church faces today. We urge you to reconsider your approach to this matter. (Letter written by Floyd W. Taylor, Attorney At Law, dated March 14, 1994)

In *Case Reports*, pages 23-24, we find this information:

Estimates about child sexual abuse vary, but figures from the Boy Scouts of America and the National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse indicate that one in four girls and one in six boys will be sexually abused before age eighteen. “Women from highly religious homes are just as likely to be abused as nonreligious women.” According to one study of eighty-nine married Mormon women from “very religious” homes, 26 percent had been sexually abused as children. . . . Rather than dealing straightforwardly and helpfully with the topic, it [the church] has rather taken the position of deploiring the behavior but leaving survivors and their families in the hands of local leaders who may or may not be equipped and motivated to deal with the problem.

The same book informs us that four sociologists studied the experiences “of seventy-one Mormon women when they disclosed their abuse, or considered disclosing their abuse, to ecclesiastical leaders.” The research made it clear that most of the women were not satisfied with the response they received:

The researchers found that only twelve (17 percent) of the women had positive interactions with their Church leaders when they disclosed their abuse. Forty-nine (69 percent) had negative experiences, and ten (14 percent) had not talked to church leaders, because they “had no confidence in their leaders’ ability to help them.” . . . This study therefore raises serious doubts about the accuracy of President Hinckley’s statement that unsupportive priesthood leaders are “a blip here, and a blip there.” Obviously more research needs to be done with random samples and generalizable results. But in this group alone, 69 percent of Mormon women sexually abused as children had negative experiences (including disfellowshipping and excommunication when they disclosed their abuse to their bishops as adults while another 14 percent (a total of 83 percent) feared to do so lest they be punished. (Ibid., pages 48-49)

*Case Reports* cites other important material from the report by the four sociologists mentioned above. The article which they published was entitled, “Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse: The Case of Mormon Women.” It was printed in *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work* 11, Spring 1996, pages 39-60. All four of the researchers taught at Brigham Young University.

According to the article as cited in *Case Reports*, the women described their leaders as “judgmental,” “unbelieving,” “protective of perpetrators who held the priesthood,” “intrusive,” “nosy,” or “impatient.” . . .

1. The leaders did not want to talk about the abuse or refused to believe that the alleged perpetrators ‘would ever do anything like that.’

2. The leaders offered simple ‘solutions’ (such as, ‘Stop thinking about it’ or ‘read your scriptures and pray more’).

3. Several leaders implied that the victims just needed to ‘forgive and forget’ and get on with their lives.

4. Some leaders implied that the abuse or related problems were the women’s fault.

. . . Ten women felt ‘threatened’ because they believed they would be punished or silenced if they came forward with allegations of abuse. One woman went to her bishop in an effort to gain control over life choices that she felt were destructive. She explained that she had been sexually abused as a child and believed that the abuse was a primary factor in her compulsive behavior. As a result of her revelations to the bishop, she was excommunicated, which, she said, “emphasized that I was no good and not worthy of anything.”

“Five of the women who spoke to Church leaders were . . . disfellowshipped . . . or excommunicated for behaviors (such as sexual behavior) related to their abuse. Of the 80 Mormon
perpetrators, only 3 were disciplined in any way. Thus sexual “impurity” by these adult survivors of abuse, all of whom confessed their behavior voluntarily, was punished more harshly than was the sexual abuse of children by male priesthood holders.

“Some of the perpetrators remained priesthood holders in good standing after they were legally convicted of molesting children. In the case of one perpetrator who admitted his guilt but was not legally tried, a bishop said that he had made sufficient recompense because he offered to pay the victim $30 a month for six months; the total cost of this survivor’s psychotherapy was about $16,000.” (Ibid., pages 107-108)

On page 109 of Case Reports we read:

A final finding was that sixty-five (92 percent) of the abuse survivors felt that Mormon culture did not aid in their recovery because it forced them to maintain a public identity at odds with their private selves. It maintained a heavy-handed “code of silence.” Abuse was “a taboo topic,” said one woman.

Marion B. Smith, the first director of the Intermountain Specialized Abuse Treatment Center, reported a number of cases of sexual abuse committed by Mormon bishops. In a letter published in Sunstone magazine, December 1991, pages 4-6, she reported: “Six of my clients in cases of incest were daughters of former bishops.”

Case Reports, pages 124-125, tells of some cases Marion Smith dealt with:

A professional woman in her forties sought Marion’s help in therapy after being abused by both her father and her grandfather for years when she was a child. Her father, the bishop, was widely respected in the ward during the same time period. . . .

A Provo woman incested as a child by her father went to the stake president with whom her father had served on a regional council. He responded that he “had to assume that her father was ‘an honorable man’ because he held a high Church office. She must be wrong.” . . .

A Salt Lake City woman and her sisters, between ages seven and nine, were “repeatedly abused” by a ward member and entered therapy as adults to deal with the trauma. One sister was “horrified to see their abuser serving as a temple worker.” He was also volunteering with children at a local hospital. She reported him to the hospital, who discontinued his volunteer services. . . .

Kristie Morton, raised in an active LDS family with pioneer roots, was sexually abused during childhood by various relatives. One was her great-uncle, a branch president, who said he was “helping her” and doing her “a favor.” She tried to defend herself, but her confusion was as paralyzing as her great-uncle’s greater power: “In Church they told us young women to be morally pure; they warned us about young men our own age trying to take sexual advantage of us, but they didn’t warn us about our priesthood leaders or family members trying to do the same thing. They told us to honor male priesthood holders because they act for God on earth. They told us to follow our leaders and do what we were told and everything will be all right. Well, it wasn’t all right.” Kristie entered therapy in her mid-thirties, after her great-uncle had died, and confronted her aunt with the fact of the abuse. The aunt said that the uncle “was only human” and had given “devoted service for so many years the Lord had forgiven him his sins.” She blamed Morton for bringing the abuse upon herself, and she accused her of trying to tear apart the family.

Among the numerous accounts of child sexual abuse noted by the Mormon Alliance we find the following:

Ellen (a pseudonym) had been molested twice by the time she was fourteen. . . . Confused and distraught, she and her family turned to bishops Arlo Atkinson and James Stapely, who also is a Mesa city council member. Atkinson took her into his home in Mesa. She would live with his family, and he would shepherd her through the court proceedings that followed.

Two months later, he began “a sexual relationship” with her. It did not stop, even after she tried to commit suicide. When ward members became “suspicious” about the amount of time Ellen was spending with Atkinson, she moved back home but the sexual relationship continued. When she became pregnant, she “concocted a story” about date rape and was placed in a state foster home. The foster mother intercepted “sexually explicit” letters from Atkinson to Ellen and contacted the police. Atkinson was excommunicated from the Church, served 132 days in jail for “sexual misconduct with a minor, and was sentenced to three years” probation. When he was out of jail, he moved to California but continued to telephone and visit Ellen. During the visits he continued to have sexual relations with her. (Case Reports, pages 89-90)

THE FALL OF GEORGE P. LEE

While some Mormons would like to believe that their leaders are almost infallible, the case of George P. Lee clearly demonstrates that even a highly respected leader can fall into sin. The Mormon Church is led by a group of men known as the General Authorities. Since Lee served in the First Quorum of the Seventy, he was a member of this elite group that directs the affairs of the church.

On September 2, 1989, the Salt Lake Tribune made this startling announcement:

George P. Lee, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy since 1975, was stripped of his membership by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles for “apostasy” and “other conduct unbecoming a member of the church.” . . .

Dr. Lee has been considered a rising star in the church hierarchy, but his questioning of church leadership landed him in trouble two years ago, he said. Since then, he claims church officials have accused him of polygamy and immorality,” both of which he denies. When those charges didn’t stick, they charged him with apostasy, he said.

After George Lee’s excommunication, he wrote two letters “To the First Presidency and the Twelve” in which he severely castigated the leaders of the church. In the first letter he asked: “Who wrote a letter to George P. Lee and falsely accused him of things which were not true such as polygamy and teaching false doctrine?” His letters were turned over to the news media and caused a good deal of dissension in Salt Lake City.
George Lee’s many supporters discounted the comments regarding polygamy and immorality, believing that the church was out to get him. Unfortunately, however, in 1993, the statements about polygamy and immorality became very important. On July 30, 1993, the Mormon Church’s newspaper, the Deseret News, reported the following:

George P. Lee, former LDS Church general authority, is expected to surrender to authorities next week on charges that he sexually abused a 12-year-old girl in 1989.

Investigators say he fondled the girl at his home and during official trips made as a member of the church’s First Quorum of Seventy.

Lee, 50, was charged Thursday with aggravated sexual abuse of a child, a first-degree felony that carries a maximum penalty of five years to life in prison. The single charge accuses him of fondling the girl at his West Jordan home while talking to her about polygamy.

The girl would sometimes accompany Lee’s daughter when they traveled to conferences in other states while he served as a general authority for the church. Lee is accused of fondling her during trips to Arizona, Canada and Lake Powell, according to a sheriff’s report.

Prosecutors filed the charge as a first-degree felony because Lee ‘occupied a position of special trust to the victim’ as a religious leader and because the incidents are said to have occurred more than five times, the charges state.

On August 13, 1993, the Salt Lake Tribune reported:

Former Mormon general authority George P. Lee said God will bring “calamities and judgments” upon those who have accused him of child sex abuse. . . . Mr. Lee compared his plight with the persecution of Jesus Christ. “We all have peaks and valleys,” he said. “This is my valley, my Garden of Gethsemane.”

Finally, on October 12, 1994, the Salt Lake Tribune reported that Lee acknowledged his guilt:

A year ago, former Mormon general authority George P. Lee proclaimed he was “innocent before God” of sexually molesting a 12-year-old neighbor girl.

But Tuesday before a 3rd District judge, Lee humbly hung his head and admitted to touching the girl’s breasts for sexual gratification . . . .

Lee, 51, pleaded guilty to attempted sexual abuse of a child, a third-degree felony . . . .

Lee admitted only to fondling the girl’s breasts. But the victim, now 17 years old, said Lee fondled her breasts, buttocks and genitals for three years, beginning in 1986 when she was 9 years old . . . .

The last time Lee abused her was after a camping trip in June 1989 at Lee’s home.

George Lee, like the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith, mentioned the practice of “polygamy” to the young girl after they had returned from a camping trip:

During that trip, she went camping with the Lee family. Lee disappeared for a day and a night, then returned and brought her . . . back to their West Jordan home. That night, he called Karen [a pseudonym used to protect the identity of the victim] into his bedroom and had her sit on his bed. He told her that he had hiked to the top of a nearby mountain where he spoke “to the Lord and he told the Lord he’d fallen in love with me. . . . I was confused and taken aback about him speaking to the Lord and the Lord saying it was OK.” Lee then began talking to her about polygamy, “He said that it was going to be brought back to the Earth and we’d be asked to live it.” . . . Still later that night, Lee woke her up and said “he was sorry he’d ever started touching me and that he’d never do it again.”

However, “almost every day” for the month, he continued the fondling: in her friend’s bedroom, in the family room, in the pool at the Deseret Gym, on a Heber Creeper train ride, and in hotels when they traveled to Canada. She testified later that there were “more than 20 touching incidents” that month. (Case Reports, page 73)

The Mormon Alliance raises the question of whether church leaders knew about Lee’s sexual problem before he was excommunicated. In his first letter to the First Presidency and the Twelve George Lee made it clear that the church had put him on probation:

Who is acting as judge, jury and executioner at the same time and delights in putting George P. Lee on probation without fair hearing. . . . Who put George P. Lee on probation after he faithfully and honestly opened up to you in his attempts to answer your questions and false accusations with a presentation on the chalkboard?

The Mormon Alliance reported that there was a possibility that Lee may have abused other individuals:

In 1993 when criminal charges were filed against Lee, a Church spokesman said “they were unaware at the time [of the excommunication] of the sexual-abuse allegations.” Despite the Church’s silence and Lee’s denial, however, it is not impossible that allegations of sexual misconduct were known among the other General Authorities, for simultaneously with the period of probation and the pattern of intensifying ostracism, Lee was turning to children for sexual gratification and had been doing so since at least 1986, three years before his excommunication.

According to newspaper accounts spanning the time period between the filing of charges and Lee’s plea bargain, there may have been additional victims. A story published two days after he was charged states: “Other possible victims are alluded to in the report, but officials say that for now, only incidents involving the 12-year-old will be prosecuted.” A second newspaper story quoted sheriff’s officials as saying “others allegedly have made similar allegations against Lee.” A third news story, published in May 1994, reported that Lee’s attorney had filed a motion “asking the judge to exclude ‘any evidence of other misconduct or bad acts concerning defendant’s sisters-in-law . . . for the reason that said incidents, even if true, are irrelevant.’ The motion did not elaborate on the ‘misconduct or bad acts.’” . . .

Many questions remain unanswered: Did Lee abuse other children besides Karen, including the sisters of his wife Kitty? Were there abuse victims earlier than Karen? What was the influence of his abusive activities on his “apostasy” and vice versa? What did other General Authorities suspect or know? What kinds of interventions did they attempt during his “probation” and why was he placed on “probation”? (Case Reports, pages 72, 76)
On April 19, 1992, the *Salt Lake Tribune* published an article containing the following:

The social structure of the Mormon Church and its emphasis on family protect child sex abusers, according to two women who have written a book about sexual abuse in two Mormon neighborhoods.

*Paperdolls: Healing from Sexual Abuse in Mormon Neighborhoods,* was written by two Salt Lake Valley women using the pseudonyms April Daniels and Carol Scott. . . . While the women tell their stories of sex abuse separately, they share more than authorship: One of the teenage boys who abused Ms. Daniels in the 1970s married Ms. Scott’s daughter and later abused his own children. . . .

“I wrote it out of a need to empower myself, just some deep need to have the truth spoken,” said Ms. Scott, who relates how her grandchildren were abused at “touching parties” staged by the daughter and son-in-law of a Mormon Church apostle. . . .

In the book’s foreword, Salt Lake County psychiatrist Dr. Paul L. Whitehead reports he treated three of the children described in the book and “can verify the accuracy of their horrific experiences.”

On page 52 of *Paperdolls* Carol stated that when she thinks of the kids from one of the neighborhoods, “it makes me physically ill. Six kids dead. Three of them suicides. Three in and out of institutions. Five with eating disorders or drug abuse.”

Carol claimed that the apostle’s daughter was very generous about tending children, but felt there was an evil motive:

This mother . . . is a daughter of a general authority in the Mormon church, a daughter of one of the Twelve Apostles. Her husband is in the bishopric . . . Our children told about the “touching parties” at her house. About what the dad did to his two little girls and ours while the mom gave out Popsicles and cookies and took videos. About how she used some of the Junior Sunday School visual aids for backgrounds in the videos. . . . The detail from each matches what the others have said. (*Paperdolls,* page 55)

On page 108, Carol related that pornographic videos were shown and then the children all took part in various sexual acts: “The whole ‘party’ took less than an hour. Usually about seven children, a couple of teenagers, and three or four adults were there. Sometimes there were costumes and props, and sometimes the children were given injections, ‘especially if it was going to hurt.” On the same page we find that the children were threatened:

Cynthia said the apostle’s daughter told them, “I’ll run over your Mommy and Daddy with my truck if you tell,” and “I’ll drop Claire in the road going to pre-school, and she’ll get lost or run over.” Cynthia and Claire watched as the apostle’s son-in-law strangled a baby kitten. They made the children help bury it. “We can do this to Claire,” they told Cynthia. “We’ll bury her right here by the kitty if you ever tell.”

According to Carol, the church did not take any action against this man: “. . . the stake president . . . talked with one of the children’s therapists. The stake president told us he believed it. There has never been an excommunication trial . . . the ones who had the ‘touching parties,’ are the daughter and son-in-law of an apostle in the Mormon church. . . . What Utah police official, what church authority is going to deal with that?” On page 145, she stated: “The apostle’s son-in-law would continue to sit next to the bishop on the stand in church, looking down on all the faces of the children he had molested.”

In a letter to *Sunstone,* Marion B. Smith indicated that she felt there was a cover up with regard to the daughter and son-in-law of a Mormon Church apostle:

A little over five years ago . . . I, along with five or six other therapists, interviewed approximately twenty children from a Bountiful ward. In this same ward other children had made allegations about Bret Bullock and other adults in what appeared to be a group sex ring. Bullock was subsequently convicted. . . . In this same neighborhood, totally different adults were named by totally different children . . . the children who reported the second, non-Bullock sex ring did not know what the children in the Bullock case had said and were too young to come up with the consistent, spontaneous, explicit detail and congruent emotional affect that they manifested. These two Bountiful sex rings were never linked by any children as far as I know. Both groups involved ritualized sex acts but to my knowledge, not satanic rites. . . .

One aspect of the second alleged sex ring was that a daughter and son-in-law of a general authority were named as the main abusers by at least seven children. Explicit detail was given about this couple’s activities by all of these children. When the couple’s names surfaced, the Bountiful police, for all practical purposes, dropped the case. . . . At the time, the stake president and others in the Church system said they believed the children, but no Church action was ever taken against any of the alleged perpetrators . . . much of the sex ring activity being reported allegedly has taken place within LDS congregations and is perpetrated by active LDS members. . . . Within the Salt Lake Valley alone, sex abuse rings have been reported in Midvale, West Valley, Salt Lake, and Bountiful. . . . The patriarchal system where the priesthood holder’s authority is not questioned allows pedophiles a unique opportunity. Bishops often support the perpetrator because he is a priesthood holder . . . The Church needs to change its implied message that its leaders are morally infallible. . . . LDS denial of anything being wrong within family or Church systems is exceedingly strong. I believe that a Church cover-up occurred in the case of the general authority’s children . . . If there has been a cover-up, obviously it is intolerable to Mormons and non-Mormons alike. . . . (*Sunstone,* December 1991, pages 4-6)

In the story published in *Paperdolls* the apostle’s son-in-law is referred to only as “Hank.” The Mormon Alliance Case Reports gives additional information with regard to this matter:

The story continued after the publication of *Paperdolls.* In the summer of 1992, Carol’s two youngest daughters and one of their husbands met with Hank’s current bishop and his stake president. They sought this meeting with these ecclesiastical leaders as part of their own healing. They pled with Hank’s priesthood leaders to take action to right the wrong that had been done and to protect the children to whom Hank still had access. Carol reports: “These authorities told us they were worried Hank might kill himself if they took action against him, but they said...
they believed us. They said they would have to check with their legal department and get back to us. We heard no further response from them.” Carol’s son-in-law wrote to the stake president later:

We met with you, as spiritual leaders, with the hope that something could be done to protect against more abuse, to better facilitate the long and difficult healing process . . . President, I cannot begin to tell you how crushed I felt to look you, a fellow priesthood holder, in the eye and tell you that a diagnosed pedophile, who had returned from a mission and who had married in the temple, raped and sodomized my wife and many others when they were but small and innocent children, only to have you tell me that you would have to check with your legal department and get back to me, which you have not bothered to do. . . . Because we cannot get any support from our Church, we are forced to resort to a civil court of law. . . . I pray for you, as well as the children.

A copy went to Elder Loren C. Dunn, then area president. Two of the women initiated a civil suit against Hank for damages from his abuse when they were children. Criminal action was not possible because the statute of limitation had run out. Even though Hank was an attorney and a member of the Utah Bar, he did not contest the suit, and the women were awarded a default judgment for $5 million. Their “damages” consisted of a token $100 a month, as Hank had sought protection from previous creditors by declaring bankruptcy. He had never paid any child support for his four children.

In 1992, an adult woman who had read Paperdolls called Carol and said, “I know who Hank is. . . . He abused me for four years when I was a child, right up until he left on his mission.” She had gone to Hank’s current bishop and stake president and told her own story . . . hoping they might warn families in his present ward. But nothing ever happened.

In fall 1993, Hank was fired from his position with the State Tax Commission, allegedly for sexually harassing a teenage female employee. Carol and her daughters were amazed to be told later that Hank’s mortgage was paid from ward welfare funds for many months, a payment authorized by Hank’s bishop, who apparently felt that Hank’s financial needs took precedence over his victims’ claims. . . . Carol, reported to me in the spring of 1996 the ending of this story for Hank . . . She had learned these details when Hank’s second wife, Elaine, called her. A year before in the spring of 1995, Hank and Elaine separated . . . When Elaine told her two daughters by her first marriage and the son she had borne to Hank that she planned to divorce him, the three children told their mother of their years of sexual and physical abuse at his hands . . . Elaine called Hank, told him that the children were in therapy, and that she was going to see him “rot in jail for what he’d done.”

Hank disappeared from his job. Elaine later learned that he had returned to his mother’s home in Salt Lake City. The morning after his return, his mother found him dead from an overdose of prescription drugs. A suicide note addressed to his stepdaughters said . . . he knew God would forgive and understand his death because he could not continue the destruction of more lives . . .

Carol summarizes bleakly, “I know of at least thirty people Hank molested when they were children . . . Hank was never called to a disciplinary council, and we have never been given an explanation for this lack of Church action against him. We believe that Church officers shielded Hank from ecclesiastical action and even paid his bills because of his connection to an apostle’s family.” (Case Reports, pages 118-120)

**RITUAL ABUSE CONFIRMED**

While the sexual abuse reported above is certainly very distressing to read about, there is another form of abuse that is far worse because it includes extreme torture along with all types of sexual abuse. This is the ritual abuse of children. Although it is often referred to as satanic ritual abuse, those who participate in it do not always worship Satan. They may, in fact, be occultists who worship other gods. In addition, many of those involved in this evil practice may not even believe in the existence of any god. They simply use occultic or satanic trappings to terrify their victims.

Although we knew there was a group that broke off from the Mormon Church and committed many murders (the LeBarons), and two dissident brothers (the Laffertys) who ritually sacrificed a baby by cutting its throat, we were not aware that anything like this was going on within the Mormon Church.

In July 1991, however, we were presented with a copy of a very sensational memo written by a General Authority of the Mormon Church. It was a highly secret document authored by Glenn L. Pace, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric of the church. It was dated July 19, 1990, and was directed to the “Strengthening Church Members Committee” of the Mormon Church. In the memo Pace states that he met with many victims of “ritualistic child abuse,” and that “All sixty individuals are members of the Church.”

Since we felt that this information should be available to members of the Mormon Church so that the children could be protected, we published the Pace memo in the November 1991, issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger* (copies of this newsletter are still available free to those who write us at: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110).

In addition to the large number of copies we distributed from our bookstore, we also sent copies of it to the news media. All three of the major television stations in Salt Lake City ran the story. On October 24, 1991, it became the lead story on the Channel 4 evening news. Channel 2 also ran the story on its evening news, and even the Mormon Church’s own station KSL (Channel 5), ran the story on its 10 o’clock newscast. To our surprise, KSL actually presented a frank and accurate account of the contents of the memo and of the serious implications for the church. Other stories concerning ritual abuse and the Mormon Church were presented on all three of the major stations in the days that followed and a number of the victims gave their stories. The story also became national news.

Although we thought Mormon leaders would deny the accusations of ritualistic abuse in the church, we are happy to report that they acknowledged that Pace wrote the memo and that there was indeed a problem in the church. The church’s own newspaper reported:

> Officials from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints said Friday they are evaluating reports that satanic cults
dedicated to sexually abusing children are operating within the church. . . .

“Satanic worship and ritualistic abuse are problems that have been around for centuries and are international in scope,” said a statement issued Friday by the church public affairs department. “While they are, numerically, not a problem of major proportions among members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, for those who may be involved they are serious.”

The Church has strived to help local ecclesiastical leaders understand and deal with the issue, the statement said, citing a Sept. 18 message from the First Presidency “reaffirming their concern about such distasteful practices and encouraging vigilance in detecting and treating situations that may arise.” . . . Bishop Pace said satanic abusers in Utah “represent a cross-section of the Mormon culture.” (Deseret News, October 25, 1991)

While some Mormons have tried to skirt around the official statement made by the church itself, the Mormon Alliance acknowledges that the document which we published is authentic:

On 2 July 1991, Jerald and Sandra Tanner received a copy of the Pace memo from an unidentified source. Linda Walker, an investigator and writer from San Francisco then doing research on incest and satanic abuse within Mormonism, says that she received a copy of the memo from them. Walker interviewed Bishop Pace and he confirmed that he had “interviewed about one hundred victims of ritualistic abuse.” The Tanners also gave a second copy to a second researcher, who was suspicious about the authenticity of the memo and about the existence of the Strengthening Church Members Committee. He confirmed the existence of both the memo and the committee with a secretary in Pace’s office. . . .

The authenticity of the memo has been challenged by those who feel that Jerald and Sandra Tanner . . . would not scruple to forge a document. Those who are familiar with the Tanners’ work, while they may not agree with their methods or conclusions, believe that they adhere to scrupulous standards of accuracy. Since the Church acknowledged the existence of the memo without any qualifications about its accuracy, attempts to deny the existence or seriousness of ritual abuse by casting doubts on the authorship of the memo cannot be taken seriously. (Case Reports, page 138)

In the highly secret report Pace noted that he had met with sixty victims. Later, however, he interviewed forty more people, thus making a total of one hundred victims. The following is taken from Pace’s memo to the Strengthening Church Membership Committee of the Mormon Church:

Pursuant to the Committee’s request, I am writing this memorandum to pass along what I have learned about ritualistic child abuse. Hopefully, it will be of some value to you as you continue to monitor the problem. You have already received the LDS Social Services report on satanism dated May 24, 1989 . . . I have met with sixty victims. That number could be twice or three times as many if I did not discipline myself to only one meeting per week. . . . All sixty individuals are members of the Church. Forty-five victims allege witnessing and/or participating in human sacrifice. The majority were abused by relatives, often their parents. All have developed psychological problems and most have been diagnosed as having multiple personality disorder or some other form of dissociative disorder.

Ritualistic child abuse is the most hideous of all child abuse. The basic objective is premeditated — to systematically and methodically torture and terrorize children until they are forced to dissociate. . . .

Many individuals with whom I have spoken have served missions . . . One individual has memories of participating in rituals while serving as a full-time missionary. . . . when sixty witnesses testify to the same type of torture and murder, it becomes impossible for me, personally, not to believe them. . . .

Children are put in a situation where they believe they are going to die — such as being buried alive or being placed in a plastic bag and immersed in water. Prior to doing so, the abuser tells the child to pray to Jesus to see if He will save her. Imagine a seven year old girl, having been told she is going to die, praying to Jesus to save her and nothing happens — then at the last moment she is rescued, but the person saving her is a representative of Satan. He uses this experience to convince her that the only person who really cares about her is Satan, she is Satan’s child and she might as well become loyal to him.

Just before or shortly after their baptism into the Church, children are baptized by blood into the satanic order which is meant to cancel out their baptism into the Church. . . . Most victims are suicidal. They have been brainwashed with drugs, hypnosis, and other means to become suicidal as soon as they start to tell the secrets. They have been threatened all of their lives that if they don’t do what they are told their brother or sister will be burned, or they themselves will be killed. . . . They believe they might as well kill themselves instead of wait for the occult to do it. . . . Our priesthood leaders, when faced with such cases, are understandably at a loss of how to respond. . . .

I’m sorry to say that many of the victims have had their first flashbacks while attending the temple for the first time. The occult along the Wasatch Front use the doctrine of the Church to their advantage. For example, the verbiage and gestures are used in a ritualistic ceremony in a very debased and often bloody manner. When the victim goes to the temple and hears the exact words, horrible memories are triggered. . . . The perpetrators are also living a dual life. Many are temple recommend holders. This leads to another reason why the Church needs to consider the seriousness of these problems. In affect, the Church is being used.

I go out of my way to not let the victims give me the names of the perpetrators. I have told them that my responsibility is to help them with spiritual healing and that the names of perpetrators should be given to therapists and law enforcement officers. However, they have told me the positions in the Church of members who are perpetrators. Among others, there are Young Women leaders, Young Men leaders, bishops, a patriarch, a stake president, temple workers, and members of the Tabernacle Choir. These accusations are not coming from individuals who think they recognized someone, but from those who have been abused by people they know, in many cases their own family members. . . . Not only do some of the perpetrators represent
a cross section of the Mormon culture, but sometimes the abuse has taken place in our own meetinghouses. . . . I have met with 60 victims. Assuming each one comes from a coven of 13, we are talking about the involvement of 800 or so right here on the Wasatch Front. Obviously, I have only seen those coming forth to get help. (Memorandum written by Bishop Glenn L. Pace to the Strengthening Church Membership Committee, July 19, 1990, pages 1-5)

In a television interview Noemi Mattis, who holds a doctorate in psychology from Columbia University and treats victims of ritual abuse, reported that at “a meeting of therapists” in this area she “circulated a questionnaire asking how many cases have you seen, have you treated in therapy who have reported ritual abuse. And there was a total of 32 therapists who were in the room. There was a total of 360 cases reported.”

As noted above, after we published the Pace memo it received a great deal of attention from the news media. The subject of both sexual abuse and ritual abuse was widely discussed in Utah. In fact, on January 18, 1992, KSL TV reported the results of a poll about ritual abuse:

Utahns overwhelmingly believe that satanic and/or ritualistic child abuse exists. A recent KSL-DN [Deseret News] poll showed that 90% of those surveyed say it exists. Some say it’s widespread, while others see it happening only occasionally or seldom. Only 2% do not think it exists at all.

On November 24, 1991, the Salt Lake Tribune supported a plan by Governor Bangerter to appoint investigators to look into the charges of ritual abuse in Utah. The measure was passed by the Utah Legislature and two investigators, Lt. Michael R. King and Lt. Matt Jacobson, were selected to investigate the allegations.

King had previously served as the “lead investigator” in the prosecution of the Shreeve group. This cult used passages from Joseph Smith’s Book of Mormon as they sexually abused children. This, of course, is a bizarre use of the Book of Mormon, since there is nothing in the book that could possibly be used to justify sexual abuse. In any case, twelve adults were charged with sexually abusing children, and all of them were convicted. Arvin Shreeve, the leader of the group, and Sharon Kapp “are respectively serving 20 years and 10 years to life sentences in the Utah State Prison.”

When we were interviewed by Lt. Matt Jacobson, we informed him of allegations of ritual abuse in a Mormon Church in Oklahoma which could throw some light on cases in Utah. Jacobson, in turn, told us that the investigation had led him to believe that ritual abuse was taking place in Utah.

On April 25, 1995, the Utah Attorney General’s Office released the report on ritual abuse. It is entitled, Ritual Crime in the State of Utah: Investigation, Analysis & A Look Forward. While the investigators were unable to find enough hard evidence to prosecute any of the perpetrators, they did bring forth very convincing proof that ritual abuse is indeed a reality! In their report they noted:

In another case, three adult female children recalled memories of satanic sexual abuse that occurred while they were very young. The victims, in separate interviews discussed robed ceremonies, alters [sic], candles, animal sacrifices and extreme physical and sexual abuse. Since their recollections appeared to show some consistency, an in-depth investigation was launched. At the conclusion of the investigation, the suspects were interviewed. Both the mother and the father admitted to serious sexual and physical crimes against the children and named several other individuals who were also involved. The case, however could not be prosecuted because the statute of limitation had run. The crimes occurred over 25 years ago, but this case does indicate that serious sexual and physical abuse can happen and that it is perpetrated by those who cloak their crimes in ritualistic activity. (Ritual Crime in the State of Utah, page 3)

Significantly, when the report by the ritual abuse investigators was released, the Mormon Church’s newspaper, Deseret News, revealed a great deal about one of the three victims whose parents confessed to the practice of satanic ritual abuse. Deseret News staff writer Jerry Spangler wrote the following about this important case:

From the time she was 3 years old until she became a young adult, Rachel Hopkins was ritualistically tortured, raped, bathed in blood and threatened that she would be killed if she ever told anyone.

It’s a story so bizarre and so terrifying that some people refuse to believe that it really happened. Hopkins (not her real name) was a victim of what is commonly called satanic ritual abuse — a phenomenon that many psychological experts say doesn’t exist.

Rather, they argue, memories of ritualistic abuse are fantasies or false memories planted by unscrupulous therapists. “I am sure there are cases where bogus therapists have suggested things. Of course, there are false memories,” Hopkins said. “But that is not what happened to me.”

Like most victims of satanic ritual abuse, Hopkins remembered the abuse many years later. But her case is significantly different from others.

She has the signed confessions of her parents — both of whom admitted abusing her during satanic rituals — that corroborate every memory she has of the abuse. The confessions offer much greater detail of events Rachel could not have known.

Hopkins’ parents also confessed in detail to two investigators from the Utah attorney general’s office and to leaders of the church they attended.

Hopkins was also able to recover a photograph of herself as a child that shows bruises inflicted during the ritual abuse. Her siblings have also corroborated the events surrounding the ritual abuse.

“The biggest weapon they (occultists) have is secrecy,” she said. “By our society not acknowledging that it exists, we aid in that secrecy and we refuse to allow the healing to begin.” . . .

Hopkins . . . has met repeatedly with investigators Matt Jacobson and Mike King from the attorney general’s office, who said her case was “absolutely, concrete evidence” of satanic ritual abuse. They even requested her permission
to cite her case specifically in the report and asked her to
talk to the media about her experience.

“The truth is they (occultists) do wear black robes, they
do abuse children, they do kill animals,” she said. “It
exists, and to say otherwise is to deny the facts in front of
them. Our society used to deny the existence of incest, too,
because we didn’t want to believe it.”

Today, Hopkins . . . is a mother of two children, she
has been happily married for 20 years, she has just returned
to college to complete her undergraduate degree and she is
devoted to the LDS Church.

Hopkins recalls how her parents and others, some of
them relatives, would dress in black robes for sporadic
rituals that involved terror and torture. “I was sexually
abused in every way you can conceive. I was tortured and
had the bottoms of my feet cut, I was made to believe I
was killing a baby, and they forced me to kill dogs and
cats,” she said.

“I was bathed in a tub of blood and forced to look at
myself in a mirror. I was tied up and hung upside down
and spun. I was suffocated and electrocuted to the point of
being bowed and paralyzed. Sometimes they forced me and
my siblings to hurt one another. They would tell me, ‘now
you’re one of us. If you tell anybody, they won’t believe
you and they’ll put you in a mental hospital.’ And they
threatened to torture me until I was dead.”

Hopkins and her siblings believe Rachel was singled
out for more intensive abuse because of her blond hair and
eyes and because she refused to submit willingly to
the rituals. . . .

Two years and eight months ago the memories started
coming back. At first, she couldn’t believe it either. She had
heard of satanic ritual abuse before but had never associated
her memories with that behavior.

“The first time I called my parents up and told them I
had been sexually abused and I knew they did it, they told
me I was hallucinating,” she said. “Since that time, they have
written letters to each of the children confirming everything
in explicit detail.”

For Hopkins, the healing began when people started
to believe her — her husband, her therapist, church leaders
and even the attorney general’s investigators.

“It was my faith in Jesus Christ that got me through it
all,” she said. “I am at peace with this now.” . . . “But I want
those out there who may have been victimized by this kind
of abuse to know that there are those who believe them.
With a good therapist, they can start the healing process,
too. They can break free of this and have a new life,” she
said. (Deseret News, April 25, 1995)

On April 25, 1995, the television station KTVX (Channel 4)
gave additional information regarding the same victim (referred
to as Jenny in the newscasts). Paul Murphy reported:

One woman who came forward to tell about ritual
abuse brought something no one else has — a confession
from the perpetrators. . . . The way the abuse occurred
sounds like scenes out of Rosemary’s Baby.

Paul Murphy said that “most people would be skeptical of
Jenny’s story of satanic ritual abuse, except for one thing — her
parents confessed. In these letters [which were shown to the
television audience] the parents ask for forgiveness and describe
the abuse in detail. Her mother wrote: ‘He cut off your night
clothes and panties. A dog was hung by the back feet, throat
cut and disemboweled, and hind legs cut off. You were hung
by your feet after being bound.’ ”

Mr. Murphy also quoted the woman’s father as writing the
following: “I performed the same sexual acts on you at home.
The sexual abuse in our home was a repeat of the ritual.” Murphy
went on to reveal that, “The confessions come after Jenny and
siblings interfered with the parents’ plans to go on a [Mormon]
Church mission.”

According to the woman, when her parents were confronted
about the ritual abuse, “They denied it vehemently, but the
bishop and the stake president said . . . ‘why would all of your
children say this . . . Why would they all say this about you, if
it isn’t true.’ And so finally they did confess.”

Murphy reported that, “The parents settled out of court to
pay Jenny’s therapy bills along with a note that says, ‘We are
so happy to send this check. We pray for your healing. Love
Mom and Dad.’ ”

Paul Murphy revealed the following: “This is what her
father wrote about the rituals: ‘You were threatened that if you
ever told this, that you would really be cut apart.’ ”

When one of the newscasters asked Murphy if anything
could be done to the parents, he replied: “Well, they admitted
to things that didn’t fall within the statute of limitations. The girl
still hopes that her parents may be prosecuted on other things
that have happened. They were also excommunicated from
the church, which I understand has no statute of limitations.”

Newscaster Randall Carlisle summed up the whole matter
regarding ritual abuse by saying: “Boy, if no one’s seen proof
up till now, they certainly see the proof now.”

It would be very difficult to set this woman’s report aside
as fantasy. While some might ignore the statements of three
children, when all five members of a family testify to the same
thing, it becomes very difficult to deny the charges. That both
the children’s mother and father would write letters confirming
the satanic ritual abuse is very important. Moreover, the fact
that the parents confirmed the abuse to investigators and even
allowed themselves to be subjected to excommunication from
the Mormon Church is highly significant.

It is very difficult to gloss over the serious implications
of this information. Those who doubt the reality of ritual abuse
usually point out that the so-called “Satan scare” was triggered
by “Christian fundamentalism” and the publication of the book,
Michelle Remembers, in 1980.

The case investigated by the Utah Attorney General’s
Office throws important light on the subject of satanic ritual
abuse because it clearly shows that this type of sexual abuse and
torture was actually taking place long before the book Michelle
Remembers was published.

In the secret memo written by Glenn Pace regarding ritual
abuse he explains that in many cases the abuse is too horrible
to cope with. Consequently, the victims often block it out of
their minds for many years. Pace commented: “The victims
lead relatively normal lives, but the memories are locked up in
a compartment in their minds and surface in various ways . . .
As they become adults and move into another environment, something triggers the memories and . . . flashbacks and/or nightmares occur. One day they will have been living a normal life and the next they will be in a mental hospital in a fetal position.”

The case reported above gives strong support to the claim that a child who is severely abused can repress the ugly memories for many years, only to have them break forth into their conscious mind after they have grown up. As noted above, the Deseret News article reported that the woman repressed memories of the abuse for “many years.” In fact, according to the article, written on April 25, 1995, it was only “Two years and eight months ago, the memories started coming back.”

This demonstrates that traumatic memories can be stored in the mind and later retrieved by the victim. While it must be acknowledged that this does not prove that all recovered memories are true, in this case it shows the victim’s long-suppressed recollections were dependable. This is demonstrated in the fact that her parents’ signed confessions “corroborate every memory she has of the abuse.” (Deseret News, April 25, 1995)

Interestingly, a recent civil case tried in Salt Lake City, which involved a claim of repressed memories was won by the victim:

Cherese Franklin told a Salt Lake City jury that she completely repressed memories of being sexually abused as a child — and then recovered those memories 33 years later.

And the jury believed her.

After an 11-day trial in 3rd District Court, jurors Thursday awarded Franklin $750,000 in physical and emotional damages for lifelong illnesses and mental symptoms she claimed resulted from abuse inflicted upon her by an older cousin. . . . Franklin began her journal in November 1992 . . . By the end of the year, she had detailed 15 horrific incidents of abuse that involved death threats accompanied by the mutilation of animals. (Salt Lake Tribune, August 16, 1996)

Mormonism stresses morals and the importance of the family. These things, of course, are admirable and should be continued. On the other hand, however, the many reports of sexual and ritualistic abuse are very disturbing. The church certainly needs to take a tougher stand against child sexual abuse.

Because of the significance of the information contained in the book, Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance, vol. 1, we have decided to make it available to the reader at a special price. In addition, our book, Occultic Ritual Abuse: Fact or Fantasy? which usually sells for $6.95 can be obtained for free with every order of $25.00 or more. This book contains a great deal of material on both child sexual abuse and ritualistic abuse in the Mormon Church. See the special prices on the first page of this newsletter.

**EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS**

“To the Salt Lake City Messenger: Actually the clowns known as the Tanners. I am a missionary for the LDS church . . . This is the ONLY church set up like Christ set it up. Not some joke thing out of Salt Lake like you clowns. . . . Satan is on your side . . . He’s got a whole section rooting for you clowns. Your ex[ac]tly that. Clowns! . . . Satan is your pimp. . . .” (Letter from Idaho)

“I have found your newsletters to be very interesting, in particular the articles concerning FARMS. . . . Your ministry was instrumental as far back as 20 years ago in helping us to see the truth. Thank You!” (Letter from Oklahoma)

“We, as a family [of five], officially resigned from the Mormon church as of June 23, 1996. Thank you so much for your words of encouragement . . . We discussed all that we had found with our children, with the Holy Bible in hand and much prayer for guidance, and the change in their perspective about the Mormon church was quite dramatic. We know that the Holy Spirit played a great part in the transformation. For us it constitutes a miracle.” (Letter from Arkansas)

“We want to thank you so much for the honesty and integrity that you both display . . . more than all your willingness to stand up to the Mormon Church. . . . Thank you so much for your helping us to see the truth about the Mormon Church, we have been very faithful Mormons for 35 years . . . You folks have made it possible to finally know the truth about Mormonism, and we have since left the Mormon Church and we are very glad we have done so. We have found out who Jesus Christ really is and what part he plays in all of our lives, no more nonsense, or deceit, or lies. We finally are free thanks to you fine people and others. We now understand what life really is about. Many Mormons are leaving the church and many are questioning the truthfulness of the church . . .” (Letter from Utah)

Those who would like to help us reach the Mormon people should be aware of the fact that Utah Lighthouse Ministry is a non-profit organization. In addition to our work with Mormons, we provide support for 44 children through World Vision, and furnish some help to a local Rescue Mission. Those who are concerned about helping this ministry can send their tax-deductible contributions to UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY, P. O. Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110. Both contributions and orders can be made over the phone (801-485-8894 or 801-485-0312) with Visa, MasterCard or Discover Card.

While we deeply appreciate the financial support that we receive, we strongly desire your prayers. We believe they will bring thousands of Mormons to the truth. As Apostle Paul admonished: “Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving” (Colossians 4:2).
LAWRENCE FOSTER’S
RESPONSE TO OUR LAST NEWSLETTER

September 17, 1996

Dear Jerald Tanner,

Thank you for allowing me to respond to your comments in the most recent issue of the Messenger. Since it is difficult in a single page to address more than a dozen pages of comments, including some serious distortions of my Mormon history scholarship over more than two decades, let me ask those interested in an accurate statement of my complex views to read my two articles on your work in Dialogue (Summer 1984) and Differing Visions (1994); the relevant sections of my two books, Religion and Sexuality and Women, Family, and Utopia; and the personal statement of my approach to Mormon history in Dialogue (Fall 1983).

On the question of why I would have drafted a press release critical of what I took to be your unwillingness to meet with me when I was attempting to prepare a serious scholarly analysis of your work, I have only this to add. I came up with that idea immediately after talking with Michael Marquardt more than a month after not receiving an answer to my two written requests for an interview (I wrote rather than called you because I did not want to open the possibility that anything I might say on the phone could subsequently be reported in a distorted form in your newsletter). Michael told me, though he does not remember his specific statement more than a decade later, that you were uneasy about meeting with me and had not yet decided whether or not you would agree to an interview. Immediately after Marquardt’s comments, I drafted the statement you have reproduced. I was quite frankly fed up that after all the times you had berated Mormon leaders for not responding to you, you were apparently not willing to meet with a non-Mormon scholar interested in trying to write a serious analysis of your work. If I was in error on this point, I apologize for the error.

The larger issue here is relevant to my fundamental critique of your work, however. You and Sandra are accomplished debaters, but your analysis is ultimately unconvincing because you refuse to apply consistent standards to assessing both Mormonism and your own faith. I have repeatedly pressed you on this point to no avail. Despite the importance of your research in various areas of Mormon history, my fundamental assessment thus still stands: “Until the Tanners are prepared to use consistent standards of judgment for their own faith as well as for that of others, their stance cannot be taken seriously by scholars or by the general public.” This weakness is one that both you and many Mormon apologists associated with FARMS both share.

I am similarly concerned that your discussion of my work in the Messenger seriously misrepresents some of my most important conclusions. For example, the key point of my assessment of the origins of Mormon plural marriage was that the motivation for introducing the practice was enormously complex and could not simply be reduced to the argument that Joseph Smith had an excessive sex drive. Similarly, my analysis of the complex sources of Joseph Smith’s genius (Dialogue, Winter 1993) never refers to him as “mentally ill” but instead stresses the complex psychological dynamics that may have contributed to his exceptional creativity. Whatever the sources of that genius may have been, the ultimate issue is, in Jesus’ words: “By their fruits shall ye know them.”

Sincerely yours,

Lawrence Foster

NOTICE: Since Dr. Foster took over four months to prepare his rebuttal, we were unable to respond in this issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger.
BOOKS AND TAPES
(Mail orders add 10% — Minimum postage $1.50)

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MANY MORE BOOKS!!!

We have many other books which are not listed in this issue of the Messenger. A complete book list will be sent free upon request by writing to us at Utah Lighthouse Ministry, PO Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110.
In the late 1950’s we began publishing materials relating to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly known as the Mormon Church. We were absolutely astounded at some of the material that came through our own research and the work of other people. Three and a half decades later new and important information regarding Mormonism is still coming to light. In fact, it is pouring forth so rapidly that we are unable to keep up with the flood of material that has become available.

As each chapter unfolds it becomes more and more evident that Mormonism has changed a great deal since Joseph Smith published the Book of Mormon in 1830. Unfortunately, the Mormon Church suppresses a great deal of important material that reflects badly on the church. Much of this material is kept hidden away in the Church Historical Department and in the First Presidency’s vault. This suppressive attitude has been criticized by many of the church’s historians.

QUINN’S REBELLION

Dr. D. Michael Quinn, who was excommunicated from the Mormon Church in 1993, was at one time considered to be one of the church’s top scholars. He published articles for the church’s official publication, The Ensign and also wrote for Brigham Young University Studies.

Quinn obtained a Ph.D. in history at Yale University and was formerly professor of American social history at the church’s Brigham Young University. Unfortunately for Quinn, he dug too deeply into the secret documents in the Church Historical Department. Quinn was able to see these documents because he had an inside track at the Historical Department under Dr. Leonard Arrington, who was formerly Church Historian.

Orrin Porter Rockwell

SOME SPECIAL OFFERS

Offers Good Until July 31, 1997
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The Mormon Hierarchy:
Extensions of Power, vol. 2
By D. Michael Quinn

Dr. Quinn is a noted historian who has had a great deal of access to many secret records stored in the Church Historical Department. Despite the fact that Mormon officials wanted Quinn to cease publishing materials that were embarrassing to the church, he has continued his work. In his latest book Quinn gives important information regarding “blood atonement murders” and violence in early Utah and many other topics. The regular price in bookstores is $45.00. Our special price is only $39.00.

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With every order of $25.00 or more we will send a free copy of the book, The Mormon Kingdom, vol. 2, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. This book provides important information regarding the murders and violence spoken of in Quinn’s new book. Regular price: $4.95.

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In a speech Quinn gave in 1981, he noted that he had “spent a decade probing thousands of manuscript diaries and records of Church history” that he “never dreamed” he would view. (On Being a Mormon Historian, a lecture given by D. Michael Quinn, Brigham Young University, Fall 1981)

When Dr. Quinn began publishing some of his more critical research—especially that regarding how the church secretly sanctioned the practice of polygamy after the Manifesto—some church leaders were incensed. In the book, Faithful History, edited by George D. Smith, page 109, Quinn wrote the following:

In June 1986 the staff of the church historical department announced it was necessary to sign a form which Elder Packer declared gave the right of pre-publication censorship for any archival research completed before signing the form. I and several others refused to sign the form and have not returned to do research at LDS church archives since 1986.


Dean C. Jessee is a scholar who is well known to students of Mormon history. He is currently serving as a research historian in the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History at Brigham Young University. For many years, however, Jessee worked at the Church Historical Department and had access to a vast number of sensitive documents.

When Michael Quinn’s first volume was published, Jessee expressed concern that Quinn had given too much attention to the “messy” matters researchers encounter when studying early Mormon history. He also wrote “that the story he tells is not as free from speculation and faulty interpretation as his bold writing style and abundant source notes would imply” (Journal of Mormon History, Fall 1996, pages 164-165).

Nevertheless, Dean Jessee acknowledged that Quinn did, in fact, have access to important church documents and that he did “painsstaking research.” Jessee wrote the following in his review:

Few historians have been in a better position to study the Mormon past than D. Michael Quinn. With degrees in English and history, including a doctorate at Yale, employment in the LDS Church Historical Department and wide-ranging access to its holdings, a dozen years of teaching history at BYU, and painstaking research in seventy-five repositories (he lists them), Quinn has spent a substantial part of his life studying Mormon history. This book and a second volume to follow are the outgrowth of research that led to a master’s thesis, continued through a doctoral program, and is the crowning accomplishment of thirty years work. . . .

The Mormon Hierarchy is a valuable contribution in terms of identifying sources and understanding the groundwork of the organizational structure. . . . While Hierarchy has laid important groundwork, the definitive study remains to be written. (Ibid., pages 162, 168)

Over the years Dr. Quinn has often found himself faced with serious problems with church leaders and officials at Brigham Young University. Around the time of his excommunication he was informed of a threat against his life. While Quinn did not link this threat with the Mormon Church itself, he believed that the rhetoric regarding his work had encouraged someone to threaten his life.

QUINN AND CONTROVERSY

As far as we know, Dr. Quinn had no problems with church officials in his early years as a historian. Ironically, however, he did find himself in a controversy with us in 1977, when he became involved in plot to undermine our work. The Church Historical Department had been receiving many letters and inquiries regarding the truthfulness of our research, and it had become clear that something had to be done to refute our credibility—especially the material found in our book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? It was secretly decided that the Historical Department would distribute a booklet attacking our work. Interestingly, D. Michael Quinn was designated to write the pamphlet. The booklet was published under the title, Jerald and Sandra Tanner’s Distorted View of Mormonism: A Response to Mormonism —Shadow or Reality?

The publication of the pamphlet turned out to be a real disaster because those involved did not dare reveal that the Church Historical Department was responsible for its publication. Consequently, neither the name of the author nor the publisher was mentioned anywhere in the book. In addition, the publication was distributed in a clandestine fashion. Wilfrid Clark, who worked at Zion Bookstore, told us he received an anonymous letter containing a key to a room at a self storage

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company. He went to that location and picked up 1,800 free copies of the booklet!

Our response to this work appeared in a publication entitled, *Answering Dr. Clandestine: A Response to the Anonymous LDS Historian*. In this booklet we identified Quinn as the author. Even Lawrence Foster [a non Mormon who is very critical of our work] had to admit that, “The Tanners convincingly link the anonymous critique to D. Michael Quinn and the LDS Historical Department . . . ” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1984, page 510)

While a number of Mormon scholars affiliated with Brigham Young University and FARMS eventually came to detest Michael Quinn’s writings, they still continued to cite Quinn’s attack on us in their publications. We feel that they must have known that Quinn was the author. Interestingly, however, the long-kept silence regarding this matter was finally broken by Brigham Young University Professor Louis Midgley. Midgley identified “D. Michael Quinn” as the author in the FARMS publication, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1995, page 236.

Although we strongly disagreed with many of Quinn’s conclusions regarding our work, in our response we wrote: “We feel that he is probably one of the best historians in the Mormon Church. His dissertation written for Yale University is a masterpiece” (see *Answering Dr. Clandestine*, page 5).

Dr. Quinn is a real enigma to many people. Although he has been excommunicated from the church, he believes in the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith’s First Vision. He, in fact, seems to feel that he has a calling to tell the truth about Mormonism no matter where it leads. In an interview with a newspaper reporter Quinn emphasized that he is still a believer: “When Michael Quinn was asked about his relationship to the LDS Church, he still describes himself as a ‘true believer’” (*The Herald Journal*, February 10, 1997).

**A REAL HORNET’S NEST**

Michael Quinn stirred up a great deal of animosity when he published an article in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* entitled, “Male-Male Intimacy among Nineteenth-century Mormons: A Case Study.” *The Herald Journal* for February 10, 1997, reported: “Quinn’s views drew such fierce criticism in Cache Valley that the former Brigham Young University historian was uncertain whether his Friday visit would draw a hostile crowd.” Fortunately for Quinn, there were no problems.

Although Dr. Quinn has published a great deal of important information regarding early Mormonism, we have a real problem with this particular article. Quinn wrote the following about Joseph Smith:

And as taught by their martyred prophet himself, it was acceptable for LDS “friends to lie down together, locked in the arms of love to sleep and wake in each other’s embrace.” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Winter 1995, page 110)

In a footnote at the bottom of the same page, Michael Quinn spoke of “the tenderness involved in same-sex bedmates as advocated by the Mormon prophet.”

When we first read these comments we were very surprised. We had never encountered anything like that before in our research regarding Mormon Church history. We did notice, however, that Quinn gave a reference to Joseph Smith’s *History of the Church*. A careful examination of the context revealed that the quote was not referring to “same-sex bedmates,” but instead to death, burial and the resurrection! It was a speech given by Joseph Smith on April 16, 1843, at the funeral of Lorenzo D. Barns. We take the following from Joseph Smith’s *History*:

It has always been considered a great calamity not to obtain an honorable burial . . . If tomorrow I shall be called to lie in yonder tomb, in the morning of the resurrection let me strike hands with my father, and cry, “My father,” . . . When we lie down we contemplate how we may rise in the morning; and it is pleasing for friends to lie down together, locked in the arms of love, to sleep and wake in each other’s embrace. . . . when the voice calls for the dead to arise, suppose I am laid by the side of my father, what would be the first joy of my heart? To meet my father, my mother, my brother, my sister; and when they are by my side, I embrace them and they me. . . . (*History of the Church*, vol. 5, page 361)

A year after Michael Quinn published his article, George L. Mitton wrote a letter to the editor of *Dialogue*. His conclusions regarding Quinn’s article were similar to ours. Mitton, however, went even further:

The language Quinn cites is from a funeral sermon on the resurrection, where Joseph advocated that family and friends should be buried near each other if possible, lying down in nearby graves, so that they may wake at the resurrection to rejoice together and embrace in celebration of God’s goodness and love. He is referring to family members who are our dearest friends, and describing a scene of intense family joy. The *arms of love* is a scriptural allusion—the imagery of godly love as the Lord extends it at the resurrection and otherwise. . . .

Those who wish to know more about this issue should read George L. Mitton’s letter to the editor in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Winter 1996, pages v-ix.

Mitton demonstrates that similar terms are found in the Book of Mormon and the *Doctrine and Covenants*. For example,

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in one of Joseph Smith’s early revelations in the *Doctrine and Covenants* we read that “God” told Oliver Cowdery to be “diligent in keeping the commandments . . . and I will encircle thee in the arms of my love” (*Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 6, verse 20).

In the Book of Mormon we find a similar expression: “But behold the Lord hath redeemed my soul . . . and I am encircled in the arms of his love” (2 Nephi 1:15). It seems clear then that the use of the words “in the arms of love” have nothing to do with “same-sex bedmates.” While Quinn made a serious error, we find it hard to believe that he deliberately set out to deceive. It seems more likely that he merely misunderstood the context.

Quinn also suggested that Evan Stephens, “director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir at the turn of the twentieth century, provides a case study in the use of social history sources, as well as being a prime example of the early Mormon celebration of male-male intimacy.” While Quinn implies that Evan Stephens may have been a homosexual, there is no way to know for certain at this late date. We feel that it is unwise to speculate about the matter.

**SEALING MEN TO MEN**

As most people who are familiar with Mormonism know, dedicated Mormons believe in sealing women to men and children to their parents for all eternity. Few people, however, are aware of the fact that the early Mormons sealed living men to other men in an unusual ceremony known as “the law of adoption.” Thus a man could have any number of men adopted to himself as his sons for eternity. For example, in June, 1896, Wilford Woodruff, the fourth president of the church, gave a synopsis of his work in the ministry since 1834. He wrote the following in his journal: “I officiated in Adopting 96 Men to Men” (*Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, 1833-1898, typescript, edited by Scott G. Kenney, 1985, vol. 9, page 408). In another synopsis for the years 1834-1885, he revealed: “I had 45 Persons Adopted to me” (*Ibid.*, vol. 8, page 352).

While we cannot agree with Michael Quinn’s interpretation of Joseph Smith’s speech given at the funeral of Lorenzo D. Barns, it is interesting to note that even before the Mormons left Nauvoo to come to Utah, they were sealing men to men. An article concerning the law of adoption appeared in the Mormon Church’s publication *The Latter-Day Saints’ Millennial Star*, June, 1843, vol. 4, pages 17-19. This was a year before Joseph Smith was murdered. Gordon Irving, who worked for the historical department of the church, wrote: “No consensus exists with regard to the date when the first adoptions were performed . . . It is certainly possible, perhaps probable, that Joseph Smith did initiate certain trusted leaders into the adoptionary order as early as 1842” (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Spring 1974, page 295).

Although we have not found any evidence that immoral activities were involved in the sealing of men to men, the practice certainly could have opened a door for those predisposed to homosexual temptations. It seems obvious that the men who were sealed to one another were likely to have closer contact with one another than those who did not enter into the practice. (We do know that in recent times some missionaries who were constantly in close contact with their companions yielded to homosexual activities and were sent home from their missions.) In any case, the historian Hubert Howe Bancroft gave this information about the law of adoption:

> **The father may be either younger or older than the son, but in any case assumes the character of guardian, with full control of the labor and estate of the adopted son. Many young men give themselves over to the leaders as “eternal sons,” in the hope of sharing the honor of their adopted parents.** (*History of Utah*, page 361)

Gordon Irving tells of a case where two men could not agree on a sealing ceremony because they both wanted to be the father:

> In his short autobiography, Albert K. Thurber recalled that in 1850 Benjamin F. Johnson approached him and “in a round about way proposed for me to be adopted to him.” Thurber put him off by telling him, “I thought it would be as well for him to be adopted by me.” (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Spring 1974, page 304)

The noted Mormon historian Juanita Brooks discussed the law of adoption in a book written in 1962. Mrs. Brooks revealed that when a man was adopted to another man it was not considered improper for him to take his surname:

> At this time another ceremony was instituted, which . . . was significant and important while it lasted. This was the adoption of young men and their wives to one of the leaders. The idea behind it was that in establishing the Kingdom of God upon the earth there should be also a celestial relationship. If the Prophet Joseph were to become a God over a minor planet, he must not only have a large posterity but able assistants of practical skills. Brigham Young had been “sealed” to Joseph under this law; now he in turn had some thirty-eight young men sealed to him.

> Of this number, John D. Lee was second. . . . All of the men thus joined in the covenant seemed brothers in one sense, and for some of them Lee developed a genuine affection. Among others, jealousies grew up as they competed for favor.

> In the same way, Lee had eighteen or nineteen young men with their wives adopted to him. . . . He often spoke of them as George Laub Lee, W. B. Owens Lee, Miles Anderson Lee, James Pace Lee, Allen Weeks Lee, William Swap Lee. (*John D. Lee: Zealot, Pioneer, Builder, Scapegoat*, page 73)

George Laub, who was sealed to John D. Lee, wrote: “. . . I and my wife Mary Jane with many others was adopted into John D. Lee’s family, this I took upon myself the name of Lee in this manner, George Laub Lee and my wife’s name Mary Jane Laub Lee in such a way that it cannot be seaparated [sic] . . . by covenanted before God . . . this was done in the hous[e] of the Lord across the alter as was prepared for this Purpose of ordinances” (*Ibid.*, page 74).

In his new book, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power*, vol. 2, page 492, footnote 39, D. Michael Quinn indicated that the idea of a man taking another man’s surname did not last too long: “When he was adopted to Apostle Willard Richards, Thomas Bullock recorded that he changed his ‘name
to Thomas Bullock Richards. . . . However, within two years this name-adoption practice ended, and men such as Lee and Bullock stopped referring to themselves by their adopted surnames.

Early Mormon documents clearly reveal that the law of adoption led to a great deal of jealousy, and confusion among the men. Gordon Irving acknowledged that the sealing of men to men led to contention:

Difficulties began when it became apparent that adoption gave one a special status and that not all the adopted enjoyed the same status. . . .

Adoption as a system of social organization was troubled not only by fathers who demanded too much of their sons, but also by some of the children who in turn expected too much from their fathers. . . . In theory the importance of adoption lay in the validation of one’s sonship in the family of God. But some were more interested in being fathers and exercising authority over others than they were in being sons of God. Kingdom-building, or the gathering together of a large number of people over whom one could rule in eternity, enjoyed a good deal of popularity.

Brigham Young complained: were I to say to the elders you now have the liberty to build up your kingdoms, one half of them would lie, swear, steal and fight like the devil to get men and women sealed to them. They would even try to pass right by me and go to Jos[eph]. . . .

Adoption might have worked among the strong willed men who had joined the Church had they submitted to the “quiet spirit of Jesus.” However, the decision of the saints to assert their “selfish independence” destroyed any possibility that an authoritarian, hierarchical system such as adoption could function successfully among them. (Brigham Young University Studies, Spring 1974, pages 299-303)

On April 6, 1862, President Brigham Young claimed that the practice of sealing men to men was “a great and glorious doctrine.” Nevertheless, he acknowledged that it could be very dangerous and may even send some “to hell”:

By this power men will be sealed to men back to Adam, completing and making perfect the chain of the Priesthood from this day to the winding up scene. I have known men that I positively think would fellowship the Devil, if he would agree to be sealed to them. “Oh, be sealed to me, brother; I care not what you do. You may lie and steal, or anything else, I can put up with all your meanness, if you will only be sealed to me.” Now this is not so much weakness as it is selfishness. It is a great and glorious doctrine, but the reason I have not preached it in the midst of this people, is, I could not do it without turning so many of them to the Devil. Some would go to hell for the sake of getting the Devil sealed to them. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 9, page 269)

Brigham Young’s grandson, Kimball Young, had a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago and served as chairman of the Department of Sociology at Northwestern University. Dr. Young made some interesting comments regarding the rolls of men and women in Brigham Young’s time:

To understand the role and status and the accompanying self-images of men and women in polygamy, we must recall that Mormondom was a male-dominated society. The priesthood—which only men could hold—was in complete control and celestial marriage, either monogamous or polygamous, exemplified the higher status of men. Women were viewed as of lesser worth, to be saved through men holding the priesthood.

The self-image of the woman reflected her inferior status. Alice Johnson Read, after hearing a sermon by Brigham Young, put the matter in her journal thus: “The Principle is that a woman, be she ever so smart, cannot know more than her husband if he magnifies his priesthood . . . God never in any age of the world endowed woman with knowledge above the man.” And Daisy Barclay, herself brought up in a plural family, remarks: “Polygamy is predicated on the assumption that a man is superior to a woman . . . [The] Mormon tradition follows that of the early Hebrews. It teaches [a] woman to honor and obey her husband and look upon him as her lord and master.” As a daughter of the second wife of Isaac Lambert once complained, “Mother figures you are supposed to spend your life taking care of a man, and he is God.”

That this masculine principle went deep, and far more fantastically than the Saints could comprehend, is shown in a sermon by Brigham Young, reported by John Read. In a letter to one of his wives Read said that Brigham referred to some future time “when men would be sealed to men in the priesthood in a more solemn ordinance than that by which women were sealed to men, and in a room over that in which women were sealed to man in the temple of the Lord.”

Here is evidence of deep, psychological Brüderschaft. There are obviously latent homosexual features in this idea and its cultural aspect has many familiar parallels in other religions. Most Saints, including Brigham Young himself, would have been much shocked by such an interpretation. Yet the Mormon system, with all its ecclesiastical trappings and military controls, like other organizations of this sort, had strong homosexual components. This is true of armies; it is true of priestly orders in all religions; and certainly in many aspects of the occupational guides of the Middle Ages. (Isn’t One Wife Enough? The Story of Mormon Polygamy, 1954, pages 278-280)

In a discourse President Brigham Young gave on September 4, 1873, he remarked that, “we can seal women to men but not men to men, without a Temple (Journal of Discourses, vol. 16, page 186).

As Juanita Brooks noted above, Brigham Young himself was sealed to Joseph Smith and in turn had some thirty-eight young men sealed to him. While we have no idea how many men President Young was eventually sealed to, it must have been a significant number.

Ironically, although Brigham Young, the second president of the Mormon Church, was married to dozens of wives he made this revealing comment about his relationship with women:

There are probably but few men in the world who care about the private society of women less than I do. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 5, page 99)
President Young and other early Mormon leaders were convinced that women were inferior. Consequently, they often had a difficult time getting along with them. Apostle Wilford Woodruff recorded in his journal the following comment made by Brigham Young:

> The man is the head & God of the woman, but let him act like a God in virtuous [sic] principles & God like conversation . . . (Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, vol. 3, page 131)

On a number of occasions Brigham Young frankly admitted that he was a dictator. For example, he once commented: “I sometimes say to my brethren, ‘I have been your dictator for twenty-seven years—over a quarter of a century I have dictated this people; that ought to be some evidence that my course is onward and upward’” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 14, page 205).

On another occasion Young declared: “Now ask the Father in the name of Jesus whether I am telling you the truth about temporal things or not . . . the man whom God calls to dictate affairs in the building of his Zion has the right to dictate about everything connected with the building up of Zion, yes even to the ribbons the women wear, and any person who denies it is ignorant” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 11, page 298).

At one time relations became so strained in Brigham Young’s own family that he publicly threatened to set all his wives free if they did not submit to his authority:

> Now for my proposition; it is more particularly for my sisters, as it is frequently happening that women say they are unhappy. Men will say, “My wife, though a most excellent woman, has not seen a happy day since I took my second wife;” “No, not a happy day for a year,” says one; and another has not seen a happy day in five years . . .

> I wish my own women to understand that what I am going to say is for them as well as others . . . I am going to give you from this time to the 6th day of October next . . . then I am going to set every woman at liberty and say to them, Now go your way, my women with the rest, go your way. And my wives have got to do one of two things; either round up their shoulders to endure the afflictions of this world, and live their religion, or they may leave, for I will not have them about me. I will go into heaven alone, rather than have scratching and fighting around me. I will set all at liberty. “What, first wife too?” Yes, I will liberate you all . . . I want to go somewhere and do something to get rid of the whiners . . .

> I wish my women, and brother Kimball’s and brother Grant’s to leave, and every woman in this Territory, or else say in their hearts that they will embrace the Gospel . . . Tell the Gentiles that I will free every woman in this Territory at our next Conference. “What, the first wife too?” Yes . . . And then let the father be the head of the family, the master of his own household . . . let the wives and the children say amen to what he says, and be subject to his dictates . . .

> Let every man . . . say to your wives . . . if you stay with me you shall comply with the law of God, and that too without any murmuring and whining. You must . . . round up your shoulders to walk up to the mark with out any grunting.

Now recollect that two weeks from tomorrow I am going to set you at liberty. But the first wife will say, “It is hard, for I have lived with my husband twenty years, or thirty and have raised a family of children for him, and it is a great trial to me for him to have more women;” then I say it is time that you gave him up to other women who will bear children. If my wife had borne me all the children that she ever would bare, the celestial law would teach me to take young women that would have children . . . Sisters, I am not joking. I do not throw out my proposition to banter your feelings . . . But I know that there is no cessation to the everlasting whining of many of the women in this Territory . . . if the women will turn from the commandments of God and continue to despise the order of heaven, I will pray that the curse of the Almighty may be close to their heels, and that it may be following them all the day long . . .

Prepare yourselves for two weeks from tomorrow; and I will tell you now, that if you will marry with your husbands, after I have set you free, you must bow down to it, and submit yourselves to the celestial law . . . remember, that I will not hear any more of this whining. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 4, pages 55-57; also printed in the church’s newspaper, Deseret News, vol. 6, pages 235-236)

The reader will notice that Brigham Young spoke of the possibility that “brother Kimball’s” wives might leave him. Heber C. Kimball served as first counselor to President Brigham Young. Interestingly, Stanley B. Kimball, Heber C. Kimball’s great-great-grandson, stated that Heber, “had or was sealed to forty-three wives,” but he had to admit that “Sixteen wives separated from him during his lifetime for various reasons . . .” (Heber C. Kimball: Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer, page 307).

This, of course, is a real indictment against Joseph Smith’s doctrine regarding polygamy, a doctrine which was perpetuated by Brigham Young and his successors. It was secretly practiced until the early part of the twentieth century, which was many years after the so-called Manifesto.

Brigham Young claimed that after Joseph Smith’s death he “went to see Joseph” in a dream. Young said that he spoke with Joseph about the law of adoption (see “Manuscript History of Brigham Young,” February 23, 1847).

Hosea Stout heard Brigham Young tell of his experience and recorded the following in his diary:

> “I want you all to remember my dream for I [sic] it is a vision of God and was revealed through the spirit of Joseph.” (On the Mormon Frontier; The Diary of Hosea Stout, edited by Juanita Brooks, vol. 1, pages 237-238)

John D. Lee, who was a member of the secret Council of Fifty, noted in his journal that in a speech Brigham Young made it clear that obedience to the law of adoption was essential for those who would obtain salvation:

> I have gathered a number of families around me through the law of adoption and seal of the covenant according to the order of the priesthood and others have done likewise, it being the means of salvation to bring us back to God. (Journals of John D. Lee, 1846-47 and 1859, edited by Charles Kelley, pages 80-81)
A very shocking concept which was related to the law of adoption is found in Wilford Woodruff’s journal. Woodruff later became the fourth president of the church. Woodruff was at a meeting where Brigham Young and Apostle Orson Pratt addressed the people. Fortunately, he made a report of the proceedings. The following is recorded in his journal with the original spelling retained:

Many other interesting & important items were presented by President Young much to our edification. Meeting was dismissed & met again at 2 oclok & was addressed in a very edifying manner by O Pratt & treated upon the same principles spoken off by Br Young. Among his remarks He said that as all the ordinances of the gospel Administered by the world since the Aposticy of the Church was illegal, in like manner was the marriage Cerimony illegal and all the world who had been begotten through the illegal marriage were Bastards not sons & Hence they had to enter into the law of adoption & be adopted into the Priesthood in order to become sons & legal heirs of salvation. (Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, vol. 3, August 15, 1847, page 260)

By teaching that civil marriages were invalid the early Mormon Church leaders were opening up a door that would entice many of their people into adultery and polygamy. John D. Lee, who was the second man sealed to Brigham Young, gave more information on this subject:

About the same time the doctrine of “sealing” for an eternal state was introduced, and the Saints were given to understand that their marriage relations with each other were not valid. That those who had solemnized the rites of matrimony had no authority of God to do so. That the true priesthood was taken from the earth with the death of the Apostles and inspired men of God. That they were married to each other only by their own covenants, and that if their marriage relations had not been productive of blessings and peace, and they felt it oppressive to remain together, they were at liberty to make their own choice, as much as if they had not been married. That it was a sin for people to live together, and raise and beget children, in alienation from each other. (Confessions of John D. Lee, photomechanical reprint of the original 1877 edition, page 146)

On page 165 of the same book, Lee gave more information regarding this important issue:

In the Winter of 1845 meetings were held all over the city of Nauvoo, and the spirit of Elijah was taught in the different families as a foundation to the order of celestial marriage, as well as the law of adoption. Many families entered into covenants with each other—the man to stand by his wife and the woman to cleave unto her husband, and the children to be adopted to the parents. I was one of those who entered into covenants to stand by my family . . . to cleave to them through time and eternity. I am proud to say I have kept my obligations sacred and inviolate to this day. Others refused to enter into these obligations, but agreed to separate from each other, dividing their substance, and mutually dissolving their former relations on friendly terms. Some have mutually agreed to exchange wives and have been sealed to each other as husband and wife by virtue and authority of the holy priesthood. One of Brigham’s brothers, Lorenzo Young, now a bishop, made an exchange of wives with Mr. Decker . . . They both seemed happy in the exchange of wives. All are considered aliens to the commonwealth of Israel until adopted into the kingdom by baptism . . . This doctrine extends much further. All persons are required to be adopted to some of the leading men of the Church.

Although there were undoubtedly many Mormon men who truly felt they were doing God’s work when they were sealed to one or more of the brethren, the evidence clearly shows that the law of adoption was a very selfish doctrine. It was used by many as an opportunity to gain glory and power over others. According to Mormon doctrine, those who obtained many men would have greater kingdoms in the hereafter. They would not only have the men they were sealed to for all eternity, but they would also obtain the women and children of these men to rule over.

The following statements by the Mormon leaders are found in John D. Lee’s journal under the date of February 17, 1847:

. . . Dr. Richards (the Historian) addressed the collection. Said . . . One item that caught my attention was this thing of jealousy, fearing that some man is rising or gaining power and influence faster than what I am. Therefore jealousy will arise which causes an envious feelings in our bosom and we imagine that man is [electioneering] and using unlawful measures to gain an influence. . . . Elder G. A. Smith said he and Bro. Amasa Lyman have just returned from a mission . . . but he durst [not] say as Bro. Pratt and Woodruff has, that he had not lexierered, for I have with all my might . . . But there is one thing that I don’t like to see and that is this thing called jealousy stirring up family disturbances and broils because we are afraid that some man is gaining favor and I am not advancing as fast as they are. And in order to keep back or stop their influence we go to those that have been sealed and discourage them saying why diden’t [you] come with me where none but the respected are? Was you not as capable of holding the keys of presidency yourself as Bro. Lee . . . suppose I was to jump every man and be sealed to the great God and have 3 only sealed to me. I don’t think my kingdom would be very large or my glory very great. . . . I could get no more. I should be dependent on the exertion of those who were sealed to me. But was I sealed to the most obscure individual in this church and I had 10s of 10,000 sealed to me, would not my glory be greater than it would be was I sealed to headquarters with my 3 only? Certainly it would. . . . let jealousy stop and be united that we may speedily build up the kingdom of God on the earth, &c. (Journals of John D. Lee, February 17, 1847, pages 91-94)

Mormon historian Gordon Irving observed that the sealing of men to men did not work out very well:

Mormon leaders must have hoped that family life in adoption would bring their people together and enhance
the Church’s efforts to make a new life for the Mormon community in the West. . . . it could clearly be seen by the spring of 1848 that it had failed to produce the anticipated benefits.

Adoption might be good doctrine, but it had failed to work as a principle of social organization. With confusion at home and abroad, Church leaders saw fit to discontinue the effort to make the ties of adoption the basis of organization for the Mormon community. . . . Once Mormon leaders abandoned adoption as experiment, their publicly expressed interest both in the doctrine and the practice appears to have fallen off sharply for some time. Even so there are indications that adoption was not altogether forgotten by the general membership of the Church. Between 1849 and 1854 the ‘waiting list’ of those desiring to join Brigham Young’s family increased by 175 names. . . .

As time went on, Mormon leaders began again to preach adoption from the pulpit. Adoption into the family of God that one might be a legal heir to exaltation was still very much a part of Mormon doctrine. As unpleasant memories of the experiences of the 1840s faded, Brigham Young and others increasingly stressed the importance of adoption in Mormon theology. (Brigham Young University Studies, Spring 1974, pages 303-305)

DEATH OF THE DOCTRINE

Although the sealing of men to men who were not of their own lineage seemed to revive for a season, it eventually suffered a death blow. Charles Kelly, who edited the Journals of John D. Lee, wrote: “Like many other Mormon doctrines, it was but a passing fad, and is now ignored and forgotten” (see page 88, note 87). In 1894, Wilford Woodruff, the fourth president of the Mormon Church, publicly repudiated the doctrine of adoption and claimed that a man should be sealed to his own father. Woodruff stated that in the past some of his male friends had been sealed to him. He acknowledged, however, that he felt uneasy about the matter:

I have not felt satisfied, neither did President Taylor, neither has any man since the Prophet Joseph who has attended to the ordinance of adoption in the temples of our God. We have felt that there was more to be revealed. . . . Revelations were given to us in the St. George Temple, which President Young presented to the Church of God. Changes were made there, and we still have more changes to make . . . . We have felt, as President Taylor said, that we have got to have more revelation concerning sealing under the law of adoption. Well, what are these changes? One of them is the principle of adoption. In the commencement of adopting men and women in the temple at Nauvoo, a great many persons were adopted to different men who were not of the lineage of their fathers, and there was a spirit manifested by some in that work that was not of God. Men would go out and electioneer and labor with all their power to get men adopted to them. One instance I will name here: A man went around Nauvoo asking every man he could, “You come and be adopted to me, and I shall stand at the head of the kingdom, and you will be there with me.” . . .

Men are in danger sometimes in being adopted to others, until they know who they are and what they will be. . . . President Young was not satisfied in his mind with regard to the extent of this matter; President Taylor was not. When I went before the Lord to know who I should be adopted to . . . the Spirit of God said to me, “have you not a father, who begot you?” “Yes, I have.” “Then why not honor him?” “Yes,” says I, “that is right.” I was adopted to my father . . . I want every man who presides over a temple to see performed from this day henceforth and forever, unless the Lord Almighty commands otherwise, is, let every man be adopted to his father. When a man receives the endowments, adopt him to his father; not to Wilford Woodruff, nor to any other man outside the lineage of his people. . . . I have had friends adopted to me. We all have, more or less. But I have had peculiar feelings about it, especially lately. There are men in this congregation who wish to be adopted to me. I say to them to-day, if they can hear me, Go and be adopted to your fathers, and save your fathers . . . A man may say, “I am an Apostle . . . and if I am adopted to my father, will it take any honor from me?” I would say not. . . . You will lose nothing by honoring your fathers and redeeming your dead. (Millennial Star, vol. 56, pages 337-341)

On April 8, 1894, George Q. Cannon, a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, also repudiated the law of adoption:

. . . in the minds of many there has been a feeling of doubt in regard to the principle of adoption as has been practiced among us. . . . I well remember . . . the spirit that was manifested by many at the dedication of the temple at Nauvoo when the ordinances were administered there. Some men thought to build up kingdoms to themselves; they appeared to think that by inducing men and women to be adopted into their families they were adding to their own glory. From that day until the present, I have never thought of this subject of adoption without having a certain amount of fear concerning it. . . . There is no true principle of the Gospel that will produce division. . . . And this revelation that God has given to His servant, the President of our Church, removes all the danger which seemed to threaten us through an imperfect understanding of the manner in which the law of adoption should be carried out. . . .

Why should a man come to one of the Apostles and be sealed to him and then trace his genealogy through him and his ancestors, and neglect his own? (Millennial Star, vol. 56, pages 354-358)

It is apparent, then, that the law of adoption, which Brigham Young called “a great and glorious doctrine” and “the means of salvation left to bring us back to God,” was repudiated by later Mormon leaders. As noted above, President Wilford Woodruff publicly revealed that he had “peculiar feelings about it, especially lately.” George Q. Cannon proclaimed he had “a certain amount of fear concerning it.” He also used the phrases, “endless confusion” and “great confusion” when speaking of what could happen under this strange doctrine.

A comparison of Brigham Young’s teaching with that of Wilford Woodruff plainly shows that the early Mormon leaders
women were sealed to men

were not led by revelation. The Mormon prophet Brigham Young said:

... I will answer a question that has been repeatedly asked me... should I have a father dead that has never heard this gospel, would it be required of me to redeem him and then have him adopted into some man’s family and I be adopted to my father? (I ans. no.)... were we to wait to redeem our dead relatives before we could link the chains of the P.H. [i.e., the priesthood] we would never accomplish it. (Journals of John D. Lee, page 89)

Wilford Woodruff, the fourth president of the church, contradicted Brigham Young:

... let every man be adopted to his father. When a man receives the endowments, adopt him to his father; not to Wilford Woodruff, not to any other man outside the lineage of his fathers. That is the will of God to this people... I say let every man be adopted to his father... (Milennial Star, vol. 56, pages 337-341)

President Brigham Young claimed to have a revelation concerning the doctrine of sealing men to men. Wilford Woodruff, on the other hand, had a revelation to do away with the practice. Under the date of April 6, 1894, President Woodruff wrote that God had given him, “a Revelation which was received by my Councillors...” (Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, vol. 9, page 296).

The opening of that conference led to the demise of Brigham Young’s teachings concerning the sealing of men to men who were not of the same lineage. D. Michael Quinn wrote: “... Wilford Woodruff announces revelation which ends the practice of adopting men to LDS leaders... His published sermon is only available text of the revelation” (The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power, vol. 2, page 795).

The reader will remember that John Read wrote an interesting letter regarding President Brigham Young’s vision of some future time “when men would be sealed to men in the priesthood in a more solemn ordinance than that by which women were sealed to men, and in a room over that in which women were sealed to man in the temple of the Lord.”

Young’s dream for the church was shattered when President Woodruff received his revelation abolishing the sealing of men to men.

Gordon Irving made this observation regarding the doctrinal change:

President Woodruff was declaring publicly that not only should the Saints be sealed to their own parents but that henceforth they had to be sealed to them if they were to be sealed at all... The immediate response of the general Church membership appears to have been strongly favorable. The only real problem was what to do about the more than 13,000 souls, most of them dead, who had already been adopted to persons other than their natural parents. After some consideration the First Presidency and the Twelve ruled that these people should be sealed to their own parents but that the old records should be left standing. Any possible problems would be straitened out in the hereafter. (Brigham Young University Studies, Spring 1974, pages 312-313)

As we will show below, the practice of sealing men to men and of acquiring many families to rule over is not compatible with the teachings of Jesus. Unfortunately, the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith taught his people that men could become Gods and have their own worlds which they would rule over. In the Mormon publication, Times and Seasons, vol. 5, pages 613-614, Smith’s teachings are set forth:

First, God himself, who sits enthroned in yonder heavens, is a man like unto one of yourselves, that is the great secret... I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined that God was God from all eternity... God himself; the Father of us all dwelt on an earth the same as Jesus Christ himself did... You have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves... No man can learn you more than what I have told you.

Smith’s teachings regarding the plurality of Gods greatly excited many of the Mormon men. They could picture themselves as Gods having their own world which they could rule over. Moreover, Smith also declared that faithful Mormons could have many wives (see the church’s Doctrine and Covenants, Section 132, verses 1-4, 19-20, 34-35, 37-38, 39, 52, 60-62). In addition to all this, while the Mormons were still in Nauvoo they were informed of the sealing of men to men. It did not take long for a man to realize that through adoption he could obtain a large number of men, women and children who would become part of his kingdom and add to his eternal glory.

The doctrines which we have mentioned above obviously led to selfishness and pride. They are, in fact, diametrically opposed to the teachings of the Bible. For example, in Matthew 20:24-28 we read:

But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

In Matthew 23:10-12 we find this important admonition:

Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

It is clear from the Bible that Jesus taught humility rather than trying to build a kingdom for oneself. In Matthew 18:3-4 Jesus stated:
Salt Lake City Messenger

MORMON BLOOD ATONEMENT
Fact or Fantasy?

It is a well-known fact that the early Mormons suffered a good deal of persecution at the hands of the Gentiles—i.e., non-Mormons. The prophet Joseph Smith and his brother were murdered by a cowardly mob that took the law into their own hands. A number of Mormons lost their lives during these early years. Unfortunately, however, many Mormon historians have overlooked the other side of the story.

During the early years of Mormonism it was frequently alleged that the leaders of the church sanctioned the practice of putting both Gentiles and Mormon apostates to death. In 1969-70, we made a detailed study of the charges and published our conclusions in a book entitled, The Mormon Kingdom, vol. 2. The evidence that we marshalled convinced us that many of the claims were genuine. Since doing this research we found even more evidence to verify that there was a conspiracy to destroy dissenters and other people that the Mormon leaders hated.

While many Mormon scholars would like to scoff at those who have seriously studied this matter, there is incontrovertible proof that Brigham Young, the second prophet of the Mormon Church, publicly preached a doctrine called “blood atonement.” Although one might think that the name of this doctrine came from the atonement of Jesus on the cross, the truth of the matter is that it relates to people being put to death. Brigham Young explained this in a sermon given on September 21, 1856:

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

Now take a person in this congregation who has knowledge with regard to being saved . . . and suppose that he is overtaken in a gross fault, that he has committed a sin that he knows will deprive him of that exaltation which he desires, and that he cannot attain to it without the shedding his blood, and also knows that by having his blood shed he will atone for that sin, and be saved and exalted with the Gods, is there a man or woman in this house but what would say, “shed my blood that I may be saved and exalted with the Gods?”

All mankind love themselves, and let these principles be known by an individual, and he would be glad to have his blood shed. That would be loving themselves, even unto an eternal exaltation. Will you love your brothers and sisters likewise, when they have committed a sin that cannot be atoned for without the shedding of their blood? Will you love that man or woman well enough to shed their blood? That is what Jesus Christ meant . . .

I could refer you to plenty of instances where men have been righteously slain, in order to atone for their sins. I have seen scores and hundreds of people for whom there would have been a chance . . . if their lives had been taken and their blood spilled on the ground as a smoking incense to the Almighty, but who are now angels to the Devil . . . I have known a great many men who have left this Church for whom there is no chance whatever for exaltation, but if their blood had been spilled, it would have been better for them . . .

This is loving our neighbor as ourselves; if he needs help, help him; and if he wants salvation and it is necessary to spill his blood on the earth in order that he may be saved, spill it . . . if you have sinned a sin requiring the shedding of blood, except the sin unto death, would not be satisfied nor rest until your blood should be spilled, that you might gain that salvation you desire. That is the way to love mankind. (Sermon by President Brigham Young, delivered in the Mormon Tabernacle, February 8, 1857; printed in the Deseret News, February 18, 1857; also reprinted in the Journal of Discourses, vol. 4, pages 219-220)

These are only two of many “blood atonement” sermons preached by Mormon leaders. Sandra Tanner, one of the authors of this newsletter who is also the great-great-granddaughter of Brigham Young, was greatly shocked when she read Young’s sermons. This, in fact, was an important factor in her decision to leave the Mormon Church.

In 1958, Gustive O. Larson, Professor of Church History at the church’s Brigham Young University, acknowledged that blood atonement was actually practiced. He related the following:
To whatever extent the preaching on blood atonement may have influenced action, it would have been in relation to Mormon disciplinary action among its own members. In point would be a verbally reported case of a Mr. Johnson in Cedar City who was found guilty of adultery with his stepdaughter by a bishop’s court and sentenced to death for atonement of his sin. According to the report of reputable eyewitnesses, judgment was executed with consent of the offender who went to his unconfsecrated grave in full confidence of salvation through the shedding of his blood. Such a case, however primitive, is understandable within the meaning of the doctrine and the emotional extremes of the [Mormon] Reformation. (Utah Historical Quarterly, January, 1958, page 62, note 39)

This may be the same case spoken of by John D. Lee, who was sealed to Brigham Young and was a member of Young’s secret Council of Fifty:

The most deadly sin among the people was adultery, and many men were killed in Utah for the crime.

Rasmus Anderson was a Danish man who came to Utah . . . He had married a widow lady somewhat older than himself . . . At one of the meetings during the reformation Anderson and his step-daughter confessed that they had committed adultery . . . they were rebaptized and received into full membership. They were then placed under covenant that if they again committed adultery, Anderson should suffer death. Soon after this a charge was laid against Anderson before the Council, accusing him of adultery with his step-daughter. This Council was composed of Klingensmith and his two counselors; it was the Bishop’s Council. Without giving Anderson any chance to defend himself or make a statement, the Council voted that Anderson must die for violating his covenants. Klingensmith went to Anderson and notified him that the orders were that he must die by having his throat cut, so that the running of his blood would atone for his sins. Anderson, being a firm believer in the doctrines and teachings of the Mormon Church, made no objections . . . His wife was ordered to prepare a suit of clean clothing, in which to have her husband buried . . . she being directed to tell those who should inquire after her husband that he had gone to California.

Klingensmith, James Haslem, Daniel McFarland and John M. Higbee dug a grave in the field near Cedar City, and that night, about 12 o’clock, went to Anderson’s house and ordered him to make ready to obey Council. Anderson got up . . . and without a word of remonstrance accompanied those that he believed were carrying out the will of the “Almighty God.” They went to the place where the grave was prepared; Anderson knelt upon the side of the grave and prayed. Klingensmith and his company then cut Anderson’s throat from ear to ear and held him so that his blood ran into the grave.

As soon as he was dead they dressed him in his clean clothes, threw him into the grave and buried him. They then carried his bloody clothing back to his family, and gave them to his wife to wash . . . She obeyed their orders . . . Anderson was killed just before the Mountain Meadows massacre. The killing of Anderson was then considered a religious duty and a just act. It was justified by all the people, for they were bound by the same covenants, and the least word of objection to thus treating the man who had broken his covenant would have brought the same fate upon the person who was so foolish as to raise his voice against any act committed by order of the Church authorities. (Confessions of John D. Lee, Photo-reprint of 1877 edition, pages 282-283)

In the same book John D. Lee made this startling statement: “I knew of many men being killed in Nauvoo . . . and I know of many a man who was quietly put out of the way by the orders of Joseph and his Apostles while the Church was there” (Ibid., page 284). Lee also revealed another very cruel practice which took place both in Nauvoo, Illinois, and in early Utah:

In Utah it has been the custom with the Priesthood to make eunuchs of such men as were obnoxious to the leaders. This was done for a double purpose: first, it gave a perfect revenge, and next, it left the poor victim a living example to others of the dangers of disobeying counsel and not living as ordered by the Priesthood.

In Nauvoo it was the orders from Joseph Smith and his apostles to beat, wound and castrate all Gentiles that the police could take in the act of entering or leaving a Mormon household under circumstances that led to the belief that they had been there for immoral purposes. . . . In Utah it was the favorite revenge of old, worn-out members of the Priesthood, who wanted young women sealed to them, and found that the girl preferred some handsome young man. The old priests generally got the girls, and many a young man was unsexed for refusing to give up his sweetheart at the request of an old and failing, but still sensual apostle or member of the Priesthood. As an illustration . . . Warren Snow was Bishop of the Church at Manti, San Pete County, Utah. He had several wives, but there was a fair, buxom young woman in the town that Snow wanted for a wife. . . . She thanked him for the honor offered, but told him she was then engaged to a young man, a member of the Church, and consequently could not marry the old priest. . . . He told her it was the will of God that she should marry him, and she must do so; that the young man could be got rid of, sent on a mission or dealt with in some way . . . that, in fact, a promise made to the young man was not binding, when she was informed that it was contrary to the wishes of the authorities.

The girl continued obstinate. . . . the authorities called on the young man and directed him to give up the young woman. This he steadfastly refused to do . . . He remained true to his intended, and said he would die before he would surrender his intended wife to the embraces of another. . . . The young man was ordered to go on a mission to some distant locality . . . But the mission was refused . . .

It was then determined that the rebellious young man must be forced by harsh treatment to respect the advice and orders of the Priesthood. His fate was left to Bishop Snow for his decision. He decided that the young man should be castrated; Snow saying, “When that is done, he will not be liable to want the girl badly, and she will listen to reason when she knows that her lover is no longer a man.”
It was then decided to call a meeting of the people who lived true to counsel, which was held in the schoolhouse in Manti . . . The young man was there, and was again requested, ordered and threatened, to get him to surrender the young woman to Snow, but true to his pledged troth, he refused to consent to give up the girl. The lights were then put out. An attack was made on the young man. He was severely beaten, and then tied with his back down on a bench, when Bishop Snow took a bowie-knife, and performed the operation in a most brutal manner, and then took the portion severed from his victim and hung it up in the school-house on a nail, so that it could be seen by all who visited the house afterwards.

The party then left the young man weltering in his blood, and in a lifeless condition. During the night he succeeded in releasing himself from his confinement, and dragged himself to some hay-stacks, where he lay until the next day, when he was discovered by his friends. The young man regained his health, but has been an idiot or quite lunatic ever since. . . .

After this outrage old Bishop Snow took occasion to get up a meeting . . . When all had assembled, the old man talked to the people about their duty to the Church, and their duty to obey counsel, and the dangers of refusal, and then publicly called attention to the mangled parts of the young man, that had been severed from his person, and stated that the deed had been done to teach the people that the counsel of the Priesthood must be obeyed. To make a long story short, I will say, the young woman was soon after forced into being sealed to Bishop Snow.

**Brigham Young . . . did nothing against Snow.** He left him in charge as Bishop at Manti, and ordered the matter to be hushed up. (Ibid., pages 284-286)

Mormons today would be appalled if such a dastardly deed was committed and would demand that the persons responsible be severely punished. Brigham Young, however, approved of many violent acts perpetrated by those he put in authority. Interestingly, D. Michael Quinn found documented evidence showing that President Young supported Bishop Warren S. Snow’s cruel mistreatment of the young man:

In the midsummer of 1857 Brigham Young also expressed approval for an LDS bishop who had castrated a man. In May 1857 Bishop Warren S. Snow’s counselor wrote that twenty-four-year-old Thomas Lewis “has now gone crazy” after being castrated by Bishop Snow for an undisclosed sex crime. When informed of Snow’s action, Young said: “I feel to sustain him . . .” In July Brigham Young wrote a reassuring letter to the bishop about this castration: “Just let the matter drop, and say no more about it,” the LDS president advised, “and it will soon die away among the people.” (The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power, vol. 2, pages 250-251)

On November 30, 1871, T. B. H. Stenhouse received a letter by an individual who was present at a meeting in Provo, Utah. The letter indicated that Bishop Blackburn was also strongly pushing for the emasculation of men who were disobedient to their leaders:

> “Dear Stenhouse: I have read carefully the accompanying statement about the ‘Reformation.’ . . . If you want to travel wider and show the effect in the country of the inflammatory speeches delivered in Salt Lake City at that time, you can mention the Potter and Parrish murders at Springville, the barbarous castration of a young man in San Pete, and, to cap the climax, the Mountain-Meadows massacre . . . Threats of personal violence or death were common in the settlements against all who dared to speak against the priesthood, or in any way protest against this ‘reign of terror.’

> “I was at a Sunday meeting in the spring of 1857, in Provo, when the news of the San Pete castration was referred to by the presiding bishop—Blackburn. Some men in Provo had rebelled against authority in some trivial matter, and Blackburn shouted in his Sunday meeting—a mixed congregation of all ages and both sexes—‘I want the people of Provo to understand that the boys in Provo can use the knife as well as the boys in San Pete. Boys, get your knives ready, there is work for you! We must not be behind San Pete in good works.’ The result of this was that two citizens, named Hooper and Beavere, both having families at Provo, left the following night . . . Their only offence was rebellion against the priesthood.

> “This man, Blackburn, was continued in office at least a year after this . . .

> “The qualifications for a bishop were a blind submission and obedience to Brigham and the authorities, and a firm, unrelented government of his subjects.” (Rocky Mountain Saints, by T. B. H. Stenhouse, 1873, pages 301-302)

This is a very important letter because it throws additional light upon President Brigham Young’s knowledge regarding emasculation in early Utah. According to Wilford Woodruff’s journal, not long after Warren S. Snow’s cowardly attack on Thomas Lewis, President Young discussed the matter of castration being used to save people:

I then went into the president office & spent the evening. Bishop Blackburn was present. The subject came up of some persons leaving Provo who had apostatized. Some thought that Bishop Blackburn & President Snow was to blame. Brother Joseph Young presented the thing to President Young. But when the circumstances were told President Brigham Young sustained the Brethren who presided at Provo. . . .

> The subjects of Eunuchs came up . . . Brigham Said the day would come when thousands would be made Eunuchs in order for them to be saved in the kingdom of God. (Wilford Woodruff’s Diary, June 2, 1857, vol. 5, pages 54-55)

> In 1861, Apostle Orson Hyde met with Wilford Woodruff and indicated that he believed Warren Snow was guilty of stealing. Wilford Woodruff wrote the following in his journal:

> He spoke of his mission in Sanpete and the unwise course of Bishop Warren Snow, & George Pecock his first councillor. They have squandered a large amount of tithing funds, County taxes &c & Brother Hyde thinks from Testimony guilty of stealing many cattle. (Ibid., vol. 5, page 554)
It is astounding to think that the prophet of the Mormon Church would allow such a man as Warren Snow to function as a bishop in the church. Unfortunately, however, President Young went so far as to give him a special blessing. Wilford Woodruff recorded the following in his journal under the date of April 1, 1861: “Warren Stone Snow was Blessed By President Young who gave him a very good Blessing” (Ibid., page 571). Moreover, in 1867, he was given the opportunity to preach in the Mormon Tabernacle (see vol. 6, page 319).

In a public discourse President Young acknowledged that the church had use for some very mean devils who resided in early Utah:

And if the Gentiles wish to see a few tricks, we have “Mormons” that can perform them. We have the meanest devils on the earth in our midst, and we intend to keep them, for we have use for them; and if the Devil does not look sharp, we will cheat him out of them at the last, for they will reform and go to heaven with us. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 6, page 176)

Orrin Porter Rockwell was certainly one of Brigham Young’s “meanest devils.” Rockwell, who had served as a bodyguard for Joseph Smith, did not hesitate to shed blood. The reader will find a photograph of Rockwell on the first page of this newsletter. Bill Hickman was another ruthless man who killed many people. In his book Brigham’s Destroying Angel, Hickman confessed that he had committed murders for the church.

In 1858, an extremely grotesque double murder was committed. Henry Jones and his mother were both put to death. These murders were obviously the direct result of Brigham Young’s doctrine of “blood atonement.”

Two months before Henry Jones was actually murdered, he was viciously attacked. Hosea Stout, a very dedicated Mormon defender, wrote the following regarding the first attack on Jones:

Saturday 27 Feb 1858. This evening several persons disguised as Indians entered Henry Jones’ house and dragged him out of bed with a whore and castrated him by a square & close amputation. (On the Mormon Frontier; The Diary of Hosea Stout, vol. 2, page 653)

One would think that this would have ended the vendetta against Jones. Unfortunately, this was not the case. On April 19, 1859, the newspaper Valley Tan printed an affidavit by Nathaniel Case which contained a statement implicating a bishop and other Mormons who lived in Payson:

Nathaniel Case being sworn, says: that he has resided in the Territory of Utah since the year 1850; lived with Bishop Hancock (Charles Hancock) in the town of Payson, at the time Henry Jones and his mother were murdered . . . . The night prior to the murder a secret council meeting was held in the upper room of Bishop Hancock’s house; saw Charles Hancock, George W. Hancock, Daniel Rawson, James Bracken, George Patten and Price Nelson go into that meeting that night. . . . About 8 o’clock in the evening of the murder the company gathered at Bishop Hancock’s . . . . They said they were going to guard a corral where Henry Jones was going to come that night and steal horses; they had guns.

I had a good mini rifle and Bishop Hancock wanted to borrow it; I refused to lend it to him. The above persons all went away together . . . . Next morning I heard that Henry Jones and his mother had been killed. I went [sic] down to the dig-out where they lived . . . . The old woman was laying on the ground in the dug-out on a little straw, in the clothes in which she was killed. She had a bullet hole through her head . . . . In about 15 or 20 minutes Henry Jones was brought there and laid by her side; they then threw some old bed clothes over them and an old feather bed and then pulled the dig-out on top of them. . . . The next Sunday after the murder, in a church meeting in Payson, Charles Hancock, the bishop, said, as to the killing of Jones and his mother he cared nothing about it, and it would have been done in daylight if circumstances would have permitted it.—This was said from the stand; there were 150 or 200 persons present. He gave no reason for killing them. And further saith not. Nathaniel Case.

Sworn to and signed before me this 9th day of April, 1859.

John Cradlebaugh,
Judge 2nd Judicial District.

Those who murdered Henry Jones and his mother may have remembered President Brigham Young’s sermon which was delivered just two years prior to these murders: “Suppose you found your brother in bed with your wife, and put a javelin through both of them, you would be justified, and they would atone for their sins, and be received into the kingdom of God. I would at once do so in such a case; under such circumstances, I have no wife whom I love so well that I would not put a javelin through her heart, and I would do it with clean hands” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 3, page 247).

In his book, The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power, vol. 2, pages 241-261, Dr. Quinn presented compelling evidence showing that “blood atonement” was endorsed by church leaders and actually practiced by the Mormon people. Quinn gave the names of a number of violent men who served as “enforcers” for Brigham Young. In addition Quinn wrote:

During this period Brigham Young and other Mormon leaders also repeatedly preached about specific sins for which it was necessary to shed the blood of men and women. Blood-atonement sins included adultery, apostasy, “covenant breaking,” counterfeiting, “many men who left this Church,” murder, not being “heartily on the Lord’s side,” profaning “the name of the Lord,” sexual intercourse between a “white” person and an African-American, stealing, and telling lies. . . . Some LDS historians have claimed that blood-atonement sermons were simply Brigham Young’s use of ‘rhetorical devices designed to frighten wayward individuals into conformity with Latter-day Saint principles’ and to bluff anti-Mormons. Writers often describe these sermons as limited to the religious enthusiasm and frenzy of the Utah Reformation up to 1857. The first problem with such explanations is that official LDS sources show that as early as 1843 Joseph Smith and his counselor Sidney Rigdon advocated decapitation or throat-cutting as punishment for various crimes and sins.
Moreover, a decade before Utah’s reformation, Brigham Young’s private instructions show that he fully expected his trusted associates to kill various persons for violating religious obligations. The LDS church’s official history still quotes Young’s words to “the brethren” in February 1846: “I should be perfectly willing to see thieves have their throats cut.” The following December he instructed bishops, “when a man is found to be a thief, he will be a thief no longer, cut his throat, & thro’ him in the River,” and Young did not instruct them to ask his permission. A week later the church president explained to a Winter Quarters meeting that cutting off the heads of repeated sinners “is the law of God & it shall be executed . . .” A rephrase of Young’s words later appeared in Hosea Stout’s reference to a specific sinner, “to cut him off—behind the ears—according to the law of God in such cases.” . . .

When informed that a black Mormon in Massachusetts had married a white woman, Brigham Young told the apostles in December 1847 that he would have both of them killed “if they were far away from the Gentiles.” (The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power, vol. 2, pages 246-247)

While we do not have room for extensively quotations from Quinn’s book, the following are some extracts:

In September 1857 Apostle George A. Smith told a Salt Lake City congregation that Mormons at Parowan in southern Utah “wish that their enemies might come and give them a chance to fight and take vengeance for the cruelties that had been inflicted upon us in the States.” Smith had just returned from southern Utah where he had encouraged such feelings by preaching fiery sermons about resisting the U.S. army and taking vengeance on anti-Mormons. Just days before his talk in Salt Lake City, members of Parowan’s Mormon militia participated in killing 120 men, women, and children in the Mountain Meadows Massacre . . .

Although most accounts claimed that the militia killed only the adult males and let their Indian allies kill the women and children, perpetrator Nephi Johnson later told an LDS apostle that “white men did most of the killing.” Perpetrator George W. Adair also told another apostle that “John Higbee gave the order to kill the women and children,” and Adair “saw the women’s and children’s throats cut.” . . .

As late as 1868 the Deseret News encouraged rank-and-file Mormons to kill anyone who engaged in sexual relations outside marriage . . .

Under such circumstances the Mormon hierarchy bore full responsibility for the violent acts of zealous Mormon[s] who accepted their instructions literally and carried out various forms of blood atonement. “Obviously there were those who could not easily make a distinction between rhetoric and reality,” a BYU religion professor has written. . . . It is unrealistic to assume that faithful Mormons all declined to act on such repeated instructions in pioneer Utah . . . . Neither is it reasonable to assume that the known cases of blood atonement even approximated the total number that occurred in the first twenty years after Mormon settlement in Utah . . . . LDS leaders publicly and privately encouraged Mormons to consider it their religious right to kill antagonistic outsiders, common criminals, LDS apostates, and even faithful Mormons who committed sins “worthy of death.” (The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power, vol. 2, pages 251-53, 56-57, 60)

On pages 804-805, of the same book, Quinn reported concerning a murder committed in 1902:

5 Apr., “Clyde Felt has confessed to cutting the throat of old man Collins, at his request. The old man was a moral degenerate. The boy is a son of David P. Felt.” Grandson of former general authority, Clyde Felt is fourteen. Despite this blood atonement murder, LDS leaders allow [the] young man to be endowed and married in temple eight years later.

Although we cannot be certain, this may be the last known case of “blood atonement” committed by Mormons. It should be noted, however, that at least two groups (the LeBarons and the Laffertys) broke off from the Mormon Church and still hold to Brigham Young’s teaching of “blood atonement.” Consequently, they committed a significant number of “blood atonement” murders between 1972 and 1988.

While Dr. Quinn’s book, The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power, vol. 2, presents plenty of evidence to establish the fact that “blood atonement” murders were committed by the early Mormons, Quinn did not have the space to deal at great length with this important issue. To compliment Quinn’s excellent work we highly recommend our book, The Mormon Kingdom, vol. 2. In this book we have actual photographs from the church’s Deseret News confirming that church leaders strongly supported the doctrine of “blood atonement.” While the regular price for this book is $4.95, a free copy will be sent with every order of $25.00 or more (see first page of this newsletter).

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS

“You have given me so much help in leaving Mormonism behind in my life & the lives of my two children. Thank you so much for your work.” (Letter from Louisiana)

“It’s been about fifteen years since we found your book, [Mormonism:] Shadow or Reality, and began the journey to come to grips with what Mormonism actually is. But even more importantly we came also to grips, by the grace of God, with the truth of His Word in scripture and in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ . . . . Keep up the good work Sandra, and thank Jerald for us and for countless others like ourselves who see you both as keys in the hand of God to the opening of a doorway of truth and understanding that otherwise might never have been as available as your efforts have made it.” (Letter from Arizona)

“The work you and your husband have done on Shadow [Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?] is amazing. My . . . Mormon husband has read parts and is busy figuring out ways to share information with Mormons in our vicinity. I owe you and Jerald a debt of gratitude. I never thought my husband would see the obvious things that I saw. However, the meticulous researching
and presentation of this book leaves no option but to study the contents. Your cross referencing and use of source documents, together with photocopies of original material has made this invaluable. My husband is going to share the section on polygamy with his Mother. Thank-you once again—your book is truly a Marvelous Work and a Wonder.” (Letter from Australia)

A RESPONSE TO FOSTER

In our last newsletter we included a statement by Dr. Lawrence Foster criticizing our work. Foster claimed that we were deliberately trying to avoid an interview with him. Nothing could be further from the truth. We were actually looking forward to meeting with him. Unfortunately, in his response to us in the last newsletter, Foster continued to state that we were afraid to meet with him. He went so far as to claim that H. Michael Marquardt told him that “you were uneasy about meeting with me and had not yet decided whether or not you would agree to an interview.”

When we asked Mr. Marquardt about this matter, he replied that this assertion was not true and authorized us to print the following: “I never told Foster that the Tanners were uneasy about meeting with him.”

In the May 1996 issue of the Messenger we spoke of Foster’s hypothesis that Joseph Smith may have been mentally ill. While we certainly have no strong objections to Foster’s idea, we know that it is very offensive to Mormons. Unfortunately, it now appears that Foster wants to sugarcoat his statements about Joseph Smith’s mental state. In his rebuttal to us he states: “Similarly my analysis of the complex sources of Joseph Smith’s genius (Dialogue, Winter 1993) never refers to him as ‘mentally ill’ but instead stresses the complex psychological dynamics that may have contributed to his exceptional creativity.” This statement gives the impression that we misrepresented Foster’s position. While it may be true that Foster did not use the specific words “mentally ill” in his article, he very strongly implied that Joseph Smith had a serious mental problem. Foster’s hypothesis is that Smith suffered from manic-depression, which is certainly a form of mental illness. In his article in Dialogue Foster wrote:

In no area were Joseph Smith’s manic qualities more evident than in his efforts to introduce and practice polygamy during the last three years of his life. The point at which Joseph Smith began systematically to introduce polygamy to his closest associates has strong suggestions of mania. . . . his subsequent surge of activity [sic] with the sixteen or more women with whom he appears to have sustained sexual relations as plural wives . . . is even more suggestive of the hypersexuality that often accompanies manic periods. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Winter, 1993, pages 4, 7,9-13)

Foster’s statement that, “In no area were Joseph Smith’s manic qualities more evident than in his efforts to introduce and practice polygamy” does not fit well with his watered-down statement in his rebuttal to us.

SEXUAL ABUSE UPDATE

In the November 1996 issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger we reported that Cherese Franklin was awarded $750,000 in damages in a sexual abuse case involving repressed memories. On appeal this case was overturned by a judge in Salt Lake City.

In our last newsletter we discussed the problem of child sexual abuse committed by bishops and other important leaders in the Mormon Church. Recently we received another letter from a woman reporting that she was abused by her father: “Some of your research is being sent to a related attorney regarding the Beckly W. VA. [case] Sad! My bishop father sexually abused me. I know about the damage.”

Significantly, two other cases of sexual abuse involving prominent Mormons have recently come to light.

1 — Lloyd Gerald Pond, 51, was originally charged with two counts of forcible sodomy on a 14-year-old girl he met at a Mormon ward. Pond was employed by the Mormon Church’s public-relations department and “hosted a weekly nationwide radio program that promoted Mormon values . . .” (Salt Lake Tribune, Feb. 4, 1997). Many people were publicly complaining that Pond would only get a slap on the wrist because he was a well-known Mormon. Fortunately, this turned out not to be the case. The Tribune reported: “Ignoring recommendations for probation, a 3rd District judge sent confessed child sex abuser Lloyd Gerald Pond to prison for up to 15 years.” Ironically, Pond’s radio work for the church included warnings “about the evils of child abuse and pornography . . .” (Ibid., Nov. 16, 1996).

2 — The Idaho Falls Post Register reported the following on November 13, 1996:

A former state senator [Rex Furness] will be spending the next two months in jail for sexually battering his teenage granddaughter. . . . Furness will serve 60 days in the county jail, starting next week, and seven years probation. . . .

He was also very active in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, holding various titles, including bishop until he confessed the acts to his church and surrendered his temple recommend.

What he did not say in court was that the charge against him forced him to resign from the state senate.

Utah Lighthouse Ministry is a non-profit organization. In addition to our work with Mormons, we provide support for 44 children through World Vision, and furnish some help to a local Rescue Mission. Those who are concerned about helping this ministry can send their tax-deductible contributions to Utah Lighthouse Ministry, PO Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110. Both contributions and order can be made over the phone (801-485-8894 or 801-485-0312) with Visa, MasterCard or Discover Card.

While we deeply appreciate the financial support that we receive, we strongly desire your prayers. We believe they will bring thousands of Mormons to the truth. As Apostle Paul admonished: “Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving” (Colossians 4:2).
BOOKS AND TAPES
(Mail order add 10% — Minimum postage $1.50)

The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power, (vol. 2) by D. Michael Quinn. Reg. $45.00 — Special Price: $39.00

The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power, (vol. 1), by D. Michael Quinn. Reg. price is $29.95 — Special Price: $28.00

Sandra Tanner Tape No. 4. Two talks given at the Christian Institute for Mormon Studies entitled “Struggles of Leaving Mormonism” and “Obstacles to Leaving Mormonism.” Price: $3.00

Quest for the Gold Plates — Thomas Stuart Ferguson’s Archaeological Search for the Book of Mormon, by Stan Larson. Now in paperback. Price: $13.00

Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Mormons, by Ron Rhodes and Marian Bodine. Price: $11.00

The Prophet Motive: Examining the Reliability of Biblical Prophets, by Kenny Barfield. Price: $13.00

Mormonism: Changes, Contradictions and Errors, by John Farkas and David Reed. Price: $11.00

Early Mormon Documents, vol. 1, edited by Dan Vogel. Over 450 documents relating to Mormon origins. Includes writings of Emma Hale Smith, Lucy Mack Smith, Katherine Smith, Joseph Smith, Sr., William Smith, Joseph Smith, Jr. Special Price: $32.00

Orrin Porter Rockwell: Man of God / Son of Thunder, by Harold Schindler. Price: $20.00

John Doyle Lee — Zealot, Pioneer Builder, Scapegoat, by Juanita Brooks. Price: $15.00

MANY MORE BOOKS

We have many other books which are not listed in this issue of the Messenger. A complete book list will be sent free upon request by writing to us at: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, PO Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110.

UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY
PO BOX 1884
SALT LAKE CITY UT  84110
THE MORMON PUZZLE
A New Video About Mormonism

We are very happy to announce that a new video regarding Mormonism is now available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry. This video was prepared by the Southern Baptist Church, an organization that has over 15 million members.

Although those involved in the production of this video do not agree with Mormonism, they have been very tactful in their approach to the subject. Moreover, Brigham Young University professors and other members of the Mormon Church were given an opportunity to give their side of the story.

Southern Baptists are taking this matter very seriously. We have recently learned that 40,000 copies of the video will be distributed to their pastors. This video will also be distributed to many different parts of the world. We have been informed that it will be translated into six or eight different languages. While the video was produced by the Interfaith Witness Division of the Southern Baptist Convention’s North American Mission Board, it does not stress the Southern Baptist faith. It is, in fact, a video that can be profitably used by almost all evangelical Christians who wish to know the truth about Mormonism.

A FIRST CLASS PRODUCTION

Although she is not a Southern Baptist, Sandra Tanner, one of the editors of this newsletter, was asked to help with the project. Sandra spent a great deal of time assisting those involved in the production. Some of the scenes, in fact, were filmed at Utah Lighthouse Ministry.

Interestingly, Peter Scarlet, a reporter for the Salt Lake Tribune, made a thorough review of the video. We quote the following from his articles:

Are Mormons Christians? That is the central question of a 70-minute video prepared for the Southern Baptist Convention, which will hold its 1998 annual meeting in Salt Lake City.

The question is answered, although not neatly. It could do no more. Any answer depends on how “Christian” is defined.

Southern Baptists and evangelical Christians conclude that Mormons are not because their theology about God, Jesus Christ and salvation differs from that of historical, biblical Christianity with its monotheistic deity.

SOME SPECIAL OFFERS

Offers Good Until January 31, 1998
(Mail orders add 10% — Minimum postage $1.50)

THE MORMON PUZZLE
An Excellent Video About Mormonism
Regular Price – $20.00
OUR SPECIAL PRICE – ONLY $18.00

With every order of $25.00 or more we will send a free copy of the book, Flaws in the Pearl of Great Price, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. This is a study of changes and plagiarism in Joseph Smith’s work known as the Pearl of Great Price (one of the four standard works of the Mormon Church). The regular price is $6.00.

NOTICE: You must tell us if you want the free book.
Conversely, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints portrayed in the video conclude that they are Christians because they believe that Jesus Christ is the head of the church that bears his name. . . .

Some recent videos about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints . . . have used sensationalism to paint a vituperative picture of the church.

“The Mormon Puzzle” is quite different . . . Southern Baptists and evangelical Christians explain how Mormon views differ from historical Christianity. . . . The video message is that Mormons, like the unchurched or others need to hear the gospel and gain the personal relationship with Jesus Christ that most evangelical Christians believe is necessary for salvation.

The LDS Church clearly cooperated in the making of the video. Southern Baptist film crews were given access to Temple Square, where they shot footage of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir . . . they interviewed Brigham Young University faculty, missionaries and the mission president in the church’s Georgia Atlanta Mission. . . .

LDS Church spokesman Don LeFevre declined to comment about the church’s role in the video. But others were less reticent. (Salt Lake Tribune, July 5, 1997)

Some members of the Mormon Church have become concerned that so many Southern Baptists will be coming to Utah in 1998. In a recent call-in show on the Mormon Church’s radio station (KSL) a devout Mormon, who previously lived in the South was very concerned that some members of the Mormon Church would be unable to cope with the arguments used by the Baptists.

In the same issue of the Tribune cited above, Peter Scarlet reported:

When it comes to witnessing one’s faith to others, turnabout is fair play. . . .

For generations The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has sent proselytizing missionaries throughout the world to win converts to the faith.

The Rev. Mike Gray, pastor of Salt Lake City’s 1,200-member Southeast Baptist Church, is quick to point out the distinction between proselytizing and evangelism.

“Our objective is not to take people from one church and into another, but to share Jesus and urge people to enter into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ,” he said. “You don’t have to be Southern Baptist to come into Jesus.” . . .

From Gray’s perspective, it was LDS Church founder Joseph Smith who spurned the Christian label during his account of what Mormons call the First Vision.

In it, God and Jesus Christ are said to have appeared to the 14-year-old Smith and told him not to join any church because they all were wrong; that their creeds were an abomination; and that their people were corrupt.

“What the LDS doctrine system has done is criticize all other evangelical churches and put us on the outside,” Gray said. “His first vision was a personal attack on all of the Christians of his day. It’s an affront to all of us who are Christian.”

Nonetheless, he said next year’s convention will not be a forum for Mormon bashing.

“The whole spirit of what we’re trying to do will be very positive,” Gray said. “This is not a Mormon thing, but Southern Baptists coming in for a meeting and to share Jesus with the people while we’re here.” (Salt Lake Tribune, July 5, 1997)

TIME LOOKS AT MORMONS

The August 4, 1997, issue of Time magazine devoted 10 pages to an examination of the Mormon Church. The outside cover of the magazine shows a beautiful picture of the Salt Lake City Temple and carries this intriguing headline: MORMONS, INC. The Secrets of America’s Most Prosperous Religion.

Because of the interest that many had in the subject, copies of Time were very hard to obtain in Salt Lake City. Some Mormons who were fortunate enough to find copies were distressed with some of the observations found in the magazine. On the other hand, however, many Mormons were happy that the church received so much publicity.

The portion of the magazine relating to financial matters was upsetting to many Mormons. The following appeared in Time:

The church’s material triumphs rival even its evangelical advances. With unusual cooperation from the Latter-day Saints hierarchy (which provided some financial figures and a rare look at church businesses), Time has been able to quantify the church’s extraordinary financial vibrancy. Its current assets total a minimum of $30 billion. If it were a corporation, its estimated $5.9 billion in annual gross income would place it midway through the FORTUNE 500, a little below Union Carbide and the Paine Webber Group but bigger than Nike and the Gap. And as long as corporate rankings are being bandied about, the church would make any list of the most admired: for straight dealing, company spirit, contributions to charity (even the non-Mormon kind) and a fiscal probity among its powerful leaders that would satisfy any shareholder group, if there were one.

Yet the Latter-day Saints remain sensitive about their “otherness”—more so, in fact, than most outsiders can imagine. . . .

THE TOP BEEF RANCH IN THE WORLD IS NOT the King Ranch in Texas. It is the Deseret Cattle & Citrus Ranch outside Ireland, Fla. It covers 312,000 acres; its value as real estate alone is estimated at $858 million. It is owned entirely by the Mormons. The largest producer of nuts in America, AgReserves, Inc., in Salt Lake City, is Mormon-owned. So are the Bonneville International Corp., the country’s 14th largest radio chain, and the Beneficial Life Insurance Co., with assets of $1.6 billion. There are richer churches than the one based in Salt Lake City:
Roman Catholic holdings dwarf Mormon wealth. But the Catholic Church has 45 times as many members. There is no major church in the U.S. as active as the Latter-day Saints in economic life, nor, per capita, as successful at it. . . . Last year 5.2 billion in tithes flowed into Salt Lake City, $4.9 billion of which came from American Mormons. . . .

The Mormons are stewards of a different stripe. Their charitable spending and temple buildings are prodigious. But where other churches spend most of what they receive in a given year, the Latter-day Saints employ vast amounts of money in investments that *Time* estimates to be at least $6 billion strong. Even more unusual, most of this money is not in bonds or stock in other peoples’ companies but is invested directly in church-owned, for-profit concerns, the largest of which are agribusiness, media, insurance, travel and real estate. Deseret Management Corp., the company through which the church holds almost all its commercial assets, is one of the largest owners of farm- and ranchland in the country, including 49 for-profit parcels in addition to the Deseret Ranch. Besides the Bonneville International chain and Beneficial Life, the church owns a 52% holding in ZCMI, Utah’s largest department-store chain. . . . All told, *Time* estimates that the Latter-day Saints farmland and financial investments total some $11 billion, and that the church’s non-tithe income from its investments exceeds $600 million. (*Time*, pages 52-53)

On page 54 of the *Time* article, we find the following: “The Hotel Temple Square Co. owns much of the real estate around the headquarters in downtown Salt Lake City. Their Polynesian Cultural Center is Hawaii’s No. 1 paid visitor attraction, with annual revenues of at least $40 million. Other holdings include 11,571 meetinghouses and 50 temples around the world.”


The article also notes that the church has colleges: “B.Y.U. in Provo, Hawaii and Jerusalem, L.D.S. Business and Ricks in Idaho.”

The Mormon Church claimed that *Time* magazine exaggerated its financial worth. Not surprisingly, however, the church did not divulge what its assets really amount to. Unlike many other churches, the LDS Church refuses to give a financial statement to its members.

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**MORMON DOCTRINE ALTERED**

Unfortunately, most members of the Mormon Church are completely oblivious to the serious changes that have been made by church leaders since the days of the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith.

Dr. Hugh Nibley is proclaimed by many to be one of the greatest defenders the Mormon Church has ever known. Nibley once made this fantastic claim regarding Mormonism: “Yet of all churches in the world only this one has not found it necessary to readjust any part of its doctrine in the last hundred years” (*No, Ma’am, That’s Not History*, page 46). Nibley originally printed this statement in 1946, and as far as we know, he has never repudiated this false assertion.

A careful examination of the evidence reveals that Nibley was absolutely incorrect. For example, in the last issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger* (April 1997) we demonstrated that church leaders changed the law of adoption in 1894. Prior to that time the Mormons sealed living men as adopted sons to other men in an unusual ceremony known as “the law of adoption.” In this way a man could greatly increase his family and kingdom, making himself a more powerful God in the hereafter.

Both the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith and his successor, Brigham Young, gave strong support to this strange doctrine. Both of them had many men adopted to them in a sacred ceremony. They were, in fact, absolutely convinced that they would have these men in their own kingdoms on other planets. Some of the men who entered into this covenant even added the last names of those who adopted them onto the end of their own surnames.

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**UTAH LIGHTHOUSE ON THE INTERNET**

For some time we have wanted to have our own web site so that we can send our message throughout the world. Fortunately, we have recently received a great deal of help and it appears that the dream will soon become a reality. Our readers can visit our web site at:

www.utlm.org

We hope that many people will take advantage of this opportunity and will others about our new site. Although Moody Press originally held the copyright on our book, *The Changing World of Mormonism*, they have been kind enough to allow us to make it available on our own web site. We hope to be able to present a great deal of material in the months that follow.

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**THE BEACON**

A Monthly Support Group
For those Leaving or Questioning Mormonism
2nd Sunday of the Month
7:00 p.m.
Utah Lighthouse Ministry
1358 S. West Temple, SLC

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**LDS CLAIMS**

Under the Search Light
Recorded Message (801) 485-4262
(Message is three to five minutes)
As we noted in our last newsletter, Wilford Woodruff, who became the fourth president of the church, was deeply involved in this practice. He wrote the following in his journal: “I officiated in Adopting 96 Men to Men.” (Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 1833-1898, typescript, 1985, vol. 9, page 408)

Unfortunately for those like Nibley who believe that Mormonism has never changed its doctrines, the evidence clearly shows that the law of adoption was repudiated by the leaders of the church. Ironically, it was President Wilford Woodruff, who had been deeply involved in sealing men to men, who finally squelched the practice of adoption.

Although President Brigham Young called the law of adoption “a great and glorious doctrine” and “the means of salvation left to bring us back to God,” President Woodruff repudiated the practice! He taught instead that men should be sealed to their own fathers.

Speaking in the Mormon Tabernacle in 1894, President Woodruff acknowledged: “I have had friends adopted to me. We all have, more or less. But I have had peculiar feelings about it, especially lately.”

On April 8, 1894, George Q. Cannon, a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church publicly stated: “I have never thought of this subject of adoption without having a certain amount of fear concerning it . . . this revelation [to stop the practice] that God has given to His servant, the President of our Church, removes all the danger which seemed to threaten us . . .”

For more information concerning “the law of adoption” see our book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 480-483, and The Case Against Mormonism, vol. 1, pages 17-26)

GIVING UP POLYGAMY

In addition to giving up “the law of adoption,” the Mormon Church abandoned the practice of polygamy, a doctrine which Joseph Smith claimed he received by revelation from God. John Taylor, who became the third prophet of the Mormon Church, once declared, “. . . we are firm, conscientious believers in polygamy . . . it is part and parcel of our religious creed” (Life of John Taylor, page 255). Brigham Young, the second prophet of the church, once stated: “The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 11, page 269). On another occasion Brigham Young emphatically declared: “Now if any of you will deny the plurality of wives and continue to do so, I promise you will be damned . . . take this revelation, or any other revelation that the Lord has given, and deny it in your feelings, and I promise that you will be damned” (Deseret News, November 14, 1855).

Although the Mormon leaders adamantly maintained they would never give up polygamy, they finally yielded to the civil law and the practice was discontinued.

Strange as it may seem, however, Joseph Smith’s revelation regarding the importance of practicing polygamy still remains in the Doctrine and Covenants—one of the four standard works of the Mormon Church. We extract the following from the revelation:

Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord Justified my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines . . .

Therefore, prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you; for all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same.

For behold, I reveal unto you a new and an everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory . . .

And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife . . . by the new and everlasting covenant . . . they shall pass by the angels, and the gods . . . to their exaltation . . .

Then they shall be gods, because they have no end . . .

Abraham received concubines, and they bore him children; and it was accounted unto him for righteousness . . .

David also received many wives and concubines, and also Solomon and Moses . . . and in nothing did they sin save in those things which they received not of me.

David’s wives and concubines were given unto him of me . . .

And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith, receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph, and who are virtuous and pure before me; and those who are not pure, and have said they were pure, shall be destroyed, saith the Lord God . . .

And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood — if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then is he justified; he cannot commit adultery with that that belongeth unto him and to no one else.

And if he have ten virgins given unto him by the law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given unto him: therefore is he justified.” (Doctrine and Covenants, Section 132, verses 1, 3-4, 19-20, 37-38, 52, 61-62)

It is difficult to imagine the trauma that the Mormons experienced when they were forced to give up the practice of polygamy. In light of this major doctrinal change made by Mormon leaders, it seems incredible that Dr. Hugh Nibley would boast: “Yet of all churches in the world only this one has not found it necessary to readjust any part of its doctrine in the last hundred years.”
CHANGING THE ANTI-BLACK DOCTRINE

Prior to 1978, Mormon Church leaders taught that blacks were cursed by God and inferior to whites. Because of this they could not hold the priesthood, participate in the sacred temple ceremonies, or be married for eternity in a Mormon Temple. Since a temple marriage is required for anyone to live in God’s presence, it was very difficult for LDS blacks to understand why they would be banned from the temple.

In 1966, Wallace Turner, a correspondent for the New York Times, explained what it meant to be denied the priesthood:

The Negro Mormon can hold no office whatsoever in a church which offers some office to every one of its male members at some time in his life. A gray-haired Negro Mormon who may have spent his adult life in careful practice of all the complicated and demanding rules set down by the LDS church stands disenfranchised before the altar where a youth whose beard is just beginning to fuzz may preside. A twelve-year-old boy may become a member of the Aaronic priesthood, more than this Negro man has been able to achieve through a lifetime of devotion. To hold any church office, a Mormon must be a member of the priesthood. (The Mormon Establishment, pages 243-244)

The doctrine which Mormon leaders used to teach concerning blacks was clearly set forth in a letter written by the First Presidency of the church in 1947:

From the days of the Prophet Joseph even until now, it has been the doctrine of the Church, never questioned by any of the Church leaders, that the Negroes are not entitled to the full blessings of the Gospel. (Letter from the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, July 17, 1947, as cited in Mormonism and the Negro, by John J. Stewart, 1960, pages 46-47)

Bruce R. McConkie, who later served as an apostle in the LDS Church, made this statement in 1958:

Negroes in this life are denied the priesthood; under no circumstances can they hold this delegation of authority from the Almighty. . . . The gospel message of salvation is not carried affirmatively to them . . .

The negroes are not equal with other races where the receipt of certain spiritual blessings are concerned, particularly the priesthood and the temple blessings that flow therefrom, but this inequality is not of man’s origin. It is the lord’s doing. . . . (Mormon Doctrine, 1958, page 477)

Mormon theology has always taught that a black skin is a sign of God’s displeasure. This teaching came directly from Joseph Smith’s Book of Mormon. Smith taught that a group of Jewish people came to the New World in about 600 B.C. The good people were called Nephites and those who were evil were referred to as Lamanites.

In the Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 5:21 we read about the Lamanites being cursed with a black skin: “And he had caused the cursing to come upon them, yea, even a sore cursing, because of their iniquity . . . wherefore, as they were white, and exceeding fair and delightful, that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them.”

In the Book of Mormon, Alma 3:6 we read: “And the skins of the Lamanites were dark, according to the mark which was set upon their fathers, which was a curse upon them because of their transgression . . .”

The prophet Joseph Smith taught that the Lamanites eventually destroyed the white skinned people (Nephites) and that the American Indians are the descendants of the ancient Lamanites. In his Book of Moses, Joseph Smith wrote about a group of people in the Old World who were cursed with a black skin: “For behold the Lord shall curse the land with much heat . . . and there was a blackness came upon all the children of Canaan, that they were despised among all people” (Pearl of Great Price, Book of Moses 7:8).

Joseph Smith himself taught that “Negroes” are the “sons of Cain” (History of the Church, vol. 4, page 501). Mormon leaders also taught that “As a result of his rebellion, Cain was cursed with a dark skin; he became the father of the Negroes, and those spirits who are not worthy to receive the priesthood are born through his lineage” (Mormon Doctrine, 1958, page 102).

Brigham Young, the second prophet of the church, asserted: “Cain slew his brother. . . . and the Lord put a mark upon him, which is a flat nose and black skin” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 7, page 290).

Joseph Fielding Smith, who became the tenth prophet of the church in 1970, made it clear that Mormons should consider blacks as inferior: “Not only was Cain called upon to suffer, but because of his wickedness he became the father of an inferior race” (The Way to Perfection, page 101). On the following page Smith asserted that the “negro brethren” have a “black covering emblematical of eternal darkness.” Those who are familiar with Mormon doctrine know that the Latter-day Saints believe that all people who are born on earth had a previous existence in heaven. Mark E. Petersen, who served as an apostle in the church for many years, gave the following information concerning the doctrine of pre-existence and the effect it had on blacks and other races:

Let us consider the great mercy of God for a moment. A Chinese, born in China with a dark skin, and with all the handicaps of that race seems to have little opportunity. But think of the mercy of God to Chinese people who are willing to accept the gospel. In spite of whatever they might have done in the pre-existence to justify being born over there as Chinamen, if they now, in this life, accept the gospel and live it the rest of their lives they can have the Priesthood, go to the temple and receive endowments.
and sealings, and that means they can have exaltation. Isn’t the mercy of God marvelous?

Think of the Negro, cursed as to the Priesthood. . . . This negro, who, in the pre-existence lived the type of life which justified the Lord in sending him to the earth in the lineage of Cain with a black skin, and possibly being born in darkest Africa—if that negro is willing when he hears the gospel to accept it, he may have many of the blessings of the gospel. In spite of all he did in the pre-existent life, the Lord is willing, if the Negro accepts the gospel with real, sincere faith, and is really converted, to give him the blessings of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost. If that Negro is faithful all his days, he can and will enter the celestial kingdom. He will go there as a servant, but he will get celestial glory. . . .

Now let’s talk segregation again for a few moments. . . . When the Lord chose the nations to which the spirits were to come, determining that some would be Japanese and some would be Chinese and some Negroes and some Americans, He engaged in an act of segregation. . . .

Who placed the Negroes originally in darkest Africa? Was it some man, or was it God? And when He placed them there, He segregated them. . . . At least in the cases of the Lamanites and the Negroes we have the definite word of the Lord Himself that He placed a dark skin upon them as a curse . . . He forbade intermarriage . . . He certainly segregated the descendants of Cain when He cursed the Negro as to the Priesthood, and drew an absolute line. You may even say He dropped an Iron curtain there. . . .

We must not intermarry with the Negro, Why? If I were to marry a Negro woman and have children by her, my children would all be cursed as to the Priesthood. Do I want my children cursed as to the priesthood? If there is one drop of Negro blood in my children, as I have read to you, they receive the curse. There isn’t any argument, therefore, as to inter-marriage with the Negro, is there? There are 50 million Negroes in the United States. If they were to achieve complete absorption with the white race, think what that would do. With 50 million Negroes inter-married with us, where would the Priesthood be? Who could hold it, in all America? Think what that would do to the work of the Church!

Now we are generous with the negro [sic]. . . . I would be willing to let every Negro drive a cadillac if they could afford it. I would be willing that they have all the advantages they can get out of life in the world. But let them enjoy these things among themselves. I think the Lord segregated the Negro and who is man to change that segregation? . . . what God hath separated, let not man bring together again.” (Race Problems — As They Affect The Church, Address by Apostle Mark E. Petersen at the Convention of Teachers of Religion on the College Level, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, August 27, 1954)

While Apostle Mark E. Petersen was very concerned about the need for segregation, Brigham Young, the second prophet of the church, was even more adamant about the matter. Young gave this chilling warning:

Shall I tell you the law of God in regard to the African race? If the white man who belongs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the penalty, under the law of God, is death on the spot. This will always be so. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 10, page 110)
Speaking out regarding the discrimination was certainly not a popular cause to espouse in Salt Lake City in those days. Those of us who criticized the church for its racial teachings were ridiculed for attempting to change the doctrine. In fact, one irate Mormon man threatened to punch Sandra in the nose because of this issue.

In any case, after the revelation was made public, a number of Mormons became very concerned that church leaders had betrayed their trust. They knew that former LDS prophets taught that blacks could not have the priesthood until after the coming of Christ.

President Brigham Young went so far as to proclaim that if the church gave “all the blessings of God” to the blacks prematurely, the priesthood would be taken away and the Mormon Church would go to destruction. We extract the following from a typed copy of Brigham Young's speech which retains the spelling errors of the original:

... the Lord told Cain that he should not receive the blessings of the priesthood nor his seed, until the last of the posterity of Abel had received the priesthood, until the redemption of the earth. ... Let this Church which is called the kingdom of God on the earth; [say] we will summon the first presidency, the twelve, the high counsel, the Bishopric, and all the elders of Israel, suppose we summon them to appear here, and here declare that it is right to mingle our seed with the black race of Cain, that they shall come in with us and be partakers with us of all the blessings God has given us. On that very day, and hour we should do so, the priesthood is taken from this Church and kingdom and God leaves us to our fate. The moment we consent to mingle with the seed of Cain the Church must go to destruction, — we should receive the curse which was placed upon the seed of Cain, and never more be numbered with the children of Adam who are heirs to the priesthood until that curse be removed. (Brigham Young Addresses, Ms d 1234, Box 48, folder 3, dated Feb. 5, 1852, located in the LDS Church Historical Department)

President Brigham Young’s address presents a serious dilemma for Mormon Church leaders. If they really believe Young was a prophet, then it follows that the church has lost the priesthood, been put under “the curse” and is going to destruction! In spite of Brigham Young’s emphatic warning against giving blacks “all the blessings God has given us,” the present leaders have announced that blacks will now receive “all of the privileges and blessings which the gospel affords” (Deseret News, June 9, 1978).

Although the Mormon Church has always maintained that it is led by revelation, it appears that the word “revelation” is greatly misused. The revelations given to Joseph Smith contained the words “Thus saith the Lord” or similar wording indicating that the message had come directly from God. The expression, “Thus saith the Lord” is found over fifty times in the Doctrine and Covenants.

In recent times, however, it is evident that church leaders use the word “revelation” merely to indicate that they have agreed that a matter should be handled in a certain way.

Historian D. Michael Quinn reported that Wilford Woodruff’s “published sermon is [the] only available text of the revelation” changing the doctrine of adoption. Both the Manifesto to stop the practice of polygamy and the revelation allowing blacks to hold the priesthood have been declared to be revelations from God. Unfortunately for those who believe in Mormonism, neither of these “revelations” are set forth with the statement, “thus sayeth the Lord.” There is, in fact, no written message coming directly from the Lord to abandon these practices.

Both the practice of polygamy and the anti-Black doctrine were very offensive to American citizens. In both cases the church was under a great deal of pressure to abandon the unusual doctrines. The leaders apparently felt that the word “revelation” had to be used in these particular cases to get the people to conform to their decisions. They knew that if they claimed that they made the decisions on their own to abandon these doctrines it could cause a significant schism in the church.

In his recent publication, The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power, D. Michael Quinn gives some important information regarding the church’s decision to allow blacks to hold the priesthood. Quinn shows that Mormon leaders made an aborted attempt to abandon the practice in 1969:

On 12 November 1969 Stanford University refused to participate in athletic competitions with BYU because of the church’s refusal to ordain blacks. First Counselor Hugh B. Brown had been on record for six years as favoring an end to this ban. . . .

In November 1969 Brown told the university’s vice-president that he expected the church to drop this restriction. Shortly after Stanford’s decision Brown “was able to get a proposal allowing full priesthood for blacks approved by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.” With church president David O. McKay unable to function, the way was now open for the two counselors and the Quorum of Twelve to issue a joint declaration granting priesthood to those of black ancestry. Second counselor N. Eldon Tanner confided to BYU’s president Ernest Wilkinson on 3 December 1969 that “a special committee was to report on the Negro situation.” Wilkinson labeled his memorandum of the conversation as “ULTRA CONFIDENTIAL.” Apostle Harold B. Lee, an increasingly powerful member of the Twelve, was absent during his quorum’s decision and rejected it upon his return. Lee not only opposed giving priesthood to blacks, he also held “the traditional belief as revealed in the Old Testament that the races ought to be kept together.”

Lee persuaded the Quorum of Twelve to rescind its vote. Then he pressured the first counselor to sign a
statement which reaffirmed the priesthood restriction on blacks “in view of confusion that has arisen.”

Five years after Lee’s death, church president Spencer W. Kimball in June 1978 extended priesthood ordination to all Mormon men of black African ancestry. For decades he had been troubled about this racial restriction, and was among the apostles who unsuccessfully voted for this proposal eight-and-a-half years earlier. (The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power, pages 13-15)

Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, who was present during the discussions regarding giving blacks the priesthood, claimed that the General Authorities of the church had a powerful and miraculous experience of “complete harmony, between the Presidency and the Twelve on the issue involved.” Nevertheless, McConkie acknowledged that there was no vision or voice from heaven:

“The Lord could have sent messengers from the other side to deliver it, but he did not. He gave the revelation by the power of the Holy Ghost. Latter-day Saints have a complex: many of them desire to magnify and build upon what has occurred, and they delight to think of miraculous things. And maybe some of them would like to believe that the Lord himself was there, or that the Prophet Joseph Smith came to deliver the revelation . . . which was one of the possibilities. Well, these things did not happen. The stories that go around to the contrary are not factual or realistic or true . . . (“All Are Alike Unto God,” by Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, as published in Following The Brethren, Part 2, page 2)

In his new book, D. Michael Quinn quoted the following from Gordon B. Hinckley, who is now president of the Mormon Church: “No voice audible to our physical ears was heard. But the voice of the spirit whispered into our minds and our very souls” (The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power, page 16).

The fact that the Brethren were finally in agreement with one another regarding a doctrine that could have caused a serious split in the church undoubtedly brought a feeling of peace to those who were present. The thing that is distressing about this matter, however, is that instead of church leaders admitting that they made a grave error when they stubbornly denied blacks equality, they turned right around and claimed that they had a “revelation” from God about the matter.

It is obvious from President Spencer W. Kimball’s statement printed in the church’s own newspaper that he did not receive any word from God concerning the matter:

“I asked the Twelve not to go home when the time came. I said, ‘Now would you be willing to remain in the temple with us?’ And they were. I offered the final prayer and I told the Lord if it wasn’t right, if He didn’t want this change to come in the Church that I would be true to it all the rest of my life, and I’d fight the world against it if that’s what He wanted.

“We had this special prayer circle, then I knew that the time had come. I had a great deal to fight, of course, myself largely, because I had grown up with this thought that Negroes should not have the priesthood and I was prepared to go all the rest of my life till my death and fight for it and defend it as it was. But this revelation and assurance came to me so clearly that there was no question about it.” (Deseret News, Church Section, January 6, 1979, page 4)

It would appear, then, that when President Kimball asked the Lord if He had any objections to his changing the doctrine, he received no answer from heaven. Since God did not seem to contest the idea, Kimball felt he had the “assurance” that it must be the Lord’s will. This, of course, seems like a very unusual way to obtain a “revelation.”

We feel that it was wrong for the leaders of the church to fail to accept any blame for their treatment of blacks before 1978. Instead of pretending to have a “revelation” to get them out of their dilemma, they should have publicly apologized to the blacks. By their actions, however, church leaders made it appear that God Himself was a racist who stubbornly refused to allow blacks to hold the priesthood.

Church leaders gave the impression that by “pleading long and earnestly in behalf of these, our faithful brethren, spending many hours in the upper room of the Temple,” they finally persuaded God to give blacks the priesthood.

The truth of the matter, however, is that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35). It was the Mormon leaders who kept blacks under a curse. They continually and stubbornly opposed the advancement of black people, threatening and excommunicating those who differed with them on the matter. Finally, when their backs were to the wall, the Mormon leaders were forced to change their position.

Interestingly, the three doctrines which were reversed — sealing men to men, polygamy, and refusing to allow blacks to have the priesthood — were all attempts to abandon past teachings made by the early founders of the Mormon Church. As someone once observed, “Today’s truth may become tomorrow’s heresy.”

Besides the revelation regarding blacks and a vision given to Joseph Smith in 1836, the only other revelation added to the Doctrine and Covenants during this century was a vision that church President Joseph F. Smith had less than two months before his death. He was eighty years old and “was very ill” at the time.

Church officials did not include this revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants after it was given in 1918. In fact, they did not add it until many decades after Joseph F. Smith’s death. Michael Quinn wrote: “14 Nov., First Presidency and Twelve vote to accept Joseph F. Smith’s revelation on spirit world, even though several apostles have misgivings about it” (The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power, page 816).
As early as 1972, we were pointing out that although the church claimed to have “living prophets,” the leaders were failing to canonize any new revelations in the *Doctrine and Covenants*. We stated: “The Manifesto of 1890 is the last revelation, if it can be termed a revelation, that has been added to the *Doctrine and Covenants*.” (Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 184)

While we will never know for certain whether our statements had any impact on church officials, the leaders were apparently concerned about the matter and eventually added the two revelations mentioned above to the *Doctrine and Covenants*. In any case, this hardly solved the problem since both revelations were anything but new revelations. As noted above, the first revelation was given in 1836 and the other in 1918.

Surprisingly, church leaders made a mistake when they finally printed the two old revelations as scriptures of the church. Instead of printing them in the *Doctrine and Covenants*, they added them to the *Pearl of Great Price* in 1976. In our book, *The Changing World of Mormonism*, page 435, we pointed out that this was the wrong place to publish them. We noted that President Joseph F. Smith clearly stated that, “if the Lord should reveal His mind to His people and it should be accepted by His people in the way that He has appointed, it would then become a matter to be added to the Book of *Doctrine and Covenants*.”

Mormon leaders later realized they made a mistake when they added the two revelations to the *Pearl of Great Price*. Consequently, in 1981, they removed the two revelations from that book and added them into the *Doctrine and Covenants* as sections 137 and 138. While we do not have access to the original text of Joseph F. Smith’s revelation (section 138), a comparison of the prophet Joseph Smith’s vision (section 137) with his diary reveals falsification has occurred to protect Smith’s reputation as a prophet. Over 200 words which appear in Joseph Smith’s diary have been omitted. If these words had been included in the *Doctrine and Covenants* it would show that Joseph Smith had given a false prophecy (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? page 31-B).

This fumbling with the revelations only tends to emphasize that the Mormon Church is led by fallible men rather than by direct revelation from God.

Interestingly, President Gordon B. Hinckley, the current “living prophet” of the Mormon Church, has recently revealed in a newspaper interview that “revelation” does not come in the way most of us were brought up to believe:

“Revelation no longer comes by vision,” Mr. Hinckley said, “but in the ‘still, small voice,’ like that heard by Elijah.

“We wrestle with a problem, we discuss it, we think about it, we pray about it,” he said of the First Presidency, made up of Mr. Hinckley and his two counselors. “And the answer comes in a remarkable and wonderful way.” (Washington Times, December 3, 1996, page A8)

Don Lattin, a reporter for the *San Francisco Chronicle* also interviewed President Hinckley and asked him about divine revelation:

Q: And this belief in contemporary revelation and prophecy? As the prophet, tell us how that works. How do you receive divine revelation? What does it feel like?

A: Let me say first that we have a great body of revelation, the vast majority of which came from the prophet Joseph Smith. We don’t need much revelation. We need to pay more attention to the revelation we’ve already received. Now, if a problem should arise on which we don’t have an answer, we pray about it, we may fast about it, and it comes. Quietly. Usually no voice of any kind, but just a perception in the mind.” (Interview with President Gordon B. Hinckley, as published on the Web site of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 13, 1997)

In the same interview the current prophet of the Mormon Church seemed to be downplaying one of the most important doctrines of the church — i.e., that God Himself was once a man:

Q: There are some significant differences in your beliefs. For instance, don’t Mormons believe that God was once a man?

A: I wouldn’t say that. There was a little couplet coined, “As man is, God once was. As God is, man may become.” Now that’s more of a couplet than anything else. That gets into some pretty deep theology that we don’t know very much about.

Q: So you’re saying the church is still struggling to understand this?

A: Well, as God is, man may become. We believe in eternal progression.”

Significantly, President Gordon B. Hinckley also waivered concerning the Mormon doctrine that God was once a man when he was questioned by *TIME* magazine:

In an interview with *TIME*, President Hinckley seemed intent on downplaying his faith’s distinctiveness. . . . At first Hinckley seemed to qualify the idea that men could become gods, suggesting that “it’s of course an idea. It’s a hope for a wishful thing,” but later affirmed that “yes, of course they can.” (He added that women could too, “as companions to their husbands. They can’t conceive a king without a queen.”) On whether his church still holds that God the Father was once a man, he sounded uncertain, “don’t know that we teach it. I don’t know that we emphasize it . . . I understand the philosophical background behind it, but I don’t know a lot about it, and I don’t think others know a lot about it.” (Time, August 4, 1997 page 56)
Unlike the first Mormon prophet, Joseph Smith, President Hinckley gives the impression that he is ashamed of the teaching that God was once a man. In the Mormon Church publication, *Times and Seasons*, Smith boldly proclaimed that God was once a mortal man and that men can become Gods:

First, God himself, who sits enthroned in yonder heavens, *is a man like unto one of yourselves*, that is the great secret. . . . I am going to tell you how God *came to be God*. We have imagined that God was God from all eternity. . . . God himself; the Father of us all *dwelt on an earth* the same as Jesus Christ himself did . . . You have got to *learn how to be Gods yourselves* . . . No man can learn you more than what I have told you. (*Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, pages 613-614)

Since the days of Joseph Smith, the Mormon church has always taught that God the Father had a Father, and that God’s Father also had a Father, and so on. Smith’s successor, Brigham Young declared:

He [God] is our Father — the Father of our spirits, and *was once a man in mortal flesh* as we are, and is now an exalted being. . . . there never was a time when there were not Gods . . .

It appears ridiculous to the world . . . that God has *once been a finite being* . . . (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 7, page 333)

President Young’s statement was restated in the 1985 Melchizedek Priesthood manual (see page 153).

Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt made it very clear that God was once in a “fallen state,” “died” and was “redeemed from the grave” (*The Seer*, Jan. 1853, page 23).

That President Hinckley would downplay this important doctrine of the church in at least two major interviews seems almost incredible. It has, in fact, shocked some members of the church. There seems to be only two reasons why Hinckley would be reticent about discussing a doctrine which is so ingrained in the minds of the Mormon people and taught in some of their current manuals.

1. He may fear that orthodox Christians would be shocked to hear about this doctrine and declare it to be blasphemous.

2. On the other hand, however, it is possible that Hinckley himself doubts the authenticity of Joseph Smith’s strange doctrine about God and is trying to curtail the dissemination of information about it.

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**EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS**

The letter which follows was written by a Mormon attorney who is very displeased with our work on Mormonism. A photocopy of it was forwarded to us by the individual who received the letter:

I apologize for not returning the document entitled “Major Problems of Mormonism” by Jerald and Sandra Tanner sooner. . . .

I had originally intended to read the entire 256 pages, but after 20-something pages I was so disappointed by the Tanners’ poor writing skills and lack of scholarship that I saw no purpose in going any further. I have read much better anti-Mormon literature. . . . I was offended by the inarticulate meander of the authors. . . . The Tanners constantly quote from sources not available to the reader, including numerous unnamed sources and out-of-print sources (or make their own quotes up. . . .) their work reads like right-wing militia propaganda concerning conspiracies within the federal government or claims of alien abductions. The Tanners’ diatribe is so salacious and “out there,” that they probably support the videotape “Alien Autopsy” occasionally shown on tabloid T.V. shows.

I am concerned that you place so much stock in the ramblings of a not-so-bright former “machinist” . . . The Tanners do this solely for the notoriety that their crying and wailing brings them. They probably started with the object of getting rich, but obviously have been so ineffective that they can hardly raise enough funds to prolong their miserable work. . . . You should be aware that the Tanners’ “Salt Lake City Messenger” is a tiny gossip rag read by few, even though free of charge. Even the crummiest of tabloids do better. . . .

Initially, I began making notes of the numerous lies, inaccuracies, and half truths of the Tanners, but found it to be such an extensive list that would have covered hundreds of pages, that I quit. . . . All the Tanners have done is write an *Enquire*-type article on the LDS Church. I would encourage you to pursue true scholarship of the things that apparently fascinate you, and not rely on this feeble machinist’s deranged thoughts. . . . I found Tanners’ work and your suggestion that it was “overwhelmingly convincing” to be offensive and worthy only of a brief, blunt, clear response. (Letter from Texas)

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Take my name off your mailing list. I do not want any more “SATINISTIC GARBAG” [sic]. I dare you to print this letter in your next issue. (Letter from Utah)

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Dear Tanners, I want to thank you for all the intricate research you have compiled over the years. I was able to check out “. . . Shadow . . .” [Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?] from the university library and have enjoyed reading each page with wide eyes. I appreciate the documentation and honesty in your book that was lacking as I grew up in the church. You answered many questions
that were never properly answered by my parents and leaders. Don’t give up on people — I wouldn’t have been ready for things like this a year ago — there are times when things make sense and you allow yourself to listen. (Letter from Arizona)

You have given me so much help in leaving Mormonism behind in my life & in the lives of my two children. (Letter from Louisiana)

The young [Mormon] missionary girls started coming here in December 96. They made their usual pitch . . . they started talking baptism. I still couldn’t believe several things. But I went ahead and was baptized in Feb of 1996. By Nov 1997 I had had all I could take. So much was false I couldn’t wait to get out. When I received your brochures etc. that topped it off. I sent in a letter of resignation. (Letter from West Virginia)

Thanks to you guys and especially Jerald and Sandra Tanner I canceled my baptism with the Mormon Church . . . there was so much so hard to believe that it seemed like heresy. I could not in clear conscience go to church any more . . . there was something missing in the Mormon version of Joseph Smith’s story. (Letter from Illinois)

I want to thank you two for your help. I finished reading A Gathering of Saints today and coincidentally dug out your news letter — Mormon Leaders Suppress Key Item in Murder Case — I need no more proof. If I still think they [the Mormon leaders] talk to God after this fiasco then there’s no help for me. The Hoffman episode proves to me that its all a hoax . . . . I think your work is very important. You look for the truth and I admire you for that. (Letter from Oklahoma)

Just a note to say thanks for the info that you produce. You are shaking up the Mormon empire enough to merit your own special publication within their church. The following is a cover sheet from a long ‘letter’ about you and your publications given to me by some Mormon missionaries that I have had discussions with. They bristle at the Tanner name. (Letter from Hawaii)

I just wanted to drop you a quick note saying thank you for all the work you have done. Your research and work has been greatly appreciated by me and others trying to get out of Mormonism. . . . I didn’t even know so much of this evidence existed . . . . You have helped me and countless others by showing us that there is not only one or two problems with the church, but books upon books of them. There is no way the church can avoid this other than pretending you don’t exist to their true believers. . . . I am impressed, also, with the tone you have taken in dealing with the problems. This tone seems to say to me, “Here is the evidence, look for yourself if you want.” (Letter from Arizona)

Reading . . . has completely destroyed any remaining idea I had of the authenticity of Joseph Smith’s “prophetic” mission and the Book of Mormon. Thank You. I requested excommunication and left the Mormon Church . . . in spite of having . . . served a mission, taught at the Missionary Training Center, attended BYU, and married in the Salt Lake Temple. At age 32, after 13 years of living as an active Mormon, I left the Church having realized I spent years engaged in double-think and self-deception . . . . While [I] was a Church member I never read your books or articles, having been warned away from you . . . . As you know, Mormonism is hard to leave emotionally and psychologically even after one has left physically. Thank you for loosening its remaining holds on me. (E-mail, dated May 27, 1997)

I can’t begin to thank you for the freedom you have given me. I am 45 years old, I spent at least 35 years of my life trying to make Mormonism work. I am free now . . . . Your book, “Mormonism, Shadow or Reality?” freed me completely. Before your book I could not completely rid myself of the programming of that cult, and give my life to Jesus. I have to thank [you] from the bottom of my heart for your work and for leading me to our savior. (E-mail, dated March 27, 1997)

The material is extremely good! We needed . . . documentation for our book about Mormonism and for all the conversations with Mormons as well (they always say: I don’t believe what you say, show me the documents!).

So we just want to say thank you for your thoughtfulness and generosity. May the Lord bless you and give you His love and power in the ministry you do for the Kingdom of God! (Letter from Hungary)

Utah Lighthouse Ministry is a non-profit organization. In addition to our work with Mormons, we provide support for 44 children through World Vision, and furnish some help to a local Rescue Mission. Those who are interested in helping this ministry can send their tax-deductible contributions to Utah Lighthouse Ministry, PO Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110. Both contributions and orders can be made over the phone (801-485-8894 or 801-485-0312) with Visa, MasterCard or Discover Card.

While we deeply appreciate the financial support we receive, we strongly desire your prayers. We believe they will bring thousands of Mormons to the truth. As Apostle Paul admonished: “Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving” (Colossians 4:2).
BOOKS AND TAPES

(Mail orders add 10% — Minimum postage $1.50)

No Regrets: How I Found My Way Out of Mormonism, by Judy Robertson. Regular price: $11.00
Special Price: $10.00

Utah in the 1990s: A Demographic Perspective, by T. Heaton, T. Hirschel & B. Chadwick. Regular price: $20.00
Special Price: $19.00

No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, by Fawn M. Brodie (Paperback) Regular price: $17.00
Special Price: $16.00

The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power, (vol. 1), by D. Michael Quinn. Regular price: $30.00
Special Price: $28.00

The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power, (vol. 2), by D. Michael Quinn. Regular price: $45.00
Special Price: $40.00

Sandra Tanner Tape No. 4. Two talks given at the Christian Institute for Mormon Studies entitled, Struggles of Leaving Mormonism and Obstacles to Leaving Mormonism. Price: $3.00

Quest for the Gold Plates — Thomas Stuart Ferguson’s Archaeological Search for the Book of Mormon, by Stan Larson. (Paperback) Price: $13.00

Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Mormons, by Ron Rhodes and Marian Bodine. Price: $11.00

Special Price: $32.00

The Prophet Motive: Examining the Reliability of Biblical Prophets, Kenny Barfield. Price: $13.00


MANY MORE BOOKS!!!

We have a good supply of books which are not listed in this issue of the newsletter. A complete book list will be sent free upon request by writing to us at:

Utah Lighthouse Ministry
PO Box 1884
Salt Lake City, UT 84110
Since we began publishing material regarding the Mormon Church in 1959, church leaders have carefully avoided making any mention of our work. David Merrill wrote: “The official attitude of the Mormon hierarchy towards the Tanners has been one of silence and apparent unconcern. They have, however, actively discouraged LDS scholars and intellectuals from jousting with the Tanners . . .” (Utah Holiday, February 1978, page 7).

To our surprise, however, when the Associated Press writer Kristen Moulton wrote an article about our work the Deseret News picked up the story. In addition, the church’s newspaper even included a photograph of Jerald and Sandra Tanner standing outside the Utah Lighthouse Ministry Bookstore. We were astonished that an article that seems rather favorable to our work would be featured in the church’s own newspaper.

The article appeared in the Deseret News on May 16, 1998, under the title, TANNERS ARE WELLSPRING OF DOCUMENTS. We have no way of knowing how many other newspapers picked up the story.

Before giving our readers a chance to examine the article we should point out that there is an error in the Deseret News printing which should be corrected. It is erroneously stated that “the Tanners created a video, The Mormon Puzzle.” While it is true that Sandra Tanner was often consulted and interviewed a number of times in the video, the Southern Baptists actually financed the project and had total control of its contents.

One other thing should be mentioned regarding the Associated Press story. Mormon professor Daniel C. Peterson of Brigham Young University complained that one of his comments concerning our work was misunderstood. In a letter he wrote to the Deseret News he stated:

I was dismayed to see myself, in the recent Associated Press article on them, praising Jerald and Sandra as unexcelled researchers (“Tanners are wellspring of documents,” May 16). “As far as LDS history goes,” I remarked, “there’s no one out there who has the documents mastered as they do.” Perhaps I was not clear. I meant that there is nobody among professional critics of the LDS Church who knows the historical documents as well as the Tanners do . . . there are certainly plenty of serious historians whose factual knowledge is equal to or better than theirs . . .

Tanners are wellspring of documents
Critics say pair’s agenda colors interpretation
By Kristen Moulton
Associated Press writer

Sandra and Jerald Tanner’s quest fit the times: They were fumbling into adulthood in the early ’60s, brash and full of big ideas.

They weren’t war protesters or hippies, though; the Tanners’ rebellion was more personal.

Pioneer descendants, Sandra and Jerald — 18 and 20 when they met in 1959 — believed that the church’s 19th century founder, Joseph Smith Jr., was a fraud and the religion he created a sham.

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**Special Offers**

**Joseph Smith’s Plagiarism of the Bible**
by Jerald and Sandra Tanner
Absolute proof that Joseph Smith borrowed from the Bible when he wrote the Book of Mormon. Regular price: $10.00
Our special price: $8.00 (offer good thru September 30, 1998)

**In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith**
by Todd Compton
An important look at Joseph Smith’s method of ensnaring at least 33 women, including a 14-year-old girl, into polygamy.
Retail price: $40.00  Our price: $35.00

**LDS Classics CD-ROM 2.0 (Second Edition)**
It’s here! The new Windows/Mac version that contains over 30 titles including Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? and the original 1830 Book of Mormon (see p. 15 for list) Price: $49.00
Upgrade available for $30.00 (return of DOS version required).

**Free Book Offer!**
With every order of $25.00 or more receive:
**The Mormon Church and the McLellin Collection**
How Mormon Leaders Suppressed a “Key” Item in the Hofmann Murder-Forgery Case
by Jerald and Sandra Tanner
Offer good thru September 30, 1998. Retail value: $5.00
And the firebrands began broadcasting their convictions, first in mimeographed handouts to dismayed family members and eventually around the world through a newsletter, pamphlets and more than 40 books.

At the same time, they began ferreting out and publishing early church documents, newspapers, diaries and books they believed proved their case.

More than 30 years later, the evangelical Christian Tanners are recognized for their trove of documents. They’re loved by those trafficking in anti-Mormon literature and grudgingly respected by many Latter-day Saint scholars for their painstaking and accurate research, if not for their interpretations.

Their Utah Lighthouse Ministry and its bookstore have become a chief resource for members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who are interested in early church history as well as members who are disillusioned and looking to get out.

“The Tanners, pound for pound, year after year, have been the most successful opponents of the church,” said Daniel C. Peterson, professor of Islamic studies and Arabic at Brigham Young University. “I don’t mean it as a compliment.”

Source for ‘The Mormon Puzzle’
Sandra Tanner, the spokesperson of the duo, was one of the experts the Southern Baptists turned to last year to explain The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. To help them do this, the Tanners created a video, “The Mormon Puzzle.”

She also will present a workshop about the church for Southern Baptists when some 10,000 come here next month for their annual meeting.

“As far as LDS history goes, there’s no one out there who has the documents mastered as they do,” said Peterson, chairman of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies at BYU. “They occasionally have forced us (LDS Church defenders) to sharpen a line of reasoning or come up with a line of reasoning.”

“The Tanners have caused a lot of Mormon historians to do better homework,” said Elbert Peck, editor of the periodical Sunstone.

Yet, Peck notes, the Tanners’ evangelical agenda colors their interpretation of history.

“They’re one-sided in their approach. They believe the Mormon Church is wrong, and they are doing research to prove it’s wrong.”

Sandra puts it this way: “Historians see us as self-righteous simpletons.”

She and Jerald, however, see it quite differently.

“It was like God had given us a burden to share with them that they had been misled and betrayed,” says Sandra, a great-great granddaughter of Brigham Young, the second prophet of the LDS Church. “The church isn’t worthy of their devotion.”

The Tanners came to that conclusion fairly young.

Early questions
The Tanners met in the spring of 1959, when Sandra, raised in Southern California, was visiting her grandmother in Salt Lake City. She’d already strained her reputation by asking cheeky questions in religion classes, and found Tanner—obsessed with his growing knowledge of early church history—fascinating.

He had been on a loner’s pilgrimage to Independence, Mo., where he talked to members of offshoot religions and became convinced that Joseph Smith and later prophets were corrupt.

The two married in June of that year and were excommunicated within a couple of years of asking that their names be stricken from LDS Church membership rolls.

The young Tanners tangled with church apostles over matters of history, by letter and once in person.

“Hardly anyone challenged the brethren on anything,” recalls Sandra. “To have two young whippersnappers do it was the height of impudence.”

When the couple printed up copies of their reasons for disbeliefing, family members, including those who harbored their own doubts, were angry. “There was a feeling we had gone too far,” Sandra says.

Jerald was surprised by the rejection.

“I thought it would be easy. I had very good evidence. I soon realized how hard it would be.”

When the couple shed their last tie to the church in 1962—a belief in the veracity of the Book of Mormon—it was a turning point. They turned to the Christian Missionary Alliance, where they remain active today.

They also launched their own ministry—to put on microfilm and later into print obscure historical documents. Within two years, Jerald gave up his full-time machinist’s job.

“We had three little babies. They were meager years,” recalls Sandra.

They bought a home in 1964 in a down-and-out Salt Lake neighborhood, and operated the bookstore from their front parlor until expanding next door three years ago.

Collecting documents
Historian Michael Quinn says the Tanners’ contribution of early documents is often overlooked.

While academics could study such materials through universities and church archives, others had no way to read them. “For people who are just curious about Mormon history, that has been a tremendous contribution,” Quinn said.

Reaching the common LDS Church member, Jerald says, has been his goal all along. He brushes off criticism from researchers, who find his underlining and use of word capitalization annoying and even comical.

“I wasn’t trying to write for scholars. I’ve tried not to use big words that confuse people,” says Jerald, who volunteers several hours each day at the Rescue Mission downtown.

Wayne Jensen of Ogden, a former LDS stake mission president, said he left the church “kicking and screaming” after his wife, Carol Jensen, concluded it was not the “one true church.” It was the Tanners’ research that pointed the Jensens to hundreds of church documents from which they drew their own conclusions, Carol Jensen said.

“I expected them to be these great big, eat-you-alive people,” she says of the Tanners. “You couldn’t meet two kinder, gentler people in the world.”

One episode in the mid-1980s, more than any other, changed how the Tanners were perceived by intellectuals in the church.

Salamander letter’ labeled forged
Jerald concluded that the so-called “white salamander letter” was a forgery while other historians, including some employed
by the church, considered it an authentic historical document.

After Mark Hofmann killed two people with pipe bombs in 1985 in a failed attempt to cover that and others of his forgeries, Jerald and Sandra helped investigators and reporters piece together the case.

The fact that the Tanners debunked a document that could have hurt the church showed their integrity, said Peterson.

“There are some anti-Mormons out there that I hold in contempt. They’re demagogic. They spread hatred and strife and disharmony. I don’t see the Tanners in that way,” he said.

Yet Peterson doubts the Tanners have pulled as many Latter-day Saints from the fold as they’d like.

In the years since the couple began their ministry, the church has grown from 2 million to 10 million members.

Sandra Tanner says their impact can’t be quantified. But she estimates thousands have left the church, including the Tanners’ parents and most of their siblings.

The Tanners themselves have divided their work over the years. Jerald, an almost painfully shy introvert, does the research. Sandra runs the bookstore and is the public speaker.

“Either one of us would have had a hard time doing this,” says Sandra. “We’re two halves of one whole.”

* * * * * * * * *

COVERING UP MORMON POLYGAMY

On April 5, 1998, the Associated Press reporter Vern Anderson reported that the leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons) were attempting to hide the fact that polygamy was once an important part of Mormonism. Joseph Smith, the first Mormon prophet, actually claimed that God gave him a revelation that polygamy was to be practiced by the Mormons!

A STRANGE REVELATION

The revelation, dated July 12, 1843, contained the following:

Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord Justified my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines—

Behold, and lo, I am the Lord thy God, and will answer thee as touching this matter.

Therefore, prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions . . .

For behold, I reveal unto you a new and everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory. . . .

And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith [Joseph Smith’s wife] receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph, and are virtuous and pure before me; and those who are not pure, and have said they were pure, shall be destroyed, saith the Lord God. . . .

And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood—if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another . . . he is justified; he cannot commit adultery with that that belongeth unto him and to no one else.

And if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him and they are given unto him; therefore is he justified. (Doctrine and Covenants, Section 132, verses 1-3, 52, 61-62)

Smith secretly entered into plural marriage taking many wives for himself. In addition, he encouraged the brethren to do the same. In 1887, Assistant Church Historian Andrew Jenson made a list of 27 women who were sealed to Joseph Smith (Historical Record, vol. 6, p. 233). More recent research, however, demonstrated that the number 27 was too small. Mormon writer John J. Stewart believed that Smith married “three to four dozen or more” (Brigham Young and His Wives, 1961, pp. 30-31).

IN SACRED LONELINESS

While the leaders of the Mormon Church have tried to down play the fact that the early leaders of the church were polygamists, Mormon writer Todd Compton has compiled an astounding amount of material regarding the suffering Joseph Smith’s plural wives endured.

Compton’s 788-page book is entitled: In Sacred Loneliness – The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith. Unlike some of the leaders of the church, Dr. Compton is willing to tell what really happened in the early years of Mormonism. In the preface of his book Compton wrote:

All historians are subject to the limitations of the evidence available, and this book is no exception. But it is surprising that these key women have been comparatively forgotten, especially considering the reverence Mormons hold for their founding prophet, and considering how important polygamy was to Smith. In fact, one occasionally meets Mormons who have no idea that Joseph Smith had plural wives at all: twentieth-century
Mormons are undoubtedly uncomfortable with the details of nineteenth century polygamy. (page xi)

Further on Compton observed:

Often plural wives who experienced loneliness also reported feelings of depression, despair, anxiety, helplessness, abandonment, anger, psychosomatic symptoms, and low self-esteem. Certainly polygamous marriage was accepted by nineteenth-century Mormons as thoroughly sacred—it almost defined what was most holy to them—but its practical result, for the woman, was solitude. (pp. xiv-xv)

Many scholars have sought to ascertain exactly how many wives Joseph Smith had during his lifetime. Compton addressed this issue on the first page of his book:

I have identified thirty-three well-documented wives of Joseph Smith, which some may regard as an overly conservative numbering . . . Historians Fawn Brodie, D. Michael Quinn, and George D. Smith list forty-eight, forty-six, and forty-three, respectfully. Yet in problematic areas it may be advisable to err on the side of caution.

Compton made it clear that Joseph Smith wanted to marry even more women. He noted that Joseph "proposed to at least five more women who turned him down." Compton also reported that Smith "apparently experimented with plural marriage in the 1830s in Ohio and Missouri . . . In 1841 Smith cautiously added three wives in the first eight months of the year . . . during the first half of 1843, Joseph Smith married fourteen more wives, including five in May" (pp. 2-3).

Since most people who lived in Illinois in the 1840’s were very opposed to polygamy and adultery, Joseph Smith’s secret teaching caused a great deal of conflict. Despite the fact the Smith attempted to hide these strange practices and even publicly denied them, leaks occurred and the practice became known to his enemies. Just about a month before his death Joseph Smith was charged with adultery (see History of the Church, vol. 6, p. 403).

When Joseph Smith learned that some of his own followers had become disenchanted with his leadership and were planning to publish the fact that he was deeply involved in polygamy he panicked. Instead of handling manners in a peaceful way, he ordered the destruction of the opposition’s newspaper, the Nauvoo Expositor. This incident was very disturbing to non-Mormons who lived in or near Nauvoo. They were convinced that Smith had violated freedom of the press and that something had to be done. The noted Mormon historian B. H. Roberts wrote: “The legality of the action . . . was of course, questionable, though some sought to defend it on legal grounds; but it must be conceded that neither proof nor argument of legality are convincing” (History of the Church, Introduction to vol. 6, p. xxxviii).

Unfortunately for Joseph Smith, this incident eventually led to his death. While Joseph and his brother Hyrum were being held in the Carthage Jail a mob attacked the jail. Both Joseph and Hyrum were murdered by their assailants. This, of course, was a very cowardly act and even anti-Mormon writers refer to it as “cold-blooded murder.”

ASHAMED OF POLYGAMY?

Joseph Smith’s revelation regarding polygamy caused serious difficulties for faithful Mormons who followed him. After Smith’s death Brigham Young, the second prophet of the church, continued to stress the importance of plural marriage. On June 3, 1866, Brigham Young declared:

We are told that if we would give up polygamy—which we know to be a doctrine revealed from heaven, and it is of God and the world for it—but suppose this Church should give up this holy order of marriage, then would the devil, and all who are in league with him against the cause of God, rejoice that they had prevailed upon the Saints to refuse to obey one of the revelations and commandments of God to them . . . Will the Latter-day Saints do this? No; they will not to please anybody. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 11, p. 239)

On August 19th, 1866, Brigham Young strongly admonished his people to continue the practice of plural marriage:

The only men who become Gods, even the sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy . . . I heard the revelation on polygamy, and I believed it with all my heart . . . “Do you think that we shall ever be admitted as a State into the Union without denying the principle of polygamy?” If we are not admitted until then, we shall never be admitted. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 11, p. 269)

On another occasion President Brigham Young warned: “Now if any of you will deny the plurality of wives and continue to do so, I promise that you will be damned . . .” (Deseret News, November 14, 1855).

President Young, like Joseph Smith, was very emphatic about the need for his people to practice
polygamy. In 1873, he gave this stern warning:

Now, where a man in this church says, “I don’t want but one wife, I will live my religion with one,” he will perhaps be saved in the Celestial kingdom; but when he gets there he will not find himself in possession of any wife at all. He has had a talent that he has hid up. He will come forward and say, “Here is that which thou gavest me, I have not wasted it, and here is the one talent,” and he will not enjoy it but it will be taken and given to those who have improved the talents they received, and he will find himself without any wife, and he will remain single forever and ever. (Deseret News, September 17, 1873)

The reader will note that the quotations above were taken from the church’s own publications, Deseret News and Journal of Discourses.

After Brigham Young’s death the Mormon Church continued to practice plural marriage. The government, however, was determined to stop polygamy. Consequently, many Mormons were imprisoned.

Lorenzo Snow, who became president of the church in 1898, strongly argued that the church would never cease plural marriage. When Snow was on trial for the practice of polygamy, Mr. Bierbower, the prosecuting attorney, predicted that if he were convicted, “a new revelation would soon follow, changing the divine law of celestial marriage.” To this Lorenzo Snow responded:

Whatever fame Mr. Bierbower may have secured as a lawyer, he certainly will fail as a prophet. The severest prosecutions have never been followed by revelations changing a divine law, obedience to which brought imprisonment or martyrdom.

Though I go to prison, God will not change his law of celestial marriage. But the man, the people, the nation that oppose and fight against this doctrine and the Church of God, will be overthrown. (Historical Record, p. 144)

Although Lorenzo Snow said that the “severest prosecutions have never been followed by revelations changing a divine law,” Wilford Woodruff, the 4th president of the church, issued the Manifesto in 1890. This document proclaimed the church would not continue to allow the practice of plural marriage.

Although the highest leaders of the Mormon Church promised to obey the law of the land, many of them broke their promises. Few people, however, realized to what extent until they were called to testify in the “Proceedings Before the Committee on Privileges and Elections of the United States Senate in the Matter of the Protests Against the Right of Hon. Reed Smoot, a Senator From the State of Utah, to Hold His Seat.” It is commonly referred to as the Reed Smoot Case.

Joseph F. Smith, the sixth president of the church, testified as follows in the Reed Smoot Case:

The CHAIRMAN. Do you obey the law in having five wives at this time, and having them bear to you eleven children since the manifesto of 1890?

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Chairman, I have not claimed that in that case I have obeyed the law of the land.

The CHAIRMAN. That is all.

Mr. SMITH. I do not claim so, and I have said before that I prefer to stand my chances against the law. (Reed Smoot Case, vol. 1, p. 197)

Mr. TAYLER. You say there is a State law forbidding unlawful cohabitation?

Mr. SMITH. That is my understanding.

Mr. TAYLER. And ever since that law was passed you have been violating it?

Mr. SMITH. I think likely I have been practicing the same thing even before the law was passed. (Ibid., p. 130)

The CHAIRMAN. . . . you are violating the law?

Mr. SMITH. The law of my State?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes.

Mr. SMITH. Yes, sir.

Senator OVERMAN. Is there not a revelation published in the Book of Covenants [i.e., the Doctrine and Covenants] here that you shall abide by the law of the State?

Mr. SMITH. It includes both unlawful cohabitation and polygamy.

Senator OVERMAN. Is there not a revelation that you should abide by the laws of the State and of the land?

Mr. SMITH. Yes, sir.

Senator OVERMAN. If that is a revelation, are you not violating the laws of God?

Mr. SMITH. I have admitted that, Mr. Senator, a great many times here. (Ibid., pp. 334-335)

It seems incredible that President Joseph F. Smith could admit that he violated both “the laws of the State” and “the laws of God” and still remain the “Prophet, Seer, and Revelator” of the Mormon Church.

After making a long and careful study of the church’s cover-up of polygamy, the Committee on Privileges and Elections submitted a report showing that the Manifesto was a deception:
A sufficient number of specific instances of the taking of plural wives since the manifesto of 1890, so called, have been shown by the testimony as having taken place among officials of the Mormon Church . . . the leaders in this church, the first presidency and the twelve apostles, connive at the practice of taking plural wives, and have done so ever since the manifesto was issued which purported to put an end to the practice . . . As late as 1884 one Lillian Hamlin became the plural wife of Abraham H. Cannon, who was then an apostle . . . The prominence of Abraham H. Cannon in the church, the publicity given to the fact of his taking Lillian Hamlin as a plural wife, render it practically impossible that this should have been done without the knowledge, the consent, and the connivance of the headship of that church.

George Teasdale, another apostle of the Mormon Church, contracted a plural marriage with Marion Scholes since the manifesto . . . Charles E. Merrill, a bishop of the Mormon Church, took a plural wife in 1891 . . . The ceremony . . . was performed by his father, who was then and until the time of his death an apostle in the Mormon Church. It is also shown that John W. Taylor, another apostle of the Mormon Church, has been married to two plural wives since the issuing of the so-called manifesto.

Matthias F. Cowley, another of the twelve apostles, has also taken one or more plural wives since the manifesto . . . Apostles Taylor and Cowley, instead of appearing before the committee and denying the allegation, evade service of process issued by the committee for their appearance and refuse to appear after being requested to do so . . .

It is also proved that about the year 1896 James Francis Johnson was married to a plural wife . . . the ceremony in this instance being performed by an apostle of the Mormon Church. To these cases must be added that of Marriner W. Merrill, another apostle; J. M. Tanner, superintendent of church schools; Benjamin Cluff, Jr., president of Brigham Young University; Thomas Chamberlain, counselor to the president of a stake; Bishop Rathall, John Silver, Winslow Farr, Heber Benion, Samuel S. Newton . . .

It is morally impossible that all these violations of the laws of the State of Utah by the contracting of plural marriages could have been committed without the knowledge of the first presidency and the twelve apostles of the Mormon Church . . . the authorities of said church have endeavored to suppress, and have succeeded in suppressing, a great deal of testimony . . . it was well known in Salt Lake City that it was expected to show . . . that Apostles George Teasdale, John W. Taylor, and M.F. Cowley, and also Prof. J. M. Tanner, Samuel Newton and others who were all high officials of the Mormon Church had recently taken plural wives . . . All, or nearly all, of these persons . . . were then within reach of service of process from the committee. But shortly before the investigation began all these witnesses went out of the country . . .

It would be nothing short of self-stultification for one to believe that all these important witnesses chanced to leave the United States at about the same time and without reference to the investigation. All the facts and circumstances surrounding the transaction point to the conclusion that every one of the witnesses named left the country at the instance of the rulers of the Mormon Church and to avoid testifying before the committee.” (Reed Smoot Case, vol. 4, pp. 476-482)

Although Mormon leaders promised the government in 1890 that they would not sanction any more plural marriages, they secretly continued the practice until 1904! This, of course, casts serious doubt on their integrity. Unfortunately, these authorities followed the path of Joseph Smith, who always denied the practice of polygamy even though he actually had many plural wives.

An example of Joseph Smith’s deception is found in the official History of the Church. On May 3, 1844, Joseph Smith responded to the accusation that he “kept six or seven young females as wives”:

What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one.

I am the same man, and as innocent as I was fourteen years ago; and I can prove them all perjurers. (History of the Church, vol. 6, p. 411)

**REVELATION REMAINS**

While the Mormon Church leaders no longer allow their members to practice polygamy, they will not remove Joseph Smith’s revelation concerning plural marriage from the Doctrine and Covenants. Although this book is canonized as one of the four standard works of the Mormon Church, it is not usually given to outsiders. Many non-Mormons who live outside of Utah have told us that they could not obtain this book from the Mormon missionaries. The church is apparently embarrassed by the polygamy revelation which appears in that book.

The church’s reluctance to remove the revelation from the Doctrine and Covenants led to a great deal of confusion. Unfortunately, the double standard of the Mormon leaders after the Manifesto left such a credibility gap that many Mormons continued to hold to polygamy even after the church withdrew its official support of the practice. Like Joseph Smith, they secretly entered into
polygamy, and even though the Mormon Church excommunicated a large number of them, the movement did not die out. Consequently, almost a century after Wilford Woodruff issued the Manifesto; there are thousands of people who are still practicing polygamy in Utah. On December 27, 1965, the New York Times reported that as “many as 30,000 men, women and children live in families in which polygamy is practiced.” Ben Merson reported:

“Today in Utah,” declares William M. Rogers, former special assistant to the State Attorney, “there are more polygamous families than in the days of Brigham Young. At least 30,000 men, women and children in this state are now living in plural households—and the number is rapidly increasing.” Thousands now live in the adjoining states of Idaho, Nevada, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona—plus sizable portions in Oregon, California, Canada and Mexico. (Ladies' Home Journal, June 1967, p. 78)

The number of polygamists has of course grown since Ben Merson wrote his article. On June 7, 1998, Maxine Hanks wrote an article in the Salt Lake Tribune pointing out that polygamy is a serious problem:

Utah usually ignores polygamy, hoping it will go away. But its scope and problems have grown and “festered like cancer,” according to an ex-wife . . . Polygamy is a relic of 19th-century Mormon fundamentalism, still thriving. Today, there are a dozen major clans consisting of hundreds of families. And there are small independent groups. Often the clans are eccentric and insular, while other polygamists blend unnoticed into contemporary American society. Estimates vary widely, but insiders claim that Mormon fundamentalism may involve 60,000 people scattered from Canada to Mexico across seven Western states. Most of them are practicing some form of polygamy.

Because they claim to go back to the original teachings of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young concerning polygamy and the Adam God Doctrine, they are usually referred to as Mormon “Fundamentalists.” The Mormon leaders now find themselves in a very strange situation. On the one hand, they have to uphold polygamy as a righteous principle, but on the other, they have to discourage members of the church from actually entering into its practice. If they completely repudiated the doctrine of polygamy, they would be admitting that Joseph Smith was a deceiver, and that the church was founded on fraud. If, however, they vigorously defended the doctrine, many people would probably enter into the practice and bring disgrace upon the church. Their position is about the same as a person saying, “My church believes in water baptism, but we are not allowed to practice it.” Because of this peculiar dilemma, church officials discourage discussion of plural marriage.

As long as the Mormon leaders continue to publish Joseph Smith’s revelation on polygamy (Doctrine and Covenants, Section 132), there will no doubt be many people who will enter into the practice. Church leaders of course cannot repudiate this revelation without destroying their doctrine concerning temple marriage. The two doctrines were revealed in the very same revelation. (Temple marriage is the marriage of a man and woman for time and all eternity in a secret ritual performed only in a Mormon temple.)

The fact that polygamy and temple marriage stand or fall together was made very clear by Charles Penrose, who was later sustained as first counselor in the First Presidency, at a conference in Centerville, Utah: “Elder Charles W. Penrose . . . showed that the revelation . . . was [the] only one published on Celestial Marriage, and if the doctrine of plural marriage was repudiated so must the glorious principle of marriage for eternity, the two being indissolubly interwoven with each other” (Millennial Star, vol. 45, p. 454).

Apostle Orson Pratt argued that “if plurality of marriage is not true or in other words, if a man has no divine right to marry two wives or more in this world, then marriage for eternity is not true, and your faith is in vain, and all the sealing ordinances and powers pertaining to marriages for eternity are vain, worthless, good for nothing; for as sure as one is true the other also must be true” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 21, p. 296).

**DAMAGE CONTROL**

In 1997, the First Presidency of the Mormon Church and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles decided to publish a manual entitled: Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young. This manual has generated a good deal of controversy. As noted above, Vern Anderson wrote an interesting article that demonstrated the church’s attempt to suppress information regarding Brigham Young’s plural wives.

Anderson reported that a young woman who had recently married a Mormon came to the home of Valeen Tippett’s Avery, a noted Mormon writer, seeking to know why the new manual overlooked Brigham Young’s practice of polygamy. Vern Anderson wrote: “She was confused now, and someone had suggested she talk to Avery.
“Dr. Avery,” she said, “I just got the new Relief Society manual, which is about Brigham Young, and he only has one wife.”

Avery, a Mormon who knew the pioneer leader had 55 wives, couldn’t explain why the lesson manual being used since January by male and female church members in 22 languages paints America’s most famous polygamist as a monogamist.

But she had some advice.

“The Mormon church is trying to say to the new people coming into the church, as well as to the larger American society, that there was nothing questionable in the Mormon past,” Avery told the woman. “And if you want answers to these kinds of sticky questions, you’re not going to find them inside accepted Mormon manuals and doctrines.”

The absence of any mention of polygamy is just one of the criticisms being leveled at the manual . . .

“Whoever compiled the manual is extraordinarily embarrassed by the church’s second president,” says Ron Pridis of Signature Books.

“It’s a religious tract, not history,” scoffs historian Nancy J. Taniguchi . . .

Within months of assuming the church presidency in March 1995, Gordon B. Hinckley told the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to begin updating the curriculum of the adult male priesthood quorums and the Relief Society, both of which had always been separate . . . Soon, a writing committee was formed, using Discourses of Brigham Young, a 1954 compilation of Young’s teachings by Apostle John A. Widtsoe, as the primary source for a new priesthood manual . . .

Widtsoe’s work, narrowly windowed from the hundreds of Young speeches contained in the multivolume Journal of Discourses, had served to spruce up and sanitize the rough-and-ready frontier prophet for modern audiences. Widtsoe eliminated many of the cantankerous, contradictory, hyperbolic rantings for which Young was known . . .

Polygamy, which church founder Joseph Smith secretly practiced . . . and which Young publicly championed, was dropped 13 years after his death . . . and appears nowhere in the Widtsoe index or the new manual.

Also missing from the manual are Young’s theories that Adam was God the Father and that Eve was just one of God’s wives, the rest having been left on other worlds. Blood atonement was another casualty.

Worse than a glaring lack of context, though, say critics who have closely compared statements in the manual of Young’s sermons, are the resulting misrepresentations of his ideas.

“I’d say that about 10 percent of the quotes are overtly lifted out of context, with about another 10 percent that are more subtly altered. In addition, about 5 percent have been abbreviated to avoid offense regarding race, nationality, gender and so on,” Pridis said. (Vern Anderson. The Associated Press, April, 1998)

HIDING YOUNG’S WIVES

As noted above, the manual authorized by the church’s highest leaders carefully plows around the question of polygamy. The manual does contain a “Historical Summary” that mentions Young’s first wife, Miriam Smith, and tells of her death. It then states that he married Mary Ann Angell in 1834 (see page vii). On page 4, the manual notes that “six children were born into their family.” Unfortunately, the fact that Young actually had 55 wives and 56 children during his lifetime is entirely omitted from the record!

Sandra Tanner, who is the great-great-granddaughter of Brigham Young and one of the editors of this newsletter, finds it ironic that the church would try to hide the truth about Brigham Young’s polygamous practices when there must be hundreds of his descendants in the church.

The attempt to conceal Brigham Young’s numerous wives is evident. Interestingly, the Deseret News 1997-98 Church Almanac misprinted the first seven presidents of the church because they were all polygamists. The names of these leaders of the church are as follows: Joseph Smith, Jr., Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, Joseph Fielding Smith, and Heber Jeddy Grant.

The interesting thing about this matter is that after mentioning the death of the seventh president of the church in 1945 (Heber Jeddy Grant) the 1997-98 Church Almanac switches its emphasis. From that point on it lists the names of the women that were married to the presidents of the church. Furthermore, it tells the number of children that they had. For example, George Albert Smith, the eighth president, was not a polygamist. Consequently, those who compiled the Almanac were able to provide information regarding his wife and the number of children they had. It was noted that George Albert Smith, “Married Lucy Emily Woodruff May 25, 1892 (she died Nov. 5, 1937); they had three children.”
David Oman McKay, the ninth president of the church, lived to the age of 96. His marriage and his children are mentioned in the *Almanac*. It was noted that he was, “Married to Emma Ray Riggs Jan. 2, 1901 (she died Nov. 14, 1970): they had seven children.”

The next six presidents of the church: Joseph Fielding Smith, Harold Bingham Lee, Spencer Woolley Kimball, Ezra Taft Benson, Howard William Hunter and the current leader of the church, President Gordon B. Hinckley, all had the names of their wives mentioned in the current *Almanac* as well as the number of children they fathered. The attempt to conceal the fact that the early Mormon leaders were all polygamists is evident to anyone who takes a serious look at the matter (see the *Deseret News 1997-98 Church Almanac*, pp. 14, 40-42).

Some interesting examples of suppression are found on page 165 of the church manual. In the first example we find this admonition by Brigham Young: “... Set that example before your wives and your children...” (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 15, p. 229).

In his book published in 1946, Apostle John A. Widtsoe rendered the quote as it appeared in the original *Journal of Discourses*. Unfortunately, however, those who were in charge of preparing the new manual decided that the word *wives* should not be used. Consequently, they fixed the text so it read: “... Set that example before your [wife] and your children...” The reader will notice that the word wife is set in brackets. This was clearly an attempt to remove material about plural marriage from the text.

On the same page of the manual we find another attempt to cover up the past. Young is quoted as saying: “Let the husband and father learn to bend his will to the will of his God, and then instruct his [wife] and children...” The reader will note that “wives” has been replaced with the word “wife.” Neither the *Journal of Discourses* nor Apostle Widtsoe’s book agrees with the new manual.

Although we have not had the time to make a thorough search of the material found in the manual, we did find additional evidence of tampering with the text. For example, Brigham Young stated:

It is obvious that those in authority did not want Brigham Young’s comments concerning men being sealed to men to appear in the manual. Another example of the same type of cover-up is found on page 334 of the manual. Brigham Young stated:

Then man will be sealed to man until the chain is made perfect... (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 15, p. 139)

The manual, however, has been changed to read as follows:

Then [children] will be sealed to [parents] until the chain is made perfect... (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church, Brigham Young*, p. 334)

Most people who are familiar with present-day Mormonism know that dedicated Mormons have a wedding ceremony in the temple in which they seal women to men for time and all eternity. Their children are also sealed to them for eternity. Most Mormons, however, are not aware of the fact that the early leaders of the church had a very unusual ceremony known as the “the law of adoption.” Thus a man could have any number of men adopted to him as sons for eternity. Interestingly, the adopted sons were sometimes older than the men who adopted them! Wilford Woodruff, the fourth president of the church, wrote in his journal that he “officiated in Adopting 96 Men to Men” (*Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, edited by Scott G. Kenney, 1985, vol. 9, p. 408).

The noted Mormon historian Juanita Brooks reported that when a man was sealed to another man it was not considered improper for him to take the surname of that man. Mrs. Brooks also wrote:

If the prophet Joseph were to become a God over a minor planet, he must not only have a large posterity but able assistants of practical skills. Brigham Young had been “sealed” to Joseph under this law; now he in turn had some thirty-eight young men sealed to him.” (*John D. Lee: Zealot-Pioneer-Builder-Scapegoat*, p. 73)

Those who censored the church manual concerning Brigham Young obviously did not want their people to know about this strange doctrine of sealing men to men. This attempt to disguise the truth about what was going on in the early years of Mormonism is deplorable. For more information about this matter see our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pp. 480-483.
MARRYING A CHILD

The Mormon prophet Joseph Smith married a number of young women before his death in 1844. One of his victims was Helen Mar Kimball. Todd Compton wrote: “Having married Joseph Smith at the age of fourteen, victims was Helen Mar Kimball. Todd Compton wrote: ‘Sacred Loneliness’ (p. 487).

Even before Joseph Smith’s marriage to Helen Kimball, Smith had upset the Kimball family when he asked for Heber C. Kimball’s wife, Vilate Kimball. Todd Compton wrote:

The first chapter in the story of Smith, the Kimballs, and polygamy is that of Vilate’s offering, which Orson Whitney, Helen’s own son, recounted in his biography of Heber. In early 1842, apparently, Joseph approached Heber and made a stunning demand: “It was no less than a requirement for him to surrender his wife, his beloved Vilate, and give her to Joseph in marriage!” wrote Orson. Heber, naturally was ‘paralyzed’ and initially unbelieving. “Yet Joseph was solemnly in earnest.”

For three days Heber endured agonies. Finally asked to choose between his loyalty to Mormonism and his intimacy with his wife, Mormonism and Smith won out. “Then, with a broken and bleeding heart, but with soul-mastered for the sacrifice, he led his darling wife to the Prophet’s house and presented her to Joseph.”

“He was wept at this proof of devotion, and embracing Heber, told him that was all that the Lord required.” It had been a test, said Joseph, to see if Heber would give up everything he possessed . . .

This prefigured the next test for the couple, which was nearly as difficult as the first: Smith now taught Heber the principle of polygamy and required him to take a plural wife . . . Smith had already selected Heber’s first plural wife . . . to add to the trial, Joseph commanded Heber to keep the plural marriage secret even from Vilate “for fear that she would not receive the principle.” Helen wrote, “This was the greatest test of his [Heber’s] faith he had ever experienced . . . the thought of deceiving the kind and faithful wife of his youth, whom he loved with all his heart, and who with him had borne so patiently their separations and all the trials and sacrifices they had been called to endure, was more than he felt able to bear.”

According to Orson, “Heber was told by Joseph Smith that if he did not do this he would lose his apostleship and be damned.” As so often, Joseph Smith taught polygamy as a requirement, and to reject it was to lose one’s eternal soul. Once one had accepted him as a prophet, one had to comply or accept damnation . . .

Heber and Vilate had passed through the fiery ordeal of two polygamic tests. One more, this one involving Helen, still awaited them . . . Polygamy was inching closer and closer to the unsuspecting teenager . . . Orson Whitney wrote, “soon after the revelation [to Vilate] was given, a golden link was formed whereby the houses of Heber and Joseph were indissoluble and forever joined. Helen Mar, the eldest Daughter of Heber Chase and Vilate Murray Kimball, was given to the Prophet in the holy bonds of celestial marriage.” . . . As Helen told the story, polygamy entered her life when her father approached her one day . . . in the early summer of 1843. “Without any preliminaries [my father] asked me if I would believe him if he told me that it was right for married men to take other wives.” Helen’s response was instinctual Victorian: “The first impulse was anger . . . My sensibilities were painfully touched. I felt such a sense of personal injury and displeasure; for to mention such a thing to me I thought altogether unworthy of my father, and as quick as he spoke, I replied to him short and emphatically, No I wouldn’t! . . . This was the first time that I ever openly manifested anger towards him.” . . .

Helen listened in disbelief and complete dismay. She wrote that, for her, this first interview “had a similar effect to a sudden shock of a small earthquake. When he found (after the first outburst of displeasure for supposed injury) that I received it meekly, he took the first opportunity to introduce Sarah Ann to me as Joseph’s wife. This astonished me beyond measure.” However, before introducing Helen to the subject of her possible marriage to Smith, Heber had apparently already offered her to the Prophet. In her 1881 reminiscence Helen wrote, “Having a great desire to be connected with the Prophet, Joseph, he offered me to him; this I afterwards learned from the Prophet’s own mouth. My father had but one Ewe Lamb, but willingly laid her upon the altar: how cruel this seemed to the mother whose heartstrings were already stretched until they were ready to snap asunder, for he had taken Sarah Noon to wife & she thought she had made sufficient sacrifice [sic] but the Lord Required more.” Heber thus ended his first interview with Helen by asking her if she would become Joseph Smith’s wife. If possible, Helen was even more astounded than before. She wrote, “I will pass over the temptations which I had during the twenty four hours after my father introduced to me this principle & asked me if I would be sealed to Joseph.” Undoubtedly, unbelief and rebelliousness were part of these temptations.

In a published account Helen described her indecision during this twenty-four-hour period, but her trust in her father turned the scales toward accepting polygamy: “[He] left me to reflect upon it for the next twenty-four hours . . . I was skeptical—one minute believed, then doubted. I thought of the love and tenderness that he felt for his only daughter . . . I knew that he loved me too well.
Evidence, however, is irrefutable. Todd Compton wrote: “If you will take this step, it will ensure your eternal salvation & exaltation and that of your father’s household & all of your kindred.” This promise was so great that I willingly gave myself to purchase so glorious a reward.” This is far from a glowing positive. Despite Vilate’s obvious reluctance to see her daughter enter plurality, the ceremony took place. In May 1843 . . . she was married to Joseph . . . it appears that Helen, when she married Smith, understood that the marriage would be “for eternity alone,” and that it would leave her free to marry someone else for time. But apparently this was not the case, as is shown by a number of factors. First, there is no evidence elsewhere that Smith ever married for eternity, not only for her own salvation but for that of her whole family. Thus Helen’s acceptance of a union that was not intrinsically attractive to her was an act of youthful sacrifice and heroism.

The only person still reluctant to see the marriage performed, after Helen had accepted the proposal, was Vilate. Helen wrote, “None but God & his angels could see my mother’s bleeding heart—when Joseph asked her if she was willing, she replied, ‘If Helen is willing I have nothing more to say.’” This is far from a glowing positive. For instance, in the marriage ceremony used for Smith and Sarah Ann Whitney . . . they both agreed “to be each other’s companion so long as you both shall live” as well as for eternity . . . So apparently Helen had expected her marriage to Joseph Smith to be for eternity only, then discovered that it included time also. (In Sacred Loneliness, pp. 495-500)

TAKING OTHER MEN’S WIVES

Many members of the Mormon Church find it very difficult to believe that the prophet Joseph Smith would be involved in anything unseemly. Some of them, in fact, cannot believe that he had sex with his wives. The evidence, however, is irrefutable. Todd Compton wrote:

Emily Partridge Young said she “roomed” with Joseph the night following her marriage to him, and said that she had “carnal intercourse” with him.

Other early witnesses also affirmed this. Benjamin Johnson wrote: “On the 15th of May . . . the Prophet again Came and at my house [house] occupied [sic] the Same Room & Bed with my sister that the month previous he had occupied with the Daughter of the Later [late?] Bishop Partridge as his wife.” According to Joseph Bates Noble, Smith told him he had spent a night with Louisa Beaman . . . many of Joseph’s wives affirmed that they were married to him for eternity and time, with sexuality included. Eliza Snow . . . wrote that “I was sealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith for time and eternity, in accordance with the Celestial Law of Marriage which God has revealed.” (In Sacred Loneliness, pp. 12-14)

Todd Compton frankly discussed the issue of Joseph Smith marrying women who already had husbands. This strange type of marriage is known as polyandry (i.e., the practice of a woman having more than one husband at the same time.)

On pages 15-16 of his book, Compton wrote:

Polyandry is one of the major problems found in Smith’s polygamy and many questions surround it. Why did he at first primarily prefer polyandrous marriages? In the past, polyandry has often been ignored or glossed over, but if these women merit serious attention, the topic cannot be overlooked . . . A common misconception concerning Joseph Smith’s polyandry is that he participated in only one or two such unusual unions. In fact, fully one-third of his plural wives, eleven of them, were married civilly to other men when he married them. If one superimposes a chronological perspective, one sees that of Smith’s first twelve wives, nine were polyandrous. So in this early period polyandry was the norm, not the anomaly . . . Polyandry might be easier to understand if one viewed these marriages to Smith as a sort of de facto divorce with the first husband. However, none of these women divorced their “first husbands” while Smith was alive and all of them continued to live with their civil spouses while married to Smith . . . In the eleven certain polyandrous marriages, only three of the husbands were non-Mormon (Lightner, Sayers, and Cleveland) and only one was disaffected (Buell). All other husbands were in good standing in the church at the time Joseph married their wives. Many were prominent church leaders and close friends of Smith. George W. Harris was a high councilor . . . a position equivalent to that of a twentieth-century general authority. Henry Jacobs was a devoted friend of Joseph and a faithful missionary. Orson Hyde
was an apostle on his mission to Palestine when Smith married his wife. Jonathan Holmes was one of Smith’s bodyguards . . . Windsor Lyon was a member in good standing when Smith united with Sylvia Lyon, and he loaned the prophet money after the marriage. David Sessions was a devout Latter-day Saint.

These data suggest that Joseph may have married these women, often, not because they were married to non-members but because they were married to faithful Latter-day Saints who were his devoted friends. This again suggests that the men knew about the marriages and permitted them.

Another theory is that Joseph married polyandrously when the marriage was unhappy. If this were true, it would have been easy for the woman to divorce her husband, then marry Smith. But none of these women did so; some of them stayed with their “first husbands” until death. In the case of Zina Huntington Jacobs and Henry Jacobs—often used as an example of Smith marrying a woman whose marriage was unhappy—the Mormon leader married her just seven months after she married Jacobs, and then she stayed with Jacobs for years after Smith’s death. Then the separation was forced when Brigham Young (who had married Zina polyandrously in the Nauvoo temple) sent Jacobs on a mission to England and began living with Zina himself. (In Sacred Loneliness, pages 15-16)

In the fourth chapter of his book Todd Compton gives a great deal of information regarding Joseph Smith’s polyandrous relationship with Zina Diantha Huntington:

On February 2, 1846, in an inner room in the Nauvoo temple, Zina Huntington Jacobs stood by the side of Brigham Young, presiding apostle and de facto president of the Mormon church . . . Somewhat apart stood Henry B. Jacobs, whom Zina had married in a civil ceremony in March 1841. She was now seven months pregnant with their second child . . . That Henry Bailey was inside the temple shows that he was considered a faithful, worthy Latter-day Saint.

Zina and Brigham turned toward each other and Kimball sealed (married) Zina to Joseph Smith for eternity; Brigham stood proxy for the dead prophet, answering in his stead when the ceremony required a response . . . as was customary in temple proxy marriages, Zina and Brigham turned to each other and were sealed to each other for time. Once again Henry stood as witness. One suspects that none of the four participants in these ceremonies understood their full significance. Henry and Zina probably felt that they would continue living together as husband and wife, as they had during Joseph Smith’s life. Young had married some women by proxy with whom he never lived . . . But Brigham Young would eventually decide that Zina must become his wife fully, and the story of Zina Huntington would run its enigmatic course.

Zina . . . was a polyandrous plural wife of both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. It is well documented that she married Henry Jacobs in March 1841 and continued to live with him until May 1846, bearing him two children . . . It is also well documented that Zina married Joseph Smith in October 1841 and Brigham Young in February 1846. While “official” Mormon biographies have Zina marrying Smith and Young after she left Henry, her marriages are so well documented that one is forced to reject this sequence and confront the issue of Nauvoo polyandry . . . as was the case with many of Joseph Smith’s plural wives, Zina lived in his house before her marriage to him . . . Apparently in the midst of Henry Jacobs’s suit, Joseph Smith taught Zina the principle of plural marriage and then proposed to her. One can only imagine the shock this must have caused her. The “cult of true womanhood” in nineteenth-century America required that a woman live by the ideals of purity, piety, domesticity, and submissiveness; and Smith’s new doctrine offended against domesticity (the sanctity of the home), piety (typical American religious mores), and purity (the belief that sexuality should be reserved for monogamous Christian marriage). So it is not surprising that despite her religious reverence for the Mormon leader, she either flatly rejected his proposals or put him off. Furthermore, she was probably in love with Jacobs, and may have revered Joseph’s wife Emma, whom she probably realized would be unsympathetic to an extramongamous union . . . Smith was always persistent in his marriage proposals, and rejections usually moved him to further effort, so he continued to press his suit with Zina at the same time that she was courting Henry. And Smith usually expressed his polygamous proposals in terms of prophetic commandments. In addition to the religious dilemmas she faced, Zina was also choosing between two men, both of whom she cared for in different ways. In early 1841 Zina made here choice: she would marry Henry Jacobs, her romantic soulmate. The engagement was announced. By making this decision, she probably felt that she had put an end to Smith’s suit and to the specter of polygamy in her life. It is not known whether Henry knew that Smith had also proposed to Zina, but it is known that he was a close friend and disciple of Smith. According to family tradition, as the day of marriage approached, Henry and/or Zina asked Smith to perform the marriage, and he agreed . . . but Smith did not appear, so they turned to John C. Bennett . . . to officiate. Zina must have felt a
sense of relief and finality as she and Henry exchanged vows and began their married life in Nauvoo.

However, Zina learned soon afterwards, undoubtedly to her complete astonishment, that Smith had not given up. Again according to family tradition, she and Henry saw Smith soon after the marriage and “asked why he had not come . . . he told them the Lord had made it known to him she was to be his celestial wife.” Once again Zina was plunged into a quandary. Smith told them that God had commanded him to marry her. However, he apparently also told them they could continue to live together as husband and wife. According to family tradition, Henry accepted this, but Zina continued to struggle. If polygyny offended against the American cult of true womanhood, polyandry offended even more. Nevertheless . . . submissiveness required her to obey. Disobeying Smith would also be an offense against Mormon piety. So polygamy divided the cult of true womanhood against itself. If a woman interpreted Smith’s polygyny and polyandry as sacred, she would become entirely devoted to the new system . . . Zina remained conflicted until a day in October, apparently, when Joseph sent Dimick to her with a message: an angel with a drawn sword had stood over Smith and told him that if he did not establish polygamy, he would lose “his position and his life.” Zina, faced with the responsibility for his position as prophet, and even perhaps his life, finally acquiesced . . . Apparently, Henry knew of the marriage and accepted it. He believed that whatever the prophet did was right, without making the wisdom of God’s authorities bend to the reasoning of any man” . . . Zina and Henry stayed married, cohabiting, throughout Smith’s life. Thus Zina’s explanation for her marriage to Smith may be a “revision” of history to gloss over her simultaneous marriage to both men. It is certain that the marriage was not enough to cause the couple to stop living together during Smith’s lifetime, or for years after his death . . . for reasons that are not completely clear, Brigham Young pressed his suit with Zina. According to family traditions, “President Young told Zina D. if she would marry him she would be in a higher glory.” . . . Brigham approached her after Smith’s death and she apparently married him for time in September 1844. Nevertheless, she remained married and cohabiting with Jacobs, which was consistent with Smith’s practice of polyandry . . . At Winter Quarters the next development in Zina’s marriage history took place: she began to live openly as Brigham Young’s wife. She later wrote, “Those days of trial and grief [at Mt. Pisgah] were succeeded by my journey to Winter quarters, where in due time I arrived, and was welcomed by President Young into his family.” This method of practicing polyandry contrasted sharply with Joseph Smith’s. Smith had never required any of his polyandrous wives to leave their first husbands and never lived openly with any of his polyandrous wives. Another problematic aspect of Zina’s relationship to Young was that they apparently did not write Henry and tell him of the development. (In Sacred Loneliness, pp. 71-72, 78-81, 84, 90)

Many years ago we searched through the Mormon Church’s publication Journal of Discourses and found a sermon delivered in the Tabernacle by Jedediah M. Grant, second counselor to Brigham Young. In this sermon, delivered February 19, 1854, Jedediah Grant made these weird comments:

There were quite a majority, I believe, in the days of Joseph, who believed he had no right to dictate in temporal matters, in farms, houses, merchandize, gold, silver, &c.; and they were tried on various points.

When the family organization was revealed from heaven—the patriarchal order of God, and Joseph began, on the right and on the left, to add to his family, what a quaking there was in Israel. Says one brother to another, “Joseph says all covenants are done away, and none are binding but the new covenants; now suppose Joseph should come and say he wanted your wife, what would you say to that?” “I would tell him to go to hell.” This was the spirit of many in the early days of this Church . . . If Joseph had a right to dictate me in relation to salvation, in relation to a hereafter, he had a right to dictate me in relation to all my earthly affairs, in relation to the treasures of the earth, and in relation to the earth itself . . . What would a man of God say, who felt aright, when Joseph asked him for his money? He would say, “Yes, and I wish I had more to help to build up the kingdom of God.” Or if he came and said, “I want your wife?” “O yes,” he would say, “here she is, there are plenty more.” . . . Did the Prophet Joseph want every man’s wife he asked for? He did not, but in that thing was the grand thread of the Priesthood developed. The grand object in view was to try the people of God, to see what was in them. If such a man of God should come to me and say, “I want your gold and silver, or your wives,” I should say, “Here they are, I wish I had more to give you, take all I have got.” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 2, pp. 13-14)
Todd Compton made this observation regarding Jedediah Grant’s sermon:

Grant disapproves of those who were asked to give up their wives and refused . . . He states that Smith did not want every wife he asked for, which implies that he wanted some of them . . . the fact that at least eleven women were married to Joseph polyandrously, including the wife of prominent apostle Orson Hyde, shows that in many cases Joseph was not simply asking for wives as a test of loyalty; sometimes the test included giving up the wife. (In Sacred Loneliness, pp. 18-19)

FALSE PROPHETS?

Mormon apostle John A. Widtsoe boldly asserted that Joseph Smith and the other early leaders were completely honest. The evidence with regard to polygamy, however, reveals exactly the opposite. The first seven presidents of the church who were supposed to be “prophets, seers, and revelators to the church,” were involved in a doctrine that led them into breaking the law, adultery, polyandry, deception, perjury, bribery and a massive cover-up. The reader will find a great deal of evidence concerning these matters in our book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?, pp. 202-249.

As we have noted above, the evidence clearly reveals that Joseph Smith’s practice of polygamy is an evil that continues to draw thousands of people into its web. Since Jesus Himself warned us to beware of “false prophets,” and instructed us that we will “know them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:15-16), it seems imperative that we face the truth about Mormonism. There is no way around the problem; the deceptive practices used by Joseph Smith and the other early leaders of the Mormon Church must be recognized for what they are—the “evil fruit” which Jesus attributed to “false prophets.” While we do not agree with much of the material written by President Joseph Fielding Smith, the sixth president of the church, he did make one statement that really gets to the heart of the matter:

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

If Joseph Smith was a deceiver, who willfully attempted to mislead the people, then he should be exposed; his claims should be refuted, and his doctrines shown to be false . . . (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 1, pp. 188-189)

We sincerely hope that Mormons who read this newsletter will see the futility of trusting in leaders who have used so much deceit and cover-up in establishing their work. We pray that they will awaken to the true message of Christ, realizing that in Him alone we have eternal life.

Temple Marriage?

One of the most important tenants of the LDS Church is the necessity of temple ordinances. They teach that marriage in one of their temples is a requirement for Eternal Life. Past President Spencer W. Kimball said:

Only through celestial [temple] marriage can one find the strait way, the narrow path. Eternal Life cannot be had in any other way. (Deseret News, Church Section, November 12, 1977)

Yet there is no mention of temple marriage in either the Bible or the Book of Mormon. The Jewish temple ceremonies are clearly explained in the Old Testament (Exodus, chapters 26-30) and have no relationship to the LDS temple ceremony.

In the New Testament the only eternal marriage is the spiritual marriage of the believer to Christ (see 2 Corinthians11:2 and Romans 7:4). This is a spiritual union, not an actual marriage. Christ never mentions that a temple marriage is necessary for eternal life. In fact, he taught just the opposite.

The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God. (Luke 20:34-36)

Extracts from Letters

(spelling and grammar corrected)

You call yourselves Christian and are out there serving a purpose to try to convert members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Yet you purposely tear down their beliefs. You say that you’re helping them. But do you realize what you are doing? Families are being torn apart. Good relationships are now bad. People in the church have now left it because of the garbage you guys put out.... All the anti you publish just goes to show you that it is of the devil. (Letter from Georgia)
Dearest friends in Christ, just wanted to tell you that I have left the mormon church. I am a 8th generation mormon. I left a few years ago and there was a book that I once read called Mormonism- Shadow or Reality? I have been looking for this book to give to my girlfriend’s family. If you know where I could find one please let me know... I also challenge anyone to dispute the book Mormonism- Shadow or Reality? When I was a mormon I tried my best to prove it wrong and to show that it was bunk and the Tanner’s book really made me think and I asked my bishop what’s going on here and he instructed me to shut up about it. So I looked up each and every one of their quotes and found that they are NOT taken out of context. (email from William)

Just dropping you a note to let you know that through the information given to me by your efforts and the folks on the Ex-mormon email list, my wife has sent in her letter to have the names of my children and hers removed from the LDS rolls. (email from James)

I was raised Mormon and one of the first books that I read about the Mormon church was The Changing World of Mormonism. I even gave it to my mother to read. Soon after I was saved thanks to your book making me question the Mormon church, prayers and my husband’s teaching of the Bible. I have been saved five years and am now learning some things that I didn’t know that the Mormon church believed. (email from Melinda)

I want to extend my sincere gratitude for the work that you have done, which has glorified our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The various materials from the Utah Lighthouse Ministry have been a blessing in my life.

I came out of Mormonism two years ago and was able to put to rest some of the reservations I had about leaving the Latter-day Saints. Mrs. Tanner, it was your book “The Bible and Mormon Doctrine” that had the most spiritual effect on me. The Holy Ghost has blessed me by making God’s word come to life. I no longer feel the hindering burden of Mormon doctrine shutting up the Kingdom of Heaven against me. (Letter from North Carolina)

THE BEACON
A Monthly Support Group for Those Leaving or Questioning Mormonism
2nd SUNDAY OF THE MONTH
7:00 pm
Utah Lighthouse Ministry
1358 South West Temple

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Utah Lighthouse Ministry is a non-profit organization. In addition to our work with Mormons, we provide support for 44 children through World Vision, and furnish help to a local Rescue Mission.
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Both contribution and orders can be made over the phone. We accept Visa, Mastercard and Discover.
While we deeply appreciate the financial support we receive, we strongly desire your prayers. We believe they will bring thousands of Mormons to the truth. As Apostle Paul admonished: “Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving” (Colossians 4:2).
Additional Books

The Counterfeit Gospel of Mormonism: The Great Divide Between Mormonism and Christianity, by Francis Beckwith, Norman Geisler, Ron Rhodes, Phil Roberts, Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Price: $10.00

Mormonism Unmasked: Confronting the Contradictions Between Mormon Beliefs and True Christianity, by R. Philip Roberts, Tal Davis, Sandra Tanner. Price: $9.00

Is the Mormon My Brother?: Discerning the Differences Between Mormonism and Christianity, by James R. White. Price: $10.00

What’s With the dudes at the Door?: Stuff to Know When the Cults Come Knocking, by Kevin Johnson and James White. Great book for young teens. Price: $8.00

Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons, by Pastor Mark J. Cares. Good introduction to Mormon culture and beliefs, with helpful insights on witnessing. Price: $11.00

Mormons – How to Witness to Them, by John Farkas and David Reed. Price: $12.00

Out of the Cults and Into the Church: Understanding & Encouraging Ex-Cultists, by Janis Hutchinson. Price: $10.00


“Wild Bill” Hickman and the Mormon Frontier, by Hope A. Hilton. Price: $15.00


Basic Christianity, by John R. W. Stott. A brief examination of the claims of Christ and our response to His call. Price: $5.00

Nauvoo Expositor. Photomechanical reprint of the newspaper Joseph Smith sought to destroy in order to suppress the truth about polygamy and other practices. Price: $2.00


Witness to Mormons, by Concerned Christians. Comparison of Mormon teachings in three parallel columns—Mormon Doctrine, Mormon Scripture and the Bible. Price: $5.00

The Mormon Missionaries: An Inside Look at Their Real Message and Methods, by Janis Hutchinson. Price: $10.00

UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY
PO BOX 1884
SALT LAKE CITY UT  84110
**Was Joseph Smith a Magician?**

How did Joseph Smith translate the supposed ancient record he found in the hill? The eye-witnesses to the translation process of the Book of Mormon seem to be describing a magical event. Joseph Smith would put a stone in his hat and then the “translation” of the plates would appear on the stone. Smith’s wife, Emma related:

“In writing for your father, I frequently wrote day after day, often sitting at the table close to him, he sitting with his face buried in his hat, with the stone in it, and dictating [the Book of Mormon] hour after hour with nothing between us.” (as quoted in *Creation of the Book of Mormon*, by LaMar Petersen, p. 25)

The Smith family’s involvement with the occult goes back a number of years before the Book of Mormon was “translated” and printed in 1830. Michael Marquardt and Wesley Walters relate the beginnings of the Smith’s magical practices:

As early as 1822 Joseph Smith was connected with the magic “seer stone” he found while digging a well for a Mr. Chase. Joseph and his father later joined with a group of men to search for buried treasures, aided by Smith’s stone. In 1825, after hearing of Smith’s powers, Josiah Stowell came to Palmyra to hire the Smiths to help him look for a silver mine in Pennsylvania.

Smith’s mother relates that Mr. Stowell specifically sought out Joseph Smith due to his special powers. Lucy Smith wrote:

A short time before the house was completed [1825], a man by the name of Josiah Stowell came from Chenango county, New York, with the view of getting Joseph to assist him in digging for a silver mine. He came for Joseph on account of having heard that he possessed certain means by which he could discern things invisible to the natural eye. (Biographical Sketches, Lucy Smith, pp. 91-92, as quoted in *Early Mormon Documents*, vol. 1, p. 309)

Joseph Smith’s seer stone from *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, Figure 8

When Joseph Smith recalled his money-digging activities for his official history, he wrote only about searching for a lost mine in 1825 for Josiah Stowell. But contemporary records suggest that this had been one of the Smith family occupations in the Palmyra/Manchester area since the early 1820s. For example, Joshua Stafford of Manchester recalled that he “became acquainted with the family of Joseph Smith, Sen. about the year 1819 or 20. They then were laboring people, in low circumstances. A short time after this, they commenced digging for hidden treasures, . . . and told marvellous stories about ghosts, hob-goblins, caverns, and various other mysterious matters.” Willard Chase, another friend of the family, similarly recalled, “I became acquainted with the Smith family . . . in the year 1820. At that time they were engaged in the money digging business.” (*Inventing Mormonism*, Marquardt and Walters, p. 64)
This subject is further explored in LaMar Petersen’s new book, *The Creation of the Book of Mormon*:

Lucy [Joseph Smith’s mother] provided an even more revealing glimpse into the Smith family’s involvement in magical abracadabra and other aspects of folk magic:

Let not the reader suppose that because I shall pursue another topic for a season that we stopt our labor and went at trying to win the faculty of Abrac [,] drawing Magic circles or sooth saying [sic] to the neglect of all kinds of buisness [,W]e never during our lives suffered one important interest to swallow up every other obligation but whilst we worked with our hands we endeavored to remmember [sic] the service of & the welfare of our souls.

As a young man Joseph Smith not only labored on his family’s farm, but he also worked “in blessing crops, finding lost articles, predicting future events or prophesying, and using divine rods and seer stones.”

One of the most detailed accounts of Joseph’s use of a seer stone for purposes other than translation is recorded in a pre-trial examination by justice Albert Neely at Bainbridge, New York, in March 1826, where Joseph was charged with being a disorderly person and an imposter. … LDS Church writers were extremely reluctant to recognize its authenticity, as it seems that such examinations before a justice of the peace were not usually recorded. Also, the fact that it was published through the instrumentality of Episcopal Bishop Daniel S. Tuttle did not enhance its value. In 1961 Hugh W. Nibley, professor of history and religion at Brigham Young University, explained the seriousness of the alleged trial:

People of State of New York vs. Joseph Smith. Warrant issued upon oath of Peter G. Bridgman, who informed that one Joseph Smith of Bainbridge was a disorderly person and an imposter. … Prisoner examined. Says that he came from town of Palmyra, and had been at the house of Josiah Stowell in Bainbridge most of time since; had small part of time been employed in looking for mines, but the major part had been employed by said Stowell on his farm, and going to school; that he had a certain stone, which he had occasionally looked at to

You knew its immense value as a weapon against Joseph Smith if its authenticity could be established. . . . If this court record is authentic, it is the most damning evidence in existence against Joseph Smith.

Another LDS researcher, Francis W. Kirkham, recognizing the disturbing implications of the report, said:

If any evidence had been in existence that Joseph Smith had used a seer stone for fraud and deception, and especially had he made this confession in a court of law as early as 1826, or four years before the Book of Mormon was printed, and this confession was in a court record, it would have been impossible for him to have organized the restored Church. . . .

The first part and conclusion of the alleged court record published by Bishop Tuttle is here reproduced, which indicates that young Joseph admitted to using his seer stone to search for lost property, buried coins, hidden treasures, and gold mines:

People of State of New York vs. Joseph Smith. Warrant issued upon oath of Peter G. Bridgman, who informed that one Joseph Smith of Bainbridge was a disorderly person and an imposter. Prisoner brought into court March 20 (1826). Prisoner examined. Says that he came from town of Palmyra, and had been at the house of Josiah Stowell in Bainbridge most of time since; had small part of time been employed in looking for mines, but the major part had been employed by said Stowell on his farm, and going to school; that he had a certain stone, which he had occasionally looked at to

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We Were Wrong!

About forty years ago we (Jerald and Sandra Tanner) became acquainted with LaMar Petersen. Mr. Petersen, raised in a devout LDS home, had been studying Mormonism for many years before we came on the scene, and had written a very important pamphlet entitled, Problems in Mormon Text. In addition, Mr. Petersen was working on another manuscript and allowed us to read it. At that time we were thoroughly convinced that the Book of Mormon was divinely inspired and came from ancient gold plates that Joseph Smith translated.

Although we respected LaMar Petersen’s diligent research and kindness towards us, we could not agree with the material we found in his manuscript. It obviously was an attempt to connect Smith with the occult and to undermine belief in the Book of Mormon. Consequently, we tried to disprove the allegations.

As it turned out, we continued to believe in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon until near the end of 1962. We then concluded that Mr. Petersen was correct after all. We were the ones who had not adequately done our homework.

Mr. Petersen paid a high price for delving into the mysteries of Mormonism. He was, in fact, excommunicated from the Mormon Church because of his stand for the truth. We highly recommend LaMar Petersen’s new book, *The Creation of the Book of Mormon: A Historical Inquiry*. 
determine where hidden treasures in the bowels of the earth were; that he professed to tell in this manner where gold-mines were a distance under ground, and had looked for Mr. Stowell several times, and informed him where he could find those treasures, and Mr. Stowell had been engaged in digging for them; that at Palmyra he pretended to tell, by looking at this stone, where coined money was buried in Pennsylvania, and while at Palmyra he had frequently ascertained in that way where lost property was, of various kinds; that he has occasionally been in the habit of looking through this stone to find lost property for three years, but of late had pretty much given it up on account its injuring his health, especially his eyes—made them sore; that he did not solicit business of this kind, and had always rather declined having anything to do with this business. . . .

And thereupon the Court finds the defendant guilty.

Recent discoveries have confirmed the reality of the 1826 pre-trial examination of “Joseph Smith The Glass looker” before Albert Neely, a justice of the peace. (The Creation of the Book of Mormon, LaMar Petersen, Freethinker Press, 1998, pp. 29-32)

In 1971 Wesley P. Walters, a Presbyterian minister and researcher of Mormon history, went to New York to look for documentation of Smith’s 1826 hearing. In the damp, musty basement of the jail in Norwich, New York, Mr. Walters found the Chenango county documents for 1826. In these bundles of papers were two documents that related to Smith’s 1826 hearing. Mr. Walters explains:

The discovery among the 1826 Chenango County bills of two bills from the officials who participated in the arrest and trial of Joseph Smith at South Bainbridge in 1826 now confirms this story beyond question. The bill of Justice Albert Neely carries this entry:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>same [i.e. The People]</th>
<th>Misdemeanor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Smith</td>
<td>To my fees in examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Glass Looker</td>
<td>of the above cause 2.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 20, 1826</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The phrase “Glass looker” appearing on Mr. Neely’s bill is the precise terminology preferred by Joseph Smith himself to describe his crystal gazing occupation and is the same that Mr. Benton adopted five years later to speak of Smith’s use of a peep-stone or glass placed in a hat, which he employed when hired to hunt for hidden treasures. The bill of Constable Philip De Zeng gives further historical evidence and details concerning this trial, by listing:

Serving Warrant on Joseph Smith & travel............... 1.25
Subpoening 12 Witnesses & travel...................... 2.50 (3.50?)
Attendance with Prisoner two days & 1 night.......... 1.75
Notifying two Justices..................................... 1. —
10 miles travel with Mittimus to take him............. 1. —

This new evidence corroborates and throws fresh light on two accounts of this 1826 trial published almost a hundred years ago but vigorously disputed by the Mormons since they first came into prominence. The first is an account of the trial by Dr. William D. Purple, an eye-witness to the proceedings and a personal friend of Justice Neely. The second is the official trial record itself, torn from the Docket Book of Justice Neely and published in three independent printings. Not only do the newly-discovered bills substantiate these two accounts as authentic, they now make it impossible for Mormon scholars to dismiss the numerous affidavits testifying that young Smith prior to founding the Mormon faith had earned part of his livelihood using a peep-stone to hunt for buried treasures. The peep-stone story can no longer be set aside as a vicious story circulated by those who wished to persecute the budding Prophet, for this new evidence, dating four years before he founded his church, witnesses incontrovertibly to Joseph’s early “glass-looking” activities. (Joseph Smith’s Bainbridge, N.Y. Court Trials, by Wesley P. Walters, pp. 129-131)

The evidence shows that Joseph Smith appeared before Justice Neely for what was known as an “examination” (see A New Conductor Generalis: Being a Summary of the Law Relative to the Duty and Office of Justices of the Peace, Sheriffs, Coroners, Constables, Jurymen, Overseers of the Poor, &c, &c, Albany, New York, 1819, pages 141-143).

This seems to be like the “preliminary hearing” we have today where the accused is bound over for trial at a later date. It would appear from page 109 of the same
publication that since Justice Neely found Joseph Smith “guilty” of being a “disorderly person” he could have immediately sentenced him to “sixty days” in the “bridewell or house of correction, at hard labor,” but instead he bound him over to be tried by three justices at a later date. These justices could have ordered “him to be detained at hard labor, for any future time not exceeding six months, and during his confinement to be corrected by whipping, according to the nature of the offense, as they shall think fit” (*A New Conductor Generalis*).

Since we do not have the rest of Justice Neely’s docket book nor any other extant record concerning the matter, it is difficult to determine what finally happened in this case. It is possible that Joseph Smith could have admitted his guilt and struck an agreement with the county. Many times officials who wanted to cut expenses would be willing to let prisoners go if they would agree to leave the county where the crime took place.

On March 8, 1842, Justice Joel K. Noble, who acquitted Joseph Smith of some charges brought against him in 1830, wrote a letter in which he spoke of Joseph Smith’s “first trial” — i.e., the case before Justice Neely. According to Justice Noble, Smith “was condemned” at that time. Wesley P. Walters wrote:

Mr. Noble succinctly states that the “whisper came to Jo., ‘Off, Off!’ ” and so Joseph “took Leg Bail,” an early slang expression meaning “to escape from custody.” What is obviously happening is that the justices are privately suggesting to this first offender to “get out of town and don’t come back,” and in exchange they will not impose sentence . . . Judge Noble’s statement agrees precisely with an early account of this 1826 trial published just five years after the trial had taken place. It was written by Dr. Abram Willard Benton, a young medical doctor who lived in South Bainbridge at the time. Dr. Benton, like Justice Noble, mentions that Joseph had been involved in glass looking, and that he had been “tried and condemned.” Dr. Benton adds that because Joseph was a minor at the time, being 20 years old, “and thinking he might reform his conduct, he was designedly allowed to escape.” Therefore, the court, though it found him guilty of being in violation of the law, had intentionally not imposed sentence as a way of showing mercy on this youthful offender. (“From Occult to Cult With Joseph Smith, Jr.,” *Joseph Smith’s Bainbridge, N.Y. Court Trials*, p. 123)

Mormon historians are now conceding the reality of the Smith family’s involvement with magic. In D. Michael Quinn’s new edition of his book, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* he observes:

Friendly sources corroborate hostile non-Mormon accounts. As historian Richard L. Bushman has written: “There had always been evidence of it (‘money-digging in the Smith family’) in the hostile affidavits from the Smith’s neighbors, evidence which Mormons dismissed as hopelessly biased. But when I got into the sources, I found evidence from friendly contemporaries as well, Martin Harris, Joseph Knight, Oliver Cowdery, and Lucy Mack Smith. All of these witnesses persuaded me treasure-seeking and vernacular magic were part of the Smith family tradition, and that the hostile witnesses, including the 1826 trial record, had to be taken seriously.” BYU historian Marvin S. Hill has likewise observed: “Now, most historians, Mormon or not, who work with the sources, accept as fact Joseph Smith’s career as village magician.” (*Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 2nd ed. 1998, p. 59)

**THE IMPLICATIONS**

Now that the authenticity of the Neely record has been established beyond all doubt, Mormon Church leaders are faced with a serious dilemma. Most people would allow Joseph Smith the right to make a few youthful mistakes without maintaining that it would seriously affect his later role as a prophet. The issue, however, is much more
serious than just the transgression of an early New York law. What is involved here is the question of whether Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God or merely a man entangled in occultic practices. The implications of this matter are very serious indeed.

Once we accept the validity of the documents concerning Joseph Smith’s trouble with the law, we are forced to admit that he was engaging in witchcraft and magical practices at the very time he claimed he was being tutored by the deceased Moroni, now an angel, to receive the sacred records. These facts undermine the whole story of the divine origin of the Book of Mormon.

FAMILIAR SPIRITS

Mormonism claims that Isaiah 29:1-4 is a prophecy of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. Past president Joseph Fielding Smith wrote:

ISAIAH PROPHESIES OF BOOK OF MORMON. One of the most important predictions regarding the Book of Mormon is that found in the 29th chapter of Isaiah. The prophet here speaks of a people who should be like Ariel, the city where David dwelt. They should have heaviness and sorrow and should be brought down to speak out of the ground, and their speech was to be low out of the dust, and their voice was to be as of one that had a familiar spirit. (Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 3, p. 213)

However, Isaiah 29:1-4 is a prediction of God’s punishment on Jerusalem. The Bible always condemns familiar spirits. If the Book of Mormon is supposed to be the word of God why would God associate it with demonic forces? The following verses demonstrate God’s condemnation of familiar spirits.

- Lev. 19:31 Regard not . . . familiar spirits neither seek after wizards.
- Lev. 19:26 Neither use enchantment nor observe times.
- Lev. 20:6 Familiar spirits, wizards . . . I will set my face against.
- Lev. 20:27 Hath familiar spirit or wizard – put to death.
- Deut. 18:10-12 Divination, enchanter, witch, charmer, consulter with familiar spirits, wizard, necromancer – abomination to Lord.
- Isa. 8:19 When they say – seek familiar spirits or wizards that peep – should not a people seek their God?
- Isa. 19:3 I will destroy counsel thereof and they shall seek idols, charmers, familiar spirits and wizards.
- Isa. 29:1-4 Woe to Ariel . . . one that hath a familiar spirit.
- Isa. 44:24-26 Thus saith the Lord, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; that confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers.

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ANIMAL SACRIFICES

Animal sacrifices were often a part of the magic rituals that accompanied money-digging. In the first edition of his book, Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, page 144, Dr. D. Michael Quinn gives this information: “A cousin of Smith’s wife Emma reported that Smith ‘translated the book of Mormon by means of the same peep stone, and under the same inspiration that directed his enchantments and dog sacrifices; it was all by the same spirit’ (H. Lewis 1879).”

In a magic book known as The Greater Key of Solomon, page 122, we read that “In many operations it is necessary to make some sort of sacrifice unto the demons, and in various ways . . . Such sacrifices consist of the blood and sometimes of the flesh.”

The evidence seems to show that Joseph Smith did make sacrifices to the demons. In an affidavit published in 1834, William Stafford, one of the neighbors of the Smith family, reported the following:

Joseph Smith, Sen., came to me one night, and told me that Joseph Smith Jr. had been looking in his glass, and had seen, not many rods from his house, two or three kegs of gold and silver . . . Joseph, Sen. first made a circle, twelve or fourteen feet in diameter. This circle, said he, contains the treasure. He then stuck in the ground a row of witch hazel sticks, around the said circle, for the purpose of keeping off the evil spirits. Within this circle he made another, of about eight or ten feet in diameter. He walked around three times on the periphery of this last circle, muttering to himself something which I could not understand. He next stuck a steel rod in the centre of the circles, and then enjoined profound silence upon us, lest we should arouse the evil spirit who had the charge of these treasures. After we had dug a trench about five feet in depth around the rod, the old man . . . went to the house to inquire of young Joseph the cause of our disappointment. He soon returned and said, that Joseph had remained all this time in the house, looking in his stone and watching the motions of the evil spirit – that he saw the spirit come up to the ring and as soon as it beheld the cone which we had formed around the rod, it caused the money to sink . . . another time, they devised a scheme, by which they might satiate their hunger, with the mutton of one of my sheep. They had seen in my flock a sheep, a large, fat, black weather. Old Joseph and one of the boys came to me one day, and said that Joseph Jr. had discovered some very remarkable and valuable treasures, which could be procured only in one way. That way, was as follows: – That a black sheep should be taken to the ground where the treasures were concealed – that after cutting its throat, it should be led around in a circle while bleeding. This being done, the wrath of the evil spirit would be appeased: the treasures could then be obtained, and my share of them was to be four fold. To gratify my curiosity, I let them have a large fat sheep. They afterwards informed me, that the sheep was killed pursuant to commandment; but as there was some mistake in the process, it did not have the desired effect. This, I believe, is the only time they ever made money-digging a profitable business. (Mormonism Unvailed, 1834, pp. 238-239; also reproduced in Early Mormon Documents, vol. 2, pp. 59-61)

The reader will notice that it was a “black” sheep that was supposed to have been sacrificed. This is interesting because The Greater Key of Solomon, page 122, says that, “Sometimes white animals are sacrificed to the good Spirits and black to the evil.”

In any case, the Mormon apologist Richard L. Anderson says that, “If there was such an event of a borrowed sheep, it had nothing to do with dishonesty” (Brigham Young University Studies, Spring 1970, page 295). On page 249 of the same article, Professor Anderson quotes the following from BYU Professor M. Wilford Poulson’s notes of a conversation with Wallace Miner: “I once asked Stafford if Smith did steal a sheep from him. He said no, not exactly. He said, he did miss a black sheep, but soon Joseph came and admitted he took it for sacrifice but he was willing to work for it. He made wooden sap buckets to fully pay for it.”

C. R. Stafford testified concerning the same incident: “Jo Smith, the prophet, told my uncle, William Stafford, he wanted a fat, black sheep. He said he wanted to cut its throat and make it walk in a circle three times around and it would prevent a pot of money from leaving” (Naked Truths About Mormonism, January 1888, p. 3; also reproduced in Early Mormon Documents, vol. 2, p. 197).

The current leaders of the Mormon Church have turned away from many of the occultic practices, which played such an important role in the church Joseph Smith founded. In fact, the church hierarchy has publicly condemned magic. Most Mormons are not aware of Joseph Smith’s involvement in the occult because their leaders have systematically covered up the more embarrassing parts of Smith’s history.

SMITH AND THE METHODISTS

It is interesting to note that as early as 1828 members of the Methodist Church were forced to make a decision
with regard to Joseph Smith. Smith had taken steps to join their church, but they felt his dealings in witchcraft made him unfit to be a member.

In the book *Inventing Mormonism* we read:

In 1879 Joseph and Hiel Lewis, cousins to Joseph’s first wife, Emma Hale, stated that Joseph joined the Methodist Episcopal Church or class in Harmony, Pennsylvania, in the summer of 1828. There was disagreement about how long Joseph’s name remained on class rolls. See the articles in the *Amboy [Illinois] Journal* . . . It is possible that Joseph attended class with his wife Emma because of the death of their first son on 15 June 1828. That Joseph was a member of the class was not questioned, only the length of time his name remained on the class record. (*Inventing Mormonism*, Marquardt and Walters, p. 61, n. 49)

Part of the statement by Joseph and Hiel Lewis reads:

He presented himself in a very serious and humble manner, and the minister, not suspecting evil, put his name on the class book, in the absence of some of the official members. (*The Amboy Journal*, April 30, 1879, p. 1)

When Joseph Lewis learned of this act, he felt that Smith was not truly repentant of his magic involvement and felt him to be unfit for membership. Mr. Lewis further details the incident:

I with Joshua McKune . . . thought it was a disgrace to the church to have a practicing necromancer, a dealer in enchantments and bleeding ghosts in it. So on Sunday we went . . . and talked to him some time . . . Told him that his occupation, habits and moral character were at variance with the discipline . . . that there should have been recantation, confession and at least promised reformation — That he could that day publicly ask his name be stricken from the class book, or stand investigation. He chose the former, and did that very day make request that his name be taken off the class book. (*The Amboy Journal*, June 11, 1879, pg. 1)

It is certainly strange that Joseph Smith would try to join the Methodist Church. His attempt to unite with the Methodists, in fact, flies in the face of his claim that he had his First Vision when he was, “an obscure boy, only between fourteen and fifteen years of age.” In this vision God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ supposedly appeared to him. Those who have read his story will remember that Joseph emphatically stated that the two personages warned him that he should not join any church. Joseph Smith’s own statement about the matter reads as follows: “I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: “they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof” (*Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith — History 1:19).

With the mounting evidence of Joseph Smith’s involvement in witchcraft, members of the Mormon Church are faced with a very weighty decision — i.e., can they accept as a prophet a man who was involved in occultic practices at the very time he was supposed to have been receiving revelations from God?

**HOW WERE THE PLATES TRANSLATED?**

Most Mormons believe that Joseph Smith translated the gold plates with what was known as the Urim and Thummim. Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

From time to time, as his purposes require, the Lord personally, or through the ministry of appointed angels, delivers to chosen prophets a Urim and Thummim to be used in receiving revelations and in translating ancient records from unknown tongues. With the approval of the Lord these prophets are permitted to pass these instruments on to their mortal successors . . . Because of the sacred nature of these holy instruments, they have not been viewed by most men, and even the times and circumstances under which they have been held by mortals are not clearly set forth . . . Joseph Smith received the same Urim and Thummim had by the *Brother of Jared* for it was the one expressly provided for the translation of the Jaredite and Nephite records. (*Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, by Bruce R. McConkie, p. 818)

Joseph Smith’s mother wrote the following concerning the Urim and Thummim:

That of which I spoke, which Joseph termed a key, was indeed, nothing more nor less than the Urim and Thummim, and it was by this that the angel showed him many things which he saw in vision; by which he could ascertain, at any time, the approach of danger, either to himself or the Record, and on account of which he always kept the Urim and Thummim about his person. (*Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet and his Progenitors for Many Generations*, p. 106; also reproduced in *Early Mormon Documents*, vol. 1)

On page 101 of the same book, Lucy Smith claimed that Joseph actually allowed her to examine the Urim and Thummim:
I knew not what he meant, but took the article of which he spoke into my hands, and, upon examination, found that it consisted of two smooth three-cornered diamonds set in glass, and the glasses were set in silver bows, which were connected with each other in much the same way as old fashioned spectacles. He took them again and left me, but said nothing respecting the Record. (Biographical Sketches, p. 101)

Although Joseph Smith was supposed to have the Urim and Thummim, the evidence shows that he preferred to use the seer stone found in a well to translate the Book of Mormon. The Mormon historian B. H. Roberts acknowledged the use of one of Joseph Smith’s seer stones. He made the following statement in the Comprehensive History of the Church, vol. 1, page 129:

The Seer Stone referred to here was a chocolate-colored, somewhat egg-shaped stone which the Prophet found while digging a well in the company of his brother Hyrum, for a Mr. Clark Chase, near Palmyra, N.Y. It possessed the qualities of Urim and Thummim, since by means of it — as described above — as well as by means of the Interpreters found with the Nephite record, Joseph was able to translate the characters engraved on the plates.

Joseph Smith’s father-in-law, Isaac Hale, noticed a definite relationship between the method Joseph Smith used to translate the Book of Mormon and the way he searched for buried treasures. In an affidavit that Isaac Hale provided we find some very interesting information:

I first became acquainted with Joseph Smith, Jr. in November, 1825. He was at that time in the employ of a set of men who were called “money-diggers;” and his occupation was that of seeing, or pretending to see by means of a stone placed in his hat, and his hat closed over his face. In this way he pretended to discover minerals and hidden treasure . . . Smith, and his father with several other “money-diggers” boarded at my house while they were employed in digging for a mine that they supposed had been opened and worked by the Spaniards, many years since. Young Smith gave the “money-diggers” great encouragement, at first, but when they had arrived in digging, to near the place where he had stated an immense treasure would be found — he said the enchantment was so powerful that he could not see . . .

After these occurrences, young Smith made several visits at my house, and at length asked my consent to his marrying my daughter Emma. This I refused, and gave him my reasons for so doing; some of which were, that he was a stranger, and followed a business that I could not approve: he then left the place. Not long after this, he returned, and while I was absent from home, carried off my daughter, into the state of New York, where they were married without my approbation or consent . . . In a short time they returned . . .

Smith stated to me, that he had given up what he called “glass-looking,” and that he expected to work hard for a living, and was willing to do so . . . Soon after this, I was informed they had brought a wonderful book of Plates down with them . . . The manner in which he pretended to read and interpret, was the same as when he looked for the money-diggers, with the stone in his hat, and his hat over his face, while the Book of Plates were at the same time hid in the woods! (The Susquehanna Register, May 1, 1834)

David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, described how Joseph Smith placed the “seer stone” into a hat to translate the Book of Mormon:

I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. (An Address to All Believers in Christ, by David Whitmer, 1887, p. 12)

In a letter written March 27, 1876, Emma Smith acknowledged that the entire Book of Mormon, that we have today, was translated by the use of the seer stone. James E. Lancaster wrote:
How can the testimonies of Emma Smith and David Whitmer, describing the translation of the Book of Mormon with a seer stone, be reconciled with the traditional account of the church that the Book of Mormon was translated by the “interpreters” found in the stone box with the plates? It is the extreme good fortune of the church that we have testimony by Sister Emma Smith Bidamon on this important issue . . . a woman . . . wrote to Emma Bidamon, requesting information as to the translation of the Book of Mormon. Emma Bidamon replied . . . March 27, 1876. Sister Bidamon’s letter states in part:

Now the first that my husband translated, was translated by the use of the Urim and Thummim, and that was the part that Martin Harris lost, after that he used a small stone, not exactly black, but was rather a dark color . . .

Sister Bidamon’s letter indicated that at first the Book of Mormon was translated by the Urim and Thummim. She refers to the instrument found with the plates. However, this first method was used only for the portion written on the 116 pages of foolscap, which Martin Harris later lost. After that time the translation was done with the seer stone. (Saints’ Herald, November 15, 1962, p. 15; Emma’s letter is also reproduced in Early Mormon Documents, vol. 1, p. 532)

David Whitmer frankly admitted that he never did see Joseph Smith use what was later known as the Urim and Thummim (the two stones set in silver bows). This information is found in an article in the Saints’ Herald:

According to the testimony of Emma Smith and David Whitmer, the angel took the Urim and Thummim from Joseph Smith at the time of the loss of the 116 pages. This was in June 1828, one year before David became involved with the work of translation. David Whitmer could never have been present when the Urim and Thummim were used. All of this he clearly states in his testimony to Brother Traughber:

With the sanction of David Whitmer, and by his authority, I now state he does not say that Joseph Smith ever translated in his presence by aid of Urim and Thummim, but by means of one dark colored, opaque stone called a “Seer Stone,” which was placed in the crown of a hat, into which Joseph put his face, so as to exclude the external light. Then, a spiritual light would appear before Joseph, upon which was a line of characters from the plates, and under it, the translation in English; at least, so Joseph said.

(Saints’ Herald, November 15, 1962, p. 16)

Many years ago M. T. Lamb made some important observations regarding Joseph Smith’s strange habit of using his seer stone instead of the Urim and Thummim:

Finally, according to the testimony of Martin Harris, Mr. Smith often used the “seer stone” in place of the Urim and Thummim, even while the later remained in his possession — using it as a mere matter of convenience.

It seems almost too bad that he should thus inadvertently give the whole thing away. You must understand that the Urim and Thummim spoken of, and called throughout the Book of Mormon “the Interpreters,” had been provided with great care over 2500 years ago by God himself, for the express purpose of translating these plates. They are often mentioned in the Book of Mormon as exceedingly important. They were preserved with the greatest care, handed down from one generation to another with the plates, and buried with them in the hill Cumorah over 1400 years ago; as sacred as the plates themselves. So sacred that only one man was allowed to handle or use them, the highly favored prophet, Joseph Smith himself. But now, alas! After all this trouble and pains and care on the part of God, and on the part of so many holy men of old, this “Urim and Thummim” is found at last to be altogether superfluous; not needed at all. This “peep stone” found in a neighbor’s well will do the work just as well — and is even more convenient, “for convenience he used the seer stone.” So we are left to infer that when he used the Urim and Thummim at all, it was at some inconvenience. And probably he only did it out of regard to the feelings of his God, who had spent so much time and anxiety in preparing it so long ago, and preserving it to the present day for his special use! (The Golden Bible, 1887, pp. 250-251)

Although Joseph Smith spent a lot of time staring at his seer stone, it did not seem to help him find the buried treasures he desired. Since Joseph Smith’s failed treasure seeking and translation method for the Book of Mormon were both accomplished through the use of the same magic stone it appears that both efforts were lacking in divine approval. As one former follower of Joseph Smith expressed it, a person must “come out from the company of Joseph the sorcerer.”

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“I cannot tell you enough how much I appreciate the work you are doing. . . . It is not easy to wipe out 46 years of your life and realize how you have been controlled . . . I was a Relief Society president in our stake for a number of years when I began to question & really was tired of ‘the Lord will tell us in His time’ answers.” (Letter from Canada)

“Your a son of perdition, well at least in my opinion, Greg.” (Email)

“I called you . . . in 1998 regarding my wife . . . who was raised a Mormon in Brazil. She has since come out of that darkness & is basking in the grace given through our Lord Jesus Christ. Being very pragmatic in nature, the meticulous research in your documents was used by the Lord to reveal his truth. We look forward to supporting your activities.” (Letter from Florida)

“There was a time when I thought you guys were nuts. Now you’re my heroes!! Thanks for your research and efforts. I sincerely hope you will be around for a long long time. A Former True Blue Mormon.” (Email from Mike)

“I can’t thank you enough for the information that you have sent up from Lighthouse Ministries . . . My 2nd husband loved the Church, and the Priesthood that he held. He is a brilliant man . . . I would bring things up, hoping that something would click with him . . . I couldn’t take it a step at a time, but just ‘blurted’ out everything, and that I felt it was all a lie. He couldn’t believe it, and wanted to know [why] I hadn’t mentioned it to him earlier. We haven’t been to Church since and have been avidly reading lots of books, and papers from your site which we have found so incredibly informative. We haven’t been to church in three months and everyone is scratching their heads . . . we both have given back all our callings, without the ‘permission’ of the Bishop . . . We sooooooooooo enjoy your newsletters . . . Thank you so much for your work. We will be sending a donation from time to time to further the work. You have helped us so much, and we would like to help provide for others.” (Email from California)

“I have, over the years, read your shoddy researched, and intellectually dishonest, commentaries on the Lord’s Kingdom here on earth . . . Still, you serve the purposes of the Lord to keep us . . . on our toes.” (Email from a Mormon)

“I am a seventeen year old girl attending . . . High School . . . I have read your chapter in the book The Counterfeit Gospel of Mormonism. I just want to say thank-you for helping write the book because terminology was something I really needed to know. . . . There are many Mormons in my school . . . I had never really spoken to ***** [a Mormon friend] but I knew God wanted me to witness to him. . . . The talk went very, very well. The atmosphere was calm and everyone was friendly with each other. . . . I owe part of the meeting’s success to you two . . .” (Letter from California)

“I just found your site . . . [www.utlm.org] I am so glad I found you on the web finally. . . . I also want to thank you for the great work that you do. I first learned of your existence while I was a missionary in Australia. Someone gave us some of your literature trying to ‘save’ us. At that time I was not ready to know the truth but I did read the literature that was given to us and found it fascinating. . . . I never forgot the things that I read. It wasn’t until several years later when I began to ‘see the light’ that I remembered that experience on my mission. I was living in SLC at the time and looked you up in the phone book and came and visited your bookstore. Funny that ‘in the heart of Zion’ there is an oasis of truth! . . . I have to say again, how happy I am to have found you on the internet. Thank God for modern technology!” (Email)

“I wanted to let you know that I have used your book to lead two families out of Mormonism. One was a local Mormon leader in the US military community . . . The other is now a base commander here . . . Both asked to be excommunicated after reading your book . . . Thought you might be interested. God bless you.” (Email)

What’s in Your Local Library?

Does your public or college library have information on both sides of Mormonism? The LDS Church is currently contacting various libraries around the country and are offering them free copies of a number of LDS books and videos. Please consider donating to your library some books that give the real history and doctrine of Mormonism.
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- *Early Mormon Documents, vol. 2*, edited by Dan Vogel. (Signature Books)  
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- *Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance vol. 3*, compiled and edited by Lavina Fielding Anderson and Janice Merrill Allred. (Mormon Alliance)  
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**Selected Titles on Hofmann Forgeries**

- *City Confidential: Faith & Foul Play in Salt Lake City*, Arts & Entertainment video — Good video on Mark Hofmann forgeries and murders.  
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- *Salamander: The Story of the Mormon Forgery Murders*, by Linda Sillitoe and Allen Roberts. (Signature Books)  
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- *Tracking the White Salamander*, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. (Utah Lighthouse Ministry)  
  Price: $6.95

- *The Mormon Church and the McLellin Collection*, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. (Utah Lighthouse Ministry)  
  Price: $5.00

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**THE BEACON**

A Monthly Support Group  
for Those Leaving or Questioning Mormonism

2nd Sunday of Every Month  
7:00 p.m.

Utah Lighthouse Ministry  
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Due to increased costs of printing and mailing the newsletter, we will be purging our mailing list after this issue.

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Or email us your name and address at: Messenger@utlm.org

Or contact us by phone (801) 485-0312.

*Your name will be automatically kept on our mailing list if:

- You have donated to the ministry in 1998 or 1999,
- You have placed an order in 1998 or 1999,
- You have requested the newsletter after January 1, 1999.

(Please contact us if your address is different from the label below.)
LDS CHURCH SUES MINISTRY

At approximately eleven in the morning, October 13, 1999, Sandra Tanner was working in the Utah Lighthouse Ministry Bookstore when she was surprised to encounter two well-dressed men who turned out to be representatives of the Mormon Church’s law firm. They served legal papers on Utah Lighthouse Ministry and the Tanners, ordering us to immediately remove some material that was posted on our Ministry’s web site [www.utlm.org]. The material in question was limited portions of the LDS Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 1 (1998).

This handbook is the updated version of the instruction manual given to local bishops in the Mormon Church. Various editions have been published over the last 100 years. This manual contains, among other topics, instructions on excommunication and discipline procedures against erring members.

As a non-profit organization concerned with providing clear and accurate information to people desiring to terminate their LDS membership, we posted portions of the Handbook on our web site. These legal papers, served by Intellectual Reserve Inc., demanded that we immediately remove any material from the Church Handbook of Instructions from our web site and post their statement regarding the matter by 2 p.m. of the same day. Intellectual Reserve, with offices in the 28 story LDS Church Office Building in Salt Lake City, is the legal entity that holds the church’s copyrights.

While we did not think that we had violated their copyright, by 1:00 p.m. we had removed the material and posted their letter to us, in the hope that it would avert a costly lawsuit. This did not satisfy the LDS Church. Later the same day they filed their copyright lawsuit against the Ministry in the U.S. District Court for District of Utah, Central Division, Case No. 2:99-CV-0808C. They made NO effort to discuss or negotiate the matter with our attorney or us prior to filing.

HOW WE GOT THE HANDBOOK

The Mormon Church is very careful to restrict access to the Handbook. It is given to bishops, stake presidents, and various church leaders. When someone leaves their position they are to give the manual to the next officer. When a new edition is printed the old edition is to be destroyed.

In the latter part of June, 1999, when Sandra went to get the mail out of the mailbox at the front of the store she found a computer disk with no explanation as to its origin. Later, she received a telephone call from an anonymous man. He asked her if she had received the disk he had left. When he was informed that we hadn’t looked at it for fear that it might contain a computer virus he informed us that it contained the LDS Church Handbook.

After checking the disk for any viruses it was concluded that it was safe to examine the contents. Just as the man had said, it contained the 1998 Church Handbook of Instructions! Prior to this we had acquired earlier editions of the Handbook, but we did not have the 1998 edition.

Free Book Offer - See page 12
Later we discovered that there were a large number of people involved in disseminating copies of the Handbook. The Mormon Church was desperately trying to stop this underground movement among its own people but found it almost impossible to detect who had copies of the files. Moreover, many people were distributing email copies to their friends. These copies could be instantly sent on the Internet throughout the world.

**OUR WEB SITE**

On July 15, 1999, we posted on Utah Lighthouse’s web site [www.utlm.org] a page called “How to Remove Your Name from the LDS Records.” Included with this entry was most of chapter 10 from the Church Handbook of Instructions, along with a few quotes from two other chapters. This was done strictly as a public service to answer the many questions we receive on this issue. There was no charge for this information.

While copyright laws are somewhat complicated we felt that what we had posted from the Handbook was within the guidelines of fair use. On page 54 of the book, A Copyright Guide for Authors, Robert E. Lee wrote the following regarding fair use:

> Early in the development of U.S. copyright law, it became apparent to legislators that there should not be strict enforcement in certain situations. If harm to the author was minimal and the violation was for legitimate purpose, non-infringement was frequently found by the courts. From this cradle of justice fair use was born. By the time the 1976 act was legislated, fair use had become so firmly entrenched that it was codified: “Notwithstanding the provision of Section 106, fair use of a copyrighted work, including such use by reproduction in copies or phonorecords for purposes such as criticism (including making multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship or research, is not an infringement of copyright.”

The statute lists four factors that are to be considered in determining fair use: (1) the purpose and the character of the use, including whether such use is of a commercial nature or is for non-profit educational purpose; (2) the nature of the copyrighted work; (3) the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole; and (4) the effect of the use upon the potential market of the copyrighted work.

Since we (1) are a non-profit organization, offering the material free as a public service, (2) the Handbook is a factual procedural manual, (3) only 17+ pages of the 160+ page book were posted on our site, and (4) the LDS Church does not sell the book, many people felt that we were within our rights. Clearly the LDS Church was not hurt financially by our posting of those few pages.

The Church is also maintaining that the Handbook is an unpublished work. Yet the copyright notice on the front does not identify it as such. To the contrary, the title page states that it is published by the LDS Church. Further, the work is distributed to over 55,000 people, who have been given the authority to copy portions and to give permission to others to copy portions as needed.

**DAVID AND GOLIATH**

While Utah Lighthouse Ministry has only five full-time employees and a limited budget, the Mormon Church has vast resources. For example, the book Mormon America: The Power and the Promise has a whole chapter on LDS finances and wealth. The authors report:

> The estimated grand total of LDS assets, by a conservative reckoning, would be $25-30 billion. . . . Yet another LDS trademark is the system of membership tithing that brings in what we project as offerings of $5.3 billion a year, though one knowledgeable source thinks $4.25 billion might be a safer estimate. Stocks and directly owned businesses produce perhaps $600 million more in cash income. The estimated yearly annual revenues total $5.9 billion, or by the more conservative reckoning, just under $5 billion. Per capita, no other religion comes close to such figures. (Mormon America: The Power and the Promise, by Richard and Joan Ostling, Harper, 1999, p. 115)

Further on, the Ostlings observe: “If the LDS Church were a U.S. corporation, by revenues it would rank number 243 on the Fortune 500 list” (Mormon America, p. 124).

From the information given above it is obvious that the Mormon Church has nearly unlimited resources to use in their legal battles while we have very limited assets.

In 1998 Utah Lighthouse Ministry received $207,936 from book sales and gifts. In 1999 this Ministry took in $252,893 from gifts and book purchases. The increase was mainly due to gifts for the lawsuit.

Many people who have heard of the lawsuit feel the church’s real agenda was to shut down the Ministry.

Over the past forty years we have printed critical books regarding Mormonism, discussing many historical and doctrinal problems. We have also reprinted sensitive documents that the Mormon leaders were trying to keep
from their own people. The current lawsuit seemed to be their hope to end our publishing career.

Many LDS have misunderstood the lawsuit and assumed it related to supposed lies in our material. One Mormon wrote:

This is just my personal opinion, but it’s about time that the church files suit against defaming liars like yourselves. (Email November 5, 2000)

Ironically, we were sued for printing the truth, not lies. The lawsuit was not for printing “anti-Mormon” literature but for printing official LDS material not readily available to its members.

What the Church has failed to tell its members is that we were not the first ones to post portions of the *Church Handbook of Instructions* on the Internet. In fact, we have evidence indicating that the entire *Handbook* had been posted on the Internet by another individual as early as June of 1999.

On June 16, 1999, someone posted the following on an Internet newsgroup: “It seems someone has scanned the CHI and posted it.” The man who gave the information referred to himself as Tom. (*CHI* is an abbreviation for *Church Handbook of Instructions*.)

The important thing about this matter is that it proves someone else was responsible for the initial posting of the *Handbook*. In fact, the Ministry posting of the 17+ pages did not even take place until July 15, 1999. This would be about a month after Tom first reported that someone else had posted the entire *Handbook of Instructions* on the web.

Another posting from the newsgroup contained the following:

Late last year, the LDS (Mormon) Church published a new edition of the *Church Handbook of Instructions*, copyrighted by the mysterious “Intellectual Reserve.” Almost immediately after the release of this new edition, an HTML version as well as a Folio database version was being passed around the Net to interested parties . . .

One posting we saw said the following:

The nature of the CHI on the web, is that someone posts the document to an anonymous web site somewhere, anonymously posts the URL to a public place, or notifies people by E-mail, and then sits back and waits for Intellectual Reserve to get the web site closed down . . . Just be patient, sooner or later, it will be posted again. The genie is out of the bottle so to speak.

Interestingly, David Gerard, who maintains a web site in Australia, seemed to have no fear about posting the *Church Handbook* on the web. Eventually however, the church confronted him. Gerard wrote the following about this matter:

The Church finally sent a lawyer’s letter, on real paper and all. I’ll put it up soon. In the meantime, I have duly removed the files containing the *Church Handbook of Instructions* . . .

As a reaction to the Church’s attempts to suppress the book, several people whose websites I do not control have chosen to put the files up themselves. Some mirror sites are listed at the end of this page.

If the Mormon Church wishes to act like Scientologists—suing critics to try to shut them up—they’ll be treated like Scientologists. This is not a threat of illegal action, but a prediction of how people are likely to react . . . Incidentally, I should state that I have no contact whatsoever with Jerald and Sandra Tanner. I received the files linked below from several different people from around the world . . . just by asking on the Net. The Church needs to realize that when you’ve distributed thousands upon thousands of copies of a work in paper form, trying to claim that it’s a “secret” because it’s “unpublished” relies on absolutely none of those people getting upset at you and having a Net connection . . . Please note that I have nothing in particular against Mormons or against the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Nor do I necessarily agree or disagree with anything on the Tanners’ web site.

Gerard later posted an interesting item regarding his encounter with the LDS Church’s lawyers:

(The threats from Church lawyers keep on coming, though. The best was when they made a threat, then made a second threat to try to make me keep the first a secret. Look up John 3:20 and ask yourself why the Church is acting so afraid of the light. I haven’t gotten around to putting up either letter, but am considering it.)

The reader will notice that Intellectual Reserve did not file a lawsuit against David Gerard! In fact, Gerard even admitted publicly that he had four different versions of the *Handbook*: the *Handbook* uncompressed, the *Handbook* compressed for Unix, the *Handbook* compressed for Windows, and a WinZip-compressed version of the Folio Infobase version of the *Handbook*. One would wonder why Intellectual Reserve behaved in the way that it did. Why sue us and yet permit a vast
number of other people to continue to spread the Handbook around the world?

Intellectual Reserve obviously wanted to smear our reputation in every way possible. Their arguments presented to the court went so far as to charge that we were responsible for putting the entire Church Handbook of Instruction on the Internet. This slanderous charge is totally false. We had nothing to do with any posting of material, other than what appeared on our web site, from the Handbook nor did we encourage people to do so.

The University of Utah paper reported on the LDS lawsuit:

The . . . [Intellectual] Reserve Inc., the corporation that owns copyrights used by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, has recently commenced a lawsuit against two individuals.

The goal of the lawsuit is to prevent these individuals from distributing excerpts from an unpublished church book dealing with the procedures for members removing their names from the LDS Church’s membership rolls. . . . People who have participated in this letter-writing campaign [to get their LDS membership terminated] claim that their letters have resulted in harassing telephone calls from clergy and letters inviting them to participate in a church court concerning their membership status in the LDS Church.

This type of response to a letter from a member of a church asking to be removed from a church’s membership rolls is clearly an unconstitutional attack on the freedom of religion rights of those who wrote the letters . . .

So why is the LDS Church, through its subsidiary corporation IRI, attempting to prevent the publication of information on how to leave the LDS Church? . . .

A cynical answer would be that the LDS Church is attempting to hold on to all its members so that it can maintain the potential of collect tithing from them. . . .

A better explanation for this lawsuit is that the LDS Church feels that the information in the book is secret information which can be used against them by outsiders. . . .

The LDS Church should recognize that using the courts in this way will only make it look bad, and drop the case. (Daily Utah Chronicle, “LDS Church Should Set Members Free” by William Tibbits, October 21, 1999, p. 6)

LDS CLAIMS
Under the Search Light
Recorded Message (801) 485-4262
(Message is three to five minutes)

THE TEMPORARY RESTRAINING ORDER

The initial Temporary Restraining Order [TRO] issued on October 18, 1999, only required that the material from the LDS Church Handbook be kept off our web site until the case was resolved.

On Saturday, October 30, 1999, the Salt Lake Tribune ran an article on the lawsuit and listed the Internet addresses of sites that contained the Handbook. We were certainly not expecting this startling development. Prior to this, Church leaders apparently hoped to contain the spread of the Handbook. As it turned out, however, thousands of people downloaded the Handbook due to the information provided by the Tribune.

The next Tuesday, Nov. 2, 1999, we posted on our web site various emails we had received concerning the lawsuit. Two of these emails contained URL’s, or web addresses, purporting to contain all or part of the Handbook. Note, these were never posted on our site as LINKS, they were simply web addresses.

However, on November 3, 1999, IRI complained to the court that we were somehow violating the TRO by listing the web addresses. After the November 10th hearing the judge expanded the TRO to include a restriction against posting web addresses containing material from the Handbook.

On December 6, 1999, the judge disregarded our arguments against the Temporary Restraining Order and issued a Preliminary Injunction, which greatly expanded the issues and charged us with Contributory Infringement. The Injunction was to stay in effect until the lawsuit was resolved.

CONTRIBUTORY INFRINGEMENT

The judge reasoned in the Preliminary Injunction that when a person merely went to one of the sites containing the Handbook they made an illegal copy, as the text would have been temporarily copied in their computer’s RAM (memory). By our posting web addresses where such a person might be able to find the entire Handbook we were contributing to their copyright infringement.

Carl S. Kaplan of the New York Times, wrote:

In a ruling that could undermine the freedom to create links on the Web, a federal judge in Utah has temporarily barred two critics of the Mormon Church from posting on their Web site the Internet addresses of other sites featuring pirated copies of a Mormon text. In issuing a preliminary injunction on Monday, Judge Tena Campbell of the United States District Court in Salt Lake City said it was likely that the critics, Sandra and Jerald
Tanner, had engaged in **contributory copyright infringement** when they posted the addresses of three Web sites that they knew, or should have known, contained the copies. The copyrighted material was the text of the Church Handbook of Instructions, . . .

Lawyers for Intellectual Reserve Inc., a corporation that holds the intellectual property assets of the Mormon Church, praised Judge Campbell’s decision. . . . But other lawyers found the court’s decision disturbing and if it stands, a possibly dangerous precedent that could inhibit one of the most fundamental features of the Web—the ability to direct viewers from one Web to another. Although the Tanner’s case revolves around the posting of Internet addresses or URLs, and not actual linking, the copyright issues are similar, lawyers said. “That decision ultimately holds up, then linking is definitely dead,” said Jeffery R. Kuester, a copyright lawyer who practices cyberspace law at Thomas, Kayden, Horstemeyer & Risley in Atlanta. “If you can’t post an address without running into copyright infringement, how can you link?”


The article went on to examine the judge’s ruling:

In reaching her decision [for the Preliminary Injunction], Judge Campbell made two key conclusions. First, she reasoned that anyone who went to a Web site and viewed a pirated copy of the handbook was probably engaging in direct copyright infringement, because that viewer’s browser automatically makes a local copy of the text. In addition, Judge Campbell reckoned that by posting the addresses to the pirate sites after they were ordered to take down the handbook, and by otherwise assisting people who wished to locate the pirate sites, the Tanners were liable under a theory of **contributory copyright infringement**. By their actions, the Tanners “actively encouraged” browsers to directly infringe the church’s copyright, Judge Campbell wrote. What makes Campbell’s 10-page opinion significant lawyers said, is that there are few other instances where a court has ruled on the practice of knowingly linking to or posting addresses for the sites with infringing material. . . .

“I don’t believe it is illegal to tell someone where to go to read the handbook,” Tanner said. Broadbent, the lawyer for [Intellectual Reserve Inc.], claimed the court’s order was a straightforward application of the law of contributory infringement. “We regard what the Tanners did as an end-run around the initial order,” he said. Broadbent added that IRI recently contacted the operators of Prestige Elite Communications in Australia, as well as half a dozen other sites which, he claimed, had posted portions of the handbook, requesting that they stop directly infringing church copyrights. He said that with one exception, all the sites IRI contacted have taken down the material. . . .” (*New York Times*, December 10, 1999)

The article also interviewed Jessica Litman, a law professor at Wayne State University:

Jessica Litman, . . . an expert on intellectual property, said she believes the court was wrong to issue a preliminary injunction.

Pointing out that there can be no contributory infringement without direct infringement, she said it was clear to her that when members of the public used the addresses provided by the Tanners and visited a site to look at the handbook, any copies their browsers made were permissible and protected by the concept of fair use.

In any case, Litman asserted, the mere posting of a Web address could not amount to actively encouraging someone else’s infringement. “If I give a footnote in a law review article for a plagiarized book, that seems to be just telling people where the book is, not materially facilitating infringement,” she said. “This decision is like saying that providing footnotes to illegal material is illegal.” . . . (*New York Times*, December 10, 1999)

CNN.com also became interested in the trial. On December 14, 1999, Steven L. Lawson wrote the following:

A ruling this week by a federal court in Utah could represent a body blow to a key feature of the Web: linking users of one site to information on others. . . . The [LDS] church maintained that posting violated its copyright on the book. Observers familiar with Internet law said the decision could be one signal of an increasingly closed Web of the future, far different from the freewheeling forum that users know today. . . . Experts said the ruling in favor of the [LDS] church could hold back the use of one of the Web’s greatest tools, the ability to direct users from one site to another, either with information or URLs or with actual links. . . .

“This could have some far-reaching, chilling effects if people are worried about liability,” said
Robert Gorman, an associate with the law firm Fulbright & Jaworski LLP, in New York. Gorman said the ruling seems reasonable on its face, . . . “Nevertheless, the Web is a unique medium where traditional copyright law is difficult to apply,” he added. “Providing a link that takes a user to a Web site that may contain copyrighted material isn’t the same thing as reproducing a copyrighted work,” Gorman noted. . . .

Thomas Lipscomb, a founder of the Institute for the Digital Future, condemned the ruling. “Although posting protected material would be a clear violation of copyright law, simply providing addresses or links is just free speech, not a crime itself,” he said. (CNN.com, “Copyright ruling targets Web links,” December 14, 1999)

On Saturday, January 29, 2000, the LDS Church owned Deseret News incorrectly reported that we had “added links” to sites containing the Handbook to our web site:

The Tanners removed the manual from the Web site prior to the lawsuit being filed but then added links to other Internet sites where the material could be found, one of which posted the entire 160 pages of the manual. (Deseret News, January 29, 2000)

As noted earlier, we only posted an email letter (along with other emails we received about the case) containing the addresses of sites purporting to contain material from the Handbook. These were never “links.” Interestingly enough, the Salt Lake Tribune had listed other sites containing the Handbook three days before the Ministry posted the email containing the same information. The Internet site for the New York Times article on December 10, 1999, not only provided the Internet address where the Handbook could be found but also provided an actual link to the site. (Since that site has moved the link no longer works.)

Since the LDS Church had already stated to reporters that they would not sue the Salt Lake Tribune for printing and posting the URL’s (addresses) of web sites containing the Handbook, they obviously were not as concerned about web addresses being contributory infringement as they were intent on damaging Utah Lighthouse Ministry and the Tanners. Also, we were informed that the entire Handbook continued to be offered at various sites on the Internet. This was all being done by other parties. We had no connection or control over any such actions.

As far as we are aware, the LDS Church, as of January 20, 2001, has NOT filed lawsuits against any of the people so involved.

Judge Tena Campbell had to admit that there was no conclusive evidence that we were involved in the current posting of the LDS Church Handbook of Instructions on the Internet. She wrote the following in the Preliminary Injunction:

The evidence now before the court indicates that there is no direct relationship between the defendants and the people who operate the three websites. The defendants did not provide the website operators with the plaintiff’s copyrighted material, nor are the defendants receiving any kind of compensation from them. The only connection between the defendants and those who operate the three websites appears to be the information defendants have posted on their website concerning the infringing sites. Based on this scant evidence, the court concludes that plaintiff has not shown that defendants contributed to the infringing action of those who operate the infringing websites. (Preliminary Injunction, December 6, 1999)

Unfortunately for us, however, Judge Tena Campbell felt we were possibly contributing to copyright infringement by helping others go to such web sites. Because of the judge’s extreme ruling in the Preliminary Injunction, we found it necessary to file an appeal with the U.S. 10th Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver. This was done on December 24, 1999.

The Salt Lake Tribune printed the following:

Long-time LDS Church critics Jerald and Sandra Tanner are appealing an order by U.S. District Judge Tena Campbell which forbids them from posting on their Web site outside Internet addresses that tell readers where online copies of The Church Handbook of Instructions can be found . . . The Tanners disagreed with Campbell’s ruling which found they could be contributing to someone else infringing on the church’s copyright if they reveal where the book may be read online. (Salt Lake Tribune, “Critics File Appeal,” December 30, 1999)

Motion To Dismiss

At the beginning of January we filed a motion to dismiss the case with Judge Campbell. Our position was that the LDS Church had not filed a proper copyright on the Handbook and thus the case should be dismissed. In our January 2, 2000, News Release we stated:

The Church has registered its copyright in the 1998 Handbook with the Copyright Office, a prerequisite to bringing a lawsuit. The Tanners have
moved to dismiss the suit because ~73% of what was displayed on their web site came almost verbatim from the 1989 General Handbook of Instructions and was copied into the 1998 Church Handbook of Instructions. The 1989 General handbook has not been registered with the Copyright Office. Because any infringement by Tanners was of the 1989 General Handbook, the lack of a registration of that work means that the Church cannot sue... Under copyright law, strict compliance with registration requirements is required to bring a lawsuit for infringement. The LDS Church has not complied with the requirements and the case must be dismissed. (Press Release, January 2, 2000)

The judge disregarded our arguments on the validity of the copyright filings, and refused our motion for dismissal.

**COURT MAKES PHOTOS OF CHAPTER 10**

Interestingly, the Federal Court records of our case contain multiple copies of the disputed pages from the Church Handbook of Instructions from both the 1989 and the 1998 editions.

Since the LDS Church was claiming “irreparable harm” from our posting of the 17+ pages of their Handbook on the Internet, one would think that the church would have requested the judge to seal the exhibits in the case. This, however, was not done. On October 23, 1999, a man wrote to Judge Campbell, telling her that he was able to go to the Federal Court House at 4th South and Main, in Salt Lake City, and simply purchase the offending pages of the Handbook from the court filing. Several other people have informed us that they also purchased copies at the courthouse.

It is ironic that the LDS Church’s lawsuit to suppress access to the Handbook actually resulted in placing chapter 10 in a public government record where anyone can purchase a copy.

**FINAL SETTLEMENT**

With the failure of our Motion to Dismiss we were back to the issue of our appeal on the Preliminary Injunction. The Federal 10th Circuit Court of Appeals requires the parties involved in a lawsuit to work with a court mediator to see if a solution can be reached before setting a court date. We entered into negotiations with the 10th Circuit Court Mediator and the LDS lawyers in February of 2000 and finally reached an agreement on November 30, 2000.

The Salt Lake City Weekly reported:

As longtime critics of the LDS church, Jerald and Sandra Tanner never intended on setting legal precedent regarding the use of Internet links to copyrighted material. Given enough financial resources, they very well could have. Now, pending an imminent settlement agreement with the church, it looks like that precedent will have to be forged by someone else...

Last week’s settlement between the Tanners and the LDS church... put the issue to rest under certain conditions. For the Tanners, that means destroying any and all copies they have of what’s formerly called the Church Handbook of Instructions a heavily guarded, copyrighted manual for clergy only.

So far so good. For the Tanners and their attorney, Brian Barnard, the most important agreement from the opposing side was the withdrawal of the court’s original opinion restricting the posting of Internet addresses...

For Barnard, withdrawal of that opinion was crucial. Still, he admits that the Tanners’ preference for settlement constitutes a lost opportunity to possibly set legal precedent... But as so often happens in legal cases, money is power. The Tanners simply didn’t have the time and resources to settle the issue in such a definitive way... Outside of Utah, however, there are plenty of people who wish the case had gone all the way, setting once and for all the question of whether or not providing Internet links to copyrighted material amounts to contributory copyright infringement.

“I’m sorry to hear that they settled, but I’m not surprised,” said Robin Gross, a staff attorney with the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a non-profit civil liberties group for Internet concerns. “In this case, I believe the Tanners were completely in the right. A link is simply a reference that points someone in the direction of where they can find information. But the trend we’re seeing now is that large corporations, like the LDS church, are using the club of litigation as a way of controlling speech. Copyright litigation is becoming one of the most effective ways of silencing critics.”...

The Tanners, meanwhile say they’re set to get on with their publishing ministry. Sandra Tanner can’t let go of the feeling that the church singled them out for legal action, especially when others freely posted and published links to the church handbook. An Australian still has addresses to the book posted on his website, and it’s easily found through a simple web search. Religious issues aside, she too frames the whole affair as one of
One suspects that the LDS Church realized that with the upcoming 2002 Olympics in Salt Lake City it was a bad time to be getting negative publicity and agreed to settle the lawsuit to get it out of the news. Otherwise, the appeal on the Preliminary Injunction would have probably been going on in the court at the same time as the 2002 Olympics, generating unwanted attention to the LDS Church’s secret Handbook and disciplinary procedures.

In agreeing to settle the lawsuit we did not pay any money to the LDS Church nor did we admit to any wrong doing. We simply agreed not to quote more than 50 words from any one chapter of the Handbook in any one article. We also agreed to destroy all versions of the Handbook in our possession. While we believe this was an unreasonable demand from the Church, we agreed to destroy all the copies we had. Since various libraries have multiple versions of the Handbook available, it was not critical that we retain copies.

The LDS Church agreed to our demand that the Preliminary Injunction be dissolved so that it would not affect future Internet cases.

Another point of irony is that the Church’s lawsuit increased public curiosity about the Handbook, which led to many people downloading copies from the Internet. Also the international attention given the lawsuit helped quadruple the number of people coming to our web site.

While the lawsuit is over, many questions still remain:
1. Since the Handbook is still being disseminated on the Internet, why has no one else been sued?
2. Why is the Church Handbook kept from its members?
3. Why are members unable to see the rules and regulations that govern them?
4. Why is the process to terminate LDS Church membership so complicated?
5. Why can’t people simply notify the LDS Church that they have quit? Why isn’t that enough?

For more details, articles, transcripts and photos on the court case, see our web site www.utlm.org.

For those wanting information on how to terminate their membership in the LDS Church, simply drop us a note or check our web site www.utlm.org.
(Cont.) I briefly checked out the Tanner’s website for a minute and then put the issue out of my mind but chuckled in my mind that even the Tanners had an Internet site now. Around the same time I had read about the “Kinderhook Plates” issue from stalwart TBM internet sites and after several months I still could not come to a peace of mind on it so I returned to the Tanners’ site to see what they had to say about it. That’s where I found the “Changing World of Mormonism” which discussed this issue and raised enough other questions to put me in a frenzy of truth-seeking like I’ve never had before in my life during the first 3 weeks of April 2000. The end result was that I lost my testimony when faced with the overwhelming amount of evidence that shows that the Church is not true beyond reasonable doubt.

Good job on the lawsuit you bureaucrats in the Church Offices!! I probably would have never gone on the Tanners’ website when I did if it hadn’t been for the publicity the lawsuit raised in my favorite trade journal that I started reading religiously while at BYU (i.e. ComputerWorld). Why was I reading ComputerWorld magazine? Because some tithing dollars were being spent by my boss on it for the department at BYU where I worked as a Computer Specialist and I was following the counsel of the Brethren to stay current on my chosen profession and ComputerWorld magazine is one of the best for doing this. Little did I know that one day that an article in it would be a passive contributing force to me losing my testimony.

**Extracts from Letters and Emails**

**October 1999.** I am writing to say that I read about your story in the Salt Lake Tribune and I commend you on your efforts to make the Mormon Question accessible to as many people as you can. I am a Catholic and am 22 years of age. I have often dealt with Mormons as just another Christian denomination until I really started to look into the heart of their religion and their various beliefs. I have come to realize that the lie they are perpetuating is grand and centered on disinformation. I never knew that there is a website where you can get so much information to challenge the self-righteous all-knowing Mormons who point to their religion as the one true religion. They almost always point to the Book of Mormon as the alpha and omega of their doctrines and beliefs, while knowing full well that it is only a small portion of what they believe. I want to thank you and once again commend you on your efforts to curb this Great Lie and make information more accessible to the public who get bogged down by Mormon rhetoric.

**October 1999.** Thank you for having such a wonderful and informative web site - I came across it after reading the article in the on line version of the SLC Tribune. Many years ago I asked to have my name removed from the “records” and it took two years of harrassment, wanting me to go to bishops court, etc before I finally got a letter of excommunication. I had done nothing wrong but felt so terribly guilty. Finally their actions are being brought to light by your work.

**October 1999.** Hi: I’m a 30 yr. old mother of two and a Christian. I saw you on the news last night and I applaud your efforts. I’m not surprised that the LDS church won this round. (In this state nothing surprises me). We are from the east coast and knew nothing about Mormonism when we moved here. We have been bombarded with people trying to convert us. I read your website last night and it cleared up a lot of questions I’ve had. The blessing that has come out of this lawsuit is the publicity and the people who will now visit your website (like I did). Keep up the good work.

**November 1999.** your newsletters helped me get free from my doubts about leaving the church! i would have defended the church to the death a year ago. i was so involved in the lies . . . i defended the lies when i was confronted! now i have the truth and i am sooo glad you have made all of this history available.

**November 1999.** I feel so very sorry for both of you and for those who have been duped by you. To deny truth and flaunt it. As so many who have gone before, your reward will come.

**November 1999.** I’m very sorry for you. I don’t understand where all hate comes from? I will pray for you and your salvation. Thank you for strengthening my testimony. I know the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints IS TRUE.

**November 1999.** I just read about the Injunction proceeding in the LA Times. . . . My gut thought says that copyright law is to protect commercial uses of writings, not privacy of gangs. As an ex-Mormon who was shown the light by your ministry I cannot imagine anything that you would publish that would not be fair use and protected free speech.

**December 1999.** Your work has assisted our exodus from a life of valiant service to the religion we no longer are members of and to freedom in our Lord & Savior. I just wanted to take a moment to thank you once again and to wish the work to continue & flourish in the upcoming New Year in bringing more mormons to the true light of Christ.
December 1999. Lets see, the LDS Church obtained main street for their own use, sues the Tanners. What is next “Blood Atonement,” for anyone who gets in their way? It did not surprise me that an Utah Judge ruled against the Tanners concerning the LDS Handbook. The Tanners had to go to the “Tenth District Federal Court,” to receive justice over publishing the Clayton Diaries.

December 1999. Thank you! My wife has already begun to compose the letter [to withdraw from the LDS Church]...she’s going to explain her reasons in detail!

This is a big step for her...she’s not yet real comfortable sharing her “new” faith in Christ. Feels quite unsure as of yet about her convictions because she was so confident when she was a Mormon and then found out Mormonism is false...so she’s moving slowly! Thanks for the help and we’ll be praying for you!

February 2000. I just wanted to say that what you have done in the way of allowing an ignorant father like myself to gather the facts and present them to a son that was still willing to be reasonable and analytical has saved him from the mormon baloney and returned his feet to the path of Christ. Thank you, thank you, a million thanks.

July 2000. I would like you to know that I have turned from the LDS religion recently and have turned to the true Jesus Christ who saves. Been reading your site for quite sometime. May you continue in your ministry to the lost ones held prisoner by the LDS. Thank you.

October 2000. We left mormonism on Dec. 1991...We left mormonism because of John L. Smith and your great book Mormonism-Shadow or Reality. That book really opened my eyes. I ordered it from UML. When I found out the lies we were told by the [LDS Church] I wept, was angry and I grieved. If I had known the truth we would have never become Mormons. We were really ignorant of the truth when we became Mormons...I...had been a Baptist all of my life and so had my husband. Our daughters husbands both served on a mission... It was really hard for the one son inlaw who left when he found out the truth. Our daughter told me she had been to your place... Our other daughter, her husband and her little family are still very much Mormons. When we left both daughters were upset with us. A miracle happened to one... Our son also left. Two out of three is great,... We returned to our Christian Faith on the Lord’s Day December 29, 1991. We are Free, in The True Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and not Mormonism Jesus the Christ.

November 2000. I want to let you know that your ministry has helped many of my wife’s and I friends who needed help in leaving the LDS church. You will be happy to know that your site alone has turned at least 9 couples that were in our ward to the true Christ and gave them strength to leave the church from all its pressures.

November 2000. What do you have against the LDS Church? Isn’t it every ones right to believe what they want? What makes you the supreme authority on TRUTH? Why have you made it your personal mission to tear down the LDS Church? Do you really think or believe you are being of service to God?

November 2000. I stopped by your bookstore last month just prior to closing and Sandra was there, politely waiting while I picked up a hardbound copy of your classic “Mormonism, Shadow or Reality?” (The other paperback copy I loaned out and never got it back) and other selections. The research in this book gave me the empetis to have my name removed from the LDS church in 1999.

While there, I filled my arms with one each of the free “Salt Lake City Messenger” bulletins, not aware of this publication. I have spent the last month reading them and it has reinforced my belief that Mormonism and the BOM is a creation of the 19th century. I too, like Jerald and Sandra, had a hard time letting go of the Book of Mormon, but after reading the bulletins, the doubt has vanished. Your issues #80 and #81 were excellent. ...Since my wife and children still attend the LDS faith, it has been hard for me to break way and attend another Christian service, so I spend my Sundays studying your documentation. I know my children will come to me some day desiring the truth, and I have been preparing myself to teach them.

December 2000. We have been married in the temple and were active members for over 10 years. After re-examining Mormonism, we decided to leave the church and pursue a spiritual life in a Christian church. ...

December 2000. [I was ex]communicated from the L.D.S. church in 1996 on charges of heresy. ... I have total empathy with my family and others. After all, I was like them for most of my life, though the seeds of doubt were planted in my brain (and later my heart) when I was a deacon. Now I am a pariah of sorts with those I love best, including the missionaries and members over whom I presided in Argentina (Buenos Aires North and Buenos Aires South,...) and in Chile (president of Missionary Training Center in Santiago,... with missionaries primarily from Chile, Bolivia and Peru). ... I retired from BYU [some years ago]. ... With sincere congratulations for your important work, ...

December 2000. My husband and I were in Utah just a short while back and we spoke of the Mormon influence and what it would be like to be a Christian in that area. I have, since that trip, been introduced to at least six Mormon families. I am currently communicating with a Mormon friend via email. Your site [www.utlm.org] has been very informative and encouraging.

January 2001. It is so amazing that people such as yourselves have nothing better to do than to dig for dirt and to find fault with Christ’s church. I certainly think your faith is in yourself and that a loving Heavenly Father knows your works of darkness and it will turn back on you when you least expect it. Bitter Bitter people that you are. Go and sin no more.
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Polygamist Sentenced to Five Years in Prison

Tom Green, a modern-day polygamist in Utah, was given a five-year prison sentence on August 25, 2001. Green might never have come to the attention of the state if he had kept a low profile. Instead, he appeared on various television programs and granted numerous interviews, explaining his polygamist life-style. The Salt Lake Tribune reported:

NEPHI—Polygamist Tom Green’s bragging on tabloid TV shows that he is married to five women and has fathered dozens of children finally may have caught up with him. . . .

“I will never regret standing and publicly defending my religious beliefs,” Green told The Salt Lake Tribune. “I’m being prosecuted because I am a polygamist who stood up.”

Also Thursday [April 19, 2001], the Utah Court of Appeals rejected Green’s appeal of another judge’s ruling that his marriage to wife Linda Kunz is valid—a crucial point for prosecutors in the bigamy charges. . . . The ruling about Green’s marriage does not resolve the bigamy counts, and prosecutors still must prove those charges beyond a reasonable doubt, the court said in dismissing the appeal.

Green also did not file his appeal by court deadlines, the judges noted. During the hearing in Nephi, Kunz called herself “Head wife” and added, “If our family was a business, I’d be the CEO.” She explained that meant, among other things, she is in charge of deciding who will spend each night with Green.

. . . Green was ordered to stand trial on the bigamy charges last year. But [4th District Judge Guy] Burningham granted a new preliminary hearing after Juab County Prosecutor David Leavitt filed an amended complaint alleging the admitted polygamist has continued to break bigamy laws.

In court Thursday, Hannah Bjorkman—who married Green in a civil wedding in 1991, but divorced him four years later testified that she is still married to Green “in my heart.” Bjorkman added all of the women considered themselves to be Green’s wives, regardless of status in the eyes of the state. . . .

Green is also charged with first-degree felony rape for allegedly fathering a child with Kunz, then 13, in 1986. Kunz later became Green’s wife. That charge could be dropped if Bucher [Green’s attorney] can prove the rape allegation had been reported to the police before 1986. That would mean the 10-year legal deadline, or statute of limitations, then in effect had expired. (Salt Lake Tribune, April 20, 2001, p. D3)

On May 19, 2001, The Salt Lake Tribune reported:

PROVO—Avowed polygamist Tom Green—the subject of Utah’s first polygamy trial in nearly five decades—was convicted late Friday on four counts of bigamy and one count of criminal nonsupport. . . . The 8-person jury reached the verdict in less than three hours.

Interestingly, Green recalled in testimony his transformation from a missionary with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to a believer in what he called “Mormon fundamentalism.”

“The process began in my teens as I studied . . . the history of my faith, the history of my state,” Green said.

Polygamy was practiced for several decades during the 1800s by Mormon pioneers, but was abandoned by the church in 1890. . . . [Juab County Prosecutor David] Leavitt has said he did not know Green existed until he
saw him bragging on “Dateline NBC” about his living arrangements. . . . “The reality is that the state of Utah makes criminal more than one wife because it hurts people,” Leavitt said, telling jurors that Green took three of his wives when they were only 14.

The Salt Lake Tribune reported the following:

PROVO—With a rueful smile, convicted polygamist Tom Green blew a kiss to his five tearful wives and a handful of his 30 children before deputies escorted him from court to Utah State Prison for up to 5 years. . . . [This] marked the first time since the 1940’s that a Utah polygamist was sent to prison for violating the state’s anti-bigamy law. . . . Green, 53, was sentenced to up to 5 years on each of four counts of felony bigamy and one charge of criminal nonsupport, and was ordered to pay $78,868 in restitution. . . .

[Judge] Burningham, who acknowledged his own polygamous heritage during Friday’s court proceeding, ruled Green’s prison sentences will run concurrently. . . .


Ironically, the Juab County Prosecutor, David Leavitt (brother of Utah State Governor Mike Leavitt) is also descended from early Mormon polygamists. The Salt Lake Tribune commented:

Modern-day polygamists—like Green, himself a former church missionary—are excommunicated for entering into plural marriages. . . . Leavitt and his older brother, Gov. Mike Leavitt have polygamous ancestors.

(Salt Lake Tribune, May, 19, 2001, p. A5)

The Salt Lake Tribune also reported that the state Attorney General’s Office is pursuing other possible cases against Utah polygamists.

Green is the first polygamist to be convicted since the 1953 raids on a polygamist group in southern Utah:

. . . Utah’s estimated 30,000 polygamists, . . . have never forgotten a 1953 raid on the polygamous enclave of Short Creek on the Utah-Arizona border. The incident became a public relations nightmare for state and federal officials as fathers, mothers and children were forcibly separated.

(Salt Lake Tribune, August 25, 2001, p. A10)

While the Salt Lake Tribune estimated Utah’s polygamists at 30,000, the total number of polygamists is hard to determine. Maxine Hanks reported:

Utah usually ignores polygamy, hoping it will go away. But its scope and problems have grown and “festered like cancer,” according to an ex-wife . . . Today, there are a dozen major clans consisting of hundreds of families. And there are small independent groups. . . . Estimates vary widely, but insiders claim that Mormon fundamentalism may involve 60,000 people scattered from Canada to Mexico across seven Western states. Most of them are practicing some form of polygamy.

(Salt Lake Tribune, June 7, 1998)

Incest and Abuse

The Salt Lake Tribune reported on another polygamist group, the Kingstons:

. . . Two years ago, [S.L. County District Attorney David] Yocum’s office successfully prosecuted polygamist David Ortell Kingston on two charges of incest—a felony for having sex with a niece in a closed polygamist society. Kingston, a key member of Salt Lake County’s largest polygamist clan, was ordered to serve two consecutive terms of up to 5 years in prison and fined $10,000. And Kingston’s brother, John Daniel Kingston was sentenced to 7 months in jail for beating his daughter with a horsewhip after she fled the arranged marriage to her uncle. But Yocum did not pursue charges on bigamy. David Zolman, a former lawmaker from Taylorsville who often defended polygamists on Capital Hill, says violent crimes such as the Kingston’s should be prosecuted but that consenting adults, such as Green and his five wives, ought to be left alone. He says plural marriage in Utah is here to stay and that Green’s trial has galvanized polygamists statewide.

(Salt Lake Tribune, May, 20, 2001, p. A14)

Although Mr. Zolman defended polygamy when it is between consenting adults, he failed to mention that Tom Green’s current first wife, Linda, was only 13 when he “married” her.

Green was first married as a regular Mormon. When he got interested in practicing polygamy his wife divorced him. He later married Beth, who had a daughter named Linda. He then married that step-daughter.

Next he married Shirley (age 15), Beth’s niece. Then he married Shirley’s mother, June. Later June’s other daughter, LeeAnn, married Green. The total of Green’s wives in 1993 was seven: Beth and daughter Linda; June and daughters, LeeAnn and Shirley; and Cari and Hanna (sisters). Older wives Beth and June later left the relationship, leaving Green with his current five wives, all at least two dozen years younger than him (see Salt Lake City Magazine, March/April, 1993, “Plural Lives: Inside Polygamy in the ‘90’s,” pp. 52-101).

The women were once a part of another polygamist group. The Salt Lake Tribune reported:

Shirley Beagley, 31, one of Green’s wives, testified Wednesday that she was raised in the polygamous enclave of Colorado City, Arizona. She said she married Green at age 15 in a “religious ceremony.” (Salt Lake Tribune, May 17, 2001, p. A8)
While Mr. Green only claims five wives today, he has had up to ten in all (Salt Lake Tribune, May 20, 2001, p. B1).

In a television interview with Green’s wives, Shirley explained that she and her mother, June, were simultaneously pregnant with Green’s children and both delivered on the same day (Dateline, June 22, 2001).

Polygamy in Other Areas

The Salt Lake Tribune carried the following story on polygamy in Arizona:

PHOENIX—Anyone thinking that polygamy is limited to a remote and obscure strip along the Arizona-Utah line beyond Grand Canyon should think again: How about metro Phoenix?

Take James Timpson of suburban Tempe, a 26-year-old Arizona State University psychology major who wears his hair in a surfer’s ponytail, drinks Corona beer and puts in long hours at his job as a computer salesman Timpson is a practicing polygamist, one of several in metropolitan Phoenix who believe keeping more than one wife is a mandate from heaven. Timpson has three.

Arizona authorities have taken no significant action toward consensual polygamist marriages since 1953, when a disastrous police raid on the polygamist settlement of Short Creek—now Colorado City, just across the border from the Utah town of Hildale—resulted in a wave of negative publicity that helped drive Republican Gov. Howard Pyle from office.

“Polygamous or plural marriages, or polygamist cohabitation, are forever prohibited within this state,” says Arizona’s constitution, written in 1910.

But the Maricopa County Attorney’s Office will prosecute only if there is evidence the husband defrauded his wives financially, Bill FitzGerald said. “We don’t think the public interest is served by prosecuting,” added Bill Ekstrom, the top prosecutor in Mohave County, where an estimated 5,000 practicing polygamists still live in what was Short Creek.

Tens of thousands of people in western United States practice polygamy. There is no way to gauge how many of them are in Phoenix, . . . Timpson was raised with 65 biological brothers and sisters in Colorado City, said to be the home of the largest polygamist assembly in North America today. (Salt Lake Tribune, May 20, 2001, p. A15)

Another article relating to the Colorado City group
told of the escape of a teenage girl:

A 15-year-old girl who ran away from her polygamous family saying she wanted to avoid an arranged marriage maintained she just looks for a chance to live a normal life and get an education . . . she has not been allowed to attend school since the sixth grade . . . The girl believed she would be forced to marry 45-year-old Warren Jeffs, acting church president [of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints] . . . (Salt Lake Tribune, April 7, 2001, p. A1)

Polygamy is not just a phenomena of the United States. The following newspaper article appeared in the Saturday, September 30, 2000, edition of the York Daily Record:

VANCOUVER, British Columbia—A polygamous community in Southern British Columbia is part of a U.S. probe into the arranged marriages of underage American girls. In Utah last week Ron Barton was hired by the state attorney general’s office to investigate tax evasion, welfare fraud, and child sexual abuse, domestic abuse and other crimes in “loose” societies, such as tax protest groups, white supremacist organizations and polygamist sects.

One of the largest of the polygamist sects is the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Located primarily in Hildale, Utah, and neighboring Colorado City, Ariz. it has an estimated 8,000 to 12,000 members. The sect has an enclave at Lister, British Columbia, with 800 to 1,000 members.

Ex-members of the sect and a child advocacy group have asked Utah authorities to investigate the movement of young girls between Arizona, Utah and British Columbia. They say the arranged marriages are increasing because the church’s leaders have predicted that the end of the world is near. The Lister enclave is headed by businessman Winston Blackmore, 44, who has 30 wives and 80 children, The Vancouver Province newspaper reported.
Joseph Smith and Polygamy

Although many members of the Mormon Church are familiar with polygamy in early Utah, they usually are not aware of the beginnings of plural marriage under Joseph Smith. Richard VanWagoner explains that Joseph Smith first introduced the idea of polygamy in 1831, just a year after starting his church:

It is difficult to determine exactly when Joseph Smith first felt compelled to practice polygamy. W. W. Phelps recollected three decades after the fact in an 1861 letter to Brigham Young that on 17 July 1831, when he and five others had gathered in Jackson County, Missouri, Smith stated: “It is my will, that in time, ye should take unto you wives of the Lamanites [Indians] and Nephites, that their posterity may become white, delightsome and just.” Phelps added in a postscript that “about three years after this was given, I asked brother Joseph, privately, how ‘we,’ that were mentioned in the revelation could take wives of the ‘natives’ as we were all married men?” He claimed that Smith replied, ‘In the same manner that Abraham took Hagar and Keturah; and Jacob took Rachel, Bilhah and Zilpha, by Revelation. (Mormon Polygamy: A History, by Richard S. Van Wagoner, p. 3)

Joseph Smith’s practice and teaching on polygamy were only known to a small circle of friends and was kept secret from the community. This led to speculation and charges of adultery. In response to these charges, a section on marriage and denouncing polygamy was added to the 1835 edition of the Mormon’s scriptures, Doctrine and Covenants:

Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy: we declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife; and one woman, but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again. (Doctrine and Covenants, 1835 ed., Sec. 101)

This denial of polygamy was in every edition of the Doctrine and Covenants until 1876, when it was replaced with section 132 commanding polygamy. Even though Smith was already practicing plural marriage in the 1830’s he did not give his polygamy revelation (Sec. 132) until 1843.

George Smith provides the following discussion of Joseph Smith’s 1843 revelation on polygamy:

On July 12, 1843, Joseph Smith dictated a ten-page revelation to his private clerk, William Clayton, which indicated that he meant to “restore” the ceremonies and cultural patterns of ancient Israel. The revelation on plural marriage, or “celestial marriage” as it was called, claimed to restore the practice of “Moses, Abraham, David and Solomon having many wives and concubines . . . a new and everlasting covenant” in which “if any man espouse a virgin . . . [or] ten virgins . . . he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him.” (D&C 132:4, 61, 62).

A few months earlier, Clayton recalled, Smith “also informed me that he had other wives living besides his first wife Emma, and in particular gave me to understand that Eliza R. Snow, Louisa Beman, Desdemona W. Fullmer and others were his lawful wives in the sight of heaven.” In fact, by the time of the 1843 revelation Smith had married at least twelve women besides his legal wife Emma, and a dozen of his most trusted followers had also taken plural wives. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, vol. 27, no. 1, Spring 1994, pp. 7-8, “Nauvoo Roots of Mormon Polygamy, 1841-46: A Preliminary Demographic Report,” by George D. Smith)

B. Carmon Hardy, in Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage, discusses the response to Smith’s revelation:

That plurality of wives was the most important intent of the communication [D&C 132] is clear from the reasons that led Joseph to dictate it. The opening lines expressly indicate that it was an answer to the prophet's inquiry as to why ancient men of God were justified in taking plural wives and concubines. . . . Commencing with the examples of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, affirming the sealing authority of God's appointed and applying it to marriage for eternity, Joseph was instructed to “do the works of Abraham” and his wife Emma to accept them. The ancient patriarchs had taken wives and concubines “and it was accounted unto . . . [them] for righteousness . . . and they have entered into their exaltation . . . and sit upon thrones, and are not angels but are gods.” More than this, the Lord stated that “those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same.”

Whatever accounted for the prophet’s decision to dictate on the matter, its portrait of the universe as a field for dominion by the patriarchal family had begun to take form . . . Not all were favored . . . with a presentiment of the doctrine’s divinity. And much of the dissent dividing the church in the spring of 1844 dated from refusal to accept the revelation and the obligations enjoined by it. Some of this arose from the sense of betrayal an associate like William Law could feel. Law had previously stood by Joseph, publicly denying rumors of church-sanctioned polygamy. By the spring of 1844, however, the church’s leadership was rent with ugliness and accusation. Not only did some refuse to accept the revelation on plural marriage, but charges of adultery
and attempted seduction were traded. Violence was threatened. And, feeding on reports of scandal, the non-Mormon press made the most of it. Social structure in Nauvoo was becoming dangerously tangled.

Then, while **under indictment** from a Carthage, Illinois, grand jury for **adultery and polygamy** but secure at home and among friends, Joseph was confronted with the publication by several disaffected members of the *Nauvoo Expositor*. Charging the Mormon leader with abuses of power and economic manipulations for private gain, the paper was primarily an attack on the personal morality of the leader and his brother Hyrum, including the revelation about and **practice of polygamy**. The **seduction of young women**, the ruination of innocent reputations, and the secrecy of sexual liaisons in the name of religion were all charged. Pleading for repentance by the brothers, asking that the old friendships and old orthodoxies be restored, the *Expositor*’s authors acknowledged the jeopardy they invited by their disclosures but hoped the venture, which promised future evidence in support of their allegations, would be protected by the freedoms of press and religion.

Fearful of the paper’s effect if it were permitted to continue, the city council held an extraordinary meeting with **Joseph presiding**, condemned the publication as a nuisance, and issued an order to **wreck the press** that printed it. Those responsible for the *Expositor* left town in fear, seeing to it that Joseph and others were charged in Carthage with instigating to riot and destruction of property. After some hesitation and considerable parleying involving Governor Thomas Ford, the prophet with several associates surrendered to authorities in Carthage to await trial. In the late afternoon of 27 June 1844, a mob of assassins with blackened faces stormed the jail, shot Joseph and Hyrum to death, and left John Taylor, one of their companions, terribly wounded. (*Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage*, B. Carmon Hardy, pp. 10-11. A copy of the *Nauvoo Expositor* is available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry for $2 plus $1 shipping.)

Polygamy was kept secret until the Mormons settled in Utah. In 1852 Apostle Orson Pratt was appointed to make the announcement on plural marriage in an LDS meeting (*Mormon Polygamy: A History*, p. 85).

**Plural Marriage Illegal**

Prosecutor David Leavitt stated:

“I am sure that my great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents would approve of my actions,” Leavitt said. . . . “Polygamy is against the law in Utah.” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, May 20, 2001, p. A14)

Ironically, polygamy was against the law in Illinois when the early Mormons began practicing it. This was the reason for its great secrecy and the adamant denials of the doctrine and practice by Joseph Smith. Richard S. Van Wagoner provides the following information:

**Polygamy, a criminal act under the 1833 Illinois Anti-bigamy Laws**, was so unacceptable to monogamous nineteenth-century American society that Smith could introduce it only in absolute secrecy. Despite Smith’s explicit denials of plural marriage, stories of “spiritual wifery” had continued to spread. (*Mormon Polygamy: A History*, p. 18)

In 1833 the state of Illinois passed a law making bigamy illegal:

Sec 121. Bigamy consists in the having of two wives or two husbands at one and the same time, knowing that the former husband or wife is still alive. If any person or persons within this State, being married, or who shall hereafter marry, do at any time marry any person or persons, the former husband or wife being alive, the person so offending shall, on conviction thereof, be punished by a fine, not exceeding one thousand dollars, and imprisoned in the penitentiary, not exceeding two years. It shall not be necessary to prove either of the said marriages by the register or certificate thereof, or other record evidence; but the same may be proved by such evidence as is admissible to prove a marriage in other cases, and when such second marriage shall have taken place without this state, cohabitation in this state after such second marriage shall be deemed the commission of the crime of bigamy, and the trial in such case may take place in the county where such cohabitation shall have occurred. (*Revised Laws of Illinois, 1833*, pp. 198-199)

Thus we see that Joseph Smith, living in Illinois in the 1840’s, was privately practicing and teaching a doctrine that was not only illegal but also in direct contradiction to the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants*. In addition to this, records indicate that many illegal plural marriages took place after the LDS Church issued the 1890 Manifesto, supposedly stopping the practice. There is a list of 262 plural marriages between 1890 and 1910 among the prominent LDS people in the back of the book, *Solemn Covenant*, by B. Carmon Hardy. (See also “LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890-1904,” by D. Michael Quinn, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1985, pp. 9-105.) Of this number 131 men had served on a mission, been a Branch President, Bishop, Stake President or Apostle.
Number of Wives

In 1887, LDS Assistant Church Historian Andrew Jenson made a list of 27 women who were sealed to Joseph Smith before his death (Historical Record, vol. 6, 1887, pp. 233-234). More recent research, however, has led to a longer list. Todd Compton stated:

I have identified thirty-three well-documented wives of Joseph Smith, which some may regard as an overly conservative numbering . . . Historians Fawn Brodie, D. Michael Quinn, and George D. Smith list forty-eight, forty-six, and forty-three, respectfully. Yet in problematic areas it may be advisable to err on the side of caution. (In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith, p. 1)

Compton also noted that Joseph Smith wanted to marry even more women. He noted that Joseph Smith “proposed to at least five more women who turned him down.” On the dust jacket of his book, we read:

Mormons today have little idea about their founder’s family life . . . Fewer know of his contempt for traditional marriage and Victorian morality.

To understand these issues, Todd Compton has painstakingly researched and recovered the life stories of the women aged fourteen to fifty-four—whom the prophet loved and married and whose salvation he guaranteed. In their own accounts, the wives tell how difficult it was to accept this secret—shared marriage—and to forfeit their dreams of meeting and falling in love with a man of their choice. What they received were tainted reputations among the uninitiated and, ultimately, their husband’s violent death.

These were colorful, tragic figures. After the martyrdom, one of the widows became a nun; another joined the prophet’s first wife in the Midwestern anti-polygamy reorganization; and some abandoned Utah for California. Most were claimed by the twelve apostles, who fathered their children but proved unreliable as husbands, resulting in more than one divorce.

The widows experienced sadness as they contemplated what they had become. One reticently revealed on her deathbed that her child, Josephine, was the prophet’s daughter—a whispered confidentiality that only underscored the secrecy that still surrounds these women’s identities a half-century later.

Thirty-three extraordinary lives began with promise and devotion and ended almost uniformly in loneliness. The great consolation these women held was that their sacrifices had been for God. Whatever reward they received, it was not of this world.

Teen Brides and Married Women

Joseph Smith’s wives ranged in age from fourteen to fifty-six. Todd Compton recounts: “Having married Joseph Smith at the age of fourteen, Helen Mar [Kimball] is the youngest of Smith’s known wives” (In Sacred Loneliness, p. 487).

Helen had not been Smith’s first pick from the Kimball family. He had earlier asked Apostle Heber C. Kimball for his wife, Vilate. When Heber was unwilling to give up his wife, Joseph turned to his daughter, Helen.

The fact that Joseph Smith asked for other men’s wives was acknowledged in a sermon in 1854 by Jedediah M. Grant, second counselor to Brigham Young. In this sermon he stated:

When the family organization was revealed from heaven—the patriarchal order of God, and Joseph began, on the right and on the left, to add to his family, what a quaking there was in Israel. Says one brother to another, “Joseph says all covenants are done away, and none are binding but the new covenants; now suppose Joseph should come and say he wanted your wife, what would you say to that?” “I would tell him to go to hell.” This was the spirit of many in the early days of this Church . . .

What would a man of God say, who felt aright, when Joseph asked him for his money? He would say, “Yes, and I wish I had more to help to build up the kingdom of God.” Or if he came and said, “I want your wife?” “O Yes,” he would say, “here she is, there are plenty more.” . . . Did the Prophet Joseph want every man’s wife he asked for? He did not . . . If such a man of God should come to me and say, “I want your gold and silver, or your wives,” I should say, “Here they are, I wish I had more to give you, take all I have got.” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 2, February 19, 1854, pp. 13-14)

Todd Compton frankly discussed the issue of Joseph Smith’s practice of polyandry, marrying women who already had husbands:

Polyandry is one of the major problems found in Smith’s polygamy and many questions surround it. Why did he at first primarily prefer polyandrous marriages? In the past, polyandry has often been ignored or glossed over, but if these women merit serious attention, the topic cannot be overlooked . . . A common misconception concerning Joseph Smith’s polyandry is that he participated in only one or two such unusual unions. In fact, fully one-third of his plural wives, eleven of them were married civilly to other men when he married them. If one superimposes a chronological perspective, one sees that of Smith’s first twelve wives, nine were
so in this early period polyandry was the norm, not the anomaly...Polyandry might be easier to understand if one viewed these marriages to Smith as a sort of de facto divorce with the first husband. However, none of these women divorced their ‘first husbands’ while Smith was alive and all of them continued to live with their civil spouses while married to Smith...In the eleven certain polyandrous marriages, only three of the husbands were non-Mormon (Lightner, Sayers, and Cleveland) and only one was disaffected (Buell). All other husbands were in good standing in the church at the time Joseph married their wives. Many were prominent church leaders and close friends of Smith...These data suggested that Joseph may have married these women, often, not because they were married to non-members but because they were married to faithful Latter-day Saints who were his devoted friends. This again suggests that the men knew about the marriages and permitted them.” (In Sacred Loneliness, pp. 15-16)

One of Smith’s polyandrous marriages was to Zina Diantha Huntington Jacobs. Smith had taught eighteen-year-old Zina about plural marriage and proposed to her but she put him off. She was being courted by a “handsome, eligible twenty-three-year-old” named Henry Jacobs. “On 7 March 1841, twenty-year-old Zina married Henry Jacobs.” Smith would not attend their marriage. He next approached Zina’s brother, Dimick, to talk to her about becoming his plural wife. “In October 1841, Smith sent him [her brother Dimick] with an unwelcome message to force Zina to a decision. ‘Joseph said, Tell Zina I have put it off and put it off until an angel with a drawn sword has stood before me and told me if I did not establish that principle [plurality of wives] and live it, I would lose my position and my life and the Church could progress no further’.” (Four Zinas: A Story of Mothers and Daughters on the Mormon Frontier, by Martha Bradley & Mary Woodward, pp. 107-115). Under such religious pressure, Zina submitted to become Smith’s secret plural wife. She also continued in her marriage to Henry, a devout Mormon. “Zina does not record if she and Joseph consummated their union, although Zina later signed an affidavit that she was Smith’s wife in ‘very deed’” (Four Zinas, p. 115). Joseph Smith’s death did not end Zina’s struggles with polygamy and polyandry, “on 2 February 1846, Henry Jacobs witnessed the sealing of his twenty-five-year-old wife, Zina, for time to Brigham Young, who was twenty years her senior” (Four Zinas, p. 132).

According to Illinois law, not only would Joseph Smith have been guilty of bigamy but so would his various wives who were already married.

Marriages Consummated

Many members of the Mormon Church find it difficult to believe that Joseph Smith had multiple wives and even harder to believe that he had sex with anyone other than Emma. The evidence, however, is clear. Todd Compton wrote:

Emily Partridge Young said she “roomed” with Joseph the night following her marriage to him, and said that she had “carnal intercourse” with him. (In Sacred Loneliness, p. 12)

Other early witnesses also affirmed this. Benjamin Johnson wrote:

On the 15th of May...the Prophet again came and at my house [house] occupied [sic] the Same Room & Bed with my sister that the month previous he had occupied with the Daughter of the Later [late?] Bishop Partridge as his wife.” According to Joseph Bates Noble, Smith told him he had spent a night with Louisa Beaman...Many of Joseph’s wives affirmed that they were married to him for eternity and time, with sexuality included. (In Sacred Loneliness, pp. 13-14)

False Prophets

The first seven presidents of the Mormon Church, proclaimed to be prophets of God, were involved in breaking the law, polygamy, polyandry, adultery, deception and perjury. All 15 presidents of the LDS Church have been involved in a massive cover-up regarding these issues. Although Joseph Smith died on June 27, 1844, his teaching on plural marriage continues to affect thousands of people today. As long as the LDS Church continues to print Sec. 132 in their Doctrine and Covenants and does not renounce the doctrine of polygamy, the sad practice will continue to spread.

Jesus Himself warned us to beware of “false prophets,” and instructed us that we will “know them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:15-16). Mormons need to face the fact that one of the “fruits” of Mormonism is the wide spread practice of polygamy today. Joseph Smith’s secret, illegal doctrine is directly responsible for the vast number of people who are trapped in polygamy and who have never had a chance to know the truth.
IS POLYGAMY PART OF GOD’S PLAN FOR MARRIAGE?

When God created humans He instituted His plan for marriage: one man should have one wife. Genesis 2:24 states: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh.”

The first mention of polygamy in the Bible is Genesis 4:19: “And Lamech [a descendant of Cain] took unto him two wives . . .” But this was not attributed to instructions from God.

If there was ever a justification for polygamy it would seem to have been needed when Adam and Eve were to populate the earth. Yet we see the pattern of just one woman and one man.

The same pattern is carried out by Noah at the time of the Ark (Genesis 7:7). Noah took his one wife into the ark. Again, if polygamy were ordained of God, why didn’t He tell Noah to take additional wives to repopulate the earth faster?

God instructed Moses that the kings of Israel were to have only one wife: “Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away” (Deut. 17:17).

This is exactly what happened with Solomon. We read in I Kings 11:4: “For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.”

David’s heart was right with God because he did not turn to other gods, not because he practiced polygamy.

LDS will sometimes point to 2 Samuel 12:8 to prove that David’s wives were approved by God. But that verse indicates that he inherited Saul’s wives, not that David actually married them by God’s appointment. It was the custom of the time for the succeeding ruler to receive all of the prior ruler’s property and women. This is not a proof that God intends people to practice polygamy. It is contrary to the pattern of marriage established with Adam and Eve and His instructions in Deuteronomy.

Just as divorce was permitted, so too was polygamy. But it does not represent God’s will. In Matt. 19:3-9 the Pharisees asked Jesus about divorce and Jesus answered: “Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain [two] shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain [two], but one flesh.”

The Pharisees then asked him why Moses allowed for divorce. Jesus answered: “Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so” (Matt. 19:7).

In the New Testament the practice of polygamy would have kept a man from leadership in the church. Paul instructed Timothy: “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife . . .” (I Timothy 3:2).

Paul also wrote to Titus: “. . . ordain elders in every city . . . if any be blameless, the husband of one wife . . .” (Titus 1:6).

Thus we see that there is no teaching in the Bible that plural marriage was ever part of God’s religious instruction to His people.

ABUSE — SPECIAL REPORT

$3 Million Dollar Settlement in Oregon

On September 5, 2001, The Oregonian reported a settlement deal between the LDS Church and Jeremiah Scott, the victim of child sexual abuse:

The Mormon church on Tuesday announced the $3 million settlement of a sex-abuse case brought by a Portland-area man abused by a high priest as a boy, as both sides raced to declare victory. . . .

Alleging negligence and emotional distress, Scott’s lawsuit accuses the church of knowingly allowing a child molester to have access to children. . . .

The church admits no wrongdoing and settled the case Friday to avoid the cost of continued litigation, lawyers said Tuesday. . . .

Most cases similar to this one involve confidential settlements. Trial had been set for August, with the plaintiff seeking $1.5 billion in punitive damages.

In his 1998 lawsuit filed in Multnomah County, Scott accused the church of hiding the fact that Curtis, one of its high priests, was a pedophile. Curtis was excommunicated from the church in 1983 in Pennsylvania but was rebaptized in 1984 in Michigan. In 1988, he joined the Brentwood Ward in Portland.

Curtis lived with the Scott family twice, in 1990 and 1991, at Scott’s parents’ invitation. He repeatedly abused Scott on the second stay, when the two shared a bed because of lack of space in the Scott home. At the time, Curtis was 87 and Scott was 11. Curtis was later convicted of sex abuse. . . .

Scott’s mother, Sandra Scott, had consulted her bishop, Gregory Lee Foster, about taking in Curtis to live out his years in the family’s home. Foster advised her that she shouldn’t because of his advanced age but said nothing about pedophilia, although he knew of complaints about Curtis, the plaintiff said in his suit.
Foster, in a deposition, said he didn’t remember the complaints at the time of his conversation with Sandra Scott. (*The Oregonian*, September 5, 2001, pp. B1, 9)

However, according to Sandra Scott, Foster knew Curtis was a pedophile and yet did nothing to protect her son:

The lawsuit claims that Curtis sexually abused at least five children in the Rocky Butte Ward in Portland, where he became a member. **A bishop confronted Curtis and he admitted the molestation.**

Curtis joined another ward, where he **told then-Bishop Gregory Lee Foster that he had abused** in the past. **Foster didn’t report him because Curtis said he had repented,** the lawsuit states. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, February 10, 2001, p. A5)

Sandra Scott says she called her former LDS bishop in 1993 to warn him that her son had been sexually abused by an aging Sunday school teacher her family had taken into their home.

She said she was “dumbfounded” when the **bishop told her he had known the late Frank Curtis was a pedophile, but that he did not tell the Scotts because Curtis had repented.** . . .

The LDS Church maintains Scott misunderstood the bishop, who was only trying to tell her he had heard about what had happened to her son and express his sympathies. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, September 6, 2001, p. B1)

After the victim reported the crime, Curtis was charged with sexual abuse and plead no contest to the felony, but died a year later in 1995. Foster, the victims former bishop, was dropped as a defendant in the lawsuit, leaving the LDS Church to defend against accusations of knowingly allowing a pedophile to have access to children.

“It’s not about the mistakes of an individual,” said David Slader, Scott’s lawyer, of Portland. “It’s about the policy of the Mormon church to intentionally conceal and cover up its knowledge that one of its high priests is a child molester.”

A church lawyer told a Salt Lake City newspaper Tuesday that “No church, including this one, had the ability to track all its members and inform every bishop in the country about the members’ past history.”

But internal Mormon documents, which *The Oregonian* obtained Aug. 17 from a public court file, memorialize both a 1982 disciplining of Curtis for, in the words of the church documents, “homosexual actions” and the 1983 excommunication for “homosexuality/child molesting.” The words “child molesting” had been crossed out with a pen. (*The Oregonian*, September 5, 2001, p. B9)

The courtroom battle over what the LDS Church knew and when it knew it escalated when the plaintiff’s attorneys demanded that the Church turn over documents it keeps on sexual predators and their victims. The LDS Church fought vigorously to prevent access to the records:

Portland, Ore.—Hoping to uncover what the Mormon church knew about a high priest convicted of sexually abusing an 11-year-old boy, a Multnomah County judge ordered the church to release internal records of sex-abuse complaints and discipline actions. The church has filed an emergency appeal with the Oregon Supreme Court. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, February 10, 2001, p. A5)

And *The Oregonian* reported:

The settlement comes after Multnomah County Circuit Judge Ellen F. Rosenblum ordered, in January, the church to **turn over all its internal records of sex-abuse complaints in the Portland area, regardless of the subject.** Mormon attorney Von Keetch said the **records involved a dozen Mormon sex offenders. . . .**

“No religious institution in the history of the world is as diligent in keeping records as the Mormon church,” Slader said. “The Mormon church knew Curtis was abusing children. The Mormon church knew exactly where Curtis was, and the Mormon church did absolutely nothing to protect the children of the Brentwood Ward in Portland.” (*The Oregonian*, September 5, 2001, p. B9)

The records were sought due to the fact that child molesters tend to have a long history of abuse, often times involving multiple victims. Unfortunately, this case proved no different.

Curtis first served the church in Portland in 1978 and 1979, in the Linwood Ward, where he taught young children, and abused boys, according to depositions taken from victims and their parents.

One woman was briefly married to Curtis during that time. . . . In 1979, she walked in on him in the bathroom with a young boy, she wrote in an affidavit. “I was shocked and disgusted.” She wrote her bishop but said she never heard back from him or any other church official.

Slader said the plaintiff’s lawyers know of 20 other Curtis victims and expect lawsuits from at least a half-dozen of them. (*The Oregonian*, September 5, 2001, p. B9)

Sandra Scott made the following statement:

“We cannot put our children at the mercy of the church’s sense of judgment,” Scott said at a news conference. “People need to know when there are severe criminals in their church—that’s not something you conceal.” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, September 6, 2001, p. B1)
The Toombs Case

Another case brought to light recently with disturbing allegations of silence and non-reporting involved the sexual predator, Jay Toombs.

LOGAN—A 43-year old Benson man accused of fondling a boy three times in the early 1990s now faces another charge and growing evidence that victims have been many and his obstacles few. . . . Yet [Logan Police Detective Rod] Peterson and Cache County Prosecutor Scott Wyatt say one of the most disturbing facts of all is that so many people knew of the alleged abuse and did not tell police. . . .

“He [Jay Toombs] expressed to people that found out that, in a very convincing way, that he was truly sorry for what he’d done and it wouldn’t happen again,” says Peterson. “They’ve forgiven him. They believe him, that he’s repented.”

Forgiveness is fine, says Wyatt, but it doesn’t stop an abuser. . . .

Wyatt was so agitated upon learning there was widespread knowledge—but only one report—of abuse, that he considered bringing failure-to-report charges against a West Valley City counselor and two LDS bishops. “Everyone in our community is obligated to report it. They have not only a legal obligation, but a moral obligation,” Wyatt says. . . .

The mother, who is not being identified to protect her son’s identity, says she spoke of Toombs’ misbehavior with boys from 1991 through 1999 with Cooper, two LDS bishops and Toombs’ family, including his brother, an LDS stake president. . . .

“I was always told to be patient with Jay, he was a good man. That’s what I was told again and again and again. I was even given priesthood blessings that I had been chosen to help him,” she says.

The bishops were inclined each time to tell police, the woman says, but later told her they had checked with church officials and learned they did not have to report Toombs as long as he was repentant and getting professional help.

Both bishops deferred questions to church attorneys. . . . Says Von Keetch, a Salt Lake City attorney who represents The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: “Our investigation indicates that these leaders acted appropriately.” . . .

Neither bishop called police. But Keetch says one, Robert Owens, knew the Cache County Sheriff’s Office investigated Toombs in 1989 and the second, Brent Bryner, made sure that law enforcement authorities were notified by a counselor of an alleged victim’s mother shortly after Bryner learned of alleged abuse in 1997.

The mother says she first told Bryner of abuse four years earlier. . . .

Jerry Toombs, an LDS stake president in Benson and Jay Toombs’ older brother, says it is not true that he and his father had been warned for years about Jay Toombs’ alleged abuse.

Keetch says Jerry Toombs, like the bishops, acted appropriately. When he was told of suspicions of child abuse, he learned that law enforcement authorities had investigated, say the attorney. He did not become his brother’s stake president until last year.

Jerry Toombs was in the spotlight last year when he recommended a convicted child abuser, Shonn M. Ricks of Benson, for a mission after the 23-year-old had served a 14-month sentence at the Utah State Prison. The mission call was withdrawn after the victim’s outraged father complained. . . .

The . . . mother says she was baffled when the case was dropped with no criminal charge.

“It was really, really hard. We were always the one made to feel like the bad people,” she says. “Everybody was always defending Jay. Everybody. So we just kind of dropped it.”

Robb Parrish, chief child abuse counsel in the Utah Attorney General’s Office, says charm is a hallmark of most pedophiles. It allows a pedophile to get victim’s— and their parents’—trust and is a main reason that many are never reported, he says. . . .

The urge to have sex with children, pedophilia, is a deep-seated aberration, he says.

“It doesn’t just go away. They are not just in need of a little counseling,” Parrish adds. “They’ve got to have intensive intervention, with the threat of prosecution held over their heads. The confessional situation is not enough.” (Salt Lake Tribune, March 26, 2000)

Utah State Law on Reporting

Utah, like many other states, does have a law on mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse:

State law requires a person with knowledge of child sexual abuse to report the crime, and provides a penalty of up to six months in jail and a $1,000 fine for those that do not. Clergy are exempt from the law only if their sole source of knowledge of the abuse comes from a perpetrator’s own confession. (Salt Lake Tribune, July 8, 2000, p. B2)

Utah’s law, while supported by those in law enforcement, has been repeatedly attacked by the LDS Church. The Salt Lake Tribune reported on a panel discussion dealing with this topic:

David McConkie, an attorney who represents The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, called Utah’s reporting law vague and ambiguous. . . .
But police argue Utah’s law is clear. A panel moderator Marilyn Sandberg, executive director of the Utah Chapter of the Child Abuse Prevention Center, said many clergy want to believe abuse will somehow stop spontaneously—an erroneous conclusion.

“The legal system needs to be involved,” Sandberg insisted.

Conference speaker Mike Johnson, a Texas police detective who has spent his career investigating child abuse, said it made his “soul hurt” to hear panelists talk about protecting the confidences of child abusers.

“I don’t believe God condones anyone standing by,” Johnson said. “Kids lack the ability to protect themselves. They will continue to be abused under this veil of protection.” . . .

McConkie pointed to pamphlets, videos and training sessions for LDS Church leaders—as well as a 24-hour hot line that offers legal advice to bishops. (Salt Lake Tribune, August 3, 2000, pp. A1, A6)

Law enforcement in Utah has given clergy simple advice to follow:

Police and prosecutors, noting the secrecy that often surround child sexual abuse, contend clergy members and others can avoid trouble by reporting anything suspicious and allowing authorities to investigate. (Salt Lake Tribune, October 3, 2000)

Yet Mormon clergy have repeatedly ignored the mandatory reporting law:

Declaring himself innocent of wrongdoing, LDS Bishop Bruce Christensen plans to challenge the constitutionality of a Utah law that sometimes forces clergy to inform on members of their own flock. . . .

Christensen is the third Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints bishop charged this year with failing to report.

Bishop David Maxwell . . . allegedly failed to report an alleged rape of a 16-year-old girl by a 15-year-old boy. . . .

Also this year, a Washington County LDS bishop Brent Atkinson, was charged with failing to report a suspected case of child sex abuse. Atkinson last month entered into a diversion agreement that calls for dismissal of the charge if he completes 100 hours of community service, pays $250 in court costs and commits no new violations. (Salt Lake Tribune, August 15, 2000)

However, despite the charges brought against a few Mormon bishops, little has resulted:

Charges accusing a Mormon bishop [Christensen] of failing to report an alleged case of child sexual abuse were dismissed Monday in 3rd District Court. . . .

. . . prosecutors said the woman recently changed her story and now says she spoke to Christensen only in hypothetical terms, . . .

“The police reports were very specific, [but] now she’s saying something different,” said Salt Lake District Attorney David Yocom. “It’s not a prosecutable case now.” . . .

But defense attorney Bradley Rich did not mention any hypothetical scenarios to reporters Monday after the case was dismissed by Judge Roger Livingston.

Rich said Christensen believed any touching between the father and child was inadvertent and, therefore, not child sexual abuse.

The father, 43-year-old Hassane Adib, remains charged with misdemeanor lewdness with a child, . . .

Adib’s charges are based upon information from the child’s mother, who allegedly observed Adib allowing the baby to fondle him in July 1999.

The woman came to Christensen in January to discuss conflicts with her estranged husband. Rich has said that the woman mentioned the fondling incident almost as an aside, and that Christensen’s priority was getting the woman to a shelter and finding her a divorce attorney. (Salt Lake Tribune, October 3, 2000)

Close on the heels of that dismissal:

For the second time in a week, a controversial criminal case involving a Mormon bishop has quietly evaporated.

Bishop David West Maxwell . . . entered into an agreement with prosecutors in which the charge will be dismissed in 90 days. Meanwhile, Maxwell, 35, is required to admit no guilt, pay no court costs and perform no community service. . . .

Maxwell said he called the help line and talked to a stake president but was told he was not obligated to report the alleged rape, according to police reports. The alleged rape was ultimately reported to police by the girl’s seminary teacher. The boy was charged with first-degree felony rape in 3rd District Juvenile Court and is scheduled for trial next week. (Salt Lake Tribune, October 5, 2000, pp. C1, C3)

LDS Church Warned of Problems

The lack of reporting and the disgraceful treatment of victims of child abuse has plagued the Mormon Church for years. A study done in 1995 by Karen E. Gerdes and Martha N. Beck sought to find answers on how victims within the LDS Church were being treated. However, when the results were revealed it was met with open hostility from the LDS Church:

. . . It [the sex-abuse study] was denounced or worst of all, largely ignored by church officials who still dismiss it four years later.
The study, which Mormon leaders condemned as flawed, found that more than two-thirds of the women interviewed said they had bad experiences when they turned to Mormon clergymen for comfort and counsel.

For a church that in recent years has faced numerous lawsuits accusing it of harboring, or at least failing to stop, pedophiles in its midst, Gerdes said she believed she and her colleagues were providing some helpful insights.

“It’s like it was bad news they didn’t want to hear,” she said. “Our only agenda was to help the church help victims. I was excited because I thought the church was going to be pleased to get this information so they could put it to good use. It was quite a letdown.”

The researchers reported that, out of 71 Mormon women who had suffered childhood sexual abuse, 49 told of having “negative interactions” with the bishops in whom they had confided.

The women who reported the negative encounters described the bishops as “judgmental” in some cases, “unbelieving” in others and “protective of the perpetrators” in still other cases. Twelve of the women reported positive interactions while the other 10 chose not to confide in local church leaders.

“(Church officials) can criticize our methodology all they want, but it was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Brigham Young,” Gerdes said. “It was scrutinized by a panel of scholars at the very reputable journal (Affilia) that published our article about it. It was rigorously evaluated—and approved—by both Mormon and non-Mormon professional researchers.”

In addition, Gerdes, who has a Ph.D. in social work, pointed out that the research was supported by a grant from the Eccles Foundation, a Mormon entity—and administered by the Women’s Research Institute at Brigham Young.

According to the article in Affilia, the scholarly journal for social workers, the research found that 50 of the 71 victims felt guilt or frustration for being admonished by “the highest church authorities or local leaders to forgive their perpetrators.” It noted that “the majority of women reported feeling neither protected nor helped in their recovery process” by church officials.

The study has been used as legal ammunition by plaintiffs’ attorneys who have sued the church in courts across the country, alleging a widespread pattern of failures by bishops or other ecclesiastical leaders to report abuses to proper authorities or to obtain proper professional counseling for victims. (Houston Chronicle, May 10, 1999, pp. 1A, 11A)

A professional psychologist and member of the LDS Church, Arleen Cromwell, also sought to help the church with its sexual abuse problems. However, after a bizarre turn-around and recanting by the psychologist, it left many people questioning whether the LDS Church was engaging in a deliberate cover-up in order to protect itself from litigation.

In a sworn affidavit she signed in February 1996—but later recanted—the Salt Lake City therapist detailed what she called a pattern in which sexually abused children had been shunned or generally mishandled by bishops, who in the Mormon faith are local congregational leaders.

Cromwell noted in the affidavit, given for a lawsuit in which she agreed to testify against the church, that families of the abuse victims often sought help from bishops, who failed to get them the professional treatment they needed.

She said bishops often made “little effort to ensure the safety of victims or failed to report abuses to appropriate state authorities.”

“In many cases, the Bishop is ignorant of the needs of the victim, and does not act to ensure that the victim is not further abused,” said Cromwell, who had been involved in treating abuse patients in about 300 cases in Utah.

The therapist went on to note that in March 1992, she “became so concerned with the disturbing pattern I had seen emerging among the clergy of my own Church” that she wrote a letter to her stake president.

“It seemed Bishops had a distrust of therapists which made them reluctant to refer victims to therapy,” she said in her first affidavit. “This antagonism further injured the victim of the abuse by preventing the assistance with treatment that counseling provides.”

“Since March 1992, I have noticed no significant change in the number or severity of child sexual abuse cases among members of the church and I have noted no change in the pattern which I found so disturbing and which compelled to write to my Stake President,” Cromwell stated in the 1996 affidavit.

Cromwell, however, backed off the statement last June as the lawsuit pending in Beckley, W.Va.—where Mormon officials are accused of liability for failing to report a case of child sexual abuse to authorities—where Mormon officials are accused of liability for failing to report a case of child sexual abuse to authorities [See Salt Lake City Messenger No. 91, November 1996].

Cromwell said she told the plaintiff’s attorneys that she did not want to be involved in the lawsuit and asked them not to use her 1996 affidavit.

Von Keetch, a Salt Lake City attorney representing the church in that case and similar lawsuits, said Cromwell’s recanting of her original affidavit is evidence that the experienced therapist is impressed with the church’s turnaround in training its bishops in a concerted effort that began in 1995.

Sullivan [plaintiff’s attorney in the Beckley case] said he suspects that Cromwell was pressured to recant, but by whom, he doesn’t know.

“Recanting doesn’t change what she swore as being her experience with bishops,” he said. “She either
observed this pattern by bishops, and experienced the antagonism from them and saw firsthand how terrible they were treating victims, or she didn’t.”

“You have to wonder why a woman who is a credible psychologist with impeccable credentials . . . would turn right around and say, ‘Never mind. I didn’t mean it. King’s X. Black is white,’” Sullivan said.

“You don’t have to be a rocket scientist to see from looking at both affidavits that somebody from the church got to her.” (Houston Chronicle, May 10, 1999, p. 11A)

Help Line for Victims or Mormon Clergy?

In 1995 the LDS Church started a help line for bishops and other Mormon clergy reportedly to help deal with child abuse cases within the church.

The Salt Lake Tribune reported in ‘95 when the hot line was first put in place:

A May 10 internal memorandum from the church’s Presiding Bishopric mandates that local ecclesiastical leaders in America and Canada who become aware of abuse involving church members are to call the toll-free help line. . . .

Counselors and attorneys who deal with child sexual abuse cases unanimously praised the idea of a hotline, although some characterize it as belated and merely an attempt to ward off legal liability.

Others believe the church should insist its leaders immediately call the proper police or social agency as required in the child abuse laws of most states . . . .

It [the memorandum] instructs bishops and counselors in stake presidencies to consult with their stake president . . . about “incidents of abuse that come to their attention.” Published reports indicate the 9 million-member church has been forced to settle several lawsuits involving cases of abuse.

For example, Jefferson County, Texas, court records show the church in January settled for an undisclosed amount a lawsuit filed by the parents of an 8-year-old girl who was repeatedly molested at a Mormon chapel by a member of the congregation. The member, Ralph Neeley, was sentenced to life in prison.

The lawsuit names as co-defendants the church and Neeley’s bishop, who apparently knew about the allegation but failed to report it. (Salt Lake Tribune, June 10, 1995 pp. D1, D3)

The question of whether the hot line is for the victims of child sexual abuse or merely to help protect the LDS Church from litigation has been inadvertently answered by David McConkie, the LDS Church’s own attorney:

McConkie pointed to pamphlets, videos and training sessions for LDS Church leaders—as well as a 24-hour hot line that offers legal advice to bishops. (Salt Lake Tribune, August 3, 2000, p. A6 )

Also the Salt Lake City Weekly reported:

According to Lavina Fielding Anderson, co-editor of the 1996 volume Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance, which covered child sexual abuse in the Mormon church, the help line is more self-serving than victim-friendly. “I was told by one bishop who called the help line that they walked him through procedure on how to get a commitment from the parents of the victim not to sue the church,” she says. (Salt Lake City Weekly, March 8, 2001, p. 23)

Many believe the LDS Church is out to protect its image more than protecting the victims of child sexual abuse:

The church that is known for placing a spiritual premium on family values is under increasing attack for an alleged failure to protect its children from pedophiles.

Therein lies the irony of a barrage of lawsuits and general complaints alleging that—in an effort to protect its wholesome image—the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly called the Mormon church, has failed to root out child molesters in its midst . . . .

Last year in Montgomery County, a jury found the national church liable in a $4 million verdict—$1 million more than the plaintiff had sought—for failing to protect an 8-year-old boy who was sexually assaulted in 1993 . . . .

“The church will go to great lengths to protect its image and reputation,” said Clay Dugas, a lawyer in Orange who has sued the church on behalf of numerous child-abuse victims and their families in Texas and Mississippi.

Dugas, who led a team of lawyers in winning the $4 million verdict in the Montgomery County case, said he believes that pedophiles are attracted to the Mormon church because of its structure . . . .

“The church is very patriarchal, very secretive. Why would you preach not to discuss a case of child abuse when it becomes known? They do that. The whole belief is that the men, the leaders who are all men, can take care of everything. If someone in a family is abused, the family won’t go to the police. They’ll go to the bishop.” (Houston Chronicle, May 9, 1999, p. 18A)

The Franco Case and the Utah Supreme Court Decision

Another case of child sexual abuse broke new ground in Utah’s highest court and ended in a decision giving the LDS Church and other clergy far-reaching protection from litigation:
The Utah Supreme Court on Friday banned lawsuits over allegations of clergy malpractice, a landmark ruling that grants broad protections to church leaders when they counsel members of their flocks.

Citing First Amendment safeguards against government intrusion in to the practice of religion, the high court unanimously upheld a trial judge’s decision to dismiss a child rape victim’s lawsuit against The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The alleged victim, Lynette Franco, claimed her LDS bishop and stake president were negligent by mishandling her plea for help after she claimed to have been sexually abused by a teen-age church member. . .

LDS Church spokesman Dale Bills said in a news release the church was satisfied with the ruling. . .

Franco’s attorney, Ed Montgomery, said the ruling by the five justices—all of whom are Mormon—means the LDS Church is “completely immune from anything they do behind closed doors. It’s chilling, is what it is,” Montgomery said. “You have the most powerful organization in this state doing what it will, without any government regulation at all and without any redress being available.” . .

The events at the heart of the Franco case allegedly occurred in 1986, when the girl was 7 years old. Franco claims she was sexually assaulted by Jason Strong, a 14-year-old neighbor boy and fellow LDS ward member. The abuse was “so extreme” that Franco repressed the memory for eight years, the justices wrote.

By the time Franco reported the abuse, Strong was preparing to serve a church mission. Montgomery claims church leaders decided to defend the young male member of the priesthood at the girl’s expense. “They used my client to help them protect the very person who molested her,” Montgomery said.

Franco claims her bishop, Dennis Casaday, and stake president David Christensen counseled her to “forgive, forget and seek atonement.”

Later, the two clergymen referred the girl to a purportedly qualified counselor at a Bountiful mental health center, who, it turned out, was not licensed to practice in Utah. The counselor, Paul Browning, also advised the girl to forgive her attacker and forget the incident, rather than inform police, the girl claims.

Franco’s parents finally took the girl to another counselor, who reported the sexual abuse to police. Investigators, however, said too much time had passed to pursue charges. . .

Despite $70,000 worth of counseling, Montgomery said Franco, now in her early 20s, may never completely recover from being sexually abused. (Salt Lake Tribune, March 10, 2001, pp. A1, A9)

For more information on the Franco abuse case, see the article “Crisis of Confidentiality” which appeared in the Salt Lake City Weekly, March 8, 2001.

Extracts From Letters and Emails

May 2001. I just wanted to let you know how much my husband and I appreciate your website. We were both raised in the Mormon Church by zealous parents.

We both went to BYU. My husband served a 2 yr. mission, and we both married in the temple. Yet, we had both been feeling dissatisfied with the Mormon Church.

I’d push doubts aside and keep trying to be faithful. After all it was my duty to raise the kids to be strong in the Gospel. My husband was leaning toward inactivity.

Towards the end of Feb. of this year our Mormon paradigm came crashing down. My husband was watching a TV show which talked about Mark Hoffman. He wondered how the Church authorities could be tricked by the forgeries. They were supposed to be men of God. Apostles and prophets weren’t supposed to be deceived.

My husband did an internet search to learn more about the salamander papers. Up came the websites that led to more websites and disturbing accusations regarding the Church. We researched the terrible claims against the Mormon Church and it all checked out.

We were able to get our hands on the History of the Church books and verify that Joseph Smith was not a humble man. The boasting of himself against Jesus was very disturbing to us but did not seem to faze my husband’s parents. Needless to say we are having problems with parents and siblings still in the Church.

Luckily, my husband has a wonderful Christian extended family. His parents are the only Mormon converts on both sides. His extended family has been praying for 30 years that my husband’s parents and children would see through the deception of the Mormon Church. So they have really been there for us and helping us learn about who God really is according to the Bible. I’m pretty angry at the LDS Church. It’s painful to feel so betrayed and have such turmoil with the parents, but I am thankful to know the truth.

May 2001. . . I just want you to know that it was through the reading and study of many of your books and letters that I was able to stay separated from the LDS Church after having been a member for the first 31 years of my life.

I found the Lord’s truth through reading the New Testament but spent the next 5 years struggling to break all ties with what I had been taught. It was a difficult process and I couldn’t have done it without all the work you have done for the Lord. God Bless you as you serve Him.

March 2001. I just praise the Lord for your voice crying out in the wilderness & hope anything we send will help your ministry. Bless you.
May 2001. Hi Jerald and Sandra, My name is ____. I joined the Mormon Church in January. Well shortly after I joined I got my hands on what they call Anti-mormon literature but it was actually their own literature.

I couldn’t believe how fast the word spread that I was mormon bashing and I was only asking questions because there was alot I didn’t understand. I am not writing you to understand it all. But it has been really hard for me to break away from the church. I have believed and have been raised a christian. So I know God is up there and cares for us all. However for some reason the mormon religion hung me up so bad it is hard to recover really. I find my self confusing there beliefs with the bible and etc. It is hard.

Anyway I guess in a way I wanted to say thanks for having this literature up here for me to read it helps me understand what Mormonism really is . . . Thanks so much.

April 2001. OK you two, After wading through all the lies you call information on your web site, it’s easy to see how you could be swayed from Christ’s path to one of abomination and heresy. You were weak and easily fooled.

March 2001. I find it amazing that people take all this time to put together this complex website. . . . I am sorry to see that you have been so miss led . . . All I can do is pray for people like you. . . . Hope you can get your facts straight someday! Good luck.

April 2001. . . . I was in the mormon [church] for a very long time . . . I thank God all the time for Jerald and Sandra Tanner for your dedication and work you people do. I cannot describe the peace and hope in my heart because of your efforts. May God bless you both.

July 2001. Tanners, Why do your publications do the same thing that you accuse the mormon church of doing—namely brainwashing? With due respect, your publications sound like a bunch of whining babies wrote them. Don’t mean to be rude, but the tone of your publications are too whiney. Thanks.

March 2001. Your website is horrible. There is so much false information about the Mormon church. What are you anti-Mormon or something? You really need to talk to some Mormon Missionaries and get things cleared up, because you are obviously confused out of your minds.

August 2001. My husband is a ex-Mormon who has been born again. We are so happy to have found your web site. It has taught us so much! The most impressive thing of all is how the Lord led both of you to himself.

April 2001. . . . When I found your website and read some of the material there, my first thought was, “Looks like someone has taken something true and put their “spin” on it.

It saddens me when people have nothing better to do with their time than twist the truth into something unrecognizable. I didn’t see the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in your website. I saw a campaign of lies. It’s a shame.

June 2001. I want to thank the Tanners for their in depth research into the LDS church. It has helped me to make a more informed decision about this church that still holds my membership records. . . . My husband and children are still “believers” and I am dealing with this completely alone, given the fact most people I associate with are LDS! I am so very afraid of losing my family because of this decision . . .

July 2001. I’m in the medical field. . . . My analogy of mormonism, as one who was raised a mormon, is this: I see mormonism as a melanoma tumor. It is a cancer that grows at an alarming rate, that spreads in all directions and levels. It is deadly if not caught in time and cut out. It has gotten into the body of christ and people do not see its deadly potential spiritually. It is not selective of its victims, in their Race, Nationality, Religious preference, Gender or financial status. I was willing to look under the microscope at mormonism, I saw the evidence I know the truth now! to L.D.S. members I say the devil is very Clever! thank you for being there utlm . . .

August 2001. Are you guys still around?? I am amazed. . . . NO Tanners, true CHRISTIAN mormons aren’t upset about your constant silly attacks on us. It doesn’t bother us really cos every idiot under the sun has attacked the True Church and where has it gotten them? Nowhere! . . . we have deep pity for you both knowing what is going to happen to you. To be honest even Hitler doesn’t get what you 2 have to have.

September 2001. Hello, My wife and I just wanted to thank you for the time you’ve spent on your site and it’s contents! It’s very hard here in Salt Lake to find an open and honest source of information about the LDS Church. When coming to our decision to leave the church, we often found ourselves at your site looking up information that other wise would have been unavailable to us! We have recently parted ways with the church and have truly found Christ in our lives for the first time!! Now if our families would only speak with us!! Thanks again for a wonderful source of information. God Bless.
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Mormon Alliance

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September 11, 2001, will forever be an important date to Americans. On that day over 3,000 people on the east coast were killed by foreign terrorists. However, there is another reason this date will never be forgotten. On September 11, 1857, in southern Utah, approximately 120 unarmed non-Mormon men, women and children were murdered in cold blood by Mormons and Indians. This massacre of Americans by Americans was surpassed only by the Oklahoma bombing in 1995. The Provo Herald reported that the 1857 massacre was perpetrated “by the Iron County Mormon militia and a band of Indians at the meadow, . . .” (Daily Herald, Provo, Utah, December 29, 1996, p. A-1) The article goes on to state:

It was undoubtedly one of the most lamentable tragedies to ever occur in the history of the American West—a debacle the reverberations from which have echoed down through several generations and are still being felt by the descendants of both the perpetrators and those who died.

The attack on the Fancher wagon train at Mountain Meadows was once again in the newspapers this year when a metal plate was discovered that was supposedly written by John D. Lee, one of several local LDS leaders in southern Utah during the 1850’s, who participated in the massacre. The Salt Lake Tribune reported:

On Jan. 22, a National Park Service volunteer cleaning out Lee’s Fort at Lee’s Ferry along the Colorado River discovered a thin sheet of weathered metal inscribed with what purports to be a deathbed confession and blame-fixing of John D. Lee, the only person convicted in the conspiracy and mass murders of California-bound emigrants at Mountain Meadows in Washington County [Utah].

Lee hid out at Lee’s Ferry before he was convicted and executed by firing squad in 1877, going to his grave claiming that LDS Church President Young had scapegoated him. (Salt Lake Tribune, March 16, 2002, p. B3)

In another article, the Tribune reported:

The National Park Service is attempting to determine the authenticity of the rolled message . . . The misspelled text is dated Jan. 11, 1872, and states that “the time is closing and am willing to tak the blame for the Fancher [wagon train]—Col. Dane - Maj. Higby and me—on orders from Pres. Young thro Geo Smith took part . . .”

Although other sources attributed to Lee had inferred LDS President Brigham Young’s complicity in the crime, the inscription’s discovery triggered worldwide media coverage. (Salt Lake Tribune, March 20, 2002, p. B8)

While document experts are questioning the plate’s authenticity (see Salt Lake Tribune, May 1, 2002, pp. B1 & 3), the text is consistent with John D. Lee’s statements in his book, Mormonism Unveiled, reprinted as Confessions of John D. Lee.

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Prelude to Murder

The attack on the Fancher wagon train in 1857 is a sad example of innocent people being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Richard Abanes explained that the group came through Utah during a particularly tense time:

Conflict between Mormons and federal appointees to various government posts in Utah was inevitable. These began almost immediately after the region was declared a U.S. Territory in 1850, as federal officers were subjected to threats, harassment, and physical violence at the hands of Young and his security forces. . . .

Washington officials finally decided that only a military expedition sent to Utah would be able to restore territorial order to the region. . . .

On May 28, 1857, marching orders to Utah were given to three full regiments (at least 2,500 men), or one-sixth of the U.S. Army, with a compliment of artillery. President James Buchanan's justification to Congress for the decision came in the form of nearly five dozen letters and reports written over a six-year period, "alleging treason, disloyalty, or other serious offenses," against Mormon leaders. The president's detachment of soldiers, . . . would eventually be led by Col. Albert Sidney Johnston of the Second U.S. Cavalry, . . . (One Nation Under Gods, by Richard Abanes, Four Walls Eight Windows Press, 2002, pp. 227-231)

Abanes further comments:

Barely a year had transpired since the inauguration of Brigham's reformation. Moreover, winter was coming, which always meant additional hardship for the Saints. And Johnston's approaching [U.S.] army was almost within striking distance of the territory. "We are invaded by a hostile force who are evidently assailing us to accomplish our overthrow and destruction," Young announced on August 5 [1857]. Anticipating an attack [by the U.S. Army], he then declared martial law, ordering all his forces to "hold themselves in readiness to march, at a moment's notice, to repel any and all such threatened invasion." (One Nation Under Gods, pp. 243-244)

Emotions ran high among the Mormons. Some had taken an oath to avenge the deaths of Joseph Smith and his brother, Hyrum, and held the gentiles [non-Mormons] responsible for their being driven out of their homes. Apostle Abraham H. Cannon recorded in his journal that his father, George Q. Cannon (a member of the First presidency) admitted that when "he had his endowments in Nauvoo that he took an oath against the murderers of the prophet Joseph as well as other prophets, and if he had ever met any of those who had taken a hand in that massacre he would undoubtedly have attempted to avenge the blood of the martyrs." (Daily Journal of Abraham H. Cannon, Dec. 6, 1889, p. 205, original at BYU; photocopy at University of Utah)

This oath took on added meaning when word was received that Apostle Parley P. Pratt had been murdered in Arkansas on May 13, 1857. Apostle Wilford Woodruff recorded in his journal for June 23, 1857:

The Eastern mails arrived at 5 past 2 o'clock 23 days from Independence. . . . We learn that all Hell is boiling over against the saints in Utah. We also are informed that Elder Parley P Pratt was Murdered By [ ] MCLain who shot him in Arkansaw. This was painful news to his Family. The papers of the United States are filled with bitter revileings against us. The devil is exceeding mad. (Wilford Woodruff's Journal, edited by Scott Kenney, Signature Books, vol. 5, p. 61)

It appears that this murder helped to seal the fate of the peaceful, wealthy group of non-Mormon farmers from Arkansas. Besides the Mormons avenging the blood of the prophets, there was the added incentive of money, property and livestock to be gotten from the group. A description of the wagon train is given by David Bigler:

Led by 52-year-old John T. Baker and Alexander Fancher, 45, the company was made up mainly of farm families from northwest Arkansas moving west to make new homes in California. Among an estimated 135 members, it numbered at least fifteen women, most young mothers. Dependent children made up the largest age group, more than sixty, or roughly half the total. Of these, more than twenty were girls between the ages of seven and eighteen. The rest were adult males, mostly heads of families, but they also included some teamsters and other hired hands.

The Arkansas company was relatively affluent. Most of its wealth took the form of a large herd of cattle, estimated by various observers to number from three hundred to a thousand head, not including other animals, work oxen, horses, or mules. . . .

Since they were moving permanently, Baker-Fancher train members were also better off in other worldly possessions than typical emigrant parties on the California Trail. John W. Baker later placed the value of property his father took on the journey at "the full sum of ten thousand dollars." Besides animals, some thirty or forty wagons and equipment, members also carried varying amounts of cash to cover unforeseen costs on the journey. (Forgotten Kingdom: The Mormon Theocracy in the American West, 1847-1896, by David Bigler, Utah State University Press, 1998, pp. 159-160)

At first the large wagon train was traveling south at the rate of about seven miles a day. But after a troubling meeting with a Mormon Apostle and some Indian chiefs on August 25th, they increased their speed to twelve miles a day (see Forgotten Kingdom, p. 167). Bigler commented:

As they [the wagon train] hurried to get away, [newly appointed Santa Clara Indian Mission president Jacob] Hamblin and some twelve Indian chiefs on September first
met with Brigham Young and his most trusted interpreter, 49-year-old Dimick B. Huntington, at Great Salt Lake. Taking part in this pow-wow were . . . leaders of desert bands along the Santa Clara and Virgin rivers.

Little was known of what they talked about until recently when it came to light that Huntington (apparently speaking for Young) told the chiefs that he “gave them all the cattle that had gone to California by the south route[.]” The gift “made them open their eyes,” he said. But “you have told us not to steal,” the Indians replied. “So I have,” Huntington said, “but now they have come to fight us & you for when they kill us they will kill you.” The chiefs knew what cattle he was giving them. They belonged to the Baker-Fancher train. (Forgotten Kingdom, pp. 167-168)

Mormon writers have claimed that some in the Fancher group had been boasting that they had been involved in the murder of Smith (see Comprehensive History of the Church, vol. 4, pp. 154-155). However, this may have just been a rumor used to justify the killings. In her biography of John D. Lee, Juanita Brooks tells of the meeting of the local LDS leaders in Cedar City, on September 6th, to discuss the fate of the wagon train. She concludes:

So the discussion went on, some in favor of “doing away with” the men who had been the chief offenders, others preferring to let them all go . . .

Thus events followed one another, leading inexorably to the final tragedy. . . . Strong hatred, deep-seated beliefs, and greed were all combined in the drama. That this was a wealthy train with good wagons and ox teams and horses; with a large herd of cattle; and with loads of household goods and necessities was without doubt a factor with some who were involved. Their own deep religious convictions increased in potency—that “the blood of the Prophet should be avenged” and that by their own covenants, taken in the Nauvoo Temple or in the Endowment House, they were bound to help carry out God’s will. (John Doyle Lee, by Juanita Brooks, Utah State University, pp. 207-208)

The initial attack on the group was started on September 7th, but the immigrants held their ground. It became apparent that it would take a greater effort to conquer the wagon train. When the first attempt was not successful, the Mormon leaders called a meeting and developed a new strategy. Richard Abanes writes:

The first wagon, carrying children under six years old, was driven by Samuel McCurdy. The second wagon, driven by Samuel Knight, carried two or three wounded men and a woman. The remaining women and older children marched at a slight distance. About a quarter of a mile farther back walked the unarmed men, formed in a single line, each one escorted by an armed Mormon guard. Then without warning, the wagons stopped between some hills thick with brush.

Higbee, on horseback at the rear flank of the male emigrants, also halted. “Do your duty,” he shouted. With sudden fury, the Mormon soldiers shot and/or knifed the men they were escorting, as the women and children up ahead looked back and began screaming in horror. At that same moment, the gunfire cued Indians hiding in the nearby brush to emerge and begin their attack against the defenseless children and their mothers, all of whom finally understood with terrible clarity what was happening. The Indians, along with several Mormons disguised by native clothes and war-paint, butchered their victims...

The screams and gunshots continued, as the wounded emigrants [from the earlier attack] in the wagons were executed at point blank range. A few of the Arkansas men, who had managed to avoid the initial assault by their escorts, desperately tried to run to the aid of their families. But they were cut down by Mormons on horseback almost as soon as they began racing toward the carnage. . . .

The brutal assault lasted but a few minutes. The only survivors were seventeen children and infants, all six years old or younger, some of whom had been wounded by the gunfire. They had been spared because their blood, according to the Mormon doctrine, was still innocent. Fifty men, about twenty women, and approximately fifty children between the ages of seven and eighteen, had been slaughtered. Their bodies were left exposed until the next day, when [John D.] Lee, Haight, and other local church leaders rode back to the location and dumped the corpses into shallow trenches, covered by a thin layer of dirt. (One Nation Under Gods, pp. 247-250)

After the Massacre

After the massacre the surviving children were rounded up and taken to Jacob Hamblin’s home. A few were later placed in various LDS families. The goods and wagons were later distributed among the Mormons and Indians. Mr. Abanes explains:

Regarding the property taken from the train, it was divided up throughout the various Mormon communities via a public auction at Cedar City. Nothing was discarded. According to [U.S. Army Maj. James] Carleton’s report, the Mormons even took “[t]he clothing stripped from the corpses, bloody and with bits of flesh upon it, shredded by the bullets.” . . . As for the seventeen remaining children, they were finally returned in 1859 to Arkansas relatives, after being located and claimed by federal agent Jacob.
Forney. The Mormons, in turn, actually billed the U.S. government thousands of dollars in reimbursements for boarding, clothing and schooling the children during their time in Utah. (One Nation Under Gods, p. 251)

Why Participate?

Outsiders often wonder why a person would have agreed to participate in such a horrible act. Weber State University professor Gene Sessions commented on the pressure to go along with the crowd:

Somebody made a terrible decision that this has got to be done . . . I don’t justify it in any way. But I do believe it would have taken more guts to stay home in Cedar City on those days in 1857 than it would to go out there to the meadows and take part. (Salt Lake Tribune, March 14, 2000, p. A-4)

To understand that type of fanaticism, one must understand early Mormon trials, fears, prejudices, oaths of obedience sworn in the temple and Brigham Young’s teachings on “blood atonement.” Historian David Bigler, author of Forgotten Kingdom, says:

When you have 50 to perhaps more than 70 men participate in an event like this, you can’t just say they got upset. . . . We have to believe they did not want to do what they did any more than you or I would. We have to recognize they thought what they were doing is what authority required of them. The only question to be resolved is did that authority reach all the way to Salt Lake City? (Salt Lake Tribune, March 14, 2000, p. A-4)

Brigham Young Responsible?

Whether or not Brigham Young directly ordered the massacre may never be known. However, he seemed to have no problem with the bloody deed after the fact. When Young visited the site in 1861 Apostle Wilford Woodruff wrote in his diary:

May 25 [1861] A very cold morning much ice on the creek. I wore my great coat & mittens. We visited the Mt. Meadows Monument not up at the burial place of 120 persons killed by Indians in 1857. The pile of stone was about twelve feet high but beginning to tumble down. A wooden cross is placed on top with the following words, Vengeance is mine and I will repay saith the Lord. Pres. Young said it should be Vengeance is mine and I have taken a little. (The Mountain Meadows Massacre, by Juanita Brooks, University of Oklahoma, p. 182).

David Bigler adds:

One of Young’s escort lassoed the cross [on the burial site] with a rope, turned his horse, and pulled it down. Brigham Young “didn’t say another word,” recalled Dudley Leavitt. “He didn’t give an order. He just lifted his right arm to the square [a temple gesture], and in five minutes there wasn’t one stone left upon another. He didn’t have to tell us what he wanted done. We understood.” (Forgotten Kingdom, p. 178)

Juanita Brooks observed:

While Brigham Young and George A. Smith, the church authorities chiefly responsible, did not specifically order the massacre, they did preach sermons and set up social conditions which made it possible. . . . Brigham Young was accessory after the fact, in that he knew what had happened, and how and why it happened. Evidence of this is abundant and unmistakable, and from the most impeccable Mormon sources. Knowing then, why did not President Young take action against these men? . . . He did have the men chiefly responsible released from their offices in the church following a private church investigation, but since he understood well that their acts had grown out of loyalty to him and his cause, he would not betray them into the hands of their common “enemy.” . . . Someone assuredly warned all the participants, so that for many years they were all able to evade arrest.

The church leaders decided to sacrifice Lee only when they could see that it would be impossible to acquit him without assuming a part of the responsibility themselves. . . . this token sacrifice had to be made. Hence the farce which was the second trial of [John D.] Lee. The leaders evidently felt that by placing all the responsibility squarely upon him, already doomed, they could lift the stigma from the church as a whole. (The Mountain Meadows Massacre, pp. 219-220)

The Scapegoat

Twenty years after the massacre John D. Lee, one of dozens of men involved in the attack, was the only man convicted and executed by the U.S. government for the crime. Mr. Bigler comments:

But too many had been involved to cover up the atrocity by tearing down monuments, taking oaths of secrecy, or swearing to falsehoods, however artfully contrived. As more and more of the story was revealed, protests spread and outrage grew. . . . So it came about that one man was chosen to pay the price for many.

The most likely candidate, John D. Lee, was excommunicated by his church in 1870 as a show of punishment and sent to operate a ferry at a remote location . . . In November 1874 Lee was arrested. He was tried a year later at Beaver, Utah, for his part in the massacre, but the trial was abortive. Others included on the indictment could not be found. Missing, too, were key witnesses, and those who did appear suffered lapses in memory. . . . as a result, while all four non-Mormon jury members voted for conviction, eight Mormon jurors chose acquittal.

In a second trial, restricted by agreement to Lee’s role, witnesses found their memories restored and an all-Mormon jury unanimously found him guilty. On March
23, 1877, he was taken to Mountain Meadows, the scene of the crime, where at age 64 he was perched on the edge of his coffin and shot to death by a firing squad. (Forgotten Kingdom, pp. 178-179)

Cover-Up

The Mormon efforts to cover-up the details and whitewash the massacre continues even today. In March of 2000 the Salt Lake Tribune told of the accidental unearthing of “the skeletal remains of at least 29 slain emigrants” at Mountain Meadows in Southern Utah.

Scientists wanted to do a full study of the remains. However, Gov. Mike Leavitt, a descendent of one of the participants of the massacre, “encouraged state officials to quickly rebury the remains, even though the basic scientific analysis required by state law was unfinished. . . . the governor’s intercession was one of many dramas played out last summer, all serving to underscore Mountain Meadows’ place as the Bermuda Triangle of Utah’s historical and theological landscape. The end result may be another sad chapter in the massacre’s legacy of bitterness, denial and suspicion. (Salt Lake Tribune, March 12, 2000, p. A-1)

A rushed examination of the bones prior to reburial in 2000 showed:

At least five adults had gunshot exit wounds in the posterior area of the cranium — a clear indication some were shot while facing their killers. . . . Women also were shot in the head at close range. . . . At least one youngster, believed to be about 10 to 12 years old, was killed by a gunshot to the top of the head. . . . Virtually all of the “post-cranial” (from the head down) bones displayed extensive carnivore damage, confirming written accounts that bodies were left on the killing field to be gnawed by wolves and coyotes. (Salt Lake Tribune, March 13, 2000, p. A-5)

The Salt Lake Tribune quoted the following from Gene Sessions, president of the Mountain Meadows Association:

It raises the old question of whether Brigham Young ordered the massacre and whether Mormons do terrible things because they think their leaders want them to do terrible things. (Salt Lake Tribune, Mar. 14, 2000, p. A-4)

The paper went on to report:

Noted Mormon writer Levi Peterson has tried to explain the difficulty that Mormons and their church face in confronting the atrocity of Mountain Meadows.

“If good Mormons committed the massacre, if prayerful leaders ordered it, if apostles and a prophet knew about it and later sacrificed John D. Lee, then the sainthood of even the modern church seems tainted,” he has written. “Where is the moral superiority of Mormonism, where is the assurance that God has made Mormons his new chosen people?”. . .

But acknowledging any complicity in Mountain Meadows’ macabre past is fundamentally problematic for the modern church.

“The massacre has left the Mormon Church on the horns of a dilemma,” says Utah historian Will Bagley, author of a forthcoming book on Mountain Meadows.

“It can’t acknowledge its historic involvement in a mass murder, and if it can’t accept its accountability, it can’t repent.” (Salt Lake Tribune, March 14, 2000, p. A-4)

(To date the most thorough research on the 1857 attack has been The Mountain Meadows Massacre, by Juanita Brooks. However, Oklahoma University Press has just announced the forthcoming book, Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows, by Will Bagley. Publication date is set for September 2002, price will be $39.95 in hardcover.)

LDS Church Suppresses Documents

In October, 2001, controversy erupted over who had the rights to various research papers of Dr. Leonard Arrington. Arrington, a well-respected historian and former professor at Utah State University, served as the official LDS Church historian from 1972-1982 and was then transferred to the Brigham Young University. During his lifetime of research he collected a vast amount of photos and documents relating to sensitive areas of Mormon history. After his death in 1999, his papers and research were placed in the Utah State University Library in Logan, Utah, but were not opened to the public until October 2001. The Salt Lake Tribune explained:

The LDS Church contended Thursday it has an “ironclad” document giving it full ownership of some of the papers historian Leonard Arrington deeded to Utah State University before his death. USU isn’t so sure. . . .

On Oct. 11, the Arrington Collection, containing 658 boxes, was opened to the public.

Within days, eight LDS Church employees went through the entire collection, some boxes more than once, over four days, said Ann Butters, director of USU’s special collections. . . .

After that initial search, the church asked the university to set aside about 148 boxes of papers. . . . Some of the items in the collection, such as minutes of meetings of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, are copies of documents the church does not make available to researchers, [Richard] Turley [managing director of the LDS Church’s Historical Dept.] said.

“We consider they are of a sacred, private and confessional nature,” he said. (Salt Lake Tribune, October 26, 2001, pp. A1 & A11)
The *Tribune* article on October 26th contained a long list of disputed documents, minutes of various Council of Twelve meetings, items relating to the temple ceremony, private letters of church leaders, etc.

Then, on November 4, 2001, University of Utah Professor Dean May wrote to the *Tribune* protesting that the Arrington papers did not belong to the LDS Church and should be given to the Utah State University as Arrington requested (*Salt Lake Tribune*, Editorial page p. AA3).

In a letter to the *Tribune*, Steven Sorensen, director of LDS Church Archives, argued that Arrington’s papers included items owned by the LDS Church and they should be returned to them. “Among those items were some 70 years of minutes of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, temple records, employment files, and other materials considered by church officials to be sacred, private, or confidential” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, Nov. 11, 2001, p. A11).

One wonders how the church determined what was “sacred, private, or confidential”? Or was the real criteria whether the documents were potentially embarrassing? After all, most of this material is about 150 years old and some of it is already available in college libraries.

On November 25, 2001, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported:

> Barely a month after LDS Church officials said they owned up to 60 percent of a huge collection of papers donated to Utah State University by the late Mormon historian Leonard Arrington, the church graciously accepted a half-box of material. . . . They include only a copy of a Book of Anointings, which describes sacred Mormon rituals; portions of LDS Apostle Heber C. Kimball’s 1845-56 diaries discussing temple ceremonies, and partial copies of minutes from the church’s Council of Twelve meetings between 1877 and 1950. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, Nov. 25, 2001, pp. A1 & A15)

Ironically, the Book of Anointings material is already in the Marriott Library at the University of Utah, and Heber C. Kimball’s diaries have been published (see *On the Potter’s Wheel: The Diaries of Heber C. Kimball*, edited by Stanley B. Kimball, Signature Books, 1987). Quotes from the Book of Anointings are also in the book, *The Mysteries of Godliness*, pages 87-90.

The *Deseret News* described the non-temple documents as follows:

> The other returned documents consist of a “smattering” of minutes of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles regarding a particular topic that Arrington was commissioned to research for a private church study. Daines [the Arrington family lawyer] declined to identify the topic. . . . Daines said the issue regarding the minutes was not one of content, but of ownership, and that details of how these papers ended up in Arrington’s collection are unclear.” (*Deseret News*, Nov. 25, 2001)

Since the documents in question were copies and not the originals, one is forced to conclude that the issue is truly one of “content” rather than “ownership.” Even the topic of the “private church study” is being suppressed.

### Second Anointing

Most people are aware of the LDS Church’s expanding temple building program. To date, there are over 100 temples in operation around the world. Through the years there have been numerous published exposés of the endowment ritual (see *Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony: 1842-1990*). However, there is another little known ceremony given by invitation from church leadership called the Second Anointing. In order to qualify for this anointing one must have proven him/herself worthy and already participated in the endowment ceremony.

LDS researcher David Buerger pointed out:

> The higher ordinance was necessary to confirm the revealed promises of “kingly powers” (i.e., godhood) received in the endowment’s initiatory ordinances.

*Godhood was therefore the meaning of this higher ordinance, or second anointing . . .* (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1983, p. 21).

The couple receiving their second anointing were to go to the temple, and then dress in their temple robes. On December 26, 1866, LDS Apostle Wilford Woodruff wrote in his journal:

> I met with The Presidency and Twelve at President Youngs Office at about 12 oclok. The subject of the Endowments & 2d Anointings was presented when President Young said that the order of the 2n anointing was for the persons to be anointed to be cloathed in their Priestly robes the man upon the right hand and wife or wives upon the left hand. The Administrator may be dressed in his usual Clothing or in his Priestly Robes as he may see fit. The meeting Should be opened by Prayer then the Administrator should Anoint the man A King & Priest unto the Most High God. Then he should Anoint his wife or wives Queens & Priestess unto her husband. (*Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, vol. 6, p. 307)

On Jan. 11, 1846, Brigham Young and his wife received their second anointing. Part of their anointing reads:

> Brother Brigham Young, I pour this holy, consecrated oil upon your head, and anoint thee a King and a Priest of the Most High God . . . for princes shall bow at thy feet and deliver unto thee their treasures; . . . And I seal thee up unto Eternal Life. . . . And thou shalt attain unto [the] Eternal Godhead . . . that thou mayest . . . create worlds and redeem them; so shall thy joy be full . . .
Elder Heber Chase Kimble then anointed Mary Ann Young, a Queen & Priestess unto her husband (Brigham Young) in the Church . . . Sister Mary Ann Young, I pour upon thy head this holy, consecrated oil, and seal upon thee all the blessings of the everlasting priesthood, in conjunction with thy husband: and I anoint thee to be a Queen and Priestess unto thy husband, . . . inasmuch as thou dost obey his counsel; . . . And I seal thee up unto Eternal Life, thou shalt come forth in the morning of the first resurrection and inherit with him all the honors, glories, and power of Eternal Lives, and that thou shalt attain unto the eternal Godhead, so thy exaltation shall be perfect, . . . (Book of Anointings, as quoted in The Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship, by David John Buerger, Smith Research Associates, 1994, pp. 88-90)

Originally, this ceremony seemed to be a guarantee of godhood. Mr. Buerger observed:

Because of the strict confidentiality surrounding second anointings, it is unclear precisely what long-term effect they had on recipients nor, for that matter, the degree to which the conferral of godhood was held to be conditional or unconditional. Most early nineteenth-century statements imply that the ordinance was unconditional. (The Mysteries of Godliness, pp. 112-113)

Today, the church leaders seem to be minimizing the importance of the second anointing and refer to it as a “special blessing” but not necessary for exaltation (godhood) (see The Mysteries of Godliness, p. 165). The official LDS magazine Ensign, March 2002, p. 18, emphasized the necessity of the endowment (as opposed to the second anointing) for “eternal exaltation.” The article went on to state: “Obedience to the sacred covenants made in temples qualifies us for eternal life . . .” According to Mormonism, a person’s endowment and temple marriage starts one on the road to godhood (D&C 132:20 — “Then shall they be gods”). While some Mormons emphasize that the word “gods” in the revelation is not capitalized, editions prior to 1900 have it capitalized. Also an official statement of the LDS First Presidency used the capitalized form, and declared that man’s ultimate goal was to evolve “into a God” (Ensign, February 2002, p. 30).

Joseph Smith taught that men had the capacity to achieve Godhood and rule their own planets. He also taught that our God was originally a mortal who achieved Godhood under the direction of another God (see History of the Church, vol. 6, pp. 305-306, 474). While Mormons say they worship only one God, they believe there are countless Gods in the universe.

However the Bible clearly teaches that there is only one God. Isaiah 44:8 says: “Is there a God beside me? Yea, there is no God; I know not any.”

Innocent Blood?

While the Bible offers the repentant sinner forgiveness for any sin, including murder (see Matt. 12:31; Mark 3:28-29; Acts 8:1; Acts 9:1; 1 Tim. 1:15), the LDS Church maintains a murderer cannot achieve eternal life (which is different from merely going to heaven). One of the few conditions placed on those who received their temple endowment and second anointing was that they were not to shed innocent blood. The Doctrine and Covenants states:

Thou shalt not kill; and he that killeth shall not have forgiveness in this world, nor in the world to come. (D&C 42:18)

It also states that those who have been married “in the new and everlasting covenant” will be forgiven of any sin except murder “wherein they shed innocent blood” (D&C 132:19, 26). This was a major concern for those involved in planning the Mountain Meadows massacre. Mr. Buerger explains:

John D. Lee’s recollection of the deliberations preceding the 1857 Mountain Meadows massacre describes their concern that by killing the women and children, they might be guilty of shedding innocent blood. This task was left to the Indians so that “it would be certain that no Mormon would be guilty of shedding innocent blood—if it should happen that there was any innocent blood in the company that were to die.” (John D. Lee, Mormonism Unveiled, . . .) . . . Lee received his second anointing on 17 January 1846, . . . (The Mysteries of Godliness, p. 124)

The LDS teaching on murder has led the Mormons to conclude that when King David, in the Bible, arranged to have Uriah killed (2 Samuel 11:15-17) he committed an unpardonable sin that would keep him from exaltation. Joseph Smith taught:

. . . no murderer hath eternal life. . . . Now, we read that many bodies of the Saints arose at Christ’s resurrection, . . . but it seems that David did not. Why? Because he had been a murderer. . . . the man who forfeited his life to the injured laws of his country, by shedding innocent blood; . . . cannot be forgiven, . . . (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith, Deseret Book, 1977, p. 188)

Evidently the LDS Church has now decided that John D. Lee did not shed “innocent blood” as they restored all of his temple blessings, which would include his sealings to his plural wives, in 1961 (see The Mountain Meadows Massacre, by Juanita Brooks, p. 223). John D. Lee was married to nineteen women, and fathered 60 children (see John Doyle Lee, Appendix). Three of his marriages were after the massacre, thus showing that the LDS leadership still considered him a faithful Mormon.
One wonders how the LDS Church makes a distinction between King David’s sin being unforgivable and John D. Lee’s actions acceptable? King David only conspired to have one innocent person killed. Lee helped orchestrate the murder of 120 innocent men, women and children.

**Husband to Call Wife from the Grave**

Early Mormon Apostle Heber C. Kimball recorded the second anointing ceremony in his diary:

February the first 1844. My self and wife Vilate was annointed Priest and Priestess unto our God under the Hands of Brigham. Young and by the voys [voice] of the Holy Order.

April the first 4 day 1844. I Heber C. Kimball received the washing of my feet, and was annointed by my wife Vilate my burial, that is my feet, head, Stomach. **Even as Mary did Jesus, that she might have a claim on Him in the resurrection.** In the City of Nauvoo.

In 1845 I received the washing of my feet by [which follows is in Vilate’s hand:]

I Vilate Kimball do hereby certify that on the first day of April 1844 I attended to washing and anointed the head, Stomach and feet of my dear companion Heber C. Kimball, that I may have claim upon him in the morning of the first Resurrection, Vilate Kimball. (On the Potter's Wheel: The Diaries of Heber C. Kimball, pp. 56-57)

Mr. Buerger gave the following outline of the current second anointing ceremony:

In practice today the second anointing is actually the first of two parts comprising the fullness of the priesthood ceremony. . . . In the Salt Lake temple, second anointings are usually administered on Sunday afternoons. . . . The first part of the ceremony—being anointed and ordained a king and priest or queen and priestess—is administered in a Holy of Holies or special sealing room and is performed by or under the direction of the president of the church. There are usually but not always two witnesses. Only the husband and wife need to dress in temple robes. The husband leads in a prayer circle, offering signs and praying at an altar. He is then anointed with oil on his head, after which he is ordained a king and a priest unto God to rule and reign in the House of Israel forever . . . He is also blessed with the following (as the officiator determines): the power to bind and loose, curse and bless, the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the Holy Spirit of Promise; to attain godhood; to be sealed to eternal life (if not done previously); to have the power to open the heavens; and other blessings.

Next the wife is anointed . . . to be an heir to all the blessings sealed upon her husband . . . to receive the blessings of godhood; . . . to have the power of eternal lives (of posterity without end); . . .

At the conclusion of this ordinance, the washing of the husband’s feet by his wife is explained to the couple. It is a private ordinance, without witnesses. Its significance is related to the resurrection of the dead, as Heber Kimball noted. The couple is told to attend to the ordinance at a date of their choosing in the privacy of their home. At the determined time the husband dedicates the home and the room in which they perform the ordinance, which then follows the pattern of Mary’s anointing Jesus in Matthew 12. The ordinance symbolically prepares the husband for burial, and in this way the wife lays claim upon him in the resurrection . . . Kimball’s journal entry derives from a speculative belief taught by early Mormons that Jesus married Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus. (**The Mysteries of Godliness**, pp. 66-67)

The emphasis on the wife’s assertion that “I may have claim upon him in the morning of the first Resurrection” seems to relate to the teaching in the temple that the woman is called from the grave to exaltation by her husband. Men and women are given new names in the temple and the wife is instructed not to tell her name to anyone other than her husband. Preaching in 1857, Apostle Erastus Snow declared:

*Do you uphold your husband before God as your lord? . . . Can you get into the celestial kingdom without him? . . . No woman will get into the celestial kingdom, except her husband receives her . . . (Journal of Discourses, vol. 5, p. 291)*

Apostle Charles Penrose, writing in 1897, explained:

*In the resurrection, they stand side by side and hold dominion together. Every man who overcomes all things and is thereby entitled to inherit all things, receives power to bring up his wife to join him in the possession and enjoyment thereof. In the case of a man marrying a wife in the everlasting covenant who dies while he continues in the flesh and marries another by the same divine law, each wife will come forth in her order and enter with him into his glory. (“Mormon” Doctrine Plain and Simple, by Charles W. Penrose, p. 66)*

Writing in 1846, one former Mormon woman described receiving her new temple name:

*In one place [during the temple ritual] I was presented with a new name, which I was not to reveal to any living creature, save the man to whom I should be sealed for eternity. By this name I am to be called in eternity as after the resurrection. (As quoted in The Mysteries of Godliness, p. 94)*

**Temples and the Bible**

One of the most important tenets of the LDS Church is the necessity of temple ordinances. LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie explained:

*From the days of Adam to the present, whenever the Lord has had a people on earth, temples and temple*
ordinances have been a crowning feature of their worship. . . . The inspired erection and proper use of temples is one of the great evidences of the divinity of the Lord’s work. . . . where these are not, the Church and kingdom and the truth of heaven are not. (Mormon Doctrine, pp. 780-781)

The LDS Church teaches that only those with proper priesthood authority can administer these essential rites. Joseph Smith supposedly restored the original temple ceremony of the Old Testament. The LDS temples are used for eternal marriages for both the living and the dead, as well as baptisms for the dead. A person must have a temple marriage in order to progress to godhood. LDS prophet Spencer W. Kimball said:

Only through celestial marriage can one find the strait way, the narrow path. Eternal life cannot be had in any other way. (Deseret News, Church Section, November 12, 1977, Salt Lake City, Utah)

These ordinances, which are performed in special white clothing and a green apron, include secret handshakes and passwords. These are kept secret and are never to be discussed outside of the temple.

The LDS temple endowments and other rites are not based on biblical teaching. The temple in the Old Testament, with its High Priest and animal sacrifices, was a foreshadowing of Christ’s role as both our final High Priest and last blood offering for sin (Hebrews, chapters 5-9). When Christ died on the cross the veil of the temple was torn in half (Luke 23:45) thus signifying that the Old Testament temple ritual had been replaced by the atonement of Christ.

Eternal Marriage

There is nothing in the New Testament about “eternal marriages” and secret rituals in a Christian temple. The Jewish temple ceremonies had no baptisms or marriages and are clearly explained in the Old Testament (Exodus, chapters 26-30). The only eternal marriage in the Bible is the spiritual marriage of the believer to Christ. Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth: “I have espoused you to one husband [Christ], that I may present you [the Christians] as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2). Paul also wrote in Romans 7:4 that Christians are to be “married to another, even to him [Christ] who is raised from the dead, . . .” This is a spiritual union, not an actual marriage. Christ never mentions the need for an eternal marriage. In fact, he taught just the opposite. In Luke 20:34-36 Christ said:

The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: . . . for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, . . .

Notice that Christ equated those who are “the children of God” with angels, not married couples. Christians look forward to being with their loved ones in heaven. As brothers and sisters in Christ we will be together as one large family, the family of God (Galatians 3:26). However, there is nothing in the Bible to indicate that this would include marriage relationships.

There is nothing in the Bible to indicate that the Christians were to build temples. Some of the early Jewish Christians met in the courtyard of the temple in Jerusalem for prayer but they certainly were not performing any rites like the Mormon ceremony. The New Testament teaches that God’s temple is a spiritual building made up of all Christians, with Christ as the foundation (1 Corinthians 3:16). This is emphasized in Ephesians 2:19-22:

Now therefore ye are no more strangers . . . but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Contrary to the LDS teaching on the necessity of temple ritual, the Bible offers eternal life, in its fullest meaning, to all those who have placed their trust in Christ’s atonement (1 John 5:11-13).

For Further Reading on Mormon Temple Rituals

**Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony** $6.00
Jerald and Sandra Tanner - Utah Lighthouse Ministry

**Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?** $18.00
Jerald and Sandra Tanner - Utah Lighthouse Ministry

**Mysteries of Godliness** $22.50
David John Buenger - Signature Books

For More Information on the Mountain Meadows Massacre

**Confessions of John D. Lee** $8.00
John D. Lee - Photo reprint by Utah Lighthouse Ministry

**Forgotten Kingdom** $20.00
David Bigler - Utah State University Press

**John Doyle - Zealot, Pioneer Builder, Scapegoat** $18.00
Juanita Brooks - Utah State University Press

**Mountain Meadows Massacre** $17.00
Juanita Brooks - University of Oklahoma Press

**Mountain Meadows Massacre** $4.00
Josiah Gibbs - Photo reprint by Utah Lighthouse Ministry

**One Nation Under Gods (Sale Price)** $25.00
Richard Abanes - Four Walls Eight Windows Publisher

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Extracts from Letters and Emails

Nov. 2001 - It is almost a full year (come Dec. 6th) since my release (FREEDOM) became final. I'm enjoying every minute of it. I am now 85...Wishing you continued success. Those posts which condemn you have their day coming... that will be when they get their eyes opened, and see for themselves how duped they were. Sincerely, Ever Onward!

Nov. 2001 - As apostates of the true Church of Jesus Christ, you will continue to spread your satanical lies and reap the reward of a life with the author of lies in the hereafter. Keep your lies to yourself!!! The lies are not worth refuting. This is obviously your evil livelihood.

Nov. 2001 - ...thanks for the wonderful site... my family left the church 1 year ago... and thanks to your site 8 other friends have followed as well as another family from Utah moving here... to finally find the truth... She has realized God of mormonism and God of the bible are 2 different Gods... we worship the God of the bible and condemn Mormonism... thanks

Dec. 2001 - hey listen here you. how DARE you write false things about the Prophet Joseph Smith. Have you ever prayed and asked GOD if Joseph Smith was a Prophet, by the look of things i guess not! what's the point of trying to prove the mormons wrong? do you really have nothing else going on in your life? you can try, but you'll never prove us wrong. you can't. you need to quit being so bitter.

the church will still accept you if you will repent. you must repent of your wrong doings. otherwise a fierce judgement will be in store for you... we know that Joseph Smith was a true Prophet of GOD and was called to restore the TRUE CHUCH to the earth in the last dispensation. pray about it and you'll recieve your answer but pray sincerely with FAITH in CHRIST. by the power of the HOLY GHOST you may know the truth of all things.

Dec. 2001 - having wasted 15 years in the Mormon Church, it is still hard to live it down....I used to be a Bishop and when I converted to real Christianity, all of my Mormon friends treated me like I was the enemy... I read just about everything I can on the internet just for reasons I can’t explain...but I am proud of the work that you do and the knowledge that you must have... thanks for being you....

Dec. 2001 - Your website is terrific! Its also amazing that anyone is still in the LDS Church after reading the information you've discovered concerning the church. After hearing the truth, those that stay in the LDS Church are determined to do so, with disregard to logic or The Gospel. Thanks again

Jan. 2002 - ...Thank You for your wonderful website. When I would ask questions about the Mormon religion I was told to “go on Faith” that it would be enough. When I gave “an act of Faith” as my reason for leaving the Mormon Church, suddenly Faith was not considered to be good enough. Your website has not only affirmed my decision but has helped me defend it.

Jan. 2002 - Personally, I think you are the people that are starting the great and abominal church. You start your own church because the real one is too hard for you to follow... How dare you mock Jesus, and act as a Prophet by translating your beleifs. Why don’t you have followers. Why don’t you have your own Buildings and temples of worship. I think if your the true church, god will help you. But you know what, your a false doctrine organization led by Satan and his followeres. There is no truth in what you say, just opinion!!! Sorry, your the whore of the Church!!!! That is in my opinion. Freedom of speech!!!!

Jan. 2002 - Congratulations for your web page!

You have been doing an excellent work, i guess you are of my favorite people....I left the mormon church 1 year ago, and was baptized on last sunday.

I have learned to recognize mormonism as the recombination of different and contradictory christian-like views of different times, with degeneration of masonic rituals, misuse of egyptian documents, etc.

That proves something: Combination of all kinds of truths or cool stuff doesn’t add up to give all truth....overall if the man “restoring” has no idea of what truth is.

What i enjoy in the bible is that the real prophets are [n] ever talking about material things, nor did they try “their best”, they just listened the words of God and spoke them. As for Jesus, I have been learning to appreciate him as my savior.

I know how difficult is this work for both of you. but it is soo important!. Sometimes i have feel really stressed, since i am at BYU, but i have started to enjoy myself.... I try not to listen the stuff of everybody, since these youngsters are unexperienced. ....It can be soo difficult recognizing the truth! thanks

Feb. 2002 - Hi! I applaud you guys for your hard work and dedication at exposing mormonism for the false religion that it is. We need more people like you out there.

Anyways i was recently visiting the lds.org web site where i would go and look at the doctrine. to compare it with what the bible had to say. well just today i visited it again and they changed the whole format of the doctrine!!!! They have left out so much of the BS that makes mormonism what it is. I’m afraid that many more people will fall victim to the lies of the church ...I’m just a little worried at the new tactics the church is using.
Jan. 2002 - I find it very sad that you must deceive people in order to make a buck! ... I find it comical that you “changed” your name to become a “non Profit” ministry. We all know that this entitles you to receive money from our government. How convenient!!!!!

Your fore fathers must be sickened by your hatred for the religion and cause that they gave so much for! What a reunion you will have with them when you meet them in the hereafter!

If you want to discredit the Book Of Mormon then so be it but when you stand at your Masters feet, it will be you who is discredited for the frauds you are and I believe that you will be held responsible for anyone that you help lead astray. How about them apples?

Feb. 2002 - What makes you so hateful. Hate is how the Jews were persecuted by the nazis. If hate is what your religion believes in I suggest you questions your own believes. You should try praying sincerely some time and at least try to feel an answer.

You draw near to god with your words but your heart is far from him. I have never hated someone for their beliefs I feel this is racist almost but instead of having to do with color it is the hate of other religions. You have probably been hurt by one person of this church and that is why your mind is not open to the good things of other religions especially the Mormons, will you really let one person swarm your life with hate towards others. I am only 14 and I have felt some of the most remarkable feelings due to this magnificent church. Why do you take every little sentence and alter its meaning in order to make people share your misery? ...love

Feb. 2002 - I just wanted to thank-you for the volumes of work that you have done in the name of our savior, Christ Jesus. I was raised LDS and last April my family and I left the church. By the grace of God we have been saved and delivered from our lives of deception.

Your website continues to be a valuable tool for me put my life back together. At this point I am still a little embarrassed to see just how wrong and deceived I was for so many years. Please be encourage that God is working through your ministry and you are touching lives in a positive manner. I pray that God will use the seed you are planting, especially in those that disagree with your site.

Feb. 2002 - Just going thru some old SL Messengers when I came across the term “antimormonoids”. Are they sure they want to use such a term of derision? When you break the word down to it’s component parts we have,

Anti: a suffix - to be in opposition to;
Mormon: believer in the writings of Joseph Smith
oid: a thing of unthinking robotic existence.

Undoubtedly the creator of this word was using it as a term of derision but if you/me are antimormonoids, does that make true believers Mormonoids? Unthinking, placid, robotic creatures? What a strange title to apply to oneself.

Feb. 2002 - I’m glad to see that LDS members are at least taking the time to read some of the things on your website. I was wondering if any of them try to get in touch with you to dispute any of your documentation. It seems to me that all they can do is just write some hit and run letter with no documentation to support their claims that you guys are just “Satan Worshipers” and this website is full of lies and that you guys are just “Mormon bashing”. I find these letters rather humorous.

I’ve spent hours and hours going through your website and I think I’ve read just about everything on it. I check every day to see if a new month of “Letters to the Editor” has been posted. These hit and run Mormon letters have become my favorite thing to read here. I’m just waiting for some Mormon to write in with some documentation to support their claims. I’m sure it’s going to be quite a while, if ever.

You’re very courageous in your fight for Christ. (with documentation) Thanks for your time.

March 2002 - So what if the LDS Church did the temple work for Adolf Hitler. Why do you care? You probably don’t believe in temple work anyway so why make a big deal about it? The reason the church would make those type of records not available to the public is because of dopes like you who make a big deal out of nothing.

March 2002 - What I find interesting about the letters from Mormon members to you, is how they claim to be believers in their “church” but yet they disobey their “teachings” and visit your site (and probably others as well) enough to read information to complain to you about. Sounds to me like they are in denial. To those that do this: If you believe your church so much, then why do you even visit? Obviously you are not as staunch as you claim to be or you are already in doubt. -Observant

LDS CLAIMS
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Joseph Smith’s Traumatic Surgery

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Interestingly, in a book published in 1998 by the American Psychiatric Press, we find that William D. Morain, M.D. explored this very theory. He is the author of more than 100 scientific and literary publications.
In the foreword to Morain’s book John C. Nemiah, M.D., Professor of Psychiatry, Dartmouth Medical School, wrote the following regarding Morain’s work:

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

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

The worst of all for me has always been the suffering of burned children. It is impossible not to inflict repeated pain during the necessary dressing changes on their tender raw surfaces. Their emotional reactions are always heartbreaking to me, even after all my years in intensive care units. Despite the explanations and the diversions, the pain administered by an adult is always perceived as punishment. I know that by the time they leave the hospital, their emotional lives will be as indelibly scarred as their hands and faces. I am aware that their future behavior may be driven in new and unpredictable directions by the painful stresses of their treatment. There was additional drainage of bone, for Joseph recalls fourteen pieces of bone worked their way to the surface before the wound closed. As nothing was mentioned about the healing of the wound, we assume it was straightforward. Joseph used crutches for three years following the surgery and was known to walk with a slight limp in later life. *(The Sword of Laban, page xix)*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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**LDS CLAIMS**

*Under the Search Light*

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

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

Dr. Morain made the following observation concerning Joseph Smith:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On page 12 of his book Dr. Morain wrote:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Both of these books are available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry.

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

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

### Why Not Accept the Book of Mormon?

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

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

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

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

For further research on the Book of Mormon we suggest:


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


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


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

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

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**Quote from October 2002 LDS Conference—**

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

*Apostle Joseph B. Wirthlin*

*Salt Lake Tribune, October 7, 2002, page A6*
First Vision or Fraud?

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. Smith claimed that from 1820 onward he was persecuted for telling the vision. Yet there is no contemporary evidence that he either told the vision to anyone or even attempted to write it down until 1832 (see Mormonism and the Nature of God, pages 92-3).

2. When he did write his 1832 account he only mentioned Jesus appearing. The account never stated that God the Father was present (see An American Prophet’s Record, page 5).

3. If he had claimed a vision of Jesus it would not have been that different from many Christians of the day who claimed similar experiences (see Inventing Mormonism, page 52).

4. In 1834 the LDS Church magazine printed an account of the beginnings of Mormonism yet it failed to mention Smith’s 1820 vision in the grove. Instead, it related that Smith’s first vision happened in 1823 when the angel appeared in his bedroom to tell him of the Book of Mormon plates (see Messenger and Advocate, vol.1, no.3, pages 42 and 78).

5. In 1835 he related the vision in the grove to some visitors but he only mentioned angels appearing, not Jesus and God the Father (see An American Prophet’s Record, pages 51, 59).

6. Early newspaper articles criticizing Joseph Smith never raised the issue of a vision in 1820 or that he was teaching that God the Father and Jesus are separate Gods (see Sunstone Magazine, July/Aug. 1980, page 27).

7. Smith’s official account of his vision mentions he went into the grove to pray due to an 1820 revival in his neighborhood. However, there is no record of such a revival that year (Inventing Mormonism, chapter 2).

8. It can be demonstrated that Smith’s doctrine of God the Father and Jesus having separate bodies developed years after the founding of Mormonism, not because of an 1820 vision (see Mormonism and the Nature of God, chapters 2 and 3).

9. The sermons of early LDS leaders show that they thought the first vision was of angels, not God and Jesus. Also, they did not use the first vision to establish their view of God the Father and Jesus as separate entities (see Journal of Discourses, vol. 6, pages 29, 335; vol. 2, pages 171, 196-197; vol. 10, page127; vol. 12, pages 333-334).

10. Smith’s concept of God the Father having once been a mortal, having a resurrected body, and achieving godhood contradicts the Bible (see Isaiah 43:10-11; Isaiah 44:6, 8, 24; Jeremiah 23:23-24).
These are just a few of the many problems with Smith’s claims. If anything happened to young Smith in the grove, it could not have been the experience he later described. For more information on the problems with the first vision, see the following books:

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

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

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

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

Chapters on the first vision can also be found in:

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

*Major Problems of Mormonism,* by Tanners. $8.00

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

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

**Revelation by Survey?**

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

Interestingly, the 1890 section ending plural marriage and the 1978 section ending priesthood restriction on Blacks, give instruction on ending embarrassing practices, not to establish new doctrine. These sections claim to be the result of revelation but the specific wording of the divine communications are not published. Since both of these changes came after the church had received years of severe criticism from the outside, one is left to wonder if the changes were made due to pressure more than hearing the voice of God. Oddly, section 132, which instructed Smith on the practice of polygamy, is still retained in their scriptures. While there never was a revelation in the *Doctrine and Covenants* stating Blacks could not be ordained to the priesthood, there were statements by President Brigham Young declaring that descendants of Cain, interpreted as Blacks, would not get the priesthood until after the resurrection:

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

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

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

> “Revelation no longer comes by vision,” Mr. Hinckley said, “but in the ‘still, small voice,’ like that heard by Elijah.”

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

This revelatory process seems to also include surveys of the membership. In 1988 a church survey was mailed to 3,400 members in the United States and Canada. Many of the questions dealt with the person’s feelings and reactions to temple work. One of the questions wanted to know if the person “was confused by what happened” in the temple. Also, did he/she find the experience “unpleasant” or did she feel the rites were “too hurried.” The survey also wanted to know if the person found “it hard to go to the temple” or if the person felt “guilty about not doing enough.” One question tried to determine if the person felt “the church makes unreasonable demands” of its members. The results were not released, but in 1990 the LDS Church made major revisions to the temple ceremony, making it more palatable to the members.
In 1990 the church did another survey, evidently by telephone. Among other things, it wanted to know what type of marriage the person had (temple or civil), how active the person was in the ward and his level of tithing.

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

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

The article also reported:

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

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

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

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

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

“Why do they need such a detailed questionnaire about how women are feeling when they are supposed to be receiving divine revelation?” she asked. (Salt Lake Tribune, October 5, 2002, page C3)
**GODHEAD**  
**LDS:** Father & Son are resurrected men with physical bodies. Holy Ghost is a separate man with a spiritual body. Three totally separate Gods. God is married. Other Gods for other worlds. (D&C 130:22; Teachings, pp. 345-346, pp. 370-373; Doctrines of Salvation, v.1, pp. 10-12)  
**BIBLE:** God is not a man. (Num. 23:19) He has always been God. (Psa. 90:2; Mal. 3:6; Hab. 1:12; Rom. 1:22-25) Only one God. (Isa. 43:10-11; 44:6; 45:21-22) Father is Spirit. (John 4:24; 1 Tim. 1:17)  

**JESUS CHRIST**  
**LDS:** Literally our elder brother, born to Heavenly Parents in the premortal life. Jesus, Lucifer and humans are all the same species and are brothers and sisters. (Gospel Principles, pp. 11, 17, 18)  
**BIBLE:** Fully God, not a subordinate deity. Eternal. (Isa. 9:6; John 8:58; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 13:8; John 1:1-14; Col. 1:16-17)  

**PREMORTAL LIFE**  
**LDS:** Teach that everyone existed in heaven before born on earth. We have existed eternally. (D&C 93:29; PGP: Bk of Abr. 3:21-22: Teachings, pp. 352-354)  
**BIBLE:** Only Christ existed before mortality, not man. (John 8:58; Col. 1:17) Our existence started on earth. (Zec. 12:1; 1 Cor. 15:46)  

**THE FALL**  
**LDS:** Fall was a blessing. It brought mortality, ability to have children and physical death. Adam was given conflicting commandments and was supposed to fall. (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 1, pp. 111-116; Gospel Principles, pp. 31-33; 2 Nephi 2:25; Mormon Doctrine, pp. 268-269)  
**BIBLE:** God intended obedience. (Gen. 1:28) God tempts no one. (James 1:13-14). Man is sinful. (Rom. 5:12; 8:5-8; 1 Cor. 2:14)  

**VIRGIN BIRTH**  
**LDS:** Believe God, as a resurrected physical man, is literal Father of Jesus—same manner in which men are conceived on earth. Believe Matt. 1:18 is in error. (Mormon Doctrine, pp. 546-547, 742)  
**BIBLE:** Mary was “with child of the Holy Ghost.” (Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:30-35)  

**SIN**  
**LDS:** Specific acts, not man’s basic nature. Must know act is wrong to be a sin. (Mormon Doctrine, pp. 550, 735-736)  
**BIBLE:** We are in spiritual rebellion until conversion. (Eph. 2:3; Rom. 5:6) We do not just commit sins; we are basically sinful. (Matt. 1:21; Jer. 17:9; Luke 5:32)  

**FORGIVENESS**  
**LDS:** Granted at end of process of repentance and reformed behavior (Mormon Doctrine, p. 292-298; Gospel Principles, pp. 75-77, 123; Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 1, pp. 133-134)  
**BIBLE:** Complete forgiveness granted the moment we turn to Christ. (Mark 2:5; Col. 2:13-14; Eph. 1:6-7)  

**SALVATION BY GRACE**  
**LDS:** Believe Christ’s death brought release from grave and universal resurrection. Salvation by grace is universal resurrection. Beyond this, man must earn his place in heaven. Saved by grace after all we can do. (Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 25:23; Mormon Doctrine pp. 669-671)  
**BIBLE:** Salvation is not limited to universal resurrection but gift of God to those who believe. (Rom. 1:16; Heb. 9:28; Eph. 2:8-9)  

**REDEEMED**  
**LDS:** From mortal death only. Not same as Eternal Life. (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 2, pp. 10-15)  
**BIBLE:** Redeemed from more than mortal death; redeemed from spiritual death & given Eternal Life. (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:1; Gal. 4:4-5)  

**GOSPEL**  
**LDS:** Doctrines and commandments of the LDS Church. True gospel restored by Joseph Smith. (Mormon Doctrine, pp. 331, 334; Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 1, pp. 156-159)  
**BIBLE:** Good news of Christ’s death and resurrection as atonement for our sins. (1 Cor. 15:1-4; Gal. 1:6-8)  

**BORN AGAIN**  
**LDS:** Baptism into the LDS Church. (Mormon Doctrine, p. 101)  
**BIBLE:** We are spiritually dead until our spiritual birth. (1 Pet. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:17; John 3:7, 14, 15)  

**TRUE CHURCH**  
**LDS:** Only the Mormon Church. The true church was taken from the earth until Joseph Smith restored it. (D&C 1:30; 115:3, 4; Mormon Doctrine, pp. 133, 136)  
**BIBLE:** Not an organization; as born-again Christians we are part of God’s Church. (1 Cor. 12:12-14; Matt. 16:18; 18:19-20)  

**AUTHORITY - PRIESTHOOD**  
**LDS:** Believe only LDS have authority to baptize, ordain, etc. Have two-part system of priesthood—Melchizedek and Aaronic. (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 3, pp. 80-81; D&C 107:1-21)  
**BIBLE:** Christ brought end to Aaronic priesthood and is the only High Priest after the manner of Melchizedek. (Heb. 5:9-10; 7:11-17; 7:24-27; 2 Tim. 2:2)  

**BAPTISM**  
**LDS:** Must be performed by LDS priesthood. (Mormon Doctrine, pp. 69-72)  
**BIBLE:** Emphasis is on Believer—not priesthood authority. (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:37-41; 16:30-34)  

**ETERNAL LIFE**  
**LDS:** Exaltation in Celestial Kingdom; godhood and ability to bear children in heaven. Must have a temple recommend and be sealed in Mormon temple. (D&C 131:1-4; 132:19-25, 30, 55)  
**BIBLE:** Not limited to certain ones in the top part of heaven. No mention of priesthood or temple marriage but is given to all true believers. (1 John 5:12-13; Luke 20:35-36)  

**IMMORTALITY**  
**LDS:** Universal gift. The ability to go to heaven and live forever but not same as Eternal Life. Lower level of heaven and unable to bear children. (D&C 14:7; Mormon Doctrine, pp. 237, 376-377, 670)  
**BIBLE:** Makes no distinction between immortality and eternal life. No second class citizens in heaven. (2 Tim. 1:10; John 3:15-16)  

**HEAVEN**  
**LDS:** Divided into three kingdoms—Celestial, Terrestrial and Telestial. A place for almost everyone. (D&C 88:16-20; Misuse of 1 Cor. 15:40-41)  
**BIBLE:** Only mentions two conditions—everlasting punishment or eternal life. (Matt. 25:31-46; 2 Thess. 1:7-10)  

**HELL**  
**LDS:** Hell as an institution is eternal—inmates come and go as in jail, but do not spend eternity there. Temporary. After debt is paid they will go to the Telestial Kingdom. (Mormon Doctrine, pp. 349-351)  
**BIBLE:** No mention of people getting out of Hell. (Rev. 21:8; Matt. 13:24-43, 47-50; Luke 16:26)  

**KINGDOM OF GOD**  
**LDS:** Means Celestial Kingdom. Only those in the Celestial Kingdom are in God’s presence. Those in the Terrestrial or Telestial Kingdoms are not in the presence of the Father. (D&C 76:50-88; 131:1-4; 132:16-17)  
**BIBLE:** All redeemed will be in God’s presence. (Rev. 21:1-3) All believers are part of Kingdom. (Matt. 13:41-43)  

**LDS References:**  
Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price  
Mormon Doctrine by Bruce R. McConkie, 1979  
Doctrines of Salvation by Joseph Fielding Smith  
Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith by Joseph Fielding Smith  
Gospel Principles, published by LDS Church, 1995
Extracts from Letters and Emails
(Spelling and grammar not corrected)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

April 2002. I find it ironic that a mormon would criticize your site. By their own scriptures “all Christian sects are corrupt”. By their definition they are ashamed of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and several of the early leaders. Obviously these men were “unchristian” by their own given definition of the term. And lets not forget Jesus Christ. How “unchristian” can one get, after all he said Woe to You Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites . . .

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

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

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

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

i testify to you that the CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS, is the true and only living church upon the whole face of the earth. God has told me that the BOOK
OF MORMON is true. God has told me that the LDS church is true. “NO i was not tricked by satan. dont use that excuse either.
i dont want to hear any justifications, or Lame excuses. you two need humbled big time. you two need to have your hearts soften.you two may e-mail back to me with your response of my letter. but dont you dare, Start e-mailing ANTI-LDS literature to me. i dont mean to be harsh, but you two need to give your Anti business a rest, and get a real job.
Sincerely, the guy who you will thank someday.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

May God Richly Bless You,

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

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

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

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

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

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

- **American Apocrypha: Essays on Book of Mormon** $20.00  
  Edited by Dan Vogel & Brent Metcalfe - Signature Books

- **Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows** $35.00  
  Will Bagley - University of Oklahoma Press

- **Early Mormon Documents Volume 4** $40.00  
  Edited by Dan Vogel - Signature Books

- **The Gospel According to Joseph Smith: A Christian Response to Mormon Teaching** $11.00  
  Ethan E. Harris - P&R Publishing

- **Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows** $35.00  
  Will Bagley - University of Oklahoma Press

- **The Gospel According to Joseph Smith: A Christian Response to Mormon Teaching** $11.00  
  Ethan E. Harris - P&R Publishing

- **The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America** $18.00  
  Sarah Barringer Gordon - Univ. of N. Carolina Press

- **Understanding My Mormon Friends’ Faith and Mine** $5.00  
  Judy Robertson - Concerned Christians  
  (small 24-page booklet written for children)

### New Video / DVD

- **Lost Book of Abraham: Investigating a Remarkable Mormon Claim** Video or DVD $20.00  
  Institute for Religious Research

- For printed information on the Book of Abraham see:

  - **By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus** $11.00  
    Charles M. Larson - Institute for Religious Research

### Recent Titles

- **Mormon Conspiracy (The) A Review of Present Day and Historical Conspiracies in Mormon America and World** $13.50  
  Calvin Wood

- **Mormonism and the Nature of God: A Theological Evolution 1830-1915** $34.50  
  Kurt Widmer - McFarland & Company

- **New Mormon Challenge: Essays Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-Growing Movement** $20.00  
  Edited by F. Beckwith, C. Mosser, P. Owen - Zondervan

- **One Nation Under Gods: A History of the Mormon Church** $28.00  
  Richard Abanes - Four Walls Eight Windows

- **The Poet and the Murderer: A True Story of Literary Crime and the Art of Forgery** $21.50  
  Mark Hofmann

- **The Sixth of Seven Wives: Escape from Modern Day Polygamy** $18.00  
  Mary Mackert - xpolygamist.com

- **The Stones Cry Out: What Archaeology Reveals About the Truth of the Bible** $11.50  
  Randall Price - Harvest House Publishers

- **A Winter With the Mormons: 1852 Letters of Jotham Goodall** $27.00  
  Edited by David Bigler - Tanner Trust

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**Mail Orders:**  
Please add 15% mailing charge
In November of 1964 we launched the first issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger. At that time we were operating under the business name of Modern Microfilm Company. (We became a non-profit organization in 1983.) Over the next thirty-nine years we covered many controversial topics. At times we felt like Joseph Smith when he said, “No man knows my history. . . If I had not experienced what I have, I could not have believed it myself.” (History of the Church, Vol. 6, p. 317) The following is a brief overview of our newsletters.

1833 Book of Commandments

The lead article of the Nov. 1964 Messenger was “Mormon Church Suppresses Book Of Commandments: Deseret Book Store Ordered Not To Sell Wilford Wood’s Reprint Of The Book Of Commandments.” After recounting the problems we had trying to advertise our own reprint of the 1833 Book of Commandments we described the release of Wilford Wood’s reprint entitled Joseph Smith Begins His Work, Vol. 2. However, even his reprint ran into problems. We wrote:

Since Wilford Wood’s reprint did not tell that the revelations had been changed, the Church did not try to suppress his book at that time. Instead they promoted it and allowed him to display his original copy of the Book of Commandments in the window of the Deseret Book Store (that is the Church book store) . . . the Church leaders evidently felt that they were safe as long as members of the Church did not compare it with present editions of the Doctrine and Covenants. It appears, however, that members of the Church did compare the two editions and found that many changes had been made. On Oct. 9, 1964, a man reported to us that the Deseret Book Store had refused to sell him copies of Joseph Smith Begins His Work, V.1 and 2. On Oct. 10, 1964, Sandra Tanner went to the Deseret Book Store and asked the clerk concerning these books. The clerk, supposing she was a Mormon, said, “President David O. McKay won’t let us sell that anymore.” The clerk went on to say, “We’ve had several people leave the Church because of those books. The priest and ministers of the other churches are using these books to confuse people. Because of the confusion we can’t sell them anymore. President McKay has taken them out of circulation.”

Years later, after many books and articles had been printed detailing the changes in Smith’s revelations, the Deseret Bookstore once again allowed the volumes to be sold. A complete study of the changes can be found in Joseph Smith’s Revelations—Text & Commentary by H. Michael Marquardt.
Suppressed First Vision Account

The second article in our first issue was entitled “First Vision.” We briefly discussed a few problems with various accounts of Smith’s original vision, such as the history in the Messenger and Advocate, 1834-35, and the account written by Smith’s brother, William Smith. Neither account mentioned an 1820 vision. Instead, these accounts had Smith’s visions starting several years later.

During this period our friend LaMar Petersen told us of a conversation he had in 1953 with Levi Edgar Young of the Seven Presidents of Seventies in the LDS Church. Mr. Young told LaMar that he had read a “strange” unpublished account of the First Vision at church headquarters but was instructed not to divulge the contents to anyone. This led us to research the various accounts of the First Vision and the information was included in our book, Joseph Smith’s Strange Account of the First Vision. In this book we quoted from Paul Cheesman’s 1965 BYU thesis, An Analysis of the Accounts Relating to Joseph Smith’s Early Visions, and reproduced his appendix containing the 1832 First Vision account.

However, LDS scholars were reluctant to mention that we were the first to publish the 1832 account. In fact, the following misinformation was printed in the Autumn 1966 issue of Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought:

In this issue, James Allen publishes for the first time substantial portions of two early accounts by Joseph Smith of his First Vision which became known in modern times and (to just a few people) only in the past two years.

In the January 1967 Messenger no. 12, we quoted LaMar Petersen’s letter to the editor of Dialogue, pointing out their mistake. While our original pamphlet on the First Vision is out of print the information is included in our book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?

In July 1967, we published Messenger no. 15 with the title “Examining The First Vision.” In it we discussed Smith’s suppressed 1832 account of his vision, where he only mentions Jesus appearing to him. We also mentioned the 1835 account which mentions “angels” but has nothing to indicate that God and Jesus appeared. We then quoted from Wesley Walters research on other problems with Smith’s 1820 vision. Walters found that Smith’s description of a revival in 1820 actually applied to a revival in 1824/25, which raises all sorts of problems for the story. He stated:

“...the point at which one might most conclusively test the accuracy of Smith’s story has never been adequately explored. A vision, by its inward, personal nature, does not lend itself to historical investigation. A revival is a different matter, especially one such as Joseph Smith describes, in which ‘great multitudes’ were said to have joined the various churches involved. Such a revival does not pass from the scene without leaving some traces in the records and publications of the period. In this study we wish to show by contemporary records that the revival, which Smith claimed occurred in 1820, did not really occur until the fall of 1824. We also show that in 1820 there was no revival in any of the churches in Palmyra or its vicinity. In short, our investigation shows that the statement of Joseph Smith, Jr. can not be true when he claims that he was stirred up by an 1820 revival to make his inquiry in the grove near his home.” (New Light On Mormon Origins, as quoted in the Salt Lake City Messenger, July 1967, p. 3)

Wesley P. Walters and H. Michael Marquardt further developed this research in their book, Inventing Mormonism.

Joseph Smith’s History

In the second issue, April of 1965, we wrote an article called “Changes In Joseph Smith’s History.” We discussed a large deletion from the History of the Church relating to Smith’s death as it was printed in the Millennial Star compared with its present printing. We also pointed out that a paragraph relating to Smith’s description of the word “Mormon” had been deleted from current printings. For more on this, see our book, Changes in Joseph Smith’s History.

Threats

We also mentioned the two letters we had received from LDS Apostles threatening us with lawsuits over what we were publishing. LeGrand Richards sent his letter Dec. 20, 1961 and Mark E. Petersen sent his letter Feb. 13, 1965. Neither one followed through with their threats, but they were hints of what was to come.

Book of Mormon

In the October 1965 issue, no. 4, we announced the publication of our book, 3,913 Changes in the Book of Mormon, and listed a few examples of changes. One of the examples we gave was Alma 29:4. In the original 1830 edition, page 303, it read:

“... yea, I know that he allotteth unto men, yea, decreeth unto them decrees which are unalterable, according to their wills, ...”

But the 1968 edition deleted the middle of the phrase:

“... yea, I know that he allotteth unto men according to their wills, ...” (Alma 29:4)

Interestingly, that verse was changed back to the 1830 reading in 1981.
**Blacks and the Priesthood**

In November 1965 we issued no. 5 with the title "Negroes In The Priesthood." At that time Blacks were not allowed to hold the LDS priesthood. We stated:

For many years the Mormon Church leaders have taught that a Negro cannot hold the Priesthood. . . . Outwardly the Mormon doctrine concerning the Negro seems to be firm and absolute. "One drop of Negro blood," the Mormon leaders declare, would prevent a man from holding the Priesthood. The truth is, however, that some people with Negro blood are being ordained to the Priesthood.

Although we were aware of the fact that a "colored man" by the name of Elijah Abel held the Priesthood in the Mormon Church [in 1836] we were very astonished to learn that his descendants have also been ordained to the Priesthood.

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**ORDINATIONS TO PRIESTHOOD**

| Elijah Able | Ordained an Elder March 3, 1836.  
|-------------|---------------------------------|
| Enoch Able  | Ordained an Elder November 10, 1900. (son of Elijah)  
| Elijah Able | Ordained a Priest July 5, 1934. (grandson of Elijah)  

Nauvoo, Illinois

Enoch Able  
by John Q. Adams, Logan, 5th Ward, Utah.

Enoch Able  
by John Q. Adams, Logan, 5th Ward, Utah.

Elijah Able  
by J.C. Hogenson  
Logan 10th Ward, Utah

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...We have obtained a photograph of Elijah Abel's grandson's ward membership record which proves that he was ordained to the Priesthood.

In the January 1966 issue, no. 6, we quoted from the New York Times, December 27, 1965, pages 1 and 18:

"Within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—more commonly known as the Mormon Church—the liberal intellectuals are hungry as never before for avenues of discussion.

"For many of these liberals the paramount question is the church's attitude on Negroes, who are permitted to become members but cannot attain to the priesthood open to all other males of all races.

"At the other end of the doctrinal spectrum, some conservatives are causing concern by taking to polygamy—a practice officially discarded by the church 75 years ago—for which they are excommunicated.

"Only by excommunication can a person leave the church. This may be had for the asking, but few ask, even when disenchanted with their religion.

"Two who did request it are Jerald Tanner and his wife, Sandra, who run a small printing operation here that distributes such things as anti-Mormon books that have been out of print and pamphlets attacking the validity of the 'Book of Mormon' as a divinely revealed work."

We then quoted from the December 28, 1965, New York Times:

"The church moves slightly toward the Negro all the time. Proselytizing is heavy now in Brazil, where many persons of mixed Negro blood live and where many such have undoubtedly been taken into the priesthood.

"However, sometimes the church missionaries have been required to go to new priests and tell them they no longer may perform their priestly function—that research has shown they have Negro ancestry. Orders for this come from Salt Lake City.

"The church will identify only one Negro who was ever a priest. He was Elijah Abel, an undertaker in Nauvoo, Ill.—and a good friend of Joseph Smith, the founder. . . .

"Although there is ferment for change, many observers believe it probable that the majority of the church's nearly 2.5 million members today would oppose changing the exclusionary rules on Negroes."

It would be another 13 years before the LDS Church would officially remove its ban and offer priesthood to males of all races.

**Smith's Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar**

In the April 1966 issue, no. 7, we published our first article challenging the Book of Abraham titled "Hidden Document Revealed: Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet And Grammar Suppressed For 130 Years Now Comes To Light. This Document Proves That Joseph Smith Did Not Understand Ancient Egyptian and That the Book of Abraham was a Work of His Imagination." (At that time we did not realize that the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York was preserving the original papyri owned by Joseph Smith.) On page 3 we stated:

Although the Mormon Church Historian's Office has the original document [Smith's Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar] and also a microfilm copy, members of the Mormon Church have been required to get special permission from Joseph Fielding Smith, Church Historian, to even see the microfilm.

We also quoted from BYU Professor James R. Clark:

"Many people have asked me, 'Well, why don't they submit the grammar and alphabet to scholars?' Well, my answer is this, that the Prophet didn't complete it. They have already disagreed with him, most of the scholars, on his translation. I'm wondering if there would be any change in their approach to it now to what it has been, and so I'm not personally in favor of submitting it. . . . I'm in favor of doing what we've done with the Book of Mormon. Let the thing keep rolling and depend on our testimonies of the gospel." (Prophets and Problems of the Pearl of Great Price, BYU, p. 75, as quoted in Salt Lake City Messenger, April, 1966, p. 3)
Our reprint of Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar is still available. See our book list.

Also in no. 7 we mentioned the New York Times, December 29, 1912, article “Museum Walls Proclaim Fraud Of Mormon Prophet.” The full article is reprinted on our web site [www.utm.org].

Today the Book of Abraham continues to be a hot topic as the papyri and grammar provide ample evidence that it is not an authentic translation.

Smith’s Egyptian Papyri Found

The most surprising development of the 1960’s was the rediscovery of the Joseph Smith papyri collection. The February 1968 newsletter, no. 16, was titled “The Mormon Papyri Question.” In it we stated:

For a long period of time the Mormon leaders claimed that the original papyri were burned in the Chicago fire. On November 27, 1967, however, the Deseret News announced:

“New York—A collection of papyrus manuscripts, long believed to have been destroyed in the Chicago fire of 1871, was presented to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints here Monday by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. . . . Included in the papyri is a manuscript identified as the original document from which Joseph Smith had copied the drawing which he called ‘Facsimile No.1’ and published with the Book of Abraham.” (Deseret News, November 17, 1967, page 1)

We went on to discuss the problems with Facsimile No.1 and its connection with the Egyptian Book of the Dead.

In our March 1968 Messenger, no. 17, we announced: “Fall Of The Book Of Abraham.” We wrote:

The fall of the Book of Abraham has been brought about by the identification of the piece of papyrus from which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham. . . . The identification of this fragment . . . has been made possible by a comparison with Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar. . . . Before publishing photographs of the papyri, the Brigham Young University Studies had advertised that they were going to print pictures of the Book of Abraham Papyri. When the photographs appeared there was an apology which read:“Our calling them the Book of Abraham Papyri in some of our advertisements did not reflect the official Church identification which is the present title we use: The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri.”

The Mormon publication, Improvement Era, February, 1968, contains color photographs of the papyri. The fragment of papyrus from which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham is found on page 41—the very last photograph. It is labeled: “XI. Small ‘Sensen’ text (unillustrated).” . . . The reader will find the word “sensen” on the fourth line of the papyrus identified as the original used by Joseph Smith as the basis for the Book of Abraham. . . . The reader will note that Joseph Smith used less than four lines from the papyrus to make 51 verses in the Book of Abraham. These 51 verses are composed of more than 2,000 English words! A person does not have to be an Egyptologist to know that it would be impossible to translate over 2,000 words from a few Egyptian characters. (Salt Lake City Messenger, March 1968, p. 2)

Messenger numbers 16 through 21 were devoted to the problems of the Book of Abraham, which we later incorporated into a chapter for our book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?

More recent resources on the problems in the Book of Abraham include the book, By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus, and the video, The Lost Book of Abraham.

Orson Pratt and Apostolic Succession

In September 1966, no. 9, we discussed Orson Pratt and his original problems with polygamy which caused him to lose his seniority in the council of twelve apostles. When his wife told him that Joseph Smith had approached her to become his plural wife, it caused Pratt to have a nervous breakdown. He was later reconciled to Smith, but his time out of the church affected his apostolic standing. After discussing changes in various printings of the History of the Church we stated:

It would appear from the way Joseph Smith’s history was first printed that Orson Pratt did not lose his seniority and that he should have become president of the Mormon Church. The changes in Joseph Smith’s history evidently were made to cover up this fact . . . . Although Orson Pratt was finally able to accept the doctrine of plural marriage, he again ran into trouble when Brigham Young announced the Adam-God doctrine.” (Salt Lake City Messenger, no. 9, p. 2)

Orson Pratt’s struggle with church authority is explored in the new book by Gary Bergera titled, Conflict in the Quorum: Orson Pratt, Brigham Young, Joseph Smith.

Joseph Smith and Polygamy

The lead article in issue no.12, January 1967, was “Joseph Smith and Polygamy” where we announced our book by the same name. In this issue we presented evidence that Smith had married women who already had husbands and even asked various apostles for their wives. We went on to discuss the problems with the 1890 manifesto, showing that it did not end polygamy amongst the leaders. These issues have since been addressed in such books as Todd Compton’s In Sacred Loneliness, Richard VanWagoner’s Mormon Polygamy: A History and Newell and Avery’s Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith.
Political Kingdom of God

The May 1967 issue, no. 14, of the Messenger was titled “The Mormon Kingdom.” In it we discussed Smith’s efforts to establish the political kingdom of God on earth, even having himself ordained King, and the secret Council of Fifty. We quoted Apostle John Taylor’s statement:

“We do believe it, and we honestly acknowledge that this is that kingdom which the Lord has commenced to establish upon the earth, and that it will not only govern all people in a religious capacity, but also in a political capacity.” (Journal of Discourses, Vol. 7, page 170)

This topic was later covered in D. Michael Quinn’s two volumes, Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power and Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power.

LDS Temple Ceremony

In the May 1969 issue, no. 23, page 3, we published probably the first photograph of someone dressed in the complete temple clothing. The article was titled “Secret Temple Ceremony.” This included a side-by-side comparison of the wording of the penalties from the 1931 and the 1969 version of the temple ritual. In 1931 the temple participant swore, “we will not reveal any of the secrets of this, the first token of the Aaronic priesthood, with its accompanying name, sign or penalty. Should we do so; we agree that our throats be cut from ear to ear and our tongues torn out by their roots.”

This was later modified and in 1969 a person swore, “I will never reveal the First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood, together with its accompanying name, sign or penalty. Rather than do so I would suffer my life to be taken.” Little did we imagine that this part of the ceremony would be deleted in 1990. This is detailed in our book, Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony, 1842-1990.

1970’s - Revelations

Blacks and Priesthood

Our first newsletter for 1970, no. 26, was titled “Led By Revelation?” In it we discussed various problems facing Mormonism. We stated:

Today the Church is faced with a crisis that is similar to the one it encountered in 1890 over polygamy. This controversy stems from the fact that Mormon leaders teach that the Negroes are cursed by God and therefore ineligible to hold the Priesthood. The Mormon Apostle Mark E. Petersen stated:

“If I were to marry a Negro woman and have children by her, my children would all be cursed as to the priesthood. Do I want my children cursed as to the priesthood? If there is one drop of Negro blood in my children, as I have read to you, they receive the curse.”

This doctrine is derived from Joseph Smith’s “translation” of the Book of Abraham. . . . Since the Book of Abraham contains the verse that is used for “denying the Priesthood to Negroes,” it should be examined with a very critical eye.

Blacks Given the Priesthood

The anticipated revelation giving priesthood to Blacks was announced June 9, 1978, by President Spencer W. Kimball. In the July 1978 Messenger, no. 39, we wrote:

Since we have probably printed more material critical of the Mormon anti-black doctrine than any other publisher, the new revelation comes as a great victory and a vindication of our work. We printed our first criticism of this doctrine in 1959. This was certainly not a popular cause to espouse in those days. (In fact, at one time a Mormon threatened to punch Sandra in the nose over the issue.) . . . As early as 1963 we printed a sheet entitled, “Will There Be A Revelation Regarding The Negro?” At the bottom of this sheet we predicted: “If the pressure continues to increase on the Negro question, the leaders of the Mormon Church will probably have another revelation which will allow the Negro to hold the priesthood.”

On page 7 of the July 1978 issue we observed:

One thing that should be noted about the new “revelation” is that the Church has failed to produce a copy of it. All we have is a statement by the First Presidency which says a revelation was received.

For more information on the pressures that were exerted against the LDS Church prior to their changing their prohibition on priesthood for Blacks, and the doctrinal implications, see our books, Mormons and Negroes and Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?

Joseph Smith’s Occult Connection

Another important topic in the 1970’s was Smith’s involvement with the occult. In Fawn Brodie’s landmark biography of Joseph Smith, No Man Knows My History, she wrote about Smith’s early participation in magic, treasure hunts and money digging. One of the issues she raised was the charge that Smith was arrested in 1826 as a result of these activities. In our newsletter for October 1970, no. 29, we discussed the evidence for this claim, citing the account from the 1877 Vermont Historical Gazetteer; Vol. 3, pages 810-819. We also quoted from the court record as printed in Fraser’s Magazine, 1873, p. 229:
"Warrant issued upon written complaint upon oath of Peter G. Bridgeman, who informed that one Joseph Smith of Bainbridge was a disorderly person and an impostor.

"Prisoner brought before Court March 20, 1826. Prisoner examined: says that he came from the town of Palmyra, and had been at the house of Josiah Stowel in Bainbridge... That he had a certain stone which he had occasionally looked at to determine where hidden treasures in the bowels of earth were..."

At that time we presented evidence from other historical documents to support the court record. However, since there was no original, LDS scholars continued to dismiss the printed record as an invention of anti-Mormons in the 1870's.

Wesley Walters, a non-Mormon scholar, became intrigued with this early period of Smith's life and made numerous trips to New York to search for any documents still in existence in various public offices. While searching through court documents in Norwich, New York, Rev. Walters uncovered the bundles of the 1826 court documents for Bainbridge. On page 3 of our August 1971 newsletter, no. 32, we wrote:

The document which Wesley P. Walters has found is Justice Albert Neely's bill showing the costs involved in several trials in 1826. The reader can see from the photograph on page 2 that the fifth item from the top mentions the trial of "Joseph Smith The Glass Looker." This statement alone seems to show that the published account of the trial is authentic. Besides this, however, Neely's bill provides additional evidence. It states that the trial took place on "March 20, 1826; and this is precisely the date found in the published account of the trial: "Prisoner brought before Court March 20, 1826." (Fraser's Magazine, Feb. 1873, page 229) In Albert Neely's bill the fee for this trial is listed as "2.68;" and this is the exact figure found in the printed record: "Costs: . . . $2.68."

While further research seems to indicate that this was an examination, or preliminary hearing, not a trial, the importance of the event remains. Another document found by Walters was the bill from Constable Philip DeZeng for his costs relating to Smith's arrest for this hearing. These documents prove that Joseph Smith was deeply involved in magic during the very period when he was supposedly being prepared by the Angel Moroni for his role as God's instrument to bring forth a new book of scripture. For more on Walters' research, see his pamphlets, Joseph Smith's Bainbridge, N.Y. Court Trials, New Light on Mormon Origins and his book with Michael Marquardt, Inventing Mormonism.

**Secret Polygamy Revelations**

Two previously hidden revelations of Joseph Smith came to light in the 1970's. In the May 1973 newsletter, no. 35, we reported on Smith's July 27, 1842 revelation to N. K. Whitney instructing him on the ceremony to be said for Smith's plural marriage to his daughter, Sarah Ann Whitney. The most peculiar part of this event was that Smith had Sarah enter into a pretend marriage with Joseph Kingsbury to hide the fact that she was secretly married to Smith. Michael Marquardt detailed this situation in his pamphlet, The Strange Marriages of Sarah Ann Whitney to Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet, Joseph C. Kingsbury and Heber C. Kimball.

The other suppressed revelation was one given by Smith in 1831 and brought to light by Michael Marquardt. In the May 1974 Messenger, no. 36, we wrote:

Recently a revelation given by Joseph Smith, which has been suppressed for over 140 years, has come to light. Although Mormon leaders have never published this revelation, they have referred to it and admitted that it was given to Joseph Smith in 1831. They maintain that it supports the doctrine of polygamy and that it is a forerunner to the revelation on polygamy—given July 12, 1843—which still appears in the Doctrine and Covenants as Section 132...Mr. Marquardt learned what appears to be the real reason why the revelation has been suppressed. This is that the revelation commanded the Mormons to marry the Indians to make them a "white" and "delightsome" people.

We published a photo of this revelation with related documentation in our book, Mormonism Like Watergate?

**Smith's Diaries and the History of the Church**

One of the problems discussed in the January 1979 Messenger, no. 40, was the suppression of Joseph Smith's diaries. On page 3 was an article titled "Joseph Smith's Diaries Deal Fatal Blow To History Of Church." In this we stated:

Since we now know that more than 60% of Joseph Smith's History was not compiled until after his death, the question arises as to what were the sources which Mormon historians used to create the purported history. We know that they used newspapers and journals of other Mormon leaders and that much of the material came only from memory. (It was, of course, written in the first person to make it appear that Joseph Smith was the author.) We have always felt that Joseph Smith's private diaries were used as a source in preparing the history, but we were denied access to them. Finally, in August, 1976, we were able to examine microfilm copies of these important documents...
The first thing we noticed is that there are large periods of Joseph Smith’s life that are not covered by extant diaries. Only three of the last six years of Smith’s lifetime as it appears in the History of the Church can be checked against his diaries. The famous Rocky Mountain Prophecy, for instance, appears in the printed history under a date when Joseph Smith did not keep a diary. In Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? we demonstrated that this prophecy was not written in the original manuscript of the History of the Church until after Joseph Smith’s death.

On page 4 of issue no. 40 we discussed the need for publishing Joseph Smith’s diaries. Since it looked like the LDS Church historical department was not planning on publishing them any time soon we worked with Michael Marquardt to publish a typescript of Smith’s 1832-34 diary. We went on to state:

In this publication we have also included the first photographs of all six pages of the document which contains Joseph Smith’s “strange account” of the First Vision. Mr. Marquardt has done a line-for-line transcription of this important document.

Joseph Smith’s diaries were later printed by Signature Books under the title, An American Prophet’s Record: Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith.

B. H. Roberts’ Manuscript

In the December 1979 Messenger, no. 41, we had an article titled “B. H. Roberts’ Secret Manuscript.” In this issue we stated:

We are often asked how a young man like Joseph Smith could produce a work like the Book of Mormon. As we have already indicated, we feel that the Bible was the main source. Many of the stories found in the Bible were simply rewritten and inserted into the Book of Mormon. Hundreds of passages have been lifted from the New Testament and appear in the Book of Mormon in the style of the King James Version.

Besides the Bible, however, Joseph Smith had access to a great deal of source material. One of the most interesting books which was published prior to the Book of Mormon was Ethan Smith’s View of the Hebrews. The first edition was printed in 1823; it was soon sold out and an enlarged edition appeared in 1825. The Mormon historian B. H. Roberts read View of the Hebrews and evidently became concerned because of the many parallels between it and the Book of Mormon. He prepared a manuscript in which these parallels are listed. Copies of Roberts’ parallels were “privately distributed among a restricted group of Mormon scholars.”

Some new evidence concerning B. H. Roberts’ interest in View of the Hebrews has recently come to light. It has been discovered that Roberts wrote a manuscript of 291 pages entitled, “A Book of Mormon Study.” In this manuscript 176 pages were devoted to the relationship of View of the Hebrews to the Book of Mormon. Roberts concluded:

“If from all that has gone before in part I, the view be taken that the Book of Mormon is merely of human origin; that a person of Joseph Smith’s limitations in experience and in education; who was of the vicinage and of the period that produced the book—if it be assumed that he is the author of it, then it could be said that there is much internal evidence in the book itself to sustain such a view.

“In the first place there is a certain lack of perspective in the things the book relates as history that points quite clearly to an undeveloped mind as their origin. The narrative proceeds in characteristic disregard of conditions necessary to its reasonableness, as if it were a tale told by a child, with utter disregard for consistency.” (B. H. Roberts’ manuscript, quoted in Salt Lake City Messenger, Dec. 1979, p. 15)

In 1980 we were the first to publish the entire B. H. Roberts manuscript under the title, Roberts’ Manuscripts Revealed. His manuscripts have since been printed in a paperback edition by Signature Books under the title, Studies of the Book of Mormon.

1980’s - Trying Times

Hofmann’s Forgeries

The July 1980 Messenger, no. 43, was the start of our coverage of the Mark Hofmann documents. In that issue we quoted the May 3, 1980, Deseret News:

“A hand-written sheet of paper with characters supposedly copied directly from the gold plates in 1828, and also bearing other writing and the signature of Joseph Smith, has been found in an old Bible by a Utah State University student.

“This would make it the oldest known Mormon document as well as the earliest sample of the Prophet’s handwriting. . . .”

Unfortunately, this was the beginning of the greatest fraud scheme to hit the LDS Church, which would end with the murder of two Mormons by Mr. Hofmann.

In issue no. 49 we discussed the new Anthon transcript found by Mark Hofmann. It would be over a year before we started to seriously question Mark Hofmann’s finds.

The March 1984 Messenger, no. 53, bore the title “Moroni Or Salamander? Reported Find of Letter By Book of Mormon Witness.” We opened with the statement:

For a month or two there have been rumors circulating that an extremely important letter written by Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris has been discovered. Although there has been an attempt to keep the matter quiet until the document has been published, we have been able to piece together the
story and to learn of the remarkable contents of this letter. The document was apparently purchased by Mark Hofmann, a Mormon scholar who has made a number of significant discoveries in the last few years.

We went on to warn:

At the outset we should state that we have some reservations concerning the authenticity of the letter, and at the present time we are not prepared to say that it was actually penned by Martin Harris. The serious implications of this whole matter, however, cry out for discussion.

We quoted the following extract from the purported Harris letter:

“...I found it 4 years ago with my stone but only got it because of the enchantment the old spirit come to me 3 times in the same dream & says dig up the gold but when I take it up the next morning the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander in the bottom of the hole...”

The September 1984 Messenger, no. 54, brought reports of yet more early documents linking Smith with magic. Again, these were documents found by Mark Hofmann. Again we expressed caution:

Although we can see no obvious historical problems with the letter to Stowel, we will withhold judgment concerning its authenticity until we obtain more information concerning it.

We then discussed the newly found 1830 letter by Martin Harris to W. W. Phelps. We concluded with this statement:

We have learned that Mark Hofmann originally tried to sell this letter to the Mormon Church for a large sum of money. When his offer was turned down, he sold it to Steven Christensen. One of the most important things in determining a document’s authenticity is finding its pedigree. We have tried to find out where this letter came from but have not achieved any success. Hofmann claims that he has told the buyer (Christensen) the source, but cannot tell anyone else... While we have expressed some doubts about the authenticity of the letter, they are based strictly on the text itself. The results of tests on the document as well as the establishment of a pedigree could alter our conclusions.

In the January 1985 Messenger, no. 55, Jerald wrote an article titled “Dilemma Of A Mormon Critic.” In this article he laid out his concerns that the Harris letter was a forgery. He then quoted from a September 1, 1984, Deseret News article:

“... outspoken Mormon Church critics Jerald and Sandra Tanner suspect the document is a forgery, they told the Deseret News.”

As the months went on more information and documents came forward and then tests were done on the paper that seemed to vindicate them. However, Jerald’s doubts continued. In the June 1985 Messenger, no. 56, we even had to go to a split editorial, Jerald giving his reasons for believing the Hofmann documents to be forgeries and I [Sandra] giving my reasons for accepting the documents. Little did we realize that in just over three months the whole issue would literally blow up.

In January 1986, no. 59, we issued our largest newsletter, forty pages long. The lead article was titled “LDS Documents & Murder.” Jerald then related the events of October 15, 1985, when Steven Christensen, a Mormon bishop, document collector and friend of Mark Hofmann, was murdered in front of his downtown Salt Lake City office when he picked up a package loaded with explosives. Later that morning a Mormon woman on the east side of town stopped at the front of her garage to pick up a package. But it, too, was full of explosives and killed her instantly. The next day Mark Hofmann was injured in a bomb blast while trying to enter his car. Unexpectedly, the October 17th issue of the Deseret News stated, “police say Hofmann is considered not just a third victim but also a prime suspect in the Tuesday killings...” As the investigation continued it became obvious that Mark had concocted a whole series of false documents.

Issues no. 60, 61 and 62 contained unfolding information on the police investigation into the 1985 murders and Hofmann’s documents. On February 4, 1986, the Salt Lake City Police Department announced that Mark Hofmann had been charged with two counts of first-degree homicide and 26 counts of fraud and forgery. In April 1986, a preliminary hearing began for Mark Hofmann which lasted into May and was called “the most complex and lengthy preliminary hearing in Utah history.” (Salt Lake Tribune, May 13, 1986)

The March 1987 Messenger, no. 62, carried the heading “Hofmann Confesses: Admits He Killed Two People And Forged Mormon Documents.” Hofmann entered into a plea bargain agreement to avoid a possible death sentence. He was sentenced to “one prison term of 5 years to life and three other prison terms of 1-to-15 years for his role in the bombing deaths of two people and the forgeries and frauds that led to those murders.” (Salt Lake Tribune, Jan. 24, 1987)

In issue no. 63 we also discussed the implications of the LDS apostles being fooled by Hofmann. On page 12 we wrote:
The Mark Hofmann affair raises some serious questions for the Mormon Church. For instance, in a statement published by the church, the General Authorities now acknowledge that they were the victims of fraudulent activities:

"Like other document collectors throughout the nation, the Church has relied on competent authorities in document acquisition and with the others has been a victim of the fraudulent activities which have now been acknowledged in the courtroom. As earlier announced, the Church acquired forty-eight documents directly from Mark W. Hofmann…" (The Ensign, April 1987, page 77)

…That Spencer W. Kimball and all the other leaders of the church were deceived by Hofmann time after time does not seem to square with their claim to have the same powers as the ancient Apostles in the Bible. At least two of the documents they obtained contain revelations purporting to come from the Lord. It now appears that a wolf in sheep’s clothing can write revelations comparable to Joseph Smith’s and that it is even possible to get them past the scrutiny of the highest officials of the Mormon Church.

For more on this case see our book, Tracking the White Salamander: The Story of Mark Hofmann, Murder and Forged Mormon Documents.

Changes in the Book of Mormon

In 1981 the LDS Church released a new printing of their scriptures. However, there had been changes made. In our October 1981 Messenger, titled “A White Pure And Delightsome People” we noted:

One of the most embarrassing things about the doctrine concerning the Indians is that they are not becoming “white” as the Book of Mormon prophesied….

It now appears that the Mormon leaders are trying to “dissolve” the doctrine that the Indians will turn white after turning to Mormonism. The Church has just released its 1981 printing of the “triple combination” which contains the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price. This new publication contains a very important change. Previous editions of the Book of Mormon had said that in the last days the Indians “shall be a white and delightsome people.” (2 Nephi 30:6) In the new edition this has been altered to read that the Indians “shall be a pure and delightsome people.”…

Besides all the evidence from the original Book of Mormon manuscript and the first two printed editions [that the reading should be “white”] there is another passage in the Book of Mormon which makes it very clear that Joseph Smith believed that the Lamanites’ skins could be turned “white” through repentance:

“And their curse was taken from them, and their skin became white like unto the Nephites;” (3 Nephi 2:15)

We have taken this quotation directly from the new “triple combination” to show that the Mormon Church is still bound by the belief that righteousness affects skin color even though they have changed the verse appearing as 2 Nephi 30:6….

Like Joseph Smith, President Brigham Young taught that the Indians would “become ‘a white and delightsome people.’” (Journal of Discourses, Vol. 2, p. 143).

Today the LDS Church will not discuss their views on race. They simply side-step the issue by referring people to the 1978 revelation giving priesthood to men of all races. However, this does not explain the church’s past racial teachings or racial concepts in their scriptures.

Book of Mormon on Trial

The Messenger for May 1987, no. 63, carried the title “Mormonism And Plagiarism.” In this issue we discussed the possible sources for entries in the Book of Mormon. We compared Alma, chapter 19, with the gospel of John, chapter 11, showing the Book of Mormon dependence on the text of John. Next we compared Moroni 7 with I Corinthians 13 and Moroni 10 with I Corinthians 12. Since the writers of the Book of Mormon were supposedly separated from Israel by an ocean and a different language and culture, one is forced to conclude that the similarities can only be accounted for by plagiarism of the Biblical text.

One Mormon scholar tried to explain the dependency by arguing for an expanded text, with Smith supplying additional material beyond what was on the plates. Our newsletter gave this quote from Blake Ostler:

“Many Book of Mormon doctrines are best explained by the nineteenth-century theological milieu… it is likely that Joseph Smith expanded the Book of Mormon… some doctrines in the book’s pre-Christian sections are simply too developed and too characteristic of the nineteenth century to explain as pre-exilic ideas. The presence of the KJV in the book is, it seems to me, indisputable…

“The model of revelation I propose here is that of creative co-participation. It seems to me that the Book of Mormon makes most sense if it is seen as both a revelation to Joseph Smith and as Joseph’s expansions of the text… It also appears that the usual relationship existing between a translator and an identifiable, objective text did not exist for Joseph Smith, for the ancient text merged with his own thought processes.” (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Spring 1987, pages 76-112)

Further on in the Messenger article we concluded:

While Ostler’s idea that Joseph Smith did not really realize that he was expanding the text may remove the sinister element in some people’s minds, it certainly does not instill confidence in the contents of the Book of Mormon. If Ostler is correct, then it is obvious that at least part of the Book of Mormon is the
work of Joseph Smith’s own imagination. The reader will remember that Dr. Hugh Nibley claimed that a “forgery” is defined as “any document which was not produced in the time, place, and manner claimed by it or its publishers.” If Ostler’s theory is correct, then at least part of the Book of Mormon must be considered as forged material. While it might make some people feel better to believe that Joseph Smith really thought he was translating this material from gold plates, it would not change the fact that the material is spurious.

In July 1989 we published issue no. 72 titled “A Black Hole In The Book Of Mormon.” In this issue we showed that after Martin Harris lost the 116 pages of the manuscript of the Book of Mormon Smith was in a panic. Smith’s mother remembered him saying, “All is lost! All is lost! What shall I do? I have sinned.” (Biographical Sketches, pages 120-123.) We commented:

Joseph Smith’s words, “All is lost! All is lost!” show the gravity of the predicament he found himself in. He realized that since he had not retained a copy of the 116 pages, he could not reproduce exactly the same material as the first part of the Book of Mormon.

The theft of the 116 pages brought the translation of the Book of Mormon to a grinding halt. Joseph Smith claimed that “both the plates [i.e., the gold plates on which the Book of Mormon was supposed to have been written] and the Urim and Thummim [a sacred device used to translate the plates] were taken” from him. (History of the Church, Vol. I, p. 23) Later, however, the plates were restored and he received a revelation purporting to be from Jesus Christ. The Lord told him not to retranslate the missing pages because his enemies had altered them. . . . the Lord told Joseph Smith that he could translate the small plates of Nephi and they would take the place of what had come from the large plates of Nephi—i.e., the missing 116 pages. . . . It was during this period of intense research in the Book of Mormon that a question began to arise concerning the wars in the Book of Mormon—i.e., why were the accounts of the wars in the later portion of the book given in such great detail, whereas the material replacing the lost 116 pages was so surprisingly sparse with regard to details?

This question aroused our curiosity and we began to look at names, dates, cities, lands, directions, kings, etc. In all of these areas we found an abundance of material in the later books, but scarcely nothing in material coming from the “small plates of Nephi.” This discovery eventually led to the formulation of our theory that there is a black hole in the Book of Mormon.

Are the Tanners Communists?

Our February 1981 newsletter, no. 45, was captioned “Communists In Zion? FBI Documents To Be Sought In Court.” After an employee of the Mormon Church, who was also a former FBI employee, was found to be spying on us, using an alias, we decided to ask the FBI if they had any files on us. We submitted a request under the Freedom of Information Act. In our newsletter we reported:

After a long delay, FBI headquarters in Washington, D.C., provided us with some documents. A great deal of material, however, had been blacked out and eighteen full pages were “withheld entirely.” In one of the documents, dated Oct. 4, 1974, a full page of material has been blacked out.

Evidently someone had turned in a report to the FBI in 1974 that we were Communists. One of the FBI documents stated:

“On [material suppressed] telephonically advised that captioned individuals, husband and wife, who reside at 1350 South West Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah, are alleged communists. [material suppressed] stated [material suppressed] had been advised the Tanners moved to Salt Lake City from California several years ago and that Jerald J. Tanner operates the Modern Microfilm Company. [material suppressed] also stated [material suppressed] had been told the Tanners have been circulating petitions against the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and that they have been ‘trouble-makers’ in that respect.”

So there you have it. If one is opposed to the Mormon Church he must be a communist. We suspect this false charge came about due to our public criticism of the LDS Church due to its racial policies.

Mormonism and Magic

The December 1982 Messenger, no. 49, was titled “Mormonism & Magic.” In it we reproduced a photo of one of the Smith’s magic parchments owned by a Smith descendent, and discussed Joseph Smith’s Jupiter talisman. This research was expanded in our book, Mormonism, Magic and Masonry. Also see D. Michael Quinn’s book, Early Mormonism and the Magic World View.


Ministry is Born and is Sued

In the March 1983 Messenger, no. 50, we announced that as of January 1, 1983, we had changed from being Modern Microfilm Co. to a non-profit organization, Utah Lighthouse Ministry. In the next newsletter, June 1983, we announced that a lawsuit had been filed against us:

Since publishing the March newsletter things have been very exciting at Utah Lighthouse Ministry. On May 7, 1983, we were served with a summons to appear in court. The paper made it clear that we were being sued for reproducing extracts from William Clayton's diaries. This is the first time that anyone has actually taken legal action against us. ... The plaintiff in the suit that has been filed against us is Andrew F. Ehat [a BYU student], and the attorney is listed as Gordon A. Madsen, the “authorized agent of Religious Studies Center” at the Mormon Church's Brigham Young University. ...

The complaint alleges that we violated Mr. Ehat's rights when we produced the book Clayton's Secret Writings Uncovered. The suit asks for damages of up to “the sum of $50,000,” and the costs of the action to the plaintiff, ... The plaintiff also requests that we “be ordered to deliver up on oath for destruction all infringing copies of said notes, together with all plates, matrices and other means for making such infringing copies.”

Notice, we were not sued for making false claims but for printing suppressed historical documents in our book, Clayton's Secret Writings Uncovered: Extracts from the Diaries of Joseph Smith's Secretary William Clayton.

The Clayton Nauvoo diaries, among other issues, contain information on how Joseph Smith was secretly practicing polygamy and Smith's success in convincing Clayton to also enter the secret practice.

The case continued until March 25, 1984, when Federal Judge A. Sherman Christensen, a BYU graduate, dismissed the copyright claim but awarded Andrew Ehat $16,000 for what he said was “unfair competition” and damage to Ehat’s reputation. We then appealed the decision to the Federal 10th Circuit Court. In the April 1986 Messenger, no. 60, we announced:

Finally, on December 30, 1985, the U.S. Court of Appeals For The Tenth Circuit ruled in our favor and completely overturned Judge Christensen's decision.

Our two and a half year ordeal was finally over and we had been vindicated. This whole event is detailed in our book, The Tanners on Trial. A larger collection of Clayton diary material has been published in the book, Intimate Chronicle—Journals of William Clayton, edited by George Smith.

General Authority Excommunicated

Our opening article in issue no. 73, October 1989, of the Messenger related to the discipline of a top LDS leader. The heading read “Excommunication: Mormon Leader Expelled After Charging Church With Racism.”

On September 2, 1989, the Salt Lake Tribune made this startling announcement:

“The only American Indian general authority in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was excommunicated Friday after claiming church leaders are perpetrating a ‘silent, subtle scriptural and spiritual slaughter’ of his race.

“George P. Lee, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy since 1975, was stripped of his membership by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles for ‘apostasy’ and ‘other conduct unbecoming a member of the church.’ He is the first Mormon general authority excommunicated in 46 years....”

1990’s - Disposing of Problems

Changes in the Temple Ceremony

Although the LDS Church has never published their secret temple ritual, many accounts have been printed through the years by former members. Many objected to the oaths of secrecy, oaths of obedience, ridicule of other ministers, etc. Quietly, without any forewarning, the ceremony was revised in April of 1990. Immediately, however, there were reports that the changes had occurred. In our July 1990, no. 75, and November 1990, no. 76, Messenger we discussed many of the changes and their implications. In the November 1990 issue we wrote:

Since the temple ceremony was supposed to have been given by revelation to the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith, some members of the church ... are very disturbed that the current church leaders would make changes in the sacred ritual. Although some Mormon apologists would have us believe that the changes were really very minor or were only made so the ceremony could be shortened, the evidence we present in Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony clearly demonstrates that many of the changes were major and affect very important Mormon teachings.

In our last newsletter we noted that in the 1990 version of the temple ceremony the Mormon leaders removed the “penalties” for revealing the secrets. These penalties had previously been considered “most sacred.” We have always felt that these penalties were not compatible with Christian teachings and have strongly opposed them in print for over twenty years....

One very important change in the temple ceremony is the removal of a portion of the ceremony in which the Devil hired a Christian minister to preach the “orthodox religion” to the
people. This portion of the ceremony made it clear that in the eyes of the Mormon leaders the orthodox Christian religion was the Devil’s religion.

Ritual Abuse

Our November 1991 Messenger, no. 80, launched into a totally new topic for us. The lead article was titled “Ritualistic Child Abuse And The Mormon Church: Mormon General Authority Warns That A Satanic Conspiracy May Be Functioning In The Church.” We wrote:

On July 2, 1991 we were presented with a copy of a very sensational memo purported to have been written by a General Authority of the Mormon Church. This memo was authored by Glenn L. Pace, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric of the church. It is dated July 19, 1990, and is directed to the “Strengthening Church Members Committee” of the Mormon Church. In the memo Pace states that he has met with “sixty victims” of “ritualistic child abuse,” and that “All sixty individuals are members of the Church.”…

Bishop Pace strongly believes that “these activities are real and cannot be ignored” (page 6 of his report) and states that “the Church needs to consider the seriousness of these problems” (p. 4). Even though Pace goes so far as to charge that “bishops, a patriarch, a stake president, temple workers, and members of the Tabernacle Choir” may be involved and that “sometimes the abuse has taken place in our own meetinghouses” (p. 5), he does not believe the Mormon Church itself is behind the satanic activity; instead, he feels that “the Church is being used.”

We also included in this issue photos of the entire Pace memo. This set off a whole series of news articles and TV reports. This topic was further explored in no. 81. One of the issues we dealt with was how the pre-1990 temple oaths seemed to trigger memories of ritual abuse for many people.

Scholars Excommunicated

The lead article for the November 1993 issue, no. 85, was “Mormon Inquisition? LDS Leaders Move To Repress Rebellion.” We wrote:

While the Mormon Church continues to grow at a rapid rate (it now has close to 9,000,000 members), it is obvious that internal problems are also beginning to mount. Consequently, church leaders have decided to take an uncompromising stand against Mormon historians who wish to tell the unvarnished truth about church history and other dissenters within the church.

FIVE EXCOMMUNICATED

In an apparent show of strength just before the October, 1993, General Conference of the Mormon Church, six prominent church members were summoned to stand trial in church courts for apostasy. On October 2, 1993, the Salt Lake Tribune reported concerning the results of those trials:

“Three men and three women have been charged with apostasy for their writing and speaking about Mormon subjects. Paul Toscano, Avraham Gileadi, D. Michael Quinn, Maxine Hanks and Lavina Fielding Anderson were excommunicated. Lynne Kanavel Whitesides was disfellowshipped.…”

On page 6 of no. 85 we quoted the following from the Arizona Republic, October 10, 1993:

“Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist Steve Benson—first grandchild of Ezra Taft Benson, the ailing head and prophet of the Mormon Church—has resigned from the church… His wife of 16 years, Mary Ann Benson, 36, also resigned… The Bensons said they resigned to protest what they believe is an increasingly intolerant church leadership…”

Tanners Criticized

In June of 1994 we published no. 86 with the title “The Book Of Mormon: Inspired Scripture Or A Work Of Fiction?” In this issue we discussed the recent critical reviews of our work, mainly in response to our book, Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon, done by scholars at BYU and the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (F.A.R.M.S.). While we have no problem with anyone printing a different point of view, we were surprised by some of the disdainful verbiage used, such as referring to us as “our sagacious swamis” and “our gallant pedagogues, the Tanners.” While we have published critical material against Mormon claims for years we have tried to be courteous in our comments. If we had ever used such demeaning language in reference to LDS scholars we would have never lived it down. This is just another example of the double standard we encounter in dealing with Mormonism.
The May 1996, no. 90, issue had the title “Mormon FARMS: Battling The Antimormonoids.” In this article we observed:

It is obvious that many of those who write for FARMS view us and others who question Mormon doctrine with contempt. Professor Louis Midgley, of Brigham Young University, refers to us as, “the Tanners (those shadows of reality who operate the anti-Mormon Utah Lighthouse Ministry).”

In a footnote on page 139 of [Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 5] . . . Professor Midgley refers to Mormon critics as “antimormonoids.” “The more moderate faction of antimormonoids is best illustrated by the late Reverend Wesley P. Walters, who generally tended to be more circumspect on such matters.”

After reviewing other such dismissive statements we quoted a few positive statements from non-Mormon scholar Lawrence Foster, who has published his own criticisms of our work. These statements are from his paper presented at the May 6, 1983, Mormon History Association:

“Jerald and Sandra Tanner are without doubt among the most complex and multi-faceted of all the figures whom I have encountered in Mormon history, past or present. Their writing about Mormonism in its own terms, has contributed to our understanding of the church and its impact on American society. The Tanners have challenged the Mormon church. They believe in the power of history, and in its ability to shape the future. They challenge the Mormon church to be more open to the diversity of its membership, and to be more inclusive in its policies and practices. Their work has forced the church to confront its past, and to consider the impact of its actions on individuals and communities. The Tanners have contributed to a more realistic understanding of Mormonism, and have helped to open the church to new perspectives and ideas.”


The article contains several Mormon scholars’ comments on our work:

“...As far as LDS history goes, there’s no one out there who has the documents mastered as they do,” said Peterson, chairman of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies at BYU. “They occasionally have forced us (LDS Church defenders) to sharpen a line of reasoning or come up with a line of reasoning.” Historian Michael Quinn says the Tanners’ contribution of early documents is often overlooked.”

Lawsuit Over LDS Church Handbook

The lead article in the February 2001 issue, no. 96, was titled, “LDS Church Sues Ministry.” It started with this comment:

At approximately eleven in the morning, October 13, 1999, Sandra Tanner was working in the Utah Lighthouse Bookstore when she was surprised to encounter two well-dressed men who turned out to be representatives of the Mormon Church’s law firm. They served legal papers on Utah Lighthouse Ministry and the Tanners, ordering us to immediately remove some material that was posted on our Ministry’s web site. The material in question was limited portions of the LDS Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 1, (1998).

On page 2 of no. 96 we gave some background:

On July 15, 1999, we posted on Utah Lighthouse’s web site . . . a page called “How to Remove Your Name from the LDS Records.” Included with this entry was most of chapter 10 from the Church Handbook of Instructions, along with a few quotes from two other chapters. This was done strictly as a public service to answer the many questions we receive on this issue. There was no charge for this information.

While copyright laws are somewhat complicated we felt that what we had posted from the Handbook was within the guidelines of fair use.

The irony in all this is that by the very fact of making a legal issue about posting parts of the Handbook, the LDS Church made the general public aware that there was a secret handbook regulating church disciplinary action. This led to people all over the world searching on the Internet for copies. Their legal action amounted to blowing feathers in the wind and never being able to retrieve them.
Both times that legal action has been taken against us it has been over releasing suppressed documents, not printing falsehoods. On page 4 of no. 96, February 2001, we stated:

On December 6, 1999, the judge disregarded our arguments against the Temporary Restraining Order and issued a Preliminary Injunction, which greatly expanded the issues and charged us with Contributory Infringement [aiding others in violating the Church's copyright]. The Injunction was to stay in effect until the lawsuit was resolved.

This Injunction, dealing with posting links on a web site, became a national concern among Internet users. The New York Times, Dec. 10, 1999 stated:

"Jessica Litman, . . . an expert on intellectual property, said she believes the court was wrong to issue a preliminary injunction. . . . Litman asserted, the mere posting of a Web address could not amount to actively encouraging someone else's infringement."

When we appealed the Injunction to the Federal 10th Circuit Court we agreed to meet with a court mediator to see if a solution could be reached before setting a court date. We entered into negotiations with the 10th Circuit Court Mediator and the LDS lawyers in February of 2000 and finally reached an agreement on November 30, 2000. We agreed to limit our use of the Handbook and the Church agreed to the dissolving of the Preliminary Injunction. We did not pay them any money and we did not admit to any wrongdoing.

Another point of irony is that the international attention given the lawsuit helped quadruple the number of people coming to our web site.

**Polygamist Abuse Cases**

The October 2001 issue, no. 97, highlighted the ongoing legal hassle over the current practice of polygamy in Utah today. The lead article was titled “*Polygamist Sentenced To Five Years In Prison*.” We opened with this statement:

Tom Green, a modern-day polygamist in Utah, was given a five-year prison sentence on August 25, 2001. Green might never have come to the attention of the state if he had kept a low profile. Instead, he appeared on various television programs and granted numerous interviews, explaining his polygamist life-style.

The newsletter continued with accounts of child abuse in the Kingston polygamist group and in the LDS Church.

**Mountain Meadows Massacre**

The May 2002 Messenger, issue no. 98, dealt with the Mountain Meadows Massacre and the ongoing cover-up of the event, including the rushed reburial of some of the victims’ bones accidentally unearthed in 2000. Since then Will Bagley’s landmark book, *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* has been published. In the Salt Lake Tribune, Feb. 20, 2003, page C1, is an article announcing a new documentary film on the massacre, *Burying the Past: Legacy of the Mountain Meadows Massacre*, produced by Brian Patrick of the University of Utah.

**Arrington Papers Censored**

Another act of censoring was the October 2001 effort of the LDS Church to suppress items in the Leonard Arrington collection at Utah State University. In issue 98 we wrote:

Then, on Nov. 4, 2001, University of Utah Professor Dean May wrote to the Tribune protesting that the Arrington papers did not belong to the LDS Church and should be given to the Utah State University as Arrington requested (Salt Lake Tribune, Editorial page p.AA3).

In a letter to the Tribune, Steven Sorensen, director of LDS Church Archives, argued that Arrington's papers included items owned by the LDS Church and they should be returned to them. “Among those items were some 70 years of minutes of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, temple records, employment files, and other materials considered by church officials to be sacred, private or confidential.” (Salt Lake Tribune, Nov. 11, 2001, page AA11)

One wonders how the church determined what was “sacred, private, or confidential”? Or was the real criteria whether the documents were potentially embarrassing? After all, most of this material is about 150 years old and some of it is already available in college libraries.

**Book of Mormon - History or Fiction?**

One of the articles in the November 2002 newsletter, no. 99, was “Why Not Accept the Book of Mormon?”. We wrote:

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

He [President Hinckley] also wondered why other Christians do not accept the Book of Mormon. . . .

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

President Hinckley seems to have overlooked the basic problem. If the Book of Mormon is not a genuine historical document, it does not provide any additional proof or witness to the reality of Jesus.
DNA Versus The Book of Mormon

Problems relating to the historical claims of the Book of Mormon took a new direction this century over the issue of DNA research.

On March 17, 2000, a Mormon scientist in Australia posted on the Internet his struggle with DNA studies and its implications for the Book of Mormon.

...My name is Simon Southerton. I am married to Jane and we are the parents of five children. ...We left the Church together towards the end of 1998. At the time I was a bishop in Brisbane, Australia. ...During my PhD study I became fascinated with the power of molecular genetics to answer biological questions. I took the opportunity to learn many of the fundamentals of DNA technology in the stimulating and challenging environment of the John Innes Institute. ...

At the end of January 1998 I took time off work and spent two months studying for an exam to enter a graduate medicine degree at the University of Queensland. The first subject I studied was biology. ...Soon after completing my study I read an article on the Flood and the Tower of Babel in the January 1998 issue of the Ensign magazine. ...I concluded that the Internet was the quickest and most readily available avenue for me to find out what other Latter-day Saints thought about the Flood. ...

Without doubt the article that had the most impact on me was a statement published by the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C. concerning the Book of Mormon. In very strong language this statement spoke of a complete lack of evidence for any connection between the Old World and the New World. The strength of this statement jolted me. Scientists rarely make such dogmatic statements unless they have plenty of evidence (or none in this case) to back them up. I had been told in seminary that the Smithsonian had been known to use the Book of Mormon in their research. The statement utterly refuted this claim. ...I believed the Book of Mormon was true and that Hebrew civilization had occurred on the American continent. ...With this in mind I decided to look for myself for research that supported Old World migrations to the Americas.

I began searching for research papers having some connection with American Indians or Polynesians. Because I was familiar with plant genetics I became interested in recent research on the DNA of American Indians. The principles of DNA analysis are applicable to all living things so it was relatively easy to jump from the plant to the animal kingdom. I rapidly accumulated many scientific papers comparing the mitochondrial DNA of American Indians from numerous tribes with the mitochondrial DNA of other populations around the world. Mitochondrial DNA is passed from mother to child each generation. It is essentially a female genealogical lineage, or a maiden name if you like, stored in the mitochondrial DNA sequence. This part of the total DNA genome is used for population studies in many animal species. ...
horse drawn wheeled vehicles and any Hebraic or Egyptian-like writings in pre-Columbus America. With the origin of the Book of Abraham exposed, and my faith in the Book of Mormon so recently shattered, I have no faith in anything that the Mormon Church claims. At almost every turn, facts are distorted and truth concealed in order to maintain the faith of most inquiring Latter-day Saints. 

My brother and his wife and five children left at about the same time and are now happily attending another church. The DNA evidence was just another problem in a long list of issues that seriously troubled them about the church. My brother had served in many senior leadership positions including seven years as a bishop, as a stake young men president and as a member of a mission presidency. His wife had known for years that the Church was not true. She had realized that many of her friends shared just as strong feelings about the churches that they attended. She couldn’t continue to feel that they were any less important in God’s eyes, or that their feelings were any less valid. She struggled for years to hide this from the extended family group. They were both greatly relieved when all their children left with them. 

(The entire text of Dr. Southerton’s statement can be read at http://www.exmormon.org/whylft125.htm)

Later that year, the Salt Lake Tribune ran an article entitled “BYU Gene Data May Shed Light On Origin Of Book of Mormon’s Lamanites.” The article stated:

Generations of Mormons grew up with the notion that American Indians are descended from a lost tribe of the House of Israel...The problem is mainstream science has failed to back that story. Instead, archaeologists, linguists and genetic experts outside Mormon culture say all the evidence points to Asia as the place from which American Indians originated. 

But most scientists outside LDS culture argue that if a band of Israelites did come to America 2,600 years ago, they left neither a linguistic nor an archaeological trace. 

Past DNA studies at other universities have shown no evidence of a connection between American Indians and Israel, notes Simon Southerton, a former Mormon bishop and molecular biologist who has extensive background in DNA research. He predicts BYU data will show the same. (Salt Lake Tribune, Nov. 30, 2000)

This issue surfaced again in December, 2002, when Thomas Murphy, lifetime Mormon and chairman of the Edmonds Community College Anthropology Department in Washington, was threatened with excommunication over his research on DNA and Book of Mormon issues. The Seattle Post-Intelligencer reported:

In December, the local stake of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints scheduled a disciplinary council and informed Murphy he faced the possibility of excommunication, or expulsion from the church. But the president of the stake—a district made up of a number of wards—indefinitely postponed the council after the debate hit the press and supporters staged rallies across the country. 

“Sin, Skin and Seed: The Mistakes of Man in the Book of Mormon” is the title of Murphy’s talk today at the UVW... The “sin” and “skin” in his lecture refer to Scripture linking skin color and behavior. The Book of Mormon states ancient Israelites came to the Americas about 600 B.C. and divided into two groups: the light-skinned, civilized Nephites and the dark-skinned, corrupt, Lamanites, who eventually defeated the Nephites. These Lamanites, according to the modern introduction to the Book of Mormon, are the principal ancestors of Native Americans. 

In fact, says Murphy, DNA data, as well as anthropological studies, indicate American Indians are descended from Northeast Asians who migrated across the Bering Sea between 7,000 and 50,000 years ago. 

The stir over his findings began when he published them on a Web site run by Mormon intellectuals and in a collection of essays on the Book of Mormon called “American Apocrypha.”

Murphy was frankly please with the publicity and subsequent response. He’s received...missives from Native Americans who say they’re happy to finally see someone addressing the issue of racism in Mormon text. (Seattle Post-Intelligencer, Jan. 13, 2003, page B3)

In a new video titled DNA vs. The Book of Mormon, several other scientists have joined with Dr. Southerton and Professor Murphy in a discussion of the problems DNA research poses for Book of Mormon claims. You can see clips from the video on the Internet at the following address: www.mormonchallenge.com. For a free copy of this video, see the special offer on the first page of this newsletter. Thomas Murphy also wrote a chapter on DNA problems for the book, American Apocrypha. Other important books dealing with Book of Mormon problems are New Approaches to the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith and the Origins of the Book of Mormon and Creation of the Book of Mormon.

LDS Scholar Faces the Issues

After years of wrestling with the problems, Grant Palmer, retired LDS Institute of Religion director, has just published his research on the founding claims of Mormonism in An Insider’s View of Mormon Origins. His extensive treatment of questions of Book of Mormon authorship, translation process, modern influences, the witnesses, as well as a chapter on priesthood problems and the First Vision, presents a well-balanced, critical look at the beginnings of Mormonism. This is a great book to give to your LDS friends.
Mr. Palmer concludes:

That Joseph Smith literally translated ancient documents is problematic. He mistranslated portions of the Bible, as well as the Book of Joseph, the Book of Abraham, the Kinderhook plates, and a Greek psalter. There is no evidence that he ever translated a document as we understand that phrase.

Furthermore, there are three obstacles to accepting the golden plates as the source of the Book of Mormon. First, although these records were said to have been preserved for generations by Nephite prophets, Joseph Smith never used them in dictating the Book of Mormon.

Second, much of the Book of Mormon reflects the intellectual and cultural environment of Joseph’s own time and place. We find strands of American antiquities and folklore, the King James Bible, and evangelical Protestantism woven into the fabric of the doctrines and setting.

Third, the only other conceivable reason for preserving the gold plates would have been to show the witnesses a tangible artifact. Yet, the eleven witnesses gazed on and handled the golden plates the same way they saw spectral treasure guardians and handled their elusive treasures, in the spirit, not in the flesh.

The remaining foundational experiences are the first vision, the angel Moroni, and priesthood restoration. These appear to have developed from relatively simple experiences into more impressive spiritual manifestations, from metaphysical to physical events. (An Insider’s View of Mormon Origins, by Grant H. Palmer, pages 259-260)

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Extracts From Letters and Emails

Aug. 2002. I want to write to express my appreciation for the work your organization is doing. I joined the church approximately 12 years ago, but experienced my first doubts during my initial Temple visit. For years I remained a loyal, (silent), member standing next to my devoted wife.

Three years ago I began to really study. This I had to do in secrecy, as you well know the implications of voicing doubt. . . . I have had countless hours of meetings with bishops, stake presidents and local church historians. They keep passing me along from “scholar” to “scholar”, in the hopes that someone can answer the questions. Most of the time I feel I would like to stay a member of this church for my wife and children, and in the hopes that perhaps I can exact more change from within.

However, I have been told to not talk to other members of the church about truths I have discovered, with the threat of excommunication awaiting me if I do not comply. I am sure you can certainly relate to what my life is currently like. I vacillate from feeling like I am about to go crazy, to wanting to run away like mad, to desperately wanting to help my wife and children.

Well, anyway . . . having other people who understand, (like you), surely helps people out here like me, (and there are plenty of us), get through the rough times. Thank you so much and God bless your work.

Aug. 2002. . . . I see no reason, I see no facts, to bad so sad. What a waste of time What a wasted life . . . Make every day count Make a difference Do something good. Be a positive influence to the human race. Love one another, HATE and FEAR should not drive your life . . .

Aug. 2002. This is in regards to my recent study into Mormonism. I have been a member of the church for months now. There is much deception in getting someone to join the church, by only telling people only what the church wants them to know. Later on, after baptism we learn this incredible story that is so off the wall. If members don’t believe this story, they are looked down upon in the church.

By looking at the material that you and others have made available, I have been able to look up contradictions in the book of mormon. Thank you for posting this information. Please keep this up. Other people thinking about joining the church have a right to know what is going on behind closed doors. . . .

I thank you for helping me find Christ, but most of all I thank Jesus for dying for my sins.

Aug. 2002. I thank you very much for helping me find Christ. I was once a Mormon and visited your website four months ago and started reading at first I rejected this website. It took months for me to accept Christ and leave the Mormon Church.
Sept. 2002. I write out of the loss of a lovely woman that was taken in by Mormonism. She is married now . . . She is heart broken because I did not join the church. And I am heart broken too. I don’t think there will ever be anyone else for me in my life. I ask that your group will pray for R____ that Jesus will show her the truth, and she will have the courage to contact you for guidance. Thank you. I am continually praying for your ministry and for both of you. God bless.

Sept. 2002. Thank you so much for writing me back, I am sure you have tons of people writing you . . . I have only been seeking the truth for a little over a month now, but am hard pressed to continue believing in the LDS church.

I have read Mormon America, and have checked your as well as other websites, but the thing that really turned me was the Bible. Now I am contending with separating myself from my entire family and the community I have been in my whole life. I am scared to death at the prospect of having this division with my family and feel a need to seek “family” outside of them who I can go to for support and strength. I am married and do have an incredibly supportive husband, but he was not raised in the Church or was ever a part of it, so he doesn’t quite understand what I am going through . . .

Sept. 2002. . . . Your papers seem to be written toward the non-critically thinking person and generally not very scholarly in their approach. My question is, what type of market are you aiming for? If you ever need help writing something addressed to a deeper thinking group of people, I would love to read and critique your work. But then again, I suppose there is much better money to be made in selling to simpler minds and groups who need ‘something to hate’.

Sept. 2002. Many historical references by other non-religious writers of the day and many archaeological finds have proven the Bible to be the Word of God. From what I have read on any of the mormon sites, there is not a shred of evidence that the book of Mormon has any proof, historical or material.

Sept. 2002. Subject: that is bull!! As a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. I tell you that you internet site is full of false teachings and the Church dose not teach these things, Just because you were excomunicated for who news what dose not mean the church is at falt Please stop publishing these lies.

Sept. 2002. Thank you for a most wonderful site, opened my eyes. I left the lds many years ago after found many faults on my own, did not know there was all this info available. I am trying to get a mormon colleague to read this site as well—www.exmormon.org. thank you for your studies.

Sept. 2002. I’ve got to be honest. I think this site is full of lies. I haven’t ever seen anything like this with the mormon church. You should be careful about what you say to others concerning beliefs you know nothing about, or in the case of the Tanners, things you felt strong enough about to joining the mormon church, and now are trying to destroy it. I don’t see the validity of the material here, and I think you should rethink calling yourselves followers of Christ. You are not. Regrettfully . . .

Sept. 2002. Thank you for caring for so many who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ. I have a son who in a state of mental confusion joined that Mormon Church. . . . He feels to leave he will be lost in Mormon darkness and terrible things will happen. Just talking to him about Jesus doesn’t seem to change his fear.

Oct. 2002. Greetings. . . . I am still fairly new in the LDS Church and already have serious doubts and questions about it being the True Church.

Whenever I have raised questions in Gospel Principles class or to my Bishop, it is like I am have committed a crime by even having doubts or concerns about Church Doctrine or Practice. A Christian friend of mine turned me on to the video; “The Mormon Puzzle”, and that is how I found out about your ministry. I am desperately seeking the truth. Thanks. Sincerely a confused LDS.

Oct. 2002. Why do you two hate me so much? You are trying so hard to destroy a good thing here. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is wonderful, and true. But Besides that, you two would be doing a greater good by trying to help others. Imagine what you could accomplish if you put forth as much effort to stop child abuse as you are to destroying a church that loves our savior. I know nothing I say can change your mind . . . but I want you to know that even though you are set on hurting myself and others . . . Including children . . . I still love you because Jesus does.

Oct. 2002. . . . This note is written for all the verbal abuse you guys suffer daily at the hands of those who hate you for taking your stand for the truth, (5 people against the millions). I’m proud of your stand in Christ and for having faith in the words of God and not in the words of man. I admire and love you two and your efforts to reach those who are seeking the truth of God and in helping to bring those who are seeking Him out of spiritual darkness and into the love and light of Christ.

Oct. 2002. I left the church in 1995 when I was 16 because of a feeling I had. I have been researching the churches history lately and of course I happened upon Utah Lighthouse Ministry. What a great site! I wish I knew about ULM when I was younger! . . .
Oct. 2002. I have written you before . . . Since my last correspondence, our entire family of 10 has left the Mormon Church officially and all have been saved through our Lord, Christ Jesus. Now that we have been saved and found a church family, we have been approached by numerous people requesting that we instruct a class on facts about Mormonism—and the culture of the church. We are going to pray about this and feel strongly that there is a need for this to be done locally here in Missouri.

Oct. 2002. I just wanted to share with all of you that today I accepted Jesus Christ as my savior and accepted his grace in a verbal prayer with my husband. I had been waiting until I felt sure; and also until I felt prompted by God that it was the right time. It first became clear to me on Sunday that it was time and so after some deep reflection and prayer I gave myself up to Christ today. My heart is full and overflowing and I feel on the verge of tears for how grateful I am, mostly for Christ coming in to my life, but also to all of you for being there and for supporting me. Thank you so much for welcoming me into your circle. Today I am going to start the process of having my name removed from the LDS records and then I am going to get baptized. Once again, thank you. God Bless. . .

Nov. 2002. I am still in shock of what I have seen. I can not believe that so many have fallen into satans trap. Doesnt anyone know that the tanners are one satans greatest tools. Please people read the doctrine ask in faith and then tell us it is not true dont lie to yourselves. Please as GOD he will forgive you for falling into this trap. Dont let your salvation be ruined. My friends please dont be blinded by these writtings. The church will always exist please dont be mislead. (Your friend)

Nov. 2002. It cracks me up to hear the hate mail you receive from all the faithful Mormons out there. I have been reading your Salt Lake messenger mailer for years and not once has a devout Mormon has ever had enough ammo to contradict your writings. All they say in their narrow minds Is leave the state or quit bashing our beliefs and you are going to rot in Hell. .

Boy, Thats the real Christian way..... All I believe in is the golden rule . . nothing more. God said to belive in me and thats all . . Oh by the way I am a white very wealthy man and have a loving wife and children . . . And you guys out there thought you had to be Mormon to have that . . . Pity on you MO’s

Nov. 2002. Your web site is full of inaccuracies and lies. If you think you have to dispute the Book of Mormon at least get your facts right.

Nov. 2002. Unsubscribe me from your mailing list immediately. Your time spent hatefuly criticizing other religious faiths is both morally wrong and proof that your organization is in no way Christian oriented. Why not use your time more constructively for the common good? Your work is only creating hatred.

Nov. 2002. Joseph Smith was a true prophet why don’t you just pray and ask God if this is so before coming to your erroneous conclusions and misrepresentations of facts. You will meet him someday after this life and then shall you know that he is a servant of God.

Nov. 2002. . . Don’t seek further to persecute something you know absolutely nothing about. You have no more light to base your findings on, for your light has become darkness and your hope is vain. So shall your lives be as the Nephites of another time. Your pride has become your downfall. May you find repentance in time or some sort of Glory when your lives are over. . .

Nov. 2002. Sounds like you guys are really scared . . .

Dec. 2002. Do not despair God is on the side of the righteous. You guys must have the Mormons very scared! I notice the Mormons never counter with facts, just nasty remarks. God love you guys. The wealthy powerful Mormons against your little ministry - I wonder what God thinks about that? He always helped the downtrodden trying to tell the truth.

Dec. 2002. . . Everyone thinks they have it all, even I do sometimes. I have read through much of your materials and applaud your thorough research containing old copies of old anti-mormon books and research.

However, I must say that such information is for the weak minded and written by the weak minded (thats my opinion as well, and will always be). I say that because the church will continue to be one of the fastest growing church in the world, and will continue to build the Kingdom of God no matter how hard you try to convert people to your little religion.

. . . Nothing can convince you otherwise because your faith is based on the behaviors of other churches or based on facts published by media, or some crime committed by a certain person. Faith based on facts is no faith at all . . . See you in the next life

Dec. 2002. Hello i would LOVE to thank you both for you’re wonderful book “changing world of mormonism” I left the church 6 months back and knew A LOT as it was . . after reading up to and part way of chapter 6 in your book i am blown away. my mind can not understand how members such as Mr. H Nibly can defend the church knowing what he has or the other Church Apologist....my personal opinion is that when ones comes to this knowledge how can one remain in mormonism. . . . i now feel it my mission to inform others of my finding and tell them of your books. . . . i am so THANKFUL that i have come across your books . . . my mother had a few when she left the church. . . . Thank you for all you’re hard work and studies to help inform those who are like me. . . who knew much BUT know there is deeper facts to uncover!
Dec. 2002. It is sad to hear most of you have lost your testimony, a matter that you must explain when coming before God when we are judged. Will you refer Him to your website or will you be able to explain; what, where, when, how, and why you denied the truth that came to you through the Holy Spirit? I hope so for I would not care to see you weep with untold guilt standing before God. Surely the work of your life has aided Lucifer in supporting many souls to let go the Iron Rod for the words of man. . . What kind of legacy will all this criticism being? Someone is right and someone is wrong, either its a few dozen or millions? . . .

Dec. 2002. I have looked over your website and found it to be quite lame. Your columns were laced with blatant falsities that only imbueles would ever believe. One, out of many, I would like to point out is the plagiarism column. Where in the column they are trying to prove that the Book of Mormon was plagiarised they circle common words like spirit and phrases that are written in an entirely different manner than that of the other. Of course you are going to find similarities in the writings they are both writing about the same subject. My intent on visiting your website was to investigate the Mormon religion not come out feeling as dumb as you blatantly are.

Dec. 2002. I am an ex-Mormon who has been saved by the Grace of God. I have spent many years studying sites like yours. Your site is one of the best I’ve seen. What a great blessing you are. The points made about many of the LDS doctrines and beliefs are wonderful. Very easy to understand and easy to discuss with LDS friends. Just wanted to let you know how much I appreciate your site!! God Bless.

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During the night of June 5th, 2002, someone crept into the Salt Lake City, Utah, home of Ed and Lois Smart, devout members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS or Mormon), and kidnapped their fourteen-year-old daughter, Elizabeth.

Jon Krakauer, in his 2003 bestseller *Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith*, noted:

Details of the audacious kidnapping were reported breathlessly and without pause by the news media, leaving much of the country aghast and riveted. When a massive investigation failed to locate Elizabeth or her unidentified abductor by summer’s end, people assumed the worst: that she had been subjected to some unspeakable ordeal and murdered. (*Under the Banner of Heaven*, by Jon Krakauer, Doubleday, p. 41)

However, she was found almost a year later in an adjacent town, dressed in a disguise and accompanied by two former Mormons, Brian David Mitchell and his wife, Wanda Barzee. Although LDS temple workers at one time, Mitchell and Barzee had gradually drifted to more radical views. *The Salt Lake Tribune* reported:

...he and Barzee attended church less and less. Mitchell spoke strange prophecies, balked at paying his tithing and refused to pay income taxes. He railed against materialism and hypocrisy, renounced mainstream Mormonism and viewed himself as a messenger from God. . . .

By the late 1990’s, Mitchell had grown a long beard and become a Jesus-like fixture on downtown Salt Lake City streets, extending his hand to passers-by with a plaintive, “Please help.”

According to *The Salt Lake Tribune*, Lois Smart hired Mitchell in November, 2001, for five hours to help with some roofing work at the Smart home. Seven months later, the LDS Church excommunicated Mitchell and Barzee for their extreme views. That same week, Elizabeth Smart disappeared (*The Salt Lake Tribune*, March 30, 2003, p. A15).

Evidently, after receiving various revelations that he was to enter polygamy, Mitchell remembered young Elizabeth Smart and decided she was God’s choice for his second wife. Since Mitchell had not been to the Smart's home for several months the family evidently did not think to associate him with the kidnapping.

Krakauer relates:

Mitchell marched Elizabeth at knifepoint four miles into the foothills west of her home. Upon reaching a secluded campsite in Dry Creek Canyon, he and Barzee conducted a weird, self-styled wedding ritual to “seal” the girl to Mitchell in “the new and everlasting covenant”—a Mormon euphemism for polygamous marriage. (*Under the Banner of Heaven*, p. 44)
The Book of Immanuel David Isaiah

On April 6, 2002, Brian David Mitchell compiled his revelations in a 27 page work titled The Book of Immanuel David Isaiah. One revelation declared the current LDS Church leaders to be in apostasy and that Mitchell is now God’s chosen prophet: “One who is mighty and strong I have ordained in the stead of him who was ordained of God.”

In another of Immanuel David’s revelations, Wanda Barzee is instructed:

“And thou shalt take into thy heart and home seven times seven sisters [wives], to love and to care for; forty-nine precious jewels in thy crown . . .” (Deseret News, March 15, 2003)

Thus it seems that Mitchell was planning to gather more wives than Joseph Smith, who had at least thirty-three (In Sacred Loneliness, Todd Compton, pp. 4-7). Police believe he may have tried to kidnap Elizabeth’s cousin as well. The Salt Lake Tribune reported:

The Elizabeth Smart kidnapping case could be back on track by October.

A 3rd District Court judge has ordered mental competency evaluations of Brian David Mitchell and Wanda Barzee to be completed by Sept. 29. . . .

Mitchell and Barzee are each charged with six felonies, including aggravated kidnapping and aggravated sexual assault. Two of the counts allege they attempted to kidnap Elizabeth’s 15-year-old cousin. (The Salt Lake Tribune, August 28, 2003, p. B2)

The March 31, 2003, issue of People magazine reported:

Nine months after Elizabeth was taken at knifepoint from her bedroom as she slept, she emerged as if from nowhere on a busy street in Sandy, Utah, on March 12, after four people recognized the man she was with: Brian David Mitchell, 49, profiled days earlier on America’s Most Wanted. She was dirty and disguised and clearly under the spell of Mitchell, a religious fanatic who worked as a roofer at the Smarts’ home for a day in 2001 and who claimed to be a prophet named Immanuel. (People, March 31, 2003, p. 44)

Jon Krakauer explained:

As for Brian David Mitchell, in the days following his arrest he steadfastly insisted that he had done nothing wrong, arguing that forcing a fourteen-year-old girl into polygamous bondage was not a criminal act because it was a “call from God.” Speaking through an attorney, he explained that Elizabeth was “still his wife, and he still loves her and knows that she still loves him.” (Under the Banner of Heaven, pp. 48-49)

The Salt Lake Tribune observed that Mitchell is but one of a long line of self-proclaimed prophets in Mormon circles:

Brian David Mitchell, who calls himself Immanuel, . . . joined a notorious cast of characters who have attributed actions to conversations with the Almighty. . . .

Utah has its special brand of religious fanaticism that has cropped up again and again. Often it is associated with polygamy, which the LDS Church disavowed in 1890 and for which members are excommunicated.

In many cases, it also has been associated with the “one mighty and strong,” as described in the Doctrine and Covenants, . . .

The belief that anyone can receive revelation is a thread that runs through many of Utah’s most bizarre crimes, said historian D. Michael Quinn. “It will probably always be a problem, I would say, in Mormon culture . . .”

Elizabeth Smart’s disappearance is just the latest tale of claims of divine revelation gone bad. . . . But if history is a guide, it may not be the last time Utahns hear of self-proclaimed prophets. (The Salt Lake Tribune, March 16, 2003, p. A10)

In the Footsteps of Joseph Smith

Besides Mitchell, dozens of Mormon men through the years have claimed to be Smith’s successor and God’s anointed to restore the original teachings, such as polygamy, to the LDS Church.

Joseph Smith’s revelation on plural marriage stated:

. . . if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another . . . and they are virgins, . . . then is he justified; . . . And if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, . . . (Doctrine and Covenants 132:61-62)

Among Smith’s thirty-three plural wives were fourteen-year-old Helen Mar Kimball, daughter of Apostle Heber C. Kimball, and at least six other teen-agers. Possibly a dozen of Smith’s other wives were living in a polyandrous union, staying with their first husbands while being secretly wed to Smith. (See In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith, by Todd Compton, pp. 4-7.)

While Joseph Smith did not physically kidnap any of his wives, he did use spiritual (psychological) coercion to get women to submit. Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, married and a faithful Mormon, told how Joseph Smith had
approached her to be his secret plural wife with the claim that God had sent an angel to him “three times between the year of ’34 and ’42 and said I [Smith] was to obey that principle [plural marriage] or he would lay (destroy) me” (In Sacred Loneliness, p. 212).

Todd Compton observed:

. . . Smith linked plural marriage with salvation, . . .
If Mary accepted him as her husband, her place in heaven would be assured. (In Sacred Loneliness, p. 212)

Another young married woman, Zina Diantha Huntington Jacobs, entered into a polyandrous marriage with Joseph Smith after she was informed:

. . . an angel with a drawn sword had stood over Smith and told him that if he did not establish polygamy, he would lose “his position and his life.” Zina, faced with the responsibility for his position as prophet, and even perhaps his life, finally acquiesced. (In Sacred Loneliness, pp. 80-81)

No explanation was given as to how married women met the criteria for “virgins” in Smith’s plural marriage revelation (Section 132 in the Doctrine and Covenants).

One Mighty and Strong

In 1832 the two main centers of LDS population were in Kirtland, Ohio and Independence, Missouri. The Mormons were to “consecrate” (turn over) all of their assets to the church and then receive back a portion for their own necessities (their “inheritance”), thus giving the church the funds to establish Zion, God’s kingdom on earth. This led to a number of problems, leaving Smith with doubts about Bishop Edward Partridge’s handling of affairs. Section 85 of the Doctrine and Covenants warned the bishop that if he did not perform his duties according to God’s will, another would be sent:

. . . I, the Lord God, will send one mighty and strong, holding the scepter of power in his hand, . . . to set in order the house of God.” In fact, when Sec. 85 was added to the Doctrine and Covenants there was a footnote to this passage that informed the saints “A future messenger promised” (Doctrine and Covenants, Sec. 85, footnote ‘g’ in the 1883 and 1890 editions).

John Taylor’s 1886 Revelation

With increasing arrests and pressure from the U.S. government in the 1880’s to give up plural marriage, LDS Church President John Taylor, husband of at least 15 wives, had to go into hiding. During this time he recorded, but did not publish, a revelation that plural marriage should never be relinquished. Richard S. Van Wagoner, in his book Mormon Polygamy: A History, explained the impact of President Taylor’s 1886 revelation:

Mormon polygamists who today rationalize plural marriage on the grounds that polygamy can be rightly maintained by a special dispensation of priesthood authority independent from the church organization usually refer to themselves as Fundamentalists. Most Fundamentalists trace their authority to President John Taylor, who, on the underground at the John W. Woolley home in Centerville, Utah, in September 1886, allegedly “asked the Lord if it would not be right under the circumstances to discontinue plural marriages.” Taylor’s son, John W., claimed he found among his father’s papers after his death the response to this question— “a revelation given him of the Lord, and which is now in my possession, in which the Lord told him that the principle of plural marriage would never be overcome” (Abraham H. Cannon Journal, 29 March 1892). . . . (Mormon Polygamy, p. 183)

Taylor’s 1886 revelation would become the focal point of arguments and justifications made by later polygamists:

Fundamentalists insist that President Taylor secretly commissioned several priesthood holders to continue the practice of plural marriage as individuals rather than as church representatives. . . . Numerous Fundamentalists since have declared themselves the One Mighty and Strong. (Mormon Polygamy, pp. 183-184)

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1890 Manifesto

Mormons had been practicing plural marriage since the 1840’s with the understanding that it was required by God as part of His “new and everlasting covenant of marriage.” Preaching in 1866, Brigham Young declared:

The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 11, p. 268)

As the United States government continued to press the church to give up the practice, new laws were enacted to force compliance. In 1887 the Edmunds-Tucker Bill was passed which, among other things, “declared that marriages not publicly recorded were felonies . . . The most serious stipulation of the bill, however, was the threat to dissolve the legal entity of the church corporation and to confiscate all church property in excess of $50,000” (Mormon Polygamy, p. 133).

Historian B. Carmon Hardy explains:

Then, on September 24, 1890, President Woodruff produced his famous Manifesto, advising church members to obey the laws of the land as they related to polygamy. (Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage, by B. Carmon Hardy, p. 130, out of print but available on New Mormon Studies CD-ROM)

However, many were left to wonder if this statement was to be considered a revelation or just an admonition. Did it mean all Mormons were to discontinue living with their plural families, refrain from having more children born to these unions, or just that they were not to take any additional wives. There seemed to be one policy for the public and another in private.

B. Carmon Hardy lists the names of 220 LDS men, including bishops, stake presidents and apostles, who continued to take plural wives after the Manifesto (see Solemn Covenant, Appendix II).

When examining just the time period from 1902 to April 1904 Richard Van Wagoner observed “at least sixty-three plural marriages were sealed throughout the church” (Mormon Polygamy, p. 159).

As the government and public became more aware of leaders marrying additional wives, sometimes out of the country, the church was under pressure to put a stop to all aspects of plural marriage. The spotlight was again turned on the church when Apostle Reed Smoot ran for the U.S. Senate. After winning the election he was challenged on his right to be seated. The Senate investigation took three years:

The Smoot Hearings (January 1904 to February 1907) examined far more than the specific charges brought against Smoot. The entire structure of the Mormon church was closely scrutinized by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections. (Mormon Polygamy, p. 164)

Hardy explained that government dissatisfaction with Mormonism included more than just polygamy:

The church was under siege not only for the practice of polygamy but also for allegations that oaths involving threats of death were taken in the temples and that secret promises to avenge the martyrdom of early Mormon leaders were made. (Solemn Covenant, p. 128)

The oath to avenge the death of their slain leaders was dropped in the early 1900’s as a result of the government investigation relating to Senator Reed Smoot (see Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony, pp. 22-26 and Mysteries of Godliness, pp. 133-136).

Testimony presented in the hearings made it clear that a number of church leaders were continuing to father children with their polygamist wives and that some were taking additional wives.

Second Manifesto

Finally, on April 7, 1904, President Joseph F. Smith issued a second Manifesto declaring that members were to enter into no new plural marriages. However, these statements were understood by some to simply mean that there were to be no new marriages in the United States, that they did not apply to plural marriages in Mexico or outside of the country.

Richard Van Wagoner explained that most Mormons did not know that some of their leaders had secretly continued the practice of polygamy:

Though the 1904 Manifesto sought and obtained Mormon confirmation of President Smith’s statements before the Smoot hearings, most Saints knew little of the covert post-Manifesto polygamy that church leaders had been supporting. (Mormon Polygamy, p. 168)

Two apostles, John W. Taylor, son of President John Taylor, and Matthias F. Cowley, were dropped from the quorum for their continued practice of the principle (see Solemn Covenant, chapter 7).

Since LDS Church leaders had continued to enter into plural marriages long after the 1890 Manifesto some rank and file members felt that they also should continue the
practice. When the church started to excommunicate those who entered the practice after the second manifesto, some started to feel the brethren had gone into apostasy.

**Mormon Fundamentalists**

A sore spot with the LDS Church is the use of the label “Mormon Fundamentalist.” The church insists that the term “Mormon” should not be applied to anyone other than members of their particular church. Jon Krakauer explained:

. . . LDS Church authorities bristle visibly when Mormons and Mormon Fundamentalists are even mentioned in the same breath. As Gordon B. Hinckley, the then-eighty-eight-year-old LDS president and prophet, emphasized during a 1998 television interview on Larry King Live, “They have no connection with us whatever. They don’t belong to the church. There are actually no Mormon Fundamentalists.” Nevertheless, Mormons and those who call themselves Mormon Fundamentalists (or FLDS) believe in the same holy texts and the same sacred history. . . .

There are more than thirty thousand FLDS polygamists living in Canada, Mexico, and throughout the American West. Some experts estimate there may be as many as one hundred thousand. (Under the Banner of Heaven, pp. 4-5)

In his book, Mormon Polygamy: A History, Richard Van Wagoner discusses the growing number of individuals who declare they are either the One Mighty and Strong or claim authority to continue the practice of polygamy. Some trace their authority through an earlier ordination by President John Taylor:

In 1922, Fundamentalist Joseph W. Musser recorded several oral accounts of the 1886 revelation from Lorin Woolley and Daniel Bateman, another individual reported to be in attendance at the 1886 meeting. . . .

Musser records that President Taylor called together Samuel Bateman, Charles H. Wilkins, George Q. Cannon, John W. Woolley, and Lorin C. Woolley and gave them authority both to perform plural marriage ceremonies and to ordain others with authority to perform polygamous marriages, thus insuring that children would be born to polygamous parents each year thereafter to the Millennium. The account relates one of the most important prophetic statements in Fundamentalist history. “In the time of the seventh president of this Church,” Taylor reportedly said, “the Church would go into bondage both temporally and spiritually and in that day . . . the One Mighty and Strong spoken of in the 85th Section of the Doctrine and Covenants would come.”

Numerous Fundamentalists since have declared themselves the One Mighty and Strong. Such claims became a serious enough concern during President Joseph F. Smith’s administration that the First Presidency published a lengthy discussion of the matter in the 13 November 1905 Deseret News. Those proclaiming themselves the “One Mighty and Strong” were declared “vain and foolish men” who make the claim to “bolster up their vagaries of speculation, and in some cases their pretensions to great power and high positions they were to attain in the Church.” During a special priesthood meeting on 8 April 1912, President Smith announced that the “One Mighty and Strong to deliver as referred to in the D and C Sec. 85 has no application to the Church at present.” (A. W. Ivins Journal, 8 April 1912)

President Smith made a total of nine public statements denouncing new polygamy during his administration . . . (Mormon Polygamy, p. 184)

Historian B. Carmon Hardy commented on the growing number of Fundamentalists:

While fundamentalist organizations became most visible in the 1930s, they had arisen from the environment of indistinct authority and inconsistent response surrounding Mormon plurality in the years following the Manifesto. It was during those years that some stalwarts began attaching large importance to a divine communication to former president John Taylor, in which he was told that plural marriage was an “everlasting covenant” and that its requirements could never be revoked. Fundamentalists additionally said that Taylor charged certain individuals with perpetuating the practice until the millennium. Linked with this was a prediction that the church would fall into apostasy, captive to the appetites of modern secular society. . . .

After succeeding Joseph F. Smith as president of the church in 1918, [Heber J.] Grant turned harshly against those contending for perpetuation of the principle. Although he had been a pluralist himself, Grant moved against those found to be contracting such unions with greater sharpness than any of his predecessors. (Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage, by B. Carmon Hardy, p. 341)

The growing number of dissidents and those claiming the prophetic mantle led President Joseph F. Smith, in 1909, to proclaim:

There never was a time, perhaps, when there were more false prophets than there are today. . . . We get letters from them, and commands and threats from them, and admonitions and warnings and revelations from them, nearly every day. Our table is frequented by revelations from false prophets, . . . some calling themselves “deliverers of Israel,” some calling themselves “the one mighty and strong, who is to deliver Israel out of bondage.” . . . We have these letters—
those that we have not destroyed—stacked up almost by the cord. Some of these false prophets, these men to “deliver Israel,” and these foolish, unwise, unstable creatures, led about by every wind of doctrine have risen right in our own midst. (LDS Conference Report, October 1909, p. 9)

However, the problem did not go away. Through the first half of the twentieth century numerous polygamist groups and colonies sprung up in the western United States, Canada and in Mexico. In 1945 Apostle Mark E. Peterson issued another warning:

So, Latter-day Saints, beware of false teachers. . . . when men come among you, . . . advocating the so-called practice of plural marriage, . . . or when a man comes among you declaring that the Church is off the track and that he is one mighty and strong sent to set the Church in order, . . . remember that such doctrines cause dissention among the people, that they cause disputes which lead to apostasy and that the Lord condemned disputes of that kind. (LDS Conference Report, October 1945, pp. 91-92)

Apostle Peterson’s warning also failed to stem the tide of new polygamist groups and those claiming to be the One Mighty and Strong.

Ken Driggs, writing in 1990 in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, gave this summary of the Fundamentalist’s objections to current Mormonism:

Fundamentalism is essentially a protest movement against the religious and cultural accommodations the Church made as it searched for a way to survive under the often savage pressures of the gentile world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Those accommodations began with the 1890 manifesto and gained speed during the long administration of President Grant. Fundamentalism strives to remain close to the Mormonism of the 1880’s, which is seen as the golden age of the faith. By studying fundamentalist beliefs, we better understand those changes. Although plural marriage is the most obvious topic, shifts and changes can also be seen in temple ceremonies, religious communalism, the Word of Wisdom, and the strong hold of religious leaders over the last century’s Mormons, a hold that is considerably diminished today. (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer 1990, vol. 23, no. 2, p. 59)

Mormons, Blacks and Fundamentalists

While Joseph Smith had allowed a few blacks to be ordained to the LDS priesthood, Brigham Young taught that they were not to receive those blessings until all the rest of Adam’s posterity had been given the chance.

The Bible teaches that when Cain killed Abel, in Genesis 4, God put a curse on Cain, announced in verses 11-12, stating that he would be a vagabond. When Cain complained that people would try to kill him, God put a mark on him to warn others not to take his life. Mormonism has traditionally taught that the mark was a black skin, the beginning of the Negro race, and priesthood was denied to his lineage. However, the Bible never depicts the mark as a color or racial origin of blacks.

Preaching in 1854, Brigham Young announced that blacks would not receive the priesthood until after the resurrection:

The Lord put a mark on him [Cain]; and there are some of his children in this room. When all the other children of Adam have had the privilege of receiving the Priesthood, and of coming into the kingdom of God, and of being redeemed from the four quarters of the earth, and have received their resurrection from the dead, then it will be time enough to remove the curse from Cain and his posterity. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 2, p. 143)

Brigham Young, while addressing the Territorial Legislature in 1852, declared that if the priesthood were ever given to the blacks it would be the end of LDS priesthood authority:

Speak by Gov. Young in Joint Session of the Legeslature. Feby. 5th 1852 giving his views on slavery. . . . Let this Church which is called the kingdom of God on the earth; we will sumoms the first presidency, the twelve, the high counsel, the Bishoprick, and all the elders of Isreal, suppose we sumoms them to apear there, and here declare that it is right to mingle our seed, with the black race of Cain, that they shall come in with us and be pertakers with us of all the blessings God has given to us. On that very day, and hour we should do so, the preisthood is taken from this Church and kingdom and God leaves us to our fate. (Brigham Young Addresses, Ms d 1234, Box 48, folder 3, dated Feb. 5, 1852, LDS Church Historical Dept., typscript by H. Michael Marquardt. Entire text of speech available on our web site www.utlm.org, under Brigham Young Sermons.)

1978 Priesthood Change

Pressure mounted through the years for the LDS Church to give the priesthood to those of African lineage. During the 1960’s and 1970’s there were repeated demonstrations and articles denouncing the church’s position on race. Finally, in June of 1978 the LDS Church announced that the Lord “by revelation has confirmed that . . . all worthy male members of the Church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color” (Doctrine and Covenants, Official Declaration—2).
For Fundamentalist Mormons this was another sign that the LDS Church was in a state of apostasy. On July 23, 1978, a group calling itself Concerned Latter-Day Saints placed a full page ad in The Salt Lake Tribune denouncing the church for caving in to the pressure of the world and changing various doctrines, such as lifting the ban on blacks in the priesthood and giving up polygamy:

The trend of the Church, since its concession to the world in 1890, has been to apologize and to yield on one point after another, thus implying that the early Church leaders were in error. . . . The setting in order spoken of in Section 112 of the Doctrine and Covenants, to begin at the House of the Lord, cannot be far distant . . .

There are still a few valiant, uncompromising men, within and without the official Church, whose integrity leaves no room for changing the doctrines and ordinances, breaking the everlasting covenant, or for presuming to bestow blessings out of season. (The Salt Lake Tribune, July 23, 1978)

Many LDS fundamentalists who had tried to maintain their standing in the church while secretly practicing polygamy, withdrew from the church after the 1978 priesthood change. They felt that at that point the church had lost the priesthood.

Fundamentalists and Violence

While most Mormon fundamentalists are peaceful, a few have resorted to violence to enforce their beliefs. They take Brigham Young’s early sermons on personal blood atonement seriously. Brigham Young proclaimed:

There is not a man or woman, who violates the covenants made with their God, that will not be required to pay the debt. The blood of Christ will never wipe that out, your own blood must atone for it; . . . (Journal of Discourses, vol. 3, p. 247)

Preaching in 1857, Brigham Young stated:

Will you love your brothers or sisters likewise, when they have committed a sin that cannot be atoned for without the shedding of their blood? Will you love that man or woman well enough to shed their blood?

LDS CLAIMS

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I could refer you to plenty of instances where men have been righteously slain, in order to atone for their sins. . . .

This is loving our neighbour as ourselves; if he needs help, help him; and if he wants salvation and it is necessary to spill his blood on the earth in order that he may be saved, spill it. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 4, pp. 219-220)

D. Michael Quinn gave this background on the blood atonement doctrine:

Some LDS historians have claimed that blood-atonement sermons were simply Brigham Young’s use of “rhetorical devices designed to frighten wayward individuals into conformity with Latter-day Saint principles” and to bluff anti-Mormons. . . . The first problem with such explanations is that official LDS sources show that as early as 1843 Joseph Smith and his counselor Sidney Rigdon advocated decapitation or throat-cutting as punishment for various crimes and sins.

Moreover, a decade before Utah’s reformation [in the 1850’s] Brigham Young’s private instructions show that he fully expected his trusted associates to kill various persons for violating religious obligations. The LDS church’s official history still quotes Young’s words to “the brethren” in February 1846: “I should be perfectly willing to see thieves have their throats cut.” (The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power, p. 247)

Over the past thirty years several polygamists have been arrested for their religiously motivated murders. On January 29, 1988, the Deseret News, owned by the LDS Church, ran an article entitled “18 Deaths Tied to ‘One Mighty and Strong.’” In the article we read:

Ex-Mormons who have claimed to be that messenger have committed at least 18 murders and suicides in the past 15 years and are suspected of 10 others. . . . But splinter groups from the church say the One Mighty and Strong will yet come to restore order to the church forcefully — as when Christ cleansed the temple — because they claim the church fell when it altered early practices by banning polygamy in 1890 and ordaining blacks to the priesthood in 1978. . . .

Of concern to lawmen is that at least seven other leaders of Mormon splinter groups nationwide also claim to be the One Mighty and Strong. In interviews, all have said they are non-violent. But their rhetoric is sometimes the opposite. (Deseret News, January 29, 1988, p. A6)

The LeBarons

Possibly the most deadly group of Mormon fundamentalists was the LeBaron family. Claiming priesthood authority through the line of a few faithful men reportedly set apart by President John Taylor back in the
1880’s, the LeBaron brothers were convinced they were the true representatives of God on earth. Problems arose, however, when they each had competing claims of who was God’s chosen prophet. The two main contenders were Joel and Ervil. Krakauer comments:

Both Ervil and Joel were imbued with exceptional charisma—and both claimed to be the “one mighty and strong.” It was therefore inevitable, perhaps, that the LeBaron brothers would eventually clash. . . . On August 20, 1972, in the polygamist settlement of Los Molinos [Mexico], which Joel had established eight years earlier on the Baja Peninsula, he was shot in the throat and head, fatally, by a member of the group loyal to Ervil.

After he ordered the death of Joel, Ervil initiated a divinely inspired series of murders, resulting in the killing of at least five additional people through 1975 and the wounding of more than fifteen others. In March 1976 he was arrested for these crimes and held in a Mexican jail, . . .

Less than a year after he was incarcerated, Ervil was let out of jail. . . . Within a few months of his release, he had a disobedient daughter killed, and shortly after that arranged the murder of Rulon Allred (leader of a rival polygamist group), whose followers Ervil coveted and hoped to convert to his own group, the Church of the Lamb of God. (Under the Banner of Heaven, p. 266)

Ervil LeBaron was again arrested in Mexico, extradited to the United States and died suddenly of a heart attack in the Utah State Prison in 1981. However, he left behind a sort of hit list of those he thought deserved death. Several of his fifty-four children felt called to avenge their father’s death and take care of the dissenters. Krakauer commented:

Two men on the hit list were assassinated in 1987. Then, on June 27, 1988—the 144th anniversary of Joseph Smith’s martyrdom—three more people on the list, along with the eight-year-old daughter of one of them, were ambushed and gunned down. These latter four murders, which occurred within five minutes of one another at different sites in Texas three hundred miles apart, were carefully planned to occur at almost the exact hour that Joseph was fatally shot in the Carthage jail. Afterward, the Lambs of God bragged that they were responsible for the deaths of seventeen people all told. Because each of their victims had been killed as an act of blood atonement, the Lambs explained, the exterminations were justified in the eyes of the Lord.

In 1993, two of Ervil’s sons and one of his daughters were sentenced to life in prison for their involvement in some of these crimes. Two years after that, Aaron LeBaron, the mastermind of the gang, was captured. . . and in 1997 sentenced to forty-five years in prison. (Under the Banner of Heaven, p. 267)

Dan and Ron Lafferty

Another group competing for the position of One Mighty and Strong was the Lafferty family in Provo, Utah. Dan and Ron Lafferty both grew to adulthood as faithful Mormons, but their devotion eventually led them to more radical views. Dan convinced his brothers that they should return to the earlier church doctrines and practice polygamy.

As Ron embraced more and more of Dan’s teachings his marriage failed and his wife, Dianna, left him. Ron placed the blame on Brenda, one of his sisters-in-law, who did not approve of the brothers’ new beliefs.

With dissension in the family, a solution was found in Brigham Young’s doctrine of blood atonement. Krakauer comments:

It didn’t take him [Dan] long to discover that polygamy wasn’t the only divine principle the modern LDS Church had abandoned in its eagerness to be accepted by American society. Dan learned that in the nineteenth century, both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young had preached about the righteousness of a sacred doctrine known as “blood atonement”; certain grievous acts committed against Mormons, as Brigham explained, could be rectified only if the “sinners have their blood spilt upon the ground.” (Under the Banner of Heaven, p. 135)

Soon Ron Lafferty began having revelations, one of which stated:

“Thus Saith the lord unto My servants the Prophets. It is My will and commandment that ye remove the following individuals in order that My work might go forward. . . . First thy brother’s wife Brenda and her baby, then Chloë Low, then Richard Stowe. And it is My will that they be removed in rapid succession that an example be made of them in order that others might see the fate of those who fight against the true Saints of God.” (Ron Lafferty revelation, as quoted in Under the Banner of Heaven, pp. 163-164)

On July 24, 1984, a state holiday commemorating the arrival of the Mormon pioneers in Salt Lake Valley, Ron and Dan Lafferty forced their way into their brother Allen’s home in American Fork, Utah, and slit the throats of Brenda and her baby. On August 17, 1984, The Salt Lake Tribune reported that “the victim’s throats were slashed in what police speculated may have been a ritualistic murder.”

As Ron awaits his execution, possibly next year, for the murders and Dan sits out his life sentence at the Utah State Prison, both remain convinced that they acted on God’s orders. (For more on the Laffertys see our Salt Lake City Messenger, no. 56, March 1985.)
**The Fruits of Joseph and Brigham**

Richard Van Wagoner observed:

Much of the development of Mormonism can be linked to the introduction, promotion, and eventual abnegation of polygamy. To those who accept Joseph Smith as a prophet of God, plural marriage can be evidence of his divine calling; to those who question or reject his prophetic claims, polygamy is more readily explained as evidence of his downfall. (Mormon Polygamy, p. 212)

Mormons often point to their strong emphasis on morals and family life as proof that Mormonism is true, appealing to Jesus’ statement in Matthew 7:20: “Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” But this passage is not about judging a religious culture, but is a warning about false prophets “which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matt. 7:15). We must look at ALL of the LDS prophets’ doctrines, not just the ones that are acceptable today. Polygamy, blood atonement, lying and disobeying the laws of the land are also the fruits of LDS prophets.

Sometimes a Mormon will respond that one can find plenty of murders and misdeeds in Christianity’s past. The difference is Jesus never advocated murder and polygamy, Joseph Smith and Brigham Young did. Why should we accept their other doctrines if polygamy and blood atonement are not true? What criteria will the Mormons give us to determine when their prophets speak for God?

Past president Ezra Taft Benson, speaking at BYU on February 26, 1980, gave his famous talk, *Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophets*. In it he declared:

- **FIRST:** The Prophet is the Only Man Who Speaks For The Lord in Everything. . . . We are to “give heed unto all his words”—as if from the Lord’s “own mouth.” . . .
- **FOURTH:** The Prophet Will Never Lead The Church Astray. . . .
- **SIXTH:** The Prophet Does Not Have to Say “Thus Saith the Lord” to Give Us Scripture. . . .
- **NINTH:** The Prophet Can Receive Revelation on Any Matter—Temporal or Spiritual. . . .
- **FOURTEENTH:** The Prophet And The Presidency—The Living Prophet And The First Presidency—Follow Them And Be Blessed—Reject Them and Suffer. (Entire speech reprinted in *Following the Brethren*.)

However, President Benson’s speech does not explain how a prophet can teach one thing on one occasion and the next prophet teach something just the opposite. If the LDS prophets cannot lead us astray, how are we to account for their contradictory teachings?

**DO LDS HISTORICAL ISSUES MATTER?**

Some people regard Mormonism’s past as irrelevant to its validity as a church today. However, Joseph Smith and his successors have always maintained that the LDS Church is both historically and doctrinally true. Below are several examples of historical events necessary for Mormon truth claims.

**First Vision**

Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, wrote that in the spring of 1820, when he was fourteen years old, there was a significant revival in his neighborhood. He recounted that “Some were contending for the Methodist faith, some for the Presbyterian, and some for the Baptist.” His mother, two brothers and his sister joined the Presbyterian Church. Then Smith went out into the woods to pray for wisdom concerning which church he should join. In answer to this prayer God the Father and Jesus Christ appeared to him as two separate, distinct beings. They told him not to join any of the churches “for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt” (*Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith—History 1:5-19). Mormon claims still stand on the historicity of that 1820 vision.

In 2002 LDS President Gordon B. Hinckley proclaimed:

> Our whole strength rests on the validity of that vision. . . . It either occurred or it did not occur. If it did not, then this work is a fraud. If it did, then it is the most wonderful and important work under the heavens. (*The Salt Lake Tribune*, October 7, 2002, p. A6)

On the basis of Smith’s 1820 vision, Mormonism claims that God has rejected all other churches, and that no one outside The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has the authority to baptize or act for God. (See Joseph Smith’s story at the back of any *Pearl of Great Price.*)

Speaking in 1998, LDS President Gordon B. Hinckley declared that the Mormon Church is “the only true and living Church upon the face of the whole earth” (*Deseret News*, Church News, June 20, 1998, p. 7).

While the LDS Church claims to believe in God and Christ, they admit that their definition is very different than that held by historic Christianity. Latter-day Saints point
to Smith’s first vision as proof that God the Father and Jesus Christ both have physical, resurrected bodies and are totally separate gods. In 1998 the Deseret News reported on President Hinckley’s comments while visiting Switzerland:

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

Thus Smith’s subjective experience carries more weight to a Mormon than all the Bible verses a Christian may quote. However, since the vision is also tied to certain historical events, one can challenge the story at those points, which present a number of inconsistencies. The books, Inventing Mormonism and Mormonism and the Nature of God, give a thorough treatment of the historical problems with the first vision.

New Scripture

Joseph Smith set up his new church on April 6, 1830, in New York. Two months later the Book of Mormon was published, financed by Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris. This book purports to be a translation of an ancient record. The 1981 Introduction to the book states:

The Book of Mormon is a volume of holy scripture comparable to the Bible. It is a record of God’s dealings with the ancient inhabitants of the Americas and contains, as does the Bible, the fulness of the everlasting gospel.

While this sounds like Mormonism gives the Bible equal authority with the Book of Mormon the LDS Articles of Faith qualify the Bible’s reliability. Article eight states:

We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.

The Introduction to the Book of Mormon goes on to promise that if one prays for spiritual confirmation God will reveal the truthfulness of the record to him or her. It states:

Those who gain this divine witness from the Holy Spirit will also come to know by the same power that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, that Joseph Smith is his revelator and prophet in these last days, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord’s kingdom once again established on the earth, preparatory to the second coming of the Messiah.

Here we see the domino effect of praying about the Book of Mormon. Once it is believed it opens the door for full endorsement of Joseph Smith as God’s mouthpiece and the LDS Church itself as God’s only approved organization. It will also destroy a person’s confidence in the Bible. The Book of Mormon declares:

And the angel of the Lord said unto me: Thou hast beheld that the book [Bible] proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew; and when it proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew it contained the fulness of the gospel of the Lord, of whom the twelve apostles bear record; . . . Wherefore, these things go forth from the Jews in purity unto the Gentiles . . .
And after they go forth . . . thou seest the formation of that great and abominable church, which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold, they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away. (Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 13:24-26)

But what physical evidence is there that the Book of Mormon is an historical document written by early inhabitants of the Americas? Scholars have raised many questions regarding these claims. Such books as New Approaches to the Book of Mormon, American Apocrypha, Joseph Smith and the Origins of the Book of Mormon and The Creation of the Book of Mormon present many well-researched problems.

Besides the Book of Mormon the LDS Church has added two other books to their canon of scripture. LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie explained:

By the standard works of the Church is meant the following four volumes of scripture: The Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price. The church uses the King James Version of the Bible, but acceptance of the Bible is coupled with reservation that it is true only insofar as translated correctly. (Eighth Article of Faith.) The other three, having been revealed in modern times in English, are accepted without qualification. (Mormon Doctrine, 1979, Bookcraft, p. 764)

However, there have been numerous changes in their scriptures. For more information, see the following books: 3,913 Changes in the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith’s Revelations: Text and Commentary, Case Against Mormonism (vol. 1) and Flaws in the Pearl of Great Price.

Also, the Book of Abraham, part of the Pearl of Great Price, has been shown to be a spurious document. Smith claimed it was a “translation” of ancient papyrus, purchased by the Mormons in the 1830’s. However, Egyptologists have demonstrated that the actual text reads nothing like Smith’s “translation.” (See By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus and The Lost Book of Abraham video [DVD].)

**Mormon Doctrine Today**

Evangelicals and Mormons both struggle with the level of doctrinal maturity among their followers. However, Mormonism seems to make a deliberate effort to mask its more heretical teachings from potential converts and the press.

In the September 1994 *Ensign* magazine President Hinckley was quoted as saying that Joseph Smith’s 1844 King Follett sermon was “an important doctrinal document in the theology of the Church.” In this sermon Joseph Smith proclaimed:

I will prove that the world is wrong, by showing what God is. . . . God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! . . . I am going to tell you how God came to be God. . . . God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did; . . . and you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done before you, . . . (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Deseret Book, pp. 345-346)

Joseph Smith’s sermon is very clear that there are multiple gods, that our god was once a mortal and achieved godhood after valiant effort. Yet when President Hinckley was asked about this doctrine in various interviews in 1997 he seemed to dismiss it. *Time* magazine reported:

On whether his church still holds that God the Father was once a man, he sounded uncertain, “I don’t know that we teach it. I don’t know that we emphasize it . . .” (Time, August 4, 1997, p. 56)

This raises the question: Is this a public relations ploy or is Mormonism truly moving away from Joseph Smith’s doctrine of plural gods?

Obviously many new converts are unaware of this teaching and would probably tell you they have never heard it. Surprisingly, the February 2002 *Ensign* reprinted the 1909 First Presidency statement affirming that “God himself was once an exalted man, perfected, enthroned and supreme.” This statement reinforces Joseph Smith’s teaching that God was a mortal who advanced to Godhood. The First Presidency’s statement also teaches that we were born in a pre-earth life to “Heavenly parents” thus proclaiming the belief in a Heavenly Mother as well as a Heavenly Father (both of whom have resurrected bodies from their prior mortal life). Also, the LDS Melchizedek Priesthood manual for 2002 focused on the teachings of past president John Taylor. Throughout the manual Taylor affirmed there are “Gods that exist in the eternal worlds,” that God and man are the same “species” and that man’s goal is to become a “God” (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor, pp. 2-5, 82).

The manual also presents the LDS Church as the “Church and Kingdom of God,” the only church containing the “everlasting Gospel” and the only ones holding the “priesthood” authority to act in the name of God (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, pp. 17, 33, 35, 70, 72, 80, 84).
Since the LDS Church continues to print and distribute these older sermons, they obviously still endorse them.

However, the Bible declares that there is only one God (Isaiah 43:10-11; Isaiah 44:6, 8) who has always been God (Malachi 3:6; Psalm 90:2). LDS teachings have been challenged in books such as The Counterfeit Gospel of Mormonism and The New Mormon Challenge.

**Bremen, Germany: An Example of Apostasy**

While Mormonism can be challenged on its theology, its historical claims are equally vulnerable. Joseph Smith’s visions were supposedly the result of certain historical events. As President Hinckley said, “It [Smith’s first vision] either occurred or it did not occur. If it did not, then this work is a fraud.”

These issues were brought to the attention of certain LDS members in Germany with the effect of causing a number of prominent members to leave the church. A recent article in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* stated:

> Then, in 1996, a member of the [Bremen] ward encountered a couple of disturbing articles about the early history of the church from the *Utah Lighthouse Ministry*, a conservative Protestant organization with an anti-Mormon mission. Attempting to come to terms with these, he asked friends in the ward for help and, in so doing, unintentionally started a wave of apostasy. Another brother translated parts of these articles into German and distributed them to members. In the fall discussion circles formed and letters were written to local and regional church authorities, questioning the official version of church history. The issues at stake were, first, the different versions of the First Vision as evidence of a developing concept of God rather than an initially clear and complete picture through revelation; second, differences between the Book of Commandments and the Doctrine and Covenants as evidence of changed (or possibly forged) revelations; and, finally, controversy over whether the Book of Mormon was a fiction or a genuinely ancient record. The members were especially upset because these papers had been written twenty years earlier (when most of them had just begun their membership in the church), but evidently no church response or explanation had ever been made available.

In February 1997 the mission president tried to solve the problem in one stroke by inviting everyone to a question-and-answer evening. During that meeting tension became acute between the group questioning the church’s truthfulness regarding its history and members affirming their testimonies and high esteem for the Book of Mormon and the First Vision. The mission president did not answer the questions specifically, but called for a spiritual approach when hard historical facts were placed in question. When he defined truth as “whatever the prophet says, if he is not mistaken,” some members decided to leave the ward. Two former bishops and a former branch president were among those who left. All together thirty people left, most of them long active in responsible church positions such as branch and district presidents, district and stake high councils. The wards, of course, were left in an uproar and are still trying to regain composure. The Delmonhorst Branch was subsequently dissolved. The remaining dwarf units continue to struggle. (“One Hundred Eighteen Years of Attitude: The History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in the Free and Hanseatic City of Bremen,” by Jorg Dittberner, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 36, no. 1, Spring 2003, p. 68)

Problems with Smith’s first vision are clearly laid out in *Inventing Mormonism* by Marquardt and Walters and our book, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?

We believe early Mormon historical material shows that Joseph Smith was the inventor, not revelator, of LDS scripture.

Even LDS authors have dealt with many of these historical issues. Grant Palmer, a retired LDS educator, has written a well-researched book, *An Insider’s View of Mormon Origins*, dealing with some of the major historical problems facing Mormonism. Another valuable book from an LDS general authority and scholar is *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, by B. H. Roberts.

### Extracts from Letters and Emails

**Jan. 2003.** I just wanted to write and thank you for all you have done for me over the years. I first came in contact with you, a few years back when I started to have doubts about the mormon religion. Your materials answered many of my questions, and I was able to defend myself from critical family members and friends, once I let them know I no longer was following the mormon church. I am very comfortable and happy with my life away from the church and proud of the choice I made.

I never saw a reason to go through with a name removal until the recent debate over main street reaped my interest. This last week I sent in a request for name removal and am also preparing a request for a roomate of mine, to be sent this week. Thank you for providing the procedure for accomplishing this on your web pages.
Jan. 2003. Subject: I discovered their lies 9 days after my baptism.

... Early last November I met a very decent young man who said “We are all one, so we ought to be nice to each other.” At his invitation, I started visiting the Davis, California LDS Church on the 17th of last November. I was baptized on Dec. 21. I started coughing badly and having trouble breathing from time to time since early last December. I asked the missionaries to postpone the baptism, but was told it could not be done. One of the missionaries assured me that my health would improve after baptism.

... Had the Mormon Church truly abolished polygamy, the Sect.132 doctrine would have been removed from its canonized scriptures long time ago. Since then I have been researching the documented Mormon history through books, articles, and the Internet. The Mormon dirty laundry on polygamy alone was appalling, frightening, and disgusting enough! I have also discovered what I was told by by missionaries regard to polygamy, etc. (it was probably the official lines) was a blatant lie and misrepresentation.

The beautifully-packaged “Six Lessons” were half-truth and misrepresentation too. Instead of being the “restored church of Christ”, Mormonism is non-Christian and it is nothing but a man-made institution. The Mormon empire is a multi-national corporation, and it is wealthy, powerful, and fast-growing. . . .

... I mailed my resignation letter on Jan.11 (three weeks after my baptism). According to the return receipt, the bishop received it on 1-13. Legally starting 1-13, I am no longer a member of the Mormon Church.

I was such a fool that I let them rush me into baptism. I should have started my research at least one month earlier. Yet I was fortunate that I discovered their lies before investing more time and energy to that organization.

Jan. 2003. Hi. Just a suggestion. I was reading your FAQ’s about Mormonism and noticed that you mention the Deseret News published a statistic that the LDS church has a membership of 10 million or so. You might want to mention somewhere on this web page that many of these 10 million do not consider themselves Mormon, such as myself. I was raised Mormon, but grew to despise that church. When people ask me is I am Mormon, my response is a definite “NO.” However, the LDS Church has me on record as a member still (see what I’m saying?).

Jan. 2003. I HAVE LOTS OF LDS FRIENDS, WHY DON’T YOU LAY OFF. Gossiping (What you are doing) is a sin too, or don’t you read the Bible.

Feb. 2003. The Utah Lighthouse Ministry has to be one of the laziest and most delusional group of people anywhere. Imagine not being able to “hack the standards” so much that you spend your whole life trying to prove a religion is false, just so you can convince yourself that your actions and conduct, which is apostasy, is justified.

Folks like you can’t give [up] a simple cup of coffee, so you try and poke holes and President Hinckley. Folks like you at some point, can’t pay their tithing, so they try and disprove the First Vision. Folks like you can’t understand the language of the Spirit, so you try and re-invent what revelation really is. Folks like you would rather rely on your own supposed intellect, rather than the promptings of the Spirit. Is that not the easy way out? Folks like you can’t follow simple laws pertaining to copyrighted materials, so accuse the Lord’s Kingdom of being a multi-billion dollar empire picking on a small ‘ministry’. Folks like you can’t obey the Lord’s commandments, so you call President Packer a bigot.

When it comes right down to it, this is way Joseph Smith inquired of the Lord to answer his humble prayer. He saw the Tanners and the Deckers and the Maxine Hanks of his day. He saw their true apathy towards revealed religion. He saw how they would re-invent religious feeling to manipulate the untaught. . . .

If there were a definition to all of your sick disorder, it would be: ‘Tannertantium...(t n r-t n tr - m) . . . . A not so subtle mannerism and sickness displayed in those who are repeatedly shown to be wrong. They vigorously pursue half truths, especially when discredited. Rather than acknowledging any mistake or wrongdoing, those who suffer from this debilitating disease become even more engaged. In severe cases, some of these die-hard anti-mormons have been known to develop a form of color blindness. They see all that is white as black, and vice-versa. The only known relief has been found in the Book of Mormon. Unfortunately, this remedy is rarely accepted due to another anti-mormon disease known as pridecomethbeforethefallitis.

Feb. 2003. First of all, great job on a very informative website that fairly presents both sides of the story. My wife converted to Mormonism in 2000 and has spent the last 2 years trying to convert me to this faith. Prior to this conversion, we attended several churches in our joint search for faith. This conversion, as you might expect, has caused great divides in our relationship. My wife is also ready to baptize our daughters into the faith and I am adamantly opposed and have let her know my opinions. Her response is that I “obviously haven’t prayed enough to know the truth” . . . Thanks for your time,
Feb. 2003. I just wanted to say thanks to you all for the work you do. Thanks for your recent e.mail, and thanks also for the book “Major Problems with Mormonism” which I am half way through reading.

I went to the Mormon Church for the last time yesterday, and being the first Sunday of the month I was able to get up and share my testimony of the Saviour and explain why I would not be going to that church again. I kept it short as I wasn’t sure the bishop would let me say too much, but I used 2Cor 6:17 as my text and then left the chapel. The only surprise was that around 15-20 people said amen. I’m not sure whether they meant it, or were just not listening.

Still, I feel I have much to thank you for. I’m sure you’ve had your share of abuse for what you do and thought it only proper to say how grateful I am. Many thanks. may the Lord continue to bless you and your work.

Feb. 2003. Your website is untrue. The things that you say about Joseph Smiths words are false. Surely, knowing that the Lord continue to bless you and your work.

March 2003. I read a statement in one of your articles a while back, that totally explains the way the LDS church explains there theology, and having believed in the LDS church for 34 years, until the Holy Spirit opened my eyes, (6 years ago I became a baptized LCMS Lutheran). The statement you claimed is totally, 100% spot on: “LDS test the Bible by their prophets. Christians test prophets, pastors and teachers by the Bible.”

March 2003. I am so very sorry that you have never been properly informed on the topics of which you write. I am sure [you] know full well what you are doing and that no good will come from it.

March 2003. You two are so utterly ridiculous. You have no idea what you are talking about. The only reason you have the faith that you have is because of the church that you grew up in. And in the very time when you could show your gratitude for those teachings, you turned your backs on the truth. I feel so sorry for you both.

April 2003. Hi. It’s funny. I had heard horrible things about you guys my entire life. I was raised LDS and then I went on a mission. I came home only ten months into said mission, mostly because I didn’t feel good about what I was doing there, and I then proceeded to heavily research the truthfulness of the Mormon church. After many years of study and thought, I came to the conclusion that my assumptions were right and I left the Mormon church for good.

However, I always sort of wrote you guys off as vindictive liars, presumably because that is what I had always been told, so I didn’t use any of your resources in my years of research. Damn. Many items that it took me some time to find were readily available through your ministry. I only recently visited your website, prompted mainly by the article in the City Weekly, and I feel moronic for not seeking out your resources earlier.

I commend you for your decades or honest research and courage. I only wish that I would’ve found you sooner. I would like any materials that you could send me, as my father and I, who is an LDS Institute Director in a major city on the East Coast, continue to have lively discussion about the validity of the Mormon faith. He’s a well-spoken man and I need all the help I can get. I would also like to receive your newsletters. Thank you and good luck in passing the torch of your ministry.

April 2003. I find it funny how Mormons assume you’re full of hate because you tell them things they don’t want to hear. When I was a questioning Mormon I visited your bookstore and met Sandra. What a gentle soul! Thank you for being the face of Christ to people who don’t even know how desperately they need Him.

April 2003. . . . We were recently saved 2 years ago. My husband is a direct descendant of Hyrum Smith. I come from a big Mormon Family also generations back, . . . We were born and raised in Mesa Az, I still sound mormon.

But by Gods Grace we were brought out. . . . We were temple, returned missionary mormons. We were married in 1987, I saw the changes to the ceremony in 1990. That really disturbed us back then. It still took years to open our eyes.

God Bless you. Our Family thinks we went nuts and are angry about life. Just the opposite holds true, peace and hope and faith came to us for the first time through the beautiful Lord Jesus Christ.
April 2003. I was born and raised in the “Church” and rose to the rank of Priest before becoming an infidel. Several years ago I found that reading the 7-volume History of the Church straight through to be sufficient for completely destroying the remains of any former testimony I might have had. Now I’m discovering that the huge work is a horrible misrepresentation of the tip of the iceberg of all that’s wrong, stupid and insidious about the Church. . . . I was always under the impression that the Anti-Mormons were telling lies and being downright mean to the Mormons for no good reason. Its weird to find out that so many of the most Anti-Mormon texts are written by Joe Smith, Brigham Young, et al. Most of the material on this site is simply a straightforward presentation of Mormon tenets; . . .

April 2003. Go Tanners! You guys are the best. Your research is thorough (despite Mormon criticism), your responses are professional (despite Mormon criticism), your motive is compassion (despite Mormon criticism), your patience is unbelievable (despite Mormon criticism), and the truth is on your side. . . . I guess that leaves them with no response . . . other than criticism. It’s got to be frustrating when your beliefs collide with truth. In all seriousness, it is truly sad to consider the hold this religion has on so many and how deeply the convictions are held.

I had a Mormon missionary once tell me to go about studying Mormonism “as if” I believed it to be true, rather than from a pre-disposition of it being false. Interesting concept! I wonder if he could agree to study “Apostate” Christianity in the same manner?

Nevertheless, many people have studied the Bible in an effort to disprove it and ended up embracing it! The trouble with Mormonism is even if you set out to study it in an effort to strengthen your faith, you keep running into annoying facts that contradict the “truth”! (As I know you well know.)

I will add my voice to the many who rightly observe: You have done an excellent job over the years. You have been and will continue to be blessed. (Despite Mormon criticism!)

May 2003. . . . I have read your book The Changing World of Mormonism off the internet and it really opened my eyes. It didn’t take me long to write the letter to the Bishop to have my name removed from the records of the church.

It wasn’t easy; I’ve been an active member for 25 years (convert 1978), married in the SLC temple and the father of 5 children, ages 14 through 21. But my eyes are now open and I feel real joy and freedom in my life as never before. I feel like I’m breathing fresh air for the first time in many, many years. Thanks to you I am rediscovering the real Word of God!

May 2003. Thank you for all of your hard work and ministry! I am just another jewel in your crown, as much of the information on your site served to confirm my decision to leave the Mormon church. I have attached a copy of the letter to my bishop requesting that I be removed from church records.

June 2003. I was just reading some letters that you have received and am very sad that some Mormons think that you hate them. I admire that you LOVE them enough to show them the other side of Mormonism that the LDS church doesn’t. So I just wanted to say thank you for loving the LDS people. My prayers are with you and your ministry. God bless you.

June 2003. Thank you so much for this information! What a blessing from God at just the right time. I just know the Holy Spirit took me to your web site.

I’m a pastor of a very small SBC in Virginia. The LDS have just built a large church here in our area and our members are being called upon weekly by LDS missionaries . . . .

Thanks you again for this work of God and the help it will be for those of us who don’t have the insight, resources or staff to compile this great work of truth you have done.

June 2003. How sad it is that you waste so much time in the pursuit of hate. Surely there are more devious things to investigate than Members of a Church. What if the Mormons are right? I know . . . but what if?

June 2003. . . . I was a Mormon from 1986 to 2002. I am so thankful to the Lord that there are people with so much courage and determination like you. God has put you guys on earth at this point and time to unmask Mormonism. You have been so far of great help for me to get out of Mormonism which has created a lot problem in my marriage since my wife and my 3 children . . . believe blindly in Mormonism. But I certainly hope someday the spark light of the Holy Spirit will come to their minds and hearts so that they too will help themselves test all things and see if Mormon Christianity will pass the test.

June 2003. . . . You might be pleased to know that I accepted Christ as my personal saviour in 1983 after being in the world of Mormonism for 8 years.

I served as a member of the Elders Quorum Presidency, as Sunday School President, Elders Quorum instructor, Investigators class instructor (Gospel Essentials), Ward Inservice director, and Executive Secretary to the Stake Presidency.

The issue for me at the end was the issue of “What had I done with the blood of Jesus Christ and did it avail for me?” I had to answer no! and upon doing so, I immediately repented and left the church that very day.
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Blacks and the Mormon Priesthood

Twenty-six years ago, in June of 1978, the LDS Church announced the end of its priesthood restrictions for blacks. Since one of the foundations of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the claim that priesthood is essential to act in God’s behalf, the change opened the way for blacks to be on an equal basis with other members. In the LDS manual *Gospel Principles* we read:

> We must have [LDS] priesthood authority to act in the name of God when performing the sacred ordinances of the gospel, such as baptism, confirmation, administration of the sacrament, and temple marriage. If a man does not have the priesthood, even though he may be sincere, the Lord will not recognize ordinances he performs. (*Gospel Principles*, p. 81, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1995 edition)

Since almost every male in the Mormon Church has some sort of priesthood office, the restriction on blacks meant that they could not participate in any leadership position. In addition to this, Mormonism teaches that a person must be married in the temple in order to achieve the highest level of heaven, or eternal life (see *Gospel Principles*, p. 297). However, the priesthood ban on blacks meant that they could not have a temple marriage, thus keeping them from achieving eternal life, also referred to as exaltation.

While the ban has been lifted the LDS Church has yet to clarify its theological view on race or why the ban was ever instituted.

Racism in Early Mormonism

Joseph Smith seems to have accepted the prevalent view of his day that darker skinned people were not as favored by God as white skinned people. This attitude is reflected in the *Book of Mormon*, which tells the story of a group of Israelites who fled Jerusalem about 600 BC and came to America. They soon divided into two groups, the righteous Nephites, who were “white”, and the wicked Lamanites, who were cursed with “a skin of blackness” (*Book of Mormon*, 2 Nephi 5:21). The story claims that when Lamanites converted to Christianity “their curse was taken from them, and their skin became white like unto the Nephites” (3 Nephi 2:14-16). The Introduction to the current *Book of Mormon* maintains that the Lamanites “are the principal ancestors of the American Indians.”

Even though early Mormonism reflected many of the same racial attitudes of the larger community, they did not restrict church participation on the basis of race. Viewing the Native Americans as descendents of the *Book of Mormon* people, Joseph Smith referred to them as “Lamanites.” In 1830 he inaugurated a mission to the Indians in Missouri (see *Doctrine and Covenants* 32:2).

Elijah Abel
First black to hold LDS Priesthood

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Armand Mauss commented:

In assessing the significance of Mormon relationships with the Indians during the lifetime of Joseph Smith, one must concede the part that these relationships played in inciting the hostility of other Americans against the Mormons, especially in Missouri . . . Prophecies in the unique Mormon scriptures, as well as some Mormon commentary on those prophecies, seemed to justify such suspicions. When the Book of Mormon has Christ promising that the “remnant of Jacob” (i.e., Indians) shall go among the unrepentant Gentiles “as a young lion among the flocks of sheep” (3 Nephi 21:12-13), it would make the Gentiles wonder. Nor would they likely be reassured by public proclamations warning the unrepentant Gentiles that God is about to sweep them off the land because of the “cries of the red men, whom ye and your fathers have dispossessed and driven from their lands” . . . As part of an emerging separate ethnic identity, the Mormons began to define their destined homeland as extending from Wisconsin down to Texas and from Missouri across to the Rockies and even beyond, with the Indians as partners in building Zion throughout that entire region. (All Abraham’s Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage, by Armand L. Mauss, University of Illinois Press, 2003, p. 55)

Soon after publishing the Book of Mormon in 1830 Joseph Smith began working on the Book of Moses (printed in the Pearl of Great Price) which reflected the same community concept that blacks descended from Cain (see Moses 7:8, 12, 22). Even though the Mormons at that time accepted the common idea that blacks were from the cursed lineage of Cain they did not view this as restricting their church participation. A few blacks were baptized and at least two were ordained to the priesthood.

When Mormons started settling in Missouri in the early 1830’s their attitude toward Native Americans and blacks became a concern of their neighbors. Many Missourians worried that Smith’s church, founded in New York, was anti-slavery (see Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, vol. 8, no. 1, p. 12).

To appease their slave-holding neighbors, on July 16, 1833, the Mormons published an article in their newspaper stating:

“... our intention was not only to stop free people of color from emigrating to this state, but to prevent them from being admitted as members of the Church.” (Evening and the Morning Star, July 16, 1833)

Writing in 1836 Joseph Smith stated:

I do not believe that the people of the North have any more right to say that the South shall not hold slaves, than the South have to say the North shall . . . . It is my privilege then to name certain passages of the Bible . . . “And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren...” (Gen. IX:25) . . . I can say, the curse is not yet taken off from the sons of Canaan, neither will be until it is affected by as great a power as caused it to come . . . (History of the Church, vol. 2, p. 438)

Oddly, right at the time Smith seems to have been developing his racial doctrines he allowed the ordination of a black named Elijah Abel. Although there may have been at least one other black ordained to the priesthood during Joseph Smith’s life, Elijah Abel was the only one mentioned by LDS historian Andrew Jenson:

Abel, Elijah, the only colored man who is known to have been ordained to the priesthood . . . was ordained an elder March 3, 1836, and a seventy April 4, 1841, an exception having been made in his case with regard to the general rule of the church in relation to colored people. (L.D.S. Biographical Encyclopedia, vol. 3, p. 577, 1901-1936, Deseret News)

Even though Elijah Abel was allowed to retain his priesthood and go on a mission after the Mormons came to Utah, he was not allowed to participate in the temple endowments (see Dialogue, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 28-29).

In 1842 Joseph Smith published his Book of Abraham, which is part of the Pearl of Great Price, in the church-owned Times and Seasons. This new work reflected Smith’s growing racist attitude towards blacks and priesthood:

Now this king of Egypt was a descendant from the loins of Ham, . . . From this descent sprang all the Egyptians, and thus the blood of the Canaanites was preserved in the land. (Pearl of Great Price, Book of Abraham 1:21-22)

Further on in the same chapter we read that Pharaoh, being a descendent of Ham, could not have the priesthood:

Now, Pharaoh being of that lineage by which he could not have the right of Priesthood . . . (Book of Abraham 1:27)

LDS author Stephen Taggert observed:

With the publication of The Book of Abraham all of the elements for the Church’s policy of denying the priesthood to Negroes were present. The curse of Canaan motif borrowed from Southern fundamentalism was being supported with the Church by a foundation of proslavery statements and attitudes which had emerged during the years of crisis in Missouri. . . . (Mormonism’s Negro Policy: Social and Historical Origins, by Stephen G. Taggart, pp. 62-63, University of Utah Press, 1970)
**Doctrine of Pre-Existence**

During this time Joseph Smith started formulating his doctrine of man’s pre-earth life. Preaching in 1844, Joseph Smith taught:

> The mind of man is as immortal as God himself . . .
> God never did have power to create the spirit of man at all. (History of the Church, vol. 6, pp. 310-311)

The Book of Abraham explains that those who were “noble” in their pre-earth life [man’s first estate] were to be the “rulers” on earth [man’s second estate] (Pearl of Great Price, Book of Abraham 3:22-23). This led to an interpretation that everyone’s birth on earth is a direct result of his/her worthiness in a prior life in heaven. Thus those less valiant were born black while the righteous were born white, with the most worthy being born into Mormon families. In 1845 LDS Apostle Orson Hyde explained that blacks were inferior spirits in the pre-earth state:

> At the time the devil was cast out of heaven, there were some spirits that did not know who had authority, whether God or the devil. They consequently did not take a very active part on either side, but rather thought the devil had been abused, . . . These spirits were not considered bad enough to be cast down to hell, and never have bodies; neither were they considered worthy of an honourable body on this earth: . . . But those spirits in heaven that rather lent an influence to the devil, thinking he had a little the best right to govern, but did not take a very active part any way were required to come into the world and take bodies in the accursed lineage of Canaan; and hence the Negro or African race. (Speech of Elder Orson Hyde, delivered before the High Priests’ Quorum, in Nauvoo, April 27, 1845, printed by John Taylor, p. 30)

**Seed of Cain**

After the Mormons moved west, Brigham Young, the second president of the church, became very adamant in his disapproval of blacks. Preaching in 1859, at the October Conference of the LDS Church, President Brigham Young declared:

> Cain slew his brother . . . and the Lord put a mark upon him, which is the flat nose and black skin . . . . How long is that race [blacks] to endure the dreadful curse that is upon them? That curse will remain upon them, and they never can hold the Priesthood or share in it until all the other descendants of Adam have received the promises and enjoyed the blessings of the Priesthood and the keys thereof. Until the last ones of the residue of Adam’s children are brought up to that favourable position, the children of Cain cannot receive the first ordinances of the Priesthood. They were the first that were cursed, and they will be the last from whom the curse will be removed. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 7, p. 290)

On another occasion Brigham Young declared:

> Shall I tell you the law of God in regard to the African race? If the white man who belongs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the penalty, under the law of God, is death on the spot. This will always be so. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 10, p. 110)

Preaching in 1882, John Taylor, the third president of the LDS Church, taught:

> Why is it, in fact, that we should have a devil? Why did not the Lord kill him long ago? . . . He needed the devil and great many of those who do his bidding just to keep . . . our dependence upon God, . . . When he destroyed the inhabitants of the antediluvian world, he suffered a descendant of Cain to come through the flood in order that he [the devil] might be properly represented upon the earth. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 23, p. 336)

**LDS Attitudes toward Blacks in the Twentieth Century**

Scholar Armand Mauss observed:

> Finally, in an important 1931 book, The Way to Perfection, the scholarly young apostle Joseph Fielding Smith . . . synthesized and codified the entire framework of Mormon racialist teaching that has accumulated . . . Integrating uniquely Mormon ideas of premortal decisions about lineage with imported British Israelism and Anglo-Saxon triumphalism, [Joseph Fielding] Smith in effect postulated a divine rank-ordering of lineages with the descendants of ancient Ephraim (son of Joseph) at the top (including the Mormons); the “seed of Cain” (Africans) at the bottom; and various other lineages in between. (All Abraham’s Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage, by Armand L. Mauss, p. 217, University of Illinois Press, 2003)

Writing in 1935 Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith, who later became the 10th president of the LDS Church, explained the curse on Cain:

> Not only was Cain called upon to suffer [for killing Abel], but because of his wickedness he became the father of an inferior race . . . . Millions of souls have come into this world cursed with a black skin and have been denied the privilege of Priesthood and the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel. These are the descendants of Cain. (The Way to Perfection, by Joseph Fielding Smith, Genealogical Society of Utah, 1935, p. 101)
Elder B. H. Roberts, of the council of Seventy, wrote:

... I believe that race [blacks] is the one through which it is ordained those spirits that were not valiant in the great rebellion in heaven should come; who, through their indifference or lack of integrity to righteousness, rendered themselves unworthy of the Priesthood and its powers, and hence it is withheld from them to this day. (Contributor 6:297, as quoted in The Way to Perfection, p. 105)

LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, son-in-law of President Joseph Fielding Smith, wrote:

Those who were less valiant in pre-existence and who thereby had certain spiritual restrictions imposed upon them during mortality are known to us as the Negroes. Such spirits are sent to earth through the lineage of Cain, the mark put upon him for his rebellion against God and his murder of Abel being a black skin. (Mormon Doctrine, 1958 edition, pp. 476-477; second edition, 1966, p. 527)

In 1949 the LDS Church First Presidency issued an official statement on priesthood denial to blacks:

The attitude of the church with reference to the Negroes remains as it has always stood. It is not a matter of the declaration of a policy but of direct commandment from the Lord on which is founded the doctrine of the Church from the days of its organization, to the effect that Negroes may become members of the Church but that they are not entitled to the priesthood at the present time. (As quoted in Black Saints in a White Church, by Jessie L. Embry, Signature Books, 1994, p. 24)

Civil Rights Movement

During the 1960’s and early 1970’s there were demonstrations and extensive articles denouncing the LDS teaching on blacks.

In January of 1963 the LDS Church announced a mission to Nigeria but it was aborted when the Nigerian Outlook printed articles attacking the Mormon position on blacks and the Nigerian government refused to grant visas to LDS missionaries.

From 1968 through 1970 students at various colleges protested against the LDS position on race. Tensions mounted against BYU and its sports department to the point that in 1969 Stanford University announced it would end participation in any sporting events with the Mormon school. The Salt Lake Tribune reported:

The Stanford University Student Senate has voted overwhelming approval of the institution’s ban against sporting events with Brigham Young University over a racial question. (The Salt Lake Tribune, Dec. 25, 1969)

Stanford’s policy of not scheduling games with BYU stayed in place until after the 1978 revelation. Gary Bergera and Ron Priddis commented:

At the time of the [1978 priesthood] announcement, only four American blacks and a handful of Africans were enrolled at BYU. During the three years following the announcement, the number of blacks rose to eighteen American and twenty-two foreign blacks ... As a direct result of the priesthood revision, Stanford University decided in 1979 to remove its ban against athletic competition with BYU. (Brigham Young University: A House of Faith, by Gary James Bergera and Ronald Priddis, Signature Books, 1985, p. 303)

One Drop Disqualifies

One of the problems for the Mormons regarding the priesthood restriction was their stand that anyone with black ancestry was barred. Speaking at BYU on August 27, 1954, Apostle Mark E. Petersen explained:

We must not inter-marry with the Negro. Why? If I were to marry a Negro woman and have children by her, my children would all be cursed as to the priesthood. ... If there is one drop of Negro blood in my children, as I have read to you, they receive the curse. (Race Problems—As They Affect the Church, speech by Mark E. Petersen, BYU, August 27, 1954)

With the mixed racial profile of many people in South Africa and South America, especially Brazil, it was becoming obvious that some priesthood holders had black ancestry. LDS scholar Jessie L. Embry discussed the struggle that had been going on in Brazil:

... church membership in Brazil had grown enormously during the 1960’s and 1970’s. Determining who was black had always been a sensitive issue in the racially mixed country. In 1978 a temple, from which blacks would be excluded, was under construction. (Black Saints in a White Church, p. 28)

Through the years there had been numerous private meetings of LDS Church leaders discussing these issues and trying to resolve the problems. When the church announced in 1975 that a temple would be built in Brazil some of the leaders must have realized that the priesthood ban would have to come to an end once the temple was dedicated (see All Abraham’s Children, p. 237).
**Prelude to Revelation**

LDS scholar Lester E. Bush, Jr., observed:

The 1970's will be a challenge to historians for years to come: Black activist harassment of BYU; the Genesis Group; litigation with the Boy Scout movement; Roots-spurred interest in genealogy; heightened leadership awareness of the historical antecedents of current Mormon beliefs; and once again questions over the identification of the cursed lineage, this time with reverberations in both Brazil and the U. S. Congress. . . .

The greatest challenge to future historians, and that of most interest and importance, will be 1978 itself, about which very little can now be said with confidence. There are a few tantalizing hints. That the forthcoming dedication of the Brazilian temple figured conspicuously in the deliberations leading up to the revelation is clear from some published comments. LeGrand Richards, for example, is quoted as saying, “All those people with Negro blood in them have been raising the money to build the temple. Brother Kimball worried about it. He asked each one of us of the Twelve if we would pray—and we did—that the Lord would give him the inspiration to know what the will of the Lord was. . . .”

Beyond this the story is hazy and intriguing. According to his son Edward, President Kimball was “exercised about the question” for “some months at least,” during which time “he could not put it out of his mind.” He solicited individual written and oral statements from the Twelve, conveying, to Apostle Richards, the impression that “he was thinking favorably toward giving the colored people the priesthood.” That any such disposition followed a great internal struggle is evidenced by a statement from President Kimball himself, in an interview with the Church News: “. . . I had a great deal to fight, of course, myself largely, because I had grown up with this thought that Negroes should not have the priesthood and I was prepared to go all the rest of my life till my death and fight for it and defend it as it was.” Indeed, according to son Edward, his father “could not comfortably debate things about which he felt deeply.”

Whatever the contributing factors, President Kimball apparently was persuaded even before the June first revelation—as Richards suggested—that a change in the priesthood policy was indicated. . . .

The “revelation and assurance came to me so clearly,” Kimball later said, “that there was no question about it.” The revelation thus appears to have been a spiritual manifestation in confirmation of a decision made after a period of lengthy and profound study and prayer. This “spiritual witness” was reportedly experienced by all present at that time as well as a week later when the First Presidency presented their official statement to the Twelve. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 12, no. 2, Summer 1979, pp. 10-11)

Historian D. Michael Quinn discussed this process. He observed that President Kimball had met privately with individual apostles who expressed their “individual thoughts” about his suggestion to end the priesthood ban.

After discussing this in several temple meetings and private discussions, Kimball wrote a statement “in longhand removing all priesthood restrictions on blacks” and presented it to his counselors on 30 May. (*The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power*, p. 16)

The next day, on June 1, 1978, the group prayed in the temple and received personal confirmation that it was time to change the policy. Gordon B. Hinckley explained:

No voice audible to our physical ears was heard. But the voice of the spirit whispered into our minds and our very souls. (as quoted in *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power*, p. 16)

Quinn goes on to explain the events leading up to the public announcement:

On 7 June 1978 Kimball informed his counselors that “through inspiration he had decided to lift the restrictions on priesthood.” In the meantime he had asked three apostles . . . to prepare “suggested wording for the public announcement of the decision.” The First Presidency used the three documents to prepare a fourth preliminary statement which was “then reviewed, edited, and approved by the First Presidency. This document was taken to the council meeting with the Twelve on Thursday, June 8, 1978.” The apostles made additional “minor editorial changes” in the nearly final statement which was then presented to all general authorities the next day, just hours before its public announcement. (*The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power*, p. 16)

This process hardly sounds like a direct revelation from God to the prophet. In what way does this chain of events equate with a “revelation”? How is this process any different from any other religious leader praying for divine guidance and then acting on those spiritual promptings?

**The 1978 Announcement**

For over a hundred years the Mormon leaders had taught that blacks could not be given the priesthood until the millennium. In 1854 Brigham Young taught:

When all the other children of Adam have had the privilege of receiving the Priesthood, and of coming into the kingdom of God, and of being redeemed from the four quarters of the earth, and have received their resurrection from the dead, then it will be time enough to remove the curse from Cain and his posterity. He deprived his brother of the privilege of pursuing his journey through life, and of extending his kingdom by multiplying upon the earth; and because he did this, he is the last to share the joys of the kingdom of God. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 2, p. 143)
Yet on June 9, 1978, the Mormon Church’s Deseret News carried a startling announcement by the First Presidency of the church that stated a new revelation had been given and that blacks would now be allowed to hold the priesthood. Although the ban was lifted in June, the declaration was not presented to the church for formal acceptance until September 30, 1978 at the Fall Conference. N. Eldon Tanner, counselor to President Kimball, read the declaration to the congregation:

To Whom It May Concern:
On September 30, 1978, at the 148th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the following was presented by President N. Eldon Tanner, First Counselor in the First Presidency of the Church:

In early June of this year, the First Presidency announced that a revelation had been received by President Spencer W. Kimball extending priesthood and temple blessings to all worthy male members of the Church. President Kimball has asked that I advise the conference that after he had received this revelation, which came to him after extended meditation and prayer in the sacred rooms of the holy temple, he presented it to his counselors, who accepted it and approved it. It was then presented to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who unanimously approved it, and was subsequently presented to all other General Authorities, who likewise approved it unanimously.

N. Eldon Tanner then read President Kimball’s letter to the priesthood:

Dear Brethren:

As we have witnessed the expansion of the work of the Lord over the earth . . . This, in turn, has inspired us with a desire to extend to every worthy member of the Church all of the privileges and blessings which the gospel affords.

Aware of the promises made by the prophets and presidents of the Church who have preceded us that at some time, in God’s eternal plan, all of our brethren who are worthy may receive the priesthood, . . . we have pleaded long and earnestly in behalf of these, our faithful brethren, spending many hours in the Upper Room of the Temple supplicating the Lord for divine guidance.

He has heard our prayers, and by revelation has confirmed that the long-promised day has come when every faithful, worthy man in the Church may receive the holy priesthood, . . . Accordingly, all worthy male members of the Church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color. . . .

Sincerely yours,

SPENCER W. KIMBALL
N. ELDON TANNER
MARION G. ROMNEY

The declaration was then presented to the assembly who gave it their full support.

Declaration 2, in the Doctrine and Covenants, was obviously carefully crafted by church officials. As a matter of fact, it never even mentions that it was the blacks who had been discriminated against prior to the revelation.

In stating that they “pleaded long and earnestly” for the change implies that God has been a racist for thousands of years, and that Mormon leaders “by pleading long and earnestly in behalf of these, our faithful brethren, spending many hours in the upper room of the Temple” finally persuaded God to give blacks the priesthood.

The Bible, however, informs us that “God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35). It was the Mormon leaders who kept blacks under a curse.

Finally, when missionary efforts around the world were being hampered by the doctrine, Mormon leaders were forced to change their position. Historian Jan Shipps commented on the reason for the announcement:

The June 9 revelation will never be fully understood if it is regarded simply as a pragmatic doctrinal shift ultimately designed to bring Latter-day Saints into congruence with mainstream America. . . . This revelation came in the context of worldwide evangelism rather than . . . American social and cultural circumstances. (as quoted in Black Saints in a White Church, p. 27)

Questions Remain

Was the original ban based on scripture or revelation?
Many Mormons have maintained that the priesthood ban was a policy, not established by revelation. If it was only a policy, why did it take a revelation to end it?

If a revelation was received in June of 1978, why isn’t the specifically worded revelation published instead of a statement about a supposed revelation? Declaration 2 is not the revelation.

If Declaration 2 represents a revelation to the church, why wasn’t it numbered with the other sections of the Doctrine and Covenants? The two Declarations at the back of the D&C seem to be policy statements putting an end to practices, but neither contains the words “thus saith the Lord” or repudiates the doctrine behind the practice. If the revelation included a repudiation of past teachings on race and color why isn’t it published?

Another contradiction is the fact that the revelation was given too early. According to Brigham Young, the priesthood would not be given to the blacks until after the resurrection:
had had a chance to receive it. but they maintained that it would be after everyone else said that blacks would eventually receive the priesthood, are worthy may receive the priesthood.” Past leaders had some time, in God’s eternal plan, all of our brethren who presidents of the Church who have preceded us that at said “Aware of the promises made by the prophets and teachings and practices they are, they must wonder: If this is the true church, led by a prophet of God, why was a racial ban instituted in the first place? (“Faith, Color and the LDS Priesthood,” The Salt Lake Tribune, June 8, 2003, pp. A1, A12)

Teaching Not Renounced

Reporter William Lobdell wrote:

It took until 1978—14 years after the Civil Rights Act—before the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints lifted the ban following what leaders said was a revelation from God to make the priesthood available to “every faithful, worthy man.”

The new doctrine came without an apology or repudiation of the church’s past practice. . . . Mauss and others believe that a church repudiation of past policies would help, but that would be difficult because it was never clear whether the racism was a divine revelation—which couldn’t be apologized for—or man-made law. (“New Mormon Aim: Reach Out to Blacks,” Los Angeles Times, September 21, 2003)

Armand Mauss observed:

Certainly these old doctrines have not appeared in official church discourse for at least two decades. . . . However, as long as these doctrines continue to appear in successive reprintings of authoritative books and are freely circulated at the Mormon grassroots, they will continue to rankle many of the black Saints. (All Abraham’s Children, p. 252)

On page 262 Mauss continues:

To repudiate any of the cherished religious lore of their immediate ancestors seems to some Mormons, especially the older ones, to be almost a repudiation of the grandparents themselves, to say nothing of their teachers, who might have walked with God. . . . One need point only to the struggle in Utah even now over plural marriage: Despite the long arm of the law and the church’s strenuous repudiation of polygamous practices, the traditional doctrines underlying plural marriage still survive even in mainstream Mormonism. Why should traditional racial doctrines be any easier to set aside? (All Abraham’s Children, p. 262. Italics in original.)

Writing in The Salt Lake Tribune, Peggy Stack pointed out:

For most white members, the ban controversy is over, but the issue continues to haunt many black members, especially in the United States. They are constantly having to explain themselves and their beliefs—to non-Mormons, other black converts and themselves. And no matter how committed to LDS teachings and practices they are, they must wonder: If this is the true church, led by a prophet of God, why was a racial ban instituted in the first place? (“Faith, Color and the LDS Priesthood,” The Salt Lake Tribune, June 8, 2003, pp. A1, A12)

Blacks in the LDS Church

Since 1978 LDS missionary work in the United States has gained a small but significant number of black converts. However, there seems to be a problem with retention. Mauss observed that “Mormon missionary work among American blacks does not seem to be thriving, even after the 1978 change in priesthood policy” (All Abraham’s Children, p. 261). Their greatest success among blacks has been in Brazil and Africa.

On the news page for the official Mormon web site, www.lds.org, is an article on their growth in Ghana. They report that in 1978 Ghana had about 400 Mormons. In December of 2003 they dedicated a new temple in Ghana to serve the approximately 23,000 members in that country.

Most of the blacks who join Mormonism are not aware of the past racist teachings of its prophets and leaders. When they read the earlier statements they are usually upset and want an explanation from the church.

A black convert, participating in a roundtable discussion on race and Mormonism, observed:

We can say what we want to say in this room today, but nothing is going to change until somebody says in General Conference meeting, “Racism in the Church is wrong.” By not saying it, they’re condoning it. They’re condoning Brigham Young’s statements; they’re condoning John Taylor’s statements; they’re condoning things that need to be repudiated. A statement may not stop everything, but it will make people think, because, by not saying it, they’re condoning it. (“Speak the Truth, and Shame the Devil,” Sunstone, May 2003, p. 33)

Darron Smith, a black convert, wrote:

. . . even though the priesthood ban was repealed in 1978, the discourse that constructs what blackness means is still very much intact today. . . . Hence there are Church members today who continue to summon and teach at every level of Church education the racial discourse that blacks are descendants of Cain, that they merited lesser earthly
privilege because they were “fence-sitters” in the War in Heaven, and that, science and climatic factors aside, there is a link between skin color and righteousness.

Further anchoring the early LDS appropriation of negative notions concerning blackness are several Book of Mormon teachings that associate dark skin with that which is vile, filthy, and evil, and white skin with that which is delightsome, pure, and good.

I did not find out about the priesthood ban on blacks until after I had joined the Church, and, sadly, I passed on much of the folklore while serving an LDS mission in Michigan. Looking back on that experience, I venture to say that had I known about such teachings in the Church, I might not have joined.

Blacks who do move toward Mormonism should not be made to feel that blackness is synonymous with curses, marks, or indifference. And this can be accomplished only by a formal repudiation, in no uncertain terms, of all teachings about Cain, the pre-mortal unworthiness of spirits born to black bodies, and any idea that skin color is connected to righteousness. (“The Persistence of Racialized Discourse in Mormonism,” by Darron Smith, *Sunstone*, March 2003, pp. 31-33)

Conclusion

While the LDS Church is to be commended for its humanitarian work in Africa and among minorities, it does not offset the damage done by racial teachings of its past leaders. The teachings in the *Book of Mormon* and *Pearl of Great Price* associating dark skin with a mark of God’s judgment, along with racist statements of past prophets and apostles, need to be officially repudiated.

The Bible offers eternal life to all mankind, regardless of race. Jesus told his disciples to go “into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

(For more on this topic, see *Curse of Cain? Racism in the Mormon Church* and *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*, ch. 21, by the Tanners.)

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**Facts on the Mormon Church**

In 1830 six men met to organize the Church of Christ, later renamed The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (see *D&C* 15:3-5). At the end of 2003 the LDS Church claimed 11,985,254 members with 56,237 missionaries.

The LDS Church operates 116 temples throughout the world. Even though there are less than 200,000 Mormons in all of Africa, the Mormons have just dedicated their second temple on the continent. They have one in South Africa and a new one in Ghana. Another is under construction in Nigeria.

Below is a breakdown of the LDS membership as of December 31, 2002, by areas, from the official LDS website, www.lds.org.

**Membership Distribution (31 December 2002)**

- United States - 5,410,544
- Canada - 163,666
- Mexico - 952,947
- Caribbean - 129,776
- South America - 2,738,037
- Central America - 503,857
- South Pacific - 381,458
- Europe - 426,944
- Asia - 825,997
- Africa - 188,322

At the April 2004 general conference of the LDS Church it was announced that there had been 242,923 convert baptisms in 2003. Significantly, this is the lowest number in the past eight years. The number of converts has been dropping since 1996 and the current number of missionaries has fallen to the level of 1997. The average number of converts per missionary in 1996 was 6.7. In 2003 the average had dropped to 4.3.

While the LDS Church publishes the number of converts to the church they refuse to publish the number of people requesting their membership to be terminated or give the percent of active members.

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By Whose Authority?
Problems in LDS Priesthood Claims

In the February 2004 *Ensign* LDS President Gordon B. Hinckley laid out the four cornerstones of Mormonism. The first is Jesus Christ and his plan of salvation, second is Joseph Smith’s first vision, third is the *Book of Mormon* and fourth is priesthood authority.

The LDS Church claims that those holding its priesthood are the only ones recognized by God to perform baptisms and ordinances of the gospel. Mormonism rejects baptisms done by any other church. The LDS manual *Doctrines of the Gospel* explains:

What is the [LDS] Priesthood? It is nothing more nor less than the power of God delegated to man by which man can . . . act legitimately; not assuming that authority, nor borrowing it from generations that are dead and gone, . . . (*Doctrines of the Gospel*, Student Manual, Religion 231 and 232, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1986, p. 67)

The LDS Church teaches that this authority must be acquired by the proper means. In *Doctrines of the Gospel* we read that every priesthood act must be done “in the proper way, and after the proper order” (p. 68).

This raises the question as whether or not Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were baptized and ordained by proper “priesthood authority” in the “proper way”? Joseph Smith’s account of the event is published in the *Pearl of Great Price*:

We [Smith and Cowdery] still continued the work of translation, when, in the ensuing month (May, 1829), we on a certain day went into the woods to pray and inquire of the Lord respecting baptism for the remission of sins, that we found mentioned in the translation of the [Book of Mormon] plates. While we were thus employed, praying and calling upon the Lord, a messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, *he ordained us*, saying:

> Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the *Priesthood of Aaron*, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.

He said this Aaronic Priesthood had not the power of laying on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, but that this should be conferred on us hereafter; and he commanded us to *go and be baptized*, and gave us directions that *I should baptize Oliver Cowdery, and that afterwards he should baptize me.*

Accordingly we went and were baptized. I baptized him first, and afterwards he baptized me—and after which *I laid my hands upon his head and ordained him to the Aaronic Priesthood*, and afterwards he laid his hands on me and ordained me to the same Priesthood—for so we were commanded. . . . It was on the fifteenth day of May, 1829, that we were ordained under the hand of this messenger, and baptized. (*Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith—History 1:68-71)

How could the angel, elsewhere identified as John the Baptist, ordain them to the priesthood before they were baptized? According to LDS doctrine today, a man must be baptized by someone holding the LDS priesthood authority before he can be ordained to the priesthood.

If John the Baptist’s ordination was valid, why did Joseph and Oliver need to baptize each other and then reordain each other to the same priesthood? Why wouldn’t the angel baptize them first and then ordain them?

Researcher Hal Hougey observed:

> This absurd and contradictory account could have been completely avoided if Joseph Smith had simply said that the angel first baptized them, and then conferred the priesthood on them. And this is what he would have said if the story were true. Why, then, did he give us the account we have? It seems likely that the part about the angel is simply an embellishment later added to what actually occurred. Joseph and Oliver were about to start a church. In order to get the people to listen to their claims, it would be advisable for them to be baptized and ordained. Since they did not want to go to any existing church for these credentials, they proceeded to give them to each other. Read the account, leaving out the part about the angel, and one has a believable narrative of what two men might do to create credentials for themselves as ministers of God. (*Latter-Day Saints—Where Did You Get Your Authority?*, by Hal Hougey, Pacific Publishing Co., 1969, p. 4)

Merrill J. Bateman, one of the top leaders in the LDS Church, emphasized the necessity of restoring proper priesthood authority to Joseph Smith:

> One of the remarkable evidences of the Restoration is the testimony of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery regarding the manner in which the priesthood and its directing powers were returned to earth. . . . John the Baptist brought back the Aaronic Priesthood with the keys of repentance and baptism. Peter, James, and John restored not only the Melchizedek Priesthood but also “the keys of [the] kingdom.” . . .

Near the end of His ministry, Jesus promised Peter “the keys of the kingdom,” knowing that Jesus would soon leave and that priesthood keys were needed by the Apostles if they were to direct the work after His ascension. . . .
In contrast, 19th-century ministers in the Palmyra environs, not understanding the great Apostasy that had taken place, believed in an entirely different process for priesthood reception. They believed that the power to preach came through an inner calling to a priesthood of believers. ("Priesthood, Keys, and the Power to Bless," Ensign, Nov. 2003, p. 50)

If such keys were needed why didn’t Peter, James and John restore both the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthouds? Mormonism claims that they held the authority for both. Why would John the Baptist need to come at all?

When Did it Happen?

In his story printed at the back of the Pearl of Great Price Joseph Smith stated that on May 15, 1829, the Aaronic Priesthood was conferred on him and Oliver Cowdery. Yet there is no date given for his ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood. The History of the Church, by Joseph Smith, shows that there is real confusion as to when Peter, James and John supposedly appeared. The footnote on p. 61 states:

... before the 6th of April, 1830, and probably before that very month of June, 1829, had expired Peter, James and John had come and conferred upon Joseph and Oliver the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood, ... (History of the Church, vol. 1, p. 61)

Historian D. Michael Quinn explained:

According to current tradition, both the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthouds functioned in the church after the spring of 1829 when Smith and Cowdery were visited first by John the Baptist, who restored the lesser or Aaronic priesthood, and then by Peter, James, and John, who restored the higher or Melchizedek priesthood. A closer look at contemporary records indicates that men were first ordained to the higher priesthood over a year after the church’s founding. No mention of angelic ordinations can be found in original documents until 1834-35. Thereafter accounts of the visit of Peter, James, and John by Cowdery and Smith remained vague and contradictory. (The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power, by D. Michael Quinn, Signature Books, 1994, pp. 14-15)

If Joseph Smith could name the specific date when the Aaronic Priesthood was restored why didn’t he give the date for the Melchizedek Priesthood ordination?

The earliest historical documents show that the concept of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthouds were products of Joseph Smith’s evolving theology and were not taught prior to 1831. Historian Dan Vogel commented:

The early Mormon understanding of restored authority evolved as the events of the restoration unfolded. ... Only gradually did Mormonism’s description of apostasy, restoration, and authority become clearly lineal-legal. In addition, the concepts of “two orders of priesthood” and “lineal priesthood” were not introduced into Mormonism until after its founding. ... Indeed, nothing in the Book of Mormon stipulates a lineal-legal notion of authority. The Book of Mormon’s description of the apostasy did not include the charge that the latter-day clergy lacked priesthood authority. Rather, it indicted them with religious hypocrisy and spiritual poverty. Similarly, the Book of Mormon’s description of the restoration included no promise of the return of priesthood authority but rather of spiritual renewal. (Religious Seekers and the Advent of Mormonism, by Dan Vogel, Signature Books, 1988, pp. 101-102)

Mormonism maintains that when John the Baptist appeared to Smith and Cowdery in 1829 they received the Aaronic Priesthood, which included the offices of deacon, teacher, and priest. When Peter, James and John supposedly appeared a short while later, they conferred on Smith and Cowdery the Melchizedek Priesthood, which included the offices of elder, seventy, High Priest, Bishop, Patriarch, Apostle and Prophet.

While one can find mention of such offices as elder or teacher in early LDS documents, these were not considered part of a larger priesthood system such as Melchizedek or Aaronic. Smith seems to have initially used these designations in the same way that other churches of the day would have used such terms.

High Priesthood Added

People reading the current edition of the Doctrine and Covenants assume that the revelations read the same as they were originally printed. However, there have been important revisions relating to priesthood.

The first printing of Smith’s revelations in book form was in 1833, in a work titled Book of Commandments. Later, in 1835, a new edition was prepared, changing many of the original revelations and adding new ones. The title was also changed to Doctrine and Covenants.

Chapter 24 of the 1833 Book of Commandments gave instructions about elders, priests, teachers and deacons but made no mention of two priesthoods. When this revelation was reprinted in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants (section 20 of a current edition) dozens of words were added to the text to include such offices as high counselors, high priests and high priesthood. Researcher H. Michael Marquardt commented:
In the Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ [Book of Commandments, chapter 24] is listed the following offices in the church: elder, priest, teacher, and deacon. The Articles and Covenants were read and received by a vote of the congregation at the first church conference on 9 June 1830 at Fayette, New York. At this time some men had been ordained to three of the four offices: elder, priest, and teacher. It was prior to 25 October 1831 when the first known deacons were ordained. As the church grew, additional offices or callings became part of the ecclesiastical structure. By 1835 it was felt necessary to add these offices to the Articles and Covenants, though such a step created an anachronism. (The Joseph Smith Revelations: Text & Commentary, by H. Michael Marquardt, Signature Books, 1999, pp. 67-68)

The revisions were made in the 1835 printing of the Doctrine and Covenants. On the next page is a photo of part of chapter 24 of the Book of Commandments (now section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants) with the revisions noted in the margins.

LDS historian Gregory A. Prince wrote:

Although in the Mormon church today the term “priesthood” refers to this bestowed authority, such a relationship did not develop until years after the founding of the church. Initially authority was understood to be inherent in what are now termed “offices.” Three offices—elder, priest, and teacher—were present by August 1829, as were the ordinances of baptism, confirmation, and ordination, but the word “priesthood” was not used in reference to these for another three years. (Power From On High: The Development of Mormon Priesthood, by Gregory A. Prince, Signature Books, 1995, p. 2)

Prince explained that while the Book of Mormon contains references to “higher authority” they were not understood in terms of “priesthood.” He concluded:

It was not until several months after the June 1831 general conference, when the “high priesthood” was conferred, that the term “priesthood” entered Mormon usage at all. (Power From On High, p. 12)

Thus we see that at the time of the founding of Mormonism in 1830 there was no teaching or awareness of Joseph Smith claiming to have received either the Aaronic Priesthood or the Melchizedek Priesthood in 1829.

Other Revelations Changed

Another example of the changes can be found by comparing the current Doctrine and Covenants, Section 27, dated August 1830, with the 1833 printing of this revelation in the Book of Commandments. The current version mentions John the Baptist and Peter, James and John, but the 1833 edition (chapter 28 of the Book of Commandments) did not contain any mention of priesthood restoration.

On the next page is a photo of chapter 28 of the Book of Commandments (now section 27 of the Doctrine and Covenants) with the revisions noted in the margins. Note the interpolation of priesthood concepts.

Also, sections 2 and 13 of the current Doctrine and Covenants, which mention priesthood, were not printed in the 1833 Book of Commandments. They were extracted from Joseph Smith’s history, started in 1838, and added to the Doctrine and Covenants in 1876.

As Joseph Smith’s church began to grow so did the need for clearer delineation of authority, thus the backdating and insertion of priesthood claims into the revelations. David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, related the following concerning the addition of priesthood concepts:

Authority is the word we used for the first two years in the church . . . This matter of two orders of priesthood in the Church of Christ, and lineal priesthood of the old law being in the church, all originated in the mind of Sydney Rigdon. . . . This is the way the High Priests and the “priesthood” as you have it, was introduced into the Church of Christ almost two years after its beginning—and after we had baptized and confirmed about two thousand souls into the church. (An Address To All Believers in Christ, by David Whitmer, 1887, p. 64)

Whitmer also condemned the LDS leaders for endorsing the rewriting of Smith’s revelations between their first printing in the Book of Commandments in 1833 and the second printing in the Doctrine and Covenants in 1835.

You have changed the revelations from the way they were first given and as they are to-day . . . to support the error of Brother Joseph in taking upon himself the office of Seer to the church. You have changed the revelations to support the error of high priests. You have changed the revelations to support the error of a President of the high priesthood, high counselors, etc. (An Address To All Believers in Christ, p. 49)

In H. Michael Marquardt’s study, The Joseph Smith’s Revelations: Text & Commentary, we read:

In recent years there has been a growing willingness on the part of some writers to admit the existence of variant readings of the early revelations. Part of this openness responds to the criticisms of some early rank-and-file members who harbored grievances against church leaders, including charges of textual revision. . . . Jonathan B. Turner in his 1842 book [Mormonism in All Ages] also dealt with changes in the 1835 D&C:

It would have been well for the world if Smith’s divinity, instead of giving him a pair of spectacles, had given him a divine
CHAPTER XXVIII.

1. A Commandment to the church of Christ, given in Harmony, Pennsylvania, September 14, 1830.

LORD, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, amen.

2. For behold, I say unto you, that it is impossible that ye shall eat, or that ye shall drink, when ye partake of the sacrament, if it be so that ye do it with an eye single to the glory of God.

3. Wherefore, if a commandment I give unto you, that ye shall not partake of the sacrament, except it be with a pure heart and a pure mind, and prepare your minds according to the words which I have spoken unto you, and your spirits prepared according to the spirit of the Lord, ye shall partake thereof with a pure heart and a pure mind, and ye shall partake of the sacrament with a pure mind, and ye shall partake thereof with a pure heart and a pure mind, and ye shall partake thereof with a pure heart and a pure mind.

4. Wherefore, a commandment I give unto you, that ye shall not partake thereof with a pure heart and a pure mind, and ye shall partake thereof with a pure heart and a pure mind, and ye shall partake thereof with a pure heart and a pure mind, and ye shall partake thereof with a pure heart and a pure mind.

5. Wherefore, a commandment I give unto you, that ye shall not partake thereof with a pure heart and a pure mind, and ye shall partake thereof with a pure heart and a pure mind, and ye shall partake thereof with a pure heart and a pure mind, and ye shall partake thereof with a pure heart and a pure mind.

6. Wherefore, a commandment I give unto you, that ye shall not partake thereof with a pure heart and a pure mind, and ye shall partake thereof with a pure heart and a pure mind, and ye shall partake thereof with a pure heart and a pure mind, and ye shall partake thereof with a pure heart and a pure mind.

7. Wherefore, a commandment I give unto you, that ye shall not partake thereof with a pure heart and a pure mind, and ye shall partake thereof with a pure heart and a pure mind, and ye shall partake thereof with a pure heart and a pure mind, and ye shall partake thereof with a pure heart and a pure mind.
printer, and a divine press, and such types that he might have been enabled to fix the meaning of his inspired revelations, so that it would be possible to let them stand, at least two years, without abstracting, interpolating, altering, or garbling, to suit the times. But the ways of Smith’s providence are indeed mysterious. (The Joseph Smith Revelations: Text & Commentary, by H. Michael Marquadt, Signature Books, 1999, p. 18)

On page 14 of this newsletter is another example of such rewriting. In 1834 the LDS newspaper, Evening and Morning Star, printed an 1831 revelation which differs significantly from the current version known as section 68 in the Doctrine and Covenants. Again, we see the addition of priesthood material.

Researcher LaMar Petersen concluded:

The student would expect to find all the particulars of the restoration in this first treasured set of revelations [the 1833 Book of Commandments], the chronological order of which encompassed the bestowals of the two Priesthoods, but they are conspicuously absent. . . . The notable revelations on priesthood in the Doctrine and Covenants before referred to—Sections 2 and 13—are missing, and Chapter 28 gives no hint of the restoration which, if actual, had been known for four years. More than four hundred words were added to this revelation of September 1830 in Section 27 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the additions made to include the names of heavenly visitors and two separate ordinations. The Book of Commandments gives the duties of Elders, Priests, Teachers, and Deacons and refers to Joseph’s apostolic calling, but there is no mention of Melchizedek Priesthood, High Priesthood, High Priests, nor High Councilors. These words were later inserted into the revelation on church organization and government given in 1830, making it appear that they were known at that date, but they do not appear in the original, Chapter 24 of the 1833 Book of Commandments. Similar interpolations were made in the revelations now known as Sections 42 and 68.

There seems to be no support for the historicity of the restoration of the priesthood in journals, diaries, letters, nor printed matter prior to October 1834. (The Creation of the Book of Mormon: A Historical Inquiry, by La Mar Petersen, Freethinker Press, 2000, p. 145)

For more on the historical and theological problems relating to LDS priesthood claims, see our web site http://www.utlm.org/onlinebooks/mclaims6.htm and the article “Fabricating the Mormon Priesthood: By God or By Man” at www.bcmmin.org/priestod2.html. The most complete historical study of LDS priesthood is Power From On High: The Development of Mormon Priesthood, by Gregory A. Prince, available on our booklist.

[Digital images of the 1833 Book of Commandments can be seen at http://www.irr.org/mit/BOC/1833boc-1835d&c-index.html. Photo reprints of the 1833 Book of Commandments and the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants can be purchased from our book list, see Joseph Smith Begins His Work, vol. 2.]

Priesthood and the Bible

In the sixth Article of Faith of the LDS Church we read:

We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, viz., apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, etc. (Pearl of Great Price)

The LDS Church has two divisions of priesthood, Aaronic and Melchizedek. The LDS manual Gospel Principles states:

The greater priesthood is the Melchizedek Priesthood. . . . The lesser [Aaronic] priesthood is an appendage to the Melchizedek Priesthood. (p. 79)

Further on the manual explains:

The offices in the Aaronic Priesthood are deacon, teacher, priest, and bishop. (p. 81)

The offices of the Melchizedek Priesthood are elder, seventy, high priest, patriarch, and apostle. (p. 82)

Since the Mormon Church makes the specific claim that their priesthood is the same as the New Testament church we need to compare their offices with those mentioned in the Bible.

Aaronic Priesthood

The Aaronic priesthood of the Old Testament was restricted to Aaron’s descendants, who were of the tribe of Levi (Numbers 3:1-10, 8:5-22; Exodus 38:21). Mormons do not claim to be descended from Aaron. Many of them believe they are from the tribe of Ephraim but this would not make them eligible for the Aaronic priesthood.

Even Jesus could not hold the Aaronic priesthood because he descended from the tribe of Judah. Hebrews 7:14 explains: “For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.”

The priesthood of the Old Testament was brought to an end with the death of Christ. In Hebrews 7:11-12 we read:

If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need
THE EVENING AND THE MORNING STAR

A REVELATION, GIVEN NOVEMBER, 1831.

M Y servant, Orson, was called, by his ordination, to proclaim the everlasting gospel, by the spirit of the living God, from person to person, and from land to land, to the congregations of the wicked, in their synagogues, reasoning with and expounding all scriptures unto them: And behold and lo, this is an example unto all those who were ordained unto this priesthood, whose mission is appointed unto them to go forth: And this is the example unto them, that they shall speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and whatsoever they shall speak, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost, shall be scripture; shall be the will of the Lord; shall be the mind of the Lord; shall be the word of the Lord; shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation; Behold this is the promise of the Lord unto me, O ye my servants: wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you; and ye shall bear record of me even Jesus Christ, that I am the Son of the living God; that I was, that I am, and that I am to come. This is the word of the Lord unto you my servant, Orson, and also unto my servant, Lyman, and unto my servant, Lyman, and unto my servant Willoughby, and unto all the faithful members of my church: Go ye into all the world, preach the gospel to every creature: acting in the authority which I have given you; baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned, and he that believeth shall be blessed with signs following; even as it is written. And unto you it shall be given to know the signs of the times, and the signs of the season of the week; and as many as the Father shall call, to whom it shall be given to send them up unto me; even so. Amen.

And now, concerning the signs, in addition to the temporal commandments, they are these: That remnant of Israel in the due time of the Lord, after the bishop has been anointed and ordained unto the office of bishop, according to the first, wherefore the bishop shall be an high priest who is worthy; and he shall be appointed by a conference of high priests. And again, no bishop on judgment shall be set apart for this office, shall be tried or ordained for this office, save it be before the conference of high priests, and in as much as he is worthy, and in his judgment he shall be confirmed by the conference of high priests at the ordination of the bishop. And again, in as much as parents have children in Zion, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance; [that] in Christ is the Son of the living God; and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old: the sin shall be upon the hands of the parents, for that shall be a law that the inhabitants of Zion and their children shall be baptized for the remission of their sins when eight years old, and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands; and they also shall teach them, and adorn them in righteousness, and walk uprightly before the Lord. And the inhabitants of Zion shall also observe the sabbath day to keep it holy. And the inhabitants of Zion also, shall remember that it is a holy day, and in as much as they are appointed to labor, in all faithfulness, or the laborer shall be in remembrance before the Lord. Now I the Lord am not well pleased with the inhabitants of Zion, for there are many among them, and among their children, who are growing in wickedness; They also seek not earnestly the riches of eternity, but they are full of grossness. These things ought not to be; and must be done away from among them: wherefore let my servant Oliver carry these sayings unto the land of Zion. And a commandment I give unto you, that ye shall observe not the years before the Lord in the season thereof, let him be held in remembrance before the judge of my people. These sayings are true and faithful, wherefore transgress them not, neither take them from. Behold I am Alpha and Omega, and I come quickly. Amen.
was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

**Deacons**

God set the minimum age of the Aaronic priesthood at twenty-five (Num. 8:23-25), and there were only priests and high priests. The Old Testament has no mention of deacons. The LDS Church ordains young men deacons, their first office in the Aaronic priesthood, at the age of twelve. The New Testament, however, states deacons are to be mature men and “the husbands of one wife” (1 Timothy 3:8-12).

**Teachers**

As part of the Aaronic Priesthood in the LDS Church a young man is ordained a Teacher at the age of fourteen. (This office is separate from the assignment of teaching a class such as Sunday School.) The New Testament passages about teachers do not make them part of a special priesthood. Teachers should be mature Christians “able to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2), not teenagers.

**Priests**

In the LDS Church a young man is ordained a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood at the age of sixteen and does not need to be a descendant of Aaron. This was never done in the Old Testament. There are Jewish priests mentioned in the New Testament, but an office of priest is never mentioned in the Christian church.

**Melchizedek Priesthood**

Melchizedek is mentioned in Genesis 14:17-20 as the King of Salem (Jerusalem) and priest of God who blessed Abraham. In Psalm 110:4, a promise was given that his priesthood would be forever. That promise was fulfilled in Jesus Christ as indicated in chapters five through seven of Hebrews where Melchizedek is identified as a type of Christ. Christ is the only one “after the order of Melchisedec.” In the Book of Hebrews we read:

And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec. . . . Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. . . . But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. (Hebrews 5:9, 10; 7:16, 24)

The only Christian priesthood mentioned in the New Testament is the spiritual priesthood of every believer. Peter wrote:

Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. . . . But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people. (1 Peter 2:5-9)

Notice that men are not singled out as the only ones holding this priesthood. It is for every Christian.

**Elders and Bishops**

In Mormonism, a man is ordained an elder upon entering the Melchizedek Priesthood. While the New Testament mentions elders (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5-6; 1 Peter 5:1-3), they are never referred to as part of a priesthood system. In 1 Timothy 3:1 and Titus 1:7 the word bishop appears in the *King James Version* of the Bible. But in the *New International Version* it is translated overseer. A bishop is not a separate office in the church but a continuation of Paul’s instructions about elders.

When Paul gave instructions to Timothy about leadership he did not mention anything about ordaining men to either the Aaronic or Melchizedek priesthoods. Instead, the emphasis was on choosing mature Christians:

And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. (2 Timothy 2:2)

**Seventy**

In the LDS Church a Seventy is a specific office in their Melchizedek Priesthood. He is a type of missionary and overseer of a given area of the church (*D&C* 107:25). Joseph Smith evidently read about Christ sending out seventy men in Luke 10:1 (KJV. The NIV Bible gives it as seventy two.) and turned this event into an ordination of men into a specific office of the priesthood. However, there is no mention in the New Testament of anyone ever being appointed to be a replacement of any of these men. Surely if such an office was to be part of the church it would have been mentioned in Acts or Paul’s letters.

**High Priest**

While there are thousands of High Priests in the LDS Church, there was only one Jewish High Priest at a time. The High Priest was part of the Aaronic Priesthood.
Hebrews 5:1 explains that the duties of the Jewish High Priest were to “offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.” Mormon High Priests do not offer any sacrifices so they are not following the Old Testament pattern. The Jewish High Priest served as an “example and shadow of heavenly things” (Hebrews 8:5).

Christ fulfilled this “when he offered up himself” (Hebrews 7:22-27). He is the only High Priest in the Christian church. Because Christ lives forever his priesthood can never pass to another. There are no references in the New Testament to any Christian holding the office of High Priest.

**Pastors**

Mormons will often use Ephesians 4:11 when trying to prove their system of priesthood. This verse reads: “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” The LDS Church, however, does not have any pastors. One of their apostles explained, “The term pastor does not refer to an order in the priesthood, like deacon, priest, elder . . . a bishop is a pastor; so is an elder who has charge of a branch . . .” (Doctrines of Salvation, by Joseph Fielding Smith, vol. 3, Bookcraft, 1956, pp. 108-109).

It is strange that the Mormons insist the words **apostles** and **teachers** are specific offices of the priesthood, but do not believe that **pastor** or **evangelist** are priesthood offices.

**Evangelist or Patriarch?**

Ephesians 4:11 mentions evangelists yet there is no such office in the Mormon Church. Instead, they claim that the original meaning has been lost and that an evangelist is supposed to be a patriarch. Joseph Fielding Smith explained: “An evangelist is a patriarch . . . The Patriarch to the Church holds the keys of blessing for the members of the Church” (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 3, pp. 108, 170).

LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie claimed:

> Having lost the true knowledge of the priesthood and its offices, …the false traditions of the sectarian world have applied the designation evangelist to traveling preachers, missionaries, and revivalists. (Mormon Doctrine, p. 242)

There is no evidence that the Greek word **evangelist** ever carried the meaning of **patriarch**. The Greek word translated **evangelist** carries the meaning of someone who proclaims the good news, not one who gives prayer blessings to church members.

In the LDS Church a patriarch gives a blessing to a member as a sort of spiritual blueprint for his/her life (D&C 107:39-56).

**Apostles and Prophets**

In Mormonism the president of the church is considered a prophet and apostle. LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie stated:

> Apostles and prophets are the foundation upon which the organization of the true Church rests. (Mormon Doctrine, by Bruce R. McConkie, Bookcraft, 1966 edition, p. 606)

In trying to establish the need for apostles and prophets in the church Mormons appeal to 1 Corinthians 12:28:

> And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

However, if one reads the entire section from verse 27 to verse 31 it is obvious that Paul is discussing various ministries or gifts in the early church, not listing specific offices of priesthood.

After Judas betrayed Christ there was one man chosen to replace him as part of the twelve apostles (Acts 1:21-23). To qualify for this position the person had to be an eyewitness to the full ministry of Jesus, including his resurrection. There is no evidence in the New Testament that anyone else was chosen to replace one of the twelve. Due to the requirements given in Acts apostles could not continue after the first generation of Christians.

Notice also that Paul lists apostles first and prophets second. In Mormonism the highest calling is the prophet of the church with the apostles serving under him. Also in Mormonism the office of teacher is bestowed on fourteen-year-old boys, not a man third in rank to the prophet and apostles.

Another problem for the LDS position is the concept of having three apostles in its First Presidency that oversees the Twelve Apostles. This adds up to fifteen apostles and is not the same as Jesus’ twelve apostles. If Mormonism is going to insist that the church today must be set up exactly as it was under Christ then they have too many apostles. The Mormons cannot have it both ways. Either they are a “restoration” that is exactly like the New Testament church or they are setting up something different from the early Christian church.
Conclusion

Thus we see that beside the problems with the historical claims of LDS priesthood restoration, Mormon priesthood concepts are not in accord with the New Testament. If they want to truly follow the New Testament model they will need to renounce their claims to Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods.

[Words in Bold in the quotes were done for emphasis and did not appear in the original.]

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Illinois Leaders Apologize to LDS

In an article in The Salt Lake Tribune on Thursday, April 8, 2004, we read:

Nearly 160 years after religious persecution in Illinois launched the Mormon exodus to the West, a delegation from the Land of Lincoln met Wednesday with LDS Church and state leaders to formally extend its regrets.

It was in 1844 that a mob murdered LDS Church founder Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum in a jail in Carthage, Ill. Two years later, thousands of Smith’s followers were expelled from Nauvoo and began the 1,200-mile trek to the shores of the Great Salt Lake.

For more background information on the reasons for the Mormon expulsion from Illinois, we recommend the following titles:

No Man Know My History, by Fawn Brodie
Cultures in Conflict: Mormon War in Illinois, by John Hallwas and Roger Launius
Kingdom on the Mississippi Revisited, edited by Roger Launius and John Hallwas

Extracts from Letters and Emails

July 2003. Wow!!! You guys must really be making a killing bashing some religion. Can i write a book and get in on it.

July 2003. I have, on many occasions, witnessed to Mormons with some of the same critical, blaming, and at times, downright offensive results that you yourselves have received. They are desperate people, seeking what Christians possess. Keep up the good work regardless of the reaction. Jesus would have it no other way. Thank you for your ministry.

July 2003. I just wonder what it will be like for you on your judgement day with all that has been said on this site!

July 2003. . . . firstly, thank you so much for posting everything you do on line - I rely on the internet to answer most questions I have and my life would have been completely taken over by the LDS church had it not been for your material.

July 2003. Thank you so much for all the research that you and your husband have done. . . . my favorite is Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book Of Mormon [Now incorporated in Joseph Smith’s Plagiarism of the Bible]. I wanted to thank you for writing it. After studying Mormonism and witnessing to Mormons for over 19 years, this book has really impressed me more than any other that the BOM was a fraud.
July 2003. I find it sad and depressing that you feel united not for something, but against something. . . . I KNOW that the Church of Jesus Christ is the ONLY true church, I KNOW Joseph Smith is the prophet of God, and I also KNOW that God would never leave us, that is why he sent us the latter day prophets. . . .

Aug. 2003. . . . I grew up Mormon here in Texas. I have been away from the Mormon church now for about 8 years. I just however, sent in a letter to the bishop to get off the church records. My parents were devastated. We’re still talking though. . . . My husband and I are believing and praying for a miracle to find God to free my family for the deception of Mormonism. . . . Thank you for all your hard work and for doing it in a loving, Christlike way. . . .

Aug. 2003. If you have questions about my church why don’t you ask instead of twisting the truth? . . . I know my church is true 150% it makes sense. I know I have Heavenly parents who love me and want the best for me. I KNOW THAT!!!

Aug. 2003. Beginning in 1978 the Lord led us to your publications. My wife and I had begun to study the Mormon church in depth, seeking answers to doctrinal questions originating in our examination of the Lectures on Faith, . . . “The Changing World of Mormonism,” and then “Mormonism: Shadow or Reality” soon became essentials in our search to know the truth of Mormonism, revealing raw and little known details about Mormonism drawn from Mormon sources that we would never otherwise have encountered, even after entire lifetimes as Mormons. . . . The Lord strengthened us to leave the Mormon church, together with our entire family, and we’ve thanked Him every day since for setting us free through believing faith in Him and His Way, His Truth, and His Life, as He is set forward Biblically.

Aug. 2003. You are some seriously disturbed individuals. I don’t know what happened to you and after reading all the lies you have purportd on the Mormon faith, I really don’t care. . . . Your site only serves to strengthen my beliefs in my faith. I KNOW the gospil is true.

Sept. 2003. First, thank-you for the incredible focus and drive. . . . Twelve years after I discovered the truth about Mormonism, I am still floored that one, gifted orator and a few cohorts could spin a lie that has lived so long and grown so big.

Even more shocking is that most of the people I know and love are Mormon, and I can never seem to get over the depth of the indoctrination or the complete irrationality that arises if engaged in civil discourse regarding the history of the church.

Sept. 2003. . . . Just wanted to tell you that I appreciate your website, I have had a chance to read a great deal over the last week or so and I really value the research . . . . I am currently leaving the Mormon church as I have finally quit blindly accepting everything and started researching the questions that I have had for years. Over the last couple of months I have found out that my suspicions were correct and that the church as we know it is, for lack of a better word, a Scam.

Sept. 2003. I just came across your website for the first time today. In the past years I have done my own research on the LDS faith, and nothing I found compares to the information you have on your website. I find it thoroughly researched and informative to read. Keep up the good work.

Sept. 2003. . . . I have read many of the letters to the editors and there seems to be a prevalent theme among them by members of the Church. That being “if I don’t know about it, it must not be true”. They expect to argue with you and yet have not taken the time to see the GLARING contradictions and changes that have taken place. It is easy to bare testimony that Joseph Smith was a prophet and that he restored the true church of Christ when you have not read statements by his own pen contradicting what we have today, when you have not seen the changes made to the Doctrine and Covenants that can bring a person only to one conclusion.

That conclusion being that if you give anyone enough time, and enough chances to change their stories, eventually it will become a great story. . . . I have the Gospel Link program and have kept your site in check by checking references (where available) and have found your research to be impeccable.

Oct. 2003. Thanks for your ongoing work to expose the truth. It amazes me that so many people will turn a blind eye, after all the facts have been laid out before them. They continue to walk in darkness and curse the light. We all need to remember to never put our trust in man, but instead to place our trust in the Lord. . . . They continue to exchange the truth for a lie; choosing to believe a man made organization and a false prophet over God.

Oct. 2003. Dear Mr. & Mrs. Tanner,

. . . I would like to commend you on your dedication to shining the light in the dark places. . . . I want to thank you also for your dedication on a personal level since the materials you have produced over the years are directly responsible for my leaving Mormonism and educating as many people as I can about the “Church”. Had your book The Changing World of Mormonism not fallen into my hands, I would probably still be trapped in the web spun by the Church. I am eternally grateful to you both and look forward to the day in Heaven when I can meet you in person . . . and thank you face-to-face.

Oct. 2003. I was active LDS for 30 years, including the mission thing and the other “must dos.” Lots of serious research convinced me it just wasn’t true. Just thought I’d share with you a comment my former LDS wife made during an attempted discussion about our belief differences and a last-ditch effort at reconciliation. She looked at me and said, “I don’t WANT to know what you know. It might change who I am.” So much for integrity...either intellectual or spiritual. Mormons are wonderful people, but they are not (as a group) noted for their craving of “truth at all costs.”
Oct. 2003. I find it interesting that so many mormon defenders base part (if not all) of their testimony on the fact that there are millions of mormons. What!? On judgement day is God going to count the number of members in each religion, declare the one with the most members the truth and reject the others?

Oct. 2003. I just now finished perusing your website. . . . It is a well-organized, easy-to-navigate site. Sadly, it is full to the brim with false doctrine and slander. Although I did not feel it was an overly vindictive or malicious site, which seems to be the general M.O. of anti-Mormon organizations, it still preaches falsehoods. . . . Truly, your site has strengthened my testimony of Joseph Smith and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (see JS-H 1:33).

Oct. 2003. . . . I just found the disturbing truth about the church aprox. a month ago. I want you to know you are in our prayers and we hope we can someday help you in your mission. We have made a personal decision to wage our own personal war against the lies. We will show the truth to whoever will listen (and even those who don’t) regardless of how many friends we loose or what the church tries to do to us.

Nov. 2003. Shame on you! Why don’t you spend your efforts promoting a religion of your choice instead of wasting time picking ours apart?

Nov. 2003. In 1998 I returned from my LDS mission . . . I had been skeptical of the veracity of church history and church doctrine from the age of 17, but accepted my “call to serve” anyway, hoping I’d “receive a testimony.” Well, I never did, despite endless praying, fasting, and obeying.

Upon my return home, I began a very intense study of church history and doctrines, and with the help of several organizations, including Utah Lighthouse Ministry, have successfully liberated my mind from the clutches of a “church” that refuses to follow the principle of honesty in regards to its own controversial past. . . . I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your well-documented research. Such a wealth of information has been very instrumental in my transition to a life free of mind-control.

Dec. 2003. I came across your website quite by accident, my biggest concern is that you are persecuting mormons and its not fair, . . .

Jan. 2004. As a person who was raised in a Christian home, but later fell into the trap of Mormonism, I am very thankful for you and the true information that you provide for others. I do not wish to ‘bash’ the Mormons, in fact, I am very prayerful for them. My husband and I have just recently been born again, and for the first time in our lives, we are seeing the whole picture of how the Mormon people are blinded by the twisted, half and complete untruths that they are taught.

Jan. 2004. On Tuesday, January 20, 2004, it will be one year since my name was removed from the records of the LDS church. I thank God everyday that I was able to find the strength and courage to be a true Christian and to recognize that I am truly one of His children. Thank you so much for your amazing resources! You provided much of the information that allowed me to make my decision.

Jan. 2004. First, let me say how wonderful your ministry is! I have come a long way in my search for truth, since leaving the church. I grew up a Mormon, and when I finally left home, I began to research for myself all about the church. My mother gave me your book . . . Shadow or Reality . . . and I use it all the time. . . .

Feb. 2004. I do believe that you need to re-read the Book of Mormon for yourself and pray sincerely about its truthfulness. I am an LDS member and can testify to you that this church is the one and only true church on the earth today, with all of the correct and proper principals of God’s church in ancient days. The structure of the church is even still the same as it was then, having a true prophet of the Lord lead us.

Feb. 2004. I was a mormon for 12 years. I converted when I was 18. I married a returned missionary in the temple . . . Seeds of doubt were planted in me shortly after joining the church but, it was 12 years later, at a woman’s conference that I realized the mistake I had made. I cannot remember the exact point the speaker was trying to make, just the sick feeling I had when I knew what I had lost over the last 12 years . . . I am now enjoying a close, intimate, relationship with God.

Mar. 2004. Hello, I just wanted to contact you and thank you for the work you are doing. I am a new Christian having left the LDS faith last July. I am in the process of having my name removed from their records. My entire family has followed me (and in some cases lead me) to do this and we are much happier now.

Mar. 2004. I dont know what is wrong with you people, you spend all your time trying to find bad in everyone else’s faith. joseph smith had many prophecy’s about deceivers in the last days. he is a true prophet and one day you will awake and see. dont waste our time and yours.

Mar. 2004. I was a member of the LDS church for over 20 years, temple endowed, the works. To make a very long story short God revealed himself to me and I am now a born again Christian . . .

Mar. 2004. your quotes are intended to mislead those who you know don’t take the time to look them up or who you know do not have access to LDS materials. your quotes are copy pasted and hacked from one page to another and you know they are. only you know why you do it. to make a living, but why else? truly, i pity your fate. you are true enemies to the kingdom of God and you know you are.
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Joseph Smith - The Making of a Prophet............. $36.00
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False Prophecies of Joseph Smith (Revised) ....... $4.50
Dick Baer - Concerned Christians

Hidden Gospels: How the Search for Jesus
Lost Its Way................................................ $13.50
Philip Jenkins - Oxford University Press

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Who are the Lamanites?

For over one hundred and seventy years LDS leaders and most LDS members have considered the American Indians to be the direct descendants of the Israelites in the Book of Mormon. However, in recent years there has been a growing number of LDS scholars claiming a limited geography for Book of Mormon lands, thus greatly reducing the possible number of people that could be literal descendants of Lehi’s family.

Dan Egan, writing for the Salt Lake Tribune, observed:

Generations of Mormons grew up with the notion that American Indians are descended from a lost tribe from the House of Israel, offspring of a Book of Mormon figure named Lehi, who left Jerusalem and sailed to the Americas around 600 B.C.

For faithful members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Lehi’s story is neither fable nor parable. It is truth. Historical fact . . . .

The problem is mainstream science has failed to back that story. Instead, archaeologists, linguists and genetic experts outside Mormon culture say all the evidence points to Asia as the place from which American Indians originated. (“BYU Gene Data May Shed Light on Origin of Book of Mormon’s Lamanites,” by Dan Egan, Salt Lake Tribune, November 30, 2000, p. B1)

Lost Tribes of Israel?

The origin of Native Americans has been a matter of speculation since the days of Columbus. In the early 1800’s many authors were promoting the concept that the Indians descended from part of the lost tribes of Israel. For example, in 1823 Pastor Ethan Smith of Vermont (no relationship to Joseph Smith) wrote his popular book, View of the Hebrews; or the Tribes of Israel in America. In it he referenced a number of books which argued for the Israelite ancestry of the American Indian. [See http://www.utlm.org/onlineresources/bomindianorigins.htm Dan Vogel’s book, Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon, can be read on line at http://www.xmission.com/~research/central/vogel1.htm]

While the Israelite/Indian theory is rejected by scientists today, it is reflected in Joseph Smith’s first literary work, the Book of Mormon, published in 1830 in New York.

Joseph Smith claimed that in 1827, on a hill in western New York, a heavenly being delivered into his hands a long hidden record of the “ancient inhabitants of the Americas” (1981 Introduction to the Book of Mormon). The angel instructed him that the record, “written upon gold plates,”

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gave “an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang” (“Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith,” at the front of the Book of Mormon).

**Book of Mormon**

The Book of Mormon portrays a land devoid of people after the flood, preserved by God for those who will “serve him” (Ether 13:2). After “the waters had receded from off the face of this land” God established two major civilizations. The book recounts that the first migration to the New World was the Jaredites at the time of the Tower of Babel. Their story does not appear at the beginning of the Book of Mormon, but is inserted near the end in the Book of Ether. This group was directed by God to gather their families, flocks, seeds, etc., and prepare for a voyage to a new land, which the Lord God had preserved for a righteous people.

And he had sworn in his wrath unto the brother of Jared, that whose should possess this land of promise, from that time henceforth and forever, should serve him, the true and only God, or they should be swept off. . . (Ether 2:7-8)

This passage claims that America was without inhabitants prior to the arrival of the Jaredites (about 2200 BC). They grew into a great nation but fell into wickedness and terrible wars. Prophets were then sent to warn the people that if they didn’t repent “God would send or bring forth another people to possess the land, by his power” (Ether 11:21). The last wicked leader was told that all the people would be slaughtered in war and that he alone would live to see the next righteous people God would bring to inherit the promised land.

The second civilization in the promised land, told at the beginning of the Book of Mormon, was made up of two separate groups, the family of Lehi and the followers of Mulek. They were all Israelites who, directed by God, fled Jerusalem about 600 BC and travelled to America. The Book of Mormon informs us that Lehi, a prophet, came out of the land of Jerusalem, who was a descendant of Manasseh, who was the son of Joseph who was sold into Egypt by the hands of his brethren. (Alma 10:3)

Lehi prophesied that others would be kept from the land as long as his descendants remained righteous:

There shall none come into this land save they shall be brought by the hand of the Lord.

Wherefore, this land is consecrated unto him whom he shall bring. . . . And behold, it is wisdom that this land should be kept as yet from the knowledge of other nations; for behold, many nations would overrun the land, that there would be no place for an inheritance.

Wherefore, I, Lehi, have obtained a promise, that inasmuch as those whom the Lord God shall bring out of the land of Jerusalem shall keep his commandments, they shall prosper upon the face of this land; and they shall be kept from all other nations, that they may possess this land unto themselves. (2 Nephi 1:6-9)

These passages leave no room for other people to have been in the land other than those mentioned in the record. Lehi’s family eventually divided into two groups, the righteous Nephites, who were “white” (2 Nephi 5:21), and the wicked Lamanites, who were cursed with a “skin of blackness” (Alma 3:6).

The other group was led by Mulek, a son of Biblical King Zedekiah (Helaman 6:10). They later joined with the Nephites.

After 550 years in the new world the people multiplied and filled the whole land:

And it came to pass that they did multiply and spread, and did go forth from the land southward to the land northward, and did spread insomuch that they began to cover the face of the whole earth, from the sea south to the sea north, from the sea west to the sea east. (Helaman 3:8)

Through the years they received various religious instructions, engaged in many wars, witnessed the appearance of Christ in the New World, and eventually met for their final battle at the Hill Cumorah. The Introduction in the current edition of the Book of Mormon further states:

After thousands of years, all were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are the principal ancestors of the American Indians.

Simon Southerton, a former LDS bishop and a molecular biologist, in his new book, Losing a Lost Tribe, observed:

There is no mention of any non-Israelite people in the New World during the thousand-year period covered by the Book of Mormon. The narrative includes descriptions of large civilizations with populations reaching into the millions and the practice of Christianity, a written language, metallurgy, and the farming of several Old World domesticated plants and animals. In addition, the immigrant Hebrew Christians found horses, oxen, cattle, and goats in the New World.

Anthropologists and archaeologists, including some Mormons and former Mormons, have discovered little to support the existence of these civilizations. Over a period of 150 years, as scholars have seriously studied Native American cultures and prehistory, evidence of a Christian civilization in the Americas has eluded the specialists. In Mesoamerica, which is regarded by Mormon scholars to be
the setting of the Book of Mormon narrative, research has uncovered cultures where the worship of multiple deities and human sacrifice were not uncommon. These cultures lack any trace of Hebrew or Egyptian writing, metallurgy, or the Old World domesticated animals and plants described in the Book of Mormon. (Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA, and the Mormon Church, Simon Southerton, Signature Books, 2004, Introduction, p. xiv-xv)

Revelations Regarding the Lamanites

The Book of Mormon prophesies that the day would come when the record of the Nephites and Lamanites would be given into the hands of the Gentiles, who will then perform missionary work among Lehi’s descendants:

And now, I [Nephi] would prophesy somewhat more concerning the Jews and the Gentiles. For after the book of which I have spoken shall come forth, and be written unto the Gentiles, . . . there shall be many which shall believe the words which are written; and they shall carry them forth unto the remnant of our seed.

And then shall the remnant of our seed know concerning us, how that we came out from Jerusalem, and that they are descendants of the Jews. (2 Nephi 30:3-4)

In one of Joseph Smith’s earliest revelations in 1828, God instructed him that

this testimony shall come to the knowledge of the Lamanites, . . . for this very purpose are these plates preserved, which contain these records . . . that the Lamanites might come to the knowledge of their fathers, and that they might know the promises of the Lord . . . (Doctrine and Covenants 3:18-20)

Joseph Smith and early Mormons believed they had a mandate from God to take the Book of Mormon to all Lehi’s descendants, the American Indians.

One problem facing those who would shrink the Book of Mormon lands to the Mayan areas of southern Mexico and Guatemala is reconciling their view with the pronouncements in the Doctrine and Covenants. Several revelations declare that all the Indians in America are descendants of the Lamanites, not just those in a very small area.

In March of 1830, God instructed Martin Harris, a local farmer, to financially assist with the printing of the Book of Mormon

that soon it may go to the Jew, of whom the Lamanites are a remnant, that they may believe the gospel. . . . (D&C 19:26-27)

In an effort to fulfill this purpose, in 1830 Joseph Smith gave several revelations instructing LDS leaders to go on a mission to the “Lamanites” or the descendants of the people of the Book of Mormon. Oliver Cowdery, one of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, was instructed:

Behold, I say unto thee, Oliver, . . . you shall go unto the Lamanites and preach my gospel unto them; . . . and no man knoweth where the city Zion shall be built, but it shall be given hereafter. Behold, I say unto you that it shall be on the borders by the Lamanites . . .

Thou shalt not leave this place until after the conference; . . . before thou shalt take thy journey among the Lamanites. (D&C 28:1-14)

Later Independence, Missouri, was revealed to be Zion (D&C 56:1-3) and thus “on the borders by the Lamanites” was obviously the western side of Missouri.

In the Doctrine and Covenants, section 32:1-2, October 1830, we read:

And now concerning my servant Parley P. Pratt, behold, I say unto him that as I live I will that he shall declare my gospel and learn of me, and be meek and lowly of heart.

And that which I have appointed unto him is that he shall go with my servants, Oliver Cowdery and Peter Whitmer, Jun., into the wilderness among the Lamanites.

In D&C 30:5-6, Joseph Smith gave a similar revelation to Peter Whitmer:

Behold, I say unto you, Peter, that you shall take your journey with your brother Oliver; . . . but give heed unto the words and advice of your brother, . . . for I have given unto him power to build up my church among the Lamanites; . . .

According to Joseph Smith, in 1831 God instructed Newel Knight to

take your journey into the regions westward, unto the land of Missouri, unto the borders of the Lamanites. (D&C 54:7-8)

If the Book of Mormon events took place in southern Mexico and Guatemala, as LDS scholars now want to claim, why would God send the missionaries to the western border of Missouri? The American Indians located between Missouri and the east coast were not descendants of the Indians in Mexico.

Joseph Smith and his successors have traditionally identified both North and South America as the habitation of the people of the Book of Mormon. Writing in 1842 Joseph Smith stated that the American Indians are the descendants of those who kept the record:

In this important and interesting book [the Book of Mormon], the history of ancient America is unfolded, from its first settlement by a colony that came from the Tower of Babel, at the confusion of languages, to the beginning of the fifth century of the Christian Era. We are informed
by these records that America in ancient times has been inhabited by two distinct races of people. The first were called Jaredites, and came directly from the Tower of Babel. The second race came directly from the city of Jerusalem, about six hundred years before Christ. They were principally Israelites, of the descendants of Joseph. . . . The principal nation of the second race fell in battle towards the close of the fourth century. The remnant are the Indians that now inhabit this country. (History of the Church, by Joseph Smith, Deseret Book, 1976, vol. 4, p. 537)

It is obvious from this quote that Smith did not believe that there were inhabitants in America before the time of the Tower of Babel. He stated that the “first settlement” was the Jaredites and the “second” group was “from the city of Jerusalem.” He consistently designated all Native Americans as “the remnant” of the Book of Mormon people.

In the book Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Smith is quoted as saying:

Much has been said and done of late by the general government in relation to the Indians (Lamanites) within the territorial limits of the United States. One of the most important points in the faith of the Church of the Latter-day Saints, through the fullness of the everlasting Gospel, is the gathering of Israel (of whom the Lamanites constitute a part) that happy time when Jacob shall go up to the house of the Lord, to worship Him in spirit and in truth, . . . when He will turn to them a pure language, and the earth will be filled with sacred knowledge . . .

The Book of Mormon has made known who Israel is, upon this continent. And while we behold the government of the United States gathering the Indians, and locating them upon lands to be their own, how sweet it is to think that they may one day be gathered by the Gospel! (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Deseret Book, 1979, pp. 92-93)

Joseph Smith’s account of the 1834 journey of “Zion’s Camp” was published in the Times and Seasons, an early LDS paper. In this account he claimed to know by “the spirit of the Almighty” that a skeleton found in Illinois was that of a warrior who was killed in the last Book of Mormon war:

We encamped on the bank of the [Illinois] river until Tuesday the 3rd during our travels we visited several of the mounds which had been thrown up by the ancient inhabitants of this county, Nephites, Lamanites, &c., and this morning I went up on a high mound, near the river, accompanied by the brethren. . . . The brethren procured a shovel and hoe, and removing the earth to the depth of about one foot discovered skeleton of a man, almost entire, and between his ribs was a Lamanitish arrow, which evidently produced his death, Elder Brigham Young retained the arrow . . . The contemplation of the scenery before us produced peculiar sensations in our bosoms; and the visions of the past being opened to my understanding by the spirit of the Almighty I discovered that the person whose skeleton was before us, was a white Lamanite, a large thick set man, and a man of God. He was a warrior and chieftain under the great prophet Omandagus, who was known from the hill Cumorah, or Eastern sea, to the Rocky Mountains. His name was Zelph. . . one of his thigh bones was broken, by a stone flung from a sling, while in battle, by the arrow found among his ribs, during the last great struggle of the Lamanites and Nephites. (Times and Seasons, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 1076. For more on Zelph, see http://www.utlm.org/onlineresources/zelph.htm)

Drawing of Joseph Smith preaching to the Indians.

Notice that Indians in North America are identified as Lamanites; no distinction is made between Indians in Central, South or North America. In all of the early LDS Church revelations and publications the message is the same; American Indians are declared to be descendants of the Book of Mormon people.

Proclamation of the Twelve

In 1845, the year after Joseph Smith’s death, the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints issued a “Proclamation” to the world leaders regarding the end times and the future restoration of the Lamanites. In this official statement the North and South American Indians are clearly identified as the descendants of the Lamanites. In it we read:

KNOW YE: — That the kingdom of God has come, as has been predicted by ancient prophets, . . . This High Priesthood or Apostleship, holds the keys of the kingdom of God, . . . Being established in these last days for the restoration of all things . . . in order to prepare the way for the coming of the Son of Man. . . We also bear testimony that the “Indians” (so called) of North and South America are a remnant of the tribes of Israel, as is now made manifest by the discovery and revelation of their ancient oracles and records.
And that they are about to be gathered, civilized, and made one nation in this glorious land. . . .

For be it known unto them that we now hold the keys of the priesthood and kingdom which is soon to be restored unto them. . . . The city of Zion, with its sanctuary and priesthood, and the glorious fulness of the gospel, will constitute a standard which will put an end to jarring creeds and political wranglings, by uniting the republics, states, provinces, territories, nations, tribes, kindred, tongues, people, and sects of North and South America in one great and common bond of brotherhood. . . .

Let the government of the United States also continue to gather together, and to colonize the tribes and remnants of Israel (the Indians), and also to feed, clothe, succor, and protect them, and endeavor to civilize and unite; and also to bring them to the knowledge of their Israelitish origin . . .

He has given us the Holy Priesthood and Apostleship, and the keys of the kingdom of God, to bring about the restoration of all things as promised by the holy prophets of old.—And we know it.

He has revealed the origin and the Records of the aboriginal tribes of America, and their future destiny.—And we know it. (Proclamation of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ, of Latter-day Saints, New York, April 6th, 1845, sixteen page pamphlet)

This statement by the LDS Twelve Apostles takes on official status as there was no president of the church at the time. Joseph Smith was killed in 1844 and his successor had not been appointed. In 1845 the Twelve Apostles constituted the highest authority in the LDS Church.

**Brigham Young’s Era**

The collective writings of LDS leaders since the days of Joseph Smith have clearly taught that the descendants of the “Lamanites” are scattered across all of North and South America, as well as in the islands of the Pacific.

Preaching in the Salt Lake Tabernacle in 1853, Brigham Young identified the Indians in Utah Territory as Lamanites:

Do you pray for Israel? You will no doubt answer in the affirmative. These Indians are the seed of Israel, through the loins of Joseph who was sold into Egypt; they are the children of Abraham, and belong to the chosen seed; were it not so, you would never have seen them with dark, red skins. This is in consequence of the curse that has been placed upon them, which never would have come upon them . . . had their fathers not violated the order of God . . . They are of the House of Israel . . . We are here in the mountains, with these Lamanites for our neighbors . . . Never permit yourself to sleep in your houses until your doors are made perfectly secure, that the Indians cannot come in and kill you in your sleep. . . . Are you sure you have faith enough to control the ungovernable nature of the Lamanites, or subdue a Gentile mob? (Journal of Discourses, vol. 1, pp. 106-107)

President Young also declared that the Nephites and Lamanites “are the fathers of the present aborigines of our country” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 2, p. 179). Young often made reference to the American Indians in Utah Territory as “Lamanites.” (See Journal of Discourses, vol. 1, pp. 162, 170-171; vol. 5, p. 236; vol. 7, p. 336; vol. 11, p. 264)

In 1871 Apostle Orson Pratt declared:

Let me here observe that the Book of Mormon, . . . gives an account of the first settlement of this country by these inhabitants, showing that they are not the ten tribes, but they are the descendants of one tribe, and they came to this country about six hundred years before Christ. The people when they first landed consisted of only two or three families; and instead of landing on the northwest coast of North America, they landed on the southwest coast of South America. . . . About fifty years before Christ the Nephites, as the righteous portion was called, sent forth numerous colonies into North America. Among these colonies there was one that came and settled on the southern borders of our great lakes. Both nations became very wicked . . . (“The Blessings of Joseph—The American Indians,” Journal of Discourses, vol. 14, pp. 10-11)

Pratt then described the appearance of Christ to the people in America and how he ordained twelve apostles:

The twelve disciples went forth and preached the Gospel, commencing in South America, and then went into North America, until all the people both in North and South America were converted. . . . About two centuries after this, the Nephites fell into wickedness: the Lamanites, who dwelt in the southern portion of South America, also apostatized; and they began to wage war with the Nephites, who were their enemies; and being exceedingly strong they drove all the Nephites out of South America and followed them with their armies up into the north country, and finally overpowered them. They were gathered together south of the great lakes in the country which we term New York. The Lord ordered that the plates on which the records were kept should be hid, and one of the prophets knowing that it was the last struggle of his nation, hid them in the hill Cumorah, in Ontario county, in the State of New York . . . (Journal of Discourses, vol. 14, p. 11)

The concept that the Nephites and Lamanites occupied all of North and South America was consistently taught throughout the nineteenth century.
Twentieth Century Statements

The designation of American Indians as Lamanites continued throughout the twentieth century. In a 1911 message of the LDS First Presidency we read:

The revealer of these [Book of Mormon] plates, who proclaimed himself a messenger from God, gave his name as Moroni, and stated that he was one of many prophets who, when in mortality, had ministered to a people called Nephites, a branch of the house of Israel, formerly inhabiting this land. The Nephites were the civilized ancestors of the degenerate Lamanites, or American Indians. The writings of these prophets, . . . had been buried in a hill anciently called Cumorah, in which place of deposit the youthful prophet, directed by the angel, discovered them. (Messages of the First Presidency, compiled by James R. Clark, Vol. 4, pp. 232-33)

Apostle Orson F. Whitney, speaking at the October 1918 LDS Conference, stated:

There was an American prophet named Nephi. He came from Jerusalem six hundred years before the birth of the Savior—came with his father, Lehi, and an Israelitish colony, and both South and North America were eventually peopled by their descendants. Those who followed Nephi were known as Nephites, while a degenerate faction who had for their leader Nephi’s brother Laman, were termed Lamanites. These were the ancestors of the American Indians. (Conference Report, October 1918, p. 39)

Speaking in 1922 Apostle George F. Richards declared:

Afterwards, Mulek, with a colony from Jerusalem came to this country. These colonies were located in the southern part of North America, in Central America, and in the northern part of South America. And all this land, as well as that into which they migrated to the north and to the south was designated by the Lord as the land of promise. (Conference Report, October 1922, p. 81)

Apostle Melvin J. Ballard, in 1923, taught that there were millions of Lamanites in North and South America:

For this very purpose, therefore, were these plates preserved, to bring to pass the redemption of the children of father Lehi, known in North and South America, in Central America, and in Mexico, as the American Indians and some of the natives upon the isles of the sea. . . . I have seen the hand of the Lord at work in preparing the way for their redemption, . . . when these thousands, yea these millions of Lamanites on this Western Continent who have the blood of Lehi in their veins, or of his descendants, shall be touched by the power of the Almighty, and the day of their redemption, when it does come, will be one of power. (Conference Report, October 1923, p. 29)

One of the recommended books for a missionary to read is Jesus the Christ, by LDS Apostle James E. Talmage. He identified the American Indians as Lamanites:

The Mission of Columbus and Its Results. — Unto Nephi, son of Lehi, was shown the future of his people, including the degeneracy of a branch thereof, afterward known as Lamanites and in modern times as American Indians. The coming of . . . Columbus; and the coming of other Gentiles to this land, out of captivity, is equally explicit. . . . The establishment of a great Gentile nation on the American continent, the subjugation of the Lamanites or Indians, the war between the newly established nation and Great Britain, . . . are set forth with equal clearness in the same chapter [I Nephi 13]. (Jesus the Christ, by James E. Talmage, Deseret Book, 1976 ed., p. 757)

In another popular book by Apostle Talmage, Articles of Faith, we read:

The Nephites advanced in the arts of civilization, built large cities, and established prosperous commonwealths; yet they often fell into transgression, and the Lord chastened them by permitting their hereditary enemies to be victorious. It is traditionally believed that they spread northward, occupying a considerable area in Central America, and then expanded eastward and northward over part of what is now the United States of America. The Lamanites, while increasing in numbers, fell under the curse of divine displeasure; they became dark in skin and benighted in spirit, forgot the God of their fathers, lived a wild nomadic life, and degenerated into the fallen state in which the American Indians — their lineal descendants — were found by those who rediscovered the western continent in later times.

The final struggles between Nephites and Lamanites were waged in the vicinity of the Hill Cumorah, in what is now the State of New York, resulting in the destruction of the Nephites as a nation, about 400 A.D. (Articles of Faith, by James E. Talmage, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982 ed., p. 260; 1984 ed., pp. 235-236)

LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie explained:

When Columbus discovered America, the native inhabitants, the American Indians as they were soon to be designated, were a people of mixed blood and origin. Chiefly they were Lamanites, but such remnants of the Nephite nation as had not been destroyed had, of course, mingled with the Lamanites. . . . Thus the Indians were Jews by nationality (D. & C. 57:4), their forefathers having come out from Jerusalem, from the kingdom of Judah. (2 Ne. 33:8-10) . . . But with it all, for the great majority of the descendants of the original inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere, the dominant blood lineage is that of Israel. The Indians are repeatedly called Lamanites in the revelations to the Prophet, and the promise is that in due course they “shall blossom as the rose” (D. & C. 49:24), that is, become again
a white and delightful people as were their ancestors a
great many generations ago. (Mormon Doctrine, by Bruce
R. McConkie, Bookcraft, 1979 ed., pp. 32-33)

LDS Apostle LeGrand Richards wrote in A Marvelous
Work and a Wonder:

The Book of Mormon gives a very definite account of
who the American Indians are and how they came to the
western hemisphere. The first people of whom we have
record who occupied the western hemisphere were the
Jaredites . . .

Lehi and his family were led from Jerusalem 600 B.C.
by the hand of God to the land of America . . . However,
shortly after their arrival there, because of the wickedness
of the followers of two of the sons of Lehi—Laman and
Lemuel—the Lord cursed them, and to separate them from
their brothers caused that their skin become dark . . .

Those who were thus cursed succeeded in destroying
all the white people, save twenty-four souls, about A.D. 384.

The dark-skinned people who occupied the land of
America from that time on were called, in the Book of
Mormon, Lamanites, which are the people known generally
as the American Indians, who are of the house of Israel.
(A Marvelous Work and a Wonder; by LeGrand Richards,

At the October 1950 LDS Conference, Apostle Spencer
W. Kimball, who later became the 12th President of the
LDS Church, explained:

You will be interested to know that there are some
forty thousand Lamanite members of the Church in
the world, including the islands of the sea. There are probably
ten thousand Lamanite members in North America in the
Mexican missions and the Indian mission. There are 902
Lamanite members in the English-speaking missions in
the Eastern, Northern, Central States, and other North
American missions. . . . We have baptized 1823 Lamanites
in the last two-and-a-half years in the three missions that
specialize in Lamanite proselyting in North America.
(Conference Report, October 1950, p. 66)

Spencer W. Kimball was called the apostle to the
Lamanites. In the preface of the book The Teachings of
Spencer W. Kimball we read:

President Kimball’s patriarchal blessing, which he has
quoted on occasion for its indication that he had a special
calling to serve the Lamanites, says more than just that.
Note the several elements “(1) You will preach the gospel
to many people, (2) but more especially to the Lamanites,
(3) for the Lord will bless you with the gift of the language
and power to portray before that people the gospel in great
plainness.”

As to (1), the scope of his preaching effort, there is
no leader of the Church, past or contemporary, who has
preached to so many people. As to (2), he has reached out
especially to the Lamanites, the North American Indians
and all the peoples of Central and South America and
Polynesia who share that heritage. As to (3), one cannot
doubt that he has spoken with power and plainness both to
Lamanites and to the rest of Israel. (The Teachings of Spencer
W. Kimball, Compiled by Edward Kimball, Bookcraft, 1982,
p. xix)

Further on in the same book Kimball is quoted as saying:

Who are the Lamanites? The term Lamanite includes
all Indians and Indian mixtures, such as the Polynesians,
the Apache, the Mohawk, the Navajo, and others. It is a large
group of great people. . . .

Lamanites share a royal heritage. I should like to address
my remarks to you, our kinsmen of the isles of the sea and
the Americas. . . . There are probably sixty million of you
on the two continents and on the Pacific Islands, all related
by blood ties. (The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, p. 596)

In the October 1985 LDS Conference, Apostle Gordon
B. Hinckley, who later became the 15th president of the
church, referred to the thousands of people attending the
dedication of the Mexico City Temple as Lehi’s descendants:

Now, recently, when the Mexico City Temple was
dedicated, they came by the thousands. . . . Most of them
have the blood of Lehi in their veins. The shackles of
darkness have fallen from their eyes, as promised by the
prophets of the Book of Mormon. They have become “a pure
and a delightful people” (2 Ne. 30:6). (Ensign, Nov. 1985)

At the October 1986 LDS Conference, H. Verlan
Andersen, of the First Quorum of the Seventy, commented:

During the past few years, my wife and I have served as
missionaries in Latin American countries. . . . It has been
deeply satisfying to work with those lovable and believing
people and to see the prophecies of the Book of Mormon
being fulfilled as hundreds of thousands of the descendants
of Lehi join the Church. The day of the Lamanites has truly
arrived. (“Missionary Work Is the Lifeblood of the Church,”
H. Verlan Andersen, Ensign, Nov. 1986, p. 23)

In 1987 President Hinckley observed that seventy-
five percent of the people attending the dedication of the
Guatemala City Temple were “descendants of Father Lehi”
(Ensign, March, 1987, p. 2).

The designation of Indians in South America as
“Lamanites” has become so accepted that members in
Ecuador even use the designation. In the June 1992 Ensign
we read:

The dominant culture here [in Otavalo, Ecuador] is that
of the Otavalo Indians . . .
Otalveno Church members designate themselves “Lamanites” and refer to members of mixed European and Indian descent as “Latinos.” No one seems bothered by the distinction, though it is seldom heard in other areas of the country, where Latinos are in the majority....

At a stake conference, Lamanite and Latino members greet each other warmly as brother and sister. (“Ecuador,” by Don L. Searle, Ensign, June 1992, p. 33)

When the San Diego, California, Temple was dedicated in 1993, there were so many Spanish-speaking people in attendance that three sessions were conducted in Spanish. President Hinckley prayed:

This temple will be used by many of the sons and daughters of father Lehi. We thank Thee for their faithfulness. We thank Thee for this day when Thou art remembering Thine ancient covenant in behalf of these Thy children, from whose eyes the shackles of darkness are now falling. Bless the posterity of Lehi, we pray Thee. (“News of the Church,” Ensign, July 1993, p. 77)

At the October 1995 LDS Conference Ted Brewerton, emeritus member of the Seventy, identified all the Indians in the Americas as descendants of Lehi:

Many migratory groups came to the Americas, but none was as important as the three mentioned in the Book of Mormon. The blood of these people flows in the veins of the Blackfoot and the Blood Indians of Alberta, Canada; in the Navajo and the Apache of the American Southwest; the Inca of western South America; the Aztec of Mexico; the Maya of Guatemala; and in other native American groups in the Western Hemisphere and the Pacific islands.

These choice native people recognize the truth of the Book of Mormon, which was recorded for them by their own ancestors. (“The Book of Mormon: A Sacred Ancient Record,” Ted E. Brewerton, Ensign, Nov. 1995, p. 30)

Current LDS authors have followed their church leaders in identifying American Indians as Lamanites. The article “Native Americans” in the Encyclopedia of Mormonism, vol. 3, contains a long discussion of the LDS Church’s missionary efforts among the American Indians. The terms “Lamanite” and “Native American” are used interchangeably. The article also mentions George P. Lee, the first Native American to serve as a General Authority:

Speaking in the April LDS Conference in 1976, George P. Lee equated the Navajos with the Lamanites:

I have a testimony of the Book of Mormon, the history of my forefathers. America was founded so that the gospel could be restored and so that this sacred record could be brought back to my people and to anyone who will listen. (“But They Were in One,” George P. Lee, Ensign, May 1976, p. 99; see Salt Lake City Messenger No. 73)

Speaking at the October 1997 LDS Conference, President Hinckley said:

We were recently with the Navajo Nation at Window Rock in Arizona....

It was difficult to hold back the tears as we mingled with these sons and daughters of Father Lehi. In my imagination I have seen him weeping for his progeny who for so long have walked in poverty and pain.

But the shackles of darkness are falling. ... They have come to know and love the gospel. They have become pure and delightsome. (“Look to the Future,” Gordon B. Hinckley, Ensign, Nov. 1997, p. 67)

While attending the 1999 dedication of the new temple in Guayaquil, Ecuador, President Hinckley commented:

It has been a very interesting thing to see the descendants of Father Lehi in the congregations that have gathered in the temple. So very many of these people have the blood of Lehi in their veins, and it is just an intriguing thing to see their tremendous response and their tremendous interest. (“News of the Church,” Ensign, Oct. 1999, p. 74)

At the dedication of the temple in Cochabamba, Bolivia, in April of 2000, President Hinckley prayed for the descendants of Lehi:

We remember before Thee the sons and daughters of Father Lehi. Wilt Thou keep Thine ancient promises in their behalf. ... May they recognize their Redeemer and be faithful and true Saints of the Most High. (“News of the Church,” July 2000, p. 74)

President Hinckley obviously intends the Native Americans to believe they are “sons and daughters of Father Lehi,” that they “have the blood of Lehi in their veins,” and that they are literally Lehi’s descendants.

Book of Mormon Lands

If Lamanites can be found anywhere from North America to Chile, one assumes those areas are part of the Book of Mormon lands. However, BYU professor John L. Sorenson tries to avoid the obvious implications of the church leaders’ statements by focusing on internal clues to Book of Mormon sites. He maintains that
the Church took no position on specific Book of Mormon locations. . . . Church authorities from the time of Joseph Smith to the present have come to no consensus, made no authoritative statement, and reported no definitive solution to the question of Book of Mormon geography. (An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon, John L. Sorenson, Deseret Book, 1985, p. 4)

By narrowing the discussion to identifying “specific” and “definitive” Book of Mormon sites, instead of general outlines for Book of Mormon lands, he makes it seem that there are no authoritative statements about the location for Lamanites. Thus he avoids the problem that church leaders for the past one hundred and seventy years have maintained that the Book of Mormon lands included North and South America, and all American Indians have been described as descendants of Lehi’s family.

Sorenson tries to determine the geography for the Book of Mormon by cross-referencing different entries to estimate distances between cities mentioned in the book. However, his model requires the Nephites to change their directional system (Ancient American Setting, p. 38), so that North/South becomes East/West. The “East Sea” is thus located north of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. If Lehi’s group could navigate across the Indian Ocean and the Pacific to land in the Americas, we assume they could determine North and South from the heavens. Then why would they change their directional concept?

John L. Sorenson and Matthew Roper argue for a very limited Book of Mormon geography yet concede it must accommodate

a population of more than two million. At their greatest the inhabitants occupied numerous cities with extensive public buildings, kept many written records, fought in large-scale wars, and carried on extensive trade. (“Before DNA,” by John L. Sorenson and Matthew Roper, Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, vol. 12, no. 1, 2003, pp. 7-8)

Unfortunately for the LDS Church, no evidence of such a Christian/Israelite civilization has ever been found. In fact, shrinking the Book of Mormon lands to 400 miles of Mesoamerica should increase the probability of finding some trace of the civilization.

Simon Southerton commented:

Despite wide acceptance by leaders and members of this global view of Book of Mormon geography, most “serious” Book of Mormon scholars, particularly those at Brigham Young University, maintain that this hemispheric geography is out of the question. The scholars at BYU have experienced great difficulty in trying to align descriptions of travel times, population growth, and the geographical proximity of events with the vast territories of North and South America. Throughout the 1,000-year history of the Nephites and Lamanites, their major population centers were relatively fixed within several days march of each other. One would expect cultures of the type described in the Book of Mormon to have left significant traces of their presence. . . .

Dozens of alternative models of geography have sprung up over the years. . . However, there is only one serious contender accepted by most Mormon academics, which proposes that most Book of Mormon events took place in a restricted part of Mesoamerica. Only in Mesoamerica are there ruins of civilizations of the magnitude evident in the Book of Mormon.

LDS scholars support this local or “limited geography” approach to Book of Mormon topography as presented by Professor John L. Sorenson . . . The Lehite lands, according to his view, must have been restricted to a 400-mile-long section of Mesoamerica that spans the cultural region of southern Mexico and northern Central America. . . . There are obvious difficulties with the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, not the least of which is that a 125-mile crossing, as the crow flies, is a formidable “day and a half’s journey” on foot. Another glitch is that the east and west seas mentioned in scripture have to be shifted almost 90 degrees because they are essentially south and north of the narrow neck of land. (Losing a Lost Tribe, pp. 156-57)

Other models for Book of Mormon geography have been suggested. Ralph Olsen, LDS author and chemist, has proposed a totally different Book of Mormon geography. He feels the Malay Peninsula in Southeast Asia is the true location of the story (“A Malay Site for Book of Mormon Events,” Ralph A. Olsen, Sunstone, March 2004, p. 30). His map and theory seem just as plausible as Sorenson’s and he doesn’t need to change the directional system.

Vern Holley, in Book of Mormon Authorship, feels the author of the Book of Mormon had the Great Lakes area of North American in mind for his story. While we are not advocates of Mr. Holley’s theory that Solomon Spalding wrote the Book of Mormon, he does have a good alternate setting for a limited geography for Smith’s story. His map of the area even has some parallel names with the Book of Mormon (http://sidneyrigdon.com/vern/vernP3.htm, see page 54).

Joseph Smith could have easily adapted such a local area for his story without the need to borrow it from some other source. Having a mental picture of an area with which one is already familiar would make it easier to tell a story to someone and keep the various locations in mind. Also, the Book of Mormon would have a ready audience since there was great public interest in the mound builders said to have inhabited the areas of New York and the Ohio valley.
LDS scholars have dismissed the Great Lakes area since they are looking for locations that have remains of large cities, like those of the Mayas. By limiting the Book of Mormon lands to Mesoamerica LDS scholars have supposedly solved the problem of knowing where to look for ruins. It also eliminates the problem of how to feed and move mass armies from southern Mexico to New York. Mesoamerica is full of ruins. Unfortunately, the buildings are adorned with carvings of various deities and Mayan inscriptions, and do not refer to Israelites. In order to explain why Book of Mormon cities have not been found some Mormons have used 3 Nephi 8. This chapter tells that at the time of Christ’s crucifixion, “in the thirty and fourth year” after Christ’s birth, God brought judgment upon the wicked people in America. (One wonders why such judgment wasn’t poured out on those in Jerusalem, where Christ actually died?) There were great earthquakes in Book of Mormon lands “till the buildings thereof had fallen to the earth,” some cities were “sunk,” terrible fires destroyed others, whirlwinds carried people off, until many people and cities were destroyed. However, other cities were spared. This devastation continued for three hours, until “the whole face of the land was changed.” This was followed by three days of “thick darkness.” The righteous survivors were then able to gather at the temple in Bountiful to see the risen Christ. Obviously the area was still recognizable and the temple still standing. Also, since later writers in the Book of Mormon do not seem to have a problem determining where these various cities were located, one would think they could be found today. But where is the evidence of such cities and catastrophic events in Mesoamerica at approximately 32-34 AD?

Language Problems

The Book of Mormon states that the people spoke Hebrew but wrote in reformed Egyptian (1 Nephi 1:2; Mosiah 1:4; Mormon 9:33). Writing in 1923, B. H. Roberts, LDS general authority and historian, was already aware that there was a serious problem regarding the vast number of languages in America compared with the Book of Mormon claim that the people spoke Hebrew. Roberts quoted from Frederick Dellenbaugh, author of The North Americans of Yesterday:

“Not only does the differentiation of the stock languages indicate antiquity, but that of the dialects adds strong testimony. . . . the difference which is presented between the Cakchiquel and the Maya dialects could not have arisen in less than two thousand years.” [The North Americans of Yesterday, 1906, pp. 19-22]

The above, it must be remembered, is said of a difference between two American dialects, not between two stocks. . . . Obviously it would take a very much longer time to produce the divergence represented by language stocks than by dialects. And if, as stated in the passage above, the difference between the Cakchiquel and Maya dialects could not have arisen in less than 2,000 years, how many thousand years would it require to produce language stocks—which are so much more widely divergent than dialects? And from the Book of Mormon standpoint, it should be remembered, all these stocks came into existence since the Nephite debacle at Cumorah 400 A.D. (Studies of the Book of Mormon, by B. H., Roberts, edited by Brigham D. Madsen, Signature Books, 1992, p. 81)

Roberts goes on to quote from the 1902 book, The Discovery of America:

John Fiske says: “The aboriginal American, as we know him, with his language and legends, his physical and mental peculiarities, his social observances and customs, is most emphatically a native and not an imported article. . . . There is not a particle of evidence to suggest any connection or intercourse between aboriginal America and Asia within any such period as the last twenty thousand years.” (The Discovery of America, by John Fiske, vol. 1, p. 24, as quoted in Studies of the Book of Mormon, p. 86)

One hundred years later, scientists still maintain the same position. LDS scholars John L. Sorenson and Matthew Roper concede what non-LDS scholars have been saying for years. The multiple languages found in the Americas at the time of Columbus could not have developed from Hebrew in just one thousand years (the time between the end of the Book of Mormon record and the arrival of Europeans). People have lived in America for thousands of years, with multiple languages, prior to the time the Jaredites supposedly landed. In their article “Before DNA,” LDS authors Roper and Sorenson acknowledge:

Indications are strong that there was considerable linguistic differentiation in Mesoamerica as early as 1500 B.C. Latter-day Saint students of the Book of Mormon should understand that long prior to Lehi’s day, Mesoamerica was already linguistically complex. Moreover, many archaeological sites were occupied continuously, or so it appears, for thousands of years without clear evidence in the material remains of any replacement of the culture of the inhabitants. That continuity suggests, although it does not prove, that many of those people probably did not change their tongues.

All this means that the old supposition by some Latter-day Saints that the Hebrew tongue used by Lehi’s and Mulek’s immigrant parties became foundational for all ancient American languages is impossible. (Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, vol. 12, no. 1, p. 17)
Simon Southerton commented on the complexity of languages in the Americas:

Another impetus for the restricted geography is the obvious fact that the Americas were widely inhabited thousands of years before the arrival of the Jaredites in 2200 BC. The astounding array of cultures and languages encountered by early Europeans could not have originated from the Hebrew said to have been spoken by the Nephites and Lamanites of AD 400. The only plausible explanation for Mormon apologists is that the two groups of Semitic immigrants—the Lamanites (Lamanites and Nephites) and Mulekites—occupied a restricted area in the Americas (Losing a Lost Tribe, p. 159)

Others in the Land?

Besides the language problem, there is also the problem of population sizes in the Book of Mormon. The small immigrant groups in the story simply reproduce at an impossible rate for a civilization without the aid of advanced medicine and technology for mass food production. Lehi’s group and Mulek’s followers, arriving approximately 600 BC, would probably not include more than thirty to fifty adults of child-bearing age. (See the chapter “Multiply Exceedingly: Book of Mormon Population Sizes,” by John C. Kunich, in New Approaches to the Book of Mormon.) Yet after only four hundred years the Lamanites, alone, suffered the loss of 3,000 men in battle. Since most armies represent a fraction of the total population, one is faced with an amazing population number at that time. Southerton gave the following summary of Book of Mormon battle numbers:

About one-third of the Book of Mormon is devoted to a rather tedious procession of battles between the Lamanites and Nephites. The casualties arising from these conflicts provide frequent indications of the size of these displaced Hebrew populations. For example, in 190 BC a single battle claims the lives of 3,000 Lamanites (Mosiah 9:18). By 90 BC similar battles claim almost 20,000 lives (Alma 2:19). It is not uncommon for tens of thousands to be slain in a single year in the Book of Mormon. In addition, the book notes the departure of thousands of men, women, and children from the main centers of civilization into the “land northward.”

. . . During the last hundred years of their recorded history, these two nations fight against each other in a seemingly irrational series of wars in which hundreds of thousands are slain. In the final battle, in approximately AD 385, a massive Lamanite army slaughters 230,000 Nephite men, women, and children (Morm.6). The Lamanite population capable of sustaining an army of that size, capable of inflicting such carnage, must surely number into the millions. (Losing a Lost Tribe, pp. 12-13)

To get around this obvious population dilemma, LDS apologists maintain that the indigenous people joined with the Jaredites and Lehites, thus allowing for faster growth than could have been accomplished otherwise. Southerton points out the problems for LDS apologists who argue that the Jaredites and Lehites intermarried with indigenous people. The Book of Mormon simply does not mention any other groups:

An important consequence of this compression of the geography and acknowledgment of the presence of non-Book of Mormon peoples is having to explain how the large numbers of native peoples who lived throughout the Americas interacted with those described in the golden-plate account. Unfortunately, the Book of Mormon offers little assistance in this regard. There is no indication in the record that the Jaredite or Lehite parties came into contact with any native people whose origin could not be accounted for in the book . . . (Losing a Lost Tribe, pp. 159-160)

LDS scholars acknowledge that Lehi’s group was a small colony when it landed but argue that they soon incorporated indigenous people into their society. They maintain that many of these other people probably joined the Lamanites, which would explain their rapid growth. Thus the term “Lamanite” does not need to mean that one was a descendant of Laman. Brent Metcalfe responds to this argument in his article “Reinventing Lamanite Identity”:

Indeed, a careful reading of the Book of Mormon reveals that the narrative says nothing of indigenous “others” and in fact prophetically precludes them. . . .

When ancestry is identified, all post-Jaredite peoples—Nephites and non-Nephites, good and bad, groups and individuals—consistently trace their pedigree back to the founding Israelite immigrants. Ammon, for instance, says that he is “a descendant of Zarahemla” (Mosiah 7:13; see also v.3) who “was a descendant of Mulek, and those who came with him into the wilderness” (Mosiah 25:2), and Mulek was “the son of Zedekiah” the Jewish King (Hel. 6:10; cf. Omni 1:15). Nephitic dissident Coriantumr “was [also] a descendant of Zarahemla” (Hel. 1:15). . . .

Lamanite king Lamoni, readers learn, is “a descendant of Ishmael” (Alma 17:21; cf. V.19). Centuries after the Lehiites disembark on their new promised land, a group of Lamanites “who joined the people of the Lord” did not include Nephite dissenters “but they were actual descendants of Laman and Lemuel” (Alma 56:3).

Lamanite doesn’t necessarily refer to a descendant of Laman, nor Nephte to a descendant of Nephi—but they are universally described by Book of Mormon narrators as Israelite. . . .

Book of Mormon readers are not told of a single Nephite or Lamanite who descended from anyone other than an Israelite. . . . [LDS scholars] have yet to explain cogently
why all Book of Mormon characters—God included—
seemingly know nothing about the hordes of indigenous
people that the revisionist theories require; why Joseph
Smith’s revelation of the Book of Mormon is trustworthy
enough to extract a detailed limited geography, yet his
revelations about Amerindian identity and origins are
flawed, if not erroneous; and why their word should count
more than that of LDS prophets on the one hand, and that
of secular scholars on the other. (“Reinventing Lamanite
Identity,” by Brent Lee Metcalfe, Sunstone, March 2004,
pp. 21-23)

At the August 2004 Sunstone Symposium, David
Anderson presented a paper entitled “The Secrets of Nim’s
[Necessary, Inferred Mayans]: When the Book of Mormon
was Dictated, Were There ‘Others’ in it?” He outlined
the four stages defenders have gone through in trying to
identify the Book of Mormon people:

1. Originally Mormons taught all American Indians are
Israelites and descend from Lehi.

2. When research started pointing to Asians as the ancestors
of the American Indian, Mormons revised their claims to say
there may have been others in the land but they didn’t mix with
the Israelites.

3. As the population numbers in the Book of Mormon came
under greater scrutiny, it was claimed that others in the land
mixed with the Lamanites (and possibly with the Mulekites),
thus enabling the huge growth.

4. Now that DNA has established that almost all American
Indians descend from Siberians, LDS defenders claim the
descendants of Lehi intermarried and lost their genetic identity.
(My summary of his points, not his specific wording. A tape of
the talk can be ordered from http://www.sunstoneonline.com.)

If the Israelites of the Book of Mormon landed
in an already populated country why is there no specific
reference to these other people? Were there no battles for
supremacy worthy of mention? No conversion stories of
these “others” when they turned to the God of Israel? Surely
encountering various pagan groups, who far outnumbered
Lehi’s group, all speaking different languages, would have
merited a line or two. Are we to believe that these pagans
meekly joined the small group of Israelites? All through
the Old Testament there are references to the civilizations
surrounding the Israelites and their battles. Why aren’t there
similar references in the Book of Mormon?

Hill Cumorah

This downsized Book of Mormon geography also
necessitates relocating the Hill Cumorah to southern
Mexico (see An Ancient American Setting for the Book
of Mormon, p. 350). According to LDS scholars, Moroni
must then transport the plates from Mexico to New York,
rebury them, and after hundreds of years, appear to Joseph
as an angel and lead him to their secret location. Then
Smith mistakenly thinks that the hill where the plates are
buried is the same hill mentioned in the last battle of the
Book of Mormon.

Simon Southerton commented on the reason to relocate
Cumorah:

Why would hundreds of thousands of Lamanites and
Nephites march from Mesoamerica to New York to fight a
final battle of extermination? To account for this anomaly,
Mormon scholars have concluded that there are in fact two
Cumorahs. The Hill Cumorah referred to in the Book of
Mormon is not the one in New York State from which the
gold plates were recovered. (Losing a Lost Tribe, p. 159)

However, the LDS Church still endorses the location
of the Hill Cumorah in New York. In 1990 an LDS bishop
in Oklahoma was asked about the location of the Hill
Cumorah, and the bishop wrote to the LDS First Presidency
for clarification. In a letter dated October 16, 1990, the
Secretary to the First Presidency answered:

Dear Bishop Brooks:

I have been asked to forward to you for acknowledgment
and handling the enclosed copy of a letter to President Gordon
B. Hinckley from Ronnie Sparks of your ward. Brother
Sparks inquired about the location of the Hill Cumorah
mentioned in the Book of Mormon, where the last battle
between the Nephites and Lamanites took place.

The Church has long maintained, as attested to by
references in the writings of General Authorities, that the
Hill Cumorah in western New York state is the same as
referenced in the Book of Mormon. [See photo of original
letter at http://www.ultm.org/onlineresources/cumorah.htm]

Every summer the LDS Church presents a pageant on
the hill in New York, where Joseph Smith unearthed the
plates, depicting the Book of Mormon story (see http://
www.hillcumorah.org). This pageant certainly leaves
people with the impression that the last battle of the
Nephites happened in New York.

However, knowing the problems associated with
moving two large armies from Mexico to New York, LDS
scholars propose a location for the Hill Cumorah and the
last battle in southern Mexico. But to do so they must ignore
all of the statements of LDS Church leaders.
How Wrong Can a Prophet Be and Still Be a Prophet?

LDS apologist Michael R. Ash admitted the new limited geography and arguments for “others” in the land goes against the past statements of church leaders:

What about scriptures and statements by Joseph Smith that appear to suggest there were no “others” in the land upon Lehi’s arrival?

It seems likely that Joseph Smith would have understood the Book of Mormon according to rumors and suppositions of his day—a hemispheric geography with the Lehites as the primary progenitors for the Native Americans. . . . Joseph’s opinions on the subject do not, however, constitute revelation. . . . While Joseph’s opinions might be interesting, they can be discarded when they conflict with revealed doctrine, scientific facts, or in-depth examination. (“Were the Lehites Alone in the Americas?,” by Michael R. Ash, www.fairlds.org).

If Mormons are free to discard statements of their leaders when they “conflict” with “scientific facts, or in-depth examination” why not reject the Book of Mormon entirely? There is not one piece of archeology or ancient script to establish that the Lehites ever existed. “Facts” show that Mesoamerica has been continuously inhabited by descendants of Siberian people, not Israelites. How does one determine when to ignore the prophet’s statements? Are current LDS scholars to be considered more authoritative on Book of Mormon people and geography than Joseph Smith, prophets or apostles?

In another article, Michael Ash implies that Joseph Smith arrived at his inaccurate view of Book of Mormon geography through a “cursory reading and superficial understanding”:

This [hemispheric geography theory] is a natural interpretation of Book of Mormon geography based on a cursory reading and superficial understanding to the Book of Mormon text. It is unlikely that Joseph Smith, his contemporaries, and most Saints—perhaps even most Saints today—have unquestioningly accepted this as an accurate model for Book of Mormon geography. Related to this view is the common belief among LDS that Book of Mormon people were the founding inhabitants of all native peoples of both North and South America. . . . Joseph and other LDS leaders were not (and are not) immune to their own opinions, thoughts, and even misconceptions based on tradition. (“Where Did Book of Mormon Events Take Place?,” www.fairlds.org)

Where is the “revealed doctrine” on Lamanites? Joseph Smith supposedly spent a number of evenings conversing with the angel about the Book of Mormon. Wouldn’t he be in the best position to have an informed opinion? Was he guilty of “misconceptions” about the Book of Mormon? If, after the angel took Joseph to the hill, Smith concluded he had visited the Hill Cumorah of Book of Mormon fame, who is to say that he was wrong? Why do the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants refer to American Indians in western Missouri as “Lamanites”?

DNA and Lamanites

The search for Lamanites has taken on greater significance with the use of DNA to determine the ancestors of the American Indians. LDS scholars now admit there were vast numbers of people in North and South America prior to the time assigned for the arrival of either the Jaredites or the two groups of Israelites that came about 600 BC. LDS scientists D. Jeffrey Meldrum and Trent D. Stephens argue that these earlier migrations explain why DNA links “99.6%” of American Indians to Asians and that descendants of Lehi are “unlikely to be detected by genetic analysis.” They wrote:

Our perspective is that of active members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who view the Book of Mormon as an accurate, correct account of actual historic events that occurred on the American continent. We are also biologists. . . . As biologists we accept the published data dealing with Native American origins and view those data as reasonably representing American-Asian connections. . . .

We propose that . . . the children of Lehi . . . [act] as leaven with bread. The leaven is, of necessity, only a small ingredient in bread, not the bread itself. We propose that the children of Lehi are the leaven of the Abrahamic covenant in the New World, unlikely to be detected by genetic analysis of modern New World inhabitants. (“Who Are the Children of Lehi?” by D. Jeffrey Meldrum and Trent D. Stephens, Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, vol. 12, no. 1, 2003, p. 38)

Later in the same article we read:

The data accumulated to date indicate that 99.6 percent of Native American genetic markers studied so far exhibit Siberian connections.” (Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, vol. 12, no. 1, 2003, p. 41)

Author Brent Lee Metcalfe commented on this new position:

We are witnessing the reinvention of the Book of Mormon—not by skeptical critics, but by believing apologists. Most Mormons likely believe what the Book of Mormon introduction teaches—that “the Lamanites . . . are
the principal ancestors of the American Indians.” They hold this belief oblivious to the fact that over the last few decades LDS scholars at Brigham Young University and elsewhere have substantially altered this traditional view.

Findings from multidisciplinary studies of the Book of Mormon have increasingly led LDS scholars to shrink and dilute the book’s American Israelite (or Amerisraelite) population. (LDS) Apologetic scholars now recognize (1) that Book of Mormon events could not have spanned North, Central, and South America, and (2) that modern Amerindians are predominately of East Asian ancestry. . . . As BYU geneticist Michael Whiting stipulates, a hemispheric colonization model for the Book of Mormon “is indeed incorrect” and “appears falsified by current genetic evidence.”

Many LDS apologists envision the Book of Mormon’s founding Israelite colonists as a small group who interacted in varying degrees with the vast indigenous populations of Mesoamerica. In time, sustained widespread exogamy with these “others” effectively extinguished the Israelites’ unique Middle Eastern genetic signature. Accordingly, Lamanites and Nephtes are defined by something other than Israelite ancestry. Such theories turn traditional understandings of Book of Mormon lands and peoples, including Joseph Smith’s revelations, on their head.

While perhaps affording revisionist Book of Mormon studies a veneer of scientific respectability, these apologetic efforts to reinvent Lamanite identity face some formidable challenges . . . (“Reinventing Lamanite Identity,” by Brent Lee Metcalfe, Sunstone, March 2004, p. 20)

In another article, LDS scientist Trent D. Stephens observed:

The Book of Mormon purports to present a history of three major groups of people who migrated to the Americas from the Middle East . . . Ultimately, the Lamanites destroyed the Nephtes and remained as the only representatives of Middle Eastern colonization in the New World.

In contrast to this account, data from numerous molecular population genetic studies suggest that the ancestors of extant Native Americans came from Siberia. No genetic evidence specifically supports the hypothesis that Native Americans descended from Middle Eastern populations. (“Now What,” by Trent D. Stephens, Sunstone, March 2004, p. 26)

Simon Southerton pointed out:

It came as no surprise to most scientists to learn that the DNA of living indigenous Americans was most homologous with the DNA of Asians. Well before the structure of DNA had been determined, the Asian source had been accepted through the steady accumulation of over a century’s worth of research from many disciplines. It was, and still is, widely accepted that the first waves of colonization occurred around or before 14,000 years ago from Siberia by way of the Bering Strait. (Losing a Lost Tribe, p. 73)

Mitochondrial DNA

Over the last twenty years there has been great interest in DNA research, and especially in mitochondrial DNA. Nancy Shute, writing for U.S. News & World Report, commented:

Mitochondrial DNA has proved a marvelous tool for tracing human history. Mothers pass it down to offspring almost intact—unlike nuclear DNA, the genetic material commonly used in criminal investigations. (“Haven’t Got a Clue? Maybe DNA Will Do,” U.S. News & World Report, July 24, 2000)

The problem for Mormonism is that mitochondrial DNA supports the view that the principal ancestors of Native Americans were people from eastern Asia.

Mormon defenders have maintained that Lehi’s family group would have only been a drop in the bucket of the American Indian’s gene pool, which would explain why they don’t show up in the DNA samples. However, it’s worth mentioning again that the Introduction to their own Book of Mormon claims that “the Lamanites . . . are the principal ancestors of the American Indians,” not an insignificant group.

LDS scientist Thomas W. Murphy, chair of the Department of Anthropology at Edmonds Community College in Washington, wrote:

Now that quantitative scientific methods can indeed test for an Israelite genetic presence in ancient America, we learn instead that virtually all Native Americans can trace their lineages to the Asian migrations between 7,000 and 50,000 years ago. While molecular anthropologists have the technological capability to identify descendants of ancient Hebrews, no traces of such DNA markers have appeared in Central America or elsewhere among Native Americans. . . .

From a scientific perspective, the Book of Mormon’s origin is best situated in early nineteenth-century America, . . . The Book of Mormon emerged from an antebellum perspective, out of a frontier American people’s struggle with their god, and not from an authentic American Indian perspective. (“Lamanite Genesis, Genealogy, and Genetics,” by Thomas W. Murphy, in American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon, Signature Books, 2002, p. 68)

Writing in Anthropology News, Thomas Murphy and Simon Southerton observed:

Genetic research into Native American and Polynesian origins is sending shock waves through Mormon communities around the world. The Book of Mormon, claimed as scripture by 11 million members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), purports to tell of three migrations from the ancient middle East to the Americas. The title page
claims that the descendants of the migrants from Jerusalem “are the principal ancestors of the American Indians.” Mormon folklore, likewise, postulates a Middle Eastern heritage for Polynesians.

Southerton has completed a book-length manuscript on the subject [Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA, and the Mormon Church]. Simon Southerton, a plant geneticist, . . . resigned his position as bishop and withdrew his church membership. In Mar 2000, he published the story of his disillusionment on the Internet. [http://www.exmormon.org/whylft125.htm] He “failed to find anything that supported migration of Jewish people before Columbus” and found “no reliable scientific evidence supporting migrations from the Middle East to the New World.”

. . . Investigation of mitochondrial DNA of more than 5,500 living Native Americans reveals that 99.4% can be traced back to Asia primarily via maternal lineages known as A, B, C, D and X. Only 0.6% came from Africa or Europe, most likely after 1492. Lineages A through D are only found in Asia. While the X lineage also is found in Europe and the Middle East, Asian and American lineages have distinctive markers that indicate an ancient separation long before the events described in the Book of Mormon. Similar results from nearly 1,000 paternal lineages substantiate a Northeast Asian origin of American Indians. Likewise, approximately 99% of the Polynesians surveyed to date can trace their maternal lineages back to Southeast Asia. The other 1% almost certainly came from Europe in the recent past. . . .

Folk biological claims of an Israelite ancestry, a curse with a dark skin, and a whitening of dark-skinned Native American and Polynesian Mormons fail to stand up to scrutiny among scientifically literate Latter-day Saints. (“Genetic Research a ‘Galileo Event’ for Mormons,” by Thomas W. Murphy and Simon Southerton, Anthropology News, February 2003, p. 20)

The lack of evidence that Israelites came to America and grew to a major population prior to the arrival of the Europeans certainly raises serious questions about the historicity of the Book of Mormon.

In response to criticism of the Book of Mormon and recent DNA studies that show the American Indians are descended from Asians, the LDS Church has posted on their official web site a set of links to various LDS apologists, under “Mistakes in the News.” The site prefaces the links with this statement:

Recent attacks on the veracity of the Book of Mormon based on DNA evidence are ill considered. Nothing in the Book of Mormon precludes migration into the Americas by peoples of Asiatic origin. The scientific issues relating to DNA, however, are numerous and complex. Those interested in a more detailed analysis of those issues are referred to the resources below.

However, in an apparent effort to allow for deniability if any problems arise from referring people to these sites, the church adds the following disclaimer:

The following are not official Church positions or statements. They are simply information resources from authors with expertise in this area that readers may find helpful. (http://www.lds.org/newsroom/mistakes/0,15331,3885-1-18078,00.html)

If these statements do not represent the “official church position” why refer people to them? One is left to wonder why the LDS prophet is not able to give an official clarification on the matter. They concede that Asian migrations to America happened but present no evidence that Israelite migrations occurred.

Is “Faith” Enough?

In light of the continuing statements by LDS Church presidents and apostles linking American Indians with “the sons and daughters of Father Lehi,” they owe the public an explanation. Where is the evidence for Israelite migrations to America?

LDS author John M. Butler concluded one must look to faith:

A spiritual witness is the only way to know the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. Although DNA studies have made links between Native Americans and Asians, these studies in no way invalidate the Book of Mormon despite the loud voices of detractors. (“A Few Thoughts From A Believing DNA Scientist,” by John M. Butler, Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, vol. 12, no. 1, 2003, p. 36)

Since all of the evidence points to the Book of Mormon being a nineteenth century work it seems unworthy of “faith.” Christianity calls us to faith, but it grows out of confidence that there were historical people and events recounted in the Bible.

There are thousands of manuscripts, artifacts, and inscriptions attesting to the record in the Bible. In a recent article, Dr. Paul L. Maier discusses various archaeological items relating to the historicity of the Bible:

The Existence of Hittites. Genesis 23 reports that Abraham buried Sarah in the Cave of Machpelah, which he purchased from Ephron the Hittite. Second Samuel 11 tells of David’s adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. A century ago the Hittites were unknown outside of the Old Testament, and critics claimed that they were a figment of biblical imagination. In 1906, however, archaeologists digging east of Ankara, Turkey, discovered the ruins of Hattusas, the ancient Hittite capital at which
is today called Boghazkoy, as well as its vast collection of Hittite historical records, which showed an empire flourishing in the mid-second millennium BC.

The Merneptah Stele. A seven-foot slab engraved with hieroglyphics, . . . boasts of the Egyptian pharaoh's conquest of Libyans and peoples in Palestine, including the Israelites: “Israel—his seed is not.” This is the earliest reference to Israel in nonbiblical sources and demonstrates that, as of c. 1230 BC, the Hebrews were already living in the Promised Land.

Biblical Cities Attested Archaeologically. In addition to Jericho, places such as Haran, Hazor, Dane, Megiddo, Shechem, Samaria, Shiloh, Gezer, Gibeath, Beth Shemesh, Beth Shean, Beersheba, Lachish, and many other urban site have been excavated, quite apart from such larger and obvious locations as Jerusalem or Babylon. Such geographical markers are extremely significant in demonstrating that fact, not fantasy, is intended in the Old Testament historical narratives; . . . Israel’s enemies in the Hebrew Bible likewise are not contrived but solidly historical. . . . Such precise urban evidence measures favorably when compared with the geographical sites claimed in the holy books of other religious systems, which often have no basis whatever in reality.

Shishak's Invasion of Judah. First Kings 14 and 2 Chronicles 12 tell of Pharaoh Shishak’s conquest of Judah in the fifth year of the reign of King Rehoboam, the brainless son of Solomon, and how Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem was robbed of its treasures on that occasion. This victory is also commemorated in hieroglyphic wall carvings on the Temple of Amon at Thebes.

The Moabite Stone. Second Kings 3 reports that Mesha, the king of Moab, rebelled against the king of Israel following the death of Ahab. A three-foot stone slab, also called the Mesha Stele, confirms the revolt by claiming triumph over Ahab’s family, c.850 BC, and that Israel had “perished forever.” (“Archaeology—Biblical Ally or Adversary?” by Paul L. Maier, Ph.D., Professor of Ancient History at Western Michigan University, Christian Research Journal, vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 12-19)

The article discusses a number of other finds, such as the Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, the burial plaque of King Uzziah, Hezekiah’s Siloam Tunnel inscription, the Sennacherib Prism, and the cylinder of Cyrus the Great. These all relate to Biblical issues.

We realize that lack of evidence is not the same as “proving” something did not happen. However, one would expect the Book of Mormon civilization to have left a similar level of artifacts, cities and manuscripts as there are for the Bible. Yet not one artifact, manuscript or inscription has been found in the Americas to support the Book of Mormon Israelite civilization.

Israelite Identity

One of the distinct traits of the Israelites has been their determined effort to remain separate from other groups. In spite of their minority presence in every area they have lived, they have managed to keep their own identity. Simon Southerton, who has major reservations about the Bible, acknowledges there is evidence for the existence of Israel 3,000 years ago:

The Israelites entered Canaan in about 1250 BC and settled in the hills to the south. After conquering the Philistines and the native Canaanites under the leadership of King David in 1000 BC, Canaan became known as the Land of Israel, Israelites tracing back both culturally and genetically to the people occupying this small geographic region approximately 3,000 years ago. . . . Blood ties link the nations and ethnic groups living in close proximity to modern Israel. . . . Unlike the Jews [who have spread out over Europe] several Middle Eastern populations have remained in Palestine for the last three thousand years, and knowledge of their genetic makeup helps shed light on the genetic makeup of the Israelites. . . .

Given the Jews’ deep spiritual ties to Palestine, it is somewhat ironic that they have spent most of their history in exile. Of the estimated 14 million Jews living today, most are derived from two ethnic groups known as Ashkenazim and Sephardim, distinguished by their most recent place of exile. Ashkenazic Jews, . . . have resided in northeastern Europe for centuries, . . . Sephardic Jews . . . previously lived around the Mediterranean, predominantly in Spain . . . . Most Sephardic Jews now share present-day Israel with a similar number of Ashkenazim.

. . . . Jews are more closely related to other Semitic populations than they are to European people or to the more distant African populations. However, somewhat unexpectedly, Ashkenazic and Sephardic Jews share closer genetic ties with each other than they do with groups in neighboring Semitic communities. . . . In spite of their disparate histories, both Jewish communities have maintained a high degree of isolation from surrounding foreign populations. . . .

Clearly, Middle Eastern populations represent branches of the European bough of the human family tree. In some cases it is possible to differentiate between Israelite and European lineages and thus distinguish Israelite ancestry from European ancestry. The Y chromosome is particularly suited for this type of research because it is packed with information that can be tapped to identify Israelite-specific DNA lines. A remarkable demonstration of this capacity comes from work among Jews who, through tradition, traced their ancestry back to the ancient patriarch Moses. (Losing a Lost Tribe, pp. 121-125)
Southerton then discusses the descendants of Aaron and Levi:

According to the Biblical record, after the exodus from Egypt in approximately 1500 BC, Moses instigated an important patriarchal tradition among the tribe of Levi when he set apart the male descendants of his brother Aaron to serve as priests . . . Jews inheriting this responsibility are known as the Cohanim, or the Cohen Jews. . . .

The strict father-to-son inheritance of priestly responsibility mimics the inheritance of the Y chromosome, raising an intriguing question. Is there a unique Y chromosome lineage among Cohens that could have survived the 120 or so generations since Aaron? . . .

Based on surveys of Jewish gravestones, about 5 percent of male Jews around the world belong to the priestly tribe . . . Skorecki [head of molecular medicine at Rambam Hospital in Haifa, Israel] and his colleagues tested Cohanim, Levite, and Israeli Jews of Ashkenazic and Sephardic origin for a range of unique DNA changes on their Y chromosomes. Remarkably, they found that about 50 percent of Cohens in both ethnic groups possessed virtually identical Y chromosomes. This molecular surname was found in about 15 percent of Israeli Jews and 5 percent of Levites but was essentially absent in non-Jewish Semitic populations. . . .

[One] possibility is that the Cohen lineage may be the Y chromosome of the genealogical father of all Israelites, Abraham, who is understood to have lived about 500 years earlier than Aaron. The research shows conclusively that the inception of the Jewish priesthood predated the division of world Jewry into Ashkenazic and Sephardic ethnic groups over 1,000 years ago.

Skorecki’s team found further intriguing evidence that the Cohen Y chromosome may have belonged to Aaron. . . . Since the approximate rate of mutation in the Y chromosome is known, it was possible to estimate the time when the original ancestral Cohen Y chromosome existed in a single individual. This was calculated to have been approximately 3,000 years ago, a date that corresponds very well with the biblical account of Moses and Aaron living about 3,300 years ago. (Losing a Lost Tribe, pp. 125-127)

The Lemba Tribe

Simon Southerton tells of the Lemba people, a tribe in southern Africa, who have claimed for decades that they were descended from Jews. With DNA technology their claim was able to be tested and verified:

In Zimbabwe a black Bantu-speaking people numbering about 50,000 had claimed to be descended from Jews from the Middle East who had traveled to Africa centuries earlier. Known as the Lemba, their oral tradition was of ancestors arriving by boat from a lost city called Sena and that the original party consisted entirely of males who were shipwrecked off the east coast. The Lemba claim to Jewish ancestry was based on scant evidence but included tribal customs such as circumcision, food taboos, and use of biblical names. On the surface, their customs could be Judaic or derived from Muslim or Afghani cultures. . . .

In light of these findings, scholars decided to see if there was in fact a Jewish presence in the paternal genealogies of the Lemba by comparing Lemba, Bantu, and Semitic Y chromosomes . . . It was discovered that a surprisingly high proportion of Lemba Y chromosomes have Semitic origins. About 70 percent of Lemba Y chromosomes are Semitic and the remaining 30 percent are common among surrounding Bantu populations. About one in ten Lemba male lineages proved to be virtually identical to the Cohen paternal lineage—powerful evidence that Lemba oral traditions were based on historical facts rather than myth. (Losing a Lost Tribe, pp. 127-128)

The Lemba DNA study was also mentioned in Science. Of particular interest is the fact that the boatload of Jewish males migrated to Africa in about the same time frame as the Lehites supposedly came to America in the Book of Mormon. Yet Lemba DNA can still be traced back to the Israelites:

Genetic evidence also supports the oral tradition that the Lemba, who are now Bantu-speaking people of southern Africa, derive from Jews who migrated from the Middle East to Yemen 2700 years ago and from Yemen to southern Africa 2400 to 2000 years ago. More than 50% of Lemba Y chromosomes carry haplotypes that are common among Jewish populations but absent in their African neighbors. Genetic analysis has also confirmed the distinctiveness of the Cohanim, or traditional Jewish priesthood. (“Genomic Views of Human History,” by K. Owens. and M. King, Science, 1999, 286:451-453)

If DNA can establish that the Lemba descended from a boatload of Israelites 2,400 to 2,000 years ago, where is the DNA evidence that Israelites lived in Mesoamerica during the same time period?

LDS scientist Trent Stephens assumes that DNA from the small number of Book of Mormon Israelites would have been lost through the years. He concludes that

Middle Eastern colonization in the Americas may have been very small compared to the remainder of the population, and, as a result of two major bottleneck events, no genetic evidence of a Middle Eastern origin is present in the extant population, nor is such evidence likely to be forthcoming. . . .

With the significant number of studies that have already been conducted concerning the genetic profiles of extant Native American populations, it does not seem likely that additional studies of this kind will present new data that differ significantly from that already accumulated. (“Now What?,” by Trent D. Stephens, Sunstone, March 2004, p. 27)
Simon Southerton commented on this problem:

Whiting suggests that another obstacle to detecting Lamanite lineage among Native American populations arises out of uncertainty about where the Lamanites might have been located or where their descendants might be. Since the chief geography apologist, Sorenson, and numerous others have identified Mesoamerica as the only possible candidate for the territory described in the Book of Mormon, it would be reasonable to examine the research that has been carried out among native tribes from this region.

In fact, the DNA lineages of Central America resemble those of other Native American tribes throughout the two continents. Over 99 percent of the lineages found among native groups from this region are clearly of Asian descent. Modern and ancient DNA sample tested from among the Maya generally fall into the major founding lineage classes. The Mayan Empire has been regarded by Mormons to be the closest to the people of the Book of Mormon because its people were literate and culturally sophisticated. However, leading New World anthropologists, including those specializing in the region, have found the Maya to be similarly related to Asians. (Losing a Lost Tribe, pp. 190-191)

Southerton goes on to discuss testing that has been done on ancient Mayan skeletons buried 500 to 2,500 years ago. No evidence emerged of Hebrew origins. The research showed the same type of Asian ancestry found throughout the Americas.

Finding Phoenician DNA

Another example of the use of DNA is found in the October 2004 National Geographic. Rick Gore, in the article “Who Were the Phoenicians?”, discusses the search for descendants of the Phoenicians using DNA. Gore relates that the Phoenicians “dominated the Mediterranean Sea” from the ninth to sixth centuries BC but are now “a vanished civilization.” During the height of their glory the Phoenicians spread around the coastal areas. Gore states that after scientists collected thousands of samples of DNA they were able to conclude that “modern Lebanese people share a genetic identity going back thousands of years” to the Phoenicians (“Who Were the Phoenicians?” by Rick Gore, National Geographic, October 2004, pp. 34-49).

If Israelites actually arrived in America in 600 BC, one would think scientists could identify them as they have identified Phoenician descendants. The title page of the Book of Mormon states that the record was specifically “written to the Lamanites, who are a remnant of the house of Israel” to bring them to a knowledge of Christ. If the Lamanites can not be identified, how is the message to be taken to them? It would seem that the Lord’s promise in the Book of Mormon has failed.

And behold how great the covenants of the Lord, and how great his condescensions unto the children of men; and because of his greatness, and his grace and mercy, he has promised unto us [Lehites] that our seed shall not utterly be destroyed, according to the flesh, but that he would preserve them; and in future generations they shall become a righteous branch unto the house of Israel (2 Nephi 9:53).

The LDS scientists are not able to identify a single person who is of the “seed” of Lehi “according to the flesh.” LDS scholars concede that DNA for American Indians shows “99.6%” are from Siberian ancestry and that there is a lack of DNA evidence for Israelites in the Americas prior to Columbus. The LDS Church should publicly explain to their people that American Indians are not literal descendants of Lehi or Israel.

Sorry, You’re Not a Lamanite

The 1997 LDS manual Gospel Principles announces:

Great numbers of Lamanites in North and South America and the South Pacific are now receiving the blessings of the gospel. (Gospel Principles, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997, p. 268)

LDS missionaries throughout North and South America present the Book of Mormon to Native Americans with the claim that it is the religious record of their forefathers. With approximately 5 million members in Central and South America and the Pacific islands, the church is faced with a problem. Obviously many of these people assume they are direct descendants of Lehi. Simon Southerton wrote:

One hundred and seventy years after its publication, the Book of Mormon still holds center stage in the unfolding drama of Mormonism. As a direct consequence of this book, most Native American Latter-day Saints throughout the Americas regard the Israelite Lehi to be a blood relative. In sermons, prayers, magazines, lesson manuals, and books, leaders have repeatedly spoken of the Lamanite birthright of native peoples. With full prophetic support, the modern Lamanite family has expanded to include not only Native Americans but also the Polynesians. (Losing a Lost Tribe, p. 37)

The anonymous author of the article “Reframing the Book of Mormon” observed:

As the limited-geography, limited-population paradigm becomes more visible, many faithful members are looking for guidance. In the discussion period following a January 2003 presentation at BYU, a young Peruvian student named Jose summed up the dilemma. He told the audience and
panelists how he grew up believing he was a Lamanite and now felt “overwhelmed with the surprise coming from the science. . . . We don’t know where the Book of Mormon took place. We don’t know where the Lamanites are. If we don’t know who the Lamanites are, how can the Book of Mormon promise to bring them back? It’s an identity crisis for many of us that [must] be understood.” (“Reframing the Book of Mormon,” Sunstone, March 2004, p. 19)

Evidently the same Peruvian student was interviewed for an article in the Seattle Times. Reporter Patty Henetz wrote:

While the work of the BYU scholars is confined mostly to intellectual circles, some church members who have always identified themselves with Mormon teachings on the people known as Lamanites are suffering crises.

“It’s very difficult. It is almost traumatizing,” said Jose Aloayza, a Midvale, Utah, attorney and Peruvian native who likened facing this new reality to staring into a spiritual abyss.

“It’s that serious, that real. I’m almost here feeling I need an apology. Our prophets should have known better. That’s the feeling I get.” (“DNA Results Challenge Core Mormon Beliefs,” Local News, Seattle Times, Aug. 14, 2004)

If the Indians of North and South America are from Asiatic ancestry, why do the LDS prophets, apostles and missionaries keep telling them they are descended from Father Lehi?

As more and more American Indians, who assume they are literal descendants of Lehi, become aware of the shifting position of the church it could lead to growing dissent in the ranks. Simon Southerton commented:

It seems that among the obstacles facing the church, the real stumbling block is not the failure to find evidence for horses, metallurgy, or the wheel in the New World, or the fact that there is no evidence for a Hebrew influence in Mesoamerica, or the preponderance of Asian DNA among living Native Americans and Polynesians. The real challenge comes from a failure to openly confront the evidence and state what it means for the church, as well as a failure to accommodate the apologists, who themselves feel hemmed in by the church’s insistence that members believe tenets that are clearly untrue . . . . The theories of the apologists concerning a minuscule Lehite colony that existed in some unknown corner and had no lasting impact on the Americas are equally unsatisfying to mainstream scientists. Orthodox Mormons cannot conceive of such a reinterpretation of the Book of Mormon, and therefore the current prophets are reluctant to publicly address the problems. . . .

The Brethren no doubt recognize that to change the way Mormons think about the Book of Mormon would bring disruption and turmoil and risk undermining the foundation on which many people have based their religious convictions. . . . Millions of members feel a familial bond with Father Lehi, an emotion that frequently plays a central role in people’s conversion to the church. The General Authorities are aware of just how deep-seated and crucial these feelings are in the processes of conversion and retention. (Losing a Lost Tribe, p. 206)

Will the LDS leaders ever state publicly that the principal ancestors of Native Americans came from Asia rather than from Jerusalem? Will they clarify who is a Lamanite? Will the prophet ever announce the location of Book of Mormon lands? Will LDS missionaries stop telling potential Native American converts that the Book of Mormon is the record of their ancestors? Can these issues be resolved without doing great damage to church growth? The answer to all of these questions is probably “No.”

It is time for the LDS leaders to face the issues. Some have suggested that the church should drop the Book of Mormon historical claims, and view it as an inspired allegory. However, it is still not worthy of belief. Thomas Murphy observed:

As Mormons, we have a moral and ethical obligation to discontinue this view of Native American origins and publicly disavow the offensive teaching that a dark skin is a physical trait of God’s malediction. (“Lamanite Genesis, Genealogy, and Genetics,” by Thomas W. Murphy, American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon, Signature Books, 2002, p. 68)

The Book of Mormon, along with its racist teaching, is a product of the nineteenth century, not an historical account of God’s dealing with Israelite immigrants to America. For more information on the LDS attitudes toward Native Americans, see Armand Mauss’ book, All Abraham’s Children.

For those desiring more information on DNA issues, we recommend Simon Southerton’s new book, Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA, and the Mormon Church, and the film, DNA vs. the Book of Mormon.

Current Magazines Available

We are now carrying several of the top Christian magazines at a 20% discount (plus mailing charge, if mailed). Some of the magazines that we have are: Christianity Today, Biblical Archaeology Review, Bible Review, Christian Research Journal, Worship Leader, Discipleship Journal, Charisma, Marriage Partnership, Pray, Guideposts and others. A complete list of magazines is on our web site: www.utlm.org.

For more information, please call us at (801) 485-0312 or email us: info@utlm.org
LDS Church Ordains Two New Apostles

With the death of two apostles this year the LDS Church was faced with the need to find two replacements. In spite of the fact that at least one third of the LDS Church membership is Latin American, the church turned to a North American and a German, both of whom are white. One is left to wonder why there was not more national or racial diversity sought.

In a 1996 interview for the Washington Times, President Hinckley was asked why there were no non-Americans in the Council of Twelve:

> With overseas growth, the church’s second-tier leadership of 70 men now has Asians and Europeans, and Mr. Hinckley said non-Americans will someday sit in the top-tier Council of Twelve Apostles.

> “I don’t know when it will come, but I think it will come,” he said. “Just the growth of the church will bring that about. We’re no longer a Utah church.”


The San Francisco Chronicle asked President Hinckley a similar question in 1997:

> Q: When The Chronicle did a series last year on the global impact of the Mormons, we spoke to Mormons in Japan, Russia and Mexico, and some say the church has not moved fast enough to give power and authority to Mormons from other ethnic groups.

> A: It’ll come. It’s coming. It’s coming. We have people from Mexico, Central America, South America, Japan, Europe among the general authorities [in the First and Second Quorums of the Seventy]. And that will increase, I think, inevitably. As we become more and more a world church, we’ll have greater world representation. (“Sunday Interview,” by Don Lattin, San Francisco Chronicle, April 13, 1997)

When President Hinckley was interviewed in 1999, he was asked:

> Q: As the church grows overseas, some foreign members have called for more autonomy from Salt Lake City. Do you envision that happening?

> A: Never have heard of such a thing. I never have. I’ve been all over this world with the people of this church, everywhere. . . . I don’t find any dissidents. We have representation from all of these places. . . .

> Q: What are the major challenges of your rapid growth?

> A: Two things: leadership and building buildings to accommodate that growth. Now, all of our local leaders across the world are volunteer workers, and they have to be trained, and that’s a great challenge . . .

Q: Despite the globalization, the top leadership is still largely comprised of white American males. Do you plan to take affirmative steps to diversify your top leadership?

A: We’ve had diversity in our top leadership. We’ve had a man from Brazil, for instance, who’s black. Wonderful man. We have people from Japan and Germany and elsewhere in our top leadership. . . . As the church grows across the world, we’ll have more and more of that, I have no doubt whatsoever. It isn’t a matter of affirmatively doing anything. It’s a matter of finding worthy and able leadership, wherever they may be. (“Leading a World Faith Explosion with Roots in Small-Town America,” by Teresa Watanabe, Los Angeles Times, May 9, 1999)

Below is a list of the top ten languages spoken by LDS Church members, taken from the LDS Church web page, as of 2003:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>5,828,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish (mostly Mexico, Central and South America)</td>
<td>3,681,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese (mostly Brazil)</td>
<td>907,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagalog (Philippines)</td>
<td>165,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cebuano (Philippines)</td>
<td>126,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>117,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilokana (Philippines)</td>
<td>109,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samoan</td>
<td>102,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tongan</td>
<td>76,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>75,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Quick Facts, www.newsroom.lds.org)

Of particular interest is the fact that after English, the next nine languages are spoken by non-Anglo-Saxons. Evidently there was not one “worthy” and “able” man amongst these millions of people that would qualify for the position of apostle. Notice that German didn’t even make the list.

On the next page is a reprint of an article from Institute for Religious Research (http://www.irr.org/mit/), used by permission.

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MORMON CHURCH APPOINTS
2 NEW APOSTLES:
NON-ANGLOS NEED NOT APPLY?

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In the 170-plus year history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, every member of Quorum of the Twelve (apostles) has been a white male of American or European heritage. This pattern remains unbroken following the October 2, 2004 announcement at its General Conference of two new apostles – David A. Bednar, an American and Dieter F. Uchdorf, a German. The two fill the vacancies left by the deaths of apostles Neal A. Maxwell and David B. Haight, who died several months ago within weeks of each other.

Though over half of the Mormon Church’s 12 million members are now in countries outside North America, and more than a third (4.25 million) are Latin Americans, the Quorum of the Twelve remains a solidly white body. It’s difficult to imagine that Mormons of color will not be disappointed and perhaps dismayed by this development.

There are a number of non-Anglos in the Quorums of the Seventy, most of whom are of Hispanic descent. However, none has ever been elevated to the position of apostle, even though many of them have been Seventies for 10 years or more. Currently these include Carlos Amado, Claudio Costa, Walter Gonzalez, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Francisco Viñas, and Adhemar Damiani. All of these are members of the first and second quorums of the Seventy, and the majority have more years seniority at this level than either Bednar or Uchdorf.

Mormon membership in Germany, homeland of new apostle Dieter Uchdorf, is less than 37,000; in all of Europe –West, Central and Eastern combined – Mormon membership is barely 393,000. By comparison, the Church boasts memberships of nearly a million in Mexico, 850,000 in Brazil, and in excess of 500,000 in both Chile and the Philippines. Yet in terms of qualification for the Mormon hierarchy, the message to these faithful Mormons of color seems to be, non-Anglos need not apply.

[Statistical data taken from the Deseret Morning News 2004 Church Almanac, published in Salt Lake City, Utah, 2004.]

Extracts from Letters and Emails

May 2004. Subject: The definition of “priceless:”
The look on Jerald and Sandra Tanner’s faces when they finally discover (most likely in the next life) —

1) The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints really is the Lord’s true Church.
2) Joseph Smith and his successors really are all prophets of the Lord.
3) The Book of Mormon, Doctrine & Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price really are true. and…
4) After leaving the true Church themselves, they led or kept others away as they spent their entire lives slandering the Lord, His Church, and His servants…

May 2004. As an Ex-Mormon (Fifth generation) and now a born again Christian, I thank God for your faithfulness! … I know it must be hard for you, but God is supporting you mightily. . . .

May 2004. you are wasting your time . . .

May 2004. Your work will last beyond you, and still bearing fruit for the Lord, helping people out of the Mormons, and proactively preventing others from entering. The rest of the Body has to just USE it! Don’t be discouraged. The last time the Mormons came here, I spent three hours with them, partly because the two of YOU have done such excellent work and I know I am not spouting mere hearsay, but researched material. So thank you!!

May 2004. Over 15 years ago, you helped us more than you know. We were stationed in England with the Air Force. Only 1 week after our big day at the London Temple, God saved me and my husband. Our lives were so tore-up, but God was so good to us. You guys sent us all the info we needed, for the help we needed.

May 2004. I have spent 10 years of my life dedicated to Mormonism. Only recently did I come to the knowledge that I believed in something that was not true. I am working through my feelings and have asked a Christian pastor to help me learn how to live without the church. I understand that some people do not think that any type of brainwashing occurs in the Mormon Church but, I believe that it does.

May 2004. why are you so bitter against the church. remember president [N. Eldon] tanner i was a good man you are evel sorry 4 you you are streghten my testimony

May 2004. yeah, i have a question for the Tanners....when are you going to grow up and come back to the truth? Stop doing what the Apostle Paul did for a while....fighting against the church. You guys are absolutely waisting your time … We will pray for you “in the temple.”

June 2004. Thank you again for being there to educate those of us who were taught to believe in “the church” rather than the Bible….I’m 73 now, raised in the church, and remember when some of the teachings and rules and regulations were different from now. Your article about the change of allowing Blacks to hold the priesthood because of Brazil made so much sense because those of us living in Miami knew many of the Brazilians are mixed….
June 2004. Our pastor recently played the video, “The Mormon Puzzle.” Thank you for being an integral part of that film. It is very good and our LDS friends have to really reach to be offended by it. It is something that enables them to start thinking on their own about what they have been taught and what the Bible actually says.

June 2004. If people really want to know about Mormonism, why don’t they ask and LDS member themselves? It seems kind of pointless to ask the enemy, don’t you think?

June 2004. All your arguments are built upon the idea that everything ever said by every Mormon leader who ever existed must unequivocably be true, or else the church must be false; … This is not true.

I know you are good people and I once had a pleasant, friendly visit at the Tanner home, and I believe you are sincere, but I fear that you are wasting some great abilities and efforts on a profession of fault-finding and criticism.

June 2004. Some twenty years ago I read a study that concluded the vast majority of Japanese high school students were unaware their country was ever occupied by the United States. They know nothing of the war… History has been successfully erased in Japan. I tell you this because I have just returned from a visit to Mountain Meadows. The whitewash left me with a parallel sense of outrage. History has been successfully erased in the Mormon Church. Your mission may seem hopeless at times, but I pray God may bless it all the same.

June 2004. Many of your comments are disturbing, and coming from a man of 22 years old, I can say that my testimony of the Gospel came through the Holy Ghost, the spirit from which I only pray you have not driven yourselves too far away. There are many concepts that you are either altering/changing that you yourselves know how they are.

June 2004. Thank you for all the material you have sent. … You may be interested in knowing how I heard about you. The mailman left it [our newsletter] in my mail box by mistake. Since it wasn’t in an envelope and looked interesting, I read it and put it back in the mailbox so it could go to its rightful owner. Hope the check helps a little.

July 2004. Saw a piece about you on City Confidential. I was a Mormon for five years before I found the whole thing to be a fraud. I live within blocks of the Oakland Temple, but took out my own endowments at SLC Temple back in the days when they still had live “sessions.”… Joseph Smith Jr. was an ignorant, but clever fraud whose only interest was in gaining power over a large group of people… I later joined the Masonic Lodge, and was immediately struck with the fact that Joe Smith stole a great deal of the symbols, and even the rituals of Freemasonry for use in the temple.

July 2004. As an ex-Mormon myself I have come to greatly appreciate your website as a good source to research the history and background of Joseph Smith and Mormonism. Your lifelong work is a tremendous help in sorting out the complexities of this false religion.…
July 2004. As an ex-Mormon myself I have come to greatly appreciate your website as a good source to research the history and background of Joseph Smith and Mormonism. Your life-long work is a tremendous help in sorting out the complexities of this false religion. …

July 2004. Some years ago I asked your help, … My constant search has been ongoing all these years, and I am blessed indeed to move toward a personal relationship with our loving inclusive triune God. May God continue to bless Sandra and Gerald Tanner.

August 2004. You really need to post on your website who you are and why you think you have so much information.

You have stated falsehoods on your site- most of it dependent on the hope that the reader knows hardly anything about the Book of Mormon.

August 2004. I joined the LDS-Church in 1995 not in order of their theology as I know now but cause of the feelings which the missionaries called The Holy Ghost. … Today I know that I understood their terms of God and so on in my way and not in the way Mormons think. …

On your website is a very important part called Terminology Differences which is eyeopening. After reading that Mormonism reminds me of Orwells 1984!

August 2004. … I am from Oregon. I’ve been a Christian my whole life, but a friend of mine is Mormon. I’ve bought about 10 books from your website to try and show her the truth. She’s really doubting Mormonism now. …

August 2004. Subject: Journal of Discourses

It was interesting reading some of the speeches of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. I’m glad they’re accessible to people. Thanks. As I read a few things that were uncomfortable, like those aspects of Joseph and Brigham that you are exposing, I realized that these men were imperfect, as are all men. … Words uttered and deeds performed had mistakes along the way. Are you and I more “perfect” than they? …

August 2004. Let me tell you about the situation here in Scotland … The L.D.S. Church, with a claimed membership of 25,000+ and growing, are making ground with the lapsed or “non-active” members of mainstream churches, or those who feel disillusioned/disenfranchised!

When the L.D.S. came to me, they must have thought it was Christmas come early— I didn’t slam the door, or tell them to *?! I agreed to read the BM! Then I got hold of a copy of David [Persuitte] excellent book, “[Joseph] Smith and the Origins of the B.M.” 2nd ED. and then I got myself a copy of the original 1830 B.M. … Of course, it’s not every day that the L.D.S. missionaries come across an awkward old sod like me, who is willing to read the B.M. and isn’t afraid to question it! … Scotland really needs a “Lighthouse Mission” to counterbalance the aggressive proselytizing of the L.D.S. over here. …

September 2004. I have read a couple of your articles, and I must say, you guys are cowards. Anybody could write better lies than that, it was just obvious that you website was not credible. How can any man claim to be Christian and not follow the basic Christian principle of honesty?

September 2004. As usual your press tells half truths and out and out lies, but I guess when you have no morals thats ok.

October 2004. I have been reading a great deal of material about the Mormon Church. I continue to be amazed at the way unsuspecting people can be deceived by an organization based on such lies and distortions of the Truth! Even more amazing is how these same people will spew such vitriol at you in the face of such well-documented evidence debunking their church. They accuse you of hate-mongering, but I have seen no such attitude in your material.

October 2004. Subject: Are you an imbecile? Are you that stupid to think that the LDS church get there doctrines and teachings only from the Bible?

October 2004. THANKS for your website and the good information you sent me. I was born and raised in the Mormon church and thankfully … I decided to find the truth. I accepted Christ as my saviour just a few weeks ago, and what a feeling of peace! I can’t even described how I feel. … It’s just incredible. The more I read about the mormon church the more I can’t believe I bought all that crap! It’s just crazy! … I usually read your stuff online, so keep putting it there for those of us who can’t afford books!

BTW, Sandra, enjoyed your comment on the latter-day lampoon interview [http://www.latterdaylampoon.com/ interviews/sandratanner/] about letting the church borrow your stone. Totally cracked me up.

New and Recently Added Titles

**Becoming Gods - A Closer Look at 21st-Century Mormonism** ........................................... $13.50
Richard Abanes - Harvest House

**Blood of the Prophets - Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows** (Paper) ………….. $22.50
Will Bagley - University of Oklahoma Press

**Burying the Past - Legacy of the Mountain Meadows Massacre** (DVD) ………………………… $30.00
Brian Patrick - Patrick Film Productions

**God’s Brothel** (Extortion of sex for salvation - Stories of 18 women who escaped contemporary fundamentalist polygamy) …………………………………………. $15.00
Andrea Moore-Emmett - Pince-Nez Press

**Losing a Lost Tribe - Native Americans, DNA, and the Mormon Church** …………………………. $22.50
Simon Southerton - Signature Books

**Mormon Scrapbook - A Christian’s Guide for Reaching Latter-day Saints** ………………………… $11.50
Daniel G. Thompson - Providence Publications

**Suddenly Strangers: Surrendering Gods and Heroes** .. $15.00
Brad L. & Chris L. Morin - Aventine Press

**Truth Behind the Da Vinci Code (The)** ……………………………….. $6.00
Richard Abanes - Harvest House

**Under the Banner of Heaven - A Story of Violent Faith** (Paper) ………………………………… $13.50
Jon Krakauer - Anchor Books
Your gift to the ministry blesses people around the world. Utah Lighthouse Ministry is dependent on both the sale of books and donations to fund its outreach. Donations allow us to:

1. Develop and maintain our internet site. We reach people around the world through this important area of our ministry. While this results in a considerable expense, it is one of our best outreaches to Mormons. They will go to the web site and read even though they would never buy a critical book on Mormonism.

2. We have a 24 hour recorded message line—(801) 485-4262. The message deals with some aspect of LDS claims compared with the Bible. It is changed every week or two.

3. We counsel people in the bookstore and on the phone every day.

4. We offer seminars to various college and church groups that pass through Utah. We have a meeting room above the bookstore that holds up to 50 people.

5. We support about 40 children through World Vision.

6. Twice a year we mail out thousands of copies of our free newsletter.

7. We give free books to prisoners and various people we feel need the material but can’t afford it.

8. We have five employees, who handle such things as printing, binding, mailing, counseling, the web site and the bookstore.

We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization registered with the United States government. Donations are tax-deductible.

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Total Revenue 214,985
(Gifts and sales)
Total Expenses 226,743
Net Assets 427,771
(Land, buildings, inventory, savings)

Even if you can't give financially, please remember us in your prayers.
Temple Ritual Changed...Again

One of the most important tenets of the LDS Church is the necessity of temple ordinances. New LDS temples are opened regularly, with over one hundred in operation today and a number in the planning stage. LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie explained:

From the days of Adam to the present, whenever the Lord has had a people on earth, temples and temple ordinances have been a crowning feature of their worship. . . . The inspired erection and proper use of temples is one of the great evidences of the divinity of the Lord’s work . . . where these are not, the Church and kingdom and the truth of heaven are not. (Mormon Doctrine, 1979 ed., pp. 780-81)

Joseph Smith claimed he was restoring the original temple ceremony of the Old Testament with the proper priesthood authority to administer those rites. The LDS temples are used for eternal marriages for both the living and the dead, as well as baptisms for the dead.

LDS Church leaders have consistently taught that a person must have a temple marriage in order to achieve eternal life and godhood. LDS prophet Spencer W. Kimball said:

Only through celestial marriage can one find the strait way, the narrow path. Eternal life cannot be had in any other way. (Deseret News, Church Section, Nov. 12, 1977)

While most people have heard of the LDS practice of proxy baptisms, they may not realize that those rites are usually performed by teenagers. Adult Mormons go through the temple ceremony only once for themselves. After that, they participate in the rituals on behalf of a dead person of the same sex.

These ordinances are kept secret and are never to be discussed outside of the temple. When a Mormon attends the temple for the first time it is referred to as taking out his or her endowments. LDS President Brigham Young taught:

Your endowment is, to receive all those ordinances in the House of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, being enabled to give them the key words, the signs and tokens, pertaining to the Holy Priesthood, and gain your eternal exaltation in spite of earth and hell. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 2, p. 31)

In order to attend the LDS temple members must be interviewed by the bishop of the local congregation and then by the stake president of the area. People are asked such questions as do they believe the president of the LDS Church is God’s prophet, do they pay a full tithe, keep the word of wisdom (health code), are they morally clean, do they associate with apostates, etc. If the leaders believe the person to be ready to attend the temple he/she will be given a recommend. This is a small card with the person’s name and ward (local congregation) listed and is signed by the bishop and stake president. This card must be shown at the temple door in order to enter.

FREE BOOK OFFER!

Orders that total $30 or more (before shipping charge) will receive FREE

Mormon Kingdom Vol. 1
by Jerald and Sandra Tanner
(Contains the 1969 temple ceremony that is not in Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony)

and

The Nauvoo Expositor
(only issue printed before the press was destroyed)

Offer Expires August 31, 2005
Today the temple ceremony is divided into four parts:
1. Washing and anointing.
2. Endowment (creation play and instruction).
4. Second Anointing.

Missionaries are required to participate in the LDS temple washing and anointing and endowment ceremony prior to their assignment to a particular mission district. Later when the missionary gets married he/she will need to have a marriage sealing ceremony in the temple.

The Second Anointing ceremony is a lesser known aspect of the LDS rituals and is by invitation only. When a couple participates in this ritual they are guaranteed godhood. David Buerger commented:

In 1901 Lorenzo Snow, fourth church president, stated “that persons who are recommended for second anointings should be those who have made an exceptional record, that they are persons who will never apostatize.” (The Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship, by David John Buerger, Smith Research Associates, 2002, p. 118)

Earliest Ceremony in Kirtland, Ohio

The earliest form of the LDS washing and anointing ceremony was performed in Kirtland, Ohio in 1836 among the top male leaders. Attendees were instructed ahead of time to come prepared to fast for the day. Upon arrival the priesthood member received a complete bath, followed by an anointing with oil.

Later the men gathered for a foot-washing ceremony and partook of the sacrament consisting of bread and wine. After the Mormons moved west the church gradually changed from using wine to using water (see Power From On High, by Gregory A. Prince, Signature Books, pp. 95-96). William Harris, writing in 1841, related his experience:

In 1836, an endowment meeting, or solemn assembly, was called to be held in the Temple at Kirtland. . . . When the day arrived, great numbers convened from the different Churches in the country. They spent the day in fasting and prayer, and in washing and perfuming their bodies; they also washed their feet, and anointed their heads with what they called holy oil, and pronounced blessings. In the evening, they met for the endowment . . . The fast was then broken by eating light wheat bread, and drinking as much wine as they saw proper. Smith knew well how to infuse the spirit which they expected to receive; so he encouraged the brethren to drink freely, telling them that the wine was consecrated, and would not make them drunk. As may be supposed, they drank to the purpose. After this, they began to prophesy, pronouncing blessings upon their friends, and curses upon their enemies. (William Harris, Mormonism Portrayed, as quoted in Mysteries of Godliness, p. 28)

Although the church had already switched from using wine to water in the local congregations, shortly after the turn of the last century they discontinued use of wine in the temple. LDS historian Thomas Alexander wrote:

By mid-1905, members of the Twelve were actively using stake conference visits to promote adherence [to the Word of Wisdom]. . . . In keeping with the change in emphasis, the First Presidency and Twelve substituted water for wine in the sacrament in their temple meetings, apparently beginning July 5, 1906. (Dialogue, vol. 14, no. 3, Autumn, 1981, p. 79)

Apostle Orson F. Whitney, speaking in 1916, defended the sacrament change:

If we use water instead of wine in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, it is because Christ has so commanded. Divine revelation adapts itself to the circumstances and conditions of men, and change upon change ensues as God’s progressive work goes on to its destiny. (Orson F. Whitney, Conference Report, October 1916, p. 55)

1837 Anointings

To accommodate those church leaders who were not in Kirtland for the 1836 ceremony, another one was held in 1837. LDS Apostle Wilford Woodruff gave an account of his 1837 Kirtland experience in his diary:

After attending to the duties above spoken I repaired to a room in Company with Elder Meeks & Priest J Turpin to attend to our first washing. After washing our bodies from head to foot in soap & watter we then washed ourselves in clear watter next in perfumed spirits. (Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, as quoted in Mysteries of Godliness, p. 32)

The next day Woodruff and those who had just received their washings were reassembled for their anointings (Mysteries, p. 32).

The washing and anointing ritual was later incorporated into the Nauvoo Temple ceremony. Thus the washing and anointing segment became known as the “initiatory ordinance” performed prior to the endowment ceremony.

Nauvoo Endowment

In 1838 Joseph Smith was commanded by revelation to build a temple in Nauvoo. In the Doctrine and Covenants, section 124: 40-42, we read:
And verily I say unto you, let this house be built unto my name that I may reveal mine ordinances therein unto my people . . . And I will show unto my servant Joseph all things pertaining to this house, and the priesthood thereof, and the place whereon it shall be built.

The earliest accounts of the temple ceremony were recorded in 1845. Apostle Heber C. Kimball noted in his December 1845 journal:

. . . John D Lee and others have been fitting up stoves in the two west rooms [of the temple]. As they will be devoted to washing and Anointing and to heat water. We have two Large traves [troughs]. . . . Three men can wash in either of them at the same time. (As quoted in Mysteries of Godliness, p. 75)

While men and women participated in the Nauvoo ritual, their washings and anointings were done in separate areas. David Buerger observed:

The earliest accounts of the Nauvoo temple endowment indicate that initiatory washings followed a literal Old Testament model of actual bathing. Large tubs of water are specified in the separate men’s and women’s rooms. The anointing was performed by liberally pouring consecrated oil from a horn over the head and allowing it to run over the whole body. (Mysteries of Godliness, p. 81)

As late as 1931 the Salt Lake Temple had full-sized bathtubs for the washing ceremony (see Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony, Appendix F, pp. 175-76, and Mysteries of Godliness, Appendix 2, p. 218). Below is a picture of one of the ten washing and anointing rooms in the Salt Lake Temple as it appeared in 1912.

A few years later the washing and anointing ceremony was reduced to a ritual touching with water and oil on the various parts of the body by an officiator as prayers were said. The initiate was no longer totally undressed but covered with a sort of white poncho (called a “shield”) open on the sides. The officiant then reached inside the shield to anoint various areas of the body (see Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony, p. 61). Then the temple worker assisted the initiate in putting on the one-piece form of the garment. Many Mormons wear the two-piece style in everyday life, reserving the one-piece style for the temple.

**Changes in 2005**

In January of 2005, the initiatory washing and anointing rite was again modified. Now an initiate disrobes in a locker room (men and women in separate areas), puts on the one-piece garment by him/herself, and then puts the newly designed shield over that. The new shield is no longer open on the sides so that the person is totally covered prior to entering the cubical for the washing and anointing rite.

The temple worker simply touches the person’s forehead with water, and then gives the blessing regarding the various parts of the body (see account below). This is followed by an anointing of the forehead with oil and a repeat of a similar set of prayers. There has also been a slight modification to the wording at the end of the ritual telling the patron that his/her garments are now “authorized.”

Following is the first-hand report from an individual who participated in a proxy washing and anointing session on January 18, 2005 in a temple in Utah:

First, you are given a one piece pair of “Garments” (with zipper in the front) and are told to “PUT THIS ON FIRST”. You are instructed to then put the “Shield” on over the garments. The first thing I noticed was the shield is no longer open on the sides. . . . AT ALL. It’s sealed up all the way down to your ankles. Sure, they’ve got armholes and a big zipper in the front, but it NEVER comes open during the Initiatory.

No more icky naked feeling because, well, you’re not practically naked while doing Initiatories anymore. Where the old “Shields” had massive slits up both sides, the new Shields have no opening on the sides at all. That’s because the old men (and old women for the ladies) no longer reach under the Shield and touch you all over your naked body. Now, if you want to have an old man dab oil all over your body, you’ll have to pay for your perversions like everyone else.

Then, you go into the first cubicle (about 4 feet by 4 feet) and sit on a little stool. (www.josephlied.com)
After the man is ordained to the priesthood in behalf of the dead person, the worker states:

"Brother _______, the temple washing, anointing and clothing ordinances were given anciently, as recorded in the Book of Exodus: “And thou shalt bring Aaron and his sons unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and wash them with water. And thou shalt put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him. . .” (Exodus 40:12-13)

“We likewise administer these ordinances in our day, but you are washed and anointed only symbolically, as follows.”

THEN comes the washing. The temple worker dabs his finger tips into water and sort of draws an imaginary line across your forehead with his wet fingers, getting your forehead slightly damp. He does NOT touch you anywhere else on your body other than when he places his hands on your head and says,

"Brother _______, having authority, I wash you preparatory to your receiving your anointings (for and in behalf of [Patron gives the name. Then officiator repeats the name] ________, who is dead), that you may become clean from the blood and sins of this generation.

“I wash your head, that your brain and your intellect may be clear and active; your ears, that you may hear the word of the Lord; your eyes, that you may see clearly and discern between truth and error; your nose, that you may smell; your lips, that you may never speak guile; your neck, that it may be strong and perform its proper functions; your arms and hands, that they may be strong and wield the sword of justice in defense of truth and virtue; your loins, that you may bear the burdens that shall be placed thereon; your back, that there may be marrow in the bones and in the spine; your breast, that it may be the receptacle of pure and virtuous principles; your vitals and bowels, that they may be healthy and strong and perform their proper functions; your arms and hands, that they may be strong and wield the sword of justice in defense of truth and virtue; your loins, that you may be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, that you might have joy in your posterity; your legs and feet, that you might run and not be weary, and walk and not faint.”

THEN comes the “Sealing of the Washing.” A second man comes into the booth and they BOTH put their hands on your head and the second guy says:

"Brother _______, having authority, we lay our hands upon your head (for and in behalf of [Patron does NOT repeat the name] ________, who is dead), and seal upon you this washing, that you may become clean from the blood and sins of this generation, through your faithfulness, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.”

THEN you move to the second booth (where the guy that just sealed the washing came from) and the guy that just sealed the washing has you sit on a stool and he drips a drop of oil on the top of your head. HE DOESN’T TOUCH ANY PART OF YOUR BODY EXCEPT YOUR HEAD as he puts his hands on the top of your head and says:

"Brother _______, having authority, I pour this holy anointing oil upon your head (for and in behalf of [Patron gives the name. Then officiator repeats the name] ________, who is dead), and anoint you preparatory to your becoming a King and a Priest unto the Most High God, hereafter to rule and reign in the House of Israel forever. I anoint your head, that your brain and your intellect may be clear and active; . . .” [The prayer continues with the same wording as the anointing with water.]

THEN another guy steps into the booth and does the “Confirmation of the Anointing” . . .

THEN, you step into the LAST partition and the guy that just said the Confirmation prayer says:

"Brother _______, under proper authority, the Garment placed upon you is now authorized (for and in behalf of [Patron gives the name. Then officiator repeats the name] ________, who is dead), and is to be worn throughout your life. It represents the Garment given to Adam when he was found naked in the Garden of Eden, and is called the Garment of the Holy Priesthood. Inasmuch as you do not defile it, but are true and faithful to your covenants, it will be a shield and a protection to you against the power of the destroyer until you have finished your work on the earth.”

The reference to the ritual of washing, anointing and dressing of the priests in the book of Exodus has evidently been added to make the LDS ceremony seem biblical. However, there are a number of important differences.

1. This rite was restricted to Aaron and his sons and was not done for his daughters or Israelites from a different tribe (Exodus 40:12).
2. The garment placed on Aaron was outer clothing, described in Exodus 39:27-31, and was not like the LDS undergarment or their temple clothing.
3. The priest did not wear a green apron.
4. The washing and anointing did not precede an endowment ritual or marriage ceremony.
5. The Aaronic rituals were recorded and Israelites knew what was done in the temple.
6. The Biblical account says nothing about priests becoming kings.
7. There was no oath of silence about the rites.
8. The priests offered sacrifices for the sins of the people, prefiguring the atonement of Christ. The Old Testament temple and its rites are no longer needed (see Hebrews 8:13-9:15).
Defending Temple Changes

Through the years there have been many changes to the wording in the temple ceremony. (For more on this see our Salt Lake City Messenger, Nos. 75 and 76.) Some Mormons may feel that the changes to the endowment ceremony only relate to the form and don’t affect the essential ordinance. Mormon apologist Michael Ash concedes that “the temple ceremony has undergone changes, improvements, and refinements” but argues that these relate to “presentation” and not to “absolute truths” (“Can Temple Ceremonies Change?” by Michael Ash, www.fairlds.org).

W. John Walsh, another LDS Church defender, gave his explanation for the changes:

It is important to remember that the temple ceremonies are teaching mechanisms that are tailored to the needs of their audience. . . The mechanisms may be changed for many reasons including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Spiritual Growth of the Church. . .
2. Apostasy in the Church. . .
3. Modernize to conform with the prevailing culture and/or language. . .
4. Add a specific teaching that is especially needed at a point in time. . .

One is left to wonder which of these applies to the temple changes: apostasy? modernization? cultural reasons? How does one determine when change is due to apostasy rather than spiritual growth?

One needs to keep in mind that the LDS Church has always insisted on exactness in such items as total immersion (not sprinkling) during baptism and the exact words to be read during the Sacrament blessing (even to the extent of making the young man repeat the prayer a number of times until he says it word-perfect). Then what is the rational for changes in the temple ceremony?

Changing from a total bath to simply touching the forehead with water seems to be comparable to switching from total immersion in baptism to sprinkling. Brigham Young declared:

Has the holy Catholic Church got faith in Jesus that we have not got? Not a particle that is true and pure. But as for the ordinances of the House of God, we say, . . . that the mother church and all her daughters have transgressed the laws, every one of them; they have changed almost every ordinance of the House of God; . . . There is but one mode of baptism and that is by being immersed in the water . . . (The Essential Brigham Young, Signature Books, 1992, p. 195)

In 1982 W. Grant Bangerter, executive director of the Temple Department and a member of the First Quorum of Seventy, stated:

As temple work progresses, some members wonder if the ordinances can be changed or adjusted. These ordinances have been provided by revelation, and are in the hands of the First Presidency. Thus, the temple is protected from tampering. (Deseret News, Church Section, January 16, 1982)

However, in 1990 sweeping changes were introduced. As recently as 2001 the official LDS magazine, Ensign, proclaimed:

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “Ordinances instituted in the heavens before the foundation of the world, in the priesthood, for the salvation of men, are not to be altered or changed.” (Ensign, August 2001, p. 22)

Since the LDS Church insists that it has restored the ancient temple rituals, how can it make changes and still claim that it is the original ceremony? Prior to 1990, everyone who went through the ceremony understood the embrace on the five points of fellowship to be an essential part of the ritual. Why has it been removed?

The type of changes made in the ritual (i.e. removal of oath of vengeance and penalties, removal of the Christian minister, shortening of the ceremony, modernizing the garment, full bath changed to symbolic touching with water, etc.) would seem to indicate that they were made to make the ceremony more acceptable to new temple attendees.

One thing seems certain, the LDS Church will continue to claim that its temple ritual is the restoration of the ancient temple rite and yet will continue to make modifications.

LDS CLAIMS
Under the Search Light
Recorded Message (801) 485-4262
(Message is three to five minutes)
Civil Ceremony First?

One change that would make church policy consistent and produce greater goodwill with non-LDS family members would be to allow an LDS couple to have a civil marriage ceremony just prior to the temple sealing. Obviously the LDS Church recognizes the trauma that results from excluding non-LDS family members from a temple wedding. In the February 2005 Ensign is an article concerning ways to lessen the hurt feelings. One woman counseled:

Remember you are doing the right thing. The pain and heartache you may feel are momentary. It may not seem so now, but this too shall pass. (Ensign, February 2005, p. 32)

Often an LDS couple will plan a short ring exchange program at their reception to make the non-member family feel more included in the day. However, this is usually seen as too little too late by the mother and father of the bride. One woman wrote:

The day of our marriage was bittersweet. The temple experience was magnificent. Although the simple ring ceremony did little to appease my parents, my husband and I decided to focus on the temple experience and hope that time would heal the wounds. (Ensign, February 2005, p. 32)

All of this pain could easily be avoided by simply allowing the couple to have a civil marriage prior to the temple ceremony.

A recent letter to the editor in the Salt Lake Tribune pointed out:

There has been much talk recently about the feelings between the LDS and non-LDS people in Utah. I am writing to offer a suggestion for taking a step toward easing those differences.

I bring experience that the LDS Church hierarchy cannot have had. I have stood on the front lawn of various LDS temples while three of my sons, two of my daughters and two of my granddaughters have been married within. I suggest that the LDS Church change the rules that brought that about.

Simply being a parent and a reasonably good citizen should be sufficient qualifications for attending the wedding of a son or daughter. . . . I believe I could be convincing in telling the lies about my beliefs that would be necessary for me to obtain a temple recommend. Do they really want parents to lie?

I understand that they regard their temple ceremonies as sacred. Do they think that parents, of whatever religious persuasion, do not regard the weddings of their children as sacred? (Robert Lee, Letters to the Editor, Salt Lake Tribune, April 28, 2005)

A Mormon responded:

. . . Placing the blame for not being able to attend temple wedding ceremonies on the LDS Church is unfair. If he has raised his family in LDS religion practices, why is this such a big surprise? . . . When my oldest daughter was contemplating marriage in the LDS Temple, she told me that she would not get married without her mother and father by her side. She said she would get sealed in the temple the next year. . . . (Alesa Forrest, Letters to the Editor, Salt Lake Tribune, May 2, 2005)

Another reader commented:

In his . . . letter, Robert Lee poignantly illustrated the heart-wrenching personal impact of the LDS Church’s policy regarding temple weddings. This division and pain could be prevented by making a simple policy change. It would not be necessary to change any doctrine.

Present church policy excludes non-LDS and “unworthy” LDS from attending temple marriages of family and friends. LDS couples living in Utah are actively discouraged from considering a non-temple ceremony followed by a later temple sealing. Those who wish to include all family and friends in their wedding ceremony and marry outside the temple are penalized by church policy which requires them to wait one year to be sealed in the temple. However, this waiting period is not church policy in France, Germany, Japan and many other countries. It is not even a consistent policy within the United States.

If the LDS Church is unwilling to allow non-LDS family and friends to be present at temple marriages, it should at least eliminate the one-year waiting period. This policy which requires them to wait one year to be sealed in the temple. However, this waiting period is not church policy in France, Germany, Japan and many other countries. It is not even a consistent policy within the United States.

If LDS Church leaders are serious about their part in healing the divide in Utah and honest about their public pro-family stance, they must seriously consider changing their policy. (Jolene Arnoff, Letters to the Editor, Salt Lake Tribune, May 4, 2005)

According to the LDS Church Handbook, in some areas the church already allows a civil marriage prior to the temple sealing:

Some areas require that a marriage ceremony be performed by a public official. . . . In these cases, the temple sealing necessarily follows the civil marriage as soon as possible . . . (Church Handbook of Instruction, p. 71, 1998)

Since there is already a policy for such situations, why not make it universal? Evidently, there is no “revelation” that states the temple marriage must be done first or that a couple should wait a year after a civil ceremony before having the marriage “sealed.” Consequently, with no doctrinal issues at stake, the change could easily be made. Why inflict such needless sorrow?
Summary of Major Changes in the LDS Temple Ritual from 1842-2005

1. Washing and Anointing was changed from being naked and having a full bath to being completely covered by the garment and shield, with symbolic anointing to forehead (see Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 2005 ed., pp. 39-40; Mysteries of Godliness, p. 32).

2. When the garment was first introduced it was only worn for special occasions. However, in a special meeting of the Quorum of the Anointed in 1845 George A. Smith declared that the garment should be worn “at all times” (Mysteries, p. 146).

3. Originally the garment was made of muslin, one-piece, full length with long sleeves and a collar. In 1916 President Joseph F. Smith emphasized that the garment was never to be altered (Evolution, p. 45, Mysteries, p. 150).

   But in 1923 the First Presidency sent a notice to stake and temple presidents announcing that the garment could be modified. The sleeve could now end at the elbow, the leg could be shortened to just below the knee, the collar eliminated and the crotch closed. They could also be made of finer knitted material, even of silk, instead of the coarse, unbleached cotton material that was used originally.

   However, the full-length garment was to be worn in the temple. Then in 1975 it became optional and one could elect to wear the shorter garment in the temple. In 1979 the shorter garment was again modified to a two-piece version (see Evolution, pp. 44-47; Mysteries, pp. 138, 142-154).

4. Originally only men participated in the temple ritual. In 1843 women were included (see Mysteries, p. 62).

5. The Second Anointing was added in 1843, in which couples were sealed to become gods (see Mysteries, pp. 62-68, 123).

6. A Christian minister, in clerical outfit, making a bargain with the devil to teach false doctrine was added in the 1850’s, then removed in 1990 (see Evolution, pp. 32-33; Mysteries, p. 80 footnote 23).

7. Prior to 1877 the endowment ceremony was only performed for the living. David Buerger writes:

   The first recorded endowments for the dead were performed in St. George on 11 January 1877, according to temple president David H. Cannon. Shortly thereafter Wilford Woodruff, the new temple president, received a revelation about endowments and sealings for his dead, which he recorded in his journal . . . Accordingly on 1 March 1877 Woodruff spent his seventieth birthday in the St. George temple with 154 women performing proxy endowments for deceased women who had been or were being sealed to Woodruff. (Mysteries, pp. 108-109)

8. Dances were often held in the Nauvoo temple after an endowment session (see Mysteries, pp. 85-6). Parties were sometimes held in the temple. After Wilford Woodruff’s sealing to the women mentioned above one hundred people joined him for a Birthday/Wedding party in the St. George temple (see Mysteries, p. 109).

9. In 1894 the Law of Adoption, where a man could have unrelated men sealed to him as his sons, was changed to just sealing those in one’s own family (see Evolution, pp. 42-44).

10. Oath of Vengeance against those who killed Joseph Smith was removed in 1927 (see Evolution, p. 22; Mysteries, pp. 133-140).

11. Wording and demonstration of penalties (drawing thumb across throat, heart and bowels) went through several modifications prior to being removed in 1990 (see Evolution, p. 16; Mysteries, pp. 39, 52-54, 141).

12. Chant of “Pay Lay Ale” changed to “Oh God, hear the words of my mouth” in 1990 (see Evolution, p. 36).

13. Mocking of the Christian doctrine of God was removed in 1990 (see Evolution, p. 80).

14. Lecture at the veil delivered at sessions for those taking out their endowments for the first time was removed in 1990 (see Evolution, p. 37; Mysteries, pp. 81, 110-113, 137).

15. Embrace on the Five Points of Fellowship at the veil was removed in 1990 (see Evolution, pp. 29-30; Mysteries, pp. 55, 78, 170).

16. Woman’s Oath of Obedience to her husband was modified in 1990 (see Evolution, pp. 33-35).

17. Length of temple ceremony has varied through the years (see Mysteries, p. 80).
Ministry Files Lawsuit

For the first time in the history of Utah Lighthouse Ministry, we have had to file a lawsuit. The action was filed on April 25, 2005, in U.S. District Court in Salt Lake City, to prevent the exploitation of the ministry trademark and our personal names, and to ensure that those seeking our information are not misled. The next day the Salt Lake Tribune reported:

A Salt Lake City organization that is critical of the LDS Church filed suit Monday accusing a pro-Mormon foundation of trademark infringement and unfair competition.

The suit by Utah Lighthouse Ministry Inc. accuses The Foundation for Apologetic Information & Research (FAIR) of registering 13 Internet domain names associated with UTLM, including those of founders Jerald and Sandra Tanner, to create confusion.

The alleged cybersquatting—the practice of registering or using Internet domain names with the intent of profiting from the good will associated with someone else’s trademark—takes visitors looking for UTLM publications to a selection of hyperlinks to articles posted on FAIR’s Web site instead, the suit contends. In addition, it says, these internet sites “bear a remarkable resemblance of ‘look and feel’ to the UTLM Web site.”

The legal action seeks transfer to UTLM of the 13 domain names, which were registered in 2003 and 2004 by Allen Wyatt, and triple the unspecified money damages suffered by the ministry. (“Ministry Files Suit Over Web Sites,” Salt Lake Tribune, April 26, 2005)

On Wednesday, April 27, the Deseret News ran a similar article on the suit. Neither paper contacted us for a statement. The thirteen domain names are:

utahlighthouseministry.org
utahlighthouseministry.com
utahlighthouse.org
utahlighthouse.com
utahlighthouse.info
sandratanner.org
sandratanner.com
sandratanner.info
jeraldtanner.org
jeraldtanner.com
jeraldtanner.info
geraldtanner.org
geraldtanner.com

Exhibits 40-46 of the complaint are emails from various people who stumbled across the bogus sites.

Exhibit 40 is an email from a woman who wrote “that when you type in utahlighthouse.com or even utahlighthouseministries.com you’re redirected to an anti-utlm site, which looks EXACTLY like your site!!!” (Complaint, p. 19)

One man wrote “the website utahlighthouse.com is a hacked site parodying and slamming this site.” (Complaint p. 19)

After visiting www.utahlighthouse.org another man wrote “I assume you already knew about it, but just in case you didn’t, you really should have a look. If that isn’t illegal manipulation of the image and purpose of your Website, I don’t know what is!” (Complaint p. 20)

In Exhibit 46 a customer wrote “I went to www.utahlighthouseministry.com and found a different site, obviously not yours, talk about deceptive, let me tell you.” (Complaint p. 21)

On the next page is a copy of Exhibit 1, our opening web page and Exhibit 29, one of the web pages of the defendants. Wyatt’s web sites were specifically designed to mimic the “look and feel” of our official site. All of the sites have now been taken down but that does not resolve the problem of “acts of cybersquatting, trademark infringement, trademark dilution and unfair competition in violation of the laws of the United States of America and the State of Utah.” (See Utah Lighthouse Ministry, Inc. a Utah Corporation, Plaintiff, v. Discovery Computing, Inc., an Arizona Corporation and Allen L. Wyatt, an individual, Debra M. Wyatt, an individual, The Foundation For Apologetic Information & Research (FAIR), a New York Corporation and Scott Gordon, an individual, and Does 1-10, inclusive, Defendants. United States District Court, District of Utah, Central Division, case number 2:05CV00380 DAK.)

Your donations help make this newsletter possible.

Thank you for your support.
Utah Lighthouse Ministry
is a non-profit organization
and gifts are tax-deductible.

Donations may be made with cash or check and sent by mail or with a credit card on our web site, www.utlm.org.
Welcome to the official website of Utah Lighthouse Ministry, founded by Gerald and Sandra Tanner.
The purpose of this site is to document problems with the claims of Mormonism and compare LDS doctrines with Christianity.

Exhibit 1

Psalms 43:3
"O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me."...

John 3:21
"But he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life..."

John 8:12
Jesus said: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness..."

Click this Lighthouse to see Reliable Information About the LDS Church

Click the Lighthouse's base for the Official LDS Site

Exhibit 29

Utah Lighthouse Ministry

Welcome to an official website about the Utah Lighthouse Ministry, which was founded by Gerald and Sandra Tanner.
The purpose of this site is to document problems with the claims made by Gerald and Sandra Tanner under the guise of Christianity.

Titus 1:10-11
"For there are many unruly and vain teachers and deceivers... Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake."

2 Peter 3:3
"...there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts..."

John 8:32
"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free..."

Articles about the Tanners
Books by the Tanners

For more than three decades, Gerald and Sandra Tanner have devoted their lives to exposing and trying to destroy Mormonism. They have succeeded in creating a miasma of false information, largely because of their obsessive writing style, which is most nearly reminiscent of FBI undercover agents reporting back to J. Edgar Hoover on the terrible continuing threat of the worldwide communist (read: Mormon) conspiracy." 

http://www.utahlighthouseministry.org/

4/1/2005

https://www.saltlakecitymessenger.com/
Excerpts from Letters and Emails

Nov. 2004. Thank you for your November 2004 Messenger; as usual, I read it from cover to cover….Thanks to your ministry, a young woman whom my son dated a few years ago renounced Mormonism, started attending our church (University Christian), and married a fine Christian man.

Nov. 2004. It is unfortunate that you have been so easily deceived Sandra. That same spirit you felt as you sang the song Oh it is wonderful resides in all aspects of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, including but not limited to His Prophets, I know the LDS faith is True. The Rock on which Christ established his Church was not Peter nor any man, but revelation and God revealse his truths to his Prophets.

Nov. 2004. You are both so full of sh**. Always, always, always follow the prophet. Even when it is not in your interest. Once you start doubting the prophet(s) you fall. [We edited his four-letter word.]

Nov. 2004. … I have always enjoyed researching Mormon history. I thank God that I did not complete the baptism that was scheduled for me into the Mormon Church in 1976, … The reason I did not join the church was due to my reading of Fawn Brodie’s famous book [No Man Knows My History], as well as a book called, “Why I am Not a Mormon.” Since that time, I have been fascinated with Mormon history.

Nov. 2004. how dare you. if you were born into the church why put such slander for everyone to read, why be false prophets to everyone. many have done research and many things stated on this site were false, why slander someone if u are not telling the truth. … joseph smith was a prophet of god, he NEVER in his life said such things, u of all ppl should know this. u grew up being taught this. …

Dec. 2004. I read the whole “Mormonism, Shadow or Reality” 11 yrs ago (took almost a yr. to read) and several other of your works. It has been valuable over the years in keeping me informed, and I have derailed the conversion to Mormonism of family members. Also I’ve planted seeds of doubt I hope in a young group of missionaries at my door. Anyways God bless you & your loved ones- always!

Dec. 2004. I find it interesting in reading the emails from others that many mormon members are angry and accuse you of being hateful and evil. I believe this is the first step in their own realization that something is wrong. I pray these people will receive guidance to continue to learn the truth and develop a closer relationship with Jesus.... Thank YOU!!
Jan. 2005. Now of course you will . . . give me a bunch of bull crap about your reasons for being antimormon. But it’s okay. I am not expecting you to tell me the truth. (In fact, your whole website is a bunch of lies). Now I could go through all of your lies and have comebacks for all of them. But it wouldn’t do any good. I have tried that enough times with you liars that I have realized that whenever I try to ask a strait up question, you always find a way to sneak around the question without answering it because you have no answer for it.

Feb. 2005. I joined the church at the young age of twenty-three while I was in the service. After 40 years in the church I began to see things that bothered me and it wasn’t until my wife and I moved to Las Vegas, Nevada, that we began to search out what’s what in earnest.

Your website has been a great source . . . Like you, I am concerned about the members most of whom are really great people. But, it is obvious that we all have been lied to over the years and this makes me very angry at the church leaders. . . .

I appreciate all the information you have made available and the links to other websites which have been a great source of information. I have been studying like crazy and have learned a lot of information, some of which has made me sick to my stomach! . . .

Feb. 2005. I am LDS and Proud of it, I am not the one to judge anyone, but how can you stray away from it is really the truth about your ancestors and become part of a church that will never show you the truth and the light. . . . Please do not disappoint you ancestor’s By doing what you are doing now go back to the LDS faith and seek the true meaning of the gospel that was sent here before us through Joseph’s Smith’s Eyes.

Feb. 2005. All of the reading I have done about Joseph Smith Jr. and all of his writings including the book of Mormon sound phony to me. I cannot see any reason to believe anything he says. It all sounds like plagiarism and lies to me.

Feb. 2005. Are you LDS? If not, how could you possibly know the answers to questions people may have concerning this religion?! Because I AM LDS . . . I am so sick to death of people putting down a religion they know so little about. Please for all LDS peoples sake, knock it off.

Mar. 2005. Why are you trying to publicly defame the Mormons? What did they ever do to you? It seems the Mormons are the only church not interested in ridiculing the beliefs of other churches. That truly is sad.

April 2005. I recently received the letter of freebies, which though hurtful, I am grateful to know the truth about the Mountain Meadows Massacre. I am very grateful for the Tanners’ honest look into Mormonism’s past, and re-emphasis and the most important theme I cling to as a Mormon, and that is my personal relationship with the Lord. After an honest look at what they’ve presented, it becomes very evident that our Mormon prophets are just men, sinners like the rest of us with a sometimes unclear understanding of history and God’s universe.

I don’t know if this compliment from a Mormon is meaningless or not, but the Tanners’ have followed the Lord’s command to know the truth, and to make sure their brother does not stumble in error, two clear exhortations in the New Testament. As such, I firmly believe they will attain a higher degree of glory than many of us Mormons, and I am glad to see such an honest pursuit of truth. God loves the work your ministry is doing.

April 2005. I’m a former Mormon who came to know the Lord in 1972 while I was a player in the NFL through the ministry of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

The Mormon Church does such a good job of obscuring its theological positions and the changing of its historical positions that it took me five years before I realized that I couldn’t be both a Mormon and a Christian. The materials I obtained through Utah Lighthouse Ministry were incredibly helpful to me in turning the light on. I finally found the peace that I’d been looking for and my life hasn’t been the same since!

April 2005. After 30 years as a “convert” to the LDS Church, I and my wife (she is still struggling with this) have walked away from the church. I’ve always thought of folks like you as spreaders of poison and followed church leaders advice to avoid “antimormon” literature.

Recently, and I don’t know why, I chose to take a look at the challenge put forth about the Book of Abraham and found the evidence compelling. I’ve even read the FARMS and FAIR responses and found them to be pretty lame.

Since then I’ve read a ton of stuff that I won’t list here but has convinced me that the things that I’ve held sacred all these years are no more than smoke and mirrors created by Brother Joe. I’m angry and disappointed that I’ve been lied to all these years. . . . Thanks to folks like you truth that would not otherwise come forth is available now for those who are seeking the real truth. Thanks for what you do.

April 2005. I am a former Mormon who was able to excommunicate himself from the Mormon Church over 10 years ago with the help of your ministry. My younger sister, brother-in-law, and I have since embraced traditional Christianity.
Two Free Books
by
Noted Historian
LaMar Petersen
with order of $100 or more
(before shipping charge)
($24.00 value)

The Creation of the Book of Mormon:
A Historical Inquiry

Hearts Made Glad:
The Charges of Intemperance Against
Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet

New Titles
Correcting the Cults - Expert Responses to Their
Scripture Twisting ........................................ $18.00
Norman Geisler & Ron Rhodes - Baker Books

Mormonism’s Greatest Problems (3 CD Set) .. $20.00
Audio CD’s featuring Sandra Tanner, Dr. Thomas
Murphy, Dr. Simon Southerton, Bill McKeever, Eric
Johnson, Jim Robertson, Andy Poland and others.
Hosted and produced by Roger Resler - Truth in Depth.

New Books This Summer
Joseph Smith’s Quorum of the Anointed,
1842-1845: A Documentary History ............... $36.00

The Nauvoo Endowment Companies,
1845-1846: A Documentary History ............... $36.00
Edited by Devery Anderson & Gary Bergera
Signature Books

UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY
PO BOX 1884
SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84110
This year the LDS Church is celebrating the 200th anniversary of Joseph Smith’s birth on December 23, 1805. Joseph claimed that God and Christ appeared to him when he was fourteen, in the spring of 1820, and told him not to join any church for they were all in a state of apostasy. God was about to restore His true church through the instrumentality of Smith.

Three years later, in 1823, Smith claimed a messenger from God appeared to him and told him about a record hidden in a hill outside of Palmyra, New York, close to Smith’s home. In the introduction to the current Book of Mormon we read:

The Book of Mormon . . . is a record of God’s dealings with the ancient inhabitants of the Americas . . . The record gives an account of two great civilizations. One came from Jerusalem [to America] in 600 B.C., and afterward separated into two nations, known as the Nephites and the Lamanites. The other came much earlier when the Lord confounded the tongues at the Tower of Babel. This group is known as the Jaredites.

This record also contained an account of the appearance of Jesus Christ to the Nephites shortly after his crucifixion.

According to Smith, the angel who appeared to him was Moroni, the last person to have written on this record prior to it being buried, approximately 421 A.D. Moroni, now a resurrected being, instructed Smith that he must keep himself from evil, follow God in righteous behavior and he would eventually be permitted to translate the hidden record. Four years later, on September 22, 1827, Moroni directed Smith to the spot on the hill where he was able to uncover the plates.

Then in the spring of 1830 Joseph Smith published the Book of Mormon and founded the Church of Christ, later to be renamed the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. However, few know the background and problems associated with his claims.

Joseph Smith and his father first garnered the public’s attention in 1820 due to their involvement in money-digging. Joseph’s claims of special magic powers took on greater meaning in 1822 when he found a small chocolate-colored stone while digging a well for a neighbor, Willard Chase. This stone was thought to have the power to direct a person to buried treasures.

In 1833, Mr. Chase gave the following statement regarding the Smiths:

I became acquainted with the Smith family, known as the authors of the Mormon Bible, in the year 1820. At that time, they were engaged in the money digging business, which they followed until the latter part of the season of 1827. In the year 1822, I was engaged in digging a well. I employed Alvin [Joseph’s brother] and Joseph Smith to assist me; the latter of whom is now known as the Mormon prophet. After digging about twenty feet below the surface of the earth, we discovered a singularly appearing stone . . . and as
we were examining it, Joseph put it into his hat, and then his face into the top of his hat. . . . The next morning he [Joseph] came to me and wished to obtain the stone, alluding that he could see in it . . . (Early Mormon Documents, vol. 2, edited by Dan Vogel, Signature Books, 1998, pp. 65-66)

William Stafford, one of the first settlers of Palmyra, New York, gave the following statement in 1833:

I first became acquainted with Joseph, Sen., and his family in the year 1820. They lived, at that time, in Palmyra, about one mile and a half from my residence. A great part of their time was devoted to digging for money: especially in the night time, when they said the money could be most easily obtained. I have heard them tell marvelous tales, respecting the discoveries they had made in their peculiar occupation of money digging. They would say, for instance, that in such a place, in such a hill, on a certain man’s farm, there were deposited keys, barrels and logheads of coined silver and gold—bars of gold, golden images, brass kettles filled with gold and silver—gold candlesticks, swords, &c. &c. They would say, also, that nearly all the hills in this part of New York, were thrown up by human hands, and in them were large caves, which Joseph Smith, Jr., could see, by placing a stone of singular appearance in his hat, in such a manner as to exclude all light; at which time pretended he could see all things within and under the earth,—that he could see within the above mentioned caves, large gold bars and silver plates—that he could also discover the spirits in whose charge these treasures were, clothed in ancient dress. The facility of approaching them, depended in great measure on the state of the moon. New moon and good Friday, I believe, were regarded as the most favorable times for obtaining these treasures. (Early Mormon Documents, vol. 2, pp. 59-60)

Further on in the same statement Mr. Stafford related:

At another time, they [the Smiths] devised a scheme, by which they might satiate their hunger, with the mutton of one of my sheep. They had seen in my flock of sheep, a large, fat, black weather. Old Joseph and one of the boys came to me one day, and said that Joseph Jr. had discovered some very remarkable and valuable treasures, which could be procured only in one way. That way, was as follows: — That a black sheep should be taken on to the ground where the treasures were concealed—that after cutting its throat, it should be led around a circle while bleeding. This being done, the wrath of the evil spirit would be appeased: the treasures could then be obtained, and my share of them was to be four fold. To gratify my curiosity, I let them have a large fat sheep. They afterwards informed me, that the sheep was killed pursuant to commandment; but as there was some mistake in the process, it did not have desired effect. This, I believe, is the only time they ever made money-digging a profitable business. They, however, had around them constantly a worthless gang, whose employment it was to dig money nights, and who, day times, had more to do with mutton than money. (Early Mormon Documents, vol. 2, p. 61)

Many of the Smith neighbors and acquaintances gave similar statements telling of the Smiths’ involvement in magical practices and money-digging. These have now been collected and reproduced in Early Mormon Documents, compiled by Dan Vogel, volumes 2-5.

Joseph Smith’s mother confirmed his notoriety as a glass-looker, or soothsayer, and related how a Mr. Stowell traveled across the state to hire him:

A short time before the house was completed [1825], a man by the name of Josiah Stoal [Stowell] came from Chenango county, New York, with the view of getting Joseph to assist him in digging for a silver mine [in Pennsylvania]. He came for Joseph on account of having heard that he possessed certain means by which he could discern things invisible to the natural eye. (Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and his Progenitors for Many Generations, by Lucy Smith, 1853, p. 91; also reproduced in Lucy’s Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith’s Family Memoir, edited by Lavina F. Anderson, Signature Books, 2001, pp. 359-360)

H. Michael Marquardt relates that both of Smith’s parents claimed Stowell sought him out specifically because of his magic stone:

Smith’s father and mother indicated that he was more than a hired hand for Stowell. Joseph Sr. reportedly told Fayette Lapham that his son went to Harmony, Pennsylvania, “at the request of some one who wanted the assistance of his divining rod and stone in finding hidden treasure, supposed to have been deposited there by the Indians or others.” Similarly Lucy recalled that Stowell had sought her son’s help because he heard Joseph “possessed certain keys, by which he could discern things invisible to the natural eye.”

In other words it was because of Smith’s reputation that father and son made the trip of over one hundred miles to Harmony, Pennsylvania, where Stowell employed them to help locate the mine. Smith was now nineteen and his father fifty-four. (The Rise of Mormonism: 1816-1844, by H. Michael Marquardt, Xulon, 2005, p. 63)
Involvement in magic stones and treasure-digging was quite common in the New England states in the early 1800’s and many did not view it as antithetical to an active church life. Fawn Brodie, famous biographer of Joseph Smith, told of the community interest in treasure-digging and the influence of Luman Walters, the magician:

Excitement over the possibilities of Indian treasure, and perhaps buried Spanish gold, reached its height in Palmyra with the coming of what the editor of the Palmyra Reflector called a “vagabond fortune-teller” named Walters, who so won the confidence of several farmers that for some months they paid him three dollars a day to hunt for buried money on their property. In addition to crystals, stuffed toads, and mineral rods, the scryer’s usual paraphernalia, Walters claimed to have found an ancient Indian record that described the locations of their hidden treasure. This he would read aloud to his followers in what seemed to be a strange and exotic tongue but was actually, the newspaper editor declared, an old Latin version of Caesar’s [Cicero’s] Orations. The press accounts describing Walter’s activity, published in 1830-1, stated significantly that when he left the neighborhood, his mantle fell upon young Joseph Smith. (No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, The Mormon Prophet, by Fawn Brodie, 1971, Knopf, p. 19. For more information on Luman Walters, see Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, by D. Michael Quinn, Signature Books, 1998 ed., pp. 116-132)

While working for Mr. Stowell, Joseph and his father entered into an agreement with several other money-diggers that they would share in any treasure find. H. Michael Marquardt commented on that agreement:

On November 1, 1825, soon after their arrival in Harmony and in anticipation of their discoveries, Stowell’s treasure digging company drew up “Articles of Agreement.” This agreement stipulated, “if anything of value should be obtained at a certain place in Pennsylvania near a Wm. Hale’s, supposed to be a valuable mine of either Gold or Silver and also to contain coined money and bars or ingots of Gold or Silver,” each member would receive a share, . . . According to this agreement, Joseph Sr. and his son Joseph (who both signed the agreement) would receive “two elevenths of all the property that may be obtained.” (The Rise of Mormonism: 1816-1844, pp. 63-64)

The entire agreement is reproduced in Early Mormon Documents, vol. 4, pp. 407-413. This agreement would come back to haunt Smith when these men felt that they should have a share in the Book of Mormon gold plates. This led to a number of attempts to steal the plates from the Smiths.

The men probably became aware from Willard Chase that Smith was about to retrieve the plates from the hill. Chase had been requested by Smith to make a chest in which he could store the plates. Dan Vogel observed:

The cabinet maker was probably Willard Chase, who said Smith came to him about that time and “requested me to make him a chest, informing me that he designed to move back to Pennsylvania, and expecting soon to get his gold book, he wanted a chest to lock it up, giving me to understand at the same time, that if I would make the chest he would give me a share in the book.” Chase declined because he had other more pressing work . . . Despite his skepticism about the gold plates, Chase would soon join other treasure seekers in an effort to find where Smith had hidden them.

The discussion with Chase tipped off the other treasure seekers, who became angry with Smith for keeping the plates from them. . . . Recalling a visit to the area in 1828, David Whitmer [one of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon] stated: “I had conversations with several young men who said that Joseph Smith had certainly golden plates, and that before he attained them he had promised to share with them, but had not done so, and they were very much incensed with him.” (Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet, by Dan Vogel, Signature Books, 2004, p. 95)

LDS historians generally agree that Joseph Smith was involved in magical practices as a young man but tend to minimize its importance. However, Richard Bushman, a well-respected LDS scholar, has devoted several pages to the Smith’s money-digging in his new book, Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling. On page 50 he notes:

The Smiths were as susceptible as their neighbors to treasure-seeking folklore. In addition to rod and stone divining, the Smiths probably believed in the rudimentary astrology found in the ubiquitous almanacs. Magical parchments handed down in the Hyrum Smith family may have originally belonged to Joseph Sr. The visit of the angel and the discovery of the gold plates would have confirmed the belief in supernatural power. For people in a magical frame of mind, Moroni sounded like one of the spirits who stood guard over treasure in the tales of treasure-seeking. The similarities may even have made the extraordinary story more credible in the Smith family. Lucy recognized the crossover in prefacing her narrative of the plates with a caution against thinking

that we stopt our labor and went at trying to win the faculty of Abrac drawing Magic circles or sooth saying to the neglect of all kinds of business we never during our lives suffered one important interest to swallow up every other obligation but whilst we worked with our hands we endeavored to remember the service of & the welfare of our souls.

Lucy’s point was that the Smiths were not lazy—they had not stopped their labor to practice magic—but she showed her knowledge of formulas and rituals and associated
them with “the welfare of our souls.” Magic and religion melded in Smith family culture. . . .

Joseph Jr. never repudiated the stones or denied their power to find treasure. Remnants of the magical culture stayed with him to the end. (Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling, by Richard L. Bushman, 2005, Knopf, pp. 50-51)

In 1826, while working for Mr. Stowell, Joseph Smith was charged with a misdemeanor due to his magic practices. Mr. Stowell’s nephew brought the charges against Smith, believing that Smith was an imposter. Richard Bushman writes:

Notes of a March 1826 court appearance in South Bainbridge shed light on the Smith family’s attitudes toward treasure-seeking on the eve of receiving the plates. Peter Bridgeman, nephew of Josiah Stowell, entered a complaint against Joseph Smith Jr. as a disorderly person in South Bainbridge, Chenango County, New York. New York law specified that anyone pretending to have skill in discovering lost goods should be judged a disorderly person. . . . Presumably, Bridgeman believed that Joseph was trying to cheat the old man by claiming magical powers. In the court record, Stowell said that he “had the most implicit faith in the Prisoners skill,” implying that was the reason for hiring Joseph. (Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling, pp. 51-52)

The documents relating to this 1826 event leave some questions as to whether this was a preliminary hearing or the actual trial. That is not as important as the information they provide about Joseph Smith’s activities at that time. They demonstrate that he was active in folk magic during the very time period that he was supposedly being groomed by an angel for his calling as prophet and seer. (For more details on this 1826 court proceeding, see Inventing Mormonism, by Walters and Marquardt, Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet, by Dan Vogel, and Early Mormon Documents, edited by Dan Vogel, vol. 2-4, and our Joseph Smith and Money Digging. For more details on the Smith’s involvement with magic, see Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, by D. Michael Quinn, and our Mormonism, Magic and Masonry.)

GETTING THE PLATES

Martin Harris, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, gave an account of Smith finding the plates in his 1859 interview in Tiffany’s Monthly:

Joseph Smith, jr., found at Palmyra, N.Y., on the 22nd day of September, 1827, the plates of gold upon which was recorded . . . the Book of Mormon . . . Joseph had a stone which was dug from the well of Mason Chase [father of Willard], twenty-four feet from the surface. In this stone he could see many things to my certain knowledge. It was by means of this stone he first discovered these plates. . . .

Joseph had this stone for some time. There was a company there in that neighborhood, who were digging for money supposed to have been hidden by the ancients. Of this company were old Mr. Stowel—I think his name was Josiah—also old Mr. [Alvah] Beman, also Samuel Lawrence, George Proper, Joseph Smith, jr., and his father, and his brother Hiram Smith. They dug for money in Palmyra, Manchester, also in Pennsylvania, and other places. When Joseph found this stone, there was a company digging in Harmony, Pa., and they took Joseph to look in the stone for them, and he did so for a while, and then he told them the enchantment was so strong he could not see, and they gave it up. There he became acquainted with his future wife, the daughter of old Mr. Isaac Hale, where he boarded. (Reprinted in Early Mormon Documents, vol. 2, pp. 302-304)

Further on in the same article Harris stated:

The money-diggers claimed that they had as much right to the plates as Joseph had, as they were in company together. They claimed that Joseph had been traitor, and had appropriated to himself that which belonged to them. For this reason Joseph was afraid of them, and continued concealing the plates. (Early Mormon Documents, vol. 2, p. 307)

At another place in the article Harris observed:

Joseph had before this described the manner of his finding the plates. He found them by looking in the stone found in the well of Mason Chase. The family had likewise told me the same thing.

Joseph said the angel told him he must quit the company of the money-diggers. That there were wicked men among them. (Early Mormon Documents, vol. 2, p. 309)

In Smith’s history at the back of the Pearl of Great Price, we read that the angel first appeared to him in 1823 during the night and early morning of September 21st and 22nd. The angel instructed Smith to meet with him on the same date every year until he got the plates (see Joseph Smith—History 1:29 and 53, Pearl of Great Price). One of the interesting things about the annual visit of the angel on September 22, from 1823 to 1827, is the date’s association with magic. D. Michael Quinn devotes chapter five of Early Mormonism and the Magic World View to a discussion of the magical implications of the dating and various aspects of both Smith’s first vision and the September 22 angel vision on the autumnal equinox (see Early Mormonism, p. 144).

While Joseph Smith claimed that an angel first informed him of the ancient record in 1823, he was not allowed to retrieve the plates from the hill south of Palmyra, New York, until 1827. Joseph Smith’s mother, Lucy, gave the following account of that event:
The plates were secreted about three miles from home. . . Joseph, on coming to them, took them from their secret place, and, wrapping them in his linen frock, placed them under his arm and started for home.

After proceeding a short distance, he thought it would be more safe to leave the road and go through the woods. Traveling some distance after he left the road, he came to a large windfall, and as he was jumping over a log, a man sprang up from behind it, and gave him a heavy blow with a gun. Joseph turned around and knocked him down, then ran at the top of his speed. About half a mile further he was attacked again in the same manner as before; he knocked this man down in like manner as the former, and ran on again; and before he reached home he was assaulted the third time. In striking the last one he dislocated his thumb, which, however, he did not notice until he came within sight of the house, when he threw himself down in the corner of the fence in order to recover his breath. As soon as he was able, he arose and came to the house. He was still altogether speechless from fright and the fatigue of running. (Lucy’s Book, pp. 385-386, Biographical Sketches, by Lucy Smith, pp. 104-105)

This seems to have been an effort by the money-diggers to get the treasure that they felt had been wrongfully kept from them.

Plates of Gold?

Joseph Smith recorded in his official history that the angel informed him the plates were gold:

When first I looked upon him, I was afraid; but the fear soon left me. He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me and that his name was Moroni. . . He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the sources from whence they sprang. (History of the Church, vol. 1, by Joseph Smith, Deseret Book, 1976, pp. 11-12)

However, in 1842, Smith seemed to qualify his description of the plates. He wrote to John Wentworth that the plates had “the appearance of gold”:

These records were engraved on plates which had the appearance of gold, each plate was six inches wide and eight inches long, and not quite so thick as common tin. They were filled with engravings, in Egyptian characters, and bound together in a volume as the leaves of a book, with three rings running through the whole. The volume was something near six inches in thickness, a part of which was sealed. The characters on the unsealed part were small, and beautifully engraved. (History of the Church, vol. 4, p. 537)

The change from stating the plates were “gold” to the “appearance of gold” was possibly due to someone pointing out that a stack of plates such as he described would have weighed somewhere in the vicinity of 200 pounds. Since he supposedly ran a distance of three miles, jumping over obstacles, and warding off assailants, all while carrying the plates, his story would lack credibility.

Weight of the Plates

A discussion of the weight and size of the plates was given by LDS Apostle John A. Widtsoe and Franklin S. Harris:

The plates upon which the Book of Mormon was engraved were made of gold and have been described as being about six inches wide by eight inches long by six inches thick. A cube of solid gold of that size, if the gold were pure, would weigh two hundred pounds, which would be a heavy weight for a man to carry, even though he were of the athletic type of Joseph Smith. This has been urged as an evidence against the truth of the Book of Mormon, since it is known that on several occasions the Prophet carried the plates in his arms. It is very unlikely, however, that the plates were made of pure gold. They would have been too soft and in danger of destruction by distortion. For the purpose of record keeping, plates made of gold mixed with a certain amount of copper would be better. . . If the plates were made of eight karat gold, which is gold frequently used in present-day jewelry, and allowing a 10 percent space between the leaves, the total weight of the plates would not be above one hundred and seventeen pounds—a weight easily carried by a man as strong as was Joseph Smith. (Seven Claims of The Book of Mormon: A Collection of Evidences, by John A. Widtsoe and Franklin S. Harris, Jr., Zion’s Printing and Publishing Company, 1937, pp. 38-39) While Apostle Widtsoe proposes a possible weight for the plates of 117 pounds, the friends of Smith estimated them to be between 40 and 60 pounds.

Martin Harris estimated the weight of the plates at “forty or fifty pounds” (Tiffany’s Monthly, 1859, p. 166, reprinted in Early Mormon Documents, vol. 2, p. 306). This would not be enough weight for them to be made of lead, let alone gold. We have a set of lead plates made to the size described by Smith and they weigh 117 pounds. This weight is too great and the plates too cumbersome for Smith to have run through the woods three miles while fighting off attackers, as described by both Martin Harris and Smith’s mother, Lucy.

A number of people mention “hefting” the plates: Lucy and Martin Harris, their daughter, Emma Smith, Lucy Smith, William Smith and others. Martin Harris related:
My daughter said, they were about as much as she could lift. They were now in the glass-box, and my wife said they were very heavy. They both lifted them. (Early Mormon Documents, vol. 2, p. 309)

If the plates weighed only “forty or fifty pounds” as Harris stated, his wife and daughter possibly could have picked them up. But are we to believe that this young woman hefted at least 117 pounds?

Dan Vogel theorizes that Smith could have constructed a set of plates from tin:

His [Smith’s] remark that a plate was not quite as thick as common tin may have been meant to divert attention from the possibility that they were actually made from some material otherwise readily available to him. Indeed, his prohibition against visual inspection seems contrived to the skeptic who might explain that the would-be prophet constructed a set of plates to be felt through a cloth.

The construction of such a book would have been relatively easy. There were scraps of tin available on the Smith property and elsewhere in the vicinity, . . . Using a pair of metal shears, it would have been easy to cut a number of 6x8-inch sheets. A hole punch, nail, or some similar instrument could have been used to make three holes along one edge of each plate. Then it would have been a matter of passing three wires or rods through the holes and bending them into rings. A book made of tin plates of the dimensions (6x8x6 inches) described by Smith would have weighed between fifty and sixty pounds, corresponding to the weight that was mentioned by eye-witness accounts. (Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet, p. 98)

TUMBAGA?

In order to explain the disparity between the plates being gold and the weight given by those who hefted the covered plates, Mormons have suggested that the plates were made out of “tumbaga,” a metal made out of part gold and part copper. They assume the plates were approximately 8 to 12 carat gold. For instance, LDS author Michael Ash proposes a possible weight “between 53 and 86 pounds.” Apostle Widtsoe’s figures were also calculated with an assumption of 8 carat gold. The difference is that Widtsoe (Seven Claims of The Book of Mormon, p. 38) assumed a “10 percent space between the leaves” while Ash assumes that the “unevenness left by the hammering and air spaces between the separate plates would reduce the weight to probably less than 50 percent of the solid block.” (www.mormonfortress.com/gweight.html)

One problem with this theory is that Mormons also maintain the plates contained very fine, small characters (necessary in order to write the entire Book of Mormon on the relatively few sheets). This would seem to necessitate a fairly smooth surface. The argument for uneven sheets resulting in fifty percent weight loss would also reduce the number of plates available for engraving.

Bill McKeever gave the following response to the effort of an LDS organization, FARMS, to promote the tumbaga theory:

The FARMS’ article supports the tumbaga theory by referring to William Smith, Joseph’s brother, who was quoted in the Saints Herald (31, 1884, p. 644) as stating that the plates were a mixture of gold and copper. One can only imagine how William arrived at such a conclusion since there is no evidence to suggest that the plates were ever analyzed. Making William’s statement even less credible is the fact that he admitted to having never seen the plates. He claimed, “I was permitted to lift them as they laid in a pillow-case; but not to see them, as was contrary to the commands he had received. They weighed about sixty pounds according to the best of my judgment” (A New Witness for Christ in America 2:417). FARMS insists that tumbaga plates would have weighed only about 53 pounds. In other words, it would be like carrying a sack of redi-mix concrete.

Despite the effort from FARMS to change LDS history, it appears that the tumbaga theory is not being taken too seriously. As recently as May 15, 1999, the LDS Church News ran an article entitled “Hands-on opportunity.” Speaking of Joseph Smith, it read, “He had also been instructed by an angel, Moroni, who had met with him each year for four years. On his last visit, he was entrusted with plates of solid gold, which he had been translating by the power of the Spirit.” (http://www.mrm.org/multimedia/text/how-heavy.html)

To date LDS scholars have failed to show that native Americans recorded their history or religious texts on metal sheets during the Book of Mormon time period. Deanne Matheny, anthropologist and former instructor at BYU, commented:

The peoples of Mesoamerica possessed a stone age technology, and metal appears to have arrived late in the sequence of most regions, where it was little used for utilitarian objects (“Does The Shoe Fit? A Critique of the Limited Tehuantepec Geography,” by Deanne G. Matheny, New Approaches to the Book of Mormon, edited by Brent Lee Metcalfe, Signature Books, 1993, p. 276).

CAPACITY OF THE PLATES

Joseph Smith stated that “each plate was six inches wide and eight inches long, and not quite so thick as common tin” and that the stack of plates were “near six inches in thickness.” He also related that part of the stack “was sealed. The characters on the unsealed part were small, and beautifully engraved” (History of the Church, vol. 4, p. 537).
LDS Apostle Orson Pratt added that “two-thirds were sealed up, and Joseph was commanded not to break the seal” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 3, p. 347). Supposedly the sealed portion contained deeper religious teachings that the world was not ready to receive. Thus all of the Book of Mormon text would have been engraved on only one third of the plates.

LDS Apostle Widtsoe and Franklin Harris tried to resolve the problem of fitting the entire Book of Mormon text on the unsealed portion of the plates:

At first sight, one unfamiliar with the subject questions the possibility of writing the whole of the five hundred and twenty-two pages of the Book of Mormon upon a series of gold plates with a total thickness of about two inches (one-third of the whole volume of plates). . . .

The question before us is, Could one-third (two-thirds being sealed) of a volume of metal leaves six by eight by six (the Prophet Joseph), or eight by seven by four inches (Martin Harris), or eight by seven by six inches (Orson Pratt) contain a sufficient number of plates, each as thick as parchment or tin, to yield the necessary space for the entire text of the Book of Mormon? If so, what about their immense weight? Upon “a sheet of paper, eight by seven inches, a Hebrew translation of fourteen pages of the American text of the Book of Mormon has been written in the modern, square Hebrew letters in common use. . . . It is demonstrated on this sheet that the entire text of the Book of Mormon, as the American readers have it, could have been written in Hebrew on forty and three-sevenths pages—twenty-one plates in all.” (Sjodahl, p. 39.) (Seven Claims of The Book of Mormon, pp. 38-39)

However, the example of Hebrew writing they refer to is produced on paper, not metal, and the text is far too small to have been engraved by ancient means. A picture of this sheet is included in the LDS textbook Book of Mormon Student Manual, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981, p. 14. (See the picture on page 8.)

Yet, when one looks at the sample of script that Joseph Smith copied off the plates, it has no resemblance to Hebrew and looks like it would take far more space. Below is a photo of the Book of Mormon script.

The squiggles and curving lines look like they would be much harder to engrave than Hebrew. It should also be noted that the scribes in the Book of Mormon stated that the record was kept in “reformed Egyptian” not Hebrew (Mormon 9:32). The next two verses explain that they didn’t use Hebrew because it would have taken more space:

And if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also; and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record.

But the Lord knoweth the things which we have written, and also that none other people knoweth our language. (Mormon 9:33-34)

Smith’s script would not lend itself to the compact engraving necessary to fit the Book of Mormon text on two inches of plates.

Getting all of the Book of Mormon on a two inch stack of plates becomes even more complicated since the text of the 116 pages lost by Martin Harris must be included. Martin Harris acted as scribe for Smith during the spring of 1828. During that time Smith dictated at least 116 pages of text. Harris begged Smith to let him take the manuscript to show his wife to reassure her that Smith was truly working on a book of great worth. Smith finally agreed to let Harris borrow the pages. However, it is assumed Mrs. Harris, fearing the loss of their money in this scheme, destroyed the pages. Smith evidently feared that Mrs. Harris was setting some sort of a trap to test him. If he couldn’t come up with the same translation again she could expose him as a charlatan. To avert this crisis, Smith announced that the angel had informed him that the record also contained the “small plates of Nephi” and he was to skip over the part he had previously translated and begin his manuscript with these pages. Thus, when computing the number of plates necessary to contain the entire Book of Mormon as we know it today, one must also include the number of plates necessary to supply 116 pages of text lost by Harris.
LDS Sample of Hebrew Translation of 2 Nephi, Chapters 5:20 to 11:3 inclusive.
That text would have had to be part of the two inch stack (see illustration at http://www.lightplanet.com/mormons/basic/bom/plates_eom.htm). Thus the text of the present Book of Mormon would have to be written on one fifth less plates than LDS scholars are proposing.

In the photos at the front of the 1978 paperback edition of the Book of Mormon was a picture of a metal plate from Persia, dating to the fourth century B.C. A photo of this plate is also on the LDS site http://www.lightplanet.com/mormons/basic/bom/plates_eom.htm. See photo below.

The caption under the picture in the front of the 1978 Book of Mormon states that the Darius tablet is “about the size of the gold plates of the Book of Mormon.” However, the picture on the University of Chicago Oriental Museum’s web page shows someone holding one of the plates and it looks several inches larger in both directions. (http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/MUS/PA/IRAN/PAAI/IMAGES/PER/MF/5A2_4.html)

Also, it is a special declaration by King Darius, written in three different scripts, thus containing only one paragraph of actual text. (See http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/MUS/PA/IRAN/PAAI/IMAGES/PER/MF/5A3_4.html)

This example is supposed to convince us that a written record like the Book of Mormon is possible. However, since the engravings are relatively large and widely spaced, they demonstrate that the claim of getting all of the Book of Mormon text on plates 6x8 inches and 2 inches high isn’t feasible. Keep in mind that one must also leave room on the plates for the three holes for the rings and the text of the 116 lost pages of transcript.

LDS apologists also use the copper scroll found among the Dead Sea Scrolls as another example of writing on metal. However, the copper scroll again demonstrates the relatively small amount of text usually engraved on metal. On the right is a photo from http://www.usc.edu/dept/LAS/wsrp/educational_site/dead_sea_scrolls/copperscroll_e.shtml

Notice how the engraving pushes right through the plate. Obviously it would be very hard, if not impossible, to engrave on both sides of thin plates. Yet, even by LDS calculations, the Book of Mormon engravings must be on both sides of the plates in order to accommodate the full text of the book on two inches of plates being “as thick as parchment or tin.”

While metal plates have been used for centuries, there is no parallel to the extensive sets of plates mentioned in connection with the civilizations of the Book of Mormon. Thomas J. Finley, Professor and Chair of the Department of Old Testament and Semitics at Talbot School of Theology, observed:

The Book of Mormon mentions plates of brass or of gold that were used to preserve a wide variety of materials, from genealogies to history and prophecy . . . .

There is no question that metal was sometimes used as writing material in the ancient world, including the Near East. However, such examples do not seem to parallel the lengthy Book of Mormon, since they normally contain a small amount of material and imitate standard writing procedures for the time . . . .

At the palace of Darius (Apadana), one gold and one silver plate containing the king’s trilingual inscription was found “in a stone box beneath the northeast corner of the main hall of the Apadana.” . . . This inscription contains only
eight lines of cuneiform writing repeated in three languages. The purpose of the inscription was to describe the extent of Darius’s kingdom and to request the god Ahuramazda for protection for him and his “house.” . . . Even so, there is no parallel among materials in cuneiform writing for the many plates it would have taken to record even the book of 1 Nephi.

The copper scroll from cave three of Qumran rather uniquely has a longer text (though not nearly as long as the Book of Mormon). . . . Unlike the brass or gold plates discussed in the Book of Mormon, this work attempted to imitate a “standard parchment scroll.” (“Does the Book of Mormon Reflect an Ancient Near Eastern Background?,” New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-Growing Movement, edited by Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser and Paul Owen, Zondervan, 2002, pp. 340-341)

Dr. Finley further states:

Turning back to the Book of Mormon, the emphasis on the “plates of brass” (1 Nephi 4:38, etc.), “plates of ore” (Mosiah 21:27), “plates of gold” (Mosiah 28:11), “plates of Nephi” (1 Nephi 9:1-4), and “plates of Jacob” (Jacob 3:14) is quite impressive. It appears to be a motif or minor theme of the entire book. . . . These recordings were quite extensive, and it would have been at least awkward to transport them from place to place. In contrast, the extremely important materials of the Bible were passed on through scribal transmission on leather, papyrus, and parchment—materials much more easily transportable and convenient to use. While metal was used in the ancient New East for writing material, the dissimilarities in usage with the Book of Mormon outweigh the similarity of material. (New Mormon Challenge, p. 342)

Where is an example of a Near East or New World religious text or history recorded on such extensive plates? Why didn’t Biblical scribes use metal? Obviously the texts were too long, metal plates too expensive and difficult to engrave, for such wholesale use as depicted in the Book of Mormon.

WHY SO WORDY?

When one considers the effort to make the plates and then to engrave them, one would expect the author to give serious thought to being succinct, not wordy. Nephi’s brother, Jacob complained:

I cannot write but a little of my words, because of the difficulty of engraving our words upon plates. (Book of Mormon, Jacob 4:1)

Rev. M. T. Lamb observed:

If you turn over to the New Testament, what could be plainer or simpler, or more beautifully expressed than Christ’s sermon on the mount. . . .
This sentence contains over 340 words. The words “that” and “which” are repeated twenty times; the words “I,” “my” and “me,” eleven times; the word “Father,” eight times; “Gentiles,” five times; the expression, “shall come forth,” four times. All this in one sentence. A very remarkable sentence surely. (The Golden Bible, or The Book of Mormon. Is It From God?, by M. T. Lamb, 1887, pp. 44-47)

This wordiness is seen throughout the Book of Mormon. Another example is 4 Nephi 1:6:

And thus did the thirty and eighth year pass away, and also the thirty and ninth, and forty and first, and the forty and second, yea, even until forty and nine years had passed away, and also the fifty and first, and the fifty and second; yea, and even until fifty and nine years had passed away.

Would an author be so long-winded if he was struggling to engrave on metal? If it was so hard to engrave the record, as Nephi’s brother Jacob complained, why didn’t the author just say “Fifty nine years had passed away”?

The redundancy in the Book of Mormon has even led one Mormon to propose a modern English version to make it easier to read. For example, Mosiah 18:30 reads:

And now it came to pass that all this was done in Mormon, yea, by the waters of Mormon, in the forest that was near the waters of Mormon; yea, the place of Mormon, the waters of Mormon, the forest of Mormon, how beautiful are they to the eyes of them who there came to the knowledge of their Redeemer; yea, and how blessed are they, for they shall sing to his praise forever.

LDS author Timothy Wilson proposed the following condensation:

Mosiah 18:30 All this happened in the forest near the waters of Mormon, a beautiful place to those who there found their Redeemer. How blessed they are, for they will sing to His Praise forever. (“Translating ‘Book of Mormon’ to Modern English Brings Complexity, Controversy to Wordsmiths,” Salt Lake Tribune, Nov. 28, 1992, p. D1)

Examples of such rambling sentences can be found throughout the book. Turn to the Words of Mormon, composed by the man who made “an abridgment from the plates of Nephi, down to the reign of this king Benjamin.” One would think that someone who had spent so much time condensing the record would be careful to make his own comments succinct. Here is an example of one of his longer sentences:

And it came to pass that after there had been false Christs, and their mouths had been shut, and they punished according to their crimes; and after there had been false prophets, and false preachers and teachers among the people, and all these having been punished according to their crimes; and after there having been much contention and many dissensions away unto the Lamanites, behold, it came to pass that king Benjamin, with the assistance of the holy prophets who were among his people—for behold, king Benjamin was a holy man, and he did reign over his people in righteousness; and there were many holy men in the land, and they did speak the word of God with power and with authority; and they did use much sharpness because of the stiffneckedness of the people—wherefore, with the help of these, king Benjamin, by laboring with all the might of his body and the faculty of his whole soul, and also the prophets, did once more establish peace in the land. (Words of Mormon 1:15-18)

While one can find long passages in the Bible those authors were not struggling to engrave on metal.

Besides the general wordiness of many passages themselves, one wonders why certain whole sections were even included in the first place. The Book of Mormon contains many chapters of the Old Testament book of Isaiah. Sidney B. Sperry, a BYU professor, conceded “the Book of Mormon quotes twenty-one complete chapters of Isaiah and parts of others” (Answers to Book of Mormon Questions, by Sidney B. Sperry, Bookcraft, 1967, p. 73). Sperry gives the following references for the Isaiah quotes:

The Book of Mormon quotes from the following chapters of Isaiah: 2-14 (2 Nephi 12-24); 29 (2 Nephi 27); 48, 49 (1 Nephi 20, 21); 50, 51 (2 Nephi 7, 8); 52 (3 Nephi 20); 53 (Mosiah 14); 54 (3 Nephi 22); 55 (2 Nephi 26:25). (Answers to Book of Mormon Questions, p.80)

Nephi prefaced his addition of Isaiah 2-14 with this comment:

I write some of the words of Isaiah, that whoso of my people shall see these words may lift up their hearts and rejoice for all men. Now these are the words, and ye may liken them unto you and unto all men. (2 Nephi 11:8)

Since the Nephites supposedly had the entire book of Isaiah on plates they brought from Jerusalem, why recopy them? Why would it be more likely for his people to see those words on his plates as opposed to reading the actual Isaiah record?

Another oddity is encountered at the end of the Book of Mormon. After the destruction of all the Nephites at approximately 400 A.D., Moroni, the last one to record on the plates, writes:

Behold I, Moroni, do finish the record of my father, Mormon. Behold, I have but few things to write, which things I have been commanded by my father.

And now it came to pass that after the great and tremendous battle at Cumorah, behold, the Nephites who
had escaped into the country southward were hunted by the Lamanites, until they were all destroyed.

And my father also was killed by them, and I even remain alone to write the sad tale of the destruction of my people. . . .

Therefore I will write and hide up the records in the earth; and whither I go it mattereth not.

Behold, my father hath made this record, and he hath written the intent thereof. And behold, I would write it also if I had room upon the plates, but I have not; and ore I have none, for I am alone. My father hath been slain in battle, and all my kinsfold, and I have not friends nor whither to go; and how long the Lord will suffer that I may live I know not. (Mormon 8:1-5)

In spite of Moroni being alone and out of ore he continued to engrave on the plates, a text that would take another thirty pages of print, giving the account of the Jaredites who came to the New World at the time of the Tower of Babel, known as the book of Ether. Moroni wrote:

And now I, Moroni proceed to give an account of those ancient inhabitants who were destroyed by the hand of the Lord upon the face of this north country.

And I take mine account from the twenty and four plates . . . which is called the Book of Ether [the original record of the Jaredites].

And as I suppose that the first part of this record, which speaks concerning the creation of the world, and also of Adam, and an account from that time even to the great tower, and whatsoever things transpired among the children of men until that time, is had among the Jews—

Therefore I do not write those things which transpired from the days of Adam until that time; but they are had upon the plates; and whoso findeth them, the same will have power that he may get the full account.

But behold, I give not the full account, but a part of the account I give, from the tower down until they were destroyed. (Ether 1:2-5)

The odd part is that the twenty-four plates were supposed to cover hundreds of years of history. However, Moroni’s abridgement of only the part from the Tower of Babel until the end of the Jaredites here in America takes thirty printed pages in the Book of Mormon. How condensed could their script have been? Moroni’s abridgement must be longer than the original, which contained an account starting with Adam.

Add to this the problem that after the book of Ether, Moroni writes another whole book, all while being alone, hunted by the Lamanites and out of ore. At the beginning of this next record, Moroni writes:

Now I, Moroni, after having made an end of abridging the account of the people of Jared, I had supposed not to have written more, but I have not as yet perished; and I make not myself known to the Lamanites lest they should destroy me.

For behold, their wars are exceedingly fierce among themselves; and because of their hatred they put to death every Nephite that will not deny the Christ.

And I, Moroni, will not deny the Christ; wherefore, I wander whithersoever I can for the safety of mine own life.

Wherefore, I write a few more things, contrary to that which I had supposed; for I had supposed not to have written any more; but I write a few more things, that perhaps they may be of worth unto my brethren, the Lamanites, in some future day, according to the will of the Lord. (Book of Moroni 1:1-4)

This is followed by chapters dealing with instructions for the church on ordination, the sacrament, baptism and church discipline. This ending is such a shift in emphasis that one wonders if Smith got to the end of his story and realized that he hadn’t included enough information for the founding of a church.

Then Moroni copies into the record his father’s sermon on “faith, hope, and charity,” followed by two letters from Mormon (all of which seem to be admonitions based on phrasing from the KJV New Testament). In chapter ten Moroni finishes the record, for the second time, with the statement, “And I seal up these records, after I have spoken a few words by way of exhortation unto you,” followed by two pages of spiritual thoughts (which again seem to be based on phrasing from Paul’s epistles in the New Testament).

Does all this really sound plausible?

IDEA FOR PLATES AND STONE BOX

In reading about the plates of Darius a Mormon might get excited at seeing that they were stored in a stone box much like the one Smith described as storing the Book of Mormon plates. How would Joseph Smith know that ancient people used stone boxes? Researcher Dan Vogel found that in Smith’s day there were reports of ancient stone boxes and records here in North America which could have given Smith his ideas:

Joseph Smith was certainly not the first to claim the discovery of a stone box, metal plates, or an Indian book. It was known that the Indians sometimes buried their dead in stone boxes similar to the one described by Joseph Smith. In 1820, for example, the Archaeologia Americana reported that human bones had been discovered in some mounds “enclosed in rude stone coffins.” A similar stone box, described by John Haywood of Tennessee, was made by placing “four stones standing upright, and so placed in relation to each other, as to form a square or box, which
enclosed a skeleton.” Stone boxes of various sizes and shapes had reportedly been found in Tennessee, Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, New York, and other places.

According to various accounts, some of the North American mounds also contained metal plates. Plates constructed by the Indians were usually made of hammered copper or silver and were sometimes etched. Plates made of other metals were most likely of European manufacture. In 1775 Indian trader James Adair described two brass plates and five copper plates found with the Tuccabatches Indians of North America. According to Adair, an Indian informant said “he was told by his forefathers that those plates were given to them by the man we call God; that there had been many more of other shapes, . . . some had writing upon them which were buried with particular men.” . . .

Perhaps such discoveries of metal plates encouraged the persistent legend of a lost Indian book. The legend, as related by Congregational minister Ethan Smith [in his 1825 book, View of the Hebrews] of Poultney, Vermont, held that the Indians once had “a book which they had for a long time preserved. But having lost the knowledge of reading it, they concluded it would be of no further use to them; and they buried it with an Indian chief.” (Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon, by Dan Vogel, Signature Books, 1986, p. 18)

As mentioned by Dan Vogel, Congregational minister Ethan Smith, in the 1825 edition of View of the Hebrews, may have provided many of the ideas for Joseph’s story. Researcher George D. Smith observed:

In 1823, seven years before the Book of Mormon was published, Ethan Smith, had written View of the Hebrews a compilation of popular opinions about the origins of the American Indians, who supposedly descended from the Hebrew tribes. . . . Ethan Smith was a Congregational minister living in Poultney, Vermont, Oliver Cowdery’s home until 1825 when he moved west and met Joseph Smith. Joseph Smith’s own birthplace, Sharon, Vermont, was only 40 miles from Poultney. But View of the Hebrews, which was expanded in the 1825 edition, was also read widely in New York . . .

Evidently all of the Nephite and Jaredite records were buried in a hill . . . .

Another source for the idea of metal plates could have come from reading the popular Jewish historian, Josephus. In his Antiquities of the Jews, he mentioned “engraven” “public records” of “brass” (Josephus: Complete Works, Kregel Pub., ch. 10, p. 299). Also, the Apocrypha (published in many King James Bibles of Smith’s day) contained mention of metal records: “So then they wrote it in tables of brass” (KJV Apocrypha, I Maccabees 14:18, 27, 48).

A CAVE FULL OF PLATES?

Evidently all of the Nephite and Jaredite records were in the hill by Smith’s home in New York. According to Brigham Young, Oliver Cowdery had said there were wagonloads of plates in the hill:

“. . . I lived right in the country where the plates were found from which the Book of Mormon was translated, and I know a great many things pertaining to that country. I believe I will take the liberty to tell you of another circumstance that will be as marvelous as anything can be. This is an incident in the life of Oliver Cowdery, but he did not take the liberty of telling such things in meeting as I take . . . . Oliver Cowdery went with the Prophet Joseph when he deposited these plates. Joseph did not translate all of the plates; there was a portion of them sealed, which you can learn from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. When Joseph got the plates, the angel instructed him to carry them back to the hill Cumorah, which he did. Oliver says that when Joseph and Oliver went there, the hill opened, and they walked into a cave, in which there was a large and spacious room. He says he did not think, at the time, whether they had the light of the sun or artificial light; but that it was just as light as day. They laid the plates on a table; it was a large table that stood in the room. Under this table there was a pile of plates as much as two feet high, and there were altogether in this room more
plates than probably many wagon loads; they were piled up in the corners and along the walls. The first time they went there the sword of Laban hung upon the wall; but when they went again it had been taken down and laid upon the table across the gold plates; it was unsheathed, and on it was written these words, ‘This sword will never be sheathed again until the Kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our God and his Christ.’ I tell you this as coming not only from Oliver Cowdery, but others who were familiar with it, and who understood it just as well as we understood coming to this meeting, enjoying the day, . . .” (Sermon by Brigham Young, June 17, 1877, Journal of Discourses 19:38-39)

Since many BYU professors today maintain that the Book of Mormon story actually happened in southern Mexico and Guatemala, and that Moroni later took the plates to New York, one wonders how he transported all of the plates? Deanne Matheny commented on early means of transport:

Wheeled toys indicate that the principle of the wheel was known in some areas of Mesoamerica, but no evidence indicated that wheels were employed beyond this limited context. There were few domesticated animals and thus human porters constituted the primary means for transporting goods. (New Approaches, p. 276)

Further on she discusses the problem of horses as mentioned in the Book of Mormon:

References to horses are found throughout much of the chronological scope of the Book of Mormon, and in a number of instances horses are associated with chariots. (p. 305)

After discussing the lack of evidence for the horse in the Book of Mormon time frame, Matheny goes on to discuss the problems with suggesting that the horses referred to in the Book of Mormon could have been deer or tapirs. . . . There is little evidence suggesting that tapirs ever have been tamed or used as beasts of burden. They are extremely shy, hiding in the forest by day and coming out at night to feed. Although adults weigh between 225 and 300 kilograms, they are short animals averaging about one meter in height which, even if domesticated for some purpose, seem unsuitable for riding. . . . No evidence has been offered that tapirs were being used for riding or to pull chariots or carts in pre-Columbian times or that they have been used to any extent for either purpose since the arrival of the Europeans. (Ibid., pp. 306-307)

With no horses or wheeled carts in Mesoamerica prior to the arrival of Europeans, moving the huge amount of metal plates described by Oliver Cowdery from Mexico to New York seems impossible.

**Wood Box for Plates**

Another problem is the size of the plates compared to the size of the box used for their storage. Joseph Smith described the plates as being 6x8x6 inches, but this would be too large to fit them in the box the LDS Church claims was used to store the record.

There is a picture of the box in an official LDS book, which states the box dimensions as being 14x16 inches with a depth of 6 1/4 inches sloping to 4 inches (Church History in the Fulness of Times, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989, p. 44). Thus the lid could not have been shut.

Even if one goes with Martin Harris’ plate measurements of 7x8x4 inches you would still need to factor in the size of the three rings holding the plates together. They would have to extend to some degree above and below the plates to allow for turning the leaves. Again, the box is not deep enough to close the lid on plates four inches tall with rings.

**Who Saw the Plates?**

While some of the statements made by the various witnesses to the Book of Mormon imply that they saw the plates with their natural eyes, other statements indicate that the viewing was actually in a vision. In fact, one Mormon gave up belief in the Book of Mormon when he heard Martin Harris state that the witnesses only saw the plates in a visionary state. Stephen Burnett related this event in a letter to Lyman E. Johnson on April 15, 1838:

I have reflected long and deliberately upon the history of this church & weighed the evidence for & against it—loath to give it up—but when I came to hear Martin Harris state in a public congregation that he never saw the plates with his natural eyes only in vision or imagination, neither Oliver [Cowdery] nor David [Whitmer] & also that the eight witnesses never saw them & hesitated to sign that instrument [their statement at the front of the Book of Mormon] for that reason, but were persuaded to do it, the last pedestrian gave way, in my view our foundations was sapped & the entire superstructure fell a heap of ruins . . . M[artin] Harris arose & said he was sorry for any man who rejected the Book of Mormon for he knew it was true, he said he had hefted the plates repeatedly in a box with only a tablecloth or a handkerchief over them, but he never saw them only as he saw a city through a mountain. And said that he never should have told that the testimony of the eight [witnesses] was false, if it had not been picked out of [h]im but should have let it passed as it was . . . (Early Mormon Documents, vol. 2, pp. 291-292)
It is assumed that Harris was saying that the eight witnesses did not see the plates with the natural eye but in a vision, not that they lied about their experience.

LDS scholar Marvin Hill discussed the issue of the plates and whether the witnesses physically saw the plates or only in a vision:

In the revelation given the three witnesses before they viewed the plates they were told, “it is by your faith that you shall view them” and “ye shall testify that you have seen them, even as my servant Joseph Smith Jr. has seen them, for it is by my power that he has seen them.” There is testimony from several independent interviewers, all non-Mormon, that Martin Harris and David Whitmer said they saw the plates with their “spiritual eyes” only. Among others, A. Metcalf and John Gilbert, as well as Reuben P. Harmon and Jesse Townsend, gave testimonies to this effect. This is contradicted, however, by statements like that of David Whitmer in the Saints Herald in 1882, “these hands handled the plates, these eyes saw the angel.” But Z. H. Gurley elicited from Whitmer a not so positive response to the question, “did you touch them?” His answer was, “We did not touch nor handle the plates.” Asked about the table on which the plates rested, Whitmer replied, “the table had the appearance of literal wood as shown in the visions of the glory of God.”

So far as the eight witnesses go, William Smith said his father never saw the plates except under a frock. And Stephen Burnett quotes Martin Harris that “the eight witnesses never saw them & hesitated to sign that instrument [their testimony published in the Book of Mormon] for that reason, but were persuaded to do it.” Yet John Whitmer told Wilhelm Poulson of Ovid, Idaho, in 1878 that he saw the plates when they were not covered, and he turned the leaves. Hiram Page, another of the eight witnesses, left his peculiar testimony in a letter in the Ensign of Liberty in 1848:

As to the Book of Mormon, it would be doing injustice to myself and to the work of God of the last days, to say that I could know a thing to be true in 1830, and know the same thing to be false in 1847. To say my mind was so treacherous that I have forgotten what I saw, to say that a man of Joseph’s ability, who at that time did not know how to pronounce the word Nephi, could write a book of six hundred pages, as correct as the Book of Mormon without supernatural power. And to say that those holy Angels who came and showed themselves to me as I was walking through the field, to confirm me in the work of the Lord of the last days—three of whom came to me afterwards and sang an hymn in their own pure language; yes, it would be treating the God of heaven with contempt, to deny these testimonies.

With only a veiled reference to “what I saw,” Page does not say he saw the plates but that angels confirmed him in his faith. Neither does he say that any coercion was placed upon him to secure his testimony. Despite Page’s inconsistencies, it is difficult to know what to make of Harris’ affirmation that the eight saw no plates in the face of John Whitmer’s testimony. The original testimony of these eight men in the Book of Mormon reads somewhat ambiguously, not making clear whether they handled the plates or the “leaves” of the translated manuscript. Thus there are some puzzling aspects to the testimonies of the witnesses. (“Brodie Revisited: A Reappraisal,” by Marvin S. Hill, Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 83-85)

Further reinforcing the position that the eight witnesses never saw the actual plates, except for a possible vision, is the following statement of Martin Harris:

These plates were usually kept in a cherry box made for that purpose in the possession of Joseph and myself. The plates were kept from the sight of the world, and no one, save Oliver Cowdery, myself, Joseph Smith, Jr., and David Whitmer, ever saw them. (Early Mormon Documents, vol. 2, p. 306)

Even though Harris says the three witnesses saw the plates, he obviously is still referring to a vision. In 1840 John A. Clark, pastor of Palmyra’s Zion’s Episcopal Church in the mid-1820’s, gave the following account of Martin Harris seeing the plates:

A gentleman in Palmyra, bred to the law, a professor of religion, and of undoubted veracity told me that on one occasion, he appealed to Harris and asked him directly, “Did you see those plates?” Harris replied, he did. “Did you see the plates, and the engraving on them with your bodily eyes?” Harris replied, “Yes, I saw them with my eyes,—they were shown unto me by the power of God and not of man.” “But did you see them with your natural,—your bodily eyes, just as you see this pencil-case in my hand? Now say no or yes to this.” Harris replied,—“Why I did not see them as I do that pencil-case, yet I saw them with the eye of faith; I saw them just as distinctly as I see any thing around me,—though at the time they were covered over with a cloth.” (Early Mormon Documents, vol. 2, p. 270)

Thus it appears that only Joseph Smith could claim to see the plates with the natural eye.

**WERE THE PLATES EVEN NEEDED?**

LDS illustrations of Joseph Smith translating the plates usually show him bent over the plates as he tried to decipher the characters. However, it appears Smith didn’t even need to look at the plates to do his translation.
Joseph’s wife, Emma, described the process to her son:

In writing for your father I frequently wrote day after day, after sitting by the table close by him, he sitting with his face buried in his hat, with the stone in it, and dictating hour after hour with nothing between us. . . . The plates often lay on the table without any attempt at concealment, wrapped in a small linen table cloth, which I had given him to fold them in. (Statement of Emma Smith, Early Mormon Documents, vol. 1, p. 541)

In 1834 Emma’s father, Isaac Hale, gave a similar description of the translation process:

. . . I went to the house where Joseph Smith Jr., lived, and where he and Harris were engaged in their translation of the Book. . . . I told them then, that I considered the whole of it a delusion, and advised them to abandon it. The manner in which he [Smith] pretended to read and interpret, was the same as when he looked for the money-diggers, with the stone in his hat, and his hat over his face, while the Book of Plates were at the same time hid in the woods! (Isaac Hale Statement, Early Mormon Documents, vol. 4, p. 287)

LaMar Petersen, author and historian, observed:

The church has always been strongly committed to the belief that Joseph translated directly from the plates, but at least one modern LDS scholar, Nels L. Nelson, a professor at Brigham Young University, concluded otherwise: “Joseph Smith did not look directly at the plates while translating. In fact the plates, while they were in the possession of the Prophet, were probably not immediately at hand with him during most of the translation.” (Creation of the Book of Mormon: A Historical Inquiry, by LaMar Petersen, Freethinker Press, 2000, p. 96)

Since Joseph Smith simply read the translation off the stone in his hat it would have been irrelevant whether the plates were in the room or in the woods. David Whitmer described the process of translation:

I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to Brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear, and another character with the interpretation would appear. Thus the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man. (An Address To All Believers in Christ, by David Whitmer, 1887, p. 12)

After Smith finished his translation, the plates were returned to the angel. Smith stated:

But by the wisdom of god, they [the plates] remained safe in my hands, until I had accomplished by them what was required at my hand. When, according to arrangements, the messenger called for them, I delivered them up to him; and he has them in his charge until this day, being the second day of May, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-eight. (History of the Church, vol. 1, pp. 18-19)

Urim and Thummim or Seer Stone?

In the Book of Mormon we read that a “seer” has the ability to translate all records that are of ancient date: and it is a gift from God. And the things are called interpreters, and no man can look in them except he be commanded, lest he should look for that he ought not and he should perish. (Mosiah 8:13, Book of Mormon)

Smith claimed that the angel informed him these “interpreters” were with the plates:

While I was thus in the act of calling upon God, . . . a personage appeared at my bedside, . . . He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang. . . . Also, that there were two stones in silver bows—and these stones, fastened to a breastplate, constituted what is called the Urim and Thummim—deposited with the plates; and the possession and use of these stones were what constituted “seers” in ancient or former times; and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book. (Joseph Smith—History 1:35, Pearl of Great Price)

Even though God had reportedly preserved the Urim and Thummim, or interpreters, for centuries and had them buried with the plates to insure their translation, Joseph only used them for the first 116 pages of the Book of Mormon, which were lost by Martin Harris. All of the present Book of Mormon was evidently translated by use of the seer stone found in Chase’s well.

LDS historian Andrew Jensen reported a speech given by Martin Harris in Salt Lake City on Sunday, September 4, 1870:

He [Martin Harris] related an incident which occurred during the time that he wrote that portion of the translation of the Book of Mormon which he was favored to write direct from the mouth of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and said that
the Prophet possessed a seer stone, by which he was enabled to translate as well as from the Urim and Thummim, and for convenience he then used the seer stone. . . .

Martin said further that the seer stones differed in appearance entirely from the Urim and Thummim obtained with the plates, which were two clear stones set in two rims, very much resembling spectacles, only they were larger. *(Historical Record, by Andrew Jensen, vol. 7, p. 216)*

One assumes that the “convenience” of using his stone was due to size. A stone could be carried in one’s pocket and would fit in a hat easier than large spectacles.

Here we are presented with the peculiar situation of a rock found in a well which works just as well as God’s specially prepared “interpreters” and is more convenient!

This year the LDS Church has a special display at their Church Museum of different Joseph Smith artifacts. They even have a mockup of the gold plates. However, they have not chosen to display any of Joseph Smith’s seer stones. D. Michael Quinn related the following concerning Smith’s various stones:

In more recent years, Grant Palmer [three-time director of LDS Institutes of Religion in California and Utah] was “shown by Earl Olson” the three “seer stones in First Presidency Vault.” The first was “milk chocolate [in color], like a baseball [in shape, with] no stripes.” Different from the descriptions of the founding prophet’s dark-colored Book of Mormon seer stone, this first stone’s origin and chain-of-ownership are unknown (at least outside the LDS Presidency’s office). The second was “shiny or polished stone, [with] stripes, dark brown [—] size between egg and handball.” . . .The only description Palmer gave for the third was that it was a “small stone.” . . . While the First Presidency’s secretary told Mary Brown Firmage Woodward that there were three seer stones in the presidency’s vault, she saw only one. Grant Palmer saw all three.

The brown and white stones are the only seer stones Joseph Smith definitely used, yet he acquired others as church president. Young told the apostles in 1855 that Smith had five seer stones. . . .

Young’s statement makes it clear that Smith did not regard his seer stones simply as relics of his youth. Rather, as church president Smith continued to discover new seer stones. *(Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, p. 245–246)*

Since one of these stones was used to translate all of the published Book of Mormon, one wonders why it wasn’t included in the display? Could it be that the current prophet is embarrassed by the very instrument used to produce LDS scripture?

Richard Bushman, in trying to sort out the problems of Smith’s later work on the Book of Abraham, concluded that both the Book of Mormon and the Book of Abraham came through revelation, not through standard methods of the scholar looking at an ancient text:

. . . the discovery [of the Egyptian papyri in 1967] prompted a reassessment of the Book of Abraham. What was going on while Joseph “translated” the papyri and dictated text to a scribe? Obviously, he was not interpreting the hieroglyphics like an ordinary scholar. As Joseph saw it, he was working by inspiration—that had been clear from the beginning. When he “translated” the Book of Mormon, he did not read from the gold plates; he looked into the crystals of the Urim and Thummim or gazed at the seerstone. The words came by inspiration, not by reading the characters on the plates. By analogy, it seemed likely that the papyri had been an occasion for receiving a revelation rather than a word-for-word interpretation of the hieroglyphics as in ordinary translations. Joseph translated Abraham as he had the characters on the gold plates, by knowing the meaning without actually knowing the plates’ language. *(Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling, p. 192)*

Thus we see that Joseph Smith found the plates by using his magic stone, then used that stone, instead of the instrument prepared by God, to receive an inspired translation of records he didn’t even need to see. Additionally, the witnesses seem to have only seen the plates in some sort of vision.

**Summary**

All of these issues added together show the utter implausibility of Smith’s claim of finding a set of metal plates in New York containing an account of the “former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang.” The problems discussed in this newsletter, plus many others that are detailed in the various books cited, show that the Book of Mormon is a product of the nineteenth century, not a record of ancient people.

Some have suggested that the book does not need to be historical, that it could be seen as an inspired allegory. However, it is presented to the world as a real account of actual people who inhabited ancient America. The allegory theory fails to explain the many visits of Angel Moroni, who claimed to be the Nephite who hid the plates in the hill. What was Smith carrying as he ran through the woods in 1827? Why did Smith need a box for the plates if they are only allegorical? What is to be made of the various statements of hefting the plates?

This theory would require Smith to make some sort of prop, which is always kept covered, to have people feel and heft in order to get them to believe his story. This would place Smith in the position of either being deluded or lying.
LDS Apostle Jeffrey Holland observed:

To consider that everything of saving significance in the Church stands or falls on the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and, by implication, the Prophet Joseph Smith’s account of how it came forth is as sobering as it is true. It is a “sudden death” proposition. Either the Book of Mormon is what the Prophet Joseph said it is, or this Church and its founder are false, a deception from the first instance onward. . . Joseph Smith must be accepted either as a prophet of God or else as a charlatan of the first order . . . (Jeffrey Holland, Christ and the New Covenant, Deseret Book, 1997, pp. 345-47; as quoted by BYU professor Robert Millett, http://www.byui.edu/Presentations/Transcripts/Devotionals/2004_01_27_Millet.htm)

In 1981, the LDS Church expanded the title of the Nephite record to “The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ.” However, if the Book of Mormon is not an actual historical document it would not serve the purpose of being further evidence of Jesus beyond what we have in the Bible.

(Bold emphasis in the quotes was added and did not appear in the books referenced.)

**Excerpts From Emails**

**May 2005.** Thank You for your web site, it has been of great help. I have been a member of the LDS church for a few years and now I want to leave.

**May 2005.** YOUR JUST A TYPICAL RUN OF THE MILL ANTI-MORMON GROUP. IF YOU BELIEVE SO MUCH IN HONESTY, WHY DON’T YOU JUST PUT “ANTI-MORMON GROUP” AS YOUR HEADING. AT LEAST THIS WAY PEOPLE CAN KNOW WHAT YOUR REALLY ALL ABOUT.

**June 2005.** . . . I joined the LDS church with my family when I was 5 years old. In my 23 years, I have not been able to come to a valid conclusion on WHY people find it necessary to insult and defame the LDS church. What you don’t understand is that “MORMONS” are just as Christian as you are? We follow and believe and love Jesus Christ with all of our hearts.

**June 2005.** . . . I have just begun a journey to seek the truth behind Mormonism. . . . I am trying to build up the courage to show my wife the things that I have discovered and I am hoping to find enough solid material to at least plant the seed of doubt . . . that which will allow her to question things herself.

**June 2005.** . . . God is doing a wonderful thing through lighthouse ministries. . . . When it comes to dealing with LDS I do not use any other source. Your ministry played a part in my leaving the LDS church back in 1989. I believe you probably have no idea how many have come to know Jesus after contacting lighthouse ministries :-(

**June 2005.** Yesterday I received one of my favorite pieces of mail—the Salt Lake City Messenger! You deserve a great deal of credit for your unfailing devotion to spreading the truth, and right in Salt Lake City, the nerve center of what has become an enormously wealthy and powerful international organization.

[I was a] BYU student of Mormon history . . . The modern LDS establishment holds little in common with the church begun by Joseph Smith, and no doubt he would be promptly excommunicated today. How shockingly little Mormons know about their own religion and its history! . . .

Look at the bright side, at least the Mormons appear to have given up the practice of using blood atonement against their enemies!

**June 2005.** Your book, “The Changing World of Mormonism” was like a very strong cup of coffee, hard to swallow at first, but it opened my eyes wide. I was born and raised in the mormon church, my family are mormon pioneers on both sides.

**June 2005.** I too, amongst many, have come from a Mormon background and have received Jesus Christ as my personal savior. I commend you for your faithfulness in your endeavors and I praise God that He has given and provided you with fortitude and strength to deliver these people out of darkness and into the light. Truth does withstand scrutiny.

**July 2005.** I am an ex-Mormon, who left over three years ago. My husband, children and I had our records removed last year. The freedom I have felt is indescribable. After reading your testimonies, I know you both feel that freedom, too. We just couldn’t stay that far away from God anymore. We needed the true Jesus of the Bible in our lives.

**July 2005.** I am curious to know if it is just my faith that you pull to pieces, or whether you evenly destroy all faiths? . . . You should be ashamed of yourselves, if this is what you do to a christian faith. . . . Where does your priesthood ordinances stem from? . . . When did you pray to God to ask him about each faith you studied? Did you ask him about Joseph Smith and his testimony? No.

**July 2005.** WHY DON’T YOU ALL GO OUT AND GET A “REAL JOB” INSTEAD OF RUNNING DOWN SOMEONES RELIGION. I MEAN THERE MUST BE SOMETHING CONSTRUCTIVE YOU CAN DO.

**August 2005.** Okay, I’m a total wimp. I know in my heart that the LDS Church is not true, and that Jesus is the “fullness of the gospel.” It feels so wonderful to be free from bondage! And drink coffee again. . . . I am also admittedly not yet ready to take that final step of having my name removed from the records.

**September 2005.** Hello guys. . . . thank you, thank you and thank you for the awesome work that you guys have done over the years. You guys helped me greatly in the process of dispersing the dark cloud of Mormonism from my life.

**October 2005.** Clearly, you have never read the Book of Mormon. It is sad to me that in your ignorance, which is your fault, you are teaching the world false things about the Mormon beliefs. The mormons do not view themselves as better than the rest of the world, but yes, our church is the only true church.
NEW BOOK OF MORMON FILM

We are pleased to announce that Living Hope Ministries, producers of the film DNA vs. The Book of Mormon, have just released their new video entitled The Bible vs. The Book of Mormon. The following is taken from their Fall 2005 brochure:

After two years, six trips and nearly 40 interviews, it is with great joy that we announce that our latest video production, The Bible vs. The Book of Mormon, is complete! . . .

Many LDS leaders have stated that if the Book of Mormon is not true, then the Mormon Church is not true, or words to that effect. Similarly, we as Christians can make the same assertion—if the Bible is not true, then our faith is meaningless. . . . Is there any evidence to establish the truth or falsehood of either of them?

The Bible vs. The Book of Mormon asks two simple questions of both books: First, are they historically true? Secondly, and more to the point—can they be considered scripture? (The Field Worker, Fall 2005)

In making this film, Scott Johnson and Joel Kramer traveled to Jerusalem to visit different sites mentioned in the Bible and to interview scholars such as noted biblical archaeologist Gabriel Barkay. They later traveled to Great Britain to interview a number of experts in biblical languages and textual criticism, both at the University of Aberdeen (Scotland) and Oxford University, specifically on the subject of the textual history of the Bible, and its historical reliability.

Last year they traveled to Guatemala, Honduras, and southern Mexico, and spoke with several archaeologists and anthropologists, such as Thomas Murphy, looking for any evidence of an Israelite migration as described in the Book of Mormon.

They found that “the civilizations that existed in Mesoamerica were truly amazing, but bore no resemblance to those described in the Book of Mormon. The archaeology of the New World contradicts the Book of Mormon outright, in just about every possible way.”

This well done, professional video will be a great tool to use when talking to LDS friends and family. We highly recommend it. For special offers to receive this video free, see the back page of this newsletter.

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The Bible vs. The Book of Mormon
and
No Man Knows My History:
The Life of Joseph Smith
By Fawn Brodie

UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY
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New Joseph Smith Movie: History or Propaganda?

As we crossed the street it was a dreary overcast day in Salt Lake City but once inside the Joseph Smith Memorial Building there were gracious, smiling LDS missionaries everywhere.

As we entered the waiting area for the elaborate new LDS movie, Joseph Smith: Prophet of the Restoration, the first clue that the film aimed to elicit an emotional outpouring for the portrayal of Smith as a saintly martyr, was the number of missionaries standing around offering tissues to everyone entering the theater. After attending the movie one Mormon commented:

Being that I’m LDS and regard Joseph as a prophet, I was touched in several places and was brought to tears quite a few times . . . which I presume is expected since they handed out tissues BEFORE the movie started! (http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0431170/).

The film was released in December of 2005 to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Joseph Smith’s birth. The project was discussed in 2004 in the LDS church-owned Deseret News:

The script has been vetted by historians, the church’s correlation committee and by the highest authorities of the church whose 12 million members consider Smith a prophet chosen to restore Christ’s church.

“We’ve had long meetings about the script,” said Elder Donald L. Hallstrom of the church’s First Quorum of the Seventy and executive director of the Church Audiovisual Department. “Members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve have taken a very personal role to be comfortable with the way the life of Joseph is portrayed.”

Munns called the script “a labor of love but a real labor. It stood up to a lot of scrutiny.” The scrutiny was time-consuming but necessary.

“A film never really gets better than its script,” he said. “It is doctrinally sound, historically accurate and very appealing, very engaging. Hopefully people will learn some things and feel some things and like it. . . .

“We think this film will appeal to those not of our faith,” Munns said. “We hope this will help them to appreciate this great man, the challenges he overcame and the church he organized, to see him as a man and not just a prophet.”


While the film took thousands of man-hours and several years to complete, the cost of the film has not been released. The film is approximately 70 minutes long and is being shown at various LDS historic sites and visitors’ centers. For theater locations, see www.lds.org/library/display/0,4945,6516-1-3350-1,00.html.

Joseph the Man

With the goal of telling Smith’s life in a way that would be “comfortable” to the LDS Church leaders, historical accuracy seems to have been of little concern. The movie
was designed to be a “faith promoting” experience, not a balanced view of Smith “as a man.” The official LDS website gives the following description of the film:

The film depicts events in the life of Joseph Smith from his early youth in Vermont to his martyrdom in Illinois at age 38. It recounts Joseph’s search for truth as a young boy, a search that resulted in divine revelation that set his life on a path of service and sacrifice in restoring the Church of Jesus Christ. Through scenes of his interactions with family and with early Church members and others, viewers will see both the personal and public sides of Joseph's caring nature and prophetic leadership (http://www.lds.org/newsroom/showrelease/0,15503,4028-1-22488,00.html).

It is exactly in the film’s depiction of Smith’s “personal” side that it becomes obvious this is strictly a propaganda piece. Smith’s magic involvement, temper, lying, and manipulation of his followers are conveniently overlooked.

The movie, like most LDS projects, was beautifully filmed and well acted. However, this was not a realistic portrayal of either the beginnings of Mormonism or Smith’s relatively short life. One Mormon blogger wrote:

Joseph Smith: Prophet of the Restoration is literally an hour long string of images and depicted events. The entire film is a montage. We see many of the major events in his life, along with various bits of playfulness, preaching, and prophesying. We see him imprisoned in Richmond, imprisoned in Liberty and imprisoned in Carthage, though we never once have any idea why. He heals the sick, he rebukes the wicked, he buries his children, he is loved by all. Scottish bagpipes play a tune that will later praise his name.

The blur of images and sound tells us nothing more than a bullet point list of facts about Joseph’s life, but its aim is to convince us of a fact not empirically verifiable – that he was indeed a prophet. It’s a work of art calculated to make us feel the spirit.

Is this a good thing? I think it is. Mostly. My only concern is the audience that will respond to the film. The western world is an increasingly cynical and skeptical one. And I sense that many potential investigators will be impressed by the man but unmoved by the message (http://motleyvision.blogspot.com/2006/01/review-joseph-smith-prophet-of.html).

Another Mormon observed:

Not much time was spent on dissention within the Church, the financial troubles of Kirtland, or Zion’s Camp. Polygamy was mentioned not at all. And that’s okay. It seemed to me that the primary audience is the general population of the Church, and interested outsiders. I don’t think that it was really made for people who don’t know anything about the life of the Prophet, and I think that it was made to build and strengthen the testimonies of those who saw it (http://www.lavalane.org/ponderit/2006/01/joseph-smith-prophet-of-restoration.html).

This Mormon has summed it up quite well. The film is meant to reinforce believers, to give members a positive emotional experience that will hopefully carry them through any periods of doubt. In such a portrayal Smith’s rougher side was conspicuously absent.

Joseph’s Early Years

A significant period of time was given to reenacting Joseph’s terrible leg surgery when he was about seven (see Salt Lake City Messenger, no. 99). While this event was no doubt important in forming his mental outlook, it appears that the main reason for including it in the film is to help establish a sympathetic view of Joseph Smith.

The film then moves to the period just prior to Joseph’s first vision, when he was fourteen, showing the religious revivals in the neighborhood and the ministers preaching on predestination and election to salvation, two doctrines Smith later rejected. Joseph’s 1820 vision is recounted in the current way with no mention of the various accounts that differ as to date, who appeared or the message delivered (see Inventing Mormonism, by Marquardt and Walters, Salt Lake City Messenger, no. 87 and http://www.ultm.org/onlineresources/firstvision.htm).

In the movie version of the 1820 vision Smith is told by God and Christ that he is not to join any Christian church. However, there is no mention of his later attempt to join the Methodist Church in 1828.

Joseph Lewis, Emma Smith’s cousin, later explained why Joseph was not allowed to become a member of the Methodist Church:

I, with Joshua McKune, a local preacher at that time, I think in June, 1828, heard on Saturday, that Joe Smith had joined the church on Wednesday afternoon, (as it was customary in those days to have circuit preaching at my father’s house on week-day). We thought it was a disgrace to the church to have a practicing necromancer, a dealer in enchantments and bleeding ghosts, in it. So on Sunday we went to father’s, the place of meeting that day, and got there in season to see Smith and talked with him some time in father’s shop before the meeting. Told him that his occupation, habits, and moral character were at variance with the discipline, that his name would be a disgrace to the church, that there should have been recantation, confession and at least promised reformation. That he could that day publicly ask that his name be stricken from the class book, or stand an investigation. He chose the former, and did that very day make the request that his name be taken off the class book (The Amboy Journal, June 11, 1879, p. 1).

For more information, see the article, The Mormon Prophet Attempts to Join the Methodists, by Wesley P. Walters at http://www.ultm.org/onlineresources/josephsmithmethodist.htm.

Hugo Olaiz, Sunstone news editor, gave these reflections on the film’s treatment of Smith’s first vision:

The bicentennial celebrations of the first Mormon’s birth have been marked by a further irony. Not only has the Church changed since Joseph’s day, Joseph himself has
Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling


Lucy's point was that the Smiths were not lazy—they had not stopped their labor to practice magic—but she showed her knowledge of formulas and rituals and associated them with "the welfare of our souls." Magic and religion melded in Smith family culture. . . .

Joseph Jr. never repudiated the stones or denied their power to find treasure. Remnants of the magical culture stayed with him to the end (Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling, by Richard L. Bushman, 2005, Knopf, pp. 50-51).

The film never mentions these activities of the Smiths nor how magical practices affected their lives.

Joseph Meets Emma

One emphasis in the movie is the apparent loving relationship between Joseph and his wife Emma. The film introduces Emma Hale in a scene where she and her mother are outside hanging up the laundry. While discussing the topic of marriage, they see Joseph Smith walking down the lane. Joseph and Emma's eyes meet and the audience realizes that romance is in the air.

But the film fails to explain Smith's presence in the Pennsylvania neighborhood in 1825. He did not just happen to pass by the Isaac Hale household but was actually boarding there. Joseph's mother recounted that the reason he and his father had traveled from Palmyra, New York, to the Pennsylvania border was to provide magical direction to a Mr. Stowell in his efforts to locate an underground silver mine:

A short time before the house was completed [1825], a man by the name of Josiah Stoal [Stowell] came from Chenango county, New York, with the view of getting Joseph to assist him in digging for a silver mine [in Pennsylvania]. He came for Joseph on account of having heard that he possessed certain means by which he could discern things invisible to the natural eye. . . . After labouring for the old gentleman about a month, without success, Joseph prevailed upon him to cease his operations; and it was from this circumstance of having worked by the month, at digging for a silver mine, that the very prevalent story arose of Joseph's having been a money digger.

While Joseph was in the employ of Mr. Stoal, he boarded a short time with one Isaac Hale, and it was during this interval, that Joseph became acquainted with the daughter, Miss Emma Hale, to whom he immediately commenced paying his addresses, and was subsequently married (Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and his Progenitors for Many Generations, by Lucy Smith, 1853, p. 91).
Joseph the “Glass Looker”

In 1826, while working for Mr. Stowell, Joseph Smith was charged with a misdemeanor due to his magic practices. Mr. Stowell’s nephew brought the charges against Smith, believing that Smith was an imposter. Richard Bushman writes:

Notes of a March 1826 court appearance in South Bainbridge shed light on the Smith family’s attitudes toward treasure-seeking on the eve of receiving the plates. Peter Bridgeman, nephew of Josiah Stowell, entered a complaint against Joseph Smith Jr. as a disorderly person in South Bainbridge, Chenango County, New York. New York law specified that anyone pretending to have skill in discovering lost goods should be judged a disorderly person. . . . Presumably, Bridgeman believed that Joseph was trying to cheat the old man by claiming magical powers. In the court record, Stowell said that he “had the most implicit faith in the Prisoners skill,” implying that was the reason for hiring Joseph (Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling, pp. 51-52).

Joseph Smith’s involvement in magic practices had always been denied by the LDS Church until 1971, when Wesley P. Walters discovered two original documents which proved that Joseph Smith was a “glass looker” and was arrested and examined before a justice of the peace in Bainbridge, N.Y. in 1826. One of the documents is Justice Albert Neeley’s bill to the county showing the costs involved in several hearings held in 1826. The fifth item from the top of Neeley’s bill mentions the examination of “Joseph Smith The Glass Looker.” (For a photo of this document, see Messenger no. 68 at http://www.utlm.org/newsletters/no68.htm)

The documents relating to Smith’s March 1826 arrest were at first thought to be from the actual trial but further research seems to indicate that this was a preliminary hearing. But the fact remains that Smith was engaged in magical practices during the very time period that he was hearing. While the film mentions that Emma’s parents objected to her marriage to Joseph, it does not explain the reasons. Mr. Hale wrote a statement outlining his disapproval of Smith, printed in 1834, but it was not utilized in the movie:

Emma’s Father Objects to Marriage

While the film mentions that Emma’s parents objected to her marriage to Joseph, it does not explain the reasons. Mr. Hale went on to state:

Joseph Smith Jr. resided near me for some time after this and I had a good opportunity of becoming acquainted with him, and somewhat acquainted with his associates, and I conscientiously believe from the facts I have detailed, and from many other circumstances, which I do not deem it necessary to relate, that the whole “Book of Mormon” (so called) is a silly fabrication of falsehood and wickedness, got up for speculation, and with a design to dupe the ridiculous and unwary—and in order that its fabricators may live upon the spoils of those who swallow the deception. ISAAC HALE (Mormonism Unvailed, p. 266).

Evidently Smith’s change in vocation from magician to prophet did nothing to improve Mr. Hale’s opinion of him.

LDS Abuse of Dissenters in Missouri

The movie portrays the Mormons as totally peace-loving, non-violent people, contrary to the historical record. While the movie shows various attacks on the Mormons it never
mormons in Jackson County, Missouri. LDS historian Stephen LeSueur wrote:

Joseph Smith had designated Jackson County, Missouri, as the site for the Saints’ Zion in 1831, and many of his followers began gathering there soon afterward. A small group of Mormons attempted to establish a communitarian society in Jackson County, but they came into conflict with their Missouri neighbors, who viewed suspiciously their strange beliefs and practices. . . .

The Mormons were partly responsible for causing, or at least reinforcing, the suspicions and prejudice against them. Their claims about establishing the Kingdom of God in Jackson County, that they would “literally tread upon the ashes of the wicked after they are destroyed from off the face of the earth,” excited fears that the Mormons intended to obtain their “inheritance” by force. According to Joseph Thorp, a Clay County resident, the Mormons told local settlers that “this country was theirs [the Mormons’] by the gift of the Lord, and it was folly for them [the Missourians] to improve their lands, they would not enjoy the fruits of their labor; that it would finally fall into the hands of the saints.” In July 1832, a Mormon journal in Independence published a Joseph Smith revelation in which the Lord declared that “I will consecrate the riches of the Gentiles [non-Mormons], unto my people which are of the house of Israel.” Similar claims regarding the role of the Indians in building the Kingdom and punishing God’s enemies stimulated rumors that the Mormons were exhorting the Indians to drive the non-Mormon settlers from their land. . . . Whatever the faults of the Mormons, however, it was the Missourians who initiated the conflicts between the two groups (The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri, by Stephen C. LeSueur, 1987, pp. 16-18).

After the Mormons were driven from their settlement in Jackson County, Missouri, they relocated in and around Caldwell County to the north. But as more and more Mormons moved into the area, the non-Mormons grew hostile.

Besides the problems with non-Mormons, during 1837 and 1838 there was growing dissent within the church regarding church finances, the failure of the Mormon’s Kirtland Bank in Ohio, and whether members could sell their property in Jackson County, Missouri, and if the county cannot be freed from them any other way I will assist to trample them down or to erect a gallows on the square of Far West and hang them up as they did the gamblers at Vicksburg and it would be an act at which the angels would smile with approbation Joseph Smith in a short speech sanctioned what had been said by Rigdon, though said he I don’t want the brethren to act unlawfully but will tell them one thing Judas was a traitor and in stead of hanging himself was hung by Peter. . . . (Reed Peck Manuscript, typescript, pp. 6-7, photocopy of original document at the University of Utah, Marriott Library).

The Danites

With growing opposition in the community and dissent among some of the top LDS leadership, a secret band was formed to deal with troublemakers. This group became known as the Danites. In June, 1838, a very threatening letter was sent to the dissenters which accused them of serious crimes and ordered them to leave Far West, Missouri, at once. D. Michael Quinn shows that this letter was authorized by some of the highest leaders in the LDS Church:

On 17 June 1838, first counselor Sidney Rigdon preached his “Salt Sermon” as a warning that Mormon dissenters would “be cast out and trodden under foot of men.” . . . Rigdon was restating what a revelation of February 1834 had authorized the First Presidency to do to Mormons who “hearken not to observe all my words” (D&C 103:8-10). The next day second counselor Hyrum Smith and his Uncle John Smith (assistant counselor in First Presidency) joined with Danite leader Sampson Avard (as first signer) and eighty other Danites in a threatening letter to Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, John Whitmer, Lyman E. Johnson, and William W. Phelps. . . .

Regarding this Danite expulsion of prominent Mormon dissenters, Counselor Rigdon told Apostle Orson Hyde at Far West that “it was the imperative duty of the Church to obey the word of Joseph Smith, or the presidency, without
question or inquiry, and that if there were any that would not, they should have their throats cut from ear [to] ear.” (The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power, by D. Michael Quinn, p. 94)

The threatening letter the Danites sent to the dissenters contained the following:

To Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, John Whitmer, William W. Phelps, and Lyman E. Johnson, greeting:

Whereas the citizens of Caldwell county have borne with the abuse received from you at different times, and on different occasions, until it is no longer to be endured . . . out of the county you shall go, and no power shall save you. . . . if you do not depart, we will use the means in our power to cause you to depart; for go you shall. . . . vengeance sleepeth not, neither does it slumber; . . . there is but one decree for you, which is depart, depart, or a more fatal calamity shall befall you. . . . For the insult, if nothing else, and your threatening to shoot us if we offered to molest you, we will put you from the county of Caldwell: so help us God (Letter quoted in Senate Document 189, Feb. 15, 1841, pp. 6-9).

Book of Mormon witness John Whitmer, who was threatened by the Danites in the letter cited above, wrote the following in his history of the church:

Joseph Smith, Jr., S. Rigdon, and Hyrum Smith moved their families to this place, Far West, in the spring of 1838. As soon as they came here, they began to enforce their new organized plan, which caused dissensions and difficulties, threatenings and even murders. Smith called a council of the leaders together, in which council he stated that any person who said a word against the heads of the Church, should be driven over these prairies as a chased deer by a pack of hounds, having an illusion to the Gideonites, as they were termed, to justify themselves in their wicked designs. Thus on the 19th of June, 1838, they preached a sermon called the salt sermon, in which these Gideonites understood that they should drive the dissenters, as they termed those who believed not in their secret bands, in fornication, adultery or midnight machinations. . . . They had threatened us, to kill us, if we did not make restitutions to them, by upholding them in their wicked purposes and designs. . . . to our great astonishment, when we were on the way home from Liberty, Clay County, we met the families of Oliver Cowdery and L. E. Johnson, whom they had driven from their homes, and robbed them of all their goods, save clothing, bedding, etc.

While we were gone Jo. and Rigdon and their band of Gadiatons kept up a guard, and watched our houses, and abused our families, and threatened them, if they were not gone by morning, they would be drove out, and threatened our lives, if they ever saw us in Far West (John Whitmer’s History, p. 22).

The fact that the Mormon leaders violated the civil rights of their own people by driving out dissenters from their midst caused many non-Mormons to conclude that they were dealing with a very dangerous group. As they heard reports by those who were driven out, they became increasingly fearful of the Mormons. Richard Bushman commented:

Mormons believed they were building Zion according to God’s commands; to apostates and outsiders they looked like mindless zealots obeying a tyrant.

In 1838, the practical form of this question involved submission to law. The Missourians believed that Mormons thought Joseph’s revelations put them beyond the law. Since the word of God outranked the law of the land, Mormons were suspected of breaking the law whenever the Prophet required it (Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling, p. 353-354).

Extermination Order

The film has a scene showing the Missouri militia about to carry out an “extermination order” given by Governor Lilburn W. Boggs on October 27, 1838. Governor Boggs had declared:

The Mormons must be treated as enemies, and must be exterminated or driven from the State if necessary, for the public peace—their outrages are beyond all description (The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri, p. 152).

After Governor Boggs’ order an army of the state militia marched to the borders of Far West, Missouri, and demanded the surrender of Joseph Smith and several others. A hasty court-martial was convened on the spot and Smith and the other prisoners were sentenced to be executed the next morning. The film shows the captain’s refusal to carry out the order but doesn’t give any details surrounding the event.

While many Mormons have heard of Governor Boggs’ “extermination order,” they usually are not aware that the term originated with the Mormons. Sidney Rigdon, first counselor in the First Presidency, had preached his infamous “salt sermon” threatening the dissenters in June. Then on July 4, 1838, he warned that there could be “a war of extermination” against anyone abusing the Mormons. This was three months prior to the time Boggs issued his order. LDS historian B. H. Roberts commented on Rigdon’s July 4th speech:

This oration by Sidney Rigdon has always been severely criticized as containing passages that were ill-advised and vehemently bitter. Especially those passages which threatened a war of extermination upon mobs should they again arise to plague the saints (History of the Church, vol. 3, p. 42, footnote).

In his speech, after speaking of the persecution that church members had suffered, Rigdon threatened:
We take God and all the holy angels to witness, this day, that we warn all men, in the name of Jesus Christ to come on us no more for ever, from this hour we will bear it no more; our rights shall no more be trampled on with impunity; the man, or the set of men who attempt it, do it at the expense of their lives. And that mob that comes on us to disturb us, it shall be between us and them a war of extermination; for we will follow them until the last drop of their blood is spilled; or else they will have to exterminate us, for we will carry the seat of war to their own houses and their own families, and one party or the other shall be utterly destroyed. . . . We this day, then, proclaim ourselves free with a purpose and determination that never can be broken, No, never! No, never! No, never! (Comprehensive History of the Church, by B. H. Roberts, vol. 1, p. 441).

B. H. Roberts acknowledged that Joseph Smith himself approved of Rigdon’s speech:

The unwisdom of the utterance has been quite generally recognized by our writers, and by them responsibility for it has been placed upon the rather fervid imagination of Sidney Rigdon, who delivered the speech, and who quite generally is supposed to have been mainly or wholly responsible for it. This is not true. The speech was carefully prepared . . . and read by other presiding elders of the church before its delivery. It immediately appeared in The Far West, a weekly newspaper . . . and was also published . . . on the press of the Elders’ Journal. Joseph Smith in his journal speaks of it approvingly; and in the Elders’ Journal, of which he was the editor, and in the editorial columns under his name, the speech is approvingly recommended to the saints. In view of these facts, if the ‘declaration’ was of doubtful propriety, and unwise and impolitic, responsibility for it rests not alone on Sidney Rigdon, but upon the authorities of the church who approved it, and the people who accepted it by their acclamation (Comprehensive History of the Church, vol. 1, p. 443).

This speech undoubtedly helped trigger the violence that erupted in Missouri. During the conflict that ensued, the Mormon Danites were engaged in plundering and burning the homes of the non-Mormons. For example, Benjamin F. Johnson, a member of the Mormon militia, both claimed that the decision to plunder the Missourians’ food and possessions was prompted by the necessities of war. “It should not be supposed . . . that we were common robbers because we took by reprisal that with which to keep from starvation our women and children,” Johnson wrote . . . And the rumor spread among them, particularly among Danites under Sampson Avard’s tutelage, that “the time had come when the ‘riches of the Gentiles’ should be consecrated to the Saints,” thus fulfilling an 1831 revelation to Joseph Smith. The Mormon soldiers believed their pillaging was divinely sanctioned . . . The desperate crimes committed by the Mormon soldiers can be attributed to several factors. Their militant activities and the belligerent speeches of their leaders during the summer and fall of 1838 had been leading them on a course of increasing lawlessness and violence (The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri, pp. 120-121).

Steven LeSueur calculated that “the Mormons burned about fifty cabins and stores, and drove one hundred non-Mormon families from their homes” (The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri, p. 124).

Speaking of the Danites, D. Michael Quinn noted that, “As of 4 September 1838, Danite John N. Sapp estimated their number at 800-1,000” (The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power, p. 479). Through his research Quinn has identified about 230 of these Danites by name (Ibid., pp. 479-485).

With mounting hostilities and plundering on both sides, together with the Mormon’s growing army, the non-Mormons had good reason to be alarmed.

Haun’s Mill

The film shows various attacks on Mormon settlements by non-Mormons. The most famous of these was the slaughter at Haun’s Mill on October 30, 1838. However, Mormons are not usually aware of the fighting that had already been escalating in Missouri. Ten days before the attack on Haun’s mill

Mormon soldiers met secretly and organized into companies of ten, fifty, and one hundred in preparation for war. . . . On the morning of 20 October, Joseph Smith gathered about three hundred of his men on a ridge near Diahman and covenanted with them never to accept peace at the sacrifice of truth and justice. . . . The Prophet then
stepped forward, drew his sword, and lifting high above his head, proclaimed, “I have drawn my sword from its sheath and I swear by the living God that it never shall return again till I can go and come and be treated by others as they wish to be treated by me” (*The 1838 Mormon War*, pp. 125-126).

The Mormons living in the small community of Haun’s Mill had experienced a number of attacks from non-Mormons but had signed a peace treaty with the locals. Thus they were caught off-guard when, on Tuesday, October 30, 1838, about 200 Missouri troops attacked the settlement, killing eighteen men (see *The 1838 Mormon War*, p. 164).

There is, of course, no way that a person can justify this bloody deed. Dr. Quinn was very disturbed by the “brutality of the anti-Mormon” militia that “attacked the LDS settlement at Haun’s Mill,” but he put the matter into perspective by showing that the action of the Danites earlier at the Battle of Crooked River led to the slaughter at Haun’s Mill:

In the skirmishes that both sides called “battles,” Mormons used deadly force without reluctance. Benjamin F. Johnson wrote that Danite leader (and future apostle) Lyman Wight told his men to pray concerning their Missouri enemies: “That God would Damn them & give us pow[er] to Kill them.” Likewise, at the beginning of the Battle of Crooked River . . . Apostle David W. Patten (a Danite captain with the code-name “Fear Not”) told his men: “Go ahead, boys; rake them down.” The highest ranking Mormon charged with murder for obeying this order was Apostle Parley P. Pratt who allegedly took the careful aim of a sniper in killing one Missourian and then severely wounding militiaman Samuel Tarwater. This was after Apostle Patten received a fatal stomach wound. In their fury at the sight of their fallen leader, some of the Danites mutilated the unconscious Tarwater “with their swords” striking him lengthwise in the mouth, cutting off his under teeth, and breaking his lower jaw; cutting off his cheeks . . . and leaving him [for] dead.” He survived to press charges against Pratt for attempted murder. . . .

A generally unacknowledged dimension of both the extermination order and the Haun’s Mill massacre, however, is that they resulted from Mormon actions in the Battle of Crooked River. Knowingly or not, Mormons had attacked state troops, and this had a cascade effect. Local residents feared annihilation: “We know not the hour or minute we will be laid in ashes,” a local minister and county clerk wrote the day after the battle. “For God’s sake give us assistance as quick as possible.” Correspondingly, the attack on state troops weakened the position of Mormon friends in Missouri’s militia and government. Finally, upon receiving news of the injuries and death of state troops at Crooked River, Governor Boggs immediately drafted his extermination order on 27 October 1838 because the Mormons “have made war upon the people of this state.” Worse, the killing of one Missourian and mutilation of another while he was defenseless at Crooked River led to the mad-dog revenge by Missourians in the slaughter at Haun’s Mill (*The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power*, pp. 99-100).

Richard Bushman commented:

The skirmish at Crooked River led to the charge of treason against Joseph Smith and the Mormon leaders. Resisting a band of vigilantes was justifiable, but attacking a militia company was resistance to the state (*Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, p. 364).

In Sidney Rigdon’s July 4th speech he threatened that if the Mormons were attacked, there would be “a war of extermination; for we will follow them until the last drop of their blood is spilled; or else they will have to exterminate us. . . .” Although Boggs’ order echoed Rigdon’s threat to exterminate the opposition, the Mormons were able to negotiate a settlement. Joseph Smith and four others surrendered to the militia. Richard Bushman writes:

The Mormons were to give up their arms and leave the state. Those accused of crimes were to be surrendered and tried. Mormon property in Missouri was to be confiscated to reimburse the Daviess citizens whose houses had been burned. The Mormons were to give up everything except their lives (*Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, p. 367).

The Mormon prisoners were eventually brought before a court. Richard Bushman gave the following overview of the event:

The inquiry before Judge Austin King of the Fifth Circuit Court in Richmond ran from November 12 to 28 [1838]. The nearly fifty prisoners were accused of participating in the raids on Daviess County or the attack on Samuel Bogart and the Richmond County militia at Crooked River. For two weeks, the court heard testimony from over forty witnesses blaming Joseph for instigating the Mormon raids and setting up the Danites as a secret government. . . . At the end, the court found probable cause to charge Joseph and five others with “overt acts of treason.” Another five, including Parley Pratt, were charged with murder because a Missourian was killed at Crooked River. The rest of the accused Mormons were dismissed. . . .

Because the Richmond jail was crowded, on December 1 the group charged with treason were sent chained and handcuffed to Liberty, the Clay county seat (*Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, p. 369).

Mr. Bushman gives the following summary of the Mormon problems in the 1830’s:

While in prison, Joseph mulled over the problems of the past year. The Missourians were to blame, of course, but he now saw that the Church had erred, and he had made mistakes himself. . . .

Repairing their mistakes, however, did not deal with the underlying question: why God had allowed the Missourians to abuse the Saints. If this was His work where was He? The succession of failures, beginning with Jackson County and continuing through the Far West surrender, was too much for John Corrill, the steady, clear-headed Missouri leader. At the end of his 1839 account of early Mormonism, Corrill explained why he abandoned the movement:
When I retrace our track, and view the doings of the church for six years past, I can see nothing that convinces me that God has been our leader; calculation after calculation has failed, and plan after plan has been overthrown, and our prophet seemed not to know the event till too late. If he said go up and prosper, still we did not prosper; but have labored and toiled, and waded through trials, difficulties, and temptations, of various kinds, in hope of deliverance. But no deliverance came.

Everything Corrill said was true. The great work had met defeat after defeat. None of the Mormon settlements had lasted in Ohio or Missouri. Joseph’s seven-year stay in Kirtland was the longest in any gathering place. At Far West, the Saints survived barely two years. The gathering led to one disaster after another, as local citizens turned against the expanding Mormon population (Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling, p. 379).

After spending months in jail the five men were able to make an escape while being transferred to another jail in April of 1839, and made their way to Illinois.

Both the Missourians and the Mormons were guilty of crimes but the movie places all the blame on the non-Mormons and shows the Mormons as peaceful and non-aggressive. There were reasons the Mormons kept running into opposition and were driven out of various areas, but that is never explained in the film.

**Joseph’s Temper**

While the movie shows Joseph Smith good-naturedly entering into wrestling contests, it fails to show how he sometimes lost his temper and became violent. D. Michael Quinn observed that Smith was a “church president who physically assaulted both Mormons and non-Mormons for insulting him” (The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power, pp. 261-262).

On August 1, 1843, Smith’s history records:

Mr. Bagby, the collector, came up in the midst of our conversation, . . . I told him that I had always been ready to pay all my taxes when I was called upon; and I did not think it gentlemanly treatment to sell any of my lots for taxes; and I told him that he was continually abusing the citizens here. Bagby called me a liar, and picked up a stone to throw at me, which so enraged me that I followed him a few steps, and struck him two or three times. Esquire Daniel H. Wells stepped between us and succeeded in separating us. . . . I rode down to Alderman Whitney . . . he imposed a fine which I paid, and then returned to the political meeting (History of the Church, vol. 5, p. 524).

On August 13, 1843, Smith made public reference to the altercation with Mr. Bagby:

I met him, and he gave me some abusive language, taking up a stone to throw at me: I seized him by the throat to choke him off (History of the Church, vol. 5, p. 531).

In that same year Smith assaulted Joseph Butterfield, president of the Seventy:

Josiah Butterfield came to my house and insulted me so outrageously that I kicked him out of the house, across the yard, and into the street (History of the Church, vol. 5, p. 316).

Jedediah M. Grant, a member of the First Presidency under Brigham Young, told of Smith’s rough handling of a visiting minister:

. . . the Baptist priest who came to see Joseph Smith . . . stood before him, and folding his arms said, “Is it possible that I now flash my optics upon a man who has conversed with my Savior?” “Yes,” says the Prophet, “I don’t know but you do; would not you like to wrestle with me?” That, you see, brought the priest right on to the thrashing floor, and he turned a somerset right straight. After he had whirled round a few times, like a duck shot in the head, he concluded that his piety had been awfully shocked . . . (Journal of Discourses, vol. 3, pp. 66-67).

While this may have seemed amusing to Apostle Grant, Joseph Smith was hardly displaying a Christian attitude. His close friend Benjamin F. Johnson made this observation after Smith’s death:

And yet, although so social and even convivial at times, he [Joseph Smith] would allow no arrogance or undue liberties, and criticism, even by his associates, was rarely acceptable, and contradiction would rouse in him the lion at once, for by no one of his fellows would he be superseded or disputed and in the early days at Kirtland, and elsewhere one or more of his associates were more than once, for their impudence, helped from the congregation by his foot, and at one time at a meeting at Kirtland, for insolence to him, he soundly thrashed his brother William who boasted himself as invincible. And while with him in such fraternal, social and sometimes convivial moods, we could not then so fully realize the greatness and majesty of his calling, which, since his martyrdom, has continued to magnify in our lives, as the glories of this last dispensation more fully unfold to our comprehension (Letter by Benjamin F. Johnson to Elder George S. Gibbs, 1903, as printed in The Testimony of Joseph Smith’s Best Friend, pp. 4-5, at University of Utah, Marriott Library).

Mormon writer Max H. Parkin refers to a court case against Joseph Smith in which Calvin Stoddard, Joseph Smith’s brother-in-law, testified that

Smith then came up and knocked him in the forehead with his flat hand — the blow knocked him down, when Smith repeated the blow four or five times, very hard — made him blind — that Smith afterwards came to him and asked his forgiveness (Conflict at Kirtland, 1966, p. 132, citing from the Painesville Telegraph, June 26, 1835).

This side of Joseph Smith’s character is very carefully left out of the film.

**Joseph’s Boasting**

In 1843 Charlotte Haven, a non-Mormon, wrote letters from Nauvoo which contain some candid observations about Joseph Smith:
Joseph Smith . . . is evidently a great egotist and boaster, for he frequently remarked that at every place he stopped going to and from Springfield people crowded around him, and expressed surprise that he was so “handsome and good looking” (“A Girl’s Letters from Nauvoo,” *Overland Monthly, California*, December 1890, p. 621).

He talked incessantly about himself, what he had done and could do more than other mortals, and remarked that he was “a giant, physically and mentally.” In fact, he seemed to forget that he was a man. . . . They say he is very kindhearted, and always ready to give shelter and help to the needy (*Ibid.*, p. 623).

A reporter who visited Joseph Smith wrote in 1843:

We spent about an hour conversing on various subjects, the prophet himself, with amazing volubility, occupying the most of the time, and his whole theme was himself. Let us give what turn we would to the conversation, he would adroitly bring it back to himself. . . . he said: “The world persecutes me, it has always persecuted me. . . . When I have proved that I am right, and get all the world subdued under me. I think I shall deserve something (*The New York Spectator*, September 23, 1843).

For those who might doubt these assessments of Smith’s character, we give the following quotes from Joseph himself:

I am a lawyer; I am a big lawyer and comprehend heaven, earth and hell, to bring forth knowledge that shall cover up all lawyers, doctors and other big bodies (*History of the Church*, vol. 5, p. 289).

Don’t employ lawyers, or pay them for their knowledge, for I have learned that they don’t know anything. I know more than they all (*History of the Church*, vol. 5, p. 467).

I combat the errors of ages; I meet the violence of mobs; I cope with illegal proceedings from executive authority; I cut the gordian knot of powers, and I solve mathematical problems of universities, with truth-diamond truth; and God is my “right hand man” (*History of the Church*, vol. 6, p. 78).

If they want a beardless boy to whip all the world, I will get on the top of a mountain and crow like a rooster; I shall always beat them. . . . I have more to boast of than ever any man had. I am the only man that has ever been able to keep a whole church together since the days of Adam. A large majority of the whole have stood by me. *Neither Paul, John, Peter, nor Jesus ever did it.* I boast that no man ever did such a work as I. The followers of Jesus ran away from Him, but the Latter-day Saints never ran away from me yet (*History of the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 408-9).

**Smith Introduces Polygamy**

Polygamy was unlawful in Illinois, thus the need for extreme secrecy. But another obstacle to its practice was convincing women that it was right before God. After all, the Book of Mormon condemned polygamy (*Jacob 2:23-28*) and section 101 in the 1835 edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* denied the Mormons practiced it. Evidently Smith appealed to new revelation and the practice of polygamy in the Old Testament as justification for “restoring” the principle in his day and linked it to eternal exaltation. The revelation starts out:

Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, justified my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines—Behold, and lo, I am the Lord thy God, and will answer thee as touching this matter. . . . all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same. . . . and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned . . . (*Doctrine and Covenants* 132:1-4).

Richard Bushman commented:

The possibility of an imaginary revelation, erupting from his own heart and subconscious mind, seems not to have occurred to Joseph. To him, the words came from heaven. They required obedience even though the demand seemed contradictory or wrong. . . . Joseph told a prospective wife that submitting to plural marriage would “ensure your eternal salvation & exaltation and that of your father’s household. & all your kindred” (*Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, pp. 438-439).

One of the first women listed as a plural wife of Joseph Smith is Fanny Alger, a teenager who lived in the Smith home in the mid-1830’s. Todd Compton, an LDS historian, commented that her marriage to him in Kirtland, Ohio, established a pattern that was repeated in Nauvoo, Illinois: Smith secretly marries a teenage servant or family friend living in his home, and his first wife Emma forces the young woman from the premises when she discovers the relationship (*In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith*, by Todd Compton, p. 25).

Oliver Cowdery, one of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, became aware of the relationship between Joseph and Fanny but considered it a case of adultery. In 1838 he wrote to his brother, Warren, about the episode:

When he [Joseph Smith] was there we had some conversation in which in every instance I did not fail to affirm that what I had said was strictly true. A dirty, nasty, filthy affair of his and Fanny Alger’s was talked over in which I distinctly declared that I had never deviated from the truth in the matter, and as I supposed was admitted by himself (Letter written by Oliver Cowdery and recorded by his brother Warren Cowdery; see photograph in *The Mormon Kingdom*, vol. 1, p. 27).

While Smith may have taken at least two plural wives in the 1830’s, his first plural wife in Nauvoo, Illinois, was Louisa Beaman in 1841. Soon after this, the doctrine was introduced to selected leaders. Richard Bushman comments:

Joseph told the Twelve about plural marriage soon after their return in 1841, and they began marrying other women
soon after. Before Joseph died, as many as twenty-nine other men had married at least one additional wife under his authorization. The practice had to be generalized because the revelation tied marriage to the highest form of exaltation. . . . The plural marriage revelation [D.&C. 132] still describes the modern Mormon view of marriage and family, although Latter-day Saints abandoned plural marriage more than a century ago. . . .

To those sealed by the priesthood, the promises were startling. When out of the world, the revelation said, sealed couples would pass by the angels and go on to godhood (Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling, p. 443).

Smith’s secret teachings were exposed in 1842 after Martha Brotherton, a young convert, published her story of being approached by Brigham Young to be his plural wife. LDS historian Richard Van Wagoner related:

In a retrospective newspaper account months later, Martha Brotherton, a young Nauvoo woman, reported that during [January of 1842] she was privately approached by Brigham Young and asked “were it lawful and right . . . could [you] accept of me for your husband and companion?” Brigham stated that “Brother Joseph has had a revelation from God that it is lawful and right for a man to have two wives; for as it was in the days of Abraham, so it shall be in these last days . . . if you will accept of me, I will take you straight to the celestial kingdom.” Brotherton reported that when she hesitated, Young left the room and returned ten minutes later with Joseph Smith. “Well, Martha,” she reported the prophet as having said, “just go ahead, and do as Brigham wants you to. . . . I know that this is lawful and right before God. . . . I have the keys of the kingdom, and whatever I bind on earth is bound in heaven, and whatever I loose on earth is loosed in heaven.” Martha begged for time to consider the offer, then left for Saint Louis, where she published her story in the 15 July 1842 St. Louis Bulletin.

Even before Martha left Nauvoo, rumors of the incident began to circulate. Hyrum Smith, believing Joseph’s public posture that polygamy was not being practiced, publicly addressed the Saints on 7 April 1842 “in contradiction of a report in circulation about elders Heber C. Kimball, Brigham Young, himself, and others of the Twelve, alleging that a sister had been shut in a room for several days, and that they had endeavored to induce her to believe in having two wives.” Joseph, who addressed the group after Hyrum, added, “There is no person that is acquainted with our principles who would believe such lies” (Mormon Polygamy: A History, by Richard S. Van Wagoner, second ed. 1989, p. 20).

Even though Joseph Smith was publicly denying any doctrine or practice of plural marriage, he was secretly taking more wives. Only a week after Martha Brotherton’s accusations were printed in the St. Louis Bulletin Smith convinced seventeen-year-old Sarah Ann Whitney to be his plural wife. Richard Van Wagoner relates:

She [Sarah Ann Whitney] was sealed to Smith with her parents’ permission on 27 July 1842. In an 18 August 1842 letter to the Whitneys, Smith, hiding from Missouri law enforcement officials, detailed his problems in getting to see Sarah Ann without Emma’s knowledge. “My feelings are so strong for you since what has passed lately between us . . . if you three would come and see me in this my lonely retreat, it would afford me great relief, of mind, if those with whom I am allied, do love me, now is the time to afford me succor . . . the only thing to be careful is to find out when Emma comes then you cannot be safe, but when she is not here, there is the most perfect safety” (Mormon Polygamy, pp. 48-49).

Sarah Ann probably did not realize that she had become Joseph’s fifteenth plural wife. Any youthful dreams of courtship and a public marriage were sacrificed to gain Smith’s promise of eternal exaltation for herself and her parents.

### Number of Wives

Todd Compton compiled biographical information on 33 women who were married to Smith, ranging in age from 14 to 58. Compton provided the following overview of Smith’s wives:

- In the group of Smith’s well-documented wives, eleven (33 percent) were 14 to 20 years old when they married him.
- Nine wives (27 percent) were twenty-one to thirty years old.
- Eight wives (24 percent) were in Smith’s own peer group, ages thirty-one to forty.

The teenage representation is the largest, though the twenty-year and thirty-year groups are comparable, which contradicts the Mormon folk-wisdom that sees the beginnings of polygamy as an attempt to care for older, unattached women. These data suggest that sexual attraction was an important part of the motivation for Smith’s polygamy (In Sacred Loneliness, p. 11).

Compton further observed:

- Eighteen of Joseph’s wives (55 percent) were single when he married them and had never been married previously.
- Another four (12 percent) were widows. . . . However, the remaining eleven women (33 percent) were married to other husbands and cohabiting with them when Smith married them. . . . I use the term polyandry—which means one woman being married to two men simultaneously—to describe this marital triangulation.

Polyandry is one of the major problems found in Smith’s polygamy and many questions surround it. . . .

A common misconception concerning Joseph Smith’s polyandry is that he participated in only one or two such unusual unions. In fact, fully one-third of his plural wives, eleven of them, were married civilly to other men when he married them. If one superimposes a chronological perspective, one sees that of Smith’s first twelve wives, nine were polyandrous. So in this early period polyandry was the norm, not the anomaly. . . . none of these women divorced their “first husbands” while Smith was alive and all of them continued to live with their civil spouses while married to Smith (In Sacred Loneliness, pp. 15-16).

The fact that Joseph Smith asked for other men’s wives was made very plain in a sermon delivered in the Salt Lake
Tabernacle by Jedediah M. Grant, second counselor to Brigham Young. In this sermon, delivered February 19, 1854, Apostle Grant stated:

When the family organization was revealed from heaven—the patriarchal order of God, and Joseph began, on the right and on the left, to add to his family, what a quaking there was in Israel. Says one brother to another, “Joseph says all covenants are done away, and none are binding but the new covenants; now suppose Joseph should come and say he wanted your wife, what would you say to that?” “I would tell him to go to hell.” This was the spirit of many in the early days of this Church. . . .

What would a man of God say, who felt aright, when Joseph asked him for his money? He would say, “Yes, and I wish I had more to help to build up the kingdom of God.” Or if he came and said, “I want your wife?” “O Yes,” he would say, “here she is, there are plenty more.” . . . Did the Prophet Joseph want every man’s wife he asked for? He did not . . . If such a man of God should come to me and say, “I want your gold and silver, or your wives,” I should say, “Here they are, I wish I had more to give you, take all I have got” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 2, pp. 13-14).

For further evidence that Joseph Smith had multiple wives, visit the LDS web site www.familysearch.org. One can find a list of 24 of Joseph Smith’s wives by simply typing in the names of Joseph and Emma (Hale) Smith, add his parents, Joseph and Lucy, add United States as the country, and you should be able to find the list. While the list is incomplete, it does contain the names of four of the women who had living husbands when they married Smith. These are Mary Elizabeth Rollins (Lightner), Sylvia Sessions (Lyon), Presendia Huntington (Buell) and Zina Huntington (Jacobs). Also listed are Helen Mar Kimball, Smith’s youngest wife at 14 years of age, and seventeen-year-old Sarah Ann Whitney.

Smith’s revelation on polygamy stated that according to “the law of the priesthood” a man could have “ten virgins given unto him by this law” and it would not be adultery (D&C 132:61-62). In light of the wording of the revelation, one wonders how he could justify his marriages to women with living husbands. Evidently he believed all marriages not performed by the priesthood were null and void, leaving the woman available for a “celestial” marriage. Richard Van Wagoner explained:

Smith viewed as invalid those marriages not sealed by his blessing. As God’s earthly agent, he believed he had been given powers that transcended civil law. . . . Whenever he deemed it appropriate he could release a woman from her earthly marriage and seal her to himself or to another with no stigma of adultery (Mormon Polygamy, p. 47).

Most of the plural marriages were done without Emma’s knowledge. Smith also “proposed to at least five more women who turned him down” (In Sacred Loneliness, p. 2). Two of these proposals are mentioned by Robert S. Wicks and Fred R. Foister:

Not all of the women Joseph solicited submitted to his entreaties. The most publicly embarrassing refusal was Joseph’s attempt, in 1842, to marry Nancy Rigdon, daughter of counselor Sidney Rigdon, himself a vocal opponent of polygamy. At the time she was being courted by twenty-three-year-old Francis M. Higbee. By early 1844, Higbee had become an influential dissident. Jane Law, wife of former counselor William Law, was unsuccessfully propositioned by Joseph in the spring of 1844 (Junius & Joseph: Presidential Politics and the Assassination of the First Mormon Prophet, by Robert S. Wicks and Fred R. Foister, 2005, p. 134).

Were the Marriages Consummated?

When the issue of Joseph Smith’s plural marriages is discussed with Mormons they will often assert that Smith did not cohabitate with his wives but were sealed for eternity only. However, several of his wives and friends made statements that clearly show at least some of the marriages included sexual relations. Todd Compton explained:

For instance, Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner stated that she knew of children born to Smith’s plural wives: “I know he had six wives and I have known some of them from childhood up. I know he had three children. They told me. I think two are living today but they are not known as his children as they go by other names.” Melissa Lott Willes testified that she had been Smith’s wife “in very deed.” Emily Partridge Young said she “roomed” with Joseph the night following her marriage to him, and said that she had “carnal intercourse” with him.

Other early witnesses also affirmed this. Benjamin Johnson wrote: “On the 15th of May . . . the Prophet again Came and at my hosue [house] occupied the Same Room & Bed with my Sister that the month previous he had occupied with the Daughter of the Later Bishop Partridge as his wife.” According to Joseph Bates Noble, Smith told him he had spent a night with Louisa Beaman (In Sacred Loneliness, pp. 12-13).

Emma’s Problems with Polygamy

The film depicts Emma and Joseph’s relationship as one of mutual respect and equality. An LDS member gave the following assessment of the film’s treatment of Joseph and Emma:

“I saw the film last weekend when we were in Utah. Fabulous! I loved the way they depicted Emma & Joseph’s relationship” (www.nauvoo.com).

The movie, however, conveniently omits Joseph and Emma’s numerous arguments over polygamy. Both in speeches and church publications, Smith continually denied the doctrine and practice of plural marriage, while secretly adding more wives. Thus the rumors persisted. Richard Van Wagoner wrote:

Smith’s denials of polygamy were accepted at face value by most Saints. But Emma so strongly suspected her
husband of practicing it that she enlisted support from other anti-polygamy women to keep track of him. Joseph Lee Robinson wrote of one such alliance. Angeline, wife of his brother Ebenezer, "watched Brother Joseph the Prophet [...] had seen him go into some house that she had reported to Sister Emma the wife of the Prophet [...] it was at a time when she was very suspicious and jealous of him for fear he would get another wife." Robinson alleged that Emma was so angry she "said she would leave and was making preparations to go to her People in The State of New York it came close to breaking up his family" (Mormon Polygamy, p. 51).

Sometime during February of 1843 Emma evidently became aware that Joseph had taken her best friend, Eliza R. Snow, as a plural wife. Eliza was currently living in the Smith home, which housed a number of boarders. LDS historians Linda Newell and Valeen Avery wrote:

When the full realization of the relationship between her friend Eliza and her husband Joseph came to her, Emma was stunned. . . . Although no contemporary account of the incident between Emma and Eliza remains extant, evidence leads to the conclusion that some sort of physical confrontation occurred between the two women. In 1886 Wilhelm Wyl published the first known version of the incident in his anti-Mormon book, Joseph Smith the Prophet: His Family and His Friends:

They say . . . there is scarcely a Mormon acquainted with the fact that Sister Emma . . . soon found out the little compromise arranged between Joseph and Eliza. Feeling outraged as a wife and betrayed as a friend, Emma is currently reported as having had recourse to a vulgar broomstick as an instrument of revenge; and the harsh treatment received at Emma's hands is said to have destroyed Eliza's hopes of becoming the mother of a prophet's son. . . .

A fourth story, attributed to LeRoi C. Snow, Eliza's nephew, is an oral family tradition that tells of Emma knocking Eliza down the stairs with a broom, the fall resulting in a miscarriage for Eliza. . . .

Whether Eliza fell down the stairs or whether Emma pushed her or pulled her down by the hair, or whether Emma only turned her out of the house, the result seems to be documented in Eliza's terse journal entry for February 11, 1843: "Took board and had my lodging removed to the residence of br. [Jonathan] Holmes." . . . Eliza did not make another entry in her journal for five weeks and wrote no explanation for either the gap in her diary or her abrupt departure from Emma's home. . . .

The incident between Emma and Eliza forced the issue of plural marriage into the open. Emma could no longer believe that Joseph was not involved, and he could no longer deny it. Emma had not acted with violence before; now her determined opposition might show up again with unexpected force. Joseph resolutely tried to bring Emma around (Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith, by Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, 1994, pp. 134-137).

Emma seems to have occasionally agreed to Joseph taking other wives only to turn on him later. Linda Newell and Valeen Avery provide this information on Emma's capitulation:

For two months, from March to May, Joseph appears to have talked with Emma about plural marriage. He apparently used their rides together to teach her the necessity of the endowment and sealing. There is no evidence that she ever opposed him on any doctrine but plural marriage. Convinced that it was necessary for her salvation and essential to their continued relationship, she may have decided to compromise with Joseph. In May 1843 she finally agreed to give Joseph other wives if she could choose them . . . Emma chose the two sets of sisters then living in her house, Emily and Eliza Partridge and Sarah and Maria Lawrence.

Joseph had finally converted Emma to plural marriage, but not so fully that he dared tell her he had married the Partridge sisters two months earlier (Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith, pp. 142-143).

Emily Dow Partridge told how she and her sister were married without Emma's knowledge and then were remarried to Smith later with Emma's consent:

. . . the Prophet Joseph and his wife Emma offered us a home in their family, and they treated us with great kindness. We had been there about a year when the principle of plural marriage was made known to us, and I was married to Joseph Smith on the 4th of March 1843, Elder Heber C. Kimball performing the ceremony. My sister Eliza was also married to Joseph a few days later. This was done without the knowledge of Emma Smith. Two months afterward she consented to give her husband two wives, providing he would give her the privilege of choosing them. She accordingly chose my sister Eliza and myself, and to save family trouble Brother Joseph thought it best to have another ceremony performed. Accordingly on the 11th of May, 1843, we were sealed to Joseph Smith a second time, in Emma's presence. . . . From that very hour, however, Emma was our bitter enemy. We remained in the family several months after this, but things went from bad to worse until we were obligated to leave the house and find another home (Historical Record, edited by Andrew Jenson, vol. 6, 1887, p. 240).

According to Todd Compton, Joseph Smith married at least twenty-seven plural wives between 1833 and July 12, 1843 (see In Sacred Loneliness, pp. 4-6). These were all before Joseph committed his revelation to paper. For example, the Partridge sisters were married to Smith in March of 1843. In July of 1843 Joseph's brother, Hyrum, believed he could convince Emma of the truthfulness of polygamy and suggested Smith commit the revelation to paper. Joseph's secretary, William Clayton recorded:

On the morning of the 12th of July, 1843; Joseph and Hyrum Smith came into the office . . . Hyrum said to Joseph, "If you will write the revelation on celestial marriage, I will take it and read it to Emma, and I believe I can convince her of its truth, and you will hereafter have peace." Joseph smiled and remarked, "You do not know Emma as well as I do." . . . Hyrum then took the revelation to read to Emma. . . . When he came back, Joseph asked how he had succeeded. Hyrum replied that he had never received a more severe talking to in his life. . . .
Joseph quietly remarked, “I told you you did not know Emma as well as I did.” . . . Two or three days after the revelation was written Joseph related to me [William Clayton] and several others that Emma had so teased, and urgently entreated him for the privilege of destroying it, that he became so weary of her teasing, and to get rid of her annoyance, he told her she might destroy it and she had done so . . . realizing that he . . . could rewrite it at any time if necessary (History of the Church, Introduction to vol. 5).

A month later, Joseph and Emma were again arguing over polygamy. On August 16, 1843, William Clayton recorded the following in his journal:

This A.M. Joseph told me that since E[mma] came back from St. Louis she had resisted the P[riesthood] in toto, and he had to tell her he would relinquish all for her sake. She said she would [have] given him E[liza] and E[mily] P[artridge] but he knew if he took them she would pitch on him and obtain a divorce & leave him. He however told me he should not relinquish anything (An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton, edited by George D. Smith, p. 117).

Emma’s struggles with polygamy continued. Linda Newell detailed the events of the coming days:

A few days after hearing that Joseph would “relinquish all,” Emma found two letters in his pocket from Eliza R. Snow, then living at the Morley Settlement. Emma, seeming “vexed and angry,” asked William if he had delivered the letters to Joseph. Clayton denied it. His report of the incident may have been colored by his own apprehensions.

Two days later, William Clayton again reported Emma in another situation, . . . The 23 August entry reads:

Prest J[oseph], told me that he had difficulty with E[mma], yesterday. She rode up to Woodworths with him & called while he came to the Temple. When he returned she was demanding the gold watch of F[loria], he reproved her for her evil treatment. On their return home she abused him much & also when he got home. he had to use harsh measures to put a stop to her abuse but finally succeeded.

William Clayton did not include the full details. Still smarting from her discovery of Eliza’s letters, Emma went for a short carriage ride with Joseph. He attended to some business at the temple while she called on the Lucian Woodworth family. Emma was unaware that the Woodworth’s sixteen-year-old daughter, Flora, had been Joseph’s plural wife since spring. What probably began as a casual social visit exploded when Emma discovered that Joseph had given Flora a gold watch. The implications of such a gift were obvious since he had also given one to Eliza. Joseph returned as Emma “was demanding the gold watch” from Flora and reprimanded her. Once in the carriage, however, Emma undoubtedly vented her own anger at discovering yet another unsettling situation, continuing what William Clayton called “her abuse” until Joseph must have lost his temper and employed “harsh measures” to stop Emma (“The Emma Smith Lore Reconsidered,” by Linda King Newell, Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, vol. 17, no. 3, p. 91).

What are we to make of William Clayton’s statement that Joseph “had to use harsh measures” to stop Emma’s quarrelling “but finally succeeded”? Did Smith physically assault her? Whether his harsh measures were verbal or physical, it hardly presents a picture of the loving atmosphere in the Smith home as presented in the film.

### The Poisoning

Another curious incident in Smith’s life is his accusation that Emma tried to poison him. Ms. Newell writes:

Joseph won a respite with Emma over plural marriage when she received the Church’s highest ordinance, the second anointing, on or shortly before 28 September 1843. She had received her endowment and been sealed to Joseph for eternity the previous spring. But by November marauders on the outskirts of the city had begun looting, burning, and whipping. Emma and Joseph’s relationship again showed signs of intense stress and they both suffered from ill health. In an 1866 conference address, Brigham Young told this story:

> [Joseph] called his wife Emma into a secret council, and there he told her . . . of the time she undertook to poison him, and he told her that she was a child of hell, and literally the most wicked woman on this earth, that there was not one more wicked than she. He told her where she got the poison, and how she put it in a cup of coffee. . . . When it entered his stomach he went to the door and threw it off.

. . . The evidence strongly suggests that Joseph indeed made the accusation but that he was wrong in concluding that Emma tried to poison him. The episode needs a larger context. Joseph’s diary entry of 5 November 1843, describes becoming suddenly ill while eating dinner and vomiting so violently that he dislocated his jaw and “raised fresh blood.” He believed he had been poisoned, but recovered enough to attend a “prayer meeting in the hall over the store” that evening. This was a meeting of the “quorum of the anointed”—those who had received their endowments—and most likely the “secret council” in which, according to Brigham, Joseph accused Emma of trying to poison him. Joseph’s diary records that he and Emma did not dress for the prayer circle that night. Significantly, members did not customarily participate in the prayer circle if they had hard feelings against anyone else in the group. . . .

If Emma had convinced Joseph of her innocence in the earlier incident, Joseph apparently did not tell the others at the meeting and Emma remained forever guilty in their minds (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, vol. 17, no. 3, pp. 91-93).

In the same Brigham Young speech quoted above, he went on to relate:

> He [Joseph] spoke to her [Emma] in that council in a very severe manner, and she never said one word in reply. I have witnesses of this scene all around, who can testify that I am now telling the truth. Twice she undertook to kill him (The Essential Brigham Young, 1992, pp. 188-189).
Regardless of whether or not Emma actually tried to poison Joseph, obviously Smith and the other leaders believed it to be the case. These harsh accusations do not present a picture of marital bliss.

**Plural Marriage Essential**

Marriage to multiple women was not a side-line issue with Smith but a central part of his quest for exaltation and godhood. Todd Compton observed:

One may wonder why Smith married so many women when two or three wives would have complied with the reported divine command to enter polygamy. However, the church president apparently believed that complete salvation (in Mormon terminology, exaltation, including the concept of deification) depended on the extent of a man's family sealed to him in this life. . . . This puts the number of women Joseph married into an understandable context (In Sacred Loneliness, pp. 10-11).

Perhaps understandable to a Mormon, but does it really answer the objections? Why all the lying to Emma and the public? Why married women? One could argue that it looks a lot like an excuse for adultery.

Generally speaking, Mormons today seem unaware that Smith practiced polygamy and believe it was instituted in Utah to provide homes for widows. But there never was such a need. LDS apostle John A. Widtsoe admitted that there was no surplus of women:

The implied assumption in this theory, that there have been more female than male members in the Church, is not supported by existing evidence. On the contrary, there seems always to have been more males than females in the Church . . . .

The United States census records from 1850 to 1940, and all available Church records, uniformly show a preponderance of males in Utah, and in the Church (Evidences and Reconciliations, 1960, pp. 390-392).

Even if there had been an excess of widows they could have been cared for through some church program that would not necessitate marriage.

Plural marriage was presented to people as an essential doctrine, necessary for the highest rank in heaven. In 1878 apostle Joseph F. Smith told how God had to send an angel with a drawn sword to Joseph Smith to convince him to enter plural marriage "or he should be utterly destroyed" (Journal of Discourses, vol. 20, p. 29). Richard Van Wagoner observed:

This emphasis on procreation became the basis for the Mormon concept of humanity's progress to divinity. All of Smith's Nauvoo doctrinal innovations fell into place around this new teaching. Smith explained that God was an exalted man and that mortal existence was a testing ground for men to begin progress toward exalted godhood. Salvation became a family affair revolving around a husband whose plural wives and children were sealed to him for eternity under the "new and everlasting covenant" (Mormon Polygamy, p. 56).

Preaching in 1866, President Brigham Young declared:

The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy (Journal of Discourses, vol. 11, p. 269).

In 1890 the LDS Church issued the Manifesto, printed at the back of the Doctrine and Covenants, putting an end to the official practice of plural marriage. However, many continued its practice, even risking excommunication if found out. This led to many splinter groups who still practice polygamy and believe the LDS Church is in a state of apostasy. Today the LDS Church tries to distance itself from the splinter groups. President Gordon B. Hinckley was interviewed by Larry King in 1998 and asked about those currently practicing plural marriage. One of his questions to Hinckley was: "First tell me about the church and polygamy. When it started it allowed it?" Hinckley responded "When our people came west they permitted it on a restricted scale."

Hinckley went on to state:

I condemn it, yes, as a practice, because I think it is not doctrinal. It is not legal. And this church takes the position that we will abide by the law (Larry King Live, Sept. 8. 1998)

Three things should be noticed in Hinckley's comments. First, when asked specifically when plural marriage started in Mormonism, Hinckley clearly lied. He knows that Joseph Smith was practicing polygamy as early as the 1830's, years before the Mormons came west.

Second, plural marriage is obviously still "doctrine." Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants, which advocates plural marriage, is still printed in their scriptures.

Evidence that the LDS Church still believes the doctrine is their practice of allowing an LDS widower to be sealed to another woman after his wife's death. For example, in the Salt Lake Tribune for April 7, 2006, was an article announcing the temple marriage of Apostle Russell M. Nelson, age 81, to a BYU professor. His first wife died in February of 2005 and this was the first marriage for his new wife. This would mean, according to LDS beliefs, that Nelson has two wives sealed to him for eternity. Obviously the LDS Church still believes plural marriage will be practiced in the celestial kingdom.

Third, if Hinckley's objection is that its practice is "not legal," how does one square that with Joseph Smith practicing plural marriage when it was against the laws of Illinois?

**Joseph's Political Ambitions**

The film never explains why the communities surrounding Nauvoo were so against the Mormons. The tension seems to be just an extension of the seemingly senseless persecution endured by the Mormons through the years.

However, thousands of Mormons were pouring into Nauvoo, which threatened to give them tremendous political power and the ability to affect local elections. Robert S. Wicks and Fred R. Foister observed:
With ten to twelve thousand inhabitants in 1843, Nauvoo was the second largest city in Illinois, rivaled only by Chicago. The Holy City, as it was often called, dominated the economy of the region (Junius & Joseph, p. 22).

Also during the early 1840's Smith had secretly introduced a number of new doctrines and practices. Besides introducing plural marriage, he secretly instituted the Council of Fifty, a secret governing body, which was a forerunner of his plan to set up a theocracy, the literal Kingdom of God on Earth.

When Smith set up the Nauvoo Legion, with himself elevated to “Lieutenant General,” the non-Mormon community became fearful of the militant stance of the Mormons. On July 21, 1841, the Warsaw Signal reported:

How military these people are becoming! Everything they say or do seems to breathe the spirit of military tactics. Their prophet appears, on all occasions, in his splendid regimental dress signs his name Lieut. General, and more titles are to be found in the Nauvoo Legion, than any one book on military tactics can produce; . . . Truly fighting must be a part of the creed of these Saints! (Warsaw Signal, July 21, 1841).

D. Michael Quinn observed that the Nauvoo Legion was no ordinary militia. By 1842 the legion had 2,000 troops, by far the largest single militia in Illinois. Within two years, the Nauvoo Legion had nearly 3,000 soldiers. By comparison the U.S. army had less than 8,500 soldiers that year (The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power, p. 106).

Besides this, the Mormons tended to vote as a block. Thomas Ford, Governor of Illinois from 1842-1846, made these observations:

But the great cause of popular fury was, that the Mormons at several preceding elections had cast their vote as a unit, thereby making the fact apparent that no one could aspire to the honors or offices of the country, within the sphere of their influence, without their approbation and votes. . . . This one principle and practice of theirs arrayed against them in deadly hostility all aspirants for office who were not sure of their support, all who have been unsuccessful in elections, and all who were too proud to court their influence, with all their friends and connections (History of Illinois, by Thomas Ford, 1854, pp. 329-330).

Furthermore, Smith had decided to run for President of the United States. Governor Ford commented:

To crown the whole folly of the Mormons, in the spring of 1844, Joe Smith announced himself as a candidate for president of the United States. His followers were confident that he would be elected. Two or three thousand missionaries were immediately sent out to preach their religion, and to electioneer in favor of their prophet for the presidency. This folly at once covered that people with ridicule in the minds of all sensible men, and brought them into conflict with the zealots and bigots of all political parties; as the arrogance and extravagance of their religious pretensions had already aroused the opposition of all other denominations in religion (History of Illinois, p. 321).

Robert S. Wicks and Fred R. Foister give the following assessment of Smith’s bid for the presidency:

For the thirty-eight-year-old prophet Joseph, the American presidency was only the beginning. His publicly stated motivation for seeking the presidential chair was to facilitate compensating the Saints for their losses—of life, land, and property—during years of persecution in Missouri and their subsequent expulsion from the state. His private vision (initially made known only to a select inner circle of confidants) was even more ambitious. He prophesied the demise of the United States government within his own lifetime and proclaimed that his political Kingdom of God would ultimately overthrow all earthly regimes in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Smith's dual political agendas were managed by a secret Council of Fifty, organized as the nucleus of a new world government. . . . To Joseph's opponents, the prospect of merging church and state in America meant a frightening, and unacceptable, repudiation of a cornerstone of the constitution (Junius & Joseph, p. 1).

Since the community was already upset because the Mormons had a militia and voted as a block, when Smith entered the political arena it just added to people's apprehension.

Nauvoo Expositor

Not all of Smith's top leaders approved of his secret doctrine of plural marriage and plans for a kingdom. LDS historians James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard commented:

In April 1844 several of those who disagreed with the Prophet over the plurality of wives and other new doctrines withdrew and organized a reform church based on teachings as they had stood in 1838. The dissenters included William Law of the First Presidency, his brother Wilson Law, Austin Cowles of the Nauvoo high council, James Blakeslee, Charles G. Foster, Francis M. Higbee, and business men Robert D. Foster, Chauncey Higbee, and Charles Ivins. The grievances of these men and about two hundred others who joined with them extended beyond polygamy. . . . Denouncing Joseph Smith as a fallen prophet, a political demagogue, an immoral scoundrel, and a financial schemer, these men publicized their charges in a newspaper inaugurated June 7, 1844, as the Nauvoo Expositor (The Story of the Latter-day Saints, 1992, pp. 205-206).

This step was not taken lightly or suddenly. William Law had repeatedly tried to convince Smith to renounce polygamy. Finally William Law filed a suit against Smith in Hancock County Circuit Court, charging the prophet with living with Maria Lawrence “in an open state of adultery” from 12 October 1843 to 23 May 1844 (Mormon Polygamy, p. 66).

Joseph Smith's response was to denounce Law and deny the charge of adultery in his speech of May 26, 1844:

This new holy prophet [William Law] has gone to Carthage and swore that I had told him that I was guilty of adultery.
This spiritual wifeism! Why, a man dares not speak or wink, for fear of being accused of this. . . .

A man asked me whether the commandment was given that a man may have seven wives; and now the new prophet has charged me with adultery. . . . I am innocent of all these charges, and you can bear witness of my innocence, for you know me yourselves. . . . What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one (History of the Church, vol. 6, pp. 410-411).

The Nauvoo Expositor was only able to print one edition, June 7, 1844. Joseph Smith, as mayor of Nauvoo, brought the issue before the city council on June 10th, which

decided the paper was a public nuisance that had slandered individuals in the city. Public indignation threatened mob action against the paper, they reasoned, and if the council failed to respond, the libelous newspaper would arouse anti-Mormon mobs. . . . The mayor, Joseph Smith, then ordered the city marshal to destroy the press, scatter the type, and burn available papers. Within hours the order had been executed. The publishers, ostensibly fearing for their personal safety, fled to Carthage, where they obtained an arrest warrant against the Nauvoo city council on a charge of riot (Story of the Latter-day Saints, p. 206).

While Mormons try to justify the destruction of the press on the basis that the paper was full of lies, history has shown that the charges were legitimate. Smith had at least 33 plural wives by 1844. A number of other top leaders were practicing polygamy as well, and there was a secret agenda to set up the political Kingdom of God.

The destruction of the press outraged the defectors and non-Mormons, who then called for the extermination of the Mormons (see Mormon Enigma, p. 181).

Historians Linda Newell and Valeen Avery tell how Smith then called out the Nauvoo Legion:

On June 12 Joseph and seventeen others were arrested on charges stemming from the destruction of the press. Judge Daniel H. Wells, a friendly non-Mormon, acquitted them all. . . .

Joseph responded to lynching threats by declaring martial law and calling out the Legion. Dressed in his uniform, he reviewed his militia as they marched past the Mansion on June 18 and stopped smartly in front of Porter Rockwell’s partially completed bar and barbershop. Joseph climbed up the framework, then spoke for an hour and a half, warning the crowd of approaching danger. “Will you all stand by me to the death, and sustain at the peril of your lives, the laws of our country, and the liberties and privileges which our fathers have transmitted unto us, sealed with their sacred blood?”

The people shouted, “Aye!”

With a swift motion he drew his sword and thrust it up. “I have unsheathed my sword with a firm and unalterable determination that this people shall have their legal rights, and be protected from mob violence, or my blood shall be spilt upon the ground like water, and my body consigned to a silent tomb.”

Emma saw little of Joseph in the following four days. He spent most of his time sequestered in his office, planning a defensive strategy, aware that in a short time he could be arrested again. . . .

Meanwhile Governor Ford . . . wrote Joseph on June 22, “Your conduct in the destruction of the press was a very gross outrage upon the laws and the liberties of the people. It may have been full of libels, but this did not authorize you to destroy” (Mormon Enigma, pp. 184-185).

Rather than take a chance on non-Mormon justice, Joseph then fled the state. After pleas from his wife and leaders to return and give himself up, Smith and his brother, accompanied by several friends, traveled to Carthage.

Robert S. Wicks and Fred R. Foister tell of their arrival:

The Nauvoo company arrived at Hamilton’s Hotel just before midnight. A “great crowd” of nearly five hundred soldiers greeted them, eager to catch a glimpse of the infamous Joe Smith. . . .

After rising early, Joseph and Hyrum surrendered themselves to the constable. . . .

Shortly after Joseph and Hyrum had completed their recognizance bonds and were waiting to conduct an interview with the governor, they were approached by the constable, who served the men with new writs, this time charging them with treason for calling out the Nauvoo Legion earlier in the month. . . .

Justice Smith remanded Joseph and Hyrum to jail to await examination on the new charge, scheduled to take place the next day. The accused were taken to the Carthage jail (Junius & Joseph, pp. 157-158).

Since the destruction of the Nauvoo Expositor was the act that set in motion Smith’s arrest and murder, it is amazing that no mention is made of it in the film.

Smith’s Death

LDS leaders John Taylor and Willard Richards stayed at the jail with Joseph and Hyrum Smith, although others were allowed to visit. Fearing the growing number of enemies in Carthage, friends had smuggled in two guns to the Smiths (see http://www.ultm.org/onlineresources/josephsmithsdeath.htm).

Robert Wicks and Fred Foister give this account of the storming of the jail:

Hearing shots from outside, Dr. Richards parted the curtain. More than two hundred men, some in militia uniforms, others wearing fringed blue flannel hunting shirts, most of them armed, were crowding around the jail. . . .

The men in the hallway began their assault, firing up the stairs towards the sitting room. They regrouped on the landing.

Hyrum checked his weapon, aimed, and fired. A shot from the hallway struck him in the face. “I am a dead man!” he cried. Hyrum’s pistol fell from his hand. Joseph leaned over his dying brother, called out his name, and returned to the task of securing the door. The assailants pressed against the door until the latch gave way. As the intruders poked their gun barrels into the room, Richards and Taylor
beat them down with broad swipes of their canes. Joseph’s shoulder pressed against the weakening door. He jammed his Allen Pepperbox through the opening and shot blindly into the landing. Three times the ball struck a man. Three times the gun misfired.

The prophet retreated to the open window opposite the door. Gunfire from the hallway filled the room with smoke. Hit in the thigh from the latest volley, Joseph sat awkwardly on the broad window ledge.

Joseph held out his arms in the hailing sign of a Freemason in distress, “O Lord my God…” he cried, uttering the first four words of the Masonic plea for help. He fell from the window and landed, nearly fifteen feet below, on his side, badly hurt and unable to move. . . . One grabbed the dying man, and cursed as he propped him up against the well curb. . . .

Four men, led by John C. Elliott, took up their arms, and moved to the front rank of troops. They took position, aimed, and fired on command. Each ball found its mark. . . . Several of the men struck Joseph’s lifeless body with their bayonets to make certain the job was done (Junius and Joseph, pp. 177-178).

John Taylor, who was present in the room, told how the guns were smuggled into the jail:

Elder Cyrus H. Wheelock came in to see us, and when he was about leaving drew a small pistol, a six-shooter, from his pocket, remarking at the same time, “Would any of you like to have this?” Brother Joseph immediately replied, “Yes, give it to me,” whereupon he took the pistol, and put it in his pantaloons pocket. . . .

I was sitting at one of the front windows of the jail, when I saw a number of men, with painted faces, coming around the corner of the jail, and aiming towards the stairs. . . .

I shall never forget the deep feeling of sympathy and regard manifested in the countenance of Brother Joseph as he drew nigh to Hyrum, and, leaning over him, exclaimed, “Oh! my poor, dear brother Hyrum!” He, however, instantly arose, and with a firm, quick step, and a determined expression of countenance, approached the door, and pulling the six-shooter left by Brother Wheelock from his pocket, opened the door slightly, and snapped the pistol six successive times; only three of the barrels, however, were discharged. I afterwards understood that two or three were wounded by these discharges, two of whom, I am informed died (History of the Church, vol. 7, pp. 100, 102 & 103).

Mormons will often respond that there is no proof that anyone died as a result of Joseph firing his gun. However, the fact that he was firing back at the mob certainly shows that he intended to kill their attackers.

The film ends with a scene of the mob storming the jail but with no sign of the Smiths shooting back. The camera focuses on Joseph holding his dying brother Hyrum, as he looks toward the open window.

The musical score wells up in a dramatic rendition of the popular LDS hymn honoring Joseph Smith, Praise to the Man. The non-Mormon won’t catch the significance of the music but it seems to be calculated to bring the Mormon to tears. The lyrics go:

*In recent editions of the LDS hymnbook, “Plead unto heaven” has replaced the words “Stain Illinois.” (http://mlbd.byu.edu/phelps4.htm)

Did Joseph Smith suffer a martyr’s death? Or did he reap what he had sown? While the attack on the jail was clearly illegal, the Mormons’ growing presence in Illinois, voting as a block, the destruction of a newspaper, the Nauvoo Legion, and Smith’s secret doctrines and practices certainly created fear and anger in the non-Mormon communities. There is no excuse for a mob storming the jail, but Joseph Smith must bear a large part of the responsibility for what led to the event.

**Joseph Like Jesus?**

The film’s glorified story has struck several viewers as an attempt to portray Smith’s life as parallel to Christ’s. Hugo Olaiz observed:

The movie makes a point of informing readers that Mormons do not worship Joseph Smith. Yet the Joseph Smith portrayed in this film is a strikingly Christ-like figure. Like Jesus, Joseph charismatically communes with the common folk—children, the poor, the sick, and the outcast, including a company of black converts that includes recently rediscovered African pioneer Jane Manning James. The instant healing of a young boy in the Nauvoo swamps recalls similar miracles performed by the Savior. “Tell us, Joe, which Mormon house is going to burn tonight,” one of the guards taunts him at Liberty jail, evoking the tormentors who taunted Jesus to prophesy (Matthew 26:67-68, Luke 22:67).
When a grief-stricken Emma asks why Joseph could not work a miracle to save one of their own sick children, Joseph replies, “I can only do God’s will,” an echo of words spoken by Jesus in the Gospel of John (John 5:30, 6:38).

The film comes to an abrupt end with the martyrdom at Carthage. After his brother Hyrum dies in his arms, Joseph springs to the jailhouse window. The camera follows his point of view: we see what Joseph sees as he crashes through the glass—and then, instead of plummeting to the ground, he ascends (yet again like Jesus) into the clouds. Is Mormon triumphalism no longer able to stomach its founder’s death? A viewer not familiar with Mormonism might conclude that we believe there was no martyrdom but only apotheosis—that Joseph Smith literally leaped from the window into heaven (Sunstone, Dec. 2005, p. 71-72).

This effort to sanitize Joseph Smith is nothing new. It was commented on as early as 1859:

People sometimes wonder that the Mormon can revere Joseph Smith. That they can by any means make a Saint of him. But they must remember, that the Joseph Smith preached in England, and the one shot at Carthage, Ill., are not the same. The ideal prophet differs widely from the real person. ... Art may make him, indeed, an object of religious veneration. But remember, the Joseph Smith thus venerated, is not the real, actual Joseph Smith ... but one that art has created (Tiffany’s Monthly, 1859, p. 170).

This film comes across as Disney-type fantasy, not a balanced account of Smith’s life. While possessing natural abilities and talents, Joseph Smith’s personal character was far from the saintly image his followers have molded him into. His strong egotism and drive for power, together with his deceptive practices led ultimately to his destruction.

Acceptance of Joseph Smith Necessary for Eternal Life?

The importance of Joseph Smith in Mormon theology cannot be overemphasized. Joseph Fielding Smith, tenth president of the LDS Church, proclaimed:

If Joseph was verily a prophet ... then his knowledge is of the most vital importance to the entire world. No man can reject that testimony without incurring the most dreadful consequences, for he cannot enter the kingdom of God (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 2, Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., p. 189).

Heber C. Kimball, a member of the first Presidency under Brigham Young, said that the time would come when people would prize brother Joseph Smith as the Prophet of the Living God, and look upon him as a God, and also upon Brigham Young, our Governor in the Territory of Deseret (Journal of Discourses, vol. 5, p. 88).

Brigham Young, the church’s second president, gave the following challenge:

Well, now, examine the character of the Savior, and examine the characters of those who have written the Old and New Testament; and then compare them with the character of Joseph Smith, the founder of this work . . . and you will find that his character stands as fair as that of any man’s mentioned in the Bible. We can find no person who presents a better character to the world when the facts are known than Joseph Smith, Jun., the prophet, and his brother, Hyrum Smith, who was murdered with him (Journal of Discourses, vol. 14, p. 203).

D. Michael Quinn, excommunicated LDS historian who still believes in Joseph Smith’s call, outlined the different aspects of Smith’s character:

Few Mormons today can grasp the polarizing charisma of their founding prophet. Some may feel uncomfortable when confronted with the full scope of Joseph Smith’s activities as youthful mystic, treasure-seeker, visionary, a loving husband who deceived his wife regarding forty of his polygamous marriages, a man for whom friendship and loyalty meant everything but who provoked disaffection by “testing” the loyalty of his devoted associates, an anti-Mason who became a Master Mason, church president who physically assaulted both Mormons and non-Mormons for insulting him, a devoted father who loved to care for his own children and those of others, temperance leader and social drinker, Bible revisionist and esoteric philosopher, city planner, pacifist and commander-in-chief, student of Hebrew and Egyptology, bank president, jail escapee, healer, land speculator, mayor, judge and fugitive from justice, guarantor of religious freedom but limiter of freedom of speech and press, preacher and street-wrestler, polygamist and advocate of women’s rights, husband of other men’s wives, a declared bankrupt who was the trustee-in-trust of church finances, political horse-trader, U.S. presidential candidate, abolitionist, theocratic king, inciter to riot, and unwilling martyr (Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power, pp. 261-262).

Thousands of people have found it impossible to reconcile these various aspects of Smith’s character with a prophet of God. However, Brigham Young emphasized that accepting Joseph Smith as God’s prophet was necessary for one to have eternal life:

... I am an Apostle of Joseph Smith ... all who reject my testimony will go to hell, so sure as there is one, no matter whether it be hot or cold ... (Journal of Discourses, vol. 3, p. 212).

... no man or woman in this dispensation will ever enter into the celestial kingdom of God without the consent of Joseph Smith. ... Every man and woman must have the certificate of Joseph Smith, junior, as a passport to their entrance into the mansion where God and Christ are ... I cannot go there without his consent. ... He reigns there as supreme a being in his sphere, capacity, and calling, as God does in heaven (Journal of Discourses, vol. 7, p. 289).
I will now give my scripture—“Whosoever confesseth that Joseph Smith was sent of God... that spirit is of God; and every spirit that does not confess that God has sent Joseph Smith, and revealed the everlasting Gospel to and through him, is of Anti-christ...” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 8, p. 176).

To many Christians such claims border on blasphemy. We are to look to Christ, not a man or a church, for eternal life. In the New Testament we read:

He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God (1 John 5:12-13).

While the Bible is silent about Joseph Smith, it points to “Christ in you” as our “hope of glory” (Col. 1:27).

1826 New York Court Documents Relocated

In 1971 Presbyterian minister and scholar Wesley P. Walters scoured the areas surrounding Bainbridge, New York, looking for early documents relating to Joseph Smith. He was able to locate two documents connected to Smith’s 1826 arrest for practicing magic while working for Josiah Stowell. We immediately published the documents and since then much has been written regarding his find (see the various articles on our web site at www.utlm.org).

These documents recently made the news when it became known that they were at the home of the past county historian, Mae Smith. After Walters had turned the documents over to the county, the historian secretly took the documents, plus thousands of other old county papers, home for safe-keeping. There they stayed until her death, when the records were returned to the Chenango County Historical Department in 2005. Several news stories erroneously reported that the documents were given to the LDS Church. However, Dale Storms, the current Chenango County historian, stated:

I sent a copy to their [LDS] archives. I did not send the originals. They called and thanked me...I’m hoping they will be conserved because of the water damage. They need conservation. Our county is looking into having that done. (The Post-Standard, New York, December 11, 2005, p. A-14).

LDS Church Growth

While there is a popular assumption among Mormons that their church is the fastest growing faith, it is simply a myth. The Salt Lake Tribune reported on the problems of church growth:

Today, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has more than 12 million members on its rolls, more than doubling its numbers in the past quarter-century. But since 1990, other faiths – Seventh-day Adventists, Assemblies of God and Pentecostal groups – have grown much faster and in more places around the globe.

And most telling, the number of Latter-day Saints who are considered active churchgoers is only about a third of the total, or 4 million in the pews every Sunday, researchers say...

Take Brazil. In its 2000 Census, 199,645 residents identified themselves as LDS, while the church listed 743,182 on its rolls.

“It is a matter of grave concern that the areas with the most rapid numerical membership increase, Latin America and the Philippines, are also the areas with extremely low convert retention,” says [David G.] Stewart, a California physician (“Keeping Members a Challenge for LDS Church,” by Peggy F. Stack, Salt Lake Tribune, July 26, 2005).

The percentage of Mormons in Utah is also falling. The Salt Lake Tribune reported:

Within the next three years, the Mormon share of Utah’s population is expected to hit its lowest level since The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints started keeping membership numbers...

The often cited claim that Utah is 70 percent Mormon is not true – and hasn’t been true for more than a decade, according to the church numbers. While continuing to grow in actual members, the LDS share of the state population showed a slow but constant decline every year from 1989 to 2004.

According to the 2004 count, Utah is now 62.4 percent LDS with every county showing a decrease (“Mormon Portion of Utah Population Steadily Shrinking,” by Matt Canham, Salt Lake Tribune, July 24, 2005).

At the April 2006 Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the church statistics for the year 2005 were announced:

Total Church Membership: 12,560,869
Increase in children of record in 2005: 93,150
Converts baptized in 2005: 243,108
Full-time Missionaries: 52,060

While baptisms for 2005 were up by about 2,000 over 2004, it was still not as high as other years. Interestingly, the number of converts peaked in 1990 with 330,877 baptisms. This was accomplished with 43,651 full-time missionaries.

The 12.5 million member count includes more than baptized members. It also includes children who have been blessed as babies (whether baptized or not) and inactive members. Even if a person never attends again after being...
blessed as an infant he will be included in the count until he dies. According to the Salt Lake Tribune

Inactive Mormons who rarely, if ever, attend church are included in all membership numbers (“Church Won’t Give up on ‘Lost Members’,” Salt Lake Tribune, Oct. 17, 2005).

Such people will not be taken off the rolls until the member would have reached the age of 110. . . . That means some of the people included in the worldwide tally of 12 million members are really dead, with life expectancy in the United States at about 78 years old . . . (Ibid., Oct. 17, 2005).

Thus we see that the 12.5 million number is quite exaggerated.

Finding Inactive Members

The church also asks members to volunteer as “member locaters.” The Salt Lake Tribune reported:

To do so, the LDS Church has set up three “member locater” offices in Salt Lake City, American Fork and St. George that search for lost Mormons in the United States and Canada. Analysts search for the names and numbers of relatives through church records or online public access databases, [LDS Church general authority Merrill] Bateman said.

Those leads are then passed on to volunteer missionaries, mostly elderly couples, who serve as member locaters (Salt Lake Tribune, Oct. 17, 2005).

This explains why many inactive Mormons are surprised and upset when someone from the LDS Church seems to contact them out of the blue. Some inactive members don’t want to be bothered. Others have already joined another church and had assumed their LDS membership had been terminated long ago.

The LDS Church never releases the number of people who have resigned or been excommunicated.

Close-up of Chile Membership

The problems of church growth were further illuminated in an article in the Salt Lake Tribune discussing the LDS Church presence in Chile. Reporter Peggy Stack explained the problems of divorce and remarriage in Chile. Many couples do not go through a formal marriage, thus making it easier to separate if the need arises. Those that have been married in the Catholic Church and decide to split up, it is easier to separate if the need arises. Those that have been married in the Catholic Church and decide to split up often do not go through the process of getting the marriage annulled. Ms. Stack reported:

In this environment, the LDS Church quietly baptized unmarried partners, especially those who had been together for a long while or who had children together. But it drew the line at having those marriages “sealed for time and all eternity” in a temple . . . .

The marriage dilemma is a headache for missionaries and sometimes causes would-be converts to lose interest.

But it is only one of several reasons members and/or potential members fall away. . . .

In addition, members who want to go to the temple abstain from coffee, tobacco and alcohol, which can be tough in Chile, a major exporter of wine.

By far the greatest challenge, though, is tithing. . . . That keeps them out of the temple and away from full participation.

The importance of paying tithing became a kind of mantra during LDS Church President Gordon B. Hinckley’s visit repeated by everyone in leadership (“Building Faith,” Salt Lake Tribune, March 31, 2005).

The article goes on to state that although there are 535,000 people on the LDS membership rolls in Chile, only 120,000 identified themselves as Mormons in the 2002 Chilean census. An even greater disparity is seen when comparing the 535,000 number with the average of 57,000 people said to attend sacrament meetings.

If this same type of problem is present in other Latin American countries, the claim that there are 4.5 million members in those countries becomes very suspect.

For further discussion of the problems in past Mormon statistics, see http://www.mormoninformation.com/stats.htm.

Update on Lawsuit

In the June 2005 Salt Lake City Messenger we announced our lawsuit against Allen Wyatt, Scott Gordon and FAIR (Foundation for Apologetic Information & Research) for trademark infringement. That lawsuit is still in process and the trial has been scheduled for February of 2007.

Excerpts From Emails and Letters

Aug. 2005 — I have been a member of the LDS CHURCH for 45 yrs, currently a High Priest, and served in the Bishopic, and as a Stake High Council. I have studied the mormon doctrine extensively. One thing that I have learned about us Mormons is “we don’t know the true history of the church”. Why? Because it is not faith promoting.

Sept. 2005 — you should probably be grateful that the lds church does not waste their earthly time debunking the beliefs of others. if they didn’t have a tolerant, charitable attitude—as christ taught—they have the resources to squash you. how about spending your life on something positive?

Sept. 2005 — I am really really unhappy after being a member of the LDS church for nearly 8 years. I became a member when I married my dear husband, who is a devout LDS member . . . After experiencing the LDS church for nearly 8 years, I believe it is one of control, superstition, fear, and guilt-inducing.
**Sept. 2005** — you guys obviously don’t know too much about the LDS church . . . I took a look at your site and read part of your book, you guys should do some research or go try something before you talk bad about it.

**Sept. 2005** — It was with your help I resigned from the Mormon church in 1989. It was one of the best things I ever did.

**Oct. 2005** — you are a charlatan, you only want money

**Oct. 2005** — I married a Mormon 7 yrs. ago. I was then and still am a born-again Christian. I had no idea how far apart our belief systems are. It has been a struggle to know how to live with a pride-filled “high priest” and be a witness to the love of Christ — the real Christ.

**Nov. 2005** — I know that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the true church of God. . . . Joseph Smith is a true prophet of God.

**Nov. 2005** — I can’t put into words the sense of freedom I have gained since leaving the LDS church. After reading many of your publications, I’m amazed at how I allowed myself to be deceived for so long. My brother is currently reading *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality*, I hope he comes to his senses also. Thank you both so much!

**Nov. 2005** — As a convert to the LDS church, I want to thank you. . . . From a logical standpoint, you have bolstered my beliefs in the LDS church and especially that of Joseph Smith.

**Dec. 2005** — I am a convert of 4 years, baptized at age 19, and I can’t thank you enough for all the help and resources your site provided me in my decision to resign from the LDS church. . . . This Sunday I am going to tell my bishop that I am resigning as an act of faith in Jesus Christ.

**Dec. 2005** — Earlier this week, I withdrew my membership from the Mormon church. Your insightful analysis and articulate commentary as to the theological inconsistencies of Mormon doctrine relative to the Christian perspective contributed significantly towards my eventual decision, and for this I thank you.

**Dec. 2005** — You are basing a lot of your information on half truths then misleading people on false accusations. . . . I hope that you are proud of the garbage that you are spreading.

**Dec. 2005** — I am an inactive LDS member . . . I have many questions about the real truths behind mormonism . . . I am on a journey of my own to find the truth.

**Dec. 2005** — As an ex-Mormon who worships the real Jesus of the Bible, I am so grateful for God opening my eyes to the falsehood of Mormonism.

**Jan. 2006** — I have been reading more and more on your website and am impressed with how accurate you stay to things . . . The comparison you give of mormons teachings and Christian teachings were really eye opening . . .

**Jan. 2006** — I completley disagree with you on everything your a liar and you deceive the hearts of men. if your so sure that mormonism is a frod why do you have to put us down publicly.

**Jan. 2006** — I am 34 years old and have been a member of the LDS church till this past month. I sent in my letter of resignation along with all of my family. I was introduced to the truth information you have that explains the churches actual foundation . . .

**Feb. 2006** — I recently removed my name from the LDS records partly because of your’s and the recovery from mormonism websites. . . . I beleive in what you are doing, and there are more of us searching for the truth. Thanks.

**Feb. 2006** — As missionary I felt that your tactics of only disparaging the beliefs of another are pretty useless. The fact of the matter is that the Questions that you raise are not winning you converts, but raising interest in the LDS faith.

**Feb. 2006** — I have yet to find one single piece of evidence that contradicts my belief that Joseph smith was a true prophet.

**Feb. 2006** — My wife and I decided to leave the church back in November and so we are still going through the transition, explaining things to our families, etc. I’m sure you understand how difficult that can be when your family has been strong in the LDS church for generations. Your website has been helpful in learning about some of the things the LDS church has tried to hide. Thank you.

**Feb. 2006** — Why do you seek to destroy the church of god? . . . The church is growing faster that any other church in the world.

**Mar. 2006** — It is difficult to even read (so I stopped) the presented diatribe . . . Happy in the knowledge that you are in the company of a lot of other perpetrators of false doctrine . . . you will convert no one of any substance.

**Mar. 2006** — I am an 18 year old girl who, just in the past three weeks has left my Mormon beliefs. I was a convert, a “golden investigator”, and I held so much promise for the Church. I was finally saved from the entwining deceit of the Mormon “gospel” . . .

**Mar. 2006** — I have been a Bishop three times, in several stake Presidencies and in about every other position in the Church at the Ward and Stake levels. Until now I have never taken the time to actually research any of the origins of the Church. I have been amazed and more at what I am finding. I appreciate what you all must have gone thru over the years—especially in SLC.

**April 2006** — Over the past 28 years you have earned my respect and gratitude for your painstaking and accurate research which has continuously confronted Mormonism with its greatest falsehoods and embarrassing contradictions. The hardest part in combating this behemoth of certitude (that Mormonism has become) depends upon is getting the horse to the trough — and attempting to get the horse to take a sip or two from the water! As a former member of “the Church” I know how great the resistance is against reading printed material that is “critical” of “the truth.” The “Church” does a very efficient job of keeping its membership from the matter is that the Questions that you raise are not winning you converts, but raising interest in the LDS faith.

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For Additional Reading on Joseph Smith

- **The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri**
  by Stephen C. LeSueur
  $30.00

- **An Intimate Chronicle: Journals of William Clayton**
  Edited by George D. Smith
  $16.00

- **Early Mormon Documents Volume 2**
  Edited by Dan Vogel
  $40.00

- **Inventing Mormonism**
  by H. Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters
  $31.50

- **Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling**
  A Cultural Biography of Mormonism’s Founder
  by Richard Bushman
  $31.50

- **Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet**
  by Dan Vogel
  $36.00

- **In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith**
  by Todd Compton
  $38.00

- **Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith**
  by Linda King Newell & Valeen Tippett's Avery
  $19.00

- **Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power**
  by D. Michael Quinn
  $27.00

- **Mormon Polygamy: A History**
  by Richard Van Wagoner
  $13.50

- **Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?**
  by Jerald & Sandra Tanner
  $18.00

- **Early Mormon Documents Volume 3**
  Edited by Dan Vogel
  $40.00

- **Joseph & Joseph: Presidential Politics and the Assassination of the First Mormon Prophet**
  by Robert S. Wicks and Fred R. Foister
  $22.50

- **Early Mormon Documents Volume 4**
  Edited by Dan Vogel
  $40.00

- **Mormon Polygamy: A History**
  by Richard Van Wagoner
  $13.50

- **One Nation Under Gods: A History of the Mormon Church**
  by Richard Abanes
  $21.50

- **No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith**
  by Fawn M. Brodie
  $16.00

- **Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess**
  by Richard Van Wagoner
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by Wesley P. Walters - Includes information on Smith’s 1826 and 1830 Trials

Senate Document 189 [February 15, 1841]
“Testimony given before the judge of the fifth judicial circuit of the State of Missouri,
on the trial of Joseph Smith, Jr., and others, for high treason and other crimes against the state.”

Nauvoo Expositor [June 7, 1844]
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UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY
PO BOX 1884
SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84110
Some years ago a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints gave us the following outline. (Several variants of this have been circulated through the years but all seem to contain the same major points.)

While no author is given on this copy, we have another copy that was distributed in 1976 at the St. George, Utah, LDS Temple Visitor’s Center that bears the name of Hugh Nibley. We have been told that Nibley used to hand out copies of this paper in some of his classes at Brigham Young University.

Since this challenge has once again been sent to us for our comments, we present the following critique.

The original “Challenge” text appears in bold type, with our comments following in regular type.

The Challenge the Book of Mormon Makes to the World

If one scoffs at the missionary’s explanation of the Book of Mormon, he is in so many words claiming it to be false: That it is a deceiving fraud formulated through the efforts and talents of a common man. What is produced by one man can always be duplicated by another. The challenge that the Book of Mormon makes to the world is that of duplication. Because the book complies with every one of the following conditions, in order to produce a similar record, one must comply with the same conditions.

Here is the challenge: Can you accept it?

1. Write a history of ancient Tibet covering a period from 600 B.C. to 450 A.D. Why ancient Tibet? Because you know no more about Tibet than Joseph Smith (or anyone else) knew about ancient America.

Ancient American ruins were already known in Joseph Smith’s day. In the early 1800’s there was high interest in the American Indian culture and artifacts resulting in many books and newspaper articles. Also, there were a number of books printed before the Book of Mormon discussing the origin of the American Indians specifically claiming that they descended from Israel—the very idea put forward in the Book of Mormon.

In 1652 Menasseh Ben Israel’s Hope of Israel was published in England. This Jewish rabbi was a firm believer that remnants of the ten tribes of Israel had been discovered in the Americas (Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon, by Dan Vogel, 1986, p. 117, www.signaturebookslibrary.org/indian/preface.htm).

In 1775 James Adair published The History of the American Indians. He theorized that there were twenty-three parallels between Indian and Jewish customs. For example, he claimed the Indians spoke a corrupt form of Hebrew, honored the Jewish Sabbath, performed circumcision, and offered animal sacrifice. He discussed various theories explaining Indian origins, problems of transoceanic crossing, and the theory that the mound builders were a white group more advanced than the Indians (Indian Origins, page 105).

A popular book of Smith’s day was View of the Hebrews, by Rev. Ethan Smith, printed in 1823, with a second edition in 1825.

LDS General Authority B. H. Roberts wrote extensively about the parallels between View of the Hebrews and the Book of Mormon (see Studies of the Book of Mormon).
Rev. Robert Hullinger gave the following summary of B. H. Roberts’s parallels:

According to Roberts’s later studies, some features of View of the Hebrews are paralleled in the Book of Mormon. (1) Indians buried a book they could no longer read. (2) A Mr. Merrick found some dark yellow parchment leaves in “Indian Hill.” (3) Native Americans had inspired prophets and charismatic gifts, as well as (4) their own kind of Urim and Thummim and breastplate. (5) Ethan Smith produced evidence to show that ancient Mexican Indians were no strangers to Egyptian hieroglyphics. (6) An overthrown civilization in America is to be seen from its ruined monuments and forts and mounds. The barbarous tribes—barbarous because they had lost the civilized arts—greeting the Europeans were descendants of the lost civilization. (7) Chapter one of View of the Hebrews is a thirty-two page account of the historical destruction of Jerusalem. (8) There are many references to Israel’s scattering and being “gathered” in the last days. (9) Isaiah is quoted for twenty chapters to demonstrate the restoration of Israel. In Isaiah 18 a request is made to save Israel in America. (10) The United States is asked to evangelize the native Americans. (11) Ethan Smith cited Humboldt’s New Spain to show the characteristics of Central American civilization; the same are in the Book of Mormon. (12) The legends of Quetzacoatl, the Mexican messiah, are paralleled in the Book of Mormon by Christ’s appearing in the western hemisphere. . . . Roberts came to recognize that, at least in the case of Ethan Smith’s book, such works were widely available (Joseph Smith’s Response to Skepticism, by Robert N. Hullinger, Signature, 1992, pp. 183-184).

For more information the similarities between the Book of Mormon and View of the Hebrews, see Joseph Smith and the Origins of the Book of Mormon, by David Persuitte.

2. You are 23 years of age.

Why this age would be necessary is unclear. Many young people have accomplished things that seem beyond their years. Alexander the Great led an army at age 18 and Mozart was composing music by the age of 6. In his late teens Joseph Smith showed signs of being a creative and charismatic leader, as evidenced by his leadership in various money-digging schemes. According to his mother, Lucy Smith, he was a creative storyteller as well:

During our evening conversations, Joseph would occasionally give us some of the most amusing recitals that could be imagined. He would describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent, their dress, mode of travelling, and the animals upon which they rode; their cities, their buildings, with every particular; their mode of warfare; and also their religious worship. This he would do with as much ease, seemingly, as if he had spent his whole life with them (Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith, by Lucy Smith, 1853, p. 85; reprinted under the title Joseph Smith's History by His Mother).

3. You have had no more than three years of formal school education, and have spent your life in backwoods farming communities.

Simply because Smith did not spend a number of years in a formal school setting does not mean that he was uneducated. He even enrolled in school when he was 20. Further instruction could have come from Smith’s father, who had been a school teacher and subscribed to the local newspaper (Inventing Mormonism, by Marquardt and Walters, pp. 43-45).

Below is a sample of Smith’s handwriting in 1832 which shows that he had been instructed in writing and penmanship.

Personal Writings of Joseph Smith, 2002, page 16

Author Dan Vogel observed:

Certainly, Smith had less schooling than his wife, but he managed to write reasonably well. After examining several letters from the early period of Smith’s life (1831-32), historian Dale Morgan concluded that they exhibit “a flair for words, a measure of eloquence, and a sufficient degree of schooling” (Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet, by Dan Vogel, 2004, Signature Books, p. 119).
Similar claims of no education have been made for Muhammad. He had limited schooling, received visions, started a new religion and produced the Koran, a book considered scripture by over a billion people. (For more comparisons, see Joseph Smith & Muhammad, by Eric Johnson.)

Another similar claim has been made for Ellen White (1827-1915), of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which has grown to over 14 million members in less time than it has taken the LDS Church to reach 12 million. One Seventh-day Adventist writer gave the following summary of White’s life:

One morning four women gathered in a humble home in New England for their regular season of earnest prayer. After the three older women had prayed, Ellen Harmon, a shy girl of eighteen, began to pray. Suddenly she stopped praying and after a few moments of silence the women turned to Ellen and noticed that her eyes were wide open. . . . And Ellen told them that she must have been in a vision, but it seemed like she was right there. . . . Later, Ellen received another vision and this time the Lord asked that she tell her visions to the people.

A meeting was arranged for in Portland, Maine. About 200 people gathered to hear this young woman tell her vision. . . . She married James White a year after her first vision and she lived 70 more years, dying at the ripe old age of 87. During her lifetime she had more than 2,200 visions from the Lord. . . .

Though Ellen White had less than four years of formal education, she was instructed by the Lord to write and give counsel to the Church. If we had one copy of each book she has written placed one upon another, they would make a stack of books over seven feet high. She has, no doubt, written more than any modern writer. . . . The same God who gave her the vision, has given her the gift of inspired writing (The Spirit of Prophecy—Modern Prophets: Are They of God?, by L. E. Tucker, California, nd—possibly 1960’s).

Such claims do not prove that Muhammad, Ellen White or Joseph Smith truly received communication from God. But they do illustrate that Joseph Smith is not the only one from humble beginnings to claim the role of a prophet with millions of followers.

4. Your history must be written on the basis of what you now know. There was no library that held information for Joseph Smith. You must use none. There is to be no research of any kind.

Contrary to the above statement, the New England area abounded in literature speculating on the origin of the American Indian. In Smith’s neighborhood there was a library, bookstore and newspapers.

Both Palmyra and Manchester had a lending library. Even though there is no evidence that Joseph Smith borrowed from the Manchester library, he could have used the Palmyra library. There were also plenty of other sources for information. Robert Paul, writing for the BYU Studies, observed:

Moreover, if Joseph had wished to explore the literary materials of the day, it would have been unnecessary to travel the five miles to Manchester when in Palmyra, only two miles distant, there were several bookstores and at least one library, the contents of which he would have been free to peruse. . . . As early as 1819, and occasionally thereafter, book auctions were held in Palmyra. . . . The availability of bookstores and libraries in Palmyra, together with the fact that the Smith family regularly obtained the Palmyra Register and later the Wayne Sentinel from the newspaper office which doubled as a bookstore, would have mitigated the need to travel nearly three times the distance to acquire literary materials from the Manchester area (BYU Studies, Summer 1982, p. 340).

Robert Hullinger commented on the popularity of View of the Hebrews:

View of the Hebrews circulated widely in New York. It was also condensed in Josiah Priest’s The Wonders of Nature and Providence, one of the more widely circulated books of the Manchester rental library in 1827 (Joseph Smith’s Response to Skepticism, p. 186).

The local newspapers occasionally ran stories about the Indians. The Palmyra Register for May 26, 1819, reported that one writer

believes (and we think with good reason) that this country was once inhabited by a race of people, at least, partially civilized, & that this race has been exterminated by the forefathers of the present and late tribes of Indians in this country (Palmyra Register, May 26, 1819).

Furthermore, the following was published in the Smith’s local newspaper, the Wayne Sentinel, in 1825:

Those who are most conversant with the public and private economy of the Indians, are strongly of opinion that they are the lineal descendants of the Israelites, and my own researches go far to confirm me in the same belief (Wayne Sentinel, October 11, 1825).

The Book of Mormon parallels the views of Smith’s day; it does not parallel archaeologists’ findings today. This is one of the areas which demonstrate that the Book of Mormon was written in the 1820’s, not 600 B.C. to 421 A.D.
5. Your history must be 531 pages and over 300,000 words in length.

There are a number of books of equal or greater length claiming to come from God. Examples are the Koran, A Course in Miracles, Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ, Oahspe, the prophecies of Anna Katharina Emmerick and the writings of Ellen G. White. These all claim to come from God.

Another group claiming divine instruction and visions were the Shakers. They published a number of pamphlets and books written in a scriptural style.

One of their books is A Holy, Sacred and Divine Roll and Book; From the Lord God of Heaven, to the Inhabitants of Earth. More than sixty individuals gave testimony to the “Sacred Roll and Book.” Although not all of them mention angels appearing, some of them tell of many angels visiting them—one woman told of eight different visions. On page 304 of this book we find the testimony of eight witnesses. They claim that they saw an angel and the “Roll and Book”:

We, the undersigned, hereby testify, that we saw the holy Angel standing upon the house-top, as mentioned in the foregoing declaration, holding the Roll and Book.


Joseph Smith only had three witnesses who claimed to have seen an angel. The Shakers, however, had a large number of witnesses who claimed they saw angels and the Roll and Book. There are over a hundred pages of testimony from “Living Witnesses.”

(For more on the Shakers, see www.passtheword.org/SHAKER-MANUSCRIPTS/index.html)

Of particular interest is that Martin Harris, one of the Book of Mormon witnesses, also joined the Shakers. He evidently had a testimony of the Shaker book as well as for the Book of Mormon (see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?, p. 63).

6. Other than a few grammatical corrections, you must have no changes in the text. The first edition as you dictate it to your secretary must stand forever.

Besides the approximately 4,000 grammatical and spelling changes that have been made in the Book of Mormon, there have been both historical changes and doctrinal changes.

In two places the name of a king has been changed from Benjamin to Mosiah. In the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon we read as follows:

... king Benjamin had a gift from God, whereby he could interpret such engravings ... (Book of Mormon, 1830 edition, page 200)

In modern editions of the Book of Mormon this verse has been changed to read:

... king Mosiah had a gift from God, whereby he could interpret such engravings ... (Book of Mormon, 1981 ed., Mosiah 21:28)

The same change was made in Ether:

... for this cause did king Benjamin keep them ... (Book of Mormon, 1830 edition, page 546)

In the 1981 edition, Ether 4:1, we read:

... for this cause did king Mosiah keep them ... .

According to chronology found in the Book of Mormon, king Benjamin should have been dead at this time; therefore, the name was changed to his successor, Mosiah.

(For more information on changes, see our web site www.utlm.org/topicalindexa.htm#Changes)

Four important doctrinal changes relating to the godhead were made in the second edition of the Book of Mormon. The original Book of Mormon clearly taught that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost were one God. However, through the years Joseph Smith’s concept of God evolved into three Gods (see chapter 7 of our book The Changing World of Mormonism, online at utlm.org).

One of the most significant changes was made in 1 Nephi 13:40. In the 1830 edition it was stated that the very purpose of the Nephite records was to make known that Christ is the Eternal Father:

These last records, ... shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is the Eternal Father and the Savior of the world. ... (Book of Mormon, 1830 ed., p. 32).

In the current edition three words have been interpolated:

These last records, ... shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world. ... (1 Nephi 13:40)

A second important change was made in 1 Nephi 11:18; this is on page 25 of the 1830 edition. In the first edition it read:
Behold, the virgin which thou seest, is the mother of God, after the manner of the flesh.

In modern editions it has been changed to read:

Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh.

Notice that the words “the Son of” have been inserted in the middle of the sentence. Verse 21 of the same chapter originally read:

And the angel said unto me, behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Eternal Father!

It was changed to read:

And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father!

Verse 32 of the same chapter, which is on page 26 of the original edition, was also changed. In the 1830 edition it read:

. . . the Everlasting God, was judged of the world; and I saw and bear record.

It was changed to read:

. . . the Son of the everlasting God was judged of the world: and I saw and bear record.

While most of the changes in the Book of Mormon were done by Joseph Smith in the 1837 edition, a number of changes were made as recently as 1981. (See www.utlm.org/onlinebooks/3913intro.htm#Major)

7. This record is to contain the history of two distinct and separate nations, along with histories of different contemporary nations or groups of people.

This point assumes that Smith correctly identified the different groups. Strangely missing is any reference to the Maya. Surely the Book of Mormon people would have encountered them.

To date, none of the Book of Mormon people groups have been identified through independent archaeological research. The Introduction to the Book of Mormon declares that

After thousands of years, all were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are the principal ancestors of the American Indians.

Thus one would assume that it would be easy to identify descendants of the Lamanites. Yet DNA shows that the “principal ancestors” of the American Indians were Asians.

Many writers have produced complicated novels dealing with various fictional groups of people. Just look at the writings of J. R. R. Tolkien (www.tolkiensociety.org).

8. You must describe their religious, economic, political, and social cultures and institutions. Cover every phase of their society, including the names of their coins.

The Book of Mormon does not match any culture here in the Americas. It fails totally in the areas of religion, economics, politics and social culture, including their “coins.”

While the Book of Mormon does not use the term “coins” it is used in the heading of Alma, chapter 11, which describes the Nephite monetary system: “Nephite coinage set forth . . .” The chapter goes on to state:

And the judge received for his wages according to his time—a senine of gold for a day, or a senum of silver, which is equal to a senine of gold; and this is according to the law which was given. Now these are the names of the different pieces of their gold, and of their silver, according to their value (Alma 11: 3-4).

However, when Europeans landed on the New England coast they did not find the American Indians using gold or silver as money. The first medium of exchange seems to have been shell beads, called Wampum (www.mohicanpress.com/mo08017.html). Later Indians exchanged such items as animal furs for the foreigner’s knives, axes, and other utensils (http://countrystudies.us/united-states/history-9.htm).

Further south, the Maya did not value gold as part of their trade system. Instead, they traded such items as salt, cacao, quetzal feathers, obsidian, colored shells and jade (The Maya, by Michael D. Coe, 2005, seventh edition, p. 206).

Whether or not the Book of Mormon refers to coins or measurements of metals, there is no evidence that gold and silver formed the basis of Native American commerce.

9. Change your style of writing many times. Many ancient authors contributed to the Book of Mormon, each with his own style.

Much of the book has the same long, rambling type of narrative one would expect from one author. Those instances of differences could be accounted for by the fact the book plagiarizes extensively from the various authors of the books of the Bible.

Joseph copied sections from Isaiah, Matthew, Luke, Paul’s letters, etc. For example, in Galatians 5:1 Paul wrote “stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.” This same phrase appears in the Book of Mormon, prior to the time of Christ. Alma 58:40 reads “stand fast in that liberty wherewith God has made them free.”
For more examples see our book *Joseph Smith’s Plagiarism of the Bible*.

10. Weave into your history the religion of Jesus Christ and the pattern of Christian living.

Instead of being a proof of divine inspiration, this is evidence that the book is a modern work. The Old Testament has no mention of Jesus Christ by name, or the Christian concept of baptism. Yet these are an integral part of the Nephite religion during the period before Christ. For instance, in approximately 550 B.C. God instructs the Nephites “repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my Beloved Son” (2 Nephi 31:11).

Also, the Book of Mormon repeatedly borrows phrases from the New Testament (King James Version). The problem is that these are found throughout the Book of Mormon prior to Christ’s birth and prior to the writing of the New Testament. Below are three examples of how Smith wove together parts of the Bible to make his new scriptures. The parallel biblical phrases are in brackets. In Alma 5:48 (about 83 B.C.) we read:

> . . . I know that Jesus Christ [John 1:17] shall come, yea, the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father [John 1:14], full of grace, and mercy, and truth [John 1:14]. And behold, it is he that cometh to take away the sins of the world [John 1:29], yea, the sins of every man who steadfastly believeth on his name [John 1:12].

Supposedly written about 550 B.C., Jacob declared:

> And he commandeth all men that they must repent [Acts 17:30], and be baptized in his name [Acts 19:5], having perfect faith in the Holy One of Israel [Isaiah 43:3], or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God [Acts 8:12]. (2 Nephi 9:23)

Compare the following Book of Mormon passage with the Bible:

Mosiah 5:15 [about 121 B.C.] Therefore, I would that ye should be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works, that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal you his, . . .

1 Corinthians 15: 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoving, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

11. You must claim that your smooth narrative is not fiction with moral value, but true and sacred history.

The Book of Mormon may have a complicated story line but it lacks a “smooth narrative.” Dan Vogel observed:

The book Joseph dictated abounds with examples of his poor grammar and Yankee dialect as well as his penchant for digression, redundancy, and wordiness. Rarely are his characters’ inner moral conflicts reflected. Most often we encounter flat, uncomplicated, two-dimensional heroes and villains. Generally the plots are simple and frequently improbable (*Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet*, p. 119).

There are a number of religious books claiming to be “sacred history.” Many imitation gospels were written after the New Testament claiming to have been penned years earlier by various apostles (see http://wesley.nnu.edu/biblical_studies/noncanon/writings.htm).

12. You must include in your book fifty-four chapters dealing with wars, twenty-one historical chapters, fifty-five chapters on visions and prophecies. Remember, when you begin to write visions and prophecies, you must have your record agree meticulously with the Bible. You must write seventy-one chapters on doctrine and exhortation, and you must check every statement with the scriptures or you will be proven a fraud. You must write twenty-one chapters on the ministry of Christ, and every thing you claim he said and every testimony you write in your book about Him must agree absolutely with the New Testament.

The author of this challenge seemed to be unaware of the fact that the Book of Mormon was not divided into its current chapters and verses until 1879. The original chapters were much longer, resulting in fewer chapter numbers. Regardless of the number of chapters, it is sufficient to show that others have written books claiming to come from God that are equally, if not more, complex than the Book of Mormon.

In fact, there are people on the Internet claiming to have translated other portions of the gold plates. One man claims to have the lost book of Lehi, (http://losttruthfound.com). Another person claims to have restored the lost book of Zelph (www.bookofzelph.com). And yet another person claims to have the sealed portion of the plates (www.absalom.com/mormon/mohonri/contents.html).

As for including chapters on the ministry of Christ, Smith plagiarized many portions of the gospels, including the Sermon on the Mount from the book of Matthew with only slight variations (3 Nephi 12).
Also, by Smith’s own admission he had sufficient exposure to Christianity to write the religious material in the Book of Mormon. According to Joseph Smith’s 1832 history, he had studied the Bible since he was 12 and had already determined that all churches were in error prior to his first vision:

At about the age of twelve years my mind become seriously imprest [p.1] with regard to the all important concerns for the welfare of my immortal Soul which led me to searching the scriptures believing as I was taught, that they contained the word of God thus applying myself to them and my intimate acquaintance with those of different denominations led me to marvel exceedingly for I discovered that <they did not adorn> instead of adorning their profession by a holy walk and Godly conversation agreeable to what I found contained in that sacred depository [the Bible] this was a grief to my Soul thus from the age of twelve years to fifteen I pondered many things in my heart concerning the sittuation of the world of mankind the contentions and divisions the wic[ked]ness and abominations and the darkness which pervaded the minds of mankind my mind become exceedingly distressed for I became convicted of my sins and by searching the scriptures I found that mankind did not come unto the Lord but that they had apostatised from the true and liveing faith and there was no society or denomination that built upon the gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the new testament (Personal Writings of Joseph Smith, edited by Dean Jessee, Deseret Book, 2002, pp. 10-11; photo on page 2 of this newsletter).

As for “checking every statement with the scriptures” the Book of Mormon contradicts the Bible on a number of points. It does not “agree meticulously with the Bible.” For example, the Bible plainly states that the gospel, with its inclusion of Gentiles, was not fully revealed until after Christ’s death. In Ephesians 3:3-7 Paul writes:

by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister. (See also Col. 1:26; 1 Peter 1: 1-12; Romans 16:25-26)

However, the Book of Mormon maintains that the knowledge of Gentile inclusion existed in 545 B.C. In 2 Nephi 26:12 we read:

And as I spake concerning the convincing of the Jews, that Jesus in the very Christ, it must needs be that the Gentiles be convinced also that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God;

And in 2 Nephi 30:2 we read:

For behold, I say unto you that as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord; and as many of the Jews as will not repent shall be cast off . . .

For other examples of contradictions, see (www.utlm.org/onlineresources/bibleandbomcontradictions.htm) and (www.irr.org/mit/bombible.html).

13. Many of the facts, claims, ideas, and statements given as absolute truth in your writing must be entirely inconsistent with the prevailing beliefs of the world. Some of these worldly beliefs must be the direct opposite of your claims.

If the Book of Mormon’s claims contradict anything, it is the current scientific views of American Indian origins, rather than the views of Joseph Smith’s time. Nevertheless, it is not clear why such a contradiction with “prevailing beliefs of the world” would necessarily lend proof to the divine authenticity of any claim, as required in the above challenge. The fact that some Book of Mormon claims contradicts other widely accepted claims could be evidence for Joseph Smith’s own imaginative, yet inaccurate, thoughts.

When we examine the literature of Smith’s day we find that books such as View of the Hebrews argued that the American Indians were descended from the lost tribes of Israel. A similar concept is found in the Book of Mormon, where the people are descended from Israel. However, scientists today believe, and DNA confirms, the Indians descended from Asians, not Israelites. (See Quest for the Gold Plates by Stan Larson, Losing a Lost Tribe by Simon Southerton.)

14. Included in your narrations will be authentic modes of travel; whether or not those ancient people used fire; description of their clothing, crops, mourning customs, and types of government. You must invent about 280 new names that will stand up under scrutiny through the years as to their proper application and derivation.

The Book of Mormon does not describe the “authentic modes of travel.” When Lehi and his family landed in the New World they supposedly found “the cow and the ox, and the ass and the horse” wandering in the wilderness, animals supposedly brought by the Jaredites years before (see 1 Nephi 18:25; Ether 6:4; Ether 9:17-19). In Alma 18:9-12 we read of the king’s “horses and chariots.” In 3 Nephi 3:22 we read of the Nephites “horses, and their chariots, and their cattle, and . . . their grain.” Alma 1:29 specifies that they had “silk and fine-twined linen.” Yet there is no archaeological evidence for these things prior to the arrival of the Europeans in the Americas.
Evidently Joseph Smith thought a group of people from the Old World could simply bring their way of life, animals and seeds with them and create the same lifestyle in the New World. For instance, Mosiah 9:9 tells that the people planted “wheat.” However, archaeologists depict a very different lifestyle for the region most favored by LDS scholars as the Book of Mormon lands. Michael Coe, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at Yale University, describes the diet of the Maya:

While there are profound differences between the subsistence base of the lowlands and that of the highlands, the ancient foursome of *maize, beans, chile peppers, and squash* formed then, as it still does, the basis of the Mesoamerican diet. . . . (*The Maya*, p. 13)

The Book of Mormon also claims that cattle, sheep, swine and goats were “useful for the food of man” (Ether 9:18). However, the animals most hunted in Mesoamerica were the deer, cottontail and dog (*Mexico: From the Olmecs to the Aztecs*, by Michael D. Coe and Rex Koontz, 2002, p. 89).

Metallurgy is another problematic claim of the Book of Mormon. It refers to steel swords produced in the New World (2 Nephi 5:14-15; Ether 7:9). It states also that the people worked with both iron and gold. Stan Larson observed:

William J. Hamblin, professor of history at BYU, criticized those who see “large-scale metal ‘industries’” among Book of Mormon peoples, affirming that the text “claims only that certain metals were known to the Nephites.” However, the Book of Mormon attributes advanced metallurgical skills to both Jaredites and Nephites. Glenna Nielsen Grimm said that “sophisticated metallurgical processes were engaged in that involved the mining and refining of both ferrous [i.e., iron] and non-ferrous ores.” Consider the impressive description of metallurgical technology during the time of Kish, a Jaredite king about 1500 B.C.:

And they did work in all manner of ore, and they did make gold, and silver, and iron, and brass, and all manner of metals; and they did dig it out of the earth; wherefore, they did cast up mighty heaps of earth to get ore, of gold, and of silver, and of iron, and of copper. And they did work all manner of fine work (Ether 10:23).

One must keep in mind the important distinction between mere metalworking and true metallurgy. Metalworking means the cold hammering and shaping of metal, while metallurgy requires temperatures of 700° to 800° C and involves some or all of the following technological processes: smelting, casting, gilding, annealing, soldering, and alloying. The Book of Mormon does specify the practice of smelting among the Jaredites, for Ether explained that Shule “did molten out of the hill, and made swords out of steel” (Ether 7:9).

Raymond Matheny described the metallurgical technology needed to produce iron objects:

A ferrous industry is a whole system of doing something. It’s just not an esoteric process that a few people are involved in, but ferrous industry—that means mining iron ores and then processing these ores and casting these ores into irons and then making steels and so forth—this is a process that’s very complicated. . . . In other words, society would have to be organized at a certain level before ferrous industry would be feasible.

The technology of mining is problematical for the Book of Mormon. Where do you find iron ores in sufficient quantity to create an industry? . . . No evidence has been found in the New World for a ferrous metallurgical industry dating to pre-Columbian times. And so this is a king-size kind of problem, it seems to me, for so-called Book of Mormon archaeology. This evidence is absent.

Matheny also pointed out that the extraction of iron from ore needs high temperatures and various fluxing substances which produce slag, which in turn become indestructible rock forms. In the 1920’s B. H. Roberts summarized the situation, saying that “there is nothing on which the later investigators of our American antiquities are more unanimously agreed upon than the matter of the absence of the knowledge of, and hence the non-use of, iron or steel among the natives of America” (*Quest for the Gold Plates*, Stan Larson, pp. 195-196). Michael Coe gives further background on items used by the Maya:

From the time of their initial contact with the Maya, the Spaniards learned to their bitter disappointment that there were no sources of gold and silver in the Maya lowlands, and the foreign colonizers soon came to look upon the region as a hardship post. Yet the native inhabitants, to whom the yellow metal was of little value and in fact unknown until about AD 800, had abundant resources which were of far greater importance to them in their daily life, in their rituals, and in their trade. . . .

As archaeologist Robert Cobean has noted, obsidian—a natural volcanic glass—was to ancient Mesoamerica what steel is to modern civilization. It was turned into knives, lance and dart points, prismatic blades for woodworking and shaving, and a host of other tools. . . .

The Maya elite had their special needs, above all jade, quetzal feathers, and marine shells (*The Maya*, pp. 22-23). Oddly, the Book of Mormon never mentions these items that were so important in Mesoamerica.

In the 1996 statement from the Smithsonian Institution we read:
One of the main lines of evidence supporting the scientific finding that contacts with Old World civilizations, if indeed they occurred at all, were of very little significance for the development of American Indian civilizations, is the fact that none of the principal Old World domesticated food plants or animals (except the dog) occurred in the New World in pre-Columbian times. American Indians had no wheat, barley oats, millet, rice, cattle, pigs, chickens, horses, donkeys, camels before 1492. (Camels and horses were in the Americas, along with the bison, mammoth, and mastodon, but all these animals became extinct around 10,000 B.C. at the time when the early big game hunters spread across the Americas.)

Iron, steel, glass, and silk were not used in the New World before 1492 (except for occasional use of unsmelted meteoric iron). Native copper was worked in various locations in pre-Columbian times, but true metallurgy was limited to southern Mexico and the Andean region, where its occurrence in late prehistoric times involved gold, silver, copper, and their alloys, but not iron (www.utlm.org/onlineresources/smithsonianletter.htm) and (www_answeringlds_org/index.html?artSmithsonian.html).

As for the topic of authentic names, almost half of the Book of Mormon names are from the Bible, while many others are variations of biblical names. “Lehi” is a Hebrew place found in the Bible (Judges 15:9, 14, 19). “Nephi” is from the King James translation of the Apocrypha. In 2 Maccabees 1:36 we read:

And Neemias called this thing Naphthar, which is as much as to say, a cleansing; but many men call it Nephi.

The main hill in the Book of Mormon is called “Cumorah.” However, the spelling is somewhat different in the first edition. The original text of Moroni 6:2 reads:

… we might gather together our people unto the land of Camorah, by the hill which was called Camorah, and there we would give them battle.

One of the main leaders in the Book of Mormon was “Moroni.” Interestingly, there are islands off the east coast of Africa named the Comoro Islands (also spelled Comora), and the capital is Moroni. A common school book in Smith’s day was Geography Made Easy, by Jedidiah Morse, 1813. On page 356 he mentions the “Comora Islands” off the coast of Africa.

Smith could have also heard of these islands in connection with his treasure-digging, as the famous pirate Captain Kidd, along with many other pirates, stopped there. It was rumored that he later buried his treasure somewhere in New England. Ron Huggins informs us:

One day in late March 1697, a ship . . . arrived at the Island of Mohilla, one of the Comoro Islands . . . . It would not depart again until April 18. Its captain, William (a.k.a. Robert) Kidd, did not know he would soon become one of history’s most famous, and notorious, pirates.

In those days pirates, even famous ones, were no oddity in the Comoros . . .

But it was the rumor of an enormous treasure trove buried somewhere, or scuttled along with the mysteriously missing Qedah, which did most to immortalize the man. The fact that Kidd was arrested so soon after arriving in Boston made it highly likely, or so many believed, that his treasure was still out there, somewhere, waiting to be discovered. Thus, Kidd’s treasure became the most vigorously sought pirate’s prize of all. For Mormons, the fact that the pirate was hanged for crimes allegedly committed in the vicinity of Moroni on Grand Comoro is significant because the hunt for his treasure came to play a part in the story of Moroni on Comorah (“From Captain Kidd’s Treasure Ghost to the Angel Moroni,” Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, vol. 36, no. 4, Winter 2003, pp. 17-19, http://tinyurl.com/jppjue).

Further on in the same article, Huggins relates various statements connecting Joseph Smith with an interest in Kidd:

Stories about pirates and, especially, stories about Captain Kidd, played a particularly important role in the young Joseph’s imagination. According to J. H. Kennedy, Joseph “made confession” that the autobiography of Captain Kidd “made a deep impression upon him.” Kennedy does not say in what context Smith made this “confession.” Palmyra native Phietus B. Spear recalled in an 1873 interview that as a boy Joseph “had for a library a copy of the ‘Arabian Nights,’ stories of Captain Kidd, and a few novels.” Pomeroy Tucker also mentions Joseph’s youthful fascination with Captain Kidd, Stephen Burroughs the counterfeiter, and others, noting that such stories “presented the highest charms for his expanding mental perceptions.” . . . E. D. Howe [in his 1834 book, Mormonism Unvailed] describes the prophet’s parents as “having a firm belief in ghosts and witches; the telling of fortunes; pretending to believe that the earth was filled with hidden treasures, buried there by Kid[d] or the Spaniards” . . .

Rumors of Kidd’s treasure were not limited to sites on the Eastern seaboard. Nor were the Smiths particularly unique in digging for it. John Hyde, Jr., wrote in 1857: “It was quite common in the western part of New York, about thirty years ago [i.e. 1827], for men to dig for treasure which they supposed had been hidden by Captain Kidd and others.” (“From Captain Kidd’s Treasure,” pp. 37-38; see also www.rochedalss.eq.edu.au/pirates/bart.htm).

Another prominent Book of Mormon name is Mormon. This name was already in use prior to 1830 as the name of a species of puffin birds on the east coast of North America.
For more information on Book of Mormon names, see (www.utlm.org/onlineresources/bomnames.htm).

15. You will have to properly use figures of speech, similes, metaphors, narrations, exposition, descriptions, oratory, epic lyric, and parables.

Ideas for parables, figures of speech, etc. could have come from reading the Bible. The book of Revelation speaks of “the four quarters of the earth” (Rev. 20:8), which is echoed in the Book of Mormon, “four quarters of the earth” (1 Nephi 19:16). For other similar copying, see The Changing World of Mormonism, chapter 5 and Joseph Smith’s Plagiarism of the Bible.

Another source of ideas is the Apocrypha. It was readily available in Smith’s day and was published in many Bibles. For examples of Joseph Smith’s borrowing from the Apocrypha see our Salt Lake City Messenger, No. 89.

When one considers the effort needed to make the original gold plates of the Book of Mormon and then to engrave them, one would expect a scribe to be as concise as possible, not wordy. Nephi’s brother, Jacob complained:

I cannot write but a little of my words, because of the difficulty of engraving our words upon plates (Book of Mormon, Jacob 4:1).

However, lengthy sentences abound. Here is just one example:

And now it came to pass that according to our record, and we know our record, and we know our record to be true, for behold, it was a just man who did keep the record—for he truly did many miracles in the name of Jesus; and there was not any man who could do a miracle in the name of Jesus save he were cleansed every whit from his iniquity—And now it came to pass, if there was no mistake made by this man in the reckoning of our time, the thirty and third year had passed away; And the people began to look with great earnestness for the sign which had been given by the prophet Samuel, the Lamanite, yea, for the time that there should be darkness for the space of three days over the face of the land (3 Nephi 8:1-3. For other examples see Salt Lake City Messenger, No. 105).

One could more easily imagine such long, rambling descriptions coming from someone spontaneously dictating to a scribe (as Joseph purportedly did) than from someone painstakingly engraving each word of a long historical record.

In order to maintain the impression of “properly using literary styles” the author of the Book of Mormon not only plagiarized verse after verse from the Bible, he also lifted wording from other sources. The Preface to the King James Bible (prepared for the 1611 printing) uses certain words which do not appear in the Bible, such as “clouds of darkness” and “overshadowed.” Yet the Book of Mormon contains similar wording:

... the cloud of darkness, which had overshadowed them, did not disperse ... (Book of Mormon, Helaman 5:31)

In fact, Smith repeated these words over and over again in the book of Helaman:

And it came to pass that they were overshadowed with a cloud of darkness ... behold the cloud of darkness, which had overshadowed them, did not disperse ... the Lamanites could not flee because of the cloud of darkness which did overshadow them ... he saw through the cloud of darkness ... the Lamanites said unto him: What shall we do, that this cloud of darkness maybe removed from overshadowing us? And Aminadab said ... You must repent. and when you shall do this, the cloud of darkness shall be removed from overshadowing you ... the cloud of darkness was dispersed. And it came to pass that when they cast their eyes about, and saw that the cloud of darkness was dispersed from overshadowing them, behold, they saw that they were encircled about ... by a pillar of fire (Helaman 5:28, 31, 34, 36, 40-43).

After this repetitious section of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith never used the words “cloud of darkness” again; instead he used the words “mist of darkness” or “mists of darkness.” It is interesting to note that the word “mists” (plural) is not found in the text of the Bible either, but it does appear in the Preface of the King James Bible (see Salt Lake City Messenger, No. 84).

Also, in order to “properly use ... descriptions” one should not produce any anachronistic references. Yet many items are mentioned that would not have been known in Book of Mormon times, such as candles. In 3 Nephi 8:21 we read:

And there could be no light, because of the darkness, neither candles, neither torches; neither could there be fire kindled ...

16. You must invite the ablest scholars and experts to examine the text with care, and you must strive diligently to see that your book gets into the hands of those eager to prove it a forgery, and who are most competent to expose every flaw in it.

Actually, the first scholar to denounce the Book of Mormon was Professor Charles Anthon in 1828. Martin Harris took a small sample of the text, known as the Anthon Transcript, to Dr. Mitchell and Dr. Anthon. Professor Charles Anthon wrote:
The whole story about my pronouncing the Mormon inscription to be reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics is perfectly false. Some years ago, a plain, apparently simple-hearted farmer [Martin Harris] called on me with a note from Dr. Mitchell, of our city, now dead, requesting me to decipher, if possible, the paper which the farmer would hand me. Upon examining the paper in question, I soon came to the conclusion that it was all a trick—perhaps a hoax. . . . I have frequently conversed with friends on the subject since the Mormon excitement began, and well remember that the paper contained anything else but Egyptian hieroglyphics (as quoted in Mormonism Unveiled, by E.D. Howe, 1834, pp. 270-272).

Also, the Book of Mormon characters bear absolutely no similarity to Mayan characters. Below is a sample of Mayan hieroglyphics.

Many scholars since Prof. Anthon have looked at the Book of Mormon and have come to the same conclusion. After discussing the Mormon belief in Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon, Michael Coe, one of the best known authorities on the Maya, frankly stated:

Let me now state uncategorically that as far as I know there is not one professionally trained archaeologist, who is not a Mormon, who sees any scientific justification for believing the foregoing to be true, . . . nothing, absolutely nothing, has ever shown up in any New World excavation which would suggest to a dispassionate observer that the Book of Mormon . . . is a historical document relating to the history of early migrants to our hemisphere (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer 1973, pp. 42, 46).

17. Thorough investigation, scientific and historical evidence, and archeological discovery for the next 125 years must verify its claims and prove detail after detail to be true, for many of the details you put in your history are still buried beneath the soil of Tibet.

There are no archaeological sites, writing samples or artifacts that can be identified as Nephite, Lamanite, or Jaredite. The LDS Church does not even publish a map designating the location of the Book of Mormon story. In fact, they seem to discourage attempts to designate any place as a Book of Mormon site. In 1978 the LDS Church News warned members not to get involved in trying to figure out where the Book of Mormon story took place:

The geography of the Book of Mormon has intrigued some readers of that volume ever since its publication. But why worry about it? . . .

To guess where Zarahemla stood can in no wise add to anyone’s faith. But to raise doubts in people’s minds about the location of the Hill Cumorah, and thus challenge the words of the prophets concerning the place where Moroni buried the records, is most certainly harmful. And who has the right to raise doubts in anyone’s mind?

Our position is to build faith, not to weaken it, and theories concerning the geography of the Book of Mormon can most certainly undermine faith if allowed to run rampant.

Why not leave hidden the things that the Lord has hidden? If He wants the geography of the Book of Mormon revealed, He will do so through His prophet, and not through some writer who wishes to enlighten the world despite his utter lack of inspiration on the point (Deseret News, July 29, 1978, Church News Section, p. 16 and www.utlm.org/onlineresources/cumorah.htm).

This LDS editorial leaves us with several questions:

1. If the Book of Mormon recounts historical events and places, why would it “undermine faith” to search for those sites? Researchers do archaeological studies for biblical sites, why not for LDS scriptures?

According to challenge number 17 it would seem that scientific testing of Book of Mormon geography would be welcomed. Yet the LDS Church leaders discourage it. In a recent LDS student manual is a theoretical map of various Book of Mormon sites. However, the caption states:

No effort should be made to identify points on this map with any existing geographical locations (Book of Mormon Student Manual: Religion 121 and 122, 1996, p. 163).

They evidently know that Book of Mormon sites do not fit the geography of the Americas.
2. Current editions of the LDS scriptures contain maps of the LDS Church migration across America. If maps aid in understanding the *Doctrine and Covenants*, why wouldn’t they be important for studies of the Book of Mormon?

3. If only the prophet can determine Book of Mormon geography, why doesn’t he?

4. If the prophet is the one who can correctly speak on these issues, then shouldn’t Joseph Smith’s statement that Lehi landed in Chile be authoritative? (See www.irr.org/mit/bomarch1.html)

5. Are the BYU scholars the ones referred to as challenging the location of the Hill Cumorah? Then of what value are speculations on geography by BYU scholars? (See http://tinyurl.com/p7hwq)

One of the LDS Church’s official web sites is still promoting the hill in New York as the place Moroni buried the plates. See (www.hillcumorah.org/cumorah.asp).

18. You must publish it to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people declaring it to be the word of God and another witness for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Other books have done the same. James Strang, one of the contenders to succeed Joseph Smith, claimed divine revelation. Strang declared that

he was visited by an angel at 5:30 p.m. on June 27, 1844—the exact moment of Joseph Smith’s death—and anointed to be Smith’s successor (”*God Has Made Us A Kingdom*”: James Strang and the Midwest Mormons, by Vickie C. Speek, 2006, p. 22).

Later Strang claimed to find a buried record. Vickie Speek explains:

On September 1, 1845, Strang told followers he had learned by revelation about some ancient plates of brass buried in a nearby hillside. He claimed an angel appeared before him and showed him the plates in vision and gave him his own urim and thummim to translate the records (”*God has Made Us a Kingdom,*” p. 24).

For more on James Strang, see (www.vorsoft.com/faith/calendar/strang.htm).

19. The book must not contain any absurd, impossible, or contradictory statements. Your history must not contain any statement that will contradict any other statement elsewhere in the volume.

There are many absurdities in the Book of Mormon, such as the story of the Jaredite barges, in Ether 2:16-21 and chapter 6.

According to the Book of Mormon, after the time of the Tower of Babel, Jared and his brother, together with their extended families, were told to build “barges” to carry them from the Middle East to the promised land (America). These eight barges were to be “small” and “light upon the water.” They were to be made the “length of a tree” and “tight like unto a dish.” At first God gave no instructions for light or ventilation. But the brother of Jared brought it to His attention and the Lord instructed:

Behold, thou shalt make a hole in the top, and also in the bottom; and when thou shalt suffer for air thou shalt unstop the hole and receive air. And if it be so that the water come in upon thee, behold, ye shall stop the hole, that ye may not perish in the flood (Ether 2:20).

One wonders how long they would be able to breathe, let alone deal with the problems of pressure, with the boat sealed up and “swallowed up in the depths of the sea” (Ether 2:25)? This sounds like modern submarine capabilities. Also, when did one use the hole in the bottom? Did the boats flip over, thus requiring two holes? How does one transport people, flocks, herds, water and food in rotating vessels? Then the brother of Jared complained that there was no lighting inside the barges. The Lord instructed him that they couldn’t have “windows, for they will be dashed in pieces” (Ether 2:23). Remember, this supposedly took place thousands of years ago before glass windows.

The brother of Jared then suggested that God touch sixteen stones, “molten out of a rock,” to make them “even as transparent glass” to provide light in the barges (Ether 3:1-2). This gives them two stone lights for each barge, full of people, animals and supplies.

They are next instructed to prepare “all manner of food” for themselves and “food for their flocks and herds, and whatsoever beast or animal or fowl that they should carry with them” (Ether 5:4). How would they have room on eight small barges the length of a tree to store food and fresh water for a trip that would take a year?

One wonders how these eight small barges stayed together and on course? No instructions are given as to any means of steering the vessels which are “light” and “tight like unto a dish,” yet they are driven by furious winds and at times “buried in the depths of the sea.” Amazingly, all eight barges arrive at the same spot at the same time. This horrible trip is summed up as follows:

And thus they were driven forth, three hundred and forty and four days upon the water (Ether 6:11).

No such trip could have been made thousands of years ago.
The account of the decapitation of Shiz (Ether 15:29-31) is equally unbelievable. Supposedly the Jaredite civilization came to an end with a terrible battle involving millions of people at the hill Ramah. The Nephites and Lamanites would later choose the very same location for their last battle but named the hill Cumorah.

The last two opponents were Shiz and Coriantumr. After Coriantumr beheaded Shiz, “Shiz raised up on his hands and fell; and after that he had struggled for breath, he died.” Did his head struggle for breath or his body? Either situation is impossible.

An important example of anachronistic contradictions in the Book of Mormon is found in the use of the name “Jesus Christ.” Some time around 550 B.C. an angel revealed to Jacob, brother of Nephi, that the Redeemer would be named “Christ” (2 Nephi 10:3).

After this, Nephi had it revealed to him that “Jesus is the Christ” (2 Nephi 26:12). However, according to the first edition of the Book of Mormon, Nephi already knew this name years before:

And a great and a terrible gulf divideth them; yea, even the word of the justice of the Eternal God, and Jesus Christ, which is the Lamb of God . . . (Book of Mormon, 1830 edition, page 28).

Since the Book of Mormon states that the name was first made known to Jacob, then to Nephi, Joseph Smith had to change the words “Jesus Christ” to “the Messiah” in the 2nd edition. Thus in the 1981 edition we read:

And a great and a terrible gulf divideth them; yea, even the word of the justice of the Eternal God, and the Messiah who is the Lamb of God . . . (Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 12:18).

This change allows Nephi to refer to the “Messiah” without using his name, leaving it to Jacob to later reveal that the Messiah would be called “Christ.”

The same mistake is made when King Benjamin (about 124 B.C.) revealed to his people that the name of the Messiah would be “Jesus Christ” (Mosiah 3:8). According to Book of Mormon chronology, this name would have been known for hundreds of years, having been revealed earlier to Jacob and Nephi (see Salt Lake City Messenger, No. 74).

In fact, it had already been revealed to the Jaredites hundreds of years before Jacob and Nephi. In the record of the Jaredites is an account of the appearance of Jesus to the brother of Jared:

Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son (Ether 3:14).

20. Many theories and ideas as to its origin must arise, and after discovering and examining the facts, they must fail. You have claimed that your knowledge had come from divine origin, and this claim continues to stand as the only possible explanation. The strength of this explanation must not decrease as time passes, but actually increases to the point where it becomes the only logical explanation.

The Book of Mormon has grown less credible through non-LDS scholarly study, not more so.

The Book of Mormon tells of three migrations to the Americas, a land held in reserve for these people. It never mentions other groups occupying the land prior to the arrival of the Book of Mormon peoples. Yet the DNA of the American Indian shows that 99.6% descended from Asians, not Israelites. For more information on DNA problems, see Salt Lake City Messenger, No. 103 and the book, Losing a Lost Tribe, by Dr. Simon Southerton. For other problems, see (www.lds-mormon.com/bomquest.shtml).

21. Your record is to fulfill many Bible prophecies, even in the exact manner in which it shall come forth, to whom delivered, its purposes, and its accomplishments.

No Bible scholar sees the Book of Mormon as fulfilling prophecy. Mormons often cite Ezekiel 37:15-21 as a prophecy regarding the Book of Mormon. Mormonism claims that the two sticks refer to the Bible and the Book of Mormon. However, the chapter gives its own interpretation of the passage. At that time Israel was divided into two groups. Verse 18 states the people will ask for an interpretation of the joined sticks. In verses 19-22 the Lord declares that the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel shall be joined into one nation. It is a promise from the Lord relating to the restoration of Israel. See (www.utlm.org/onlineresources/bomoverview.htm) and (www.mrm.org/articles/the_book_of_mormon).

22. Call down an angel from heaven in the middle of the day and have him bear testimony to four honest, dignified citizens of your community that the record is the word of God. These witnesses must bear the angel’s testimony to the world, not for profit or gain, but under great sacrifice and severe persecution, even to their death beds. You must put that testimony to the test by becoming an enemy to these men.

The witnesses to the Book of Mormon were involved in magic and money-digging prior to testifying to the book. They were not the most “dignified” citizens of the area. Several years after Joseph Smith started his church he denounced Martin Harris, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, even calling him a “wicked man”
in two different revelations (D&C 3:12-13; 10:6-7). The other two witnesses, Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer, were accused of uniting

with a gang of counterfeiters, thieves, liars, and blacklegs of the deepest dye, to deceive, cheat, and defraud the saints out of their property, . . . (Letter quoted in Senate Document 189, Feb. 15, 1841, pp. 6-9).

Since Smith himself lost confidence in these men, why should anyone today trust their testimony about angelic visions? For more on the witnesses, see chapter 5 of our book, The Changing World of Mormonism.

Other movements, such as the Shakers and Strangites, have claimed revelations, angelic visitations and listed various witnesses. In fact, Martin Harris joined both of these groups (Changing World, chapter 5, pp.100-101). Besides this, many Catholics and Protestants have recounted visions. Two famous Catholic visions were the appearance of Mary in 1531 to Juan Diego in Mexico and her appearance in 1858 to Bernadette at Lourdes. Two Protestants claiming visions of Christ were Rev. Elias Smith, in 1816 and Asa Wild in 1823 (Changing World of Mormonism, pp. 159-160). Thus Smith’s claim of visions is not as unique as many LDS people believe.

23. Thousands of great men, intellectual giants, national and international personalities, and scholars for 165 years must accept your history and its teachings even to the point of laying down their life rather than deny their testimony of it.

This could equally be applied to Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, etc. See response to points 2 and 3.

24. You must include within the record this promise: “And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, He will manifest the truth of it unto you by the power of the Holy Ghost.”

This challenge provides Mormons with a comforting explanation if one does not get the same confirmation that they did. If you pray about the Book of Mormon but do not receive a witness in your heart that it is true, you did not pray with “a sincere heart.” Latter-day Saints seem unaware of the thousands of people who claim to have sincerely prayed about other religious texts and are equally convinced that they have found the truth. Prayer alone is not enough to ensure that one is not misled. It didn’t keep Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris from gaining an equal testimony to the Shakers and James Strang.

25. Missionaries must bear record to the world for the next 165 years that they know the record to be true because they put the promise to the test and found it to be true. The truth of it was manifested to them by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Christian missionaries have put their faith and lives on the line for almost 2000 years. One need only read Fox’s Book of Martyrs for examples (www.ccel.org/f/foxe/martyrs/home.html).

26. Over 52,900 plus [This number is different in other copies] competent salesmen must be so sold on your book that they gladly give up two or more years of their lives to take it to all parts of the world for distribution. They not only pay their own way during these years, but return bearing testimony that the time spent will remain as one of the highlights of their lives. They receive nothing in return for their efforts but the joy of having shared your book with others.

The number of committed followers does not guarantee that the movement has the truth. Also, not all LDS missionaries pay their full expenses. The LDS Church has a general missionary fund to help those who are not able to pay for a mission. How is this any different from any Christian missionary society where funds are pooled to send out missionaries? This represents a great sacrifice on the part of Christian missionaries who have generally spent years in college to prepare for such a calling. Plus, they do it as a lifetime commitment, not just two years.

27. Your book must not only raise the standards of millions of people but do it in such a way that they become one of the great moral, ethical, and dynamic marvels of the day. They must become world renowned for this.

The Book of Mormon simply echoes the moral teachings of the Bible. In Alma 16:18 is a list of sins, all of which are dealt with in the Bible:

Now those priests who did go forth among the people did preach against all lyings, and deceivings, and envynings, and strifes, and malice, and revilings, and stealing, robbing, plundering, murdering, committing adultery, and all manner of lasciviousness, crying that these things ought not so to be—(Alma 16:18).

We read in Mark 16:16 “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Yet an ocean away Moroni writes “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mormon 9:23).

Paul cautions that to “be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life (Rom. 8:6). However,
hundreds of years before Christ’s birth, the Book of Mormon recorded “Remember, to be carnally-minded is death, and to be spiritually-minded is life eternal. (2 Nephi 9:39).

Philippians 2:12 states “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” Again, Moroni uses the same language, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Mormon 9:27).

Of course the Book of Mormon sounds Christian; it simply plagiarizes verse after verse from the Bible.

Christians, Jews and Muslims have traditionally promoted honesty and family values. The LDS Church does not have a corner on the concept.

28. For the next 20 years you must watch those that follow and you, your family, and the dearest of your loved ones persecuted, driven time after time from their homes, beaten, tortured, starved, frozen and killed. Tens of thousands must undergo the most extreme hardships in your presence just because they believe your claims concerning the origin and content of what you have written on ancient Tibet.

Early Christians were arrested, thrown to the lions, and died in various terrible ways for their faith. Mormons have never suffered to the extent that Catholics, Protestants and Jews have done. Even the Jehovah’s Witnesses have been persecuted far beyond anything experienced by the LDS Church. See (www.persecution.org/newsite/index.php) or (www.bibleleague.org/persecuted/index.php).

29. You must gain no wealth from your work, but many times lose all that you have. Like those that believe you, you must submit yourself to the most vile persecution. And finally after 20 years of this, give your own life in a very savage and brutal manner, for your testimony concerning your history book. This must be done willingly on your part.

Joseph Smith brought on many of his problems with his secret doctrines like polygamy and the kingdom of God. He did not die as a martyr, but in a gun battle while in jail (www.utlm.org/onlineresources/josephsmithsdeath.htm). Zealots have been sacrificing and dying for their various causes for thousands of years.

30. Start right now and produce this record which covers 1,000 years of history, doing it, not in the peaceful atmosphere of your community, but under the most trying of circumstances which include being driven from your home several times, and receiving constant threats upon your life. Please have your book completed, talk a friend into mortgaging his farm to raise money to have it printed – all in 60 days.

The Smiths had moved a few times during Joseph’s childhood due to financial reverses. But Joseph was hardly “driven” from his home several times during the production of the Book of Mormon.

Joseph and his father traveled to the border of New York and Pennsylvania to work for Mr. Stowell in 1825 and 1826. Mr. Stowell hired Joseph Smith specifically because he claimed to have magical powers to find hidden treasure. After Joseph married Emma in 1827 they lived with his parents. However, his former partners in money-digging were hounding him about the gold plates, feeling that he owned it to them to share the treasure. Martin Harris, who financed the printing of the Book of Mormon, told a newspaper editor:

The money-diggers claimed that they had as much right to the plates as Joseph had, as they were in company together. They claimed that Joseph had been traitor, and had appropriated to himself that which belonged to them. For this reason Joseph was afraid of them, and continued concealing the plates (Tiffany's Monthly, August 1859, as quoted in The Creation of the Book of Mormon, by LaMar Petersen, p. 136).

In the winter of 1827-1828 Joseph and Emma moved south to Harmony, Pennsylvania, to live on her parent’s property while he did his translation (see Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet, by Dan Vogel, p. 106). During this time Joseph’s father lost the family farm due to debt and moved in with his married son, Hyrum. Joseph later moved north to the Whitmer home in Fayette, New York, where he finished the translation. These moves seem to relate more to monetary necessity than religious persecution. (See Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith, by Newell and Avery, pp. 24-29)

The Book of Mormon project was not restricted to “60 days.” Smith seems to have been working on his story prior to getting the plates in 1827.

Joseph’s mother said that he used to entertain the family with tales about the Indians. Since Smith’s mother places this after the time the angel first told Joseph about the plates (1823), some have argued that he was merely repeating information he got from the angel. However, it is hard to imagine God sending an angel to tell Smith entertaining stories of the Indians’ “dress, mode of travelling, and the animals upon which they rode,” etc. It sounds more like a young man practicing his story.

Joseph Smith first started dictating his book in 1827, so he had at least three years to record the story prior to its publication.

Also, Martin Harris, the man who mortgaged his farm to finance the printing of the Book of Mormon and one of the witnesses, had been involved with Joseph Smith for three years. He didn’t make a quick decision to finance the
project. In fact, he seems to have gone into the venture with an eye to making money. Dan Vogel explains:

According to his [Martin Harris] wife and sister-in-law, Harris boasted in 1828 that the Book of Mormon would be a financial windfall. According to Tucker, “Harris was led to believe that the book would be a profitable speculation for him, and very likely in this [fact] may be traced his leading motive for taking the venture. He was vouchsafed the security of a ‘special revelation’ commanding that the new Bible should in no instance be sold at a less price than ‘ten shillings,’ and that he himself should have the exclusive right of sale, with all the avails. . . . Indeed, he figured up the profits . . . thus: 5,000 books at $1.25 per book, $6,250. First cost, $3,000. Showing a clear speculation of over one hundred per sent upon the investment” (Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet, p. 481).

However, when the book failed to sell, Martin became concerned about the mortgage on his farm and the possibility of foreclosure to cover the printer’s bill. In response to this Joseph received a revelation denouncing Martin for hesitating to pay the bill:

I command thee [Martin Harris] that thou shalt not covet thine own property, but impart it freely to the printing of the Book of Mormon, which contains the truth and the word of God—. . . Pay the debt thou hast contracted with the printer. Release thyself from bondage (Doctrine and Covenants 19:26, 35).

LDS historians James Allen and Glen Leonard observed that the Book of Mormon “was not a commercial success, however, and a year later Martin Harris, true to his word, sold his mortgaged farm and paid the $3,000” (Story of the Latter-day Saints, 1992, p. 53).

There is only one answer: The Book of Mormon is a divine record. If not, its origin must be stated and its claims must be explained by the critic. It isn’t enough to merely discard it as false and forget about it!

The first thing to do in examining any ancient text is to consider it in the light of the origin and background that is claimed for it. If it fits into that background there is no need to look farther, since historical forgery is virtually impossible.

Forgeries that fit the historical background that is claimed for them are not only possible, but are prevalent. For example, there were the infamous Hitler diaries, consisting of 60 volumes, created by Konrad Kujau in the 1980’s:

. . . Kujau might have remained a small-time crook had he not come into contact with Gerd Heidemann. A Stern reporter whose career had reached something of an impasse, Heidemann had developed an unhealthy interest in the personalities of the Third Reich and an expensive appetite for the artefacts associated with them, . . .

He was immediately fascinated by the “Hitler Diaries”. Kujau’s first production was no more than a single volume labelled Political and Private Notes from January 1935 until June 1935. Adolf Hitler. . . .

Believing – or wanting to believe – this extraordinary volume authentic, Heidemann went to Stern with his “revelation”. His star began to rise at once. Amid great secrecy, the magazine’s publishers agreed to give him the funds to pay Kujau for more diaries, to be secured, at some risk, via his high-ranking contact in the East German military.

Kujau set to work. For three years, he wrote Hitler’s daily thoughts in Gothic script into a black A4 notebook. On to each page he would pour tea, to give it an aged appearance. He would then slap the pages together and batter them against the table to wear and age the volumes. Finally he affixed two red wax seals in the form of a German eagle on the covers.

The diaries purported to run from June 1932 to April 1945. In composing the content, Kujau worked from a library of reference books, newspapers and medical records. The result was not immediately impressive, though it was only after the hoax was revealed that the banality of the entries seemed so strikingly clear (www.mishalov.com/Kujau.html).

The forgeries were announced to the world through Stern, then exposed by David Irving:

Adopting high-powered marketing methods at their press conference to sell the multi-million dollar diaries, Stern began by presenting to the hundreds of television and newspaper journalists a one-hour video film describing how the documents had been found in East Germany by their star journalist Gerd Heidemann. . . .

The diaries had been faked, it turned out, by Konrad Kujau, a gifted Stuttgart confidence trickster. Irving located Kujau’s abandoned “studio” in May 1983. . . . Irving was in court in Hamburg on July 8, 1985, to hear sentence passed on Kujau, who had confessed to forging the documents, . . . (www.fpp.co.uk/bookchapters/Torpedo/Intro.html).

One need only look at Mark Hofmann and his numerous documents and letters to see an LDS example of historical forgery. Like Kujau, Hofmann used historical research, artificially aged ink, etc. to create his documents. He was even able to deceive the president of the LDS Church. In 1980 the Deseret News carried a picture of Hofmann examining the supposed Anthon Transcript with President Spencer W. Kimball (see chapter 6 of our Tracking the White Salamander). Not only were the LDS leaders unable to discern that Mark’s documents were forgeries, they were buying them. After Hofmann killed two people the whole forgery scheme was exposed and he is now serving a life sentence at the Utah State Prison.
SUMMARY

Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt declared:

The Book of Mormon claims to be a divinely inspired record. . . . If false, it is one of the most cunning, wicked, bold, deep-laid impositions ever palmed upon the world, calculated to deceive and ruin millions . . . if true, no one can possibly be saved and reject it: if false, no one can possibly be saved and receive it . . .

If, after a rigid examination, it be found an imposition, it should be extensively published to the world as such; the evidences and arguments on which the imposture was detected, should be clearly and logically stated . . .

But on the other hand, if investigation should prove the Book of Mormon true . . . the American and English nations . . . should utterly reject both the Popish and Protestant ministry, together with all the churches which have been built up by them or that have sprung from them, as being entirely destitute of authority (Orson Pratt’s Works, “Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon,” Liverpool, 1851, pp. 1-2).

When we look at the origin and background of the Book of Mormon we find that the only one to actually examine the record was Joseph Smith, a young farmer-turned-magician. He announced to his family and neighbors that a long dead inhabitant of the Americas had appeared to him in a vision and eventually showed him where to find the ancient record of his people.

However, no one was allowed to go with Smith to retrieve the plates from the hill and no one was allowed to see them, except in vision. When a sample of the Book of Mormon characters was shown to scholars it was denounced as a fraud. While translating the record, the plates were either hid in a box or secreted outside the home. After the translation was completed the plates were returned to the angel and have not been seen since that time, thus making it impossible for experts to examine the record.

Over the next 178 years scholar after scholar has concluded that the book is a product of the 19th century, not an ancient record (see Salt Lake City Messenger, No. 105).

Where is the non-LDS scholar who views the Book of Mormon as a historical document? Where are the artifacts, buildings or samples of writings of the Nephites, Lamanites or Jaredites? These groups supposedly numbered in the millions and built great cities. There are thousands of artifacts relating to the Israelites, early Christianity, Maya and Olmec civilizations. Why are there none for the Nephites and Lamanites? Where is an official LDS map?

There were no elephants, horses or cows in the Americas prior to the Europeans’ arrival. Also, American Indians did not have wheeled vehicles, metallurgy, or wheat during the Book of Mormon time period. Nothing has been found that directly relates to the Book of Mormon civilizations. Obviously it is a fictitious work of the nineteenth century and should be rejected. As John warned centuries ago:

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world (1 John 4:1).

EXCERPTS FROM EMAILS AND LETTERS

May 2006. This might seem like an odd eMail, considering that I’m Mormon and . . . well, you’re not. However, I have nothing but respect for the way that UTLM has dealt with early historical documents relating to the LDS Church. My guess is that if you hear from Mormons at all, it’s usually negative. However, my view is that despite our religious differences, I admire the absolute commitment to historical accuracy that you appear to have.

May 2006. I have always considered myself to be a “historian” by hobby. I have studied many religions and spent the better part of my time studying to Defend the LDS faith by using the same tactics of “anti” doctrine users.

I found almost all sites to be very negative and slanted in their bias and easily dismissed. However your messenger articles have been very informative and “eye opening”. Your careful decision making and integrity while being UNBIASED and sticking totally to the facts have made me take myself out of my comfort zone and to do something I have never done . . . Consider the facts and do what I asked so many potential investigators of the lds faith to do and that is to have an open mind. The more I research the more damning the evidence is.

June 2006. What a sad life the Tanner’s lead. I’m sorry you/them feel it’s necessary to warn the world of the Mormon’s “corrupt” past and teach hate (not to mention plenty of fallacies) instead of preaching love, respect and charity........................ hmmm..... like what the Savior would do! Educate yourself before educating others. It makes you look silly when you don’t. Don’t forget, we’ll all be judged according to our own judgments. If the Lord’s as just as you believe he is, you’d better be right!

June 2006 . . . In August [2005] I was baptised into the Mormon church. It felt rushed and pressurised. But they were such lovely people . . . so caring . . . how could they be wrong? . . . Anyway, despite my concerns and my brain telling me this didn’t gel, I went ahead with it . . . Since that time I have been doing my own research. The more I learn, the more murky it all seems. . . . God Bless you both for what you are doing. You have helped to save one person from over ‘the pond’.
June 2006. I just had to tell someone! Over the last 3-4 years I have used your material to find the “truth” about the Mormon church. I am a convert and have struggled, not from the beginning, but after my first year or two in the church. I kept remembering my personal relationship with Jesus in my childhood and the Word of God that taught me that he does nothing in secret and that confusion is of the devil.

I just decided tonight that I AM DONE. I AM REALLY DONE! Done searching for answers and the truth. I had the truth all along and God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. He doesn’t change His mind. He doesn’t change doctrine. The path to the Father is straight and narrow and only through Jesus Christ! Not through a husband for cryin’ out loud!

June 2006. I am a recovering Mormon, born to Mormon parents, and most of my relatives are active. I am the only one in my family who is not active, and for the most part I have kept my belief that Mormonism is a lie to myself. Your website has played no small part in my decision to leave the church, and I wanted to express my appreciation for what you do, please never stop.

June 2006. I spent my whole life in the church . . . Thank you for your research. You seem to be the best source for accurate LDS history. I have heard that since you are geared toward converting “Mormons” to Christianity that you are not an objective source. As a scientist working in research I like to think I have high standards when people make claims. I have found the information that you provide to be well documented and accurate. The least accurate source for LDS history appears to be the LDS church. I still struggle with some of the ideas that have been ingrained in my mind when I was too young to know better.

June 2006. You have taken your stand religiously and now stubbornly deny anything else that differs from it.(very similar to what wonderful men like Nathan Bedford Forrest, Adolph Hitler, Osama Bin Laden, and Herod have tried to do) You ignore all truths from your opposition and will inadvertently abandon your own truths in attempt to destroy . . . You try to attack a religion who accepts scientific laws and faith but you only use science and faith separately so you can choose when it suits your argument the best. How do you expect readers to believe you when they look at the whole picture? Blind faith perhaps? In a form, yes. You prey upon those whose faith, knowledge or understanding isn’t strong or upon those whose hatred and animosity will believe anything to prove their foe wrong.

June 2006. Well, I am a Mormon, and I think some of things you both have posted are rather ‘interesting’ and I know my faith, and i know many things from studying [other religions, languages, math, science] and I know what I believe is true. But i would like to note, if you both put the words ‘mormons are wrong’ or ‘joseph didn’t know egyptian’, understand that what you put, can be slightly offensive and some things i’ve read upon your site, came across as a little offensive. you both should consider seeing perspectives and writing them onto the site rather than your own.

sorry but thats the fact.

July 2006. Got my diploma [LDS termination of membership letter] dated the 27th of June, they’ve apparently miisaid my wife’s. Thinking of framing it, but can’t decide on oak or something darker. Thanks again for all you do.

It was a small paperback book left by a couple of wandering Baptists back in about ’87 that I first heard about them “Tanners”. That book was the beginning of a new line of thought for me. I hadn’t felt like the church & I belonged together particularly well for a number of years, but always bought the “failure is yours” routine they promulgate. That book gave me a feeling of relief along with the thought that maybe, just maybe, it was the church that was off, not me.

Took a while, but I’m glad we got our names off the roles & resigned ourselves officially. Still saving up for another trip to your store.

July 2006. Dear Sandra, . . . I left the LDS Church in 1985 after a temple marriage & 2 sons. My sons have both gone on missions. In February my youngest son left his dad’s home and the LDS religion, he is now living with [us]. He has really been struggling and feels if he was lied to his whole life about Mormonism, he doesn’t want to become a Christian to find out it is all a lie too. We are doing our best to help him—with the Lords help!

July 2006. My husband and I owe you an incredible debt of gratitude. I was a Mormon for 25 years (& loved it) when after 16 years of marriage my husband joined the church. Shortly after his baptism, he began to investigate his new faith, broaden his understanding, when he came across your website. It opend his eyes but it also brought much turmoin into our family.

As he put it, “How do I share this news with my wife when she finally thinks her prayers have been answered with im joining the church?” It was 2 years of a living hell on earth in our home. But I needed to realize that the Lord is in control & to turn it over to him. Finally, the spirit, your newsletters and other info. helped me to realize what a lie I had been fed for so long. I am so scared for my friends and pray for the know-how and time of when to share with all my Mormon friends the good news of the real Jesus Christ. That you for your role in bringing full joy, freedom and Jesus Christ into our family. Love . . .

July 2006. In July of 2003, . . . we moved . . . to be closer to our daughter and her growing LDS family. . . . We especially want to thank you for your June 30th letter [to donors] and the accompanying article from CHARISMA. It was especially heart-warming because [we] were privileged to get acquainted in person with Jerald and Sandra and help them briefly in their ministry when our car broke down in SLC in August 1990.

Sandra, you and Jerald are especially dear to our hearts because we were able to experience in person what kind, loving, dedicated people you are. It was a time of blessing and spiritual growth for us, we will never forget it.

August 2006. Look deep into your souls . . . Profiting off disinformation and lies . . . capitalism at its’ best! You should be ashamed.
For Additional Information on the Book of Mormon

3,913 Changes in the Book of Mormon  
by Jerald & Sandra Tanner  
$14.00

Inside the Mind of Joseph Smith: 
Psychobiography and the Book of Mormon  
by Robert D. Anderson  
$18.00

Studies of the Book of Mormon  
by B. H. Roberts  
$13.50

American Apocrypha: 
Essays on the Book of Mormon  
Edited by Dan Vogel & Brent Lee Metcalfe  
$20.00

The Use of the Bible in the Book of Mormon 
and Early 19th Century Events Reflected in the Book of Mormon  
by H. Michael Marquardt  
$3.00

Answering Mormon Scholars Vol. 1  
by Jerald & Sandra Tanner  
$6.00

The Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Mormon  
by Wesley P. Walters  
$8.00

Answering Mormon Scholars Vol. 2  
by Jerald & Sandra Tanner  
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by Ethan Smith  
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by LaMar Petersen  
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Jerald Tanner’s Quest for Truth

By Ronald V. Huggins

For all the saints who from their labors rest,
Who thee by faith before the world confessed,
Thy name, O Jesus, be for ever blest.
Alleluia. Alleluia.

From now on whenever Christians throughout the world sing this triumphant hymn it will be celebrating, along with all the other saints throughout the ages, the life and witness of Jerald Dee Tanner, who passed into the Lord’s presence on Sunday, October 1, 2006. For those who have not seen Jerald’s obituary it can be found online at: http://utlm.org/jeraldtanner.html

In light of Jerald’s death I thought it would be a good time to pause and reflect on his life and, more particularly, on how God initially led him into the ministry he carried on so effectively, and with such great energy, integrity, and accuracy, for more than forty years.

When people can’t gain access to the information they want or need because the place which ought to be providing it is unwilling to do so, other less formal centers for the dissemination of information emerge. If you happened to want to do research into Mormon history in the late 1950s or early 1960s (real Mormon history, I mean, not the largely sanitized version promoted in official LDS Church publications) sooner or later you would likely find your way to a barbershop at 424 South State Street in Salt Lake City.1 Upon entering you would be assaulted by the usual barbershop smells: the hair tonic, the hot clipper oil, and the dust of ancient whiskers. You would notice also that the place looked as if nothing had changed since the turn of the century; old-time woodwork and furniture all round with two classic barber chairs, one, as likely as not, filled with old books, and the other attended by the owner and proprietor of the establishment, a barber and the son of a barber, a champion skater, and Groucho Marx look-alike, James D. Wardle (1915–1997), to whom a Salt Lake alternative newspaper once applied the honorific sobriquet: “State Street Socrates.”2

Jerald Tanner, an inactive Mormon teenager, met Wardle in the late 1950s when, at the beginning of his spiritual quest, he attended an RLDS meeting. From that time on Jerald regularly visited Wardle’s barbershop, not however to get his hair cut—the couple of times Jerald did sit in the chair he went away feeling a little too breezy on top—but rather because James kept in the back of his shop one of the most remarkable Mormon libraries around. In those days that meant not only that you would have to cast a wide net in terms of making connections in order to stock such a library in the first place, but that lots of people would be coming to see you once you had. It was in James’ shop, for example, that Jerald met such characters as Francis W. Kirkham, compiler of the classic two-volume collection of early Mormon texts entitled A New Witness of Christ in America,3 the LeBaron brothers, Ross, Joel, and the murderous Ervil LeBaron, and Ogden Kraut, defender of the good old-fashioned polygamous, Adam-God worshipping Mormonism.

If you kept your ear to the ground in the Mormonism of those days as James did, you would find out lots of interesting things, and as such you could become a particularly helpful resource on many occasions where the LDS Church wasn’t

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1 The current location of the Scott Mattheson County Courthouse.
talking. Over the years James provided many things to the Tanners. His most significant contribution to Jerald’s life, however, came early in their relationship when one day he handed Jerald a little 1887 tract entitled *An Address to All Believers in Christ* written by one of the original Book of Mormon witnesses, David Whitmer. It must be remembered that for Jerald the issue at this stage, as it would continue to be all his life, was finding peace with God, not refuting Mormonism. No doubt research on Mormonism has always carried its own interest due to its history as an authoritarian religious bureaucracy prone to clumsily applying the heavy hand of discipline as a way of covering up the truth of its past and clinging to its own power. At this stage, however, and in fact until 1962, Jerald expected to find God’s truth at work at the roots of Joseph Smith’s restoration. Consequently, what Whitmer said in his tract troubled Jerald greatly. Whitmer wrote:

If you believe my testimony to the Book of Mormon, if you believe that God spake to us three witnesses by his own voice, then I tell you that in June, 1838, God spake to me again by his own voice from among the Latter Day Saints, for as they sought to do unto me, should it be done unto them.” In the spring of 1838, the heads of the church and many of the members had gone deep into error and blindness. I had been striving with them for a long time to show them the errors into which they were drifting, and for my labors I received only persecutions.⁴

Changing Revelations

Jerald was devastated when he read Whitmer’s further claim that the early Mormon prophesies had been changed. Whitmer wrote:

Some of the revelations as they are now in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants have been changed and added to. Some of the changes being of the greatest importance as the meaning is entirely changed on some very important matters; as if the Lord had changed his mind a few years after he gave the revelations, and after having commanded his servants (as they claim) to print them in the “Book of Commandments;” and after giving his servants a revelation, being a preface unto His Book of Commandments, which says: “Behold, this is mine authority, and the authority of my servants, and my preface unto the Book of my Commandments, which I have given them to publish unto you, oh inhabitants of the earth.”⁵

After reading Whitmer’s tract, Jerald recalled, “I could not believe such a serious charge against the Prophet and I tossed the pamphlet down in disgust.” But then he had second thoughts: “After throwing it down . . . I began to think that perhaps this was not the right way to face the problem. If David Whitmer was wrong in his criticism of Joseph Smith, surely I could prove him wrong. So I picked up the pamphlet and read it through.”⁶

At the time Jerald could not compare Whitmer’s claims against an original 1833 edition of the *Book of Commandments*, since he had not yet seen one. We do not know whether he tried to see one of the copies in the possession of the LDS Church at the time, but had he done so we can imagine what kind of response there may have been, considering the story told by the late LaMar Petersen, who published a little booklet in 1957 entitled *Problems in Mormon Text*. Petersen related how on one occasion in the 1950s, his well-meaning bishop persuaded LaMar to join him in going up to the LDS archives to have a look at a copy of the original *Book of Commandments* with the purpose of laying to rest once and for all the ridiculous nonsense LaMar had been spouting about changes in the early revelations. When they came to make their request, Earl E. Olson told them that the *Book of Commandments* was never actually finished since the Missouri mobocrats had destroyed the press it was being printed on. In response Petersen listed off the names of several libraries where he had actually seen copies. “Oh,” Olson said, “I didn’t realize you’d actually seen the book,” and then toddled off cheerfully to fetch a copy.⁷

Jerald had never seen an original copy of the *Book of Commandments*, nor did he know LaMar Petersen at the time. He would not have been able to appeal successfully to the unwritten “well since you already know the document exists I might as well stop pretending it doesn’t exist” policy illustrated by Petersen’s story.

In any case Jerald grasped the seriousness of the situation well enough: “Like David Whitmer, I felt that it would be unthinkable for anyone to claim to have direct revelations from God and then turn around and alter those words.”⁸

In the end Jerald reports that “I could not demonstrate that Whitmer was in error with regard to the statements which bothered me so much. His pamphlet, in fact, proved to be very reliable with regard to historical facts.”⁹ In making his investigations Jerald might have made his comparison between the then-current *Doctrine and Covenants* and the editions of the *Book of Commandments* published by the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) in about 1926 or the one printed by the *Salt Lake Tribune* in 1903. Since neither of these were actually photomechanical reprints, they would not ultimately be entirely acceptable. Nevertheless Jerald felt that he could trust their basic integrity when making his comparisons.

In a revelation dated March 1829 (now D&C 5) as it originally appeared in the *Book of Commandments*, God made it clear to Joseph Smith that his prophetic calling was to end once the Book of Mormon was finished: “he [Joseph] has a gift to translate the book, and I have commanded him that he shall pretend to no other gift, for I will grant him no other gift” (*Book of Commandments* 4:2). Some time later, however, Joseph apparently felt that God’s language here was beginning to cramp his prophetic style, and so he created a little wiggle room for

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⁴ David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, Mo.: David Whitmer, 1887) p. 27.
⁵ Ibid., p. 56.
⁷ Sandra heard Petersen tell this story on several occasions over a number of years.
⁸ From Jerald’s introduction to the Utah Lighthouse Ministry’s photographic reproduction of Whitmer’s *An Address to All Believers in Christ*.
⁹ Ibid.
himself by doctoring the passage, pretending that what God had actually commanded was to "pretend to no other gift until my purpose is fulfilled in this; for I will grant unto you no other gift until it is finished" (D&C 32:1 [1835]). Jerald reasoned from this that if the restoration was true, it had to rest on the original prophesies, not on the later ones that had been doctored to facilitate Joseph’s continuing ambition to play the prophet. More striking still was Whitmer’s claim that the “matter of the two orders of priesthood in the Church of Christ, and lineal priesthood of the old law being in the church, all originated in the mind of Sidney Rigdon,” and that “the High Priests and the ‘priesthood’ as you have it, was introduced into the Church of Christ almost two years after its beginning.”10 And indeed when Jerald looked at the Book of Commandments he discovered that the key sections dealing with the restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods were either missing entirely (D&C 2 and 13) or were found to be in a more primitive form to which the crucial language had not yet been introduced (D&C 27 = Book of Commandments 28).

Jerald did not fail to see the implications of what Whitmer revealed with regard to Utah Mormonism. Even though Jerald still believed that the Book of Mormon was true, he was now convinced that Joseph had subsequently become a fallen prophet. In following Joseph Smith into his apostasy, then, Utah Mormonism proved that it had seriously missed the boat. “While I felt that the Catholic and Protestant churches were all wrong,” Jerald later recalled, “I needed to know which of the churches which claimed to be based on Joseph Smith was the true church. I felt that the only way to find out the truth was to go back to Missouri and visit the various [splinter] groups.”11

A Trip to Missouri

One night in the latter part of 1957 the nineteen-year-old Jerald climbed into his '48 Chevy and headed for Missouri. When he reached Wyoming he was met by a blinding snow storm. The next morning found him parked on the roadside with steam boiling out from under the hood. His water pump had given out, the first of four problems with his car on the 1,200 mile trip. Fortunately all four problems occurred near a town, remarkably good luck for someone traversing the vast open distances of the Great Plains in an old jalopy. One day just after sunrise while Jerald was driving across Kansas he saw a sign that gave him great encouragement that he was on the right track. It read “Christ is the way.”

Once in Missouri Jerald made his way to Richmond, the town where David Whitmer’s tract had originally been published. He wanted to find the granddaughter of Book of Mormon witness Jacob Whitmer, who he had read belonged to the church David had started. When he found her she turned out to be an ancient lady, probably over ninety years old, but with a good memory. She could still remember seeing David Whitmer just before he died laying in his bed and working on the tract that had inspired Jerald’s journey. However, as it turned out, she was one of the last two members of David Whitmer’s church, the other being a woman of similar age, and, to Jerald’s disappointment, showed no interest whatever in seeing her church survive.

Upon his arrival in Independence Jerald visited two churches. The first was the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), named for the fact that it owned the lot Joseph Smith dedicated in 1831 as the site of the Temple to which Christ was to eventually return (see D&C 57 and 86). As already noted Jerald certainly knew and probably even owned a copy of the edition of the Book of Commandments printed by the Church of Christ (Temple Lot).

Jerald was received warmly and a copy of the original edition of the Book of Commandments was even brought out of the safe for him to look at. Yet Jerald says that he “did not feel led to return there.”12 This was partly due to the fact that the Temple Lot group represented a more developed form of Mormonism than the one Jerald found described in Whitmer’s pamphlet. It was governed by Twelve Apostles, for example, a pattern of leadership disapproved of by Whitmer, and it accepted as valid all 65 prophesies in the Book of Commandments. In contrast Whitmer only accepted revelations up until June 1829, those “given through the ‘stone,’ through which the Book of Mormon was translated.” “These,” he had insisted “are the only revelations that can be relied upon, and they are not law.” Nor, Whitmer goes on to say, should these ever have been published, since the “Lord told us not to teach them for doctrine.”13

Pauline Hancock

The other church Jerald visited in Independence was also called the Church of Christ, but that group was known as the Lukites (after prominent member H. Irvin Luke). In reality its most prominent member was not Luke but its pastor, Pauline Hancock. Quite possibly Jerald had heard of the church from James Wardle. In any case Wardle would regularly boast afterward of having won two converts to Pauline’s group, namely Jerald and Sandra.

Pauline’s father, J.W.A. Bailey, had been Wardle’s own pastor at the RLDS Church at 336 South 400 East in Salt Lake City, a church that had actually commanded was to “pretend to no other gift until my purpose is fulfilled in this; for I will grant unto you no other gift until it is finished” (D&C 32:1 [1835]). Jerald reasoned from this that if the restoration was true, it had to rest on the original prophesies, not on the later ones that had been doctored to facilitate Joseph’s continuing ambition to play the prophet.

More striking still was Whitmer’s claim that the “matter of the two orders of priesthood in the Church of Christ, and lineal priesthood of the old law being in the church, all originated in the mind of Sidney Rigdon,” and that “the High Priests and the ‘priesthood’ as you have it, was introduced into the Church of Christ almost two years after its beginning.” And indeed when Jerald looked at the Book of Commandments he discovered that the key sections dealing with the restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods were either missing entirely (D&C 2 and 13) or were found to be in a more primitive form to which the crucial language had not yet been introduced (D&C 27 = Book of Commandments 28).

Jerald did not fail to see the implications of what Whitmer revealed with regard to Utah Mormonism. Even though Jerald still believed that the Book of Mormon was true, he was now convinced that Joseph had subsequently become a fallen prophet. In following Joseph Smith into his apostasy, then, Utah Mormonism proved that it had seriously missed the boat. “While I felt that the Catholic and Protestant churches were all wrong,” Jerald later recalled, “I needed to know which of the churches which claimed to be based on Joseph Smith was the true church. I felt that the only way to find out the truth was to go back to Missouri and visit the various [splinter] groups.”

A Trip to Missouri

One night in the latter part of 1957 the nineteen-year-old Jerald climbed into his ’48 Chevy and headed for Missouri. When he reached Wyoming he was met by a blinding snow storm. The next morning found him parked on the roadside with steam boiling out from under the hood. His water pump had given out, the first of four problems with his car on the 1,200 mile trip. Fortunately all four problems occurred near a town, remarkably good luck for someone traversing the vast open distances of the Great Plains in an old jalopy. One day just after sunrise while Jerald was driving across Kansas he saw a sign that gave him great encouragement that he was on the right track. It read “Christ is the way.”

Once in Missouri Jerald made his way to Richmond, the town where David Whitmer’s tract had originally been published. He wanted to find the granddaughter of Book of Mormon witness Jacob Whitmer, who he had read belonged to the church David had started. When he found her she turned out to be an ancient lady, probably over ninety years old, but with a good memory. She could still remember seeing David Whitmer just before he died laying in his bed and working on the tract that had inspired Jerald’s journey. However, as it turned out, she was one of the last two members of David Whitmer’s church, the other being a woman of similar age, and, to Jerald’s disappointment, showed no interest whatever in seeing her church survive.

Upon his arrival in Independence Jerald visited two churches. The first was the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), named for the fact that it owned the lot Joseph Smith dedicated in 1831 as the site of the Temple to which Christ was to eventually return (see D&C 57 and 86). As already noted Jerald certainly knew and probably even owned a copy of the edition of the Book of Commandments printed by the Church of Christ (Temple Lot).

Jerald was received warmly and a copy of the original edition of the Book of Commandments was even brought out of the safe for him to look at. Yet Jerald says that he “did not feel led to return there.” This was partly due to the fact that the Temple Lot group represented a more developed form of Mormonism than the one Jerald found described in Whitmer’s pamphlet. It was governed by Twelve Apostles, for example, a pattern of leadership disapproved of by Whitmer, and it accepted as valid all 65 prophesies in the Book of Commandments. In contrast Whitmer only accepted revelations up until June 1829, those “given through the ‘stone,’ through which the Book of Mormon was translated.” “These,” he had insisted “are the only revelations that can be relied upon, and they are not law.” Nor, Whitmer goes on to say, should these ever have been published, since the “Lord told us not to teach them for doctrine.”

Pauline Hancock

The other church Jerald visited in Independence was also called the Church of Christ, but that group was known as the Lukites (after prominent member H. Irvin Luke). In reality its most prominent member was not Luke but its pastor, Pauline Hancock. Quite possibly Jerald had heard of the church from James Wardle. In any case Wardle would regularly boast afterward of having won two converts to Pauline’s group, namely Jerald and Sandra.

Pauline’s father, J.W.A. Bailey, had been Wardle’s own pastor at the RLDS Church at 336 South 400 East in Salt Lake City, a church that he was on the right track. It read “Christ is the way.”
City during the late 1930s and early ’40s. And like so many others Bailey had enjoyed stopping in at Wardle’s barbershop to commiserate about things.14 Bailey once even praised Wardle to RLDS President Israel A. Smith, saying he was “about the best posted on Mormonism that we have in Utah.”15

Wardle also knew Pauline and a number of letters between them exist from this period. Many of these dealt with the sharing of documents. But it is in a letter that James wrote about Pauline, rather than to her, that we probably get the best picture of the sort of representation Wardle might have given to Jerald, making him want to go and visit her church. This appears in a letter dated December 17, 1959, that Wardle wrote to a Mrs. S. G. Winholtz, in which he said, “Pauline Hancock is one of the VERY FEW REAL CHRISTIANS that I have met in my whole life,” and “she is one of God’s women, a child of Christ. As far as I am concerned, I’ve never met anyone quite like her.”16 He also had high praise for her basement church:

It is her group of people to whom she ministers. They have something that far exceeds anything I have ever felt in any church I’ve ever attended, including my own. They have the REAL fellowship.—If I were to judge I would say that they have the real SPIRIT of Christ in their midst. They LOVE one another . . . I wish we had more of that love in Salt Lake City.

No doubt the group’s interest in early Mormon documents would have appealed to Jerald. They even owned a microfilm camera so as to be able to photograph and preserve such gems as came their way. Also Pauline agreed with Whitmer in rejecting all of the revelations in the Book of Commandments except for the fourteen that came through the stone (i.e., Book of Commandments 2–15). Appropriately when Jerald and Sandra finally produced their own photomechanical edition of Whitmer’s Address, it was in fact from a copy that Pauline had given them.17

Something had happened in the little group there that was quite rare in the world of Mormon sectarianism. Pauline had actually come around to a view of God that was close to the Christian view, and an understanding of the gospel of grace that was dead on the money. Part of the reason for this was that at key moments in her life she was led in the right direction by visions and words from the Lord. One of the most important of these is where she first came to an understanding of “THE BLOOD OF CHRIST or the way of salvation,” through a vision she had of the suffering of Jesus from the time he was being mocked by the soldiers until his crucifixion. As she looked on as he was being crucified, she said:

FOR THE FIRST TIME in my life I BEHELD THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB OF CALVARY. I knew all of a sudden MY OWN VILE AND SINFUL NATURE, my lost condition. I knew that there was nothing good in me EXCEPT GOD HAD PUT IT IN THERE . . . I COULDN’T GET ENOUGH OF WHAT I SAW shining from His face. I knew that I was nothing like THIS WONDERFUL PERSON . . . When others were cruel and unkind, He was kindness itself. HIS FACE REFLECTED LOVE AND COMPASSION. I had murmured [sic] and complained at my burdens and trials while He in the greatest of agony, was willing to bear all this, that I might live again a new creature . . . I fell upon my knees and prayed to God THROUGH JESUS AND HIS SHED BLOOD, to be forgiven of my sins, that I might have the love I had seen in Him. When my prayer was finished, GOD BAPTIZED ME WITH HIS OWN SPIRIT and my soul was on fire WITH LOVE towards God and mankind—I became a new creature.18 (emphasis in original)

Jason R. Smith describes Pauline as “resolute about the fact that salvation was by grace through faith rather than earned through one’s efforts. She rejected the idea that good works, taking the sacrament, church membership, or any other action would merit salvation. She later came to teach also that water baptism was not necessary for salvation.”19 And by the time Jerald arrived her teaching was bearing a kind of fruit Jerald had never encountered before, so that what impressed Jerald most was “not their research but the love they had towards each other and even people outside their group . . . They were different from any people I had ever met. It was almost as if I had stepped back into the first century and was meeting with the original disciples of the Lord . . . The joy in the hearts of this people was so obvious that I could not miss it. It was evident that they really loved the Lord and had dedicated their lives to serve him.”20

Growing up a Mormon in Utah Jerald was used to hearing a lot of talk about Joseph Smith and the importance of the LDS Church, but here were people who spoke instead about a God who delivered his children from sin and blessed them with a peace that passes understanding. “It was at this church,” Jerald recalled, “that I first heard the true message of Christ preached so that I really understood it. They had something in their lives that I knew I did not possess.”21

Yet although Jerald was convinced they had what he needed, he found himself resisting turning his life over to God. Jerald had come to Missouri to find one thing but instead he discovered quite another. Even though he had already come to believe that the church of his youth could not be the true heir of Joseph Smith’s restoration, he had yet to discover that it was not only wrong in doctrine but wrong in its entire concept of how one approaches finding God. Jerald related:

Before I set out for Missouri, I realized that I had committed many sins. I still felt, however, that I had the strength to change

14 Bailey writes: “I always liked to call at your shop and talk things over with you.” Letter from J. W. A. Bailey to James D. Wardle (February 6, 1945). James D. Wardle Papers, box 47, folder 3, Marriott Library Archives, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.
15 Letter from J. W. A. Bailey to President Israel A. Smith (May 19, 1945). James D. Wardle Papers, box 22, folder 8, Marriott Library Archives, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.
16 James D. Wardle to Mrs. S. G. Winholtz (December 17, 1959). James D. Wardle Papers, box 22, folder 8, Marriott Library Archives, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.
17 See Jerald’s introduction to the Utah Lighthouse Ministry edition of the tract (February 25, 1956). This testimony was the final installment of a series of ads with the same title dated January 28, February 4, 11, 15, and, this one, February 25. This story is also quoted in Kate B. Carter, Denominations that Base their Beliefs on the Teachings of Joseph Smith (n.p.: Kate B. Carter, 1962) pp. 49-50. It is also reproduced from Carter in Steven L. Shields, Divergent Paths of the Restoration (4th ed.; Los Angeles, Ca.: Restoration Research, 1990) pp. 152-3.
19 Jerald Tanner’s Testimony, p. 6.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
my own behavior and live a righteous life . . . I had been convinced that the church I was raised in was in error and it was only a matter of finding the one “true church,” and then living a good moral life that would be pleasing to God. What I had learned in Missouri completely changed my way of thinking. Instead of focussing on the errors of the Mormon Church and searching for the “true church,” I now had to take a hard look at my own heart and realize how completely undone I was before God. I was a sinner in desperate need of a Saviour. I could perhaps compare my life to a car which seemed to have a miss in the engine. At first I felt that it just needed some new spark plugs or a tune-up. The truth of the matter, however, was that it needed a major overhaul of the engine. In other words, I needed a completely new life within.23

And so now, understanding more of the reality of things but as yet resisting surrendering to God, Jerald “came back to Salt Lake City with a heavy heart and continued to live under the burden of sin.”24 When December came Jerald, who was not in the habit of sending Christmas cards, was greatly moved when he was unexpectedly deluged with them from the people in the Missouri church.

During this same time Jerald became more convinced “of the depravity of the heart of man,” which, he says, he learned from his own heart. Mormonism’s lack of a true understanding in this area has always stood in the way of its being able to understand the Bible’s message of sin and salvation. Yet from the Christian perspective this stage in Jerald’s experience was a very common one, and one that has often been described by great Christians like Augustine of Hippo, John Wesley, and Charles Finney, as an important stage leading to authentic conversion to Christ. This is a trustworthy saying, “Christ came to save sinners,” and “If we claim we have not sinned, we make [God] out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.”25 Knowing what he needed to do but still finding himself unwilling to do it, Jerald was even more alarmed to find himself tempted in ways he had never been tempted before. He began to fear that sin would plunge his life into the gutter, or that worse still, he would die in his sins and be forever separated from the presence of God. Knowing he had to come to terms with this Jerald felt that the best way to do it was to return to Independence and surrender to the Lord there.

A Second Missouri Trip

There was still snow on the ground when Jerald arrived in Independence in the early part of 1958 and checked into a cheap hotel in the center of the city. As soon as the people in the Church of Christ found out he was in town again he was invited to stay in the home of Gene and Barbara Moore, who had recently lost a son in a terrible automobile accident and welcomed him warmly into their home as “sort of a replacement for their son.” He stayed a full month. It was during that visit that Jerald recalled, “I looked to Jesus Christ and my life was miraculously changed. I passed from a life of sin and misery to one of peace and joy.” This took place without any remarkable “outward sign from God when I first committed myself to Him.” He expected some sort of remarkable experience when he emerged from the baptismal waters in which Pauline baptized him, but nothing of the sort happened. Nevertheless, he says, “I began to walk by faith and to feel the spirit of God working in me and helping me with my life.”26

Given the context in which Jerald became a Christian it is not surprising that for a time he carried with him some of the baggage of Mormonism. Following the example of Pauline he did not give up the Book of Mormon. Still that scarcely put him in close agreement with the religion of his youth, since, as Jerald himself continued to believe even after he had given it up, “the Book of Mormon itself does not teach the unique doctrines which separate the Mormon church from other Churches,” that it is in fact “far closer to Protestant theology than it is to Mormonism.”27 Current Latter-day Saints are continually seen trying to artificially harmonize the Book of Mormon with current LDS doctrine in hopes of being able to press the former into the service of the latter.

Jerald Meets Sandra

Once back in Salt Lake City, Jerald became the sole representative of the little Church of Christ. He asked James Wardle for a list of people he thought might be interested in Pauline Hancock’s message and sent out invitations to them to come to meetings in the basement of his parents’ house on Dalton Street where they were treated to Pauline on tape with discussion afterward. It was to one of these meetings that the twenty-year-old Jerald was to meet the love of his life and complement in his ministry, an eighteen-year-old Mormon girl from California named Sandy McGee. Sandy, or Sandra as she is now usually called, probably didn’t even know who Pauline Hancock was and would likely not have been interested in attending if she had known. She only went one evening because she was driving her grandmother, Sylvia Rogerson, who had apparently received an invitation as one of those on James Wardle’s list.

Sylvia’s first husband had been Walter Stevens Young, the son of Apostle Brigham Young Jr., who in turn was the son of the Mormon Prophet Brigham Young himself by the first wife he married as a Mormon, Mary Ann Angell. Mary Ann’s brother, Truman O. Angell, designed such key Salt Lake historic monuments as the Salt Lake Temple, the Lion House, the Beehive House, and the Eagle Gate. Walter and Sylvia Young had a daughter named Georgia, who married Ivan McGee and together they had Sandra.

Sandra was understandably proud of her distinguished Mormon pedigree, but she had not been all that interested in independently researching Mormon history. But however much she might have wanted to quietly blend in at the Ward, find a nice Mormon boy, have a Temple marriage and get on with her life, it was not to be, given the family she had been born into. The fact that Sandra’s grandmother’s name found its way onto the list Wardle had given to Jerald shows that she was a woman who at least occasionally looked beyond the end of her nose.
to see what was out there beyond official Mormonism, and was therefore not a perfect fit in a culture where the sentiment “When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done,” 27 could be expressed in all seriousness. Similarly Sandra’s mother, Georgia McGee, and aunt, Lucille Hyler, were both eager beavers when it came to searching the used book stores for old Mormon books to buy and study. In the mid-1950s they were excited to learn that a polygamist sect had brought out a photo reprint of the 26-volume Journal of Discourses. Naturally Sandra’s mother and aunt bought a set. As a typical teenager Sandra sometimes found the level of Georgia and Lucille’s enthusiasm for research a bit irritating. On school days Sandra would rise early to attend Mormon seminary (high school level classes) from 6–7 a.m. before her usual classes started at 7:30 at San Fernando High.

“This was part of the motivation for my dad to get me a car,” Sandra recalls, “he hated getting up at 5 [a.m.] to take me to seminary, which was across town.” Sometimes, after these long days at seminary and school, Sandra would return home to find books spread out all over the floor of the front room and Georgia and Lucille absolutely absorbed in study. Equally upsetting was the fact that she would have to scare up her own dinner, and, adding insult to injury, wash up afterward. This irritation got translated on more than one occasion into arguing with her mother about her “wasting her time” on all the study—after all the church was true and wasn’t that all we need to know? To be sure Sandra’s irritation was magnified by the usual angst that comes with being a teenager, and in retrospect, she admits that “my folks were pretty laid back and I had a pretty easy life.”

Mounting Questions

Sometimes Sandra’s mother would ask Sandra to run some of the questions she was encountering in her research past the seminary teacher. One of the issues Sandra remembers raising was the distinction between Elohim and Jehovah in the Old Testament. Current Mormonism identifies Jesus with Jehovah and Heavenly Father with Elohim. Sandra remembers one time when she was studying the Old Testament in seminary and “[my mother] was going after me several days about who Elohim was and who Jehovah was and how to tell which is which in the Old Testament, how you make the distinction between the two. So I went back to my seminary teacher about this, and essentially the way the answer broke down was: Generally speaking, it’s always Jehovah except in places where it’s Elohim.”

Attending ward meetings with Georgia and Lucille could also be more embarrassing than pleasant. Sandra recalls:

Back then Mormons didn’t carry their Bibles to church so if she took hers to church I knew she was going to ask questions, which would cause a stir. She was told one time something to the effect, “You don’t need to look up the references, the brethren are inspired to put the right references in the lessons. It shows a lack of faith.”

One time my aunt was in class with mom when they brought up something . . . and a man jumped up and shook his finger at [Aunt] Lucille and said “Only an adulterous nation seeks after a sign.”

Happily for her, Sandra was spared the embarrassment of being present on the latter occasion.

Despite her lack of involvement in her mother’s and aunt’s research Sandra could not help but become aware of some of the things they were discovering which caused her to have questions. Sandra’s seminary teacher, Ina Easton, was a very kind lady, a grade school teacher, who Sandra felt would not have the training to answer the kinds of questions her mother was posing. Sandra felt sure, however, that the answers would unfold once she graduated from seminary and moved on to LDS Institute (college level classes usually offered in a building owned by the Mormons next to secular university campuses). As it would turn out Sandra graduated early from seminary and so was able to begin attending Institute in the evening while she was still in high school. It was really not until her second year of Institute with a new teacher, at Los Angeles Valley Junior College (now defunct) in Van Nuys, California, that Sandra began asking substantive questions. She naturally assumed that if there is any time and place in the Mormon world where it is appropriate to ask the hard questions, surely it would be in these college-level Institute classes. She was mistaken: “When I started asking questions the second year [my teacher] got defensive and told me to stay after class. He then instructed me to not ask any more questions as I was disturbing a girl who was attending but wasn’t a member yet.” Ironically it had been Sandra who was giving the girl in question a ride to the class.

Despite her holding on to Mormonism at the time, Sandra is convinced that she knew enough even then about the cracks in the foundation of Mormonism that she would have eventually given it up even if she had never met Jerald.

But she did meet Jerald. During Sandra’s first year at the community college Sandra’s grandmother had come to California to stay the winter. Then Sandra accompanied her grandmother on her trip back to Salt Lake during spring break.

It was on Sunday evening of that weekend that Sandra’s grandmother asked her if she would drive her to a meeting she described as being “sort of like a fireside.” The words “sort of” did not escape Sandra and so she supposed that it was not a regular Mormon fireside they were going to. But she decided to tag along anyway to get her mind off the recent visit from her boyfriend (now attending BYU) informing her of his intention to toss her over in the hope of finding a finer filly in the stables of the Lord’s University. Still it was not as though she expected the meeting to be exciting. Sandra recalls, “I assumed it was a bunch of old Mormon people and she [Sylvia] didn’t want to tell me that in case I wouldn’t go. When this tall good-looking guy came to the door I immediately got more interested.” As it happened Jerald too was attracted to Sandra. “I thought that she was a beautiful young woman,” Jerald recalled, yet feared “she was probably too young for me in the foundation of Mormonism that she would have eventually given it up even if she had never met Jerald.”

Fortunately for Sandra Jerald was also attracted to her. “I thought that she was a beautiful young woman,” Jerald recalled, yet feared “she was probably too young for me in the foundation of Mormonism that she would have eventually given it up even if she had never met Jerald.”

Afterward Sandra took the initiative to engage Jerald in a discussion about the meeting. Naturally he was eager to share both his discoveries about Mormonism and his newfound faith in Christ. An invitation was tendered for Jerald to come over to Sandra’s grandmother’s house the following Friday for dinner.

28 Jerald Tanner’s Testimony, p. 9.
and further discussion and then another for April 1st. On the latter occasion Jerald’s first impression of Sandra’s sophistication faced the challenge of her playing an April Fool joke by setting the dinner table that evening with cups, pans, measuring cups, anything besides normal tableware. When Jerald arrived, very eager to make a good impression and to be a good witness, he noticed the peculiar arrangement, concluded that there must be some legitimate reason for it, or some misfortune such as Sandra and her grandmother not being able to afford better, and so, not wanting to offend or embarrass, studiously avoided acting like anything was out of the ordinary. Sandra maintained her deadpan expression as long as she could, waiting in vain for some glimmer of recognition of the joke on Jerald’s face, and then finally burst out laughing “April Fool!” After that fiasco Sandra feared Jerald might lose interest. But he was not so easily put off and we find Sandra having dinner at Jerald’s two days later.

One of the first things Jerald showed Sandra in terms of problems with Mormonism were the changes Joseph Smith had introduced into the prophesies between 1833 and 1835. Following up, Sandra went down to Sam Weller’s Zion’s Bookstore and purchased an LDS triple combination (The Book of Mormon, Doctrine & Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price bound together under a single cover) and an edition of the Book of Commandments. Then, as her grandmother read the prophesies from the Book of Commandments aloud, Sandra followed along in the then-current Doctrine & Covenants, noting the changes in the margins. In this way she was able to establish for herself beyond doubt that what Jerald had told her was in fact true. More decisive however was the reading she did in the sermons of her great-great-grandfather Brigham Young. One day Jerald challenged her with the question whether, given her pride in her ancestry, she had ever actually read any of Brigham Young’s sermons. She admitted that she had not. And so Jerald began bringing over volumes of the Journal of Discourses with slips of paper marking places from which he would then show her passages where Brigham had taught things that were wrong or markedly out of line with current Mormon teaching. It was at this time that Sandra learned of Brigham Young’s false prediction that the Civil War would not succeed in defeating slavery (“Ham this time that Sandra learned of Brigham Young’s false prediction that the Civil War would not succeed in defeating slavery (“Ham

Blood Atonement

Although she could see the problem in each case it did not seem to her that they were significant enough in themselves to prove current Mormonism wrong. What ended up being decisive was Brigham Young’s Blood Atonement teaching. To this day Sandra can point to the two paragraphs that in one stroke and forever more persuaded her that the branch of Mormonism led by Brigham Young could not be of God. They are found in a sermon preached by Brigham Young in the Salt Lake Tabernacle on March 16, 1856:

> Suppose you found your brother in bed with your wife, and you would at once do so in such a case; and under such circumstances, I have no wife whom I love so well that I would not put a javelin through her heart, and I would do it with clean hands.

> There is not a man or woman, who violates the covenants made with their God, that will not be required to pay the debt. The blood of Christ will never wipe that out, your own blood must atone for it; and the judgments of the Almighty will come, sooner or later, and every man and woman will have to atone for breaking their covenants.

Sandra was shocked at finding Brigham Young teaching that you are doing someone a redemptive favor by murdering them, and that our blood needs to be shed because the blood of Christ was not sufficient for us. In that instant all Sandra’s illusions about Brigham Young being a true prophet of God fell away, as did her faith in the Church he led.

Enter Cupid

As Jerald and Sandra’s study advanced so did their romance. On April 6th, while the LDS General Authorities busied themselves down at the Tabernacle during the Spring General Conference, serving up their usual courses of edifying platitudes, Jerald sat next to Sandra for the first time at her grandmother’s house. On April 24, while sitting in the Tanner family’s front room, the petting of a fat tabby cat that sat between them resolved itself, with a nudge of encouragement from Sandra, into holding hands. Three days later, on Monday, April 27, Jerald and Sandra met with the intention of listening to a Pauline Hancock tape on Jerald’s trusty reel-to-reel tape machine. The thing had always worked great before, and indeed it did so on the following day, but for some reason Jerald couldn’t get it to play the tape on that particular day. So they spent the evening talking instead, and as they talked the topic of discussion veered away from study and onto their relationship. Sandra’s grandmother was in the front parlor watching television while Jerald and Sandra sat side by side holding hands in another parlor at the back of the house. Jerald remarked on how much he loved being with Sandra, and then, gazing at their hands, said that he wanted to hold her hand forever. Sandra, thinking she detected perhaps the sound of a proposal fluttering in the air, and noting that Jerald was looking at her hand rather than her face, sought further clarity with the

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29 At this point Sandra does not recall whether it was the 1926 Temple Lot edition or the 1903 Salt Lake Tribune edition.


31 Journal of Discourses 1:50.


result that Jerald made explicit that he loved her and wanted to marry her. To this Sandra responded with a line appropriately embarrassing to recall, something like “Wow! Me Too!” They kissed and started making plans.

As soon as Sandra’s mother and Aunt Lucille got the news they hurried from California to Salt Lake. On the evening of Saturday, May 2, Jerald and Sandra came close to eloping. While Sandra’s grandmother, mother, and aunt were out visiting relatives Sandra left a note. Then they went over to Jerald’s to fetch his mother to serve as witness and headed out west for Wendover, Nevada. They got no further than the Great Salt Lake, however, before Sandra began to have qualms about how disappointed her mother would be. And so they turned back. Sandra’s mother actually returned home before they did but didn’t see the note, and so might have never known anything about the planned elopement if Sandra hadn’t dully ventured to ask: “Did you see the note?”

LaMar Petersen

The next day, May 3, Jerald and Sandra joined Sandra’s mother and aunt to go and visit a man who would become a beloved friend and helper to Jerald and Sandra for the rest of his life: LaMar Petersen (Dec. 23, 1910–Sept. 16, 2005). They met him at his Mozart School of Music, which in those days was located at 45 South Main Street above Daynes Music Company. Since it was a Sunday, and the school was closed, we may suppose that they had rearranged the meeting to follow LaMar’s usual Sunday performance as organist at Salt Lake’s Second Church of Christ, Scientist, where, although he was not a Christian Scientist, he would play for 65 years.

Two years prior to this LaMar had written the small booklet mentioned previously, Problems in Mormon Text, which dealt frankly with the kind of problems Jerald had been encountering. The booklet was well received by scholars such as Fawn Brodie and Sterling M. McMurrin.34 Later he would write Hearts Made Glad: The Charges of Intemperance Against Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet (1975) and The Creation of the Book of Mormon: A Historical Inquiry (2000). He was a careful historian of Utah and Mormon origins, an honorary life member of the Utah State Historical Society, and served for eighteen years on the Advisory Board of the Utah Historical Quarterly. One thing that becomes clear when one looks at Jerald’s career is that he never really worked alone. He was always helped by Sandra and a number of very gifted friends, so we cannot give a full picture of Jerald’s career without mentioning faithful friends and helpers like LaMar Petersen.

Tanners Are Married

The marriage took place in Mission Hills, California, on the afternoon of June 14th in the front room of Sandra’s parents’ large colonial style home at 14960 Chatsworth Street. The weather was nice and Jerald’s parents were able to come. Since Jerald and Sandra were both convinced that the LDS Church was not a legitimate Church, they did not want to have their wedding ceremony performed by a Mormon. So a Protestant pastor by the name of James H. Kepler, of the Church of Our Savior, a Congregational Church in Granada Hills, was brought in for the occasion. Pastor Kepler’s theological liberalism gave the young couple pause to wonder whether they might just as well have invited a secular justice of the peace to perform the duty. In any case the ceremony came off well and was followed by a reception that evening.

After a brief honeymoon in Yosemite National Park, the young couple rented the small apartment that belonged to Sandra’s parents that was behind their garage. There they remained until October of 1959 when they moved into their own apartment at 11946 Hart Street, North Hollywood.

Although Sandra had previously been very religious and active as a Mormon, she didn’t know Christ. Discovering that Mormonism wasn’t true didn’t equal becoming a Christian. Jerald was firmly convinced that God had sent Sandra into his life and reasoned that “since she told me that she wanted to be a Christian, I felt that it would be pleasing to the Lord for us to be married,” an assumption he later attributed to the fact that at the time he was “only a babe in Christ,” with no one older and wiser to consult upon the matter.35 For her part, Sandra contented herself to let the excitement of the marriage push thoughts about becoming a Christian out of her mind. After they were married her Bible reading began to slip and even though Jerald encouraged her to read a little every day, she even neglected that. Finally Jerald asked Sandra to travel to Independence to visit the people that had led him to the Lord. This she did in September staying a week with the Moores as Jerald had done.36 Describing this experience in one of her earliest tracts Sandra recalled that “When she arrived in Independence, she found herself among some of the sweetest people she had ever met. Here, the ‘Sonlight’ shown so bright that Sandra could not ignore it.”37 Upon returning to California she found that she had come under conviction that she was a sinner,

34 “I think you have done an unusual service in publishing it. In the near future I plan to obtain other copies for distribution to friends. (Letter from Sterling M. McMurrin to LaMar Petersen [March 27, 1957]).
35 Jerald Tanner’s Testimony, p. 10.
36 Jason R. Smith is incorrect when he says that Jerald and Sandra went to Independence in September 1959 and that “It was on that trip that Pauline baptized Sandra” (“Pauline Hancock and Her ‘Basement Church,’” p. 192). It was on a subsequent trip in which Jerald and Sandra traveled together that Sandra was baptized.
and yet she still resisted letting Christ come into her heart until the following month. The matter was finally resolved during a religious broadcast Sandra was listening to on the morning of Saturday, October 24, 1959. Sandra recalls:

> I turned to the Christian radio station and listened to a sermon. The minister was preaching [from 1 John 4:10] on the great love of God and the mercy offered to us through Jesus Christ. Nothing ever struck me with such force. I opened my heart to God and accepted Christ as my own personal Savior. The Holy Spirit flooded my soul with such joy that I wept for over an hour.48

Sandra seldom tells this story without mentioning how they played Elton M. Roth's old hymn, "In My Heart There Rings a Melody," and how the words described perfectly what she really came to understand and how she felt that day.

From that day forward Jerald and Sandra's distinctive gifts came together to form a very effective ministry team. Jerald was a tireless researcher with an extraordinary gift for handling documentary evidence. But he was too shy and retiring to ever be a dynamic speaker or presenter. Sandra on the other hand had a good logical mind and a speaking gift that she had already used effectively on many occasions while still a Mormon. This enabled her to effectively serve as the public face of the ministry.

One God

What is important to keep in mind at this point is that even though Jerald and Sandra had both now come to know Christ, they still believed in the Book of Mormon, and as such were careful to try to harmonize what they read in it about the doctrine of God with what the Bible said. Pauline Hancock clung to the Book of Mormon until her death even to the point of being unwilling to baptize people who didn’t have a witness to its truthfulness.49 One of the reasons for her commitment to the Book of Mormon was that God used its monotheistic doctrine to deliver her from what she considered to be her polytheistic background.50 One of the difficulties is that the Book of Mormon is actually further from the later Mormon doctrine of God than traditional orthodox Trinitarianism, in that it is tainted with a view of God commonly referred to as modalism. Modalism teaches that the Trinity is not three persons in one God but one divine person in three different roles or expressions. We find numerous passages in the Book of Mormon that reflect this modalistic concept, such as Ether 3:14: "Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son," and 3 Nephi 1:14: "Behold, I come unto my own...to do the will, both of the Father and of the Son—of the Father because of me, and of the Son because of my flesh" (cf. Alma 11: 26-29, 38-39; Mosiah 3:5,8). The idea seems to be, in the second passage at least, that the spirit of Jesus is the Father and the body of Jesus is the Son. Traditional orthodox Trinitarianism accepts neither modality nor a plurality of gods. The Athanasian Creed, for example, put it this way:

> We worship one God in trinity, and trinity in unity, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance. For the person of the Father is one; of the Son, another; of the Holy Spirit, another. But the divinity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is one.

The chief concern of modalism is with safeguarding the unity or oneness of God. But it seeks to do so by "confounding the persons."

Taking her lead from the Book of Mormon, Pauline explained the Godhead as follows in one of the regular advertisement/columns she published in the Independence Examiner for many years, this one entitled “Does the Scriptures Teach A Trinity Concerning the Godhead?” (August 23, 1952):

> When the scriptures refer to the Father, it is THE LORD, THAT SPIRIT, which fills heaven and earth, our Creator, our God; when the word refers to the Son it is THAT SAME SPIRIT, THE LORD, our God, revealing Himself in a body to redeem man... and when the scriptures refer to the Comforter which cometh into the heart of the true believer to give understanding, comfort, to fill with love and joy, it is THAT SAME SPIRIT, THE LORD, our God, in another one of His administrations or operations.41

Pauline had started out in the RLDS Church, but after the large split in that denomination when Frederick M. Smith issued the “Supreme Directional Control,” Pauline first joined the faithful opposition and then eventually took advantage of the offer made by the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) to transfer her membership there, along with other former RLDS members. Among the defectors was also Samuel Wood, who became an Apostle in the Temple Lot group but later got into trouble for coming to the same understanding of the Godhead as Pauline had. In 1934 he wrote a book endorsing it entitled The Infinite God. The book was sponsored by Pauline and the printing of was paid for by his close friend, Emily Beede Shehee of Council Bluffs.42 In 1935 Wood was tried by the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) and expelled. When the charges against Wood were presented to the General Assembly, Pauline asked whether belief in one God was to be regarded as heresy. The answer being given in the affirmative she asked that her name be removed from the Church record. When it was all over Wood made his way directly to the home of Pauline and her husband Silas, feeling, he said, very desirous of taking a bath, after which he reported: “we then felt better—we seemed to be cleansed both physically and spiritually.”

In his book Wood describes the threefold character of the Godhead on the analogy of the human person, conspicuously

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37 Sandra Tanner, “Out of Darkness, into the ‘Sonlight’ ” (1960) 1. In this tract Sandra describes her experience in the third person. The assignment of the date 1961 to this tract in the copy included with the Scott Faulring Interview is incorrect. Jerald and Sandra were only at the address on the tract I have in my possession from April to July 1960. Faulring’s copy does not have the address on it.

38 Quoted in Jerald Tanner’s Testimony, p. 10.

39 This was true at least in Sandra’s case. See footnote 37.

40 Her struggle in accepting the Book of Mormon teaching that Jesus is the Eternal God is described in the very rough transcription of a biographical sermon. (James D. Wardle Papers, box 22, folder 10, Marriott Library Archives.)

41 H. Michael Marquardt Papers, box 9, folder 3, Marriott Library Archives.

42 From the obituary Samuel Wood wrote for Pauline in TM: An Independent Journal of Fundamental Religious and Social Reform 7.6 (November 1963) p. 5. Also Pauline’s name and address are given in the back of the book along with Wood’s as sources from which the book could be obtained.
borrowing his manner of expression from the eighteenth century mystic Emmanuel Swedenborg:\(^{43}\)

By the ONENESS OF GOD is meant that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are ONE GOD IN PERSON. The Father, which is the Spirit from all Eternity, the Son, which is the flesh in which the Father revealed himself in the world, and the Holy Spirit, which is the operation of God in the world, constitute one man.\(^{44}\)

This view was not only held in Pauline’s circle. James D. Wardle, who was still a member in good standing of the RLDS Church, was also convinced that the Book of Mormon taught the doctrine.\(^{45}\)

Jerald learned of Wood’s book when Pauline gave him a copy of it. In that copy, which still exists, we discover that Jerald went right through from start to finish replacing the page numbers of the edition of the Book of Mormon that Wood was using (the so-called “Authorized Edition” published in Lamoni, Iowa, in 1908) with the page numbers and references of the standard Salt Lake LDS edition.

Interestingly this modalistic view of God, though inadequate theologically, nevertheless provided Book of Mormon believers like Pauline and Jerald with a unique perspective from which to view standard Mormon teaching.

First Vision

The idea that God was only one person cast doubt on the official LDS version of the story of the First Vision, in which Joseph Smith saw the Father and the Son in 1820. Today we usually think of the problems with the First Vision story in terms of the historical evidence that stands against it. To these Book of Mormon believers, however, it stood out first of all as posing a theological rather than merely historical problem: How could you have two personages appear to Joseph Smith if God was only one person? The lengths to which someone holding the Book of Mormon view might go in order to try and validate the First Vision story, while at the same time remaining faithful to the Book of Mormon teaching about the nature of God, is well illustrated in the attempted harmonization of Moroni Sherman in his little tract “Who Is Jesus?” According to Sherman the two personages represented the spirit part and the flesh part of God, respectively.

The story of Joseph Smith seeing two personages stands as a monumental witness to the BOOK OF MORMON, p. 721. Joseph Smith saw two images and was over a hundred years ahead of scientists today who are just beginning to acknowledge that there are two beings in each of us. The spiritual man and the fleshly man are one man. Because we have two parts, flesh and spirit, does not make us two different and distinct people. Christ stated that He had a Spiritual body and a clay body and Joseph Smith was privileged to see both.\(^{46}\)

Prior to meeting Jerald, Sandra became aware of a different set of problems facing the First Vision, problems discovered by her mother Georgia and her aunt Lucille. They discovered that the LDS Church had been quietly doctoring its sources relating to the First Vision in order to conceal the fact that the official story was not the one generally told during much of the nineteenth century.

Georgia and Lucille had discovered an interesting telling of the First Vision in the January 1888 issue of the Mormon periodical The Historical Record by Andrew Jenson. The account of the first part of the vision was quite similar to the official story told in the current Pearl of Great Price:

“I saw two personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name, and said (pointing to the other), THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, HEAR HIM.\(^{47}\)

In current Mormonism the clue to identifying the personages in Joseph Smith’s First Vision story are the familiar words, taken from the New Testament gospels “This is my beloved Son, Hear Him.” We seem to have a conspicuous reference to the Father and the Son. However, as you read on in this particular source you find that one of the two figures is explicitly identified as an angel:

The angel again forbade Joseph to join any of these churches. . . . “Many other things did he (the angel) say unto me. . . .”

The idea that one of the figures was an angel seems to imply that something different is going on here than the simple identification of the personages in the passages as the Father and Son.

Having learned of this account, Lucille decided that she would like to obtain her own copy of The Historical Record. When she did, however, she was surprised to discover that the language in her copy had been changed so that the angel was now called the “Holy Being” in the first instance and “the Christ” in the second. The change was remarkable in the sense that both forms of the passage appeared in what was ostensibly bound copies of old newspapers, so that modifying it without any sort of notification amounted to the pretense of reprinting old issues of a newspaper, say the New York Times for example, but actually adding or subtracting words that you did not like.

A Letter to An Apostle

After a delightful week in Independence, Missouri, in September of 1959, Sandra was seen off at the train station by Pauline Hancock, Olive Wilcox, and Barbara Moore. Six days later we find her addressing a letter to Bishop Warren H. Kennedy in which she thanks him for an offer he had made during

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\(^{44}\) Swedenborg expressed himself on this same point in very similar terms:

“...When it is said, that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are the three essentials of one God, like the soul body and operation, in man, it appears to the human mind as if those three essentials were three persons, which is not possible. (The True Christian Religion: Containing the Universal Theology of the New Church Foretold by the Lord in Daniel VII. 13, 14; and in Revelation XXI 1,2 [Boston: Otis Clapp // New York: John Allen 1851] p. 144).


\(^{47}\) “Joseph Smith, the Prophet,” The Historical Record 7.1-3 (January 1888) p. 355.
a “recent discussion” to send one of her questions to Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith in the LDS Church Historian’s Office. The question Sandra chose was the change discovered by Lucille in the Historical Record. In view of Smith’s blistering response to her question, I think it only fair to reproduce Sandra’s letter in its entirety to provide the reader opportunity to judge for him or herself whether Smith’s response got its heat from a natural ferociousness of temper on his part or in reaction to something provocative Sandra might have said:

October 1, 1959

Dear Bishop Kennedy,

In our recent discussion you said you would be happy to send my questions to the Church Historian’s Office for an answer. These are my questions.

I have been studying church history and find different wordings of the account of Joseph Smith’s first vision in 1820. Jenson’s History published in 1888 says “The angel again forbade Joseph to join any of these churches. . . . Many other things did he (the angel) say unto me which I cannot write at this time. . . . and they did in reality speak unto me, or one of them did.” P. 355, 356

A later edition of the same history uses the wording “The Holy Being again forbade Joseph to join any of these churches. . . . Many other things did he (the Christ) say unto me which I cannot write at this time” and the words “or one of them did” have been dropped. [sic] from the later account.

The wording of our present Church History differs from both of these.

I would like a photostatic copy of Joseph Smith’s own account in his own handwriting of this first vision.

I cannot find where Joseph Smith or Brigham Young identified the personages in the first vision as “God, the Father. [sic] and His Son Jesus Christ,” or where either make any reference to this vision in a sermon.

Where can I find the first references made by authorities of the Church, wherein these personages are identified as God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, and where and when was this first taught as doctrine?

I want to thank you for offering to get these answers for me.

Sincerely,
Sandra Tanner [signature]

Joseph Fielding Smith’s November 5, 1959, response to Bishop Kennedy regarding Sandra’s letter was filled with judgmental statements on the pregnant, eighteen-year-old Sandra. He waxed expansive on how evil, devious, and unfaithful she was. “Those questions come from those who do not seek the truth, but rather are steered against it,” wrote the indignant Smith. “If this young lady would seek the Lord rather than the mouthings of enemies of the Church and obtain a testimony of the Gospel she would not be susceptible to the supposed arguments and mouthings of enemies of the Church.” And then, just in case Bishop Kennedy missed his point the first time, “I tell you, Bishop, only those who do not seek to know the truth will quibble over this statement.” And then just for good measure: “I tell you Bishop, that this kind of argument is contemptible. It is used only by those who are in opposition to the work of the Lord.”

Not only was Sandra’s question out of line, she was also accused by Smith of actually acting on behalf of some sinister conspiracy against the LDS Church:

Now those who have concocted this plot have gone to considerable trouble to find other passages which seem to contradict this [i.e., the Churches official story of the First Vision]. If they had placed half of this diligent search in prayerful, faith, the chances are that the Lord would have given them a personal revelation that this is TRUE. But, No! They must quibble over it!

It is true that Andrew Jensen said the “Angel again forbade Joseph to join any of these churches[,]” Who was the angel? Moroni! The holy being again forbade Joseph to join any of these churches, was Moroni. Now I object to anyone placing in the mouth of the Prophet Joseph Smith words that he did not utter.

“These questions follow a type,” Smith explains dismissively, “I have had three or four other communications with questions such as these almost verbatim.”

“This young woman asks for a ‘photostatic copy’ of the Prophet’s statement in his own handwriting. Well, if we furnished it would that convince her?” The implied answer is of course, no it wouldn’t, as is seen in Smith’s follow-up suggestion that Bishop Kennedy direct Sandra to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, where the rich man in torment asks Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his brothers, only to be told “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead” (Luke 16:31) along with the Lord’s statement against those who sought a sign but would not be given one, which Smith mistakenly references as coming from Matthew 12:29.

It is amazing how much Smith thinks he knows about Sandra’s attitudes and motives. He seems quite certain that she does not pray, or have a testimony, or care about the truth. In fact he is sure she is steeled against it.

One thing Smith said, however, was certainly true. Providing Sandra with a photostatic copy of the First Vision in Joseph Smith’s handwriting would not have built her confidence in the official version of the story. When Joseph Fielding Smith wrote this denunciatory letter he would have been aware of the existence of the only version of the First Vision in Joseph Smith’s own handwriting, which the LDS Church was then suppressing apparently because it differed radically from the official story and in fact at the precise point Sandra had inquired about. It said nothing whatsoever about Joseph seeing the Father and the Son, or even two personages.

That Joseph Fielding Smith knew of this account is established by the fact that he personally refused Fawn M. Brodie access to it in 1943, remarking at the time that “There are things in this library we don’t let anyone see.” LaMar Petersen, although he had never seen it himself, was told by Apostle Levi Edgar Young in 1953 of “a ‘strange account’ (Young’s own term) of the

First Vision, which he [Young] thought was written in Joseph’s own hand and which had been concealed for 120 years in a locked vault.” Young declined to give details, “but stated that it did not agree entirely with the official version. Jesus was the center of the vision, but God was not mentioned.”49 Petersen goes on, however, to say that he “respected Young’s wish that the information be withheld until after his death.” So even though LaMar might have helped with the question, he was not telling what he knew at that point. After Young died in December 1963 LaMar told Jerald and Sandra what he knew. They in turn sent a request for a copy of it along with some money to Joseph Fielding Smith, who never responded. Eventually the Tanners would publish the account for the first time in 1965 under the title Joseph Smith’s Strange Account of the First Vision.

A Visit with the Bishop

When Joseph Fielding Smith’s letter arrived Bishop Kennedy invited Sandra down and read it to her. She was shocked and asked whether the bishop thought it was fair. He said he saw no problem with it. Sandra recalls her objection:

I told him either Joseph Fielding Smith didn’t pay me the courtesy to look up the references or he was deliberately evading the real issue. Anyone reading the original source would know that to identify the “angel” as “Moroni” makes no sense. The account is talking about Joseph Smith being in the woods praying. I asked if I could have the letter, he said no. I asked if I could have a copy of the letter, he said he would have to pray about it.

As we can see from the fact that we are able to quote from the letter, Bishop Kennedy did finally give Sandra a copy. In any case, had Smith known the real circumstances behind the letter would he perhaps have responded to it more circumspectly? The situation was more complicated than Smith knew. Sandra was already out of Mormonism and would be a Christian before Smith’s answer arrived. Georgia and Lucille were concerned that Sandra had married what we nowadays call a Jesus Freak. Sandra’s mother knew about Pauline Hancock’s kind of Christianity, and she didn’t like it. It was, from her perspective, too fanatical. So when she heard that her daughter was going to marry a man of similar mind and zeal to Pauline’s she disapproved. In those early days Jerald and Sandra turned away from worldly entertainments in order to focus on the work of the Lord. They watched no television nor did they go to the movies. Sandra’s giving up make-up, lipstick, and fancy clothes greatly alarmed Georgia and moved her to want to fight to get Sandra back on track by somehow getting her back into the “more normal” LDS Church. Smith couldn’t have been more mistaken in casting Sandra as an evil dupe, and Georgia and Lucille as sinister villains in the background, who were “steeled” against the truth, concocting plots to undermine the official story of the First Vision as a way of tempting the foolish girl out of the LDS Church.

In fact Georgia and Lucille were very typical Mormons who loved to look things up and find out all the problems with LDS history but had no plan of ever leaving the Church. One does have to wonder at their surprise at Sandra’s leaving, however, after being confronted with all the problems that they showed her.

Before Smith answered the letter, Sandra would join Jerald in having something better than Mormonism, namely the knowledge of the living Savior, Jesus Christ. But even before Sandra found Jesus she was the sort of person who wanted to know that her Church was from God and told the truth. She did not view it as consistent with her moral upbringing to buy into the logic of Joseph Fielding Smith in this letter. She wanted the Church to actually be true, not just rely on a feeling that it was true.

The letter from Joseph Fielding Smith accomplished two things. First, it gave Jerald and Sandra a good feel for how surly and defensive Mormon leaders could become when questioned (a thing they would definitely need to get used to if they planned to continue in their ministry), and second, that they were not always going to get the straight scoop on things from LDS headquarters.

Joseph Fielding Smith was the quintessential boundary guardian in a Church that had institutionalized the practice of keeping the finger of blame firmly pointed outward on all occasions where the Church’s truthfulness and integrity were questioned. One might suppose that this goes back in part to the ongoing cultivation by the leadership of the LDS Church of the oft commented upon persecution complex among its members as a way of steering them against outside influences. And so by the time Jerald and Sandra began their work the LDS Church had very much become a blaming church, an its-not-our-fault-its-your-problem church.

But someone will no doubt say; “Now wait a minute. Sometimes people actually do leave the Church because of their own failure to live up to its standards, and then turn around and invent fake reasons to make it sound like it was the LDS Church’s fault,” I dare say. But will such an objector consider that perhaps that is not the only reason people criticize the LDS Church? Or again someone may remind me that there are two sides to every story and ask how I know whether Sandra’s story or Joseph Fielding Smith’s story was more true to the facts. Well, for one thing, Joseph Fielding Smith did not know the background out of which the question Sandra sent arose, and yet he clearly jumped the gun and assumed the worst. Secondly, Sandra asked a substantive question and Smith presented something in answer to it. We have Sandra’s letter, we have Smith’s answer, we have the documents in question. And when we look at both it very quickly becomes clear that when Sandra told the Bishop that Smith “didn’t pay me the courtesy to look up the references or he was deliberately evading the real issue,” we can see she is telling the truth. Anyone reading the original pages from the Historical Record can see at once that to identify the “angel” with “Moroni” just doesn’t work.

In addition to this, further vindication for Sandra’s position has since become available in the form of the First Vision account in the handwriting of Joseph Smith. Joseph Fielding Smith made it sound as if he was unwilling to make that account available to Sandra because of his certainty that since her intent was evil, she would not recognize the inconspicuous witness it bore to the

official story of the First Vision. We now know that since Smith knew the contents of that account, he would have known that it was significantly different from the official story, raising further suspicion in our mind that Smith was indeed trying to evade Sandra’s question by casting blame.

Hiding the Past

Now to be sure the LDS Church is not alone in relying on the blame game as a way of dealing with substantive criticisms of its teaching, history and behavior. Other religious institutions tend to resort to it also. It seems, however, to be a particular temptation to the only-true-church variety of religious institution.

I would think, for example, that the LDS Church might benefit from reading the following excellent comments in Roman Catholic dissident Hans Küng’s book *Truthfulness: the Future of the Church* (1968). “The Church which does not conceal her mistakes, but constructively comes to terms with them, is, because truthful, also credible.”50 Unfortunately when the Church insists upon concealing its mistakes, it must do so illegitimately, adopting an overblown view of the extent of its leadership’s spiritual authority by the manipulation of truth, where, Küng goes on to say,

truth is put at the disposal of the system and politically managed . . . Language is corrupted through tactical ambiguity, objective untruth, distorted rhetoric and shallow pathos . . . If continuity is lacking, it can be procured by omissions and harmonizations. The admission and correction of errors is strictly avoided, and instead a practical omiscience of authority insinuated. It is no longer a question of an unavailing quest for truth, but of the inert, imaginary possession of truth, maintained by every instrument of power.51

Out of this kind of manipulative situation inevitably flows a series of undesirable consequences,

secrecy is demanded in things that concern everyone; scholarship consequently must serve the system; people speak differently in private from what they do in public, they speak differently from what they write; through fear of commitment they take refuge in esoteric spheres of study, far from the storms, and for the rest adapt themselves tacitly to the party line. Thus people escape from the real difficulties of life, the most urgent decisions are postponed. Anxious and opportunist—but therefore not particularly scrupulous—prestige-, power-, and system-thinking is dominant, not humility and respect for truth.52

People unfamiliar with Küng’s background might suppose he was a dissident Mormon. Indeed one would be hard pressed to find a better description of the problems of the institution. Jerald and Sandra spent their lives countering for the sake of the Gospel. But in the teeth of a lifetime of vindictive slander by the Mormon leadership, Jerald and Sandra could encourage themselves with Jesus’s wonderfully comforting words: “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:11-12).

Tanners Start Publishing

It was Sandra who made the suggestion that launched their adventure in publishing by mentioning to Jerald one day that she knew how to work a mimeograph machine, which led to their purchasing one from Sears on May 20, 1960.

One of the first items Jerald and Sandra mimeographed and sent around to a good number of people was a letter by Sandra explaining her reasons for leaving the LDS Church. At the time they little imagined the negative response they would get. After all, were not the LDS people committed to doing the right thing when confronted with truth? Sandra recalls her thinking at that time:

I assumed, naively, when we first started out that everyone in the Church operated under the great moral standard I was raised to believe we operated under. We seek for truth and accept it when we see it. We can study our history and we don’t run from it . . . We are for the truth. “The glory of God is Intelligence.” And that works out fine as long as you are willing to accept that what the leaders tell you is truth and intelligence, but as soon as you decide that you may have the capacity of determining truth on your own, then you’re in trouble . . . If God is truth, then we must stand for truth. And if it conflicts with what we believed in the past, then we must give it up.53

Jerald and Sandra had no idea how deep the “conflicts with what we believed in the past” would go. But they were to learn soon enough.

On June 21, Sandra and Jerald began sending out the letter by Sandra entitled “Dear Friend,” giving her testimony and explaining why she was leaving the LDS Church.

Making the most of their new mimeograph machine, they sent copies to nearly everyone they knew in Mormonism, everyone on the Ward mailing list, all her friends and family, and even to Mormon scholars like Francis Kirkham and the General Authorities of the LDS Church.54 In it Sandra gave a number of reasons for her leaving, starting with the theme that the LDS Church seemed more interested in itself than in Jesus and His Word. She begins:

After much prayer and study, I am withdrawing from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints because:

1. I have found that since I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior that I cannot reconcile the teachings of the church with those of Christ.
2. The church does not teach or preach hard enough against sin. It is too conformed to the world . . .
3. The church does not put enough emphasis on Christ and His marvelous atonement. It is too much “church” and not enough “Christ” . . .
4. The church does not preach enough from the scriptures. Most of the talks are just sweet little stories, instead of the word of God.

51 Ibid., pp. 141-42.
52 Ibid., p. 142.
54 The letter from Apostle LeGrand Richards to William E. Barrett (August 29, 1960) speaks of Jerald and Sandra “sending literature to all of us General Authorities.”
Only then does Sandra turn to discuss historical problems she had encountered, including that “the church doctrine and the doctrine contained in the Book of Mormon are exactly opposite,” and that revelations in the Doctrine & Covenants had been changed. She includes as well an extensive statement about problems with the First Vision in so far as she understood them at that point:

Today the church teaches that the personages in the First Vision were God and Christ, but, in studying I have found that until after the death of Brigham Young the church proclaimed that angels appeared in the First Vision. There is no testimony in existence dated within the 50 year period, “1820 to 1870,” claiming the personages in the Vision of 1820 were God the Father, and his Son, Jesus Christ . . . For 50 years no testimony or sermon by Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, the Twelve Apostles, church historians, witnesses [sic] to the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith’s own family, friends, relatives or acquaintances, Mormon or Anti-Mormon literature proclaims a visitation of God and Christ to Joseph Smith in 1820.

Interestingly it is this letter, and in particular this statement about the First Vision, that gets things rolling in the ministry that would later become Jerald and Sandra’s life work. Their taking issue with the First Vision really became the string that, once pulled, began to unravel the whole garment of Mormonism.

Sandra Resigns

Jerald and Sandra would move to Salt Lake City on July 11, 1960, but their final days in California were marked by events that would prove particularly significant. In June Sandra wrote to the Bishop in their new ward requesting that her name be removed from the membership roles of the LDS Church. Again at that time the only procedure for getting that done was designed to exonerate the Church and attribute evil to the person asking to have it done. A Bishop’s Court had to be held and you had to be found guilty of something. Sandra’s trial was held at 7 p.m. on Thursday, July 7, at the North Hollywood Ward on 10837 Collins Street. Sandra was duly “found guilty” of “Apostasy and engaging in activities contrary to the interests of the church.” Sandra recalls that the Bishop “was visibly shaken by the proceeding. He was almost tearful. I was the first person he had excommunicated and he very obviously believed he was sentencing me to spend eternity outside the presence of God. I tried to comfort him by telling him that I felt no sorrow about being excommunicated and I was fully ready to face God as an ex-Mormon since I was trusting in Christ, not church membership, to save me.”

Once they were settled in Salt Lake City, Jerald and Sandra continued researching the First Vision. On July 22, for example, we find them poking around among the books at James Wardle’s barber shop only to find yet another account that contradicted the official version, this time in the first volume of RLDS writer Vida E. Smith’s Young People’s History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (1914):

It was morning, the day beautiful and clear, and early in the spring of 1820 . . . He saw two persons standing in the air. One of them spoke to him. Then the boy Joseph asked which of all the churches was right, and wanted to know which he should join. The angel told him to join none of them. Their creeds (the ways they believed) were wrong. The angel said many other things to this young boy, then went away.

This account, it will be noted, agrees with the one in the Historical Record before it was changed. Two persons (or personages) are mentioned as appearing to Joseph Smith, and the one that speaks is referred to as an angel.

A Chance Meeting

At Wardle’s barbershop that day Francis Kirkham, the LDS historian who edited what was for many years a two-volume standard collection of early historical documents relating to Mormonism, came in for a haircut and began chatting with James about having received a letter from a young woman who said the LDS Church was too much conformed to the world. Quite obviously he had also been sent a copy of Sandra’s “Out of Darkness, into the ‘Sonlight’ ” tract as well because he mentions something included in it to James, namely that the author had told of becoming a Christian through the influence of a group in Independence, Missouri. Since James was himself a member of the RLDS Church, also headquartered in Independence, Kirkham may have wondered whether he might be able to shed some light on the story. For his part James, recognizing that Kirkham was referring to Sandra and wanting to take the opportunity to have a little fun with it, played cat and mouse with Kirkham, dragging out the conversation as long as possible before finally asking him whether he would like to meet this woman, and then introduced him to the girl who had been in the shop the whole time. At the time Sandra described Kirkham as “nice and broad-minded” and reports that they all talked for a long time. That evening Kirkham invited Jerald and Sandra over to dinner in order to present them with a copy of the new edition of the second volume of his compilation, which he signed:

To newly found friends and believers [sic]
in the Book of Mormon.
Mr & Mrs Jerald Tanner.
Francis W. Kirkham
Salt Lake City, Utah
July 22, 1960.

The next day Kirkham left for an LDS Church tour and said that when he got to Independence he would visit Pauline Hancock.

Letter From An Apostle

Another interesting encounter that also had its roots in Sandra’s “Dear Friend” letter occurred after LDS Apostle LeGrand Richards, for some reason, decided to respond. Richards’ letter is dated July 12, 1960, the day after Sandra and

56 Ibid., p. 574.
57 From typescript from pages 5-6 of Vida E. Smith’s book in a letter of Sandra to Georgia McGee (September 22, 1960).
The Apostle authoritatively twiddled the crank on the microfilm viewer until he came to the page he wanted. He then looked displeased to see Jerald enter behind her. He motioned for them to sit down. They did. Sandra gives the following account of this meeting. “Just what is it that this Jesus of yours has that the LDS Church hasn’t got?” the Apostle asked, addressing himself to Jerald. “Well,” Jerald answered, “During my teenage years I began to fall into alcoholism and other sins, but thank God, Christ delivered me!” The Apostle was lofty, dismissive: “I never drank,” he said. “And what about you,” the Apostle said. “What do you have to offer that this Church doesn’t have?” “The love of Christ,” Jerald said, “I want to show the Mormon people the love of Christ.” The Apostle was not amused: “IF YOU THINK YOU’VE GOT MORE LOVE THAN US,” the Apostle said, “YOU’RE CRAZY!”

Before they were finished the Apostle drew himself up and thundered like Moses at Jerald: “I am warning you, don’t start anything against this church!”

The subject turned to the passage from his great-grandfather’s journal. The Apostle produced a sheet of typed excerpts and laid it before Jerald and Sandra. They looked at the him with astonishment. Surely he did not mean them to be satisfied with typed excerpts. How could the Tanners know they were accurate? (As it turned out, they weren’t.) How could they be certain that the excerpts were correctly contextualized historically? (As it turns out, they hadn’t been.) The young couple argued with the Apostle until he grudgingly agreed to accompany them over to the genealogical library to show them the microfilm of the diary itself.

Once out of the office they went down the elevator. Two elderly Mormon ladies who found themselves riding in the elevator with the Apostle sputtered excitedly to one another to the point of nearly swooning.

The Apostle was used to this kind of treatment and he took it all in stride: “Hello, Sisters,” he said, beaming magnanimously. Parting company with the ladies when they reached the ground floor, they passed out a side entrance and into the sunshine and then across to a building that in those days faced North Temple Street where the western arm of the Church Office Building now stands. Then up the elevator again.

As the elevator doors to the genealogical library slid open and the Apostle emerged with Jerald and Sandra, a rush of whispering sounds swept down the room like a tsunami as the astonished patrons passed along the news of the Apostolic visitation. And then…utter silence. Everyone watched in speechless awe as the Apostle floated through the large room and over to the help desk. After giving his instructions, the woman there snapped into action...
enough, there was a passage very like the one on the typed sheet the Apostle had given them. But it was not clear when precisely it was written. Was it written near when it happened or later, perhaps much later? So Jerald asked whether he could turn back a few pages in order to get that information. Dark clouds began to gather in the furrowing brow of the Apostle as he snapped the handle back one frame, and then another, and then yet another, each time manifesting an increasing air of impatience. Still Jerald did not have his answer, and so asked the Apostle either to keep on flipping or let him look around a bit in the document until he could satisfy himself as to its temporal provenance. At that the clouds gave way to smoke and fire. The Apostle was used to veneration, but he didn’t know how to handle being questioned, doubted or challenged on the simple veracity of his word. He began to angrily whip the crank so as to take the film off the machine. “Here I have gone to all the trouble of showing you this and you’re still not satisfied,” the Apostle fumed. “No amount of evidence would ever make you believe! You’re just enemies of the Church ‘trying to find some trick word or statement that would try and prove that he [Joseph Smith] is not a prophet.’”

When the Apostle had finished rewinding the film, he handed it back to the doting lady librarian. As he did, Jerald asked her whether he could come another time and view the microfilm. She said he could. The Apostle turned on her and thundered the command that that was not to happen, that Jerald and Sandra were not to be permitted to see the diary again.65

The Apostle then tramped off angrily in the direction of the elevator, with Jerald chasing after and asking: “Why won’t you let me look at the microfilm? What is it you are trying to hide?”

Sandra, deeply embarrassed at being a part of this fiasco trailed along at a distance, wishing she were invisible. By the time she reached the elevator the Apostle was gone.

One of the most formative moments for Jerald personally during this encounter was when Apostle Richards said: “I am warning you, don’t start anything against this church!” We may thank God that although Jerald was frightened by Richards’ threats at the time, he was not ultimately cowed: “While this meeting with Apostle Richards did cause me to grow somewhat weak in the knees,” Jerald later recalled, “it made me realize more than ever that the Mormon leaders had something to hide from their people and that I should become actively involved in bringing the truth to light. Since I am basically a cowardly sort of person, I entered into the work with fear and trembling.”66

Fear and trembling, yes, but not so much as to cause Jerald and Sandra to call off the search for the truth concerning the First Vision.

“Out for Repair”

The day after the Apostle commanded the librarian not to show Jerald and Sandra the microfilm, Sandra and her grandmother Sylvia returned and put in a request for it. They were told that it was out for repair. The same excuse was given again after that, but they were successful the fourth time they asked the librarian to let them see it.67 This took place on or before September 25, 1960.68

When they finally gained access to the microfilm they discovered that there was a good deal in it that would embarrass the Apostle and the LDS Church. And so their suspicions seemed to be confirmed that the Apostle had something to hide. But was he aware of what was in the diary? As one reads Apostle Richards’ letters related to the affair it very quickly becomes clear that he was a man who had no real head for history, that he viewed its details as irrelevant to the question of coming to know the truth as he defined it. He makes a revealing remark to this effect in a letter he wrote to Sandra’s mother around this time: “The important matter is whether or not the Father and the Son did appear to the Prophet Joseph Smith and we know that they did and that is far more important than...being able to authenticate it.”69 Neither was he a stickler for detail. For example when he first tells Sandra and Jerald about Joseph Lee Robinson’s diary reference to the presence of the Father and Son in the First Vision, he dates it to 1841. In a letter he writes a month later to William E. Barrett at BYU he says it “was written back in 1840.”70 On October 9, 1960, after reading the diary, Jerald and Sandra informed Richards in a letter that “the portion of the journal that you quoted in your letter to us was not written until 1883.”71 Despite having been so informed, Richards repeats his assertion about the early date (this time giving 1842, rather that 1841 or 1840) on November 25, 1960: “my grandfather Joseph Lee Robinson states in his journal published in 1842 when he first came to Nauvoo, that he had seen the prophet who had seen the Father and the Son and so it was common knowledge among the saints of that time that he had seen the Father and the Son.”72

Notice that Richards does not qualify any of his three dates with words like “around.” He simply gives three different dates. A year later in a book entitled Just to Illustrate (1961), Richards quotes the First Vision account from Joseph Lee Robinson’s journal, part of which reads in the book: “We have long since believed and known that Joseph Smith was a true and humble prophet of God who had seen the Father.”73 However, already on the previous October, Jerald and Sandra had sent Richards a letter in which they informed him that “in checking the microfilm of the original journal, we found that the words, ‘who had seen the Father’ were not in the original!”

64 The description of Richards’ words is a composite of various accounts. The statement about Jerald “trying to find some trick word or statement that would try and prove that he [Joseph Smith] is not a prophet” comes from Richard’s own account of the incident in a letter to Georgia McGee (September 26, 1960).
65 Sandra describes these events in a letter to LeGrand Richards dated October 9, 1960.
67 This account is based on letters from Jerald and Sandra Tanner to LeGrand Richards (October 9, 1960) and Georgia McGee to William E. Barrett (August 30, 1960).
68 The date of a letter addressed to Pauline Hancock containing quotes from Joseph Lee Robinson’s diary, along with the remark: “After copying this off, we rechecked it to be sure we had a correct copy. We are satisfied that it is correct.” (James D. Wardle Papers, box 34, folder 1, Marriott Library Archives).
69 LeGrand Richards to Georgia McGee (September 26, 1960).
71 Jerald and Sandra Tanner to LeGrand Richards (October 9, 1960).
72 LeGrand Richards to Georgia McGee (November 28, 1960; dictated November 25).
73 LeGrand Richards, Just to Illustrate (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1961) p. 205.
Robinson’s Quotes

When Jerald and Sandra read the Joseph Lee Robinson diary they discovered that, beside the fact that it was written in 1883 and not earlier as Richards claimed, there were several passages of interest, including the following incident in which Robinson’s sister-in-law reported to Emma Smith what she took to be Joseph Smith going into the house of another woman:

I knew that Angeline, Ebenezer’s wife, had some time before this had watched Brother Joseph the prophet and had seen him go into some house and that she had reported to Sister Emma, the wife of the prophet. It was at a time when she was very suspicious and jealous of him for fear he would get another wife, for she knew the prophet had a revelation on that subject. She (Emma) was determined he should not get another, if he did she was determined to leave and when she heard this, she, Emma, became very angry and said she would leave and was making preparations to go to her people in the State of New York. It came close to breaking up his family. However, he succeeded in saving her at that time but the prophet felt dreadfully bad over it. He went to my brother’s and talked to Angeline on the matter and she would not give him any satisfaction and her husband (Ebenezer) did not reprove his wife, and it came to pass the prophet cursed her severely, but they thought it would not take effect because he, the prophet, was angry supposing the offense was not sufficient to merit so great a curse.74

There could be little doubt that Richards would have been embarrassed in those days to have such a passage become commonly known, the only question is whether he would have been more troubled by it being known that Joseph took women behind Emma’s back or that his own great-grandfather’s sister-in-law had been cursed by the prophet. The diary also recounts Brigham Young teaching his Adam-God doctrine and Joseph Lee Robinson declaring that he “believed every word.”

Some time after December 1, 1960, and before December 20, 1961,75 Jerald and Sandra published a sheet that contained some of the above material, entitled “Excerpts from the Writings of Joseph Lee Robinson,” and a tract called “Suppression of the Records.” When Richards became aware of the fact that Jerald and Sandra were publishing material from Robinson’s diary he threatened legal action on the dubious grounds that “Suppression of the Records.”…76 Happily Jerald and Sandra realized the emptiness of the threat. After all if the Apostle were correct, Sandra could have done very well for herself over the years by suing the LDS Church every time they published materials by Brigham Young without her permission.

Jerald and Sandra’s effectiveness lay partly in the fact that when push comes to shove very few people are interested enough in the truth to put themselves on the line for it. Bill McKeever began his excellent tribute at Jerald’s funeral by quoting the words of A. A. Hodge, founder of Princeton Seminary: “it is easier to find a score of men wise enough to discover the truth than to find one intrepid enough, in the face of opposition, to stand up for it.”77

Similarly one needn’t be a Roman Catholic to appreciate the words of Cardinal Stephan Wyszyński when he said:

The greatest weakness in an apostle is fear. What gives rise to fear is lack of confidence in the power of the Lord . . . The apostle then ceases to offer witness. Does he remain an apostle? The disciples who abandoned their Master increased the courage of the executioners. Silence in the presence of the enemies of a cause encourages them. Fear in an apostle is the principle ally of the enemies of the cause. ‘Use fear to enforce silence’ is the first goal of the strategy of the wicked.78

This valuable insight of Wyszyński’s was forged in the fires of conflict with another of the great nineteenth century spiritual counterfeits, Communism, but all false claimants to the human soul use similar means to achieve their ends.

Happily by the time Jerald and Sandra began to really draw the displeasure of the Mormon leadership they were already convinced that that leadership’s claim to spiritual authority was false. Once it became clear that Robinson’s diary did not contain the promised confirmation of the official First Vision story, Jerald and Sandra simply continued to press on in their research of it. And along the way they were aided by friends and family members.

Pauline in Salt Lake City

Pauline Hancock, accompanied by her friend Barbara Moore, who had put up Jerald during his visit to Independence and then also Sandra when she went there alone, came to Salt Lake City for a visit on September 19, 1960, and stayed until September 28. During their visit they attempted to gain access to the First Vision account written by Joseph Smith, but were refused. Pauline later recalled:

I, personally accompanied by Mrs. Barbara Moore, went to the Historian’s Office in Salt Lake City, Utah, September 21 1960, and asked to see the record history of this vision as written by Joseph Smith, WHICH THEY CLAIM TO HAVE. I was told emphatically and in no uncertain terms, “NO, that such things were too sacred for the public to see.” We told him that we had always heard that they had the record of THIS HAPPENING OF 1820 and again asked him (Mr. A. William Lunde [sic]) to let us see JUST THAT ITEM OF IT. He again said, “THE ANSWER IS NO.”79


75 The former date is derived from the fact that it was produced while Jerald and Sandra lived at 319 N. 5th West, where they began living on December 1, 1960. The latter date is that of the letter where LeGrand Richards threatens to sue them for publishing passages from the diary. That date is only good so long as my assumption that Richards refers to this particular sheet and not something else that the Tanners had produced.

76 LeGrand Richards to Jerald Tanner (December 21, 1961).

77 Read the full text of the tribute online at: http://www.utfm.org/jeraldtanner.html


The use of the claim that certain documents are “too sacred for the public to see” as an excuse for suppressing them is interesting and echoes the “not secret but sacred” distinction that is often appealed to nowadays (without Old Testament precedent) to defend concealing what goes on in the Mormon Temples.


In it Pauline suggests that the changes in the First Vision story were to support the theological innovations in the Book of Abraham.

Pauline, Olive Wilcox and Barbara Moore returned to Salt Lake City in September of 1961, after Pauline’s tract had become available. Olive and Barbara tried once more to gain access to the First Vision material. The resulting interaction with A. William Lund was so unbelievably frustrating and absurd that the two women had their description of it notarized:

He asked us what particular thing we wished to see. We told him we would like to see the history written by Joseph Smith in 1838. Mr. Lund told us that the history written in 1838 and published in the Times and Seasons in 1842 was not in Joseph Smith’s own handwriting and that he had told Pauline Hancock that when she visited him. He stated that it was written by a clerk or scribe and that it was impossible to say just which scribe wrote it.

We then asked Mr. Lund if we could see the First Vision material. He said, “I didn’t say that Joseph Smith dictated it.” He informed us that it was impossible for him to show it without Mr. [Joseph Fielding] Smith’s permission. He also said that there had been some minor changes made in this history, which he could not account for.

Mr. Lund stated that the “Stevenson’s Journal” referred to by Orson Pratt, would prove that the first vision was written before 1840-1842, and that Orson Pratt’s published work of 1840 proved that the first vision was true.

We told Mr. Lund that his history in 1840 did not call the “two personages” the Father and the Son. Mr. Lund told us that Joseph Smith did not claim that they were. We then asked if we could see the “Stevenson’s Journal” or anything else that would substantiate this claim of Joseph Smith’s so-called first vision. Mr. Lund said that he couldn’t show any of it to us.

While Pauline was in town, Jerald and Sandra hosted a meeting (September 26, 1960) at which Pauline spoke in the Salt Lake City branch meeting (September 26, 1960) at which Pauline spoke. Happily she also included a doctrinal statement of Pauline Hancock’s group, which she calls the Church of Christ Youthful Jerald Tanner as the head of a Salt Lake City branch meeting (September 26, 1960) at which Pauline spoke. In the tract itself references Hugh Nibley’s March 21, 1961 letter to Sandra and Pauline’s tract is mentioned in a notarized statement by Olive Wilcox and Barbara Moore on September 25, 1961, in which the tract is referred to in connection with a conversation that took place four days earlier.

We believe the Bible and the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.

We do not believe in holding up any man, but rather in holding up Christ.

We believe that all mankind are lost through the fall: for the natural man is an enemy to God and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becomes a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord. . . .

We believe that a person must be faithful in Christ until death or he cannot be saved.

We believe that this life is the only time given man to prepare to meet God, for there will be no chance for repentance after death.

If from this we were to assume that Jerald had overcome his natural bashfulness and had now become the dynamic leader of a new restorationist sect, we would be mistaken. Even the doctrinal statement was drawn up, not for adherents but for Kate Carter herself as she was preparing her book. By that time Jerald and Sandra had made a serious mark on the Mormon establishment in Salt Lake City, not through raising a following but through research and writing in their quest to bring truth to light.

(to be continued...)

Excerpts from Letters and Emails

I am a recently resigned member of the LDS church, and I was able to take my wife and five children with me. I am a 6th generation former Mormon, and your ceaseless efforts to expose the fraud of Mormonism has helped me more than you can know.

I am extremely offended by your website and all your work. . . . Are you that insecure in your own religion that you have to tear ours down with lies and slander?

I have been an LDS convert for 30 years but, I have been studying the scriptures with an open heart and mind and I am aware of the many discrepancies with the Bible and many of Joseph Smith’s teaching. I have most recently been reading Romans in detail and have a much better understanding of faith and the saving grace of the Savior.

It never ceases to amaze me how offended one can get and the lengths that they can go to to justify their guilt. What was it that made you leave the church anyway? Now be honest, what was it really? Were you immoral and had to go through the church disciplinary system, and it made you really mad? Or, did someone offend you and you have now taken on a vendetta to destroy anyone else who is associated with that religion who, supposedly, so willingly destroyed your pride?

80 The dating rests on the fact that the tract itself references Hugh Nibley’s March 21, 1961 letter to Sandra and Pauline’s tract is mentioned in a notarized statement by Olive Wilcox and Barbara Moore on September 25, 1961, in which the tract is referred to in connection with a conversation that took place four days earlier.


82 Notarized statement dated September 25, 1961, in the James D. Wardle Papers, box 22, folder 12.

83 Kate B. Carter, Denominations that Base their Beliefs on the Teachings of Joseph Smith (n.p.: Kate B. Carter, 1962) p. 51.
I will never forget how much the two of you helped me when I first became a Christian. . . . It was also a blessing to have worked with Jerald at the Rescue Mission.

From an LDS researcher.

I barely knew Jerald, but I had tremendous respect for his integrity . . . I also recall years ago you and Jerald being so kind as to allow me to attend services at your church . . . where Jerald was an elder . . . I truly enjoyed those services . . . It is unfortunate that so many people knew of Jerald only as a hated anti-Mormon, not realizing the valid and energizing role he played in sparking a deep, meaningful discussion of Mormon history.

I was an L.D.S. member for 35 years, but could no longer accept their version of the truth in their doctrines. When I was a member I was warned about the Tanner’s that they were anti-Mormon. I have come to find out the Tanners are just good people who wish for others to come to know the truth.

Your publications and books helped me a great deal after I learned for myself that Joseph Smith was not a prophet of God or divine. My first thought that day was anger and betrayal, followed by tremendous sorrow for all the years I had lost . . . But the joy in Christ takes away the sting, and we have moved on.

Note from Sandra— My heartfelt thanks for your prayers, emails and letters of condolence after Jerald’s death. I treasure each and every one of them.

Ministry Files Appeal

March 26, 2007, U.S. District Judge Dale A. Kimball ruled against our claims of trademark infringement and in favor of Allen Wyatt, Scott Gordon and FAIR (Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research) in the use of 10 domain names—utahlighthouseministry.org utahlighthouseministry.com utahlighthouse.org utahlighthouse.com sandratanner.org sandratanner.com jeraldtanner.org jeraldtanner.com geraldtnanner.org geraldtnanner.com—in conjunction with a fake site that linked back to FAIR’s site. (See #104 Messenger for more information.)

We believe the case was wrongly decided and have initiated an appeal to the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. The judge’s ruling has unfairly impacted our ability to protect our trademarks and opens the door for future exploitation. Further, this decision, if left unchallenged, could negatively affect trademark owners’ rights.

One of the egregious factual errors in Kimball’s decision was the claim Wyatt had turned over all the domain names to us already. However, only six of ten domain names have been turned over by Wyatt, and that was over a year and half ago.

This continued battle for our trademark rights is an expensive process, and we welcome any donations to help defray legal costs.

LDS CLAIMS

Under the Search Light
Recorded Message (801) 485-4262
(Message is three to five minutes)
Free Book Offers

Orders that total $30 or more (before shipping charge) will receive

FREE

Mormonism, Magic and Masonry
by Jerald and Sandra Tanner
and
2 tracts on the First Vision

Orders that total $60 or more (before shipping charge) will receive the items listed above

PLUS

Quest for the Gold Plates
by Stan Larson

All orders receive a free copy of the new DVD, Jesus Christ/Joseph Smith (while quantities last)

New Titles

10 Questions and Answers on Mormonism (Pamphlet) $3.50
Bill McKeever - Rose Publishing

Captain Alexander Fancher: Adventurer, Drover, Wagon Master & Victim of the Mountain Meadows Massacre $20.50
Burr Fancher - Inkwater Press

Breaking the Mormon Code: A Critique of Mormon Scholarship Regarding Classical Christian Theology and the Book of Mormon $14.50
Matthew A. Paulson - WingSpan Press

Banking on Heaven: Polygamy in the Heartland of the American West (DVD) $20.00
Over the Moon Productions

How to Talk to a Mormon $12.50
Ed Bliss - Book Surge

Inside Today's Mormonism (Formerly Becoming Gods) $15.50
Richard Abanes - Harvest House

Lifting the Veil of Polygamy (DVD) $10.00
Living Hope Ministries - Available June 2007

The Long Way Home: Moving from a Pseudo-Christian Cult into Genuine Christianity $10.00
Paul Trask - Refiner's Fire Ministries

Statements of the LDS First Presidency $31.50
Compiled by Gary James Bergera - Signature Books

What Every Mormon (and Non-Mormon) Should Know $24.00
Edmond C. Gruss and Lane A. Thuet - Xulon Press

Recently Added Titles

Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling (Paperback) $17.00
Richard Bushman - Vintage

The Mormon Murders: A True Story of Greed, Forgery, Deceit and Death $6.00
Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith - St. Martin’s Press
Jerald Tanner’s Quest for Truth - Part 2

By Ronald V. Huggins

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. (2 Corinthians 4:1-2)

In the wake of Jerald Tanner’s passing last October 1st it seemed fitting to go back and reflect on the circumstances of his conversion to Christ, his meeting and marrying Sandra McGee, and the beginning of their path that would lead to a lifelong ministry focused on researching Mormonism, bringing forth early Mormon texts and sharing Christ with Mormons. The beginning of the story appeared in the last issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger (http://utlm.org/newsletters/no108.htm).

After their marriage on June 14, 1959, in Mission Hills, California, Jerald and Sandra lived there until July of 1960, when they moved to Salt Lake City. Upon their arrival, however, they dropped off their belongings at the home of Jerald’s parents and stayed only a few days before heading on to Missouri for a short visit with the little Church of Christ group (see Messenger 108, p. 3). On July 25, 1960, Jerald and Sandra, along with their baby April and Jerald’s sister Irene, traveled to Independence by train. On August 2, Sandra was baptized by Pastor Pauline Hancock. Pauline had been hesitant to baptize Sandra unless she felt sure of Sandra’s testimony to the divine origin of the Book of Mormon. Prior to her baptism Sandra had expressed certain doubts, which Pauline had been able to answer to her satisfaction. At the time Jerald regarded Sandra’s satisfaction with Pauline’s explanations as a sort of sign that he should continue to hold on to his crumbling faith in the Book of Mormon’s authenticity.

For months prior to this, Jerald had entertained doubts about the Book of Mormon, the seriousness of which he shared with Pauline but not with Sandra. Seven months before the time of Sandra’s baptism Jerald had written a letter posing seventeen questions to Pauline relating to the Book for Mormon and other problems. By that time Jerald was ready to drop the Book of Mormon, as he states explicitly in a cover letter sent along with his questions:

I am really getting more faith in Christ. At the same time though I have lost faith in the Book of Mormon. It just won’t seem to meet the tests like the bible. I have prayed and so far the only answer seems to be that it is fake. The more I have thought about it the more problems I see in believing it is true.

This undated letter along with the questions included in it must have been written in late November or early December 1959. In it Jerald states that “about a month ago Sandra was born of the spirit.” That took place on October 24, 1959. Jerald also urges Pauline with regard to answering his questions: “don’t bother to start working on them until after Christmas.” Pauline’s response is dated January 20, 1960. The accusation is sometimes made that the Tanners never scrutinize their own faith, only the faith of others. It is worth noting that at the time of this letter the faith Jerald was scrutinizing was his own.
Here are the questions Jerald sent to Pauline (retaining the original spelling and punctuation):

1. Could David Whitmer be an eye witness concerning the changing of the spectacles for the stone, as I didn’t think he was there himself at the time. If he wasn’t he could have been told this story?

2. Martin Harris talks of having the stone when he was scribe (Historical Record) this was before the first 116 pages were complete; can you explain this?

3. Many of Joseph’s neighbors talk about Joseph having a stone before the Book of Mormon. Could you explain this?

4. In the book “Joseph the Prophet” by Widstoe he quotes many sources and admits the stone was found when Joseph was digging a well. He quotes many Mormon sources and agrees with Willard Chase’s story about the stone. Could you explain this?

5. Could you explain section 9 verse 3 in the R.L.D.S. Doctrine and Covenants [LDS D&C 9:7-9]. Does this have anything to do with the means by which the Book of Mormon came forth?

6. There was an article in the paper the “Wayne Sentinel” I believe, it was published in the year 1824 or 1825 before the book of Mormon was even started. It told about a small group of “gold diggers” who were out looking for a pot filled with gold, they were using a stone placed in a hat to find the treasure. Can you explain why the Book of Mormon would come forth by the same means that was used to find treasures?

7. If the Book of Mormon is of divine origin, then it would seem to me that the early revelation in the Book of Commandments, given at the same time as the Book was coming forth, would also agree with the word of God. Or is it possible that Joseph could have been inspired on the book of Mormon and then have false revelations of the same time. It would seem to me that this shouldn’t be overlooked. It would be about the same thing for us to overlook these early revelations, as for the Reorganized Church to overlook the Book of Abraham. Could you help me on this?

8. Could you tell me why the revelation in the Book of Commandments about John living until the Lord comes is not in agreement with what the Bible says in John. The bible account says that Jesus didn’t tell him that he should live till he came, The Book of Commandments says he did. This revelation looks so man made and so contradictory to the bible. Could you throw some light on this?

9. What was the gift of working with the rod in the Book of Commandments Chapter VII:3 [LDS D&C 8:5-9 (modified)]. Do you think it was a divining or mineral rod?

10. What other ancient records was Oliver Cowdery to help translate. Book of Commandments Sect. 8 verse 1 [LDS D&C 9:1-2].

11. Some of the prophesys about the sealed book seem to be fulfilled at the time of Christ coming, such as Isaiah 29:13 which Jesus says is fulfilled at his time, compare Mark 7:6 also compare Isaiah 9:14 with 1st Corinthians 1:19. could you explain this and also the other parts of the prophesy of the sealed book?

12. The Book of Mormon says Jesus was born at Jerusalem; can you explain this?

13. Gods first commandment to man was multiply and replenish the earth this was before he fell, but the Book of Mormon says that Adam and Eve could have had no children except they fell?

14. Can you explain why the language in the King James bible and the Book of Mormon is the same?

15. Can you explain how come many New Testament scriptures are quoted almost word for word?

16. In the King James Bible where it says that charity is not easily provoked [1 Cor. 13:5=Moroni 7:45]. The word easily was added by the translators but it is also inserted in the Book of Mormon, How can this be explained?

17. If High Priests don’t continue after Christ; why then do priest continue in the Book of Mormon. I cannot find any reference to priest in the bible after Christ.

Most of these questions arose from problems Jerald encountered while trying to seriously accept the idea of a single divine source behind the revelations of the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the first fifteen revelations of the Book of Commandments (i.e. the ones that came through the seer stone).1

The first several questions deal with problems Jerald was beginning to see relating to the translation of the Book of Mormon itself. In the History of the Church Joseph Smith tells of having both the gold plates and the Urim and Thummim taken away from him after Martin Harris lost the first 116 pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript in the summer of 1828. Although the pages were never recovered, Smith claimed both the plates and the Urim and Thummim were returned to him soon after.2 However, the only Urim and Thummim that witnesses to the translation process knew of after the loss of the 116 pages were not the miraculous spectacles he claimed to have originally found buried with the gold plates, but the seer stones Joseph had previously used in his treasure digging ventures. So, for example, Eri Mullin recalls Whitmer telling him in 1874 that “Joseph Smith used the Urim and Thummim when he was translating. But now it is said that he lost it when he gave the first part of the book to Martin Harris after that he used the Stone.”3 Before that, as Jerald notes, Martin Harris said Joseph used both. So Martin Harris reportedly claimed that “the Prophet possessed a seer stone, by which he was enabled to translate as well as from the Urim and Thummim, and for convenience he then used the seer stone.”4 Jerald’s first question points out the fact that Whitmer himself, who did not meet Joseph until the summer after the 116 pages were lost, would not have actually seen the original Urim and Thummim.

By this time, as well, Jerald could see the problems that accompany God using the same method [a seer stone] to translate the Book of Mormon and deliver prophesies as was at the time

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1 According to Whitmer: “The revelations in the Book of Commandments up to June, 1829, were given through the ‘stone,’ through which the Book of Mormon was translated,” An Address to All Believers in Christ (Richmond, Mo.: David Whitmer, 1887) p. 53. See also Ronald V. Huggins, “Jerald Tanner’s Quest for Truth: Part 1,” Salt Lake City Messenger No. 108 (May 2007) p. 3.


commonly used in treasure digging scams. This can be seen particularly well when we compare the description of the process in the article Jerald refers to in question six (which appeared in the Wayne Sentinel on December 27, 1825), with Joseph’s translation procedure:

MR. STRONG—Please insert the following and oblige one of your readers.

Wonderful Discovery.—A few days since was discovered in this town, by the help of a mineral stone, (which becomes transparent when placed in a hat and the light excluded by the face of him who looks into it, provided he is fortune’s favorite,) a monstrous potash kettle in the bowels of old mother Earth, filled with the purest bullion...⁸

It is hard not to notice the similarity between this account and David Whitmer’s own description of the way Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon:

I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine.⁹

In question nine, Jerald also notices the fact that in one of the revelations given through the stone, Joseph appears to have God speaking positively about Oliver’s use of a divining rod: “you [Oliver] have another gift, which is the gift of working with the rod: behold it has told you things: behold there is no other God speaking positively about Oliver’s use of a divining rod: the revelations given through the stone, Joseph appears to have and David Whitmer’s own description of the way Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon:

In question seven the problem identified by Jerald is the habit of amending his prophesies to keep them current with the changing world of Mormonism. He did not, however, conclude from this, as he did, that the Book of Mormon must therefore be true. His argument is that the Book of Mormon was translated. These are the only revelations that can be relied upon, and they are not law. The Lord told us not to harmonize either the Bk of Com or the DC with them.” She advised Jerald to “Drop the Bible & Bk of M—I do not try to harmonize either the Bk of Com or the DC with them.” She advised Jerald to “Drop everything but the Bible and the Bk of Mormon.” This was in line with the policy of David Whitmer himself who had thought it improper to publish any of the revelations, even those that came through the stone. Whitmer writes:

Brother Hyrum [Smith] said it had been suggested to him that some of the brethren might go to Toronto, Canada, and sell the copy-right of the Book of Mormon for considerable money: and he persuaded Joseph to inquire of the Lord about it. Joseph concluded to do so. He had not yet given up the stone. Joseph looked into the hat in which he placed the stone, and received a revelation that some of the brethren should go to Toronto, Canada, and that they would sell the copy-right of the Book of Mormon. Hiram page and Oliver Cowdery went to Toronto on this mission, but they failed entirely to sell the copy-right, returning without any money. Joseph was at my father’s house when they returned. I was there also, and am an eye witness to these facts. Jacob Whitmer and John Whitmer were also present when Hiram Page and Oliver Cowdery returned from Canada. Well, we were all in great trouble; and we asked Joseph how it was that he had received a revelation from the Lord for some brethren to go to Toronto and sell the copy-right, and the brethren had utterly failed in their undertaking. Joseph did not know how it was, so he enquired of the Lord about it, and behold the following revelation came through the stone: “Some revelations are of God: some revelations are of man: and some revelations are of the devil.”¹⁰

In response to Jerald’s questions relating to the difficulties raised by Joseph Smith’s prophesies, Pauline declares, “we only take the Bible & Bk of M—I do not try to harmonize either the Bk of Com or the DC with them.” She advised Jerald to “Drop everything but the Bible and the Bk of Mormon.” This was in line with the policy of David Whitmer himself who had thought it improper to publish any of the revelations, even those that came through the stone. Whitmer writes:

Publishing the early revelations, or any of them, was contrary to the will of the Lord, as I will show you from the revelations themselves. The revelations in the Book of Commandments up to June, 1829, were given through the “stone,” through which the Book of Mormon was translated. These are the only revelations that can be relied upon, and they are not law. The Lord told us not to teach them for doctrine; they were given mostly to individuals, the persons whom God chose in commencing His work for their individual instruction, and the church had no need of them.¹⁰

Despite the fact that Pauline’s letter ran six pages, the gist of her arguments was very typical of that so often heard from Mormon leaders. She essentially repeated several times over that Joseph could have been inspired on the book of Mormon and then have false revelations, of the same time?” As discussed in the last issue of the Messenger, Jerald’s discovery that Joseph was in the habit of amending his prophesies to keep them current with his developing theology, had led Jerald to follow Whitmer in accepting only those prophesies that had been given to Joseph through the stone. The difficulty with that solution, however, was that by Whitmer’s own admission Joseph had given false prophesies through the stone. Whitmer writes:

⁸ Wayne Sentinel, Reproduced by Jerald & Sandra Tanner, The Changing World of Mormonism (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1986-81) p. 78. A potash kettle was made of solid iron and “could range between 40 and 54 inches diameter, be up to 1 1/4 inches thick and weigh upwards of 1,000 pounds.” (http://www.visithistorickirtland.org/attractions/ashery.html)
⁹ Whitmer, An Address to All Believers in Christ, p. 12.
¹⁰ Book of Commandments, 7:3.
¹¹ Whitmer, Address, p. 31.
¹² Pauline Hancock to Jerald Tanner (20 Jan 1960) pp. 3-4.
¹³ Whitmer, Address, p. 53.
In his answer to Pauline’s response to his questions (postmarked Feb. 27, 1960) Jerald writes: “Actually I would like to believe the Book of Mormon is true. My prejudice leans toward it instead of away from it. I pray about it all the time, but as yet I have received no answer. I hope God will give me a positive answer soon.” In this Jerald falls into a very common Mormon pattern of behavior: If at first God tells you the Book of Mormon is not true, don’t give it up, just keep on praying until you think he has told you that it is true.

In this same letter Jerald also enclosed some money and writes: “Use the money to spread the good news. I think we could have given you much more, but we are not sure of the Book of Mormon, and I don’t really want to support a thing unless I am sure of it.” Even though Jerald expressed grave concerns about the historicity of the Book of Mormon he did go back to a belief in it, as is seen, for example, in the statement of faith he sent to Kate Carter in 1962, affirming “the Bible and the Book of Mormon to be the word of God” (see Messenger 108, p. 18). 11

It is the issue that Jerald raises in questions 14-16, namely the literary dependence of the Book of Mormon on the King James Bible, that becomes for him one of the straws that broke the camel’s back with regard to the Book of Mormon. Eventually Jerald would be forced to conclude that if the Book of Mormon were to continue to be considered true, then somehow the King James New Testament had to have been made available to the ancient pre-Christian Nephites in some miraculous manner. This, along with the total lack of archaeological evidence for the Book of Mormon, finally caused him to give it up once and for all. Sandra would hold onto the Book of Mormon longer than Jerald, of Mormon, finally causing him to give it up once and for all.

When Pauline died of cancer on October 19, 1962, she still clung to her faith in the Book of Mormon. When Jerald and Sandra gave up the Book of Mormon Pauline Hancock’s church grieved but did not reject them as the Utah Mormons had done when they first began questioning. On the contrary, the bond of affection was preserved between them.

Pauline’s group would not give up the Book of Mormon until November 24, 1973, after Wes Walters discovered an old legal document proving that the stories about Joseph Smith using his seer stone as a tool in his money-digging were true. 15 Once it was established that the same technique was used by Joseph to translate the Book of Mormon as he had previously used for divination, they felt they could no longer hold to its divine origin. 16

Jerald’s Formal Resignation

In August of 1960 Jerald was formally excommunicated from the LDS Church. Two years before, Jerald had asked that his name be removed from the membership roles and had been assured by a member of the Stake Presidency that it would be done. He now discovered, however, that the man had not kept his word, that in fact nothing had been done. Jerald wrote to the President of the LDS Church, who then referred the matter to Bishop Alma E. Kehl of the Cannon Seventh Ward in Salt Lake City. He was summoned to appear with witnesses for a Bishop’s Court on August 14, 1960. When he arrived, however, he was told his witnesses (Sandra, his mother Helen and another woman) could not be present during the hearing. The rest of the farcical proceedings is perhaps best told in Jerald’s own words:

I walked into the room alone, and they shut the door. They asked me if I would mind if they made a tape recording of the proceedings. I permitted them to make the recording but asked if I could also make a recording. The answer was no. They asked me if I wanted to plead guilty to the “alleged wrong doing” of requesting my name to be removed from the Church records and teaching doctrines not in harmony with the Church. I replied that I did not believe my actions were “wrong” in these regards, and therefore could not plead guilty, but that I wanted my name removed without the use of the expression “wrong doing.” This caused a great deal of confusion among the members of the “Bishop’s Court,” and they did not know how to proceed. After conversing among themselves they decided to proceed without the admission of “wrong doing” on my part. 17

On August 28, 1960, Jerald received a letter informing him that he had been excommunicated from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, remarkably enough without mentioning that he had been found guilty of anything. Rather it said only

11 Kate Carter, Denominations that Base their Beliefs on the Teachings of Joseph Smith (n. p.: Kate Carter, 1962) p. 51.
13 When Sandra’s Aunt Lucille saw Mormonism: A Study of Mormon History and Doctrine, a book that in turn would become the basis of the various editions of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?
16 The announcement was made in the Independence Examiner (Nov. 24, 1973), under the title “Attention Book of Mormon Believers.” Steven L. Shields is mistaken when he corrects his original date for this (which was correct) to 1971 in Divergent Paths of the Restoration (4th ed.; Los Angeles, Cal. 1990) p. 296. On November 25, Gene and Olive Wilcox sent a copy of the announcement to Jerald and Sandra with the note: “Dear Jerald and Sandra—thought you folks would be happy and pleased with this. Would love to see you. Gene and Olive.”
“In accordance with your request your name has been removed from the records and you are no longer considered a member of the said Church.”

**Letter from BYU Historian**

On October 7, 1960, BYU historian William E. Berrett wrote a lengthy and very courteous seven-page letter responding to the materials Jerald and Sandra Tanner had been sending out. He did so at the request of both Apostle LeGrand Richards and Sandra’s mother, Georgia. The latter had written to Berrett on August 30 in hopes of recruiting his help in coaxing Sandra back into the LDS Church. She wrote:

> Sandra graduated from Seminary and was one of the most faithful and spiritual girls in the church, throughout highschool. All her activities centered in the church. It was really Seminary that got her seriously interested in church history. She found changes and teachings that bothered her, but she simply figured it would all add up when she had studied more. However the opposite seemed to happen. The more she studied the more confusing it all became. 19

This is an interesting description of Sandra’s past. True, Sandra’s life had been centered in the LDS Church, but it was Georgia herself and her sister Lucille who had first made Sandra aware of the problems. In her letter, Georgia goes on to recount Jerald and Sandra’s bad experience in the genealogical library with LeGrand Richards, a story recounted in the last Messenger, noting that when Sandra and her grandmother went back the next day they were told the microfilm was out for repair, quipping edgily that “One could hardly help wondering what is being repaired!” She then goes into the story of Joseph Fielding Smith’s letter to Sandra’s bishop, a copy of which she sent along, asking Berrett whether he thought there was “anything in the letter that you would call faith promoting for a young girl to receive? Does he [Smith] show the love of Christ she would expect from an Apostle of Jesus Christ?” She concludes: “You cannot find within this church more humble, sincere, or righteous souls than these two (Sandra and Jerald)[.] They radiate the spirit of Christ.”

We do not know how Berrett processed all of this but in his response to Jerald and Sandra he avoided the blame game almost entirely. His writing was refreshingly free of the kind of impatient, self-righteous rhetoric Jerald and Sandra had recently been encountering. Instead Berrett actually put forth something resembling historical arguments against the evidence Jerald and Sandra had presented. These focus almost entirely on defending the official story of the first vision with its clear identification of the two personages that appeared to Joseph as the Father and the Son.

**First Vision Problems**

Berrett’s basic thesis was that the official account of the first vision, “which has been consistently used in the Church since 1838 is the account as written by the Prophet Joseph Smith,” and that “when the account appeared in 1838 and 1840 it did not come as a surprise to the membership of the Church; it created no stir and no denials, nor did the enemies of the Church at that time allude to it as a new approach.” As support for this Berrett presents some late recollections as well as some early accounts that were not, in his view, inconsistent with the official story of the first vision.

The core of Berrett’s time, however, was spent responding to the list of Journal of Discourses passages that Jerald and Sandra had compiled in which the primary, and indeed in some instances the only figure mentioned, is not the Father or the Son but an angel. Berrett begins by asserting:

> You must be perfectly aware that statements as contained in the Journal of Discourses are not new to any student of Church History. I have had a copy of the very same statements in my files for years and the Journal of Discourses have been available to scholars from the time they were first published. 21

Berrett’s statement that the 26-volume set of the Journal of Discourses was available to scholars is somewhat misleading, as becomes clear from the statement historian LaMar Petersen once drew up for the Tanners:

> In 1954 upon learning that the Deseret Book Company had a microfilm of the 26-volume Journal of Discourses I asked for the privilege of reading from some of the volumes on their viewer. After checking “across the street” [i.e., with the LDS Church Administration Offices] the management announced that the privilege of reading from the Journals could not be granted. 22

There is not the space here to reproduce all the passages Jerald and Sandra compiled and Berrett’s responses.23 We will, however, present three of them to underscore the key point at issue, namely that in several of them it seems that the messenger of the first vision was an angel not the Father and/or the Son.

(1) Brigham Young: “The Lord did not come with the armies of heaven... But He did send His angel to this same obscure person, Joseph Smith jun., who afterwards became a Prophet, Seer, and Revelator, and informed him that he should not join any of the religious sects of the day....” (Journal of Discourses Vol. 2, p. 171)

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18 Ibid., p. 575, where a copy of the letter appears.
21 The list of passages Berrett responds to corresponds more or less with the tract Jerald and Sandra published around this time entitled “The Father and the Son?” It is the same list that Jerald and Sandra include in a letter to LeGrand Richards dated October 9, 1960. As he is working through the list of passages Berrett includes discussion of one passage that is not included in either of the sources I have just mentioned, raising the question whether Jerald and Sandra had sent him a list that included it as well.
22 The entire statement is reproduced in Jerald & Sandra Tanner, The Case Against Mormonism, Vol. 1 (Salt Lake City, Utah: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1967) p. 44.
23 Many of them, as well as a good deal of other material on the subject can be found in Sandra’s online article “Evolution of the First Vision and Teaching on God in Early Mormonism,” at http://utlm.org/onlineresources/firstvision.htm.
Despite the presence of a reference to the first vision command not to join any of the religious sects, Berrett simply asserts against this evidence that Young “makes no direct mention of the first vision.”

(2) Wilford Woodruff: “That same organization and Gospel that Christ died for, and the Apostles spilled their blood to vindicate, is again established in this generation. How did it come? By the ministering of an holy angel from God...The angel taught Joseph Smith those principles which are necessary for the salvation of the world...He told him the Gospel was not among men, and that there was not a true organization of His kingdom in the world...This man to whom the angel appeared obeyed the Gospel...” (Journal of Discourses Vol. 2, pp. 196-197)

Here again we have the first vision claim about there not being a true church upon the earth. Berrett asserts that Woodruff was “not talking about the first vision,” and that “Clearly his references are to Moroni.” However, neither of these assertions are supported by the content of the passage itself.

(3) George A. Smith: “When Joseph Smith was about fourteen or fifteen years old...he went humbly before the Lord and inquired of Him, and the Lord answered his prayer, and revealed to Joseph, by the ministration of angels, the true condition of the religious world. When the holy angel appeared, Joseph inquired which of all these denominations was right and which he should join, and was told they were all wrong...” (Journal of Discourses Vol. 12, pp. 333-334)

Berrett says that “one would do [Smith] an injustice to indicate that he was referring specifically to the first vision,” and that “most of his remarks have to do with a visitation of Moroni.” In this case Berrett speaks right into the teeth of the evidence. Earlier in the passage George A. Smith had mentioned Joseph’s inspiration to ask for wisdom after reading James 1:5. Joseph’s age in this passage (14 or 15) also places the event at the proper time for the first vision (he was born in December of 1805), and it contains the first vision question about which sect to join and the command to join none.

As I read Berrett’s responses I have to say that they strike me as decidedly listless. I often think how discouraging and uninteresting historical study must be when the results of your research always have to come out “right.” when, as King, cited in our earlier article, had said, “If continuity is lacking it can be procured by omissions and harmonizations.” Berrett comprehended the real problem of having the personages described in these passages as angels. “What do we mean by an angel?” he asks, and then replies: “It is a name applied to a heavenly visitor and could be equally applied to the Father and the Son if they were to appear, or to messengers sent from the Father and the Son to do their bidding.” This was an argument that really does very little toward resolving the problem, especially given the fact that what was really needed was clear early references identifying the two personages as the Father and the Son, references Berrett was not apparently able to produce. In concluding his letter, Berrett kindly appealed to Jerald and Sandra “not to leave the Church of your illustrious ancestors but to seek for the spirit which they possessed.”

A Visit with Berrett

In his letter Berrett had invited Jerald and Sandra in for a face to face discussion of the issues they had been investigating. When they met with him on October 26, 1960, they found him cordial and laid back, friendly, totally relaxed, and utterly unruffled discussing the problems they were having with the early LDS Church. When they raised the issue of the sermons in which Brigham Young taught that Adam was God, Berrett placidly asked to see them. After looking at their list of passages he casually pushed it aside and said beaming: “I have a list twice that long.” And then, as if to dismiss the whole subject once for all and forever from the realm of polite conversation, he observed cheerfully: “Just Brigham’s opinion, not official doctrine you understand. Brigham said lots of confusing things. Just focus on what the current prophet says, that is the safest course.”

When it had become clear that that was all the farther they were going to get with Berrett on that point, Jerald and Sandra moved on to the issue of the changes in the early revelations. Berrett nodded sympathetically, “Yes,” he said, “there had been some small confusion there as well, but that didn’t have anything to do with the Church’s being dishonest. Certainly not! No it had to do rather with the fact that God delivers his truth as it were ‘line upon line and precept upon precept.’ In fact I’ve no doubt you will be delighted to know,” Berrett announced proudly, “that the Church is even now in the process of producing a new edition of the Doctrine and Covenants with footnotes to explain precisely when each part of each prophesy was revealed!”

Berrett’s basic approach as he sat contentedly in his office chair before Jerald and Sandra was to project an air of confidence that was contagious. Jerald and Sandra naturally preferred this to downright incivility, but they still wanted things backed up as well with a little old-fashioned solid evidence. Berrett’s answers, though pleasantly delivered, lacked any real substance. As for his promised new edition of the Doctrine and Covenants with changes noted, after forty-six years it has never materialized.

Apostle Richards Bows Out - The Tanners Move

On November 25, 1960, LeGrand Richards sent a letter to Sandra’s mother telling her that henceforth he was bowing out of further interaction. “If I felt that your daughter and her husband really wanted to know the truth,” Richards wrote, “I would put myself out to do most anything to help them but I am convinced...that they do not want to know that Joseph Smith was a prophet.”

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Five days later (December 1) Jerald and Sandra collected their baby daughter April, their mimeograph machine, and their black cockapoo, Tippy, and moved out of the home of Jerald’s parents and to their own place in a duplex at 319 North 5th (now 6th) West. The experience with Jerald’s parents had been good. By that time his mother, Helen, was having her own doubts about Mormonism and would listen to the radio program of a local Evangelical Free Pastor named Wilber Nelson on a little radio she carried with her during morning walks. And far from resenting having to put up with the dog, she loved it and took every opportunity to spoil it by slipping it treats. Sandra used to tease Jerald by saying that if she ever left him she would go home to his mother.

**Deseret News Find**

In the meantime research on the first vision continued. One day when Sandra’s grandmother was at the library reading Joseph Smith’s history in the Saturday, May 29, 1852, *Deseret News*, she discovered yet another instance in which the earlier telling of the story had been changed in the then current Joseph Smith *History of the Church*:

<table>
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<th><em>Deseret News</em></th>
<th><em>History of the Church</em></th>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday, May 29, 1852</td>
<td>Vol. 2, page 312</td>
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<tr>
<td>I gave him [Erastus Holmes] a brief relation of my experience while in my juvenile years, say from six years old up to the time I received the first visitation of angels, which was when I was about fourteen years old….”</td>
<td>I gave him [Erastus Holmes] a brief relation of my experience while in my juvenile years, say from six years old up to the time I received the first vision, which was when I was about fourteen years old….”</td>
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We now know for certain that the language of the *Deseret News* account agrees with the entry in Joseph Smith’s diary for November 14, 1835. But it wasn’t commonly known then. Jerald and Sandra produced a sheet on this discovery titled “Joseph Smith on the First Vision: Taken From The *Deseret News,*” which they sent out the third week of February 1961.

**Charles Finney’s Vision**

Earlier that same month Sandra’s grandmother, Sylvia Rogerson, stumbled upon something that would provide more insight into Joseph Smith’s first vision story. Sitting at home on February 8 she picked up that month’s issue of the Billy Graham Association’s *Decision Magazine* and began looking through it. Sylvia was not the only member of the family to subscribe to Billy Graham’s magazine at the time. Graham’s influence was felt not only through radio and television programs but also by the fact that the daughter of Sandra’s Aunt Lucille had come to Christ in 1958 at a Billy Graham San Francisco Crusade. On this occasion Sylvia was surprised to find in Graham’s magazine a reprint of the autobiographical account of the conversion of Charles G. Finney, the greatest evangelist of the early nineteenth century’s Second Great Awakening. Finney had been dramatically converted in the central New York town of Adams on a Wednesday morning in October 1821. As Sylvia read she marked several places that reminded her of Joseph’s first vision story, and then wrote at the top: “This is so very similar to Joseph Smith’s Story[.] Read it and Keep.” Above the famous Waldo and Jewett portrait of the youthful Finney she wrote, “He even looks like Joseph.”

There can be little doubt that Joseph would have known about Finney and he may well have heard the story of Finney’s conversion told as well. Interestingly the version of the first vision story Joseph told Robert Matthews (Joshua the Jewish Minister) on November 9, 1835, would later be found to contain additional striking agreements with Finney’s story as well. But Sylvia couldn’t have known this at the time, since Smith’s 1835 diary was still being suppressed. It wouldn’t become available to the general public until Jerald and Sandra published H. Michael Marquardt’s transcription of it eighteen years later.28

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26 After this discovery Jerald and Sandra published a tract entitled, “Joseph Smith Speaks on the First Vision.” This tract would have been produced between December 1, 1960, when they moved into their new place (see the address on the sheet), and Thursday, February 16, 1961, when Hugh Nibley got his copy of it in the mail (as reported by Nibley in his February 18, 1961, in the speech described below).


28 *Joseph Smith’s 1835-36 Diary* (Transcription by H. Michael Marquardt; Salt Lake City, Utah: Modern Microfilm Company, 1979).
A Winter Saturday at BYU

On Saturday, February 18, 1961, a series of events occurred that would move Jerald and Sandra’s work forward on several fronts. It is here that the man who in many ways represents Jerald’s Mormon nemesis enters our story, Hugh Winder Nibley. At the time Nibley was already in his fifties, still quite handsome, tall, thin, blue-eyed, prematurely silver haired, he looked every bit the scholar. Nibley was Mormonism’s big gun and bright-eyed boy come home after WWII to roost at BYU. Unlike Jerald, Nibley was massively educated and willing to use, or whenever necessary perhaps even misuse, his education to prove Mormonism true. He was the sort of man who could misquote his source and then scornfully ridicule its author when confronted about it. LaMar Petersen, who as we shall see would suffer this kind of abuse from Nibley, would later write to Nibley damning his work as “shallow and facetious.” “You have belittled the scholars,” Petersen writes in the letter, “and extolled fraudulence.”

Nibley’s daughter, Martha Beck, in her iconoclastic book Leaving the Saints: How I Lost the Mormons and Found My Faith (2005), tells the story of an encounter she had with a scholarly looking person in a supermarket who claimed he used to be “one of the flunkies,” who checked her father’s footnotes, only to discover that many of them had serious problems:

Sometimes what he [Nibley] said was exactly the opposite of what the author meant. Sometimes a quotation he’d footnote just wasn’t there. My team leader told me your dad’s gift was that he could see anything on any page that needed to be there.

Like a skillful tailor at his needle Nibley had the gift of altering evidence to fit the body shape of any conclusion he felt was necessary.

One would have thought that all reason and justice would have decreed that Jerald and Sandra would be no match for a man that could obfuscate and misrepresent his sources in several different languages, ancient and modern, while they had to try to limp along as best they could with only one language. Still, they had something else on their side that Nibley didn’t have: a commitment to the simple unvarnished truth, a weapon powerful enough to counterbalance the whole truckload of LDS apologists who were to come after.

Returning to our story, it had been advertised that on that February day Nibley would present a lecture on the first vision story. In a bold stroke of trying to accuse others of what the LDS leadership itself had been doing, Nibley was calling his address “The Suppression of the First Vision.” The weather that day was bad, a blizzard, but Jerald and Sandra really wanted to go and hear what Nibley had to say. So they piled into their black ’51 DeSoto and drove to Provo. When they arrived they were surprised to find out the event cost eight dollars per person, which was more than they had on them. Sandra urged Jerald to go ahead and go while she read in the BYU library. Jerald didn’t want her to have to do that so it was decided that since they were there, they might as well go over to the library and find out what they had in the collection.

As it turned out, they discovered a veritable gold mine of early sources on microfilm. There was a young man on duty that day and when they told him they wanted to make copies he came over and after a bit of fiddling admitted he didn’t know how to run the microfilm copying machine. After Jerald showed him how, the young man, realizing Jerald understood how to work the thing, said, “Well, go ahead and make whatever copies you want and then come and pay for them when you’re done.” Like kids in a candy shop Sandra and Jerald set to work. It is not clear exactly how much money they had with them that day, except that it was more than eight and less than sixteen dollars. Sandra described what they came away with a few days later in a letter to her mother:

We got the first 41 pages of the book of Comm. photographed (The Historians Copie!—signed by W. Woodruff) Hows That! Also, some of the Blood Anot. sermons photo. from the Deseret News, + a photo from the Mil Star showing that part about angels that Grandma found in the D. News, and a letter from Lund to J. R. Clark about the sec. on marriage that is removed. The B.Y.U. [Library] has all kinds of interesting things on microfilm, Deseret News, Mil. Star, Elders Journal, Eve. + Morn. Star, the diary of Wandle Mace that Berrett referred to, all kinds of anti-mormon books, the Book of Commandments—all also reprints, the different ed. Of the Doc. + Cov. starting with 1835—about 1865. And, they will photo any of it (15¢ a sheet). We would have got you a copy, but, that was all the money we had with us.

Securing the first forty-one pages of the Book of Commandments that day represented the initial step in what was to be their first photomechanical reprint of an early Mormon document.

Up until 1961 the Tanners had been freely distributing their various pamphlets but this significantly limited the distribution. Eugene Wilson, owner of Wilson’s Book in Salt Lake, convinced

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29 LaMar Petersen to Hugh Nibley (February 17, 1968).
30 This was the title Sandra uses to refer to the lecture in a letter to her mother (February 17-21, 1961), which is consistent with the contents of the typescript of the speech (see footnote 37).
31 The Deseret News, Millennial Star, Elders’ Journal and Evening and Morning Star are all early Mormon newspapers. The first mentioned is, of course, still published.
32 Sandra Tanner to Georgia McGee (February 17-21, 1961).
them that if they would at least put on a minimal charge, like 25 cents, he could sell the pamphlets in his store and thus enlarge the Tanner’s reading audience.

“Censoring the Joseph Smith Story”

As to Nibley’s February lecture, it became the basis of a four-part series of articles in the 1961 July through November issues of the LDS Church-owned Improvement Era magazine, entitled “Censoring the Joseph Smith Story.” In the first installment Nibley writes:

The writer’s great-grandfather, a Jew, one day after he had given Joseph Smith a lesson in German and Hebrew asked him about certain particulars of the first vision. In reply he was told some remarkable things, which he wrote down in his journal that very day. But in the ensuing forty years of his life during which he had many children and grandchildren and preached many sermons, Brother Neibaur seems never once to have referred to the wonderful things the Prophet told him—it was quite by accident that the writer discovered them in his journal. Why was the talkative old man so close-lipped on the one thing that could have made him famous? Because it was a sacred and privileged communication; it was never published before the world and never should be.34

The reader coming to this passage with no background might be puzzled about what point Nibley is making. In fact, Nibley’s conclusion about why Neibaur apparently never told the story again was pure surmise. Also one would wonder why that account should be kept private when Joseph Smith told the same story publicly prior to it. Both assertions would only have meaning if there was something in the story Joseph told Neibaur that was strikingly different from the one he had made a matter of public record some years earlier, or at least that it contained additional features that Joseph didn’t want revealed. Of course we now know that that was not the case, that this account told in Neibaur’s presence on May 24, 1844, was not particularly remarkable. Here it is:

Br[other] Joseph tol us the first call he had a Revival Meeting his Mother & Br[other] & Sist[er] got Religion, he wanted to get Religion too wanted to feel & shout like the Rest but could feel nothing, opened his Bible the first Passage that struck him was if any man lack Wisdom let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberality & upraidat not [James 1:5] went into the Wood to pray kneelt himself down his tongue was closet cleavet to his roof—could not utter a word, felt easier after a while—saw a fire towards heaven came near & nearer saw a personage in the fire light complexion blue eyes a piece of white cloth drawn over his shoulders his right arm bear after a wile a other person came to the side of the first Mr Smith then asked must I join the Methodist Church—No—they are not my People, [they] I have gone astray there is none that doeth good no not one, but this is my Beloved son harken ye him, the fire drew nigher, Rested upon the tree enveloped him. 35

In Nibley’s statement, as we said, the impression is given that Joseph confided the matter to Neibaur privately. The text itself gives no such impression. Indeed the lead-in line runs: “called at Br[other] Joseph’s [Smith] met Mr [Edward] Bonnie—Br[other] Joseph tol us the first call…” What Nibley really appears to be doing is making up a case for the continuing suppression of the account using a kind of too-sacred-for-the-public-to-see argument. But why should he make such an argument out of the blue in this context? Who was he trying to discourage from looking at the Neibaur account, if indeed that is what he was doing?

It could be that it was because Jerald and Sandra’s circle had been seeking access to it for some time. They had initially learned of it from Nibley’s book The World and the Prophets (1954) where he says:

The writer’s great-grandfather was a Jew, and a very hardheaded and practical man. He tells in his journal, writing on the very day that the event took place, of how he cross-examined Joseph Smith on every minute detail of the First Vision and of how the Prophet satisfied him promptly and completely. From that day he never doubted the calling of the Prophet. 36

One of the advantages of quoting from a document you have access to but nobody else does is that so long as you are confident that it will not become available any time soon, you are free to misquote it to your own advantage. Today it is possible for us to compare what Neibaur said with what Nibley said he said. And when we do we find that Nibley clearly, as it were, goes beyond what was written. In the first place there is the very tantalizing double entendre in the statement about Neibaur’s “writing on the very day that the event took place.” But which event is Nibley referring to, the first vision or the telling of the story of the first vision by Joseph Smith? This was clarified in the “Censoring the Joseph Smith Story” account where Nibley says that Neibaur “asked him about certain particulars of the first vision. In reply he was told some remarkable things, which he wrote down in his journal that very day.” 37 In other words Neibaur recorded the details of the 1844 telling of the first vision story as related to him by Joseph Smith.

In addition Nibley tries to make it sound as if a tough-minded, skeptical Neibaur had interrogated Joseph and that the prophet’s satisfactory answers became the basis of Neibaur’s confidence in his prophetic powers. None of this is evident in the journal entry to which Nibley appeals. There is no reference to Joseph’s telling the story in response to any sort of interrogation by Neibaur, nor to its effect on Neibaur’s faith in Joseph. At that time, Neibaur had already been a faithful believer in Mormonism for some years. In short Nibley was simply adding yeast to the dough of the story in order to make it rise more readily to his apologetic purpose. Even further removed from what Neibaur actually records were Nibley’s statements in the lecture Jerald

and Sandra missed that snowy day in February 1961. There Nibley said:

> When my great grandfather, [Alexander Neibaur] asked the prophet some particulars of the First Vision, he was told things that probably no other person was told. But they are not for public consumption. They are locked up in a safe in Salt Lake, and that’s where they should be. He did not mean them to be divulged to the world. 38

Nibley asserts that the account Joseph told him included “things that probably no other person was told,” which were not meant “to be divulged to the world.” But again as we read the account itself we see that it is a fairly straightforward recitation of the familiar official version that Smith had published four years earlier. Nibley elaborates on his source in order to argue for its continued suppression.

Since Jerald and Sandra did not attend this meeting they did not hear the above statement. The version of the statement which we discussed earlier would appear in the first installment of the “Censoring the Joseph Smith Story” in the July 1961 Improvement Era. 39 As we said, they seemed to have learned of it from Nibley’s The World and the Prophets (1946). The history of their knowledge of the passage is sketchy up to that point. We do know that Sandra’s grandmother went to the Church Historian’s Office in Salt Lake City on Tuesday, November 15, 1960, and that she was refused access to it by A. William Lund, Assistant Church Historian, although apparently she was told that the Neibaur account made reference to the “this is my beloved son, hear him” statement. 40 We also know that the search was on in the Tanner circle around this time for copies of Nibley’s book containing the reference. Sandra’s Aunt Lucille bought one on Sunday, December 11, 1960, from someone at her local LDS ward.

On January 4, 1961, Sandra wrote the following letter to Nibley:

> I am quite interested in your [great] grandfather’s diary that you quote in your book, The World And the Prophets, and I wonder if it would be possible to obtain a copy of it? If this is not possible, do you have a copy of his diary that I could read?

> I would like to buy 5 copies of your book, The World And the Prophets. I have been to the book stores in Salt Lake, and they don’t have any copies of your book. I wonder if you know of any place where I can obtain this book?

Nibley responded on March 8, informing Sandra that “Marvin Wallin of Bookcraft,” had just obtained “a couple of cases of The World and the Prophets,” and suggested that she might be able to get the desired copies from him. Then in response to the question concerning Alexander Neibaur’s journal Nibley wrote:

> The day my great-grandfather heard that remarkable account of the First Vision from Joseph Smith he wrote it down in his journal; and for 40 years after he never mentioned it to a soul. Therefore, when I came across the story unexpectedly I handed the book over to Joseph Fielding Smith and it is now where it belongs—in a safe.

As soon as they found out that Neibaur’s journal had been given over to Joseph Fielding Smith, they sent ten dollars requesting a microfilm copy be made from it. On March 13, 1961, Smith refused and returning the ten dollars commented that “Private journals are filed in this office with the understanding that they will be available to members of the family, but not to the general public.”

In the meantime, Sandra apparently wrote to Nibley again. On March 21, Nibley again writes to Sandra, saying:

> I believe I said in my letter to you that the Neibaur Journal now reposes in a safe in the Church Historian’s Office, where it belongs.

The “reason that Alexander Neibaur told no one of his experience for forty years,” Nibley wrote, “is that it was strictly confidential and should remain so. I think we should respect his confidence.” As we have already noted there is nothing in the then-suppressed journal entry itself to support Nibley’s claim about the supposed confidentiality of Joseph’s telling of the story which was also the supposed reason behind Neibaur’s never mentioning it again (if in fact he really did never mention it again).

Nibley’s most interesting statement in the letter of March 21 came when he says that “the last time I asked permission to see the Journal, I was refused.” This is a remarkable story and Nibley only tells part of it. He doesn’t say how he eventually gained access to it after being refused. We learn that from the autobiography the late LDS Church Historian Leonard J. Arrington:

> Hugh Nibley... came to the library to see the diary of his [great] grandfather Alexander Neibaur—a diary that he had previously given it to the Church Historian’s Office. Lund refused to let him see it because it was restricted material. Despite Nibley protestations that he’d only just given the diary to Lund, he was refused. Later I saw Nibley at the table copying from the diary. He explained that he had gone to the president of the church, who instructed Lund to let him use it. 41

Here is the full text of Nibley’s letter:

Dear Mrs. Tanner,

I believe I said in my letter to you that the Neibaur Journal now reposes in a safe in the Church Historian’s Office, where it belongs.

The reason that Alexander Neibaur told no one of his experience for forty years is that it was strictly confidential and should remain so. I think I should respect his confidence. Actually, the last time I asked permission to see the Journal, I was refused. Any attempt to reproduce it at this time is out of the question.

Yours very sincerely,

Hugh Nibley 42

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38 A rough-draft typescript of the presentation exists and was reproduced some years ago by F.A.R.M.S. in its Occasional Papers Series. The typescript was probably derived from a recording of the lecture and was prepared by someone other than Nibley. This is indicated by the fact that the person who produced it was not able, for example, to make out the name of Nibley’s great-grandfather.

39 Nibley’s February talk spans subjects dealt with in the entire four-part series of Improvement Era articles.

40 Handwritten note by Lucille Hyler in her copy of Nibley’s The World and the Prophets (inside front cover).


One wonders whether in framing things this way to Sandra, Nibley was trying to head off something that Joseph Fielding Smith had missed when giving his excuse for not making the Neibaur journal available to Jerald and Sandra. If it was true that the LDS Church was only concerned about the rights and feelings of the families whose ancestors’ writings were preserved in the Church Historian’s Office, then between them Jerald and Sandra should be able, with a little genealogical research, to pull together enough family ties to legitimately ask to see a veritable mountain of restricted archival material. Beyond question Sandra already had as much right to Brigham Young’s writings as LeGrand Richards had to Joseph Lee Robinson’s or Hugh Nibley had to Alexander Neibaur’s. In view of this, it is interesting that a somewhat different account of the story of Nibley’s being denied access to the Alexander Neibaur story is given in an undated letter sent to Jerald by someone named Bruce, who begins by saying that he had “just talked to Dr. Nibly [sic] on the phone to make sure I got the facts straight.” According to Bruce, Nibley had gone to the archives one day when “one of the assistants or ‘underlings’ [was] working,” who “wouldn’t let Dr. Nibly [sic] see the journal because he was obeying rules not to let out books or such without permission from someone of authority.” He goes on to say that “Dr. Nibly [sic] told me since that time he has gone back several times when someone who was in authority was there and was not denied access to the journal in these cases. He had had access to the journal since he placed [it] in the Office + is familiar with its contents.” We note that Arrington and Bruce seem to have different stories from Nibley. It would seem strange to speak of Lund as an “underling.”

That the family-connections, genealogical approach to gaining access to information never seemed to have occurred to Jerald and Sandra at this early stage seems remarkable. Still when the occasion finally did arise for Sandra to ask to see something from Brigham Young, the response was predictably inconsistent with the LDS Church’s alleged respect for the hallowed dignity of family ties. Here is what happened.

In 1977 a booklet was clandestinely produced by an anonymous “Latter-day Saint Historian,” most likely D. Michael Quinn—that was before Quinn himself was excommunicated—entitled *Jerald and Sandra Tanner’s Distorted View of Mormonism: A Response to Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* In their response to this booklet Jerald and Sandra called this anonymous author “Dr. Clandestine.” One of the difficulties in responding to Dr. Clandestine was that he had access to restricted material from the LDS archives the Tanners did not have. Among these were the handwritten drafts of the “Manuscript History of Brigham Young.” This gave Sandra a doubly legitimate reason to grant their anonymous historian access to materials for the purpose of assigning blame to the Tanners for not knowing what they could not have known, then surely fairness would require that the Tanners should in their turn be able to see the documents in question and correct any errors that had arisen as a result of their not having seen them before. The LDS Church was about to be put on trial with regard to its basic integrity and fairness in relation to its regular appeal to family ties as a stock excuse for suppressing documents.

On January 13, 1978, Sandra goes down to the LDS Historical Department and puts in a request to see her great-great-grandfather’s diary. The woman at the desk says she will need approval from higher up. Sandra asks to be directed to the proper person. She is escorted to the office of Earl Olson.

Crouching behind his desk, Olson glowers at Sandra under the artificial lights, affecting the bearing of an irritated grade school principal getting ready to dress down some naughty child. Sandra is not intimidated. She is frustrated, however, as she tries to make him appreciate the force of her arguments from the rights of ancestry and the demands of fairness. Far from her arguments hitting home, they serve, as it were, only as a red flag before the rising fury of a mad bull. Olson snaps back: “Mrs. Tanner, I don’t have to be fair with you about anything.”

Sandra is taken aback but not deterred. She presses again her rights as Brigham Young’s great-great-granddaughter. Finally Olson is able to control his temper no longer and he begins angrily shouting: “Mrs. Tanner, I wouldn’t even show you today’s *Deseret News.*” Sandra recognizes that whatever else might be said at that point, the best course would be to regard the interview as concluded, and take her leave. As she did so she was surprised to see people all along the hall poking their heads out to see what Olson’s fit of temper was all about.

Jerald and Sandra would sometimes ask other people to write to the Church Historical Department in the hopes of obtaining information it wouldn’t give to them. At times this approach proved effective. In the Tanners’ files is a letter from Joseph Fielding Smith to a certain Sister Christine Sweet dating to August 29, 1961, responding to a question about the first vision account in the Alexander Neibaur journal. Smith reveals that the passage contains the words: “this is my Beloved Son harken ye him” and then goes on to say that “Should there be any question in your mind as to the identity of the two personages who visited the Prophet, I hope you will take the opportunity of visiting my office so that the matter can be further explained.”

Had Nibley’s will prevailed we should still perhaps be waiting to see Alexander Neibaur’s diary. Happily that would not be the case. Still it was a number of years before the first vision passage would be made public. In a letter to the editor that appeared in the Winter 1966 issue of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought,* LaMar Petersen remarks in reference to the Neibaur Journal that “such journals are not open for public inspection. Several researchers have been denied access to this particular journal, including the donor.”43 Petersen was responding to an article that quotes a portion of Neibaur’s first vision passage but does so in dependence upon a 1965 BYU Master’s thesis by Paul R. Cheesman. For some reason Cheesman had been granted extraordinary access to documents relating to the first vision, and it was there that a transcription of the long suppressed first vision story in Joseph Smith’s own handwriting first appeared.

Although I am not certain when precisely Neibaur’s first vision account first became available, I did find the entire passage reproduced in an appendix to Milton V. Backman’s *The First Vision in its Historical Context* (1971).

This was as far as the quest for the first vision would carry Jerald and Sandra in 1961. It would not be until November of that year that Nibley, in his final installment of “Censoring the Joseph Smith Story,” attacks the sheet he had received from Jerald and Sandra on Thursday, February 16, 1961.

This final installment also holds the distinction of containing, out of the great flood of misquotation that flowed like a mighty river from Nibley’s pen, my favorite one, and that not because of its surpassing significance over the host of other misquotations awaiting the reader of Nibley, but simply because it is so mind-boggling it makes me laugh. It occurs when, in trying to make light of the discovery that the personage that spoke to Joseph in the first vision is called an angel in early sources, Nibley quotes H. Cremer’s article on Anges in the *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* as saying: “the distinction between the angel and Yahweh does not hinder from making the angel speak as Yahweh or from speaking of the angel as Yahweh,” which Nibley interprets as saying that “Jehovah himself in his capacity of a messenger to men is an angel.” Cremer did not, however, say that. Nor did he say the version of the saying that appeared in the reprint of Nibley’s 1961 *Improvement Era* articles in the 1991 compilation *Tinkling Bells and Sounding Brass*. The difference between the three versions comes down to whether and where you put the word of:

Cremer (1908): “the distinction between the angel and Yahweh does not hinder from making the angel speak as Yahweh or from speaking of the angel as of Yahweh,”

Nibley (1961): “the distinction between the angel and Yahweh does not hinder from making the angel speak as Yahweh or from speaking of the angel as Yahweh”

Nibley (1991): “the distinction between the angel and Yahweh does not hinder from making the angel speak as of Yahweh or from speaking of the angel as Yahweh”

It was also in the first installment of this series that Nibley grossly misrepresented something LaMar Petersen said in his *Problems in Mormon Text* (1957), in order to prove that “Some critics... seem to think that if they can show that a friend or enemy of Joseph Smith reports him as saying that he was visited by Nephi [rather than Moroni], they have caught the Prophet in a fraud.” Nibley gave a lengthy footnote in alleged support of this claim.

Nibley makes it sound as if Petersen had only given examples remote from Joseph Smith, overlooking the fact that Petersen’s primary example was from the publication overseen by Joseph Smith himself. Joseph Smith had originally called the angel Nephi in this account, not Moroni. Petersen wrote to Nibley confronting his misrepresentation of his work:

> You infer that the identification of Nephi as the angel who visited Joseph Smith in his room is the work of critics. You fail to state that the identification was made by Joseph himself and that if it was an error he never corrected it... I think you mislead the reader in your footnote 15. You fail to note that the source of the Nephi story was the *Times and Seasons* which was definitely not in England “far away from Joseph Smith.”

Nibley wrote back but did not address the issue of his misrepresenting Petersen. Rather he tried to make it sound as if Petersen had a problem of not liking his words twisted by Nibley: “its lucky you wrote me when you did,” Nibley writes, “It is still not too late; the Lord has extended the day of our probation: you would be insane to waste this priceless reprieve, + you could still be one of the few really happy men on the earth, but you’ll have to stop being a damn fool.”

When a scholar behaves like this when corrected it tends to perpetuate his error. Nibley was informed of the fact that he had misrepresented Petersen on July 14, 1961. He wrote his dismissive response on July 17. A correction might have been made but never was. And so now we find the same error enshrined for posterity in the eleventh volume of the *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, published in 1991. In 1962 the Tanners would prepare their own response to Nibley’s entire series of articles. They called it, “Who Censored the Joseph Smith Story?” Although there is no evidence in the text of that tract that they were aware of the exchange between LaMar Petersen and Nibley, they were still able to discern easily enough by comparing what Nibley made of Petersen’s statement to what Petersen actually said that Nibley had indeed “missed the whole point.”

In contrast to Nibley and the many others like him, Jerald and Sandra actually felt that it was their duty, as believers in the God of Truth, when confronted by evidence to the contrary of what they wanted to think, to change their position. Herein lies a key to their effectiveness when countering the works of LDS apologists (and Christian detractors) who did not and do not hold themselves to the same high standard.

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44 Appendix H of Milton V. Backman’s *The First Vision: Its Historical Context* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1971) p. 177.
50 Ibid., p. 526, nt. 15. It should be noted as well that footnote 4 is on page 4 of Petersen’s book, and not, as Nibley has it, on page 3.
51 Letter of LaMar Petersen to Hugh Nibley (July 14, 1961).
52 Letter of Hugh Nibley to LaMar Petersen (July 17, 1961).
We see this, for example, where sometime, most likely during 1960, Sandra published a second “Dear Friend” letter correcting a mistake she had made in the first:

Some time ago I wrote a letter stating my reasons for withdrawing from the [LDS] church. In it I stated that there was no Mormon or anti-Mormon literature published before 1870 which identified the personages in the first vision as God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. I would like to apologize, for I have found that an anti-Mormon writer named John Hyde, in his book “Mormonism”, published in 1857, states that Joseph saw God and Christ in 1820.55

Jerald and Sandra would be helped by a number of faithful friends in pursuing the issue of the first vision. They would be the first to actually publish the long-suppressed 1832 account mentioned to LaMar Petersen by LDS Apostle Levi Edgar Young and sought as well by Fawn Brodie for her biography of Joseph Smith. This occurred in 1966, and consisted of reproducing the typescript version from Paul R. Cheesman’s BYU Master’s Thesis. When that Thesis mysteriously (though perhaps predictably) disappeared from the BYU library, Mrs. Cheesman spread it around that the Tanners had stolen it. In response, Sandra wrote to Mrs. Cheesman informing her that they were not responsible for the theft of the Thesis and that her statements amounted to slander.

As I write, the Tanners’ copy of the Cheesman Thesis lays on the table before me at the page where the Thesis Committee’s signatures would have appeared in the library copy. In the Tanners’ copy the lines are blank indicating that this isn’t the copy that had been entered into the library. In actual fact the thesis was sent to Jerald and Sandra by a third party, who at first did not include the crucial appendix. When the appendix arrived, and Sandra recognized it as the long suppressed 1832 first vision account, she was so excited she phoned Jerald from the post office.

The Tanners would also, with the help of another good friend, H. Michael Marquardt, be the first to publish a typescript of Joseph Smith’s entire 1832-1834 diary and his 1835-1836 diary in 1979, and then his 1838-1839 diary in 1982. Each of these diaries contained at least one telling of the first vision story.

How to Make Enemies and Influence People

One of the excuses the LDS Church used in those days for suppressing documents was their fragile state of preservation. While Jerald knew that some documents were too fragile to survive frequent handling, he also knew that many archives and research facilities (not least of all the LDS Church Historian’s Office) also compensated for this by microfilming them. Jerald had also come to learn by this time that for the time being at least the LDS Church Historian’s Office was intransigent in its habit of dealing with problems in LDS history by hiding crucial documents away in a vault. So he concocted a scheme to illustrate the situation in a dramatic way. He sent letters to about twenty LDS officials and included ten dollars in each requesting copies of specific documents that were on microfilm. He distributed the money in that way because he hoped that when they inevitably returned it, as they had done on previous occasions, they would also perhaps include some sort of letters resorting to the usual fatuous list of excuses for refusing his request. At the time Sandra thought it a somewhat hair-brained idea. For one thing they could scarcely afford so large an outlay of cash in those days, but even more to the point, she was convinced it would just make everybody down at headquarters more angry at them than they already were, which of course it did.

We may feel real sympathy for laborers in the Church Historian’s Department in those days, recognizing how frustrating it must have been for them to always have to try to come up with legitimate-sounding excuses for refusing people access to documents that in all justice they had every right to see. The letters went out on April 7, 1961. From Jerald’s point of view, the response was gratifying. Most but not all of those he sent money to, sent back the money along with some excuse for not fulfilling the request.56

This was probably a futile idea, but Jerald was only twenty-two. Still in doing this he was crossing the wills of those two to three times his age who were often humorless characters with little patience for the sanguine, spontaneous folly of youth, especially when in search of revealing things that it was their bread and butter to hide.

Back to the Book of Commandments

When Jerald and Sandra went to Provo on that stormy February day in 1961 and came back with copies of the first forty-one pages of the original edition of the Book of Commandments, it was only a small step for them to decide to actually undertake a photomechanical reproduction of the entire work. In the earlier reprints, the type was reset instead of actual photocopies of the originals. The reader will recall how they at first imagined that BYU was very free in letting documents be copied. They subsequently learned, however, that that had only occurred by mistake. Through the grapevine the story reached them that when it was discovered what had been copied that day and who had copied it, there followed some sort of a shake up. Jerald explained what happened in an early tract, “they [the LDS Church Historian’s Office] became very upset and informed the B.Y.U. Library that they were not to allow us to have access to these microfilms of rare documents. Two women [probably Georgia and Lucille] who went to the B.Y.U. Library after this had happened were informed that the Church Historian’s Office had instructed the library to make a list of the microfilms they had, so that they would know just what we had access to.”57

One of the things that must be clearly understood before we begin to describe Jerald and Sandra’s ongoing efforts to obtain
copies of the remaining pages of the Book of Commandments from Mormon sources is that the Book of Commandments was not a manuscript but a book that had long since entered public domain. When this is kept clearly in mind the various excuses given for refusing the Tanners’ repeated requests for copies are seen for what they really are.

Jerald wrote to Chad Flake in Special Collections at BYU in early April 1961. Flake declined to help on April 11 on the grounds that “We are supplied this copy by the Church Historian’s office…but not for photoduplication or other forms of publication. Due to the fact that there is manuscript material in this copy, you would need to secure the permission of the Church Historian’s library to have it reproduced.” And then, probably as a sideways allusion to the manner in which Jerald and Sandra had obtained the first forty-one pages of the Book of Commandments, Flake goes on to remark: “Unfortunately, none of our professional staff, either in the Special Collections or Microfilm area, are on duty on Saturday; and our student assistants are instructed not to make any photocopies. This policy is for their protection, so that they will not be held responsible for copyright violations.” Flake must have felt that the fiction he put forth in this first letter was a good one, because we find him using it more categorically in a letter he wrote on April 14 to Manfred Goettig, a convert to Mormonism from Germany who worked in the same machine shop as Jerald: “It is impossible for us to send you a copy of the Book of Commandments due to the fact that the manuscript is not owned by us…Under law, the reproduction rights of manuscripts are retained by the institution which owns the manuscript.” Notice how in a matter of three days the Book of Commandments of Flake’s imaginative description moved from containing manuscript material, to actually being a manuscript. Pauline Hancock also wrote asking for copies and was refused by Flake in a letter written on April 12. Interestingly Flake seems to have some knowledge of Pauline and affection for her, because his letter is more courteous and possibly more honest, for all Flake says by way of an excuse is that the Church Historian’s Office “allowed us to receive a copy of the film…with the stipulation that any reproduction would have to come through their office.”

When the first salvo of requests failed, Jerald decided to try to recruit the help of the sympathetic William E. Berrett. In his first response, dated April 24, Berrett repeated Flake’s excuse. The Tanners then asked Berrett to contact the Church Historian’s Office on their behalf. He did so but failed, writing on May 5: “I did not disclose to [the Church Historian’s Office] who I wanted the copy for,” writes Berrett, “but in their reply they indicated that they had refused a copy to you and that I would have to divulge the name of the individual who wanted a copy.”

“Apparently,” Berrett went on sympathetically, “the feeling is that you have only one desire in using a copy and that is to attack the Church. I regret that you should have given any cause for them to feel that that is the case.”

On June 1, Sandra wrote directly to Joseph Fielding Smith seeking to obtain a microfilm copy of the Book of Commandments. In her letter she was careful to call Flake’s bluff by saying: “We don’t want the manuscript portion, just the printed part.” Her letter was returned with a note written on it that was entirely nonsensical in relation to the particular request: “Private records are sacred to the individual.” (The Book of Commandments, of course, was not a private record.) Still, not allowing herself to be dissuaded, Sandra continued to pursue the document. A. William Lund refused her request in a letter dated June 5 and finally David O. McKay also refused to provide any help.

The Tanners had similar difficulty trying to obtain a copy from then RLDS Historian Charles Davies. They wrote to Davies twice, on April 8 and then again on April 22, and were refused both times.

Finally Jerald and Sandra did what they probably should have done in the first place, they journeyed beyond the bounds of the capricious realm of Mormonism and put in a request with Yale University Library, who being more inclined to adhere to normal archival protocol, saw no difficulty in promptly giving them what they asked for.

One of the most bizarre episodes in the ongoing saga of the Tanner’s efforts to reprint an early Mormon text, an episode reminiscent of the cheesy cloak and dagger tactics of the old Charlie Chan movies that many in that era had grown up watching, was the attempt by somebody to instigate the destruction of the photocopies of the Book of Commandments copies Jerald and Sandra had obtained that Saturday at BYU.

These copies had originally been printed in the negative, i.e., the print was white and the background black. In order to have this reversed prior to being able to take them to a printer, Jerald and Sandra took them down to John A. Spencer Jr.’s Universal Microfilm Company, then at 141 Pierpont Avenue. At the time Universal was the only microfilm company in the valley and thus had the LDS Church as one of its clients.

As the story was told to Jerald and Sandra, one day someone from the LDS Church came in and asked Spencer whether someone had recently brought in copies of some pages from the Book of Commandments. Spencer answered that he didn’t really pay much attention to what people brought to him, only what they wanted him to do, but that he thought someone might have brought in some Book of Commandments pages. The person then said something to the effect of, “well, don’t you use some sort of chemicals around the shop that might, say, spill ‘accidentally’ and destroy some copies someone might have brought in for you to work on. I mean, you couldn’t be blamed if some chemical ‘accidentally’ spilled.” Spencer, realizing that he was being asked to destroy the Book of Commandments pages Sandra and Jerald had brought to him, tried to laugh it off, saying something to the effect of, “Look, I’m just a business man. I could hardly afford having it get around that I have those kind of accidents.” But Spencer had realized what he was being asked to do, and when

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59 ibid., p. 86.
he had finished the work and was dropping it off he told Jerald and Sandra what happened. 60

Once the preparations for their reprint edition of the Book of Commandments was complete they took it to Woodruff Printing Company to have it printed using the photo-offset printing method. And so the first photo reprint edition of the Book of Commandments ever produced, and the first of many Tanner firsts, was in print. It was a small volume, 5 1/2 by 8 1/2 inches, with a picture of the original opened to the title page, showing the signature of Wilford Woodruff on the inside of the cover. The title reads above the picture of the title page:

A BOOK OF COMMANDMENTS
PRINTED 1833
A PHOTOGRAPHIC REPRODUCTION
LITHOGRAPHED 1961

At the bottom, underneath the picture, this explanation is given: “The first forty-one pages are reproduced from the Wilford Woodruff copy at the Brigham Young University. Pages forty-two through One [sic] hundred sixty are reproduced from the Yale University copy.” No preface or introduction were actually bound into the volume. It did, however, include a four-page insert, the first page giving a brief account of the Tanner’s attempts to gain access to the original,61 the second reproducing Chad Flake’s April 11th letter, the third showing the revelation later appearing as D&C 5 (=Book of Commandments 4) showing how it had been changed from its original printing, and the fourth doing the same with D&C 27 (=Book of Commandments 28).

It will come as a surprise to nobody that Jerald and Sandra would continue to have obstructions thrown in their way even after they had printed the document. When they approached the two Salt Lake City newspapers about advertising, the once independent Salt Lake Tribune, and the LDS Church-owned Deseret News, both refused to place an ad. One of the employees of the Newspaper Agency told the Tanners that the reason behind the refusal was that the insert was “too controversial.” When a woman later called the Newspaper Agency to inquire into whether this was true, she was told that the Tanners had lied to her, that indeed the Agency did not discriminate in that fashion, nor had they refused to run the Tanner’s Book of Commandments ad. Making the best of every opportunity, the woman responded, “Very well then, if that’s really the case, I would like to personally take out an advertisement for the Tanner’s edition of the Book of Commandments.” The suggestion forced the man to give up pretending and show his true colors. He would not accept an ad from her either.62

An interesting example of adding insult to injury came when Chad Flake in Brigham Young University Studies attacked the quality of Jerald and Sandra’s reprint of the Book of Commandments, complaining that “it has pages which are completely unreadable.”63 The fact is, however, a poor reprint is better than none at all. This is shown in the continuing usefulness of Joseph Smith’s so-called Grammar & Alphabet of the Egyptian Language, a document that provided the key to the creation of the LDS Book of Abraham. Thumbing through the pages of that work, one can literally follow the process by which Joseph Smith developed portions of the Book of Abraham text from erroneous “inspired” translations of Egyptian characters copied in the margins. In 1965 James D. Wardle provided a poor microfilm copy of the document to the Tanners. They in turn subjected it to the technologies available to them at the time to improve the images. Still the reprint as a whole is of a very poor quality. Nevertheless from 1966 down to the present it has been the only commonly available reprint of the work, and for all its limitations it is far better than having the document completely unavailable.

Perusing Jerald and Sandra’s Book of Commandments reprint, one immediately notices that the first forty-one pages, the pages they obtained from BYU, are of a poorer quality than those obtained from Yale University. All the unreadable spots come from the BYU pages. Why then didn’t Jerald simply replace those original forty-one pages with better ones from Yale? At any given time in those days Jerald and Sandra seemed to have had twenty, fifty, a hundred or more dollars sent off in the mail somewhere with requests for copies. Surely the reason was not an unwillingness to spend the money. And indeed that was not the reason. Jerald felt that it was important that, in so far as possible, the reprint had to come from the LDS Church’s own copy of the Book of Commandments. He knew that LDS people were often very quick to dismiss anything that was critical of the Church on whatever pretext they could snatch out of the air at a moments notice. When Sandra’s grandfather William Henry McGee—whom she refers to as the Joseph Fielding Smith of her family—was bemoaning Sandra’s apostasy, Georgia responded by saying, “Well, the problems she encountered in the Book of Commandments are really there. What is she supposed to do about them?” His response was dismissive. That assertion, he said, was “all lies.” Georgia gave him a copy of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) edition of the Book of Commandments and challenged him to make the comparison himself. When she asked about it some time later his response was: “That dirty Church of Christ group, they changed the revelations!”

Even after the Tanners produced their photographic reprint there were those who occasionally cast doubt on its authenticity. One Mormon woman, when finding out that part of it came from the Yale library, dismissed it saying: “Yale! don’t you know that there was a communist plot there in the 1930s bent on undermining the LDS Church? Nope you can’t trust anything from Yale. No doubt the document has been doctored.”

60 Fragments of this story are told in various places in the Tanner’s works, usually without mentioning names. See, e.g., The Case Against Mormonism, Vol. 1 (Salt Lake City, Utah: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1967) pp. 51-52.
61 Including an early account of the shakeup that followed their making photocopies during their February visit to BYU: “When the L.D.S. Church Historian’s Office found out that we had obtained these photographs, they immediately sent word to the Brigham Young University to keep us from obtaining any more photo-copies of these rare documents.”
These were not in any sense legitimate criticisms. Still Jerald made it a policy to give such spiritually and intellectually irresponsible people as few excuses as possible. Down through the years people have criticized the Tanners for not cleaning up texts before making reprints of them, for not taking the trouble in other words to tidy up the margins and gutters and to obliterate as far as possible the writing on the pages. But this was intentional as a way of making it as clear as possible that they were merely reproducing the text as it was, without modifying it in any way.

In contrast to the situation with the Grammar & Alphabet of the Egyptian Language, which has never been replaced by a more adequate edition (although there has been rumors of a much anticipated forthcoming edition by Brent Metcalfe, David P. Wright, Edward H. Ashment, and Robert K. Ritner), a better reprint of the Book of Commandments appeared in early 1962 printed by the Deseret Printing Company for Mormon antiquarian Wilford C. Wood under the title, Joseph Smith Begins His Work, Vol. II from a copy Wood owned. Joseph Smith Begins His Work, Vol. I, a photo reprint of the 1830 Book of Mormon, appeared a few years earlier. Flake smooths the edges of the story by saying in his previously mentioned BYU Studies article that the Wood edition was “published at approximately the same time” as the Tanners’ edition. That is true in substance although the Tanner edition came out in early September 1961 and the Wood edition did not appear until February of 1962.

For those satisfied with appearances, the fact that the LDS Church-owned Deseret Printing Company agreed to print Wilford C. Wood’s photomechanical reprint will serve as sufficient proof that the LDS Church was not really committed to suppressing the Book of Commandments but were simply put off by the manner in which Jerald and Sandra pursued the project. The question provides an interesting opportunity to reflect. To begin with we should know a little about the man who produced Joseph Smith Begins His Work, Vol. II.

Wilford C. Wood was a man who loved the LDS Church and served it all his life. He was a great enthusiast for finding and obtaining artifacts of early Mormonism. Some of the highlights of his collection included the original cast death masks of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, the magical Jupiter’s Talisman that Joseph Smith had on him when he was killed, and Joseph Smith’s sandy-colored seer stone. In his capacity as LDS history hunter Wood did invaluable service to the LDS Church by buying up historic sites on behalf of the LDS Church. In this regard, LaMar C. Berrett writes:

For forty years Wilford actively researched ownership and purchased properties that had played an important part in Latter-day Saint history. He usually purchased the property in his own name, then sold the property to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at a great savings to church members.

Wilford purchased eight out of ten plots of ground that comprised the original temple block in Nauvoo, Illinois. He also purchased the Liberty Jail at Liberty, Missouri; Aaronic Priesthood property at Harmony, Pennsylvania; Adam-oni-Ahman in Missouri; the Masonic Lodge at Nauvoo, Illinois; the John Johnson home at Hiram, Ohio, and a store in Kirtland, Ohio.

In “thanks for his work in acquiring so many Mormon treasures,”66 the LDS Church presented Wood with a statue of the kneeling Joseph Smith receiving the golden plates by Torleif Knaphus, the famous LDS sculptor who also did the Angel Moroni Monument at the Hill Cumorah and the Handcart Monument on Temple Square in Salt Lake City.

So when Wood wanted to print his own editions of the 1830 Book of Mormon, the 1833 Book of Commandments, and 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, nobody in the LDS Church, so far as we know, discouraged him. Not only so, lest anyone doubt the authenticity of the texts he was reprinting, he included sworn statements by the representatives of the Deseret News Publishing Company, including at the time, Thomas S. Monson, now a member of the First Presidency of the LDS Church.

The Wilford Wood reprints were initially made available by the LDS Church-owned Deseret Book Stores and by the then independent Bookcraft stores. Advertisements for the book were placed in the same newspapers that had refused to run ads for Jerald and Sandra’s reprints of the same book. Jerald and Sandra speculated that the “leaders of the Mormon Church evidently felt that by using reverse psychology they could make the Mormon people believe that they were glad that the Book of Commandments had been reprinted.”67 However, Jerald and Sandra received information on October 9, 1964, that the Wood reprints were no longer available from Deseret Book. The next day Sandra went in to enquire for herself about the matter and was told that “President David O. McKay won’t let us sell that anymore...We’ve had several people leave the Church because of those books.” On October 11 Jerald and Sandra wrote to Wood himself about it. Wood wrote back saying he had plenty of the books available and asked whether they would permit him “to use your letter to show it to President McKay or those responsible for stopping the sale of the book at Deseret Book Company.”68

In a letter written on March 22, 1967, Wood blames Joseph Fielding Smith for stopping the sales of his reprints:

Without mentioning any names or talking about the General Authorities personally, this is what happened. The man who is supposed to answer all of the questions about the Church in the Improvement Era [Joseph Fielding Smith] is the man who stopped Deseret Book from selling the book. President McKay has told me more than once that he would see to it that the Deseret Book sold Volumes one and two of Joseph Smith Begins His Work. So far he has been unable to do so. I love President McKay with all of my heart.69
It would be approximately sixteen years before the Wood reprints would again become available in Deseret Book. During that entire period the Tanners continued to sell them. When the RLDS Herald House Publishers produced their reprint editions of the original Book of Mormon (1970), Doctrine and Covenants (1971) and Book of Commandments (1972), the Tanners decided to continue carrying the Wood reprints, not only because the newer reprints produced by the rival RLDS Church would raise the same kind of suspicion as the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) edition raised with Sandra’s grandfather McGee, but also because the pedigree of the Wood reprints (originally published by the Deseret News Publishing Company) remained impeccable despite the fact that the LDS Church had blacklisted them. So, even though Wood stood in quite a different relation to the LDS Church than Sandra and Jerald did, his reprints were only accepted for a relatively short time. At the end of the day it wasn’t a matter of personalities that caused the LDS Church to fight against Jerald and Sandra’s efforts to make a reprint of the original Book of Commandments, it was where it stood in relation to the truth, and to the God whose word is truth.

(to be continued...)

Excerpts from Emails and Letters

April 2007. I was baptised 4 weeks ago into the church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and I have found your web site very interesting and helpful. I have had doubts of it being the truth since I started studying 7 months ago but like all other Mormons I know learnt to trust the “burning bussom feeling” and often continued against my better judgement.

Your website has helped fill the unanswered questions I was always left with but could get no proof of and I would like to thank you for that. It was David McCament’s Testimony and scriptures from the bible that confirmed my doubts. I probably would have continued along if they had not told me last week I could become a goddess........there is only one God and it’s not me, though I have struggled with exactly who that was recently while studying with them.

April 2007. I was raised Mormon, but became a Christian on 04/02/2007 along with my wife (she was not Mormon). The decision was not an easy one, however it became clear that the Mormon Church was not what it claimed to be.

My initial reason to doubt came when I saw a 20/20 segment on Mark Hofmann. I could not understand why the church would spend so much money to hide the documents he was “unearthing.” If the church is what it claims to be, there should be no reason to do that. I found it even more troubling to find they were hiding “forged” documents at the cost of its members.

April 2007. I’ve studied anti-mormon literature etc. for 15 years. My commitment to the LDS Church is unwavering and it only strengthened my beliefs that Joseph Smith is a Prophet of God, and Jesus Christ restored His Church on earth once again because He loves mankind.

May 2007. I began receiving your publication a number of years ago. I knew in my heart I had to one day meet this man, Jerald Tanner. It was in 1995 that I drove to Salt Lake City and had the opportunity of talking to him for fifteen minutes. I doubt if I will ever meet another with such zeal for the Gospel as this humble man.

May 2007. THAT OLD “LIER FROM THE THE BEGINNING” HAS YOU FIRMLY ON HIS FISHING HOOK. IN CASE YOU DON’T KNOW WHOM I’M TALKING ABOUT, IT’S SATAN” WHOM IS YOUR GOD, FOR YOU ARE ABOUT TO GO TO HELL AND SUFFER FOR ETERNITY, BECAUSE YOU “BOUGHT HIS SUBTLE LIES!

May 2007. I am sorry to hear about Mr. Tanner. I have read and enjoyed your works for some time now. I am an active member of the LDS faith and I do appreciate what the two of you have done. Your work has caused me to study and find answers to some very interesting points.

May 2007. I’m sure the man [Jerald] is having one hell of a change of heart right now on the other side of the veil.

I met you guys in Brigham City, and Salt Lake City. Back in 1985 and you are still the same people.

Bitter til the very end!!!!! Your time is coming too, soon Sandra!

May 2007. Just a short note of appreciation in memory of Jerald for his excellent scholarship in this cause. I was in the LDS church briefly in my twenties (I am fifty-one now) but left when I did more research than the LDS church liked. I have read your newsletter from time to time and am always impressed with your thoroughness and integrity. You have done wonderful work—as educators, historians, and scholars. Best wishes, Jerald will be missed.

May 2007. Now he [Jerald] knows.... It’s a sad time when anyone passes away for those left behind and I’m sorry for your loss. I do have to say however that for anyone to spend a lifetime dedicated to doing what you do amazes me. What a waste of a life. For heavens sake let it go.

May 2007. Thank you for your comprehensive and well documented work. Having been baptized into the Mormon church in England, I have always had doubts about the validity of some of the fundamental doctrines of the church. I have no doubt that there are good, caring people in this organization, but they are sadly misled, it is true that recovery from Mormonism is a difficult process as we find ourselves alienated from family and friends. I have the added dilemma of a devout mother in the church, as well my girlfriend who has serious doubts but blindly accepts the teachings through duress.

May 2007. I don’t berate your church, but yet you berate those who are not. Possibly your church along with my family.

May 2007. I really enjoyed the article on Jerald Tanner in the last Messenger. Jerald and Sandra were so helpful in my leaving the Mormon church along with my family.
June 2007. You probably won’t remember me but when I was Mormon, … I had arranged a layover in Salt Lake just for the purpose of seeing who these Tanners were and why they hated Mormons so much. Inside, however, I did have questions. I met with you and your husband in your little bookstore and was humbled. You and your husband were very kind. … I purchased “The Changing World of Mormonism” and started reading it. I cannot tell you the absolute shock it caused. … It took a few months, but God moved us out of the influence of Mormonism. … Your kindness and your ministry changed my life, which then changed my wife’s. We now have 4 boys who are all believers [in Christ]. … THANK YOU

June 2007. Thank you for your service. I’ve been deceived by this cult for a year and half and only Sunday realized what was really the truth. I appreciate your honesty and hard work in bringing forth the truth about the Mormons.

June 2007. Hi, I just wanted to thank the Lighthouse Ministry for the tireless effort everyone there has put into gathering priceless information, sources, and etc. It has made my wife and my transition away from Mormonism much more rational and complete.

June 2007. I am no longer a Mormon, having had my name taken off the membership rolls of the church, but my husband is a practicing Mormon, of at least 40 years. My sealing to him is in suspension. … I am emotionally torn. I love him … and want to stay with him, but the fact that I don’t want to come back to the church is causing stress on our marriage.

June 2007. Your “[Mormonism-]Shadow or Reality” was so helpful to me while the Lord was dragging me out of Mormonism.

July 2007. Hello, I never thought I would be writing to your ministry, but I had an experience recently, and I thought I should share it. I was baptized into the Mormon church … But the deeper I got into the church and its beliefs, I started having trouble. I did some serious research after I joined. Finally, I had to write to our local bishop to express my concern about some of their beliefs. I later sent him a letter, resigning from the church.

July 2007. Do you truly believe what you are selling? Selling is the appropriate word. … You use scare tactics to entice people. Pulling out of context from multiple sources to substantiate a single thought. … You claim honesty but your whole site is a farce just to line your own pocketbook.

July 2007. Hello wonderful folks at Utlm! You all played a pivotal role in my departure from Mormonism—I can never thank you enough!

July 2007. Sandra I will always be so grateful for your help in getting us out of Mormonism and all you do for so many. You affect so many people even more than you realize as for each family that gets out or stays out the ripple effect keeps going forever.

July 2007. Of course it would be difficult for you to even try to “disparage” the LDS faith, All 12 million of us are a bad bet for the devil to try and conquer.

July 2007. Mrs. Tanner you are full of hate! Hate for and towards The Church of Jesus Christ Of Latter Day Saints. … I know of no one else who attacks the church with such a hatred. … Mrs. Tanner make no mistake of this. You will bow your head in dreaded misery one day, with tears of sorrow even greater then the ones you shed the day your husband died. Mark My Words Well, Sear them into your memory! THAT DAY IS COMING …

July 24, 2007. [Pioneer Day in Utah] ah grow up

Aug. 2007. There is a stage and we are assigned characters in the unfolding drama but it is only a role we play. … I have read the script pretty well for 40 years. Twice in the Bishop’s role and many times with titles like president, counsellor etc. [in England] … Then one day I was sent a DVD about the BoM. I watched it hoping, as a graduate geologist and teacher of chemistry to find quick rebuttals for any criticisms. A strange thing happened. I stepped off the stage to take a closer look. I am still off that stage (2 months) and trying to come to terms with another script; this one looks like it’s written by Jesus and I am growing fond of my new character. As a result of your industry and perseverance my entire family and my wife’s parents (he a one-time temple sealer and both returned missionaries) are out of the LDS church. So this is a letter of thanks.

Aug. 2007. Do you not have anything else in your life to worry about other then setting up webpages and printed material that talk negatively about other people or religions? Do you call yourself a Christian??

… What you are doing does not help you or others living in this world it only makes you look as if you have a hatchet to bury. … You might think you are on a crusade but when your life is over I think you will find your crusade was for the wrong side.

Aug. 2007. I came to your bookstore only one time, more than twenty years ago. However, I was deeply influenced by things you said to me that day, and by the things that I was able to read and learn both before and after my visit with you. Because of the courage that you and Jerald had to ask questions LDS doctrine and history many years ago, you have helped me and countless other former LDS members—many whom you may never know you helped—escape from the fallacy of the teachings of Joseph Smith.

Aug. 2007. Your time will come. We can also intentionally deceive others by a gesture or a look, by silence, or by telling only part of the truth. … The Lord is not pleased with such dishonesty, and we will have to account for our lies.

Aug. 2007. Thank you for your ministry. … ULM was one of the major catalysts in my leaving the Mormon church. I am a recent Christian after 40 + years as a Mormon. I served a mission in England and graduated from BYU.

Aug. 2007. Sister Tanner, now your husband knows the truth! I have read your works, and it only strengthened my testimony…. The Gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored to the earth. I know it, in spite of many contradictions, and wrong doings on the part of the early leaders of the church.
Aug. 2007. It made me very sad to see that it is your position to bad mouth and belittle other religions on your website. Why would you do that? do you think that all Mormons are unaware of the anti-Mormon position and that you are doing a great service to the Lord by publishing those horrible books and anti-Mormon literature? I am lds and a return missionary.

Aug. 2007. I just bought your excellent book, “Mormonism—Shadow or Reality.” I was baptized at age 18, in 1964, and excommunicated in 1981 for moral charges, which were true. I had no bitterness, and I still believed in the church til the past several months. I’m a retired Police Officer, and I started looking at facts and evidence instead of “feelings and faith”.... Keep up the good work,....

Aug. 2007. Appears your Apostacy is bothering you. Sandra should listen to the warnings of the Prophets. “Never, ever,ever, never, ever, let anyone or anything take you away from the Gospel.” A word to the wise. When we believe we know so much more than everyone else. we begin to find just how little we really do know.

Sept. 2007. You may not remember me but in the summer of 2004 … I came to visit you at your book store. I had been raised a Mormon my whole life and my boyfriend started giving me information that I had never seen before...anyways I just wanted to let you know that I am no longer practicing Mormonism and a Mormon my whole life and my boyfriend started giving me information that I had never seen before...anyways I just wanted to let you know that I am no longer practicing Mormonism and am now a Saved Christian and have also been baptized....I just wanted to thank you so much for letting me meet you and for answering some questions and pointing me in the right direction.

Sept. 2007. WHAT GIVES YOU THE RIGHT TO ATTACK THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS? you have no right, I see Jared Tanner has passed away i guess he is getting his just deserts.

Sept. 2007. Thank you for all the time and work you have put into bringing forth the truth. I was a convert to the LDS church in 1996 and now I’m free! I’m still not sure how I was so stupid and didn’t see beyond the lies. When I went to the temple 4 years ago I knew that something wasn’t right. Luckily my husband started his research and found the truth.

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LDS CLAIMS
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MOUNTAIN MEADOWS MASSACRE
150 YEARS LATER

“Halt! Do your duty!” With that command scores of zealous LDS priesthood leaders and followers, along with a few Indians, from the Cedar City, Utah, area fired on at least 140 unarmed, non-Mormon men, women and children. The killings were over in a matter of minutes, sparing only 17 or 18 children under the age of eight. Earlier that morning several Mormons, led by John D. Lee, diabolically entered the emigrant wagon train under a white flag and convinced them to surrender their arms in exchange for an LDS escort of safe passage through Indian territory.

The gentle wagon train, composed mainly of Methodists and Presbyterians from Arkansas on their way to California, seemed doomed from the start. The news of the murder of beloved LDS Apostle Parley P. Pratt in Arkansas (by a jealous husband whose wife had left him to become Pratt’s 12th wife) seemed to be the final straw for the Mormons. This event, coupled with the tensions over federal troops then approaching the Utah Territory, President Brigham Young’s declaration of martial law, lingering bitterness about mistreatment of LDS in Missouri and Illinois, recent sermons by President Young about “blood atonement” and inflammatory sermons during the Mormon reformation period led to the slaughter known as the Mountain Meadows Massacre on September 11, 1857. As Will Bagley observed: “Mountain Meadows was a crime of true believers.”

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the massacre and has been commemorated by various events. On September 11th a memorial service was conducted at the site of the massacre, now owned by the LDS Church. They provided a pavilion, pulpit, microphone, chairs, security guards, port-a-potties and a luncheon.

Besides various speakers from the families involved, LDS Apostle Henry Eyring offered his sincere “regret” to the descendents of those killed. The Salt Lake Tribune reported on the event:

A Mormon apostle, speaking Tuesday at the 150th anniversary memorial service for victims of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, apologized for the church’s role, expressing “profound regret for the massacre.” …

“What was done here long ago by members of our church represents a terrible and inexcusable departure from Christian teaching and conduct,” said Eyring, who choked up while reading a statement delivered on behalf of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints…. The words, “we’re sorry,” were not part of the statement, but Richard Turley Jr., the LDS Church’s managing director of family and church history and co-author of the forthcoming book, Massacre at Mountain Meadows, insisted after the ceremony that the statement was meant to be an apology.

“[The church] is deeply, deeply sorry,” he said. “What happened here was horrific.” …

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3 Bagley, pp. 9, 68.
4 Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1987, pp. 398–404-B.
5 Bagley, p. 378.
The LDS Church made a point of the fact that they did not issue an apology. Paul Foy of the Associated Press reported:

Church leaders were adamant that the statement should not be construed as an apology. “We don’t use the word ‘apology.’ We used ‘profound regret,’” church spokesman Mark Tuttle told The Associated Press. (Chicago Tribune, Sept. 11, 2007)

The families of the victims are also petitioning for the burial site to be designated as a national historic landmark.6

The massacre was discussed this spring in the new four-hour PBS program “The Mormons.”7 This year also saw the release of the full-length motion picture “September Dawn,” a fictionalized account of the murders.8 While the movie was not all that we had hoped for we were glad to see Brigham Young’s “blood atonement” sermons and the massacre brought to the public’s attention. Even the LDS Church seems to have realized “blood atonement” sermons and the massacre brought to the public’s attention. Even the LDS Church seems to have realized it couldn’t avoid talking about the massacre this year.

In an unprecedented move, the church posted on its official web site as early as June an article on the massacre scheduled to appear in the September Ensign. In it LDS historian Richard Turley acknowledges that many of the Mormon charges against the emigrants were false. He writes:

Some traditional Utah histories of what occurred at Mountain Meadows have accepted the claim that poisoning also contributed to conflict—that the Arkansas emigrants deliberately poisoned a spring and an ox carcass near the central Utah town of Fillmore, causing illness and death among local Indians. According to this story, the Indians became enraged and followed the emigrants to the Mountain Meadows, where they either committed the atrocities on their own or forced fearful Latter-day Saint settlers to join them in the attack. Historical research shows that these stories are not accurate.9

While the article repeats the charge that someone in the wagon train had boasted he helped kill LDS founding prophet Joseph Smith and that other members of the wagon train were threatening to join the federal troops in fighting the Mormons, it must be remembered that these accounts were given by LDS men involved in the massacre. One is left to wonder if these charges were simply invented to give an excuse for the attack. Juanita Brooks observed:

Whatever the details, the fact remains that the entire company was betrayed and murdered, an ugly fact that will not be downed. Certainly, when the facts are marshaled, there is not justification enough for the death of a single individual.10

Mormons will often try to shift the blame to the Paiute Indians of Southern Utah, that the attack was their idea and they coerced the Mormons to participate. However, Turley explains that it was the other way around:

The generally peaceful Paiutes were reluctant when first told of the plan. Although the Paiutes occasionally picked off emigrants’ stock for food, they did not have a tradition of large-scale attacks. But Cedar City’s leaders promised them plunder and convinced them that the emigrants were aligned with “enemy” troops who would kill Indians along with Mormon settlers.11

While there is insufficient evidence to prove Brigham Young directly ordered the massacre, he certainly set the stage for the event and aided in its cover-up.12 That Young was not upset with those who perpetrated the massacre is demonstrated by the following points. First, Brigham Young granted John D. Lee, the only man to later be tried and executed for the massacre, three additional plural wives after the event.13 The second example is Brigham Young’s treatment of the 1859 rock memorial topped with a large wooden cross erected by U.S. Army Major J. L. Carleton. While visiting the site in 1861, Brigham Young orchestrated the destruction of the monument. Bagley comments:

The monument was beginning to tumble down, but the wooden cross and its inscription, “Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord,” still stood above the rock cairn.

Brigham Young read the verse aloud, altering the text to fit his mood: “Vengeance is mine saith the Lord; I have repaid.” Dudley Leavitt recalled how Young directed the destruction of the monument so that all present could deny that he had ordered it. “He didn’t say another word. He didn’t give an order. He just lifted his right arm to the square, and in five minutes there wasn’t one stone left upon another. He didn’t have to tell us what he wanted done. We understood.”14

We offer the following article by Will Bagley to help the reader better understand the historical context in which these events occurred. (Also see Salt Lake City Messenger No. 98)

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6 For more on the movie see http://www.startribune.com/614/story/1380924.html and http://www.mrm.org/topics/reviews/september-dawn
8 Brooks, p. 108.
10 Bagley, pp. 242-247.
12 Bagley, p. 247; also given as “Vengeance is mine and I have taken a little” by Wilford Woodruff. See Brooks, p. 182.
Will You Love that Man or Woman Well Enough to Shed Their Blood?

Brigham Young’s Culture of Violence and the Murders at Mountain Meadows

By Will Bagley


In 1845, the Mormon apostles issued a proclamation “to the Rulers and People of all Nations,” declaring, “the kingdom of God has come: … even that kingdom which shall fill the whole earth, and shall stand for ever.” As drafted by apostle Parley P. Pratt, the proclamation was an ultimatum to world leaders to join the Mormon millennial plan “to reduce all nations and creeds to one political and religious standard, and thus put an end to Babel forms and names, and to strife and war.” The Earth’s rulers must “take a lively interest with the Saints of the Most High, and the covenant people of the Lord” or “you will become their inveterate enemy.”

This unambiguous statement of objectives by a revolutionary new religious movement inspired Mormonism’s fifty-year conflict with the American Republic. With this charter, Brigham Young sought to complete the work of Joseph Smith at any cost and by any means necessary. During his first decade in the West he built a religious theocracy that employed the techniques of a modern totalitarian state to establish the Kingdom of God in the Great Basin. In the process, he created what historian D. Michael Quinn has called a culture of violence. The decision to do whatever was necessary to build the Kingdom “encouraged Mormons to consider it their religious right to kill antagonistic outsiders, common criminals, LDS apostates, and even faithful Mormons who committed sins ‘worthy of death.’”

Mormon apologists have long argued that the “occasional isolated acts of violence that occurred” in Mormon Country “were typical of that period in the history of the American West.” This is not true. What made Utah’s violence unique even in the West was that it occurred in a settled, well-organized community whose leaders publicly sanctioned doctrines of vengeance and ritual murder. Its grim consequences made it terrible. The Mountain Meadows Massacre, the betrayal and execution of some forty men and eighty women and children at a remote oasis in Southern Utah on September 11, 1857, is the most infamous consequence of Brigham Young’s doctrines of blood and vengeance.

What was different about Mormon religious violence is that it was preached from the pulpit and for decades Utah’s extremely powerful religious-political leaders sanctioned murder and protected murderers through a cynical manipulation of justice. Financial interests endorsed vigilante violence in California and Montana and a displaced slaveocracy encouraged systematic terror in the South, but in no place but theocratic Utah did political and religious leaders advocate “holy murder.”

The nature of this culture of violence, which is not atypical of new religious movements, baffles today’s Latter-day Saints and bedevils their faithful historians. They lack the historical imagination to appreciate the differences between the radical, millennial nature of early Mormonism and today’s conservative religion, which for the last decade has striven mightily to become no more controversial than Methodism. But, as Wallace Stegner observed, “to pretend that there were no holy murders in Utah and along the trails to California, that there was no saving of the souls of sinners by the shedding of their blood during the ‘blood atonement’ revival of 1856, that there were no mysterious disappearances of apostates and offensive Gentiles,” is simply “bad history.”

The atrocity at Mountain Meadows did not happen because its victims stumbled into a typically violent Western confrontation or poisoned a spring or called the Mormons names. I struggled for five years to come up with a coherent explanation of this event, and much to my surprise, I found compelling evidence that this mass murder was a calculated act of misdirected retribution, which Brigham Young sanctioned as a righteous act of vengeance. In May 1861, the Mormon prophet himself explained to John D. Lee why it had to be done: “Pres. Young said that the company that was used up at the Mountain Meadows were the Fathers, Mothers, Brothers, Sisters & connections of those that Murdered the Prophets. They Merited their fate, & the only thing that ever troubled him was the lives of the Women & children, but that under the circumstances [this] could not be avoided.”

Two early Mormon practices—the Oath of Vengeance and Blood Atonement—help us understand what happened on that grim Friday afternoon 145 years ago—and why.

Following Joseph Smith’s murder, Brigham Young incorporated this oath into the Mormon temple ceremony:

You and each of you do covenant and promise that you will pray, and never cease to pray, Almighty God to avenge the blood of the prophets upon this nation, and that you will teach the same

1 Stegner, Mormon Country, p. 96.
to your children and your children’s children unto the third and fourth generations.1

Juanita Brooks concluded (perhaps incorrectly) that every Mormon participant at Mountain Meadows had taken this oath as part of their sacred endowment. But as participant John D. Lee later wrote about the victims of the massacre, “This lot of people had men amongst them that were supposed to have helped kill the Prophets in the Carthage jail, the killing of all of them would be keeping our oaths and avenging the blood of the Prophets.”

Could the murder of Parley Pratt, a Mormon prophet, on the border of Arkansas in May 1857 have contributed to the decision to destroy the Fancher party, however innocent they may have been of the crime? Two months before the murders, the Alta California thought it entirely possible:

> Whether the hot blood which must now be seething and boiling in the veins of Brigham Young and his satellites, at Salt Lake, is to be cooled by the murder of Gentiles who pass through their territory, whether the “destroying angels” of Mormondom [sic], are to be brought into requisition to make reprisals upon travelers, or whether, as has been done before, “Saints” disguised as Indians are to constitute themselves the supposed ministers of God’s vengeance in this case, we are not informed, but have no doubt that … such intentions as these, are prevalent among those saintly villains, adulterers and seducers of Salt Lake.2

During a two-year famine that ravaged Utah in the mid-1850s, Mormon leaders subjected the people of Utah to an orgy of religious fanaticism known as the “Reformation.” John M. Higbee, who gave the orders to kill the Arkansans at Mountain Meadows, recalled in 1896 that Cedar City was in the grip of “a craze of fanaticism, stronger than we would be willing now to admit.” Perhaps the most troubling aspect of the Reformation was the Mormon leadership’s obsession with blood and their public calls for murder. Their rhetoric dripped with sanguine imagery, and their Old Testament theology incorporated this dark fascination in a perplexing doctrine known as “Blood Atonement.” Joseph Smith taught that certain grievous sins put a sinner “beyond the reach of the atoning blood of Christ.” Their “only hope is to have their own blood shed to atone.”3

The Saints had a “right to kill a sinner to save him, when he commits those crimes that can only be atoned for by shedding his blood,” Jedediah Grant insisted. At the beginning of the Reformation, Grant advised sinners to ask Brigham Young “to appoint a committee to attend to their case; and then let a place be selected, and let that committee shed their blood. We have those amongst us that are full of all manner of abominations, those who need to have their blood shed, for water will not do, their sins are of too deep a dye.”4

Modern Mormon authorities insist blood atonement was a “rhetorical device” and “has never been practiced by the Church at any time,” but historian Juanita Brooks concluded that in Utah Territory, blood atonement was “a literal and terrible reality. Brigham Young advocated and preached it without compromise.”5 The appearance in 1859 of the decapitated remains of two Mormon women who had consorted with soldiers at Camp Floyd—documented in army sources and in the Church Historical Department journal—puts the lie to claims that it is impossible to prove blood atonement ever happened.

Last summer [2001] historian Michael Quinn put the implications of such irresponsible rhetoric into perspective. Suppose the archbishop of Dublin incited his congregation with a rehearsal of Protestant crimes against Irish Catholics. Suppose further that he said the solution to the problem was to slit Protestant throats, and that the bishop then published

If a Saint committed an unpardonable sin, Young asked early in 1857, “Will you love that man or woman well enough to shed their blood?” He knew hundreds of people who could have been saved “if their lives had been taken and their blood spilled on the ground as a smoking incense to the Almighty, but who are now angels to the devil.” If a man wanted salvation and it was “necessary to spill his blood on the earth in order that he might be saved, spill it … That is the way to love mankind.” It was strong doctrine to cut “people off from the earth,” he conceded, “but it is to save them, not to destroy them.” Sinners should welcome blood atonement and “beg of their brethren to shed their blood.”6

Young’s private statements exceeded even the violent language of his public sermons. “I want their cursed heads cut off that they may atone for their sins,” he told the Council of Fifty in March 1849.4 His interpretation of blood atonement evoked the Saints’ vision of themselves as an Old Testament people, an identification so strong that the plans for the Salt Lake temple included an altar “to Offer Sacrifices.”7 The gory details of blood atonement shock modern observers, but the common experience of butchering animals made them less repellant to a farming people.

Below are the footnotes for this page:

3 “The gory details
4 “McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, 87–88. McConkie insisted “there is not one historical instance of so-called blood atonement” in modern times.
5 Brigham Young, September 21, 1856 and February 8, 1857, Journal of Discourses, Vol. 4, pp. 53-209.
8 Grant sermons of March 12, 1854 and September 21, 1856, in Sessions, Mormon Thunder, pp. 127, 211.
9 Ludlow, ed., Encyclopedia of Mormonism, Vol. 1, p. 131; and Brooks, ed., Mormon Chronicle, Vol. 1, p. 129 n143. In the 1950s official LDS commentary on such doctrines was more forthright. An apostle noted that those who understood blood atonement “could and did use their influence to get a form of capital punishment written into the laws of various states of the union so that the blood of murderers could be shed.” See McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, pp. 86–88. Beheading was an execution option in Utah until 1888.
his sermon in the Irish Catholic press. If Protestants suddenly began showing up with their throats slit, Quinn asked, would even Mormon historians pretend the archbishop had nothing to do with the crime?11

Whatever the doctrine’s precise practice, the blood atonement sermons of Brigham Young and Jedediah Grant helped inspire their followers to acts of irrational violence. By encouraging such criminal acts and then covering them up, Mormon leaders betrayed the Mormon people.

The most difficult question confronting anyone trying to understand Mountain Meadows is how decent men acting on their best and firmest beliefs can commit a great evil. To dismiss this crime as just another Western massacre and ignore its religious motivation does nothing to address this problem. Trapped in an authoritarian theocratic state that punished disobedience with death and inspired by a radical millennialistic faith, the true believers who executed this awful crime did so believing they were doing God’s will. The same motives that led devout, god-fearing Mormons to treacherously murder 120 unarmed men, women, and children in 1857 inspired nineteen devout Muslims to fly airplanes into buildings full of innocent people exactly 144 years later.

Late in life, Juanita Brooks described her first visit to Mountain Meadows and its broad sage-covered plain. “Men did not gather here by chance or mere hearsay,” she thought as she contemplated the desolate site. “If they were here, they had come because they were ordered to come. And whatever went on was done because it had been ordered, not because individuals had acted upon impulse.”12

As a last word, here are comments of a noted authority, John Doyle Lee, the only man who, as he said, “stood up and faced the music” for his crimes at Mountain Meadows:

you Know the policy of Brigham is to get into possession & control everything where there is a dollar to be made . . . if he considered [himself] no accessory to the deed why would he bring men whose hands have been died in human Blood to swear away my life & make an offering of me to save his guilty Pets . . . he thinks it a friendly act, to sacrifice me, to make me atone for the sins of his Pets as well as my own by shedding my blood you know that is one of his peculiar ways of showing his Kindness to some men by killing them to save them but that Kind of Friendship is getting too thin, it is too much like the love that a Hungry wolf has for an innocent lamb.13

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12 Brooks, Quicksand and Cactus: A Memoir of the Southern Mormon Frontier, pp. 250, 255.
13 John D. Lee to Emma B. Lee, December 9, 1876, John D. Lee Collection, Huntington Library.

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Just as God spoke to Moses on the mountain, the LDS Church claims that God personally appeared to Joseph Smith and directed him to establish “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth” (Doctrine and Covenants 1:30). LDS revelations are usually written with Biblical sounding words like “thus saith the Lord.” However, Brigham Young’s 1847 revelation is the last section added to the D&C with that wording.

There have been three additions to the Doctrine and Covenants dated after 1847 but they do not include the words “thus saith the Lord.” One was a vision/dream of President Joseph Fielding Smith, dated 1918 (http://scriptures.lds.org/en/dc/138). The other two are declarations ending past practices of the LDS Church (originally claimed to be established by revelation). In 1890 President Woodruff issued the Manifesto to end polygamy (http://scriptures.lds.org/en/od/1) and in 1978 President Kimball issued a statement that God had revealed that blacks could now hold the priesthood (http://scriptures.lds.org/en/od/2). While each president of the LDS Church is still ordained as a “prophet, seer and revelator,” revelations are no longer issued. Although early Mormon apostles denounced the Christian world for holding to a closed canon of scripture, the LDS Church’s canon is for all intents and purposes closed as well.

Not only are there no new revelations, since 1890 it seems that the LDS Church has retreated from a number of teachings once held as revealed doctrine. The following five examples illustrate this redefining of LDS doctrine.

I. Lamanite Identity

On November 9, 2007, Carrie Moore, writing for the LDS-owned Deseret News, announced that the year before the LDS Church had quietly made a change in the Introduction to the Doubleday edition of the Book of Mormon. The change is to be incorporated in future church printings of the Book of Mormon. The sentence under discussion reads as follows:

After thousands of years, all were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are among the principal ancestors of the American Indians.

The Doubleday edition and future LDS editions will read:

After thousands of years, all were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are among the principal ancestors of the American Indians.

While only one word was changed its implications are astounding. This simple word change signals a retreat from past claims that all American Indians are descended from the Book of Mormon people. The Deseret News article stated:

A one-word change in the introduction to a 2006 edition of the Book of Mormon has reignited discussion among some Latter-day Saints about the book’s historicity, geography and the descendants of those chronicled within its pages (Deseret Morning News, November 9, 2007).
The same article goes on to quote retired BYU professor John L. Sorenson that the change only “eliminates a certain minor embarrassment in the use of language.” However, the change seems to fly in the face of the majority of statements by LDS Church leaders in the past that the descendents of the Book of Mormon people are to be found in the American Indians from Alaska to Chile, from the east coast to the Polynesian islands. This was not just a casual identification, but one made by various LDS Church presidents and apostles for over one hundred and fifty years. President Spencer W. Kimball certainly held such a position. In the Ensign magazine we read:

The translation by the Prophet Joseph Smith revealed a running history for one thousand years—six hundred years before Christ until four hundred after Christ—a history of these great people who occupied this land for that thousand years. Then for the next fourteen hundred years, they lost much of their high culture. The descendents of this mighty people were called Indians by Columbus in 1492 when he found them here.

The term Lamanite includes all Indians and Indian mixtures, such as the Polynesians, the Guatemalans, the Peruvians, as well as the Sioux, the Apache, the Mohawk, the Navajo, and others. It is a large group of great people (“Of Royal Blood,” Ensign, July 1971).

President Hinckley has repeatedly associated the American Indians with the descendents of Lehi. In Hinckley’s October 1997 conference speech he referred to the Navajos as “these sons and daughters of Father Lehi” (Ensign, Nov. 1997, p. 67). While attending the 1999 dedication of the new LDS temple in Guayaquil, Ecuador, Hinckley referred to “the descendents of Father Lehi” that were in the congregation and observed: “So very many of these people have the blood of Lehi in their veins” (Ensign, Oct. 1999, p. 74). Thus we see that the president of the church was equating Book of Mormon peoples as being in both North and South America as late as 1999.

(For further information on Lamanite identity problems see our newsletter #103 http://www.utlm.org/newsletters/no103.htm and the article “The Use of ‘Lamanite’ in Official LDS Discourse” by John-Charles Duffy, in the Journal of Mormon History, Vol. 34, no. 1, Winter 2008.)

With the Mormons changing who is to be considered a descendent of the Book of Mormon people, how are those who have been told all their lives that they are descended from Father Lehi to think of themselves? Hugo Olaiz, a third-generation Mormon from Argentina, wrote:

I have fond memories of being a Lamanite. As a Mormon boy growing up in Argentina, I often sang a Primary song that went like this:

. . . [I am a young Lamanite of humble birth, but I gratefully carry a song in my heart.]

Social stereotypes aside, the song was intended to tell the members in Latin America that they are a special people with a special racial identity, a once prevalent message from which Church leaders are now retracting. In past years, discourse about “Lamanites” played a key role in the missionary program in Latin America, used both as a proselytizing strategy and as an explanation for missionary success . . .

The blurring of the identity of who is a Lamanite is just another step back from the claims of the founder of Mormonism. In recent years various church writers have been trying to limit the Book of Mormon lands. The Book of Mormon claims that by approximately 49 BC the Nephites and Lamanites

...did multiply and spread, and did go forth from the land southward to the land northward, and did spread insomuch that they began to cover the face of the whole earth, from the sea south to the sea north, from the sea west to the sea east (Book of Mormon, Helaman 3:8).

Nineteenth and twentieth century church leaders spoke of the Nephites and Lamanites as occupying the whole land mass of North and South America. But now BYU scholars are pushing for a very limited Book of Mormon geography encompassing southern Mexico and Guatemala. This places the story in the same area as the Mayans. However, genetic research of the Mayans has not shown any link to Semetic people, only to Asian ancestry. Cody Clark, writing for the Provo, Utah Daily Herald reported:

A primary sticking point for some scientists—namely that DNA profiling of American Indians reveals no signs of
the DNA that Nephite and Lamanite forebear[er]s would have brought with them from Israel—is captured in the 2004 book Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA and the Mormon Church. The book was written by Simon Southerton, a molecular biologist and former LDS bishop who is no longer a member of the church.

“We are certain that American Indians are essentially all descended from Asian ancestors,” Southerton said via e-mail. “Israelite DNA has escaped detection after tests on more than 12,000 individuals. How could the massive Book of Mormon civilizations not leave a significant genetic trace?” (Daily Herald, Nov. 24, 2007)

While there has been extensive research and excavations done in the Mayan area no archaeological sites, writing samples or artifacts have been identified as Nephite, Lamanite, or Jaredite. Also, there is no official LDS Church map designating the location of the Book of Mormon story (see our article at http://www.utlm.org/onlineresources/cumorah.htm).

Another change that is being made in the Book of Mormon Introduction has not received as much attention. Carrie Moore reported:

Another change in the book’s introduction may be of interest to those who question whether Latter-day Saints are Christians, but church officials declined comment about when that change was made.

The second sentence of the introduction in many editions says the book is “a record of God’s dealings with the ancient inhabitants of the Americas and contains, as does the Bible, the fullness of the everlasting gospel.”

The 2004 edition produced by Doubleday for non-Latter-day Saints omits the phrase, “as does the Bible.” A church spokesman declined comment on when the change was first made or an explanation of why (Deseret News, Nov. 9, 2007).

One possible explanation could be that the statement would raise questions in the reader’s mind as to the need for the Book of Mormon if the Bible already contains the “fullness of the everlasting gospel.”

However, the same question could be asked about the need for the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price if the Book of Mormon contains “the fullness of the everlasting gospel.” For example, neither the Bible nor the Book of Mormon contain any teaching on the need for eternal marriage in the LDS temple ceremony in order to inherit eternal life. This doctrine is taught in sections 131 and 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Also, the Book of Mormon has nothing in it about three kingdoms of heaven or about ordinance work for the dead (see our web site, “Contradictions in LDS Scriptures”). Thus it seems that the whole sentence in the Book of Mormon Introduction should have been removed as neither it nor the Bible contain all necessary components of the LDS gospel.

2. THE GATHERING TO ZION

Early Mormonism combined the need for evangelizing the American Indians (considered to be Israelites descending through Manasseh) with the need for all true descendants of Israel to participate in the gathering to Zion. The Jews were to gather to Jerusalem and the rest of the children of Israel were to gather in Zion, which according to Joseph Smith, is Independence, Missouri. In the LDS Articles of Faith we read:

We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory (Pearl of Great Price, Articles of Faith, no.10).

Early Mormons believed that God led the scattered descendants of Israel to join the church. Lineage thus became very important to the LDS people.

Joseph Smith introduced the concept of the Patriarchal Blessing where a Mormon’s lineage is given. Usually a person is declared to be a descendent of Ephraim (from the Old Testament) unless he/she is an American Indian. Then they are told they are from Manasseh, Ephraim’s brother. Originally these designations were taken as literal fact, but now the church says it doesn’t matter if you are truly descended from Israel, you are adopted into the family when you join the LDS Church. The Encyclopedia of Mormonism, Vol. 3, under the heading PATRIARCHAL BLESSINGS, explains:

An essential part of a patriarchal blessing is a declaration of lineage. The patriarch seeks inspiration to specify the dominant family line that leads back to Abraham. The majority of modern blessings have designated Ephraim or Manassch as the main link in this tracing, but others of every tribe of Israel have also been named. Whether this is a pronouncement of blood inheritance or of adoption does not matter (see Abr. 2:10). It is seen as the line and legacy through which one’s blessings are transmitted. Thus the blessings “of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” are conferred. (Encyclopedia of Mormonism, Vol. 3, p. 1066. For more on these blessings see http://www.utlm.org/onlineresources/patriarchalblessing.htm).

The teaching of the gathering was given as a revelation to Joseph Smith in 1831:
Hearken, o ye elders of my church, saith the Lord your God, who have assembled yourselves together, according to my commandments, in this land, which is the land of Missouri, which is the land which I have appointed and consecrated for the gathering of the saints.

Wherefore, this is the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion...which is now called Independence... (D&C 57:1-2).

Early converts to Mormonism took this very seriously, resulting in the emigration of thousands of Mormons from England and Europe to America during the nineteenth century. This was held to be so important that the church set up the Perpetual Emigration Fund to aid poor families in far off lands to come to America. Professor Dean May reports that

Ultimately some 85,000 British, Scandinavian, and European converts immigrated to Nauvoo and Utah between 1840 and 1890 (“Rites of Passage: The Gathering as Cultural Credo,” by Dean L. May, Journal of Mormon History, Spring 2003, p. 4).

Originally the gathering was to be to the center of Zion, Independence, Missouri, but when the Mormons were driven out of both Missouri and Illinois they had to broaden the concept of “Zion.” It changed to mean all of North America. However, in the twentieth century the church de-emphasized the importance of the gathering. Speaking at the October 2006 LDS conference Apostle Russell M. Nelson explained that the Mormons are to gather in their own homelands, not to America:

The choice to come unto Christ is not a matter of physical location; it is a matter of individual commitment. ... True, in the early days of the Church, conversion often meant emigration as well. But now the gathering takes place in each nation. The Lord has decreed the establishment of Zion in each realm where He has given His Saints their birth and nationality. ... The place of gathering for Brazilian Saints is in Brazil; the place of gathering for Nigerian Saints is in Nigeria; the place of gathering for Korean Saints is in Korea; and so forth (Ensign, Nov. 2006).

This led the people at Reachout Trust to observe:

In such circumstances the Church has, over the years, found it helpful to trawl through early Church writings to find alternative definitions of Zion. These include identifying Zion as a cause, a state of being, or “the pure in heart”, the whole of America, and finally wherever Mormons are gathered in the nations of the world. All, in Mormon theology, are legitimate definitions of Zion. This development of the concept of Zion is held up as an example of “continuing revelation in a growing Church”. However, Doctrine and Covenants section 84, makes it plain that, however you identify Zion, the centre place is Independence, Missouri. The problem is that, today, the centre place of the Mormon Zion is Salt Lake City. Revelation? (www.reachouttrust.org/articles/ldsquest/ldsq5.htm)

3. Polygamy Essential

When Joseph Smith introduced his doctrine of eternal marriage it was directly tied to plural marriage. In the first verse of Doctrine and Covenants Section 132 we read that the revelation was given to Smith in answer to his prayer regarding David and Solomon’s plural wives. Verse six goes on to state that “as pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant, it was instituted for the fulness of my glory; and he that receiveth a fulness thereof must and shall abide the law, or he shall be damned, saith the Lord God.” In verse fifty-two the revelation instructs Emma, Joseph’s wife, to “receive all those [women] that have been given unto my servant Joseph...”

In fact, the very reason there are so many polygamy splinter groups today is due to followers of Joseph Smith taking his revelation seriously—live polygamy or be damned.

The importance of polygamy to the early leaders is seen in the extensive number of marriages they undertook. The first seven presidents of the LDS Church practiced plural marriage. Joseph Smith had at least thirty-four wives, Brigham Young, second president of the LDS Church, had over fifty and John Taylor, the third president of the LDS Church, had at least fourteen.

From Joseph Smith’s time until 1890 the practice of plural marriage was considered essential to attain godhood. Brigham Young, second president of the LDS Church, declared

The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy (Journal of Discourses, Vol. 11, p. 269, August 19, 1866).

However, in 1890 President Woodruff, himself a polygamist, issued the Manifesto which ended the official practice of polygamy. Today the LDS Church separates the doctrine of eternal marriage from the practice of polygamy even though the two are tied together in Doctrine and Covenants Section 132. It should be kept in mind that the LDS Church has not abandoned the doctrine of polygamy, only the current practice. For further information on this topic see http://www.utlm.org/onlineresources/ldsleadersbelievepolygamyinheaven.htm
4. **Temple Ceremony**

**AND GARMENTS CHANGED**

The LDS Church has traditionally stated that its ordinances and rituals are given by revelation and are to remain unchanged. Writing in 1840 Joseph Smith said:

> Now the purpose in Himself in the winding up scene of the last dispensation is that all things pertaining to that dispensation should be conducted precisely in accordance with the preceding dispensations. … He set the ordinances to be the same forever and ever, and set Adam to watch over them, to reveal them from heaven to man, or to send angels to reveal them (History of the Church, Vol. 4, p. 208).

In preparation of the Mormons building the Nauvoo temple Joseph Smith claimed that God revealed to him that he was about to restore again that which was lost…that I may reveal mine ordinances…And I will show unto my servant Joseph all things pertaining to this house, and the priesthood thereof… (D&C 124: 4042).

This was again emphasized in the Deseret News in 1982:

> As temple work progresses, some members wonder if the ordinances can be changed or adjusted. These ordinances have been provided by revelation, and are in the hands of the First Presidency. Thus, the temple is protected from tampering (W. Grant Bangerter, executive director of the Temple Department and a member of the First Quorum of Seventy, Deseret News, Church Section, January 16, 1982).

In spite of this many changes have been made through the years.

**A. Change in Washing and Anointings.**

The first time a Mormon goes to the temple he/she will participate in a washing and anointing ceremony conducted by two people of the same sex. This was originally a full bath. Years later it was shortened to a ceremonial touching with water and then oil on various parts of the body as prayers were said. It has now been modified to just having the forehead anointed with water and oil as the prayers are said.

**B. Garments Abbreviated.**

The special undergarment worn daily by those who have participated in the temple endowment ceremony was first made under Joseph Smith’s direction. They were one-piece and similar to old-fashioned long johns. However, over the years they have gradually been shortened so that they no longer go to the wrist or ankle. They are now two-piece, go to the knee and have a short sleeve.

**C. Changes in the Endowment Ceremony.**

After Mormons have their washing and anointings they cover their garments with either white pants and shirt or long white dress. During the Endowment Ceremony they add a robe over one shoulder, a hat or veil, and a green fig-leaf apron. This ceremony was first performed in Nauvoo under Joseph Smith’s direction and was claimed to be given to him by revelation. Yet the Endowment part of the ceremony has undergone a number of revisions over the years.

After the turn of the twentieth century the oath of vengeance against anyone responsible for Joseph Smith’s death was removed.

By the 1960’s the death penalty oaths for revealing the ceremony to outsiders was toned down to make it sound more like agreeing to martyrdom for revealing the ceremony instead of being a penalty inflicted by the church.

In 1990 these penalties were completely removed. Now a member simply agrees not to discuss the specifics of the ceremony outside of the temple. They also switched the chant “Pay Lay Ale” to “Oh God hear the words of my mouth.”

Also removed was the portrayal of a minister, wearing a clerical collar, entering into a contract with the devil to teach false doctrine for money. Another change in 1990 was the removal of the embrace on the five points of fellowship at the veil.

Other changes have been made through the years. For more on this see our book, Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony, 1842-1990.

5. **Blacks and the Priesthood**

Thirty years ago, in June of 1978, the LDS Church announced the end of its priesthood restriction for blacks. Although Joseph Smith allowed a few black men to be ordained elders, that policy was changed under Brigham Young. In 1854 Young taught:

> When all the other children of Adam have had the privilege of receiving the Priesthood, and of coming into the kingdom of god, and of being redeemed from the four quarters of the earth, and have received their resurrection from the dead, then it will be time enough to remove the curse from Cain and his posterity. He deprived his brother of the privilege of pursuing his journey through life, and of extending his kingdom by multiplying upon the earth; and because he did this, he is the last to share the joys of the kingdom of God (Journal of Discourses, Vol. 2, p. 143).
God Was Once a Man?

This was not listed with the previous five examples of revision as it seems to be more a matter of camouflage than change. Although some have thought that the LDS Church is abandoning the doctrine that God was once a human, we find that this teaching is still promoted in their current manuals. Granted, it isn’t emphasized as much as in the past, but it is the bedrock of their theology.

Joseph Smith laid out his doctrine of God in his sermon delivered at the LDS Conference on April 7, 1844, often referred to as the King Follett Discourse. While the sermon was printed in its entirety in the 1971 April and May issues of the Ensign, quotes since then have been kept to a minimum. In that sermon we read:

My first object is to find out the character of the only wise and true God, and what kind of a being He is... God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. . . . I say, if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form—like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man; . . . it is necessary we should understand the character and being of God and how He came to be so; for I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see.... He was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ Himself did; and I will show it from the Bible. . . . Here, then, is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn how to be gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, . . .

Apostle Lorenzo Snow later encapsulated this doctrine in his famous couplet. The 1984 LDS priesthood manual, Search These Commandments, referred to Lorenzo Snow’s statement:

President Lorenzo Snow recorded this experience that occurred when he was still a young elder:

“The Spirit of the Lord rested mightily upon me—the eyes of my understanding were opened, and I saw as clear as the sun at noon-day, with wonder and astonishment, the pathway of God and man.” Elder Snow expressed this new found understanding in these words: “As man now is, God once was: As God now is, man may be.” Later the Prophet Joseph Smith assured him: “Brother Snow, that is true gospel doctrine, and it is a revelation from God to you. . . .” (Search These Commandments, Melchizedek Priesthood Personal Study Guide, 1984, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, pp. 151-152)

For years the LDS Church leaders taught that the reason people were born black and cursed as to the priesthood was a direct result of their failures in their pre-mortal life.

In a speech given at the church’s Brigham Young University, Apostle Mark E. Petersen gave the following information concerning the doctrine of pre-existence and how it affected the various races:

We cannot escape the conclusion that because of performance in our pre-existence some of us are born as Chinese, some as Japanese, some as Indians, some as Negroes, some as Americans, some as Latter-day Saints. These are rewards and punishments. When He forbade inter-marriages He established segregation. Who placed the Chinese in China? The Lord did. It was an act of segregation. In the cases of the Lamanites [Indians] and the Negroes we have the definite word of the Lord Himself that He placed a dark skin upon them as a curse as a punishment and as a sign to all others. He forbade intermarriage with them under threat of extension of the curse (2 Nephi 5:21).

Think of the Negro, cursed as to the Priesthood. This Negro, who, in the pre-existence lived the type of life which justified the Lord in sending him to the earth in the lineage of Cain with a black skin. In spite of all he did in the pre-existent life, the Lord is willing, if the Negro accepts the gospel, he can and will enter the celestial kingdom. He will go there as a servant, but he will get celestial glory (“Race Problems As They Affect The Church,” Address by Apostle Mark E. Petersen at the Convention of Teachers of Religion on the College Level, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, August 27, 1954).

Apostle Bruce R. McConkie explained that one’s behavior in the pre-mortal life affects his birth on earth:

Of the two-thirds who followed Christ [in the pre-mortal existence], however, some were more valiant than others. Those who were less valiant in pre-existence and who thereby had certain spiritual restrictions imposed upon them during mortality are known to us as the Negroes. Such spirits are sent to earth through the lineage of Cain, the mark put upon him for his rebellion against God and his murder of Abel being a black skin (Mormon Doctrine, 2d ed. 1966, p. 527).

While the ban has been lifted the LDS Church has yet to clarify its theological view on race or why the ban was ever instituted in the first place. Was the original ban based on revelation or prejudice? If it was only a policy, why did it take a revelation to end it?

If a revelation was received in June of 1978 to end the restriction, why isn’t the specifically worded revelation published instead of a statement about a supposed revelation? For more on this see our book The Curse of Cain? Racism in the Mormon Church.
In the 1989 *Ensign* is an article on the distinctive doctrines of Joseph Smith. In it we read:

Though most people who believe the Bible accept the idea of a Godhead composed of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Joseph Smith revealed an understanding of the Godhead that differed from the views found in the creeds of his day. . . .

The Prophet explained that “God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man; . . . yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did”; and that he “worked out his kingdom with fear and trembling.” . . . As God’s children, we may become gods ourselves through Christ’s atonement and the plan of salvation, being joint heirs of Christ of “all that [the] Father hath.” . . . Along with these concepts is the concept of divine parents, including an exalted Mother who stands beside God the Father.

The LDS doctrine of Heavenly Father has led one recent commentator to write, “The Mormons espouse a radical, anthropomorphic conception of God that sets them far apart from other religions” (*Ensign*, January 1989, p. 27).

However, when Smith’s sermon was referenced in the 2007 manual, *Teachings of the Presidents: Joseph Smith*, it was carefully edited to minimize the teaching that God has not always been God. Here is the part of the sermon that is used:

God Himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. . . . (*Teachings of the Presidents: Joseph Smith*, 2007, p. 221).

In the chapter heading of *Teachings of the Presidents: Brigham Young* there is another statement of this doctrine:

President Brigham Young taught the Latter-day Saints to worship God the Father and address prayers to Him in the name of Jesus Christ. He taught further that God the Father was once a man on another planet who “passed the ordeals we are now passing through; he has received an experience, has suffered and enjoyed, and knows all that we know regarding the toils, sufferings, life and death of this mortality” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young*, 1997, p. 29).

People often read these quotes without seeing the implication of plural gods.

If God was once a mortal on another world then he has not always been God. This would necessitate another God being in charge of that world.

In the current LDS manual *Gospel Principles* we read:

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: “When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel—you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation… it will be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave” . . .

This is the way our Heavenly Father became God.

Joseph Smith taught: “It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the character of God. . . . He was once a man like us; . . . God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did” (*Gospel Principles*, 1997, p. 305).

Thus we see that the doctrine is still an integral part of Mormonism even if it is not clearly delineated in all of their doctrinal books.

**Apostle Dallin Oaks on PBS**

When Apostle Dallin Oaks was interviewed on July 20, 2007, for the PBS special *The Mormons*, he candidly spoke of Joseph Smith’s doctrine that God was not always God but progressed from mortality. The following is taken from the LDS web site and is part of his interview with PBS producer Helen Whitney:

**D[allin] H O[aks]:** Before the close of his ministry, in Illinois, Joseph Smith put together the significance of what he had taught about the nature of God and the nature and destiny of man. He preached a great sermon not long before he was murdered that God was a glorified Man, glorified beyond our comprehension, (still incomprehensible in many ways), but a glorified, resurrected, physical Being, and it is the destiny of His children upon this earth, upon the conditions He has proscribed, to grow into that status themselves. That was a big idea, a challenging idea. It followed from the First Vision, and it was taught by Joseph Smith, and it is the explanation of many things that Mormons do — the whole theology of Mormonism.

**H[elen] W[hitney]:** Is it the core of it?

**D[allin] H O[aks]:** That is the purpose of the life of men and women on this earth: to pursue their eternal destiny. Eternal means Godlike and to become like God. One of the succeeding prophets said: “As man is, God once was. And as God is, man may become.” That is an extremely challenging idea. We don’t understand, we’re not able to understand, all [about] how it comes to pass or what is at its origin, but it explains the purpose of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which is to put people’s feet on the pathway to a glorified existence in the life to come that is incomprehensible, but far closer to God than the Christian world generally perceives. (http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/news-releases-stories/elder-oaks-interview-transcript-from-pbs-documentary)

While Oaks was candid about Snow’s couplet, others have deliberately evaded discussion of their doctrine of God with non-members. When Joe J. Christensen, of the Presidency of the Seventy, addressed a Utah audience in...
1995 he told of side-stepping the topic with a non-Mormon professor. The Deseret News reported on his speech:

He [Christensen] told of speaking to a university class in the Southwest on the Church during a Religion in Life Conference. After the class, the [non-Mormon] professor approached him [Christensen] and asked him if he believed the statement, “As man is God once was, and as God is man may become.”

“I had purposely not used that statement during my remarks to the class because I felt that I could raise more dust with that one than I would be able to settle in one class period,” he recalled. “After circumlocuting around and around the question, I finally said, ‘Yes, we believe that.’” (“Prophet Joseph Taught ‘Powerful Ideas,’” LDS Church News, Deseret News, Feb. 4, 1995.)

Couldn’t one simply be honest and answer “yes” to the question? Willful “circumlocution” on doctrinal issues does not lead to clarity.

Hinckley’s “I don’t know”

For over 150 years the LDS Church has defended the doctrine that God evolved to godhood and that man has the same potential. When President Gordon B. Hinckley was asked in 1997 about their doctrine of God he seemed to be dismissing the doctrine. In the San Francisco Chronicle interview, Hinckley was asked,

Q: There are some significant differences in your beliefs. For instance, don’t Mormons believe that God was once a man? A: I wouldn’t say that. There was a little couplet coined, “As man is, God once was. As God is, man may become.” Now that’s more of a couplet than anything else. That gets into some pretty deep theology that we don’t know very much about (San Francisco Chronicle, April 13, 1997, p. 3/Z1).

That same year in an interview in Time magazine President Hinckley again downplayed the idea of God having once been a man or that man could become a god: “It’s of course an ideal. It’s a hope for a wishful thing.” He later added that “yes, of course they can.” Further on in the article we read:

On whether his church still holds that God the Father was once a man, he sounded uncertain, “I don’t know that we teach it. I don’t know that we emphasize it . . . I understand the philosophical background behind it, but I don’t know a lot about it, and I don’t think others know a lot about it” (Time, Aug. 4, 1997, p. 56).

Joseph Smith seemed to be certain about the doctrine. One wonders why President Hinckley would equivocate on a doctrine that is central to LDS theology? It appears to be a public relations effort to hide true LDS beliefs from the public. (For more examples of Hinckley’s “I don’t know” statements, see http://www.i4m.com/think/leaders/Hinckley_dontknow.htm)

Hinckley Dies

The Deseret News of January 28, 2008, carried the announcement of President Gordon B. Hinckley’s death at the age of 97. He had held the position of “prophet, seer and revelator” to his church for thirteen years.

During that time he oversaw the building of the new 21,000-seat Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, the rebuilding of the Nauvoo, Illinois Temple plus dozens of new temples, and established the Perpetual Education Fund to provide loans to returned missionaries to aid them in getting the “training and education necessary for adequate employment in their own countries” (Ensign, January 2004, p. 37). Hinckley also announced the church’s new project to rejuvenate downtown Salt Lake City. The City Creek Center will cover 25 acres along South Temple at a projected cost of $1.5 billion (“3 Salt Lake Streets to close for parking-ramp work,” Deseret News, February 20, 2008).

While Hinckley issued no new revelations, Mormons believe that he guided the affairs of the church through prophetic insight.

Thomas S. Monson Next President

On February 4, 2008, senior apostle and native Utahn Thomas S. Monson was announced as Hinckley’s successor, with his two counselors Henry B. Eyring and Dieter F. Uchtdorf making up the First Presidency. The New York Times wrote:

In a news conference at church headquarters in Salt Lake City, Mr. Monson said he had worked with Mr. Hinckley for more than four decades in various assignments, and hinted at no significant departures. . . . Mr. Monson’s appointment comes at a time of expectation and anxiety in the Mormon world. The number of converts, especially in South America and Africa, rose sharply under Mr. Hinckley as the missionary program—typically young men, working in pairs on two-year assignments—was expanded. But Mr. Hinckley also wrestled with the problem of structure in the far-flung corners of the church, and how to keep converts engaged and active after the missionaries departed. . . .

His career, beginning in the late 1940’s in advertising and later as sales manager for the Deseret News Press, a commercial printing firm then affiliated with the church, went hand-in-hand with his advancement into bigger and bigger assignments for the church itself (“Former Executive Named to Lead Mormon Church,” New York Times, Feb. 5, 2008).

President Monson is well-known for his story-telling but not for in-depth doctrinal teaching. How he will present Mormon doctrine remains to be seen.
Hugh Nibley’s Footnotes

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In her book *Leaving the Saints: How I Lost the Mormons and Found My Faith* (2005), Martha Beck describes an encounter she had with a scholarly looking person in a supermarket who accuses her famous father, the quintessential LDS apologist Hugh Winder Nibley, of being a liar. When Martha asks the man (she calls him Tweedy) for an explanation, he says he used to work as “one of the flunkies who checked his footnotes,” and that in the process had discovered that most of them (“conservatively, 90% of them”) were bogus.\(^1\)

Sometimes what he [Nibley] said was exactly the opposite of what the author meant. Sometimes a quotation he’d footnote just wasn’t there. My team leader told me your dad’s gift was that he could see anything on any page that needed to be there.

This accusation pales in comparison with Beck’s much more devastating claim, namely that her father subjected her to ritual sexual abuse when she was a child. Not long after the appearance of *Leaving the Saints*, defensive voices began to be heard trying to exonerate Hugh Nibley of guilt in relation to that charge by pointing to what they imagined to be the easily provable absurdity of “Tweedy’s” claim about the footnotes. Thus we find BYU’s Robert L. Millet, for example, remarking in a review for the Evangelical magazine *Books & Culture* that the “problem for Beck, of course, is that the books are still in print, still available for examination… Further, I know personally many if not all of the source checkers; they are outstanding academics from such BYU departments as Ancient Scripture, Asian and Near Eastern Languages, Law, the Library, English, and Classics.”\(^2\) Yet if Tweedy was in any sense right about the footnotes the “problem” ceases to be Beck’s and becomes Millet’s and his learned source checkers.\(^4\) The question then becomes: Why did all those “outstanding academics” either fail to notice the problems, or (as Tweedy claims) give Nibley a pass on them?

Note that there is also regrettably a bit of what might be considered doublespeak in what Millet says. On the one hand Millet seems to be saying that Nibley’s footnotes are all good. He knows all the checkers and they are all “outstanding academics,” and yet he also says about the footnotes “If they weren’t properly checked…they can be checked today.” But what on earth does that mean? “If they weren’t properly checked” by all those “outstanding academics,” then were they really outstanding academics after all? Or perhaps we are to suppose that they have become outstanding in the mean time. Still the issue never had to do with the checking of the footnotes, but with their original production.

In his review of *Leaving the Saints*, Boyd Jay Petersen, Hugh Nibley’s son-in-law and biographer, and brother-in-law to Martha Beck, remarks that he has “contacted many of the note checkers and editors of the Collected Works of Hugh Nibley” and that “they all confirm that, while Hugh has been sloppy—at times mistranslating a text or overstating his case—he does not make up his sources.”\(^5\) Petersen is right in saying that Nibley does not make up sources. In his review Millet gives the wrong impression when he represents Tweedy as claiming that “a good 90 percent his footnotes are totally made up.”\(^6\) Tweedy never really claimed that. Although Beck does represent Tweedy as saying that Nibley “makes them all up,”\(^7\) when one reads further it becomes clear that Tweedy is not saying Nibley invented his sources, only that he regularly misrepresented them in various ways. And, in fact, that is certainly true.

Did Tweedy exist? Certain Mormon scholars appear very confident in asserting that he did not. Kent P. Jackson

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2 Ibid., p. 166.
3 Robert L. Millet, “‘They Leave It, But They Can’t Leave It Alone’ The Memoir of a Disaffected Mormon,” *Books & Culture* 11.4 (July-Aug 2005) 33. The fact that Robert L. Millet was asked to review Martha Beck’s book for the Evangelical publication *Books & Culture* was extremely unfortunate. The fact that Martha Beck’s chronicle might be true, I say might be true, makes it entirely inappropriate for Evangelicals to publish a review by a Mormon apologist who, because of who he is, can only try to discredit Beck’s story, even if it happens to be true.
4 Although it is doubtful a case could be made for Nibley’s source checkers being responsible for fixing his footnotes.
5 http://www.fairlds.org/Reviews/Rvw200504.html.
6 Millet, “‘They Leave It, But They Can’t Leave It Alone,’” p. 33.
states flatly: “I don’t believe that the man in tweed ever existed,” and John Gee, in an email to me, states: “As I am sure you are aware, Ms. Beck’s account of Tweedy is entirely fictional.”

Whatever Professor Gee may personally believe he is mistaken in attributing to me an awareness that Tweedy is “entirely fictional.” Certainly Tweedy might have been invented, but if so he was well invented. When he recounts how his “team leader” said that Hugh Nibley “could see anything on any page that needed to be there,” I thought that that put the situation rather well, at least as the exasperated overstatement by someone who was constantly having to deal with the kinds of things I describe below. Moreover if Tweedy did not exist, where did Martha Beck learn that there were serious problems with her father’s use of his sources? Still in one sense it really doesn’t matter whether Tweedy existed or not. What matters is whether what Martha Beck reports him saying is in any sense true, whether Tweedy existed or not. What matters is whether Martha Beck reports him saying is in any sense true, which is something that can be tested, as Kent P. Jackson so correctly points out: “Nibley’s books still exist, and thus the notes are available to be examined by anyone who wants to take the time.”

In 1988 this same Kent P. Jackson pointedly criticized Nibley in a review of the latter’s Old Testament and Related Studies. In that review Jackson accused Nibley of “selectively including what suits his presuppositions and ignoring what does not,” and for seeing “things in the sources that simply don’t seem to be there.” Jackson further charged that “most puzzling assertions remain undocumented—or unconvincingly documented—even in those articles that are footnoted heavily,” and that Nibley “often uses his secondary sources the same way he uses his primary sources—taking phrases out of context to establish points with which those whom he quotes would likely not agree.” Although Jackson spoke as something of a lone voice at the time, his criticisms of Nibley were congenial to their own point of view. But what I am talking about here goes well beyond that.

Often Nibley’s modifications are quite extensive and ingenious; too ingenious in fact for me to feel comfortable attributing them to mere sloppiness as Petersen does. This ingenuity will be evident I think in most of the examples of misquotation that follow. For brevity’s sake I use the term “misquote” to mean to misrepresent in any way, e.g., by adding to or taking away from a passage, asserting that it means something other than it does, reading things into it, or mistranslating it.

Before we proceed further it should be stressed that the present work deals with only one aspect of Nibley’s long career. It does not delve into other more positive aspects such as the generations of students inspired by his teaching, many of whom no doubt even went on to pursue post graduate work themselves in hopes of carrying on in his footsteps. In addition to this he was tremendously important in terms of arousing interest in the LDS academic community in the importance of the study of ancient texts and languages. These are entirely positive developments.

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8 Email from Kent P. Jackson (6 July 2006).
9 Email John Gee (12 July 2006).
10 Martha Beck, Leaving the Saints, p. 166.
13 See example on page 12 of this newsletter.
except where Nibley’s misuse of sources is emulated as well, as one sometimes finds being done in material produced by certain over-enthusiastic LDS apologists. 14

Nibley was also a very gifted and inspiring communicator, who, when he was not in the position of having to defend the indefensible, had a clear and vigorous writing style, a gift we see in evidence as well in more than one of his highly gifted children. By any measure Hugh Nibley stands as a giant in the unfolding story of Utah and Mormonism.

Finally, in his defense, Nibley did not write in a vacuum. All those years he wrote for an audience that must also bear some of the responsibility for the problems I will be discussing. Surely we all have a responsibility within the range of our abilities to test the claims of authors even when (perhaps even especially when) they are saying things we would like to believe, recognizing, of course, that in this particular case Nibley himself made it very difficult for common people to check out his sources by featuring obscure editions in other languages instead of the widely available, and often more up-to-date and authoritative, English ones.

In order to make my examination of Nibley’s misquotations easier to follow I will consistently place in **bold** the problematic **words** and **phrases** in the Nibley passages I discuss.

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**Nibley Misquotes Justin Martyr’s First Apology**

Justin Martyr was a Christian writer and apologist who was active during the middle decades of the second century AD. In his essay “The Expanding Gospel,” Nibley quotes the tenth chapter of Justin’s *First Apology* as follows:

> “We believe that God organized all things in the beginning out of unformed matter,” says Justin Martyr to *the Jew Trypho*, “…for the sake of the human race, that they, if they prove themselves by their works to be worthy of His plan, having been judged worthy to return to His presence (so we believe), shall reign with him, having been made immortal and incorruptible. At the creation they themselves made the choice … and so were deemed worthy to live with him in immortality.”15

The original form of this passage contained some things that resonate with current LDS teaching, the creation of everything out of unformed matter being an example. 16 That was a view widely held in the ancient world, not least of all among the Platonists. Given what Justin says elsewhere, however, it is doubtful that he regarded this unformed matter to be in any sense self-existent or eternal. 17

The one item in the above passage from Nibley that can be chalked up to sloppiness is the mention of Trypho the Jew, who appears in connection with another work by

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14 See, for example, John Gee’s very forced and special-pleading translation of the phrase *ta sýstasis tas archontikas* in Ignatius of Antioch’s *Trallians 5* as “the principle revelations” (John Gee, “The Corruption of Scripture in Early Christianity” in Early Christians in Disarray: Contemporary LDS Perspectives on the Great Apostasy [ed. by Noel B. Reynolds; Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies and Brigham Young University Press, 2005] 167), rather than something more like Bart D. Ehrman’s “hierarchies of the cosmic rulers” (*The Apostolic Fathers* [Leob Classical Library 24-25; 2 vols.; Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2003] 1:261). I would invite Gee to produce an example of a single non-Mormon scholar or in any language that supports his translation here (including the two scholars he cites for support in a footnote). Perhaps I can help him get started by presenting how several different editions of Ignatius’s *Trallians*, that happen to be readily available to me, translate these words—Wake: “the several companies of them, under their respective princes,” Kirsopp Lake: “gatherings of principalities,” Richardson: “the array of principalities,” Roberts-Donaldson: “their gatherings under their respective princes,” Kleist: “the hierarchy of principalities,” Goode: “the relations of their rulers,” Lightfoot: “the assemblages, musterings, of heavenly rulers,” Lightfoot/ Hamer: “the hierarchy of principalities,” Schoedel: “the archontic formations,” Staniforth: “dispositions of the heavenly powers.” A popular Spanish translation has “los ordenes de los principados,” a popular German one, “die Rangordnung der Herrschaften,” and a popular French one, “les armées des principautés.” *A Greek Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (BAGD 3nd) agrees with all of these by translating *sytasis* in *Ignatius, Trallians 5*, “a group with common interests, gathering, union, associations,” and *archontikos* “assemblies of the (celestial) commanders,” as does G. W. Lampe’s *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, which translates *sytasis* for the passage, “congregation, company of angelic beings,” and *archontikos*, “pertaining to the rulers i.e. angelic hierarchy.”

Whether or not Gee was directly inspired in his studies by Hugh Nibley, his strange rendering nevertheless reminds us of what Nibley himself did with that same passage. Nibley translated Ignatius’s *ta sýstasis tas archontikas* with the very Mormon sounding “councils of the Heavens (lit. assemblies or natures of the Rulers archontikas),” which, it must be said, is closer to correct than what Gee has. But Nibley also tried to make the subject of Ignatius’ discussion the secret ordinances of Christians by translating *ta epourania as high things*, rather than the more correct *heavenly things* (Hugh W. Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment* [Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 16; 2nd ed.; ed. by John Gee & Michael Rhodes, Illustrations directed by Michael P. Lyon; Provo, Utah: Deseret Book // Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies and Brigham Young University Press, 2005] 522). The same material appeared on p. 283 in the original 1975 edition of this work). Gee translates *ta epourania as celestial matters*, which is acceptable so long as he does not attempt to exploit any imagined distinction between the words *heavenly things* and *celestial matters* as a way of artificially smoothing in a reference to current LDS teaching. Both Gee and Nibley did what they did in an attempt at finding in Ignatius a reference to the early existence of some sort of *disciplina arcana*, secret ordinances passed only to those who were worthy, in this case taken to parallel the teachings and rites of the modern LDS Church. Both unfortunately were willing to produce an eccentric, less than adequate translation of their original source in order to make it happen.


16 See also Justin, *Apology 59*. Another place where Justin’s original passage resonated with LDS teaching is in its emphasis on worthiness.

17 Probably Justin believed God created matter first and then shaped it later. (Could this be the implication, for example, of Justin’s words in *Apology 6*, when he says that the Father, through Jesus, “created and ordered [ektisie kai ekomeni] all things”?). Such a view at least would seem to flow from (1) Justin’s insistence that God the Father alone is unbegotten (*Apology 14 & Trypho 126), (2) his pre-conversion disagreement with Platonists who said “that the world is also unbegotten,” (*Trypho* 5) and (3) his seeming affirmation of the statement “that which is unbegotten is similar to equal to, and the same with that which is unbegotten” (*Trypho* 5). See also his remark in *Trypho 1* where he alludes to those who say “that the soul, in consequence of its immortality, needs nothing from God.” In *Trypho 5*, Justin affirms that souls are not in fact immortal. (ET: Anti-Nicene Fathers 1).
Justin (Dialogue with Trypho) but not this one. In this case Nibley probably just had a lapse of memory. The rest of his changes, however, are obviously intentional.

The most serious change occurs in Nibley's "quotation" of Justin (the third bolded text) where he inserts a phrase that, in fact, was not Justin's:

At the creation they themselves made the choice.

Not only does Nibley insert these words of his own, but he also withholds from his readers what Justin had actually said there, namely, "For as at the beginning He created us when we were not," an idea that does not jibe with the LDS doctrine of preexistence. That Nibley knew what the Greek actually said here is clear from the fact that he translated this same passage from Justin more adequately at another place. Nibley's rendering of Justin's words there is: "For in the same way in which He created in the beginning those who were not."19

Less radical but still problematic is Nibley's translation of Justin's Greek phrase τῆς μετ' αυτοῦ αναστροφῆς as to return to his presence (the second bolded text), a translation that is reminiscent of the LDS idea of the post-mortual return to Heavenly Father, but that runs counter to Justin's context. The noun anastrophē, which in the New Testament usually means something like way of life or behavior, has a number of other possible meanings, including a dwelling and a return. The fact that here in Justin the word is accompanied by the words μετ' αυτοῦ (which ought to be translated with him rather than to him) rules against Nibley's translation and for the rendering to dwell with him, which coincides with both the reading of the Latin text accompanying the Greek text in the edition Nibley used20 as well as all the English translations I have encountered.21

When we combine Nibley's rendition of τῆς μετ' αυτοῦ αναστροφῆς' (second bolded text) with the phrase he invented to replace one of Justin's, what emerges is a retelling of familiar Mormon story of choices made in the premortal period in relation to accepting or rejecting the plan of salvation proposed by Jesus and chosen by Heavenly Father in preference to the alternative one put forth by Lucifer (see Abraham 3 and Moses 4). Justin was aware of the idea of the preexistence of souls, but he nowhere endorses it, nor did he ever speculate on what preexistent human souls might have thought, done, or decided. And he clearly rules out the idea that they were either uncreated or unbegotten.22

Hugh Nibley's Misuse of the Dead Sea Scrolls Book of Giants

One of the most remarkable examples of Nibley engaging in a complex sequence of carefully worded obfuscations in order to fundamentally misrepresent a text, while obscuring its real meaning, is his attempt to establish a relationship between the Pearl of Great Price Book of Moses 6-7 and the fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls Book of Giants on the basis of a supposed link between the Mahiayah in Moses 6:40 and Mahujah in Moses 7:2 and the character Mahawai in the Book of Giants. In setting up the case here Nibley shows his usual facility at teasing one name out of another as he melds the two distinct Book of Moses and Book of Giants figures into one.23 Nibley places passages from Moses 6 and 7 in one column and various fragments from the Book of Giants next to them in another, pausing here and there to underscore alleged points of contact. In reality there are no significant points of contact between the stories related in the two works, and Nibley's clarifications simply impose foreign meanings on texts that


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<th>Nibley, Justin 1 Apology 10</th>
<th>Justin 1 Apology 10 (Ante-Nicene Fathers)</th>
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<tr>
<td>At the creation they themselves made the choice...</td>
<td>For as in the beginning He created us when we were not, so do we consider that, in like manner, those who choose what is pleasing to Him are, on account of their choice, deemed worthy of incorruption and of fellowship with Him.</td>
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<tr>
<td>and so were deemed worthy to live with him in immortality</td>
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Were he here to defend himself, Nibley might say that he was simply distilling what he understood to be the sense of the passage. There are two problems with this: (1) even if that were the case Nibley would not in fact be accurately distilling Justin's thoughts, and (2) Nibley presents it as straightforward translation. Nibley was fully aware of the proper form used for quotations as opposed to paraphrases, as is made clear by a footnote in his Temple and Cosmos, pp. 198-99 and note.

Nibley, World and the Prophets, p. 206.

19 See PG 6:341-42: ut cum eo degant “that they might live with him.” The specific edition is not mentioned in the book I am using, but it is given in the reprint of the same article in Temple and Cosmos, pp. 198-99 and note.


22 See Justin, Dialogue with Trypho 5 and 1 Apology 10.

are contradicted by what the texts themselves actually say. This despite the fact that he begins by saying “Let me read you some parallel passages, following the translation of Professors Milik and Black, so that you won’t think I have been loading the dice to come out this way.”

In order to understand how seriously Nibley misrepresents his sources here we need to provide a little background. The title of the Book of Giants is derived from its subject, the giants. But who are the giants? The story is based on Genesis 6:2: “the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.” According to one very prominent ancient stream of interpretation (in whose current the Enoch literature, including the Book of Giants ran) the Sons of God in Genesis 6:2 were fallen ruling angels, called Watchers, and the daughters of men, human women. The giants in turn were the offspring of the illicit coupling of these two. According to this tradition the flood was sent to drown the giants, whose spirits then remained on the earth as the demons. At the same time their angelic fathers (the Watchers) were bound under the earth to await the judgment. The biblical reference in Jude 6, “angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day,” is probably to this story.

Fragments of this same story are found in a multiplicity of ancient sources and it is well known to students of the Dead Sea Scrolls. In the section of the Book of Giants Nibley refers to, the giant Mahawai (Nibley calls him MHWY) is sent to Enoch to seek the interpretation of a frightening dream that one of the other giants had. Mahawai goes to Enoch, and in response Enoch sends a letter back to the giants and nephilim taking fright [when they heard about Enoch].

(1) The Book of Giants tells us that Mahawai is a giant. Nibley describes him as a man. In this case he is literally half right: giants were half human.

(2) The Book of Giants tells us that the giants, frightened by a mysterious dream, send Mahawai to get the interpretation from Enoch, “on the pain of death.” Nibley attempts to inject an additional element into the story: “That MHWY was sent ‘under pain of death’ shows that not only the dreams but the presence of Enoch was a cause of dread.” He does this to create a parallel with the fear of Enoch referred to in Moses 6:39. In his Winter 1986 lectures on the Pearl of Great Price Nibley went even further with this purpose by falsely restoring a line in this Book of Giants passage making it read: “Thereupon all the giants and nephilim took fright [when they heard about Enoch].”

(3) The Book of Giants tells us that Mahawai journeys to find Enoch. Nibley says that here Enoch’s journey as described in Moses 6:42, 7:2-3 “seems to be transferred to MHWY himself.” Actually there is no connection between the two journeys other than the bald fact that they were both journeys.

(4) The Book of Giants tells us that Enoch writes a letter in response to Mahawai’s question. Nibley says that “It is in reply to Mahijah-MHWY that Enoch refers the people to an ancient book which he bears with him,” thus trying to force a parallel with the reference to “a book of remembrance” in Moses 6:46. But there is no reference to an “ancient book” in the Book of Giants passage. Another problem here is Nibley’s description of the intended readers of Enoch’s epistle: “Enoch refers the people to an ancient book.” Enoch actually addresses the epistle not to “people” but to Shemihazah, a leader among the fallen angels (Watchers), and through him to the rest of the fallen Watchers and giants.

(5) The Book of Giants calls Mahawai’s father Baraq’el. Nibley remarks that: “The name Baraq’el is interesting in this context since Joseph Smith was designated in the Doctrine and Covenants both as Enoch and as Baurak Ale (e.g., D&C 78:9; 103:21-22).” The unusual designation of Joseph as Enoch and Baurak Ale was dropped from the 1981 edition of the D&C. In his


27 Ibid.

28 Hugh W. Nibley, Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price: Transcripts of lectures presented to an Honors Pearl of Great Price Class at Brigham Young University, Winter Semester 1986 (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies [FARMS], n.d.) 21-12. In the lecture Nibley refers to the passage as coming from 4QEnoch. The correct reference is 4QEn6GIantsb 1.20. It should be kept in mind that this statement was made in the casual context of a lecture rather than the more controlled setting of a piece of published writing. It is very easy when one is casually talking to have something come out in a way that is not exactly how one intended to say it.


Pearl of Great Price

Nibley teased this out a bit further: “Baraq’el is interesting too because Baraq’el is supposed to have been the father of Enoch.”

The father of Enoch in the Bible and the Book of Moses is Jared (Gen 5:9 and Moses 6:21). Mahawai the giant is not Enoch, nor is Baraq’el, the father of Mahawai in the Book of Giants, by any stretch of the imagination, the father of Enoch. He is an evil figure, one of the chiefs of the fallen angels.

The Book of Giants tells us that the letter of Enoch describes the coupling of fallen angels and human women as “prostitution.” In an attempt to link that passage to the general reference to Adam’s children as being “conceived in sin” in Moses 6:55, Nibley gives this strange description of what is supposedly going on:

Enoch tells how the Lord told Adam of the natural inclination to sin that came with the Fall. This is converted in the Aramaic version to a denunciation of the wicked people of Enoch’s day, who did indeed conceive their children in sin, since they were illegitimate offspring of a totally amoral society.

4QEnGiants

By the strength of my power, [I had attacked] all flesh and I have made war with them. But [I] not […] and I do not find my support(?) to strengthen (me), for my accusers […] they dwell in [heaven]s and they live in holy abodes, and [I will] not [win my cause(?)], for they are more powerful than I

By the strength of my power, [I had attacked] all flesh and I have made war with them; …

they live in holy abodes, and …

they are more powerful than I (Nibley’s italics)

Nibley’s ellipsis points make it appear that Ohyah made war against those living in holy abodes (presumably he wants the reader to think of Enoch). That is not the case. Ohyah makes war against “all flesh” but his accusers represent another group, a group that lives in heavens and holy abodes. Notice as well that Nibley again calls the giants “people.” The theme of the giants turning bloodthirsty and attacking humanity, and even eating them, was a common one in ancient Jewish literature (cf. 1 Enoch 7:1-6; 9:10; Jubilees 7:21-24).

All the supposed parallels between the Book of Giants and the Book of Moses exist only in Nibley’s mind. And he carefully crafts his language throughout to conceal the true meaning of the Book of Giants fragments from his readers.

32 Nibley, Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price, 21:12.
34 Ibid., p. 315.
36 Ibid., p. 294.
38 Ibid., p. 308.
Nibble’s Misquotation of Eusebius’ Preparation for the Gospel

One of the more complex and interesting examples of Nibley’s misuse of his sources is found in his attempt to make Eusebius of Caesarea, a Christian writer active during the first half of the fourth century, support the identification of Enoch as a Son of Man figure. Writes Nibley:

Eusebius states the case thus: “The Son of Man and the Son of Adam are the same thing, so that Adam and Enosh are the same; carnal (sarkikon) through Adam, rational (logikon) through Enosh.” [[Preparation 11.6]]

He also makes it perfectly clear that by Enosh he means Enoch: “The Hebrews say that Enoch not Adam was the first true man. . . . He was not found” [said only of Enoch] means that truly wise men are hard to find. He withdrew from the world of affairs and thereby became the Friend of God [cf. Abraham]. The Hebrews call him ‘The Friend,’ signifying thereby the favor (charin) of God.” [[Preparation 7.8]]. (double brackets mine)39

At the center of Nibley’s use of the two passages from Eusebius cited in the above quotation is the assertion that Enosh and Enoch are one and the same. Nibley states this explicitly when he says it is “perfectly clear that by Enosh he means Enoch.” His apparent reason for saying this is that he wants to transfer what is said about Enosh in Eusebius to Enoch. In order to accomplish this identification, Nibley must misquote the second passage. He does this by misusing ellipsis points to tie together what is said about Enosh in the first passage with what is said about the one “who was not found,” i.e., Enoch (see Gen 5:24), in the second. Contrary to Nibley’s claim, however, Eusebius does not identify Enoch with his twice-great grandfather Enosh (Gen 5). The material passed over by Nibley’s ellipsis points contains a clear transition from the discussion of Enosh to the discussion of Enoch in the words: “But now after him of whom we have spoken there was another.”40

Eusebius does link Enos and Adam, based on the fact that these names come from two different Hebrew words meaning man.

Nibley significantly modifies the text and in doing so obscures what Eusebius was actually saying. This is perhaps best seen by quoting the passage in context with Nibley’s version in a parallel column:

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<th>Preparation 11.6 (Gifford)41</th>
<th>Preparation 11.6 (Nibley)</th>
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<tr>
<td>It is written at least in a certain Prophet ‘What is man [Heb: enosh], that Thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man [Heb: adam], that Thou visitest him?’ [Ps. 8:4] For which the Hebrew, in the first naming of ‘man,’ contains the word ‘Enos’; as if he said more plainly, What is this forgetful one, that Thou, O God, rememberest him, forgetful though he is? And the other clause, ‘Or the son of man that Thou visitest him?’ is read among the Hebrews, ‘Or the son of Adam’: so that the same man is both Adam and Enos; the fleshly nature being represented by Adam, and the rational by Enos.</td>
<td>The Son of Man and the Son of Adam are the same thing, so that Adam and Enosh are the same; carnal through Adam, rational through Enosh.</td>
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Nibley’s words “The Son of Man and the Son of Adam are the same thing,” although placed within quotation marks, do not appear in his source. Nibley has apparently made them up in service of his wanting to more clearly secure the identification of Enoch as a Son of Man figure.42

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39 Hugh w. Nibley, “The Enoch Figure,” in Enoch the Prophet, pp. 35-6.
41 Gifford, Preparation for the Gospel, 2:554.
42 See earlier statements in Nibley “The Enoch Figure,” in Enoch the Prophet, p. 35. Nibley appeals to these same two passages from Eusebius’ Preparation for the Gospel (7.8 and 11.6) in support of a similar claim about Enoch in his article “A Strange Thing in the Land.” He does so in a passage that also contains a rendering of the Hebrew verb bara that is highly problematic as well:

It is implied in Genesis 5:1-2 that the human race was fully launched when the book of the generations of Adam was inaugurated, since Adam and Eve were set apart (barâ), and given a name and a blessing. A very old tradition equates true humanity with Enoch the recordkeeper, a more complete man than Adam himself (“A Strange Thing in the Land,” in Enoch the Prophet, p. 138).

In yet another place Nibley, in the process of “translating” Genesis 5:1-3, renders bara the same way again:

It begins, “In the day the Gods set apart [bara—we are very literal here] Adam in the likeness of the Gods [hi-dmuth elohim] he made him. Male and female he set them apart, and gave them a blessing, and gave them their names as Adam, in the day he set them apart.” (See Genesis 5:1-3). (“Before Adam,” in Old Testament and Related Studies, p. 78).

Nibbley’s rendering of this passage is highly problematic. In the first place if one wants to be “very literal” in translating bara one translates it create not set apart. Set apart is not listed as a possible translation of bara in standard reference works on Biblical Hebrew such as Brown, Driver, Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament and the Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament (TDOT). Secondly, elohim should be translated here not as a plural (Gods), as Nibley has done, but as a singular (God). This is made clear in the Hebrew by the use of third singular verbs. Hence when Nibley puts the Gods set apart Adam he is doubly mistranslating bara. Not only does the Hebrew verb not mean set apart but it is also cast in 3rd person singular in the original (he set apart Adam). In order for Nibley’s translation to be legitimate in terms of the grammar of the passage, bara would have had to have been cast in the 3rd plural. Finally, if Nibley insists on treating elohim as plural and is willing to confound the singular verb bara by treating it as if it were a 3rd plural form with elohim (Gods) as its plural subject, why does he then fail to confound all of the other singular verbs in the sentence, which also have elohim as their subject? Why didn’t he confound them to read as third plurals as follows?:

- in the likeness of the Gods they [the Gods] made him
- Male and female they [the Gods] set them apart and gave them a blessing, and gave them their names, as Adam
- in the day they [the Gods] set them apart.

Instead he translates them using the 3rd singular pronoun he as their subject. There would, of course, be no virtue in Nibley’s carrying through his illegitimate translation in this manner, but it would have at least made his distortion of the passage consistent all the way through.
Nibley Misquotes Various Sources in his “The Passing of the Primitive Church”

Though his literary output was enormous, Hugh Nibley seldom published in scholarly journals outside Utah, and even less in ones dedicated to the study of ancient Judaism, Christianity, and the Bible. Naturally the question arises whether Nibley indulged his propensity for misquotation when writing for non-Mormon scholarly audiences as often and as bluntly as he did when writing for Mormons. The answer is that the same kind of problems are found in those articles as in things he wrote for Mormons.

“The Passing of the Primitive Church: Forty Variations on an Unpopular Theme,” was originally published in the prestigious journal Church History in 1961. In the communications section of that journal in the final issue of that same year, R. M. Grant, one of the most distinguished historians of early Christianity at the time, complained that Nibley had “not always taken into account the context of the Fathers’ statements or for that matter their use of homiletical rhetoric.” What Grant said was certainly true. But the problems with that article ran far deeper, as I shall now attempt to illustrate by way of two examples. What Nibley set out to prove in that article was that “the church founded by Jesus and the apostles did not survive nor was it expected to.” It is an argument for the great apostasy and the rise of the great and abominable church without using those terms. In order to carry it off Nibley had to marshal evidence showing that the actions of the earliest church indicated that they did not expect the church to continue, and that the idea of the triumph of the church arose only later. Unfortunately Nibley gets where he wants to go by tailoring the evidence.

1. Nibley Misquotes the Shepherd of Hermas

The Shepherd of Hermas is an important allegorical work dating from the second century AD. In the article we have been discussing Nibley refers to two passages from Hermas’ well-known book of Vision’s Tower Parable:

The original tower with its perfectly cut and well-fitted stones is soon to be taken from the earth, and in its place will remain only a second-class tower of defective stones which could not pass the test. [Visions III. 3-7] In the Visions of the Pastor of Hermas the church is represented as an old and failing lady—“because your spirit is old and already fading away”—who is carried out of the world; only in the world beyond does she appear as a blooming and ageless maiden. [Visions III, 11-13] (Brackets mine to include references given by Nibley in footnotes.)

If the Shepherd had actually said what Nibley credited it with saying about the replacement of the tower (which represents Christ’s church) with a “second-class tower of defective stones” it might have been legitimately cited as a possible prediction of the coming replacement of the true church of Christ with the great and abominable church described in 1 Nephi 13. But the Shepherd says nothing whatsoever about a second tower. It only mentions that certain stones (people) that delay repentance will not be included in the tower but will go to an inferior place. It does not say that the inferior place is a tower, nor that it replaces the tower that is spoken of:

I asked her yet another question, whether these stones that were tossed aside and not fit into the building of the tower could repent and have a place in the tower. “They can repent,” she said, “but they cannot be fit into this tower. They will be fit into a greatly inferior place—and then only after they have been tormented and have completed the days of their sins” (Visions III.7.5-6).

The reference Nibley quotes about the Church being represented as an “old and failing lady” who will only appear “as a blooming and ageless maiden” in the world beyond entirely misrepresents the meaning of Hermas’ vision. In reality the condition of the woman representing the church in the vision reflects Hermas’ own spiritual condition. In the course of his vision she appears to him in three different forms, each time with increasing vigor, as Hermas becomes more spiritually vigorous himself. None of this has anything to do with her state in this world as opposed to the world to come. Her three appearances are described in Visions III.10.2, and each as it relates to Hermas’ spiritual development in its own chapter in Visions III.11, 12, and 13. That the appearance of the woman relates to Hermas’ spiritual state and not to her (the church’s) condition in this age as opposed to the age to come can be seen very well when the second passage quoted by Nibley is given with its context:

In the first vision, why did she appear to you as an elderly woman, seated on a chair? Because your spirit is elderly and already fading away, having no vigor because you are feeble and of two minds. (Visions III.11.2)

In short, Nibley boldly misrepresented the Shepherd of Hermas’ Vision’s Tower Parable.

47 Ibid., 2.223.
2. Nibley Misquotes Eusebius’s Ecclesiastical History

We have already dealt with Nibley’s complex misquotation of Eusebius’s *Preparation for the Gospel.* The *Ecclesiastical History,* written in stages during the first quarter of the fourth century, is Eusebius’s best known work. As part of his argument that the earliest church did not expect to survive, Nibley wants to show that there was a significant shift in attitudes toward martyrdom in the earliest and later Christian Church. He appeals, in defense of this idea, to a letter by Bishop Dionysius of Alexandria (d. c. 265) preserved by Eusebius. Here is what Nibley says:

> This concept of martyrdom [the one Nibley had been describing as the one held by the early Church] is the opposite of that which later prevailed, as Dionysius of Alexandria points out in a letter to Novatus, noting that whereas the early martyr was concerned “for his own soul alone…” today the martyr thinks in terms of the whole Church.”

In context, however, the letter has nothing to do with contrasting earlier and later attitudes toward martyrdom. This is clearly seen when some of the original context of the letter is given along with the words Nibley quotes. In his letter Dionysius says to Novatus:

> You ought to have been ready to suffer anything whatever rather than split the Church of God, and martyrdom to avoid schism would have brought you as much honour as martyrdom to escape idolatry—I should say, more. For in the latter case a man is martyred to save his own single soul, in the former to save the whole Church.

Nibley creates the temporal/historic element he needs out of thin air by adding a word that is not in the original at all: “today.”

Nibley Misquotes Two Early Sources in Support of Baptism for the Dead.

1. Nibley Misquotes Matthew 16:18

In his article “Baptism for the Dead in Ancient Times,” Nibley offers a case for an alternative reading of Matthew 16:18, “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,” that is built upon a combination of mistranslation, misquotation, and the misidentification of sources. Nibley insists that Matthew’s famous passage refers to the practice of baptism for the dead:

> It is the proper function of a gate to shut creatures in or out of a place; when a gate “prevails,” it succeeds in this purpose; when it does not “prevail,” someone succeeds in getting past it… the thing which is held back [by the gates of hell], is not the church, for the object is not in the accusative but in the partitive genitive: it is “hers,” part of her, that the gates will not be able to contain. Since all have fallen, all are confined in death which it is the Savior’s mission to overcome; their release is to be accomplished through the work of the church, to which the Lord promises that at some future time he will give the apostles the keys.”

According to Nibley, then, the *it in prevail against it* refers not to the Church but to a portion of the number of the souls who were at one point in hell, but who will later escape from there through proxy baptism. In other words the passage should have been translated something like: “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against some of the dead it is holding back getting out finally through baptism for the dead.”

Nibley defends this strange rendering by arguing that the object of *prevail against* here “is not in the accusative but in the partitive genitive: it is ‘hers,’ part of her, that which belongs to her, that the gates will not be able to contain.” One need go no further in response to Nibley’s argument than to point out the fact that the Greek verb translated *prevail against* in Matthew 16:18 (katischyo) almost always takes a genitive object when used to mean *prevail against or over:* This being the case there is no reason whatever to suppose that the passage has any other object than the Church. The mere fact that the object of the verb is not an accusative, in no way implies that we must read it as a partitive genitive. What is more there are no other contextual clues which would suggest a partitive genitive with the meaning Nibley gives it here either.

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48 Nibley, “Passing of the Primitive Church,” in *Mormonism and Early Christianity,* p. 179.
50 The contrast between martyrdom for self and for whole church is stated using *men* and *de* in two nicely balanced statements:
> Ekei men gar hyper hias tis thea eukatisth eukathistei martyri ekei gar hyper mia tis thea eukatisth eukathistei
> entauitha de hyper holasen tekklesias martyrerei (PG 20:633)
52 Ibid.
53 I had originally written here “the Greek verb translated *prevail against* in Matthew 16:18 (katischyo) always takes a genitive object when used to mean *prevail against or over:*” An early reviewer pointed out that I had missed an example given in the big Liddell & Scott Classical Greek Lexicon (i.e., the Greek Septuagint at 2 Chronicles 8:3), where the verb had this same basic meaning but with an accusative rather than a genitive object. In this instance the reviewer was correct and so I replaced the *always with almost always.*
2. Nibley Misquotes Ignatius of Antioch’s Philadelphians

A remarkable example of Nibley’s findings things in the ancient sources that simply aren’t there is where he argues that the combination of the words “rock” “key,” and “gate” is to be understood as a reference to baptism for the dead. And so he writes concerning the ninth chapter of Ignatius of Antioch’s letter to the Philadelphians (early 2nd cent.):

The same idea is even more obviously expressed by Ignatius in what is perhaps the earliest extant mention of the rock after New Testament times, making it equivalent to the high priest . . . to whom alone the secrets of God have been confided. . . . This is the way which leads to the Father, the Rock . . . the Key . . . the Gate of Knowledge, through which have entered Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, Moses and all the host of prophets.

From which it is clear that Matthew 16:17-19, with its combination of gates, keys, and rock, definitely hinges on the subject of salvation for the dead, and the work by which they are admitted to the presence of the Father. 54

The passage in the form Nibley quotes it, is by no means as explicit as he makes it. As we begin to deconstruct Nibley’s argument it will be helpful to restore the words Nibley left out between have been confided and This is the way:

. . . have been confided. The ministering powers of God are good. The Comforter is holy and the Word is holy, the Son of the Father, by whom He made all things, and exercises a providence over them all. This is the way . . . 55

It appears that Nibley removed these in-between words in order to make the words This is the way refer back to secrets of God. But even if this connection were as clear as Nibley wants to make it, it would still not be clear that we are to find baptism for the dead implied in the words secrets of God, and hence Nibley would still not be justified in arguing that the combination of rock, key, and gate should be taken to refer to baptism of the dead.

But in pointing out these problems we have yet only scratched the surface. The even more basic problem is that the text Nibley quotes comes from a version of Ignatius’ letter that was expanded by someone writing several centuries after Ignatius. None of the crucial words, rock, key, and gate, in Nibley’s quotation are found in Ignatius’s original letter. 56 They were all added later (perhaps in the fourth century) by an unknown writer who tampered with the text. Nibley is remiss in not telling us that he has used the later, longer version of Ignatius’ letter and for not providing us with any justification for his having done so. What is more, his claim that the passage contains what is perhaps the earliest extant mention of the rock after New Testament times” is completely false. 57 Nibley seems to assume that the words originated with Ignatius, in which case that might have been correct. As it is, however, the fact that he assumes rock is original to Ignatius raises doubts as to how well he actually knows the Ignatian material. The fact that there is more than one recension of Ignatiius’ letters and that the longer version, the one appealed to by Nibley, is not the original one is scarcely something known only to experts.

Nibley’s quoting material from the late recension of Ignatius’ letters but treating it as coming from the time of Ignatius is a problem we find elsewhere in his works as well. In another work he quotes material from the late versions of Ignatius’ Trallians 4 and Smyrneans 6 as examples of the sort of thing that is being said “Already, at the end of the first century.” 58 Not only did the material Nibley quotes in that case come from centuries later, but he was also imprecise in his dating of Ignatius’ original letters, which date from the early second and not the late first century.

Nibley’s argument about the rock, key and gate, collapses completely when we look at the passage as Ignatius originally wrote it in the early second century. In the passage as Nibley quoted it the bolded word This was taken to refer to the secrets of God, into which Nibley read baptism for the dead. But Ignatius originally wrote not this (houtos) but he (autos) referring back not to the secrets of God but to the high priest (possibly Jesus or the bishop representing him) mentioned just before, i.e. to a person not a practice or teaching. To this both the standard English translations and the critical Greek editions uniformly testify. 59

In the end Nibley’s argument is grounded on arguments and appeals to ancient texts that had absolutely nothing whatever to do with baptism for the dead.

56 See the original form of this letter, for example, in ET: Bart D. Ehrman, The Apostolic Fathers (Loeb Classical Library 24-25; 2 vols.; Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2003)
57 See, for example, Ignatius, Polycarp 1:1; Epistle of Barnabas 5:13; 6:3; 11:3, 5; Shepherd of Hermas, Parables (Similitudes) 9.2.1-2; 9.3.1; 9.4.2; 9.5.3; 9.9.7; 9.12.1; 9.13.5; 9.14.4.
58 Nibley, World of the Prophets, p. 49.
59 See Bart D. Ehrman, The Apostolic Fathers 1.292-93. Ehrman’s edition replaces the older 1912-1913 Loeb Classical Library edition of Kirsopf Lake. Both editions agree that Ignatius wrote autos not houtos (neither offering houtos as a variant reading) and both translate the word he not this. Edgar J. Goodspeed’s Index Patristics (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, n.d.) also identifies autos and not houtos as the reading here (pp. 31 and 178). Although there is really no doubt as to the correct translation I have, by way of illustrating Nibley’s difficulty, checked the translations of Wake, Lightfoot, Roberts-Donaldson (Ante-Nicene Fathers 1), Stawley, Hoole, Richardson, Lake, Goodspeed, and Staniforth as well. All of them have he referring to the high priest. Finally, the reading in the edition of Ignatius’ authentic letters in Jacques-Paul Migne’s Patrologiae cursus completus, which is likely the edition Nibley himself used, is, again, autos not houtos in Philadelphians 9 (PG 5:704-05).
Nibley Misquotes Eight Sources at One Stroke

One of the most common ways Hugh Nibley misquotes his sources is to make some assertion and then offer a footnote containing several references to ancient texts, some of which might mention the topic he is discussing, but few if any of which provide direct support for the point he is trying to prove. It is impossible to estimate how many of these kind of footnotes exist, but there are so many that it is not difficult to suppose that it is in consideration of these that Tweedy came up with his exaggerated 90% number. A classic case in point is a footnote Nibley offered while trying to prove “the total neglect of education in the early church.” Nibley declared: “Actually the Apostolic Fathers were greatly concerned about education, warning their people against the bad education of the world, and chiding them for their neglect of the only education that counted—that which prepared the young for the next life.”

In ostensible support of this statement Nibley directs his readers to a footnote which in turn refers them to no less than eight different ancient passages, none of which reflect a negative attitude toward formal education as such, and only six of which come from the group of writers known as the Apostolic Fathers. Prominent Church historian Hans J. Hillerbrand pointed to Nibley’s “comment about the absence of educational concern in the early church,” as a prime example of things he considered “highly debatable” in Nibley’s article.

Nibley’s Defenders

Having said all of this, it should be noted that there have been attempts to vindicate Nibley on the question of his footnotes. In a talk titled “Autobiographical Notes on My Testimony,” Daniel C. Peterson tells the following anecdote about his own expert encounter with Nibley’s footnotes:

You may remember, some of you, that Hugh Nibley wrote an article and published it in Revue de Qumran a number of years ago called “Qumran and the Companions of the Cave.” And I thought, well, okay, Islamic studies and Arabic was just a sideline for Nibley. I’ve heard for a long time (and so have you probably) that Nibley’s work really isn’t that good. That if you checked the footnotes it doesn’t hold up, you know. He wasn’t that good a scholar, he’s sloppy, and he’s careless, and you can’t trust him, and he’s just a dishonest Mormon apologist. So I thought (you know, which now I am) (Laugh). So, anyway...

But it seemed to me a good opportunity to look at that passage. There’s a passage in one of the Surahs of the Qur’an [sic!], one of the chapters, that talks about the Companions of the Cave and Nibley argued that this was a garbled recollection of the Dead Sea Scrolls community and he had cited a number of Arabic sources.

I thought it would be child’s play for an Arabist to check out Nibley’s footnotes and then expand beyond them to see if his argument really held up. Well, what really struck me about it was, when I started getting into the article, how many Arabic sources he had looked at; how much work he had done and how precisely right it was.

All this is well and good. If Peterson found that a single article by Nibley was impressive then, of course, that is fine. Still how strict an examination did he actually undertake of it? He gives us some sense of this right after what he says above: “Now I can only say that it was right to a certain extent,” he continues, “because I didn’t get through it all.” Not exactly a systematic analysis then, I gather. Even so Peterson goes on to say that he came away feeling that in that article anyway, Nibley’s footnotes were “meticulously accurate, that he had really gotten the Arabic sources down, which really impressed me. And so now when people say, ‘Yeah, well he just misrepresents his sources.’ I suggest they go have a look at the (Inaudible) or something like that if they want to check it. They usually don’t.”

I cannot be certain what word or words stood where “inaudible” now appears in the quote above. Still one could easily imagine that Peterson had said there: “Revue de Qumran.” If not, it is still worth asking whether Nibley was in fact “meticulously accurate” in his use of sources there? And the answer is no, he is not. On page 136 of that article Nibley says: “The story of Joseph’s winning of Mary is told in the Epistle of I Clement, c. 43.” No actually it...
is not. A story similar to the one Nibley describes is told in the *Protevangelium of James* 8-9, a story that echoes the story of Aaron’s budding rod in the Old Testament book of Numbers, chapter 17. In fact it is this latter story, the story of Aaron’s budding rod, that is told in the *Epistle of I Clement*, c. 43.

In his review of Martha Beck’s book Boyd Petersen says the following:

John Gee recently completed a statistical analysis of one of Hugh’s articles chosen at random to establish the accuracy of the footnotes. In looking at Hugh’s essay, “Victoriosa Loquacitas: The Rise of Rhetoric and the Decline of Everything Else” as it appeared in its original form in Western Speech 20 (1956): 57-82 (reprinted in *The Ancient State* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company and FARMS, 1991]: 243-286) Gee discovered that “87% of the footnotes were completely correct, 8% of the footnotes contained typographical errors, 5% were wrong in some other way (e.g. frequently right author, right page, wrong title). In no case could I determine that any of the errors in the footnotes was intentional or that any of the footnotes were fabrications” (personal e-mail, John Gee to Boyd Petersen, 13 January 2005).

In a later study Gee analyzed the footnotes in one of Hugh’s Egyptian works, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyrus: An Egyptian Endowment* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1975). Selecting a chapter from the book at random (Chapter 3, the second-longest chapter in the book), Gee found that “94% of the citations were correct, 4% were typographical errors, and 2% were wrong.” It was Gee’s determination that “the results seem to show that Nibley was more accurate when dealing with a Mormon topic, that his Egyptian work was more accurate than his classics work, and that his work on Message was better than normal, not worse.” Further, Gee stated that “I have never seen any case where Hugh Nibley ever fabricated or made up a source. After looking up thousands of citations, I have seen him make just about every mistake I think one could make, but I have never seen him make up anything” (personal e-mail, John Gee to Boyd Petersen, 14 March 2005).65

Gee makes allusion to the analysis of the chapter from Nibley’s *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyrus* in his introduction to the new second edition, of which he was one of the editors: “Analysis of a random chapter showed that of its almost seven hundred citations, Nibley was completely accurate 94 percent of the time, and in more than half of these remaining forty cases, one could explain the problem as a typographical error.” (p. xx) Petersen cannot be correct in saying that Gee used chapter 3 in his analysis, since that chapter is clearly not the “second-longest chapter

in the book,” nor does it contain “almost seven hundred citations.” In fact it contains only 60 footnotes, 48 in the original edition. Gee must have based his analysis not on chapter 3, but on Part III. Part III with 616 footnotes in the new edition comes closest to Gee’s “almost seven hundred citations,” of all the sections in the book. The only section with more footnotes is Part II, with 774 footnotes.

For Gee to merely cite the statistics of his study of course means nothing unless we can actually see what he meant when he says he checked Nibley’s footnotes. How rigorous was his checking? The summary statement he makes regarding it, which we have just quoted, does not instill a high level of confidence. (By what measure I wonder do 616 citations count for “almost seven hundred citations”?) Nor does his remarking that “Since Nibley made his own translations from all foreign languages except where noted, we have given him wide latitude in rendering his translations.”

Still there is a way to test the rigor of Gee’s analysis. Given the fact that Part III served as the basis of Gee’s analysis, and therefore that the depth and carefulness of his analysis ought to become evident, to some degree at least, in the kinds of changes he makes in relation to the footnotes for that section in the new edition.

If one were looking for evidence that Gee’s analysis dealt primarily with superficial things one would find it in an instance where Nibley very conspicuously misrepresented his source, and where Gee made some minor corrections but overlooked entirely the bigger problem. Such an example conveniently presents itself in a quotation from a book by Yigael Yadin that appears on page 131 in the 1975 edition and page 212 in the 2005 edition.

In the 1975 edition Nibley says that “a fundamental religious activity of the ancient Hebrews was going up to the Temple ‘to read the Story of the Creation’ (Y. Yadin, *War of the Sons of Light and Darkness*, pp. 202f).” In the second edition the editors have made a few minor changes. Yadin had not capitalized *Story*, and so the new edition changes the quote to read “story of the Creation.” It also, for example, changes Nibley’s “202f” to “202-203”. No notice is taken however of the conspicuous fact that Yadin does not say that it was those going up to the temple that read the story of Creation but those who did not go up. The words “To read the story of [the] Creation,” by the way, occur on page 203 twice. I quote the passage so as to include both of them. The first part begins in the midst of a quotation from the Mishnah:

65 http://www.fairlds.org/Reviews/Rvw200504.html
The above is an example of a very straightforward misquotation. Yadin said it was those who did not go up to Jerusalem that read the story of Creation, Nibley quoted him as saying it was those who did go up to Jerusalem. This indicates that Gee in making his corrections for this passage for the new edition was not attending to the question of whether Nibley was accurately representing his sources, even on a relatively basic level, but was attending only to superficial matters of spelling, capitalization, and so on.

If then Gee missed so straightforward an example of Nibley’s misuse of his sources as this, how can we expect that he would not also have missed ones that were less straightforward and harder to detect? In addition, when Gee says he gave Nibley, “wide latitude in rendering his translations,” does that mean that he did not check his translations or simply decided to accept without question whatever Nibley chose to do in them? And are all of Gee’s statistics as inexact as his using “almost seven hundred” as just another way of saying “616”? Such considerations cast a certain shadow of doubt over Gee’s statistics. It will be interesting to see whether he will be able to do anything to make the shadow go away.

Summing Up

I have offered here only a few examples of what I believe to represent a common phenomenon in the works of Hugh Nibley. I could have easily multiplied the number of examples dealt with, but I feel the ones I have chosen illustrate the situation well enough. Quite often Nibley will multiply misrepresentations by piling them up one upon the other all in a very short space as for example when he claims on page 248 of Old Testament and Related Studies that scholars are “generally agreed,” that the Dead Sea Scrolls revealed “for the first time” such things as “… the exact date of Easter… the nature and origin of the organization of the Primitive Church… the origin of Gnosticism.” The Dead Sea Scrolls are Jewish texts. They include no Christian texts at all. In addition their perspective is quite different from that of Gnosticism. To put it quite simply they do not reveal “for the first time” nor for any time the things Nibley claims they do. And since Nibley’s statements weren’t true, scholars obviously weren’t “generally agreed” in supporting them. Nibley is a very untrustworthy guide for Mormons wanting to follow in his footsteps by becoming scholars. His information is simply too often inaccurate and his way of using it too often dubious to serve as any sort of credible model.

68 Should anyone wish to pursue this matter a bit further they might begin by seeking answers to the following questions:

Was Nibley correct when he claimed that:

1) The texts found at the site of ancient Chenoboskia near the modern Egyptian town of Nag Hammadi in 1954 had originally been “buried by a little Christian church before the apostasy hit it, before Gnosticism hit it. They represent the earliest level, the earliest teachings of the church, a totally different picture from what anybody had imagined it would be like. And the extent of these things is remarkable,” (Nibley, “Apocryphal Writings and the Teachings of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in Temple and Cosmos, pp. 198-99.)

2) “The Epistle to Diognetus 10 tells us not to marvel at this—man must become the heir of divinity in the fullest sense,” (Nibley, “Temple in the Hebrews,” in Old Testament and Related Studies, p. 206, nt. 89.)

3) It was Christians being referred to when he writes: “ ‘O miserable Aristotle!’ cried Tertullian shortly after, ‘who taught them (the Christians) dialectic, the art of proving and disproving, the cunning turns of sentences, forced conjectures, tough arguments, contrary even to itself.’ ” (Nibley, World of the Prophet, pp. 35-36.)

4) The Gospel of Philip “is strictly orthodox, and very strongly anti-gnostic, although some people try to explain it away by saying it is gnostic.” (Nibley, “Rediscovery of the Apocrypha and the Book of Mormon,” in Temple and Cosmos, p. 225, Infobase edition.)

5) Justin Martyr “knows of no certain norm for distinguishing true Christians from false, and Irenaeus struggles manfully but vainly to discover one. (Nibley, “Passing of the Primitive Church,” in Mormonism and Early Christianity, p. 182.)

6) The community that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls that “their book of doctrine and covenants (now called the Manual of Discipline) is surprisingly like ours, and are their ideas of priesthood, prophecy, heaven and earth, marriage and eternal progeny, and so on.” (Nibley, “More Voices from the Dust,” in Old Testament and Related Studies, p. 240.)

7) Jesus is presented as performing baptisms for the dead, and the spirits are described as joining “his church exactly like their mortal descendants, and by the same ordinances” in chapter 42 of the 1st or 2nd century work, the Odes of Solomon. (Nibley, “Baptism for the Dead in Ancient Times,” in Mormonism and Early Christianity, p. 119.)

8) Concerning the baptism performed by the Apostles upon the dead in Shepherd of Hermes, Similitudes (Parables) IX.16.2, “That it was an earthly baptism which only could be performed with water is emphatically stated.” (Ibid., p. 122.)

9) The Shepherd of Hermes is “one of the most trustworthy guides to the established beliefs of the early church.” (Ibid., p. 121.)

10) Origen (c. 251) “can report no clear official teaching in his day not only regarding minor matters, but on the very first principles of the gospel.” (Nibley “Passing of the Primitive Church,” in Mormonism and Early Christianity, p. 175. Nibley’s misquotation of Origen’s First Principles in this case is a good example of what Tweedy described when he says: “Sometimes what he [Nibley] said was exactly the opposite of what the author meant” (Beck, Leaving the Saints, p. 16.)

11) “The Confessions [of Augustine] is the story of a man who sought for revelation in the church, failed to find it, and so with great reluctance turned to philosophy as a poor second best.” (Hugh Nibley, “Baptism for the Dead in Ancient Times, Part II,” Improvement Era (Jan 1949) 60 n.t. 60.)
It has sometimes been a cause of wonder why, given his enormous literary output, and his great interest in writing about the Old and New Testament and early Church texts and history that Nibley published so infrequently in the standard non-Mormon scholarly journals dedicated to these subjects, especially given the fact that his writing career spanned more than half a century. (The actual scholarly articles that I am aware of are these: “Christian Envy of the Temple,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 50.2 (October 1959) 97-123 and 50.3 (Jan 1960) 229-40 (two parts); “The Passing of the Church: Forty Variations on an Unpopular Theme,” *Church History* 30.2 (June 1961) 131-54; “Qumran and the Companions of the Cave,” *Revue de Qumran* 5.2 (1965) 177-98; and “Evangelium Quadragesimae Dierum,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 20.1 (1966) 1-24.)

His own account of it is given in his “An Intellectual Autobiography,” where, speaking of his activities in the 1950s, Nibley writes:

> [T]o be taken seriously one must publish, and I soon found that getting published in the journals is as easy and mechanical as getting grades: I sent out articles to a wide variety of prestigious journals and they were all printed. So I lost interest. (Hugh W. Nibley, “An Intellectual Autobiography,” in *Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless*, p. xxv.)

And yet he does not cease writing in regional journals like the *Western Political Quarterly*. Is it possible that a cautioning word got round the scholarly guild after someone decided to look up a few of Nibley’s footnotes and discovered the kinds of problems we have been discussing in this article? That such might have been the case is clear from the fact, as we have seen, that Nibley did not hesitate to misquote his sources even in the non-Mormon scholarly journals. Were I an editor and an article containing the kinds of things I have described in the present work, I should have certainly deemed it unsuitable for publication. I cannot imagine that editors more expert than I would do anything less.

This takes us back to a point raised at the beginning. If what Tweedy said was true, then the “problem” reverts to those many “outstanding academics from such BYU departments as Ancient Scripture, Asian and Near Eastern Languages, Law, the Library, English, and Classics,” mentioned by Robert Millet as having worked on Nibley’s footnotes. What are we to make of them now that we have seen how things really are?

Here I must to some degree rise in their defense. I can easily imagine myself in their position, first becoming disturbed that the footnotes in the section assigned to me do not match what the sources say, and perhaps trying to correct one or two or more of them. Then I begin to realize the true depth of the problem, and finally coming to terms with the fact that so many footnotes are wrong, that if I were to begin monkeying with them, Nibley’s basic arguments might well begin to collapse all around me, and I would be faced with the fact that I really couldn’t fix things without thoroughly revising or even rewriting Nibley’s articles. Thus coming full circle I would finally have to surrender to the fact that the safest course for me would be to leave everything just as it was.
**Excerpts from Letters and Emails**

**Oct. 2007.** Thank you for being there when the church had NO answers! I just wish I could get my husband to even LOOK at any of the info, let alone listen to me at all on this subject! I just don’t know how to de-program him after our 25+ yrs in the church. My biggest fear is that the church will demand that he divorce me as an apostate.

**Nov. 2007.** What is your purpose? To sell books? To start your own religion? If you’re wrong, you’ll have a lot of explaining to do to God.

**Dec. 2007.** Just a note to thank you for your site. My Granddaughter joined the mormon church last Christmas. Thanks to you and your informative site I was able with Gods leading to show her of her mistake. Long story short she has since come out of their church and received a letter that her name has been removed from the rolls. Thank you again.

**Dec. 2007.** I was raised in the Presbyterian Church and was born again at age 16. I had many friends in high school that were Mormon. When I was in college I met a Mormon guy who gave me a Book of Mormon and sent missionaries to my door. I went through the lessons and was baptized a Mormon in 1978. I had a great time at the dances and met a guy who I became engaged to be married.

Two months before the wedding I found out what the Mormon Church really believes. My future husband had gone to Salt Lake to visit his parents over spring break … When he came back to California his parents had bought my temple robes for the wedding and endowment. When I opened the box and saw the green apron I thought the leaves looked like a Van Gogh painting and Van Gogh was crazy (I was an art major). I remember thinking that this looks crazy, but then dismissed the thought. [My boyfriend] and I then went back to church.

My parents come home from the Presbyterian Church and my mom sees the box on the coffee table. She opens it and the Holy Spirit speaks to her heart and says this “church” is not Christian. Later in the evening my mom and I are drying the dishes and she has a funny look on her face. I asked her what was wrong and she says that [my boyfriend] is a good guy and she doesn’t want to interfere.

Well, you can’t let that go, so I continued to ask what was wrong. My mom said that when she looked at those temple clothes all she thought was that the Mormon Church is not Christian. She also said that Christ came for everyone not just the “perfect” people, and your father and I can’t go into the temple to see you get married.

As soon as she said that Christ came for everyone not just the “perfect” people I could feel my heart sink because I knew she was right. It was like a flood of Bible verses came flooding into my head. I then didn’t know what to do if I should marry [my boyfriend]. If I would marry him would I be denying God? If I had children and we went to the Mormon Church would they go to hell? I couldn’t knowingly take my children to a church that was not Christian. I felt like I was being torn in two.

The verse about not loving two masters came alive for me. I spoke to a Christian pastor at my Presbyterian Church and he told me to go into my room and pray and I would know what to do (he said more that this, but this email will get too long). I did and I knew I had to break up with [my boyfriend]. When I told him I had lost my testimony, that Joseph Smith was not a prophet and that he was not going to be a god. That there is only one god and I didn’t want to be a god. [My boyfriend] asked me why I didn’t want to be a god? I was really stunned. As you know, Mormons use the same words that Christians use. When I would hear Father, Son, and Holy Spirit I would think of the Trinity (one God) I didn’t realize that they (Mormons) were thinking one in thought and purpose. Anyway, this is a very short version of what happened to me.

I have been married to a Christian man for 27 years and we have a 17 year old son. I am so thankful that the Lord never lets us go.

Thank you for your ministry. You have helped many people find the truth and peace that only the Jesus of the Bible can give.

**Jan. 2008.** I am LDS but I’m having a difficult time. I did not research this religion before I joined it. I have felt uneasy for quite some time. As I’ve been researching I’m finding out things that have made me back away.

**Feb. 2008.** Well as always when people try and disprove the only true Church left on the face of the earth, I suggest that you would think long and hard before soliciting bias against God’s kingdom. All I can say to you at this moment is either stop insulting God or be prepared to face Him at the judgment seat or at the great and dreadful day of the Lord,…
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Jerald Tanner’s Quest for Truth - Part 3

By Ronald V. Huggins

This last of our three-part series examining the life and research of Jerald Tanner, focuses on the integrity Jerald brought to his research of Mormon historical documents. The previous two parts of this series can be found in Salt Lake City Messenger Nos. 108 and 109, which dealt with Jerald’s initial doubts about the truthfulness of Mormonism, his conversion to Christianity, his marriage to Sandra and their early years of research and writing on Mormonism.

Jerald Tanner’s research was always centered in determining the truth, not just uncovering problems in LDS claims. Besides examining the church’s own material, at times he found it necessary to examine the veracity of works that were critical of the LDS Church. In the early sixties the Tanners published a reprint of Oliver Cowdery’s *Defence in a Rehearsal of My Grounds for Separating Myself from the Latter Day Saints* in a booklet called *Revealing Statements by the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon*.1 Jerald was especially interested in the statements of Book of Mormon witnesses David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery as they wrote of various problems in early Mormonism and indicated that Joseph Smith was a fallen prophet. Cowdery even claimed “an open vision” in which Jesus declared that the Latter Day Saints had erred in “permitting their President, Joseph Smith, Jr., to lead them forth into errors, where I led him not, nor commanded him . . .”2

At that time it did not occur to Jerald and Sandra to doubt the authenticity of the Cowdery tract as it had been treated as authentic already by Mormon historian B. H. Roberts in his LDS Church published *Comprehensive History of the Church* where he referred to the 1906 printing by R. B. Neal.3 It was also referenced by Fawn Brodie in the original edition of *No Man Knows My History*. The latter source in addition had a tantalizing note to the effect that “apparently there are no copies of the original extant.”4 Cowdery’s tract had supposedly been published in 1839, but the earliest available reprints came from after 1900. This naturally represented a challenge to Jerald and Sandra’s circle of friends to see if they could find an original copy.

In late 1960 Pauline Hancock, pastor of the little Church of Christ in Independence, Missouri, received a letter from Susan Kallenbach of the Yale University Library’s Western Americana Collection announcing that they had not the original itself but a copy of the original, which they were willing to photocopy or microfilm. They stressed however that they had no information “as to the location of the original copy.”5 This news was hopeful but not entirely satisfactory. So the next April we find Jerald requesting a copy of the Cowdery document from the LDS Church Historian’s office, and being promptly refused.6 The copy they would eventually print would be the Yale copy.7

Before long Wesley P. Walters, fellow researcher and pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Marissa, Illinois, had managed to trace the original from which the Yale copy was made to a certain Mr. Fulk, who allowed him to examine it in his home. Walters was disappointed to discover that it was not an original but only made to look like one: “in Mr. Fulk’s copy the page had been cut all the way across just above the word *Defence*. A blank piece of paper of the same size was pasted in its place.”

1 Jerald & Sandra Tanner, *Revealing Statements by the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Modern Microfilm, 1962-64). Date arrived at by address on tract. Jerald & Sandra lived at 566 Center Street from Summer 1962–June 1964. If this publication spurred Richard Lloyd Anderson’s investigations (see footnote 16) then this tract must be dated to the summer or early fall of 1962.
5 Susan Kallenbach to Pauline Hancock (Nov. 15, 1960).
6 Earl E. Olson to Jerald Tanner (April 24, 1961). A photocopy of his letter appears in opening section of [Tanner’s], *Revealing Statements*.
quality as the rest of the title page was pasted above the word *Defence*. I couldn’t see the point of this until I returned home and checked [R.B.] Neal’s 1906 tract and saw that this was the very spot where Neal had printed the identifying words ‘Title Page of Cowdery’s Tract.’” Evidently Walters’ discovery occurred prior to the publication of the Tanners’ Revealing Statements where they make mention of it.  

By the summer of 1962 Richard Lloyd Anderson of Brigham Young University had already begun trying to determine whether the *Defence* was authentic. He sent a copy of the Cowdery *Defence* that he had somehow obtained (possibly from the Tanners’ tract) to Yale and received a letter back from Archibald Hanna, curator of the Western American Collection, informing him that the copies he had sent were derived from the Yale copy, further noting that the Yale copy had been “photographed from a pasted up dummy,” which suggested to Hanna that “the original may have appeared in a newspaper and that Cowdery decided to reprint it as a pamphlet and so pasted up a dummy and had a title page set for it.” Hanna further recommended that Anderson contact Ernest Wessen of Midland Rare Book Company in Mansfield, Ohio, which he did, perhaps for the first time, the following October.

In any case, Anderson had sent a copy of the Cowdery tract to Wessen, who responded in part by saying “There was no press at Norton, Ohio, in 1839”—the tract claimed to have been printed by Pressley’s Job Office, Norton, Ohio—and that “the typography is of a much later date.” Wessen wrote again only a few days later cautioning that the “evidence that no press existed at Norton, Ohio, in 1839, is purely presumptive,” and that “I am proud of my reputation, and would not want to be quoted on the typography,” i.e., on the general impression that it came from a later period.

At some point in this process Anderson approached the Tanners directly about his growing doubts. In response Jerald made the question a matter of his own investigation, and on April 7, 1967, he and Sandra issued a tract entitled *A Critical Look: A Study of the Overstreet ‘Confession’ and the Cowdery ‘Defence’*, which set out to prove that the *Defence*, along with another document related to Cowdery that also placed the LDS Church in a bad light, were both forgeries. Here we shall focus only on the *Defence*.

In making his case against the *Defence* Jerald repeated many of the same concerns shared by Anderson and other early investigators, i.e., the fact that the tract was never quoted anywhere prior to its appearance in the early twentieth century, that a first edition could not be discovered anywhere, and so on. But, as in most of his work, Jerald’s most decisive argument was a literary one in which he proved, I believe beyond reasonable doubt, that the *Defence* had been cobbled-together from published Cowdery writings, especially from the series of letters he wrote on the history of the Church which appeared in the LDS newspaper *Messenger and Advocate*.

There are two legitimate reasons that authors may write similar things in different places. The first is that everyone has his own distinctive style of writing, features of which show up consistently in whatever they write. It is also a common practice among writers when they write on a topic they have already covered to copy what they formerly said in a new work. Jerald, however, discovered close parallels to Cowdery’s writings that fit neither of these criteria. In his 1967 pamphlet Jerald focused only on the first:

Besides the letter in the Huntington Library, Oliver Cowdery wrote articles and letters which were published in the *Evening and Morning Star*, the *Messenger and Advocate* and the *History of the Church*. We compared all of these sources with the purported “Defence,” and the results of this study are rather interesting. In the letters found in the Huntington Library we found no parallels of any importance; likewise the *History of the Church* contained no significant parallels. In the *Evening and Morning Star* we found only one important parallel—i.e., both the “Defence” and an article published in the *Evening and Morning Star* contain the words “by the shedding of blood.”

On the other hand, we found that the *Messenger and Advocate* contains many important parallels.

Jerald then listed eighty-four parallels between Cowdery’s *Messenger and Advocate* writings and the *Defence*. He concluded that “whoever wrote the ‘Defence’ used the *Messenger and Advocate*.” Jerald granted that people sometimes copy things they have written before, and contented himself to noting that the parallels “arouse suspicion.” But there is a difference between what the *Defence* does and what authors are usually doing when they copy something. Usually the motive for recopying something that you have written before is that the author has occasion to talk about the same topic again. But what we find in the *Defence* are phrases and chunks of text taken out of one context and patched in to another, without there being any obvious connection between the two settings. This is the case, for example, in the following three parallels:

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9 Although the Tanners’ statement does not make this explicit: “In a letter dated Nov. 15, 1960, an employee of the Yale University Library stated that they had ‘a copy of the original.’ Wesley P. Walters ... stated that he examined the copy and that he believed it to be the 1906 reprint. After examining we are inclined to agree with Mr. Walters.” Had Walters already seen Fulk’s copy of the *Defence*, or did he merely conclude from comparing the Yale photocopy with copies of the later tract what he would later confirm directly by examining Fulk’s tract?
11 The date is derived from Ernest J. Wessen to Richard L. Anderson (Oct 21, 1963), who speaks of “yours of the seventh.” There may have been letters before this. The tone of Wessen’s letter is at least consistent with it being his first response, but not decisively so.
**Cowdery’s Defense**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Man may deceive his fellow man, deception may follow deception, and the children of the wicked one may seduce the unstable, untaught . . . (p. 4)</th>
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<tr>
<td>This, I confess, is a dark picture to spread before those whom I am to warn, but they will pardon my plainness when I assure them of the truth. (p. 5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>my Spirit is holy and does not dwell in an unholy temple, nor are angels sent to reveal the great work of God to hypocrites (p. 5)</td>
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**Cowdery’s material in Messenger and Advocate**

<table>
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<th>Man may deceive his fellow man; deception may follow deception, and the children of the wicked one may have power to seduce the foolish and untaught. (M&amp;A 1:16)</th>
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<tr>
<td>This, I confess, is a dark picture to spread before our patrons, but they will pardon my plainness when I assure them of the truth. (M&amp;A 1:14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Holy Spirit does not dwell in unholy temples, nor angels reveal the great work of God to hypocrites. (M&amp;A 1:95)</td>
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This makes it all but certain that the *Defence* was plagiarized from the *Messenger and Advocate*. The only way someone could make a case for its authenticity at this stage would be to prove that Cowdery was in the regular habit of plundering phrases and paragraphs from his earlier writings and dropping them without rhyme or reason into his later ones.

In 1968, a year after Jerald’s pamphlet, Richard Lloyd Anderson wrote an article on Oliver Cowdery for the *Improvement Era* in which he prefaces his own attempt at debunking the *Defence* by saying: “The fact is that the pamphlet has been accepted at face value for over a half of century without any serious investigation of its genuineness.”16 In saying this Anderson would appear to be taking credit himself for being the first to put forward a “serious investigation.” His case is strong but not as decisive as it would have been had he appealed to Jerald’s literary argument. But he does not mention the Tanners efforts from the previous year at all.

Historians less beholden to the LDS Church than Anderson were also less quiet to come to the conclusion that the *Defence* was indeed a forgery fathered on Cowdery. After reading the Tanners’ pamphlet, historian Juanita Brooks wrote to Sandra saying:

> You have convinced me that the item is genuine and that it was really written by Oliver Cowdery. You did for me what I had intended to do with the Messenger and Advocate letter myself, and the result is clearly that Cowdery was really the author.17

Fawn M. Brodie similarly did not agree with Jerald’s arguments. “I regret very much to say that I cannot agree with you about the Cowdery ‘Defence.’ After the most careful reading, I still believe it to be genuine.”18

In hindsight I am a bit surprised that careful scholars like Brodie and Brooks failed to see the force of Jerald’s literary argument. It just goes to show that not everyone has a head for discerning textual relationships. With time, however, Jerald’s position has won out, leaving Brodie to be one of the very few historians to hold out for the authenticity of the *Defence*.

### Factual History?

As a historian I have long been cognizant of the fact that being careful about getting at the truth of history is not a necessary prerequisite for success in publishing, in fact a certain cavalierness in fiddling the truth is often just the right recipe for achieving big sales and pride of placement on the shelves of major book stores. It is simply not the case anymore that a layperson can pick up a book by a scholar from a prominent university and trust that the information it contains is going to be true and accurate even at the level of being correct about the basic facts. A good example of this is the book *Reading Judas: The Gospel of Judas and the Shaping of Early Christianity* (New York: Viking, 2007) by Elaine Pagels, Hunington Spear Paine Professor of Religion at Princeton University, and Karen L. King, Winn Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Harvard Divinity School. After writing a critical review of their book I was scarcely surprised to find Pagels and King’s *Reading Judas* come out in paperback this year with all its original errors intact. Even if the authors never saw my piece, the errors I pointed out were scarcely obscure. One would have expected other scholars to point out the same things.19

In this environment, Mormon scholars have begun to flourish to the point that even in a book published by the distinguished old firm Oxford University Press, Richard Bushman can get away with asserting that Mormon apologists have “produced vast amounts of evidence for the Book of Mormon’s historical authenticity.”20 Actually Mormon apologists have not produced any substantive evidence for the Book of Mormon’s historical authenticity. Bushman would have been more honest and accurate had he said the opposite, i.e., that there is “vast amounts of evidence against the Book of Mormon’s historical authenticity.”

Much of what has been written by Mormon apologists down through the years has been very disrespectful toward truth and the weight of evidence. Seemingly anything will do so long as it appears to sustain Mormonism. So now we see a current atmosphere of critical laxity paving the way for Mormons to get substandard scholarship published with respected publishing.

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17 Juanita Brooks to Sandra Tanner (July 13, 1968).
18 Fawn M. Brodie to Jerald and Sandra Tanner (May 10, 1967).
19 See my comments at http://blog.bible.org/bock/comment/reply/149 and my review of Pagels and King’s *Reading Judas* at www.irr.org/pdfs/Huggins-PagelsKing.pdf.
houses. As a result we are already beginning to see new life being breathed into baseless old apologetic theories, many of which have long since been considered thoroughly debunked by scholars familiar with the Mormon scene.

**Book of Abraham Translation**

A good example of this is found in the discussion of the translation of the Book of Abraham (a part of LDS Scripture) in Richard Lyman Bushman’s biography *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*. The problem for the Mormon historian is that Joseph Smith’s Kirtland Egyptian papers relating to the Book of Abraham make no sense. Thus one must develop an explanation that does not make Smith responsible for the Egyptian characters on the manuscript. Bushman states:

> The Abraham texts gave Joseph another chance to let his followers try translating. . . . They seem to have copied lines of Egyptian from the papyrus and worked out stories to go with the text. Or they wrote down an Egyptian character and attempted various renditions. Joseph apparently had translated the first two chapters of [the Book of] Abraham . . . and the would-be translators [Joseph’s scribes] matched up hieroglyphs with some of his English sentences [in manuscript pages included in the Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar].

Bushman then goes on to describe how he imagines that came about: “One can imagine these men staring at the characters, jotting down ideas that occurred to them, hoping for a burning confirmation.” Only that wasn’t the case. The scribes were not independently trying to decipher the meaning of the papyrus or to identify which character matched up with Joseph’s translation. So where did Bushman get the idea that the scribes added the characters after the English text had been written out? His endnote 38 tells us, “Hugh Nibley worked out this explanation,” and then directs us to a Summer 1971 *Brigham Young University Studies* article by Nibley entitled “The Meaning of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers.” It is remarkable to me that a historian of Bushman’s prominence—Gouverneur Morris Professor of History, Emeritus, at Columbia University—would appeal to such a source and at this late date.

One would think that someone who had lived and moved in the LDS world and the larger scholarly world as long as Bushman has would have long since learned that Nibley’s work was mostly desperation apologetics not sound, careful scholarship, which should therefore not normally be appealed to in books of serious scholarship. And no place, perhaps, did Nibley speak with less credibility than in the article relied upon by Bushman. That article in particular is the purest example of damage control deployed by Nibley in an attempt to introduce a note of confusion after a remarkable discovery had demonstrated how Joseph Smith had produced the Book of Abraham, and in doing so discredited Smith’s claim to have translated it miraculously from Egyptian. Bushman as a historian should have known enough to look into the issues himself. By failing to do so, he does his readers and his craft a huge disservice. But here it provides me with an opportunity to tell “the rest of the story.”

What Nibley was really up to, as we said, was trying to call into question the then-recent discovery of how Joseph went about “translating” the Egyptian papyri he bought in 1835 from antiquities dealer Michael Chandler, and which he put forward as, to quote the 1851, first edition of the *Pearl of Great Price*:

> A TRANSLATION OF SOME ANCIENT RECORDS, THAT HAVE FALLEN INTO OUR HANDS FROM THE CATECOMBS OF EGYPT, PURPORTING TO BE THE WRITINGS OF ABRAHAM WHILE HE WAS IN EGYPT, CALLED THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM, WRITTEN BY HIS OWN HAND, UPON PAPYRUS.

This same heading accompanied the first installment of the Book of Abraham in the March 1, 1842, issue of the early Mormon periodical *Times and Seasons* (3:704), and it is still used today in the LDS Church published *Pearl of Great Price*. And for most of their history, Mormons took for granted that the Book of Abraham was just what this heading said it was, that providence had placed some of the writings of the Biblical patriarch into Joseph Smith’s hands and he had translated them by the supernatural gift of God. Many Mormons, in fact, still believe that.

Long before the period and discoveries I am describing here (1960’s~1970’s), it had already become clear to non-Mormons that the Book of Abraham was not really what Joseph Smith claimed it was. On the one hand, the fourth chapter of Abraham, though modified to teach a plurality of Gods, nevertheless still tracked so closely with the wording of the King James Version of the first chapter of Genesis that it would have been difficult for an outsider making the comparison not to conclude that Joseph had derived that portion of the Book of Abraham directly from the King James Bible. Indeed 647 of the 864 words in KJV Genesis 1:1-2:3 are retained in Book of Abraham 4. In addition, many other words are also retained but have simply been pluralized or had their tenses changed. In the form in which this chapter first appeared in the March 15, 1842, issue of *Times and Seasons* there is even evidence that when Joseph changed singular nouns to plural he neglected to change the tenses of their accompanying pronouns. Hence we read:

> And the Gods [plural] organized the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; with the lesser light he [singular] set the stars also. (cf., Abr. 4:16)

In addition, Joseph included, along with the published text of the Book of Abraham, three illustrations (Facsimiles 1, 2 and 3) of drawings he found on the Egyptian Papyri in his possession along with explanations as to what they were supposed to mean, explanations supposedly endorsed by Abraham himself in the text of the Book (see, e.g., Abr. 1:12-14). Even though these drawings were not very good, they were clear enough for Egyptologists in

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22 Bushman, p. 291.
the early 1900’s to state very definitely that they were not what Joseph claimed them to be.23 This in turn led to a story in the December 29, 1912, *New York Times* under the headline:

**Museum Walls Proclaim Fraud of Mormon Prophet**

Sacred Books Claimed to Have Been Given Divinely to the First Prophet Are Shown to Be Taken from Old Egyptian Originals, Their Translation Being a Work of the Imagination—What a Comparison with Metropolitan Museum Treasures Shows.24

After that time informed non-Mormon opinion regarding the Book of Abraham has continued to be in agreement with the assessment expressed in the *New York Times*. Among the Mormons, counter-arguments were proposed by LDS apologists like John Henry Evans, B. H. Roberts, and a certain Dr. Robert C. Webb, who was actually not a doctor, that is to say he didn’t have a Ph.D., and whose real name was James Edward Homans.25 These and other Mormon writers literally stuffed the pages of the 1913 LDS *Improvement Era* with articles trying to rescue the Book of Abraham. Stress was put on the fact that the original papyri that Joseph Smith had actually handled and worked with remained unavailable. And hope was held out that were they to turn up, Joseph’s translation would be vindicated. And so the matter pretty much remained until the mid-1960’s, informed non-Mormons feeling satisfied that the Book of Abraham wasn’t what it claimed to be and (most) faithful Mormons imagining they knew that it was.

**Joseph’s Egyptian Papyri Found**

Many consider the next important moment in the ongoing saga of the Book of Abraham to be the sensational article on the front page of the 1967 LDS Church owned *Deseret News* announcing:

NEW YORK: A collection of papyrus manuscripts, long believed to have been destroyed in the Chicago fire of 1871, was presented to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints here Monday by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.26

The Egyptian papyri in question were none other than at least some of those Joseph Smith had used in translating the Book of Abraham. In evidence of this, the article was accompanied by a photograph of the very papyrus that had served as the basis of Facsimile 1. According to the Book of Abraham text, Abraham himself refers to the illustration: “...that you may have a knowledge of this altar, I will refer you to the representation at the commencement of this record.” (Abr. 1:12)

The transfer of the papyri to the LDS Church, however, fit into a larger picture that began at least two years before in the circle that frequented 424 State Street, the Barber shop of the “State Street Socrates” and Mormon book and document collector extraordinaire, James Wardle.27

After obtaining the Egyptian papyri from Michael Chandler in 1835, Joseph Smith referred on a number of occasions to a document he was developing in connection with the translation of what would eventually appear as the Book of Abraham. In the Manuscript History compiled in 1843 Joseph Smith remarked concerning July 1835: “The remainder of the month, I was continually engaged in translating an alphabet to the Book of Abraham, and arranging a grammar of the Egyptian language as practiced by the ancients.”28 Over the following months of 1835 we find additional references to the Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar in Smith’s journal:


Tuesday, [[November]] 17th Ex[h]ibited some /the Alphabet/ of the ancient records to Mr. Holmes and some others,29

23 For the opinions of Egyptologists in this earlier period see the chapter “Opinions of Scholars upon the Book of Abraham” in Frank S. Spaulding, *Joseph Smith, Jr, As A Translator* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Arrow, 1912) pp. 23-31; reprinted now in *Why Egyptologists Reject the Book of Abraham* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, n.d.).
24 For typescript and PDF scan of article see: http://www.utlm.org/onlineresources/nytimes1912papyrus.htm
Sometime, probably in early 1965, James Wardle managed to obtain a very poor quality microfilm copy of Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar, which he loaned to the Tanners, who in turn took advantage of the technology then available in hopes of improving the images before publishing the document, which they finally did in April 1966.30

Grant Heward’s Crisis of Faith

In the meantime another person became interested in the Alphabet and Grammar in early 1965 who would play a significant role in the story: Grant Stuart Heward, James Wardle’s postman. Heward was a true blue Mormon who looked upon the Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar as an opportunity to prove, by showing that Joseph Smith actually succeeded in translating Egyptian, that Joseph was a true prophet of God. In pursuit of this goal, between delivering letters and packages, Heward commenced studying Egyptian, so that already by late May 1965, he was “beginning to recognize some of the characters on the Hypocephalus1 myself.”32 Hoping to find substantive proof through his study that Joseph was indeed a prophet of God capable of translating unknown languages, Heward’s study led him instead to “nothing more than a sad discouragement.”33 Like so many, Heward had spent years not being able to even consider the towering difficulties that faced his religion: “Have you ever seen anyone refuse to look at the facts while condemning wildly those who would?” Heward at one point recalls, “You should have seen me; I’ve been guilty of just that.” Still somehow his eyes were finally opened so that he was able to see what he had been blinded to before. Were all the things he had heard about Book of Mormon problems, the changing of the prophecies in the Doctrine and Covenants, all lies? “I certainly thought so,” writes Heward, “until I checked and compared for myself. It was so easy to check. I felt bewildered, but I could no longer say they were lies, because it was so easy to find out for myself.”34

But with Heward’s Egyptian study and the efforts of the Tanners and others to come to grips with the significance of Joseph Smith’s Alphabet and Grammar, enough spadework would be undertaken by the time the Tanner edition appeared and was featured in the April 1966 Salt Lake City Messenger (No. 7) to prove that Joseph’s attempts to translate Egyptian were futile. On the one hand a microfilm copy of the document had been sent to I.E.S. Edwards, Keeper of the Egyptian Antiquities Department at the British Museum, who responded in a letter dated December 22, 1965: “The commentary, such as it is, shows that the writer could not possibly have understood Ancient Egyptian. They simply do not deserve serious study.”35 The opinion foreshadowed what other Egyptologists would say about it. But more significant still was that Heward and Tanner had already come to discover that in the process of “translation” Joseph would derive dozens of words out of single Egyptian characters.36

It was at this point in his journey that Heward, listening to some advice from Jerald, took a serious step that would affect his continuing relationship with the LDS Church. Like many Mormons, Heward had been brought up believing that his church was about truth and truthfulness, so he felt sure his fellow Mormons, or at least those among them who were open and honest lovers of the truth, needed to hear about what he had discovered. He came up with the idea of producing leaflets to hand out at the LDS General Conference. These consisted of at least two sheets, one entitled “Why Would Anyone Want to Fight Truth?” and the other “What About Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Grammar?” We know this because Nibley quoted from both of them in the apologetic article cited by Bushman.37 Somewhere in the process Heward asked Jerald if he thought his plan would get him into trouble. Jerald thought it highly unlikely since the church would not want to draw attention to the Book of Abraham problems. So Heward went ahead and distributed his leaflet at LDS General Conference in April 1967. Unfortunately for Heward—or fortunately, depending how you look at it—Jerald had underestimated the reaction of the LDS Church, which moved quickly to strike Heward off the membership rolls. He was tried on June 21, 1967, for the “alleged circulation of literature challenging the validity of the translation of a standard work of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” and excommunicated.38 The charge against him was made by the office of Joseph Fielding Smith, President of the Quorum of the Twelve.39 In a circular letter informing his friends of what happened Heward declares “to oppose truth is to oppose God. To place any authority above truth is idolatry.”40

If the plan was poorly conceived, the leaflets weren’t. On one sheet Heward made a case for truthfulness, asking “Is it right to fight truth to protect what we have long considered sacred?” No, says Heward, rather, “Bring on the truth! It can never cast a shadow on God! Only on a false god! What authority is greater than truth? Our Father in heaven is the Spirit of Truth—for God and Truth are one.”41 On the other sheet Heward spells out the

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30 Still available as Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet & Grammar (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1966)
31 Presumably a reference to Book of Abraham, Facsimile 2.
32 Grant S. Heward to Earnest C. Conrad (May 22, 1965). In the same letter Heward reports: “I have a full copy of Joseph Smith’s Alphabet Character Grammar (typed) with the characters he claimed were equal to the Book of Abraham up to the 20th verse of the 2nd Chapter. His collection appears to have some real Egyptian material that remains untranslated.”
35 Quoted in “Hidden Document Revealed,” Salt Lake City Messenger No. 7 (April 1966) p. 3.
37 Nibley quotes passages identifiable as belonging to these two works, in connection with his reference to how “In 1967 a Mr. Heward passed out Handbills at a general conference” (“The Meaning of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers,” Brigham Young University Studies 11.4 [Summer 1971] p. 374).
38 The wording comes from the summons issued by the Midvale Stake (dated June 14, 1967) and signed by S. A. Hutchings, Lloyd Gardner, and R. Kent King.
39 In a circular letter Heward prepared to explain his excommunication to his friends, he writes that “Both [i.e., the Bishop and Stake President] stated that the charge came from the office of Joseph Fielding Smith.”
40 Letter undated, single page, one side.
problem raised by Joseph translating many words from single Egyptian characters in the Alphabet and Grammar, which he illustrates by saying: “Suppose someone showed you a round black dot on a piece of paper and said that it was writing. That it told the story of ‘Little Red Riding Hood’; the whole story—Little Red Riding Hood, her mother, her grandmother, the wolf, the woodcutter, the forest, the basket of cookies and all—everything! The whole story was there! Could a single round dot carry that much meaning?”

Then to bring this home Heward, on the other side of the sheet, gave the actual Egyptian Alphabet and described how his readers could use it to write their own names. The drawing of an owl represents “m”, a foot stands for “b”, etc. This in order to help them understand that it takes a number of Egyptian symbols to make a word. He also included an example from Smith’s Grammar showing a single Egyptian character, resembling a backwards E\(^2\), from which Joseph allegedly derived the seventysix words that make up Book of Abraham 1:13-14.

13 It was made after the form of a bedstead, such as was had among the Chaldeans, and it stood before the gods of Elkenah, Libnah, Mahmackrah, Korash, and also a god like unto that of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

14 That you may have an understanding of these gods, I have given you the fashion of them in the figures at the beginning, which manner of figures is called by the Chaldeans Rahlemos, which signifies hieroglyphics.

This is one of the key issues that drove Nibley to write the article Bushman cites. He could see the implications of Heward’s leaflets in terms of potentially undermining Joseph Smith’s prophetic claims and so used his trusty method of turning the facts on their heads as a way to try and wiggle out of the implications of what Heward discovered.\(^3\) What really happened Nibley will say is not that Joseph looked at the Egyptian characters and dictated his translation of them, but that his scribes looked at Joseph’s dictated translation and then tried to guess which Egyptian characters should be associated with which part of it. That thesis, besides striking one as extremely counterintuitive, also fails to do justice to the evidence. But before we delve into that, we need first to track our story a little further along.

### Locating the Papyri

When the Metropolitan Museum in New York handed the Joseph Smith Papyri over to the LDS Church on November 27, 1967, the discovery of the papyri was credited to Aziz S. Atiyah, a non-LDS Professor of Middle Eastern studies at the University of Utah, and a Coptic Christian. Atiyah had been visiting the Museum in May of 1966 while pursuing his own research when he came upon a set of papyri which he recognized at once as being related to the facsimiles in the Pearl of Great Price. Over the next year he played a key role in negotiating the turning over of the eleven papyrus fragments to the LDS Church.

In the meantime Jerald and Sandra’s circle caught wind of their existence. In September, 1966, University of Chicago Egyptologist Klaus Baer in a letter to Heward, referred to a “lot of eleven papyri from the Joseph Smith collection that will probably make a reappearance in the not too distant future.”\(^4\) But no one was telling where the papyri were actually located. As it turned out the Metropolitan Museum was asking Egyptologists to keep their location confidential. In a letter Baer wrote to Jerald after the papyri had been made public Baer speculated: “It may very well be that the Metr. Mus. was dropping hints about the papyri to everyone it could think of that had some sort of Mormon connections (come to think of it, I was known to be a friend of Nibley’s) in the hope that they’d do something about it—and we all took the request to keep the matter confidential too seriously.”\(^5\)

In any case prior to the handing over of the documents, while Jerald, Grant and others were trying to discover the location of the papyri, a fortuitous thing happened.

One day while Glen W. Davidson, who had written an article published in the Christian Century in 1965, entitled, “Mormon Missionaries and the Race Question,” was visiting Klaus Baer in his office, Baer showed him photographs of the Joseph Smith Papyri. Davidson noticed that the pictures were each marked with a number, which he took to be catalogue numbers. As he sat talking with Baer he memorized as many of the numbers as he could, and wrote them down after leaving Baer’s office. He then wrote a letter dated October 10, 1967, giving Jerald and Sandra the numbers, and saying that Hugh Nibley had already obtained a set of the photos through the mediation of a “Prof. Araya, Arabic Studies, of the U. of Utah,” which they quickly recognized as probably referring to Atiyah.\(^6\) Grant Heward called Atiyah asking him for help in matching the numbers with the institution, but Atiyah feigned ignorance, suggesting only that “he’d heard the papyri had been burned years ago in the Chicago fire.”\(^7\)

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\(^2\) What looks like a backwards E is actually three wavy lines and is a determinative to indicate water. See http://www.thekeep.org/~kunoichi/kunoichi/themestream/glyphs_2a.html

\(^3\) Nibley actually refers to Heward’s Little Red Riding Hood illustration in “Kirtland Egyptian Papers,” p. 374.

\(^4\) Klaus Baer to Grant S. Heward (Sept 20, 1966).

\(^5\) Klaus Baer to Jerald Tanner (Aug 16, 1968).


\(^7\) Jerald & Sandra Tanner, The Case Against Mormonism 2 (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1968) p. 136. The unidentified Egyptologist on this page is Klaus Baer, and the one referred to as the anonymous source of the numbers, Glen W. Davidson.
Atiyah also sought to put Heward off the scent by suggesting he write to the University of Michigan. The numbers were then passed along to Wesley P. Walters, who, on November 23, 1967, wrote to the Metropolitan. Henry G. Fisher, Curator of Egyptian Art, responded in a letter dated November 28, saying, “It is curious that you should inquire about these fragments just now, for they were turned over to the Mormon Church yesterday.”

Was the timing of the handing over of the Joseph Smith Papyri suddenly moved forward as a result of Atiyah’s finding out that the numbers had been leaked and that Walters had pinpointed their location? The answer is no. In fact the transfer had been planned for several months. In the end the papyri were given to the Church as a gift, but it was a gift “made possible” by an anonymous donation to the Museum.

In fact the whole story of the discovery of the papyri was a bit of a sham. In August of 1968, Egyptologist Klaus Baer wrote to Jerald explaining that

the Metropolit[museum]. Mus[eum]. photos were shown to Nibley in 1965 (at which time he did not know where the originals were). Atiya’s story about “discovering” the papyri is obviously mistaken. He “discovered” them because the Metr. Mus. wanted them “discovered.” It is also pretty clear to me that the Metr. Mus. didn’t want anyone to find out about the papyri before the Mormon Church did, at least not publicly, and that they took their own sweet time about it. To me this is tantamount to suppression….

Nor were even Mormon scholars entirely unaware of the papyri. Noted historian Dale Morgan wrote to Stanley Ivins on June 9, 1953, asking, “Did you ever see the evidence in the files of the curator of Egyptology of the Museum of Fine Arts in N.Y. which might prove that all of the papyri were not destroyed in the Chicago fire?”

One wonders what would the LDS Church have done with the papyri had the Tanners, Heward, and Walters not learned of their existence? Would they have suffered the same fate as so many other important historical treasures that were donated only to be suppressed? That’s hard to say. In any case, the LDS Church published pictures of the papyri in a last minute insert in the February 1968 issue of the LDS Church magazine Improvement Era. The rediscovery of the Book of Abraham Papyri would lead to a number of other problems that cast further doubt on the Book of Abraham and Joseph Smith’s ability to deliver when claiming to be translating from unknown languages. But what is of greatest interest in the developing story we have been telling is how the publication of the papyri enabled Heward to take the next significant step to discover which portion of the collection Joseph actually used as his “source” for the Book of Abraham.

Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar

In the Alphabet and Grammar was a portion of the translation manuscript of the Book of Abraham down to Abr. 2:18. Egyptian characters, along with a few made-up characters, were copied at the left of the margin and then translated to the right. But interspersed among the Egyptian characters were some that seemed to be made up. Why weren’t all of the characters real Egyptian characters? Why had only a few Egyptian ones been falsified? A second mystery in the Alphabet and Grammar was that it contained a copy someone had made of a piece of manuscript material, called a Hypocephalus, that became Book of Abraham Facsimile 2, but with several spaces left blank. This probably indicates that the Hypocephalus was already damaged when it came into Smith’s possession.

A drawing of the Mormon Hypocephalus which appears in Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar.

Book of Abraham, Facsimile No. 2 from the Times and Seasons

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54 For an example of a Hypocephalus, see http://www.ancient-egypt.co.uk/ashmolean/pages/2005-mar-11%20472.htm
The mystery there centered on why the printed copy of Facsimile 2 was complete while this drawing was not? With the publication of the eleven pieces of the Metropolitan Joseph Smith Papyri, Heward was able to discover the key to definitively solve both mysteries by identifying beyond reasonable doubt that one of the eleven papyri had served as the source for both the Egyptian characters Joseph had “translated” to produce the Book of Abraham up through Abr. 2:18, and had provided (with one exception) the material used to fill in the gaps of the defective papyrus that served as the basis for Book of Abraham Facsimile 2. The papyrus in question was the piece known as Joseph Smith Papyrus XI, the small “Sensen” text, a part of the Book of Breathings.55

Joseph Smith Papyrus XI

To the right is a photograph of the original fragment of papyrus from which Joseph Smith was supposed to have translated the Book of Abraham. Below is a photograph of the original manuscript of the Book of Abraham as it appears in Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet & Grammar.

What made it especially clear that this was in fact the papyrus Joseph had used to produce the Book of Abraham was that the characters in the left margin of the translation manuscript in the Alphabet and Grammar were the same characters appearing in the same sequence as they appeared in that manuscript. Not only so, but by preserving in the Book of Abraham translation manuscript not only the characters in the right hand column of Joseph Smith Papyrus XI but also their original sequence, it now became clear that when Joseph encountered holes or gaps in the manuscript he sometimes “restored” the missing characters. This then explained the source of the made-up characters in the margins of the Book of Abraham translation manuscript. One point that would become particularly controversial in this connection was the fact that Joseph had “translated” the curse of Pharaoh as a descendant of Ham “pertaining to the Priesthood” passage in Abraham 1:26, from a gap he had filled in with characters he had made-up.56

The same papyrus provided the solution for the mystery of Book of Abraham Facsimile 2 as well, where Joseph had used characters from lines 2-4 of the same papyrus, Joseph Smith Papyrus XI (again right hand column) to fill in the gaps—with the characters from line 4 written in upside down.57

Article for Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought

One significant part of the restoration of Facsimile 2, the god in the boat in the upper-right of the picture, was copied instead from Joseph Smith Papyrus IV, again from the Metropolitan collection.58

Once Heward had discovered all this, he and Jerald got together and wrote an explanatory article that appeared in the Summer 1968 issue of Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, under the title “The Source of the Book of Abraham Identified,”59 which was very quickly accepted by Egyptologists who had worked with the materials. In a letter to Jerald dated August 16, 1968, Klaus Baer wrote:

Testamonials mean nothing; I can praise Tanner and Heward to the skies or damn them to hell, and it will not make the slightest difference. The only thing that counts is that there is an article in Dialogue 3 No. 2 (Summer 1968), 92-98 [i.e., Grant and Jerald’s article] which seems to be factual and uncontroversial in every detail.60

Baer took for granted the correctness of Heward and Tanner’s piece publicly in an article published in the Autumn 1968 Dialogue, as does Robert K. Ritner, Baer’s student and successor who revisited the issue in 2000.61

55 Richard A. Parker, “The Book of Breathings (Fragment 1, the ‘Sensen’ Text, with restorations from Louvre Papyrus 3284),” Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, 3.2 (Summer 1968) p. 98. Parker was professor of Egyptology at Brown University.
56 Tanners, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? p. 325.
57 Ibid., p. 339.
58 Ibid., p. 341.
60 Klaus Baer to Jerald Tanner (Aug 16, 1968) p. 2.
So now it had become possible not only to say that the characters Joseph “translated” in the Alphabet and Grammar didn’t mean what Joseph said they meant, but also to actually translate them in their original context of the Joseph Smith Papyrus XI (right column) and to see what they really did mean. Following is Heward’s translation:

> ... to the pool of great Khensu... born of Taykhebty, justified likewise. After his arms are put over his heart and wrapped, the Book of Breathing, which was made with writing inside and out, is fastened in royal linen at the left side, in alignment with his heart. This is done at his outer wrapping. If this is made for him, then he will breathe like the souls of the gods for ever and ever.62

Heward is not alone in translating the passage. Indeed it has been frequently retranslated since it was turned over to the LDS Church in 1967, and by both Mormon and non-Mormon scholars, including Richard A. Parker,63 Klaus Baer,64 Dee Jay Nelson,65 Hugh Nibley,66 Robert K. Ritter,67 and Michael D. Rhodes.68 Nor is there any essential dispute about what the passage says. The text simply has no relationship to Joseph Smith’s translation.

A particularly useful feature of the 1968 article by Klaus Baer is that he does in a comprehensive way what Heward had tried to do in his leaflet. Now that it was understood that Joseph had used Papyrus XI as the source of the Book of Abraham, Baer was able to show for each of the characters in the margins how Egyptologists translate them as opposed to what Joseph Smith made of them. This illustrates that the characters paralleled in the Joseph Smith translation manuscript amounted to scarcely more than twenty words when translated into English.69 As Heward and Tanner had pointed out more generally, “The characters of fewer than four lines of the papyrus make up forty-nine verses of the book of Abraham, containing more than two thousand [English] words.”70

One of the difficulties Heward and Tanner’s article caused for the Mormons was that the story of the discovery was trumpeted about all over the place in newspapers. Already an article by the Mormons was that the story of the discovery was trumpeted relates to the Source of the Book of Abraham had bought a bogus “Philosophiae Doctor” degree in 1978 from a degree mill called the Pacific-Northwestern University. The story is told in Jerald and Sandra Tanner Lingle, N. Eldon Tanner sends a copy of the note and Nelson’s business card.” The Tanners discontinued publishing this and other works by Nelson, when it was discovered that he 11 papyrus fragments acquired from the Metropolitan Museum.” Nelson apparently took this note to N. Eldon Tanner, because in a May 18, 1977, response to an inquiry by Wilber Nibley and the Tanners. On June 4, 1968, Nibley gave a note to Nelson, recommending that it would be “wise to permit Prof. Dee J. Nelson to obtain copies of the photographs of the Microfilm Company, 1968) p. 21. Dee Jay Nelson was a colorful Mormon adventurer, lecturer and self-promoter, who knew enough Egyptian to win the confidence of both Hugh Nibley and the Tanners. On June 4, 1968, Nibley gave a note to Nelson, recommending that it would be “wise to permit Prof. Dee J. Nelson to obtain copies of the photographs of the 11 papyrus fragments acquired from the Metropolitan Museum.” Nelson apparently took this note to N. Eldon Tanner, because in a May 18, 1977, response to an inquiry by Wilber Lingle, N. Eldon Tanner sends a copy of the note and Nelson’s business card.” The Tanners discontinued publishing this and other works by Nelson, when it was discovered that he had bought a bogus “Philosophiae Doctor” degree in 1978 from a degree mill called the Pacific-Northwestern University. The story is told in Jerald and Sandra Tanner.

In 1970 Richard P. Howard, historian for the RLDS Church, also affirmed the conclusions of Heward and Tanner in the pilot issue of Courage: A Journal of History, Thought and Action:

> Since the publication in 1966 of the Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar of Joseph Smith and the discovery the next year of the original papyri with which Joseph Smith worked, there is no need for presumption any longer. It has been determined that the Egyptian hieratic symbols appearing in the first four lines of one of the papyri fragments were the very ones copied into the left hand column of the Book of Abraham text pages of the Joseph Smith Alphabet and Grammar.72

Wallace Turner used Richard Howard’s article as a springboard for yet another article published May 3, 1970, this time entitled “Mormons’ Book of Abraham Called a Product of Imagination.”73

Into this situation, where a new consensus had arisen based on sound reasoning from the evidence, comes Nibley trying to cast doubt on it all in the apologetics article Bushman would later rely on for his arguments in Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling.

Nibley’s article is a long one (49 pages) about which much could be said, but we will focus particularly on his attempt to explain away the problem discovered by Heward relating to the Book of Abraham manuscript pages in the Alphabet and Grammar. Nibley asserted that the Egyptian characters were added after the translation was done rather than written down first to serve as the basis of translation, which Nibley claimed is obvious by examining the manuscript itself. Most of his arguments in this connection are made in a single paragraph whose parts we will deal with separately. In the first place Nibley says:

> ... the margins of the English text are remarkably straight and neat, and it is at once apparent that the hieratic symbols must adapt themselves to those margins, and not the other way around. Thus on the last page of B. of A. Ms. #2 [now Ms. 1a] W. W. Phelps has kept a neat margin but one more than twice as wide as necessary to accommodate the Egyptian characters; this waste of space and paper would have been avoided had he been adapting his margin to the hieratic signs.74


63 Richard A. Parker, “The Book of Breathing (Fragment 1, the ‘Sensent Text, With Restractions from Louvre Papyrus 3284),” p. 98.


65 Dee Jay Nelson, The Joseph Smith Papyri, Part 2: Additional Translations and a Supplemental Survey of the Ta-shert-Min, Hor and Amen-Terp Papyri (Salt Lake City, Modern Microfilm Company, 1968) p. 21. Dee Jay Nelson was a colorful Mormon adventurer, lecturer and self-promoter, who knew enough Egyptian to win the confidence of both Hugh Nibley and the Tanners. On June 4, 1968, Nibley gave a note to Nelson, recommending that it would be “wise to permit Prof. Dee J. Nelson to obtain copies of the photographs of the 11 papyrus fragments acquired from the Metropolitan Museum.” Nelson apparently took this note to N. Eldon Tanner, because in a May 18, 1977, response to an inquiry by Wilber Lingle, N. Eldon Tanner sends a copy of the note and Nelson’s business card.” The Tanners discontinued publishing this and other works by Nelson, when it was discovered that he had bought a bogus “Philosophiae Doctor” degree in 1978 from a degree mill called the Pacific-Northwestern University. The story is told in Jerald and Sandra Tanner.


71 Wallace Turner, “Papyri Spur Mormon Debate Over Basis for Discrimination Against Negroes,” The New York Times (Mon, July 15, 1968) p. 11; an article that appeared in other newspapers around the country as well.


In reality the margin on the page Nibley alludes to is anything but straight. In fact the English begins close in to the left side of the top of the paper, then bows to the right to make room for the first set of Egyptian characters. The margin then continues its curve even further for the next several paragraphs, only to cut back in close to the left side of the page again. In the process it gives one set of characters a wide birth. But far from the case that the “hieratic symbols must adapt themselves to those margins,” as Nibley asserts, the margin and English text have clearly adapted themselves to the previously present “hieratic symbols.” Nibley, in fact, asserts the opposite of what the evidence suggests. Nibley goes on to assert that

on the last three pages of Ms. #1 [now Ms. 2] some Egyptian characters are squeezed right off the page by a margin that is not wide enough for them, and one jumps over the margin and intrudes a whole inch on the space of the English text. Thus the margins always accommodate the English text, but not the Egyptian symbols. Which can only mean that the English of the Book of Abraham was here copied down before the Egyptian signs were added.76

But again that is simply not true.

An important article that served as a corrective to Nibley’s writings on the Book of Abraham was Edward Ashment’s 1990 essay “Reducing Dissonance: The Book of Abraham as a Case Study,” which was out in plenty of time to have served as a warning for Bushman to avoid treating Nibley’s apologetics as credible historical reflection. Bushman lists scholarly articles and books that would have provided a more rounded understanding, but in this case at least he did not seem willing to interact enough with them to gain a more nuanced and accurate picture of what Joseph was doing. In concluding his article Nibley makes three assertions that are false and that were known to be false even then among those who grasped the nature of the questions and the materials, and even more so now after more than three decades of additional research:

(1) the Book of Abraham was not derived from the “Alphabet” writings, which only got as far as Beta—the second letter; (2) it was not derived from or by means of the “Grammar,” which never got beyond the first page and a half; (3) it was not translated from the first two lines of the Joseph Smith Papyrus No. XI—the ["] Book of Breathings.77

Earlier in the article Nibley had gone as far as to say that “All the Grammar and Alphabet projects…aborted dismally; none of them could ever have been used even as an imaginary basis for constructing the story of Abraham.” But again this is quite easily shown to be false. The book published by the Tanners in 1966 under the title Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet & Grammar contains both the Alphabet and Grammar along with two of four Book of Abraham translation manuscripts, plus some additional material. They simply printed everything that was on the microfilm Wardle had given them.

The Alphabet and Grammar is covered in the first 34 pages of the Tanner edition, which text is derived from a book in the LDS Archives with the words “Egyptian Alphabet” printed on its spine. That work is divided into five sections called “degrees.” That title is also repeated at the beginning of each of the first four degrees. The title varies a bit at the beginning of the fifth degree, reading instead, “Grammar & Alphabet of the Egyptian Language.” All the degrees are related to each other in that they all deal with developing the translation of the same characters.

One notes there are differences between the various “translations,” and that the translation expands as it moves through the degrees by a process of combining earlier translations and of additional supplementation. The Book of Abraham translation manuscripts include almost everything that had appeared before in the Grammar, and then adds additional items. It becomes clear once again that Nibley was wrong in asserting that the Grammar and Alphabet contributed nothing to the development of the story of the Book of Abraham. Clearly the former served as the foundation of the latter.

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75 Formerly Book of Abraham Ms. 2, now also 1a; See the picture of that page in Nibley, “Kirtland Egyptian Papers,” p. 381. Also more clearly in page marked 4 M in Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet & Grammar, p. 4 M (photo of manuscript page).


77 Ibid., p. 398.

78 Ibid., p. 365.
Tanners Pursue Papyri Question

When Jerald and Sandra published their 1964 edition of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? they did not include any research on the Book of Abraham issue, but with the discovery of the Alphabet and Grammar and the original papyri, that was about to change. The February 1968 issue of the Tanners’ newsletter carried the heading, “The Mormon Papyri Question.” Thus began years of research on the Book of Abraham, the papyri and the facsimiles to determine their relationship and meaning.

After studying the microfilm of the Alphabet and Grammar and the Joseph Smith papyri Jerald felt the need to synthesize the research. In 1972 the Tanners published one of the most comprehensive studies of the Book of Abraham in their new edition of Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? Seventy-five pages were dedicated to the Book of Abraham and Smith’s papyri, placing the facsimiles into the larger picture of Egyptian religious texts, as well as demonstrating the alterations made to the facsimiles and problems with Smith’s interpretations and supposed translation of the papyri.

In examining the Book of Abraham issue, one must keep in mind that Egyptian hieroglyphics can be translated today almost as easily as Greek. All non-Mormon Egyptologists who have examined the issue find nothing in Joseph Smith’s Book of Abraham or Alphabet and Grammar that relates in the smallest degree to the papyri he claimed to be translating. As Klaus Baer wrote on August 13, 1968, to Jerald:

You may find it odd that an Egyptologist just doesn’t get worked up about the Egyptological rubbish that Joseph Smith produced. Partly because we’re all pretty well inured to assorted nuts with strange ideas about Egypt.

Enter Mark Hofmann

As a result of Jerald’s meticulousness, it fell to him through the years to spend a great deal of time exposing fraud and countering erroneous statements made by or about Mormons. As we have already seen it was Jerald who made the definitive argument against the authenticity of the Cowdery Defence. It was also Jerald who first raised doubt about the Mark Hofmann forgeries, which quickly turned into the Mark Hofmann murders in 1985.79

Hofmann, a young returned LDS missionary who in the early 1980’s went into the rare book and document business, claimed to have found long misplaced letters and documents related to the beginnings of Mormonism. The most problematic document among the Hofmann finds was the so-called White Salamander Letter which was supposed to have been written on Oct. 23, 1830, by Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris to early Mormon leader W. W. Phelps. Instead of an angel appearing to Joseph Smith, Harris’ letter had supposedly described the scene of the discovery of the Book of Mormon plates as follows:80

. . . [Joseph Smith] found it [the plates] 4 years ago with my stone but only got it because of the enchantment the old spirit come to me 3 times in the same dream & says dig up the gold but when I take it up the next morning the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander in the bottom of the hole & struck me 3 times & held the treasure & would not let me have it . . .

While the Salamander Letter was generally being accepted as authentic by historians, Jerald had been bothered by its similarities to a letter by W. W. Phelps which was published in the 1834 expose Mormonism Unvailed by E. D. Howe.81 Another similarity could be seen in the Dec. 11, 1833, affidavit of Willard Chase where he recounted being told by Joseph Smith Sr. in June 1827 how Joseph Jr.,

again opened the box, and in it saw the book, and attempted to take it out, but was hindered. He saw in the box something like a toad, which soon assumed the appearance of a man, and struck him on the side of his head.82

At one point in his Testimony Jerald tells how he felt after discovering literary parallels to Hofmann’s Salamander Letter that suggested it might be a forgery:

Since I knew that it was very unlikely that anyone else would spot these parallels and realize their significance, there was some temptation to keep the matter to myself. I knew, however, that God knew what I had seen, and I began to feel that He had shown me these unpleasant facts to warn me against endorsing the letter. Furthermore, I knew that I would never be satisfied if my case against Mormonism was based on fraudulent material.83

Jerald published some of his reasons for doubting the letter in “Moroni or Salamander?” his March 1984 Salt Lake City Messenger, which was expanded five months later in his publication The Money-Digging Letters: A Preliminary Report.84 Sandra, still hoping the letter was authentic, held back, thus causing them to issue their one and only split editorial in their June 1985 newsletter.

So here was Hofmann forging documents that were explicitly embarrassing to the LDS Church, and yet the Church slipped smoothly into damage-control mode. In no time at all it was assuring its faithful that not only was there nothing to be embarrassed over, but that indeed the documents when viewed in the right light might even be faith promoting.

For example, on August 27, 1984, the Salt Lake Tribune printed the remarks of LDS Church spokesman, Jerry Cahill, assuring the faithful that the find “poses no threat to what is

80 “‘Salamandergate’ Mormon Church Caught in Magic Cover-up,” Salt Lake City Messenger No. 57 (June 1985) pp. 5-6.
81 E.[ber]. D. Howe, Mormonism Unvailed: Or a Faithful Account of that Singular Imposition and Delusion, From its Rise to the Present Time (Painesville, Ohio: by the author, 1834) pp. 273-274.
82 Affidavit of Willard Chase in E.[ber]. D. Howe, Mormonism Unvailed, p. 242.
83 Jerald Tanner’s Testimony, (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1987) p. 28.
already known about the prophet or beginning of the Church.”
In September the LDS Church News Section of the Deseret News had an article about the Salamander letter with an even more encouraging headline, “Harris Letter Could Be Further Witness.”
A year later Gordon B. Hinckley wrote in the Ensign that the Salamander Letter and one other that was supposed to be written in the hand of Joseph Smith, “have no real relevancy to the question of the authenticity of the Church or of the divine origin of the Book of Mormon.”
In reality, of course, what Hinckley asserted was not true since the letter written by Harris reflected on the very story of how the golden plates were supposed to have been found. To this day Martin Harris is cited as a credible witness to the supernatural original of the Book of Mormon. The excuse-making reached its all time low in a talk given on August 16, 1985, by Apostle Dallin Oaks:

All of the scores of media stories on that subject apparently assume that the author of that letter [Martin Harris] used the word “salamander” in the modern sense of a “tailed amphibian.”

One wonders why so many writers neglected to reveal to their readers that there is another meaning of “salamander,” which may even have been the primary meaning in this context in the 1820s. . . . That meaning . . . is “a mythical being thought to be able to live in fire.” . . .

A being that is able to live in fire is a good approximation of the description Joseph Smith gave of the Angel Moroni: . . . the use of the words white salamander and old spirit seem understandable.

Another Mormon, Rhett S. James, was even quoted in the LDS Church News as claiming that “By the time of Martin Harris, the word salamander also meant angel.” The LDS Church really had come to a place where they felt confident in terms of being able to dismiss any troublesome fact that might ever appear, with a simple assertion of its unimportance (as with Hinckley) or by distorting it and giving it a weird and unprecedented meaning (as with Oaks). And obviously, those who didn’t like the LDS Church would have been generally inclined to accept the embarrassing documents as authentic. One can only imagine the amusement that Hofmann must have derived from reading such excuses around the globe will be disappointed or offended by what is written.” (Robert V. Remini, Joseph Smith [Penguin Life Series; A Lipper/Viking Book, 2002] xiii).

History or Courtesy?

Another sensibility that Mormons have been able to exploit in the larger world of historical publishing relates to historical distortion in the name of courtesy. Is it acceptable today for scholars to leave relevant evidence out of consideration when writing up their research? Indeed it is. During a session at the 2002 Sunstone Symposium I asked non-Mormon historian Robert V. Remini, author of the Penguin Life Series biography of Joseph Smith, how, as a historian, he would treat a figure who had no contemporary followers, as for example the nineteenth-century free-love communist John Humphrey Noyes, differently than he treated Joseph Smith, who of course still does have followers. His answer was that he would never write anything that would offend Smith’s present day followers. So when he says in the preface of his biography—“As a historian I have tried to be as objective as possible in narrating his life and work”—the words “as possible” must apparently be taken to include favoring conclusions that would not offend modern Mormons, even when they happen to be historically indefensible, as for example when he adopts uncritically 1820 as the date of the First Vision.

Remini’s attitude is not unique. It is very much the current sensibility and temperament among historians to write sympathetically about historical religious figures, giving them the benefit of the doubt wherever possible. This subject came up at the 2001 American Association of Religion Meeting in Denver during an author meets critic session on Grant Wacker’s book Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture. Mention was made of a prominent early Pentecostal leader who had a tendency to magnify his reputation with grand stories about his spiritual exploits that often, when investigated, turned out not to be true. The question was naturally raised in light of this how the historian, when trying to produce sympathetic historical portraits of such leaders, could do so and yet avoid the appearance of perpetuating their false stories. Is there ever a time for the historian to say, “Look, what we have here is a religious charlatan, a liar, a manipulative scoundrel who uses his spiritual sway over people to get what he wants.”

88 Quoted in Tanners, Tracking the White Salamander, pp. 22-23.
90 Tanner, “LDS Documents & Murder,” Salt Lake City Messenger No. 59 (January 1986)
91 Tanners, Tracking the White Salamander, p. 186.
92 The session, with my question and Remini’s answer was recorded: “The Problem for a Non-Mormon Historian in Writing a Biography of Joseph Smith” Sunstone Symposium (Saturday, Aug. 10, 2002) 2:15-3:15 PM. At the end of his Preface to his biography Remini similarly expresses the hope that “neither he [Joseph Smith] nor the Saints at BYU and around the globe will be disappointed or offended by what is written.” (Robert V. Remini, Joseph Smith [Penguin Life Series; A Lipper/Viking Book, 2002] xiii).
93 Remini, Joseph Smith, p. 39.
If Remini is willing to grant the possible existence of religious charlatans he could not, if he stuck to his own stated principles, ever describe them as such if it happened that they had present day disciples. He would simply have to dignify and validate their bad behavior by calling it something else. On this logic the only persons historians can identify as religious charlatans are those who have no followers today. In reality, of course, whether a religious charlatan has any followers or not speaks merely to his effectiveness and not to his being or not being what he claims. What Remini’s principle amounts to is the bracketing out of certain negative evidence in order to present a more congenial portrait of Joseph Smith than is justified. Is it really any wonder, then, that Benson Bobrick, in reviewing Remini’s biography for the New York Times, describes it as “a text that . . . follows its Mormon guides so closely as to resemble an official life.”94

Conclusion

The long and short of this is that current historians do feel the pressure at times to knowingly write what is false or misleading in order to flatter their readers or publishers. As a Christian historian, Jerald no doubt could feel this pressure as well, but he had another point of reference. The Bible both warns against man pleasing, and provides a category that modern historical study finds hard to get a handle on: the false prophet.

Scholars writing on religion in today’s atmosphere find it most useful to adopt a sort of agnosticism about religious truth. Who is to say if any religion is true or, for that matter, false? If someone happens to find any particular religion of choice in some sense helpful in getting them through the passion play of life, well then who can criticize it? Or if you happen to find the religious symbols you grew up with more meaningful than I find the ones I grew up with, then all is well and good. How can anybody say one set of religious symbols and traditions are better than another? Mormons have done their best to exploit this sensibility, publishing what I personally would regard as their Mormon guides so closely as to resemble an official life.

Excerpts from Letters and Emails

March 2008: Although I joined the Mormon cult in January 2008 from a faithful Bible-believing church, I have recently started to repent of that mistake and return to Christ and His true Church. I have found the articles of UTLM very helpful from removing my name from the cult’s rolls to what the Bible says about God (and against Mormonism).

March 2008: I have started warning my friends about what I thought was the true Church. I’m praying that the Lord forgives me for those people that got converted to the Mormon church because I persuaded them. It is also my prayer that they see the light and walk away from the darkness.

March 2008: I was a convert to LDS church and I am a returned missionary (served in Salt Lake City area). . . . but just recently I started to study Mormon history in detail. Now my feelings about the Church and its teachings are founded on facts, thanks to you and other people that are revealing things that Church is trying to hide.

March 2008: If this [LDS] is not the true church then it is not upon the earth today. Because it is the only church that makes doctrinal sense. I have read a lot on your website and can only conclude that you need to really examine your inner selves and ask yourself why you spend your time and throw so much effort into this message with a tone of hate.

March 2008: I would like to know how you would survive financially had you not started this crusade against the LDS Church. Also, what makes you an expert? I have read many books exposing you and many other anti-Mormons for the backhanded and deceitful ways you do things.

April 2008: I want you to know how much I appreciate the efforts and work you and Jerald have done over the years. It took me along time to be able to appreciate your work as your names were enough to disqualify anything you put out for many years. Once I was able to get over the immediate disqualification (without even looking/considering) I have found a great amount of information and resources through your efforts. I especially appreciate how factual you attempt to be.

May 2008: My wife, . . . and I were in the store Wed. We talked about our exit [from the LDS Church]. . . . Without your website and all the work you guys have done, we may never have found the truth in Jesus Christ.

May 2008: I want to thank you so much. i ordered a copy of mormonism shadow or reality and got it today. wow im blowed away, everything and so much more than i expected. god bless you and your staff.

June 2008: There are so much information that was incorrect in the FAQ that it was offensive. Your group better go relearn the Mormon’s church history and the Mormon’s believes. It was so bad I couldn’t finish reading question number 7 and I started at number one.

June 2008: I have really enjoyed your website, it has brought a ray of sunshine to me, . . . I have been a Mormon for all my life I served a mission and got married in the temple. I am on the verge of giving it all up. I really do not believe in it anymore. . . .

(Letters continued on page 22)

An Examination of Joseph Smith’s “Explanation” of Facsimile #2 in the Book of Abraham

In 1835 Michael H. Chandler arrived in Kirtland, Ohio. In his horse-drawn wagon he carried four Egyptian mummies. Along with the mummies were included displays of the papyri rolls found on the mummies themselves. Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet, was fascinated by Chandler’s exhibit, so much so that his fledgling Church purchased the entire display from Chandler for a large sum of money: $2,400.00. Joseph Smith said:

Soon after this, some of the Saints at Kirtland purchased the mummies and papyrus . . . and with W. W. Phelps and Oliver Cowdery as scribes, commenced the translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt, etc. . . . (Documentary History of the Church, 2:236, emphasis added).

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It should be remembered that at this time the study of Egyptian was, on a scholarly level, in its infancy. Smith was claiming to be able to translate what was, for all practical purposes, an unknown language. Of course, he had claimed this same ability in translating the Book of Mormon, which was said to have been written in “Reformed Egyptian.” That Smith was indeed claiming to translate in the normal sense of the term can be seen from his own words:

The remainder of this month, I was continually engaged in translating an alphabet to the Book of Abraham, and arranging a grammar of the Egyptian language as practiced by the ancients (DHC 2:238).

Over the next nine years Smith continued to work on his translation of the Book of Abraham. The work was included in the Pearl of Great Price when it was accepted as Scripture in 1880.

The Book of Abraham is unique amongst the books of LDS Scripture: it is the only book that contains illustrations in the form of three “Facsimiles,” each with an “Explanation” provided by Joseph Smith. Since the actual papyri were thought lost (some of the original papyri were found in 1967 and turned over to the LDS Church), the “Facsimiles” provided the only means of testing Joseph Smith’s translation, and his understanding of the documents that were before him.

In this small tract we cannot discuss all the evidence that now exists regarding the Book of Abraham, the papyri that have been found, and the various explanations put forward by defenders of Joseph Smith. Instead, we wish to look at just one aspect of the Book of Abraham, Facsimile 2 (found on the front of this tract), and even more specifically, one section of this drawing and what it really means.

Here we reproduce one section of Facsimile 2 from the Pearl of Great Price, marked and explained by Joseph Smith as figure 7:

Represents God sitting upon his throne, revealing through the heavens the grand Key-words of the Priesthood; as, also, the sign of the Holy Ghost unto Abraham, in the form of a dove.

Is this indeed a representation of the one true God sitting upon His throne revealing the grand Key-words of the priesthood? Was Joseph Smith a man ahead of his time, able to decipher Egyptian writings in a time when scholarship was just starting to get a clue on the topic?

The object that Joseph Smith included in the Book of Abraham is, in reality, a “hypocephalus,” a common item of Egyptian funeral literature (all of the facsimiles in the Book of Abraham are drawn from common Egyptian funerary documents). It was placed under the person’s head, and was to aid them in making the journey through the netherworld by bathing their bodies in light. Many examples of this kind of hypocephalus are to be found. One of the many pagan gods pictured in this hypocephalus is shown above as it appears in the current edition of the LDS Scriptures. Egyptologists tell us that this is the god “Min.” Min is an “ithyphallic god,” that is, a sexually aroused male deity, as the picture clearly indicates. Min is the god of the procreative forces of nature. Joseph Smith told us that the Egyptian god Min was in point of fact the one true God.

And what is Min doing? Joseph tells us that he is revealing the grand Key-words of the priesthood, with the sign of the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove before him. In
reality, he is holding up the “divine flail” in one hand and
is being approached by the figure Joseph Smith identified
as the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove. In point of fact,
Joseph’s hypocephalus was damaged at the border so
that only the head of the “dove” was visible. So, Joseph had to
restore the picture. Did he do so correctly? No, he did not. The
figure to the right provides us with the proper scene from
another hypocephalus (Leyden AMS 62). The being that is approaching Min is not the Holy
Ghost in the form of a dove; it is yet another ithyphallic
figure, specifically, a serpent, probably the Egyptian God
Nehebka, presenting to Min the wedjat-eye, the symbol
of good gifts. The single LDS scholar who has written the
most on the Book of Abraham, Dr. Hugh Nibley, has written
of Min:

As the supreme sex symbol of gods and men, Min behaves with shocking promiscuity, which is hardly relieved
by its ritual nature...His sacred plants were aphrodisiacal...
and he is everywhere represented as indulging in incestuous
relationships with those of his immediate family; he had the
most numerous and varied religious entourage of all the
gods, consisting mostly of his huge harem...The hymns, or
rather chanting of his worshippers were accompanied with
lewd dancing and carousing...to the exciting stimulus of a

It must be remembered that Joseph Smith said that this
figure represented God sitting on His throne! Incredible as
it may seem, intelligent, well-read LDS are fully aware of
the true nature of the hypocephalus, including the presence
of Min and Nehebka (the vast majority of LDS, however,
are not). How do they explain this? Mormon Egyptologist
Michael Dennis Rhoades said,

Joseph Smith mentions here the Holy Ghost in the
form of a dove and God ‘revealing through the heavens
the grand key-words of the priesthood.’ The procreative
forces, receiving unusual accentuation throughout the
representation, may stand for many divine generative
powers, not least of which might be conjoined with blessing
of the Priesthood in one’s posterity eternally (BYU Studies,

In other words, since the God of Mormonism is sexually
active, begetting children in the spirit-world (indeed, God’s
power is often described by Mormons as being made of
the power of the priesthood and the power of procreation),
and Min is obviously sexually active as well, this then is
the “connection.”

We believe that Joseph Smith was utterly ignorant
of what was represented in the Egyptian papyri that lay
before him. Incapable of translating the figures, he made
things up as he went along, claiming God’s direction and
inspiration as his guide. In the process he demonstrated
his own inability as a “prophet, seer and revelator,” for
he grossly misidentified each of the items not only in this
Facsimile, but in the other two as well.

Joseph Smith’s defenders today seek to find any
connection whatsoever between LDS belief and Egyptian
religion, even to the point of seeing in the sexually aroused
Min a picture of God upon His throne. But to grasp at this
straw is to ignore the Biblical testimony to the one true
God. Isaiah saw God upon His throne in Isaiah 6:1-10, but
instead of an incestuous god, surrounded by lewd dancing
girls, the angels surrounded His throne and cried, “Holy,
holy, holy.” God describes the gods of Egypt as “idols” that
tremble before him (Isaiah 9:1); these false gods will literally
be captured by God in His wrath (Jeremiah 43:12). God
reveals the worship of these gods to be an abomination
that brings His wrath (Jeremiah 44:8), and mentions one
Egyptian god by name in speaking of the punishment he will
bring against Egypt (Jeremiah 46:25). Those who worship
such gods are “defiled” in God’s sight (Ezekiel 20:7-8). The
Bible has nothing but contempt for the gods of Egypt, which
would include the abominable figure of Min, identified by
Joseph Smith as his God.

We will gladly admit that there is a similarity between
the pagan god Min and the Mormon doctrine of God
developed in the later years of Joseph Smith’s life. What
is equally clear is that the God of the Bible is not similar to
either Min, nor the LDS God. As God Himself said:

“To whom will you compare me?”

Isaiah 40:25

Alpha and Omega Ministries
http://www.aomin.org

Appeal Rejected

Unfortunately on May 29, 2008, the 10th U.S. Circuit Court
of Appeals affirmed the lower district court’s ruling against our
trademark lawsuit concerning the domain name registration and
use of our business and personal names. For more information see
Salt Lake City Messenger Nos. 104 and 108. The 10th Circuit’s
ruling can be read on our web site.

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www.upfc.org
This year saw the long-awaited publication of the new LDS Church sponsored *Massacre at Mountain Meadows: An American Tragedy*, by three Mormon historians, Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley and Glen M. Leonard. The book appeared after many hopes and great expectations, and many years of delay, so that as I began reading through its slim 231 pages of actual narrative, bristling with detail of only peripheral importance to the story, the old adage sprung uninvited to my mind: “The mountain hath labored and then brought forth a mouse.” Desiderius Erasmus, the great sixteenth-century humanist scholar, describes that adage as:

A proverbial iambic line, customarily used of boastful characters who are all display, and rouse wonderful expectations by their manifest promises and the magisterial air of their expression and costume, but when it comes to the point they contribute mere rubbish.1

High hopes were raised in 2002 for the new book after the appearance of Will Bagley’s much awaited *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* from the University of Oklahoma Press. In the October 12, 2002, *New York Times*,2 the Church-sponsored book was presented as if it would provide a definitive answer to Bagley as well as the then-forthcoming *American Massacre: The Tragedy at Mountain Meadows, September 1857* by Sally Denton. Both books had pointed to Brigham Young as the guilty party behind that massacre, but as the article went on to say, “That conclusion is vigorously disputed by three LDS Church historians, who vow their own history of the massacre, to be published by Oxford University Press in 2004, will exonerate Young.”

Earlier on May 18, 2002, an article appeared in the *Salt Lake Tribune* entitled “Church to Produce Book on Massacre: Authors Vow to Deliver Unbiased View of Killings.”3 In it one of the authors, Richard E. Turley, was quoted as saying:

> If women can write women’s history and Jews can write Jewish history, then we should be able to write fair accurate Mormon history . . . we are not concerned about protecting the image of the church’s image. The events are far enough away, its time to let the chips fall where they may.4

But Turley’s analogy to women and Jews rings hollow, because he writes as a functionary of an authoritarian organization with a long history of suppression and censoring those who do not make sure their history turns out “right.” When I recently quoted the phrase about the three historians letting the chips fall where they will, a dubious listener said yes, but in quotations: “Letting the chips fall where ‘they’ will,” namely, where the church authorities will them to fall. There are simply too many excommunicated Mormon historians around to buy into Turley’s attempt to liken himself to women and Jews. Fawn Brodie, LaMar Petersen, Lavina Fielding Anderson, Stan Larson, D. Michael Quinn, all Mormon historians, were excommunicated. Indeed one can say that the best Mormon history, the most accurate Mormon history, is written by those who are on the outs with the LDS Church or on its margins. Now to be sure some issues are less controversial than others, leaving plenty of room for Mormons to write good credible history so long as it is in subjects where there is no potential of the LDS Church’s image being tarnished. The Mountain Meadows massacre is not one of those subjects.

**Arrington Papers**

But for me the real test of the credibility of Turley’s claims was his key role in the LDS Church’s move in 2001 to seize the papers of one time LDS Church historian Leonard Arrington from the archives of the public institution to which Arrington had deeded them.

Arrington died in 1999 and 658 boxes of the papers he had given to Utah State University became open to the public on October 11, 2001. Four days later a band of eight employees arrived from the LDS Church to rifle through the collection. After Kermit Hall, President of Utah State University refused to turn over a large portion of the Arrington papers to the LDS Church, Richard Turley arrived with a lawyer to threaten him with legal action. Hall described the behavior of Turley and the other LDS Church historians involved as “very aggressive” and full of “bluff, bluster, threats, and near total disdain for the academic mission of the university.”4 Not only did the LDS historians reflect total disdain toward the mission of the university, but also toward the will of Arrington himself, who wanted his diary to remain sealed until several years in the future. In a session at the 2002 Sunstone Symposium, however, Stan Larson, archivist at the University of Utah’s Marriot Library, revealed that the historians involved in this debacle had ignored Arrington’s wishes and plundered the diary for information as to what was in his papers.5

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4 Peggy Fletcher Stack and Kirsten Stewart, “USU Gives LDS Church Some of Historian’s Papers,” *Salt Lake Tribune* (Nov. 25, 2001) p. A15. I rely on this article as the basis of my description.
5 Stan Larson spoke on a panel session entitled, “Reflections on Who Owns The People’s History: The Controversy over the Leonard Arrington Collection,” (Sat., Aug. 10, 2002). More recently another prominent Mormon historian has confirmed that this was the case.
In any case having started out claiming ownership of up to 60% of the Arrington collection, Turley and the LDS Church finally walked away with only three items: (1) Book of Anointings, (2) Heber C. Kimball’s diary, and (3) copies of the minutes of the LDS Church’s Council of Twelve allegedly covering meetings between 1877 and 1950. One may perhaps assume that it was only the third item that interested the LDS Church, and that the other two items were thrown in to give verisimilitude to their claim of only being concerned to keep sacred matters secret. In fact, however, the Kimball diary had already been published, and the Book of Anointings was already available in the University of Utah Marriott Library.

So then what was it that made the LDS Church so desperate to have the copies of the Council of Twelve Meetings? That was not revealed, at least not intentionally. Yet it was revealed that “Arrington’s copies of some minutes of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles were for use in ‘an internal private study of a particular issue for the first Presidency.’”

If that is correct, then we know what the subject of the internal study was probably about—the Mountain Meadows massacre. The reason we know this is something Arrington himself said in his 1998 autobiography Adventures of a Church Historian. “In August,” Arrington wrote, “I spent a weekend doing a background study on John D. Lee and the Mountain Meadows massacre for the First Presidency, alternately frustrated because they wanted the report in four days and flattered, pleased, honored, and delighted that they had asked me to prepare it. It was the first—and only—time I received a direct request to be a resource to the First Presidency.” Now to be sure, we can scarcely be expected to believe anything that Turley had to say about writing “fair accurate Mormon history,” after his participation in the Arrington Papers scandal. How likely is it that a person whorushes to suppress documents one minute will be entirely open and honest about them in the next?

Faith-Promoting Historians

From the beginning it was clear that a book on the Mountain Meadows massacre written by historians as beholden to the LDS Church as the three authors, could not be trusted no matter who published it. Why would Oxford want to publish the work of historians who, while claiming to cherish the ideal of historical impartiality, can be found in the next instance running around with lawyers threatening people seeking to defend that very same ideal?

But to return to the quotation from Erasmus cited earlier, is the Massacre at Mountain Meadows “mere rubbish?” I haven’t decided. Certainly some of it is, as to how much: Tempus omnia relevant! What is clearly rubbish, and that of the most conspicuous kind, are the blurbs of Robert V. Remini and Richard L. Bushman on the dust jacket. Remini speaks of the account as “insightful and balanced.” But would Remini be familiar enough with the story of the event to make that kind of evaluation, since apart from very small portions, it is clearly neither? Bushman calls the book “the best researched, most complete, and most even-handed account of Mountain Meadows incident we are likely to have for a long time.” Now to be sure it is generally taken for granted that all blur writers are liars and flatterers, but even among such a company, Bushman is telling a whopper. The entire book is told with a strong Us vs. Them mentality. Mormon violence and abusing language are not highlighted while the same on the part of non-Mormon is highlighted. Despite the occasional comment with regard to the massacred wagon train not deserving what they got, one is still often left with the feeling that they got what other non-Mormons deserved.

The frame of the story is set up in such a way as to give a false impression of the entire event and to evade the most pressing question of all, why were the Mormons so violent in 1857. It is not that the authors don’t have an answer to the question, only that the answer is entirely artificial, and appears to be one they were determined to have no matter what the evidence was. Thus when they finally propose the supposed spark that set the event in motion—that the Cedar City residents were so frightened by the idle threats made by some in the wagon train—they decided after the train left town to go rouse the Indians and attack it. The suggestion is so patently implausible that even the authors seem to feel that they have to try and prop it up with an appeal to violence theory: “The final spark that ignites violence may be small but seem large in the eyes of the perpetrators.” The falsification of the story by framing becomes clear at the outset. The reader is given the impression that the whole spiral of violence began after the arrival of Abraham O. Smoot at the July 24, 1857, Pioneer Day celebration, with news that the U.S. Army was coming to attack Utah. Throughout the book this becomes the reference point in explaining why violence was regularly done against non-Mormons in the months that followed, violence which is regularly justified by appeals to the wickedness of the victims. The attentive reader, however, will note that the dates of Mormon violence and indications of broader violent tendencies often predated July 24, 1857.

The same kind of false impression is clearly given in relation to the 1838 founding of the retributive Mormon Danites: “a riot broke out at a Davies County polling place. Several

Mormons, including recent convert John D. Lee, used sticks, boards, or whatever else they could get their hands on, to fight off Missourians who attacked them when they tried to exercise their right to vote.12 And then, in the next paragraph, we read:

Exaggerated reports of the riot and other skirmishes led to virtual civil war. Some of the Saints, including Lee, responded to Missouri vigilantes by forming bands called “Danites,” that made preemptive strikes against vigilante targets, answering violence with violence.

This telling, however, is seriously distorted in two ways. The first is by giving the impression the Danites were formed in response to the election-day riot. Otherwise the reader might have felt less sympathy for the innocent Mormons who simply wanted to “exercise their right to vote.” In fact, however, the Danites had been formed already as is evidenced by the reference in Mormon accounts of their using the “Danite sign of distress” on that occasion.13

The second and far more troubling distortion is the reference to preemptive strikes against “vigilante targets,” a chilling, demonizing euphemism being used to hide the fact that Mormons attacked and burned the homes and stole the property of innocent Missourian men, women, and children. That our Mormon authors would resort even once to using such sinister euphemisms to downplay past Mormon violence, makes Oxford’s involvement with the book an absolute disgrace.

The evasive falsification of the story by the inaccurate framing which incorrectly identified the starting points of Mormon violence was further facilitated by a sentiment that is expressed various times in the book, namely that in acting violently in 1857 the Mormons, “did not match their behavior to their ideals.”14 However, there is good evidence to believe that the Mormons of the period had reacted to early persecution by adopting a violent ideology that not only provided a religious excuse for Mormons to engage in acts of violence but also resulted in a good many actual occurrences of it. Hence the statement in the preface to Massacre, “Except for their experiences during a single, nightmare week in September 1857, most of them were ordinary humans with little to distinguish them from other nineteenth-century frontiersmen.”15 That they were ordinary humans there’s no doubt, but the issue had to do more with a violent religious ideology that Mormons at the time had embraced. In other words, the Mountain Meadows massacre was not the mysterious anomaly that the authors want us to believe. To illustrate this, I will simply present the following questions.

### Something to Consider

After reading our authors’ account of the Mountain Meadows massacre as a fluke, an aberration in which Mormons out of a sense of fear and personal endangerment lashed out in a way that went totally against what they had been taught and believed, would you be surprised to know:

- That Brigham Young approved of the Mountain Meadows massacre after the fact and he opposed having the culprits brought to justice. We see this for example in John D. Lee’s Diary for May 31 [30], 1861, which reports how Brigham said that the victims “Merritd their fate, & that the only thing that ever troubled him was the lives of the Women & children, but that under the circumstances [this] could not be avoided. Although there had been [some?] that wantd to betrayed the Brethrn into the hands of their Enemies, for that thing [they] will be Damned & go down to Hell.”16

- That later in the same month as the Mountain Meadows massacre, we find another incident of a wagon train, the Dukes Train, being robbed of everything they had except their wagons and the animals pulling them.17 And as is reflective of the contradictions of Utah history, Will Bagley sees the Mormons as complicit with the Indians while Edward Leo Lyman casts the Mormons as saviors from the Indians. For Lyman’s thesis to stand however, he would need to counter more of the evidence brought forth by Bagley than he does.18 In Lyman’s defense, however, he is writing a comprehensive trail history, and can therefore only give a certain amount of space to each thing he describes.19

- That in June of 1862 a force of 500 men were sent from Salt Lake City to attack the entirely peaceful community of prophet Joseph Morris who had gathered in the abandoned Kingston Fort. After the community raised the white flag, piled their weapons in the courtyard, and surrendered, Robert T. Burton, the leader of the Mormon forces, rode in and murdered Morris, along with two women, in cold blood. He also shot Morris’s second counselor John Banks, who died either then, or else was finished off that night by Salt Lake councilman, Jeter Clinton. The bodies of Morris and Banks were then dressed in their full religious regalia and put on display at City Hall in Salt Lake City.20

- That on December 31, 1861, John D. Dawson, the third Governor of Utah was beaten so badly while trying to escape Utah that he never recovered from his wounds, which some say included castration.21

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12 Walker, Turley, and Leonard, Massacre, p. 11.
13 John D. Lee, Mormonism Unveiled; or the Life and Confessions of the Late Mormon Bishop, John D. Lee; (Written by Himself) (St. Louis, Mo.: Bryan, Brand & Co./ New York: W. H. Stelle, 1877) 59. (Reprinted by Utah Lighthouse Ministry); See also the comment of John L. Butler, quoted in Stephen C. LeSueur, The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1987) p. 62.
14 Walker, Turley, and Leonard, Massacre, p. 115. 15 Ibid.
18 Edward Leo Lyman, The Overland Journey from Utah to California: Wagon Trails from Salt Lake City to the City of Angels (Reno & Las Vegas: University of Nevada, 2004) pp. 140-41.
• That when the Cowderys, Whitmers and Lyman Johnson left the Church in 1838, they did not simply decide to leave, they had to flee for their lives after Sidney Rigdon preached his infamous Salt Sermon against them on June 17, 1838. In it he argued that when salt (i.e., the people in question) had lost its savour (i.e., dissenters to Rigdon’s and Joseph Smith’s will) it was the duty of the Mormons to trample it (them) under their feet. The form Rigdon suggested that this should take was hanging, which would be “an act at which the angels would smile in approbation.”

Joseph Smith then publicly approved of Rigdon’s message by noting that “Judas was a traitor and instead of hanging himself was hung by the angels with cow-hides.”

• That even prior to the time when “a riot broke out at a Davies County polling place,” where the Mormons had “to fight off Missourians who attacked them when they tried to exercise their right to vote,” gangs of Mormon men were running Missourian settlers off their land. On July 31, 1838, “Twenty of the Mormons drove off some of the Missourians from their improvements [their lands] with cow-hides.”

The election took place in early August. A day or two after the election a gang of about one hundred Mormons threatened the life of Missourian Adam Black if he would not sell out to them.

• That the oft-mentioned reason that the Mormons hated Governor Boggs was his infamous “extermination order” issued October 27, 1838, in which he wrote: “The Mormons must be treated as enemies and must be exterminated or driven from the State if necessary for the public peace their outrages are beyond all description.” He probably used the term “extermination” as an intentional allusion to the July 4, 1838, speech of Mormon leader Sidney Rigdon, which Joseph Smith had afterward printed up as a pamphlet, in which Rigdon said:

“And that mob that comes on us to disturb us; it shall be between us and them a war of extermination, for we will follow them, till the last drop of their blood is spilled, or else they will have to exterminate us: for we will carry the seal of war to their own houses, and their own families, and one party or the other shall be utterly destroyed—Remember it then all MEN.”

Brigham Young later said that: “Elder Rigdon was the prime cause of trouble in Missouri, by his fourth of July oration.”

• That in 1842 Joseph Smith very probably did send Orrin Porter Rockwell to assassinate Governor Lilburn W. Boggs of Missouri. John Whitmer, one of the eight Book of Mormon witnesses, reported that “it is a well known fact that he was hired by Smith to kill Boggs.” William Law, one-time member of the First Presidency, says that Joseph told him “I sent Rockwell to kill Boggs,” and General Patrick E. Connor relates Rockwell telling him: “I shot through the window and thought I had killed him, but I had only wounded him; I was damned sorry I had not killed the Son of a bitch!”

Bushman simply asserts that Rockwell’s “innocence was proven.”

I would be very interested to hear Bushman make a case for that.

• That other perverse interpretations of the Bible were also used at this time to justify violence. When the leadership demanded everybody to turn over property to the Church, Samson Avard was heard to say that “all persons who attempt to deceive and retain property that should be given up would meet with the fate of Ananias and Saphira who were Killed by Peter.” Another was an oath on the part of the Danites, a violent Mormon paramilitary organization founded in June of 1838, to rescue a fellow Danite who had been arrested by non-Mormon authorities for legitimate crimes, even if it meant murdering a non-Mormon officer. Moses’ murder of the Egyptian was appealed to as justification: “you shall extricate him even if in the wrong if you have to do with his adversary as Moses did with the Egyptian put him under the sand…”

• That as to the Danites: “When any thing is to be performed no member shall have the privilege of judging whether it be right or wrong but shall engage in its accomplishment and trust God for the result.” Little wonder Reed Peck could report hearing A. McRae say: “If Joseph should tell me to kill Vanburen in his presidential chair I would immediately start and do my best to assassinate him.”

In view of all this is it really that surprising that the Utah Mormons did what they did? From the perspective of an outsider,
the violence toward outsiders in 1857 seems quite easily explained by the fact that from 1838 on, the Mormons (or some Mormons) had embraced violence as part of their religion.

Three Voices

For the most part Massacre represents history without the Why? The reason I say “for the most part,” is that there are three voices that emerge at different points throughout the book, whether they represent the different voices of the three authors, or the kind of material being dealt with, or both, is impossible to say without actually inquiring into who wrote what part of the book.

Voice 1 gives us Sunday School History, which rattles onanely on throughout most of the first part of the book and then more sporadically through the rest of it. This voice has no curiosity about what really happened or why, nor any real empathy for “those bad people who aren’t us.” It is this voice, I suspect, that gives us the silly descriptions likening Brigham Young to “a retired New England farmer or London Alderman,” Daniel H. Wells to “fellow Illinoisian Abraham Lincoln,” and quotes a description of George A. Smith as “a huge, burly man, with a Friar Tuck joviality of paunch and visage, and a roll in his bright eye which, in some odd, undefined sort of way, suggested cakes and ale.”37 When reading this voice, we are always clear on who we are to consider the White Hats (Salt Lake Mormon leaders), Black Hats (non-Mormons generally), and the Grey Hats (Southern Utah Mormon leaders). The overall sense given by this voice is that we are being patronized.

Voice 2 gives us Dumping Ground History, which is honest enough to dump all the evidence out on the table, but without evidencing any historical curiosity or its own part, or extending any effort to help the reader make sense of the pieces, or distinguish between those that are credible and relevant and those which are not. Instead Voice 2 contents itself occasionally to remind the reader what its predetermined thesis was, lest they be distracted from it by the evidence. Voice 2 dominates, and adds a very helpful sense of confusion (from the Mormon apologetic point of view) to the latter part of the book.

Voice 3 gives us Real History. Occasionally throughout the course of the book—very occasionally—one suddenly finds oneself startled to discover that one is reading good history, that attempts to wrestle and interact with the evidence with credibility, honesty, and intelligence. But usually one no sooner notices it than it slips away again to give place to Voice 1 or 2. Voice 3 is very much in the minority in the book. If you added up every example of its occurrence it would probably amount to less than 20 out of the 231 pages, perhaps less than 10. If Voices 1, 2 and 3 represent the voices of the actual three authors, then Oxford would have been well served to have dumped Voices 1 and 2 and given the project over to Voice 3 to write. One may doubt, however, that the LD Church would have found such an arrangement desirable. Looking at the final product it would seem clear that it was respectability and public-image enhancement that the LDS Church hoped for in getting the work published with Oxford.

Conclusion

Following the massacre, the cover-up by Brigham Young and other LDS Church leaders is an equally complex and controversial story. The authors of Massacre plan a second volume to deal with these issues. Brian Cannon, in his favorable review of the book in BYU Studies, observes:

The aftermath of the massacre is as choked with controversy as the actual killing. It includes a tangled web of subterfuge, sparring between Church and federal officials, and attempts to bring those responsible for the massacre to justice. As the authors obliquely observe, Brigham Young largely “held his tongue on the subject [of the massacre], for policy and personal peace” (229). Brooks and Bagley devoted half of their narratives to these matters. Regrettably, aside from a five-page epilogue recounting the execution of John D. Lee, the authors leave the “second half [of the story] to another day” (xii).38

One can only hope that the second volume will be more candid than the first.

It is, I think, significant that Massacre at Mountain Meadows appears 150 years after the murders because it shows that even now the possibility of good Mormon historical treatments of controversial issues by LDS historians appears to be something for the future. Hopefully the LDS Church will someday come to a place psychologically where they are willing to take a look at their own past honestly and without having to boost themselves up by trying to recast motives and personae to fit a modern Mormon ideal. Until then the greatest enemy to good Mormon history will continue to be the LDS institution itself. Mormon individuals who are having difficulty understanding or sympathizing with what I am saying, would be greatly helped by reading Ron Enroth’s book, Churches that Abuse,39 which, although I doubt it ever mentions the LDS Church, still deals with churches with similar mindsets.

In the meantime historians such as Juanita Brooks, David Bigler and Will Bagley were right in simply going for the truth and ignoring the promises down the years that the LDS Church was finally going to begin doing history in a more honest and less self-serving manner.

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Letters and Emails — Continued from page 14

**June 2008**: You are a liar. I wonder why you really left the Church or were you excommunicated?

**June 2008**: Ok, after studying several of your materials, i have come to the conclusion that you are really wasting a lot of time and messing with people's heads. You claim that you are only publishing your finds. Well, i think “your finds” are really messed up. You sound an awful lot like coriantamur in the book of mormon. Falsely leading people astray. You are false prophets in your own right.

**June 2008**: I am a 35 yr old, stay-at-home mom who was raised in the LDS Church. . . . Over the past couple of months, in response to the recent events in Texas concerning polygamy, I have been researching some of the history of the Mormon Church.

I have found many contradictions within the “gospel” that have really bothered me. . . . Less than a week ago . . . we get a call from the Bishop wanting to come and have a “visit” with us that evening . . . . We were met with love and understanding, but the Bishop did not make a valid argument in regards to my questions about the Church’s history with polygamy, or why black people had not been able to hold the Priesthood til the 70’s. And why a church leader years ago had said that the black people had black skin because they were descendents of Cain, black skin being the mark of sin.

I also have issues with the church believing that only people married in the temple will be able to reach the highest level of glory in heaven. I have plenty of friends who are not Mormon, and frankly, are better people and better Christians than some members of the Church that I know. . . . I am also a descendent of Brigham Young. Growing up, I was taught to be proud of this fact. But after doing researching on his history and teachings, I am ashamed.

It has been less that a week since my husband’s and my doubts about the Mormon Church have become “public.” This is a very small community, and I’m sure that our decision to “step away from the Church” will spread like wildfire.

**July 2008**: Wow, what do you have against Mormons? No they are not a perfect people but their church teaches them to be good people. Why don’t you use your time to go after some of the really bad organizations around this country. I guess you just don’t like Mormons, or do you pay the same sort of disrespect all faiths not yours?

**July 2008**: you don’t even realise how far from god you are. the lds church is the only true church and no matter how hard you try, with satan and minions, won’t change that.

**July 2008**: In 1973 I came to the devastating realization that something wasn’t right with the teachings and the Church I’d known all my life. I was devastated, lost and alone. I had been taught not to trust my own mind and that questions/doubts were Satan’s tricks—just have faith and don’t question . . .

I don’t remember how I found you—lucky accident? . . . I’m not sure. In any event, I found myself speaking to Sandra Tanner and . . . now I’m bawling my eyes out and can hardly write this . . . for the first time in my life I felt safe to begin to trust in my reasoning mind. . . .

**July 2008**: I began the long and difficult process of rebuilding my entire value system from the ground up. . . . Thank you, thank you, thank you for being there and talking to me when I was lost and alone and for your kindness in sharing truth with me.

**July 2008**: Good try. The courts struck you down and eventually God will too.

**July 2008**: I was listening to your [radio interview]. You are just an ex-member of the True Church and you are soured on the idea that you couldn’t be in control . . . except under Satan’s control. May God have mercy on your soul.

**Aug. 2008**: I just got done reading your website, and it almost brought me to tears. You are very brave. My husband and I are leaving the church.

**Aug. 2008**: I am currently a member of the LDS religion and would like to take my name off their records. . . . I have been watching Shawn’s sermons (Heart of the Matter) and I am really enjoyed listening to the strong points he points out.

**Aug. 2008**: I just want to pass on my sincere thanks to Sandra Tanner for all the work that she and her late husband Jerald have done in bringing the real truth to light. I had been a member of the mormon church for twenty years. I took my name off the records March this year.

**Aug. 2008**: Thank you for all you’ve done and still do. . . . I’ve used Mormonism: Shadow or Reality? so much that it fell apart. It has been invaluable in the battle against lies and deceit.

**Sept. 2008**: Sandra, You are truly a beautiful and precious woman! Thank you for personally helping me come out of the LDS faith when I visited you in your store back in 1996 to purchase “Mormonism Shadow or Reality.” I was a 4th generation Mormon . . . I just put in my “Letter of Resignation” here in Sept. 2008.

**Sept. 2008**: The temple ceremony is sacred. Do you really feel justified denigrating someone else’s beliefs? Covenants are made before “God, angels, and these witnesses,” as you well know, that they will not be revealed. Do you really feel safe now that you have broken a covenant you made with God? I sure would not want to have to answer to that situation in the after-life. . . . I have a testimony of the restoration of the gospel, of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and of Joseph Smith. I respect your disagreements with the LDS teachings; please respect our beliefs.

**Sept. 2008**: It has been years since I met the Tanners in Utah. At the time, I was struggling to find the truth and start a career. . . . I see that some have been busy trying to refute the Tanners, but in so doing they would have to refute about a dozen other researchers who have come to the same conclusions.

**Sept. 2008**: Sure enjoyed visiting your book store and talking with Bill McKeever. Tried picking up your “lead plates” exhibit and about had a hernia. Boy, Joseph must have been a superhuman to lug those plates around! Anyway, God bless you and your work.
MORMONISM—Shadow or Reality?

By Jerald and Sandra Tanner


The 2008 reformatted edition contains all the same material as the 1987 edition and the same pagination. Reformatted in regular typeface, with improved photographs of the various documents, this edition is a must for your Mormon-related research.

Writing in the October 1990 Sunstone, book dealer Curt Bench compiled “A list of the books which have had a significant influence on the development of Mormon history, theology, and literature.” The Tanners’ Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? was listed among the 50 important books on Mormonism in the first 150 years (1830-1980).

Below is an example of page 125, comparing the old and new formats.
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UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY
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Sacred Marriage or Secret Affair?  
Joseph Smith and the Beginning of Mormon Polygamy

Joseph Smith, the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was born to a poor farm family on December 23, 1805, in Vermont. Given his humble beginning no one would have suspected that one day he would issue revelations, found a religion, and marry thirty-eight women in a new order of plural marriage.

In studying Joseph Smith’s life one is left to wonder when he first puzzled over the issue of polygamy in the Bible. In the earliest account of Smith’s childhood he mentions that he studied the Bible from an early age:

At about the age of twelve years my mind become seriously imprest with regard to the all important concerns for the welfare of my immortal Soul which led me to searching the scriptures believing, as I was taught, that they contained the word of God.¹

No doubt he had read in Genesis of Abraham, Jacob, David and Solomon’s extra wives. It certainly was on Smith’s mind in 1828 and 1829 when he dictated the Book of Mormon passage denouncing polygamy unless directed by God.²

While there are examples of polygamy in the Old Testament there is no evidence that the practice was commanded by God or was a doctrine to be obeyed. Plural marriage in Mormonism, on the other hand, was always connected to their doctrine of eternal marriage and exaltation, not just a social practice. Following the lives of Biblical polygamists one is struck by the troubles it brought into their relationships. And so it was with Joseph Smith.

A Double Standard

Throughout Joseph Smith’s life the LDS Church continually insisted that its standard for marriage was one man and one wife. However, behind the scene Smith had a very different agenda. Richard Van Wagoner observed:

Smith never publicly advocated polygamy. New Testament monogamy, the official church position throughout his lifetime, was clearly outlined to the prophet in 1831 revelations: “Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shall cleave unto her and none else” (D&C 42:22); “It is lawful that [a man] should have one wife, and they twain shall be one flesh” (D&C 49:16).

But from the early days of the church rumors hinted that Smith maintained a private position different from his public posture.³

Smith’s double standard was evident early in his marriage to Emma.⁴ Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery in their biography of Emma Smith felt that charges of impropriety against Joseph may have caused him to leave Harmony, Pennsylvania, in 1830 for Ohio:

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² Book of Mormon, Jacob 2:23-25.
The pleasant aspects of Emma’s life, however, were being overshadowed by rumors that Joseph had an unconventional view of marriage. His and Emma’s abrupt departure from Harmony in 1830 may have been because her cousin, Hiel Lewis, accused Joseph of improper conduct with women. Fifty years later he repeated thirdhand stories that Joseph attempted “to seduce E.W. (Eliza Winters),” and that Joseph and Martin Harris had said “adultery was no crime.”

When Smith began his revision of the Bible in 1830 he again encountered the issue of polygamy. LDS historian Glen Leonard commented:

Joseph Smith’s puzzlement over biblical references prompted him to seek understanding from the Lord. While working on what has become known as the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible (JST), he pondered the meaning of the Old Testament marriage practices described in Genesis.

Further, we know that in 1831 he had given a revelation to a few trusted men to take plural wives of the “Lamanites” while doing missionary work among them. This was supposed to aid in making the American Indians a “white and delightsome” people, as promised in the Book of Mormon, through intermarriage. Todd Compton writes:

W.W. Phelps, in 1861, recorded that Smith received a revelation in Missouri on July 17, 1831, that directed Mormon men to intermarry with “Lamanite” (Native American) women. When Phelps later asked how the group in question, mostly married men, could take other wives, Smith immediately answered, “In the same manner that Abraham took Hagar and Keturah; that Jacob took Rachel, Bilhah, and Zilpah; by revelation—the saints of the Lord are always directed by revelations.” A December 1831 letter by anti-Mormon Ezra Booth supports Phelps: “It had been made known by revelation” that God wanted “a matrimonial alliance with the natives” and that God would bless them “abundantly” if they obeyed. They would also “gain a residence” in Indian lands, despite the Indian agent’s opposition. “It has been made known to one who has left his wife in the State of New York that he is entirely free from the Lamanites.”

In spite of Smith’s revelation, none of the missionaries seem to have obeyed this command. It also appears that none of the Indians were converted.

Mormon leaders and historians generally assert that the earliest teaching on plural marriage was given as early as 1831. However, they usually fail to mention the revelation to marry the “Lamanites.” Smith’s associates would later claim that he had taught them about plural marriage in addition to the revelation about intermarriage.

Later there would be charges that Smith was involved with young Nancy Marinda Johnson while in Ohio in 1831-1832. Most Mormons have heard about the time that Smith and Sidney Rigdon, while staying with the Johnson family, were dragged from their beds in the middle of the night and tarred and feathered. A Dr. Dennison was brought along to “perform a surgical operation, but he declined when the time came to operate.” The mob included former Mormons who were reportedly concerned about Smith’s financial plans. But later it was charged that one of the men was angry at Joseph for being “too familiar” with Nancy Johnson. Mormon historians discount the connection of the beatings with outrage at any misconduct by Smith, pointing out that the beatings included both Rigdon and Smith. However, it is suspicious that Dr. Dennison was brought along to castrate only Joseph, although he ended up refusing to do the surgery. Why was Joseph singled out for this punishment and not Rigdon? The presence of the doctor to castrate Joseph adds credibility to the charge that Smith had behaved improperly. While the claim of an affair with Nancy in the early 1830’s isn’t definitive, it is known that she was later sealed to Smith in Nauvoo even though she was a married woman. Todd Compton relates that in 1834 Nancy Marinda married future apostle Orson Hyde. However, in Nauvoo she was a polyandrous plural wife of Joseph Smith, a relationship that still has many puzzling aspects. She married Smith when Hyde was on a mission, and it is uncertain how much the apostle knew of the marriage.

George D. Smith (no relation to Joseph Smith) in his new book Nauvoo Polygamy: “...but we called it celestial marriage,” relates:
The sealing of Marinda [Nancy Johnson] Hyde in April 1842 [to Joseph] consummated a relationship that had begun ten years earlier but had stalled the previous December. Between Smith’s polyandrous marriages to the Huntington sisters in late autumn 1841, he courted Marinda Nancy Johnson Hyde, wife of the absent missionary Apostle Orson Hyde.14

During the mid-1830’s Joseph Smith had an affair with a teenager named Fanny Alger, who was living in the Smith home in Ohio.15 Todd Compton lists her as Smith’s first plural wife but the evidence of an actual ceremony is weak. There is an 1896 account by Mosiah Hancock that his father performed the Smith-Alger marriage, most likely in 1833.16 Book of Mormon witness Oliver Cowdery, however, referred to Joseph’s involvement with Fanny as a “dirty, nasty, filthy affair.”17 Former LDS apostle William E. McLellin asserted that Emma caught Joseph in the barn with Fanny:

William McLellin told his account of Joseph and Fanny Alger to a newspaper reporter in 1875. “[McLellin] … informed me of the spot where the first well authenticated case of polygamy took place, in which Joseph Smith was ‘sealed’ to the hired girl. The ‘sealing’ took place in a barn on the hay mow, and was witnessed by Mrs. Smith through a crack in the door!… Long afterwards when he visited Mrs. Emma Smith…she then and there declared on her honor that it was a fact—‘saw it with her own eyes.’ ”18

The early rumors of Smith’s infidelity might have been dismissed if it weren’t for his later polygamist activities, especially his marriages to women with living husbands. Taken as a whole they show a pattern of affairs throughout his life.

As these rumors spread the LDS leaders realized that they needed to do something to clear the church’s name of scandal. Richard Van Wagoner explains:

Rumors of the prophet’s relationship with Alger, whispered about Kirtland during the summer of 1835, may have been the catalyst for the church’s announcement of its official position on marriage as well as motivation for the prophet’s frequent addresses on marital relationships that fall. While Smith was in Michigan his secretary, W.W. Phelps, presented to the church’s 17 August 1835 General Conference a “Chapter of Rules for Marriage among the Saints.” This declaration stipulated in part: “Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy; we declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife; and one woman, but one husband, except in the case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again.” The assembled Saints voted to accept the statement as part of “the faith and principle of this society as a body” by canonizing it in the official Doctrine and Covenants of the church.19

This section on marriage was printed in every edition of the Doctrine and Covenants until 1876, making it possible for early LDS leaders to publicly denounce plural marriage while practicing it in private.

George Smith discusses Joseph’s early acquaintance with the women who would later become his plural wives:

Joseph made other acquaintances in his early life that presaged the plural marriages he would consummate in the 1840’s. His relationships in Ohio with various families and their daughters—some quite youthful at the time—allowed him to invite the young women into his further confidence when they were older. In most cases, the women were adolescents or in their twenties when he met them. About ten were pre-teens, others already thirty or above. Most were

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15 Smith, Nauvoo Polygamy, pp. 38-44.
16 Compton, In Sacred Loneliness, pp. 32-33.
18 Newell and Avery, Mormon Enigma, p. 66.
19 Van Wagoner, Mormon Polygamy, p. 6; 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, section 101.
with the families in Ohio, where Smith had sent missionaries from western New York in 1830. Then Smith issued a revelation in January 1831 ordering his followers to sell their property and trek 300 miles west to Kirtland, which he designated as a city of refuge for the church’s converts. He became acquainted there with some twenty-seven of the women who would later become his mates…

The next possible case of polygamy was Lucinda Morgan Harris, the widow of William Morgan, who had since remarried. Todd Compton lists her as Smith’s second plural wife. Evidently the Smiths lived with the Harris’s for two months in 1838. Compton states, “There is no firm date for Smith’s marriage to Lucinda, but these two months are a good possibility. He often married women while he was living in the same house with them…” If the marriage didn’t happen at that time, there is reason to believe Smith was married to her in the 1840’s. George Smith lists Lucinda as Joseph’s fifth plural wife, using the later date.

**Nauvoo, Illinois**

However one views the events in the 1830’s, historians generally agree that by at least 1841 Joseph Smith was being sealed to women in some sort of marriage ceremony. George Smith observes:

The story of Joseph Smith’s documented marriages after wedding Emma in 1827 opens in April 1841 [in Nauvoo, Illinois] and ends some thirty-seven wives later with his marriage to Fanny Young in November 1843. His life during those two and a half years was dizzying as he juggled land purchases, religious appointments, speeches, meetings; armed and trained a town militia; welcomed settlers and immigrants to the new town; oversaw building projects; and assumed a prominent role in the ascent municipal government. All of this in addition to pronouncing revelations, avoiding arrest and extradition orders, and entering into matrimony with over three dozen women, which meant about one new wife a month. . . .

Woven throughout this fabric of daily public life is a concealed record of courtship and marriage that can be found in diaries, autobiographies, letters, affidavits, and sealing records which confirm these events.

George Smith starts his list of Joseph’s plural wives with Louisa Beaman in April of 1841. They were married by Joseph Bates Noble, who was married to Louisa’s sister, Mary. Years later Noble would tell of marrying them “during the evening under an Elm tree in Nauvoo. The Bride disguised in a [man’s] coat and hat.” When asked about the nature of the marriage, Noble stated that the marriage was consummated “for I saw him [Joseph] in bed with her [Louisa].”

George Smith comments, “Neither Smith nor Beaman left a personal account of their marriage (that has been found), but eleven other sources confirm that the ceremony did take place.” There was always a great need for secrecy as Illinois had a law against bigamy.

*Nauvoo Polygamy* documents Joseph Smith’s thirty-seven plural wives and categorizes them as follows:

Seventeen of them were single. Three of the teenaged wives and three of those in their twenties were orphaned or separated from their parents. Unlike Louisa, fourteen of the wives were already married and typically had children.

Todd Compton starts his list of Smith’s wives with Fanny Alger, followed by Lucinda Harris, thus making Louisa Beaman Joseph’s third plural wife, with a total of thirty-three. Whether the final count is thirty-three, thirty-seven or more, scholars generally agree that the list includes about a dozen women with living husbands.

In the fall of 1841 Joseph Smith took his next two wives, sisters Zina Huntington Jacobs and Presendia Huntington Buell, who were already married. By marrying Zina and Presendia, Smith disobeyed the directive given to Moses that a man was not to marry sisters. Later he would also disobey the command that a man was not to marry both a mother and daughter.

Smith had proposed to Zina in 1840, prior to her marriage to Jacobs, and was refused. Even though Zina was now married, Smith persisted in his pursuit of her. Compton tells the story:

Again according to family tradition, she and Henry saw Smith soon after the marriage and “asked why he had not come . . . he told them the Lord had made it known to him she was to be his celestial wife.” Once again Zina was plunged into a quandary. Smith told them that God had commanded him to marry her. However, he apparently also told them

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21 Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, p. 49.
Joseph Smith's Wives

The chart below contains information from *Nauvoo Polygamy* by George D. Smith. Although Fanny Alger is not included in the list by George Smith, Todd Compton lists her as Joseph Smith's first plural wife in his book, *In Sacred Loneliness*. In 1887, Andrew Jenson, assistant church historian, listed Fanny Alger as one of Smith's first plural wives in the *Historical Record*. The numbers in parentheses ( ) represent Compton's list of Joseph's plural wives. The asterisk (*) notes the twenty-seven plural wives on Jenson's list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Name of Plural Wife</th>
<th>Marriage Date</th>
<th>Joseph's age</th>
<th>Wife's age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Emma Hale</td>
<td>Jan 18 1827</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fanny Alger</td>
<td>early 1833</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Louisa Be[a]man</td>
<td>April 5 1841</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mrs. Zina Diantha Huntington (Jacobs)†</td>
<td>Oct 27 1841</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mrs. Presendia Lathrop Huntington (Buell)</td>
<td>Dec 11 1841</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Agnes Moulton Coolbrith (Smith)</td>
<td>Jan 6 1842</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mrs. Lucinda Pendleton (Morgan Harris)</td>
<td>after Jan 17 1842</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Rollins (Lightner)</td>
<td>Feb 1842</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mrs. Patty Bartlett (Sessions)</td>
<td>Mar 9 1842</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mrs. Sylvia Porter Sessions (Lyon)</td>
<td>Feb 8 1842</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Mrs. Presendia Lathrop Huntington (Buell)</td>
<td>Mar 4 1843</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Mrs. Sarah M. Kingsley (Howe Cleveland)</td>
<td>Mar 15 1842</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Mrs. Elizabeth Davis (G. Brackenbury Durfee)</td>
<td>Mar 24 1842</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Mrs. Marinda Nancy Johnson (Hyde)</td>
<td>April 1842</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Mrs. Elvira Anna Cowles (Holmes)</td>
<td>June 1843</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Mrs. Sarah Rapson (Poulterer)</td>
<td>after July 1842</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Mrs. Ruth Daggett Vose (Sayers)</td>
<td>Feb 1843</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Flora Ann Woodworth</td>
<td>Mar 4 1843</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Emily Dow Partridge</td>
<td>Mar 4 1843</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Eliza Maria Partridge</td>
<td>Mar 8 1843</td>
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<td>Almera Wood[w]ard Johnson</td>
<td>after Apr 25 1843</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Lucy Walker</td>
<td>May 1 1843</td>
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<td>Sarah Lawrence</td>
<td>May 11 1843</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Maria Lawrence</td>
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<td>Helen Mar Kimball</td>
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<td>Mrs. Elvira Anna Cowles (Holmes)</td>
<td>June 1 1843</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Rhoda Richards</td>
<td>June 12 1843</td>
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<td>Hannah S. Ells</td>
<td>mid-1843</td>
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<td>Mary Ann Frost (Stearns Pratt)</td>
<td>July 24 1843</td>
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<td>Olive Grey Frost</td>
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<td>Sarah Scott (Mulholland)</td>
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<td>Mrs. Phebe Watrous (Woodworth)</td>
<td>after Oct 29 1843</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>Mary Huston</td>
<td>approx. Oct 1843</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>Fanny Young (Carr Murray)</td>
<td>Nov 2 1843</td>
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b Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, pp. 4-6.
c Andrew Jenson, *Historical Record*, 1887, vol. 6, pp. 233-234.
they could continue to live together as husband and wife. According to family tradition, Henry accepted this, but Zina continued to struggle. . . .

Zina remained conflicted until a day in October, apparently, when Joseph sent [her brother] Dimick to her with a message: an angel with a drawn sword had stood over Smith and told him that if he did not establish polygamy, he would lose “his position and his life.” Zina, faced with the responsibility for his position as prophet, and even perhaps his life, finally acquiesced.30

She finally consented and entered into a polyandrous marriage with Smith while six months pregnant with Jacob’s child.31 During the next six months Joseph would enter into six more polyandrous marriages.32

Later in Utah, Jedediah M. Grant, second counselor to President Brigham Young, gave a sermon in the Tabernacle in which he confirmed that Joseph Smith asked for other men’s wives:

When the family organization was revealed from heaven—the patriarchal order of God, and Joseph began, on the right and on the left, to add to his family, what a quaking there was in Israel. Says one brother to another, “Joseph says all covenants are done away, and none are binding but the new covenants; now suppose Joseph should come and say he wanted your wife, what would you say to that?”

“I would tell him to go to hell.” This was the spirit of many in the early days of this Church. . . .

What would a man of God say, who felt aright, when Joseph asked him for his money? He would say, “Yes, and I wish I had more to help to build up the kingdom of God.”

Or if he came and said, “I want your wife?” “O yes,” he would say, “here she is, there are plenty more.” . . . Did the Prophet Joseph want every man’s wife he asked for? He did not . . . If such a man of God should come to me and say, “I want your gold and silver, or your wives,” I should say, “Here they are, I wish I had more to give you, take all I have got.”33

When Brigham Young returned from his missionary trip to England in 1841 he was soon introduced to the secret practice.34 Brigham later stated:

Some of my brethren know what my feelings were at the time Joseph revealed the doctrine; . . . it was the first time in my life that I had desired the grave, and I could hardly get over it for a long time and when I saw a funeral, I felt to envy the corpse its situation, . . .35

However, once converted he was diligent in expanding his kingdom, eventually marrying fifty-five women.36 Years later Brigham Young would proclaim “The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy.”37

Publicly Exposed

In April of 1842 Joseph Smith secretly approached Nancy Rigdon, the nineteen-year-old daughter of Sidney Rigdon, to be his wife but was refused. Shortly after that Smith sent her a letter, laying out his rational for undertaking an action that on the surface might appear wrong. Even though she was instructed to destroy the letter after reading it she saved the letter, which was later published in the August 19, 1842, Sangamo Journal and then in John C. Bennett’s History of the Saints. It read in part:

Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God; but we cannot keep ALL the commandments without first knowing them . . . That which is wrong under one circumstance, may be, and often is, right under another. . . . Whatever God requires is right, NO MATTER WHAT IT IS, although we may not see the reason thereof till long after the events transpire.38

Emma Smith’s biographers describe the confrontation that followed:

Nancy Rigdon showed the letter to her father. Rigdon immediately sent for Joseph, who reportedly denied everything until Sidney thrust the letter in his face. George W. Robinson, Nancy’s brother-in-law, claimed he witnessed the encounter and said Joseph admitted that he had spoken with Nancy but that he had only been testing her virtue.39

Even though Sidney Rigdon was a member of the first presidency and stayed in the church, the event put a strain on Smith and Rigdon’s friendship.

30 Compton, In Sacred Loneliness, pp. 80-81.
31 Smith, Nauvoo Polygamy, p. 75.
32 Compton, In Sacred Loneliness, pp. 4-5.
34 Smith, Nauvoo Polygamy, p. 47.
36 Smith, Nauvoo Polygamy, p. 635.
38 John C. Bennett, History of the Saints, Leland & Whiting, 1842, pp. 243-244. Emphasis in original.
39 Newell and Avery, Mormon Enigma, pp. 111-112.
A couple of months later Brigham Young would face a similar situation. He was first married at age twenty-three in 1824, then widowed a few years later. After converting to Mormonism he married Mary Ann Angell in 1834. Years later he secretly entered plural marriage, taking Lucy Ann Decker Seely, possibly separated from her husband, as his plural wife in June of 1842. But his next attempt at courting turned into a public scandal.

Brigham Young approached a young English convert, Martha Brotherton, but was rejected. Her story was then published in the *St. Louis Bulletin* on July 15, 1842. She made a sworn affidavit that Heber C. Kimball escorted her to a private meeting with Brigham Young where she was locked in the room and pressured to marry Brigham Young in polygamy. Martha gave this report of the meeting:

B[ Brigham Y oung]: Well, what are your feelings toward me? M[artha] B[rotherton]: My feelings are just the same towards you that they ever were, sir.
BY: But to come to the point more closely, have not you an affection for me, that, were it lawful and right, you could accept of me for your husband and companion?
MB: If it was lawful and right perhaps I might; but you know, sir, it is not.
BY: Well, brother Joseph has had a revelation from God that it is lawful and right for a man to have two wives; . . . and if you will accept of me I will take you straight to the celestial kingdom; and if you will have me in this world, I will have you in that which is to come, and brother Joseph will marry us here today, and you can go home this evening, and your parents will not know any thing about it.
MB: Sir, I should not like to do anything of the kind without the permission of my parents.
BY: Well, you are of age, are you not?
MB: No, sir, I shall not be until the 24th of May.
BY: Well, that does not make any difference. You will be of age before they know, and you need not fear. . . .
MB: I want time to think about it.
BY: Well, I will have a kiss any how.

When it was obvious that she was hesitant to accept his proposal Joseph Smith was brought into the room to try and convince her:

J[oseph] S[mith]: Well, Martha, it is lawful and right before God. I know it is. Look here, don’t you believe in me? Well Martha, just go ahead and do as Brigham wants you to, he is the best man in the world except me. . . . Yes, and I know that this is lawful and right before God, and if there is any sin in it I will answer for it before God, and I have the keys of the kingdom, and whatever I bind on earth is bound in heaven, and whatever I loose on earth is loosed in heaven; and if you will accept of Brigham, you shall be blessed. God shall bless you, and my blessing shall rest upon you again; and if you do not like it in a month or two, come to me and I will make you free again; and if he turns you off I will take you on.
M[artha] B[rotherton]: Sir, it will be too late to think in a month or two after. I want time to think first.

Finally, after Martha was able to convince them that she needed time to pray about it and that she would tell no one of the conversation, she was allowed to leave the room. The next day she wrote down the conversation and soon left for St. Louis. Her statement was given wide distribution in various newspapers and was included in ex-Mormon John C. Bennett’s 1842 expose, History of the Saints. However, Joseph and his brother Hyrum continued to make public denials of any such doctrine or practice. Richard Van Wagoner comments:

Even before Martha left Nauvoo, rumors of the incident began to circulate. Hyrum Smith, believing Joseph’s public posture that polygamy was not being practiced, publicly addressed the Saints on 7 April 1842 “in contradiction of a report in circulation about Elders Heber C. Kimball, Brigham Young, himself, and others of the Twelve, alleging that a sister had been shut in a room for several days, and that they had endeavored to induce her to believe in having two wives.” Joseph, who addressed the group after Hyrum, added, “There is no person that is acquainted with our principles who would believe such lies.”

Martha’s statement would cost her dearly. The LDS newspaper, *The Wasp*, edited by Joseph Smith’s brother, printed a stinging denunciation of her and John C. Bennett on August 27, 1842. It charged that Martha Brotherton and all such females were “mean harlots.” Brigham Young’s denial, issued the same day as the *Wasp* article, stated, “I do hereby testify that the affidavit of Miss Martha Brotherton . . . is a base falsehood, with regard to any private intercourse or unlawful conduct or conversation with me.”

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40 Smith, Nauvoo Polygamy, p. 262.
45 Smith, Nauvoo Polygamy, p. 270.
George Smith explains that “Brotherton eventually returned to England, where she died in 1864. But on August 1, 1870, in Salt Lake City, Brigham Young achieved his romantic pursuit when he had Brotherton sealed to him for eternity. Her sister, Elizabeth Brotherton Pratt, plural wife of Apostle Parley Pratt, acted as proxy for the deceased.”

While Joseph Smith was publicly denying any doctrine or practice of plural marriage, he was secretly taking more wives. Only a week after Martha Brotherton’s accusations were printed in the St. Louis Bulletin, Smith convinced seventeen-year-old Sarah Ann Whitney to be his plural wife. However, the transaction was carefully kept from Emma Smith. Richard Van Wagoner relates:

He [Joseph Smith] was walking a tightrope, secretly courting both thirty-eight-year-old Eliza R. Snow and seventeen-year-old Sarah Ann Whitney, while fighting extradition to Missouri as “an accessory to an assault with intent to kill” former governor Lilburn W. Boggs. Smith was also at odds with his long-time friend and counselor Sidney Rigdon over a reputed polygamous proposal on 9 April 1842 to Rigdon’s unmarried daughter Nancy.

In a footnote Van Wagoner tells more of the Whitney story:

She [Sarah Ann Whitney] was sealed to Smith with her parents’ permission on 27 July 1842. In an 18 August 1842 letter to the Whineys, Smith, hiding from Missouri law enforcement officials, detailed his problems in getting to see Sarah Ann without Emma’s knowledge. “My feelings are so strong for you since what has passed [sic] lately between us . . . if you three would come and see me in this my lonely retreat, it would afford me great relief, of mind, if those with whom I am allied, do love me, now is the time to afford me succor . . . the only thing to be careful is to find out when Emma comes then you cannot be safe, but when she is not here, there is the most perfect safety.”

Any youthful dreams of courtship and a public marriage were sacrificed to gain Smith’s promise of eternal exaltation for herself and her parents. Both Todd Compton and George Smith list Sarah Ann as Joseph’s fifteenth plural wife.

Six weeks after marrying Sarah Ann Whitney Joseph made another public denial of plural marriage. Due to Bennett’s expose and the ongoing rumors of polygamy Joseph Smith printed the following in the September 1, 1842, Times and Seasons:

Inasmuch as the public mind has been unjustly abused through the fallacy of Dr. Bennett’s letters, we make an extract on the subject of marriage, showing the rule of the church . . . from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and is the only rule allowed by the church. . . . “Inasmuch as this church of Christ had been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy: we declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife; and one woman, but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again.”

In spite of such denials Joseph continued to take more wives and he expanded the number of men involved in the practice. George Smith lists five men who were living in plural marriage in 1842: Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, Heber Kimball, Vinson Knight and Reynolds Cahoon. Joseph had sixteen plural wives, the others had one plural wife each.

Joseph Smith introduced the new teaching to his secretary, William Clayton, in February of 1843. Upon hearing that Clayton had formed a special friendship with a woman while doing missionary work in England, Smith used this as an opening to teach him the new doctrine. He instructed Clayton to send to England for the woman who was to be his plural wife. Clayton wrote about Smith’s advice: “Says he[,] just keep your present wife . . . the truth” by telling untruths, in this case the strategic charade of publicly rebuking someone while privately embracing them.

With such access to the church president, Clayton not only captured the tone of the invitation to marry when Smith said “you have a right to get all you can.” He bequeathed to us Smith’s plan for keeping such obvious marriages secret. After Margaret became pregnant in May or June 1843, Clayton wrote on October 19 about needing to protect “the truth” by telling untruths, in this case the strategic charade of publicly rebuking someone while privately embracing them. Clayton wrote about Smith’s advice: “Says he[,] just keep her [Margaret] at home and brook it and if they raise trouble about it and bring you before me I will give you an awful scourging and probably cut you off from the church and then I will baptize you and set you ahead as good as ever.”

46 Smith, Nauvoo Polygamy, pp. 271-272.
47 Van Wagoner, Mormon Polygamy, pp. 31-32.
48 Ibid., pp. 48-49, footnote 3.
49 Compton, In Sacred Loneliness, p. 6; Smith, Nauvoo Polygamy, p. 622.
50 Time and Seasons, vol. 3, September 1, 1842, p. 909.
51 Smith, Nauvoo Polygamy, p. 311.
52 Ibid., pp. 244-245.
53 Ibid., p. 247, italics in original.
The secrecy surrounding polygamy even led to problems for young men trying to court the girls in Nauvoo:

When nineteen-year-old Orange Wight noticed the attractive sixteen-year-old Flora Woodworth one spring day in 1843, how could he have known she was already married, and was even a secret wife of the Mormon prophet? He had returned home from a year-long mission to the eastern United States and was not yet familiar with the changed social landscape in Nauvoo. He was surprised to discover that many of the young women he wanted to befriend were someone else’s secret wives.54

When Did Emma Know?

While Emma did not see Joseph’s revelation on polygamy until Hyrum Smith read it to her in July of 1843, she had to know of the rumors in the 1830’s of Smith’s connection to other women. At least by 1842 she had to be aware of Martha Brotherton, Nancy Rigdon and John C. Bennett’s accusations. She may have initially hoped that it was only a matter of a few indiscretions, not a doctrine promoted by her husband.

The Smith’s home in Nauvoo was large enough to allow boarders. Emma may not have been aware of the convenience this arrangement offered Smith in his courting and marrying single women. Many of Joseph’s wives first came to the home as boarders or helpers.

Several times Emma seemed to accept plural marriage only to change her mind later. Evidently Joseph had tried on a number of occasions to convince her it was of God and necessary for her salvation. Finally, after assuring her that with acceptance she would also be sealed eternally to Joseph, she agreed to his marrying two sets of sisters, ranging in age from sixteen to twenty-two, who were living in the home.55

One of his wives, Emily Partridge, gave a statement in 1887 regarding her two marriages to Smith in the spring of 1843:

. . . the Prophet Joseph and his wife Emma offered us a home in their family, and they treated us with great kindness. We had been there about a year when the principle of plural marriage was made known to us, and I was married to Joseph Smith on the 4th of March, 1843, Elder Heber C. Kimball performing the ceremony. My sister Eliza was also married to Joseph a few days later. This was done without the knowledge of Emma Smith. Two months afterwards she consented to give her husband two wives, provided he would give her the privilege of choosing them. She accordingly chose my sister Eliza and myself, and to save family trouble Brother Joseph thought it best to have another ceremony performed. Accordingly on the 11th of May, 1843, we were sealed to Joseph Smith a second time, in Emma’s presence, she giving her free and full consent thereto. From that very hour, however, Emma was our bitter enemy. We remained in the family several months after this, but things went from bad to worse until we were obliged to leave the house and find another home.56

Before the Partridge sisters left the home, Emma had several confrontations with them and Joseph, demanding that there be an end to their marriages. Emily recounted that “Emma said some very hard things—Joseph should give us up or blood should flow.” She went on to relate, “Joseph came to us and shook hands with us, and the understanding was that all had ended between us.” Summing it all up, Emily stated “I am ashamed to say, I felt indignant towards Joseph for submitting to Emma, but I see now he could do no different.”57 Such accounts destroy the well-polished image of Joseph and Emma’s happy marriage that is promulgated today.

Joseph now approached young Lucy Walker, who would become his twenty-second plural wife. Todd Compton relates:

Lucy was another young wife of Smith—he proposed to her when she was fifteen or sixteen. In her story we find the familiar pattern of the teenage girl living in the Mormon leader’s house, whom Joseph then approaches and marries.58

The Walker family had converted to Mormonism several years before moving to Nauvoo. In the summer of 1841 the mother, Lydia, contracted malaria due to the swampy conditions in Nauvoo and finally died on January 18, 1842. Lucy recalled, “When at length we were forced to believe she would not speak to us again we were in the depths of despair. Ten motherless children!”59 Joseph soon came up with a solution. The father was sent on a mission to the east, the younger children were sent to other families and at least two of the older siblings, Lorin and Lucy, were taken in by the Smith’s. Shortly after this division of the family one of the younger children died.
In the midst of all this sorrow and loneliness, Joseph approached sixteen-year-old Lucy Walker in late 1842 about plural marriage. Todd Compton outlines Lucy’s resistance:

When Smith sensed resistance, as has been seen, he generally continued teaching—asking the prospective wife to pray about the principle. . . . So it happened here. “He said, ‘If you will pray sincerely for light and understanding in relation thereto, you Shall receive a testimony of the correctness of this principle.’” Lucy was horrified by polygamy and by his proposal and did not quickly gain the promised testimony. She prayed, she wrote, but not with faith. She was nearly suicidal: “tempted and tortured beyond endurance until life was not desirable. Oh that the grave would kindly receive me that I might find rest on the bosom of my dear mother.” Lucy now felt intensely the absence of her parents: “Why—Why Should I be chosen from among thy daughters, Father, I am only a child in years and experience. No mother to council; no father near to tell me what to do, in this trying hour. Oh let this bitter cup pass. And thus I prayed in the agony of my soul.”

Then in the spring of 1843, while Lucy’s brother and Emma were in St. Louis, Joseph pressed the issue again. Lucy took the matter to God in prayer and finally felt she had received divine approval. Todd Compton relates:

On May 1 [1843] Lucy, who had turned seventeen the day before, married Smith at his home, with William Clayton officiating and Eliza Partridge standing witness.

Later that month Joseph married two other girls who were staying with the Smiths, Sarah and Maria Lawrence, evidently with Emma’s consent. Linda Newell and Valeen Avery provide this background:

The Lawrence sisters had come to Nauvoo from Canada without their parents in 1840 when Maria was about eighteen and Sarah fifteen. Emma and Joseph offered them a home. According to William Law’s account, the girls had inherited about eight thousand dollars in “English gold.” Law said, “Joseph got to be appointed their guardian,” and indicated that he [Law] and Sidney Rigdon were bondsmen to Joseph. After Emma approved of the Lawrence marriages, William Law accused her of doing so with an eye to helping Joseph get rid of his pocket. . . . Two or three days after the revelation was written Joseph related to me and several others that Emma had so teased, and urgently entreated him for the privilege of destroying it, that he became so weary of her teasing, and to get rid of her annoyance, he told her she might destroy it and she had done so, but he had consented to her wish in this matter to pacify her, realizing that he . . . could rewrite it at any time if necessary.

According to Todd Compton, Joseph Smith married approximately two dozen women by July of 1843, most of them without Emma’s knowledge or consent. While

60 Compton, In Sacred Loneliness, p. 464.
61 Newell and Avery, Mormon Enigma, p. 132; Smith, Nauvoo Polygamy, p. 193.
63 Newell and Avery, Mormon Enigma, p. 144.
65 Compton, In Sacred Loneliness, pp. 4-6.
Smith’s revelation is dated July 12, 1843, it was not included in the LDS canon until 1876. Prior to that date, the 1835 section denouncing polygamy was included in every printing of the Doctrine and Covenants. Thus Smith and various church leaders could publicly appeal to that section to demonstrate that they did not promote polygamy. This raises the problem of Joseph publicly lying about the very thing he was practicing in private. The revelation on polygamy is still printed in the current Doctrine and Covenants, section 132.

The Revelation

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, justified my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines—. . .

3 Therefore, prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you; for all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same.

4 . . . and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory. . . .

19 And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, . . . shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, . . . and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, . . . to their exaltation and glory . . . which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.

. . . Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them. . . .

22 For strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it, . . .

24 This is eternal lives—to know the only wise and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. . . .

25 Broad is the gate, and wide the way that leadeth to the deaths; and many there are that go in thereat, because they receive me not, neither do they abide in my law . . .

27 The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which shall not be forgiven in the world nor out of the world, is in that ye commit murder wherein ye shed innocent blood, and assent unto my death, after ye have received my new and everlasting covenant, saith the Lord God; . . .

29 Abraham received all things, whatsoever he received, by revelation and commandment, by my word, saith the Lord, and hath entered into his exaltation and sitteth upon his throne. . . .

32 Go ye, therefore, and do the works of Abraham; enter ye into my law and ye shall be saved. . . .

34 God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife. And why did she do it? Because this was the law; and from Hagar sprang many people. . . .

37 Abraham received concubines, and they bore him children; and it was accounted unto him for righteousness, because they were given unto him, and he abode in my law; as Isaac also and Jacob . . . they have entered into their exaltation, according to the promises, and sit upon thrones, and are not angels but are gods.

38 David also received many wives and concubines, and also Solomon and Moses my servants, as also many others of my servants, from the beginning of creation until this time; and in nothing did they sin save in those things which they received not of me.

39 David’s wives and concubines were given unto him of me. . . .

40 I am the Lord thy God, and I gave unto thee, my servant Joseph, an appointment, and restore all things. . . .

52 And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith, receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph, and who are virtuous and pure before me; and those who are not pure, and have said they were pure, shall be destroyed, saith the Lord God. . . .

54 And I command mine handmaid, Emma Smith, to abide and cleave unto my servant Joseph, and to none else. But if she will not abide this commandment she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord; for I am the Lord thy God, and will destroy her if she abide not in my law.

55 But if she will not abide this commandment, then shall my servant Joseph do all things for her, even as he hath said; and I will bless him and multiply him and give unto him an hundredfold in this world, of . . . wives and children, and crowns of eternal lives in the eternal worlds. . . .

61 And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood—if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then is he justified; he cannot commit adultery for they are given unto him; . . .

62 And if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, . . .

63 But if one or either of the ten virgins, after she is espoused, shall be with another man, she has committed adultery, and shall be destroyed; for they are given unto him to multiply and replenish the earth, . . . and for their exaltation in the eternal worlds, that they may bear the souls of men; . . .

64 . . . if any man have a wife, who holds the keys of this power, and he teaches unto her the law of my priesthood, as pertaining to these things, then shall she believe and administer unto him, or she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord your God; for I will destroy her; . . .

65 Therefore, it shall be lawful in me, if she receive not this law, for him to receive all things whatsoever I, the Lord his God, will give unto him, . . . and he is exempt from the law of Sarah, who administered unto Abraham according to the law when I commanded Abraham to take Hagar to wife. . . .

66 Doctrine and Covenants, section 132, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981. Emphasis added.
It is obvious that the revelation was specifically worded to justify polygamy and to use spiritual coercion to get Emma to accept it or be damned. In relation to verse one, the LDS Church gave the following explanation to the use of the word “concubines”:

**D&C 132:1. What Are Concubines?**

*Concubine*, a word commonly used in the Old Testament, was defined by Elder Bruce R. McConkie as follows: “Anciently they were considered to be secondary wives, that is, wives who did not have the same standing in the caste system then prevailing as did those wives who were not called concubines. There were no concubines connected with the practice of plural marriage in this dispensation, because the caste system which caused some wives to be so designated did not exist.”

By this definition it would seem that all of Joseph Smith’s wives would fall into the category of “concubine.” They certainly did not have the “same standing” as Emma, were not publicly acknowledged and had no rights of inheritance.

Mormons today try to separate eternal marriage from polygamy but the revelation makes these one and the same. In section 132 the Biblical term “eternal life” is redefined as “eternal lives,” thus changing man’s goal of being with God eternally to that of becoming a God with the ability to procreate eternally. To inherit eternal procreation, or “eternal lives.” Those who enter into this covenant “are not angels but are gods.” In opposition to the clear teaching of the Bible that there is only one God, Smith taught there is an endless stream of men progressing to godhood.

Mormons today seem to view D&C section 132 as mainly relating to a man being sealed to his wife in an eternal marriage, with plural marriage only an outdated appendage. The early Mormons viewed it just the opposite, declaring that plural marriage was necessary for exaltation. In Joseph Smith’s day eternal marriage was synonymous with plural marriage. Curiously Smith wasn’t even sealed to his legal wife, Emma, until May 28, 1843, after he had already been sealed to two dozen women. If Smith’s concern was to be married eternally to his wife why did he put so many women ahead of her? It seems obvious that the issue was getting her to accept plural marriage. Once she agreed to the new doctrine Smith had her sealed to him.

**Virgins or Married Women?**

In contradiction to the revelation restricting marriage to “virgins” Smith married over a dozen women with living husbands. Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, married and a faithful Mormon, told how Joseph Smith had approached her to be his secret plural wife with the claim that God had sent an angel to him “three times between the year of ’34 and ’42 and said I [Smith] was to obey that principle [plural marriage] or he would lay (destroy) me.” Todd Compton observed that “Smith linked plural marriage with salvation, as he did in later marriages. If Mary accepted him as her husband, her place in heaven would be assured.”

Richard Van Wagoner tells more of Mary’s sealing to Smith:

Mary Elizabeth Rollins, married to non-Mormon Adam Lightner since 11 August 1835, was one of the first women to accept the “celestial marriage” teachings of the prophet. “He was commanded to take me for a wife,” she declared. “I was his, before I came here,” she added. Brigham Young secretly sealed the two in February 1842 when Mary was eight months pregnant with her son, George Algernon Lightner. She lived with Adam Lightner until his death in Utah many years later. In her 1880 letter to Emmeline B. Wells, Mary explained: “I could tell you why I stayed with Mr. Lightner. . . . I did just as Joseph told me to do, as he knew what troubles I would have to contend with.”

67 Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual, p. 327.
69 D&C Student Manual, p. 327.
70 Isaiah 43:10-11; 44:6, 8, 24; 45:5-7, 22.
72 Smith, Nauvoo Polygamy, pp. 223-224.
73 Compton, In Sacred Loneliness, p. 212.
74 Van Wagoner, Mormon Polygamy, p. 43.
No explanation is given as to how married women met the criteria for “virgins” in Smith’s plural marriage revelation.

**Presenting the Revelation to the Nauvoo Stake High Council**

With rumors of polygamy growing in number, Joseph evidently decided it was time to present the revelation to a larger audience. George Smith explains:

On August 12, 1843, as Hyrum Smith read his brother’s month-old dictated revelation to a dozen or more individuals at a Nauvoo Stake High Council meeting, reactions were mixed. Reports of the event contain references to dissent in the leadership for the first time since Oliver Cowdery’s private objection in 1838 to the prophet’s conduct with Fanny Alger or the year-ago protest of President John Bennett when he defected over what he called “gross sexual improprieties, unethical degradation, financial misbehavior, theft, and murder.” Four supporters of plural marriage, James Allred, David Fullmer, Thomas Grover, and Aaron Johnson, as well as a critic, Leonard Soby, reported on the meeting in letters and affidavits. . . .

Not long afterward, two members of the High Council, Cowles (father of Smith’s plural wife, Elvira Cowles) and Soby, withdrew from the church and revealed the content of the revelation to the public. It created a wave of confusion and discontent as these formerly esteemed leaders accused Smith and others of marital infidelity. Citizens in the surrounding area needed little prompting to join their own voices to the chorus of protesters. It was during this period, before and after the Smith brothers’ martyrdom, that many first realized that plural marriage was, in fact, a reality among the LDS hierarchy.75

Even though Emma knew of Joseph’s marriages to the Partridge sisters and the Lawrence sisters, and possibly a few others, she must not have known the extent of Smith’s marriages. On August 16, 1843, Smith’s secretary, William Clayton, recorded in his diary:

This A.M. Joseph told me that since E[mma] came back from St. Louis she had resisted the P[riesthood] in toto and he had to tell her he would relinquish all for her sake. She said she would [have] given him E[liza] and E[mily] P[artridge], but he knew if he took them she would pitch on him and obtain a divorce and leave him. He however told me he should not relinquish anything.76

Then on August 18 Clayton records a conversation with Joseph about a visit he and Emma made at the Woodworths.

Evidently this was the first that Emma realized Joseph had already wed young Flora Woodworth, his eighteenth plural wife:

President Joseph told me that he had difficulty with E[mma] yesterday. She rode up to Woodworths with him and called while he came to the Temple. When he returned she was demanding the gold watch of F[loria]. He reproved her for her evil treatment. On their return home she abused him much and also when he got home. He had to use harsh measures to put a stop to her abuse but finally succeeded . . .77

One of the last leaders to be introduced to polygamy by Joseph Smith was apostle Amasa Lyman in 1844. George Smith details Lyman’s conversion to plural marriage:

Amasa Lyman . . . was preparing to go to Boston in the spring of 1844 when Joseph Smith spoke with him about plural marriage. As Lyman reported it, “a few days after the [April] conference, I had an interview with the Prophet, in which he taught me some principles on celestial marriage. On the day of my parting with him, he said as he warmly grasped my hand for the last time, ‘Brother Amasa, go and practice on the principles I have taught you, and God bless you.’” . . . Lyman understood that the “plurality of wives” was a matter that “as yet was to be kept carefully from the ears of the world.” In Lyman’s last conversation with the prophet, Smith used “impressive words” to emphasize “the import and obligation of this ancient law,” saying that “to obey that law” was “one of the essentials to salvation.”

**Joseph’s ultimatums**

At first, Lyman found polygamy to be “strange, startling, astonishing” and “rather too much to grasp in a moment.” He also perceived a “tone” of “power and authority” in Smith’s voice. More and more often, Joseph would threaten colleagues with eternal damnation if they did not accept the promised rewards of plural marriage. If Lyman rejected this principle, Joseph told him, “he would be damned.” . . . When he returned from the East, he dutifully married eight women and by old age would father thirty-seven children.78

While Nauvoo Polygamy discusses Smith’s various wives, it also details the extent of early polygamy among the leaders in Nauvoo. George Smith offers the following tally:

From 1843 through the first half of 1844, Joseph Smith expanded the number of his confidants. John Bennett had broken the story to the newspapers, but publicity had not

75 Smith, Nauvoo Polygamy, p. 369.
77 Smith, An Intimate Chronicle, p. 118.
78 Smith, Nauvoo Polygamy, pp. 363-364.
Events Leading to Joseph’s Death

The last few months of Joseph’s life were full of strife and confusion, much of it in relation to polygamy. Emma seems to have enlisted the help of various friends to keep an eye on Joseph’s movements. On April 17, 1844, the *Warsaw Signal* reported the following:

“We learn direct from Nauvoo, that Jo Smith, on Friday last, turned his wife out of doors. “Sister Emma’s” offence was, that she was in conversation with Mr. Ebenezer. Robinson, and refused, or hesitated to tell the Prophet on what subject they were engaged. The man of God, thereupon, flew into a holy passion, and turned the partner of his bosom, and the said Robinson, into the street—all of which was done in broad day-light, and no doubt in the most approved style."

In his journal and autobiography, Joseph Lee Robinson, Ebenezer’s brother, frankly admitted that Joseph and Emma had a fight over plural marriage:

“... Angeline Ebenezers wife had some time before this had watched Brother Joseph the Prophet had seen him go into some house that she had reported to sister Emma the wife of the Prophet it was at a time when she was very suspicious and jealous of him for fear he would get another wife... she was determined he should not get another if he did she was determined to leave and when she heard this she Emma became very angry and said she would leave... It came close to breaking up his family... the Prophet felt dreadful bad over it, he went to my Brothers and talked with Angeline on the matter, and she would not give him any satisfaction, and her husband did not reprove his wife, and it came to pass the prophet cursed her severely, ... I thought that I would not have a wife of mine do a thing of that kind for a world, but if she had done it she should get upon her nees at his feet and beg his pardon. ...”

Smith was not only facing opposition at home, some of his top leaders came out against him and his new doctrines. Besides teaching polygamy and multiple gods, Smith also had himself secretly ordained king and was planning the political kingdom of God. Several leaders filed lawsuits against Smith, one was by William Law. After repeatedly pleading with Joseph to renounce plural marriage, Law decided to bring a lawsuit against Smith for “living in an open state of adultery” with Maria Lawrence. Richard Van Wagoner explains:

“Smith commented on the charges the next day in Sunday services, noting that such accusations were not new to him. “Another indictment has been got up against me,” he said. “I had not been married scarcely five minutes, and made one proclamation of the gospel, before it was reported that I had seven wives, ... What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one.” (HC 6:408-11). Smith, who had been sealed to Maria and Sarah Lawrence in the summer or early fall of 1843, had himself appointed legal guardian of the two orphan girls on 4 June 1844, two weeks after Law’s charges were filed. ...

Law’s charge of adultery against the prophet was apparently his final attempt to get Smith to abandon polygamy. ... On 18 April 1844 Law and his wife Jane and brother Wilson were excommunicated for “unchristianlike conduct.” Ten days later they and other dissidents founded a separatist church, declaring Smith a fallen prophet. The group issued a prospectus for an opposition newspaper, *The Nauvoo Expositor*, 10 May 1844.

Nauvoo Expositor Destroyed

On June 7, 1844, the first and only edition of the *Nauvoo Expositor* was printed. In it were charges of secret polygamy, the doctrine of plural gods and the Mormons’ political agenda:

“We are earnestly seeking to explode the vicious principles of Joseph Smith, and those who practice the same..."
abominations and whoredoms; which we verily know are not accordant and consonant with the principles of Jesus Christ . . .

Many of us have sought a reformation in the church, without a public exposition of the enormities of crimes practiced by its leaders . . . but our petitions were treated with contempt; and in many cases the petitioner spurned from their presence, and particularly by Joseph . . .

It is a notorious fact, that many females . . . are requested to meet brother Joseph, or some of the Twelve, at some insulated point, or at some particularly described place on the bank of the Mississippi, or at some room, which wears upon its front—Positively NO admittance . . . they are told, after having been sworn in one of the most solemn manners, to never divulge what is revealed to them, with a penalty of death attached, that God Almighty has revealed it to him that she should be his (Joseph’s) Spiritual wife; . . . The Prophet damn’s her if she rejects. . . .

Our hearts have mourned and bled at the wretched and miserable condition of females in this place; many orphans have been the victims of misery and wretchedness, through the influence that has been exerted over them, under the cloak of religion and afterwards, in consequence of that jealous disposition which predominates over the minds of some, have been turned upon a wide world, fatherless and motherless, destitute of friends and fortune; and robbed of that which nothing but death can restore. . . .

The next important item which presents itself for our consideration, is the attempt at Political power and influence, which we verily believe to be preposterous and absurd. . . .

Among the many items of false doctrine that are taught the Church, is the doctrine of many Gods, one of the most direful in its effects that has characterized the world for many centuries. We know not what to call it other than blasphemy, for it is most unquestionably, speaking of God in an impious and irreverent manner.—It is contended that there are innumerable Gods as much above the God that predominates over the minds of many centuries. We know not what to call it other than blasphemy, for it is most unquestionably, speaking of God in an impious and irreverent manner.—It is contended that there are innumerable Gods as much above the God that predominates over the minds of the same, one of the most direful in its effects that has characterized the world for many centuries. We know not what to call it other than blasphemy, for it is most unquestionably, speaking of God in an impious and irreverent manner.—It is contended that there are innumerable Gods as much above the God that predominates over the minds of

The next important item which presents itself for our consideration, is the attempt at Political power and influence, which we verily believe to be preposterous and absurd.

Joseph’s Widows

Between 1844 and 1846 LDS Church leaders would marry twenty-four of Joseph Smith’s thirty-seven plural wives before their trek west. George Smith explains:

Susa Young Gates recalled that her father, Brigham, approached the widows to tell them that “he and his brethren stood ready to offer themselves to them as husbands” in order to contribute to their comrade’s offspring, and that the widows were free to “choose for themselves.” Within just a half a year, six of the women married Young, four married Kimball, and one married Amasa M. Lyman. Over the next year and a half, Young, Kimball, and six others . . . would marry thirteen more of the widows for a total of twenty-four of Smith’s thirty-eight wives.

84 Nauvoo Expositor, June 7, 1844, pp.1-2.
85 Ibid., p. 2.
86 History of the Church, vol. 6, p. 432.
87 Warsaw Signal, June 12, 1844.
89 Brodie, No Man Knows My History, pp. 392-394.
90 Smith, Nauvoo Polygamy, p. 282.
Emma Smith, rejecting Brigham Young’s leadership and polygamy, stayed in Illinois and married Lewis Bidamon, a non-Mormon, in December of 1847.91

Smith’s Legacy

LDS scholars Danel Bachman and Ronald K. Esplin defend Joseph Smith’s practice of polygamy with this claim:

Far from involving license, however, plural marriage was a carefully regulated and ordered system. Order, mutual agreements, regulation, and covenants were central to the practice.92

This might cover many of the later plural marriages in Utah but it hardly is a picture of the way Smith took wives. Pressuring a woman into accepting him as a husband by using claims of an angel with a drawn sword, threatening Smith with destruction if she refuses him, hardly seems to fit the description given above. Smith’s relationship with numerous teenagers and married women looks like “license.” These “mutual agreements” usually did not include Emma’s consent and Smith did not establish a home with any of these women or publicly acknowledge them. The Partridge sisters entered into plural marriage in good faith but after repeated run-ins with Emma, Joseph seems to have divorced them and sent them on their way. How does this fit with the claim of eternal “covenants”?

It is estimated that there are currently 60,000 people who claim Joseph Smith as their prophet (even though not members of the LDS Church) who are involved in polygamy, spread among a number of off-shoot groups and independent polygamists.93 The recent raid on the polygamist group in Texas and the arrests in Canada have brought the issue to public attention and created a public relations nightmare for the Mormons. While the LDS Church tries repeatedly to distance itself from the current practice there is no denying that the only reason there are splinter groups today practicing polygamy is because of Joseph Smith and his revelation, which is still printed in the Doctrine and Covenants.

After looking at the heartbreaks and confusion of polygamy one is drawn to Christ’s simple teaching:

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” (Matthew 19:5)

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91 Newell and Avery, Mormon Enigma, p. 246
92 Encyclopedia of Mormonism, “Plural Marriage,” vol. 3, p. 1094
93 Salt Lake Tribune, June 7, 1998
As a teenager, I remember the excitement I felt the evening my father and I were invited to visit the ruins of Central America. I envisioned a fascinating adventure to discover the lost cities of the Book of Mormon lands. We never made the trip, although thousands of Latter-day Saints have. Many more have imagined the journey through the various picture books available that compare Book of Mormon stories to ancient American sites.

To Latter-day Saints, the Book of Mormon is an ancient record of great cities, peoples at war, and the rise and fall of nations. They look for its mark on the landscape of America. But archaeology has failed to unearth any concrete evidence for the Book of Mormon. In response, LDS scholars seek to validate the book’s antiquity by seeking similarities to the ancient Near East. Others see stronger connections between the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith’s own times.

Consider some examples. The Book of Mormon peoples are described using gold, silver, iron, brass, and copper. The mining, smelting, and casting of metal ores require special tools and complex processes that leave traces in the archaeological record. But scholars generally agree that metallurgy was not introduced into Mesoamerica until several centuries after the Book of Mormon story ends. What’s more, the Book of Mormon mentions the use of steel swords. But metal swords were not known in Mesoamerica before the Spanish conquest.

The Book of Mormon also speaks of many different kinds of animals, mostly those familiar in the Old World, like cattle, sheep, goats and horses. But none of these have been found in any archaeological setting that dates to Book of Mormon times. Unlike the deer, jaguar, peccary, tapir and other native species, the horse has never been found...
depicted in any of thousands of samples of Mesoamerican art — in spite of its impressive appearance.

The Book of Mormon contains anachronisms, that is, events or objects that appear out of the proper time period in which one would expect them to be present. To give just one example, Alma 16:13 describes how Nephite evangelists “went forth preaching repentance to the people...in their synagogues, which were built after the manner of the Jews.” The Book of Mormon mentions synagogues twenty-five times. But synagogues were not developed by the Jews until four hundred years after Lehi left Jerusalem. How could the writer have known how the Jews built their synagogues?

To Latter-day Saints, raising issues like this will probably seem like an “anti-Mormon” attack. A sincere inquirer should not be expected to ignore honest questions that bear on the Book of Mormon’s credibility. Yet we should raise these questions with sensitivity and humility.

New World archaeology is still a young science. Perhaps some day, an artifact or inscription will be unearthed to validate the Book of Mormon. By contrast, archaeology has repeatedly demonstrated the Bible’s historical and geographical reliability. The use of metals, as described in the Bible, has been verified at a number of sites in the Near East. A traveler today can visit the site of ancient Capernaum, where Jesus lived, or Ephesus, where the apostle Paul traveled.

A few years ago I visited the British Museum in London. There I saw a series of massive stone panels from ancient Nineveh, carved during the reign of Assyria’s King Sennacherib to commemorate the defeat of the Israelite city Lachish. Lachish is mentioned in the Bible, as is Sennacherib’s military campaign in Israel. But even after decades of archaeological work in the New World, it seems to me that the best Mormon apologists can do is create an aura of plausibility by suggesting vague similarities between the Book of Mormon and ancient Mesoamerica.

**Denied by DNA**

Recent advances in DNA research have challenged the traditional LDS understanding of where the American Indians came from, leading some to question the credibility of the Book of Mormon’s basic story. The predominant hypothesis of mainstream science is that all Native Americans are of Asian origin. This view is supported by extensive DNA sampling of American Indian populations.

The traditional LDS view, still held by most Mormons, is that, as children of Lehi, Native Americans are of Semitic origin. Latter-day Saints have believed this because it was taught by Joseph Smith and is the most straightforward way to read of the Book of Mormon text. But widespread testing of Native American DNA affords no evidence of any relationship with Semitic peoples.

While some LDS scholars claim that DNA results are inconclusive and thus do not undermine the traditional view, others have adopted the hypothesis that most Native Americans are of Asian origin, while a small subset is Semitic. If so, Nephites and Lamanites made up only a small portion of the total New World population during the Book of Mormon’s time frame.

Are the people of Central America descended from the Lamanites?

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4 On crops and animals, see *Ibid.*., 302-10.
5 On the archaeological confirmation of the Bible, see Joseph P. Free, *Archaeology and Bible History*, revised and expanded by Howard F. Vos (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).
Lamanites “are among the ancestors of the American Indians.” This change accommodates the current scientific consensus at the expense of the traditional LDS view. But if the Nephite and Lamanite clans were not alone in the Americas, it seems odd that the Book of Mormon never mentions the numerous people who must have lived in surrounding lands and who surely would have interacted with them.

**Internal versus External Evidence**

Lacking external, physical evidence, LDS scholars have turned from spade to book, hoping to establish an ancient provenance for the Book of Mormon by linking it to ancient Near Eastern texts and practices. The idea is that if the Book of Mormon accurately reflects Near Eastern elements that Joseph Smith could not have known and that cannot be traced to the Bible, then it must be taken seriously as an ancient text, even without archaeological proofs. Yet this approach can be highly speculative. The pioneer of this method, Hugh Nibley, explains it like this:

> While Book of Mormon students readily admit that no direct, concrete evidence currently exists substantiating the links with the ancient Near East that are noted in the book, evidence can be adduced—largely external and circumstantial—that commands respect for the claims of the Book of Mormon concerning its ancient Near Eastern background.

For the typical Latter-day Saint, circumstantial evidence is enough. Even though many of the parallels break down upon close inspection, those who are already committed to the Book of Mormon will find them convincing. Their testimony of the Book of Mormon is based on a spiritual experience, not on external verification. Thus LDS scholars merely need to provide enough of an argument to reassure believers and to hold the critics at bay.

**Literary Evidence**

One type of internal evidence for the Book of Mormon has to do with its language and style. If the Book of Mormon peoples came from Jerusalem, the root language behind the book would be Hebrew. Thus LDS scholars believe that the presence of Hebrew literary and grammatical patterns, called Hebraisms, give evidence of its ancient origin. The most fundamental problem with this approach is that the Book of Mormon is only available to us in translated form. Without an original document to compare, we simply cannot know whether the Hebraisms we observe are rooted in some Hebrew original or result from factors in the English text.

One example of a Hebraism in the Book of Mormon is chiasm. Chiasm occurs when a series of terms are stated and then repeated in reverse order, forming a mirror-like reflection. The elements of a chiasm follow the pattern $A^1 - B^1 - B^2 - A^2$, as in Isaiah 6:10 (KJV):

- $A^1$: Make the heart of this people fat,
- $B^1$: and make their ears heavy,
- $C^1$: and shut their eyes;
- $C^2$: lest they see with their eyes,
- $B^2$: and hear with their ears,
- $A^2$: and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

No one disputes that chiasm appears in the Book of Mormon (see Alma 41:13-14). But does this reflect a Hebrew basis of the text? After all, chiasm is not unique to the Hebrew language. Any time a reciprocal relationship or action is described, or a series of items is repeated in reverse order, chiasm will result. The common phrase, “A place for everything, and everything in its place,” is a chiasm. Thus chiasm can arise by coincidence.

Moreover, Joseph Smith’s familiarity with biblical language could account for chiasm occurring in his writings, whether intentionally or not. This explains why chiasm crops up in Smith’s writings outside the Book of Mormon. Let me give just one example, from Doctrine and Covenants 3:2:

- $A^1$: For God doth not walk in crooked paths,
- $B^1$: neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left,
- $B^2$: neither doth he vary from that which he hath said,
- $A^2$: therefore his paths are straight…

A cursory reading of the Doctrine and Covenants reveals other passages that have elements of chiasm, such as Section 6:33-34 and Section 43:2-6. Since these passages are neither ancient nor Hebrew in origin, they diminish the relevance of chiasm in the Book of Mormon.

LDS apologists also claim to find names in the Book of Mormon that are found in ancient Near Eastern sources but not in the Bible. For example, the name Alma has been found in Jewish documents from about 132 A.D. But...
without knowing what the original Hebrew spelling of these names might have been, no one can know whether any Book of Mormon name is truly parallel to a Near Eastern name or not. Moreover, many of the names listed by LDS scholars could easily be derived from biblical names with only slight modification: Sam from Samuel, Josh from Joshua, Sariah from Sarah, Chemish from Chemosh, and so forth.\(^{12}\)

One challenge in trying to establish Hebraic literary parallels is that the Book of Mormon is riddled with the language of the Bible. As illustrated with chiasm, most of the Hebraisms identified in the Book of Mormon can also be found in modern writings of Joseph Smith.\(^{13}\) This suggests that these language forms do not come from an ancient Hebrew source, but from Smith consciously or unconsciously imitating the language of the Bible.

### A Nineteenth-Century Text?

Since its publication, observers have noted that the Book of Mormon contains numerous parallels to nineteenth-century American life. In chapter one I mentioned Alexander Campbell, a leading American theologian from Joseph Smith’s time. In his review of the Book of Mormon, Campbell noted that Smith had written into the book “every error and almost every truth discussed in N. York for the last ten years.”

He decides all the great controversies - infant baptism, ordination, the trinity, regeneration, repentance, justification, the fall of man, the atonement, transubstantiation, fasting, penance, church government, religious experience, the call to the ministry, the general resurrection, eternal punishment, who may baptize, and even the question of freemasonry, republican government, and the rights of man. All these topics are repeatedly alluded to.\(^{14}\)

As Campbell observed, the Book of Mormon reflects nineteenth century American theological and political themes. It offers guidance on democracy, the practice of capitalism, and various Protestant controversies. Some scholars see parallels between the Book of Mormon’s secret societies—the Gadianton robbers—and contemporary concerns about Freemasonry. Many see the warning in 1 Nephi 13 about a “great and abominable church” as a close parallel to anti-Catholic propaganda in the 1830s.

Sermons by Nephite prophets echo the form and language of nineteenth-century evangelists. The conversion experiences described in the Book of Mormon are similar to spiritual awakenings commonly reported in the American revival movement of the early 1800s.\(^{15}\) Why are the contents of an ancient work so closely tied to the concerns of one American generation?

### Battle of the Parallels

LDS scholars counter that, as a translation, the Book of Mormon can be expected to reflect the time and place in which it was translated. They recognize many of the parallels cited, but argue that instead of being unique to nineteenth-century America, these reflect universal questions of human life. Where the Book of Mormon does speak directly to particulars of Joseph Smith’s environment, they assert, this is evidence of the book’s prophetic power. If God intended the Book of Mormon to speak to Smith’s generation, Mormons are not surprised that it addresses concrete issues from American life. From this perspective, the parallels actually confirm the prophetic accuracy of the Book of Mormon.\(^{16}\)

In the end, the question is: Which parallels are more convincing? Those that link the Book of Mormon to the ancient Near East, or those that connect it to Joseph Smith’s American context? Taking the evidence of archaeology, literary parallels, and nineteenth-century anachronisms all into account, people who are not already convinced of the Book of Mormon’s claims have reason to doubt that it is an ancient book.

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16 A thoughtful LDS perspective on the nineteenth-century parallels is found in Givens, By the Hand of Mormon, 165-67.
Excerpts from Letters and Emails

Oct. 2008. . . . I can tell that none of you have talked to a mormon about any of this, or read the book of mormon, pearl of great price, or doctrine and covenants. you are completely wrong and misguided about almost all of your accusations. you seem to put short quotes and twist them around to prove your point. you dont include the background information, audience, or anything. you are creating false judgements about the mormons.

Nov. 2008. As a 43 y.o. faithful LDS member I recently began questioning my faith and found very objective and factual data that sent me into a spiral downward concerning the Church I believed I knew. . . .

I went to FAIR after the LDS.org website missionary stated this was the only approved source for material on controversial topics. I was sick after reading some of what I found on FAIR, which included attacks on others and lots of fluffy and faith oriented replies to fact based questions. . . . Its the final straw for me. I lose all to admit to myself and my family what is clearly truth yet I am not afforded any consideration.

Dec. 2008. I am finally thanking you for all the good and hard work you and Jerald did for me and many thousands of others. I was once a Mormon, married in the Idaho Falls Temple, but quit church in my twenties. I became a scientist who remained oriented replies to fact based questions. . . . Its the final straw for me. I lose all to admit to myself and my family what is clearly truth yet I am not afforded any consideration.

Nov. 2008. I love your website! It really encourages me to seek out the truth about Mormonism. I've been surrounded by Mormons for many years now. As a Christian, it makes me so sad to see how little they know of the Truth and life Jesus offers.

Dec. 2008. Exactly, you are only in it for the money!!!!!!!!!!!

Dec. 2008. It's really sad that you all go this far to try to pull people from the truth. this website is a bunch of LIES. I will pray for all of you. . . . Remember, there is only one true church . . . . The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

Dec. 2008. This ministry has been such a blessing to me. Your books helped me so many years ago when I was leaving the Mormon church. I always look forward to receiving your newsletter. Isn't it comforting to know that the only peace in this world and in our lives comes from our Lord Jesus found in the Bible.

Dec. 2008. I am planning on leaving the LDS church, I've been a member now for about a year. The local church hasn't been all that bad. . . . The Temple is beginning to really bother me. The things I am learning about the temple seem to contradict the Bible.

Dec. 2008. Have you read the Book of Mormon? Have you prayed about it with an open heart and mind and asked our Heavenly Father if it is true? The LDS Church is Christ's restored Church on earth.

Jan. 2009. First of all I need to say that my purpose is not to contend with you or to demean you. . . . I hesitate to judge your true motives but in listening to your broadcasts and call-ins as well as reading your many anti-Mormon publications I get the heavy and dark feeling of contention and anger woven throughout your discourse. Christ never mocked or demeaned others, instead he taught with the spirit of love and humility. I have never sensed that spirit of love nor humility from either of you – quite the opposite.

March 2009. I am LDS and have been doing a lot of research on Mormonism. I was born in the church . . . . I've always felt the church was true, but have been really struggling with a lot of things over the last few years. It has always bothered me how Christ doesn't seem to be in people's heart in the LDS church. They mention him in a talk or when closing a prayer or something, but I can tell there is no real love for him like I see when I talk to Christians. . . . One thing I can say is that I have been born again. I've been asking god to help me know Jesus because I knew he was missing in the LDS church and in my life.

[A week later the same man wrote about his efforts to talk to his LDS wife]

I think my wife is slowly coming around. This all just happened over the past month or so, so I just need to be patient and let it work itself out. If Shawn [McCraney] could hang in there for another four years after being born again, I'm sure I can make it for a while. . . . She's slowly starting to think "outside the box." I think she is starting to see things in a different way. My main thing is trying to help her see that Mormons don't worship Christ the same way as biblical Christianity. . . . I'm praying that she will want to know Christ more than she does and that it's all about him and not the church. . . . But I've learned that I do have to take it slow and not push too much on her at one time. After all, it took several months to find out everything I discovered myself. Thanks again for being there for me.

March. 2009. I just watched your interview with Shawn [McCraney] on YouTube. I am 22 and was raised in Mormonism. Thankfully, my parents became skeptical a few years ago and left the church. My mom told me to “google” you — and I’m happy I did. Your research has answered many of my questions. Thank you. I’m happy to have found answers and have left the church while I am still young & unmarried.

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Mormon Answer to Skepticism:
Why Joseph Smith Wrote the Book of Mormon

Robert Hullinger’s book, *Mormon Answer to Skepticism*, examines the major thought patterns of the Book of Mormon in relation to Joseph Smith’s personal development. Why did Smith view the American Indians as Israelites? Was he familiar with *View of the Hebrews*? What influence did Masonry have on the Book of Mormon? Was he disturbed by the religious controversies in the New England area?

Hullinger argues that Joseph Smith was responding to the critics of the Bible in his day, such as Thomas Paine. Paine, often referred to as the father of the American Revolution, became notorious for writing *The Age of Reason*, published in 1793–94, advocating deism and arguing against Christian doctrines.

Lucy Smith, Joseph’s mother, wrote about the family’s encounter with the writings of Thomas Paine. Shortly before Joseph Smith was born, while the Smiths were living in Tunbridge, Vermont, Lucy became interested in religion and started attending the Methodist meetings. Asael Smith, Lucy’s father-in-law, disapproved and tried to convince Joseph Smith, Sr., to quit attending. Lucy wrote that Asael “came to the door one day and threw Tom Pains age of reason into the house and angrily bade him read that until he believed it.”

Hullinger observers:

Prophecy in the Book of Mormon is a massive response to deistic objections. Smith traced prediction back to the time of Jared, including the note that prophecies from the time of Adam were on the brass plates of Laban (1 Ne 3:20) and, soon after the publication of the Book of Mormon, produced prophecies of Adam himself. . . .

No room was allowed for Paine’s charge that the prophets were “liars and impostors,” for Smith made the gift of prophecy depend upon merit. Prophets were identified by their genealogies, their properly recorded calls from God, their exemplary lives, and their fulfilled predictions.

Smith generally acknowledged the objections that skeptics had toward prophecy. He detailed the case against it as he saw it through the person of Korihor, the arch-villain and antichrist of the Book of Mormon. Korihor “began to preach unto the people against the prophecies which had been spoken by the prophets, concerning the coming of Christ” (Alma 30:6).

Further on, Hullinger states:

Fulfilled prophecy was meant to inspire faith in future fulfillment. By including signs of the coming birth and death of Christ and notice of their accomplishment in the Book of Mormon, Smith pointed that reader who had been looking for such signs to those of the coming millennium. By what the Bible and Book of Mormon describe as signs of the last days, including the discovery of the latter book, the reader was encouraged and challenged to expect the imminent wind-up of this world’s affairs and the beginning of the millennium.

In discussing Smith’s view of revelation, Hullinger concludes:

In defense of God, Joseph Smith assailed the natural revelation of deism and the static revelation of traditional Christianity. To enable revealed religion to overcome natural religion, however, he supported the deistic attack upon the view that the present Bible is God’s complete and errorless revelation to mankind. Destruction of the traditional view left him free to preserve special revelation by his own means.

A free copy of this book will be sent with every order totaling $40 or more, while supplies last. See the back page for details.

HBO’s Big Love Mormon Temple Scene

In March of 2009, the HBO series, “Big Love,” showed a re-enactment of part of the Mormon Temple ceremony. Here are two photos from the show.

To read a discussion about this episode, go to: http://blog.mrm.org/category/mormon-temple/

For more information on the Mormon temple ceremony, we recommend *Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony 1842-1990* by Jerald and Sandra Tanner.

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The Oldest Biblical Text?
Joseph Smith’s Book of Abraham Examined

By Sandra Tanner

In 1835 Joseph Smith, Jr., announced what he thought was the most important discovery in the history of biblical studies. It all began on July 3 when Michael Chandler brought his traveling exhibit of Egyptian mummies and papyri to the small Mormon community of Kirtland, Ohio. After examining the artifacts, Joseph Smith announced to his followers that the papyri contained the long-lost writings of Old Testament prophets Abraham and Joseph.1 Josiah Quincy, who visited with Smith in 1844, described his experience of being shown the papyri by Smith:

Some parchments inscribed with hieroglyphics were then offered us. They were preserved under glass and handled with great respect. “That is the handwriting of Abraham, the Father of the Faithful,” said the prophet. “This is the autograph of Moses, and these lines were written by his brother Aaron. Here we have the earliest account of the Creation, from which Moses composed the first Book of Genesis.”2

By the time of Smith’s death, he had translated only a portion of the papyri that was attributed to Abraham. While this new record followed the creation story, it varied in significant ways from that of Genesis. Smith’s claim, if valid, would make these papyri the oldest biblical manuscripts in existence. Writing in 1938, Dr. Sidney B. Sperry, of Brigham Young University, boasted of the importance of the find:

The Book of Abraham will some day be reckoned as one of the most remarkable documents in existence . . . the author or editors of the book we call Genesis lived after the events recorded therein took place. Our text of Genesis can therefore not be dated earlier than the latest event mentioned by it. It is evident that the writings of Abraham . . . must of necessity be older than the original text of Genesis. I say this in passing because some of our brethren have exhibited surprise when told that the text of the Book of Abraham is older than that of Genesis.3

Although the finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1945 would eventually push the date of the oldest Bible manuscripts back to the second century BC, they still would not be as old as Smith’s claim for the writings of Abraham. Thus, if Smith’s assertion were accurate, the papyri in his possession would be priceless. The importance placed on the papyri can be seen by the fact that in 1835 the Mormons negotiated with Chandler to buy his collection for $2,400, a significant amount in their cash-strapped community. [Approx. $60,000 today — www.measuringworth.com]

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3 Sidney B. Sperry, Ancient Records Testify in Papyrus and Stone, LDS Church Course of Study, Adult Department, M.I.A., 1938, p. 83.
Many people are aware that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS/Mormon Church) has additional writings it considers scripture besides the Bible. The most well-known of these is the Book of Mormon, whose main story line deals with an ancient group of Israelites who migrated to the Americas in 600 BC. However, few people are familiar with their other two sacred texts, the Doctrine and Covenants, containing revelations given to their prophets, and the Pearl of Great Price, composed of the Book of Moses (a revelation), the Book of Abraham (purported translation of papyrus), an extract from Joseph Smith’s revision of the Bible, and extracts from his church history. While each of Smith’s additional scriptures are open to criticism, we will focus on the problems associated with his Book of Abraham.

The Papyri

After Joseph Smith’s death, when the Mormons were forced out of Illinois in the 1840s, most of the church papers were brought west with Brigham Young. However, the Smith family retained possession of the Egyptian material, which later changed hands, and over the course of years the papyri dropped from public view.

Like the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith professed to translate the Book of Abraham from authentic ancient records. During this time the study of Egyptian hieroglyphs was in its infancy, which no doubt left Joseph Smith feeling free to offer his interpretation of the papyri without challenge. While Frenchman Jean-François Champollion had been involved in deciphering the Rosetta Stone in the 1820s, which proved to be the key to translating Egyptian hieroglyphs, his research was little known in the United States during Smith’s lifetime.

Joseph Smith first developed his Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar using various hieroglyphs from the papyri and then composed an English explanation. In July of 1835 he recorded in his history:

The remainder of this month, I was continually engaged in translating an alphabet to the Book of Abraham, and arranging a grammar of the Egyptian language as practiced by the ancients.4

He worked on his translation for the next several years, finally publishing it in the March 1, 1842, issue of the Mormon newspaper, Times and Seasons. The Book of Abraham was next printed in England in 1851 as part of a booklet, The Pearl of Great Price, which was later canonized in 1880. Included in the Book of Abraham were three illustrations taken from the papyri, labeled Facsimile Nos. 1, 2 and 3. On the next two pages are the three scenes with a brief explanation of each.

Facsimile No. 1 — Smith described this as “Abraham fastened upon an altar” and “The idolatrous priest of Elkenah attempting to offer up Abraham as a sacrifice.”5 However, Egyptologists would later identify this as a standard scene from the Book of the Dead, showing the god Anubis overseeing the embalming of Osiris. Underneath the couch are four canopic jars used to store the person’s organs, representing the sons of Horus.6

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5 Pearl of Great Price, Book of Abraham, Explanation of Facsimile No. 1, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981.
7 http://www.akhet.co.uk/4sons.htm
Facsimile No. 2 — In Smith’s purported translation of the text, he explained that the central figure represented “Kolob,” the first creation nearest to the “residence of God.” Other figures related to priesthood, various planets and stars, the measurement of time and “God sitting upon his throne.” However, this object is known as a hypocephalus, a magical disc placed under the head of a mummy to aid the person in his journey after death. The figures represent well-known Egyptian deities. The Mormon copy is similar to a number of other such objects in various Egyptian collections around the world. Smith identified Figure 7 (lower right area) as “God sitting upon his throne” while Egyptologists identify the figure as Min, the Egyptian god of male sexual potency, shown with an erection.

Facsimile No. 3 — Joseph Smith explained that this was a picture of “Abraham sitting upon Pharaoh’s throne,” with Pharaoh standing behind him. Abraham is said to be “reasoning upon the principles of Astronomy.” However, Egyptologists identify this as the Judgment Scene from the Book of the Dead, showing Isis standing behind the seated figure of Osiris. Standing in front of the seated figure, according to Smith, is a “Prince of Pharaoh.” Smith identified the next figure as “Shulem, one of the king’s principal waiters” and the black figure as “Olimlah, a slave belonging to the prince.” However, the three figures in front of Osiris have been identified as Maat (the goddess of truth), the deceased person (for whom the papyrus was made), and the black figure is the half-man, half-jackel deity Anubis.

Smith’s Translation Under Scrutiny

By 1860 Egyptology had advanced to the point where it could be used to test Joseph Smith’s ability as a translator. Even though the papyri were no longer known to be in existence, the printed facsimiles from the Book of Abraham could still be scrutinized. They were submitted to the French Egyptologist M. Theodule Deveria, who not only accused Joseph Smith of making a false translation but also of altering the scenes shown in the facsimiles.

By the turn of the century the study of Egyptology had progressed considerably, as seen in the 1895 classic, The Pearl of Great Price, Explanation of Facsimile No. 2.

8 Pearl of Great Price, Explanation of Facsimile No. 2.
10 R. C. Webb, Joseph Smith as a Translator, Deseret News Press, 1936, pp. 130, 165, 173, 175, 177, 179.
11 “Min is Not God,” Salt Lake City Messenger, Nov. 2008, No. 111; http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/min.htm
12 Pearl of Great Price, Explanation of Facsimile No. 3.
14 Deveria’s work was originally published in French in 1860 and then reprinted in English in A Journey to Great Salt Lake City, by Jules Remy and Julius Brenchley, London: W. Jefts, 1861. Then in 1873, T. B. H. Stenhouse included Deveria’s work in his book, Rocky Mountain Saints. Included were side-by-side comparisons of Smith’s interpretation with Deveria’s explanation of the facsimiles.
Egyptian Book of the Dead, by Sir E. A. Wallis Budge. The growing body of knowledge on Egyptology led Rev. F. S. Spalding, Episcopal Bishop of Utah, to contact eight leading scholars of his day and request their evaluation of Joseph Smith’s illustrations in the Book of Abraham. These statements were published in 1912 under the title, Joseph Smith Jr., As a Translator.

One of the scholars who examined Smith’s work was James H. Breasted, Ph.D., Haskell Oriental Museum, University of Chicago, who wrote:

These three facsimiles of Egyptian documents in the “Pearl of Great Price” depict the most common objects in the mortuary religion of Egypt. Joseph Smith’s interpretations of them as part of a unique revelation through Abraham, therefore, very clearly demonstrate that he was totally unacquainted with the significance of these documents and absolutely ignorant of the simplest facts of Egyptian writing and civilization.

The other Egyptologists whom Spalding contacted rendered similar verdicts of Smith’s erroneous interpretations.

That same year the New York Times ran a large article with the startling headline, “MUSEUM WALLS PROCLAIM FRAUD OF MORMON PROPHET.” The article quoted the various Egyptologists contacted by Bishop Spalding and gave an overview of the problems with Joseph Smith’s interpretation. The article explained:

Much of Bishop Spalding’s work was done in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in this city. The ten rooms of the Egyptian collection yielded proof in such abundance that any layman, even in Egyptology, can take the drawings as published in the sacred Mormon record and reproduced on this page of THE TIMES, and find dozens of duplicates of certain figures in them on the walls of the Museum and in its cases of Egyptian objects.

The following year saw another challenge to the facsimiles. Noted scholar Samuel A. B. Mercer published his article “Joseph Smith as an Interpreter and Translator of Egyptian” in 1913. Dr. Mercer observed:

No one can fail to see that the eight scholars [quoted in Bishop Spalding’s booklet] are unanimous in their conclusions. Joseph Smith has been shown by an eminently competent jury of scholars to have failed completely in his attempt or pretense to interpret and translate Egyptian figures and hieroglyphics.

Marvin Cowan, a Baptist missionary working among the Mormons, had been told by various Mormons that the pamphlet by F. S. Spalding was outdated so in 1966 he decided to ask various scholars for their assessment. He sent copies of the Book of Abraham facsimiles to Richard A. Parker, of the Department of Egyptology at Brown University, and requested his opinion of the photos. Parker responded:

The pictures you sent me [from the Book of Abraham] are based upon Egyptian originals but are poor or distorted copies. . . . The explanations are completely wrong insofar as any interpretation of the Egyptian original is concerned. . . . Number 1 is an altered copy of a well known scene of the dead god Osiris on his bier with a jackal-god Anubis acting as his embalmer.

One has only to look at any credible source on Egyptian deities to see that the figures in the Book of Abraham facsimiles are standard images from the Book of the Dead. To suggest that Abraham would use pictures of pagan gods to illustrate the true God is in direct opposition to the teachings in the Old Testament. Genesis 17:1 records that God revealed Himself to Abraham saying “I am the Almighty God.” Later God instructed Moses, “I am the LORD: and I appeared unto Abraham,… but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them” (Exodus 6:2-3 KJV). In the Ten Commandments, God specifically stated that He had delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt and that they were to reject all pagan deities, specifically stating that no one was to make any image or likeness of God (Exodus 20:2-4). Joseph Smith’s identification of these pagan deities with the God of Abraham makes no more sense than to claim that a statue of the Buddha actually represents Jesus Christ in prayer or claiming the Hindu goddess Parvati is actually the Virgin Mary.

Today the Book of Abraham contains the same claim of being an authentic translation of the papyri as it was originally published in the Times and Seasons:

The Book of Abraham, Translated from the Papyrus, by Joseph Smith. A translation of some ancient records, that have fallen into our hands from the catacombs of Egypt. — The writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt, called the Book of Abraham, written by his own hand, upon papyrus.  

While the facsimiles have come under attack, there was no way for the scholars to test Smith’s purported translation of the papyri, as it was assumed they had been destroyed. However, Smith’s translation would be put to the test in 1967 when a number of pieces of the long-lost papyri were presented to the LDS Church by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

After Joseph Smith was killed in 1844 the mummies and papyri were retained by his widow, Emma Smith. Some of these were later sold to the Chicago museum, which burned to the ground in the great Chicago fire of 1871. Thus it was assumed that the papyrus designated as the Book of Abraham had been destroyed. Actually, some of Smith’s papyri had been preserved and were eventually purchased by the Metropolitan Museum in 1947. Since the papyri only dated to the time of Christ, and the museum had a number of examples from that period, the museum felt they could divest themselves of the pieces. Working through Prof. Aziz Atiya, of the University of Utah, they arranged the return of the papyri to the LDS Church. This was not exactly a gift, but had been made possible by an anonymous gift to the museum.

Once photos of the papyri were printed in the 1968 Improvement Era, the official LDS magazine, scholars began the search to determine which piece Smith had utilized in his translation. The piece was identified by comparing Joseph Smith’s translation papers and his Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar with the papyri. It was soon determined that Smith had used characters from the piece of papyri identified as “XI. Small ‘Sensen’ text (unillustrated),” also referred to as the Book of Breathings (a condensed version of the Book of the Dead). Below is an illustration of the way the hieroglyphs line up on the papyri and the way they are aligned in Smith’s manuscript next to the alleged English translation.

All of the first two rows of characters on the papyri fragment can be found in the manuscript of the Book of Abraham. Other manuscript pages show that he used

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20 Pearl of Great Price, Book of Abraham, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981.
23 Ibid., p. 51.
almost four lines of the papyrus to make fifty-one verses in the Book of Abraham. These fifty-one verses are composed of more than two thousand English words. A person does not have to be an Egyptologist to know that it would be impossible to translate over two thousand words from a few Egyptian characters.

This piece, Joseph Smith’s XI Small “Sensen” text, has been translated by several Egyptologists with virtual agreement. Contrary to Smith’s version, the English translation takes up just slightly more space than the actual hieroglyphs. Professor Parker’s translation was published in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought:

1. [.....]this great pool of Khonsu
2. [Osiris Hor, justified], born of Taykhebyt, a man likewise.
3. After (his) two arms are (fast)ened to his breast, one wraps the Book of Breathings, which is
4. with writing both inside and outside of it, with royal linen, it being placed (at) his left arm
5. near his heart, this having been done at his
6. wrapping and outside it. If this book be recited for him, then
7. He will breathe like the soul(s of the gods) for ever and
8. ever.

Mormon scholars, realizing the problems of defending a literal translation for the Book of Abraham, have now proposed that either (1) Smith didn’t use the “Sensen” text and the piece Smith did use no longer exists or (2) it doesn’t have to be a literal translation of the papyrus, but could be a revelation triggered by looking at the artifacts. Some also propose that Smith used the drawings from the papyri only to illustrate his revelation, not that they originally were drawn to illustrate a composition by Abraham. However, the heading of the Book of Abraham still carries the official statement that it is a translation of the papyrus. If the Book of Abraham is a product of revelation, not an actual translation, and the facsimiles were not drawn to illustrate Abraham’s text, one wonders why the Mormons needed to invest so much money to acquire these pagan documents in the first place? In Joseph Smith’s day, the papyri were certainly presented to the public as actually documents in the first place? In Joseph Smith’s day, the need for plural wives in order to increase one’s posterity, have served as a reinforcement of his new teaching on the priesthood and endless posterity. This has been ignored. In the current LDS college manual, The Pearl of Great Price Student Manual, the verse is not discussed. There is instead a quote from the First Presidency about the granting of priesthood to all worthy men “without regard for race or color.”

Chapter 2 redefines the Abrahamic covenant as the priesthood and endless posterity. This has been interpreted as meaning celestial (temple) marriage. The Book of Abraham was published at a time when Joseph Smith was trying to secretly introduce the doctrine of plural marriage to a few of the church leaders and this text would have served as a reinforcement of his new teaching on the need for plural wives in order to increase one’s posterity, to fulfill the law of Abraham. The chapter ends with God instructing Abraham to lie about Sarai being his sister. This contradicts Genesis 12:12-13 where it is Abraham, not God, who comes up with the idea of lying. One assumes that Smith redirected this story to justify himself to the church leaders for his lying to his wife and the public about his secret polygamy. If God could tell Abraham to lie, why not Smith?

28 Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pp. 312-313.
32 The Pearl of Great Price Student Manual, Religion 327, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2000, p. 32.
33 Ibid., p. 34.
34 Doctrine and Covenants 132:30-32.
Chapter 3:21-27 introduces the concept of pre-mortal existence, that men and women had a prior life (“coexisted”) with God before being born on earth. Those who were “noble” in their pre-earth life (man’s first estate) were to be the “rulers” on earth (man’s second estate). This led to an interpretation that everyone’s birth on earth is a direct result of his/her worthiness in a prior life in heaven, thus the belief that those more valiant were born black while the righteous were born white.36 The Bible, however, clearly teaches that only the Godhead has eternal existence. We are God’s creation and did not have a spiritual existence prior to our birth on earth. When Jesus declared, “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58 KJV), He is claiming to be truly God and that Abraham had a beginning. In Zechariah 12:1 we read that God “formeth the spirit of man within him” (KJV).

Chapters 4 and 5 of the Book of Abraham seem to be a rewrite of the Genesis creation story with the addition of multiple gods involved in the process. For instance, verse 3 reads “And they (the Gods) said: Let there be light; and there was light.” Curiously, this contradicts his earlier revelation of Moses’ account: “And I, God, said: Let there be light; and there was light.”37 If Moses was as inspired as Abraham, why didn’t he understand that the creation was accomplished by a council of gods? During the early years of Mormonism, Joseph Smith preached the standard doctrine of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. However, by the 1840s he had begun to teach a plurality of gods, completely ignoring the biblical doctrine of one eternal, unchanging God and even contradicting his earlier writings.38

Test the Spirits

The Bible calls us to “test the spirits” and examine the teachings of those claiming to be prophets.39 When we apply these tests to Joseph Smith and his book of scripture, we are left with (1) a book that is not an authentic translation of a document written by Abraham and (2) a text that teaches heretical doctrine. Therefore, the only course for the Christian is to reject both Joseph Smith and his scripture.

For more information on the Book of Abraham, see Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? chapter 22.

36 Speech of Elder Orson Hyde, delivered before the High Priests’ Quorum, in Nauvoo, April 27, 1845, printed by John Taylor, p. 30.
37 Book of Moses 2:3, Pearl of Great Price.

Joseph Smith’s Translation Problems

The significance of the Book of Abraham was recently discussed by BYU professor John Gee, at the 2009 F.A.I.R. Conference. In comparing its importance with other LDS scriptures he mentioned that “The Book of Abraham is not central to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ” and ranked it below their other books of scripture. In listing the main areas of Mormonism that should be defended was the Book of Mormon. “The Book of Mormon is true, and by that I mean that it was a record of God’s interactions with an actual ancient people,” he said. Both the Book of Mormon and Book of Abraham purport to be the actual records of “ancient people.” How does one determine which scriptures are crucial to Smith’s truth claims and which are not?

Gee noted that the Book of Abraham is seldom referenced in LDS Conference talks, Abraham 3:22-28 being the usual quote mentioned. These verses teach the doctrine of man’s pre-mortal existence as an “intelligence.” Gee feels those verses are “pretty much the only distinctive part of the book,” thereby dismissing the issue of its historicity as “simply not important to Latter-day Saints.” Lack of interest on the part of the LDS membership does not mean the questions regarding the translation are irrelevant.

Gee also argues that the papyrus used by Joseph Smith for the Book of Abraham was not the one critics have designated (“XI. Small ‘Sensen’ text (unillustrated)”) but was actually part of another longer scroll. However, this would ignore the evidence that points to the “Sensen” text as the one Smith claimed to translate:

1. Abraham 1:14 states “That you may have an understanding of these gods, I have given you the fashion of them in the figures at the beginning,” thus tying Facsimile 1 to the Abraham text.
2. The text following the drawing used for Fac. 1 identifies the person for whom the papyrus was prepared as “Hor.” Fac. 3, which would have been at the end of the scroll, also contains the name “Hor,” thus establishing it as part of the same papyrus containing the original of Fac. 1.
3. The characters on the “Sensen” text were utilized in Smith’s manuscript for the Book of Abraham and the Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar.

From this it is clear that Smith intended this papyrus to be equated with the Abraham text.

In his closing remarks Gee stated: “How the Book of Abraham was translated is unimportant. The Church does not stand or fall on the Book of Abraham.” On the other hand, critics point out that this is one area where Smith’s translations can be put to the test and he fails.

* * * * *
In trying to establish the historicity of the Book of Mormon, some LDS writers maintain that the presence of chiasmus, a poetic style used in the Bible, points to its Hebrew origins.

Mormon apologist Noel B. Reynolds explains that “chiasmus is a peculiar and long-forgotten literary form present in the very earliest Hebrew writing as well as in other ancient Near Eastern works. In the Hebrew tradition it developed into a rhetorical device in which two sets of parallel elements are presented. The first set is presented 1, 2, 3, etc., but order of presentation is inverted in the second set, 3, 2, 1” (Brigham Young University Studies, Winter 1980, p. 138).

Here is an example from Genesis 9:6 showing how the elements in the first half are mirrored in reverse order in the second half:

A. Whoever sheds
B. the blood
C. of man
C. by man shall
B. his blood
A. be shed

Here is an example from the New Testament, Matthew 19:30:

A. But many that are first
B. shall be last,
B. and the last
A. shall be first.

An example of this from the Book of Mormon would be 2 Nephi 29:13:

A. The Jews
B. shall have the words
C. of the Nephites
C. and the Nephites
B. shall have the words
A. of the Jews;
A. and the Nephites and the Jews
B. shall have the words
C. of the lost tribes of Israel;
C. and the lost tribes of Israel
B. shall have the words of the
A. Nephites and of the Jews.

LDS scholars also point out that this style was not identified as chiasmus until after the time of Joseph Smith. Thus, they reason, his use of it in the Book of Mormon demonstrates that it is a translation of an ancient text. However, a brief investigation shows there are other explanations.

First, this poetic style has always been in the Bible. In Joseph Smith’s day this was usually referred to as parallelism.

In the October 1989 Ensign article, “Hebrew Literary Patterns in the Book of Mormon,” there is mention of a book on Hebrew poetry, dated 1787, which discusses the poetic style of parallelisms. The term chiasmus is never used, but this book clearly shows that Hebrew poetic styles were recognized and studied even before Joseph Smith’s time.

LDS scholar Blake Ostler, in reviewing the book, Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins, commented:

Book of Mormon Authorship has made a prima facie case for the ancient origins of the Book of Mormon. It fails, however, to respond to scholarly criticism in some crucial areas. For example, since Welch first published his study on chiasmus in 1969, it has been discovered that chiasmus also appears in the Doctrine and Covenants (see, for example, 88:34-38; 93:18-38; 132:19-26, 29-36), the Pearl of Great Price (Book of Abraham 3:16-19; 22-28), and other isolated nineteenth-century works. Thus, Welch’s major premise that chiasmus is exclusively an ancient literary device is false. Indeed, the presence of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon may be evidence of Joseph Smith’s own literary style and genius. Perhaps Welch could have strengthened his premise by demonstrating that the parallel members in the Book of Mormon consist of Semitic word pairs, the basis of ancient Hebrew poetry. Without such a demonstration, both Welch’s and Reynold’s arguments from chiasmus are weak (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 16, No. 4, Winter, 1983, p. 143).

Second, as Ostler pointed out, the Doctrine and Covenants has examples of the same pattern. Since Joseph Smith dictated the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants, and it is not claimed that they were translations of ancient writings, obviously this pattern was part of Smith’s style. The Pearl of Great Price and Joseph Smith’s diary exhibit similar patterns.
A thesis at BYU by Richard C. Shipp, “Conceptual Patterns of Repetition in the Doctrine and Covenants and Their Implications” (Masters Thesis), arrives at a similar conclusion. Although Mr. Shipp was not trying to disprove chiasmus claims in the Book of Mormon, his study shows that Joseph Smith had picked up both the rhythm of chiasmus and parallelism. In his 1832 first vision account, Joseph claimed that he had studied the Bible since he was twelve, so it is quite conceivable that he picked up this style from his studies.

In 1993, H. Clay Gorton’s book, Language of the Lord: New Discoveries of Chiasma in the Doctrine & Covenants, was published. Gorton made the surprising assertion that he “identified 225 chiasma in the Doctrine and Covenants, which reveals a density comparable to that in the Book of Mormon” (page 24). One of his examples of chiasmus is found in a revelation “the Lord” gave to Joseph Smith on April 23, 1834. While Gorton actually quotes only one verse from this revelation, we have added the next verse to put the example in perspective:

And they shall be organized in their own names, and in their own name; and they shall do their business in their own name, and in their own names (Doctrine and Covenants 104:49-50).

While Gorton is convinced that at least the first verse is chiastically significant, most people would view this as an example of repetitiveness. He is convinced that the appearance of chiasms in the Doctrine and Covenants proves that the revelations are divinely revealed:

Finding the chiastic form as such an integral part of the Doctrine and Covenants has profound implications with respect to both the Doctrine and Covenants and the chiasmus itself. . . .

Since Joseph Smith could not have written the chiastic structure as an objective literary form, it would follow that the chiastic form itself in the Doctrine and Covenants was of inspired origin. . . . Recognizing the divine source of the chiastic form in the Doctrine and Covenants establishes the divinity of the subject matter of which the chiasma are a part (Gorton, Language of the Lord, pp. 25-26).

Critics, on the other hand, see the presence of chiasmus in the Doctrine and Covenants as another proof that it was part of Joseph Smith’s style. The logical conclusion is that Joseph Smith himself was the author of both the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants.

Third, chiasmus appears in English as well as other languages. This weakens the LDS argument that its presence signals a Semitic or divine origin.

Interestingly, even the followers of James J. Strang, rival to Brigham Young and Sidney Rigdon for leadership of the LDS movement after Joseph Smith’s death, argue for chiastic structure in Strang’s book of scripture. Here are examples from the Strangite web site:

Here is a beginner’s example of chiasmus from the Book of the Law of the Lord, chapter 39, section 1, which shows good rhythm. Notice that line A parallels line A’, and line B parallels line B’:

A YE SHALL not CLOTHE YOURSELVES
B AFTER THE MANNER of the follies of other men;
B’ but AFTER THE MANNER that is seemly and convenient,
A’ SHALL YE CLOTHE YOURSELVES.

Here is a more complex example from the FIRST CHAPTER of the 1851 Book of the Law of the Lord, with God skillfully placed in the center of the structure:

A Thou shalt not TAKE the NAME of the Lord thy God in VAIN;
B thou shalt not USURP dominion
C as a RULER; for the NAME of the Lord thy God
D is great and glorious ABOVE ALL OTHER NAMES:
E he is ABOVE ALL,
F and is the ONLY TRUE God;
F’ the ONLY JUST and upright King
E’ OVER ALL:
D’ he ALONE hath the RIGHT
C’ to RULE; and in his NAME, only he to whom he granteth it:
B’ whosoever is not chosen of him, the same is a USURPER, and unholy:
A’ the Lord will not hold him guiltless, for he TAKETH his NAME in VAIN.

(fft://www.strangite.org/Chiasmus.htm)

Chiastic structures in Joseph Smith’s writings do not prove them to be ancient or authentic any more than those in James Strang’s book prove his writings to be ancient or inspired. Chiasmus even appears in children’s nursery rhymes. Mormon writer H. Clay Gorton noted that “Fukuchi has identified the chiastic structure as an integral part of old English riddles,” and also claimed that he has discovered chiasmus in the works of Shakespeare (Language of the Lord: New Discoveries of Chiasma in the Doctrine & Covenants, by H. Clay Gorton, 1993, pages 21-22). Below is an example of chiasmus in a nursery rhyme:

A. Old king Cole
   B. was a merry old soul
   B. a merry old soul
   A. was he.
Confucius is another person who employed chiastic verse:

Don’t worry that other people don’t know you; worry that you don’t know other people
(Analects—1.16.).

Even the actress Mae West is known for her chiastic line:

It’s not the men in my life, it’s the life in my men.

Another example of chiasmus comes from Leonardo da Vinci:

Painting is poetry that is seen rather than felt, and poetry is painting that is felt rather than seen.

Obviously Confucius, Mae West and Leonardo da Vinci were not trained in chiasmus but had picked up the form as a rhetorical device. (Examples were taken from http://www.drmardy.com/chiasmus/types.shtml) In fact, one of the best known couplets in Mormonism could be said to be chiastic:

A. As man is
B. God once was,
B. as God is
A. man may become.

As one person pointed out on the Recovery From Mormonism Board, “The chiasmus ‘evidence’ is like trying to prove from a piece of music that its composer must have studied music theory. And yet there are tons of music, fulfilling the basics of music theory, produced by people who couldn’t even read and had no formal training whatsoever.”

Mormon scholars go to great lengths in their attempts to identify chiasmus in the Book of Mormon and reason that what they have found provides proof that the book must be “a product of the ancient world.” Even if chiasmus occurs in the Book of Mormon, it would not prove anything more than that Joseph Smith borrowed the chiastic style from passages found in the Bible. Some of the chiasms that H. Clay Gorton and Richard C. Shipp have identified in Joseph Smith’s Doctrine and Covenants seem to have been inspired by biblical texts. For example, on page 74 of his book, Gorton refers to Doctrine and Covenants 29:30:

\[
2] \text{that the first} \\
1] \text{shall be last} \\
1] \text{and that the last} \\
2] \text{shall be first}
\]

The source of this is clearly the words of Jesus found in Matthew 19:30:

But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.

Both Gorton and Shipp refer to Doctrine and Covenants 101:42:

\[
2] \text{He that exalteth himself} \\
1] \text{shall be abased,} \\
1] \text{and he that abaseth himself} \\
2] \text{shall be exalted.}
\]

This chiasm was borrowed from the King James Version of the Bible, Matthew 23:12:

And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

Joseph Smith is credited with many words he actually borrowed from others. Gorton, for example, refers to the Doctrine and Covenants 74:1 on page 65 of his book:

\[
2] \text{For the unbelieving husband} \\
1] \text{is sanctified by the wife} \\
1] \text{and the unbelieving wife} \\
2] \text{is sanctified by the husband}
\]

Those who are familiar with the Bible will recognize that this comes from the writings of Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:14:

For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: 
\text{else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.}

The reader will notice that Gorton has not used the last ten words which we have shown in italics. Joseph Smith plagiarized the entire passage from 1 Corinthians 7:14, including the last phrase.

As explained above, the Book of Mormon is filled with material taken from the King James Bible. It should be obvious, then, that a great deal of material attributed to Joseph Smith was actually lifted from the Bible. In his article, “Hebrew Literary Patterns in the Book of Mormon,” Mormon Hebrew scholar Donald W. Parry cited an example of synonymous parallelism in the Book of Mormon:

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Abinadi, for example, underscores what the Resurrection does for us by pairing two phrases that echo each other (Mosiah 16:10):

\[
\text{Even this mortal shall put on immortality,} \\
\text{and this corruption shall put on incorruption. (The Ensign, October 1989, page 59)}
\]

While this may seem impressive at first, when we carefully examine the passage, we see that it has been taken from the writings of Apostle Paul:

\[
\text{For this corruptible must put on incorruption,} \\
\text{and this mortal must put on immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:53)}
\]

It is obvious that although the wording has been twisted around by Joseph Smith, most of the words are identical.

On the next page, Parry gives an example of “contrasting ideas” which he found in 2 Nephi 9:39:

\[
\text{Remember, to be carnally-minded is death,} \\
\text{and to be spiritually-minded is life eternal.}
\]

This should be compared with Paul’s statement in Romans 8:6:

\[
\text{For to be carnally minded is death;} \\
\text{but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.}
\]

As in the previous example, Joseph Smith has slightly reworded Apostle Paul’s statement. The extensive plagiarism from the King James Version of the Bible in the Book of Mormon would need to be factored into any study of chiasmus. We believe that much of the claimed chiastic structure in the Book of Mormon is merely evidence of Joseph Smith’s repetitive style of writing and plagiarism.

Our examination of the Book of Mormon shows that Joseph Smith frequently repeated phrases, thoughts and even stories throughout his work. Toward the end of the 19th century, Mormon critic M. T. Lamb noticed that “the prevailing style of the Book of Mormon is so verbose, so full of inelegant and uncalled-for repetitions, that any ordinary writer can greatly excel it—often reducing its wordy sentences to one-half, and one-third, and even one-fourth their present compass without any sacrifice of thought or force or beauty . . .” (M. T. Lamb, The Golden Bible; or The Book of Mormon, Is It From God? 1887, p. 27).

Considering the effort needed to make the original gold plates of the Book of Mormon and then to engrave them, one would expect a scribe to be as concise as possible, not wordy. Nephi’s brother, Jacob complained:

\[
\text{I cannot write but a little of my words, because of the difficulty of engraving our words upon plates (Book of Mormon, Jacob 4:1).}
\]

However, lengthy sentences abound in the Book of Mormon. Here is just one example:

\[
\text{And now it came to pass that according to our record, and we know our record to be true, for behold, it was a just man who did keep the record—for he truly did many miracles in the name of Jesus; and there was not any man who could do a miracle in the name of Jesus save he were cleansed every whit from his iniquity—And now it came to pass, if there was no mistake made by this man in the reckoning of our time, the thirty and third year had passed away; And the people began to look with great earnestness for the sign which had been given by the prophet Samuel, the Lamanite, yea, for the time that there should be darkness for the space of three days over the face of the land (3 Nephi 8:1-3).}
\]

One could more easily imagine such long, rambling descriptions coming from someone spontaneously dictating to a scribe (as Joseph evidently did) than from someone painstakingly engraving each word of a long historical record. Since Smith was supposedly translating Mormon’s abridgement of the extensive history of his people, such wordy sentences become even more problematic.

B. H. Roberts, president of the LDS First Quorum of the Seventy and assistant church historian, made these revealing comments concerning repetition in the Book of Mormon:

\[
\text{Having seen how strong parallelism obtains between Jaredite and Nephite peoples in the matter of their migration, and their movements after arriving in the promised land, it remains in somewhat the same manner to show that a like sameness of repetition or parallelism obtains among the Nephites at different periods showing the same limitations, and leading to the same conclusions respecting the authorship of the Book of Mormon (Studies of the Book of Mormon, by B. H. Roberts, Signature Books, 1985, p. 264).}
\]

\[
\text{. . . I shall hold that what is here presented [concerning various accounts of Anti-Christs in the Book of Mormon] illustrates sufficiently the matter taken in hand by referring to them, namely that they are all of one breed and brand; so nearly alike that one mind is the author of them, and that a young and undeveloped, but piously inclined mind. The evidence I sorrowfully submit, points to Joseph Smith as their creator. It is difficult to believe that they are the product of history . . . (Ibid., p. 271).}
\]

Since Joseph Smith was so repetitive in his style, using the same thoughts and phrases over and over again, Mormon
scholars who search long enough are certain to find these recurring elements in an order which they consider to be chiastic in nature. In 1981, Mormon scholar John W. Welch published a 353-page book entitled, *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis*. In this book, there is a section on chiasmus in the Book of Mormon. John S. Kselman, Associate Professor of Semitic Languages at the Catholic University of America, made these observations about Welch’s work in a review published in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*:

In the introduction . . . John Welch . . . describes chiasmus as “the appearance of a two-part structure or system in which the second half is a mirror image of the first, i.e., where the first term recurs last, and the last first” (p. 10). An example of this simplest form of chiasmus is found in Isaiah 22:22:

I will place the key of the House of David on his shoulder;
when he opens, no one shall shut,
when he shuts, no one shall open.

The balance and inversion that mark the last two lines above are chiastic and can be represented schematically as AB/BA . . . .

Another paper of particular interest to me . . . is the editors’ contribution on “Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon” . . . . The instances of chiastic arrangements of material, particularly in the early parts of the Book of Mormon, are set out with clarity and with an admirably non-apologetic tone. As a non-Mormon, I would draw different inferences from the evidence, a possibility that Welch allows for, both at the beginning and at the end of this article. In evaluating this contribution, it seems to me that the point Welch makes (i.e., that the presence of chiastic structures in parts of the Book of Mormon indicates their status as ancient scripture) is weak, or at least is explainable in other ways. After all, if one wants to repeat a list of items not haphazardly, but in some sort of order, there are only two ways to do it: by mirroring the first instance (ABCD = ABCD), or by reversing it (ABCD = DCBA) (“Ancient Chiasmus Studied,” by John S. Kselman, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Vol. 17, No. 4, Winter 1984, p. 147).

Chiastic structures are often used as a way to emphasize a point. For instance, Frederick Douglass’ statement “If black men have no rights in the eyes of the white men, of course the whites can have none in the eyes of the blacks” could be seen as a chiasmus (Frederick Douglass, “An Appeal to Congress for Impartial Suffrage,” January 1867). It is often used in speeches, the most famous probably being John F. Kennedy’s statement, “Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country” (January 20, 1961, Presidential Inaugural speech).

Ross Anderson has provided the following summary of the chiasmus issue:

No one disputes that chiasm appears in the Book of Mormon (see Alma 41:13-14). But does this reflect a Hebrew basis of the text? After all, chiasm is not unique to the Hebrew language. Any time a reciprocal relationship or action is described, or a series of items is repeated in reverse order, chiasm will result. The common phrase, “A place for everything, and everything in its place,” is a chiasm. Thus chiasm can arise by coincidence.

Moreover, Joseph Smith’s familiarity with biblical language could account for chiasm occurring in his writings, whether intentionally or not. This explains why chiasm crops up in Smith’s writings outside the Book of Mormon. Let me give just one example, from *Doctrine and Covenants* 3:2.

A¹: For God doth not walk in crooked paths,
B¹: neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left,
B²: neither doth he vary from that which he hath said,
A²: therefore his paths are straight . . . .

A cursory reading of the *Doctrine and Covenants* reveals other passages that have elements of chiasm, such as Section 6:33-34 and Section 43:2-6. Since these passages are neither ancient nor Hebrew in origin, they diminish the relevance of chiasm in the Book of Mormon (Ross Anderson, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, Zondervan, 2009, pp. 73-7).


### Joseph Smith’s Plagiarism of the Bible

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THE ROLE OF PROPHET, SEER AND REVELATOR IN MORMONISM

By Sandra Tanner

Talk given May 30, 2009, at the Compassionate Boldness Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah.

At the April, 2009 annual conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Thomas Monson was formally set apart as the “Prophet, Seer and Revelator” of the church.¹

But what does this title mean and how does it function in Mormonism? Do the LDS leaders claim their revelatory process is distinct from the spiritual guidance received by a minister in answer to his prayers?

Joseph Smith founded his church on April 6, 1830. However, at that time it was called the Church of Christ, not receiving its current name until 1838. On that spring day in 1830, Smith announced that through revelation he had been designated as God’s prophet, seer, translator, revelator, and apostle.² Today Mormon literature usually shortens those titles to simply “prophet, seer and revelator.” Verse five of that early revelation instructed Smith’s followers to accept his words as if from God’s “own mouth.”

Today I want to focus on each of the three designations given to the president of the LDS Church.

1. PROPHET

First, let us look at the claim of Prophet. Throughout the Old Testament we see prophets called by God to declare His will, to call Israel to repentance, and to warn of God’s judgment. They were usually not very popular and were often opposed by the leaders and people. These men were forerunners to the final prophet, the Messiah as mentioned in Deuteronomy 18:15. Moses declared:

The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me [Moses] from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear (NKJ).

Peter makes mention of the Deuteronomy passage in Acts 3:19-26, identifying the prophet who would be like Moses as Jesus Christ. The writer of Hebrews explained that the Old Testament role of prophet was fulfilled in Christ:

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son,...³

While there are men in the New Testament who are referred to as prophets, they were not prophets in the same sense as those of the Old Testament. Also, they were not the top leaders in the Christian church, but part of local congregations, as seen in Acts, chapter 13. Mormons will often appeal to Ephesians 4:11 in support of their office of a prophet at the head of the church. But this passage says nothing about priesthood offices but is referring to various ministries within the church.

Speaks for God

When Mormons are asked to enumerate the doctrines that set their church apart from all others they usually mention that they have a living prophet. They believe that this gives their church a solid foundation that is lacking in others. Mormons do not hold their scriptures as the final authority on doctrine but instead they look to the teachings of the current president.

As a young person attending LDS meetings I often sang the song “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet to guide us in these latter days.”⁴ In fact, the Ward Teachers’ message for June 1945 instructed members that “when the prophet speaks the thinking has been done.”⁵ This attitude is currently promoted in the LDS book True to the Faith. In it members are taught that “you can always trust the living prophets…. Your greatest safety lies in strictly following the word of the Lord given through His prophets, particularly the current President of the Church.”⁶

When someone points out that this sounds like blind obedience, Mormons will often respond that the members are to pray for themselves to know the truth. They fail to see the circular reasoning behind these two concepts:

1. The prophet will never lead you astray.
2. You are to pray to know that he is speaking for God.

Of course, if you don’t get a confirmation that he speaks for God then you are the one with the problem, not the prophet, because the prophet will never lead you astray.

Speaking in 1994, Apostle L. Tom Perry explained:

What a comfort it is to know that the Lord keeps a channel of communication open to His children through the prophet.... The Lord surely understood the need to keep His doctrines pure and to trust its interpretation to only

¹ Ensign, May 2009, p. 27.
⁴ Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985, number 19.
⁵ The Improvement Era, June 1945, page 354.
one source. . . . In this way, conflict and confusion and differing opinions are eliminated.

Mr. Perry went on to quote from the second president of the LDS Church:

President Brigham Young has assured us we can have complete confidence in the prophets. He said: “The Lord Almighty leads this Church, and he will never suffer you to be led astray . . .” (in Journal of Discourses, 9:289).7

Those who study the history of Mormon doctrinal development are left to wonder about such a statement. Given the fact that President Brigham Young taught doctrines contrary to what is taught today, it is amazing to see Mr. Perry appeal to Brigham Young in affirming that the prophet will never lead you astray.

We will now look at three problem areas associated with LDS prophetic utterances.

Adam-God

The first one relates to Brigham Young’s famous teaching that Adam is our Father and God, a view not endorsed today.

In 1873 Young claimed that God had revealed that doctrine to him:

How much unbelief exists in the minds of the Latter-day Saints in regard to one particular doctrine which I revealed to them, and which God revealed to me—namely that Adam is our Father and God.8

Further on in his sermon he identified Adam as the father of our spirits, which contradicts current LDS teaching. Brigham Young repeatedly taught that there was a hierarchy of gods and that the god over our earth is Adam. Brigham Young certainly believed that his sermons were true. Speaking in 1870 Young proclaimed:

I have never yet preached a sermon and sent it out to the children of men, that they may not call Scripture.9

However, in 1976 President Spencer W. Kimball stated:

We warn you against the dissemination of doctrines which are not according to the scriptures and which are alleged to have been taught by some of the General Authorities of past generations. Such for instance is the Adam-god theory.

We denounce that theory and hope that everyone will be cautioned against this and other kinds of false doctrine.10

But this seems to contradict a statement by President Joseph Fielding Smith:

Neither the President of the Church, nor the First Presidency, nor the united voice of the First Presidency and the Twelve will ever lead the Saints astray or send forth counsel to the world that is contrary to the mind and will of the Lord.11

If one prophet claims a doctrinal revelation and then a later prophet denounces the teaching, which one is right? What are we to make of the Mormon claim that having a prophet somehow guards the church against false teaching? In a January 2002 interview, The New Yorker reported Gordon B. Hinckley as saying:

Brigham Young said if you went to Heaven and saw God it would be Adam and Eve. I don’t know what he meant by that. . . . I’m not going to worry about what he said about those things.12

In 1986 Pres. Gordon B. Hinckley gave instruction on how to deal with contradictory statements by their prophets:

We have critics who appear to cull out of a vast panorama of information those items which demean and belittle some men and women of the past who worked so hard in laying the foundation of this great cause. . . . We recognize that our forebears were human. They doubtless made mistakes.13

But if Brigham Young’s Adam-God doctrine is false, why is it not proof that he is a false prophet? Can twenty-five years of sermons on Adam-God be dismissed as simply a “mistake” or just Young’s personal opinion?

God Was Once A Man?

Another concern with the claim of prophetic teaching is Joseph Smith’s doctrine of God.

The cornerstone of Christian doctrine is that there is only one eternal God. The importance of this truth is seen in Deuteronomy 13 which specifies that a prophet can not lead you after a false god. Also, God instructed Isaiah: “I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.” Further on Isaiah recorded: “Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.”14

All Christian doctrine flows from this concept. Yet Joseph Smith taught that “it is necessary we should understand the character and being of God and how He came to be so; for I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, . . .”15

Apostle James E. Talmage discussed Joseph Smith’s teaching in his book, Articles of Faith:

We believe in a God who is Himself progressive, . . . In spite of the opposition of the sects, in the face of direct

---

8 Deseret News, June 18, 1873.
10 Ensign, Nov. 1976, p. 77.
14 Isaiah 43:10; 44:6, 8, 46:5, 9.
15 History of the Church, Vol. 6, p. 305.
charges of blasphemy, the Church proclaims the eternal truth: “As man is, God once was; as God is, man may be.”

If Joseph Smith, Brigham Young and James E. Talmage were prophets of God, how are we to reconcile their doctrines with Isaiah’s proclamation of one eternal God? They can’t all be right.

LDS Apostle Harold B. Lee declared:

I bear you my solemn witness that we have a living prophet, seer, and revelator. We are not dependent only upon the revelations given in the past . . . we have a mouthpiece to whom God is revealing his mind and will. God will never permit him to lead us astray. As has been said, God would remove us out of our place if we should attempt to do it.

Joseph Smith was killed at the age of 38, a month after teaching his most famous sermon on the plurality of gods. Brigham Young, on the other hand, lived to be 76 and taught many doctrines not embraced by the LDS Church today.

Why didn’t God remove him for teaching false doctrine?

Mormon leaders undercut the authority of scripture and past prophets by pointing everyone to the current prophet to determine truth. But this leads to the question, how can we be sure the prophet is speaking an eternal truth? As with Brigham Young’s Adam-god doctrine, is today’s teaching going to become tomorrow’s false doctrine?

Prophecy

Another problem with the claim that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God is that the majority of his prophecies failed. In 1832 he dictated section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants in which God reportedly told the saints to gather to Independence, Missouri, build a temple and the city of New Jerusalem. However, the Mormons were driven out of the area the next year and the temple still has not been built.

In verses 114-115 of section 84 Bishop Newel K. Whitney was instructed by God to travel through the cities of New York, Albany and Boston warning the people that if they rejected the message of Mormonism, God’s judgment was at the door and they would face “desolation and utter abomination.” This prophecy was obviously a failure.

In 1838 Smith tried again to gather the church, but this time to Far West, Missouri. Section 115 states that God called the church to build a temple in Far West but this failed as well. The Mormons were driven out of that area and no temple has been built on the site. Keep in mind that these revelations had a direct impact on people’s lives. Mormon families repeatedly moved, many losing their land and possessions, following these instructions.

While Deuteronomy 18:22 declares that if a prophet’s words fail he is to be judged a false prophet, Mormons have no such standard. There seems to be an unending stream of rationalizations as to why Smith’s prophecies failed. Mormons say Christians have an unrealistic view of testing prophets, insisting that prophets can make mistakes the same as anyone. Mormon apologist Jeff Lindsey defended Smith’s prophecies in these words:

... many critics of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, including some members, have unreasonable expectations of Church leaders. . . . In spite of his mistakes and errors in judgment, Joseph Smith was a prophet of God— . . . His divine calling as prophet was not based on his error-free track record or supernatural judgment, but was based on the fact that God made him prophet and put him in that office of the Church.

But why should anyone accept the claim that “God made him prophet”? What is the standard? Since it is the leaders who continually insist that the prophet cannot lead them astray, why is it unrealistic to hold him to that standard? One is left to wonder where to draw the line between false and true prophets. At what point would Mormons concede that their prophet crossed the line?

I once asked a Mormon how many failed prophecies it would take to determine that a man was a false prophet. Since he was already aware of many of Smith’s failed prophecies he had to give Smith wide leeway. He finally said if 80% of his prophecies failed he could be judged a false prophet.

He felt that the December 25, 1832, prophecy about the civil war was one of the best examples of Smith’s prophetic gift. I pointed out to him that it didn’t require a revelation for Smith to predict the civil war in section 87, as both North and South Carolina had just threatened to leave the union.

That would be like me prophesying that there will be new eruptions of violence in the Middle East in the next 5 years. Some future events are pretty easy to guess.

Also the Mormons did not put that revelation into the Doctrine and Covenants until 1876. The fact that it wasn’t put in earlier editions makes it look like they were waiting to see if there was a civil war before canonizing the prophecy.

2. SEER

Now we move to the second title given to the Mormon president, that of Seer. Smith was probably influenced by such passages as 1 Samuel 9:9 where the Biblical view of
“seer” is synonymous with “prophet” and refers to one who speaks for God. But Joseph Smith connected the seer’s power with the use of an object sometimes referred to as “Urim and Thummim,” “interpreters,” or a “seer stone.”

Joseph Smith claimed that when he retrieved the ancient record preserved on gold plates from their hiding place in a hill outside Palmyra, New York, in 1827, he also took away an object later referred to as the “Urim and Thummim,” which was supposedly prepared by God to aid in the translation of the record. This was described as two crystals set in silver bows, like large eye glasses.

By the way, LDS Church illustrations of Smith translating never depict him using these large spectacles. He is usually shown sitting at a desk and simply looking at the plates.

Joseph borrowed the name “Urim and Thummim” from the Old Testament objects used by the High Priest to determine God’s will. These were possibly small pieces of stone or wood and kept in the priest’s vestments. There does not seem to be any case in which they were used to translate a document.

The Book of Mormon has several references to these objects and associates them with the ability to translate unknown languages. In Mosiah, chapter eight, we read of some records that were found but were in an unknown script so they were taken to the king for he has wherewith that he can look, and translate all records that are of ancient date; and it is a gift from God. And the things are called interpreters. And whosoever is commanded to look in them, the same is called seer.

Even though God had reportedly preserved the Urim and Thummim, or interpreters, for centuries and had them buried with the plates to insure their translation, Joseph only used them for the first 116 pages of the Book of Mormon, which were lost by Martin Harris. All of the present Book of Mormon was evidently translated by use of a seer stone Smith found in a neighbor’s well. Book of Mormon witness David Whitmer described the process as follows:

I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, . . . A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing.

But if God is responsible for the English text, one wonders why there would have been the need for thousands of corrections to the various editions of the Book of Mormon?

Whitmer also discussed a failed revelation that came through Smith’s stone. Martin Harris was having trouble selling a portion of his farm to help pay for the printing of the Book of Mormon. Joseph’s brother, Hyrum, suggested that the copyright to the book could be sold in Canada to help cover the debt. Whitmer wrote:

Joseph looked into the hat in which he placed the stone, and received a revelation that some of the brethren should go to Toronto, Canada, and that they would sell the copy-right of the Book of Mormon. . . . but they failed entirely to sell the copy-right, returning without any money. . . . Well, we were all in great trouble; and we asked Joseph how it was that he had received a revelation from the Lord for some brethren to go to Toronto and sell the copy-right, and the brethren had utterly failed in their undertaking. Joseph did not know how it was, so he enquired of the Lord about it, and behold the following revelation came through the stone: “Some revelations are of God: some revelations are of man: and some revelations are of the devil.” So we see that the revelation to go to Toronto and sell the copy-right was not of God, but was of the devil or of the heart of man.

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27 Book of Mormon, Mosiah 8:10-13.
28 David Whitmer, An Address To All Believers in Christ, 1887, p. 12.
29 Jerald and Sandra Tanner, 3,913 Changes in the Book of Mormon, Introduction, Utah Lighthouse Ministry.
30 David Whitmer, An Address to All Believers in the Book of Mormon, 1887, p. 31.
If Smith could give false revelations through the stone, why should we trust his Book of Mormon translation through that object?

As a point of interest, Smith’s seer stone is preserved in the LDS Church First Presidency’s vault but we have never seen any reference to its use in recent times.31 Why wouldn’t the church leaders be proud of the object used to produce one of their books of scripture? Is it possible that they also know that it is simply a piece of folk magic? Without the Book of Mormon plates scholars are unable to test Smith’s translation. However, we can examine other instances of failed seership in Mormonism.

Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Bible

Shortly after Smith published the Book of Mormon he began working on a corrected version of the Bible. Numerous sections of the Doctrine and Covenants refer to this work.32 While the LDS Church only prints extracts from Smith’s revision in the back of their Bible, LDS apostle Bruce R. McConkie maintained that Smith’s version is “one of the great evidences of the divine mission of Joseph Smith.”33 However, Smith was not translating from any ancient text, but simply revising the verses as he felt led. Consequently, his work is not accepted by Bible scholars. One example of the way he expanded the text can be seen in John 1:1. The King James Version reads:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Joseph Smith, however, changed this verse to read:

In the beginning was the gospel preached through the Son. And the gospel was the word, and the word was with the Son, and the Son was with God, and the Son was of God.34

To our knowledge Joseph Smith’s rendition of this verse is not supported by any evidence. In fact, an early Greek manuscript of John 1:1, known as Papyrus Bodmer II, P66, is dated about 200 A.D. and translates like the King James Version.35

Another interesting change is Smith’s expansion of chapter 50 of Genesis, where he inserts a prophecy about himself. In his expanded text we read:

And again, a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins, . . . And that seer will I bless, and they that seek to destroy him shall be confounded; . . . and his name shall be called Joseph, and it shall be after the name of his father . . . 36

Again, there is no textual evidence for his expansion of Genesis. Mormons will often challenge a Christian on the reliability of the Bible, insisting that it has had numerous revisions. When they are asked about Joseph Smith’s Inspired Version they will usually respond that he never completed the project, even though he stated in his history that he had done so.37

Even if Smith did not complete the work, why hasn’t any succeeding president taken up the project? Why was God so insistent that Smith work on this project, even commanding him to publish the work only to let it languish in some drawer for years? If each succeeding president has been a seer in the same sense as they claim for Joseph Smith, one of them should have been able to finish the Inspired Version. Researcher Ed Ashment concluded:

Shortly after publication of the Book of Mormon in March 1830, Smith’s second canonical project was to correct errors and omissions in the Bible. . . . Smith declared that many more ancient records would come to light as part of the “restoration of all things.” . . . The belief that more books could be added to the canon has continued in Mormonism and become one of its most exciting and controversial calling cards. Since Joseph Smith’s death, however, the opening in the heavens has become more restricted. While the Reorganized LDS church [now Community of Christ] has continued to add revelations to its Doctrine and Covenants, only four revelations and two “Official Declarations” produced since Smith’s lifetime have been canonized by the Utah church.38

Not only were there no new books added to Joseph Smith’s Bible revision, he even left one out, the Song of Solomon.

Book of Abraham

A second area where Joseph Smith’s gift of translating can be put to the test is the Book of Abraham. In 1835 a man named Michael Chandler came to the Mormon community in Kirtland, Ohio, to show Smith his collection of Egyptian mummies and scrolls.

The Mormons then bought the collection for $2,400 and Smith began his work of translation. In his History of the Church we read:

. . . I commenced the translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt . . . 39

32 Doctrine and Covenants, sec. 35:20; 42:56; 45:60-61; 73:3-4; 93:53; 94:10; 104:58; 124:89.
33 Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, Bookcraft, 1979, p. 384.
34 Holy Bible, published by the Church of Jesus Christ of latter-day Saints, 1979, p. 807.
35 Tanner, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? p. 381.
36 Holy Bible, published by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979, p.799.
37 Tanner, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pp. 386-387.
This culminated in the Book of Abraham, which is part of the *Pearl of Great Price*. The heading for that work specifically claims that it is a translation of the Egyptian scrolls:

> A Translation of some ancient Records, that have fallen into our hands from the catacombs of Egypt.—The writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt, called the Book of Abraham, written by his own hand, upon papyrus.

Joseph Smith’s translation was made at a time when Egyptian hieroglyphics were just beginning to be understood. LDS apostle Orson Pratt boasted:

> The Prophet translated the part of these writings which, as I have said is contained in the *Pearl of Great Price*, and known as the Book of Abraham. Thus you see one of the first gifts bestowed by the Lord for the benefit of His people, was that of revelation—the gift to translate . . . ancient records. Have any of the other denominations got this gift among them? Go and inquire through all of Christendom and do not miss one denomination. Go and ask . . . “Can you translate ancient records written in a language that is lost to the knowledge of man?” “No,” he would say, “we cannot, it is out of my power to do it.”

However, by the end of Smith’s life scholars were able to translate many of the hieroglyphics. Egyptologists have now translated the papyri owned by Joseph Smith and they are simply part of the Egyptian Book of the Dead, and have no relationship to Abraham. If Smith were truly a prophet with the gift of seership he would have known that these were fakes. Instead, he claimed that they contained the history of a descendant of Ham. How could Smith retrieve any information from fraudulent plates?

### Hofmann’s documents

This leads us to the modern day test of the Mormon president and his claim of being a seer; the Mark Hofmann documents. The May 3, 1980, *Deseret News* announced that document dealer Mark Hofmann had discovered “A hand-written sheet of paper with characters supposedly copied directly from the gold plates in 1828, and also bearing other writing and the signature of Joseph Smith . . .” The paper went on to state, “This would make it the oldest known Mormon document as well as the earliest sample of the Prophet’s handwriting.”

The article was accompanied by a photograph showing Mark Hofmann and the LDS First Presidency examining the document referred to as the Anthon transcript. Unfortunately, this was the beginning of the greatest fraud scheme to hit the LDS Church, which would end with many investors losing their money and the murder of two Mormons by Mr. Hofmann. If President Kimball was truly a “prophet, seer and revelator,” one wonders why he was not able to discern that the document was a forgery?

Had Mr. Hofmann been exposed at that time, two Mormons would not have been killed.

Less than a year after the LDS Church leaders met with Hofmann regarding the Anthon transcript, the church bought a copy of a revelation given to Joseph Smith designating his son as his successor. The document even carried the wording, “thus saith the Lord.” This too turned out to be a forgery of Mr. Hofmann’s and an embarrassment to the LDS Church leaders’ claim of prophetic discernment. Whatever gift of translating that Smith possessed, it evidently doesn’t function in the LDS Church today.

### 3. REVELATOR

The third title given to the LDS president is that of Revelator. Apostle Bruce R. McConkie declared that “the Lord’s Church must be guided by continuous revelation. . . . The presence of revelation in the Church is positive proof that it is the kingdom of God on earth.” However, the number of “Thus Saith the Lord’s” has certainly diminished since Joseph Smith’s day.

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41 Tanner, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?, pp. 294-369D.
42 *Times and Seasons*, Vol. IV, No. 12, May 1, 1843, pp. 185-186.
43 William Clayton’s Journal, May 1, 1843, as cited in *Trials of Discipleship — The Story of William Clayton, a Mormon*, p. 117. This later became the basis of the account in the *History of the Church*, Vol. 5, p. 372.
44 http://www.utlm.org/onlineresources/kinderhookplates.htm
Even before he established the Mormon Church in April of 1830, Smith had received numerous revelations. Over one hundred of his revelations are canonized in the *Doctrine and Covenants*.

However, not all of his revelations have been placed in the *Doctrine and Covenants*. For instance, the LDS Church has a copy of the failed Canadian revelation, but is only now preparing to make it public in their new series, *The Joseph Smith Papers*.

If revelations came so plentifully to Joseph Smith, why has there been such a dearth of published revelations since his death? Bruce R. McConkie admitted:

> It is true that not many revelations containing doctrinal principles are now being written, because all we are as yet capable and worthy to receive has already been written. But the Spirit is giving direct and daily revelation to the present Brethren in the administration of the affairs of the Church.48

First, by using McConkie’s reasoning, one could argue there was no need for Joseph Smith’s revelations as we are still not able to live up to the teachings in the Bible.

Second, if revelation now comes through the less spectacular means of inner conviction, how is this any different from a Christian pastor praying about an issue and feeling the Holy Spirit leading in a particular direction? In fact, when their sixth prophet, Joseph F. Smith was questioned in 1904 during the Reed Smoot Senate hearings, regarding the revelatory process in Mormonism, he answered, “I have never pretended to nor do I profess to have received revelations.” He went on to state:

> I am susceptible, I think, of the impressions of the Spirit of the Lord upon my mind at any time, just as any good Methodist or any other good church member might be. And so far as that is concerned, I say yes; I have had impressions of the Spirit upon my mind very frequently, but they are not in the sense of revelations.49

If Joseph F. Smith was only susceptible to the impressions of the Spirit of the Lord as “any good Methodist,” then why should his word be trusted above that of any other good minister?

In 2002 a reporter for *The New Yorker* asked President Gordon B. Hinckley if he had any communications from God:

> When I asked him to describe his own revelations, Hinckley demurred. “They’re very sacred to me. They’re the kind of things you don’t want to put before the world,” he said. But he added, “There’s no doubt in my mind we’ve experienced a tremendous undertaking in the building of temples across the world, having just dedicated the hundred-and-second working temple of the Church. I believe the *inspiration* to move that work forward came from the Almighty.”50

Notice that he used the word “inspiration,” not “revelation.” Since Joseph Smith published accounts of his visions and revelations, one is left to wonder why President Hinckley would not do the same if he had received any revelations?

### Book of Commandments

While the Mormons continually criticize the preservation of the Bible, it is the LDS scriptures that have sustained deliberate alterations.

Joseph Smith’s revelations were first compiled in a book in 1833, under the title, *Book of Commandments*. In the first revelation in that book God is reported as saying, “Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them, shall all be fulfilled.”51

However, just two years later a new edition was printed, called the *Doctrine and Covenants*, where dozens of words were changed in the revelations. David Whitmer, one of the Book of Mormon witnesses, objected to the revisions:

> Some of the revelations as they now appear in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants have been changed and added to. Some of the changes being of the greatest importance as the meaning is entirely changed on some very important matters; as if the Lord had changed his mind a few years after he give [sic] the revelations, and after having commanded his servants (as they claim) to print them.52

Chapter four of the *Book of Commandments* specifically stated that the only gift God had given Joseph Smith was to translate the plates of the Book of Mormon. Yet two years later this revelation was reworded to state that translating the plates was only Joseph’s first gift, thus reversing the original statement. If we are to believe that the revelations were from God and printed in 1833 by His direction, why would there be a need to rewrite many of the revelations just two years later?

Besides the changes in Joseph Smith’s revelations, textual revisions have been made in the Book of Mormon, Book of Moses and Book of Abraham. Each of these books is claimed to have come through divine revelation.

### Plural Marriage

Our next example of changing revelations is the LDS doctrine on marriage. Section 101 of the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants* stated that the LDS Church denounced polygamy and believed a man should have only one wife. However, Joseph Smith was secretly teaching that God revealed to him

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48 McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, p. 650.
51 Book of Commandments, for the Government of the Church of Christ, 1833, chapter 1, p. 6.
the doctrine of plural marriage, even sending an angel with a drawn sword to press him into obedience to the command.\footnote{53} This doctrine was considered so important that Smith secretly married thirty-seven women in this new order.\footnote{54}

His revelation on plural marriage is printed in the current \textit{Doctrine and Covenants} as section 132. In it God instructs Smith that once this doctrine is revealed to a man, he must live it or be damned.\footnote{55}

Smith soon introduced the doctrine to his close associates and by the time the Mormons left Nauvoo in 1846 there were 196 men and 719 women secretly living in polygamy.\footnote{56} The fact that plural marriage was illegal in Illinois shows how important the practice must have been to the early Mormons. They considered it a command of God. Yet today the LDS Church has changed the emphasis to the early Mormons. They considered it a command of God. Yet today the LDS Church has changed the emphasis of section 132 and teaches that only temple marriage, not polygamy, is necessary for eternal life. In fact, references to Joseph Smith’s and Brigham Young’s plural wives are carefully edited out of current LDS teaching manuals.

Brigham Young took this doctrine so seriously that he eventually married fifty-five women in plural marriage.\footnote{57} After the Mormons settled in Utah territory Brigham Young proclaimed “The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy.”\footnote{58} In response to the growing pressure from the government to abandon polygamy in 1865, the LDS magazine \textit{Millennial Star} proclaimed:

\begin{quote}
We have shown that in requiring the relinquishment of polygamy, they [the US Government] ask the renunciation of the entire faith of this people. . . . There is no half way house. The childish babble about another revelation is only an evidence how half informed men can talk.\footnote{59}
\end{quote}

This was the position of the LDS Church up until 1890. After federal laws had been enacted against polygamy, years of arrests and resisting the government’s demand that the practice be stopped, the president of the LDS Church issued the 1890 Manifesto instructing the Mormons to cease entering into plural marriages.\footnote{60} When one reads Declaration-1, in the \textit{Doctrine and Covenants}, it comes across as a decision made to keep the leaders of the church out of jail.

Even though the suspension was claimed to come by way of revelation, no such document has been published, only a statement that such a revelation was given. Evidently the top church leaders didn’t feel bound by the Manifesto as at least 220 of them secretly took additional wives after 1890. It wasn’t until the Smoot hearings in 1904 that the church genuinely made an effort to end plural marriage.\footnote{61}

But how does one reconcile the change? Section 132 is presented as a revelation from God on the “new and everlasting covenant” which included plural marriage. Then how can the church change it? Does God bow to political pressure? If baptism were outlawed, would the Mormons give that up as well? How could both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young declare that polygamy was necessary for eternal life only to have a later prophet state just the opposite? How does this give a person a firm foundation regarding doctrine?

\textbf{Blacks}

Another problem in relation to LDS revelatory claims is their changing position on blacks. Even though a few blacks were allowed to be ordained to the priesthood during Joseph Smith’s lifetime, there was no clear teaching regarding their ordination. Smith’s writings gradually moved toward viewing blacks as unqualified.

The Book of Moses and the Book of Abraham carry statements relating to those who are black and who can’t hold the priesthood.\footnote{62} From these Brigham Young concluded that all blacks were to be denied the priesthood until the return of Christ. In 1854 Young preached:

\begin{quote}
When \textbf{all} the other children of Adam have had the privilege of receiving the Priesthood, . . . and have received their resurrection from the dead, then it will be time enough to remove the curse from Cain and his posterity, . . . he is the \textbf{last} to share the joys of the kingdom of God.\footnote{63}
\end{quote}

This was the church position for over one hundred years. Now there is a division among Mormon apologists as to whether the restriction on blacks was a matter of doctrine or a practice.

In a 1954 interview with Dr. Sterling M. McMurrin, of the University of Utah, LDS President David O McKay stated:

\begin{quote}
There is \textbf{not} now, and there never has been a doctrine in this Church that the Negroes are under a \textbf{divine curse}.\footnote{64}
\end{quote}

However, no such public statement was issued by the church and the majority of members continued to believe the ban was based on revelation. For instance, in the 1966 edition of \textit{Mormon Doctrine}, Apostle Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

\begin{quote}
Negroes in this life are denied the Priesthood; . . . It is \textbf{the Lord’s doing}, is based on his eternal laws of justice, and grows out of the \textbf{lack of spiritual valiance} of those concerned in their first estate.\footnote{65}
\end{quote}

Then in June of 1978, President Spencer W. Kimball issued what is now referred to as Declaration-2 in the \textit{Doctrine and Covenants} lifting the ban.

In September of 1978, three months after the ban was lifted, McConkie made this explanation about the

\begin{quote}
\footnote{62} Abraham 1:20-27; Moses 5:16-41; 7:8, 22.  
\footnote{64} David O. McKay and the Rise of Early Mormonism, by Gregory A. Prince and W. R. Wright, 2005, University of Utah Press, p. 79.  
\footnote{65} Mormon Doctrine, 1966, pp. 527-528.}

contradiction between prior statements by LDS prophets and the new position on blacks:

There are statements in our literature by the early Brethren which we have interpreted to mean that the Negroes would not receive the priesthood in mortality. . . . Forget everything that I have said, or what President Brigham Young or President George Q. Cannon or whomsoever has said in days past that is contrary to the present revelation. We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world. . . . It doesn’t make a particle of difference what anybody ever said about the Negro matter before the first day of June of this year, 1978.66

If past prophets could speak from “limited understanding” and without “light and knowledge,” couldn’t this apply to the president of the church today? By this reasoning a future prophet could conceivably reverse the whole position and go back to restricting blacks from holding the priesthood or reinstitute plural marriage.

But if the restriction against blacks was a practice, and not a doctrine, why did it take a revelation to change it? And why didn’t God give the revelation during Brigham Young’s era? Why wait until after the civil rights movement had gained popularity and civil rights legislation had been passed?

President Spencer W. Kimball announced that a revelation had been received to end the ban but didn’t publish the actual revelation, just a statement about a revelation. But the actual process seems to have been more a matter of the top leadership having countless meetings to discuss and pray about the possibility of a change.

When they finally gained unanimous consensus among the First Presidency and the entire Twelve Apostles, they formulated the statement printed in the Doctrine and Covenants as Declaration-2.67 Their statement reads in part:

. . . we have pleaded long and earnestly in behalf of these, our faithful brethren, spending many hours in the Upper Room of the Temple supplicating the Lord for divine guidance.

This whole process seems to put the burden of prejudice on God with the lofty-thinking brethren pleading with God to change His mind.

Modern Day Revelation

Since 1876, revelation seems to be more a matter of modifying past revelation than giving new instruction. In 1876 the church removed from the Doctrine and Covenants the section on marriage that denounced polygamy, replacing it with section 132 commanding polygamy. Then in 1890 the church reversed its stand on polygamy, and issued the Manifesto. However, section 132 remains in the Doctrine and Covenants to this day.

Then in 1921 they removed the Lectures on Faith from the Doctrine and Covenants, which were first added in 1835. It was evidently decided that they contained defective teaching on the nature of the Godhead. Throughout the twentieth century the temple ceremony, supposedly given by revelation, was modified. Then in 1978 the priesthood ban on blacks was reversed. But these all seem to be reversing past doctrine, not giving further light.

If revelation today is more a matter of spiritual impressions not needing canonization, how does that differ from any pastor seeking divine guidance for his congregation?

In Declaration-1 President Wilford Woodruff is quoted as saying:

The Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as President of this Church to lead you astray. . . . If I were to attempt that, the Lord would remove me out of my place, . . .

If the brethren can not lead us astray, how could Joseph Smith have been wrong about selling the Book of Mormon copyright? How could Brigham Young have taught false doctrine? How could Spencer W. Kimball be fooled by Mark Hofmann?

As a Mormon I often heard people refer to 2 Nephi 4:34 in admonishing someone not to put their trust in the arm of flesh. Yet the brethren continually tell the Mormons to trust them, they will not lead them astray. How is unquestioning obedience not trusting in the arm of flesh?

Christians test doctrine on the basis of its agreement with the Bible, not man. Once I put the Bible before the words of men, I realized that I must reject the Mormon prophets.

As we have the opportunity, let us reach out in love to our LDS friends and neighbors, sharing with them the good news that Christ is the only prophet we need today. He, alone, is the one who will never lead us astray.

For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. (Matthew 24:24 NKJ)

**Excerpts from Letters and Emails**

**March** — I read your "testimonies", and it is a shame you couldn’t find Jesus in an LDS service. I am only 31, and I have had more experiences with Christ in that time than it appears you have had in your long lives. You should have been paying more attention during sacrament meeting.

**April** — I am LDS. This is not an angry rebuttal. . . . If you choose to continue to try to find ways to dispute the prophet, instead of asking God if that person or church is of Him, that is your right, and I don’t have anything against it. I think Paul referred to it as “kicking against the pricks.” I would suggest you keep it to yourself though. Better for you to perish spiritually than to take others with you.

**May** — I am a former Missionary and member of Mormonism [in Liberia]. I served mission in 2002 [in Nigeria] but left the church last year after I found out that its teachings was based on fraud and lies. . . . It is my fervent prayers that the Lord Jesus Christ bless, protect and give you and your husband long lives.

**May** — As someone who is leaving the church after 18 years, FOR ONCE, I LIKE READING THE TRUTH! . . . I was a temple-attending, calling-holding, every-Sunday-going, faithful LDS sister for 18 years—my husband, in for 30 years, was a RM, seminary teacher and in 5 bishoprics—NEITHER OF US KNEW JOSEPH SMITH WAS A POLYGAMIST!! Don’t you think there’s something a little, ahem, wrong with that picture? And that, my friend, was just the tip of the iceberg that we did not know. . . .

If I had ever known, at 18 years of age, that “the new and everlasting covenant” that I was entering into in the temple marriage ceremony was eternal polygamy, I would have RUN away screaming. You just keep doing what you’re doing; you’re touching more lives than you know. . . . God bless you in your efforts to lead people to the true Christ of the Bible.

**May** — I think the biggest thing that keeps me from believing you is the fact that you are focused on attacking one single religion and want to draw people away from it. . . . There is no need to attack and point out contradictions and mistakes if you really have the truth.

**May** — I had to read Mormonism–Shadow or Reality? to get the point. Before that, when I heard an objection, I would find a way to answer it. When I read MSoR, I realized that even if I answered a hundred objections or five hundred, there would still be too many contradictions and too many things wrong with the LDS Church. [That’s] when my prideful house of cards collapsed because it was built on a foundation of sand . . .

**May** — Although your newsletter, among other things, has brought me safely through my passage from staunch multi-generation Mormon and returned missionary to wised-up (and grateful) post-Mormon, I still benefit from receiving the newsletter.

Every month as my member wife invites the missionaries to dinner at my house, and one of my three children remains a member, I am always looking for opportunities to share a non-distorted perspective on the saints.

**May** — Enclosed you will find the trash literature you sent to me this past week. . . . The Lord’s work will go forward and people such as yourself will live to regret your actions.

**May** — I have been a Mormon my whole life and when I really needed to rely on the Church it kept resulting in the guilt or blame as though it was my fault so I did the pray pay and obey thing until I really was about to either check out or find why it wasn’t working.

From there I followed the counsel to avoid any non-Mormon source for any material as at that time I was questioning my faith as I felt something was really wrong. Even in that material I found so much stuff that was totally wrong and offensive to me and later I bought a book titled “The Writings of JS” that had just been released . . . in it over and over he damned anyone that disagreed with him or wouldn’t do what he said. Clearly what I read there I found shocking when I had thought he was what the Church claimed.

From there I read Fawn Brodie. I felt so sick over all of it. I then wrote and UTLM sent me some material that when I did . . . hundreds of hours of reading and research on [it], all turned out to be the truth.

Then finally I turned to the Church for a few answers and was told I was an apostate and had lost my faith in Christ. As I asked questions on Church websites I had been directed to at BYU, I was attacked and accused as an imposter trying to destroy the Church over and over and even got calls from these guys . . . Since then I continued to research and stick to good sources like yours . . .

**June** — Joseph Smith was certainly not who I was always taught he was. Thank you for helping us to know the truth. We are now putting our faith in the truth according to the Holy Bible.

**June** — I recently ran across a copy of your Salt Lake City Messenger entitled, “Sacred Marriage or Secret Affair?” . . . It is sad that anyone would have such a distorted, incorrect perception of Joseph Smith, Jr. . . . One might ask, “What commandments[es] were you unable to keep that caused you to leave the only true and living Church on the face of the whole earth?” . . . Please be sure to enjoy all the money and celebrity which [you] have in this life, Sandra, for in the resurrection and throughout eternity you and your late husband will be remembered only as reprobate apostates . . . Mark my words, and you will see on your judgment day just how terribly mistaken you have been. . . . I call you to repentance of your evil doings in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

**June** — I just wanted to thank you so much for your Messenger. . . . My boyfriend is Mormon, and he and his family have been trying to convert me to the church for the past three years, but I decided that I wanted to do some research before hand. I respect the Messenger, and I am so grateful to have found your website!! . . . I have decided that I have no interest in converting to the Mormon church, which has upset his family. . . .

**June** — I need to say a HUGE Thank you!!! I have been dating and am now marrying a former LDS member. [Sandra] and her wonderful knowledge allowed me to show my fiancé the truth of the LDS church.
**July** — I left the church 7 years ago. I worked as a CES full time teacher, Coordinator, Director (Seminaries and Institutes) for 27 years.

**July** — I was a convert to the Mormon Church in 2002, served my mission—Spanish speaking in 2005, and returned home only 8 months after being in the mission field. The doubts were just too much for me, and upon further investigation I painfully had to realize that I had been deceived.

I resigned my membership in 2006. Since then, I have exhaustively studied, written about, and been a strong advocate for sharing the gospel with my Mormon friends, and teaching others about Mormonism.

**July** — I see now why continue to do what you are doing . . . the money. Other wise it is not necessary to attack anyone about anything. Or maybe it is pride . . . pride can have a strong hold on a person . . . I watched one of your you-tube videos today . . . It would be lovely to watch you teaching about Christ to a group of people, instead of preaching about anti-Mormonism.

**July** — I have been a LDS member since 1978 when I was 18 years old. I remember the bishop asked me at the time if I had any reservations about being baptized in the LDS church, and I said to him, “I could never accept or live polygamy.” He told me during this baptismal interview that I would never have to live polygamy. At 18, I naively accepted his statement and was baptized, not understanding that polygamy was still of the Mormon doctrine, just not currently practiced. . . . [Years later] I decided to start researching online about “celestial marriage” and came across your website. I began to read your research, including your online book, The Changing World of Mormonism, I also ordered and read the books, Mormon Enigma, and No Man Knows My History.

After reading these books and everything else on your website, and reading excerpts to my husband each night for the last 2 months, and talking things over with him, we have come to the conclusion that the LDS church is not based on truth, but deceit and manipulation. Considering myself to be a devoted Mormon, I was crushed at this realization and cried several times during this process of enlightenment . . . but I am in the acceptance stage now, and am at peace with the Savior, Jesus Christ.

**July** — I came out of the closet on my leaving the Church. In a single day I lost 11 friends on facebook. About ten others gave me all kinds of crazy responses. My family has basically cut me off and no longer takes me serious. . . . There is a huge part of me that wishes this was someone else that learned the truth.

**August** — Your site has been invaluable to me over the last 18 months. My journey out of Mormonism has been difficult, and is actually not quite complete, but I am still moving forward.

After the initial shock of seeing all this information and realizing I had been deceived all these years, I began to talk to my family about this. If I was required to select one single issue which stands on its own as proof positive of Joseph Smith’s deception, it would have to be the Egyptian Papyri and Book of Abraham (especially when considered with the Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar).

**August** — My invitation to you is: Read the Book of Mormon and pray with real intent, without any preconceived ideas and God the Father will tell you the truth. I know that, because I have done so.

**August** — Thank you for your online information regarding the so-called “Mark of Cain” and the blatant bigoted racist verses found in the pages of the Book of Mormon.

I was going to start attending the LDS ward just two blocks away from my home. Now, I want them out of my neighborhood. My wife is from India and that makes my children Indian as well . . . an “interracial” family.

I am so glad that I read the quotes regarding the so-called Lamanites and their curse from your website. How offensive, how human and how revealing. It is impossible that the BOM is divine and now Joseph Smith is exposed, in my mind, as the fraud he really is. I told the missionaries, who were trying to rope me into the LDS system, that I would never attend or subject my loved ones to a “church” or any organization for that matter, that actually believes that dark skin pigment is the result of sin. WOW!

It’s alarming to me that the LDS church is growing the way it is with prejudiced teachings such as these.

**August** — I dropped out of the LDS Church in ’98, just two months after being baptized, because I was told by the two Elders who got me to join the Church, to read the Book of Mormon from beginning to end. . . . I started questioning how there could already be horses, cows, pigs, & other farm animals in America, when Neph, Laman & the rest of their family members arrived prior to Christ. . . . I started questioning the Elders & other Church members . . . I wanted to know why there were no archeological findings that supports early Hebrews, as being the first white settlers to the Americas . . . but got no good reasonable explanations . . . I found God’s true church, which I have found amongst so many good true Christians & Believers.

**September** — I find it sad that you say whatever you want without even listening to the truth. . . . No matter what you say or what “proof” you think you have you will never be able to disprove the Book of Mormon.

**September** — I realized a long time ago while living in Utah that I was living a lie and could not continue. I was pressured into joining by my ex, and his relatives . . . I also am most grateful for your book that I found at our library here. It has given me the strength to realize there is life beyond Utah & Mormonism. . . . am finally gaining a sense of peace in my life that has never been there before.

**September** — Wow, your website is ridiculous! Really though . . . who do you think you are? Yes everyone has the right to their opinion but why do you feel you must bash other peoples religions? It is quite sad what you are doing.

**September** — Having graduated from BYU [my daughter] felt the absolute necessity of being married in the Temple. I was not deemed worthy nor were the grooms parents. His mother was especially devastated, not being able to see her only son married.

Now, after many years and three beautiful children, they have decided to renew their vows [as Christians].
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In the small farming community of Sharon, Vermont, on December 23, 1805, Lucy Smith gave birth to her fifth child, Joseph Smith, Jr. While the proud parents doubtlessly had high hopes for the son who bore his father’s name, they could hardly have imagined that he would one day produce new books of scripture and start a church that would eventually grow to over 13 million members.

In the following I will outline three areas of influence that helped to shape Joseph Smith’s religious career. The first one is Smith’s religious environment, the second is the family’s involvement with folk magic and the third is the public interest in the American Indians.

1. Joseph Smith’s Religious Environment

Many people in the New England area during the late 1700’s and early 1800’s were turning away from organized religion, believing that most denominations had fallen into apostate practices. It was a time in America of religious upheaval, revivals and new sects. Many Christians were looking for a restoration of the New Testament church. Fawn Brodie described the religious turmoil of the day:

Footwashers, and other sects. Unfettered religious liberty began spawning a host of new religions.¹

Many in that day were drawn to the “Seeker” movement and its rejection of organized churches. Historian Dan Vogel comments:

The primitive gospel movement emerged first among the “common” folk of New England, the South, and West between the years 1790 and 1830.²

Those termed “Seekers” were waiting for a new dispensation of apostolic authority. Vogel further observed:

One independent Seeker, Asa Wild, of Amsterdam, New York, published in 1824 a short work describing his revolt against Puritanism and his conversion to Seekerism. His work, A Short Sketch of the Religious Experience, and Spiritual Travels, of Asa Wild, outlines the classic Seeker position and demonstrates his yearning for a restoration and the Millennium.³

While both of Joseph Smith’s parents professed Christianity, they came from families that were divided over religion.

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³ Ibid., p. 15
Lucy Smith’s parents were not united in their faith. Lucy’s mother was a staunch Congregationalist while her father, Solomon Mack, advocated Universalism which maintained that God would save all mankind. Then in 1811 Solomon claimed to have a religious conversion and wrote a small book detailing his new faith and return to orthodoxy. Later the Book of Mormon, published in 1830, would reflect elements of the Universalist debate.

In the book of Alma we read of a certain man named Nehor whose preaching echoed that of the Universalists. He went about preaching that “all mankind should be saved at the last day, and that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice; for the Lord had created all men, and had also redeemed all men; and, in the end, all men should have eternal life.” The Book of Mormon goes on to relate that after killing a man of God who tried to call him to repentance, Nehor was sentenced to death. Just before he died he repented of his false teachings.

Those familiar with the revival literature of Joseph Smith’s day recognize similar teachings in the Book of Mormon. Fawn Brodie observed:

In the speeches of the Nephite prophets one may find the religious conflicts that were splitting the churches in the 1820’s. Alexander Campbell, founder of the Disciples of Christ, wrote in the first able review of the Book of Mormon: “This prophet Smith, through his stone spectacles, wrote on the plates of Nephi, in his Book of Mormon, every error and almost every truth discussed in New York for the last ten years. He decided all the great controversies:— infant baptism, ordination, the trinity, regeneration, repentance, justification, the fall of man, the atonement, transubstantiation, fasting, penance, church government, religious experience, the call to the ministry, the general resurrection, eternal punishment, who may baptize, and even the question of free masonry, republican government and the rights of man. . . . But he is better skilled in the controversies in New York than in the geography or history of Judea. He makes John baptize in the village of Bethabara and says Jesus was born in Jerusalem.”

Curiously, while the Book of Mormon addresses many of the doctrinal disputes of Smith’s day, it does not contain the major doctrines of Mormonism that separate it from standard Christianity. While the Book of Mormon condemned Universalism, by 1832 Smith seems to have changed his mind. Section 76 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, one of the LDS books of scripture, teaches three levels of heaven, with a place for practically everyone. The Book of Mormon contains no teaching on the need for temple rituals, eternal marriage, plural gods, man’s pre-mortal existence, proxy work for the dead, three levels of heaven or eternal progression. In fact, the Book of Mormon declares that death seals one’s fate and that there is no opportunity to repent after one dies (see Alma 34:31-35).

Long before his own religious quest, Joseph Smith’s uncle Jason, Lucy’s oldest brother, “became a ‘Seeker’ and set up a quasi-communistic society of thirty indigent families whose economic and spiritual welfare he sought to direct.” In this environment of competing philosophies, Lucy felt undecided about church membership. She later wrote about this period in her life:

> If I remain a member of no church, all religious people will say I am of the world; and if I join some one of the different denominations, all the rest will say I am in error. No church will admit that I am right, except the one with which I am associated. This makes them witness against each other; and how can I decide in such a case as this, seeing they are all unlike the Church of Christ, as it existed in former days?

Joseph Smith’s father came from a similar background. Dan Vogel explains:

> In 1796 Lucy married a man similarly perplexed about religion, although his Primitivism stemmed from independence more than from uncertainty. Joseph Smith, Sr., was more liberal, apparently agreeing with Lucy’s father about universal salvation. Joseph Smith, Sr., had been raised by a father whose curious blend of theological views was legendary in his community of Topsfield, Massachusetts. Joseph’s father, Asael, was a rationalist whose beliefs included Universalism and Seekerism. He refused to join any of the churches “because he could not reconcile their teachings with the scriptures and his reason.”

According to Lucy Smith, her husband (Joseph Smith, Sr.) had a number of dreams, or visions prior to young Joseph’s visions. LDS historian Richard Bushman noted:

> In many of the dreams, Joseph Sr. found himself alone, decrepit, or ill, or on a vaguely defined quest. In one, he traveled alone in “the desolate world,” on a road “so broad

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4 Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, p. 3.
5 Book of Mormon, Alma 1:4.
6 Alma 1:15
7 Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, pp. 69-70.
8 *Ibid.*, p. 4
10 Vogel, *Religious Seekers*, p. 26
and barren, that I wondered why I should travel in it.” In another he was in a “gloomy desert” amidst “the most death-like silence.” Usually the desolation was followed by redemption, a flower-filled garden or the fruit of an “exceedingly handsome” tree representing the love of God.11

One of the father’s visions, in 1811, seems to be the inspiration for a section in the Book of Mormon. As Lucy Smith recounted, Joseph Smith, Sr., described seeing both a broad and a narrow path. Upon entering the narrow path he came to a stream of water, then a tree bearing white fruit. After tasting the fruit he tried to persuade his family to partake as well. He then saw a great building filled with finely dressed people, mocking those who partook of the fruit.12 This should be compared with 1 Nephi 8:8–11:36, where we read of Lehi and Nephi’s visions of the tree of life. They describe seeing a river, a narrow path, a tree bearing white fruit and a building full of finely dressed people who mock those who partake of the fruit.13

By the 1820’s Lucy Smith was longing for some sort of religious affiliation. A family disaster would complicate this search. In 1823 the Smith’s oldest son, Alvin, died from a bowel obstruction and at the funeral the minister inferred that Alvin had gone to hell as he was not a baptized member of a church.14 This cemented Joseph Smith, Sr., in his rejection of organized religion.

When Lucy Smith attended the 1824 and 1825 Palmyra revival Joseph Smith, Sr., refused to accompany her. As a result of these meetings Lucy Smith, her sons Hyrum and Samuel, and a daughter, joined the Presbyterian Church. This division in the home obviously impacted Joseph Smith, Jr. LDS historian Richard Bushman observed:

If there was a personal motive for Joseph Smith Jr.’s revelations, it was to satisfy his family’s religious want and, above all, to meet the need of his oft-defeated, unmoored father.15

During these years young Joseph Smith had been attending various religious meetings, revivals, and even joined the local young people’s debating club. At times he participated in revival meetings as an “exhorter,” one who would speak after the regular sermon and “exhort” the audience to follow the admonitions of the preacher. When writing about these events many years later, Joseph explained:

During this time of great excitement my mind was called up to serious reflection and great uneasiness; but though my feelings were deep and often poignant, still I kept myself aloof from all these parties, though I attended their several meetings as often as occasion would permit. In process of time my mind became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect, and I felt some desire to be united with them; but so great were the confusion and strife among the different denominations, that it was impossible for a person young as I was, and so unacquainted with men and things, to come to any certain conclusion who was right and who was wrong. . . . The Presbyterians were most decided against the Baptists and Methodists . . . 16

Retired LDS Institute Director Grant Palmer has pointed out the similarity between the Methodist camp meetings that Smith would have attended and events spoken of in the Book of Mormon:

We have not taken Joseph Smith seriously enough when he stated that he had an “intimate acquaintance” with evangelical religion and that he was “somewhat partial” to the Methodists. Protestant concepts appear to abound in his discourses and experiences. For example, a Methodist camp meeting was held one mile from Palmyra, New York, on 7 June 1826—a pivotal time in Joseph Smith’s life. Preparations for a camp meeting included leasing and consecrating the ground. Thus the “ground within the circle of the tents is considered sacred to the worship of God, and is our chapel.” The Methodists referred to these “consecrated grounds” as their “house of God” or temple. The Palmyra camp meeting reportedly attracted over 10,000 people. Families came from all parts of the 100-mile conference district and pitched their tents facing the raised “stand” where the preachers were seated, including one named Benjamin G. Paddock . . . This large crowd heard the “valedictory” or farewell speech of their beloved “Bishop M’kendree [who] made his appearance among us for the last time.” . . . In his emaciated and “feeble” condition, he spoke of his love for the people and then delivered a powerful message that covered “the whole process of personal salvation.” Tremendous unity prevailed among the crowd, and “nearly every unconverted person on the ground” committed oneself to Christ . . .

This is reminiscent of King Benjamin’s speech to the Zarahemlans in the Book of Mormon, whose chronicler describes the setting:

12 Lucy Smith, Biographical Sketches, pp. 58-59.
13 Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Joseph Smith’s Plagiarism of the Bible in the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 2010), pp. 161-163.
14 Brodie, No Man Knows My History, p. 28.
15 Bushman, Rough Stone Rolling, pp. 16-17.
16 Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History 1:8-20.
The people gathered themselves together throughout all the land, that they might go up to the temple to hear the [last] words which [their beloved] king Benjamin should speak unto them . . . [T]hey pitched their tents round about, every man according to his family . . . every man having his tent with the door thereof towards the temple . . . the multitude being so great that king Benjamin . . . caused a tower to be erected . . . [And he said from the platform,] I am about to go down to my grave . . . I can no longer be your teacher . . . For even at this time my whole frame doth tremble exceedingly while attempting to speak unto you (Mosiah 2:1, 5-7, 28-30).17

Palmer also observed:

Evangelical meetings in western New York in the 1820s were characterized by (1) camp settings; (2) preaching that interlaced paraphrased biblical passages with revival terminology designed to produce a powerful emotional impact; (3) a conversion pattern characterized by a conviction of sin, intense prayer for forgiveness, and a sweet calming assurance of being forgiven, often accompanied by trembling, tears, falling, and other physical manifestations; (4) denunciation of Deists, Unitarians, Universalists, and agnostics; and (5) vivid descriptions of the degenerate state of human beings. While all five of these elements formed a pattern that was typical in Joseph Smith’s environment, one would not expect to find them packaged together in the discourses and experiences of ancient Americans. It is more believable that the Protestant Reformation, including its evolving doctrines and practices down to Joseph Smith’s era, influenced these sections of the Book of Mormon.18

The LDS Church has traditionally emphasized Joseph Smith’s lack of education to establish that the Book of Mormon was beyond Smith’s writing ability. However, Grant Palmer observed:

Thus we have an image of Joseph Smith as one “not learned” (see Isa. 29:12). While this accurately describes his formal education, it misstates his knowledge of the Bible, of evangelical Protestantism, and of American antiquities within his environment. He wrote in his 1832 history that his parents were thorough in “instructing me in the christian religion” and that, from age twelve on, he became a serious Bible student by “searching the scriptures.”19

An examination of Joseph Smith’s 1832 handwritten account of his early life shows that he was trained in penmanship and could compose his thoughts. On the next page is a photograph of this account.

The extensive plagiarism of phrases from the King James Bible in the Book of Mormon demonstrates Joseph Smith’s familiarity with the text. Jacob, in the Book of Mormon, sounds amazingly like Paul in the New Testament:

2 Nephi 9:39
“to be carnally-minded is death, and to be spiritually-minded is life”

Romans 8:6
“to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life”

The Book of Mormon quote was supposedly written in approximately 550 B.C., while Paul’s letter was probably written about 56 A.D. To add to the problem, Jacob’s wording is exactly like the English translation of the King James Bible, published in 1611 A.D. That the same phrases from the King James translation are used throughout the Book of Mormon demonstrates that the author had to have lived after 1611.20

Joseph Smith later claimed that it was because of a revival in the neighborhood that he went out into the woods to pray and received his first vision. He placed the date in 1820, however the description of the revival given by family members places the date in the 1824-25 time-frame, after part of the family had joined the Presbyterian Church.21

But even his claim of a vision was not an unusual occurrence during the many revivals in New York. Joseph Smith’s 1838 account of his first vision, published in the Pearl of Great Price, tells how in 1820 he went into a grove to pray to know which church to join. At first a dark power overtook him, then crying out to God, he observed a great light. Two beings appeared and told him he was not to join any of them as they were “all wrong” and that “all their creeds were an abomination in his sight.” He concluded, “When I came to myself again, I found myself lying on my back, looking up into heaven. When the light had departed, I had no strength; but soon recovering in some degree, I went home.”22 These two beings are identified today as God the father and Jesus Christ.

Richard Bushman recounted the vision of Norris Stearns whose 1815 story sounds very much like Joseph Smith’s account:

18 Ibid., p. 96.
19 Ibid., p. 44.
20 See Joseph Smith’s Plagiarism, Jerald and Sandra Tanner.
22 See Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History 1:15-20.
Joseph Smith’s 1832 diary account of his first vision in his own handwriting.
“One was God, my Maker, almost in bodily shape like a man. His face was, as it were a flame of Fire, and his body, as it had been a Pillar and a Cloud. . . . Below him stood Jesus Christ my Redeemer, in perfect shape like a man.”

In 1816 a minister by the name of Elias Smith published a book in which he told of his conversion. Notice the similarity to Joseph Smith’s first account:

I went into the woods . . . a light appeared from heaven . . . My mind seemed to rise in that light to the throne of God and the Lamb. . . . The Lamb once slain appeared to my understanding, and while viewing him, I felt such love to him as I never felt to any thing earthly. . . . It is not possible for me to tell how long I remained in that situation . . .

Alexander Campbell wrote the following on March 1, 1824, concerning a revival in New York: “Enthusiasm flourishes. . . . This man was regenerated when asleep, by a vision of the night. That man heard a voice in the woods, saying, ‘Thy sins be forgiven thee.’ A third saw his Savior descending to the tops of the trees at noon day.”

Asa Wild claimed to have a vision which is very similar to the story Joseph Smith later published. It was printed in the Wayne Sentinel (the newspaper to which the Smith family apparently subscribed) on October 22, 1823:

It seemed as if my mind . . . was struck motionless, as well as into nothing, before the awful and glorious majesty of the Great Jehovah. He then spake . . . He also told me, that every denomination of professing Christians had become extremely corrupt. . . .

With so many people dissatisfied with the churches of the day, telling of visions and looking for some sort of restoration, it is easy to see why some people would be attracted to Joseph Smith’s claims and the Book of Mormon, which echoed many of the same views.

2. The Smith Family and Magic

In the 1820’s many people believed in magical stones that allowed the owner to discern the location of lost treasures. For instance, the Wayne Sentinel, published in Joseph Smith’s neighborhood, reprinted the following from the Windsor (Vermont) Journal:

Money digging—We are sorry to observe even in this enlightened age, so prevalent a disposition to credit the accounts of the Marvellous. Even the frightful stories of money being hid under the surface of the earth, and enchanted by the Devil or Robert Kidd, are received by many of our respectable fellow citizens as truths. . . .

A respectable gentleman in Tunbridge, was informed by means of a dream, that a chest of money was buried on a small island. . . . After having been directed by the mineral rod where to search for the money . . . he and his laborers came . . . upon a chest of gold . . . the chest moved off through the mud, and has not been seen or heard of since.

Another similar story was printed on December 27, 1825, in the Wayne Sentinel:

Wonderful Discovery.—A few days since was discovered in this town, by the help of a mineral stone, (which becomes transparent when placed in a hat and the light excluded by the face of him who looks into it, provided he is fortune’s favorite,) a monstrous potash kettle in the bowels of old mother Earth, filled with the purest bullion. . . . His Satanic Majesty, or some other invisible agent, appears to keep it under marching orders; for no sooner is it dug on to in one place, than it moves off like “false delusive hope,” to another still more remote.

In 1822 Joseph Smith found a magic “seer stone” like the one mentioned in the newspaper while digging a well for his neighbor, Willard Chase. In 1833 Mr. Chase gave his account of the event:

In the year 1822, I was engaged in digging a well. I employed Alvin and Joseph Smith to assist me; the latter of whom is now known as the Mormon prophet. After digging about twenty feet below the surface of the earth, we discovered a singularly appearing stone, which excited my curiosity. I brought it to the top of the well, and as we were examining it, Joseph put it into his hat, and then his face into the top of his hat. . . . After obtaining the stone, he began to publish abroad what wonders he could discover by looking in it, . . .

A few years later Joseph Smith would use this same stone to produce the Book of Mormon. One of Smith’s followers, David Whitmer described the process:

I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the

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23 Bushman, Rough Stone Rolling, p. 41.
27 Wayne Sentinel (February 16, 1825).
29 Affidavit of Willard Chase, as quoted in Mormonism Unveiled, E. D. Howe (Painesville, Ohio: 1834), pp. 240-241.
Josiah Stowell came to Palmyra to hire the Smiths to help him look for a silver mine in Pennsylvania. At that time, Joseph and his father entered into an agreement with those involved in magic and money digging. Willard Stafford wrote:

I first became acquainted with Joseph, Sen., and his family in the year 1820. They lived, at that time, in Palmyra, about one mile and a half from my residence. A great part of their time was devoted to digging for money: . . . I had heard them tell marvelous tales, respecting the discoveries they had made in their peculiar occupation of money digging. They would say, for instance, that in such an place, in such a hill, on a certain man's farm, there were deposited kgs, barrels and hogheads of coined silver and gold—bars of gold, golden images, brass kettles filled with gold and silver—gold candlesticks, swords, &c, &c.  

In 1825, after hearing of Smith's powers, a man named Josiah Stowell came to Palmyra to hire the Smiths to help him look for a silver mine in Pennsylvania. At that time Joseph and his father entered into an agreement with those searching for the treasure, to share anything found in the dig. Smith's stone was to be their key to finding the silver. Smith's mother relates that Mr. Stowell specifically sought out Joseph Smith due to his special powers. Lucy Smith wrote:

A short time before the house was completed [1825], a man by the name of Josiah Stool came from Chenango county, New York, with the view of getting Joseph to assist him in digging for a silver mine. He came for Joseph on account of having heard that he possessed certain means by which he could discern things invisible to the natural eye.  

However, a relative of Mr. Stowell became worried that Joseph Smith was defrauding the man and filed charges against him in 1826. H. Michael Marquardt and Wesley Walters commented:

While Joseph Smith was working for Josiah Stowell, he was brought before a court on charges sworn against him by a nephew of Josiah Stowell, Peter G. Bridgman (or Bridgeman). Apparently Bridgman became concerned that his uncle's money was being spent in the pursuit of elusive treasure. Accounts of these charges corroborate Smith's treasure hunting in southern New York and Pennsylvania.  

Joseph Smith was arrested and brought before Judge Albert Neeley on March 20, 1826. Judge Neeley's record refers to Smith as "The Glass looker." A photo of Judge Neeley's bill to the county is printed on the next page. At the hearing Josiah Stowell testified that prisoner had been at his house something like five months; had been employed by him to work on farm part time; that he [Joseph] pretended to have skill of telling where hidden treasures in the earth were by means of looking through a certain stone; that prisoner had looked for him sometimes; once to tell him about money buried in Bend Mountain in Pennsylvania, once for gold on Monument Hill, and once for a salt spring; and that he positively knew that the prisoner could tell, and did possess the art of seeing those valuable treasures through the medium of said stone; . . .  

There is a difference of opinion among historians if this was actually the trial or a preliminary hearing. Regardless, it demonstrates Smith's involvement in treasure hunting by means of his stone. Joseph Smith would have been twenty years old at the time and was evidently allowed to leave the county. When he later claimed to have found the gold plates containing the Book of Mormon, the money-diggers came seeking their share of the treasure. Martin Harris wrote:

The money-diggers claimed that they had as much right to the plates as Joseph had, as they were in company together. They claimed that Joseph had been a traitor, and had appropriated to himself that which belonged to them. For this reason Joseph was afraid of them, and continued concealing the plates.
Judge Albert Neeley’s bill referring to Joseph Smith as “The Glass looker.”
While Joseph Smith was in the employ of Mr. Stowell, he met his future bride, Emma Hale, while boarding with her family. However, her father, Isaac Hale, would not give his consent to their marriage due to Smith’s magic pursuits and money digging.

Soon after this, in January of 1827, Joseph and Emma eloped and moved to Palmyra, New York. Later Joseph told Mr. Hale that “he had given up what he called ‘glass-looking,’ and that he expected to work hard for a living.” However, instead of settling down as a farmer, Smith was soon engaged in translating the ancient record supposedly found in the Hill Cumorah, a few miles from Smith’s home. Smith claimed an angel had earlier shown him the plates, but he wasn’t able to acquire them until September of 1827. He then turned his efforts to dictating to various scribes his translation of the Book of Mormon. Finding it hard to work on the manuscript at the Smith home, Joseph and Emma moved back to the Hale’s farm. After working on the manuscript through the winter and early spring, Joseph Smith was persuaded by Martin Harris, one of his followers, to loan him the first 116 pages of the manuscript to show his wife. Mrs. Harris, believing the whole enterprise to be a deception, was strongly opposed to Martin’s plan to mortgage his farm to finance the publishing of the Book of Mormon.

In the meantime Emma Smith gave birth to their first child in June of 1828. Not only did their son die soon after birth, but Emma became very ill as well. Joseph’s mother, Lucy, recounted that Emma “seemed, for some time, more like sinking with her infant into the mansion of the dead, than remaining with her husband among the living. Her situation was such for two weeks, that Joseph slept not an hour in undisturbed quiet.”

As Joseph and Emma came to grips with the loss of their son, Joseph began to wonder about Harris and the manuscript. He then traveled to Palmyra to retrieve the pages, only to learn from Harris that they were missing. Upon hearing of the theft of the pages Joseph Smith cried out in despair, “Oh, my God! . . . All is lost! All is lost! What shall I do? I have sinned—it is I who tempted the wrath of God.”

Evidently the death of the Smiths’ first child, and the loss of the 116 pages caused Joseph to seriously reconsider his religious views and he sought membership in the Methodist Church. When Joseph Lewis, Emma’s cousin, learned of this act, he felt that “it was a disgrace to the church to have a practicing necromancer, a dealer in enchantments and bleeds ghosts, in it.” Mr. Lewis told him either to “publicly ask to have his name stricken from the class book, or stand a disciplinary investigation.” Mr. Lewis stated that Joseph Smith immediately requested his name to be taken off the class book.

Joseph Smith soon regained his confidence and returned to his work of dictating the Book of Mormon.

Quoted earlier was an account from the Smiths’ local newspaper about cursed treasures that slip further into the ground when someone tries to unearth them. This same type of phenomenon is echoed in the Book of Mormon. In the thirteenth chapter of Helaman we read:

31 And behold, the time cometh that he curseth your riches, that they become slippery, that ye cannot hold them; and in the days of your poverty ye cannot retain them. . . . And then shall ye lament, and say: . . . O that we had repented in the day that the word of the Lord came unto us; for behold our riches, and then they would not have become slippery that we should lose them; for behold, our riches are gone from us.

34 Behold, we lay a tool here and on the morrow it is gone; and behold, our swords are taken from us in the day we have sought them for battle.

35 Yea, we have hid up our treasures and they have slipped away from us, because of the curse of the land.

36 O that we had repented in the day that the word of the Lord came unto us; for behold the land is cursed, and all things are become slippery, and we cannot hold them.

Thus we see how Smith’s view of treasures hidden in the ground carried over into his book of scripture.

Years later when Joseph Smith’s mother, Lucy, wrote her memoirs, she explained that the family always balanced their time between working, magical pursuits, and their faith:

I shall change my theme for the present but let not my reader suppose that because I shall pursue another topic for a season that we stopt our labor and went trying to win the faculty of Abrac drawing Magic circles or sooth saying to the neglect of all kinds of business we never during our lives suffered one important interest to swallow up every other obligation but whilst we worked with our hands we endeavored to remember the service of & the welfare of our souls.
Lucy Smith mentioned the family’s use of Abrac. This was a magical word that when written as a triangle on a piece of paper, and hung around the neck, was supposed to help sick people recover.  

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Joseph Smith also owned a Jupiter talisman, a silver medallion containing magic inscriptions [see photo on page 1]. Joseph’s widow later passed the object on to her step-son, Charles Bidaman, who in turn sold it to Mormon collector, Wilford C. Wood, of Woods Cross, Utah. Bidaman gave the following affidavit:

This is to certify that I have sold to Wilford C. Wood of Woods Cross Utah. A silver piece bearing the inscription. “Confirms O Deus Potentrssimus” [written around the outer edge of the piece] and numerous hieroglyphical inscriptions. This piece came to me through the relationship of my father Major L. C. Bidaman who married the Prophet Joseph Smith’s widow, Emma Smith. I certify that I have many times heard her say, when being interviewed, and showing the piece. That it was in the Prophets pocket when he was martyred at Carthage Ill.

The same talisman is reproduced in *The Magus*, by Francis Barrett, published in 1804. Mormon scholar Reed C. Durham explains that a Jupiter talisman is used to guarantee the possessor of such an object “the gain of riches, and favor, and power, and love and peace; and to confirm honors, and dignities.”

Besides the use of seer stones and a talisman, the Smiths used divining rods, sticks that were usually forked, to both look for water and to locate treasures. A friend of the family recounted a conversation with Joseph Smith, Sr., in which Smith explained he had “spent both time and money” searching for buried treasure using “divining rods.”

Joseph Smith’s principal scribe, Oliver Cowdery, was also involved with folk magic. One important change Joseph Smith made in his revelations was an obvious attempt to cover up the endorsement of Oliver Cowdery’s supposed gift from God to work with a divining rod. In the 1833 printing of Smith’s revelations, titled *Book of Commandments*, was an 1829 revelation given to Oliver Cowdery that stated:

Now this is not all, for you have another gift, which is the gift of working with the rod: behold it has told you things: behold there is no other power save God, that can cause this rod of nature, to work in your hands. . . . (7:3).

However, in the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants* this revelation was edited to say:

Now this is not all thy gift, for you have another gift, which is the gift of Aaron; behold, it has told you many things; Behold, there is no other power, save the power of God, that can cause this gift of Aaron to be with you.

Notice that the words “working with the rod” and “rod of nature” have been changed to the more respectable sounding “gift of Aaron.” Those who used divining rods were at times referred to as “rodsmen.” Richard P. Howard, RLDS Church historian, observed:

Several writers have established that both in Vermont and in western New York in the early 1800’s, one of the many forms which enthusiastic religion took was the adaptation of the witch hazel stick. . . . For example, the “divining rod” was used effectively by one Nathaniel Wood in Rutland County, Vermont, in 1801. Wood, Winchell, William Cowdery, Jr., and his son, Oliver Cowdery, all had some knowledge of and associations with the various uses, both secular and sacred, of the forked witch hazel rod. Winchell and others used such a rod in seeking buried treasure; . . . when Joseph Smith met Oliver Cowdery in April, 1829, he found a man peculiarly adept in the use of the forked rod . . . and against the background of his own experiments with and uses of oracular media, Joseph Smith’s April, 1829, affirmations about Cowdery’s unnatural powers related to working with the rod are quite understandable. . . .

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44 Affidavit as printed in *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*, p. 5.  
45 Reed Durham, talk given April 20, 1974, at the 1975 Mormon History Association, as printed in *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*, p. 3. Also in *No Help for the Widow’s Son*, photocopy available through Utah Lighthouse Ministry.  

Friendly sources corroborate hostile non-Mormon accounts. As historian Richard L. Bushman has written: “There had always been evidence of it (‘money-digging in the Smith family’) in the hostile affidavits from the Smith’s neighbors, evidence which Mormons dismissed as hopelessly biased. But when I got into the sources, I found evidence from friendly contemporaries as well, Martin Harris, Joseph Knight, Oliver Cowdery, and Lucy Mack Smith. All of these witnesses persuaded me treasure-seeking and vernacular magic were part of the Smith family tradition, and that the hostile witnesses, including the 1826 trial record, had to be taken seriously.” BYU historian Marvin S. Hill has likewise observed: “Now, most historians, Mormon or not, who work with the sources, accept as fact Joseph Smith’s career as village magician.”

3. Contemporary Attitudes About the American Indians

In the early 1800’s there was high interest in the American Indian culture and artifacts resulting in many books and newspaper articles. The local newspapers occasionally ran stories about the Indians. The *Palmyra Register* for May 26, 1819, reported that one writer believes (and we think with good reason) that this country was once inhabited by a race of people, at least, partially civilized, & that this race has been exterminated by the forefathers of the present and late tribes of Indians in this country.

Furthermore, the following was published in the Smiths’ local newspaper, the *Wayne Sentinel*, in 1825:

Those who are most conversant with the public and private economy of the Indians, are strongly of opinion that they are the lineal descendants of the Israelites, and my own researches go far to confirm me in the same belief.

Dan Vogel gave the following overview of Smith’s environment:

By 1830 knowledge of the impressive ruined cities of the Maya of Central America and the Inca of South America was commonplace in the northeastern United States. In addition, the inhabitants of those states were almost daily reminded of the building acumen of the early Indians: the remnants of fortifications as well as burial mounds dotted the area. Since most nineteenth-century Americans did not make distinctions among the various cultures and lifestyles of the native Americans and instead thought of these disparate groups as belonging to one race—the Indian—they also tended to see all of these ruins as coming from one group. What must this group have been like to have engineered such structures? The Book of Mormon tells the story of such a people and provides possible answers to persistent questions about their history.

There were a number of books printed in Joseph Smith’s day to provide such answers. It was a common theory that the American Indians descended from Israel—the very idea put forward in the Book of Mormon.

In 1652 Menasseh Ben Israel’s *Hope of Israel* was published in England. This Jewish rabbi was a firm believer that remnants of the ten tribes of Israel had been discovered in the Americas.

In 1775 James Adair published *The History of the American Indians*. He theorized that there were twenty-three parallels between Indian and Jewish customs. For example, he claimed the Indians spoke a corrupt form of Hebrew, honored the Jewish Sabbath, performed circumcision, and offered animal sacrifice. He discussed various theories explaining Indian origins, problems of transoceanic crossing, and the theory that the mound builders were a white group more advanced than the Indians.

A popular book of Smith’s day was *View of the Hebrews*, by Rev. Ethan Smith, printed in 1823, with a second edition in 1825. LDS General Authority B. H. Roberts wrote extensively about the parallels between *View of the Hebrews* and the Book of Mormon.

Rev. Robert Hullinger gave the following summary of B. H. Roberts’ parallels:

According to Roberts’s later studies, some features of *View of the Hebrews* are paralleled in the Book of Mormon. (1) Indians buried a book they could no longer read. (2) A Mr. Merrick found some dark yellow parchment leaves in “Indian Hill.” (3) Native Americans had inspired prophets and charismatic gifts, as well as (4) their own kind of Urim and Thummim and breastplate. (5) Ethan Smith produced

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50 *Wayne Sentinel* (October 11, 1825).
52 Ibid., p. 117.
53 Ibid., p. 105.
evidence to show that ancient Mexican Indians were no strangers to Egyptian hieroglyphics. (6) An overthrown civilization in America is to be seen from its ruined monuments and forts and mounds. The barbarous tribes—barbarous because they had lost the civilized arts—greeting the Europeans were descendants of the lost civilization. (7) Chapter one of View of the Hebrews is a thirty-two page account of the historical destruction of Jerusalem. (8) There are many references to Israel’s scattering and being “gathered” in the last days. (9) Isaiah is quoted for twenty chapters to demonstrate the restoration of Israel. In Isaiah 18 a request is made to save Israel in America. (10) The United States is asked to evangelize the native Americans. (11) Ethan Smith cited Humboldt’s New Spain to show the characteristics of Central American civilization; the same are in the Book of Mormon. (12) The legends of Quetzalcoatl, the Mexican messiah, are paralleled in the Book of Mormon by Christ’s appearing in the western hemisphere. . . . Roberts came to recognize that, at least in the case of Ethan Smith’s book, such works were widely available.55

Researcher and author Simon Southerton observed:

In spite of its extensive similarities with the Book of Mormon, View of the Hebrews should not be regarded as the sole source of inspiration for the book. The basic themes running through both publications merely reflected the most commonly accepted myths surrounding the mounds, the Indians, and the original colonization of America. The principal difference is that Ethan Smith’s work was open speculation, whereas the Book of Mormon was a narrative that purported to be a literal, eyewitness account of what happened. . . .

The white man’s perceptions of Native Americans and the Mound Builder myth, both of which permeated the New England society of Joseph Smith’s day, became embedded in Mormon scripture. In many respects, the characteristics of the Book of Mormon Lamanites mirror the misunderstandings that surfaced in the froth of frontier speculation. The Mound Builder myth receives scriptural confirmation in the closing chapters of the Book of Mormon story where the final destruction of the fair-skinned civilized Nephites occurs at the hand of their brethren, the savage, dark-skinned Lamanites. The story must have appeared plausible to early Americans who, for most of the nineteenth century, believed that Native Americans were responsible for the genocide of the postulated earlier, advanced race. The stereotypes and misunderstandings served to validate the Europeans’ theft of native lands as an act of retribution; American Indians were themselves intruders in a land that had belonged to an earlier race—one that was comfortably familiar to white colonists.56

That Joseph Smith was intrigued with the stories of the earliest inhabitants of the New World can be seen in Lucy Smith’s memoirs. She noted Joseph’s storytelling ability and interest in the Indians:

During our evening conversations, Joseph would occasionally give us some of the most amusing recitals that could be imagined. He would describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent, their dress, mode of travelling, and the animals upon which they rode; their cities, their buildings, with every particular; their mode of warfare; and also their religious worship. This he would do with as much ease, seemingly, as if he had spent his whole life with them.57

It should be borne in mind that the Book of Mormon parallels the views of Smith’s day; it does not parallel archaeology today.58 This is one of the areas which demonstrate that the Book of Mormon was written in the 1820’s, not 600 B.C. to 421 A.D.

In 1996 the Smithsonian Institute stated:

The physical type of the American Indian is basically Mongoloid, being most closely related to that of the peoples of eastern, central, and northeastern Asia . . . .

One of the main lines of evidence supporting the scientific finding that contacts with Old World civilizations if indeed they occurred at all, were of very little significance for the development of American Indian civilizations, is the fact that none of the principal Old World domesticated food plants or animals (except the dog) occurred in the New World in pre-Columbian times. American Indians had no wheat, barley, oats, millet, rice, cattle, pigs, chickens, horses, donkeys, camels before 1492. (Camels and horses were in the Americas, along with the bison, mammoth, and mastodon, but all these animals became extinct around 10,000 B.C. at the time when the early big game hunters spread across the Americas.) Iron, steel, glass, and silk were not used in the New World before 1492 (except for occasional use of unsmelted meteoric iron). Native copper was worked in various locations in pre-Columbian times, but true metallurgy was limited to southern Mexico and the Andean region, where its occurrence in late prehistoric times involved gold, silver, copper, and their alloys, but not iron. . . . Reports of findings of ancient Egyptian, Hebrew, and other Old World writings in the New World in pre-Columbian

57 Lucy Smith, Biographical Sketches, p. 85.
contexts have frequently appeared in newspapers, magazines, and sensational books. None of these claims has stood up to examination by reputable scholars. No inscriptions using Old World forms of writing have been shown to have occurred in any part of the Americas before 1492 except for a few Norse rune stones which have been found in Greenland. 59

Conclusion

Thus we see the disputes over religion preceding Joseph Smith’s founding of a church supplied the ideas for his new religion. The Book of Mormon contains many of the same doctrinal debates that were raging in Joseph Smith’s area. His first vision mirrors many others of the day. His new religion supplied the necessary means to unite his family on both doctrine and church affiliation.

His family was also immersed in the magical world view of the day, practicing water-witching, stone gazing and appealing to the “faculty of Abrac.” The same phenomenon of slipping treasures appears in the Book of Mormon as it did in Smith’s money-digging. Joseph’s use of an object to discern the will of God is also reflected in the Book of Mormon.

The regional discussion and curiosity about the origin of the American Indians and their possible descent from Israelites provided a framework for Smith’s new book of scripture.

From this we conclude that Joseph Smith’s environment provided the components necessary to author the Book of Mormon and start his new church.

Just as the Methodist leaders pleaded with Joseph Smith to renounce his unbiblical beliefs and practices, we plead with our LDS friends to come back to Biblical Christianity. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the father but by me” (John 14:6).

[This is an expanded version of a paper presented at the Capstone Conference, Salt Lake City, Utah, March 13, 2010.]

SMITHISMS IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

Excerpt from Joseph Smith’s Plagiarism of the Bible in the Book of Mormon

One of the ongoing issues relating to the Book of Mormon is the question of authorship. In our newly revised book, Joseph Smith’s Plagiarism of the Bible in the Book of Mormon, we examine many of the possible sources used to create the text. The author of the Book of Mormon obviously borrowed from such works as the King James Bible, the Apocrypha, the Westminster Confession, New York newspapers, etc., but who was the mastermind behind the work? We also look at the issue of authorship in light of the Solomon Spalding manuscript, chiasmus, Freemasonry and problems with the loss of the first 116 pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript.

Below is an excerpt from the new edition of our book, pp. 39-43.

In this section we are looking at some of the common phrases between the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants and other LDS writings which point to Joseph Smith as the common author.

SMITH’S COMMON PHRASES

After noticing that the same phrases of two or more words appear time after time throughout Joseph Smith’s scriptures, we did a computer search to identify these groups of words and feel that they provide evidence that the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith’s Inspired Version of the Bible, the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price were all the product of one mind.

We searched for certain combinations of words which are strewn throughout the Book of Mormon. The following are just a few of the many word combinations which we found:

- “dwindled in unbelief”
  2 Nephi 26:15
  Helaman 15:11
  Ether 4:3
  D&C 3:18

- “expedient that”
  2 Nephi 9:15
  Alma 34:9
  Mosiah 13:27
  D&C 9:3

- “it must needs be”
  1 Nephi 15:33
  Alma 32:28
  3 Nephi 5:1
  D&C 48:3

- “save it were”
  2 Nephi 11:1
  Helaman 3:23
  4 Nephi 1:5
  D&C 18:35

- “sufficeth me”
  2 Nephi 11:1
  Jarom 1:2
  Ether 3:17

- “would that ye should”
  Alma 38:5
  Mosiah 1:3
  Omni 1:2
  D&C 46:7

The recurrence of specific word combinations seems to indicate that these patterns are part of the author’s own peculiar style rather than words borrowed from somebody else. It is true, of course, that they may have initially appeared in some other writing, but the fact that they are repeated a number of times throughout the Book of Mormon leads us to suspect that they have become part of the author’s style.

When we find a number of different Book of Mormon writers—e.g., Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Moroni and Mormon—all using many of the same unusual word combinations, we begin to suspect that all these books were actually written by one person. Our research leads us to believe that, notwithstanding the plagiarism from the Bible and other sources, one author can still be identified throughout the entire Book of Mormon.

While the BYU researchers would have us believe that Joseph Smith had nothing to do with creating the text of the Book of Mormon, our study yielded strong evidence that Smith was indeed the author. Joseph Smith’s 1832 account of his early life demonstrates his ability to insert biblical phrases into his narrative the same as was done in
the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon opens with this statement: “I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents.” Smith’s own story states: “I was born in the town of Sharon . . . of goodly parents.” In Smith’s 1832 account he speaks of “the inhabitants of the earth.” This biblical phrase is in Daniel 3:5, among other places: “the inhabitants of the earth.” 2 Nephi 28:16 speaks of “the inhabitants of the earth” (see also Ether 3:25). The same phrase is used repeatedly in the Doctrine and Covenants.

Along with our studies of the Book of Mormon, we studied Joseph Smith’s early revelations and the preface he wrote for the first edition of the Book of Mormon. This preface, no longer printed in the Book of Mormon, explains how God proposed to handle the loss of the first 116 pages of the manuscript. The style of this document also closely resembles the Book of Mormon and Smith’s other writings. For instance, in the preface to the 1830 Book of Mormon we read “I translated, by the gift and power of God.” This same phrase is found in the Book of Mormon, Omni 1:20: “and he did interpret the engravings by the gift and power of God.” The preface also contains the phrase: “to tempt the Lord their God.” This is similar to Luke 4:12: “shall not tempt the Lord thy God.” This phrase also appears in the Doctrine and Covenants 10:15: “to get thee to tempt the Lord thy God.”

Smith’s writings contain many similar phrases as the Book of Mormon. In 2 Nephi 28:22 we read: “And behold, others he flattereth away, and telleth them there is no hell; . . .” Then in the Doctrine and Covenants 10:26 we read: “And thus he flattereth them, and leadeth them along until he draggeth their souls down to hell; . . .”

A common phrase in both the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants is “build up my church.” In Mormon 3:20 we read: “build up again my church.” In 4 Nephi 1:26 we read: “build up churches.”

Another common phrase is “more particular.”

1 Nephi 19:2
the things which transpired before I made these plates are, of a truth, more particularly made mention upon the first plates.

2 Nephi 5:33
And if my people desire to know the more particular part of the history of my people they must search mine other plates.

Alma 13:19
Now, there were many before him, and also there were many afterwards, but none were greater; therefore, of him they have more particularly made mention.

Doctrine and Covenants 10:39-40
Yea, and you remember it was said in those writings that a more particular account was given of these things upon the plates of Nephi.

And now, because the account which is engraved upon the plates of Nephi is more particular concerning the things which, in my wisdom, I would bring to the knowledge of the people in this account—

“Or, in other words” is another common phrase of Smith’s but it is not found in the Bible. This phrase is in the 1830 Book of Mormon Preface, the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants and Smith’s Inspired Version of the Bible and other writings, such as his 1838 Liberty Jail letter published in the Times and Seasons.

Preface 1830 Book of Mormon
and if I should bring forth the same words again, or, in other words, if I should translate the same over again, they would publish that which they had stolen, and Satan would stir up the hearts . . .

1 Nephi 8:2
And it came to pass that while my father tarried in the wilderness he spake unto us, saying: Behold, I have dreamed a dream; or, in other words, I have seen a vision.

1 Nephi 10:4
Yea, even six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews—even a Messiah, or, in other words, a Savior of the world.

Mosiah 7:27
he should take upon him the image of man, and it should be the image after which man was created in the beginning; or in other words, he said that man was created after the image of God, . . .

Alma 32:16
Therefore, blessed are they who humble themselves without being compelled to be humble; or rather, in other words, blessed is he . . .

3 Nephi 6:20
and testifying unto them concerning the redemption which the Lord would make for his people, or in other words, the resurrection of Christ; and they did testify boldly of his death and sufferings.

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1 See An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith, ed. Scott Faulring (Salt lake City: Signature Books, 1989), pp. 3-8.
2 Ibid., p. 6.
Doctrine and Covenants 10:17
And if God giveth him power again, or if he translates again, or in other words, if he bringeth forth the same words, behold, we have the same with us, and we have altered them;

Doctrine and Covenants 61:23
let them come not again upon the waters, save it be upon the canal, while journeying unto their homes; or in other words they shall not come upon the waters to journey, save upon the canal.

Doctrine and Covenants 95:17
And let the higher part of the inner court be dedicated unto me for the school of mine apostles, saith Son Ahman; or, in other words, Alphus; or, in other words, Omegus; even Jesus Christ your Lord.

Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 6:29
And unto him who smiteth thee on the cheek, offer also the other; or, in other words, it is better to offer the other, than to revile again.

Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 17:37
And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is gathered; or, in other words, whithersoever the saints are gathered, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 9:3
And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses or in other words, John the Baptist and Moses: and they were talking with Jesus.

Joseph Smith’s 1835 Diary, An American Prophet’s Record, p. 51
Information was what I most desired at this time and with a fixed determination to obtain it, I called upon the Lord for the first time in the place above stated. Or in other words, I made a fruitless attempt to pray.

Joseph Smith’s 1838 Liberty Jail Letter, Times and Seasons, vol. 1, no. 6, p. 83
I say unto you that those, who have thus vilely treated us, shall like Haman be hanged on their own gallows, or in other words, shall fall into their own gin and ditch, which they have prepared for us.

A phrase not found in the Bible but used in the Book of Mormon is “immortal soul.”

Mosiah 2:38
the demands of divine justice do awaken his immortal soul to a lively sense of his own guilt,

Helaman 3:30
And land their souls, yea, their immortal souls, at the right hand of God . . .

Smith used this same phrase in his 1832 account of his life.

An American Prophet’s Record, p. 4
The all important concerns for the welfare of my immortal Soul which led me to searching the scriptures . . .

“Exceeding great” or “exceedingly great” is a phrase in the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants and Joseph Smith’s 1832 diary.

1 Nephi 8:12, 23
And as I partook of the fruit thereof it filled my soul with exceedingly great joy; . . .

And it came to pass that there arose a mist of darkness; yea, even an exceedingly great mist of darkness . . .

Mosiah 4:11
And again I say unto you as I have said before, that as ye have come to the knowledge of the glory of God, or if ye have known of his goodness and have tasted of his love, and have received a remission of your sins, which causeth such exceedingly great joy in your souls, . . .

Ether 11:4
And he lived to a good old age, and begat Shiblom; and Shiblom reigned in his stead. And the brother of Shiblom rebelled against him, and there began to be an exceedingly great war in all the land.

Moroni 10:11
And to another, exceedingly great faith; and to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; . . .

Doctrine and Covenants 108:3
and be more careful henceforth in observing your vows, which you have made and do make, and you shall be blessed with exceeding great blessings.

Doctrine and Covenants 109:23
And from this place they may bear exceedingly great and glorious tidings, in truth . . .

Doctrine and Covenants 127:10
I will say to all the saints, that I desired, with exceedingly great desire, to have addressed them . . .

Joseph Smith’s 1832 Diary, An American Prophet’s Record, p. 5
whose power and intelligence in governing the things which are so exceeding great and marvelous . . .

A phrase that is used to the point of monotony in the Book of Mormon is “and it came to pass.” In just four verses of Jacob, we find this phrase used four times.

4 For a good discussion of the phrase “and it came to pass” and the supposed “Hebraisms” in the Book of Mormon, see Edward Ashment’s article in New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology, ed. Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature books, 1993), pp. 329-393.
Jacob 5:4-7

And it came to pass that the master of the vineyard went forth, and he saw that his olive-tree . . .
And it came to pass that he pruned it, and digged about it, and nourished it . . .
And it came to pass that after many days it began to put forth somewhat a little, young and tender branches; . . .
And it came to pass that the master of the vineyard saw it, and he said unto his servant: . . .

Besides the many times the phrase is used in Jacob, it is used repeatedly in 1 Nephi, Alma, Mosiah, Ether, Helaman, 3 Nephi, 4 Nephi and Mormon. It is also used repeatedly in the Book of Moses, which Smith composed shortly after finishing the Book of Mormon. Here are three examples.

Book of Moses 7:19-21, Pearl of Great Price
And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even Zion.
And it came to pass that Enoch talked with the Lord; and he said unto the Lord: . . .
And it came to pass that the Lord showed unto Enoch all the inhabitants of the earth; . . .

This phrase also appears in Joseph Smith’s 1832 diary.

An American Prophet’s Record, p. 6
And it came to pass when I was seventeen years of age, I called again upon the Lord. . . .

An American Prophet’s Record, p. 7
And it came to pass that after we had translated 116 pages that he desired to carry them to read . . .

An American Prophet’s Record, p. 8
And it came to pass after much humility and affliction of soul, I obtained them again . . .

It appears in the Book of Abraham as well. Here is one example.

Abraham 4:19
And it came to pass that it was from evening until morning that it was night; and it came to pass that it was from morning until evening that it was day; and it was the fourth time.

That Joseph Smith’s writings, his revelations, the preface to the Book of Mormon and the ancient Nephite prophets all sound the same leads us to conclude that Joseph Smith was the author of all these documents.

DOCTRINES MISSING FROM THE BIBLE?

In order to establish a need for additional scripture, the author of the Book of Mormon introduces a prophecy about teachings that would be taken out of the Bible after the death of Christ’s apostles. Nephi, approximately 550 B.C., records his conversation with an angel:

And the angel of the Lord said unto me: Thou hast beheld that the book [Bible] proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew; and when it proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew it contained the plainness of the gospel of the Lord, of whom the twelve apostles bear record; . . .

And after they go forth by the hand of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, from the Jews unto the Gentiles, thou seest the foundation of a great and abominable church, which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold, they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away. (1 Nephi 13:24, 26)

Further on the angel explained that the record of the Nephites (Book of Mormon) and the record of the Jews (the Bible) would come together in the last days:

These last records, which thou hast seen among the Gentiles, shall establish the truth of the first, which are of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and shall make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away from them . . . (1 Nephi 13:40)

In 2 Nephi 29:2-3 the Lord further instructed Nephi that the Nephite record would come forth as “a standard unto my people” but the Gentiles will object, saying “A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible.” To this the Lord responded: “ye need not suppose that it [the Bible] contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written” (2 Nephi 29:10).

According to Mormon history, this prophecy was fulfilled when the angel appeared to Joseph Smith in 1823 and announced that he was called to translate the Book of Mormon. He was informed “that the fulness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants.”

Even though the Book of Mormon was supposed to restore the lost doctrines and covenants of the Bible, it does not contain the unique doctrines of the LDS faith that set it apart from traditional Christianity. Missing is any mention of the need for a marriage for eternity in an LDS temple, baptism and marriage ceremonies for the dead, man’s pre-mortal existence, three degrees of glory in heaven, Aaronic

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5 Introduction to the Book of Mormon.
and Melchizedek Priesthood in the Christian era, eternal progression to godhood and the doctrine of plural gods. These doctrines are found in the *Doctrine and Covenants* and *Pearl of Great Price*, which are not usually given to the prospective convert until after he has joined the LDS Church.

The Book of Mormon declares that there is only one God (Alma 11:27-39, 44; 2 Nephi 31:21) yet the *Doctrine and Covenants* teaches there are many gods (*D&C* 121:32; 132:18-20, 37).

The Book of Mormon teaches that God is a Spirit and can dwell in one’s heart (Alma 18:26-28; 22:8-11; Alma 34:36) yet the *Doctrine and Covenants* teaches that God has a body and therefore can not dwell in the heart (*D&C* 130:22; 130:3).

The Book of Mormon states that death seals man’s fate (Mosiah 2:36-39; Alma 34:32-35) yet the *Doctrine and Covenants* holds out the hope that one’s place in heaven can be changed through temple rituals for the dead (*D&C* 76:106-112; 88:99).

The Book of Mormon declares that creation was the work of one God (2 Nephi 2:14; Jacob 4:9) yet the *Pearl of Great Price* speaks of a council of gods.6

The Book of Mormon says that those who have never heard the gospel are saved without baptism (Moroni 8:22-23; 2 Nephi 9:25-26; Mosiah 15:24-27) yet the *Doctrine and Covenants* teaches the need to do proxy baptism for the dead (*D&C* 128:5, 17-18).

The Book of Mormon teaches that there are only two options for man’s future: heaven or hell (2 Nephi 28:22; 1 Nephi 15:35; Mosiah 16:11, 27-31; Alma 41:4-8; Alma 42:16) yet the *Doctrine and Covenants* promises some level of heaven to practically everyone (*D&C* 76:43, 70-112).

While there is mention of a temple in the Book of Mormon it seems to have been used for open assembly, not the restricted access of current temples. Also, there is no mention of the temple being used for marriages or ordinances for the dead. In Alma 16:13 we read:

> And Alma and Amulek went forth preaching repentance to the people in their temples, and in their sanctuaries, and also in their synagogues, which were built after the manner of the Jews.

In Jacob 1:17 Nephi’s brother, Jacob, went into the temple to preach to those who were rebelling against God:

> Wherefore I, Jacob, gave unto them these words as I taught them in the temple, having first obtained mine errand from the Lord.

Since the Book of Mormon claims that it is restoring the missing doctrines that were removed from the Bible and that it contains the “fulness of the everlasting Gospel,” one is left to wonder why these specific doctrines are not contained in the book? If Lehi and Nephi were God’s chosen prophets, why did they not teach these things?

The Book of Mormon is one of the main missionary tools used to introduce people to Mormonism. However, a person investigating the LDS teachings will need to read the other LDS books of scripture to get a complete picture of their actual doctrines.

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6 *Pearl of Great Price*, Book of Abraham, chapters 4 and 5.
Excerpts from Letters and Emails

**Oct. 2009:** Please keep us on your mailing list for the Salt Lake City Messenger newsletter. Not only does your newsletter contain such great information for my wife and myself, I have been able to share this information with so many others with just a quick visit to a copy machine. We have lost all respect for the Mormon church, and cutey little sayings like “You can leave the church, but you can’t leave the church alone” only drive us further. We will leave the church alone when they leave us alone, . . .

**Oct. 2009:** Having been converted to “Mormonism” over four years ago, and having spent countless hours studying the doctrine and history of the Lords only true Church, I am not surprised to hear of your apostasy . . . You have chosen to consecrate your life, time, and talent as an enemy of the Church, the Church which has done more good in this world than all pathetic, heretical ministries, such as your lighthouse ministry . . . could ever do for the cause of Christ . . .

Although I am very disturbed by the ignorance of people who produce and subscribe to anti-mormon literature, it is my prayer and hope that you may repent and return unto Christ. But I fear that the spirit has ceased to strive with you and you have committed the unpardonable sin, as did your late husband, and you are consumed by that evil spirit who seeks to destroy God’s work . . . You have brought great shame on the name of Brigham Young, and I know the heavens weep over the loss of one of its daughters, in whom was so much potential . . . P.S. Don’t look forward to exaltation.

**Nov. 2009:** I wrote to you many months ago from Colorado, and wanted to let you all know how I am doing. I am now starting to overcome some of my anger over all the lies that were told to, by those “fine, upstanding” elders. And I am also so grateful to you for steering me in the direction away from the Mormons . . . Also, active LDS say we may have left, but we can’t leave it alone, well probably cause we’re really mad that we were lied to for so long, so we feel it is within our right to lash out at em!!

**Nov. 2009:** I retyped my letter [resigning from the LDS Church], notarized it and got it in the mail today. Sent one to my bishop and one to member records in SLC for good measure. My wife and daughter are using the resignation process, they don’t have the same ‘here’s what you can do with your church’ gene that I do. Thank you SO much for your trailblazing and years of hard work and research you and your husband put into UTLM. I owe you a great debt.

**Nov. 2009:** Thank you—Thank you and thank you for your ministry—your courage and dedication to educating us about the truth concerning Mormonism . . . When I was 23 I served a mission to Australia . . . When I was 28 I married a man who had been divorced and had children . . . It was when I was about 40 that I felt like I was not getting spiritually fed by attending Sacrament meetings and so I began my search for something more— . . .

**Nov. 2009:** Do not continue sending your apostate mail to my home. I will be returning it at your expense. It is offensive, untrue, and has cost me more than you can imagine . . . I’m sure someday you will be sorry for what you have done. By then you will have destroyed many as well as yourself.

**Nov. 2009:** I am a mormon and as a mormon i feel that mormonism must be investigated and understood from both non mormons and mormons and even the ex mormons. Yes a lot of controversy has been written about the TANNERS BOOKS AND WRITINGS. THE TANNERS BOOKS ARE A HISTORY OF MORMONISM OF WHATS HAPPENED IN THE PAST. . . All religions including mormonism have two sides to history. The good and bad side . . . JERALD AND SANDRA TANNERS MAY BE ANTI MORMONS TO MOST MORMONS BUT FOR ME AS A MORMON THE TANNERS ARE WHAT WE CALL MORMON HISTORIANS.

**Nov. 2009:** In my youth I served a mission in New Zealand and became the special assistant to the mission president. As an adult, however, I long ago stopped believing that angels had ever flown around with metal books in their hands.

I’m basically an agnostic who would like to believe, but down deep I worry that when the old pu[n]ip stops it’s all over. Despite having serious religious differences with you, I hope you’ll keep me on your list.

Incidently, your publication about the Book of Abraham [Salt Lake City Messenger # 113] is all that anyone with two brain cells to rub together should need to figure out that Joseph Smith was a con man, an apparently charismatic one, but a con man nevertheless.

**Nov. 2009:** I recently left the LDS Church. I was quite excited to meet you . . . During our conversation you asked me what percentage of the LDS Church I think is active. I didn’t give you a straight answer at the time, but I think there are probably only 3 million to 4 million active believing members [of the approx. 6 million members in the USA]. I also think 5% to 10% of the people on the rolls are actually dead. So, that’s my opinion . . . I wish we knew a straightforward answer to that question . . . but, of course, some truths are not helpful to the Church.

**Nov. 2009:** A friend recently lent me a copy of the Nov. 2009 Salt Lake City Messenger. WOW!!!! . . . After several years of living and traveling throughout this great nation of ours a job transfer brough me back to Utah. Since my return I cannot help but feel the constant, daily bombardment of Mormonism. It’s like Chinese water torture.

**Nov. 2009:** Making progress. Sent a copy of my exit letter to friends and family; immediately separated the ‘wheat from the tares’ in my life. Funny, I don’t feel the least inclined to respond in kind, just love my neighbor as myself. I never really knew just how black is white and white is black your thinking can be until I decided to walk away from it.

**Nov. 2009:** I would like to take the time to thank you for all of the further light and knowledge I have recevied from your website. I am now resigned from the Cult. My Wife and I and my four children are out.
Nov. 2009: Your reputation precedes you. If you were to read D&C 121 you would see that all this was predicted. I am not yet a great or even good Mormon scholar but I do know this, if you were to use the methods and judgements against the Saviour that you use against Joseph Smith you would have people doubting His (The Saviours) sovereignty. . . . You are obviously very genuine in your desires to help people understand the truth and I respect that, just make sure for your sake it’s the whole truth.

Nov. 2009: Your work is an excellent expose on how the LDS Church seeks to procure, alter, and control the interpretation of their history. . . . At age 52 I still experience the challenge of overcoming the resonance caused by their ideologies, . . . The final decisive moment was when I realized that the prophets routinely contradict themselves through their doctrines and that it is impossible to discern what is doctrine versus opinion. No amount of praying and good works could resolve the extensive contradictions. We all know why. I found myself required to accept fact, truth, and the light of Christ.

Dec. 2009: Please stop criticizing or finding some loop holes in our religion, . . . please, we have our choices in life. you have yours, and we have ours. it has really hurt a lot of people and specially me. so please, if you have something that we don’t know regarding about the church, keep it to yourself. . . . I’m not saying that you’re wrong and I’m right or vice versa, its just we are not forcing people to believe as [we do]. and we believe in what we teach, I’m just 17, and though my knowledge about life is just not that much but, i know whats wrong and right.

Dec. 2009: Please continue your wonderful work. I, too, grew up Mormon and have in the last year parted ways with the church. What a freeing experience but what a disappointment at the same time. Everything I was taught about religion is wrong from what really happened biblically . . . The more I can learn and understand what keeps my family in this trance of Mormonism the better!

Dec. 2009: You was asked to stop . . . posting from your lying trashy web site. You are now included in the investigation of hate crimes and religious hate. Enjoy what you have coming to you. I will not rest until all of you pay for your crimes.

Dec. 2009: I would like to start off by saying how much I appreciate all of the hard work and research that has been done by you folks over the years. I was born and raised a mormon, went on a mission, married in the temple you get the idea. I would never have been able to get to the point that I, or my family are now at without your efforts. We have all left Mormonism and are actively pursuing a relationship with the one true god.

Dec. 2009: I was born and raise member of the LDS church in Mexico, I even was a missionary, randomly or accide[n]tally i’ve seen through the internet many of the teachings of Sandra Tanner and others against church doctrines and feel you are right in everything you say, because it does make sense.

Jan. 2010: God used your book, Major Problems of Mormonism, back in 1994, to get me out of that cult. This was a necessary step before I came to faith in Christ shortly thereafter.

Jan. 2010: Thank you for your faithful ministry through the years. I was a convert to Mormonism that left the church in 1985. Your ministry was one of the first that I came in contact with in those early years that were filled with so much confusion and questions. I now serve the LORD in pastoral ministry . . .

Jan. 2010: I know you have no idea who I am, but you had a major impact on my life and my Dads life as well. I was born and raised in the L.D.S Church. Although my parents were very devout Mormons I was more interested in getting into trouble. Finally my life took a turn where I turned to the Lord for help and started attending a Christian Church. A few months later I drove down to visit my parents to tell them the good news. I thought they would be pleased after all of the hardship I put them through in my teenage years. They were not pleased at all! My Dad got mad at me and told me I might as well not go to church at all because I was going to the wrong one. I went home confused and saddened. Not long after this I was introduced to your book “Mormonism Shadow or Reality?” I was skeptical, but I looked up as many references in your book as I could find and found your book to be completely accurate! I am glad to say that I used the material in your book and 10 years later my Dad accepted Jesus as his Lord and had his name removed from the L.D.S records. I am extremely grateful for the effort that you and your husband put into this work of reaching Mormons for Christ.

Jan. 2010: I joined the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day saints without a knowledge much about Joseph Smith at first, has not read the book of Mormon and not seen any lds movies, I joined because I was going to the wrong one. I went home confused and not long after this I was introduced to your book “Mormonism Shadow or Reality?” I was skeptical, but I looked up as many references in your book as I could find and found your book to be completely accurate! I am glad to say that I used the material in your book and 10 years later my Dad accepted Jesus as his Lord and had his name removed from the L.D.S records. I am extremely grateful for the effort that you and your husband put into this work of reaching Mormons for Christ.

Feb. 2010: I want to thank you for helping to bring out Mormon history in its true light. I had never heard of any Church history other than that which they lead people to believe. I had fallen hook line and sinker. When I invited Christ into my life, the change was truly miraculous.

Feb. 2010: Many years ago I asked my good Salt lake friend Jon to pick up some information from Utah Lighthouse. . . . Jon brought the monthly newsletter along with the occassional research by Sandra Tanner to my office so that I wouldn’t have to have it delivered to my home. I’ll never forget the shock and then the relief as the lies became unraveled before my eyes. My favorite pamphlet was the hieroglyphic translation of ancient funeral texts magically turned into the Book of Abraham. Thanks Gerald and Sandra.

Feb. 2010: You complain about being told you are a liar, but you call others liars, perverts, etc. You are a hypocrite. Please repent.
Feb. 2010: i joined [the LDS] church in 2003 in france where i’m from, i was baptized in caen, i realize that i don’t stand for the doctrines and practices of the church, and i found out recently after many researches and sincere prayers that the book of mormon is fake and the church is an heresy; I believe in the jesus of the holy bible . . .  

Feb. 2010: I guess i just dont understand why ya’ll have a quote that Joseph Smith said on the main page of your website. Is that the motive of your church, to prove the LDS church wrong? Granted your are based in Salt Lake where there are a ton of Mormons but doesnt it seem like a weakness to focus on Mormons and try to discredit them, instead of focusing on how right your church is?  

Feb. 2010: This is a thank you email that is being sent anonymously . . . I would like to thank the Utah Lighthouse Ministries for doing high-quality scholarship. . . . I am one that works in the physical sciences; good scholarship, reproducibility of results, and the ability to peer review data are high priorities. The vast majority of the works from Utah Lighthouse Ministries have scholarship that is in my opinion par excellence. The book titled “Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?” and the online edition of “The Changing World of Mormonism” are to my liking of other scholarly works such as “Jesus Among Others Gods” by Ravi Zacharias . . .  

Feb. 2010: I FINALLY got my walking paper, not that I felt I needed it, but it is good to hold in my hands. Looking back, leaving Mormonism looms large in ones mind, even though I had been inactive for 30 years, but now it seems like any sacrifice of family and friends was such a small price to pay. There is a dark as night and noon-day difference in the place Jesus Christ had and now occupies in my life. Read, more like soak up the Bible every single day!! Thanks again, I owe you one Gal!!  

Mar. 2010: Long story short . . . many years ago while on my mission I read [Mormonism-] Shadow or Reality? and left the LDS church after completing my mission. I followed yours and Jerald’s example of asking to be removed from the church rolls. . . . I’m one of that 60% or whomever that don’t find another church or follow Christ upon leaving Mormonism. I’ve not sought a dramatic born-again experience but Shawn’s [McCraney, www. bornagainmormon.com] challenge to pray, “Lord, I don’t know if you’re there or if I even like you, but I want you to enter my heart and guide me to Your Truth” resonates with me so I have done that. Please think of me in your prayers.  

Mar. 2010: I’m sure you don’t remember us, a young LDS couple with four young children in tow. We came to your bookstore looking for answers—and found them! We talked with you a long while, visited your Christian Missionary Alliance Church, . . . It was a hard thing to break with the Mormon church! Eventually we did, though, and joined the conservative Mennonites. It has been a real blessing. Our eight children are all grown up now—and each one a born-again Christian.  

Mar. 2010: I have read the changes on the Book of Mormon from the first edition of the 1830 and let me tell you that this changes did not change the doctrine of the everlasting gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . Please, read the Book of Mormon and pray about it . . . I know that the Book of Mormon is true, . . . I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God and that he translated the Book of Mormon by the Gift and Power of the Holy Ghost. I know this and bear record of this in front of Heaven Angels and in Front of God and Jesus Christ that is seeing this email and this is being written upon Heaven.  

Mar. 2010: Thank you for the DVD you gave me . . . My husband and I resigned our membership from the Mormon church 3/16/10. We are now reading the bible and wanting to know God. We are also watching Heart of The Matter [http://www.hotm.tv] and reading your book and articles.  

April 2010: Although you don’t know me, your efforts have been instrumental in my de-conversion from the LDS church and have culminated in my letter of resignation received by the church office building on April 6, 2010. Although I consider myself a non-member, the LDS church will do some internal gymnastics until they send out the final letter.  

I sincerely appreciate the efforts that both you and Jerald have undertaken over so many years to expose this situation for what it is. Your persistence has contributed, in part, to my awakening and eventual freedom from a situation that was stifling and unhealthy. I have not yet decided my future path and, in fairness, I have not reconciled certain christian doctrine at this time. I hope this ongoing search allows me arrive at a better place.  

April 2010: I just wanted to take a moment to thank you for your magnificent video documentaries which can be found on YouTube. My favorite is “The early years of Mormonism” [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmH2CIXRB54]. Although I had my name removed from the records of the Mormon church in 1995, I use your video’s, pamphlets and books . . . I cannot express to you in words how grateful I am to you (and your deceased husband) for the countless hours that you have spent per leading the very misled Mormon population back to Christ.  

April 2010: Hello. I am a District Court Judge . . . I write today to thank you for putting The Changing World of Mormonism on the web as a research tool for folks like me, non-Mormons, who, as thoughtful Christians (in my case, Episcopalian), want to understand the Mormon faith for a variety of reasons.
April 2010: I have come to your website through my searches regarding Baptism for the Dead.

I am a member of the United Church of Canada, and my extended family is liberal Protestant with the exception of my Mormon sister, her husband, two daughters . . .

I regard Baptism for the Dead, its related Celestial Kingdom and external polygamists in heaven as one of the most bizarre beliefs of the Mormon faith. It is so idiotic that I am inclined to ignore it.

However, after my father—a United Church minister—died three years ago, I found out that my sister and her family have baptized my grandparents and other ancestors secretly without notifying the family that this had been done, or requesting their permission as per LDS suggested guidelines. Several of my ancestors were United Church and Methodists ministers and Quaker religious leaders. Their proxy baptism by the Mormon members of our family is highly disrespectful of our ancestors religious traditions and sends the wrong message that the Mormons regard my ancestors religion as being inferior. . . .

I have asked my sister that there be full, plain and true disclosure of the names of the family for whom this temple work had been performed and that the other 100 plus members of my father’s family be informed that this practice exists so that they can express their opinion one way or the other about this practice being done to their immediate relatives (my deceased aunts, uncles and cousins) and themselves. So far, my sister has avoided action on this request, constantly referring me to the Mormon prophets which only they recognize as having legitimacy.

I do not accept temple work as having any validity in spiritual terms. I am under no illusion that disclosure will have any material effect on church practice . . . However, I feel that I cannot remain silent about these practices with regard to myself and other family members.

*MORMON EXPANSION INTO BLACK AFRICA*

One year ago, at the April 2009 conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Joseph Sitati became the first black African to be appointed to their top leadership. Sitati, an experienced businessman with a degree in mechanical engineering and a diploma in accounting and finance, was installed in the First Quorum of Seventy, the LDS Church’s second most important tier of leaders. Prior to 1978, when the LDS priesthood ban on ordaining blacks was lifted, such an event would have been impossible.

While blacks have always been able to join the LDS Church (and a few blacks were given the priesthood under Joseph Smith1), up until June of 1978 the LDS Church would not allow blacks to be ordained to the priesthood, thus barring them from the temple ordinances necessary for one to achieve eternal life—i.e., exaltation.

Brigham Young, second president of the LDS Church, had been very adamant that blacks were not to be given the priesthood until “all the other children of Adam have had the privilege” and they were to be “the last to share the joys of the kingdom of God.”2 In 1868 an article in the LDS magazine Juvenile Instructor declared that “black skin is a mark of the curse of Heaven.”3 Speaking in 1954, LDS Apostle Mark E. Petersen concluded that due to poor performance in the pre-mortal life some were born black, while the righteous were born white. “These are rewards and punishments,” Petersen declared.4 In 1963 Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith explained:

According to the doctrine of the church, the Negro, because of some condition of unfaithfulness in the spirit-or-pre-existence, was not valiant and hence was not denied the mortal probation, but was denied the blessings of the priesthood.5

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4 Mark E. Petersen, “Race Problems as They Affect the Church,” BYU, August 27, 1954. The entire speech is reproduced in Tanners’ *Curse of Cain?* pp. 104-113.
5 Photo of Smith’s letter is reproduced in Appendix C of *Curse of Cain?*
After the priesthood ban was lifted, Apostle Bruce R. McConkie advised church employees to:

Forget everything that I have said, or what President Brigham Young or President George Q. Cannon or whomsoever has said in days past that is contrary to the present revelation [giving priesthood to blacks]. We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world. . . . It doesn’t make a particle of difference what anybody ever said about the Negro matter before the first day of June of this year [1978].

While we applaud the LDS Church’s repudiation of their racial teachings, it leaves the question of how much to trust doctrinal statements made by their prophets and apostles. If they were wrong here, where else have they been wrong?

Although the LDS Church is trying to distance itself from its racist past, their scriptures still contain passages equating black or dark skin with a curse from God. While the LDS Church dropped the priesthood ban on blacks, they have never repudiated their underlying concept of why different races and colors exist.

In response to the growing number of converts in Africa, three LDS temples have been opened on that continent: Johannesburg, South Africa; Aba, Nigeria; and Accra, Ghana.

Every April at the general conference of the LDS Church a report is read giving the growth figures for the past year. As of December 2009 Mormonism claimed a world-wide membership of 13,824,854. This included 280,106 convert baptisms, and 119,722 new children of members added to the rolls in 2009. According to the LDS web site, church membership in all of Africa is slightly over 300,000, while the population of Africa is approximately one billion.

The Salt Lake Tribune, April 16, 2010, ran an article entitled, “Africa, Caribbean lead way in LDS growth.” If one only looks at the percentage of growth it can give a false impression of large numbers. For instance, Uganda was reported to have experienced a 18.7% LDS growth rate. However, the number of members in Uganda at the end of 2009 was only 8,216. Even though Africa was reported to be among the fastest-growing areas of the LDS Church, the numbers are still relatively small compared to the total population. The largest number of Mormons in Africa is in Nigeria, with over 93,000 members. When this number is compared to the estimated total population of Nigeria of 155,000,000, the LDS presence loses its impact.

After the LDS priesthood ban was lifted, missionary efforts in Africa started to bear fruit. However, the growth was not as impressive as they might have expected. There are certain concepts within Mormonism that resonate with Africans (prophets, gifts of the spirit, healings), however this has not lead to wide acceptance. One problem seems to be the LDS Church hierarchal priesthood structure, thus ruling out any local man’s ability to claim prophetic utterances. Another problem has been the language barrier. According to Salt Lake Tribune reporter, Peggy Stack, “Though many Africans speak ‘colonial’ languages—English, French, and Portugese—others speak primarily tribal languages.” While many men in the work place speak one of the colonial languages, most women tend to speak their tribal languages. Also, the services in Africa are conducted in the same manner as in America—no drums, dancing, or clapping, and the men are expected to come to church in a white shirt and tie. Philip Jenkins, professor at Pennsylvania State University, commented:

Despite what might appear to be vast structural and ideological advantages, Mormonism is doing nothing like as well as Pentecostal churches such as the Assemblies of God, not to mention cases like the Mennonite and Lutheran churches . . . Based on the standard of many other churches, it simply is not true to describe Mormon growth in Africa as spectacular, amazing, or in any of the other standard superlatives. A balanced comment would place Mormon growth as moderate at best, and limited to some small areas. I see no likelihood that Mormons will account for as much as 1 percent of the continental population, at least in the next century. Quite possible, even as LDS membership in Africa grows in absolute numbers, it will actually decline as a proportion of overall continental population.

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6 As quoted in Black Saints in a White Church, Jessie Embry (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), pp. 34-35.
7 See 2 Nephi 5:21; Alma 3:6; Moses 7:8, 22; Abraham 1:21, 27. For a longer list, see “Racial Statements in LDS Scriptures,” http://www.utlm.org/onlineresources/racialstatements.htm
9 Salt Lake Tribune (April 16, 2010).
10 http://www.newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/nigeria
SPECIAL BOOK OFFERS
Expires July 31, 2010

Orders that total $30 or more (before shipping charge)
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*Curse of Cain? Racism in the Mormon Church*
By Jerald and Sandra Tanner

Orders that total $60 or more (before shipping charge)
will receive BOTH of these books FREE

*Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*
By Jerald and Sandra Tanner
The Mormon Murders
Twenty-Five Years Later

By Sandra Tanner and Rocky Hulse

It has been twenty-five years since Mark Hofmann, a returned missionary of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), forged numerous historical documents, blew up two innocent people with pipe bombs, and was given a plea bargain instead of going to trial.

Why would the prosecuting attorneys offer a plea bargain when Hofmann had been charged with thirty-two felony counts and two murders? It becomes clearer if you understand the tremendous power the LDS Church has over the state of Utah. Placing Mark Hofmann on trial would have meant calling LDS Prophets and Apostles to the witness stand. These LDS Church Authorities had been utterly fooled by him into purchasing thousands of dollars worth of forged documents relating to early Mormon history.

Nothing in Mark Hofmann’s past indicated a dark, sinister side. He was born and raised a Mormon and went on his two-year mission to southwest England, returning in 1976. Married in the Salt Lake LDS temple in 1979, outwardly Mark appeared to be a faithful Mormon. However, as he learned more about problems in early LDS history, he found an easy target to exploit in the LDS Church’s desperate need for control of its history.

Since the beginning of Mormonism, founder Joseph Smith has been accused of fraud, deceit, folklore, magic and mysticism. In 1834 E. D. Howe published the first exposé of Mormonism titled Mormonism Unvailed, which contained a number of statements by the Smiths’ neighbors, accusing them of deceit and seeking buried treasures through the use of magic.

One neighbor of the Smiths charged that he accompanied Joseph Smith, Jr., and his father, Joseph Smith, Sen., on a nocturnal treasure hunt where he was assured that they would find “two or three kegs of gold and silver, some feet under the surface of the earth.” But after drawing two magic circles, lining one with a row of witch hazel sticks, driving a steel rod in the center, digging a five foot trench around the rod, an evil spirit “caused the money to sink.” Joseph Smith, Sen., informed him that “we had made a mistake in the commencement of the operation; if it had not been for that, said he, we should have got the money.” The farmer went on to state: “When they...
[the Smiths] found that the people of this vicinity would no longer put any faith in their schemes for digging money, they then pretended to find a gold bible, of which, they said, the book of Mormon was only an introduction."

Prior to telling his neighbors of the gold plates, Joseph Smith was arrested in 1826 on a misdemeanor charge relating to his money-digging. In Judge Albert Neeley’s papers he described Smith as the “glass looker,” referring to his use of a stone in his hat to discern the location of buried treasures. At the hearing, Joseph informed Judge Neeley that he had given up money-digging:

[Joseph Smith stated] he had a certain stone, which he had occasionally looked at to determine where hidden treasures in the bowels of the earth were; . . . that at Palmyra he pretended to tell, by looking at this stone, where coined money was buried in Pennsylvania, and while at Palmyra he had frequently ascertained in that way where lost property was, of various kinds; that he has occasionally been in the habit of looking through this stone to find lost property for three years, but of late had pretty much given it up on account its injuring his health, especially his eyes—made them sore; that he did not solicit business of this kind, and had always rather declined having anything to do with this business.

Smith may have turned from his occupation of treasure digging but he continued to use his seer stone. When he first claimed to acquire the gold plates of the Book of Mormon he used the divinely prepared “Urim and Thummim,” allegedly preserved with the plates, for the work of translating the unknown script. However, after the loss of the first 116 pages of transcription, he switched to using his money-digging stone to complete the work. Book of Mormon witness, David Whitmer wrote:

I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing.

From its beginning, the LDS Church has tried to distance itself from Joseph Smith’s early magical practices and provide a legitimate explanation of its origins. For instance, official LDS artwork never depicts Smith translating with his head in his hat, staring at his seer stone. Instead, he is shown sitting at a table looking at the gold plates. Into this fertile ground of protecting church history at all costs, Mark Hofmann cultivated his forgery scheme to make money and make the LDS Church look foolish—he succeeded on both counts.

The Anthon Transcript

Hofmann’s first big score was the “Anthon Transcript.” Martin Harris, the financier of the first printing of the Book of Mormon in 1830, was skeptical at first of mortgaging his farm to pay for the printing without some proof of the Golden Bible. Joseph Smith would only let him heft the box that supposedly contained the “Golden Plates” from which the Book of Mormon was to be translated, but this wasn’t enough to satisfy the wealthy farmer; he wanted confirmation. So, Joseph supposedly copied characters from the gold plates and Harris took them to New York City to have the scholars of the day validate the characters. The characters were not of any known language, Smith explained to Harris, but an unknown language called “Reformed Egyptian.”

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3 Howe, Mormonism Unveiled, p. 239.
5 David Whitmer, An Address To All Believers In Christ (Richmond, Missouri, 1887), p. 12.
Harris eventually found his way to Charles Anthon, a professor of Greek and Latin at Columbia College in New York. No one knows for sure what took place at this meeting but Harris came back declaring that Professor Anthon had identified the characters as Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyriac and Arabic. When Professor Anthon later heard that the Mormons were saying he had validated the characters he wrote a blistering denial: “The whole story about my having pronounced the Mormonite inscription to be ‘reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics’ is perfectly false.”

Although an early copy of the Anthon transcript has been preserved in the Community of Christ Library (formerly the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) in Independence, Missouri, the original Anthon Transcript which Martin Harris had taken on his journey was believed lost. Professor Anthon had described it as a document with vertical columns of strange characters with a circle of characters at the bottom. Amazingly, Hofmann claimed to find the long-missing document in 1980.

In order to make this fraud seem more credible Hofmann took an old seventeenth-century Bible and glued his document between the pages. He then went to Utah State University in Logan, Utah, to ask Jeff Simmons, head of Special Collections, how to extract a document that appeared to be glued between two pages. When the pages were pried loose, they found what appeared to be the original copy of the Anthon Transcript. On May 3, 1980, the Deseret News ran an article on Hofmann’s find, along with a picture of Mark standing next to the most senior LDS Church leaders studying his recently discovered (forged) “Anthon Transcript.” (See photo on the first page of this newsletter.)

This incredible document put Mark Hofmann on the inside track with the leadership of the LDS Church. Mark fooled every senior LDS Church leader and struck a deal to exchange the document for items from the LDS Church archives “worth about $20,000.”

**The Joseph Smith III Blessing**

At the time of Joseph Smith’s death in 1844, he had not designated a successor to lead the church. There had been talk that Smith had bestowed a blessing on his eleven-year-old son, Joseph Smith III, indicating that he was to be Smith’s successor. But due to the son’s age, the leaders bypassed him in favor of mature leadership. This led to competing claims between Brigham Young and Sidney Rigdon. The December 15, 1844, issue of the Times and Seasons, the LDS newspaper, had an article denouncing Rigdon’s claim of leadership. Young soon won the favor of the majority of Saints and assumed leadership.

After the main body of Mormons left Illinois and moved west a number of those who stayed behind, who denounced polygamy and refused to follow Brigham Young’s leadership, formed a new church. They called themselves the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. They insisted that Joseph Smith’s son should assume his rightful place as president of the church. Joseph Smith III was persuaded to assume leadership of the new church in 1860.

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7 Letter by Charles Anthon, Feb. 17, 1834, as quoted in Mormonism Unvailed, pp. 270-272.
11 Sometimes referred to as the RLDS Church, it is now known as the Community of Christ.
Thus began the long-running dispute regarding who was Joseph Smith’s rightful successor, Brigham Young or Joseph Smith III, and which church was the true body of Joseph Smith’s followers.

In 1891 the RLDS Church filed suit against the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), another splinter group, claiming title to the parcel of land in Independence, Missouri, that Joseph Smith had designated as the place for a future temple. During this trial the question of Smith’s rightful successor was discussed. James Whitehead, Joseph Smith’s personal secretary in Nauvoo, testified that “it was declared by Joseph Smith himself that the selection and ordination of his son Joseph as his successor in office had been made, and the people agreed to it, by a vote in the usual way, voting by the uplifted hand.”

Joseph Smith III also testified that he remembered “being called in his [Joseph Smith’s] office, or into a room adjoining his office, and receiving the laying on of hands, and a prophetic blessing or setting apart, whatever it may be called.” He then related two more events where Joseph Smith laid hands on his head and appointed him to be his successor.

When Hofmann learned that a blessing had been given designating Joseph’s son as his successor, but no copy remained, he set about to fill that void. In February of 1981 Hofmann mentioned to Michael Marquardt, a fellow researcher, that he had seen the original Smith blessing document. Authors Linda Sillitoe and Allen Roberts wrote:

The document, dated January 14, 1844, began, “Blessed of the Lord is my son Joseph, who is called the third . . .” Farther down, the key sentence read, “For he shall be my successor to the Presidency of the High Priesthood; a Seer, and a Revelator, and a Prophet, unto the Church; which appointment belongeth to him by blessing, and also by right.”

Looking for a buyer, Hofmann showed LDS church archivist Don Schmidt a photocopy of the blessing on February 16. Schmidt immediately recognized the importance and potential controversy but kept a poker face. “I’d have to see the original.”

Hofmann explained to Schmidt that “It came in a collection I purchased from the Bullock family in Coalville [Utah], from Allen Bullock to be specific.” When the LDS Church did not jump at the chance to buy it, Mark contacted the RLDS Church. Their historians expressed interest but needed time to make the arrangements. He promised them the document and agreed to wait until the church could make the purchase. However, he reneged on his promise and sold it to the LDS Church “for $20,000 in trade, again accepting various forms of early Mormon coins and currency.”

When Richard P. Howard, RLDS historian, heard that the document had been sold to the Utah church he was shocked. This created a public embarrassment when it became known that the two churches were struggling over who should own the document. Eventually the LDS Church agreed to turn over the blessing document to the RLDS Church in exchange for a copy of the rare 1833 Book of Commandments.

Hofmann’s career was in full swing. “During the first few months of 1981, Mark Hofmann had made $52,000 in cash and trade on Mormon documents alone.” He continued to “find” more documents, many of which were sold to various collectors but not made public. In January of 1983 Mark met with Gordon B. Hinckley, a member of the LDS First Presidency, to offer him a new find, an 1825 letter from Joseph Smith to Josiah Stowell, the man who had hired Joseph to use his stone to search for buried treasures. In the letter Smith supposedly told Stowell “. . . since you cannot asertain any particulars you should . . .”

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12 The Temple Lot Case, photo copy by Utah Lighthouse Ministry of “United States Circuit Court (8th Circuit) . . . The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, complainant, vs. the Church of Christ at Independence, Missouri . . . Complainant’s abstract of pleading and evidence” (Lamoni, Iowa, 1893), p. 37.

13 Ibid., pp. 40-41.

14 Sillitoe and Roberts, Salamander, p. 247.

15 Ibid., p. 248.

16 Ibid., p. 249.

17 Ibid., p. 251.
not dig more until you first discover if any valuables remain you know the treasure must be guarded by some clever spirit . . ." The letter would give support to the charge of Joseph Smith’s involvement in the occult. Hinckley handed Mark a check for $15,000 for the document. In March, Hofmann showed Hinckley another document, the supposed original 1829 contract between Joseph Smith, Martin Harris and E. B. Grandin, relating to the printing of the 1830 Book of Mormon. This in turn was purchased by Hinckley on behalf of the LDS Church for $25,000. Unfortunately for all concerned, these documents would eventually be exposed as forgeries.

The Salamander Letter and Magic

In 1983 Mark Hofmann started telling a few friends that he had uncovered a letter, which was later known as the “Salamander Letter,” supposedly written by Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris in 1830. Believing the whole translation of the Book of Mormon was steeped in mysticism and fraud, Hofmann invented a letter that played perfectly off of the claims of magic in E. D. Howe’s 1834 book. When Mark read the Salamander Letter to Michael Marquardt, his reaction was that it sounded “more like a Grimm’s fairy tale than a Sunday-school lesson: kettles of money guarded by spirits, seer stones, enchanted spells, magic ‘spectacles,’ ghostly visitations. And instead of a benevolent angel, a cantankerous and tricky ‘old spirit’ who transforms himself into a white salamander!”

The Salamander Letter would challenge the religious framework of the beginning of Mormonism, casting it in the category of folk magic rather than divine revelation.

Hofmann, possibly worried that he was “finding” too many documents, asked his associate, Lyn Jacobs, to offer the document to the LDS Church in exchange for a gold coin minted by Brigham Young or a copy of the rare 1833 Book of Commandments. But Hinckley was leery of doing business with Jacobs, someone he had just met, and wasn’t sure if Jacobs would keep the document and transaction a secret.

In order to avoid directly involving the LDS Church in the procurement of this document (too much publicity), Hofmann worked a deal with a faithful LDS member, a wealthy businessman named Steve Christensen, to purchase the document for $40,000 to prevent it from falling into the “wrong hands.” The idea was to allow time to lessen interest in the document and then Steve could donate it to the LDS Church. Historians and researchers were hearing bits and pieces of the newly found letter and anxious to see the original. Little did the church realize that Mark was the deliberate leak on the news stories of his finds.

As soon as Jerald Tanner was able to get a typed transcript of the Salamander Letter he began researching the contents. He soon became concerned that it was a forgery; too many concepts and phrases seemed to be taken from E. D. Howe’s book and a letter by Joseph Knight, a friend of Joseph Smith, recently made public in a BYU Studies article.

In the March 1984 issue of his newsletter, the Salt Lake City Messenger, Jerald outlined his doubts. At the same time LDS historians were secretly researching whether the salamander letter was consistent historically with its time and apparent circumstances. It led [Ronald] Walker, [Dean] Jessee and [Brent] Metcalfe down a road that for the most part had been taboo for Mormon scholars in the past, the study of Joseph Smith’s involvement in the occult and money digging. During months of research, they found an abundance of material, ranging from court records of his trials in Bainbridge, New York, to obscure writings by early disciples. This information indicated that during the same period of time Smith claimed to have been led to a buried cache of gold plates by the angel Moroni, he was trying to make his living with claims of supernatural powers which enabled him to locate buried treasures of gold and silver with a seer stone and other superstitious occult practices.

Late in August [1984], almost eight hundred people gathered in a Salt Lake City hotel for the annual Sunstone Theological Symposium. Even before the conference formally opened, the hotel lobby was abuzz with speculation about the secret salamander letter and reports of another secret letter that purportedly linked Joseph Smith to folk magic . . .

As the church history buffs filed into the meeting, Sandra Tanner stood in the lobby of the hotel handing out a pamphlet headlined, “The Money-Digging Letters,” in which her husband expressed strong reservations about the Martin Harris letter.

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18 Sillitoe and Roberts, Salamander, pp. 269-270.
19 Ibid., pp. 270-271.
20 Naifeh and Smith, Mormon Murders, p. 154.
21 Ibid., p. 159.
22 Ibid., p. 169.
Jerald expanded his pamphlet questioning the authenticity of Hofmann’s find in October of 1984 and reiterated his doubts in the January and June 1985 issues of the Salt Lake City Messenger. But Mark Hofmann had little to fear. Jerald Tanner’s arguments, as an apostate Mormon, were not taken seriously.

**Oath of a Freeman**

By 1985 Hofmann had been busy creating a number of historical forgeries in addition to his documents relating to Mormonism. Many of these had been sold to private collectors, thus not making the news. In spite of all of his document sales Mark was in financial trouble. He was flying back and forth to New York City and other places, supposedly searching for antique documents, and spending money like there was no end to its source. He was also attempting to purchase a very expensive house in one of the most affluent neighborhoods in Salt Lake City. Needing a document that would make him more financially secure, in March of 1985 he claimed to find a copy of the “Oath of a Freeman.”

Historically the Oath of a Freeman was thought to be the first document printed in America in 1647. Only one copy was known to exist, making a second copy worth at least one million dollars. When commenting on the unbelievable odds of Hofmann finding such a document by pure chance, after all the other documents he claimed to unearth, one police investigator commented:

“It was as if you had never heard of the Holy Grail. Then one Sunday you go to a garage sale and you find a little silver chalice or pewter cup and you say, ‘Hey, far out!’ So you pick it up. You also pick up an old Sotheby’s catalog. Then on the way home, you’re reading through the catalog and you find a notice to the effect that the Holy Grail was lost in whatever A.D. And basically it looks precisely like the item you just picked up. You say, ‘Goddam! I just bought that this morning at the garage sale!’”

But the Library of Congress was not quick to accept the authenticity of Hofmann’s “Oath.” They needed time to do research and tests on the document, time Mark did not have. Unable to wait for the sale of the “Oath of a Freeman,” with mounting debts and creditors at his heals, Mark returned to forging Mormon documents.

**The McLellin Collection**

The McLellin Collection was the fraud that would finally bring Mark Hofmann down. William E. McLellin was ordained an LDS apostle in 1835 but was excommunicated in 1838, becoming an ardent critic of the church.

While retaining a belief in the Book of Mormon, McLellin felt Joseph Smith had brought false teachings into the church, such as priesthood and polygamy. Leaders in the LDS Church had long known that McLellin had letters and papers dealing with controversial issues of Joseph Smith’s life. In 1879 the RLDS Church had printed a letter from McLellin to President Joseph Smith III, Joseph Smith’s son, in their paper, *The Saints’ Herald*, in which he insisted that Emma knew of her husband’s adultery. Due to such accounts, rumor spread that his diaries and papers had been preserved and contained many incriminating documents that would embarrass the LDS Church. But no one seemed to know who owned the fabled collection. Until now.

Mark Hofmann's forged “Oath of a Freeman”

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A month after Hofmann reported finding the “Oath of a Freeman,” word on the street was that the McLellin Collection had been located. In order for Mark Hofmann to get top dollar for the collection he had to say it included a laundry list of items. He told one friend it contained part of Joseph Smith’s papyri,29 others were informed that the McLellin Collection contained “Joseph Smith’s revelations and letters—actually a good orange crate full of letters and documents—including six little diaries handwritten by McLellin from 1831 to 1836, one for each year.”30 However, Hofmann was unable to forge enough documents prior to the deadline for the sale. The price tag was set at $185,000 and he was simultaneously working several different people, as well as the LDS Church, in the scam.

With President Hinckley out of the country at the time, Hofmann had to look elsewhere for a buyer. He turned to his friend Steve Christensen, the purchaser of the Salamander Letter, and told him he needed $185,000 to acquire the McLellin Collection. Steve contacted Elder Hugh Pinnock, a senior member of the Quorum of Seventy (an LDS General Authority, just under the position of Apostle), who in turn, on June 28, 1985, made a phone call to First Interstate Bank and arranged the loan. Mark simply had to go pick up the check.31 Evidently, such transactions had been done before. During the police investigation of the murders, Harvey Tanner, head loan officer at First Interstate Bank, told detectives that he “had been reassured that Hofmann was good for the money, the church was behind it, not to worry.” He went on to state that “we had done business with Pinnock before, obtaining money for the church without the church being involved.”32 Hofmann had also borrowed money from several other Mormons with promises of providing the McLellin Collection. Playing both ends against the middle, time was running out. Hofmann was under a great deal of pressure to meet his various obligations. Steve Christensen had entered the picture again as Mark was delinquent on his $185,000 loan arranged by Hugh Pinnock. “The Brethren” had elicited Steve’s help to complete the McLellin transaction through a wealthy LDS Mission President in Nova Scotia, Canada.33

But Hofmann was becoming more and more desperate in the pressure cooker situation that he had created. Sensing the need to divert attention away from his mounting debts and his inability to produce the fictitious documents, Hofmann began to formulate a devious plan. If he could get Christensen out of the picture then he would not only be relieved of some immediate financial pressure but the ensuing drama of Christensen’s death could refocus attention and buy him time to produce more documents.

The Bombings

On Tuesday October 15, 1985, two separate bombs took the lives of Steve Christensen and Kathy Sheets. The bomb set for Steve Christensen, left at his office door in downtown Salt Lake City, was especially brutal, being filled with nails meant to shred its victim. Gary Sheets was the intended target for bomb number two; however, his wife, Kathy, found the package containing the bomb outside their home and became the victim of its deadly power. Mark Hofmann later commented: “At the time I made that bomb my thoughts were that it didn’t matter if it was Mr. Sheets, a child, a dog.”34 No one is sure who was the intended victim of bomb number three. Mark Hofmann was in downtown Salt Lake City in the process of delivering the bomb when it went off prematurely in his parked car. Severely injured, but not killed, Mark was initially thought to be another innocent victim; however, the investigation quickly shifted to him as the suspected bomber.

Lying for the Lord

Shortly after the first bomb went off, Hofmann called Hugh Pinnock to inform him of Christensen’s death and to assure Pinnock that he was still willing to go through with the McLellin deal and was arranging to pay off the bank loan. After the second bomb went off, Mark calmly met with LDS Apostle Dallin Oaks in his church office and informed him that the bombings must relate to failed

30 Ibid., p. 342.
32 Sillitoe and Roberts, *Salamander*, p. 43.
business dealings of Christensen and Sheets and had no connection to Mark’s documents. Later Pinnock and Oaks met with Gordon B. Hinckley to discuss how to proceed with the McLellin transaction. The day after the explosion that injured Mark Hofmann, Elder Pinnock was interviewed about the crimes:

Police Detective Don Bell interviewed him at 1:12 in the afternoon on October 17, the day after the bomb exploded in Hofmann’s car.

“Elder Pinnock, this is the deal,” Bell began, notebook in hand. “This is a homicide investigation. Do you know Mr. Hofmann?”

Pinnock paused and reflected a moment. “No, I don’t believe I do.”

When local news station KSL-TV, owned by the LDS Church, accurately reported that the LDS Church was involved in arranging document deals and illegal loans, the church leaders demanded a retraction. Reporter Jack Ford complained to his boss:

“The Church is upset because we [KSL-TV] said they helped arrange a loan. Well, they did! They say it was an individual, not the Church, but that’s baloney. It may have been an individual who placed the call, but he was a Church official, sitting in his Church office, on Church time, using a Church phone, and he did it for the . . . benefit of the Church. Nobody else wanted that McLellin Collection except the Church. And the Nova Scotia mission president doesn’t collect documents. He was just a big-bucks guy who said ‘If you need help, I’ll help you out.’ If the Church says they weren’t helping arrange any buyers for anything, how do you explain the fact that the Church volunteered to get an armored car to go down to Texas and pick the Collection up?”

When LDS Apostle Gordon B. Hinckley was interviewed by County Prosecuting Attorneys Bob Stott and David Biggs about his multiple dealings with Mark Hofmann, he tried to hide his association with Mark:

Stott and Biggs shifted uneasily in their chairs. With all the time in between to recollect those meetings, he still couldn’t remember a thing.

“Was he ever in your office?” Stott asked.

“Probably,” said Hinckley.

“Probably!” thought Biggs. Now, he was even forgetting what he had admitted in the press conference. . . .

Surely he remembered the morning, only days before the bombings, when Hofmann came to tell him the Kinderhook plates “might be available for the right price”? He did remember the Kinderhook plates?

“I don’t know a whole lot about them,” Hinckley said dryly.

Biggs thought, This is Hinckley. He’s telling us he doesn’t know a whole lot about the Kinderhook plates. My God, even I have learned a little about them in this investigation. He has to know what they’re about. . . .

Stott and Biggs pressed. Surely he knew that Steve Christensen had been called by Church officials at all hours of the night to go out and find Hofmann and get him to repay the First Interstate loan?

Hinckley shrugged his shoulders. . . . Hinckley could recall nothing. . . .

After another hour of evasions, memory lapses, and sermonettes, Biggs lost his patience. “President Hinckley. This has been in the news—people have died—isn’t there any way we can get some information about your meetings with Hofmann?”

The interview then focused on the upcoming preliminary hearing.

When Bob Stott finally worked up the courage to talk about Hinckley’s testimony at the upcoming preliminary hearing, [LDS attorney] Wilford Kirton jumped in.

“President Hinckley doesn’t wish to testify at the hearing. We think it would be in everyone’s best interests to not have him testify.”

Someone suggested that he would have to testify at trial. “You don’t understand,” said Kirton imperiously. “President Hinckley does not wish to testify at the hearing, at the trial, at anything.”

Hinckley then explained to Stott:

“This isn’t that significant, as it relates to Church matters,” he said softly. “It’s the Church that matters. You have to consider the Church first. I don’t wish to testify.” . . .

“I think it would be in the best interests of the Church,” he added in the same mellow voice, “if you simply dismissed the charge.”

Dismiss the charge? Biggs was aghast. It took them a moment to realize that he meant only that Stott should dismiss the charge on the Stowell letter, which would let Hinckley off the hook as far as testifying at the preliminary hearing. . . .

But Bob Stott wasn’t ready to do that. “We are not going to drop the charge,” he said after he regained his composure. But he did have a compromise suggestion. “If we can get the defense to stipulate as to your testimony, we won’t have to call you.”
When comparing the notes of the investigators of Hofmann’s crimes, there is no doubt that Gordon B. Hinckley was lying to them.

**In Utah You Don’t Embarrass the Mormon Church**

In February of 1986 Mark Hofmann was arrested. The case against Hofmann was overwhelming. In addition to the two murders, he had forged dozens of documents and defrauded multiple people, including the LDS Church, of possibly two million dollars. In January of 1987, he pled guilty to second-degree murder and theft-by-deception to avoid the death penalty. Everyone had been expecting a trial where he would be convicted of First Degree Murder and receive the death penalty for his despicable murders; yet he only received a life sentence, to be served at the Utah State Prison. The question on the streets of Salt Lake City was “Why?”

It was clear to everyone by now that Bob Stott [prosecuting attorney] was determined to avoid a trial no matter what. Said one policeman when the news of the bargain spread though the department like the smell of a gas leak, “Even if we had a confession, Stott would have given Yengich [Hofmann’s attorney] anything he wanted.

Later, when a Los Angeles Times reporter flew to Salt Lake City to cover the breaking plea-bargain story, he told Dawn Tracy [Salt Lake Tribune reporter] that the most surprising aspect of the entire case was the attitude of the prosecution. “The typical prosecutor,” the reporter said, “goes out and gets the bad guys. He goes out and stirs things up. Here, they’re so nice and cooperative. What a nice plea bargain. In any other state, you’d see this thing go on trial, because that’s how prosecutors’ reputations are made. Going to trial and getting bad guys, big splashes, lots of exposure. Here you have a nice plea bargain.”

“Hey,” said Tracy, “You don’t rise in this state embarrassing the Mormon Church or making them look bad.”

The handling of the Mark Hofmann case is an example of Mormonism’s attitude toward truth: “faith before facts!”

**LDS Church Already Had the McLellin Diaries**

In the aftermath of all the negative publicity and books exploring the Hofmann case and early LDS history, the LDS Church announced that its historians had “embarked on a massive study of the books and news articles in an attempt to assemble a master list of errors, misquotes and exaggerations. ‘Our response to all the allegations made against the church will be made public in about 60 days,’” Richard P. Lindsay said. However, it would be another four years before Richard Turley’s book, Victims: The LDS Church and the Mark Hofmann Case, would appear.

While the book was seen as mainly a futile effort in damage control, there was one item of interest buried in the middle of the book. On page 248 of Turley’s work he states that “March 1986 brought a startling discovery,” and goes on to explain that at that time church officials became aware that they already had an important part of the McLellin collection. The McLellin journals for 1831 through 1836 had been gathering dust in the LDS First Presidency’s vault. The church, in fact, had the documents since 1908, but not being catalogued, they had been pushed aside and forgotten.

These journals were discovered before Hofmann’s preliminary hearing and yet this information was not passed on to the investigators. Thus the church suppressed a key item that would have gone to proving that Mark did not have the McLellin collection, which would have helped to establish motive for the murders. Investigators certainly would have subpoenaed the McLellin journals if they had any idea that the church had them. Evidently the church leaders deliberately kept Hugh Pinnock in the dark about the journals so that when he was questioned during the preliminary hearing he could truthfully say, as far as he knew, the church did not have any part of the McLellin papers. In order to keep Gordon B. Hinckley off the witness stand during the 1986 preliminary hearing, the church submitted a statement that Hinckley “has never seen nor possessed nor has any knowledge of the whereabouts of a document or a group of documents known as the McLellin Collection.” However, Hinckley, Oaks, Turley, Dean Larsen, Dean Jessee, Glenn Rowe and staff in the

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41 Lindsey, A Gathering of Saints, p. 378.
42 Naifeh and Smith, Mormon Murders, p. 514.
43 Ibid., p. 536
44 Los Angeles Times, September 18, 1988, as quoted in The Mormon Church and The McLellin Collection, Jerald and Sandra Tanner (Salt lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1993), p. 2. This is now published as part of the Tanners’ book, Tracking the White Salamander.
45 Tanner and Tanner, Tracking, pp. 5-6. For further information on McLellin, see William E. McLellin Papers 1854-1880, ed. Stan Larson and Samuel J. Passey (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2007).
46 Tanner and Tanner, Tracking, pp. 10-11.
LDS Historical Department, all knew the church had the McLellin papers in the vault.48

Writer Robert Lindsey observed: “Whatever else they had done, Hofmann’s documents had stimulated a burst of historical inquiry regarding Joseph Smith’s youthful enthusiasm for magic and the occult and it did not wither after his conviction . . . and it was unlikely that those in the Church Administration Building would ever be able to contain fully the fires of intellectual curiosity that Hofmann had helped fan.”49 Today Joseph Smith’s involvement with the occult is generally conceded, even by LDS historians. Over the past twenty-five years numerous historical studies have been published, leaving Smith’s occult involvement an unquestioned part of the story.50

Will He Ever Be Paroled?

Two months after thirty-three year old Mark Hofmann entered Utah State Prison two inmates reported to guards that Hofmann was planning on having several members of the Board of Pardons murdered. It was claimed that he was offering to pay at least $10,000 for the job. At first Hofmann insisted that the prisoners had invented the story to curry favor at the prison. However, a letter in code from Mark to his wife, Dori, was intercepted. Did this contain instructions for more murders? Investigator Michael George, of the Salt Lake County Attorney’s Office, confronted Hofmann with the letter and demanded an explanation:

Yes, he finally conceded, he might have discussed with other inmates the possibility of killing members of the Board of Pardons. Then he admitted that he had done so, but quickly added it hadn’t been his idea: Other inmates had proposed the idea to him.51

Without sufficient evidence to prove Mark had actively tried to hire someone to kill members of the Board of Pardons, no additional charges were made. With that, however, all hope of receiving a parole vanished like smoke in the wind.

Hofmann and the Mountain Meadows Massacre

Another Hofmann document has come to light this year. An article in the Deseret News for September 7, 2010, announced “For the past 27 years, historians have identified William Edwards as a participant in the 1857 Mountain Meadows Massacre. But forensic document examiners now say the 1924 affidavit that implicated Edwards is a forgery linked to convicted bomber Mark Hofmann.”52

The affidavit has been quoted in three books dealing with the massacre: *Massacre at Mountain Meadows* by Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley, Jr., and Glen M. Leonard; *Blood of the Prophets* by Will Bagley; and *Innocent Blood: Essential Narratives of the Mountain Meadows Massacre* by David L. Bigler and Will Bagley.

Can Documents be Trusted?

Hofmann’s documents have led some people to dismiss any negative references relating to early Mormonism as possible forgeries. However, those writing on LDS history today are careful to reference documents with a known history. Most early letters and diaries relating to Mormonism have been acquired from known family members or have always been in the possession of a well-established institution. Usually a number of people have been aware of the documents for years. For instance, David Whitmer, Martin Harris, the Smith’s neighbors, etc., made statements that were published during their lifetime. On the other hand, Mark Hofmann could not disclose who the previous owner had been or where the document had been stored. Since forensic document examiners are better prepared to test documents for authenticity today than they were twenty-five years ago, it would be very hard for another Hofmann-type forgery to succeed.

LDS CLAIMS

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51 Lindsey, *Gathering of Saints*, p. 376.
Gospel Principles 2009 as a Significant Perpetuation of Traditional Mormon Theology

By Aaron Shafovaloff

Gospel Principles is a doctrinal manual published by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the institution of mainstream Mormonism. It was first published in 1978 and has been republished nine times, most recently in 2009. The manual has been standard curriculum for the Gospel Essentials Sunday school class (for investigators and new converts), but for 2010 and 2011 it serves also as the curriculum for the Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society classes twice a month.

Outsiders learning Mormon theology afresh are better suited starting with Gospel Principles than with Mormon scriptures (KJV Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price) or literature authored by BYU religion professors. It functions not only as a concise guide to Mormon theology but also as an example of how Mormonism approaches its own canon. The existence and perpetuation of the book in Mormon culture is a corrective to suggestions that the religion is unconcerned with a holistic, coherent theological worldview. It begins with the nature of God and our pre-mortal existence (chapters 1 and 2) and then ends with final judgment and exaltation (chapters 46 and 47). It explains practical living in the context of a roughly systematic Mormon theology, and gives Mormons a sweeping worldview meta-narrative to understand ultimate reality and their grand purpose in life. In addition to priesthood authority, the main benefits of the “Restoration of the Church” are described as doctrinal truths. Questions provided for readers and teachers encourage theological reflection and practical application.

Changes found in the 2009 edition reflect attention to detail. The manual has likely undergone a process of approval by the LDS Church’s top leadership. While the book continues much of the theological tradition of Bruce McConkie, notably removed are all references to his book, Mormon Doctrine. Instead of directly referencing older extra-canonical works, the 2009 edition often indirectly references them through recent institutional...
manuscripts. According to LDS Church spokeswoman Kim Farah, “Quotes were updated to reference materials that are more accessible to members of the LDS Church worldwide. For example, the series, *Teachings of Presidents of the Church,* is referenced because it is available in 28 languages, while *Mormon Doctrine* is only available in a few.” This partly gives a sense of just how widely *Gospel Principles* will be distributed among Mormons worldwide. Its established use as an introductory manual warrants an inspection not only of its content but also of the various changes that have been made to it.

**Scripture**

At one level the manual assumes a high view of scripture, frequently referencing and quoting verses to substantiate its claims and even providing a list of scriptures at the end of each chapter that imply a basic coherence and general unity of the four books they consider canon. Approximately eighty-nine percent of all references in the main body (excluding the lists at the end of chapters) are canonical. Moses is attributed as the author of the first five books of the Old Testament. Joseph Smith is quoted assuring, “ye need not suppose that one jot or tittle of the prophecies of all the holy prophets shall fail.” The Book of Abraham, part of the *Pearl of Great Price,* is straightforwardly portrayed as “translated by the Prophet Joseph Smith from a papyrus scroll taken from the Egyptian catacombs,” leaving no natural impression that the papyri, as some Mormons argue, only served as a catalyst for the revelation of the English text.

The Bible is used to support distinctive Mormon teachings, yet the manual still provides members with a basic undergirding for rejecting the Bible when needed. The eighth article of faith is quoted, which functions in Mormon culture to cast doubt on the reliability of the Bible’s manuscript transmission history, as well as on the reliability of modern translations. It is implied that we could know more about priesthood organization and government of the Church from the Bible if it had been better preserved. Whereas Louis Zucker, Professor Emeritus of English and Lecturer in Hebrew at the University of Utah, argues that Joseph Smith approached Hebrew in the Joseph Smith Translation like an innovating artist, the manual instead promotes the traditional position that God inspired Smith to restore original meaning. In contrast with the Bible, the Book of Mormon is described as “the most correct of any book on earth” translated “into English through the gift and power of God.” Some sections of the *Doctrine and Covenants* restore “truths that were lost to the world for hundreds of years,” others “shed light on teachings in the Bible.”

The concept of scripture is not limited to the LDS canon. Readers are told that the “inspired words of our living prophets become scripture to us. Their words

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9 A working list of 1997-to-2009 changes is available from Mormonism Research Ministry at mrm.org/gospel-principles, and an evangelical chapter-by-chapter guide is available from the Institute for Religious Research at GospelPrinciples.net.
10 In the main body I counted approximately 796 canonical references, drawn from all four of their books of scripture, and 96 extra-canonical references.
11 “Moses . . . wrote the first five books of the Old Testament…” (*GP,* 41).
12 *GP,* 253, which is quoting *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 252.
13 *GP,* 48. The introduction to the Book of Abraham clearly identifies Abraham as the author of the text: “The writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt, called the Book of Abraham, written by his own hand, upon papyrus.”
14 The wiki of the Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research (Mormon apologetics group) describes the “revealed text” theory as follows:

This theory assumes that the Book of Abraham was not on the papyri; he received the text by revelation, with the papyri acting as a catalyst. This is a possibility because Joseph used the word “translation” to mean several things, including the process of receiving pure revelation. (Joseph Smith’s revelations call his revision of the Bible a “translation” (*D&C* 73:4; 76:15; 90:13; 94:10; 124:89), even though he didn’t use any Hebrew or Greek manuscripts. Also, *D&C* 7 is a revealed translation of a lost record written by the Apostle John.) http://en.fairmormon.org/Book_of_Abraham/Joseph_Smith_Papyri, accessed 3/3/2010.
15 For example: “When the plan for our salvation was presented to us in the premortal spirit world, we were so happy that we shouted for joy (see Job 38:7).” (*GP,* 13) “Adam and Eve were among our Father’s noblest children. In the spirit world Adam was called Michael the archangel (see *D&C* 27:11; Jude 1:9). He was chosen by our Heavenly Father to lead the righteous in the battle against Satan (see Revelation 12:7–9).” (*GP,* 27) “Paul named two of the kingdoms in heaven: the celestial and the terrestrial (see 1 Corinthians 15:40–42).” (*GP,* 275)
16 “We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly” (Articles of Faith 1:8).
17 “The Bible does not tell us everything about the priesthood or the organization and government of the Church. However, enough of the Bible has been preserved to show the beauty and perfection of the Church organization” (*GP,* 16).
19 “The Lord inspired the prophet Joseph Smith to restore truths to the Bible text that had been lost or changed since the original words were written” (*GP,* 46).
20 *GP,* 47.
come to us through conferences, the Liahona or Ensign magazine, and instructions to local priesthood leaders.”

The 2009 edition replaces the phrase “church manuals” to specify the main Church magazines. While for some Mormons “inspired words” constitute the small subset of prophetic teachings which are filtered and vetted against the canon, for mainstream Mormonism this teaching in Gospel Principles has the effect of generalizing General Conference talks and Church magazines as extensions to scripture. This would seem to indirectly help perpetuate the belief among Mormons that living prophets trump the scripture. This would seem to indirectly help perpetuate the belief among Mormons that living prophets trump the canon, despite statements by leaders to the contrary.

That Mormonism goes beyond the canon to support its teachings is reflected by the way the manual supports its own claims. While the manual usually substantiates content with LDS canon, it otherwise misuses its own canon, appeals to extra-canonical statements by leaders as though they carry sufficient weight, or even resorts to making naked, unsubstantiated assertions.

Adam and Eve

Both Adam and Eve are described as “valiant spirits” in pre-mortality, “among our Father’s noblest children” and chosen to “bring mortality into the world.” Their condition in the garden is a divinely ordained predicament: God commanded them to have children and not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, yet if they stayed in their pre-fallen state “they would have had no children” (2 Nephi 2:23). Eve “yielded to the temptation [of Satan] and ate the fruit,” then Adam chose to partake also. Even though the “transgression” brought “spiritual death,” the decision to eat the forbidden fruit was not a “serious sin.” Nor was the Fall a curse. It is instead a necessary step in the plan of life and a great blessing to all of us. Because of the Fall, we are blessed with physical bodies, the right to choose between good and evil, and the opportunity to gain eternal life. None of these privileges would have been ours had Adam and Eve remained in the garden.

Readers are asked to ponder the question, “How does the Fall provide opportunities for us to become like our Heavenly Father?”

False Christianity

The Great Apostasy is described not only as a loss of “apostolic authority and priesthood keys” but also as a corruption of doctrine. With an implicit reference to the First Council at Nicaea, those who taught that God is immaterial spirit are described as those “called Christians” in “false Christianity” with predominantly “pagan beliefs.” They “lost the understanding of God’s love for

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21 GP, 48.

22 Then-apostle Joseph Fielding Smith wrote:

It makes no difference what is written or what anyone has said, if what has been said is in conflict with what the Lord has revealed, we can set it aside. My words, and the teachings of any other member of the Church, high or low, if they do not square with the revelations, we need not accept them. Let us have this matter clear. We have accepted the four standard works as the measuring yardsticks, or balances, by which we measure every man’s doctrine. (Doctrines of Salvation, compiled by Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols., (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954–56), 3:203)

Robert Millet observes that this is not the dominant view of Mormons:

I think most Latter-day Saints would be prone to answer this by pointing out the value and significance of living oracles, or continuing revelation, or ongoing divine direction through modern apostles and prophets, and thus to conclude that living prophets take precedence over canonized scripture. (Robert L. Millet and Gerald R. McDermott, Claiming Christ: a Mormon-Evangelical Debate, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos, 2007, 31)

23 GP, 115 reads, “When we place our faith in Jesus Christ, repent, and are baptized, our sins are forgiven through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.” Shortly after, it quotes D&C 20:37 using an ellipsis that hides a teaching which would probably surprise most Mormons readers: the remission of sins is a prerequisite to baptism.

24 See example the substantial citation in GP, 63-65 of Packer’s atonement parable or the appeal in 279 to the controversial King Follett Discourse.

25 See for example GP, 92 where the Great Apostasy narrative is supported with an appeal to the corruption of the Emperor Constantine, a connection nowhere made in the LDS canon.

26 GP, 27.

27 GP, 28.

28 Ibid.

29 GP, 29.

30 This question is especially notable when considered alongside the LDS temple endowment drama. In it, Lucifer persuades Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit, explaining, “I want you to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, that your eyes may be opened, for that is the way Father gained his knowledge.” Told there is no other way to comprehend the knowledge of good and evil, Eve then partakes. Lucifer’s explanation goes uncorrected. For the text of the temple endowment drama see Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony. 1842-1990, Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 2005, p. 116, or http://www.irr.org/mit/endowment-ceremony.html

31 GP, 92.

32 “More and more error crept into Church doctrine, and soon the dissolution of the Church was complete.” (Ibid.)

33 “Soon pagan beliefs dominated the thinking of those called Christians. The Roman emperor adopted this false Christianity as the state religion. This church was very different from the church Jesus organized. It taught that God was a being without form or substance” (GP, 92).
us” and “did not understand the purpose of life.” Criticism of historic apostate Christendom remains strong, being only slightly toned down in the newest edition of the book.

Imperfect Continuity?

Some superlative language used to describe the LDS Church is removed. While the 1997 edition depicts the LDS Church as a “perfect organization” compared to a “perfectly formed building,” the 2009 edition no longer does so. The 1997 edition taught that after the LDS Church’s original framework was set up, the “organization was completed during the next several years.” The 2009 edition replaces this claim with, “The organization would develop as the Church continued to grow.” The 1997 edition assured, “All of the offices and functions of the Church in the days of Jesus are present in the Church today.” This sentence is also removed, but continuity between original offices and modern offices is affirmed:

The Church was organized with the same offices as were in the ancient Church. That organization included apostles, prophets, seventies, evangelists (patriarchs), pastors (presiding officers), high priests, elders, bishops, priests, teachers, and deacons. These same offices are in His Church today (see Articles of Faith 1:6).  

Exclusive Benefits

Important spiritual benefits are exclusive to those who fulfill Mormonism’s distinctive requirements. If we “desire the destroying angel to pass us by, as he did in the days of the children of Israel, we must obey the Word of Wisdom [i.e. Mormon dietary laws]; then God is bound, and the blessing shall come to us.” Obeying the Word of Wisdom is also described as necessary to enter the temple and retain the Lord’s Spirit.  

Proper ordinances are necessary as well. While a person may be “temporarily guided by the Holy Ghost without receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost…this guidance will not be continuous unless the person is baptized [into the LDS Church] and receives the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.” The gift is only given by authorized, worthy elders of the LDS Church. Once given the gift of the Holy Ghost, members of the LDS Church can then be blessed with the gifts of the Spirit, such as the gift of tongues, the gift of prophecy, and the gift of working miracles. Couples married in a Mormon temple are also exclusive beneficiaries of certain blessings. “Because we have been married in God’s ordained way, we are entitled to an outpouring of the Spirit on our marriage as we remain worthy.”

Worthiness & Repentance

In 1992 some rhetoric of perfectionism and earning our final destination was removed. “We would then be assigned to the place we had earned for our eternal home” was updated to, “the place for which we had prepared.” “If we prove faithful and obedient to all the commandments of the Lord” was updated to, “If we prove faithful to the Lord.” Instead of telling readers to list “some of the blessings that will be given to those who earn exaltation,” they are now to list “some of the blessings that will be given to those who are exalted.”

But in the 2009 edition the theme of the need to prove ourselves worthy is still persistent and clear. Our very purpose in coming to earth is to “prove whether we would obey our Father’s commandments even though we were no longer in His presence.” We needed free agency “in order to prove ourselves worthy of exaltation . . . It is now up to each of us to do our part and become worthy of exaltation.” “Our choices there made us worthy to come to earth.” Readers are told, “we should make ourselves
worthy to receive this special messenger and witness of our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.”55 “To be worthy to have the help of the Holy Ghost, we must seek earnestly to obey the commandments of God. We must keep our thoughts and actions pure.”54 “Only through sacrifice can we become worthy to live in the presence of God. We may not be asked to sacrifice all things. But like Abraham, we should be willing to sacrifice everything to become worthy to live in the presence of the Lord.”55 “We must obey the Word of Wisdom to be worthy to enter the temple. If we do not obey the Word of Wisdom, the Lord’s Spirit withdraws from us.”56 “All these things [learning self-control and using our talents to serve others] are necessary if we are going to be worthy to live with our Heavenly Father again.”57 “Because we have been married in God’s ordained way, we are entitled to an outpouring of the Spirit on our marriage as we remain worthy.”58 “Before we can go to the temple, we must be active, worthy members of the Church for at least one year . . . We must be interviewed by the branch president or bishop. If he finds us worthy, he will give us a temple recommend. If we are not worthy, he will counsel with us and help us set goals to become worthy to go to the temple.”59 “We can live worthy to have the Holy Ghost guide us.”60 “Here on earth we are often judged as to our worthiness to receive opportunities within the kingdom of God. When we are baptized we are judged worthy to receive this ordinance. When we are called to serve in the Church or interviewed for a priesthood advancement or a temple recommend, we are judged.”61 The weight of all this is compounded in the 2009 edition with newly added perfectionistic rhetoric:

Complete honesty is necessary for our salvation. President Brigham Young said, “If we accept salvation on the terms it is offered to us, we have got to be honest in every thought, in our reflections, in our meditations, in our private circles, in our deals, in our declarations, and in every act of our lives” (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young [1997], 293).

All this is seen in the wider context of bilateral covenants predicated upon our obedience. “The kingdom of heaven is governed by law, and when we receive any blessing, it is by obedience to the law upon which that blessing is based (see D&C 130:20–21; 132:5).”62 Mormonism’s ambivalence over the repentance that brings forgiveness is reflected; credence is given to Spencer W. Kimball’s teaching that forgiveness is only guaranteed upon permanent completion of a series of prerequisite repentance-steps, including restitution, successful abandonment of sin, and keeping the commandments.63 His book on forgiveness is quoted before and after the principles of repentance are listed, and then quoted twice again later in the chapter on chastity.64 That successful abandonment of a sinful habit is required to secure complete forgiveness is made clear:

“Even though forgiveness is so abundantly promised there is no promise nor indication of forgiveness to any soul who does not totally repent. . . . We can hardly be too foreboding in reminding people that they cannot sin and be forgiven and then sin again and again and expect repeated forgiveness” (The Miracle of Forgiveness, 353, 360). Those who receive forgiveness and then repeat the sin are held accountable for their former sins (see D&C 82:7; Ether 2:15).65

But as Mormon culture does not exclusively operate on Kimball’s harsh teachings concerning forgiveness, neither does the manual. The Nephite prophet Enos from the Book of Mormon is celebrated as one liberated unto a

53 GP, 33.
54 GP, 123.
55 GP, 153.
56 GP, 167.
57 GP, 199.
58 GP, 221.
59 GP, 222.
60 GP, 261.
61 GP, 269.
62 GP, 204. See also GP, 81: “Within the gospel, a covenant means a sacred agreement or mutual promise between God and a person or a group of people. In making a covenant, God promises a blessing for obedience to particular commandments. He sets the terms of His covenants, and He reveals these terms to His prophets. If we choose to obey the terms of the covenant, we receive promised blessings.”
64 As of March 2010 The Miracle of Forgiveness continues to be sold in official LDS Distribution Centers, even though the book is published by Deseret Book and not the LDS Church.
65 GP, 231. Cf. Miracle of Forgiveness, 354: “[Alma 13:11-12] indicates an attitude which is basic to the sanctification we should all be seeking, and thus to the repentance which merits forgiveness. It is that the former transgressor must have reached a ‘point of no return’ to sin where there is not merely a renunciation but also a deep abhorrence of the sin—where the sin becomes most distasteful to him and where the desire or urge to sin is cleared out of his life.” The implication of Kimball’s harsh standard of repentance is often expressed in contradictory but complementary ways: A sin is never really truly forgiven until a “point of no return” is reached, but if the sin is repeated, prior forgiveness is considered nullified.
self-forgetful love for others by having received forgiveness from God—forgiveness that seems to have simply come after a prayer of broken-hearted desperation:

“My soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens. And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed” (Enos 1:4–5). The Lord explained to Enos that because of his faith in Christ his sins had been forgiven. When Enos heard these words he no longer was concerned about himself. He knew the Lord loved him and would bless him.66

**Atonement**

*Gospel Principles* does nothing to correct the tendency of Mormons to divide the atonement into two parts, one in Gethsemane, the other at the cross.67 While Jesus is said to have suffered “painful death by one of the most cruel methods known to man” at the cross, it is in Gethsemane where “the weight of our sins caused Him to feel such agony that He bled from every pore.”68 He had power over death because he was the “Only Begotten Son of God,” which is explained as inheritance of both divine power and mortal limitations.69

The atonement secures immortality for all, but salvation from spiritual death is only given to those who through faith repent of their sins, are baptized by one holding the LDS priesthood, receive the Holy Ghost, and obey His commandments.70 Given the descriptions of true repentance elsewhere in the book, one is left with the impression that spiritual death is only truly avoided by those who are someday exalted.71

The manual continues to use Boyd K. Packer’s parable of the debtor and creditor, which shows “how Christ’s Atonement makes it possible to be saved from sin if we do our part.”72 A man incurred a great debt and was unable to repay it by the due date. Out of love, and to satisfy both mercy and justice, a friend of the debtor offers to pay the debt to the creditor. Instead of freely cancelling the debt, the friend offers to essentially refinance it: “If I pay your debt, will you accept me as your creditor?” The debtor agrees, and is told, “you will pay the debt to me and I will set the terms. It will not be easy, but it will be possible.”73

**Heavenly Mother**

Many of the references to “heavenly parents” were taken out in the 2009 edition,74 but the teaching remains. We are still described as “literally the sons and daughters of God” and as “begotten and born of heavenly parents.”75 We are “sons and daughters of heavenly parents—males and females.”76 We lived “as spirit children with our heavenly parents.”77 Adam and Eve “were formed and given bodies that resembled those of our heavenly parents.”78 Not only that, but in the Grand Council we learned “that if we followed His plan . . . we would become heavenly parents and have spirit children just as He does (see D&C 132:19–20).”79 Given the eternal importance ascribed to gender and heterosexual family units in Mormonism,80 this clearly implies not only a Heavenly Mother of our own, but also the potential of females to become heavenly mothers who beget spirit children.

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66 GP, 178.
67 While all parts of the atonement are viewed as integral to accomplishing the fullness of salvation, payment for sins and vicarious experience of cumulative human suffering is generally placed by Mormons in the garden, while the securing of resurrection for all is seen as accomplished by Christ’s death and resurrection. Neither early Mormonism nor the Mormon canon shares this approach to dividing the atonement.
68 GP, 61.
69 “Jesus is the only person on earth to be born of a mortal mother and an immortal Father. That is why He is called the Only Begotten Son. He inherited divine powers from His Father. From His mother He inherited mortality and was subject to hunger, thirst, fatigue, pain, and death” (GP, 53).
70 GP, 67.
71 The hellish state of many in heaven (especially those in the telestial and terrestrial kingdoms) seems lost on many Mormons, but some leaders have recognized it: “Eternal damnation is the opposite of eternal life, and all those who do not gain eternal life, or exaltation in the highest heaven within the celestial kingdom, are partakers of eternal damnation. Their eternal condemnation is to have limitations imposed upon them so that they cannot progress to the state of godhood and gain a fullness of all things” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 1966, 234).
72 GP, 63. Emphasis in the original.
73 GP, 65.
74 Compare GP [1997], 11 with GP [2009], 9, and 13-15 with 10-11, 17 with 13, 19 with 16, 231 with 207.
75 GP, 9.
76 GP, 10.
77 GP, 23.
78 GP, 24.
79 GP, 11.
80 “Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” Ensign [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints], Nov 1995, 102).
Jesus Christ

The 2009 edition replaces a description of Jesus as “our God and Savior and Lord of the universe” with “the Creator of the earth and our Savior.”81 The 2009 edition also removes the sentence, “We each need to have a personal relationship with him.”82 This is an odd choice. Even though Bruce McConkie counseled that members should “not strive for a special and personal relationship with Christ,”83 the language of having a “personal relationship with Jesus Christ” has gained some acceptance in Mormonism.84 Even if there is going to be a personal relationship with the Savior, prayer to Jesus is essentially prohibited. “Prayer is a sincere, heartfelt talk with our Heavenly Father. We should pray to God and to no one else. We do not pray to any other being . . .”85

The 1997 edition’s descriptions of Jesus as “first spirit born to our heavenly parents” and “literally our elder brother” are removed,86 yet Jesus and Lucifer are described as “both sons” of Heavenly Father.87 Since we are all described as spirit children of God and spirit siblings to other spirit children of God,88 the fact that we share a pre-mortal familial relationship with Jesus and Lucifer (and them with each other) is still implied.

Our Future and God’s Past

Language related to exaltation is only slightly changed, and the changes are mostly inconsequential. The phrase “become gods” has been replaced with the euphemism “become like our Heavenly Father,”89 but in other places it remains.90 In the list of special blessings for those exalted, it is still explicit: “They will become gods.”91 No longer is it stated that God “is not jealous of his wisdom and perfection”, yet it is still taught, “He glories in the fact that it is possible for His children to become like Him.”92 The specific promise that spirit children of future exalted gods “will have the same relationship to them as we do to our Heavenly Father” is replaced with the euphemism, “eternal increase.”93

What is meant by extant exaltation language is still outlined by the manual, and dovetails with two other issues: whether God the Father was once a mere mortal who had to progress unto godhood, and whether he was once a sinner like us. That the most relevant content on these issues is in the last chapter of the manual, and especially in the last few paragraphs of the manual, makes for a dramatic ending.

The most important removal in the 2009 edition of Gospel Principles is the line, “This is the way our Heavenly Father became God.”94 Yet the substance is retained. Earlier in the manual we are told of the purpose of leaving our premortal home and experiencing mortality: “If we passed our tests, we would receive the fulness of joy that our Heavenly Father has received.”95 In the last chapter Joseph Smith’s King Follett Discourse is still cited as teaching, “He [God] was once a man like us.” Afterward we are encouraged:

Our Heavenly Father knows our trials, our weaknesses, and our sins. He has compassion and mercy on us. He wants us to succeed even as He did.96

This strongly implies that our Heavenly Father passed the same tests, fulfilled the same conditions, and achieved the same blessings that we can. The chapter describes what some of these conditions are: baptism, confirmation, priesthood callings, temple endowment, eternal marriage,
love for God and neighbors, keeping the commandments, repentance, baptism for the dead, church attendance, daily prayers, teaching of the gospel to others, study of the scriptures, and obedience to inspired words of prophets.97 The blessings are also described: achievement of eternal life, exaltation in the highest sublevel of the celestial kingdom,98 godhood, living the kind of life God lives, achieving the capacity and role of creator, power, great glory, dominion, knowledge, eternal increase (which includes endless procreation of spirit children), parenthood over spirit children,99 and unity with righteous family members.100

The manual’s citation from Joseph Smith’s King Follett Discourse still includes, “God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did.” [see photo right] From this and John 5:19101 some Mormons have argued that Jesus was modeling his redemptive ministry after the Father’s past redemptive ministry—that God the Father was once a sinless savior for another world.102 Which view a Mormon takes can be expressed in terms of how they resolve the tension between the phrases “He was once a man like us” and “God . . . dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did.” In other words, it is a question of which parallel is stronger: the parallel between Heavenly Father’s mortal experience and ours, or the parallel between Christ’s mortal experience and Heavenly Father’s.103 Whichever view a Mormon takes (if any), the Gospel Principles manual is clear: sinful men can repent and succeed at becoming Creators, Gods, and Heavenly Fathers over their own spirit children, with all power, glory, dominion, and knowledge.

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97 GP, 278.
98 GP, 275 references D&C 131:1 to support the notion of three sublevels in the celestial kingdom. Mormon apologist Kevin Barney contests this traditional interpretation by explaining that “celestial glory” in the passage probably generically refers to heaven and not specifically to the celestial kingdom. See “Is the Celestial Kingdom Divided into Three Subdegrees?” http://bycommonconsent.com/2006/03/18/is-the-celestial-kingdom-divided-into-three-subdegrees/, March 18, 2006, accessed March 6, 2010.
99 GP, 275. See also GP, 11: “We would be resurrected; we would have all power in heaven and on earth; we would become heavenly parents and have spirit children just as He does (see D&C 132:19–20).”
100 GP, 277.
101 “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.” (KJV)
102 In my experience about two-thirds of Mormon laymen affirm God the Father was perhaps once a sinner. About one-third of Mormon laymen deny it, the dominant explanation being the sinless-savior theory. This diversity is reflected in my video interview project, www.GodNeverSinned.com.
103 BYU professor Rodney Turner writes: [Opinion is divided over how closely the Son’s career paralleled that of his Father . . . These and the Prophet’s earlier remarks are believed by some to infer that our God and his father once sacrificed their lives in a manner similar to the atonement of Jesus Christ. It is argued that the Prophet’s words suggest that these gods did not simply live and die as all men do, they ‘laid down’ and ‘took up’ their lives in the context of sacrifice . . . This extrapolated doctrine rests upon a somewhat inadequate, if not shaky, foundation. Indeed, it is highly doubtful. The basic process of laying down and taking up one’s life is similar for all even though it is not identical for all (“The Doctrine of the Firstborn and Only Begotten,” in The Pearl of Great Price: Revelations from God [Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989], 91-117).


*Italics* added to quotes for emphasis.
Does the LDS Church Still Teach That Heavenly Father Was Once a Man?

By Sandra Tanner

One of the problems encountered by those desiring to compare LDS theology with standard Christian theology is determining what constitutes “official” LDS doctrine.

For a number of years the LDS Church has been editing its books and church manuals to de-emphasize the more radical parts of its theology. Some observers had hoped that this signaled a move to a more standard Christian theology. However, even after editing, the aberrant doctrines are still sprinkled throughout their instruction manuals.

Traditionally Christians have maintained there is only one God, who has eternally existed as God, following the teachings of the Bible (see Deut. 6:4; Isa. 43:10-11; Isa. 44:6; Isa. 44:8; Isa. 48:11-12; Malachi 3:6). On the other hand, since the days of Joseph Smith, the LDS Church has taught that God the Father was once a mortal who advanced to godhood. This, of course, would necessitate another god who oversaw our Heavenly Father’s progress to godhood.

The following quotes, gathered from current LDS scriptures and teaching manuals, are taken from www.lds.org. These manuals clearly establish that the LDS Church is currently teaching that God the Father was once a mortal on another earth, that he and his wife are resurrected beings who progressed to godhood, and that mortals on this earth are their literal spirit children, with the same capacity to progress to godhood.

1. LDS SCRIPTURES

- **Doctrine & Covenants** 132:19-22

  . . . if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, . . . they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.

  Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, . . . Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.

- **Pearl of Great Price, Moses 1:33**

  And worlds without number have I created: and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten.

- **Pearl of Great Price, Abraham 4:1-5:20**

  1 And then the Lord said: Let us go down. And they went down at the beginning, and they, that is the Gods, organized and formed the heavens and the earth.

  2 . . . and the Spirit of the Gods was brooding upon the face of the waters . . .

2. LDS MANUALS

- **Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith, 2007.**

  “God Himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret.” (p. 40)

  “Here, then, is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn how to be gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God . . .” (p. 221)

- **Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young, 1997.**

  God the Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost constitute the Godhead. President Brigham Young taught the Latter-day Saints to worship God the Father and address prayers to Him in the name of Jesus Christ. He taught further that God the Father was once a man on another planet who “passed the ordeals we are now passing through; he has received an experience, has suffered and enjoyed, and knows all that we know regarding the toils, sufferings, life and death of this mortality.” (p. 29)

  The great architect, manager and superintendent, controller and dictator [absolute ruler] who guides this work is out of sight to our natural eyes. He [God] lives on another world; he is in another state of existence; he has passed the ordeals we are now passing through; he has received an experience, has suffered and enjoyed, and knows all that we know regarding the toils, sufferings, life and death of this mortality, for he has passed through the whole of it, and has received his crown and exaltation and holds the keys and the power of this Kingdom . . . (p. 30)

  God is the source, the fountain of all intelligence, no matter who possesses it, whether man upon the earth, the spirits in the spirit-world, the angels that dwell in the eternities of the Gods, or the most inferior intelligence among the devils in hell. All have derived what intelligence, light, power, and existence they have from God—from the same source from which we have received ours. (p. 31)
The doctrine that God was once a man and has progressed to become a God is unique to this Church. How do you feel, knowing that God, through His own experience, “knows all that we know regarding the toils [and] sufferings of mortality? (p. 34)

We receive these truths, and go on from glory to glory, . . . gaining a knowledge of all things, and becoming Gods, even Sons of God. (p. 55)

Now those men, or those women, who know no more about the power of God, and the influences of the Holy Spirit, than to be led entirely by another person, suspending their own understanding, and pinning their faith upon another’s sleeve, . . . will never be capable of becoming Gods. They cannot rule themselves, to say nothing of ruling others, . . . They never can become Gods, nor be crowned as rulers with glory, immortality, and eternal lives. (p. 288)

• Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor, 2001.

In one point of view, man appears very poor, weak, . . . In another point of view, we look at him as emanating from the Gods—as a God in embryo—as an eternal being who had an existence before he came here . . . He [man] is a God in embryo, and possesses within him a spark of that eternal flame which was struck from the blaze of God’s eternal fire in the eternal world, and is placed here upon the earth . . .

If we take man, he is said to have been made in the image of God, for the simple reason that he is a son of God, . . . He did not originate from a chaotic mass of matter, moving or inert, but came forth possessing in an embryonic state, all the faculties and powers of a God. And when he shall be perfected, and have progressed to maturity, he will be his Father—a God, being indeed His offspring. As the horse, the ox, the sheep, and every living creature, including man, propagates its own species and perpetuates its own kind, so does God perpetuate his. (pp. 2-3)

It is for the exaltation of man to this state of superior intelligence and Godhead that the mediation and atonement of Jesus Christ is instituted; and that noble being, man, made in the image of God, is rendered capable not only of being a son of man, but also a son of God . . . and is rendered capable of becoming a God, possessing the power, the majesty, the exaltation and the position of a God. (p. 5)

• Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Heber J. Grant, 2002.

. . . if we examine the commandments that are given to us as members of the Church of God, we will find that each and every one of those commandments has been given . . . that we may be qualified and prepared to go back and dwell in the presence of our Heavenly Father. These duties and obligations are calculated to make us godlike in our dispositions. They are calculated to make Gods of us . . . (p. 30)

• Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball, 2006.

[Spencer W. Kimball] taught that the gospel is “a way of life, the plan of personal salvation, and is based upon personal responsibility. It is developed for man, the offspring of God. Man is a god in embryo and has in him the seeds of godhood, and he can, if he will, rise to great heights.” (p. 1)

In order to reach the goal of eternal life and exaltation and godhood, one must be initiated into the kingdom by [LDS] baptism . . . endowed and sealed in the house of God by the prophet . . . and one must live a life of righteousness . . .

Jesus perfected his life and became our Christ. Priceless blood of a god was shed, and he became our Savior; his perfected life was given . . . (p. 5)


[Quoting Joseph Smith] “God himself was once as we are now and is an exalted man . . . he was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did; . . .” (Smith, Teachings, 345-46). (p. 8)

“God made man in his own image and certainly he made woman in the image of his wife-partner” (Kimball, Teachings, 25). (p. 8)

“All men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity” (The First Presidency). (p. 14)

“The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, basing its belief on divine revelation, ancient and modern, proclaims man to be the direct and lineal offspring of Deity. God Himself is an exalted man, perfected, enthroned, and supreme. . . .

“Man is the child of God, formed in the divine image and endowed with divine attributes, and even as the infant son of an earthly father and mother is capable in due time of becoming a man, so the undeveloped offspring of celestial parentage is capable, by experience through ages and aeons, of evolving into a God” (The First Presidency). (p. 17)


God is a resurrected, exalted personage of flesh and bone. (p. 8)

All quotes are from the official LDS site: www.lds.org

[A longer version of this article can be read on our web site, www.utlm.org]
Excerpts From Letters and Emails

May 2010: The Salt Lake City Messenger has been real blessing in my life. Especially for this ex-Mormon.

May 2010: I was born & raised a Mormon in Salt Lake. I never cease to marvel at how “different” life in Christianity is. . . . Anyway—thank you for helping so many of us.

May 2010: Many years ago your “Mormonism-Shadow or Reality?” was the beginning of my withdrawal from Mormonism. I’ve always been grateful.

May 2010: PLEASE< PLEASE>PLEASE don’t let this be my last newsletter, I love (but confused) reading your newsletters. I’ve been a LDS person since before birth. I’m just now finding myself with questions and I didn’t even know I had questions. 50 years old and always been follower, never a thinker.

I am enjoying the info that i know will help me break away from my LDS church and find the true church where I belong.

May 2010: I have been reading your newsletters and literature for years ever since we had Mormon neighbors move in across the street. They have since moved back to Utah where it was safer.

Our daughter, however, wanted so badly to be married that she married a not very active Mormon man, so perhaps all the knowledge we’ve accumulated in our house will help them some day, I pray so.

May 2010: I was baptized LDS in 1949 and excommunicated at my insistence in 1999. . . . The more engaged a person has been with Mormonism, the more he or she will appreciate your always painstaking labor in deconstructing the massive deception that organization represents.

May 2010: I thank God that I escaped [Mormonism]. I knew what that would mean with regard to my LDS children. Never the less I’m glad to be free. . . . God bless you.

May 2010: I’m 90 yrs old. 12th in my LDS family. . . All my six children have received Jesus as lord as have all my 17 grandchildren.

May 2010: I was born and raised in Mormonism, a descendent of polygamists in southern Arizona. I finally heard the simple gospel of the Bible and received Jesus into my heart as my savior and my righteousness . . .

June 2010: I made two attempts to read the two books that I ordered. Both times I felt the gathering of very dark, heavy energy around me. . . . I threw the books away . . . please take my name off your mailing list.

June 2010: I very much enjoy reading your articles on the actual history of the Mormon church, Joseph Smith, its other leaders, and their shifting doctrines and would hate to see it go missing from my mailbox!

July 2010: Just curious why you have a whole website trying to discredit the Mormon church. Seems very unchristian and with all the hate in the world, it seems like hating other Christians is wrong.

July 2010: I would like to continue to receive your newsletter. (Joseph Smith: The Early Years was riveting!) I am a life-long Christian and professional historian . . . and I have long used ULM for academic evidence to show how fraudulent Mormonism is. . . . Thanks for the work you do. It is really fine, and holds up completely to the scrutiny of any honest professional historian.

August 2010: Why don’t you guys focus on something productive rather than trying to take down other peoples believes? I’m not a religious type but you guys are f....d up and just as bad as racists.

August 2010: You probably wouldn’t remember me, but I received my Ph.D. . . . from the U in ’95. I now teach at . . . University in Virginia. You and Gerald made a huge impact on me and my wife (ex-LDS). May God continue to bless you and your ministry.

August 2010: I think someone in the LDS church hurt you and you have allowed it to fester and now you can [not] let go and all this hate inside you is coming out because it is the only way you know how to handle your emotions. All I know is that I am saved by the grace of God and I still enjoy going to the LDS church.

August 2010: It is comforting to us to know that someone (yourself with Dear Jerald), who has meant so much to our own lives in Christ Jesus, is still doing pretty good in this temporal part of our life, here on earth. . . . You just keep right on “hanging in there” in FAITH. . . . we withdrew from Mormonism, and DREW INTO JESUS.

August 2010: Perhaps I owe my deepest heart felt thanks to Sandra Tanner for helping me realize just how much I love the LDS church. . . . Reading your website the hate and anger you feel for the LDS church is so strong, I don’t know what to say. I would say I feel sorry for you but I know you won’t care.

August 2010: It’s funny I remember hearing about your publications when I was in high school mentioned with dismissive disapproval. Now that I have read several of your books and papers, I have found nothing unfair or undocumented, if anything you are too kind. I can only faintly imagine from my time asking pointed questions at BYU what it must have been like living in SLC Utah doing your work. That could not have been fun.

August 2010: [From a Mormon] I am just exposing you for what you really are . . . a fraud with so much hate in your heart that you have to tear people down. Step back and ask yourself, would our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be proud of what you are doing????
**August 2010:** I used to be mormon... the research on your website has been a huge help to me personally and I started reading it as part of the process leading to me being Saved! thank you for being an instrument in the hands of our all loving Amazing Wonderful God!

**August 2010:** [From a Mormon] Do you really have everything you need in life?? You seem to be unfulfilled... I can help you. First, let me ask you a few questions... How was your childhood??????? We can heal you from all your hate and get you onto a path of inner peace and free you of all the demons in your life.

**August 2010:** Thanks to the holy spirit and dedicated people like you I have been a christian for 10 years.

**August 2010:** I have ordered many books from your website and have found them useful to me in understanding what was left out of the church history and why so many things never quiet added up. I want to thank them for providing such a service to me personally and I'm sure thousands of others. Being able to see this information has helped put my mind at ease and is helping me move on.

**August 2010:** So why can't you just leave us alone. I'm happy knowing that I attend a church that has the same values as I do, so why all the hate??? You must be a very miserable person that has devoted a lot of time on hating the LDS church, I only wish I had that kind of time.

**September 2010:** I was a member of the mormon church for 20 years. When I found out many hidden facts about the mormon church I decided to resign.

**September 2010:** I live in Orange County, CA. I have watched a few of the wonderful YouTube videos of Sandra Tanner speaking... I have a heart for those who come witnessing at my door... and your videos have helped out a lot.

**September 2010:** [From a prisoner] Thanks so much for the books you sent me. The insight I have gained is Heartfelt.

As I stated before, when first coming to prison, I was Mark Hofmann’s neighbor; we would... play chess together although I almost never won!

Through the course of my stay, I have ran across (get this) 3, self proclaimed Prophets, Dan Lafferty, John Chenney and Warren Jeffs... Small World!

**September 2010:** I am a Mormon from... Canada that during the midst of my own research discovered the church to be not what it claims and in that process discovered Christ and accepted him as my Lord and Savior. That said however I am still currently a member although under an official written gag order by my Stake President in regards to remaining quiet about historical issues. But my research continues, especially in finding photocopy evidence of early documents, letters and diary accounts.

**September 2010:** Sandra, I am so thankful for all of the work you have done to help bring awareness about Mormonism. I was devout til age 35 and your work, among others, was instrumental in helping me sort out fact from fiction. After 7 years of heartache and soul pain, I was finally able to feel at peace, and happier and more alive than ever in my life. I am FREE!

**September 2010:** Four of my 5 children and myself, have been saved by the blood of our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. My eldest was baptized, along with his wife and family, as well as their new baby dedicated to the Lord, last Sunday at our home church... My children’s dad—a staunch LDS believer—was there and it was his first experience hearing a Christian service. Pastor... preached a dynamite sermon on the Trinity and my son... (age 18), was hoping that his dad was as touched by the Holy Spirit as we all were. He brought up the sermon, as well as a recent letter he’d written to a friend, to his dad later in the day. He ended up frustrated and sad at the thought of his dad’s hardness of heart—they ended the conversation by the typical “You’ve only strengthened me in my beliefs” comments from his dad. The other issue with [my son] is that the rest of us have all written exit letters to the church and have been bugging [him] to do the same. Although he is a follower of Christ, he has never really felt an urgency to do so.

Yesterday, I saw your interview that Aaron had posted on YouTube. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=obgzDh0dX70]

Your insights about the first Christian service you attended struck a chord with me, and I forwarded the clips to [my son]. He watched in its entirety and sent me the response, below. You should also know that his exit letter was in my inbox this morning, too.

Sandra, thank you so much for all you do. You have been an instrument of the Holy Spirit in all of us being led to the “Amazing Grace” of Jesus Christ. Keep up the great and mighty work that God is doing through you.

**Email from her son:** This was a really awesome clip. I’m glad you sent it to me, she [Sandra Tanner] really got me with the one foot in one foot out thing. I want completely out. Then I want my letter to be framed. Also the part where she talked about just being a part of someone’s growth in Christ, I just want to be a part of it I know I can’t be all of it. I just hope I get to see the outcome sometimes! I love you Mom, thank you for helping me to see Christ.

**September 2010:** I left the Mormon Church in the late nineties after reading material from UTLM. Grateful to God for His work through your life and ministry.

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**John 6:67-69** (King James Version)

Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go?

thou hast the words of eternal life.

And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.
**Recently Added Titles**

- **A Mormon’s Unexpected Journey Volume 2**
  Carma Naylor
  $19.00

- **Devil’s Gate: Brigham Young and the Great Mormon Handcart Tragedy**
  David Roberts
  $14.50

- **On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout, 1844-1889**
  Ed. Juanita Brooks
  $36.00

- **Lost Boy: This is my story.**
  Brent W. Jeffs (Nephew of Warren Jeffs)
  $14.50 (paper)

- **The Inside of Mormonism: A Judicial Examination of the Endowment Oaths Administered in All the Mormon Temples (1903)**
  Henry G. McMillan - The United States District Court
  $7.00

- **Communicating Christ in a Religious World**
  John Thomas Rogers
  $14.50

- **Scripture Twisting: 20 Ways the Cults Misread the Bible**
  James W. Sire
  $15.50

- **Letters to a Mormon Elder**
  James R. White
  $18.00

- **What We’re Hearing You Say: What It’s Like To Be An Evangelical Contemplating The LDS Church**
  Mike Mitchell
  $7.00

- **Is the Mormon My Brother? Discerning the Differences Between Mormonism and Christianity**
  James R. White
  $18.00

- **Reasons for Disbelief: One Man’s Story of Leaving the RLDS / Community of Christ Church**
  Peter Elliott
  $8.50
SPECIAL BOOK OFFERS
Expires December 31, 2010

Orders that total $35 or more (before shipping charge) will receive FREE

Quest for the Gold Plates: Thomas Stuart Ferguson’s Archaeological Search for the Book of Mormon
By Stan Larson

Orders that total $65 or more (before shipping charge) will receive BOTH of these books FREE

The Mormon Murders: A True Story of Greed, Forgery, Deceit and Death
By Steven Naifeh & Gregory White Smith
Joseph Smith’s Changing Scriptures
By Sandra Tanner

When most people think of Christianity they usually associate it with the Bible. However, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (commonly referred to as the LDS or Mormon Church) is not bound by that volume alone. The LDS Church asserts that the Bible has been corrupted but that their doctrines came directly from God to Joseph Smith, thus guaranteeing a pure transmission. Their eighth Article of Faith states:

We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.¹

Notice, there is no qualification on the translation of the Book of Mormon, only on the Bible. Even though their Articles of Faith do not mention their other two books of scripture, the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price, those books play a more central role in LDS theology than the Book of Mormon. Joseph Smith, as God’s prophet, thus takes on a greater mantle than Moses or any writers of the Bible. Milton R. Hunter, author and General Authority in the LDS Church from 1945-1975, boasted:

The Prophet Joseph Smith produced for the world three new volumes of holy scriptures, namely the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price, and, in addition, he revised the Bible. No prophet who has ever lived has accomplished such a tremendous feat. There are only 177 pages in the Old Testament attributed to Moses, while Joseph Smith either translated through the gift and power of God or received as direct revelation from Jehovah 835 [pages].²

Granted, Joseph Smith wrote a number of scriptural texts, but on what basis should one accept these as the word of God?

1. The Book of Mormon

Joseph Smith grew up in a religious family, studying the Bible as a youth. However, his parents were not members of any particular church. In Smith’s official story, published in 1842, he wrote that due to a revival in the neighborhood in 1820 he went into the woods to inquire of God which church to join. Smith claimed that God the Father and Jesus Christ appeared to him, instructing him not to join any church as they “were all corrupt.”³ However, the revival described by Joseph and other early sources, point to a revival in his neighborhood in 1824 and 1825, not one in 1820.⁴ As a result of these revival meetings Joseph’s mother, sister and two brothers joined the Presbyterian Church.⁵

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¹ Pearl of Great Price, Articles of Faith.
³ Joseph Smith—History 1:19, Pearl of Great Price.
The date of the revival becomes important as one examines the supposed chain of events. Smith said that as a result of the revival he went into the woods to pray about which church to join. Then three years later the angel appeared in his room to tell him of the Book of Mormon plates. But if the revival didn’t occur until 1824/1825, then his first vision would have to be in the Spring of 1825. However, this would confuse the chronology of events, putting the vision of God and Jesus after the angel visit of 1823.

When Smith’s mother wrote to her brother in 1831 relating the events of Smith’s vision of an angel, a new book of scripture and the founding of a new church, she made no mention of a “first vision” of God and Christ in 1820. Fawn Brodie observed:

If something happened that spring morning in 1820, it passed totally unnoticed in Joseph’s home town, and apparently did not even fix itself in the minds of members of his own family. The awesome vision he described in later years may have been the elaboration of some half-remembered dream stimulated by the early revival excitement and reinforced by the rich folklore of visions circulating in his neighborhood. Or it may have been sheer invention, created some time after 1830 when the need arose for a magnificent tradition to cancel out the stories of his fortune-telling and money-digging.

Smith’s official account of his 1820 vision was not published until 22 years after the supposed event, in the Times and Seasons in 1842. However, early documents and printed material by converts and critics alike fail to mention such a vision. They identify the beginning of Smith’s story with his experiences of money digging or the angelic visit informing him of an ancient record.

It is commonly agreed that when Joseph was about sixteen he found an unusual stone while digging a well for a neighbor and later announced that the stone had special powers. For the next few years Joseph Smith, his father, and various neighbors were engaged in treasure hunting, with Joseph acting as the diviner who could see in his stone where the treasure was hidden. However, some evil power always seemed to keep the prize from their grasp. After being arrested by the local magistrate as a possible fraud preying on the local farmers, Joseph Smith turned his attention to another treasure, the Book of Mormon.

### The Plates

Smith claimed that on September 21, 1823, an angel appeared to him to commission him to translate an ancient set of metal plates, the long lost record of God’s dealings with the former inhabitants of the American continent. Smith’s idea for such a metal record could have come from books of the day. Dan Vogel observed:

According to various accounts, some of the North American mounds also contained metal plates. Plates constructed by the Indians were usually made of hammered copper or silver and were sometimes etched. . . . In 1775 Indian trader James Adair described two brass plates and five copper plates found with the Tucubatashes Indians of North America. According to Adair, an Indian informant said “he was told by his forefathers that those plates were given to them by the man we call God; that there had been many more of other shapes, . . . some had writing upon them which were buried with particular men.” . . . Perhaps such discoveries of metal plates encouraged the persistent legend of a lost Indian book. The legend, as related by Congregational minister Ethan Smith [in his 1825 book, View of the Hebrews] of Poultney, Vermont, held that the Indians once had “a book which they had for a long time preserved. But having lost the knowledge of reading it, they concluded it would be of no further use to them; and they buried it with an Indian chief”.

The main part of the Book of Mormon story covers from 600 BC to 421 AD and tells of a small group of Israelites fleeing Jerusalem, who eventually settled in the Americas. The record, supposedly inscribed on golden plates, also included an appearance of Christ in the New World shortly after his crucifixion. The story concludes with a great battle at the Hill Cumorah in about 400 AD, after which the plates were buried in a stone box in the hill in 421 AD. Hundreds of years after Moroni, the last scribe, hid the plates, he returned as an angel in 1823 to tell Joseph Smith where the plates were buried.

### References

8 Times and Seasons, vol. 3, (1842); pp. 728, 748.
10 Salt Lake City Messenger, “Was Joseph Smith a Magician? no. 95 (April 1999); http://www.utlm.org/newsletters/no95.htm
Along with the plates, the Lord supposedly preserved divine interpreters, called the “Urim and Thummim,” to enable a future translator to decipher the unknown script. These were described as large spectacles with stone lenses. However, Smith used the stone found in the well to produce all of the present Book of Mormon. Contrary to illustrations often produced in LDS Church material, those who witnessed his translation method did not describe him studying the plates as he dictated, but peering into the stone in his hat, and then dictating the text as the divine translation appeared on the stone in English. Meanwhile, the ancient plates were either covered with a cloth or hidden inside. David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, gave this account:

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

(See illustration on the first page of this newsletter.)

From the statements made by eye-witnesses it is clear that the book was produced by the same means he used to search for treasures, by looking at the stone. In spite of the divine/magical method of reading the translation off the stone, like reading a text message on a cell phone, evidently the process was not infallible.

**Changes in the Text**

The Book of Mormon was published in 1830. However in the next printing, in 1837, thousands of words were changed. While most of these changes were to correct spelling or grammar, a few definitely affected the meaning of the text.

In four places the phrase “the son of” was added to verses speaking of God. For instance, on page 25 of the first edition is a prophecy of the coming Messiah: “the virgin which thou seest, is the mother of God, after the manner of the flesh.” This was changed in 1837 to read, “... Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God” (1 Nephi 11:18), thus altering the concept of God from Modalism to a more traditional Trinitarian view.

Another substantive change was the chronological error of referring to King Benjamin instead of his successor, King Mosiah, in Mosiah 21:28 (page 200 in 1830 edition). The same mistake was also corrected in Ether 4:1 (page 546 in 1830 edition). If this were truly an historical record, it doesn’t seem reasonable that the original writers would have mixed up the name of their current king, especially since Benjamin’s death was noted earlier in Mosiah 6:5.

Smith made a change in 1 Nephi 20:1, where he was quoting from Isaiah 48. This was evidently made to strengthen the Mormon claim that baptism was practiced by the people of the Old Testament. In the 1830 edition, page 52, we read:

Hearken and hear this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the Lord, . . .

Smith added a phrase so that it read “out of the waters of Judah, or out of the waters of baptism, who swear...” (1 Nephi 20:1). However, there is no Biblical manuscript that supports Smith’s addition. The passage is merely using a metaphor for those who descended, or flowed out, from Judah.

Curiously, Smith did not make the same correction in his revision of the Bible, which he began shortly after the publication of the Book of Mormon. There his version of Isaiah 48:1 reads:

Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the Lord, . . .

Since Joseph Smith claimed to return the Book of Mormon plates to the angel soon after completing his translation, he could not have consulted them when making these changes in the 1837 edition of the Book of Mormon. Thus the new readings could not represent a better translation.

12 David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, Missouri, 1887), p. 12.
14 1 Nephi 11:18, 21, 32; 1 Nephi 13:40.
15 Jerald and Sandra Tanner, 3,913 *Changes in the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry), Introduction.
Additional changes have been made since Smith’s death. In 1981 a change was made to obscure the racial teachings in the Book of Mormon. In the Book of Mormon story the Israelites who came to the Americas divided into Nephites (the followers of God) and Lamanites (those in rebellion against God). The Lamanites were given a “skin of blackness” due to their rebellion, but in 2 Nephi 30:6 they were promised that at some future time, when they repented, they would become “a white and delightsome people.” This verse was changed in 1981 to read: “a pure and delightsome people.” However, the book still retains its racial position of dark skin as a mark of God’s displeasure.

In December of 2010 the LDS Church announced that they had revised the Book of Mormon chapter headings and footnotes. This seems to be an effort to obscure the book’s racial overtones. In an article posted on the website, Times and Seasons, February 2, 2011, Mormon author Marvin Perkins listed a number of these changes:

1. 1 Nephi 12:23 – The footnotes for “dark” have been removed [Jacob 3:3 and Alma 3:7 (6-19)] and replaced with 2 Nephi 26:33.
2. 2 Nephi 5 – the words in the chapter heading “the Lamanites are cursed, receive a skin of blackness” were changed to “the Lamanites are cut off from the presence of the Lord, are cursed…”
3. 2 Nephi 5:21 – The footnotes for “curse” [2 Nephi 1:17 and Alma 3:6 (6-19)] were removed and replaced with “TG Curse”.
4. 2 Nephi 5:21 – The word “blackness” has a new footnote which is 2 Ne. 26:33.
5. Alma 3:6 – The footnotes for “curse” have been changed from 1 Ne. 2:23 and 2 Ne. 5:21(21-24) to 2 Nephi 5:21; 26:33.
6. Mormon 5 – the words in the chapter heading “The Lamanites shall be a dark, filthy and loathsome people” have been replaced by “Because of their unbelief, the Lamanites will be scattered, and the Spirit will cease to strive with them.”
7. Mormon 5:15 – The footnotes for “become” no longer reference 1 Ne. 2:23 and Alma 3:19 (16-19) but are replaced by 2 Nephi 26:33.
8. Moses 7:8,22 – The words “blackness” and “black” both get new footnotes which lead to 2 Nephi 26:33.

However, simply removing racial comments from the headings and redirecting the cross-references does not eliminate the racial teachings of the Book of Mormon.

Also, since DNA studies of the American Indian have established that they descended from Asian forbearers, not Israelites, the LDS Church has tried to minimize the impact of the DNA studies by changing the wording of the Introduction to the Book of Mormon from the Lamanites being the “principal ancestors of the American Indians” to them being “among the ancestors of the American Indians.”

Additional Scripture?

Joseph Smith anticipated Christians objecting to a new volume of scripture and addressed the issue in his book. In approximately 550 BC, Nephi, a prophet and leader in the first part of Smith’s new scripture, was shown by an angel that in the last days, there would be Gentiles (meaning non-LDS) in the New World who would bring the Bible to the descendents of the Book of Mormon people, the American Indians. However, the pure word of God in the Bible had been corrupted by the “great and abominable church” (1 Nephi 13) and many important teachings had been removed. But God’s word to those in the New World would be preserved and used to establish God’s true doctrine. This message was then expanded in 2 Nephi 29, where God warns of those who will mock this new work of God, saying “A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible” (2 Nephi 29). At the end of the Book of Mormon a person is assured that if he will pray “with a sincere heart” God will reveal the truthfulness of the book to him (Moroni 10:4-6). Thus the test of the Book of Mormon’s historical validity is side-stepped and the focus is diverted to the sincerity of the one praying.

But if there had been millions of people in the Americas for hundreds of years, living as Hebrew Christians, writing in “reformed Egyptian,” building mighty empires, going to battle with horses, chariots, swords and shields, one would expect there to be at least a handful of artifacts to substantiate such a culture. However, the LDS Church has yet to officially present any artifact from these people or identify any specific location for the story. Even though they

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17 Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 5:21; Alma 3:6.
18 See also 3 Nephi 2:15.
21 http://timesandseasons.org/index.php/2011/02/a-review-of-notable-changes/ These changes have been made to the online edition of the Book of Mormon as of April 19, 2011. See http://lds.org/scriptures/bom/?lang=eng.
print maps in their scriptures showing the LDS Church’s westward migration from New York to Salt Lake City, they have yet to produce an official map for the Book of Mormon story.

There is a chart of Book of Mormon cities in the 2008 Study Guide used in LDS High School Seminary classes, titled “Possible Book of Mormon Sites.” However, it cautions the reader to refrain from trying to correlate it with an actual map: “No effort should be made to identify points on this map with any existing geographical location.”24 This seems odd since on page 53 students are encouraged to “Study the geography of the Holy Land.” If the Book of Mormon is an actual history why not study its geography as one studies the geography of Israel? The church obviously sees the value of maps as there are also maps of Arabia to show Lehi’s trip from Jerusalem to the place where his group built their ship to sail to America.25 Yet the manual never indicates where the group landed in the New World, or where they traveled once they arrived.

Nephite Script

Many Mormons will point to the Mayan ruins in Central America as evidence of an advanced civilization like that described in the Book of Mormon. However, the Maya had a continuous history as a pagan group before, during and after the time frame covered by the Book of Mormon.

Michael D. Coe, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at Yale University, observed that prior to 1000 BC “the Yucatan peninsula was sparsely inhabited by preceramic peoples following an essentially Archaic way of life, centered on hunting and gathering, with some maize and manioc horticulture. Only after 1000 BC did they [the Maya] have villages and pottery, with small temples appearing after 800 BC.”26 The height of Mayan culture extended from 250 AD to 900 AD.27 Their temples and monuments show no relationship to the Israelites or Christians. Thus any association of the Book of Mormon people with the Maya would be contrary to existing evidence. In fact, after Dr. Coe met an RLDS Apostle in Merida, Mexico, who informed Coe that Christ had preached to the people of the Yucatan peninsula at the famous Mayan Temple of the Cross, Coe classified the idea as part of the “lunatic and near-lunatic fringe.”28

Writing in 1973, Dr. Coe summarized the problems of historicity for the Book of Mormon in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought:

The bare facts of the matter are that nothing, absolutely nothing, has ever shown up in any New World excavation which would suggest to a dispassionate observer that the Book of Mormon, as claimed by Joseph Smith, is a historical document relating to the history of early migrants to our hemisphere.29

In 1996 Dr. Coe was asked if he still endorsed his statements in the Dialogue article. He responded:

I see little worth in past efforts to “prove” the BOM an historic document. . . . in spite of decades of diligent archaeological research in the area, absolutely nothing relevant to the BOM has ever turned up (among literally millions of excavated artifacts).30

For years scholars struggled to decipher the Mayan glyphs, but this has changed. Their temples and monument inscriptions now can be read,31 and they do not speak

25 Ibid., pp. 15, 28.
31 Coe, Breaking the Maya Code, p. 262.
of Hebrew Christians. While Joseph Smith preserved half a page of characters supposedly copied from the Nephite plates, that script has not been found in any of the excavations in the New World. There are numerous examples of Mayan script but nothing that matches Joseph’s characters.

![Purported copy of script on the gold plates, often referred to as Joseph Smith’s “Anthon Transcript.”](image)

As you can easily see from the examples above, the style of the Mayan script is totally different from Joseph Smith’s Book of Mormon characters.

After Smith finished his translation of the gold plates he claimed they were returned to the angel. Thus there is no way to verify his story of finding an ancient record or to check the accuracy of his translation.

**Origin of the American Indian**

When composing the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith tapped into the common view of the day that the American Indians were descended from the lost tribes of Israel. Ancient American ruins were already known in Smith’s day. In the early 1800’s there was high interest in American Indian culture and artifacts, resulting in many books and newspaper articles. These writings often mentioned that the Indians claimed to have had a book from God that had been lost, artifacts stored in stone boxes, claims of two different cultures—one more advanced than the other, legends of great battles, etc. For example, the Smith’s local newspaper, the *Palmyra Register* for May 26, 1819, reported that “this country was once inhabited by a race of people, at least, partially civilized, & that this race has been exterminated by the forefathers of the present and late tribes of Indians in this country.” On October 11, 1825, the local *Wayne Sentinel* suggested that the Indians “are the lineal descendants of the Israelites.”

This theme of Israelite descent appeared in a number of books published prior to the Book of Mormon. Two important books promoting the Israelite origin of the Indians were *View of the Hebrews*, by Ethan Smith, first published in 1823, reprinted in 1825, followed in 1826 with the printing of *The Wonders of Nature and Providence Displayed*, by Josiah Priest. After examining *View of the Hebrews*, LDS General Authority B. H. Roberts commented:

> But now to return . . . to the main theme of this writing—viz., did Ethan Smith’s *View of the Hebrews* furnish structural material for Joseph Smith’s Book of Mormon? It has been pointed out in these pages that there are many things in the former book that might well have suggested many major things in the other. Not a few things merely, one or two, or a half dozen, but many; and it is this fact of many things of similarity and the cumulative force of them that makes them so serious a menace to Joseph Smith’s story of the Book of Mormon origin. . . . The material in Ethan Smith’s book is of a character and quantity to make a ground plan for the Book of Mormon. . . .

*View of the Hebrews* proposed that the Indians were descended from Israel, and looks forward to the future gathering of Israel. It speaks of the ancient civilization using metal, having a written language taken from Hebrew, and of a lost book from God. It suggests that the Indians at one time had the gospel preached to them. It recounts vast mounds or military fortifications throughout the Ohio valley, high towers, wars, etc. Thus we see that the basic ideas behind the Book of Mormon were circulating in Smith’s day. Add to this Smith’s familiarity with the Bible and you have the main source material needed for the book.

Contrary to the views of Smith’s day and the Book of Mormon, anthropologists today see no evidence for an Israelite civilization in the Americas between 600 BC

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32 *Book of Mormon Student Study Guide*, p. 14
and 400 AD. DNA has shown that the American Indians descend from Central Asia, not the Middle East.36

**Doctrine**

In April of 1830 Joseph Smith organized his church, the Church of Christ, which recognized both the Bible and the Book of Mormon as scripture. However, the teachings in his new scripture were not that far removed from many other movements of his day. It echoed the Restoration movement’s call for a return to New Testament Christianity, a rejection of the Catholic Church and infant baptism (1 Nephi 13:4; Moroni 8:11-12). It taught that there was one God (2 Nephi 31:21), that faith in Christ and Christian baptism were essential for eternal life (Mosiah 18:13; Moroni 8:25) and that there should be no division between various churches (Mosiah 25:22). In fact, in 1831, Alexander Campbell, a leader in the American Restoration movement, wrote concerning the *Book of Mormon*:

This prophet Smith, through his stone spectacles, wrote on the plates of Nephi, in his book of Mormon, every error and almost every truth discussed in New York for the last ten years. He decides all the great controversies;—infant baptism, ordination, the trinity, regeneration, repentance, justification, the fall of man, the atonement, transubstantiation, fasting, penance, church government, religious experience, the call to the ministry, the general resurrection, eternal punishment, who may baptize, and even the question of free masonry, republican government, and the rights of man.37

What the book does not contain are Joseph Smith’s later doctrines of pre-mortal life, temple rituals, eternal marriage, plural marriage, baptism and marriage for the dead, three levels of heaven and man’s hope of future exaltation as a god presiding over his own world; this in spite of the fact that the introduction to the Book of Mormon promises that it contains “the fulness of the everlasting gospel.”

**Plagiarism of the Bible**

Two other problems for the Book of Mormon are the lifting of hundreds of phrases from the King James Version of the Bible and the introduction of New Testament concepts into the Book of Mormon before the time of Christ. The Old Testament has no mention of Jesus Christ by name, or the Christian concept of baptism, yet these are an integral part of the Nephite religion in the Book of Mormon during the period before Christ. For instance, in approximately 550 BC God instructs the Nephites, “repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my Beloved Son” (2 Nephi: 31:11). Another Book of Mormon passage supposedly written about 121 BC contains words obviously taken from 1 Corinthians 15:58. It says: “Therefore, I would that ye should be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works, that Christ the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal you his.” Hundreds of phrases from the Bible have been sprinkled throughout the Book of Mormon to give it the sound of scripture.38

Thus, over the last 180 years scholar after scholar has concluded that the Book of Mormon is a product of the nineteenth century, not an ancient record.

### 2. Joseph Smith’s Revision of the Bible

Months after finishing the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith embarked on another ambitious project, his revision of the King James Bible, known as the *Inspired Version* or the *Joseph Smith Translation* (JST). Between the years 1830 and 1833 Smith and his scribes went through the Bible noting places to be changed, plus adding new verses to the text. Although Mormons often declare that Joseph Smith’s Bible revision was never completed, in a letter dated July 2, 1833, Joseph Smith wrote: “We this day finished the translation of the scriptures, for which we return gratitude to our Heavenly Father.”39

A number of the revelations in the *Doctrine and Covenants* relate to instructions from God about the Bible revision and the necessity of having it published.40 However, due to the Mormons’ frequent moves, financial plights, and other church duties, the project was not published during Smith’s lifetime. When the main body of the saints moved west, Emma Smith, Joseph’s widow, remained behind and had the manuscript for Smith’s Bible in her care. It was eventually published in 1867 by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, now known as the Community of Christ.41 Since the Lord seemed so concerned in the early 1830’s that the prophet finish and publish the new revised Bible, one wonders why the current LDS prophets do not complete the task?

This was not a translation in the regular sense as Smith had no ancient manuscripts and no training in Hebrew or Greek. It was a matter of revelation. Some of the changes were Smith’s attempt to make a more logical reading, some

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38 See Tanner, *Joseph Smith’s Plagiarism of the Bible in the Book of Mormon*.
40 *Doctrine and Covenants*, Sec. 35:20; 37:1; 42:15, 56; 73:3-4; 76:15; 104:58.
were issues Bible commentaries had already discussed, some were simply insertions by Smith.\footnote{See Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 46-61. Also, http://byustudies.byu.edu/PDFLibrary/9.1Matthews.pdf}

As with the Book of Mormon, Smith moved knowledge of Christianity into the Old Testament. For instance, his revision of Genesis 6:52-53 indicates that Adam was baptized and received the Holy Ghost:

> And he called upon our father Adam, by his own voice, saying, I am God; ... If thou wilt, turn unto me and hearken unto my voice, and believe, and repent of all thy transgressions, and be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is Jesus Christ, the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, asking all things in his name, and whatsoever ye shall ask it shall be given you . . . \footnote{Joseph Smith’s “New Translation” of the Bible, (Independence, Missouri: Herald House Publishers, 1970), Genesis 6:52-53, p. 47.}

While Enoch only receives passing mention in the Bible, Smith added over 800 words to Genesis, chapter 50, including a prophecy about himself. \footnote{Joseph Smith’ s “New Translation” of the Bible, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1963), pp. 48-51.}

> And that seer will I bless, and they that seek to destroy him shall be confounded; for this promise I give unto you; for I will remember you from generation to generation; and his name shall be called Joseph, and it shall be after the name of his father. \footnote{Merrill Y. Van Wagoner, *The Inspired Revision of the Bible* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book), p. 370.}

This was obviously intended to be a reference to Joseph Smith, whose father was also named Joseph. Furthermore, Genesis 14 was expanded to enlarge the role of Melchizedek and his priesthood.

Likewise, Isaiah received numerous corrections, with chapter 29 being greatly expanded. This was done so that the passage about a sealed book could be reinterpreted as a prophecy about the Book of Mormon.\footnote{Paul Trask, *Part Way to Utah: The Forgotten Mormons* (Independence, Missouri: Refiner’s Fire Ministries, 2005), chapter 9, “Joseph Smith’s Inspired Version of the Bible,” pp. 103-112; online at http://www.byustudies.byu.edu/PDFLibrary/9.1Matthews.pdf} Interestingly, his revision of Isaiah still retains the verses declaring that there is only one God, such as Isaiah 43:10-11, which contrasts with Smith’s later teachings on a multitude of Gods.

The Book of Mormon states that the Bible went from the Jews to the Gentiles in its purity, but was then changed.\footnote{Joel Groat, “Joseph Smith’s ‘Inspired’ Revisions to the King James Bible,” online at http://www.byustudies.byu.edu/PDFLibrary/9.1Matthews.pdf} With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls it is now clear that Smith’s additions to the Old Testament are not supported by ancient manuscripts. Christianity was not taught in the Old Testament.

Smith also added many words to the New Testament, even rewriting the well-known opening of the gospel of John. John 1:1 states:

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

However, Joseph Smith changed it to read:

> In the beginning was the gospel preached through the Son. And the gospel was the word, and the word was with the Son, and the Son was with God, and the Son was of God. (JST, John 1:1)

> Needless to say, there is no manuscript evidence for Smith’s additions.\footnote{Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book), p. 370.}

One change he made in Revelation 1:6 was to reinforce the meaning of the text. In the KJV it says that we are made “kings and priests unto God and his Father.” To eliminate any confusion that two gods are meant, Smith dropped the word “and,” so that it read “God, his Father.” However, preaching in 1844, Smith completely ignored his own revision, and used the KJV reading “God and his father” to bolster his new doctrine that there was a God above our Heavenly Father.\footnote{Merrill Y. Van Wagoner, *The Inspired Revision of the Bible* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1963), pp. 48-51.} This is just one of many instances of Smith’s evolving view of the godhead.

Curiously, Smith seemed to ignore his revision once it was finished, choosing instead to quote from the KJV or give a new rendering in his sermons. Writing in 1963, Mormon writer Merrill Y. Van Wagoner explained:

> Whenever the prophet quoted from the Bible he either retained the words of the King James version or else flatly declared it to be wrong and then gave a rendering of the passage which differed from it. He seems to take no account of his changes in the Inspired Revision, which of course was not printed.\footnote{49 Merrill Y. Van Wagoner, *The Inspired Revision of the Bible* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1963), pp. 48-51.}

One example of this is seen in his various renditions of Malachi 4:1-6. Recounting the visitation by the angel Moroni during his teenage years, in the *Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph told how Moroni quoted from these verses:

> ... he [Moroni] quoted also the fourth or last chapter of [Malachi] the same prophecy, though with a little
variation from the way it reads in our Bibles. Instead of quoting the first verse as it reads in our books, he quoted it thus:

For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall burn as stubble, for they that come shall burn them, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

And again, he quoted the fifth verse thus: Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

He also quoted the next verse differently: And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.50

However, when Smith was working on his Inspired Revision, he marked the book of Malachi as “correct.” Curiously, the Savior’s words in the Book of Mormon are different from Moroni’s words to Smith:

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse. (3 Nephi 25: 5-6)

But this is not the end of the confusion. Joseph Smith, preaching on January 24, 1844, gave yet another rendering of Malachi 4:5-6. Although he followed the wording of the King James Version, he claimed that the word “turn” should be translated “bind” or “seal”—a rendering which he did not use in either the Book of Mormon or the Inspired Version.51

Formation of the Canon

As mentioned earlier, the LDS Articles of Faith state that they believe the Bible as far as it is translated correctly. However, this reservation extends beyond the reliability of the translation. Mormons often object to the form of the Bible if the one we have is so unreliable?

In 1979 the LDS church printed its own edition of the King James Bible. At that time they certainly could have made their own compilation of books to be included in the canon. But they left it the same. While they did not make any alterations to the actual text, they did introduce new chapter headings and footnotes which cross-referenced topics in their other books of scripture. They also included numerous extracts from Joseph Smith’s Bible revision at the back of their Bible. This certainly raises the question as to why their prophet has not seen fit to publish a corrected Bible if the one we have is so unreliable?

3. Doctrine and Covenants

One of the founding principles of Mormonism is the belief in continuing revelation through a prophet at the head of the church. In their Articles of Faith it is stated that they believe “a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority.” It goes on to state “We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, vision, healing, interpretation of tongues and so forth.”53 Joseph Smith dictated dozens of revelations between 1829 and 1844 and most of these have been canonized in the Doctrine and Covenants.

Section 1, verse 30, of the D&C declares that Smith’s church is “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth.” Section 13 tells of the appearance of John the Baptist to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, ordaining them to the Aaronic Priesthood, and giving them the authority to baptize. Section 22 revealed that all those who desired to unite with the LDS Church must submit to LDS baptism, regardless of the person’s prior baptism at another church.

While the Book of Mormon is the main book used in proselytizing, Mormonism’s more unique doctrines are found in the Doctrine and Covenants—such as pre-earth life [sec. 93], Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods [sec. 107], plural gods [sec. 121; 132], Heavenly Father having a body of flesh and bone [sec. 130], three levels of heaven [sec. 76], eternal marriage [sec. 131], polygamy and progression to godhood [sec. 132], baptism for the dead [sec. 124], and their dietary health code known as the Word of Wisdom [sec. 89]. On questions of doctrine, the Doctrine and Covenants takes precedent over both the Bible and the Book of Mormon.

50 Joseph Smith History 1:36-39, Pearl of Great Price.
51 History of the Church, vol. 6, pp. 183-184. For more on Smith’s Bible revisions, see Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Mormon Scriptures and the Bible, (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1970).
Continuing Revelation?

Of the past sixteen presidents of the LDS Church, only two besides Smith contributed a section to the *Doctrine and Covenants* claiming to have received a revelation. Section 136 is the only one attributed to Brigham Young, Joseph Smith’s successor, in 1847. The Lord explained how the Mormons were to organize in various companies, sharing their goods among the group, on their journey west to the Great Salt Lake. Section 138 is a dream of Joseph F. Smith, dated October 3, 1918, which was not canonized until 1976, when it was added to the *Pearl of Great Price*. A few years later it was moved to the *Doctrine and Covenants*. At the end of the *D&C* are two official LDS Church Declarations, which are presented as the result of the revelatory process but they are not the actual revelations, thus relegating them to the end of the book in a different category. Declaration–1 was issued in 1890 by President Wilford Woodruff instructing members to no longer enter into plural marriages (polygamy). Declaration–2 was issued in 1978 under President Spencer W. Kimball, which announced the end of the priesthood ban on blacks, opening the way for them to also attend the temple.

In the April 2008 General Conference LDS Apostle Jeffrey R. Holland explained the Mormon concept of continuing revelation:

> The fact of the matter is that virtually every prophet of the Old and New Testament has *added scripture* to that received by his predecessors . . . If one revelation to one prophet in one moment of time is sufficient for all time, what justifies these many others? What justifies them was made clear by Jehovah Himself when He said to Moses, “My works are without end, and . . . my words . . . never cease.”

> I testify that the heavens are open. . . . I testify that Thomas S. Monson is God’s prophet, a modern apostle with the keys of the kingdom in his hands, a man upon whom I personally have seen the mantle fall. I testify that the presence of such authorized, prophetic voices and ongoing canonized revelations have been at the heart of the Christian message whenever the authorized ministry of Christ has been on the earth.

> It has now been thirty-three years since an addition has been made to the *Doctrine and Covenants*, which raises the question of whether or not the LDS Church has arrived at a closed canon?

> Since Joseph Smith had used the argument of the need for modern-day revelation as an essential element of his new church, his followers assumed revelation would be available to all. One of the problems encountered by Joseph Smith was the dilemma of competing revelations from others in the group. Hiram Page, one of the eight witnesses of the Book of Mormon, claimed to receive revelations for the church through his seer stone. This was soon resolved when Joseph gave an additional revelation that there is only one man at a time that speaks for God, thus solidifying Smith as God’s authorized spokesman. Section 28 of the *Doctrine and Covenants* declares:

> But, behold, verily, verily, I say unto thee, *no one* shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting my servant *Joseph Smith, Jun.*, for he receiveth them even as Moses.

> Then in verse 11, Smith is told to take Hiram Page aside and explain to him that “those things which he hath written from that stone are not of me and that Satan deceiveth him.”

> Section 4 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, given in 1829, is a good example of the ability of Smith to weave various Bible phrases into his revelations. We have supplied the Bible verses that were used for the wording in Smith’s revelation:

> Now behold, a *marvelous work* is about to come forth among the children of men. [Isaiah 29:14] . . . For behold the *field is white already to harvest*; [John 4:35] and lo, he that *thrusteth in his sickle* [Revelation 14:15] with his might, the same *layeth up in store* [1 Timothy 6:19] that he periseth not, but bringeth salvation to his soul; And *faith, hope, charity* [1 Corinthians 13:13] and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify him for the work. . . . Ask and ye shall receive; *knock* and it shall be opened unto you. [Matthew 7:8]

> Smith’s talent for interspersing biblical phrases from the King James Version in his revelations helped to give them an added air of authority.

Changes in the Text

Smith’s revelations were first put in book form in 1833, as the *Book of Commandments*, then reissued in 1835 under the title *Doctrine and Covenants*. Since additional revelations had been received after the 1833 printing the volume was enlarged. However, most members did not realize that Smith had rewritten a number of his earlier revelations, introducing new doctrines, such as the inclusion of the Melchizedek Priesthood. David Whitmer, one of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, stated that

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when it became known that Joseph Smith had changed his revelations, “the result was that some of the members left the church on account of it.”

Today the LDS Church claims that in 1829 God sent Peter, James and John to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery to ordain them to the Melchizedek Priesthood. However, all early Mormon documents and diaries show that the founding members of the LDS church were not aware of any such claim. This is but one example of the way Smith’s doctrines evolved over the fourteen years he acted as prophet.

While the Book of Mormon spoke of the authority that came from the “order of the Son” (Alma 13:9) or the “holy order of God” (Alma 13:18), it was not termed the Melchizedek Priesthood as it is today. In fact, the Book of Mormon spoke of high priests, priests, elders and teachers (Alma 4:7, 20; Alma 13:1-19) as all being of the same priesthood, not two divisions as is currently taught. Contrary to Joseph Smith’s History of the Church, the concept of a restoration of the Melchizedek priesthood in 1829 was not taught at the beginning of Mormonism. David Whitmer wrote that it was not taught in 1830. One of the evidences of this is the way Smith rewrote his revelations between the 1833 Book of Commandments and the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants.

A Mormon today would point to sections 20, 27, 42 and 68, of the Doctrine and Covenants as evidence that the early members were taught about that priesthood. However, sections 20, 27 and 42 have gone through revision and additions, and Section 68 was not even in the 1833 printing. One reason for these additions was to add concepts about priesthood that were not present in the original.

Another evidence of Smith’s evolving story is his rewriting of section 5 of the D&C. In the original 1833 printing, chapter 4 of the Book of Commandments, he was told that the only gift God would give him would be the translation of the Book of Mormon. This was rewritten in 1835 to read that the translation was just the first gift God would give him, thus opening the door for further books of scripture.

In section 7 of the D&C is Joseph Smith’s purported translation of a parchment written by John the Beloved. While it is labeled a translation, there is no evidence that Smith ever claimed to have such a record. It is simply a revelation. However, the current version is twice as long as the 1833 Book of Commandments printing (section 6). Thus we are once again faced with the problem of Smith’s accuracy in receiving revelation.

Section 8 was also rewritten. In the 1833 printing (section 7) Oliver Cowdery, Smith’s scribe, was commended for his gift of working with a divining rod, or “rod of nature,” but now the revelation euphemistically refers to Cowdery’s “gift of Aaron.” Thus Cowdery’s earlier involvement with treasure seeking and magic arts is camouflaged by altering a few words.

False Prophecy

Another problem with Smith’s revelations is his failed prophecies. One of the ways the Bible tells us to test a prophet is found in Deuteronomy 18:22 where God declares that if a prophecy fails it is evidence that the person who gave it is a false prophet. When we apply this standard to Joseph Smith, he certainly fails.

One of the most famous of Joseph’s prophecies is section 87, given December 25, 1832, predicting the Civil War. It opens with these words:

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

However, this revelation, which was not printed in either the 1833 Book of Commandments or the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, has many problems. For instance, since South Carolina had just threatened to leave the union before this revelation was given, Smith’s inspiration seems

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56 Whitmer, An Address to All Believers in Christ, p. 61.
57 Ibid., p. 64
58 Photocopies of both the 1833 Book of Commandments and 1835 Doctrine and Covenants online at http://www.irr.org/mit/boc/
to have come from newspapers of the day. On December 10, 1832, the Boston Daily Advertiser & Patriot printed “Extracts from the Message of the Governor of South Carolina at the opening of the Legislature, November 27, 1832,” warning that “South Carolina was prepared to resist the U.S. Government by force if necessary.” Thus Joseph Smith’s revelation seems to be an outgrowth of the current news.

When the immediate crisis passed, and South Carolina gave up its threat of secession, Smith’s revelation was put in storage. It was not printed until 1851, and not canonized until 1876. But even so, there are parts of the revelation that have never been fulfilled. Verses 1 and 2 speak of “wars that will shortly come to pass, beginning at the rebellion of South Carolina,” and that this will lead to a war that “will be poured out upon all nations, beginning at this place,” meaning South Carolina. It goes on to speak of Great Britain joining the Southern States in fighting against the North, and that other nations will then join in, “and then war shall be poured out upon all nations.” Obviously, the Civil War never reached such proportions. LDS scholar Paul Petersen conceded: “These matters are all history now, but certain verses in the Civil War prophecy have broader applications and it appears that portions of the revelation are yet to be fulfilled.”

In 1832 Joseph dictated section 84, which was a command to build a temple in Independence, Missouri, known among the Mormons as “Zion” or “New Jerusalem.” The temple was to be “reared in this generation,” meaning during the life-time of those currently living but that temple has yet to be built. It goes on to command the Mormon bishop to preach the LDS gospel to the citizens of New York, Albany and Boston. If they reject the message, “utter abolishment” awaited them, “for if they do reject these things the hour of their judgment is nigh, and their house shall be left unto them desolate” (D&C 84:4-5, 114-115, Sept. 1832). Clearly, those cities did not embrace Mormonism, and no such calamity befell the northern cities.

Lectures on Faith

When the LDS Church decided to do a new printing of Smith’s revelations in 1835, changing the name from Book of Commandments to Doctrine and Covenants, they added a series of lessons entitled the “Lectures on Faith.” These lectures had originally been delivered before a class of the elders in Kirtland, Ohio. These lessons present clear evidence that they were not preaching the concept of God the Father as a resurrected man with a body as is taught today. Lecture 5 distinguishes between the Father being a “personage of spirit” and the Son as being “a personage of tabernacle.”

The “Lectures on Faith” not only taught that God the Father is a spirit, but also that God is “omnipresent” and “without beginning of days.” However, in the 1840’s Joseph Smith changed his doctrine of God, teaching that God the Father not only had a resurrected body, but that God had not always been God, that there were deities before him. LDS scholar Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Flaws in the Pearl of Great Price, (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1991).

4. Pearl of Great Price

The Pearl of Great Price is a compilation of several writings. First is the Book of Moses, which is an extract from Smith’s Bible translation, composed during the early 1830’s, covering parts of Genesis. However, chapter 1 of the Book of Moses does not appear in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (aka: Community of Christ) printing of the Joseph Smith translation.

Here we see Smith reinforcing the idea of only one God. In Moses 1:3 we read “I am without beginning of days or end of years.” Then in verse 6 we read “there is no God beside me.” The story of creation in chapter 2 is carried out by “the Almighty God” and “by mine Only Begotten.”

The Book of Moses is followed by the Book of Abraham, which is the purported translation of an ancient papyrus written by the very hand of Abraham. In it Joseph Smith moves from a strictly monotheistic view of God to that of polytheism. Abraham 4:1 states:

And then the Lord said: Let us go down. And they went down at the beginning, and they, that is the Gods, organized and formed the heavens and the earth.
Next is another extract from Smith’s Bible translation, Matthew, chapter 24. This is followed by an extract from Joseph Smith’s History of the Church recounting the beginning of Mormonism. The last item is the LDS “Articles of Faith,” which was printed in 1842, but does not enumerate their most heretical doctrines, such as temple rituals and multiple gods. Also, it only mentions two books of scripture, the Bible and Book of Mormon, leaving out the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price.

As we have demonstrated in our book, Flaws in the Pearl of Great Price, each section of the Pearl of Great Price has undergone many revisions.

**Book of Abraham**

In 1835 Michael Chandler brought his traveling Egyptian mummy exhibit to the Mormon town of Kirtland, Ohio. Upon examination, Joseph Smith offered to buy the collection as he had discerned that one of the Egyptian papyrus scrolls contained the writings of Old Testament patriarch Abraham. After purchasing the mummies and scrolls for $2,400 ($61,300 in today’s value), Smith embarked on his new translation project. If this were truly the writings of Abraham it would be the oldest known biblical text. Even the Dead Sea Scrolls would dim in comparison.

Like the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith professed to be translating an ancient record, preserved by God to come forth in these last days. It was no less than the original account of the creation as recorded by Abraham, which would even pre-date his translation of the Moses account in his revision of the Bible.

During this time the study of Egyptian hieroglyphs was in its infancy, which no doubt left Joseph Smith feeling free to offer his interpretation of the papyri without challenge. While Frenchman Jean-Francois Champollion had been involved in deciphering the Rosetta Stone in the 1820’s, which proved to be the key to translating Egyptian hieroglyphs, his research was little known in the United States during Smith’s lifetime.

Joseph Smith first developed his Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar using various hieroglyphs from the papyri and then composed an English explanation. He then worked on his translation for the next several years, finally publishing it in 1842 in the LDS newspaper, Times and Seasons, and it was canonized in 1880.

Included in the Book of Abraham were three illustrations taken from the papyri, labeled Facsimile Nos. 1, 2 and 3.

Facsimile No. 1 shows a black standing figure, a man lying on a couch, a bird, and four jars underneath the couch. Smith described this as “Abraham fastened upon an altar,” and “The idolatrous priest of Elkenah attempting to offer up Abraham as a sacrifice.” The bird was identified as the “angel of the Lord” and the four jars were said to represent four “idolatrous” gods. However, Egyptologists would later identify this as a standard scene from the Egyptian Book of the Dead, showing the god Anubis overseeing the embalming of Osiris. Originally the papyrus would have shown Anubis with a jackal head, but the papyrus had evidently been damaged and the Mormons had to guess at the type of head to place on the black figure. Underneath the couch are four canopic jars used to store the person’s organs, with lids representing the sons of Horus, and the bird represents the soul of the person being embalmed.


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Facsimile No. 2 is a disc with numerous figures and hieroglyphic inscriptions. In Smith’s purported translation of the text, he explained that the central figure represented “Kolob,” the first creation nearest to the “residence of God.” Other figures related to priesthood, various planets and stars, the measurement of time and “God sitting upon his throne.” However, this object is known as a hypocephalus, a magical disc placed under the head of a mummy to aid the person in his journey after death. The figures represent well-known Egyptian deities. The Mormon copy is similar to a number of other such objects in various Egyptian collections around the world.  

Smith identified figure 7 (upside-down seated figure in lower right area) as “God sitting upon his throne,” while Egyptologists identify the figure as Min, the Egyptian god of male sexual potency, and is shown with an erection.

Facsimile No. 3 is a picture of five figures: a woman standing behind a seated man, and then another woman, a man and a black figure. Joseph Smith explained that this was a picture of “Abraham sitting upon Pharaoh’s throne,” with Pharaoh standing behind him. Abraham is said to be “reasoning upon the principles of Astronomy.” However, Egyptologists identify this as the Judgment Scene from the Book of the Dead, showing Isis standing behind the seated figure of Osiris.

Standing in front of the seated figure, according to Smith, is a “Prince of Pharaoh.” Smith identified the next figure as “Shulem, one of the king’s principal waiters” and the black figure as “Olimlah, a slave belonging to the prince.” However, the three figures in front of Osiris have been identified as Maat (the goddess of truth), the deceased person (for whom the papyrus was made), and the black figure is the half-man, half-jackal deity Anubis.

Smith produced three chapters of text but the work was not completed before his death. As scholars increased their ability to read Egyptian hieroglyphs attention was turned to examining the facsimiles reproduced in the Book of Abraham. In 1912 and 1913 several of the world’s top Egyptologists commented on Smith’s interpretation of the drawings.

One of the scholars who examined Smith’s work was James H. Breasted, Ph.D., Haskell Oriental Museum, University of Chicago, who wrote:

“These three facsimiles of Egyptian documents in the “Pearl of Great Price” depict the most common objects in the mortuary religion of Egypt. Joseph Smith’s interpretations of them as part of a unique revelation through Abraham, therefore, very clearly demonstrate that he was totally unacquainted with the significance of these documents and absolutely ignorant of the simplest facts of Egyptian writing and civilization.”

67 Tanner, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? p. 336.

The other Egyptologists rendered similar verdicts of Smith’s erroneous interpretations. One has only to look at any credible source on Egyptian deities to see that the figures in the Book of Abraham facsimiles are standard images from the Book of the Dead. To suggest that Abraham would use pictures of pagan gods to illustrate the true God is in direct opposition to the teachings in the Old Testament. In the Ten Commandments, God explicitly stated that He had delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt and that they were to reject all pagan deities, specifically stating that no one was to make any image or likeness of God (Exodus 20:2-4). Joseph Smith’s identification of these pagan deities with the God of Abraham makes no more sense than to claim that a statue of the Buddha actually represents Jesus Christ. Today the heading on the Book of Abraham still contains the same claim of being an authentic translation of the papyri:

The Book of Abraham, Translated from the Papyrus, by Joseph Smith. A translation of some ancient records, that have fallen into our hands from the catacombs of Egypt.—The writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt, called the Book of Abraham, written by his own hand, upon papyrus.69

While the facsimiles have come under attack, there had been no way for the scholars to test Smith’s purported translation of the papyri, as it was assumed they had been destroyed. However, Smith’s translation would be put to the test in 1967 when a number of pieces of the long-lost papyri were presented to the LDS Church by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Once photos of the papyri were printed in the 1968 Improvement Era, an official LDS magazine, scholars began the search to determine which piece Smith had utilized in his translation.70 The piece was identified by comparing Joseph Smith’s translation papers and his Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar with the papyri. It was soon determined that Smith had used characters from the piece of papyri identified as “XI. Small ‘Sensen’ text (unillustrated),”71 also referred to as the Book of Breathings (a condensed version of the Book of the Dead).

All of the first two rows of characters on the papyrus fragment can be found in the manuscript of the Book of Abraham. Other manuscript pages show that he used almost four lines of the papyrus to make fifty-one verses in the Book of Abraham. These fifty-one verses are composed of more than two thousand English words!72 A person does not have to be an Egyptologist to know that it would be impossible to translate over two thousand words from a few Egyptian characters.

This piece, Joseph Smith’s No. XI Small “Sensen” text, has been translated by several Egyptologists with virtual agreement. Contrary to Smith’s version, the English translation takes up just slightly more space than the actual hieroglyphs.

In 1968 Richard A. Parker, professor of Egyptology at Brown University, supplied a translation of the piece, which was published in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought:

[.....] this great pool of Khonsu [Osiris Hor, justified], born of Taykhebyt, a man likewise. After (his) two arms are (fast)ened to his breast, one wraps the Book of Breathings, which is with writing both inside and outside of it, with royal linen, it being placed (at) his left arm near his heart, this having been done at his wrapping and outside it. If this book be recited for him, then He will breath like the soul(s of the gods) for ever and ever.73

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69 Pearl of Great Price, caption on Book of Abraham, p. 29.
71 Ibid., p. 41. See Tanner, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? p. 311.
72 Tanner, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pp. 312-313.
Mormon scholars, realizing the problems of defending a literal translation for the Book of Abraham, have now proposed that either Smith didn’t use the “Sensen” text and that the piece Smith did use no longer exists, or it doesn’t have to be a literal translation of the papyrus, but could be a revelation triggered by looking at the artifacts. Some also propose that Smith used the drawings from the papyri only to illustrate his revelation, not that they originally were drawn to illustrate a composition by Abraham.74 However, the heading of the Book of Abraham still carries the official statement that it is a translation of the papyrus and that it is “the writings of Abraham . . . written by his own hand, upon papyrus.” If the Book of Abraham is a product of revelation, not an actual translation, and the facsimiles were not drawn to illustrate Abraham’s text, one wonders why the Mormons needed to invest so much money to acquire these pagan documents in the first place? In Joseph Smith’s day, the papyri were certainly presented to the public as actually being Abraham’s record.

**Doctrine of the Book of Abraham**

Many of the LDS doctrines have their origin in the Book of Abraham. Chapters 1 and 2 stress the importance of priesthood. It also reinforces the LDS concept of a racial curse (Abraham 1:21-24). Chapter 3:21-27 introduces the concept of pre-mortal existence, that men and women had a prior life (coexisted) with God before being born on earth. Those who were “noble” in their pre-earth life (man’s first estate) were to be the “rulers” on earth (man’s second estate). This led to an interpretation that everyone’s birth on earth is a direct result of his/her worthiness in a prior life in heaven, thus the belief that those less valiant were born black while the righteous were born white.75 The Bible, however, clearly teaches that only the Godhead has eternal existence. We are God’s creation and did not have a spiritual existence prior to our birth on earth. When Jesus declared, “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58 KJV), he is claiming to be truly and eternally God and that Jesus declared, “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58 KJV), he is claiming to be truly and eternally God and that Abraham had a beginning. In Zechariah 12:1 we read that God “formeth the spirit of man within him” (KJV).

Chapters 4 and 5 of the Book of Abraham seem to be a rewrite of the Genesis creation story with the addition of multiple gods involved in the process. For instance, verse 3 reads “And they (the Gods) said: Let there be light; and there was light.” Curiously, this contradicts his earlier revelation of Moses’ account: “And I, God, said: Let there be light; and there was light.” If Moses was as inspired as Abraham, why didn’t he understand that the creation was accomplished by a council of gods? During the early years of Mormonism, Joseph Smith preached the standard doctrine of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. However, by the 1840’s he had begun to teach a plurality of gods, completely ignoring the biblical doctrine of one eternal, unchanging God and even contradicting his earlier writings.77

**Conclusion**

When we look at the development of Joseph Smith’s doctrine of God we can see a steady move from his modalistic one God doctrine in the Book of Mormon, to his separation of the Father and Son in his Book of Moses, ending with his plural god doctrine of the Book of Abraham. However, if we look at these items in the historical time frame in which they were supposedly written, it would be the reverse. The plural gods of Abraham would have been recorded first, then Moses would have taught only the Father and Son, culminating in the one God concept of the Book of Mormon. If the doctrine of plural gods in the Book of Abraham is true, why didn’t Moses and the prophets in the Book of Mormon have that knowledge? The Bible is very definite that there is only one God:

Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, . . . I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. . . . Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any. (Isaiah 44: 6 and 8)

In 1992 the LDS First Presidency issued an official statement about the Bible and modern day revelation. It read in part:

The most reliable way to measure the accuracy of any biblical passage is not by comparing different texts, but by comparison with the Book of Mormon and modern-day revelations.78

However, as we have seen, LDS scriptures disagree among themselves, have undergone significant revisions and some are obviously not the ancient texts they claim to be. How would these books supply a more sure foundation? The Bible, supported by ancient manuscripts, maps and artifacts, was here long before Joseph Smith. It should stand as the point of reference for evaluating Smith’s revelations, not the other way around.

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75 Speech of Elder Orson Hyde, delivered before the High Priests’ Quorum, in Nauvoo, April 27, 1845, printed by John Taylor, p. 30.

76 Book of Moses 2:3, *Pearl of Great Price*.


Excerpts from Letters and Emails

October 2010: I just wanted to take a moment and thank you for your wonderful website! It was a great source of information for me as I transitioned out of Mormonism. You are doing such a great service to people and I really admire your work!! I came to Christ in April of this year and resigned from the Mormon church in August. I am now free of Mormonism and enjoying my walk with the Lord! . . .

In my research, I found that practically all of their writings were on the internet or copied to cd’s. I asked the librarian about it and she said that I should talk to the person in charge of the library. I called him with the inquiry and, obviously thinking that I was a Mormon, he said, “It’s funny that you should ask. Everyone on the library board agreed that the Deseret newspaper should be digitized, but when we took it to the President of the Church, he nixed the idea and said, ‘Because our children are so computer literate, if we digitized the Deseret News and they accessed it, they would leave the church in droves.’”

November 2010: I had sent for information from you just last week and today received a packet in the mail! I found tons of stuff about the Mormon church that I’m sure can help me, as I have officially sent in my resignation letter! I expect the “love bombs” to start any day now, as LDS HQ acknowledged that they received my letter a week ago! Anyway, I just want to say THANK YOU for everything!

December 2010: Mrs. Tanner—Or should I say sister Tanner. Because even though I personally consider myself an ex-Mormon, like you, I still believe we may be brothers and sisters if we accept Christ as our savior and redeemer . . . I am Brazilian, . . . I got to know the LDS Church in ‘77, even though I just was baptized three years later. I stayed in it until March of the current year [2010], when I had the blessing (in disguise!) of reading your wonderful and so well-written and documented “Changing World of Mormonism.” After that I stopped attending church and start getting deeper and deeper in my personal research.

December 2010: I am 33 years old. My father’s side of my family are all devoted LDS members. . . . As an adult, because of my occupation, I never had Sundays off, now I have Sunday mornings off. So I want to take my children to church, at least a place where we can all learn about the bible. Wanting to make a good decision, I started to question Mormonism, something never felt totally right for me. That is how I arrived at your website. I feel deceived, why didn’t my father question any of this? Although I realize that research is so much easier now that we have the internet, so I don’t fault him . . .

December 2010: It saddens me to think that your ignorance has led you to promote this site against God, Which will cause the visitation of cursing to come upon you from our heavenly father Which will cause the destruction of this forever god spiritually begot us therefore creating us as his spirit children. you sound like nehor in alma 1:2-15 you are an anti Christ so be careful.

October 2010: I REALLY appreciate your heart. My whole family watched your fireside chat and the TV show and were impressed by the sincerity and strength you speak with. [See video links at http://www.utlm.org/navonlineressources.htm]

November 2010: I would appreciate it if you would remove your information on the LDS church, as it is completely incorrect. You have claimed things on here that I have never heard in my entire life. I have been completely active in the LDS church my entire life, we do not believe the things you are claiming. I would not want an investigator be turned away by blasphemy.

November 2010: I came to the Lord about 25 years ago after being raised as a 5th generation Mormon. Someone at my church sensed my confusion and suggested I call you for help. I still recall the conversation we had and still appreciate your tender approach to a most confused young man.

November 2010: Hi. I am in the process of leaving the Mormon church and just sort of want to know the best thing to do with my temple garments. Can I just throw them away? I keep thinking I need to burn them or cut them up. [We told her it doesn’t matter, just get rid of them.]

November 2010: More than 25 years ago my wife and I were happy members of the RLDS sect of Mormonism. [My wife started reading] the N.I.V. Bible. . . . What this bible was saying did not match with the things we were taught. She began asking Me questions . . . and reading this Bible my wife came to the point of believing Joseph Smith was a false teacher! Yet, I, while seeing the same things as she, was not yet completely convinced. Then one evening we were invited to supper at the home of . . . friends who were not RLDS. We eventually got to talking about what was happening to us. As [my friend] was RLDS in his childhood I considered him a sympathetic ear. After explaining how we were seeing problems and my reluctance to completely let go of “The Church” [he] went into another room, came back and handed me some papers.”Have you ever heard of Jerald and Sandra Tanner?” He asked. Of course he already knew I had not! It was one of your newsletters that he had given me! It was exactly what I needed to see what a farce we believed all our lives! The story of my conversion goes on from here. It has been quite a journey! But to make a long story short, the most wonderful truth I came to see is what a wretched man I am, and what a wonderful Savior is Jesus My Lord. So, thank you again for your hard work. I know the Lord is using this ministry!

November 2010: I don’t know if I ever passed this story on to you, but about 6 or 7 years ago, maybe longer, I was doing some research and I called the library in Salt Lake to get a copy of Brigham Young’s statement in the Deseret newspaper from the 1870’s when he equated going to heaven with only one wife to the parable of the talents.

In my research, I found that practically all of their writings were on the internet or copied to cd’s. I asked the librarian about it and she said that I should talk to the person in charge of the library. I called him with the inquiry and, obviously thinking that I was a Mormon, he said, “It’s funny that you should ask. Everyone on the library board agreed that the Deseret newspaper should be digitized, but when we took it to the President of the Church, he nixed the idea and said, ‘Because our children are so computer literate, if we digitized the Deseret News and they accessed it, they would leave the church in droves.’”

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**December 2010:** I just want you to know how much your website and testimonies of why you left the LDS church on You tube has helped me leave the LDS church and find the real Jesus in the bible.

**December 2010:** I am a Mormon that is converting to Christianity. I appreciate your web-site and all you do to get across the truth. You are a great person, and I hope to encourage you to hang in there.

**January 2011:** My parents joined the LDS church in my senior year of high school. I began the missionary discussions the spring of that year.

  Having been raised in the Baptist church, I was uncomfortable with much of what I was hearing from the missionaries, but it wasn’t until I attended Ricks College in Rexburg that I had a chance to really invest myself in investigating the church. The more I prayed about what was the true church, the more I knew the LDS was not true. On one particular trip down to BYU in the winter of 1973, a friend from my church in Littleton, Colorado suggested I go by and meet you and Gerald and pick up one of your books.

  You were both very gracious to me and spent a fair amount of time working with me and corresponding with me to answer many of my questions. But I remember a statement that Gerald made to me one day during one of our conversations: “It is not about the church, or the family, or even you. It is about Jesus Christ. Don’t get distracted by talk about what a good church or the true church is. Christ is the truth!”

**January 2011:** I am a branch president, I have been a bishop, seminary teacher. . . I have been struggling with my testimony for 4.5 years, but have continued to come and do my part because I figured if this church is not true, then no church is. . . The problem that I have is I love Mormon Doctrine, degrees of glory, no hell, eternal families, a loving God and the ability to become God. . . BUT, I do not believe the Book of Mormon, and I believe that once one learns about Joseph Smith, it is pretty clear he was a fraud. I am struggling. . . it is clear that Mormonism is founded on lies and good cover up jobs. . . I have watched a few of your videos Sandra, I enjoyed them and appreciate your good sense of humor and non-aggressive approach. I was always taught that ants were bitter. So thank you for not making that true.

**January 2011:** I just wanted to say thank-you !! Your website and the contained documentation and your u tube presentations have done my lovely partner and I a great service. Mormonism has screwed us both over on so many levels. I met her on my mission to Manchester England back in 1990. Finally after all this time we are starting a new life together. From an ordinary guy thank you !!

**January 2011:** I’ve read all of the statements on your websites and they seem to be faulty. And a little prejudiced if I do say so myself. I am currently a member of the LDS church and I think . . . you have so many untrue statements . . . Please fix these idiotic mistakes. Bye bye smarty pants.

**January 2011:** Thank you for your hard work on dispelling the Mormon Myths. After 16 years of the LDS Church and 7 years of agnosticism, I finally came to know the True Lord. Your research and work is helping me battle the ever changing Mormon myth in the US Military and helping me advise my father, who is attempting to return to the Church after a 13 year hiatus. Keep it up!

**January 2011:** The information provided on your website was invaluable to me when I was grappling with the truth as a lifelong faithful LDS member who had inadvertently stumbled onto information that ultimately set me on a quest to learn the “real” truth about Mormonism. I praise God for Ministries like yours that not only helped me learn the truth about Mormonism but that also helped me to navigate to the true and living Christ in the process.

**January 2011:** I recently read a book on facts of the Mormon church and it led me to your website as a resource. I dated a member of the LDS church for three years—and ended up joining the church even though I never really felt called to join—but more so because I loved him . . . I ended up breaking up with this member because I felt like the church just wasn’t something that I could follow and live in a lie. Before joining the church I was an active member of my Presbyterian church and have rejoined it because I felt it actually pointed me towards salvation. I am very thankful for getting out of the LDS church and back on track—and feel like my faith has since increased and taken on a stronger note.

**January 2011:** I left the church 11 months ago. I wish I had known the truth much earlier. My letter of the law behavior hurt so many people. I pray that the church will finally admit the truth. The sad part is that I felt deep in my heart that there was something really wrong with the teaching for a very long time.

**January 2011:** I resigned this year thanks in no small part to you and your husband’s excellent research and your willingness to share it. I was talking with a friend of mine who grew up in Salt lake and said no high school kid would dare go near your bookstore in Salt Lake. He said he would have been better off being caught buying porn than in your book store. There you have it your new slogan “Utah lighthouse ministries—better than porn.”

**January 2011:** Thank you so very much for providing all of the resources you provide. I have always had a strong Christian Faith and when I moved to Idaho I thought “how bad could the Mormons be?”, not knowing much about their faith. It was not until I married a Mormon with a very, very Mormon family, that I realized the need to research them and their beliefs, thus coming upon MRM and Utah Lighthouse Ministries. With God’s help I have been able to show my husband the truth behind the Mormon faith and am bringing him closer to the Jesus and God of the Bible. Thank you for all you do!

**February 2011:** I am LDS, just a member, not a leader, and what makes it interesting is I have had special experiences similar to those which Joseph Smith had. I have received revelation for myself, and have a sure knowledge . . . There are many out there like me that have had similar experiences, they know also. They have been visited by the power of the Holy Ghost and instructed and have obtained knowledge first hand for themselves too.

**February 2011:** I was a strong believer—doer in Mormonism for 43 years, when I asked the Sugarhouse Bishop to excommunicate me (Nov 2004), he and his counselors had to pray 3 different times, which I would go into another room. The first 2 times, they said, “We feel that our Heavenly Father doesn’t want you to be ex’d”. Due to my insistence, after the 3rd prayer, they ok’d it!!! PRAISE GOD!!!
March 2011: Sandra, thirty four years ago when I was questioning the validity of the church I had been raised in, you, Jerald, and the lighthouse ministry gently guided me to the information that helped me to be a witness of God’s salvation to many other people who were also searching. God bless you!

March 2011: Great job on the Capstone talk Sandra: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmH2ClXR54
Not too many years ago I would of stayed away from your talks being an active Mormon etc. Now it is the opposite.

March 2011: I have watched a few videos from Lighthouse Ministries and I just want to say Thank You so much for shedding the light on Mormonism. I have just left Mormonism and it is people like you have helped me and my family so very much on our journey. Thank you Thank you Thank you. You have no idea what you are doing for people like myself.

March 2011: My 2 daughters just left a Mormon polygamist compound [in Missouri]. They have really seen the light and loathe everything they have been through as they were highly abused.

March 2011: Periodically, I visit your website to see what else you have dug up. Happily I am not impressed either by your materials nor by your “scholarship.” Having said that I would like you to know that I forgive you for your behavior and ignorance.

March 2011: MY views are you’re an angry old hag who decided to start a church to bash on the most wonderful people I know.

March 2011: I am a life-long LDS member, served a mission, married in the temple, served in various high callings and finally ready to stop living this lie... I am grateful for the information and material you have worked to publish as well as another ex-Mormon website I have read recently. I also know that nothing is more convincing of the truth than actual documentation of the secrets and controlling nature of the LDS church hierarchy.

March 2011: ...I have a sure knowledge that the LDS church is in very deed the Lord’s church. This is not a blind belief, this is first-hand experience like those of old, like the ones you read about in the scriptures. You have never had such experiences, hence your stance. I bid you to repent, humble yourself, and quit adding to the world’s confusion.

April 2011: God bless you and your work ... When I studied my way out, it was your work that helped keep me from becoming atheist and redirected my focus and trust on Jesus Christ. Thank you for showing me how to shovel straight through the garbage and look to Him on the other side of it all. ... I will be forever grateful ... much love and Godspeed to your ministry.

April 2011: I bet you guys are having a great time trying to figure out what to criticize next. Must be a sad life to be so confused <sigh>

April 2011: I have been doing a lot of research on the LDS faith lately, and I happened to come across your website. I was surprised at how you claim to simply be presenting information, when there is a very obvious negative connotation to most everything you say. You guys would probably be a lot more credible if you didn’t sound like you were so prejudiced. ... I don’t think any of it is valid.

April 2011: Thanks for your Ministry! I left the church at age 19 as a freshman at BYU. I am only 23, following Jesus, and still have so much to learn. God bless!

April 2011: To Jerald and Sandra Tanner: I can’t wait to see you two at the Judgement Bar of Jesus Christ, and you will feel the utter “nakeness” of being stripped of your priesthood blessings, being excommunicated from the true church!! You, Ed Decker, and the rest of the Apostates who are kicking against the pricks. I AM WARD MissionARY, and have the authority to call you to repentance. I pray you do, because the Lord will not be mocked by those who violate their Temple Covenants.

New Books and DvD’s

The Mormon Rebellion: America’s First Civil War 1857-1858
By David L. Bigler and Will Bagley
$30.00

The Development of LDS Temple Worship 1846-2000
Ed. Devery S. Anderson
$45.00

Nauvoo Polygamy
By George D. Smith, Jr.
$26.00

Unveiling Grace:
8 Mormons’ Life-Changing Encounters with Jesus Christ.
$6.00 (DVD)

The Sins of Brother Curtis:
A Story of Betrayal, Conviction and the Mormon Church
Lisa Davis
$24.50

What Do I Say to Mormon Friends and Missionaries?
By Donna M. Morley
$15.00

The Persistence of Polygamy
Edited by Newell G. Bringhurst and Craig L. Foster
$22.50

More Wives Than One:
Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System 1840-1910
Kathryn M. Daynes
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Unveiling Grace:
Eight Mormons’ Life-Changing Encounters with Jesus Christ.
New DVD by Sacred Groves Films

Orders that total $60 or more (before shipping charge) will receive the above DVD and all these items FREE

Flaws in the Pearl of Great Price
by Jerald and Sandra Tanner

Three tracts:
• New Light on Joseph Smith’s First Vision
• Documented History of Joseph Smith’s First Vision
• The Book of Mormon Today
Joseph Smith, the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, claimed that when he was seventeen years old, a heavenly messenger appeared to him in his bedroom in Western New York to commission him to translate an ancient record containing God’s dealings with the forefathers of the Native Americans. The angel, later identified as Moroni, explained that he was once a mortal and was the last person to write on the sacred plates, which he had hid in a stone box in a nearby hill in approximately 421 A.D. He explained that the record contained “an account of the former inhabitants of this continent,” and that they also contained “the fulness of the everlasting Gospel.” Also stored in the box was the sword of Laban, a breastplate and the Urim and Thummim (described as large spectacles) to aid in translating the record.

Four years later, on September 22, 1827, the angel allowed Smith to retrieve the plates and the Urim and Thummim from the hill, and sometime later he began his translation. Upon completion, Joseph Smith claimed that he returned the gold plates to the angel and published the book in 1830 under the title *The Book of Mormon*. Included in the book were two statements, one signed by three men attesting that an angel had appeared to them and showed them the gold plates. The other statement, signed by eight witnesses, affirmed that they had seen the plates. In this article we will look at some of the background of these men.

**The Translation Process**

Writing in 1842, Rev. Henry Caswall related a description of the plates and the heavenly instruments by Joseph’s mother, Lucy Smith:

> My son Joseph has had revelations from God since he was a boy, and he is indeed a true prophet of Jehovah. The angel of the Lord appeared to him fifteen years since, and shewed him the cave where the original golden plates of the book of Mormon were deposited. He shewed him also the Urim and Thummim, by which he might understand the meaning of the inscriptions on the plates, and he shewed him the golden breastplate of the high priesthood. . . . I have myself seen and handled the golden plates; they are about eight inches long, and six wide; some of them are sealed together and are not to be opened, and some of them are loose. . . . I have seen and felt also the Urim and Thummim. They resemble two large bright diamonds set in a bow like a pair of spectacles. My son puts these over his eyes when he reads unknown languages, and they enable him to interpret them in English.

When and how Lucy Smith saw the plates and the Urim and Thummim has never been explained. We assume it was in a vision or dream since she wasn’t one of the Book of Mormon witnesses. Also, none of the people who witnessed Smith during his translation activities describe him actually using the spectacles. Even Joseph Smith’s wife, Emma, who was one of his scribes, was never permitted to see the plates.

After Martin Harris, one of Smith’s scribes and benefactor, lost the first 116 pages of the manuscript,
the work of translation shifted from using the Urim and Thummim to using Smith’s seer stone, found in a neighbor’s well in 1822, five years before receiving the plates. Emma Smith tells how this happened in an 1870 letter to Emma Pilgrim:

Now the first that my <husband> translated, was translated by the use of the Urim and Thummim, and that was the part that Martin Harris lost, after that he used a small stone, not exactly, black, but was rather a dark color . . .

Emma gave the following description of the translation process:

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

Curiously, in illustrating various instruction manuals, the LDS Church does not depict Smith using either the Urim and Thummim or the seer stone. He is almost always shown sitting at a desk and simply looking at the plates, as though he were doing a regular translation.

**Money Digging**

During the same time period that the angel was supposedly grooming Smith for the role of “Seer” (before allowing him to retrieve the plates) he and his father were involved in treasure digging. In the early 1820’s Joseph was often sought out as a “seer” who could discern the location of buried treasures by looking at his stone. When Martin Harris was interviewed in 1859 he mentioned Smith’s early use of his stone:

Joseph had a stone which was dug from the well of Mason Chase, . . . It was by means of this stone he first discovered these plates. . . . Joseph had had this stone for some time. There was a company there in that neighborhood, who were digging for money supposed to have been hidden by the ancients. Of this company were old Mr. Stowel—I think his name was Josiah—also old Mr. [Alvah] Beman, also Samuel Lawrence, George Proper, *Joseph Smith, jr., and his father, and his brother Hiram Smith*. They dig for money in Palmyra, Manchester, also in Pennsylvania, and other places. When Joseph found this stone, there was a company digging in Harmony, Pa., and they took Joseph to look in the stone for them, and he did so for a while, and then he told them the enchantment was so strong he could not see, and they gave it up. There he became acquainted with his future wife, the daughter of old Mr. Isaac Hale, where he boarded.

While Smith was acting as “seer” for the money-digging group, he was arrested in 1826 in Chenango County, New York, jailed and appeared before Justice Albert Neeley. He was charged with a misdemeanor for claiming magical powers to find buried treasure. Joseph’s defense was that he truly had the gift but had given up looking in his stone to find treasures as it hurt his eyes. In Judge Neeley’s court record Smith reportedly said:

That he [Joseph Smith] had a certain stone which he had occasionally looked at to determine where hidden treasures in the bowels of the earth were; that he professed to tell in this manner where gold mines were a distance underground, and had looked for Mr. Stowell[I] several times. . . . that he had occasionally been in the habit of looking through this stone to find lost property for three years, but of late had pretty much given it up on account of its injuring his health, especially his eyes, made them sore. . . .

However, rather than giving up the use of his magic stone all together, Smith simply changed the way he used it, from treasure hunting to translating the Book of Mormon plates.

**Magic Involvement**

Contrary to the Bible’s strong denunciation of magic and necromancy in Deuteronomy 18:9-14, Joseph Smith and many, if not all, of the witnesses had been involved in the magic practices of the area, believing in ghosts who guarded buried treasures, using magic spells and paraphernalia.

Besides Joseph Smith’s seer stone, he also owned a magic Jupiter talisman (a silver medallion worn on a string around the neck). Mormon historian Reed C. Durham made these observations about Smith’s talisman in his

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3 As cited in *Early Mormon Documents*, vol. 1, p. 532.


5 Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 2008), pp. 32-49D.


presidential address to the Mormon History Association on April 20, 1974:

All available evidence suggest that Joseph Smith the Prophet possessed a magical Masonic medallion, or talisman, which he worked during his lifetime and which was evidently on his person when he was martyred. His talisman is in the shape of a silver dollar and is probably made of silver or tin. . . .[it] can now be identified as a Jupiter talisman. It carries the sign and image of Jupiter and should more appropriately be referred to as the Table of Jupiter. . . .

In astrology, Jupiter is always associated with high positions, getting one’s own way, and all forms of status.9

Joseph’s brother, Hyrum, who was one of the eight witnesses to the Book of Mormon, also owned magic parchments and a magic dagger. These artifacts are currently in the possession of Eldred G. Smith, Patriarch emeritus of the LDS Church and great, great-grandson of Hyrum Smith. Mormon writer Pearson H. Corbett describes these relics of Hyrum Smith in his book, Hyrum Smith—Patriarch:

Dagger, Masonic ten inch, stainless steel—wooden handle—Masonic symbols on blade.

Emblematic parchments—Masonic—three, original hand painted on heavy bodied paper—on border appears initials “I.H.S.” . . .

Pouch, Masonic cotton fabric 4” x 4” with draw string attached.10

Historian D. Michael Quinn made the following observation about the Smith family’s magic artifacts:

The three magic parchments possessed by the Smith family have three different purposes, all interrelated. The “Holiness to the Lord” parchment is a lamen of ceremonial magic to receive visitation from “good angels.” The “Saint Peter bind them” parchment is a talisman for personal protection. The faded “Jehovah, Jehovah, Jehovah” parchment is a house-amulet.11

Joseph Smith’s mother, Lucy Smith, told of the family’s magic involvement in the preliminary draft of her family history, although defending it as something that never interfered with their regular work:

I shall change my theme for the present but let not my reader suppose that because I shall pursue another topic for a season that we stopt our labor and went <at> tryin’ to win the faculty of Abrac[,] drawing Magic circles or sooth saying to the neglect of all kinds of business we never during our lives suffered one important interest to swallow up every other obligation but whilst we worked with our hands we endeavored to remmember the service of & the welfare of our souls.12

In Acts 19:19 we read of some people who “used curious arts” before they were converted to Christianity. At the time they confessed the Lord, however, they “brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.” Unlike the early Christians who destroyed their magic paraphernalia, the Smiths preserved their magic artifacts. In fact, the LDS Church has preserved several of Smith’s seer stones in their church vault.13

A young man named Oliver Cowdery, who became one of Joseph Smith’s most important scribes and one of the three witness to the Book of Mormon, was also involved in magic, using a forked divining rod.14 Shortly after Cowdery became a scribe, Smith received a revelation mentioning Cowdery’s special gift. The 1829 revelation, printed in the 1833 Book of Commandments, spoke of Cowdery’s “gift of working with the rod,” which was referred to as his “rod of nature” which he held in his hands. However, when this revelation was reprinted in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, it underwent important wording. Cowdery’s “rod of nature” became the “gift of Aaron” (Doctrine and Covenants 8:6-8). One

9 As cited in Mormonism, Magic and Masonry, p. 2. See also Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, chapter 3.
11 Quinn, Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, p. 104.
13 Quinn, Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, pp. 245-246.
14 Cowdery’s father, William, was a noted rodsman in Vermont. See Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, p. 35.
assumes the word changes were made to disguise the obvious references to magic paraphernalia.  

15 Quinn, Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, pp. 35-39.


18 Quinn, Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, p. 240.
Quinn then goes on to enumerate the magic involvement of the rest of the witnesses:

The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon were likewise involved in folk magic. Oliver Cowdery was a rodsman before his 1829 meeting with Smith, soon announced a revelation authorizing Cowdery to continue the revelatory use of his “rod of nature”. . . David Whitmer revered Smith’s use of a seer stone and may have possessed one of his own. Whitmer authorized a later spokesman for his own religious organization to obtain revelations through a stone . . . Martin Harris endorsed Smith’s use of a seer stone for divination and treasure-seeking. Before and after the discovery of the gold plates, Harris himself participated in treasure-digging and identified the Smith brothers Joseph and Hyrum as co-participants . . .

Of the remaining Eight Witnesses, Jacob Whitmer . . . had a seer stone which his descendants preserved . . . His brother-in-law Hiram Page . . . definitely had a stone of his own that he used for revelations . . . Christian, John, and Peter Whitmer Jr. were included in their pastor’s accusation of magic belief. 19

A number of friends and relatives observed Smith as he dictated the Book of Mormon story to a scribe, all the while having his face buried in his hat as he stared at his magic stone. Smith’s father-in-law, Isaac Hale gave this description of the process:

The Manner in which he [Joseph] pretended to read and interpret, was the same as when he looked for the money-diggers, with the stone in his hat, and his hat over his face, while the Book of Plates were at the same time hid in the woods? 20

When the plates were not hid in the woods they were laying off to one side, covered by a cloth. This leaves one wondering why God bothered preserving the plates if they were not necessary for the translation process? Furthermore, why preserve the Urim and Thummim for hundreds of years if a magic stone would work just as well? Since the plates were reportedly returned to the angel, there is no way for us to know if there really were any gold plates or whether the translation was correct. To counter this argument, Mormons often appeal to the statements made by Smith’s friends who claimed to see the plates. But did they see them through the “eye of faith” as some claimed or in a natural setting? Are these people to be believed?

### The Witnesses

The Book of Mormon declared that after Joseph received the plates —

> the book shall be hid from the eyes of the world, that the eyes of none shall behold it [the plates] save it be that three witnesses shall behold it, by the power of God, besides him [Joseph] to whom the book shall be delivered; and they shall testify to the truth of the book and the things therein. And there is none other which shall view it, save it be a few according to the will of God, to bear testimony of his word unto the children of men. 21

At the front of the Book of Mormon are two statements by Smith’s friends and family attesting to his translation of the plates. In the first statement Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris claimed that an angel of God showed the plates to them in a vision. The second statement is signed by eight men who claimed to see and heft the plates, although no angel is mentioned. This statement is signed by Christian Whitmer, Jacob Whitmer, Peter Whitmer, Jr., John Whitmer, Hiram Page, Joseph Smith, Sen. [Joseph’s father], Hyrum Smith and Samuel H. Smith [brothers of Smith].

The witnesses loosely fall into two groups—the Smith family and the Whitmer family. Oliver Cowdery, a third cousin of Joseph Smith, married David Whitmer’s sister, Elizabeth Ann. Hiram Page married another sister, Catherine Whitmer. Martin Harris does not fall into either group, being an established farmer in the area where the Smiths lived and the one who would end up financing the printing of the Book of Mormon.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Smith Family</th>
<th>Whitmer Family</th>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph Smith, Jr.</td>
<td>David Whitmer</td>
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<td>Joseph Smith, Sr.</td>
<td>Christian Whitmer</td>
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<td>Hyrum Smith</td>
<td>Jacob Whitmer</td>
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<td>Samuel H. Smith</td>
<td>Peter Whitmer, Jr.</td>
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<td>Oliver Cowdery</td>
<td>Oliver Cowdery</td>
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<td>John Whitmer</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hiram Page</td>
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### Separate Visions

The testimony of the three witnesses leaves a person with the impression that they all saw the angel and the gold plates at the same time; however, such was not the case. In his History of the Church, Joseph Smith admits

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19 Ibid.
20 E. D. Howe, Mormonism Unvailed (Painesville, Ohio, 1834), p. 265.
that Martin Harris was not with Whitmer and Cowdery when he saw the plates. Joseph had the three witnesses pray continually in an effort to obtain a view of the plates, but to no avail. Finally:

Upon this, our second failure, Martin Harris proposed that he should withdraw himself from us, believing, as he expressed himself, that his presence was the cause of our not obtaining what we wished for. He accordingly withdrew from us, and we knelt down again... presently we beheld a light above us in the air, of exceeding brightness; and behold, an angel stood before us. In his hands he held the plates. . . .

I now left David and Oliver, and went in pursuit of Martin Harris. . . . We accordingly joined in prayer, and ultimately obtained our desires, for before we had yet finished, the same vision was opened to our view, at least it was again opened to me, whilst at the same moment, Martin Harris cried out, apparently in an ecstasy of joy, “‘Tis enough; ‘tis enough; mine eyes have beheld; mine eyes have beheld;” . . .

There seems to be some question as to the time that elapsed between the two visions. Joseph Smith would have us believe that Martin Harris’ vision occurred immediately after the other vision, but according to a reporter who interviewed David Whitmer, it was “a day or two after.” According to Anthony Metcalf, Martin Harris claimed that it was “about three days” later when he saw the plates.

Mormon writer Marvin S. Hill commented:

...there is a possibility that the witnesses saw the plates in vision only. . . . There is testimony from several independent interviewers, all non-Mormon, that Martin Harris and David Whitmer said they saw the plates with their “spiritual eyes” only. . . . This is contradicted, however, by statements like that of David Whitmer in the Saints Herald in 1882, “these hands handled the plates, these eyes saw the angel.” But Z. H. Gurley elicited from Whitmer a not so positive response to the question, “did you touch them?” His answer was, “We did not touch nor handle the plates.” So far as the eight witnesses go, William Smith said his father never saw the plates except under a frock. And Stephen Burnett quotes Martin Harris that “the eight witnesses never saw them. . . .” Yet John Whitmer told Wilhelm Paulson . . . that he saw the plates when they were not covered, and he turned the leaves.

Stephen Burnett, an early Mormon convert, heard Martin Harris speak in 1838, where Harris admitted the witnesses did not physically handle the plates, which led Burnett to renounce all of Mormonism. In April of 1838 he wrote a letter to Lyman E. Johnson explaining his decision:

...when I came to hear Martin Harris state in a public congregation that he never saw the plates with his natural eyes only in vision or imagination, neither Oliver [Cowdery] nor David [Whitmer] & also that the eight witnesses never saw them & hesitated to sign that instrument for that reason, but were persuaded to do it, the last pedestal gave way, in my view our foundation was sapped & the entire superstructure fell in heap of ruins, I therefore three week[s] since in the Stone Chapel gave a full history of the church since I became acquainted with it, the false preaching & prophecying etc of Joseph [Smith] together with the reasons why I took the course which I was resolved to do, and renounced the Book of Mormon . . . after we were done speaking M[artin] Harris arose & said he was sorry for any man who rejected the Book of Mormon for he knew it was true, he said he had hefted

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22 Smith, History of the Church, vol. 1, pp. 54-55.
24 Anthony Metcalf, Ten Years Before the Mast (Malad City, In., 1888), pp. 70-71.
the plates repeatedly in a box with only a tablecloth or a handkerchief over them, but he never saw them
only as he saw a city through a mountain. And said
that he never should have told that the testimony of the
eight [witnesses] was false, if it had not been picked
out of [h]im but should have let it passed as it was . . . I am well satisfied for myself that if the witnesses
whose names are attached to the Book of Mormon
never saw the plates as Martin [Harris] admits that
there can be nothing brought to prove that any such
thing ever existed . . .26

According to Martin Harris, the witnesses only hefted
the plates, while stored in a sack, and did not view them
with the naked eye.

**Left to Doubt?**

The LDS Church claims that the witnesses to the
Book of Mormon never denied their testimony. There are,
however, at least two statements in Mormon publications
which indicate that the witnesses had doubts. In 1859,
Brigham Young, the second president of the LDS Church,
stated:

> “Some of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon,
who handled the plates and conversed with the angels of
God, were afterwards left to doubt and to disbelieve
that they had ever seen an angel.”27

There is evidence to indicate that Oliver Cowdery,
one of the three witnesses, may have had doubts about
his testimony. The following appeared in a poem that
was published in the Mormon publication *Times and
Seasons* in 1841:

> Or does it prove there is no time,
Because some watches will not go?

> Or prove that Christ was not the Lord
Because that Peter cursed and swore?
**Or Book of Mormon not His word**
**Because denied, by Oliver?**28

**Reliable Men?**

LDS Apostle John A. Widtsoe said that the eleven
men who testified to the truthfulness of the Book of
Mormon had “spotless reputations.” Non-Mormons, on
the other hand, have made many serious charges against
the witnesses. Some of the most damaging statements
against the Book of Mormon witnesses, however, came
from the pen of Joseph Smith and other early Mormon
leaders.

In fact, after Martin lost the first 116 pages of the Book
of Mormon manuscript, Joseph Smith gave a revelation in
July of 1828 in which Martin Harris was called a “wicked
man,” who “has set at naught the counsels of God, and
has broken the most sacred promises” (*Doctrine and
Covenants* 3:12-13). In another revelation given sometime
later, God was supposed to have told Joseph Smith that
Harris “is a wicked man, for he has sought to take away
the things wherewith you have been entrusted; and he
has also sought to destroy your gift” (*D&C* 10:7).

**Trouble in Missouri and Ohio**

Although Joseph Smith was able to prevail against
the revelations from Hiram Page’s peep stone, more
serious problems were developing in the late 1830’s
in the Mormon settlements in Far West, Missouri and
Kirtland, Ohio.

After the Mormons were driven from Independence,
Missouri, in the early 1830’s, Smith instructed the church
members not to sell their property with the hope that they
could still reclaim the land. However, David Whitmer
and Oliver Cowdery went against this edict. Kenneth
Winn explained:

> Cowdery was particularly nettled over the church’s
presuming to dictate how he used his property. . . .

The dissenters’ avowal that their individual freedom
should take precedence over the judgment of church
authorities made active conflict inevitable. Nor was
it long in coming. In January [1838], against policy,
William Phelps, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer
sold their land in Jackson County. . . . Accordingly, on
April 12, the Missouri High Council charged David and
John Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, and Lyman Johnson
with various counts of dereliction of duty, violation of
church policy, and disrespect for the church leadership
and cut them off from the church.29

In Kirtland, Ohio, Joseph Smith and the leaders had
become embroiled in land speculation, borrowing large
amounts of money and starting their own bank.30

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29 Kenneth H. Winn, *Exiles in a Land of Liberty: Mormons in
America, 1830-1846* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina
30 Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History* (New York City:
When the bank failed, the economy collapsed and the creditors started demanding payment, many lost faith in Joseph’s prophetic leadership. Apostle George A. Smith related the following:

After the organization of the Twelve Apostles, the spirit of apostacy became more general. . . . One of the First Presidency, several of the Twelve Apostles, High Council, Presidents of Seventies, the witnesses of the Book of Mormon, Presidents of Far West, and a number of others standing high in the Church were all carried away in this apostacy . . .

While George A. Smith didn’t specify the names of the witnesses, we know that Martin Harris, David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery had all left the LDS Church by 1838. In fact, the LDS leaders published an attack on the character of Martin Harris in The Elders’ Journal, a Mormon publication edited by Joseph Smith. The article charged that Harris and others were guilty of “swearing, lying, cheating, swindling, drinking, with every species of debauchery.” Martin Harris, in turn, accused Joseph Smith of “lying and licentiousness.”

In a letter dated December 16, 1838, Joseph Smith said that “John Whitmer, David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, and Martin Harris are too mean to mention.” Smith specifically singled out David Whitmer:

God suffered such kind of beings to afflict Job. . . . This poor man [William E. McLellin] who professes to be much of a prophet, has no other dumb ass to ride but David Whitmer, to forbid his madness when he goes up to curse Israel; and this ass not being of the same kind as Balaam’s, . . . he brays out cursings instead of blessings. Poor ass!

Before driving the dissenters from Far West, Missouri, the Mormons wrote them a very threatening letter. In this letter the dissenters were accused of stealing, lying and counterfeiting:

Whereas the citizens of Caldwell county have borne with the abuse received from you at different times, . . . until it is no longer to be endured; . . . out of the county you shall go, . . . depart, depart, or a more fatal calamity shall befall you.

After Oliver Cowdery had been taken by a State warrant for stealing, and the stolen property found . . . in which nefarious transaction John Whitmer had also participated. Oliver Cowdery stole the property, conveyed it to John Whitmer . . . Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Lyman E. Johnson, united with a gang of counterfeiters, thieves, liars, and blacklegs of the deepest dye, to deceive, cheat, and defraud the saints out of their property. . . .

During the full career of Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer’s bogus money business, it got abroad into the world that they were engaged in it . . . We have evidence of a very strong character that you are at this very time engaged with a gang of counterfeiters, coiners, and blacklegs, . . . we will put you from the county of Caldwell: so help us God.

The dissenters, fearing for their lives, fled Far West, leaving their families behind. Fawn Brodie tells of their hardship:

Upon receiving this ultimatum the two Whitmers, with Oliver Cowdery and Lyman Johnson, set out for Clay County to hire a gentle lawyer. When they returned from Liberty, they met their families on the road, bearing a tale of Danite [a secret Mormon vigilante group] persecution that the men could not believe possible as coming from their former brethren. The Danites had surrounded their homes, ordered their wives to pack their blankets and leave the county immediately, and threatened death to anyone who returned to Far West. They had been robbed, according to John Whitmer, of all their goods save bedding and clothes.

Writing in 1887, David Whitmer explained why he had left the church:

If you believe my testimony to the Book of Mormon; if you believe that God spake to us three witnesses by his own voice, then I tell you that in June, 1838, God spake to me again by his own voice from the heavens, and told me to “separate myself from among the Latter Day Saints, for as they sought to do unto me, so should it be done unto them.”
In the spring of 1838, the heads of the church and many of the members had gone deep into error and blindness. . . . About the same time that I came out, the Spirit of God moved upon quite a number of the brethren who came out, with their families, all of the eight witnesses who were then living (except the three Smiths) came out; Peter and Christian Whitmer were dead. Oliver Cowdery came out also. Martin Harris was then in Ohio. The church went deeper and deeper into wickedness.

Cowdery a Counterfeiter?

In the “Far West Record,” an early LDS ledger containing minutes of various church meetings, is some very important information concerning Oliver Cowdery and the bogus money business. After examining the record, LDS scholar Leland Gentry wrote:

[Frederick G.] Williams, . . . testified that Oliver [Cowdery] had personally informed him of a man in the church by the name of Davis who could compound metal and make dies which could not be detected from the real thing. Oliver allegedly told Williams that there was no harm in accepting and passing around such money, provided it could not be determined to be unsound.

Joseph Smith’s testimony was similar. He claimed that a nonmember of the Church by the name of Sapham had told him in Kirtland that ‘a warrant had been issued against Oliver’ for being engaged in making a purchase of bogus money and dies to make the counterfeit money with.” According to Smith, he and Sidney Rigdon went to visit Oliver concerning the matter and told him that if he were guilty, he had better leave town; but if he was innocent, he should stand trial and thus be acquitted. “That night or next,” the Prophet said, Oliver “left the country.”

From this information it would appear that Joseph Smith was complicit in that he warned Oliver Cowdery to flee from the law if he was guilty.

When Cowdery was excommunicated from the LDS Church in 1838, one of the charges against him was:

For seeking to destroy the character of President Joseph Smith Jr by falsely insinuating that he was guilty of adultery &c.

An example of Cowdery’s accusations against Smith is his 1838 letter to his brother, Warren, charging Smith with having an affair with his teenage housekeeper while in Kirtland, Ohio, in the mid-1830’s:

When he [Joseph Smith] was there we had some conversation in which in every instance I did not fail to affirm that what I had said was strictly true. A dirty, nasty, filthy affair of his and Fanny Alger’s was talked over in which I strictly declared that I had never deserted from the truth in the matter, and as I supposed was admitted by himself.

The eighth charge against Cowdery read as follows: “For disgracing the Church by being connected in the bogus business, as common report says.” Mormon scholar Leland Gentry states: “Joseph Smith, for example, testified that Cowdery had informed him that he had ‘come to the conclusion to get property, and that if he could not get it one way, he would get it another, God or no God, Devil or no Devil, property he must and would have.’”

Since six of the nine charges against Cowdery were sustained, he was “considered no longer a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” If the charges against Cowdery were true, he certainly does not present a picture of someone to trust. If the charges against him were trumped up or exaggerated, it doesn’t speak well for Joseph Smith’s character.

Cowdery Joins the Methodists

After separating himself from the Mormons, Oliver Cowdery became a member of the “Methodist Protestant Church of Tiffin, Seneca County, Ohio.” C. J. Keen, a lay leader in the Methodist Church, gave an affidavit in which he stated:

. . . Mr. Cowdery expressed a desire to associate himself with a Methodist Protestant Church of this city. . . . he was unanimously admitted a member thereof.

At that time he arose and addressed the audience present, admitted his error and implored forgiveness, and said he was sorry and ashamed of his connection with Mormonism.

He continued his membership while he resided in Tiffin, and became superintendent of the Sabbath-
Salt Lake City Messenger Issue 117

School, and led an exemplary life while he resided with us.45

Mormon writer Richard L. Anderson admits that Cowdery joined the Methodists:

“The cessation of his activity in the Church meant a suspension of his role as a witness of the Book of Mormon. Not that his conviction ceased, but he discontinued public testimony as he worked out a successful legal and political career in non-Mormon society . . . he logically affiliated himself with a Christian congregation for a time, the Methodist Protestant Church at Tiffin, Ohio.”46

It should be noted that the poem about Oliver Cowdery denying his testimony to the Book of Mormon appeared in the Mormon publication *Times and Seasons* around the same time that Cowdery renounced Mormonism and joined the Methodist Church at Tiffin, Ohio.

**FOLLOWING JAMES JESSE STRANG**

After Smith’s death there was dissention in the church regarding church leadership. James Jesse Strang, like Joseph Smith, claimed that he found ancient brass plates that he translated with his own Urim and Thummim. He also produced witnesses who swore they saw his plates, and their testimony is recorded in his book in almost the same way as that the witnesses in the Book of Mormon. Some of the Book of Mormon witnesses were influenced by the claims of James Jesse Strang as Smith’s successor. Brigham Young and the other Mormon leaders denounced Strang as an impostor, but four of the Book of Mormon witnesses joined the Strangite movement. On January 20, 1848, James J. Strang wrote the following:

... early in 1846 the tract reprint of the first number of the *Voree Herald* [Wisconsin], containing the evidence of my calling and authority, strayed into upper Missouri. Immediately I received a letter from Hiram Page, one of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon, and a neighbor and friend to the *Whitmers* who lived near him, and that they rejoiced with exceeding joy that God had raised up one to stand in place of Joseph . . . He goes on to say that all the witnesses of the Book of Mormon living in that region received the news with gladness, and finally that they held a council in which *David and John Whitmer* and this *Hiram Page* were the principal actors; and being at a loss what they ought to do about coming to Voree, sent up to me as a prophet of God to tell them what to do. . . .

In a letter to David Whitmer, dated December 2, 1846, William E. McLellin said that James J. Strang “told me that all the witnesses to the book of Mormon yet alive were with him, except Oliver [Cowdery].”48 John Whitmer, David’s brother, wrote the following in his history of the church which later, however, was crossed out:

God knowing all things prepared a man whom he visited by an angel of God and showed him where there were some ancient record hid, . . . whose name is James J. Strang, . . . and Strang Reigns in the place of Smith the author and proprietor of the Book of Mormon.49

Martin Harris joined the Strangite movement and even went on a mission to England for the Strangites. The LDS Church’s own publication *Latter-Day Saints’ Millennial Star* had a great deal to say about Martin Harris when he arrived in England:

*One of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, yielded to the spirit and temptation of the devil a number of years ago—turned against Joseph Smith and became his bitter enemy. He was filled with the rage and madness of a demon. One day he would be one thing, and another day another thing. He soon became partially deranged or shattered, as many believed, flying from one thing to another. . . . In one of his fits of monomania, he went and joined the “Shakers” or followers of Anna Lee. . . . but since *Strang* has made his entry . . . *Martin [Harris]* leaves the “Shakers,” whom he knows to be right, . . . and joins *Strang*. . . . We understand that he*

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is appointed a mission to this country, . . . if the Saints wish to know what the Lord hath said to him they may turn to . . . the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and the person there called a “wicked man” is no other than Martin Harris . . . Elder Wheelock will remember that evil men, like Harris, out of the evil treasure of their hearts bring forth evil things. . . .

Just as our paper was going to press, we learned that Martin Harris, about whom we have written in another article, had landed in Liverpool . . . there was a strangeness about him, and about one or two who came with him . . . A lying deceptive spirit attends them, and has from the beginning . . . they know that they are of their father, the devil, who was a liar from the beginning, and abode not in the truth. 50

Although the Book of Mormon witnesses were attracted to Strang for a short time, they soon became interested in a movement started by former apostle William E. McLellin.

WILLIAM E. McLELLIN

Five of the Book of Mormon witnesses definitely supported McLellin’s movement and another gave some encouragement to it. One of McLellin’s claims was that David Whitmer was the rightful successor to Smith, not Brigham Young. Martin Harris was baptized into the McLellin movement and even joined with Leonard Rich and Calvin Beebe in a “Testimony of Three Witnesses” that Joseph Smith ordained David Whitmer to be his “Successor in office.” 51 The Mormons who went to Utah felt, of course, that Brigham Young was to be leader of the church. On July 28, 1847, Oliver Cowdery wrote a letter to David Whitmer in which he gave support to McLellin’s ideas and told Whitmer that “our right gives us the head.” In a letter dated September 8, 1847, David Whitmer wrote to Oliver Cowdery and told him that “it is the will of God that you be one of my counsellors in this movement and even joined with Leonard Rich and Calvin Beebe in a “Testimony of Three Witnesses” that Joseph Smith ordained David Whitmer to be his “Successor in office.” 51 The Mormons who went to Utah felt, of course, that Brigham Young was to be leader of the church. On July 28, 1847, Oliver Cowdery wrote a letter to David Whitmer in which he gave support to McLellin’s ideas and told Whitmer that “our right gives us the head.” In a letter dated September 8, 1847, David Whitmer wrote to Oliver Cowdery and told him that “it is the will of God that you be one of my counsellors in this movement and even joined with Leonard Rich and Calvin Beebe in a “Testimony of Three Witnesses” that Joseph Smith ordained David Whitmer to be his “Successor in office.” 51 The Mormons who went to Utah felt, of course, that Brigham Young was to be leader of the church. On July 28, 1847, Oliver Cowdery wrote a letter to David Whitmer in which he gave support to McLellin’s ideas and told Whitmer that “our right gives us the head.” In a letter dated September 8, 1847, David Whitmer wrote to Oliver Cowdery and told him that “it is the will of God that you be one of my counsellors in the presidency of the Church. Jacob and Hiram have been ordained High Priests . . . ” 52

William E. McLellin recounted how David Whitmer gave revelations supporting his organization and condemned the Mormon Church:

. . . after a few moments of solemn secret prayer, the following was delivered solely through and by David Whitmer, as the Revelator, and written by me as scribe, viz: “Verily, verily thus saith the Lord unto my servants David, and John, and William, and Jacob, and Hiram, . . . Behold I have looked upon you from the beginning, and have seen that in your hearts dwelt truth, and righteousness [sic] . . . it must needs have been that ye were cast out from among those who had polluted themselves and the holy authority of their priesthood . . . For verily, verily saith the Lord, even Jesus, your Redeemer, they have polluted my name, and have done continually wickedness in my sight, . . . Thou shalt write concerning the downfall of those who once composed my church . . . ”

But here David [Whitmer] said a vision opened before him, and the spirit which was upon him bid him stop and talk to me concerning it. He said that in the bright light before him he saw a small chest or box of very curious and fine workmanship, which seemed to be locked, but he was told that it contained precious things, I was told that it contained “the treasure of wisdom, and knowledge from God.” . . . David and I turned aside, and called upon the Lord, and received direct instruction how we should further proceed. . . .

I ordained H. Page to the office of High Priest . . . we two ordained Jacob Whitmer to the same office. Then we all laid hands on John Whitmer and reordained him . . . we stepped forward and all laid hands upon David and re-ordained him . . . 53

McLellin’s movement never really got off the ground, and later in his life David Whitmer was reluctant to talk about his association with McLellin. In 1849 Hiram Page, David Whitmer’s brother-in-law and one of the eight witnesses, renounced the McLellin movement. Richard P. Howard explains:

McLellin’s flagging hope for David Whitmer’s seership vanished as he read, published in the August issue of the Olive Branch—the periodical of the James C. Brewster-Hazen Aldrich Church of Christ also at Kirtland—Hiram Page’s letter of 24 June 1849. Page speaking for himself and his Whitmer relatives in Richmond, renounced what was of value to McLellin from the proceedings of the “conference” of September 1847. Page acknowledged McLellin’s honorable motives in trying to affirm the Wh Rithers as good and honest people. The WhRithmers, however, took exception to McLellin’s claim of direction by the Holy Spirit in coming there and insisting that they organize in some church capacity. Page saw through to the center of McLellin’s thinking that the church “must come through him, which would give a sanction to all that he had done, which would give a more speedy rise to the cause . . . But we had not as

51 The Ensign of Liberty (December 1847): pp. 43-44.
yet come to an understanding, but consented to the organization after three days successive entreaties. Now we acknowledge that the organization was not in accordance with the order of the Gospel Church.”

If David Whitmer could give a revelation in the McLellin group, which Mormons would not accept and Whitmer eventually abandoned, on what basis should we accept his earlier claim of a vision regarding the Book of Mormon?

Since a person who is investigating the Book of Mormon has only the testimony of eleven men to rely on, he should be certain that they were trustworthy men. If the Book of Mormon witnesses were honest, stable and not easily influenced by men, we would be impressed by their testimony. Unfortunately, however, we find that this is not the case. The evidence shows that in matters relating to religion they were gullible and easily misled.

Since the testimony of the three witnesses who claimed to see the angel is especially important, we want to summarize the information we have on their character.

**Martin Harris**

Martin Harris was very unstable in his religious life. G. W. Stodard, a resident of Palmyra, made this statement in an affidavit dated November 28, 1833:

I have been acquainted with Martin Harris, about thirty years. As a farmer, he was industrious and enterprising. . . . Although he possessed wealth, his moral and religious character was such, as not to entitle him to respect among his neighbors. . . . He was first an orthodox [sic] Quaker, then a Universalist, next a Restorer, then a Baptist, next a Presbyterian, and then a Mormon.

Martin Harris’ instability certainly did not cease when he joined the Mormon church. The Mormons themselves recorded that Harris “became partially deranged. . . . flying from one thing to another.”

Mormon writer Richard L. Anderson admits that Martin Harris “changed his religious position eight times” during the period when he was in Kirtland, Ohio:

The foregoing tendencies explain the spiritual wanderlust that afflicted the solitary witness at Kirtland. In this period of his life he changed his religious position eight times, including a rebaptism by a Nauvoo missionary in 1842. Every affiliation of Martin Harris was with some Mormon group, except when he was affiliated with the Shaker belief, a position not basically contrary to his Book of Mormon testimony because the foundation of that movement was acceptance of personal revelation from heavenly beings.

If we add the “eight times” that Martin Harris changed his religious position in Kirtland to the five changes he made before, we find that he changed his mind thirteen times!

Mormon writer E. Cecil McGavin stated:

Martin Harris was an un-aggressive, vacillating, easily influenced person who was no more pugnacious than a rabbit. . . . His conviction of one day might vanish and be replaced by doubt and fear before the setting of the sun. He was changeable, fickle, and puerile in his judgment and conduct.

After changing his mind about religion many times, Martin Harris returned to the Mormon church. There is evidence to show, however, that he was still not satisfied. Anthony Metcalf claimed Martin Harris told him that he “never believed that the Brighamite branch of the Mormon church, nor the Josephite church, was right, because in his opinion, God had rejected them,” and he took his endowments in Salt Lake City, only to find out “what was going on in there.”

Joseph Smith’s own revelations referred to Harris as a “wicked man,” and the church’s publication *Millennial Star* said that he was an “evil” man and that “a lying deceptive spirit” attended him and his friends.

The Mormons themselves said that Harris had “fits of monomania.” Harris’ wife made some very serious charges against his character, but they are actually not much worse than those made by the Mormons. Mrs. Harris stated that Martin had “mad-fits.” The Mormons said that when he left the church he “was filled with the rage and madness of a demon.” She stated that Martin was a liar. The Mormons admitted that when he came to England “a lying deceptive spirit” attended him. She stated that Mormonism had made him “more cross, turbulent and abusive to me.” Joseph Smith himself later classified Martin Harris as one of those who was “too mean to mention.”

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56 *Millennial Star*, vol. 8, p. 124.
Oliver Cowdery

Oliver Cowdery was involved in rod working even before meeting Smith. He also believed in magic seer stones. According to Joseph Smith, Cowdery was led astray by Hiram Page’s “peep-stone.” After he was excommunicated from the Mormon church he united with the “Methodist Protestant Church” at Tiffin, Ohio. As mentioned previously, the Mormons published a poem in 1841 which stated that the Book of Mormon was “denied” by Oliver. He accused Joseph Smith of adultery while the Mormons, on the other hand, claimed that Oliver “committed adultery.” Joseph Smith listed Cowdery among those who were “too mean to mention” and the Mormons claimed that he joined “a gang of counterfeiters, thieves, liars, and blacklegs.”

While Cowdery returned to the LDS Church before his death, David Whitmer claimed that Cowdery died believing Joseph Smith was a fallen prophet and that his revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants must be rejected:

I did not say that Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer had not endorsed the Doctrine and Covenants in 1836. They did endorse it in 1836; I stated that they “came out of their errors (discarded the Doctrine and Covenants), repented of them, and died believing as I do to-day,” and I have the proof to verify my statement. If any one chooses to doubt my word, let them come to my home in Richmond and be satisfied. In the winter of 1848, after Oliver Cowdery had been baptized at Council Bluffs, he came back to Richmond to live. . . . Now, in 1849 the Lord saw fit to manifest unto John Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery and myself nearly all the errors in doctrine into which we had been led by the heads of the old church. We were shown that the Book of Doctrine and Covenants contained many doctrines of error, and that it must be laid aside. . . . They were led out of their errors, and are upon record to this effect, rejecting the Book of Doctrine and Covenants.60

David Whitmer

David Whitmer was also very gullible. He was influenced by Hiram Page’s “peep-stone,” and possibly by a woman with a “black stone” in Kirtland, Ohio. Joseph Smith identified David Whitmer with those who were “too mean to mention,” and called him a “dumb ass.” The Mormons also accused Whitmer of joining with a “gang of counterfeiters, thieves, liars, and blacklegs.”

David Whitmer evidently supported James J. Strang for awhile, then changed his mind and joined the McLellin group, where he was to be the prophet and head. He even gave a revelation in which the Lord was supposed to have told him the Mormons “polluted my name, and have done continually wickedness in my sight.” Yet he left the McLellin movement, leaving one to question the source of his revelation.

David Whitmer never returned to the LDS Church. Toward the end of his life he was a member of the “Church of Christ”—another small group which believed in the Book of Mormon. Just before his death, Whitmer published two different pamphlets, An Address to All Believers in Christ and An Address to Believers in the Book of Mormon, in which he reaffirmed his rejection of all things Mormon outside of the Book of Mormon.61

Apostle John A. Widtsoe said that the Book of Mormon plates were seen and handled “by eleven competent men, of independent minds and spotless reputations.” We feel, however, that these witnesses were easily influenced by men, given to magic and visions, vacillating in their stories and therefore were not competent witnesses. Some of them even gave false revelations in the name of the Lord. Mormons ask us to accept David Whitmer’s testimony to the Book of Mormon, but will they accept Whitmer’s revelations which he gave when he was with the McLellin group? Certainly not. Neither will they accept his statement that “God spake to me again by His own voice from the heavens, and told me to ‘separate myself from among the Latter Day Saints.’ ”


62 Whitmer, An Address to All Believers in Christ, p. 27.

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www.upfc.org
It would appear that the witnesses to the Book of Mormon would follow almost anyone who had a seer stone or claimed to have been visited by an angel. Take for instance their willingness to believe in James J. Strang who claimed to translate ancient plates with his Urim and Thummim. The reader will remember that Martin Harris even served on a mission for the Strangites. This was not the only time that Harris endorsed a religion which claimed to have a sacred book given directly by the Lord. As we have already shown, in the Millennial Star the Mormons admitted that Martin Harris joined the Shakers: “In one of his fits of monomania, he went and joined the ‘Shakers’ or followers of Anne Lee.”

**The Shakers**

The Shakers felt that “Christ has made his second appearance on earth, in a chosen female known by the name of Ann Lee, and acknowledged by us as our Blessed Mother in the work of redemption.” The Shakers, of course, did not believe the Book of Mormon, but they had a book entitled *A Holy, Sacred and Divine Roll and Book; From the Lord God of Heaven, to the Inhabitants of Earth.* More than sixty individuals gave testimony to the *Sacred Roll and Book*, which was published in 1843. Although not all of them mention angels appearing, some of them tell of many angels visiting them—one woman told of eight different visions. On page 304 of this book, we find the testimony of eight witnesses:

> We, the undersigned, hereby testify, that we saw the holy Angel standing upon the house-top, as mentioned in the foregoing declaration, holding the Roll and Book.

Sarah Maria Lewis.
Sarah Ann Spencer.
Lucinda McDoniels.
Maria Hedrick.
Betsey Boothe.
Louisa Chamberlain.
Caty De Witt.
Laura Ann Jacobs.

Joseph Smith only had three witnesses who claimed to see an angel. The Shakers, however, had a large number of witnesses who claimed they saw angels and the *Roll and Book*. There are over a hundred pages of testimony from “Living Witnesses.” The evidence indicates that Martin Harris accepted the *Sacred Roll and Book* as a divine revelation. Non-Mormon Clark Braden stated: “Harris declared repeatedly that he had as much evidence for a Shaker book he had as for the Book of Mormon.”

Mormons have also conceded that Martin Harris believed in the Shaker book. In a thesis written at Brigham Young University, Wayne Cutler Gunnell stated that on December 31, 1844, “Phineas H. Young [Brigham Young’s brother] and other leaders of the Kirtland organization” wrote a letter to Brigham Young in which they stated: “There are in this place all kinds of teaching; Martin Harris is a firm believer in Shakerism, says his testimony is greater than it was of the Book of Mormon.”

The fact that Martin Harris would even join such a group shows that he was unstable and easily influenced. Therefore, his testimony that the Book of Mormon was of divine origin should not be relied upon. How can anyone put their trust in men who were constantly following after movements like the Shakers, Strangites, and the McLellin group? The Book of Mormon witnesses when “weighed in the balances” are found wanting.

**Other Visions**

Besides the angel that appeared to the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, there were many other occasions in the history of Mormonism when angels were supposed to have appeared.

Joseph Smith declared on March 27, 1836, that the Kirtland Temple was “filled with angels.” Under the date of March 30, 1836, the following appears in Joseph Smith’s history: “The Savior made his appearance to some, while angels ministered to others, . . . the occurrences of this day shall be handed down upon the pages of sacred history, to all generations; as the day of Pentecost, so shall this day be numbered and celebrated as a year of jubilee . . . .”

Joseph Smith claimed that he and Oliver Cowdery saw Moses, Elias, Elijah and the Lord in the Kirtland Temple (see *Doctrine and Covenants*, sec. 110). If a person reads only Joseph Smith’s account of this “endowment” he is apt to be very impressed. William E. McLellin, however, gives an entirely different story. He claims that there was “no endowment.” It should be remembered that

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63 *A Holy, Sacred and Divine Roll and Book; From the Lord God of Heaven, to the Inhabitants of Earth* (Cantebury, N.H., 1843), p. 358.
67 Ibid., p. 433.
McLellin was one of the Twelve Apostles at the time the endowment was supposed to have been given. On page seven of the Ensign of Liberty, McLellin joined with five others in stating that “the anticipated endowment” was “a failure!!” In fact, a reporter for the Des Moines Daily News stated that David Whitmer absolutely denied the manifestations in the temple:

The great heavenly “visitation,” which was alleged to have taken place in the temple at Nauvoo, was a grand fizzle. The elders were assembled on the appointed day, which was promised would be a veritable day of Pentecost, but there was no visitation. No Peter, James and John; no Moses and Elias, put in an appearance.

“I was in my seat on that occasion,” says Mr. Whitmer, “and I know that the story sensationally circulated, and which is now on the records of the Utah Mormons as an actual happening, was nothing but a trumped up yarn . . .”

When we look at the testimony of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon or the report of happenings in the Kirtland temple we must remember that many early Mormons were given to visions. Apostle George A. Smith made this statement concerning an incident in the Kirtland temple: “Sylvester Smith bore testimony of seeing the hosts of heaven and the horsemen. In his exertion and excitement it seemed as though he would jump through the ceiling.”

John Whitmer, one of the eight witnesses and church historian in the 1830’s, related the following concerning some of the visions that members of the church had in Kirtland, Ohio:

For a perpetual memory, to the shame and confusion of the Devil, permit me to say a few things respecting the proceedings of some of those who were disciples, and some remain among us, and will, and have come from under the error and enthusiasm which they had fallen.

Some had visions and could not tell what they saw. Some would fancy to themselves that they had the sword of Laban, and would wield it as expert as a light dragon; some would act like an Indian in the act of scalping; some would slide or scoot on the floor with the rapidity of a serpent, which they termed sailing in the boat to the Lamanites, preaching the gospel. And many other vain and foolish maneuvers that are unseemly and unprofitable to mention. Thus the Devil blinded the eyes of some good and honest disciples.

It seems that the early Mormons could see almost anything in vision. John Pulsipher recorded the following in his journal:

One pleasant day in March, while I was at work in the woods, about one mile from the Temple, . . . there was a steamboat past [sic] over Kirtland in the air! . . . It passed right along and soon went out of our hearing. When it got down to the city it was seen by a number of persons. . . . Old Elder Beamon, who had died a few months before was seen standing in the bow of the Boat. . . . The boat went steady along over the city passed right over the Temple and went out of sight to the west.

Seer Stones in the Celestial Kingdom

Unlike reports of visions, the mention of seer stones became fewer after the Mormons moved from New York. However, Smith seemed to envision their use in the afterlife. In 1843 Joseph Smith wrote:

Doctrine and Covenants 130: 6-11

6. The angels do not reside on a planet like this earth;
7. But they reside in the presence of God, on a globe like a sea of glass and fire, where all things for their glory are manifest, past, present, and future, and are continually before the Lord.
8. The place where God resides is a great Urim and Thummim.
9. This earth, in its sanctified and immortal state, will be made like unto crystal and will be a Urim and Thummim to the inhabitants who dwell thereon, whereby all things pertaining to an inferior kingdom, or all kingdoms of a lower order, will be manifest to those who dwell on it; and this earth will be Christ’s.
10. Then the white stone mentioned in Revelation 2:17, will become a Urim and Thummim to each individual who receives one, whereby things pertaining to a higher order of kingdoms will be made known;
11. And a white stone is given to each of those who come into the celestial kingdom, whereon is a new name written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it. The new name is the key word.

Brigham Young related a conversation he had with Joseph Smith regarding seer stones:

I met with the Twelve at brother Joseph’s. He conversed with us in a familiar manner . . . and explained to us the Urim and Thummim . . . He [Joseph] said that every man who lived on the earth was entitled to a seer stone, and should have one, but they are kept from them in consequence of their wickedness, and most of them who do find one make an evil use of it: he showed us his seer stone.73

Seer stones remained popular with the Mormons even into the Utah period. Historian D. Michael Quinn explained:

In 1860 Young also preached “that the gift of seeing was a natural gift, that there are thousands in the world who are natural born Seers.” [Deseret News—Weekly, Dec. 26, 1860] Shortly after publication of a summary of this sermon, Apostle John Taylor explained to a church congregation the meaning of Young’s remarks in regard to seer stones and church authority: “Brigham Young in saying that He did not profess to be a prophet [..] seer & Revelator as Joseph Smith was, was speaking of men being born Natural Prophets & Seers. Many have the gift of seeing through seer stones without the Priesthood at all. He [Young] had not this gift [of using seer stones] naturally yet He was an Apostle & the President of the Church & Kingdom of God on the Earth . . . ” With such statements from church leaders, it is understandable why many Mormon pioneers exercised “this gift” of using seer stones.74

Conclusion

When one reads of the involvement with magic objects by Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon witnesses plus charges and counter-charges of wrong doing and visions in various early splinter groups, one is left to wonder about the credibility of their religious experiences. Dan Vogel observed:

The real question is not the trustworthiness of the witnesses but whether testimony resulting from visions or hallucinations is reliable. Indeed, does the testimony of the Book of Mormon witnesses merit greater attention than that of other similar religious testimony?75

Joseph Smith was certainly not the first to claim revelations or to bring forth a new book purporting to be scripture. For instance, the story of the coming forth of the Koran, the sacred scripture of Islam, bears some interesting parallels to Joseph Smith’s account of the origin of the Book of Mormon. N. J. Dawood, who translated the Koran into English, gave this information concerning its origin:

“For Muslims it is the infallible word of God, a transcript of a tablet preserved in heaven, revealed to the Prophet Mohammed by the Angel Gabriel. . . . According to Muslim tradition, one night in Ramadhan about the year 610 [A.D.], as he was asleep or in a trance, the Angel Gabriel came to him and said: ‘Recite!’ He replied: ‘What shall I recite?’ The order was repeated three times. . . .”76

Mohammed declared that he was God’s true prophet, appointed by an angel, and that he was restoring true religion to the earth. Twelve centuries later, the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith made a similar claim. When Mormons assert that they have had a spiritual experience that proves the truthfulness of Mormonism to them, they need to remember that many other faiths make similar claims. Even within the various splinter groups of Mormonism there are numerous assertions of visions. As Christians we must evaluate all such claims and test them in light of the evidence and what God has already revealed in the Bible.

73 Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star (February 20, 1864), vol. 26, p. 118.
74 Quinn, Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, p. 251.
76 The Koran, translated by N. J. Dawood (1968), Introduction, pp. 9-10.
What Is The True Number of Mormons In The United States of America?

By Kent H. Roberts
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The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly known as the “Mormons,” is frequently identified as one of the fastest growing churches in the United States. Official membership statistics show a six fold increase in membership of the LDS church from 1950 to 2010, while the US population only doubled and the population of Utah, the center of the church, has only quadrupled during that time. This growth rate draws attention to the LDS church. As a missionary organization, the church certainly encourages this positive attention. The attention also increases the political influence of the church which is significant in Washington DC and more than significant in the Western states of Utah, Idaho, Nevada, Arizona and California.

For the past twenty years, Professors Barry A. Kosmin and Ariela Keysar have conducted the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS). Using standard statistical methods and the same question: “What is your religion, if any?”, they have been determining which religious groups Americans actually belong to and in what numbers. The research is not directed at the LDS church or any other particular denomination. The Survey has been conducted in 1990, 2001 and 2008.\(^1\)

The ARIS raises significant questions about the true number of persons in the USA who understand themselves to be members of the LDS church. Briefly stated, at the beginning of 1990, the LDS church claimed a membership in the USA of 4,175,400, while the ARIS showed that, during 1990, 2,487,000 Americans claimed to be Mormons, a 40% difference. At the beginning of 2001, the LDS church claimed a membership in the USA of 5,208,827, while the ARIS showed that, during 2001, 2,697,000 Americans claimed to be Mormons, a 48% difference. Finally, at the end of 2008, the LDS church claimed a membership in the USA of 5,974,041, while the ARIS showed that, during the year, 3,158,000 Americans claimed to be Mormons, a 47% difference.\(^2\)

This paper places the official statistics of the LDS church and the ARIS results in juxtaposition, attempts to provide some historical context and suggests additional work by persons who may have a stake in the result.

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2 ARIS figures are from ARIS 2008, p. 5 (Table 3); the LDS figures for year-end 1989, 2000 and 2008 are from Association of Religious Data Archives (the “ARDA”), *Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, posted at: http://www.thearda.com/Denoms/D_1117.asp (viewed 1 October 2011). The official December 31, 1989 and January 1, 2009 membership numbers were confirmed by the LDS Church History Library. Email to author, 26 July & 6 September 2011 (originals in possession of author). The official December 31, 2000 membership number is confirmed in Deseret News, *2003 Church Almanac*, p. 623.
Comparison of ARIS with Official Statistics

Figure 1 below places the ARIS figures in the context of the official LDS membership statistics for the USA since 1950.

The tabular data is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Official LDS Memberships in USA(^3)</th>
<th>ARIS Survey Identification as Mormon/Latter-day Saints(^4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>1,005,346</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>1,488,729</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>2,073,146</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>3,503,000</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>4,175,400</td>
<td>2,487,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>5,208,827</td>
<td>2,697,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>5,974,041</td>
<td>3,158,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a grey shaded wedge indicated on Figure 1. This represents the rate of population growth in the USA and

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3 Official USA membership statistics from 1950 to 1980 were taken from Deseret News, *1983 Church Almanac*, p. 272; Sources for official USA membership statistics from 1980 are provided in footnote 2 above.

4 ARIS 2008, p. 5.
Utah between 1950 and 2010. This is added to indicate the effect of population growth over the post World War II period. The upper line of the wedge represents the rate of growth in Utah which was approximately 300%, from 688,862 in 1950 to 2,763,885 in 2010 and the lower line of the wedge represents the rate of growth in the USA which was approximately 100%, from 151,325,798 in 1950 to 308,745,538 in 2010, according to the US Census Bureau. In 1950, 47% of the total USA membership of the LDS Church lived in Utah. By 1980, the percentage of the US Mormon population in Utah was 29%. By 2000, the Utah portion was 31%.

**Observations**

The first observation is that there is a significant difference between the number of Americans that the LDS church claims are Mormons and the number of Americans who claim to be Mormons. This raises a number of questions discussed below.

The second observation is that if the population growth rate wedge is anchored with the 1950 church population, the ARIS results are comfortably explained by population growth in the relevant regions. This would tend to support the validity of the ARIS results while explaining the perceptible growth of the LDS church.

The third observation is that, if the ARIS results are projected backward in time, they nearly intersect with the 1950 and 1960 official LDS statistics. The deviation between the official statistics and the actual and projected ARIS results appears to begin in the 1960s and accelerates during the 1970s. This period corresponds with two vigorous missionary drives within the LDS church—the “Every Member a Missionary” program under President David O. McKay (1951 – 1970) and the “Lengthen Your Stride” program under President Spencer W. Kimball (1973 – 1985).

**Questions**

For scholars, the following questions are presented: When, how and why did this overstatement of LDS membership in the USA develop? Is the variation between ARIS and official statistics found in any other religious group in the USA?

For LDS church operational managers, the following questions are presented: How does the church insure that its true population is being measured? Further, are there incentives in the system to overstate the church population? Is a similar overstatement happening in areas outside the United States of America? Professor Lanier Britsch documented an example in the French Polynesian Mission in the 1920s where the church population figures were revised downward by 38% following “a careful census.” D. Michael Quinn documented an aggressive program in the British Mission in the 1960s first to increase the number of members followed by an aggressive program to remove non-believers from the church rolls. In the decade just concluded, the number of stakes—the local LDS administrative unit—in Chile was reduced 36%, from 115 to 74, after the 2002 government census revealed that 103,735 persons identified themselves as Mormon in contrast to the 509,592 members that the LDS church claimed at the end of 2000. The actions in Chile were reported in the

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7 Ibid.
8 Deseret News, 2003 Church Almanac, p. 623 (percentage obtained by dividing the Utah total by the USA total).
May 2006 issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger*. It is worth noting that the LDS church currently (October 2011) claims a Chilean membership of 563,689.\(^{12}\)

For LDS spiritual leaders, the question is: Why is there such a significant drop-off in affiliation with the church after baptism? A person becomes a member of the LDS church through adult baptism (actually, the eighth birthday is the minimum age). Baptism is delayed so that the candidate can make the decision in his or her own judgment. A member who does not attend regularly is commonly referred to as “inactive.” One who rejects the decision made at baptism into the LDS church is considered an “apostate.” The ARIS question addresses whether one is affiliated with a faith tradition, not the level of activity within that faith. If the official LDS church statistics represent primarily baptized persons, then the ARIS figures represent significant levels of rejection of the baptismal decision by persons once Mormon. To be specific, the level of “apostacy” suggested by the ARIS is 40% in 1990, 48% in 2001 and 47% in 2008.

For persons seeking to convert Mormons to traditional forms of Christianity, the question is: How can the leavers be identified? These are persons who are clearly seeking something promised but not found (by them) in the LDS church.

For political planners, the question is the actual electoral strength of the LDS church in the USA. The LDS church has intentionally sought to strengthen its political influence in Washington, DC, since 1903. This is probably a rational response to the experience of the LDS church in the 19th century when the Federal government’s active program to prohibit the Mormon practice of polygamy led to the imprisonment of many Mormon leaders and ultimately to the disestablishment of the LDS church by Congress in 1887. Today, the claims of the LDS church must be evaluated in light of the fact that almost one out of every two persons claimed by the LDS church as a Mormon does not in fact claim to be Mormon.

Finally, persons leaving the Mormon church should consider obtaining a formal letter of removal from the church so that they will no longer be counted as a member by the church. Common wisdom is that the LDS church population is under the age of 15. 2002 Census, p. 12. If the census figure is increased by this percentage, the number only becomes 130,395, a little more than a quarter of the official membership number.

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EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS AND EMAILS

April 2011: Hello! I’ve been involved in the LDS church for about 6 months now, and am starting to question many of the doctrines.

April 2011: I just been watching your video ‘Why Mormons Leave.’ I am a Mormon . . . having doubts . . . I have been baptised on Jan 19/2010, . . . I have also been noticing when I stopped reading the Book of Mormons and praying to be guided the right way I was seeing contradictions in the BOM which goes against the bible. . . . I have issues with the temple side of the mormonism, . . . I have done baptism for the dead . . . Also I have felt it was taking me more from Jesus Christ and as for home teaching I stopped doing it . . . I also noticed that missionaries don’t tell you everything about Mormonism either. Also D&C 132 still talks of polygamy . . . Also I noticed the Mormons want to baptise their new members very quickly . . .

May 2011: Ms. Sandra you are a beacon of light to those of us that are leaving or have left. You are a very comforting soul. I don’t think that I could ever describe my thankfulness towards you for sitting down with [us] that day! We love you and your ministry!

May 2011: I am / was a recent convert to Mormonism. . . . Upon hearing you speak via a youtube video on FaceBook I’m concerned for my Beliefs.

May 2011: I was born and raised in the LDS church and served a mission in Brazil. I left the church after returning from my mission a year early because I could no longer pretend that I had a testimony. While serving a mission I realized that I was a salesmen for the church and nothing more. This did not sit comfortably with me at all and it was ruining my emotional well-being.

You’re website is most helpful and has helped me to get over my last few emotional hurdles of any connection with the church. Thank you very much.

June 2011: I just wanted to get back to you and tell you thanks again . . . Things are going well for me. I have explained my position [not believing Mormonism any more] to my wife, and she listened and now even sees things as I do. Its great to be working together on this now.

June 2011: I am lds but don’t believe anymore. I feel very depressed and don’t think Jesus is real. I am on the fence as to whether there is even a God. . . . Thank you so much for all your hard work. Even though I doubt the very existence of god, I can at least say I am free from the bondage that is the LDS church.

June 2011: Thank you for providing so much invaluable reading material as I slowly, painfully studied my way out of Mormonism almost 8 years ago. You’re a saint to the Ex-Mo community.

June 2011: I always find the Messenger to be interesting and well researched. Others criticize you and your writings but they never say with specificity what statements you have made that are incorrect. I wonder why.

June 2011: Two days ago, I sent my letter of resignation to the LDS church. It was after many years of research and soul searching. I have no doubt that I made the right choice. Your ministry was very helpful in directing me to reading material where I could learn the truth about Joseph Smith and the Mormon church.

June 2011: I just wanted to write a quick note and let you know how valuable your work is and how much I believe Sandra (and Jerald) Tanner are truly amazing, national treasures. Thank you for the work you do!

July 2011: Have you read the whole Bible, . . . If you love the teachings of Jehovah, of Jesus in the Bible, sure you would love the message in the Book of Mormon, . . .

July 2011: While it is very heartening to read [in the newsletter] of the ones who’ve found your information life-changing, it is also revealing to read those emails/letters from die-hard Mormons. . . . I am astonished at the number of “drive-by” pot-shots that are taken at you, either to simply volley a few choice nasty words your way, or to make claims (“please fix these idiotic mistakes . . . “I don’t think any of it [your research and information] is valid . . .”) without backing up those statements. It’s so very easy to shout out “You’re wrong!” but much harder to actually prove it with calm, logical, researched proof. Thank you that in the face of unwarranted persecution that you no doubt face daily, you continue to provide proof in a commendable, Christian manner.

July 2011: We have thanked the Lord many times for your research and love for the LDS. It took [my husband] and I 10 years after leaving the LDS faith to finally surrender to the Lord.

July 2011: It’s been many years, . . . [since] we lived in SLC in the early 80’s. . . . We were grieved to hear about Jerald, but incredibly grateful for the few chances we had to chat with the two of you. Those conversations did so much to shape our faith for decades to come. We think of you often and you’re still our hero.

July 2011: After reading the boasting of Joseph Smith I pondered it. In fact what he boasted was true. I don’t know what the Lord thought of it, good or bad, I’m not the Lord and it’s his business. . . . In my youth I went to several Churches seeking one to join and all the literature made every other church out to be wrong. I was looking for a church with Christ at the head not self serving dogma. It was this unresearched misinformation and dishonesty about the beliefs of other churches and the LDS church that when corrected prompted me to become LDS.
July 2011: Just a note of thanks for your tireless work on Mormonism. I was one of those faithful LDS guys for most of life who finally got it and got out. You’re one of my heros. Blessings upon you Sandra and your ministry.

July 2011: I am disappointed in the book I bought. Like all the rest, its primary assault is on Joseph Smith’s character rather than the content of the Book of Mormon. . . . I have several objective reasons for believing that the Book of Mormon is what it claims to be. . . . However, I agree that the evidence is not conclusive. . . . If the sealed [portion of the Book of Mormon record] is to be revealed as a book that is read by the power of Christ, as I believe it is, then this generation will see it as the Lord unveils his arm in the sight of all flesh (Isa.52:10). . . . Until then, it is a matter of faith. I certify that the future as described in the Book of Mormon’s prophecies is far more likely than the future described by today’s Christian evangels. . . .

July 2011: Hello, my wife is struggling with mormonism and their core doctrines. I am searching for literature to aid her in her search for the truth, literature that will lead her to the one book of truth the Bible. [We sent a packet of information]

July 2011: Thank you so much for your work. Because of your studies, I was able to equip myself with knowledge and leave the LDS church. God bless you!

July 2011: I have been reading about the LDS religion on your website and I really appreciate it. I had been a member all my life up until about 3 yrs ago. My whole family is pretty much LDS and my father is a bishop. My husband and I have 2 girls and we are searching for a church for young, impressionable people.

Aug. 2011: I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I love Jesus Christ as my Savior and my brother. Whether the Bible actually says it or not, I choose to believe he is my brother and I love him as such.

Aug. 2011: I’ve held your Christ guided ministry in high esteem for a lot of years—even though it was so taboo (silly to preach ‘free agency’ and put bans on so many things) when I started reading articles from ULM. Learned about you from a very good friend and Christian mentor. . . . ULM helped me when I was breaking away from Mormonism back in the early 90’s. My husband was also raised (jack) Mormon, and he started going to church w me in ’08, and was saved shortly after.

It is wonderful to see God at work! Long before [our daughter] left on her mission God put it in my heart to pray for some solid Christians to come into her life. . . . Thought I knew just how controlling the LDS church was until [our daughter] left on her mission. Phone calls only on Mother’s Day and Christmas, cannot plan a trip in her area unless we talk to her mission pres ab it (like that’d happen), and the worst is not being able to contact her personally in the case of a family emergency or death! It’s obvious that the LDS have studied carefully for many years how to maintain a grip on young, impressionable people.

Aug. 2011: What are you hoping to fulfill here? Does bashing and tearing down another persons faith make you feel strong? Does what you are doing reflect the actions of that which Christ would do? Why do you feel the LDS church is false? I am willing to bet 99% of your “facts” are inaccurate.

Aug. 2011: I just wanted to thank you for your ministry and resources—they are very helpful. My wife and I are trying to witness to some Mormons and your site and resources are a great help, thank you.

Sept. 2011: I met you 16 yrs ago when my husband . . . and I flew out to Utah from Kansas for our wedding celebration, and your bookstore was our first stop off. I was a baby Christian at the time and fresh out of the Mormon Church. It was your book “Mormonism—Shadow or Reality” that had greatly influenced my husband (who used it to witness to me) . . . . I want you to know that your and Jerald’s work will always be appreciated.

Sept. 2011: Thank you for your book and all your video’s on youtube :) I am an ex- Mormon . . . , I was born into the church and have 5 generations of SLC Temple worthy Mormons before me. I am 34 now . . . This year I finally had my name removed from the Church records. . . . Now I am Free, . . . Free from the church and Free in Christ!

Sept. 2011: I went to the Mormon church today for the sacrament meeting. I felt so out of place. I literally felt uncomfortable sitting there. None of the testimonies were about Jesus Christ.

Sept. 2011: [From a Mormon] I just want to thank you for all the information your site has provided on the prophesy make by Joseph Smith on the constitution “hanging by a thread” it looks like it is NOW come TRUE!

Sept. 2011: Sandra, I met you several year ago at your ministry. Have since had numerous conversations with Lynn Wilder [former BYU professor, now Christian] who is helping my wife with her transformation out of Mormonism. Your site has also helped her understand what she had never known about her religion.

Sept. 2011: . . . traditional Christianity, the evangelicals and the fundamentalists, are no more the way of Jesus, than LDS has become, so there is a need for the LDS community, worldwide, to return to most of the original goals of LDS—all of the emotionally and spiritually healthy ones—dump the junk, restore God’s original intent for LDS, and thereby end the spiritual darkness.

Sept. 2011: I’m a Mormon on the edge. I got back from my mission a year ago and I have studied deeper into the history of Joseph Smith and thanks to your website I’ve facts that really put Mormonism into a perspective.
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**Understanding Your Mormon Neighbor**
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Expires December 31, 2011
In June of 1978 the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (also known as Mormons or LDS) announced the end of its priesthood restriction for blacks, a practice that had been rigorously defended since the days of Brigham Young, the second president of the LDS Church. Even though a few blacks had been ordained to the priesthood during the lifetime of Joseph Smith, the founder of the LDS Church, this did not grant them access to the secret LDS temple rituals, thus barring them from the Mormon goal of eternal marriage and advancement to godhood.1

While it has been thirty-four years since the ban was lifted, the issue is still coming back to haunt the LDS Church. This February, while writing a story on presidential candidate Mitt Romney and the LDS Church’s stand on racial issues, a reporter from the Washington Post interviewed Randy Bott, a well-respected professor at Brigham Young University:

In his office, religion professor Randy Bott explains a possible theological underpinning of the ban. According to Mormon scriptures, the descendants of Cain, who killed his brother, Abel, “were black.” One of Cain’s descendants was Egyptus, a woman Mormons believe was the namesake of Egypt. She married Ham, whose descendants were themselves cursed and, in the view of many Mormons, barred from the priesthood by his father, Noah. Bott points to the Mormon holy text the Book of Abraham [Pearl of Great Price, Abraham 1:21-27] as suggesting that all of the descendants of Ham and Egyptus were thus black and barred from the priesthood.2

Professor Bott defended the ban on the basis that blacks were not mature enough at that time for the responsibility:

Bott compares blacks with a young child prematurely asking for the keys to her father’s car, and explains that similarly until 1978, the Lord determined that blacks were not yet ready for the priesthood.

At another place in the article we read:

“What is discrimination?” Bott asks. “I think that is keeping something from somebody that would be a benefit for them, right? But what if it wouldn’t have been a benefit to them?” Bott says that the denial of the priesthood to blacks on Earth—although not in the afterlife—protected them from the lowest rungs of hell reserved for people who abuse their priesthood powers. “You couldn’t fall off the top of the ladder, because you weren’t on the top of the ladder. So, in reality the blacks not having the priesthood was the greatest blessing God could give them.”3

Bott’s comments spread like wildfire on the Internet, raising questions about the current teachings of the LDS Church regarding race. The day after the Washington

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3 Ibid.
Post article, February 29, 2012, the LDS Church issued an official statement repudiating Bott’s statements as not representative of the church’s position: “BYU faculty members do not speak for the Church.” The statement continued:

The Church’s position is clear—we believe all people are God’s children are equal in His eyes and in the Church. We do not tolerate racism in any form.

For a time in the Church there was a restriction on the priesthood for male members of African descent. It is not known precisely why, how, or when this restriction began in the Church but what is clear is that it ended decades ago. Some have attempted to explain the reason for this restriction but these attempts should be viewed as speculation and opinion, not doctrine. The Church is not bound by speculation or opinions given with limited understanding.

We condemn racism, including any and all past racism by individuals both inside and outside the Church.4

Curiously, this was merely a press release with no names attached, as opposed to an official First Presidency Statement, which would carry the names of the leaders. For an example, see the First Presidency Statement issued regarding baptism for the dead on February 29, 2012.5

While the LDS statement condemning racism was applauded by many Mormons, it still seems to be avoiding the basic doctrinal issue of why the priesthood ban was ever instituted in the first place.

Max Mueller, writing for Slate, an online magazine, gave this evaluation of LDS teachings and Bott’s statements:

Why did the church withhold the priesthood from blacks for over a century? Among the reasons trotted out by church leaders—including church presidents—during that time: Black people are the cursed descendants of ancient Biblical figures; black people committed pre mortal perfidy; black people lacked the intelligence and personal integrity to hold such a sacred office.

Such past beliefs have never officially been repudiated. And the failure of the church to repudiate them helped set the stage for the comments made by Bott, perhaps the most popular professor at BYU . . .

For many Mormons, reading Bott’s words was like unearthing a theological dinosaur long thought extinct but suddenly rediscovered in the corner of an obscure BYU office. . . .

Unfortunately, Bott’s beliefs, though arcane, represent a strain of Mormonism that has persisted well past the 1978 revelation. For most of the 182-year lifespan of the LDS Church, members of the church hierarchy—the senior-most of which are called prophets and speak to and for God—used similar racist rationalizations for excluding blacks from full membership. . . . The 1978 revelation itself does not address why the ban was instituted in the first place, and the lack of answers from today’s Mormon leaders creates a theological vacuum. To fill this vacuum, Mormons turn to the reams of answers provided by past prophets, who led a church in which blacks were not welcome.

Thus, some Mormon parents continue to teach their children beliefs like those proffered up by Bott. . . .

Almost to a person, the Mormons—both black and white—whom I have spoken with since the Post story broke were hoping for a “miracle,” as one well-known black Mormon called it—i.e., a full repudiation of the church’s past racial discrimination from a church apostle rather than a press release from the public affairs office. That miracle has not arrived so far.6

Also in the Slate article, Mueller mentioned that Terry Ball, dean of religious education at BYU, was upset with Bott about his statements:

In an email to several faculty members, Terry Ball, dean of religious education, expressed his disgust with Bott’s statements and said he would “deal with Bott professionally.”

Curiously, in 2008, Ball himself made similar racial comments. One Internet blogger reported:

Last week Terry Ball, Dean of the College of Religious Education, gave BYU’s weekly devotional address. His talk raises many issues relevant to recent discussions . . . He [Ball] then shows how his training confirms and informs his faith by quoting from the end of Isaiah 28, a parable of a farmer . . . :

“I believe Isaiah wants us to liken the farmer to our Heavenly Father, and the seeds to ourselves, Have you ever wondered why you were born where and when you were born? Why you were not born 500 years ago in some primitive, aboriginal culture in some isolated corner of the world? Is the timing and placing of your birth capricious? For Latter-day Saints the answer is no. Fundamental to our faith is the understanding that before we came to this earth we lived in a premortal existence with a loving heavenly father. We further understand that in the premortal state we had agency. And that we

5 http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/first-presidency-issues-direction-members-names-ordinances
7 Ibid.
grew and developed as we used that agency. Some, as Abraham learned, became noble and great ones. . . . Others of you are wheat, you’ve been placed in exceptionally fertile and promising places because God, who knows your special potential, is counting on you to produce so much. . . .

The author goes on to state that he is not accusing Terry Ball of racism but his speech does raise the issue whether the idea of nobility in premortality can ever fully get away from its racist implications. One has to ask what Ball meant by the pejorative reference to “some primitive, aboriginal culture in some isolated corner of the world.” Certainly he’s not counting “them” as wheat, since they’re not planted in the ripest ground. Ball sets up a chronological, geographical, and cultural hierarchy dependent on premortal “agency” . . . . If the comment about aborigines is not outright racist, can it be anything other than elitist, colonialist, etc.? 9

The statements of both Bott and Ball demonstrate how the LDS concept of premortal performance inevitably leads to connecting it with a preferential birth and assignment to race. These professors were simply reiterating the teachings of their past prophets and apostles.

Today the LDS Church seems to be categorizing the teachings of past prophets on racial issues as “folklore.” In an article commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of the lifting of the ban on blacks, Sheldon F. Child, of the Council of Seventies, explained to the reporter:

“We have to keep in mind that it’s folklore and not doctrine,” Elder Child said. “It’s never been recorded as such. Many opinions, personal opinions, were spoken. I’m just so grateful for this [1978] revelation,” he said, adding he can recall exactly where he was and what he was doing when he heard the news 30 years ago. 10

But if the leaders’ earlier sermons relating to the “curse of Cain” and the ban on blacks holding the priesthood were simply “folklore,” why did it require a revelation to change the practice?

Smith’s View on Race and Skin Color

The first instance of racism in Smith’s new religion can be found in the Book of Mormon, published in 1830. 11 Here we find the story of a group of Israelites who migrate to America at approximately 600 BC. They soon divide into two groups—the righteous Nephites are described as “white” and “delightsome” while the rebellious Lamanites are cursed by God with a “dark” skin, also referred to as a “skin of blackness”:

2 Nephi 5:21-23: And he [God] had caused the cursing to come upon them, yea, even a sore cursing, because of their iniquity. . . . wherefore, as they were white, and exceedingly fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them. . . . And cursed shall be the seed of him that mixineth with their seed; for they shall be cursed even with the same cursing. And the Lord spake it, and it was done.”

Jacob 3:5: Behold, the Lamanites your brethren, whom ye hate because of their filthiness and the cursing which hath come upon their skins . . .

Alma 3:6: And the skins of the Lamanites were dark, according to the mark which was set upon their fathers, which was a curse upon them because of the transgression and their rebellion . . .

The descendants of these rebellious people were believed by the early Mormons to be the American Indian. 12 While their dark skin was seen as a sign of God’s curse on them, Indians were allowed to join Mormonism and be ordained to its priesthood.

Soon after starting his church in 1830, Joseph Smith began a revision of the Bible. Without knowing either Hebrew or Greek, Smith supposedly relied on divine guidance in correcting the text. Part of his revision is printed in the Pearl of Great Price as the Book of Moses, where we find the scriptural roots of the LDS concept of the origin of black people:

Moses 7:8: . . . and there was a blackness came upon all the children of Canaan, that they were despised among all people.

Moses 7:12: . . . Enoch continued to call upon all the people, save it were the people of Canaan, to repent . . .

Moses 7:22: And Enoch also beheld the residue of the people which were the sons of Adam; and they were a mixture of all the seed of Adam save it was the seed of Cain, for the seed of Cain were black, and had not place among them.

Smith seems to have been adapting the racial arguments of his day, which were used to justify slavery,
when formulating his teaching that blacks were under the curse of Cain.\(^\text{13}\)

When Mormons started settling in Missouri in the early 1830’s their attitude toward Native Americans and blacks became a concern of their neighbors. Many Missourians worried that Smith’s church, founded in New York, was anti-slavery. After the Mormons published an article “Free People of Color”\(^\text{14}\) in their Evening and Morning Star, the non-Mormons worried that it was meant to encourage blacks to immigrate to the Mormon settlement in Independence, Missouri. To calm local fears, the Mormons immediately printed an “Extra” sheet for the paper, in which they announced:

Having learned, with regret, that an article entitled FREE PEOPLE OF COLOR, in the last number of the Star, has been misunderstood, we feel in duty bound to state, in this Extra, that our intention was not only to stop free people of color from emigrating to this state, but to prevent them from being admitted as members of the Church.\(^\text{15}\)

After a few abolitionists came to the Mormon settlement at Kirtland, Ohio, in 1836, Smith was concerned that this would cause problems between the Mormons and the Southerners. In an article for the Messenger and Advocate, Smith laid out his lack of support for the abolitionists and his views on slavery. He wrote:

I have learned by experience that the enemy of truth does not slumber, nor cease his exertions to bias the minds of communities against the servants of the Lord, by stirring up the indignation of men upon all matters of importance or interest; therefore I fear that the sound might go out, that “an Abolitionist” had held forth several times to this community, . . . all, except a very few, attended to their own vocations, and left the gentleman to hold forth his own arguments to nearly naked walls. . . .

It is my privilege then to name certain passages from the Bible, pronounced by a man who was perfect in his generation, and walked with God. And so far from that prediction being averse to the mind of God, it remains a lasting monument of the decree of Jehovah, to the shame and confusion of all who have cried out against the South, in consequence of their holding the sons of Ham in servitude. “And he said, Cursed be Canaan: a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.” “Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.” (Gen. 9:25,26). . . . What could have been the design of the Almighty in this singular occurrence is not for me to say; but I can say, the curse is not yet taken off from the sons of Canaan, neither will be until it is affected by as great a power as caused it to come; . . . I do not believe that the people of the North have any more right to say that the South shall not have slaves, than the South have to say the North shall. . . . All men are to be taught to repent; but we have no right to interfere with slaves, contrary to the mind and will of their masters.\(^\text{16}\)

On Tuesday, January 25, 1842, Joseph Smith commented “that the Indians have greater cause to complain of the treatment of the whites, than the negroes, or sons of Cain.”\(^\text{17}\) A year later, January 2, 1843, Joseph Smith gave this assessment of blacks:

At five went to Mr. Sollars’ with Elders Hyde and Richards. Elder Hyde inquired the situation of the negro. I replied, they came into the world slaves, mentally and physically. . . . Had I anything to do with the negro, I would confine them by strict law to their own species, and put them on a national equalization.\(^\text{18}\)

Ironically, right at the time Joseph Smith was developing his racial doctrines he allowed the ordination of a black man named Elijah Abel.\(^\text{19}\) Abel was “ordained an elder on March 3, 1836, and a seventy April 4, 1841.”\(^\text{20}\)

In 1842 Smith published his new scripture, the Book of Abraham, in the Times and Seasons, the LDS newspaper in Nauvoo, Illinois. This has since been canonized in the Pearl of Great Price and reflects Smith’s growing racist attitude towards blacks and priesthood:

Now this king of Egypt was a descendant from the loins of Ham, and was a partaker of the blood of the Canaanites by birth.

From this descent sprang all the Egyptians, and thus the blood of the Canaanites was preserved in the land.

The land of Egypt being first discovered by a woman, who was the daughter of Ham, and the daughter of Egyptus, which in the Chaldean signifies Egypt, which signifies that which is forbidden;

When this woman discovered the land it was under water, who afterward settled her sons in it; and thus, from Ham, sprang that race which preserved the curse in the land.

Now the first government of Egypt was established by Pharaoh, the eldest son of Egyptus, the daughter of

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Ham, and it was after the manner of the government of Ham, which was patriarchal.

Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom and judged his people wisely and justly all his days, seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam, and also of Noah, his father, who blessed him with the blessings of the earth, and with the blessings of wisdom, but cursed him as pertaining to the Priesthood.

Now, Pharaoh being of that lineage by which he could not have the right of Priesthood, notwithstanding the Pharaohs would fain claim it from Noah, through Ham, therefore my father was led away by their idolatry. (Pearl of Great Price, Book of Abraham, 1:21-27)

LDS author Stephen Taggart observed:

With the publication of The Book of Abraham all of the elements for the Church’s policy of denying the priesthood to Negroes were present. The curse of Canaan motif borrowed from Southern fundamentalism was being supported within the Church by a foundation of proslavery statements and attitudes which had emerged during the years of crisis in Missouri. . . .

When a reporter asked LDS President David O. McKay in 1961 about the basis for the policy of restricting blacks from priesthood, “he replied that it rested solely on the Book of Abraham. ‘That is the only reason,’ he said. ‘It is founded on that.’ ” Even though the LDS Church now denounces racism, how are readers to interpret racial statements in the LDS scriptures?

It should be noted that the story of Noah’s curse on Ham and Canaan in Genesis, chapter nine, never connects the curse to race, skin color or to Africa. The same can be said of the curse on Cain in Genesis, chapter four. The Bible does not identify the mark placed on Cain as being a black skin. These interpretations arose centuries later in an attempt to justify slavery.

Teaching on Pre-Mortal Life

Standard Christianity teaches that only Christ existed before mortality (John 8:58; Colossians 1:17) and that man’s existence started on earth (Zechariah 12:1; 1 Corinthians 15:46). However, Mormonism maintains that man was first born as a spirit child in heaven to Heavenly Father and a Heavenly Mother and raised to maturity before being sent to earth. During this premortal life they believe we were all engaged in a war between Lucifer and Jesus (Abraham 3:21-28). Those who were courageous in “their first estate” were chosen to be leaders on earth (their second estate). This led to the conclusion that one’s placement on earth, including race, is a result of that past performance. BYU professor Charles Harrell observed:

In the book of Abraham, the basis of foreordination shifts from God’s foreknowledge of a person’s future righteousness in mortality to a knowledge of that person’s premortal righteousness. Here, Abraham sees a gathering of preexistent spirits: “And among all these were many of the noble and great ones.” He then records God saying, “These I will make my rulers . . . Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born” (Abr. 3:22-23). Thus, foreordination is explained as being based on premortal nobility, without a mention of God’s foreknowledge of one’s future righteousness—although such foreknowledge is certainly not precluded.

Speaking at the April 1998 LDS Conference, Apostle Richard G. Scott explained:

Your Heavenly Father assigned you to be born into a specific lineage from which you received your inheritance of race, culture, and traditions.

In 1842 Smith was teaching “We believe that men will be punished for their own sins and not for Adam’s transgression.” By extension, then, one would not expect the blacks to be cursed solely on the basis of Cain’s sin. This led to the speculation that blacks must be cursed due to something they did in their premortal life. Harrell explains:

Why blacks were denied the priesthood in the first place has been and continues to be a bit controversial. Some have concluded that to be of the lineage of Cain through Ham who, according to LDS scriptures, was “cursed . . . as pertaining to the Priesthood” (Abr. 1:26-27). Recognizing that God would not punish children for the sins of their fathers, it became commonly held that it was denied them in consequence of their lack of valiancy in the preexistence. As early as 1844, LDS apostle Orson Hyde attributed the “accursed lineage of Canaan” to a premortal lack of valor. “Those spirits in heaven that lent an influence to the devil,” he stated, “were required to come into the world and take bodies in the accursed lineage of Canaan; and hence the Negro or African race.”

28 Harrell, “This is My Doctrine,” p. 389.
The Start of the Priesthood Ban

It appears that after the death of Joseph Smith, the ban on blacks being ordained to the priesthood became rigid under Brigham Young’s leadership. Charles Harrell discusses the first statement connecting priesthood denial with Ham’s lineage:

The first recorded statement on the priesthood ban appears to be by Parley P. Pratt who said of a black Church member on April 25, 1847, he “was a black man with the blood of Ham in him which lineage was cursed as regards the priesthood.” On February 13, 1849, Brigham Young echoed a popular folklore linking blacks to descendants of Cain when he remarked in a private conversation, “The Lord had cursed Cain’s seed with blackness and prohibited them the Priesthood.”

In 1852 Brigham Young made a number of racial comments when addressing the Utah Territorial Legislature:

Now I tell you what I know; when the mark was put upon Cain, Ables children was in all probability young; the Lord told Cain that he should not receive the blessings of the priesthood nor his seed, until the last of the posterity of Able had received the priesthood, until the redemption of the earth. If there never was a prophet, or apostle of Jesus Christ spoke it before, I tell you, this people that are commonly called negroes are the children of old Cain. I know they are, I know that they cannot bear rule in the priesthood, for the curse of them was to remain upon them . . . until the times of the restitution shall come, and the curse be wiped off from the earth, . . .

Now then in the kingdom of God on the earth, a man who has the African blood in him cannot hold one jot nor tittle of priesthood; Why? because they are the true eternal principals the Lord Almighty has ordained, and who can help it, men cannot, . . .

That same year the Territory of Utah passed legislation that allowed for slavery. This applied to both Indian and African slaves. One black slave, Green Flake, was even given to the church for tithing credit.

Preaching in 1859, at the October Conference of the LDS Church, President Brigham Young declared:

Cain slew his brother . . . and the Lord put a mark upon him, which is the flat nose and black skin . . . How long is that race [blacks] to endure the dreadful curse that is upon them? That curse will remain upon them, and they never can hold the Priesthood or share in it until all the other descendants of Adam have received the promises and enjoyed the blessings of the Priesthood and the keys thereof. Until the last ones of the residue of Adam’s children are brought up to that favourable position, the children of Cain cannot receive the first ordinances of the Priesthood. They were the first that were cursed, and they will be the last from whom the curse will be removed.

On another occasion Brigham Young declared:

Shall I tell you the law of God in regard to the African race? If the white man who belongs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the penalty, under the law of God, is death on the spot. This will always be so.

Preaching in 1882, John Taylor, the third president of the LDS Church, taught:

Why is it, in fact, that we should have a devil? Why did not the Lord kill him long ago? . . . He needed the devil and great many of those who do his bidding just to keep . . . our dependence upon God, . . . When he destroyed the inhabitants of the antediluvian world, he suffered a descendant of Cain to come through the flood in order that he [the devil] might be properly represented upon the earth.

Elder B. H. Roberts, of the Council of Seventy, explained that the reason some were born black was a direct result of their performance in their premortal life:

. . . I believe that race [blacks] is the one through which it is ordained those spirits that were not valiant in the great rebellion in heaven should come; who, through their indifference or lack of integrity to righteousness, rendered themselves unworthy of the Priesthood and its powers, and hence it is withheld from them to this day.

Writing in 1935 Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith, who later became the tenth president of the LDS Church, explained that Cain was to be the father of an “inferior race”:

Not only was Cain called upon to suffer [for killing Abel], but because of his wickedness he became the

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29 Harrell, “This is My Doctrine,” p. 388.
30 “Speech by Gov. Young in Joint Session of the Legislature, [Territory of Utah], Feb. 5th 1852 giving his views on slavery,” as reprinted in Curse of Cain, p. 99.
31 “Acts, Resolutions, and Memorials, passed by the First Annual, and Special Sessions, of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Utah...” 1852.
32 Tanner, Curse of Cain, pp. 44-46.
father of an inferior race. . . . Millions of souls have come into this world cursed with a black skin and have been denied the privilege of Priesthood and the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel. These are the descendants of Cain.37

In one of Joseph Fielding Smith’s popular books, Doctrines of Salvation, he wrote:

NO NEUTRALS IN HEAVEN. There were no neutrals in the war in heaven. All took sides either with Christ or with Satan. Every man had his agency there, and men receive rewards there based upon their actions there, just as they will receive rewards hereafter for deeds done in the body. The Negro, evidently, is receiving the reward he merits.38

At the October 1947 LDS Conference, Apostle George F. Richards proclaimed:

The Negro race have been forbidden the priesthood, and the higher temple blessings, presumably because of their not having been valiant while in the spirit. It does not pay to be anything but valiant.39

LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, son-in-law of President Joseph Fielding Smith, wrote:

Those who were less valiant in pre-existence and who thereby had certain spiritual restrictions imposed upon them during mortality are known to us as the Negroes. Such spirits are sent to earth through the lineage of Cain, the mark put upon him for his rebellion against God and his murder of Abel being a black skin.40

On March 18, 1961, Alvin R. Dyer, of the First Presidency, speaking at the missionary conference in Oslo, Norway, stated:

Why is it that you are white and not colored? Have you ever asked yourself that question? Who had anything to do with your being born into the Church and not born a Chinese or a Hindu, or a Negro? . . . I suppose, and you often may have heard missionaries say it, or have asked the question, why is a negro a negro? And you have heard this answer: Well, they must have been neutral in the pre-existence or they must have straddled the issue. That is the most common saying, they were neither hot nor cold so the Lord made them Negroes. This is, of course, not true. The reason that spirits are born into Negro bodies is because those spirits rejected the priesthood of God in the Pre-existence. This is the reason why you have Negroes on the earth. . . . All of this is according to a well-worked-out plan, that these millions and billions of spirits awaiting birth in the pre-existence would be born through a channel or race of people. Consequently, the cursed were to be born through Ham. . . . This is why you have colored people, why you have dark people and why you have white people.41

LDS Apostle Mark E. Petersen, speaking in 1954 at the Convention of Teachers of Religion on the College Level, Brigham Young University, gave this overview of the church’s teaching on race:

The discussion of civil rights, especially over the last 20 years, has drawn some very sharp lines. It has blinded the thinking of some of our own people, I believe. . . . We who teach in the Church certainly must have our feet on the ground and not be led astray by the philosophies of men on this subject any more than on any other subject. . . . He [the Negro] is not just seeking the opportunity of sitting down in a cafe where white people eat. . . . It appears that the negro seeks absorption with the white race. He will not be satisfied until he achieves it by intermarriage. . . . What should be our attitude as Latter-day Saints toward negro and other dark races? Does the Lord give us any guidance? Is there any Church policy on this matter? Is segregation in and of itself a wrong principle? . . .

Is there any reason to think that the same principles of rewards and punishments did not apply to us and our deeds in the pre-existent world as will apply hereafter? Is there reason then why the type of birth we receive in this life is not a reflection of our worthiness or lack of it in the pre-existent life? We must accept the justice of God He is fair to all. His is not a respecter of persons. He will mete to us according to what we deserve. . . . We cannot escape the conclusion that because of performance in our pre-existence some of us are born as Chinese, some as Japanese, some as Indians, some as Negroes, some as Americans, some as Latter-day Saints. These are rewards and punishments, fully in harmony with His established policy in dealing with sinners and saints, rewarding all according to their deeds. . . .

The Lord segregated the people both as to blood and place of residence. At least in the cases of the Lamanites and the Negroes we have the definite word of the Lord Himself that He placed a dark skin upon them as a curse—as a punishment and as a sign to all others. He forbade intermarriage with them under

39 George F. Richards, LDS Conference Report (October 1947); p. 57.
In 1969 the LDS First Presidency issued another statement on race:

December 15, 1969

To General Authorities, Regional Representatives of the Twelve, Stake Presidents, Mission Presidents, and Bishops.

Dear Brethren:

In view of confusion that has arisen, it was decided at a meeting of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve to restate the position of the Church with regard to the Negro both in society and in the Church.

We believe that the Constitution of the United States was divinely inspired.

It follows, therefore, that we believe the Negro, as well as those of other races, should have his full Constitutional privileges as a member of society.

However, matters of faith, conscience, and theology are not within the purview of the civil law.

From the beginning of this dispensation, Joseph Smith and all succeeding presidents of the Church have taught that Negroes, while spirit children of a common Father, and the progeny of our earthly parents Adam and Eve, were not yet to receive the priesthood, for reasons which we believe are known to God but which He has not made fully known to man.

Our living prophet, President David O. McKay, has said, “The seeming discrimination by the Church toward the Negro is not something which originated with man; but goes back into the beginning with God.”

“Revelation assures us that this plan antedates man’s mortal existence, extending back to man’s pre-existent state.”

From these quotes we see how the LDS teachings on premortal performance, race, and the supposed curse of Cain are intertwined. With so many of the LDS prophets and apostles teaching that blacks have been cursed with a black skin due to their misdeeds in the premortal existence, one wonders how the LDS Church can dismiss these as simply comments by “individuals” or “folklore”?

Lifting the Ban

During the 1960’s and early 1970’s the LDS Church received extensive social pressure to change their racial stance in the form of demonstrations, and newspaper and magazine articles.

For over a hundred years LDS leaders had taught that blacks could not be given the priesthood until all the rest of Adam’s posterity had been given the opportunity. Preaching in 1866, Brigham Young declared:

Why are so many of the inhabitants of the earth cursed with a skin of blackness? It comes in consequence of their fathers rejecting the power of the Holy Priesthood, and the law of God. They will go down to death. And when all the rest of the children have received their blessings in the Holy Priesthood, then that curse will be removed from the seed of Cain, and they will then come up and possess the priesthood, and receive all the blessings which we now are entitled to.

Yet on June 9, 1978, the LDS Church’s Deseret News carried a startling announcement by the First Presidency of the LDS Church that stated a new revelation had been given:

We have pleaded long and earnestly in behalf of these, our faithful brethren, spending many hours in the upper room of the Temple supplicating the Lord for divine guidance.

He has heard our prayers, and by revelation has confirmed that the long-promised day has come when every faithful, worthy man in the church may receive the holy priesthood, with power to exercise its divine authority, and enjoy with his loved ones every blessing that flows therefrom, including the blessings of the temple. Accordingly, all worthy male members of the


44 Tanner, Curse of Cain? pp. 54-78.

church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color.46

One should note, however, that the actual “revelation” was not printed, only an announcement of a revelation, which has now been added to the back of their Doctrine and Covenants as Declaration 2. This is similar to the situation in 1890 when the church issued the “Manifesto” announcing the end of polygamous marriages, printed as Declaration 1 in the D&C.47

Twenty-five years before the LDS Church gave up the practice of polygamy they were declaring that no such change could be made. In 1865 the church announced:

We have shown that in requiring the relinquishment of polygamy, they ask the renunciation of the entire faith of this people. . . .

There is no half way house. The childish babble about another revelation is only an evidence how half informed men can talk.48

However, as the U.S. government persisted in prosecuting LDS polygamists,49 LDS President Wilford Woodruff issued the 1890 Manifesto which suspended its practice. The lifting of the priesthood ban on blacks seems to be another instance of political pressure forcing the church to announce a new revelation. Writing in the New York Times, June 11, 1978, Professor Mario S. DePillis observed: “For Mormonism’s anti-black policy a revelation was the only way out, and many students of Mormonism were puzzled only at the lateness of the hour.”

Both Declaration 1 and 2 at the back of the Doctrine and Covenants were supposedly the result of “revelation” ending a long criticized practice of the LDS Church. Yet neither was accompanied by an official explanation of the doctrinal implications. Doctrine and Covenants, Section 132, which teaches plural marriage, and the Pearl of Great Price, with its statements about Cain and black skin, are still considered scripture.

On the official LDS web site is a statement titled “Priesthood Ordination before 1978.”50 There the priesthood ban on blacks is defended as being similar to the Old Testament priesthood restrictions: “Among the tribes of Israel, for example, only men of the tribe of Levi were given the priesthood and allowed to officiate in certain ordinances.”51 Notice, the comparison was made to something God announced to Israel. This implies that the ban on blacks was also God-ordained, not “folklore” or a practice of unknown origin. The tribe of Levi was chosen but the rest of Israel was not declared to be under a “curse” as blacks were said to be prior to the 1978 change.

Attending the Temple

After the First Presidency made their 1978 announcement, many people became confused over the church’s position on interracial marriage and temple attendance. It soon became apparent, however, that the church’s ban on blacks participating in the temple ordinances and the ban on mixed marriages had been lifted.

Joseph Freeman, the first black man ordained to the priesthood after the 1978 change, indicated that he wanted to be sealed in the temple to his wife who was not of African descent. Church spokesman Don LeFevre said that such a marriage would be possible and that although the church did not encourage interracial marriage, there was no longer a policy against whites marrying blacks:

That is entirely possible, said Mr. LeFevre. . . . “So there is no ban on interracial marriage. If a black partner contemplating marriage is worthy of going to the Temple, nobody’s going to stop him—if he’s marrying a white, an Oriental . . . if he’s ready to go to the Temple, obviously he may go with the blessings of the church.”52

On June 24, 1978, the Salt Lake Tribune announced:

Joseph Freeman, 26, the first black man to gain the priesthood in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Friday went in the Salt Lake Temple with his wife and sons for sacred ordinances . . . Thomas S. Monson, member of the church’s Quorum of Twelve Apostles, conducted the marriage and sealing ceremonies.

One hundred years earlier Elijah Abel had requested the same privilege of attending the temple, but was denied. LDS author Armand Mauss commented:

The restrictive policy on priesthood, . . . lingered on. It was periodically reconsidered after Brigham Young’s death in 1877, usually in response to a petition from a black member or sympathizer. The first of these reconsiderations occurred as early as 1879, when Young’s successor, John Taylor, responded to a petition from Elijah Abel (the sole surviving black member to have received the priesthood) that he be admitted to the sacred temple rites of the church. Taylor’s consultations turned up a claim by two prominent local church leaders

46 Deseret News (June 9, 1978), p. 1A.
47 Doctrine and Covenants, Official Declaration, #1 and #2.
51 Ibid.
52 Salt Lake Tribune (June 14, 1978).
that in the mid-1830s they had heard Joseph Smith declare that Negroes could not be given the priesthood and that Abel was supposed to have been stripped of it before Smith died.

Taylor himself, though a contemporary of these witnesses and a close associate of Smith, could recall no such instruction. . . . The young apostle Joseph F. Smith, nephew of the prophet, disagreed with their recollections on the basis of an 1841 certificate he had seen verifying Abel’s ordination as a seventy, and Abel himself had similar documentation . . . . To Abel’s chagrin, church policy was “resolved” not by granting his petition [to attend the temple] but by sending him on a mission. 53

Abel’s requests for temple ordinances were repeatedly denied. He died in 1884 and was buried in the Salt Lake City Cemetery, never having been admitted to the temple. His son and grandson were also ordained to the priesthood but we have no evidence that they were ever allowed to attend the temple. 54

Another early black convert to Mormonism was Jane Manning James. Her family joined Mormonism in the 1840’s and she lived for a time in the Joseph Smith home as a domestic. After migrating to Utah she was a domestic in the Brigham Young home and married another black convert, Isaac James. Isaac left the family in 1869 but Jane remained faithful to the LDS Church. Mormon historian Jessie I. Embry tells some of Jane’s story:

Jane Manning James was a member of the female Relief Society and donated to the St. George, Manti, and Logan temple funds. She repeatedly petitioned the First Presidency to be endowed and to have her children sealed to her. During the time that Isaac was gone, Jane asked to be sealed to Walker Lewis who, like Elijah Abel, had been ordained during Joseph Smith’s lifetime.

After Isaac died, Jane asked that they be given the ordination of adoption so that they would be together in the next life. She explained in correspondence to church leaders that Emma Smith had offered to have her sealed to the Smith family as a child. She reconsidered that decision and asked to be sealed to the Smiths. Permission for all of these requests was denied.

Instead the First Presidency “decided she might be adopted into the family of Joseph Smith as a servant, which was done, a special ceremony having been prepared for the purpose.” The minutes of the Council of Twelve Apostles continued, “But Aunt Jane was not satisfied with this, and as a mark of dissatisfaction she applied again after this for sealing blessings, but of course in vain.” 55

Jane Manning James died in 1908 and President Joseph F. Smith spoke at her funeral. LDS Apostle Mathias F. Cowley reported:

In after years when President Joseph F. Smith preached the funeral sermon of this same faithful woman he declared that she would in the resurrection attain the longings of her soul and become a white and beautiful person. 56

Today there is no restriction on ethnic identity for faithful Mormons to participate in their temple ordinances.

Could the Ban on Women in the Priesthood be Changed as Well?

Speaking at the LDS Conference in October of 1967, Apostle Ezra Taft Benson, who would later become the thirteenth president of the LDS Church, related the priesthood prohibition on blacks with the same policy for women:

Increasingly the Latter-day Saints must choose between the reasoning of men and the revelations of God. This is a crucial choice, for we have those within the Church today who, with their worldly wisdom, are leading some of our members astray. . . . The Lord does not always give reasons for each commandment. Sometimes faithful members, like Adam of old, are called upon to obey an injunction of the Lord even though they do not know the reason why it was given. Those who trust in God will obey him, knowing full well that time will provide the reasons and vindicate their obedience.

The arm of flesh may not approve nor understand why God has not bestowed the priesthood on women or the seed of Cain, but God’s ways are not man’s ways. 57

However, thirty years later Gordon B. Hinckley seemed to suggest that the restriction on women in the priesthood could be changed at some future time. In 1997 Hinckley was interviewed by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation regarding the 1978 revelation giving priesthood to blacks:

RB: Now up until 1978 I understand Blacks were not allowed to be priests in your Church?

GBH [G. B. Hinckley]: That is correct. Although we have Black members of the Church. . . .

55 Embry, Black Saints in a White Church, pp. 40-41.
RB: So in retrospect was the Church wrong in that?

GBH: No I don’t think it was wrong. It things, [sic] various things happened in different periods. There’s a reason for them.

RB: What was the reason for that?

GBH: I don’t know what the reason was. But I know that we’ve rectified whatever may have appeared to be wrong at the time.

RB: Is it a problem for the Church that it still has a tag of being racist?

GBH: No I don’t think so. I don’t see that anywhere.

RB: At present women are not allowed to be priests in your Church. Why is that?

GBH: That’s right, because the Lord has put it that way. Now women have a very prominent place in this Church. They have their own organization. . . . And the women of that organization sit on Boards. . . . They counsel with us. . . . and if you ask them they’ll say we’re happy and we’re satisfied.

RB: They all say that?

GBH: Yes. All except a oh you’ll find a little handful one or two here and there, . . .

RB: You say the Lord has put it that way. What do you mean by that?

GBH: I mean that’s a part of His programme. Of course it is, yes.

RB: Is it possible that the rules could change in the future as the rules are on Blacks?

GBH: He could change them yes. If He were to change them that’s the only way it would happen.

RB: So you’d have to get a revelation?

GBH: Yes, But there’s no agitation for that. We don’t find it. Our women are happy. They’re satisfied.58

Hinckley’s interview certainly raises some interesting questions. If enough women campaigned for priesthood and enough public pressure were mounted against the LDS priesthood ban on women, would the LDS Church change its policy as it did on plural marriage and blacks?

Do the LDS Prophets Speak for God?

How does one reconcile over one hundred and eighty years of racial statements by LDS prophets and apostles with their claim of prophetic leadership? By insisting that past statements by their prophets were simply “speculation or opinions” they have clouded the issue of when their prophets speak for God. In the March 2012 Ensign, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the LDS First Presidency, instructed that they speak “throughout all time”:

Prophets are inspired teachers and are always special witnesses of Jesus Christ (see D&C 107:23). Prophets speak not only to the people of their time, but they also speak to people throughout all time. Their voices echo through the centuries as a testament of God’s will to His children.59

In the LDS Church manual Gospel Principles we read:

In addition to these four books of scripture [Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price], the inspired words of our living prophets become scripture to us. Their words come to us through conferences, the Liahona or Ensign magazine, and instructions to local priesthood leaders.60

One would naturally assume that an official statement issued by the First Presidency would constitute church doctrine that would be for “all time.” However, the current LDS position on blacks seems to be at odds with the 1949 statement of the First Presidency, where the ban on blacks was declared to be a “direct commandment from the Lord”:

The attitude of the church with reference to the Negroes remains as it has always stood. It is not a matter of the declaration of a policy but of direct commandment from the Lord on which is founded the doctrine of the Church from the days of its organization, to the effect that Negroes may become members of the Church but that they are not entitled to the priesthood at the present time. . . .

The position of the Church regarding the Negro may be understood when another doctrine of the Church is kept in mind, namely, that the conduct of spirits in the premortal existence has some determining effect upon the conditions and circumstances under which these spirits take on mortality and that while the details of this principle have not been made known, the mortality is a privilege that is given to those who maintain their first estate; and that the worth of the privilege is so great that


60 Gospel Principles (Salt Lake City: LDS Church, 2009), p. 48.
spirits are willing to come to earth and take on bodies no matter what the handicap may be as to the kind of bodies they are to secure; and that among the handicaps, failure of the right to enjoy in mortality the blessings of the priesthood is a handicap which spirits are willing to assume in order that they might come to earth. . . .

Well, what about the removal of the curse? We know what the Lord has said in the Book of Mormon in regard to the Lamanites—they shall become a White and a delightsome people. I know of no scripture having to do with the removal of the curse from the Negro.63

But how is one to reconcile this 1949 statement by the LDS First Presidency with the recent church press release denouncing past leaders teachings on race as “speculation and opinion”? Are press releases now to be considered more “official” than a statement by the LDS First Presidency?

The LDS Church emphasizes that the members are to follow the “living prophets” as opposed to their dead prophets. However, they continually quote past prophets when it suits their purpose. In 2010 two General Authorities of the LDS Church62 reminded Mormons of President Ezra Taft Benson’s 1980 speech, “Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet,” where he stated that “The prophet will never lead the Church astray.”63

In an Opinion piece for the Salt Lake Tribune, Matthew L. Harris, associate professor and director of graduate studies in history at Colorado State University-Pueblo in Pueblo, Colorado, commented:

Brigham Young University religion professor Randy Bott had a bad day last week. His church rebuked him for teaching false doctrine, his colleagues scorned him, and dozens of pious Mormon bloggers called for his resignation. . . .

But did Bott teach false doctrine? Were his views incompatible with Mormon theology? If so, how did a man who gets paid to teach students at an LDS university about Mormon theology not understand this crucial theological point? . . .

Today’s church leaders say “we do not know why God denied blacks the priesthood,” but earlier leaders never made that claim. In fact, they made it very clear why blacks couldn’t hold the priesthood: God cursed them with the mark of Cain because they lacked moral purity in a pre-Earth life.

If such words make us wince, they didn’t have that effect on early church leaders. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the church was thoroughly awash in such teachings. . . .

Church officials now deny that they ever taught the divine-curse doctrine. “This folklore is not part of and never was taught as doctrine by the church,” LDS spokesman Mark Tuttle boldly declared in 2008 . . . The church reaffirmed this position in a recent press release, claiming that a few misguided leaders gave “some explanations” about the “origins of priesthood availability” that “do not represent church doctrine.”

And yet, the new official line cannot be reconciled with the hundreds, maybe thousands, of authoritative statements the church has made on the subject throughout its 182-year history. . . . LDS leaders would be well served to acknowledge this doctrine, apologize for it and move on. Until they have the courage to do that, more people like Bott will get their knuckles rapped, and more people will ask why the church sweeps its racial history under a rug.64

Sweeping past LDS leaders’ sermons on blacks “under a rug” is indeed the best that the LDS leadership has been able to do. Apostle Bruce R. McConkie’s speech of 1978 illustrates this very point:

I would like to say something about the new revelation relative to the priesthood going to those of all nations and races. . . . The gospel goes to various peoples and nations on a priority basis. . . . Not only is the gospel to go, on a priority basis and harmonious to a divine timetable, to one nation after another, but the whole history of God’s dealings with men on earth indicates that such has been the case in the past; it has been restricted and limited where many people are concerned. . . . With some minor exceptions, the gospel in [Christ’s] day went exclusively to Israel. The Lord had to give Peter the vision and revelation of the sheet coming down from heaven with the unclean meat on it, following which Cornelius sent the messenger to Peter to learn what he, Cornelius, and his gentle associates should do. . . . There have been these problems, and the Lord has permitted them to arise. There isn’t any question about that. We do not envision the whole reason and purpose behind all of it; we can only suppose and reason that it is on the basis of our premortal devotion and faith. . . . There are statements in our literature by the early Brethren which we have interpreted to mean that the Negroses would not receive the priesthood in mortality. I have said the same things, and people write me letters and say, “You said such and such, and how is it now that we do such and such?” And all I can say to that is that it is time disbelieving people repented and got in line and believed in a living, modern prophet.

Forget everything that I have said, or what President Brigham Young or President George Q. Cannon or whomsoever has said in days past that is contrary to the present revelation. We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world. . . .

It doesn’t make a particle of difference what anybody ever said about the Negro matter before the first day of June of this year, 1978. It is a new day and a new arrangement, and the Lord has now given the revelation that sheds light out into the world on this subject.65

A close reading of McConkie’s statement shows that he still believed the ban was appropriate until 1978 and that it was based on “our premortal devotion and faith.” In other words, the church was right about the curse on Cain and to restrict priesthood to blacks until they got the 1978 revelation. So the new revelation only ended the ban, it didn’t address the issue of the curse and black skin. In a 1998 interview for the Salt Lake Tribune, David Jackson, a black member of the LDS Church, explained:

“What [the 1978 revelation] doesn’t say is we’re no longer of the lineage of Cain, that we no longer did these things in pre-existence. It does not say we are not cursed with black skin.”66

BYU professor Eugene England was troubled in 1998 by the lingering racial teachings being passed on to future generations:

This is a good time to remind ourselves that most Mormons are still in denial about the ban, unwilling to talk in Church settings about it, and that some Mormons still believe that Blacks were cursed by descent from Cain through Ham. Even more believe that Blacks, as well as other non-white people, come color-coded into the world, their lineage and even their class a direct indication of failures in a previous life. . . . The majority of Mormons were clearly still racists in the 1960s . . . Sadly, some of that baggage is still with us. I check occasionally in classes at BYU and find that still, twenty years after the revelation, a majority of bright, well-educated Mormon students say they believe that Blacks are descendants of Cain and Ham and thereby cursed and that skin color is an indication of righteousness in the pre-mortial life. They tell me these ideas came from their parents or Seminary and Sunday School teachers, and they have never questioned them.67

William Lobdell, of the Los Angeles Times, observed:

In the not-too-distant past, the Mormon faithful were routinely taught that blacks were an inferior race, the color of their skin linked to curses from God recounted in Hebrew and Mormon scriptures. Besides being barred from the priesthood, black males couldn’t serve on missions or be married in the temple—though they could become church members and be baptized.

The Mormons’ historic position on race wasn’t much different from that of many other U.S. denominations; it just lasted longer. It took until 1978—14 years after the Civil Rights Act—before the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints lifted the ban following what leaders said was a revelation from God to make the priesthood available to “every faithful, worthy man.”

The new doctrine came without an apology or repudiation of the church’s past practice. . . .68

Until the LDS Church officially clarifies its doctrine of pre-existence and assignment to race, its old teachings will continue to haunt them and be handed down through the generations to come.

In contrast to these teachings, the first century Christians placed no restrictions on those of various races. In Acts 8:36-40, Philip baptized the Ethiopian man and placed no racial restrictions on him. Later in Acts we read that “God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts. 10:34-35). Also, Paul wrote to the Christians in Galatia that “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).


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I often come across this scenario on Mormon Facebook Pages and other sites as I browse the internet: Self-proclaimed Mormon “apologists” using material from FAIR (Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research) to “prove” that critics of Mormonism are dead wrong about issues that the critics claim prove the LDS Church has manipulated or lied about its history. Case in point—Joseph Smith’s “prophecy” recorded in the History of the Church:

“I prophesied that the Saints would continue to suffer much affliction and would be driven to the Rocky Mountains, many would apostatize, others would be put to death by our persecutors or lose their lives in consequence of exposure or disease, and some of you will live to go and assist in making settlements and build cities and see the Saints become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains.”

I. LDS CHALLENGING "ANTI-MORMONS"

On a Facebook Page titled “Challenging Anti-Mormon Apologetics,” I came across the following post:

LDS Honesty: Lying for the Lord … also says the following:

4. The famous Rocky Mountain Prophecy was a later addition to the official church history and not uttered by Joseph Smith as a prediction that the Mormons would inhabit the Salt Lake Valley. Despite the fact it is not authentic; the church presented it as such for more than a century. The “Rocky Mountain Prophecy” was added after the Mormons arrived in Utah. (The Changing World of Mormonism, p. 406) The church had no intentions of giving this information to members, in order to make their history appear more faith promoting.

Contemporary documentation says otherwise.

What is this “contemporary documentation” they speak of? If one pursues the FAIR link that the Facebook Page references, one comes upon the Mormon apologist response to the allegation that Smith’s famous Rocky Mountain “prophecy” was inserted into the Manuscript History of the Church at a later date. But has FAIR proved their point? Let’s start with their conclusion and work our way back. FAIR states,

To accept a “forgery” theory, we must accept that all of the people listed above who remembered Joseph speaking about the Rocky Mountains were lying or fabricating their experience. Furthermore, we must also accept that Joseph was sending explorers to the west with no real expectation of moving, and the discussion of heading west by both members and enemies was all idle talk.

This is a classic case of diverting the issue. Jerald and Sandra Tanner actually state in The Changing World of Mormonism,

In our book Falsification of Joseph Smith’s History, page 10, we stated concerning this prophecy:

There is some evidence that Joseph Smith considered going west to build his kingdom, but since we now know that the Mormon Historians actually compiled Joseph Smith’s History after his death and that they drew from many sources, we cannot help being suspicious of the authorship of this prophecy.

We see that the Tanners did indeed admit that “there is some evidence that Joseph Smith considered going west”, so why does FAIR state,

But, to claim that the account of him discussing and even prophesying a move to the west rests on nothing but “forgery” is to distort and ignore too many sources, from too broad a time period, over what is essentially a peripheral issue.

Notice how FAIR is trying to tie this specific “prophecy” to any discussion about the Rocky Mountains, and that any discussion of moving west by Smith must also be classed as spurious. Then, if they can show that Smith discussed it, this makes the Tanners deceptive. FAIR is trying to set their own criteria here, but this is not what the Tanners claim at all, as I have shown above.

The Tanner’s claim was not that Smith never discussed the Rocky Mountains, or moving the church west; it was that a prophecy was fabricated by Mormon Historians (most likely based on exaggerations by contemporary Mormons well after the fact) and placed in the official History of the Church as an actual specific statement (prophecy) made by Joseph Smith. The specific charge made by the Tanners was this,

Important evidence concerning Joseph Smith’s prophecy that the Mormons would come to the Rocky

1 History of the Church, by Joseph Smith, Deseret Book, vol. 5, ch. 4, p. 85.
2 “Challenging Anti-Mormon Apologetics” is a Facebook Page that describes itself as “A group where the members discuss issues brought up by critics of Mormonism on Face Book.’
4 Ibid.
Mountains has recently come to light. This prophecy was reported to have been given in 1842 in Illinois. Joseph Smith himself was supposed to have said:

While the Deputy Grand-Master was engaged in giving the requisite instructions to the Master-elect, I had a conversation with a number of brethren . . . I prophesied that the Saints would continue to suffer much affliction and would be driven to the Rocky Mountains, many would apostatize, others would be put to death by our persecutors or lose their lives in consequence of exposure or disease, and some of you will live to go and assist in making settlements and build cities and see the Saints become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains. (History of the Church, vol. 5, p. 85)\(^6\)

The Tanners go on to explain how they acquired a photograph of the very manuscript page of the History containing the prophecy. However, the prophecy has obviously been added to the manuscript at a later date. The Tanners continue,

... The situation, then, boils down to the following: we have two handwritten [history] manuscripts, books D-1 and D-2. Neither of these books were even started until after Joseph Smith's death [in 1844]. In both cases the prophecy concerning the Mormons coming to the Rocky Mountains was interpolated in a smaller handwriting. From this evidence we can reach only one conclusion: the famous "Rocky Mountain Prophecy" is not authentic.\(^7\)

FAIR singles out both One Nation Under Gods, by Richard Abanes, and Jerald and Sandra Tanner's book The Changing World of Mormonism, (and since they imply that Richard Abanes probably got his information from the Tanners I will focus on the argument made in Changing World). FAIR makes these points of criticism:

Jerald and Sandra Tanner claim that a prophecy from Joseph about the Saints' move to the Rocky Mountains was forged after the fact and inserted into the History of the Church. They provide the following sources for this claim:

- History of the Church 5:85.
- Brigham Young University Studies, Summer 1971, p.469
- Davis Bitton, “Joseph Smith in the Mormon Folk Memory,” The John Whitmer address, delivered at the Second Annual Meeting of the John Whitmer Historical Association, Lamoni, Iowa, September 28, 1974, unpublished manuscript, p.16 [This article is now available in “Joseph Smith in the Mormon Folk Memory,” in Restoration Studies, ed. Maurice L. Draper, vol. 1, (Independence, Missouri, 1980).]\(^8\)

FAIR concludes, “This use of sources is dishonest and misleading.”

II. UN -FAIR?

FAIR maintains that the Tanner’s use of these sources are “dishonest” and “misleading.” Let’s take this point by point and see if that is the case. FAIR states,

None of these sources support the argument:

The BYU Studies article from 1971 is Dean Jessee’s account of the authorship of the History of the Church. It says nothing about adding a “Rocky Mountain Prophecy,” and the Tanners neglect to provide the perspective on authorship practices in 19th century history that Jessee provides. They thus hide the material that answers their objection. Readers can fortunately access these ideas on the wiki.\(^9\)

Can we point out that FAIR doesn’t explain that the History of the Church still retains Joseph Smith’s name as author and it doesn’t explain how the history was compiled from other people’s diaries? And they must have missed the Tanners when they explained, “... we now know that the Mormon Historians actually compiled Joseph Smith’s History after his death and that they drew from many sources . . .” Do all the Mormon “Authorities” who quote this “prophecy” from the History bother to explain the background behind it, or that in using it this way they tout Smith’s prophetic powers as though he had actually penned those lines? But the real question that FAIR doesn’t address about the quote from Jessee is why the Tanners used it. Not only does FAIR not explain this, they don’t even offer a link or internet address to the book! They don’t even bother to quote what the Tanners said! Here is the Tanner’s explanation:

We are now happy to announce that a photograph of the portion of the original handwritten manuscript containing this ‘prophecy’ has been located at the Visitor Center in Nauvoo, Illinois. Wesley P. Walters of Marissa, Illinois, has sent us a photograph of this page. . . . This photograph is taken from “Joseph Smith’s Manuscript History,” Book D-1, page 1362.

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

\(^6\) Changing World, p. 405.
\(^7\) Ibid., p. 406.
\(^8\) http://en.fairmormon.org/Joseph_Smith_prophecies/Forged_Rocky_Mountain_prophecy/Tanners_use_of_sources
\(^9\) Ibid.
We reasoned that if the page was not written until July 4, 1845, then it was likely that the interpolation containing the prophecy was not added until after the Mormons came to Utah. We have recently found new evidence which further undermines the authenticity of this prophecy. Fortunately, in 1845 Brigham Young had ordered the scribes to make a “duplicate handwritten copy of the History” (Brigham Young University Studies, Summer 1971, p. 469). We examined this second manuscript, Book D-2, p. 2, and found that the “Rocky Mountain Prophecy” was written in very small handwriting between the lines. In other words, it was obviously added at a later time to this manuscript. 10

So the reason that the Tanners quoted Jessee from his 1971 article, was to prove that the Manuscript History and the duplicate weren’t written until 1845, a year after Smith died, and that the prophecy was added even later than that. The Tanners then quote an address by assistant LDS historian Davis Bitton where he discusses the absence of a contemporary source for the prophecy. 11 They also included a photo (in their on-line version of the book) of the page in question from the Manuscript History [see photo on the following page of this newsletter]. This photo absolutely supports the argument and FAIR doesn’t deal with the Manuscript History addition.

FAIR is not playing fair because they are not telling you why the Tanners used the BYU Studies source. And they do not discuss Bitton’s acknowledgment that “no such prophecy in the handwriting of Joseph Smith or published during the Prophet’s lifetime” exists. How many Mormons are going to go to the trouble of reading why the Tanners used the BYU Studies source? Especially when FAIR doesn’t quote them. FAIR then goes to the Davis Bitton source and states,

Davis Bitton’s article specifically rejects the Tanners’ claim:

Two errors have been made regarding this Rocky Mountains prophecy. The first is to reject it out of hand as a later invention of the Utah Mormons. There is enough discussion of possible westward moves during the later Nauvoo period to think that Joseph Smith, in one of his prophetic moods, might well have said something of the sort. The second error, even more serious, is to seize upon these fragments as the basis for concluding that Joseph knew exactly what the future held in store for the Saints down to every last detail. Like the constitution-by-a-thread prophecy, the Rocky Mountains prophecy probably had a basis in an actual statement. The two prophecies are alike, too, in the fact that they were extremely popular later on when they served the needs of the Saints for encouragement. 12

First, the Tanners did not “reject it out of hand as a later invention,” they show credible evidence that it was indeed added later. Second, a statement that one is thinking about moving west someday, or sending out exploration parties, is far different from prophesying that one will, with specific details about what happens before and after. Thirdly, (and most important) it is the Mormons that are “seizing upon these fragments as the basis for concluding that Joseph knew exactly what the future held in store for the Saints down to every last detail,” and that is why this is not a “peripheral issue.” Here is a little more of the Tanner’s use of Davis Bitton’s article that FAIR doesn’t quote,

“The situation, then, boils down to the following: we have two handwritten manuscripts, books D-1 and D-2. Neither of these books were even started until after Joseph Smith’s death. In both cases the prophecy concerning the Mormons going to the Rocky Mountains was interpolated in a smaller handwriting. From this evidence we can reach only one conclusion: the famous “Rocky Mountain Prophecy” is not authentic. The church historical department has Joseph Smith’s diary for 1842-43, but the first entry does not appear until December 21—some four months after the prophecy was supposed to have been given. Mormon scholars have been unable to come up with anything to support the authenticity of this prophecy.

The Tanner’s argument continues,

Davis Bitton, an assistant church historian, has written almost five pages concerning this matter. He frankly states that “there is no such prophecy in the handwriting of Joseph Smith or published during the Prophet’s lifetime, but it was referred to in general terms in 1846 during the trek west. After the arrival in the Salt Lake Valley the prophecy was frequently cited and became more specific as time went on” (“Joseph Smith in the Mormon Folk Memory,” The John Whitmer Address, delivered at the Second Annual Meeting of the John Whitmer Historical Association, Lamoni, Iowa, September 28, 1974, unpublished manuscript, p. 16).

Davis Bitton goes on to state that “The manuscript history covering this period was written in 1845....” This is, of course, a year after Joseph Smith’s death. Mr. Bitton then admits that the prophecy is an “insertion” which was added into the manuscript as “an afterthought” (p. 18). Although Davis Bitton cannot find any real evidence that Joseph Smith made the famous “Rocky Mountain Prophecy,” he does feel that there was “a time when something like this might have been said by Joseph Smith with considerable plausibility. Anytime during the last four years of his life,.... the Prophet had good reason to consider possibilities for relocation. It can be demonstrated that he considered the possibility of settling in Oregon (or on Vancouver Island). He was attempting to negotiate some kind of colonization venture in Texas ...” (p. 17).

10 Changing World, pp. 405-406.
This portion of the manuscript history was compiled in 1845. The Rocky Mountain Prophecy, the smaller handwriting at the bottom of the page, was added after 1845.
Mr. Bitton admits that other changes were made in Joseph Smith’s documents to support the idea that he knew the Mormons would come to the Rocky Mountains:

And in February 1844 the Prophet was organizing an exploring expedition to go to the West. There are some interesting changes in the way the description of this expedition was written by Willard Richards, secretary of Joseph Smith at the time, and the later revisions. The original, handwritten version reads: “Met with the Twelve in the assembly room concerning the Oregon Expedition.” This has been modified to read “the Oregon and California Exploring Expedition.” Continuing, the Richards manuscript reads, “I told them I wanted an exposition of all that country,”—which has been changed to “exploration of all that mountain country.” There are other such changes that make one suspect that the later compilers of the history, notably George A. Smith and his assistants in the 1850s, were determined to have Joseph Smith contemplating the precise location where the Saints had by then settled. Oregon would not do; Oregon and California as then defined at least included the Rocky Mountains. If the Prophet could be made to say “mountain country” instead of just “country,” it would appear that he clearly had in mind the future history of his followers (pp. 17-18).13

If we go by what FAIR states, we have Bitton refuting himself! They have to perpetuate an outright lie to make their point (that Bitton’s article specifically rejects the Tanner’s argument). Bitton’s article in no way rejects the Tanner’s claim that the specific prophecy, recorded in the History of the Church was an insertion after the fact. It was, and Bitton agrees that it was, stating that “there is no such prophecy in the handwriting of Joseph Smith or published during the Prophet’s lifetime.” The Tanners also reveal Bitton’s speculation that the prophecy might be based on something Smith might have said. But the bottom line is Smith didn’t say those specific words, and there is no proof that he did. Is FAIR’s claim that the Tanner’s use of Bitton is “dishonest”? We see that it is not, and that the Tanners are more than fair, admitting that Smith “considered going west to build his kingdom.”

III. FAIR’S EVIDENCE IS NO EVIDENCE

FAIR also attacks the Tanners and Richard Abanes for the use of the History of the Church source. FAIR quotes a footnote by B. H. Roberts, where he supports the authenticity of the “prophecy” with a quote by Anson Call. But is the Anson Call reference used by Roberts and FAIR credible?

As “evidence” FAIR writes, 

The prophecy source is the biography of Anson Call, in August 1842. The relevant section reads as follows:

“A block schoolhouse had been prepared with shade in front, under which was a barrel of ice water. Judge Adams, the highest Masonic authority in the State of Illinois, had been sent there to organize this lodge. He, Hyrum Smith and J. C. Bennett, being high Masons, went into the house to perform some ceremonies which the others were not entitled to witness. These, including Joseph Smith, remained under the bowery. Joseph as he was tasting the cold water, warned the brethren not to be too free with it. With the tumbler still in his hand, he prophesied that the Saints would yet go to the Rocky Mountains, and said he, ‘This water tastes much like that of the crystal streams that are running from the snow-capped mountains. I had before seen him in a vision, and now saw, while he was talking, his countenance change to white, not the deadly white of a bloodless face, but a living, brilliant white. He seemed absorbed in gazing upon something at a great distance and said, ‘I am gazing upon the valleys of those mountains.’

...This was followed by a vivid description of the scenery of these mountains, as I have since become acquainted with it. Pointing to Shadrach Roundy and others, he said: ‘There are some men here who shall do a great work in that land.’ Pointing to me, he said, ‘There is Anson, he shall go and shall assist in building up cities from one end of the country to the other, and you, rather extending the idea to all those he had spoken of, shall perform as great a work as has been done by man, so that the nations of the earth shall be astonished, and many of them will be gathered in that land and assist in building cities and temples, and Israel shall be made to rejoice.’... (Tullidge’s Histories, Vol. I. History of Northern Utah, and Southern Idaho.—Biographical Supplement, p. 271)

Thus, the accusation must be not only that the Church decided to “forge” a prophecy by Joseph, but that Anson Call did as well. Can we assess how likely these claims are?14

We certainly can assess them, because FAIR is not being fair here either. The first thing they want you to believe is that the Anson Call source is from “August 1842.” There are all kinds of problems with this, which B. H. Roberts mentions in that History of the Church footnote that FAIR quotes. Here are some of the problems that Roberts encountered,

It is thought important that the following statement from a biography of Anson Call, by Edward Tullidge, should be made part of the history of this prophetic incident, as doubtless the testimony of Brother Cali relates to the same incident as that described in the Prophet’s text of the History, notwithstanding some confusion of dates that exists in the Call testimony. It will be seen that the Prophet fixes the date of his prophecy on Saturday, the 6th of August, 1842. In Whitney’s History of Utah, Vol. IV.—(Biographical section of the history, p. 143), the date on which Call heard the prophecy, is given as the 8th of August, 1842. While in Tullidge’s biography of Call the date is given as the 14th of July, 1843, evidently an error. There is no entry in the Prophet’s journal for the 8th of August, 1842, and the entries for the 8th of August, 1843, and the 14th of

13 Changing World, pp. 405-406.

14 FAIR, Criticism—One Nation.
July, 1843, relate to matters of quite a different character. Tullidge, in relating Anson Call’s recollection of the incident also says that J. C. Bennett was present on the occasion, which must also be an error, as the rupture between Bennett and the Church and its authorities occurred and he had left Nauvoo previous to the 6th of August, 1842. In the Call statement as published by Tullidge, the name of Mr. Adams, the Deputy Grand Master Mason in charge of the ceremonies, is given as George, it should be James.  

Tullidge’s biography of Call was written in 1889. So when did Call actually first write down the prophecy he claimed that Smith made? Certainly not when it is claimed to have happened (August 1842), since he is wrong about so many details. Notice that even in his notes, Roberts tries to make it seem as if Smith wrote the prophecy and put it in his history himself.

It seems that Anson Call kept a journal, but the prophecy is not found there. He wrote an autobiography taken from his journals that ended at the year 1839. He later wrote what he called a “Life Sketch” which included his recollection of Smith’s prophecy. However, his account is obviously written well after the fact, because of the problems with the historical data that B. H. Roberts notes in his History of the Church footnote. Also, his journal ends when Smith escaped from Liberty Jail in 1839! The “prophecy” was obviously written later, and appears to be unfinished in the copy that Alice Burton had in her possession because it breaks off mid sentence near the end.  

FAIR’s sarcastic comment that Call “forged” his “prophecy,” is the most realistic conclusion, because the historical details don’t line up with the facts.

Since FAIR has no evidence that there was a specific Rocky Mountain prophecy uttered by Smith that was recorded in his lifetime, they choose to befuddle the issue with a series of quotes that they claim bolster the premise that there was probably a prophecy. Most of these are remembrances of Mormon authorities long after the fact—which prove nothing at all.

One interesting quote they use is from Wilford Woodruff’s Journal. On November 24, 1878, Woodruff wrote on the “Inside Front Cover Fly Sheet” of one of his Journals some “true sayings” of the “Prophet Joseph” that he says he copied from Philo Dibble’s “record.” These “true sayings” are supposedly Dibble’s recollection of Smith’s last address before the Nauvoo Legion. It is obvious from a quick reading that these are not journal entries from the period, or even written on those dates or shortly after the events because, like Call’s account, they are so full of inaccuracies.

Dibble first gives the date of the 22 of June, 1844, and says that Smith “called us [The Nauvoo Legion] out in order and to my astonishment Counselled us to give up our arms” and then prophesied to them that they would “gather many people into the fastness of the Rocky Mountains as a centre for the Gathering of the people.” He then thanked them, dismissed them and told them to “take care of your wives, children and homes.” But the speech was actually given on June 18, and the Legion did not give up their arms until June 24.

Dibble then writes that “on the 23d day of June 1844” Smith, dressed in his General’s uniform, gave his last speech to the Nauvoo Legion. If he had dismissed them the day before, (as Dibble attests) and said his obvious farewell (“take care of your wives, children and homes”) why would he give them a “last speech” the next day? Also, Dibble’s date of June 23, 1844, for the “last speech” of Smith before the Nauvoo Legion is incorrect. Dibble uses parts of Smith’s speech as recorded by those who were there and later published in the History of the Church, and then has Smith saying, . . . for you will yet be called upon to go forth and Call upon the freeman from Main to gather themselves to gather to the Rocky Mountains and the red man from the west, and all people from the North and from the South, and from the East to go to the west to establish themselves in there strong holds in their gathering places, and there you will gather the red Man to their center from their scattered and dispersed situation to become the strong arm of Jehovah who will be a strong Bulwark of Protection from your foes . . .  

With the confusion as to dates it is obviously Dibble’s later recollections.

After quoting numerous people’s recollections of Smith mentioning a move to the Rocky Mountains, FAIR concludes with,

To accept a “forgery” theory, we must accept that all of the people listed above who remembered Joseph speaking about the Rocky Mountains were lying or fabricating their experience. . . . It could be, of course, that Anson Call forged his account, and all the Church leaders and members lied about remembering Joseph speak about the matter. But why then appeal to “many of you” remembering Joseph speaking about it? Why not claim it was a private, secret teaching given to the apostles—for, they certainly also reported these. If the claim was fraudulent, why risk exposure?

Or, the story could have started after the Saints reached the valley, and simply grown in the telling with members “remembering” the story as it was retold to them. But, the contemporary evidence would seem to argue against this, and witnesses often mentioned how struck they were by Joseph’s remarks. They also described him discussing this idea in a variety of setting, which argues against an accumulated “folklore.”

15 History of the Church, footnote, vol. 5, pp. 85-86.
17 Criticism—One Nation.
18 This material is only included in the Appendix to Wilford Woodruff’s Journal as published on the New Mormon Studies CD-ROM, Signature Books, 2009. It was not included in the 1985 printing of the Wilford Woodruff’s Journal published by Signature Books.
19 Ibid
20 FAIR, Criticism—One Nation.
FAIR thinks it “strange to see critics argue that Joseph would not prophesy about this,” because they claim that critics say he “was always larding his ideas with prophetic pronouncement,” and I agree. He did. I will also show that the accumulated “folklore” argument fits the evidence perfectly.

Again we see FAIR combining two different issues and tying them together; implying if the prophecy itself was fraudulent that Smith’s discussing the matter must also be based on something “fraudulent.” The Tanners do not say that Smith never spoke about it, they admit that he did. The Tanner’s “evidence” for the invention of the specific prophecy is legitimate though, while FAIR’s evidence doesn’t appear to be any evidence at all.

Also, Call’s appeal to “many of you” was made because Smith did in fact make vague statements about the west. This obviously grew into a full blown “folklore” prophecy as did the story about Brigham Young transforming into Joseph Smith while he was making the case for claiming leadership of the Church.

I do agree with one point that FAIR makes: that Smith “discussed moving to the west several times, and likely prophesied about it.” Given the Mormons’ history of being driven out of every place they settled in, it sure wouldn’t be bad odds to do so and get that right. But it wasn’t this particular “prophecy” given in those words on that date; the details are completely different, and he made other “prophecies” about the west and Nauvoo that were completely false. This makes Smith a good guesser, but a bad prophet.

IV. THE REAL ISSUE

What is the real issue that the Tanners and Richard Abanes and others are getting at here? It is this: there were changes made in Joseph Smith’s History after the fact and written in as his actual words, without any contemporary documents to authenticate them. As B. H. Roberts writes in New Witnesses for God,

At that date, August 6th, 1842, the Rocky Mountains seemed like a country afar off to the people of Illinois. The Missouri River was the extreme frontiers of the United States. All beyond that was well nigh an unexplored wilderness filled with savages. The church was fairly settled at Nauvoo, the state authorities were apparently very friendly, the future of the Saints in Illinois seemed propitious. Yet in the midst of all these favorable circumstances the Prophet predicted much affliction for some of the Saints, death from persecution for others, apostasy for many, and for the great body of the church an exodus to the Rocky Mountains, where some of those present who were listening to the prediction, should live to assist in making settlements and building cities in the Rocky Mountains where they would see the Saints become a mighty people.

There can be no question as to the reality of these two predictions, the one of March, 1831, and the other of August, 1842, or of their being of a character to test the divine inspiration of him who uttered them. That they were proclaimed some years before the events predicted in them began to be fulfilled, or even there was any thought or prospect of such events taking place, is well known; that the latter prophecy has been fulfilled to the uttermost, the whole history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from August, 1842, until now witnesses. The Saints suffered many afflictions in Illinois. Their homes, fields, stacks of grain, stock and other property were destroyed; their prophets and a number of others were killed outright by mob violence; many more perished from exposure and disease occasioned by being driven from their homes at an inclement season of the year. In those trying times, following the martyrdom of the Prophet and the expulsion from Nauvoo, many turned away from the faith, and it is too generally known to need comment, that the great body of the church made its way to the Rocky Mountains, where cities, towns and villages have been founded, the wilderness subdued, and the Saints are fast becoming a mighty people.

Even knowing the problems with Call’s recollection of Smith’s “prophecy,” Roberts still insists that “the latter prophecy has been fulfilled to the uttermost,” and touts it as a test of “the divine inspiration of him who uttered them.” In 1891 Assistant Church Historian Andrew Jenson repeats the “prophecy” to a group of students,

“I need spend no time to prove the fulfilment of this remarkable prophecy. All of you who are present in this hall tonight can testify to its literal fulfilment. The Latter-day Saints have indeed become a mighty people in these mountains, numbering as they do now about two hundred thousand souls, organized into thirty-two stakes of Zion, or nearly five hundred wards and branches; and this does not include the Saints in Mexico and Canada. It is also a matter of history that the Saints, for years after the prediction was uttered, continued to suffer persecution and affliction from their enemies; that many apostatized, while others, who proved faithful and true to their covenants, were put to death for conscience’ sake, and the remainder were driven by a ruthless mob from the beautiful city of Nauvoo into the western wilderness in the year 1846.

Apostle Erastus Snow would add to the folklore in 1916:

“Joseph Smith, when he uttered this prophecy, when he beheld this vision, was standing upon the banks of the Mississippi River, fifteen hundred miles from where we now are. Yet he saw the Rocky Mountains, and the crystal streams flowing from yonder canyons, and I doubt not that if he had led his people to this land, as he once purposed doing, he would have recognized it as a familiar scene, having beheld it in vision, by the seeric gift, before he saw it with the natural eye. But the Prophet was not destined to fulfill his own prediction; his martyrdom prevented; and the Lord raised up another mighty man to

carry out the project, to become the founder of Utah, and the redeemer of the Great American Desert.”

On the Church’s official site, under “Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith” they are still peddling the folklore,

“The Prophet was well aware that he and all of the Saints living in Nauvoo were in an increasingly dangerous situation. As Nauvoo grew larger, some of the people who lived in the area began to fear the growing political and economic power of the Saints, and mobs began again to harass them. The Prophet was in particular danger, for authorities from Missouri made repeated efforts to capture him, and apostates from the Church became increasingly hostile in their efforts to destroy him. On August 6, 1842, the Prophet declared that the time would come when Church members would be forced to leave Nauvoo:

“I prophesied that the Saints would continue to suffer much affliction and would be driven to the Rocky Mountains, many would apostatize, others would be put to death by our persecutors or lose their lives in consequence of exposure or disease, and some of you will live to go and assist in making settlements and build cities and see the Saints become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains.”

The footnotes they give for the quote references the same interpolated manuscript that the Tanners expose as having been added after the fact:

“History of the Church, 5:85; from “History of the Church” (manuscript), book D-1, p. 1362, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.”

In July of 1997, LDS Apostle M. Russell Ballard once again references the same spurious prophecy in a New Era article,

“The pioneer exodus from Nauvoo, Illinois, began on February 4, 1846. Nearly four years earlier, in August of 1842, the Prophet Joseph Smith shared his foreknowledge of the trek west: ‘I prophesied that the Saints would continue to suffer much affliction and would be driven to the Rocky Mountains, many would apostatize, others would be put to death by our persecutors or lose their lives in consequence of exposure or disease, and some [would live to] build cities and see the Saints become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains’.”

The impression the Church today gives is not that this “prophecy” is a conglomeration of various and sundry statements by Smith, or even an amalgamation of them crafted into a coherent “prophecy,” but a valid, specific statement uttered by Smith on a particular day and inserted by Smith himself into his own history. What the evidence shows is that this is not only an interpolation, but it is an insertion of something that there is no evidence that Smith ever said in those precise words, on that particular day. The Tanners are absolutely correct in their use of sources to prove this, and their conclusion that this “prophecy” is “not authentic.”

**CONCLUSION**

FAIR boasts on their site:

“FAIR has been defending The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints online since 1997. Our mission is to provide well-researched answers to challenging questions within a faithful context.”

However, as we have seen, their methods are shoddy and deceptive. If one were to systematically go through each of their reviews, one can come to the same conclusion for the majority of their efforts. Their vilification of the Tanners as “dishonest” is especially disturbing, for as we see by the evidence from this one instance, the Tanners are vindicated by the facts, and it is FAIR who is shown to be dishonest and misleading.

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**Excerpts From Letters and Emails**

**Oct. 2011:** I have been googling and watching you on U tube and taking pages and pages of notes. You should know that you among other brave souls have been instrumental in my transition out of mormonism. A convert of 2 yrs, I ALWAYS had reservations but shelved them. . . . Talk about buyer’s remorse! . . . Know that you helped me keep my sanity and also my faith in GOD after the devastation and mostly disappointment at having been taken down the wrong road. Still I feel these past 2 years were not wasted and feel a new found sense of purpose in being able to share THE GOOD NEWS.

**Oct. 2011:** I was a mormon for 42 years, served a mission, married in the temple, and was active and held multiple callings, it wasn’t until 6 or 7 years ago when I started questioning things in the history that got me investigating the facts.

Your books I would find in the Library’s in southeast Idaho and Northern Utah and i would read and re-read them check the references to see if they had any validity and sure enough you guys were not lying. To make a long story short I left the church in 2008 and found the Lord in 2009 and am now a Christian!

**Oct. 2011:** I was raised a Mormon and left the LDS church many years ago . . . I have not taken my name off of the LDS church membership but with the help of your web site I will attempt to do so soon.
Oct. 2011: My nephew (19) has just been baptized into the Mormon church. I came across your interview with John Ankerberg on You Tube. Wow! You are amazing! . . . Again, thank you for your courage, thoroughness, and kindness in your approach. 

Oct. 2011: I support the cause for truth you are in. For a church that purports the truth and expects honesty from it’s members, you would think you could expect honesty and the truth from it. Not so easy!! I have been a member for almost 50 yrs. It is only in the last few yrs. that I have found out much of the real history.

Nov. 2011: Several years ago, as an active Bishop, your website was one of the key sources of truth, which led us to research more deeply our own beliefs. . . . Thank you so much for your faithful witness.

Nov. 2011: I just wanted to thank dear Mrs. Sandra Tanner again for visiting with me and my husband this weekend. . . . My husband and I have had such a long journey out of Mormonism. We were both oldest children of old Mormon families. Sandra has helped us to discard the heresies of Mormonism.

Dec. 2011: It is interesting that you people condemn the LDS Church and call them a false cult. . . . I am going to vacate the evangelical sphere of Christianity and become LDS. . . . I have forgiven all those . . . who have caused me hurt and prayer that they too will receive a testimony of the validity of the [LDS] gospel.

Dec. 2011: Thank you for helping me come out of Mormonism at age 55 in 2005. I am so much happier and now I have the grace that Joseph Smith took out of the supposedly “restored” gospel.

Dec. 2011: We discovered you when our daughter started dating a Mormon . . . [They] have broken up their relationship because she would not convert. She actually made it through missionary lesson 3 and stopped. [She] said that Bible verses kept coming to her mind and felt they were from God.

Dec. 2011: I admire you intensely and respect the work you’ve done. I left the church 3 weeks ago and am joyful beyond words. It took way too long to admit what I had known all along, but now that I have that courage my life is better in every way.

Dec. 2011: I have spent six years investigating the LDS Church comparing their material with yours and other ministries and have found that many of the facts presented by evangelicals are filled with erroneous lies and mis-quotes concerning LDS doctrines and what their apostles really meant.

Jan. 2012: Listened to your interview w/Doris Hanson [“Polygamy: What Love is This?” TV show] last night and really enjoyed it, especially your calm, cool and collected answers to the callers. You’re awesome! I want to meet you in person my next trek to SLC as I’ve “righteousy” avoided you my whole life as a lifelong [LDS] church member! lol

Jan. 2012: Sandra, someone posted on Craig’s’s list that he wanted to talk to a believing inactive mormon as himself. I wrote and told him that i was an ex mormon and he started preaching to me. I told him to check out UTLM.ORG. He said that he did not believe anything those Tanners said. I gave up on him; but about 6 months later he wrote to me and said that he got curious about UTLM and started reading. Now he has left the mormon church for Biblical christianity. All praise be to God who works through us for his divine purposes.

Jan. 2012: Thank you for this website I’m a Christian . . . I have a friend who is a Mormon, after listening to some things she talked about and doing my own research to include finding some youtubes by Sandra Tanner, I was blown away . . . this process has me looking deeper into my faith and reconnecting with Jesus Christ my Lord Savior. I am praying and reading my Bible with such thirst I pray it will never end. Thanks again for all your research I pray that my friend will find the love of Jesus Christ.

Jan. 2012: Awesome website information thanks. I’ve been meeting with Mormon Missionaries over the last 4 weeks (3 times a week) and I’m due to get baptized soon in the Mormon Church. I have had serious doubts about the teaching from the Missionaries as I have felt like something isn’t right. So I’ve been googling ‘ex mormon’ websites and came across yours. The articles are really helpful thanks. I was raised in a Christian home and the [LDS] Missionaries said that the Book of Mormon and their faith does not contradict the bible. However, through reading your material, I have found that there are huge contradictions. I would never have known about all this strange teaching, if there wasn’t great website information like yours available. I feel like the Mormons deceived me and were dishonest in their dealings with me by failing to disclose the contradictions of their faith with the Bible. But I am grateful that I have learned now before I encountered huge disappointment and hurt. Thanks.

Jan. 2012: Hi, I’m a convert to the LDS church and I know there are many things written and said about Mormons that are taken out of context, distorted, and just plain untrue. I read all this stuff over 30 years ago when I was first investigating the Church! . . . Well I read all this anti-Mormon stuff, that I found in Christian bookstores, of all places! I just knew it wasn’t right. I finally found some correct information on the Church, studied, pondered and prayed for a year, went to church to see what it was like, then asked the missionaries over and I asked them more questions. I knew I couldn’t be a member of any other church. It has the fulness of the gospel and will bring you closer to Jesus Christ and the Bible than any other church!

Jan. 2012: I had a friend who was a Mormon for many years, who visited you at your bookstore while she was searching for the truth. She was impressed with your kindness, if not at the time with the truth that you stood for. I was witnessing with another Christian friend, to her, for the last 11 or so years. She got saved recently, and is now attending a Christian church . . . . Thank you for your part in being a Christian witness to her during her search for the truth.
Jan. 2012: [LDS man] It is always interesting to read the material that you and your minions dig up on these topics to try to discredit the LDS church and I admire your zeal and commitment to your faith. . . . As LDS, we love Christ as much as you do and we walk in His ways and have his image engraven upon our countenances. . . . On the matter of slavery and bond people, that is a matter well documented right in the Holy Bible and supported by it. . . . The LDS church is not the church of the devil so save your breath.

Jan. 2012: I was a mormon for 27 years, sealed in the church. . . . I am now divorced. I asked my husband what if I didn’t go to church anymore, he said we would have to part ways. . . . My sister told me about you and I watch you on YouTube. I understood everything you where talking about, I tell people how I felt about living that life and they don’t get it. Thank you for caring and making me feel okay and that I’m not crazy.

Jan 2012: Thanks so much for your years of work exposing Mormonism. You played a big part in my exit 9 years ago. All the best to you!!

Jan. 2012: Oh come on—no matter what I say, you will disagree with it and you know it. You twist and distort things and try to make Mormons look all wrong, etc. And it’s because you aren’t in the church and you don’t have a testimony. . . . I’ve been on enough anti-Mormon and ex-Mormon videos and message boards to know how this works. Just remember, you don’t have a testimony so you are purposely twisting and distorting things. It doesn’t not mean the church isn’t true!

Feb. 2012: I just read your article on [Joseph Smith’s] White Horse Prophecy. Your slant on the story is that it would be a bad thing for an LDS leader to save our US Constitution. I don’t know what you think today (2012), but it seems pretty clear to me that most, if not all of the statements that you cite from previous LDS leaders are coming true.

Feb. 2012: Praises to the Lord for [the John Ankerberg TV] shows with Brigham Young’s granddaughter & former BYU professors! I’ve prayed for 12 years that the Lord would work on my son’s heart & he’d see the conflicts between the Bible and the Mormon church. As a result of watching your shows my son has left the Mormon church after being conflicted about their teachings for over 2 years.

Feb. 2012: I tried to be a Mormon for about 9 months when I was much younger. It just didn’t work out (for obvious reasons!) and I contacted you folks for info on getting my name out of their rolls. I was able to achieve my goal with y’alls help, thank you so much!

March 2012: I absolutely love your newsletters. They are wonderfully reaffirming to an exmo like me. There are no words to describe my gratitude to you for your efforts at exposing the truth about the whole mormon mess.

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The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri: A Complete Edition [Hardcover]
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(limited printing)

The Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes
Edited by John S. Dinger
$45.00

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By Shawn McCraney
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“This Is My Doctrine”:
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By Charles R. Harrell
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Did Brigham Young Teach False Doctrine?

One of the founding principles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints [the Mormon Church] is that there must be a living prophet at the head of the true church. Joseph Smith was designated as God’s “prophet, seer and revelator,” as have all the succeeding presidents of the LDS Church.¹

When Joseph Smith was killed by a mob while under arrest at Carthage, Illinois, in 1844, it left the Mormons with a leadership vacuum. While several men, mainly Sidney Rigdon and Brigham Young, vied for leadership, Smith had not left instructions on who was to be his successor. LDS historian Richard S. Van Wagoner explained:

Despite frequent kidnapping and assassination attempts, Joseph Smith established no firm policies regarding presidential succession in the event of his death. The resulting confusion threw the prophetic transition into turmoil. He simply had not expected to die at thirty-eight. Never given to full disclosure to any man or woman, the prophet’s public and private statements between 1834–44 suggested at least eight different methods for succession, each pointing to different successors with some claims to validity.²

After much debate, Brigham Young was able to convince the majority of the leaders to turn the control of the church over to the twelve apostles, of which he was head. Later he was formally installed as the president of the LDS Church in 1847.³

John Turner, in his new book, Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet, gave this overview of Young’s leadership:

After the founding prophet’s murder Brigham Young gathered the largest portion of Smith’s followers under his leadership, held them together amid persecution and exile, and planted the Mormon kingdom in what became Utah. Young was no less controversial than his predecessor, and non-Mormons routinely accused him of ecclesiastical tyranny, licentiousness, and even murder.⁴

Further on Turner observes:

Within a Protestant America dedicated to monogamy, monotheism, and Jacksonian democracy, Young advocated the plurality of wives, a plurality of gods, and a unity of power. Given the scope of his vision and the novelty of his beliefs, it is not surprising that he generated intense controversy and opposition. Young’s siege mentality, forged in the crucible of anti-Mormon persecution, led him to demonize his enemies, employ violent rhetoric, and condone murders. A leader who understood himself as following in the footsteps of the ancient biblical patriarchs could not readily function within the U.S. territorial system. Convinced that Young—Utah’s [territorial] governor as of 1857—was leading a rebellion against the U.S. government, President James Buchanan sent an army to Utah with Young’s gubernatorial replacement. Young eventually

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⁴ Turner, Brigham Young, p. 3.
learned to live with the presence of U.S. soldiers and officials, but in other ways he defended his kingdom with ever-greater desperation until the end of his life. In the end, Young’s ambitions for his church and himself were so great that he could at best bring them only partly to fruition.5

**Young’s Sermons**

Approximately 500 of Brigham Young’s sermons were recorded by a stenographer, more than 350 of which were printed in the *Journal of Discourses*, a 26-volume set published by the LDS Church.6 Many of his sermons were also published in the church-owned *Deseret News*. Young’s sermons were published during his lifetime, and he never issued any statement that they had been printed incorrectly. In fact, Brigham Young even went so far as to compare his published sermons with scripture. Preaching incorrectly. In fact, Brigham Young even went so far as to

I know just as well what to teach this people and just what to say to them and what to do in order to bring them into the celestial kingdom. . . . I have never yet preached a sermon and sent it out to the children of men, that they may not call Scripture. Let me have the privilege of correcting a sermon, and it is as good Scripture as they deserve. The people have the oracles of God continually.7

Later that same year Young stated:

Brother Orson Hyde referred to a few who complained about not getting revelations . . . I say now, when they [Young’s sermons] are copied and approved by me they are as good Scripture as is couched in this Bible . . . .8

On another occasion Brigham Young preached:

“If there is an Elder here, or any member of this Church, called the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who can bring up the first idea, the first sentence that I have delivered to the people as counsel that is wrong, I really wish they would do it; but they cannot do it, for the simple reason that I have never given counsel that is wrong; this is the reason.”9

Yet it is common to have a Mormon dismiss doctrinal statements by Brigham Young and other past prophets. Today the church leaders send a mixed message when they admonish the Mormons to follow the living prophet (as opposed to past prophets) and then quote past prophets to make their point. For example, speaking at the October 2010 LDS Conference, Claudio M. Costa, of the Presidency of the Seventy, preached on the necessity of following the words of the living prophet by quoting past prophets:

I testify to you that Joseph Smith is a prophet, and because I have received this answer from the Lord, I know that all of his successors are prophets too. What a great blessing it is to have prophets in our day! . . . In 1980, when President Ezra Taft Benson was serving as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, he gave a powerful message about obedience to the prophets at a BYU devotional in the Marriott Center. His great talk, titled “Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet,” touched my heart. It made me feel good that I had made the decision to follow the prophets for the rest of my life when I accepted baptism in the Lord’s true Church.

I would like to share with you some of the principles that President Benson taught:

“First: The prophet is the only man who speaks for the Lord in everything” (1980 Devotional Speeches of the Year [1981], 26). . . . We are counseled to “give heed unto all his words and commandments” (D&C 21:4). We also learn:


Again we learn from the living prophets. President Wilford Woodruff said: “The Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as President of this Church to lead you astray. It is not in the programme. It is not in the mind of God. If I were to attempt that, the Lord would remove me out of my place, and so He will any other man who attempts to lead the children of men astray from the oracles of God and from their duty” (Official Declaration 1).10

Notice that Mr. Costa quoted two past prophets in his sermon to reinforce the importance of a “living prophet.”

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5 Turner, Brigham Young, p. 4.
8 Ibid., vol. 13, p. 264.
When a Mormon is confronted with statements by past prophets that don’t agree with the current position of the church, he will often claim that we are to only heed the statements of the “living prophet.” However, LDS conference speakers and manuals repeatedly quote from their past prophets to support their point. In fact, starting in 1997, the church has yearly produced new manuals in a series called Teachings of Presidents of the Church, which covers the sermons of each of their past prophets.

In the introduction to the first manual of that series, entitled Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young, we read:

The prophet Brigham Young taught the restored gospel of Jesus Christ in a basic, practical way . . . Though more than a century has now passed, his words are still fresh and appropriate for us today as we continue the work of building the kingdom of God. . . .

This book reflects the desire of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to deepen the doctrinal understanding of Church members and to awaken within them a greater desire to know the things of God.11

However, as one studies the manual it becomes apparent that Young’s sermons have been carefully edited. Young repeatedly preached on such topics as Joseph Smith’s importance, polygamy, the Adam-God doctrine, blood atonement, and the ban on blacks holding the LDS priesthood. Yet, these subjects are not covered in the 1997 manual. In light of this, we will now explore some of Brigham Young’s more controversial sermons as they were originally printed.

**JOSEPH SMITH**

In the manual Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young, is a quote from Brigham Young about the importance of Joseph Smith to the restoration of “the keys and power of the Priesthood of the Son of God.”12 When we go back to the original source of the quote we find that it is taken from a sermon where Young declared that Joseph Smith rules over the spirit world and that one must accept him in order to gain entrance into the Celestial Kingdom:

> Joseph Smith holds the keys of this last dispensation, . . . no man or woman in this dispensation will ever enter into the celestial kingdom of God without the consent of Joseph Smith. From the day that the Priesthood was taken from the earth to the winding-up scene of all things, every man and woman must have the certificate of Joseph Smith, junior, as a passport to their entrance into the mansion where God and Christ are—I with you and you with me. I cannot go there without his consent. He holds the keys of that kingdom for the last dispensation—the keys to rule in the spirit world; and he rules there triumphantly, for he gained full power and a glorious victory over the power of Satan while he was yet in the flesh, and was a martyr to his religion and to the name of Christ. . . . He reigns there [in the spirit world] as supreme a being in his sphere, capacity, and calling, as God does in heaven.13

On another occasion Young stated that anyone who rejects Joseph Smith is “of Antichrist”:

> For unbelievers we will quote from the Scriptures—“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” Again—“Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God.” I will now give my scripture—“Whosoever confesseth that Joseph Smith was sent of God to reveal the holy Gospel to the children of men, and lay the foundation for gathering Israel, and building up the kingdom of God on the earth, that spirit is of God; and every spirit that does not confess that God has sent Joseph Smith, and revealed the everlasting Gospel to and through him, is of Antichrist. . . . They may say that they acknowledge Him until doomsday, and he will never own them, nor bestow the Holy Spirit upon them, and they will never have visions of eternity opened to them, unless they acknowledge that Joseph Smith is sent of God. Such people I call unbelievers. They tell about believing in Jesus Christ, but they might as well talk about birds understanding the Hebrew language. This statement is no more positive than true.14

The Bible cautions us to examine the teachings of anyone claiming to be a prophet. John wrote:

> Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. (1 John 4:1)

God calls us to faith in Christ, not a man. John wrote:

> For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

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11 Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young, LDS Church, 1997, page v.
12 Ibid., p. 96.
14 Ibid., vol. 8, pp. 176-177.
Polygamy

Curiously, the LDS manual on Brigham Young never mentions his 55 wives or his 56 children (by 16 of his wives). It does tell of his first wife’s death and his subsequent marriage to Mary Ann Angel in 1834, but does not mention the others. This leaves the impression that he only married one wife after the death of his first wife. Not only that, when quoting his sermons the LDS Church edited out the references to “wives” and substituted “wife.” For instance:

“...especially to those who are presiding officers, Set that example before your [wife] and your children, ..."\(^{17}\)

But the source cited, Discourses of Brigham Young, has it as “wives”:

“...especially to those who are presiding officers, Set that example before your wives and your children, ..."\(^{18}\)

Here is another example from the manual:

“Let the husband and father learn to bend his will to the will of his God, and then instruct his [wife] and children..."\(^{19}\)

However, the quote as printed in Discourses of Brigham Young actually reads:

“Let the husband and father learn to bend his will to the will of his God, and then instruct his wives and children..."\(^{20}\)

Another problem is the use of a few select sentences from a sermon that was actually about polygamy. An example of this appears on page 166 of the manual:

Let the father be the head of the family, the master of his own household; and let him treat them [his family] as an angel would treat them.\(^{21}\)

However, the same sentence in Discourses of Brigham Young reads:

Let the father be the head of the family, the master of his own household; and let him treat them as an angel would treat them; and let the wives and the children say amen to what he says, and be subject to his dictates, instead of their dictating the man, instead of their trying to govern him.\(^{22}\)

Even the quote above, from Discourses of Brigham Young, is an edited version of Young’s sermon. Ironically, the quote was part of a sermon given by Brigham Young in 1856 threatening to disown the women who were complaining about polygamy:

Men will say, “My wife, though a most excellent woman, has not seen a happy day since I took my second wife;” “No, not a happy day for a year,” says one; and another has not seen a happy day for five years. . . .

I wish my own women to understand that what I am going to say is for them as well as others, and I want those who are here to tell their sister, . . . I am going to give you from this time to the 6th day of October next, for reflection, that you may determine whether you wish to stay with your husbands or not, and then I am going to set every woman at liberty and say to them, Now go your way, my women with the rest, go your way. And my wives have got to do one of two things; either round up their shoulders to endure the afflictions of this world, and live their religion, or they may leave, for I will not have them about me. . . .\(^{23}\)

Two paragraphs later we read the quote that is given in the current manual about the father being the head of the family. But the context of that portion of Young’s sermon was about women obeying their husbands in polygamy.

Although the LDS Church today tries to minimize the importance of their past teachings on polygamy, it is still a part of their scriptures. Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants warns that once this doctrine has been revealed to a person they are under obligation before God to practice it.

Verily, thus saith the Lord . . . inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, justified my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines—Behold, and lo, I am the Lord thy God, and will answer thee as touching this matter.


\(^{16}\) Teachings: Brigham Young, p. 4.

\(^{17}\) Ibid., p. 165.

\(^{18}\) John A. Widtsoe, ed., Discourses of Brigham Young, Deseret Book, 1941, p. 198; 1925 ed. p. 306. This book is condensed versions of Brigham Young’s sermons that are found in the 26-volume Journal of Discourses printed by the LDS Church.

\(^{19}\) Teachings: Brigham Young, p. 165.


\(^{21}\) Teachings: Brigham Young, p. 166.

\(^{22}\) Discourses of Brigham Young, 1941, p. 198; 1925 ed. p. 306.

... For behold, I reveal unto you a new and an everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned... (Doctrine and Covenants 132:1-4)

Brigham Young was very adamant about the necessity of practicing plural marriage to achieve exaltation:

The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy.24

On another occasion he preached:

Now if any of you will deny the plurality of wives, and continue to do so, I promise that you will be damned; and will go still further and say, take this revelation, or any other revelation that the Lord has given, and deny it in your feelings, and I promise that you will be damned.25

It should be noted that polygamy in the Bible was never commanded by God or presented as a requirement for eternal life.

**Adam is God**

One of the more controversial doctrines taught by Young was that Adam is the God over this earth, under the supervision of yet a higher god, and Adam is the father of Jesus. However, the current manual on Brigham Young has carefully avoided this doctrine. On page 30 of the manual is a quote on the nature of God:

Our Father in Heaven begat all the spirits that ever were, or ever will be, upon this earth [see Hebrews 12:9]; and they were born spirits in the eternal world.26

The reference given for the quote is Discourses of Brigham Young.27 However, when we take the reference back another step and look at the original source we find it is Young’s famous sermon on Adam-God:

Our Father in Heaven begat all the spirits that ever were, or ever will be, upon this earth; and they were born spirits in the eternal world. . . .

Now hear it, O inhabitants of the earth, Jew and Gentile, Saint and sinner! When our father Adam came into the garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial body, and brought Eve, one of his wives, with him. He helped to make and organize this world. He is Michael, the Arch-angel, the ANCIENT OF DAYS! about whom holy men have written and spoken—He is our Father and our God, and the only God with whom we have to do. . . . When the Virgin Mary conceived the child Jesus, the Father had begotten him in his own likeness. He was not begotten by the Holy Ghost, And who is the Father? He is the first of the human family; and when he took a tabernacle, it was begotten by his Father in heaven, . . . I could tell you much more about this; but were I to tell you the whole truth, blasphemy would be nothing to it, in the estimation of the superstitious and over-righteous of mankind.28

In 1857, after some members had questioned the Adam-God doctrine, Brigham Young declared:

Whether Adam is the personage that we should consider our heavenly Father, or not, is considerable of a mystery to a good many. I do not care for one moment how that is; it is no matter whether we are to consider Him [Adam] our God, or whether His Father, or His Grandfather, for in either case we are of one species—of one family—and Jesus Christ is also of our species.29

The Adam-God doctrine was no idle speculation: Brigham Young taught that doctrine throughout his life and declared it to be a matter of revelation. In 1873 the Deseret News quoted one of Brigham Young’s sermons:

How much unbelief exists in the minds of the Latter-day Saints in regard to one particular doctrine which I revealed to them, and which God revealed to me—namely that Adam is our father and God—I do not know, I do not inquire, I care nothing about it. Our Father Adam helped to make this earth, it was created expressly for him, and after it was made he and his companion came here. He brought one of his wives with him, and she was called Eve, . . . 30

Contrary to present LDS understanding that Elohim is the father of our spirits, Brigham Young taught that Elohim, as a higher god, appointed Adam to be the father of our spirits:

We say that Father Adam came here and helped to make the earth. Who is he? He is Michael, a great prince, and it was said to him by Eloheim, “Go ye and make an earth.” . . . Father Adam came here, and then they brought his wife. “Well,” says one, “Why was Adam called Adam”? He was the first man on the earth, and its framer and maker, he, with the help of his brethren, brought it into existence. Then he said, “I want my children who are in the spirit world to come and live

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24 Journal of Discourses vol. 11, p. 269.
26 Teachings: Brigham Young, p. 30.
30 Deseret Weekly News (June 18, 1873): p. 308. Also Deseret Evening News (June 14, 1873).
Even though Young taught the Adam-God doctrine for over twenty years, at least one apostle was troubled by it. In Apostle Wilford Woodruff’s journal for September 17, 1854, we read about a meeting where this was discussed:

Brother Pratt Also thought that Adam was made of the dust of the Earth. [Pratt] Could not believe that Adam was our God or the Father of Jesus Christ. President Young said that He was that He came from another world & made this. Brought Eve with him partook of the fruits of the Earth begat Children & they were Earthly & had mortal bodies & if we were Faithful we should become Gods as He was. He told Brother Pratt to lay aside his Philosophical reasoning & get Revelation from God to Govern him & Enlighten his mind more . . .

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

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

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

Eve had the privilege to continue the work of Progression [and] consequently came to this earth . . .

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

Contrary to Young’s doctrine, the Bible, in Genesis 1:26-27, clearly presents Adam as God’s creation. Also, Isaiah declared that there is only one God:

“You are my witnesses,” declares the Lord, “and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no savior.” (Isaiah 43:10-11)

Some may argue that the Adam-God doctrine was never canonized, but by placing this teaching in the temple ceremony Young placed it above the authority of the LDS scriptures. Anyone may read the scriptures, but only faithful Mormons may participate in the temple rituals. One should also note that the temple ceremony itself has never been canonized, but no Mormon would argue that it is not doctrine.

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

Another matter. We hope that you who teach in the various organizations, whether on the campuses or in our chapels, will always teach the orthodox truth. We warn you against the dissemination of doctrines which

31 Deseret Weekly News (June 18, 1873): p. 308. Also Deseret Evening News (June 14, 1873).

See utlm.org and these web sites for more information on Mormonism:

- mrm.org
- irr.org/mt
- carm.org
- 4witness.org
are not according to the scriptures and which are alleged to have been taught by some of the General Authorities of past generations. Such, for instance, is the Adam-God theory. We denounce that theory and hope that everyone will be cautioned against this and other kinds of false doctrine.34

Kimball’s statement, however, did not end the discussion. In 1981 Apostle Bruce R. McConkie sent a letter to BYU professor Eugene England regarding the Adam-God doctrine:

As it happens, I am a great admirer of Brigham Young and a great believer in his doctrinal presentations. He was called of God. . . . Nonetheless, as Joseph Smith so pointedly taught, a prophet is not always a prophet, only when he is acting as such. . . .

Yes, President Young did teach that Adam was the father of our spirits, and all the related things that the cultists ascribe to him. This, however, is not true. He expressed views that are out of harmony with the gospel. But, be it known, Brigham Young also taught accurately and correctly, the status and position of Adam in the eternal scheme of things. What I am saying is, that Brigham Young, contradicted Brigham Young, and the issue becomes one of which Brigham Young we will believe. . . . If we choose to believe and teach the false portions of his doctrines, we are making an election that will damn us.35

This raises the question: When does a prophet speak for God? Young, as God’s prophet, declared the Adam-God doctrine to be a revelation. Kimball, as God’s prophet, declared it to be false doctrine. Since Deuteronomy 13 states that a true prophet will not lead the people after a false god, it appears that Brigham Young was a false prophet.

**Blood Atonement**

Another troubling doctrine of Brigham Young’s was blood atonement. This didn’t relate to Christ’s atonement, but to the sinner’s personal blood atonement. In reading the following statements, remember that Brigham Young was not just the president of the LDS Church, but was also the Governor of Utah Territory. In 1856 Brigham Young explained this doctrine:

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

I know, when you hear my brethren telling about cutting people off from the earth, that you consider it is strong doctrine; but it is to save them, not to destroy them. . . . I do know that there are sins committed, of such a nature that if the people did understand the doctrine of salvation, they would tremble because of their situation. And furthermore, I know that there are transgressors, who, if they knew themselves, and the only condition upon which they can obtain forgiveness, would beg of their brethren to shed their blood, that the smoke thereof might ascend to God as an offering to appease the wrath that is kindled against them, and that the law might have its course. I will say further; I have had men come to me and offer their lives to atone for their sins.

It is true that the blood of the Son of God was shed for sins through the fall and those committed by men, yet men can commit sins which it can never remit. As it was in ancient days, so it is in our day; and though the principles are taught publicly from this stand, still the people do not understand them; yet the law is precisely the same. There are sins that can be atoned for by an offering upon an altar, as in ancient days; and there are sins that the blood of a lamb, of a calf, or of turtle doves, cannot remit, but they must be atoned for by the blood of the man. That is the reason why men talk to you as they do from this stand; they understand the doctrine and throw out a few words about it. You have been taught that doctrine, but you do not understand it.36

Brigham Young further explained:

> Let me suppose a case. Suppose you found your brother in bed with your wife, and put a javelin through both of them, you would be justified, and they would atone for their sins, and be received into the kingdom of God. I would at once do so in such a case; and under such circumstances, I have no wife whom I love so well that I would not put a javelin through her heart, and I would do it with clean hands. . . .

There is not a man or woman, who violates the covenants made with their God, that will not be required to pay the debt. The blood of Christ will never wipe that out, your own blood must atone for it . . .

In another sermon Young stated that this has been carried out:

36  *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 4, (September 21, 1856) pp. 53-54.
Now take a person in this congregation who has knowledge with regard to being saved in the kingdom of our God and our Father, and being exalted, . . . and suppose that he is overtaken in a gross fault, that he has committed a sin that he knows will deprive him of that exaltation which he desires, . . . is there a man or woman in this house but what would say, “shed my blood that I may be saved and exalted with the Gods?” . . . Will you love that man or woman well enough to shed their blood? That is what Jesus Christ meant. . . .

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

This is loving our neighbour as ourselves; if he needs help, help him; and if he wants salvation and it is necessary to spill his blood on the earth in order that he may be saved, spill it. Any of you who understand the principles of eternity, if you have sinned a sin requiring the shedding of blood, except the sin unto death, would not be satisfied nor rest until your blood should be spilled, that you might gain that salvation you desire. That is the way to love mankind.38

However, the New Testament never mentions any such practice. The atonement for man’s sins was completed with Christ’s death and resurrection. Paul explained:

This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. (Romans 3:22-25)


Blacks Cursed

While a few blacks were admitted to the LDS priesthood during Joseph Smith’s lifetime, Brigham Young put an end to that in Utah. Denial of priesthood to blacks was carried on until 1978 when President Kimball reversed the ban.39 Young was very vocal in his disregard of the African race. In 1859 Young declared that blacks are cursed due to Cain’s sin:

You see some classes of the human family that are black, uncouth, uncomely, disagreeable and low in their habits, wild, and seemingly deprived of nearly all the blessings of the intelligence that is generally bestowed upon mankind. The first man that committed the odious crime of killing one of his brethren will be cursed the longest of any one of the children of Adam. Cain slew his brother. Cain might have been killed, and that would have put a termination to that line of human beings. This was not to be, and the Lord put a mark upon him, which is the flat nose and black skin. Trace mankind down to after the flood, and then another curse is pronounced upon the same race—that they should be the “servant of servants;” and they will be, until that curse is removed; and the Abolitionists cannot help it, nor in the least alter that decree. How long is that race to endure the dreadful curse that is upon them? That curse will remain upon them, and they never can hold the Priesthood or share in it until all the other descendants of Adam have received the promises and enjoyed the blessings of the Priesthood and the keys thereof. Until the last ones of the residue of Adam’s children are brought up to that favourable position, the children of Cain cannot receive the first ordinances of the Priesthood. They were the first that were cursed, and they will be the last from whom the curse will be removed. When the residue of the family of Adam come up and receive their blessings, then the curse will be removed from the seed of Cain, and they will receive blessings in like proportion.40

While the Civil War was raging in the east in 1863, Brigham Young declared:

The rank, rabid abolitionists, whom I call black-hearted Republicans, have set the whole national fabric on fire. . . . The Southerners make the negroes, and the Northerners worship them; this is all the difference between slaveholders and abolitionists. I would like the President of the United States and all the world to hear this.

Shall I tell you the law of God in regard to the African race? If the white man who belongs to the chosen

39 Salt Lake City Messenger, no. 102, (May 2004); online at utlm.org/newsletters/no102.htm
seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the penalty, under the law of God, is death on the spot. This will always be so.\textsuperscript{41}

Later in the same year Young preached:

What is the cause of all this waste of life and treasure? To tell it in a plain, truthful way, one portion of the country wish to raise their negroes or black slaves and the other portion wish to free them, and, apparently, to almost worship them. . . .

Ham will continue to be the servant of servants, as the Lord has decreed, until the curse is removed. \textbf{Will the present struggle free the slave? No;} but they are now wasting away the black race by thousands. . . .

Treat the slaves kindly and let them live, for \textbf{Ham must be the servant of servants until the curse is removed.} Can you destroy the decrees of the Almighty? You cannot. Yet our Christian brethren think that they are going to overthrow the sentence of the Almighty upon the seed of Ham. They cannot do that, though they may kill them by thousands and tens of thousands.\textsuperscript{42}

This attitude prevailed among the Mormons for the next hundred years. Then in 1978, after years of civil rights protests, President Kimball made the following announcement that lifted the ban on blacks:

In early June of this year, the First Presidency announced that a revelation had been received by President Spencer W. Kimball extending priesthood and temple blessings to all worthy male members of the Church.\textsuperscript{43}

This shift left many Mormons wondering what to make of the many past statements of their leaders that the blacks would not receive the priesthood until all the rest of mankind were given the opportunity. Consequently, Apostle Bruce R. McConkie stated:

There are statements in our literature by the \textbf{early Brethren} which we have interpreted to mean that \textbf{the Negroes would not receive the priesthood in mortality. I have said the same things}, and people write me letters and say, “You said such and such, and how is it now that we do such and such?” And all I can say to that is that it is time disbelieving people repented and got in line and believed in a living, modern prophet. \textbf{Forget everything that I have said, or what President Brigham Young or President George Q. Cannon or whomsoever has said in days past that is contrary to the present revelation. We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world.}\textsuperscript{44}

As one former Mormon quipped, “Today’s truth may be tomorrow’s heresy.”

There is nothing in the Bible to suggest that white skin is superior to dark skin or that dark skin denotes a curse from God.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Mormons are often advised by their leaders to avoid reading material on the LDS Church that is not produced by them, usually with the warning that those outside of Mormonism distort the church’s true beliefs or misquote the leaders. Speaking at the October 2012 LDS Conference, Apostle Quentin L. Cook admonished the members against reading critical material on the internet:

Some have immersed themselves in Internet materials that magnify, exaggerate, and, in some cases, invent shortcomings of early Church leaders. Then they draw incorrect conclusions that can affect testimony. Any who have made these choices can repent and be spiritually renewed.\textsuperscript{45}

However, from the examples given in this newsletter, it is obvious that it is the LDS Church leaders who edit, “exaggerate” or “invent” statements of their past leaders to suit the current agenda. The real concern of the LDS Church seems to be that the members will read unvarnished, uncensored quotes of their past prophets.

Since each LDS president is ordained as a “Prophet, Seer and Revelator” one is left to wonder why their doctrinal statements vary from man to man? If the prophet can never lead one astray how do we reconcile their contradictory sermons? Those in the audience when Brigham Young was preaching would have been listening to the “living prophet.” Obviously, then, a “living prophet” can teach false doctrine. Since both the Bible and the Book of Mormon warn that false prophets will come there is a need for vigilance.

Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. (Book of Mormon, 3 Nephi 14:15)

\textsuperscript{41 Journal of Discourses, vol. 10, (March 8, 1863) p. 110.}

\textsuperscript{42 Journal of Discourses, vol. 10, (Oct. 6, 1863) p. 250.}

\textsuperscript{43 Doctrine and Covenants, Official Declaration—2.}

\textsuperscript{44 Bruce R. McConkie, “All Are Alike Unto God,” BYU, (August 18, 1978); online at speeches.byu.edu/?act=viewitem&id=1570}

\textsuperscript{45 Quentin L. Cook, “Can You Feel So Now?,” October 2012 LDS Conference; online at lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/can-ye-feel-so-now?lang=eng}
Mormonism is presenting a gospel that depends on the revelations of Joseph Smith and his successors, not on the Christianity revealed in the Bible. In the book of Mark we are warned about false prophets:

For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. (Mark 13:22)

Peter, in the New Testament, specifically warned against such deception coming not just from without but even from within the Christian community:

But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. (2 Peter 2:1-3)

Rather than providing a bedrock of trust in the unchanging God of the Bible, Mormonism is presenting a gospel that depends on Joseph Smith and his successors, not simply on Christ.

March 2012: I was a former mormon. I was around 2 years, my wife was mormon her entire life, I took out my family from the mormon church, your documentation was very useful, my wife found a book regarding the changes of the temple ceremony . . . she was very surprise about all the changes made on the endowment ceremony . . .

we are now in processing in take out our names from the church, we are so graceful for your efforts and your dedication to your ministry, I have my wife’s family still on the church, we are praying for them in order to take them out and show them the real gospel but it is so hard because they have all their brains full of bad doctrine, they do not even read the bible, we are constantly encourage them in read the bible . . . they are so mad at me because they think that I was the reason in take my wife out of the church, in part it is true, they think that my wife had not a testimony about the church, but she has it and a big one, there was a lot of thing that doesn’t match on the church, because all the time I encouraged to my wife in read the bible . . . I always felt that something wrong was on the book of mormon . . . we now are assisting to a christian church, we are so happy . . . I fall in love of my lord Jesus christ.

thank you Sandra for your work and efforts, you are my hero . . .

March 2012: Really trying to totally leave is so difficult . . . I’m challenged at this point with not becoming super angry and feeling betrayed by the church.

Thank you for your work, it has been liberating for me and I feel a sense of happiness I hadn’t before really truly knowing that the church was hiding so much factual history.

April 2012: I left Utah 4 years ago and now live in California. I am currently experiencing the “What just happened to me over the past 36 years” moment and have left the lds church . . . Thank you for providing research links.

April 2012: I hope you’re watching the General Conference of the Church you hate so much . . .

I WITNESS TO YOU IN THE HOLY AND SACRED NAME OF JESUS CHRIST THAT THESE MEN ARE EXACTLY WHAT THEIR TITLES STATE.

I REBUKE YOU IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, AND WITNESS TO YOU THAT IF YOU DO NOT REPENT YOU WILL LITERALLY HAVE HELL TO PAY FOR YOUR BEARING FALSE WITNESS AGAINST, BY ANY MEASURE, GOOD AND HONORABLE MEN.

April 2012: I just wanted to write you and thank you for all you do . . . You may not remember me, but a year ago today April 1, 2011 that my husband and I came into Lighthouse Ministry looking for the DVD “Unveiling Grace”, some one thought you may have a copy.

While there I ask several questions because I had been on path of trying to come out of Mormonism. I walked around with just a part of me still Mormon, However with your help and your loving council, I left your ministry full of literature and a conviction of Joseph Smith not being a prophet of God, and that with that foundation no longer true to me, then the whole LDS religion was also false.

It was that day I turned to my husband and declared myself no longer Mormon. Today I am a Christian, a follower of Christ, I was baptized the end of January of this year. Had I not stepped into your Ministry a year ago today, I would not be who I am in Christ today. I am utmost thankful for all you do, you are such an instrument to bring truth to those who are searching as I was. Again thank you!!

April 2012: I can’t thank you enough for your inspiration and the way you have paved for many Christians who are transitioning out of Mormonism. It has been a painful road. I watched one of your fireside presentations yesterday and it gave me a lot of hope and affirmation . . . I discovered that the Mormon church isn’t what it claims to be this past December. I have stopped going to Church a month ago. I have been happier over the past few weeks . . . I still have tremendous faith in Christ and God.

April 2012: Many years ago you and your husband spoke to my husband who had been a life long Mormon. He had many questions about the religion and you spent several hours discussing it with him and even gave him some tapes to watch. He was a changed person and was born again and has been a Christian for almost 25 years now. Thank-you!

April 2012: I saw u speak in West Monroe, Louisiana at First West! I was born and raised a Christian but my girlfriend is Mormon! She has had questions so I took her to watch you speak! I believe it helped her a lot but she is going through a really tough time in life!

(continued on page 20)
In talking with members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints about their faith and the differences between it and standard Christianity, a Mormon will often revert to "bearing his testimony." LDS Apostle Russell M. Nelson gave a typical testimony at the end of his October 2010 conference address:

I know that God lives. Jesus is the Christ. This is His Church. The Book of Mormon is true. Joseph Smith is its translator and the prophet of this last dispensation. President Thomas S. Monson is God’s prophet today. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.¹

Speaking at the October 2006 LDS Conference, Apostle Dieter F. Uchtdorf gave this definition of a testimony:

When we talk about testimony, we refer to feelings of our heart and mind rather than an accumulation of logical, sterile facts. It is a gift of the Spirit, a witness from the Holy Ghost that certain concepts are true.²

When Mormons are asked how they “know” that Joseph Smith is a prophet or that the LDS Church is the true church they will usually respond that they received a burning conviction, a special feeling, as a result of prayer. This burning feeling is based on a passage in their Doctrine and Covenants, sec. 9:8:

. . . behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.

However, simply having a good feeling about something does not necessarily make it true. People from the various polygamist groups bear similar types of testimonies, recounting spiritual experiences that convinced them to embrace Warren Jeffs, or one of the other polygamist leaders, as God’s true prophet. Obviously the numerous testimonies of people for different prophets and religious movements can’t all be right. This is why Paul warned in Galatians 1:8—“But though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel, unto you that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”

“know” the LDS Church is God’s true church, not simply that you “believe” that to be the case. In fact, sometimes a parent will stand behind the child and prompt him on the words to say.

While I agree with the basic philosophy of training young children in their faith, I am troubled by the LDS methods that seem to border on brainwashing. In 1983, LDS Apostle Boyd K. Packer commented on the process of acquiring a testimony:

> It is not unusual to have a missionary say, “How can I bear testimony until I get one?” . . . A testimony is to be found in the bearing of it! . . . The skeptic will say that to bear testimony when you may not know you possess one is to condition yourself; that the response is manufactured. . . . Bear testimony of the things that you hope are true, as an act of faith. . . . The Spirit and testimony of Christ will come to you for the most part when, and remain with you only if, you share it.”

But Packer’s method is simply brainwashing. If you assert something enough times you probably will come to believe that it is true.

This reminds me of a young Christian man I met some years ago that was dating an LDS girl. She asked him to meet with an apostle so that he could get answers to his questions. He agreed and later met with LDS Apostle Spencer W. Kimball. Kimball brushed aside the young man’s questions and instructed him that if he really wanted a testimony regarding Mormonism he need only follow three simple steps:

1. You must want to believe that Mormonism is true.
2. Pray to know that it is true.
3. Read only the LDS books.

Kimball assured him that this never fails. But such a method would probably work for the polygamist groups as well. It does not establish that what you feel is actually true.


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The Testimony Glove

I recently purchased a book at an LDS bookstore, titled The Testimony Glove. It was written by the wife of current LDS Apostle Dallin Oaks and published by Deseret Book. Through this book we get a glimpse of what the LDS Church thinks are the basics of their faith.

First children are instructed to put on the special glove at the front of the book. The glove represents the Holy Ghost, who will guide them in learning the truth.

Next they attach a small picture of a man to the thumb of the glove, who represents God. Kimball brushed aside the young man’s questions and instructed him that if he really wanted a testimony regarding Mormonism he need only follow three simple steps:

1. You must want to believe that Mormonism is true.
2. Pray to know that it is true.
3. Read only the LDS books.

Kimball assured him that this never fails. But such a method would probably work for the polygamist groups as well. It does not establish that what you feel is actually true.

The fourth picture is the Salt Lake Temple. The child is instructed that “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Savior’s true church” and that being sealed in the temple means the child’s family will be together forever.8

On the last finger the child places a picture of the current LDS prophet. From this the child is to conclude that the LDS Church is the true church which is “led by a living prophet, who gets revelation from God” and that she is to “follow the prophet.”9

This glove is to help the child learn the basic components of a testimony: Heavenly Father is real and has a great plan for our lives, Jesus Christ is the Savior, Joseph Smith is God’s prophet, the temple is necessary to be an eternal family, and the current president of the LDS Church is God’s spokesman on earth. As the child continues to attend LDS classes she will be given more in-depth instruction on the five concepts presented in this book. Now let us look at these five points more closely.

### Heavenly Father’s Plan

The first point is the LDS doctrine of Heavenly Father and his “great plan of happiness for us.” Since the days of Joseph Smith the LDS leaders have consistently taught that God was once a mortal, after death he received a resurrected body and advanced to godhood, which would necessitate a higher god to oversee the world on which our Heavenly Father grew up.

The 2002 LDS manual *Gospel Fundamentals* informs us that “our Father in Heaven was once a man who lived on an earth, the same as we do. He became our Father in Heaven by overcoming problems, just as we have to do on this earth.”10 Further on the manual informs us that Heavenly Father has “a resurrected body of flesh and bones.”11

Past LDS president Joseph Fielding Smith explained that our Heavenly Father had a father, a grandfather, and so forth back through the eternities:

> Our father in heaven, according to the Prophet, had a father, and since there has been a condition of this kind through all eternity, each Father had a Father.12

However, Joseph Smith’s doctrine of God is in direct contradiction to the teachings of the Bible.

In Malachi 3:6 the Bible informs us that God does not change and Psalms 90:2 declares that He is “from everlasting to everlasting.”

In Isaiah 44:6 and 8, God instructed Isaiah: “I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. . . . is there a God beside me; yea, there is no God; I know not any.”

In fact, the concept that our God was once a mortal man who advanced to the position of God is the most heretical doctrine of Mormonism. This reminds me of Paul’s warning in Romans 1:23 about those who “changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man.”

Coupled with the LDS concept of God is the doctrine of eternal progression, or “plan of happiness” as used in the *Testimony* book.13 The teaching of man’s eternal progression is the bedrock of LDS doctrine. In the October 2010 LDS Conference, Apostle Robert D. Hales explained: “Before we came to this earth, Heavenly Father presented His plan of salvation—a plan to come to earth and receive a body, choose to act between good and evil, and progress to become like Him and live with Him forever.”14

This concept assumes that there is both a Heavenly Father and a Heavenly Mother who literally procreated us in a pre-earth life and then set in motion a plan for our advancement to godhood.15 Joseph Smith declared: “you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done before you.”16 In the LDS view, we are literally spirit children of Heavenly parents and the same species as the gods. While Christians talk of being children of God, they are using the term in a spiritual sense, not biological children. Paul wrote about our spiritual adoption in Romans 8:14-16:

> For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

There is nothing in this teaching that would suggest we are literally God’s biological children. We are children.

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10 *Gospel Fundamentals*, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, p. 204.
13 *Testimony* Glove, p. 10.
of God by faith, not by birth. In the classic book *Articles of Faith* by LDS Apostle James E. Talmage, we read:

> We believe in a God who is Himself progressive, whose majesty is intelligence; whose perfection consists in eternal advancement—a Being who has attained His exalted state by a path which now His children are permitted to follow, whose glory it is their heritage to share. In spite of the opposition of the sects, in the face of direct charges of blasphemy, the Church proclaims the eternal truth: “As man is, God once was; as God is, man may be.”

Thus we see that when Mormons speak of becoming God-like or Christ-like, they are not simply speaking of some sort of spiritual growth, but of their hope of achieving actual godhood, the same as their Heavenly Father did before them.

This would include their children, born on some future world, worshipping the now exalted man as their god. This was the clear intent in the 1997 edition of *Gospel Principles*. It declared that those who achieve exaltation, or godhood, would then procreate spirit children who will “have the same relationship to them as we do to our Heavenly Father.” Thus the spirit children of the exalted LDS man will be sent to the world he creates to become mortal and they will pray to him, the same as he does to his Heavenly Father. Keep in mind that the Mormon is not saying that he will one day be equal to Heavenly Father. The LDS concept is one of a hierarchy of gods, with each god in submission to the one before him, and each god worshiped by his own spirit children.

In the Mormon manual *The Latter-day Saint Woman: Basic Manual for Women*, published in 2000, is a quote from past LDS president Lorenzo Snow:

> When two Latter-day Saints are united together in marriage, promises are made to them concerning their offspring that reach from eternity to eternity. They are promised that they shall have the power and the right to govern and control and administer salvation and exaltation and glory to their offspring, worlds without end.

Notice that it says they will “administer salvation and exaltation” to their offspring. Thus they are acting in the capacity of a god to their children. Actually, this quote is a little misleading as this only applies to the husband.

The wife will be involved in procreating these children, but not in answering their prayers.

So what is our purpose in life? The Bible does not teach that man’s goal is personal godhood, but to bring glory to the one eternal God, our creator. Isaiah 43:11 records God as saying: “before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.” Further on, in Isaiah 48:11, God declares “My glory I will not give to another.” According to 1 Peter 4:11, all things are to be done with the goal of bringing glory to the Father.

The Christian plan of salvation is summed up in John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” There is nothing there about personal exaltation to godhood. We are sinners saved by grace, not “gods in embryo,” as declared by past LDS prophet Spencer W. Kimball.

### Jesus Christ

The second point of *The Testimony Glove* is Jesus Christ. While it does teach that Jesus is our savior, it does not elaborate on their doctrine that Christ’s atonement is just the first step in our ability to acquire eternal life. Besides the atonement, according to Mormonism, one must also live a faithful LDS life, hold their Melchizedec priesthood, and fully participating in their temple rituals throughout life in order to qualify to live in the presence of Heavenly Father. This is the way one achieves eternal life, which is also referred to as exaltation, or godhood.

Mormons value Christ’s atonement as an essential element of their eternal life, but not the full payment. In the February 2003 *Ensign*, LDS Apostle Russell M. Nelson explained the difference between simply receiving the gift of immortality as opposed to the goal of qualifying for eternal life:

> Thanks to the Atonement, the gift of immortality is **unconditional**. The greater gift of eternal life, however, is **conditional**. In order to **qualify**, one must deny oneself of ungodliness and honor the ordinances and covenants of the **temple**.

Keep in mind that Mormons make a distinction between “immortality” and “eternal life.” They view Christ’s atonement as a guarantee of resurrection and the ability to live forever, which is termed “immortality.” But they do not believe that this is the same as “eternal life.” That is defined as being married for eternity in an LDS temple, which gives them the ability to procreate.

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millions of spirit children to be sent to their own world. “Eternal life” is defined as having an eternal marriage and the ability to procreate life eternally.22

Thus we see that for the Mormon, Christ’s atonement is not enough to return to Heavenly Father. The person must be a fully active, temple going, member of the LDS Church in order to merit eternal life. In Mormonism, “saved by grace” means resurrection to some level of heaven, but should not to be confused with “eternal life,” or godhood, in the highest level of heaven where God resides. If eternal life, or “exaltation,” is “conditional” and something for which we must “qualify,” then it is not a gift, but a reward.

On the other hand, the Christian’s hope is summed up in Ephesians 2:8-9: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Joseph Smith

The next picture on the glove is one of Joseph Smith. In the book the child says “The third truth is that Joseph Smith saw Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. . . . I know that Joseph Smith is the prophet who was called to restore the gospel and translate the Book of Mormon.”23

This statement brings up three separate issues: Smith’s first vision [which supposedly revealed to him that God and Jesus are separate deities with resurrected bodies], the LDS claim that Joseph Smith restored the true gospel [which implies that all Christians outside of Mormonism do NOT have the true gospel] and the validity of the Book of Mormon [which opens the door for scriptures and doctrines beyond the Bible].

Regarding his claim that in 1820 God and Jesus appeared to him, Joseph Smith did not commit his vision experience to paper until 1832, and later accounts contain significant differences. The earliest account only recorded Jesus as appearing, with no mention of God the Father. Smith’s 1835 version referred to many angels, but with no specific claim that God and Jesus were present. It wasn’t until 1838 that he wrote that the Father and Son appeared to him in his first vision.24 In the early 1830’s neither LDS nor non-LDS sources raised the issue of an 1820 vision or that Joseph Smith was teaching an anthropomorphic deity. This was a doctrinal development of the 1840’s in Nauvoo, Illinois.25

Keep in mind, the Mormons are not just saying God could appear as a man, but that eons ago our Heavenly Father actually was a finite being on some other world, married, had children, died, was resurrected, and then achieved his current level of godhood. Speaking in 1844 Joseph Smith preached:

God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, . . . That is the great secret . . . I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity, I will refute that idea, . . . God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ Himself did . . .26

This is not just a past teaching. Smith’s sermon is quoted in current LDS manuals.27

I often talk to Mormons who are unacquainted with Smith’s sermon on the nature of God, but if one is going to assert that he is a prophet, the accuracy of his teaching on God is of vital importance. One of the tests of a prophet is laid out in Deuteronomy 13, where it states that a true prophet will not lead you after a strange god. As we have already pointed out, Smith’s doctrine of a God who was once a finite mortal is totally opposite the teachings of the Bible.

The next problem with the child’s statement is the claim that she “knows” that Joseph Smith, as God’s prophet, restored the true gospel. When a Mormon asserts that he “knows” that Smith was a prophet, he is usually referring to some spiritual conviction that came to him through prayer, not from any sort of testing of his prophetic claims.

The importance of Joseph Smith is canonized in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 135, verse 3:

Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it.

However, if Joseph Smith is a false prophet then he has been the means of sending many people down the broad path to destruction instead of pointing them to the narrow way that leads to life.28

The LDS Church is not just claiming to be a better church than the one down the road, but the only “true” church recognized by God. When they talk about Smith restoring the “gospel” they are talking about the doctrines laid out in the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price, not the gospel presented in the New Testament.

25 See utlm.org/onlineresources/firstvision.htm
27 Presidents of the Church Student Manual, Religion 345, LDS Church, 2004, p. 89.
28 Matthew 7:13.
Smith taught that Christ’s atonement was just the first installment on our eternal life. We must now faithfully participate in all of the LDS rituals and practices to return to Heavenly Father and achieve exaltation. Apostle Bruce R. McConkie defined the gospel as follows:

The gospel is the plan of salvation. It consists of the laws, ordinances, and eternal truths by conformity to which the spirit children of God can progress and advance until they become like their Eternal Parent.29

Thus the LDS gospel is described as the system of progression of men to godhood.

When Christians talk of the gospel they are referring to the “good news” of Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross, done on our behalf, to reconcile us to God, as laid out in 1 Corinthians, chapter 15.

The Mormon gospel, on the other hand, is one of Christ plus self-effort and centers around a personal quest for exaltation; the Christian gospel is centered in Christ. The Bible does not point us to personal exaltation, but to bring glory to the one eternal, holy God.

Another problem with the Testimony book is the assertion that Smith’s prophetic call included the translation of the Book of Mormon.

First, there is no evidence that there ever were any physical plates. The witnesses to the supposed translation process never mention seeing the plates, uncovered, on the table while Smith was dictating the story to his scribe. They describe a process of Smith looking at a stone in his hat while he dictated the book. They mention hefting the plates that were in a box or in a sack, but who is to say that it actually contained an ancient record? It could have contained scrap metal, rocks or anything heavy.30

Next, there are no artifacts, inscriptions, or monuments produced by the Book of Mormon people. There is no evidence that the American Indians grew wheat, had horses and cows, had chariots or made steel swords, as asserted in the Book of Mormon.31

Third, the Book of Mormon echoes the assumptions of Smith’s day about the American Indian that are no longer seen as valid. Many books of the day speculated that the Indians were descended from the lost tribes of Israel.32 However, DNA shows that the American Indians descend from East Asia, and are not Semitic.33

Fourth, the excessive plagiarism and dependence on the King James translation of the Bible throughout the Book of Mormon shows it to be a modern invention.34

Once a person accepts the Book of Mormon as true, he has accepted the concept that the Bible is unreliable and further revelation is needed. This opens the door to accept all the rest of Smith’s teachings. This raises a curious dilemma. The Book of Mormon does not contain the Mormon doctrines of Heavenly Father and Jesus being separate deities, eternal progression to godhood, temple marriage or work for the dead. If these crucial doctrines were not in the book, but revealed later to Smith, one wonders why God would bother with the Book of Mormon in the first place.

As for the LDS charge that the Bible is not complete, Apostle John acknowledged that all of Jesus’ teachings had not been recorded. However, in John 20:31, he asserted that everything we needed for eternal life has been preserved. He wrote:

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

If we already have everything we need to know for eternal life in the Bible, why would we need further scriptures?

The LDS Temple

This brings us to the fourth picture on the glove, the LDS temple. In the book, the child says “I know that being married in the temple like Mom and Dad were, makes it possible for our family to be sealed together forever.”35

LDS temple marriage is repeatedly emphasized in various instruction manuals. In the 2004 book, Doctrines of the Gospel Student Manual, the college-age Mormon is instructed:

The most important things that any member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ever does in this world are: 1. To marry the right person, in the right place, by the right authority; and 2. To keep the covenant made in connection with this holy and perfect order of matrimony—thus assuring the obedient persons of an inheritance of exaltation in the celestial kingdom.36

30 See Salt Lake City Messenger, no. 117 (November 2011); online at utlm.org/newsletters/no117.htm#Witnesses
31 Salt Lake City Messenger, no. 107 (October 2006); online at utlm.org/newsletters/no107.htm
32 Salt Lake City Messenger, no. 114 (May 2010); online at utlm.org/newsletters/no114.htm#contemporary
33 Salt Lake City Messenger, no. 103 (November 2004); online at utlm.org/newsletters/no103.htm
34 Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Joseph Smith’s Plagiarism of the Bible in the Book of Mormon, (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 2010).
35 Testimony Glove, p. 16
Notice, the promise of eternal life requires more than just a temple marriage. The couple must also continue to live as faithful Mormons until their death in order for them to achieve exaltation. If temple marriage were this important in God’s plan, one wonders why it was never mentioned in the Bible or the Book of Mormon?

The emphasis on temples is an example of the way Mormon doctrine appropriates Biblical terms and then infuses them with a different meaning. An example is their use of the word “temple.” In the Old Testament the temple, along with its animal sacrifices, were symbolic of Christ’s future atonement for sin. Once Christ died on the cross and was resurrected there was no longer any need for the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament. While the New Testament makes mention of the Jewish temple, Christian rituals were never conducted in it. Christian author Luke Wilson explained:

Jesus replaced the Old Covenant, of which the biblical temple was a part. He established a New Covenant based on His once-for-all atoning sacrifice, and under which He now serves as the believer’s “great high priest” in the very sanctuary of heaven (Hebrews 4:14-16). A New Testament temple building is therefore a contradiction in terms, for it ignores the finished work of Christ, and harks back to the Old Covenant.\(^37\)

An example of the way LDS prophets have twisted the scriptures is this statement by LDS President Spencer W. Kimball:

> “Only through celestial marriage [meaning LDS temple marriage] can one find the straight way, the narrow path. Eternal life cannot be had in any other way.”\(^38\)

Kimball was alluding to Jesus’ statement in Matthew 7:14: “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” However, there is nothing in Christ’s teachings to connect eternal life with marriage. In fact, Jesus plainly stated that there is no marriage in heaven in Matthew 22:30:

> . . . Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. [Also see Luke 20:34-36]

Obviously Paul had no such doctrine. In Romans 7:2 he wrote that when a man dies his wife is free from that marriage. In 1 Corinthians 7:7-8 Paul advised those who were single or widowed to remain unmarried that they might spend more time serving God. If Paul believed that marriage continued in heaven and was essential for eternal life, why did he never mention it?

Also, marriages were never performed in the Jewish temple and the first century Christians did not build temples. They were meeting in the homes of various believers. Another curious fact is that the doctrine of eternal marriage isn’t even taught in the Book of Mormon. Yet the angel who supposedly appeared to Joseph Smith in 1823 declared that the Book of Mormon contained “the fulness of the everlasting Gospel.”\(^39\)

Another difference is the secrecy surrounding the LDS temple ceremony. The Bible describes the Jewish temple rituals in Leviticus, chapters 1-7. Even though the High Priest was the only one who could enter the Holy of Holies, all Israel knew what he did in there. There was no secrecy. Yet the Mormon takes an oath to never divulge their temple ceremony.

The LDS teaching on eternal marriage comes from section 132 of their Doctrine and Covenants. Joseph Smith dictated this revelation in 1843 specifically so that it could be read to Smith’s wife Emma to convince her of the truthfulness of plural marriage. Smith’s faithful scribe, William Clayton, recorded the event in his diary.\(^40\) As we outlined in our May 2009 Salt Lake City Messenger, Smith was married to at least 33 plural wives.\(^41\) Most of them married Smith behind his wife’s back and contrary to the teachings in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants.\(^42\)

Even though the LDS Church currently tries to distance itself from the doctrine of polygamy, their sealing practices demonstrate that they still believe people will live polygamy in the celestial kingdom. As an example, Kristen Oaks, the author of The Testimony Glove, was sealed in marriage to LDS Apostle Dallin Oaks after his first wife died. He has now been sealed in an eternal marriage to two women, thus guaranteeing, according to LDS teachings, that he will be a polygamist in heaven.

The polygamist groups and the LDS Church all believe that plural marriages prior to 1890 were ordained of God and that those with the proper sealing will be able to live polygamy in heaven. The only difference

\(^37\) Luke Wilson, “Are Mormon Temples an Extension of the biblical Temple?” (Institute for Religious Research, 1997); online at irr.org/mit/ot-temple-nt-faith.html


\(^41\) See Salt Lake City Messenger, no. 112 (May 2009); online at utlm.org/newsletters/no112.htm

\(^42\) Doctrine and Covenants, section 101, 1835 edition.
is whether they believe a person should currently live polygamy on earth.

Another aspect of the LDS teaching on eternal marriage is their doctrine that there is a Heavenly Mother as well as Heavenly Father. The Mormon goal of an eternal marriage is predicated on the concept that God has also been sealed in an eternal marriage to his wife, or wives as the case may be. According to LDS president Spencer W. Kimball, “God made man in his own image and certainly he made woman in the image of his wife-partner.”

According to Brigham Young, Joseph Smith once said he “would not worship a God who had not a father; and I do not know that he would if he had not a mother; the one would be as absurd as the other.”

Even though Mormonism teaches that there is a Heavenly Mother, members are taught that they are not to pray to her. In the October 1991 LDS Conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley instructed members that:

... in light of the instruction we have received from the Lord Himself, I regard it as inappropriate for anyone in the Church to pray to our Mother in Heaven. ... The fact that we do not pray to our Mother in Heaven in no way belittles or denigrates her.

While President Hinckley said the prohibition on praying to Heavenly Mother in no way “belittles or denigrates her,” it surely makes her a silent partner.

The Living Prophet

The last picture to be attached to the glove is one of current LDS President Thomas S. Monson. The girl in the story then testifies “I know we are led by a living prophet, who gets revelation from God.”

One wonders how the girl in the book was supposed to know that Monson gets revelations? The LDS Church has not presented any revelation to the church body since 1978, when the church extended the priesthood to blacks. One could argue that the leaders pray for guidance and feel a spiritual conviction to proceed in a particular way. But how would this differ from thousands of Christians who pray daily for direction? Her testimony is simply a matter of parroting the statements made by LDS leaders.

Joseph Smith claimed that in 1830 God instructed the founding members of the LDS Church to receive Smith’s words “as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.”

This is still the position of the LDS church. The command to follow the current LDS prophets and apostles is laid out in section 68 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

“And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, . . .”

The importance of a living prophet was driven home in the October 2010 LDS Conference when two different church leaders made reference to past President Ezra Taft Benson’s talk on “Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet.” Benson proclaimed that “the living Prophet ... is more vital to us than the Standard Works” which would include the Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price. In fact, his speech is held in such high regard that it is printed in its entirety in the 2010 manual, Teachings of the Living Prophets.

By asserting the supremacy of a current prophet’s teachings over all previous scripture it eliminates any test of its truthfulness. One is expected to simply accept the current LDS leader’s teachings as divine instruction.

For example, when the church changed the authority of the Seventies to also include High Priests, Apostle Harold B. Lee challenged then current President David O. McKay on the change. President McKay asked Lee “have you ever thought that what was contrary to the order of heaven in 1840 might not be contrary to the order of heaven in 1960?”

But this raises the question as to how any Mormon can have confidence that what he currently believes and affirms will be equally true next year?

The LDS leaders would deny that they are teaching the members to have blind faith in them by pointing to speeches where they counsel the members to seek for divine confirmation through prayer. However, the person is still expected to come up with an answer to obey the leaders. Speaking at the April 2001 LDS Conference, Apostle M. Russell Ballard instructed the members: “If you will listen to the living prophet and the apostles and heed our counsel, you will not go astray.” This was further emphasized in the 2010 LDS manual, Teachings of the Living Prophets:

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46 Testimony Glove, p. 18.
47 Doctrine and Covenants 21:5.
50 Ibid., p. 21.
51 Ibid., p. 12.
Speaking under the direction of the Holy Ghost, the living prophet’s words take precedence over other statements on the same issue. . . Doctrine are eternal and do not change; however, the Lord, through His prophet, may change practices and programs, according to the needs of the people.52

But historically we see a trail of past teachings and scriptures that have been changed or eliminated. The LDS scriptures have gone through repeated editing, with severe changes being made in several of Joseph Smith’s revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants.

Examples of Changing Doctrine

Plural Marriage—The church affirmed in 1835 that it did not teach or practice plural marriage. Yet we know that Joseph Smith was already practicing it at that time. Then in 1842 Smith dictated a secret revelation commanding plural marriage while publically denying it.53 Once polygamy was openly taught and practiced in the 1850’s the leaders taught that plural marriage was essential for eternal life. Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants was considered a mandate for taking additional wives. Now section 132 is reinterpreted to mean one must have a temple marriage in order to enter the celestial kingdom, and plural marriage is no longer considered an important part of the revelation.

Temple Endowment Ceremony—In the 1840’s Joseph Smith instituted the secret temple endowment ceremony, which was supposedly received directly from God. However, these ordinances have undergone repeated changes to tone down some of the more disturbing elements. In 1990 they removed the part in the temple play where a minister was portrayed as making a deal with the devil to teach false doctrine for money. Also removed were the blood oaths where a person swore on his life to always be faithful to Mormonism.54

Priesthood and Patriarchs—From the time of Joseph Smith’s death until 1978 blacks were denied priesthood.55 The various priesthood offices have also been revised. For example, the office of Presiding Patriarch, held by Joseph Smith’s father and then by his brother, Hyrum, was thought to be a lineal line of authority. In 1979 Eldred G. Smith, a descendent of Joseph Smith’s brother Hyrum, was released from his calling as Presiding Patriarch to the LDS Church and placed on emeritus status. Now there is only a local patriarch in each stake, who does not need to be a descendent of the Smiths.56

Conclusion

In spite of the many changes, the leadership continues to assert that the LDS Church is the “restored gospel” from ages past. One wonders how it can be a restoration and yet continually change?

When Joseph Smith gave a revelation to send several early converts to Canada to sell the copyright to the Book of Mormon, the men came back in dismay. The revelation had been a complete failure. But Smith had a ready explanation: “Some revelations are of God, some revelations are of man, and some revelations are of the devil.”57 But that is the very problem, how are we to determine when his revelations are from God? The LDS Church teaches its members to use a very subjective test for determining truth: “Pray about it, and if you get a good feeling, it must be true.” But supposedly Joseph Smith and the early Mormons who took this journey had all prayed about the revelation and it had failed. Time after time in LDS history we see that their inner convictions were proven wrong. The Bible warns us in 1 John 4:1—“believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”

Mormons often appeal to James 1:5—“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God.” However, this is not instruction for testing a prophet. The Bible instructs us to test a prophet by examining his message. Paul challenged the Christians at Thessalonica to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” [1 Thessalonians 5:21] Also, Peter warned that in the Christian community there would be “false teachers” that would preach “damnable heresies.”58 Certainly Mormonism comes under this heading. Their doctrines of God once being a man, man’s ability to achieve godhood, and the necessity of a temple marriage for eternal life are in direct contradiction to the teachings of the New Testament. To say that anything, any ritual could add to the work of Christ is belittling his atonement. The writer of Hebrews summed it up this way:

52 Ibid., p. 18.
53 See George D. Smith, Nauvoo Polygamy (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2011).
55 See Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Curse of Cain? Racism in the Mormon Church, (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 2004); online at utlm.org/onlinebooks/curseofcain_content.htm
57 David Whitmer, An Address To All Believers in Christ, (Richmond, Missouri, 1887); online at utlm.org/onlinebooks/address1.htm
58 2 Peter 2:1.
“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrew 12:2)

The High Priest in the Old Testament did not sit down in the temple. The metaphor of Jesus sitting down indicated the atonement had been finished. It was complete. In John 19:30 we read that after Jesus had hung on the cross for hours he finally said: “It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.” The good news is that Christ accomplished everything that was needed for our full salvation in God’s presence. It is our joy and responsibility to share the Biblical gospel with our LDS friends, that they, too, may find the narrow way that leads to eternal life.

LETTERS AND EMAILS (continued from page 10)

April 2012: I have been a Christian for about 15 years now, but never really knew how to talk to Mormons about true grace in Jesus. After watching Heart of the Matter and learning about utlm.org and looking through your resources, I felt comfortable about being able to talk with Mormons. I live in South Korea and I had not seen one the whole time I had been here, then one day I saw a couple on the subway—they were on their mission. I was able to invite them over and make them food and share the grace of Jesus with them. My wife, who is also a Christian, shared her testimony for the first time with someone who was not a Christian.

It was SUCH a blessing to share about God’s work in our lives with them and God used you to help us feel comfortable about sharing. Your great work in this area really allows us and so many people to dialogue with Mormons in a deep and thoughtful way.

Thank you for your work as God works in you to will and to do. Praise God!

May 2012: I am a 35 year old LDS woman who was born and raised in the LDS church. I am also a great great great granddaughter of Brigham Young through his second wife, Mary Ann Angel. . . .

Several months ago my younger sister confided in me that she didn’t want to go to church anymore. She told me of some issues she had with the church that she’d been researching for years. I had no idea she felt this way and I was really shocked. Her main issues were polygamy, and blacks and the priesthood. She also pointed out that she didn’t know why she needed to give signs and tokens to see God again because she should already know her. This was a very powerful point to me. I have struggled with health problems since I was 10. It has been a great trial in my life, and yet, God has always been there with me—even in my darkest times when I wasn’t sure how I’d live to see another year.

I got my endowments out in 2009 and went again to the temple several times after that. Although I felt peace in the Celestial room—I felt uncomfortable in certain parts of the endowment session. More specifically—the prayer circle and when you raise your arms up and down and say “oh God, hear the words of my mouth”. I didn’t know why this made me uneasy, but it [did]. I got the same feeling each time I went to the temple and through the endowment session. I haven’t been very many times due to health problems that make it hard to travel.

When my younger sister mentioned her issues with the church, I spent several weeks trying to reconcile my own testimony. Then the weekend of Easter my sister and I got church, I spent several weeks trying to reconcile my own testimony. Then the weekend of Easter my sister and I got, more specifically—the prayer circle and when you raise your arms up and down and say “oh God, hear the words of my mouth”.

I was able to invite them over and make them food and share the grace of Jesus with them. My wife, who is also a Christian, shared her testimony for the first time with someone who was not a Christian.

That night and for 4 nights afterwards, I prayed to know why I felt uncomfortable during the endowment session. The 4th day I got sick with a high fever and the flu. I was home from work and school. It was this morning that I remembered someone telling me that there were similarities between masons and LDS temples. I also remember people at church mentioning that Joseph Smith was a Freemason. I knew nothing of Masons or Freemasons. So, I began researching about them on the internet. I didn’t want to be “biased”, so I tried to find out about Freemasons first. Then I went to the FAIR website and found
an article on the similarities between freemasons and temples. What I read really intrigued me and I couldn’t type fast enough to do more research into what the Master Masons ritual was (as the FAIR article mentioned Smith became one in 1842.) I found a script of the master mason ritual online and scanned over it. I was shocked when I read it. In my mind I could see similarities. I am sure you can guess what I found next. The similar handshakes, clothing, the masonic symbols were on my garments. I felt disgusted and went to the bedroom and took my garments off. It was a pretty bold move, I know—but I told God that I was not a Freemason!

I was still very sick with the flu for the next 5 days, but my research continued. I told my sister what I found and how upset it made me. Shouldn’t our temples be unique and not have similarities to an organization (the freemason)?

This is where my journey began. The weeks that followed I began to have more spiritual experiences regularly. Driving up to KU campus, I felt the Spirit and it testified to me that God created this world and that He loves all His children. These may be small to some people, but according to some LDS people . . . when you start to “stray” . . . doesn’t the Holy Ghost leave you? well that wasn’t and hasn’t happened to me.

I don’t know if that “remembrance” I had that one morning— was an answer to my prayer—but I am so thankful that I have begun to unravel the mystery behind my “uncomfortable feelings”. I also am disturbed by Joseph Smith’s multiple First Vision accounts. I even shared it with my Mom who joined the church before I was born, and she is still very much a strong LDS member. She said she could understand why those would make me upset—but it doesn’t bother her. This is astonishing to me. I even had her go to LDS.org and look at Joseph’s journal from 1832 and read his First Vision account. She agreed that it was Smith’s handwriting. And yet—she isn’t touched by it. maybe some day she will start to understand. I told my Mom that if I had seen God and Jesus, that I wouldn’t forget the details, or change the details to “fit the audience”. People who experience dramatic events in their life don’t forget the key details of those events. Therefore the excuses given by LDS scholars are fallible.

So, this leads to me where I am now. I want to resign from the church. My sister has told me to take it slow because it’s like “ripping off a big bandaid”. She will also be resigning. Our family doesn’t know yet. They will take it very hard. But I must do what I feel is right. What has emerged from this is that I feel a whole new world has opened to me, I am less judgmental of people I see and meet and most importantly, my prayers and relationship with God and with Christ are becoming stronger than I hoped for. This has always been my goal. I have Christian friends who seem to be close to Christ and I was jealous of that. Now, I can also have that and it is truly glorious! I really wish I lived closer to you guys, so I could meet and talk with you in person.

May 2012: You have been a big support for me leaving the LDS faith. Its been a journey for the last 6 months, and each day gets better than the next. Not to say that the beginning was not super hard and sad and lonely. But thank you for standing up for truth.

May 2012: Thank you for staying strong and exposing the big fraud that the Mormon church is. I was a member for 45 years . . . Now I know truth. I left in 2008 with my husband, and all our family (at least 20) are out of the cult.

May 2012: I just wanted to say THANKS for your ministry. I will keep it short (Even though I could write pages and pages and pages.) Anyways, I’m a former LDS member, married in the temple, with a . . . name that dates back to the start of it all. Neil A Maxwell was good friends with my Grandpa etc. etc. etc. . . . I’m now born again with a relationship with the One true God. Free from the chains of a false religion. As you can imagine, at one time I was told by my “leaders” that your website was nothing more than “Anti-Mormon” literature. So I must confess, I thought you were not on God’s side :) Oh, how the tables have turned! I thank God for giving you the courage to do what you do! Your website helped me more than you will ever know. I sincerely thank you. Me, my wife, my Mom, my brother, his wife, and more, have all left the LDS church and into an eternal relationship with Jesus. God bless!

June 2012: I would LOVE to personally thank you for your books and dedication. It was due solely to your and Jerald’s books that brought me out of Mormonism after 19 yrs and a Mission served. I would have never left the church IF not for the both of you, OR help bring out 30 members within my first yr out, all due to material from your books. Keep up the good work . . .

July 2012: I was so thankful that I found you on the Internet. . . . I first want to thank you for giving me the truth and leading me to the God of the Bible! I grew up in Mormonism so you saved me from eternal hell!! Thank you for allowing Jesus to used you in a powerful way!

July 2012: I am disgusted with the cruel sense that you have to bash other people’s religion and beliefs down because I don’t remember Christ ever show that kind of hatred towards others by bashing other people’s religion and beliefs. Jesus Christ taught to love one another not hatred. So how can you say that you are showing this Christ-like love that Jesus taught by doing this. . . . You may not agree with LDS faith, and you may feel you know the only truth. Jesus Christ taught to love one another, should that not go both ways? I am certain that members of your family as well as others who are members of the LDS faith haven’t posted anything against what your beliefs are, how dare you do it to ours and then call yourself a follower of Jesus Christ. Maybe you need to take a step back and think about that. . . . I think you are taking it way too far, and the things you say about the LDS faith does nothing but hurt the people as well as yourself. People like yourself that goes around and bashes other peoples religion shows that they have NO love for the Savior, themselves or others when they do this sort of thing.

August 2012: Thank you so much for your informative website!! I only came to my full knowledge of the LDS church a week ago. Having been a member for 47 years of my life, I have been so indoctrinated!! But not completely. From my own awful experiences with the leadership I became suspicious of doctrines and teachings about two years ago. From that time on, I have had a tendency to speak out in RS [Relief Society] and GD [Gospel Doctrine] classes in disgust of lessons taught there. Now, I am not ashamed to let all my LDS friends know that I have resigned, quit, forsaken, etc, the mormon church. In one week I have learned more about the truth [than] in the 47 years of cover up and lies taught me in the church. . . . Thank you so much for these resources!
August 2012: First off I have lived in Utah my whole life and married the love of my life two years ago, however she was Mormon, she has since converted to Catholicism and we both attend church weekly. I stumbled across your site because we try to find ways to have counter arguments when her family engages in conversation with us and sends missionaries to our house. At church last week our deacon had the book “Mormonism Shadow or Reality” I have since ordered that book on Amazon which directed me to your site. I really appreciate what you are doing, . . .

August 2012: I started reading UTLM materials back in the 80’s as a bible college student (Mormonism Shadow or Reality—the BIG book). In 2002 as an Army Chaplain my chaplain assistant was Mormon. We were in Iraq for a year and after almost 25 years of study I was well prepared to discuss Mormon issues with him over a year’s time.

September 2012: First, I have to apologize and ask for your forgiveness for my disrespectful attitude toward you and your message [in the past].

Second, I want to thank you for your work and your concern for the members of the mormon church. Until last January I had been a member of the church for 45 years. I knew it all and was proud of it.

Through your efforts and those of others the Lord was showing me all along that His love doesn’t come through men nor their organization. My wife was the strength behind our leaving and it has taken me this long to build up the courage to admit that I was wrong that the church is wrong and that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not something to be ashamed of. I thank God for his grace and thank you for your efforts. May God bless you.

September 2012: After I became a Christian in 2007 we emailed back and forth because God made you my first authority on Mormonism and the intro to cults. I want to thank you for being there to answer my questions and your wonderful resources.

September 2012: I received my latest shipment from Utah Lighthouse Ministries yesterday and decided to start with the [LDS Doctrines of the Gospel] Student Manual, because it is very current and shows what young Mormon students are being taught. . . .

Never in my lifetime, in the years I have been a Christians, or before so far as I know, have I seen so much deception and so much of a need for Christians to have discernment. My wife ______ and I have known for quite a few years that Mormonism does not teach the same things as orthodox Christianity, but what I am seeing in the Student Manual demonstrates why so many Christians do not realize that Mormonism is not the same as Christianity, or else they think the differences are so negligible as not to matter.

Any religion that teaches the existence of plural gods, that men are in essence the same as God to the extent they can achieve exaltation to godhood, that Lucifer is the brother of Jesus, that our spirits existed prior to our earthly existence-—cannot be the same as orthodox Christianity.

In reading the [Doctrines of the Gospel] Student Manual I have to pay very close attention and pray for discernment because there will be a long passage about repentance, about the nature of Jesus Christ that sounds like it could have been written by a born-again Christian, but, not too farther on there will be a mention of our ultimate purpose in life, for people to prepare themselves to become gods. It is important for me to see this in LDS-approved material in case I am questioned about what I write in the future. There is a chapter on “pre-mortal existence” which I recognized immediately as outside of Christian thought, at least as expressed in the Bible.

It has been very disillusioning to me to see some of the most respected ministers in this country condoning Mormonism, but I have to remember The Bible warned us that there would be those who “if possible would deceive the very elect,” and my wife and I see that happening with people we know closely and love, relatives and friends. We need to be diplomatic but as I say, discerning as well.

September 2012: I wanted to say I received my order today . . .

I want to give you a REALLY BIG THANK YOU, for the extra material, especially the DVD — “Joseph Smith/ Jesus/Search for the TRUTH”, and the handout on terminology of the LDS church. This will greatly improve my effectiveness in teaching Mormons about the True Jesus.

I have been watching Ms. Sandra Tanner on the John Ankerberg DVD series on Mormons and have learned a great deal. Your written material, especially the terminology handout will help me learn and retain the info to help lead Mormons out of the deception they are in.

September 2012: Thanks to the You Tube videos, I have stopped going to Mormon meetings of any kind & am letting my Temple Recommend expire with no plans of renewing it. I have shared what I am reading online with my spouse who now sees where he has been lied to in past church teaching. He has been “less active” for some time now with no plans of becoming active again. We will be looking for a new church in ______ Utah.

September 2012: You start by hating the dead. And getting others to hate them. Then hate the living for having the nerve to worship God, according to the dictates of their hearts. ‘They enter not nor do they suffer others to enter’ . . . sound familiar. Hating God’s prophets has always been in vogue, but you act as though it is something you alone have the moral superiority to do right. Squinting at gnats they swallowed a camel. You ridicule the idea of perfection, then in the same breath condemn those who were not. Bla bla bla I’m sure you have heard it all before and will smile and ignore it this time as well. All I can do is pray for you. It isn’t too late to break off your employ with the prince of pride. Come to Christ.

September 2012: I just wanted to thank you for this site. I am a convert to the church. i joined when i was 18 and now I'm 24. i came into the church feeling like a new person and now i am leaving feeling broken. What i do know is that my god is a loving god. Mormon god, seems to be someone a tab bid raciest, sexiest, and closed minded. I didn’t want to spend 1 more minute in sacrament meeting or with SOME of my lds friends who thought that was [ok]. I am a strong, out spoken, democratic, African American woman who was raised by two white lesbian moms. There was no place for me in that church. i thank you for giving people like me hope and the information that we need to go on with our lives.

September 2012: Your site has really good material. i'm a practicing mormon at present but i like your site, id love more info and want to donate.
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Rose Publishing
What’s Hidden in the New Headings?
Changes in the LDS Scriptures

At the end of February, 2013, the Deseret News featured an amazing article: “LDS Church Announces New Scripture Edition.” Utah was buzzing with people trying to determine what had been changed and why. The article noted that the changes included “revisions to study aids, new photos, updated maps,” “making historical and contextual adjustments to the section headings of 76 sections of the Doctrine and Covenants,” and “adding introductory headings to both official declarations at the end of the Doctrine and Covenants.”

According to the same article the LDS Church began working on this project in 2004. Currently the new edition is only available on the LDS web site, and the print version will be available in August 2013.

While many of the changes seem to be minor, some are obviously being made to counter historical problems raised by church critics.

In 2011 an online survey of about 3,000 disaffected Mormons, conducted by Open Stories Foundation, revealed:

. . . 81 percent [of disaffected Mormons] cited loss of faith in Mormon founder Joseph Smith as a moderate or strong factor in their no longer believing in the LDS Church. Another 84 percent said they studied LDS history and lost their faith. About 79 percent lost faith in Mormonism’s founding scripture, the Book of Mormon.

The survey . . . found that the two historical issues that most negatively affected belief in the faith were “the Book of Abraham”—a Mormon text that Smith said was based on Egyptian papyri he obtained—and polygamy, which the church abandoned in 1890.

Some of the alterations to the introductory material in the 2013 edition of LDS scriptures seem to be aimed at lessening the tension on these problem areas.

In the following material we will examine some of the major changes in the 2013 edition of LDS scriptures and discuss their significance.

Book of Abraham

In 1835 Joseph Smith arranged for the LDS Church to purchase a collection of ancient Egyptian papyri for $2,400 (equivalent to about $65,000 in 2012). Such a large investment was done despite the severe financial problems of the church, which shows the significance of the papyri in Smith’s mind. He soon announced that one of the papyri contained the actual writings of the biblical Abraham:

. . . I commenced the translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, . . .

Smith’s translation of the papyri was published first in the 1842 Times and Seasons, in Nauvoo, Illinois, and


then in England as part of the 1851 edition of the *Pearl of Great Price*, although not canonized until 1880. During this time, as scholars in the nineteenth century developed the ability to translate Egyptian hieroglyphics, criticism of Smith’s “translation” grew. Then, in December of 1912, the *New York Times* printed an article debunking Smith’s translation of the papyri titled “Museum Walls Proclaim Fraud of Mormon Prophet.” From that point on dozens of articles and publications, quoting current Egyptologists, have demonstrated that the Book of Abraham text is not a translation of the papyri. This seems to have been the motivation for the recent change in the Introduction to the *Pearl of Great Price*. In the 1981 Introduction we read:

*The Book of Abraham. A translation from some Egyptian papyri that came into the hands of Joseph Smith in 1835, containing writings of the patriarch Abraham.*

The 2013 Introduction to the *Pearl of Great Price* reads:


Notice the subtle shift from a direct translation to “inspired” in an effort to distance Smith’s text from the papyri. This seems to be a concession that the Book of Abraham text is not a translation of the papyri, thus alleviating the need to defend Smith’s interpretation.

When we examine the Book of Abraham itself we find that the church has removed the heading at the start of the book:

Translated from the Papyrus, by Joseph Smith.

Oddly, they have left unchanged the rest of the heading to the Book of Abraham, which still announces that the text is an actual translation of the papyrus:

*A Translation of some ancient Records that have fallen into our hands from the catacombs of Egypt. The writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt, called the Book of Abraham, written by his own hand, upon papyrus.*

This uneven editing leaves one wondering what they consider to be the connection between the papyrus and the text? Past leaders clearly believed the Book of Abraham was literally a translation of the papyrus.

**The Facsimiles**

Even if one were to accept their new explanation that the Book of Abraham was an “inspired translation” (i.e. a product of revelation from God, independent of the actual meaning of the papyri), the problem still remains regarding the drawings that accompany the translation. These facsimiles are clearly based on the images found on the Egyptian material. Smith described Facsimile No. 1 (shown below) as “Abraham fastened upon an altar” and the “idolatrous priest of Elkenah attempting to offer up Abraham as a sacrifice.”

Below is a photo of the original papyrus from which Facsimile No. 1 was drawn.

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5 Photo of 1912 *New York Times* article at www.utlm.org/onlineresources/nytimes1912papyrus.htm. See also Salt Lake City Messenger, no. 113; online at www.utlm.org/newsletters/no113.htm#aa16

Contrary to Smith’s explanations in the *Pearl of Great Price*, this is a standard Egyptian drawing relating to the embalming of the dead. The standing black figure is actually Anubis, the Egyptian god of the dead. Smith’s Book of Abraham is clearly dependent on Facsimile No. 1. In Abraham 1:12 we read “that you may have a knowledge of this altar, I will refer you to the representation at the commencement of this record.” Thus the Book of Abraham claims to be an actual translation with an illustration of Abraham being sacrificed. How can the LDS Church divorce the text of the Book of Abraham from the papyrus yet accept the facsimiles as part of Abraham’s record?

Smith’s explanation of Facsimiles No. 2 and 3 are likewise in error. Yet at the end of the explanation of Facsimile No. 2 we read: “The above translation is given as far as we [meaning Joseph Smith] have any right to give at the present time.” However, nothing has been “translated.” The text describing the illustrations does not conform to any actual translation of the Egyptian characters and appears to be entirely fabricated from Smith’s imagination. Noted Egyptologist James H. Breasted, Ph.D., gave this evaluation of Smith’s explanations of the facsimiles:

> These three facsimiles of Egyptian documents in the “Pearl of Great Price” depict the most common objects in the mortuary religion of Egypt. Joseph Smith’s interpretations of them as part of a unique revelation through Abraham, therefore, very clearly demonstrate that he was totally unacquainted with the significance of these documents and absolutely ignorant of the simplest facts of Egyptian writing and civilization.\(^8\)

Even LDS Egyptologist John Gee appears to see the problems with Smith’s purported translation and seems to downplay the significance of those issues. Speaking at the 2009 F.A.I.R. Conference he stated: “How the Book of Abraham was translated is unimportant. The Church does not stand or fall on the Book of Abraham.”\(^9\) However, many people leaving Mormonism disagree. If Joseph Smith fails as a translator of the Book of Abraham where his translation can be checked against the papyrus, why would anyone believe his “translation” of the Book of Mormon when there is no evidence that the gold plates ever existed?\(^10\)

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\(^7\) Ritner, *Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*.  

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**Book of Mormon**

The Introduction to the Book of Mormon has undergone a few significant changes. In the first sentence of the 1981 edition we read:

> The Book of Mormon is a volume of holy scripture comparable to the Bible. It is a record of God’s dealings with the ancient inhabitants of the Americas and contains, as does the Bible, the fulness of the everlasting gospel.

The phrase “as does the Bible” has been deleted. It is assumed that it was removed to enhance the importance of the Book of Mormon. After all, if the Bible contains the fulness of the gospel why would we need the Book of Mormon?

**Lamanites**

The Book of Mormon describes the migration of a group of Israelites from Jerusalem to the New World in about 600 BC. A few years after settling in America these people divided into two groups, the righteous Nephites and the wicked Lamanites. In the past Mormonism has claimed that the American Indians are the descendants of the Lamanites but in recent years this claim has been modified. In the Introduction to the 1981 Book of Mormon we read:

> After thousands of years, all were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are the principal ancestors of the American Indians.

This has been changed to read:

> After thousands of years, all were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are among the ancestors of the American Indians.

This change seems to have been made in response to the recent research on Native American DNA,\(^11\) which shows that almost all indigenous people of North and South America are Asiatic, not Semitic.

Also in the front part of the Book of Mormon is a section titled “Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith.” In this article Smith recounts the message given to him by the angel who told him of the gold plates containing the text of the Book of Mormon:

> He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang.

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Again we see the Native Americans associated with the Book of Mormon people. Past LDS Church writings repeatedly referred to Native Americans as Lamanites, descendents of the Book of Mormon people. In fact some of the earliest LDS missionary efforts were to the “Lamanites” in New York, Ohio and Missouri (D&C 28:9; 32:2).12 Now that those people can no longer be claimed as descendents of Israelites, the church has stopped referring to them as “Lamanites.” But this leaves the Mormons with no identifiable group that has descended from the Book of Mormon people. One of Smith’s revelations prophesied:

. . . this testimony shall come to the knowledge of the Lamanites, . . . for this very purpose are these plates preserved, which contain these records . . . that the Lamanites might come to the knowledge of their fathers, and that they might know the promises of the Lord . . . (Doctrine and Covenants 3:18-20).

This leaves one to wonder how the LDS can take the gospel to the descendents of the Book of Mormon people if they can’t identify anyone as a Lamanite?

Racism

Traditionally LDS Church leaders have explained that the reason Native Americans are dark is that they are descended from the cursed Lamanites.

And he [the Lord] had caused the cursing to come upon them, yea, even a sore cursing . . . wherefore, as they were white, and exceedingly fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them. (Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 5:21)

In 1981, in an attempt to minimize the book’s racial teaching about people being cursed with a dark skin, the LDS Church changed the Book of Mormon promise that in the last days the Lamanites who converted to the gospel would revert to being “white” (2 Nephi 30:6). This verse used to promise the descendants of Lehi that upon conversion they would become “a white and a delightsome people.” However, this was changed in 1981 to read “a pure and a delightsome people.”

Now they have introduced additional changes to further obscure the Lamanite’s cursed skin color. The heading for 2 Nephi, chapter 5, has been reworded. In the 1981 edition it read:

Because of their unbelief, the Lamanites are cut off from the presence of the Lord, are cursed, and become a scourge unto the Nephites. (1981 heading for 2 Nephi 5)

It now reads:

Because of their unbelief, the Lamanites are cut off from the presence of the Lord, are cursed, and become a scourge unto the Nephites. (2013 heading for 2 Nephi 5)

Notice the removal of “skin of blackness.” The heading for Mormon, chapter 5, was also reworked. It used to read:

. . . The Book of Mormon shall come forth to convince all Israel that Jesus is the Christ—The Lamanites shall be a dark, filthy, and loathsome people—They shall receive the gospel from the Gentiles in the latter days. (Book of Mormon, 1981 Introduction, Mormon 5)

The 2013 edition has reworded the introduction to this chapter to eliminate the derogatory description of the Lamanites:

The Book of Mormon will come forth to convince all Israel that Jesus is the Christ—Because of their unbelief, the Lamanites will be scattered, and the Spirit will cease to strive with them—They will receive the gospel from the Gentiles in the latter days. (2013 Introduction, Mormon 5)

However, the chapter itself still retains the original racist teaching:

. . . for this people shall be scattered, and shall become a dark, a filthy, and a loathsome people, beyond the description of that which ever hath been amongst us, yea, even that which hath been among the Lamanites, and this because of their unbelief and idolatry. (Mormon 5:15)

In spite of these changes the Book of Mormon continues to promote racism by portraying “white” people as “fair and delightsome” while “dark” people are referred to as “cursed.”13

Plural Marriage

It is interesting to see how the Book of Mormon chapter headings have been reworded in relation to plural wives. In Jacob, chapters 2 and 3, are verses dealing with marriage and polygamy. The old heading for chapter 2 read:

Men should seek riches to help their fellow men—Jacob condemns the unauthorized practice of plural marriage—The Lord delights in the chastity of women.

By using the word “unauthorized” the Mormon was still free to promote plural marriage as long as it was “authorized.” This has been reworded to avoid mentioning plural marriage altogether:


13 www.utlm.org/onlineressources/racialstatements.htm
Men may seek riches to help their fellowmen—The Lord commands that no man among the Nephites may have more than one wife—The Lord delights in the chastity of women.

Regardless of the headings, Jacob 2:24, condemning David and Solomon’s plural wives, still contradicts Doctrine and Covenants 132:1, 38, 39, where David and Solomon’s wives are approved by God.

In response to criticism of polygamy LDS members will often point out that Jacob 2:30 says men are to have only one wife unless the Lord commands otherwise, thus implying that Smith’s polygamy was approved since it was commanded by God. This verse would not provide a justification of Joseph Smith’s many marriages as the Book of Mormon verse seems to indicate that the reason God might command plural wives would be for purpose of procreation:

For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people; otherwise they shall hearken unto these things. (Jacob 2:30)

However, there is no clear evidence that Smith produced any children from his 33+ plural wives. (Further discussion of plural marriage will be found in the section dealing with the Doctrine and Covenants.)

Monetary System

One criticism of the Book of Mormon has been the lack of evidence for coins in the New World. Prior to 2013, Alma 11 contained this chapter heading:

Nephite coinage set forth.

Evidently the LDS leaders recognize the problem of saying the Native Americans used coins. In trying to minimize the problem the heading has been changed to “The Nephite monetary system is set forth.” However just dropping the word “coinage” does not solve the problem. Alma 11:3 states that a day’s wages were “a senine of gold” or “a senum of silver, which is equal to a senine of gold.” Verse 4 speaks of the “names of the different pieces of their gold, and of their silver, according to their value.” This certainly paints a picture of a system of coins.

However, there is no evidence that Native Americans ever developed a monetary system based on gold and silver, whether one refers to it as coins or weights. Native American economics were based primarily on trade and agriculture. The Mayans traded quetzal feathers, obsidian, jade, cocoa beans, and other agricultural items, but did not use a “monetary system” based on gold and silver. They truly had a barter system.14 This would have been true of the early inhabitants in the eastern area of the United States as well.

Maps

The LDS church announced that the new 2013 edition of their scriptures would include more maps. There are 14 maps relating to the Bible and 7 maps for the church history section. Yet there is not one map relating to the Book of Mormon. The fact that they cannot identify a single location demonstrates that they have no concrete evidence that these people ever existed. To date there is not one artifact or sample of writing (independent of Joseph Smith) attributed to Book of Mormon people.

The closest thing to a map in official LDS literature is the illustration below that is in the 2008 edition of Book of Mormon Seminary Student Study Guide entitled “Possible Book of Mormon Sites (in Relation to Each Other).” However, at the bottom of the illustration is this warning:

Possible relationships of sites in the Book of Mormon based on internal evidence. No effort should be made to identify points on this map with any existing geographical location.15

The illustrator was very careful in making his chart so that one could not correlate it with a map of either North or South America.

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**Doctrine and Covenants**

Smith’s revelations were first published in book form in 1833 under the title *Book of Commandments*. Then in 1835 a new edition was published under the title *Doctrine and Covenants*. Smith’s revelations underwent numerous revisions at that time, but other changes have been made since then.16

**Code Names**

After the Mormons left New York and settled in Ohio and Missouri in the early 1830’s they developed serious financial problems. Joseph Smith and several other leaders embarked on a number of business ventures. Mormon historians James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard explain:

Administration of these economic affairs was complex, and in April 1832 the Prophet and others attempted to simplify it when they created a new administrative agency known as the Central Council. This council, in turn, immediately created the United Firm (sometimes called the United Order), consisting of Joseph Smith and a handful of other Church leaders in Ohio and Missouri. This was a joint-stewardship in which the members consecrated all their lands and business to the firm. They were to manage “all things pertaining to the bishopric” (D&C 82:12), supervise the establishment of stores in Ohio and Missouri, and use their profits not only for their personal living expenses but also for the economic needs of the Church, including assisting the poor.17

Fearing possible lawsuits, Smith masked their business plans by using code names for various men and locations (i.e. Zion refers to Independence, Missouri) in several of the revelations printed in 1835. These pseudonyms were used in *Doctrine and Covenants*, sections 78, 82, 92, 96, 103,104, and 105.18 While the new heading for section 78 gives some background on the “United Firm,” it does not discuss the code names used in the original printing of the revelation:

*Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Kirtland, Ohio, March 1, 1832. On that day, the Prophet and other leaders had assembled to discuss Church business. This revelation originally instructed the Prophet, Sidney Rigdon, and Newel K. Whitney to travel to Missouri and organize the Church’s mercantile and publishing endeavors by creating a “firm” that would oversee these efforts, generating funds for the establishment of Zion and for the benefit of the poor. This firm, known as the United Firm, was organized in April 1832 and disbanded in 1834 (see section 82). Sometime after its dissolution, under the direction of Joseph Smith, the phrase “the affairs of the storehouse for the poor” replaced “mercantile and publishing establishments” in the revelation, and the word “order” replaced the word “firm.” (2013 *Doctrine and Covenants*, Introduction to Section 78)*

Below is an example of the code names used in the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants*:

The Lord spake unto Enoch, saying: Hearken unto me, saith the Lord your God, who are ordained unto the high priesthood of my church, who have assembled yourselves together . . . in other words, let my servant Ahashdah and my servant Gazelam or Enoch, and my servant Pelagoram sit in council with the saints which are in Zion. (1835 D&C 75:1-2)

However, the 2013 edition of the same passage reads:

The Lord spake unto Joseph Smith, Jun., saying: Hearken unto me, saith the Lord your God, who are ordained unto the high priesthood of my church, who have assembled yourselves together . . . in other words, let my servant Newel K. Whitney and my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and my servant Sidney Rigdon sit in council with the saints which are in Zion. (D&C 78:1, 9)

The code names were obviously an attempt to keep the public from knowing the leaders’ financial plans.19 However, even though established by revelation, Smith’s United Firm failed and the church went further into debt.

**Civil War Prophecy**

Section 87 of the D&C has often been put forward as a proof of Joseph Smith’s prophetic ability, predicting the civil war twenty-nine years before the event.

*Revelation and prophecy on war, given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at or near Kirtland, Ohio, December 25, 1832. This section was received at a time when the brethren were reflecting and reasoning upon African slavery on the American continent and the slavery of the children of men throughout the world. (Sec. 87)*

However, research has demonstrated that newspapers of the day had already announced the pending secession of South Carolina, making civil war a likely outcome. Smith was just putting into words the current fears of

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18 For an example of code names compare 1835 D&C sec. XCVIII with the current D&C sec. 104.
19 For another example of code names, compare sec. 86:4 of the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants* with the 2013 edition, sec. 82:11.
the nation. The new heading for this revelation seems to concede the point:

Revelation and prophecy on war, given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at or near Kirtland, Ohio, December 25, 1832. At this time disputes in the United States over slavery and South Carolina’s nullification of federal tariffs were prevalent. (Sec. 87)

When South Carolina backed down from secession the 1832 revelation was evidently tucked away and not published until 1851 in England as part of the Pearl of Great Price. It was not placed in the Doctrine and Covenants until 1876, years after the Civil War had ended and the Mormons felt comfortable claiming it as a revelation.

Plural Marriage and Section 132

The new introduction to D&C section 132 states:

Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Nauvoo, Illinois, recorded July 12, 1843, relating to the new and everlasting covenant, including the eternity of the marriage covenant and the principle of plural marriage. Although the revelation was recorded in 1843, evidence indicates that some of the principles involved in this revelation were known by the Prophet as early as 1831. See Official Declaration 1.

Thus the LDS Church now concedes that Smith was teaching plural marriage prior to July of 1843 but doesn’t explain which “principles” were known as early as 1831. At that time Joseph Smith had given a revelation commanding missionaries be sent to convert and intermarry with the American Indians. However, since the men who were sent on the mission were already married, it is obvious that they would have been practicing plural marriage.

While the revelation was not published at the time, it was mentioned in the Ohio Star on December 8, 1831. The purpose of marrying the Native Americans seems to have been aimed at gaining access to the Indian reservations. Ezra Booth wrote:

In addition to this, and to co-operate with it, it has been made known by revelation, that it will be pleasing to the Lord, should they [LDS missionaries] form a matrimonial alliance with the Natives, and by this means the Elders, who comply with the thing so pleasing to the Lord, and for which the Lord has promised to bless those who do it abundantly, gain a residence in the Indian territory, independent of the Indian agent. It has been made known to one, who has left his wife in the state of N.Y. that he is entirely free from his wife, and he is at liberty to take him a wife from among the Lamanites.

The 1831 revelation shows that it relates to marrying Native Americans to fulfill the Book of Mormon promise that in the last days the Indians’ skin color would be changed to “white.” The revelation states:

Verily, I say unto you, that the wisdom of man, in his fallen state, knoweth not the purposes and the privileges of my holy priesthood, but ye shall know when ye receive a fulness by reason of the anointing. For it is my will, that in time, ye should take unto you wives of the Lamanites and Nephites, that their posterity may become white, delightsome and just, for even now their females are more virtuous than the gentiles.

While it does not directly address the issue of plural marriage the fact that married men were commanded to take Native American wives demonstrates that it would have been the logical outcome. W. W. Phelps, early LDS leader, was present when the revelation was given and later asked Smith about it:

About three years after this was given, I asked brother Joseph [Smith, Jr.] privately, how “we,” that were mentioned in the revelation could take wives from the “natives”—as we were all married men? He replied instantly “In the[e] same manner that Abraham took Hagar and Keturah [Keturah]; and Jacob took Rachel Bilha, and Zilpah: by revelation—the saints of the Lord are always directed by revelation.”

If the Mormons are going to claim that there was some other 1831 revelation on marriage they should produce it. To date, the Native American revelation is the only one known.

The next hint of Smith knowing some of the “principles” of eternal marriage relates to his association with Fanny Alger, a young woman living with the Smiths in Kirtland, Ohio. Historian Todd Compton lists Fanny Alger as Joseph Smith’s first plural wife, giving the time of their marriage as early 1833. While there is evidence of an affair between them, proof of an actual marriage ceremony is more sketchy, relying on a late recollection

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22 Tanner, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pp. 230A–230C.

23 As quoted in Marquardt, Joseph Smith Revelations, p. 375.

of Levi Hancock.\textsuperscript{25} If Smith was privately married to Fanny, Oliver Cowdery, one of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, was not aware of it. He wrote to his brother, Warren, in 1838 accusing Smith of having a “dirty, nasty, filthy affair” with Fanny Alger.\textsuperscript{26}

To calm rumors regarding Fanny’s relationship with Joseph, the church quickly added a section on marriage to the 1835 edition of the \textit{Doctrine and Covenants}, which declared, “Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy; we declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife . . .”\textsuperscript{27}

Traditionally scholars have listed Smith’s first plural wife as Louisa Beaman, in Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1841. By 1842 rumors were circulating that Smith was secretly taking additional wives. We now know that Smith’s next several wives were already married to other men, which would have provided a cover for his activities.\textsuperscript{28}

In 1842 John C. Bennett, former mayor of Nauvoo and confidant of Joseph Smith, published his expose, \textit{History of the Saints}, charging Smith with secretly practicing polygamy. In answer to Bennett’s book, in August of 1842 the LDS newspaper \textit{Times and Seasons} denounced his charges of plural marriage as “base falsehoods and misrepresentations.”\textsuperscript{29} However, history confirms Bennett’s charge. Historians now concede that Smith had at least 34 wives by the time of his death in 1844.\textsuperscript{30}

In 1843, after Joseph Smith had secretly married about two dozen women in plural marriage,\textsuperscript{31} and had received strong opposition from his wife Emma, Smith’s brother Hyrum implored Joseph to record his revelation. Hyrum was convinced that he could take it to Emma and convince her that plural marriage was ordained of God. The first verse of section 132 explains that the purpose of the revelation was to answer Smith’s questions about “Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines.”

Verse 4 is very emphatic that those who have had this revelation given to them must obey it or be “damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory.” Verse 52 specifically commands Emma to accept the women Smith had already married:

And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith, receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph, and who are virtuous and pure before me; . . . And I command mine handmaid, Emma Smith, to abide and cleave unto my servant Joseph, . . . But if she will not abide this commandment she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord; . . . (\textit{D&C} 132:52)

When Hyrum returned from showing Emma the revelation he told Joseph “he had never received a more severe talking to in his life.”\textsuperscript{32} Thus we see that the whole reason the revelation was committed to paper was to convince Emma about plural marriage. While Emma Smith probably did not know the extent of Smith’s plural marriages at the time she was shown the revelation, she was well aware of the issue.

Today the church is trying to present section 132 as mainly dealing with their concept of eternal marriage, with polygamy being only a side issue. History shows that it was just the opposite. For instance, Joseph F. Smith, nephew of Joseph Smith, apostle and later president of the LDS Church, preached in 1878 that the practice of plural marriage was necessary to achieve the highest exaltation in heaven. He also emphasized that Joseph Smith only entered into plural marriage after “an angel of God, with a drawn sword, stood before him and commanded that he should enter into the practice of that principle, or he should be utterly destroyed.”\textsuperscript{33}

Lorenzo Snow, fifth president of the LDS Church, gave the following information in an 1869 affidavit:

In the month of April, 1843, I returned from my European mission. A few days after my arrival at Nauvoo, when at President Joseph Smith’s house, he . . . explained to me the doctrine of plurality of wives; he said that the Lord had revealed it unto him, and commanded him to have women sealed to him as wives; that he foresaw the trouble that would follow, and sought to turn away from the commandment; that an angel from heaven then appeared before him with a drawn sword, threatening him with destruction unless he went forward and obeyed the commandment.\textsuperscript{34}

The early LDS Church leaders understood that section 132 of the \textit{Doctrine and Covenants} commanded plural marriage. It was not just a side issue to eternal marriage, it was the key issue. Emma wasn’t sealed in marriage to Joseph until May 28, 1843, at which time Smith had already been sealed to approximately two

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., pp. 28-29.


\textsuperscript{27} 1835 \textit{Doctrine and Covenants}, section CI, p. 251.

\textsuperscript{28} Compton, \textit{In Sacred Loneliness}, pp. 4-5.

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Times and Seasons}, vol. 3 (August 1, 1842): p. 869.

\textsuperscript{30} Compton, \textit{In Sacred Loneliness}, pp. 4-7.


\textsuperscript{32} Joseph Smith, \textit{History of the Church}, Introduction to vol. 5 pp. xxxii-xxxiii.

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Journal of Discourses}, vol. 20, pp. 28-29.

dozen women. In order to receive her eternal sealing to Smith, Emma had to accept Joseph’s plural marriages.35

The Manifesto – Declaration 1

In 1890 eighty-three-year-old LDS President Wilford Woodruff issued his famous Manifesto, counseling the Mormons to forsake plural marriage. This is printed in the Doctrine and Covenants as Declaration 1. While the Manifesto is presented as the results of a revelation, no actual revelation has been printed. The new heading for Declaration 1 reads:

The Bible and the Book of Mormon teach that monogamy is God’s standard for marriage unless He declares otherwise (see 2 Samuel 12:7–8 and Jacob 2:27, 30). Following a revelation to Joseph Smith, the practice of plural marriage was instituted among Church members in the early 1840s (see section 132). From the 1860s to the 1880s, the United States Government passed laws to make this religious practice illegal. These laws were eventually upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. After receiving revelation, President Wilford Woodruff issued the following Manifesto, which was accepted by the Church as authoritative and binding on October 6, 1890. This led to the end of the practice of plural marriage in the Church.36

This carefully worded statement is misleading in several areas.
1. Not only does the Bible and Book of Mormon teach monogamy, but from 1835 until 1876 the Doctrine and Covenants contained a section that taught monogamy and denounced polygamy as a crime.

Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy: we declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife; and one woman, but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again.37

In 1876 this section was dropped from the canon and replaced by section 132.
2. The new heading implies that once plural marriage was made illegal the LDS Church gave up the practice. Ironically, polygamy was against the law in Illinois when the early Mormons began practicing it there.38 This was the reason for its great secrecy and the adamant denials of the doctrine and practice by Joseph Smith. Preaching just one month prior to his murder, Joseph Smith gave this denial of polygamy:

What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one. I am the same man, and as innocent as I was fourteen years ago; and I can prove them all perjurers.39

However, research shows that he had at least 34 wives at that time.40

Historian Richard S. Van Wagoner provides the following information about the Illinois law:

Polygamy, a criminal act under the 1833 Illinois Anti-bigamy Laws, was so unacceptable to monogamous nineteenth-century American society that Smith could introduce it only in absolute secrecy. Despite Smith’s explicit denials of plural marriage, stories of “spiritual wifery” had continued to spread.41

3. The heading for the Manifesto refers to polygamy as a “practice,” not a doctrine. The early Mormons risked prison for plural marriage because they believed it was a doctrine, and failure to practice it would keep one from exaltation. Preaching in 1866, President Brigham Young declared:

The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy.42

Joseph Smith told Heber C. Kimball that if he didn’t enter into polygamy “he would lose his apostleship and be damned.”43

4. The new heading states that the issuing of the Manifesto led to the end of the practice of plural marriage in the Church.” Notice that it says led to the end, not that polygamy was actually ended in 1890. What most readers will not know is that after 1890 over two hundred LDS apostles and leaders continued to take plural wives.44 LDS scholar B. Carmon Hardy observed:

The total of 262 post-Manifesto plural marriages found and described in the list [at the back of his book] makes it clear that a strong commitment to the doctrine continued past the turn of the century.45

Also, the statements following Declaration 1 show that the main reason plural marriage was abandoned was simply due to the fear of legal action against the church

35 Smith, Nauvoo Polygamy, pp. 178-181; 462,621; Andrew Jenson, Historical Record, 1887, pp. 225, 240.
37 Doctrine and Covenants, (1835) Section 101, p. 251.
38 www.utlm.org/images/newsletters/no97illinoisbigamylaw.gif
39 Smith, History of the Church, vol. 6, p. 411.
40 Smith, Nauvoo Polygamy, pp. 621-623; Compton, In Sacred Loneliness, pp. 4-6.
44 B. Carmon Hardy, Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage, (University of Illinois, 1992), Appendix 2.
and possible arrest of the church leaders, not that it was no longer considered a doctrine.

5. By stating that “monogamy is God’s standard for marriage” and that the Manifesto “led to the end of the practice of plural marriage in the Church” the church seems to be suggesting that plural marriage is no longer a part of LDS beliefs. However, after the death of a wife a Mormon man is able to be married/sealed again in the temple to a new wife. According to LDS statements this would result in plural marriage in heaven as the man had two women sealed to him while on earth.

This doctrine was affirmed in October 2007 at the funeral for the second wife of President Howard W. Hunter, the fourteenth President of the LDS Church. The Deseret News reported:

President Hinckley affirmed the eternal nature of the marriage between Sister [Inis] Hunter and the former church president, whose first wife, Claire Jeffs, died after a long battle with Alzheimer’s disease and is now buried beside him in the Salt Lake Cemetery.

Inis Hunter “will now be laid to rest on the other side,” he said. “They were sealed under the authority of the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood for time and for all eternity,” he said, recalling the marriage ceremony he performed for them in the Salt Lake Temple in April 1990.

Another example of plural sealings is Apostle Russell M. Nelson’s marriage in 2006 to a BYU professor. The BYU NewsNet for April 7, 2006, announced the temple marriage of Apostle Nelson, age 81, to Wendy Watson. His first wife died in February of 2005 and this was the first marriage for his new wife. This would mean, according to LDS beliefs, that Nelson has two wives sealed to him for eternity.

Harold B. Lee, the eleventh president of the church, also remarried after his wife’s death and was sealed to another woman and was looking forward to a polygamous relationship in heaven. He, in fact, wrote a poem in which he reflected that his second wife, Joan, would join his first wife, Fern, as his eternal wives:

My lovely Joan was sent to me: So Joan joins Fern That three might be, more fitted for eternity. “O Heavenly Father, my thanks to thee” (Deseret News 1974 Church Almanac, p. 17)

After being widowed, Apostle Dallin Oaks remarried in the temple and believes he will be married eternally to both women. In 2002 he commented on his second sealing:

When I was 66, my wife June died of cancer. Two years later—a year and a half ago—I married [in the LDS temple] Kristen McMain, the eternal companion who now stands at my side. (Dallin Oaks, “Timing,” speech delivered at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, January 29, 2002)

According to LDS doctrine, these men will have their faithful wives and children with them in the resurrection, which would mean they will be living polygamy in the Celestial Kingdom.

Thus we see that the doctrine and practice of plural marriage has not been abandoned, but only delayed until the afterlife. It seems the LDS Church simply wants to keep it out of the public eye for better public relations and fear of being identified with polygamist splinter groups.

Declaration 2

The new heading for Declaration 2, granting priesthood to blacks, reads:

The Book of Mormon teaches that “all are alike unto God,” including “black and white, bond and free, male and female” (2 Nephi 26:33). Throughout the history of the Church, people of every race and ethnicity in many countries have been baptized and have lived as faithful members of the Church. During Joseph Smith’s lifetime, a few black male members of the Church were ordained to the priesthood. Early in its history, Church leaders stopped conferring the priesthood on black males of African descent. Church records offer no clear insights into the origins of this practice. Church leaders believed that a revelation from God was needed to alter this practice and prayerfully sought guidance. The revelation came to Church President Spencer W. Kimball and was affirmed to other Church leaders in the Salt Lake Temple on June 1, 1978. The revelation removed all restrictions with regard to race that once applied to the priesthood.

While the church concedes that a few blacks were ordained to the priesthood during Joseph Smith’s lifetime, they do not explain that this did not grant blacks access to the temple rites in Nauvoo. For example, Elijah Abel, one of the earliest blacks to receive the priesthood, was never granted temple access, even though he advanced to the level of a Seventy and went on a mission for the church. Jane Manning, a faithful Mormon and maid in the Smith household, begged the church leaders to allow her to be sealed in the temple, but the request was denied.

47 See www.utlm.org/onlineresources/ldsleadersbelievepolygamyinheaven.htm
49 See Jerald & Sandra Tanner, Curse of Cain: Racism in the Mormon Church, (Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 2004), pp. 41-42.
Notice also that the church claims “no clear insights” into why priesthood was denied to blacks. This is a blatant dismissal of over 100 years of racial statements by their prophets and apostles. Prior to 1978 the LDS leaders seem to have been quite clear as to the reason. Preaching in 1859, at the October Conference of the LDS Church, Brigham Young declared:

Cain slew his brother . . . and the Lord put a mark upon him, which is the flat nose and black skin . . . How long is that race to endure the dreadful curse that is upon them? That curse will remain upon them, and they never can hold the Priesthood or share in it until all the other descendants of Adam have received the promises and enjoyed the blessings of the Priesthood and the keys thereof. Until the last ones of the residue of Adam’s children are brought up to that favourable position, the children of Cain cannot receive the first ordinances of the Priesthood. They were the first that were cursed, and they will be the last from whom the curse will be removed.50

Mormon blogger Joanna Brooks gives the following analysis of the new heading:

Church leaders have long maintained public ambiguity about the history of the ban and its end; they have rarely acknowledged the ordination of early African-American Mormons nor have they cited anti-racist teaching in the Book of Mormon in connection with the Church’s own troubled history on race. The new heading historicizes the ban (suggesting the influence of a robust Church History department) and depicts it as a contradiction to the original impulses of the faith, not corrected until 1978. The heading does, some commentators have noted, offer continuing cover to Brigham Young, whose on-the-record racist statements to the Utah legislature suggest his influence in the evolution of a non-ordination policy. Commentators also note the absence of reference to the fact that black women were not historically admitted to LDS temple worship until the 1978 announcement.51

History of the Church

Other interesting deletions from the Doctrine and Covenants include all the references to the History of the Church whose authorship is attributed to Joseph Smith.52 This leaves the reader with no idea where to find further information on the events that led up to the revelations. On the official LDS web site, in a question and answer section relating to the recent adjustments to the LDS scriptures, we read:

While foundational for our understanding of early Latter-day Saint history, the History of the Church contains historical errors about some sections of the Doctrine and Covenants and is inaccessible to most Church members. In addition, the revised section headings rely on other sources, including the Manuscript History of the Church, early manuscript revelation books, and other sources that are reproduced in the Joseph Smith Papers. Quotations from the Manuscript History of the Church and the History of the Church are collectively referred to in section headings as Joseph Smith’s history.53

First, it should be noted that the reason the History of the Church is “inaccessible” is because the church has discontinued printing it. While copies are still available in various libraries, most members do not have these volumes. Second, by simply citing the information as coming from a collection of writings referred to as “Joseph Smith’s history” one is left with no idea as to the specific source. The Manuscript History of the Church is comprised of about 2400 pages and the Documentary History of the Church spans some 3000 pages. To say that a certain statement or quote can be found somewhere therein is like telling a person that the source can be found in the library.

Conclusion

While some of the new headings in the LDS scriptures provide additional information, there is still an obscuring of troubling historical details.

Writing in 2012 reporter Peggy Fletcher Stack commented on the crisis faced by LDS members when they encounter critical information:

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

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

“Never before have we had this information age, with social networking and bloggers publishing unvetted points of view,” Jensen said in an interview Monday.

51 “Significant Changes to LDS Scripture Reflect Shifting Church Views on Racist History,” (March 2, 2013) www.religiondispatches.org/dispatches/joannabrooks/6889/significant_changes_to_lds_scripture_reflect_shifting_church_views_on_racist_history/
52 See Tanner, Falsification of Joseph Smith’s History and “Falsifying History,” Salt Lake City Messenger, no. 65.
“The church is concerned about misinformation and distorted information, but we are doing better and trying harder to get our story told in an accurate way.”

Unfortunately, the LDS Church is the main culprit in the spread of “distorted information.” As more and more people seek information on the Internet and from books not published by the LDS Church, the leaders will need to do a better job of candidly addressing its problematic history.


WHAT HAPPENED TO THE OFFICE OF LDS CHURCH PATRIARCH?

On April 6, 2013 the Salt Lake Tribune announced the death of Eldred G. Smith, at the age of 106, the longest-serving LDS General Authority and last to hold the position of Church Patriarch. He was also the great-great-grandson of Joseph Smith’s brother Hyrum. Originally the office was to be passed down through the Smith lineage, but the LDS Church dropped the position in 1979, when Eldred G. Smith was retired. 1 The article brought attention to the often ignored problem of the demise of a church priesthood office supposedly established by revelation. 2

Joseph Smith claimed through revelation to re-establish the ancient order of “Patriarch,” patterned after the father’s blessings given in the Bible (see Gen. 27 and Gen. 49). Unlike the Old Testament blessings given by a father on his deathbed to his sons, today the LDS blessings are given by non-relatives to various members of the church as a sort of road map for their lives and declares their lineage through one of the tribes of Israel.

Mormonism claims that the designation “Patriarch” is the same as “Evangelist.” LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

Having lost the true knowledge of the priesthood and its offices, and knowing nothing of patriarch blessings as a necessary part of church administration, the false traditions of the sectarian world have applied the designation evangelist to traveling preachers, missionaries, and revivalists. The sectarian theory is that evangelists travel to spread the gospel. 3

However, there is absolutely nothing in the New Testament about the need of Patriarchs in the church. Also, there is nothing in the Bible to indicate that an evangelist was ever known as a Patriarch. The word “evangelist” comes from the Greek word “evangel” which means “the good news.” Thus an evangelist is one who proclaims “the good news.” Paul wrote to Timothy “Preach the word; . . . do the work of an evangelist.” (2 Timothy 4:2, 5)

Smith originally ordained his father to the office of Church Patriarch, who was later succeeded by Hyrum Smith, Joseph’s older brother. The Doctrine and Covenants, sec. 124:91-92, states: “let my servant William be appointed, ordained, and anointed, as counselor unto my servant Joseph, in the room of my servant Hyrum, that my servant Hyrum may take the office of Priesthood and Patriarch, which was appointed unto him by his father, by blessing and also by right; That from henceforth he shall hold the keys of the patriarchal blessings upon the heads of all my people, . . .”

Prior to 1979 this office was part of the LDS Church General Authorities and held by direct descendants of Smith. The Encyclopedia of Mormonism, vol. 3, under PATRIARCH, explains:

Before 1979, Patriarch to the Church was a Church officer whose chief duty was to confer patriarchal blessings on Church members who generally did not have the service of stake Patriarchs readily available to them. The Prophet Joseph Smith explained that an “evangelist” (as in Ephesians 4:11) is a “patriarch” (TPJS, p. 151); that is, he confers the blessings of a patriarch upon members of the Church. Patriarchs are currently ordained in individual stakes of the Church, but for many years there was a patriarch to the entire Church. He was considered one of the General Authorities.

Today the LDS Church no longer has the office of Patriarch as part of the General Authorities. Currently one man in each stake, or diocese, of the church is set apart as the local Patriarch. But this is a complete reversal of the original office. Since this top leadership position was claimed to be established by revelation one is left to wonder why it was removed. Evidently the LDS Church leaders were concerned about continuing an office that required one to be a Smith descendant. Again Mormons are faced with the problem of current policy overriding past revelation. If it required a revelation to end the ban on blacks holding the LDS priesthood, why wouldn’t it require a revelation to nullify the office of Church Patriarch which was established by revelation? (For more information on this, read Lost Legacy: The Mormon Office of Presiding Patriarch, by Irene Bates and E. Gary Smith, University of Illinois Press.)

2 http://saintsandangels.wordpress.com/2013/04/06/eldred-g-smith-the-presiding-patriarch/
Lorenzo Snow’s Couplet:
“As man now is, God once was;
As God now is, man may be”.

“No Functioning Place in Present-Day Mormon Doctrine?”
A Response to Richard Mouw

By Ronald V. Huggins*

Man may become as God himself!
Let those who disagree howl as they may!
Robert L. Millet and Joseph Fielding McConkie1

I. Richard Mouw’s Tabernacle Apology

During his appearance with Ravi Zacharias in the Mormon Tabernacle on November 14, 2004, Fuller Seminary President Richard Mouw apologized on behalf of evangelicals for “bearing false witness” against Mormons. When challenged about his remarks, Mouw sent out an e-mail identifying places where he felt evangelicals had misrepresented Mormon teaching. Among these was the claim that “Mormonism teaches that God was once a human being like us, and we can become gods just like God is now,”2 a belief, Mouw goes on to assure us, that has “no functioning place in present-day Mormon doctrine.” As anyone familiar with Mormonism will immediately recognize, Mouw’s words allude to the famous couplet coined by the fifth LDS Church President Lorenzo Snow:

As man now is, God once was;
As God now is, man may be.3

Is Mouw correct in saying that the teaching contained in this couplet no longer has any functioning place in present-day Mormonism? In trying to answer this question, we must begin by looking at where Snow’s couplet came from and why it caught on as an important summary of the Mormon doctrinal system.

II. The Origins of Snow’s Couplet

In May 1836 Lorenzo Snow visited Kirtland, Ohio, where his sister Eliza R. Snow had moved the previous year after converting to Mormonism. At a blessing meeting in the Kirtland Temple, Snow met Joseph Smith Sr. (the father of the Mormon Prophet) who predicted that he would soon be converted to the LDS faith. Smith Sr. went on to make the astonishing prediction that afterward Snow would “become as great as you can possibly wish—EVEN AS GREAT AS GOD.” Snow was baptized two weeks later.

Snow was unable to make anything of this remarkable prediction until shortly before embarking on a mission to England in the spring of 1840. He reports that one day as he sat listening to Elder H. G. Sherwood’s explanation of the parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matt 20:1–16), the Spirit of the Lord rested mightily upon me—the eyes of my understanding were opened, and I saw as clear as the sun at noonday, with wonder and astonishment, the pathway of God and man. I formed the following couplet which expresses the revelation, as it was shown me, and explains Father Smith’s dark saying to me at a blessing meeting in the Kirtland Temple, prior to my baptism, as previously mentioned in my first interview with the Patriarch.

As man now is, God once was:
As God now is, man may be.5

At first Snow did not share his couplet with anyone besides his sister Eliza, and Brigham Young, with whom he served in England. But in January of 1843, after returning from his mission, Snow mentioned it to the Prophet Joseph Smith, who said to him: “Brother Snow, that is true gospel doctrine, and it is a revelation from God to you.”6

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1 Robert L. Millet and Joseph Fielding McConkie, The Life Beyond (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1986) 152. The comment is made immediately after a poem by Lorenzo Snow that includes the famous couplet discussed in the present article.

2 Soon after the Tabernacle event, the Internet was flooded with copies of Mouw’s response to criticisms. The version I use is one sent to me upon request by Fred Messick, Associate Vice President of Public Affairs at Fuller Seminary.

3 Often incorrectly quoted: “As man now is, God once was; as God now is, man may become.”

4 Eliza R. Snow Smith, Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret News, 1884) 10.

5 Ibid. 46. This text provides a curious setting since the parable teaches almost the exact opposite of what was revealed to Snow.

He thus imposes on his listeners the conclusion they must draw if he turns out to be wrong about what he says about God in the King Follett Discourse. They are to consider him a “false teacher,” and approve of his renouncing “all further pretensions to revelations and inspirations, or to be a prophet.” Another way of saying this is that if by any defensible standard, Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, then the King Follett Discourse is the product of prophetic inspiration. The comfortable option of continuing to consider Smith a true prophet and the King Follett Discourse mere speculation is not an option Smith himself was willing to leave open.

2. Joseph Smith’s last public discourse. In his last public sermon, given on 16 June 1844, Joseph Smith again turns to the subject of the history of God. This time he offers what he felt sure was biblical support for the idea that God the Father had a father. He found it in the language of the King James Version’s translation of Rev 1:6: “And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father . . . [italics added],” in accordance with which, he says, there clearly exists “a God above the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”11

Smith was incorrect in seeing this as the true implication of the passage, a better translation being “unto his [Jesus’] God and Father” (see, e.g., NIV). This he seemed to have recognized more than a decade earlier when he had, under the guidance of inspiration, corrected this same passage in his Inspired Version of the Bible. This version was produced in the early 1830s and rendered the phrase “unto God, his Father.” In the present sermon, however, he declares the KJV rendering “altogether correct in the translation.”12 Thus we find the teaching of Lorenzo Snow’s couplet being confirmed in final discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

III. The Couplet and the Prophet Joseph Smith

1. The King Follett Discourse. On 7 April 1844 Joseph Smith provided public confirmation to the theology of Snow’s couplet in the famous King Follett Discourse. This is clearly seen in the following excerpts:

God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! . . . I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea . . . . It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God, and to know that we may converse with him as one man converses with another, and that he was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself . . . you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you attain to the resurrection of the dead, and are able to dwell in everlasting burnings, and to sit in glory, as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power.7

The relation between the Prophet’s teaching here and his own revelation did not escape Lorenzo Snow’s notice. According to LeRoi C. Snow, Lorenzo Snow, in his own copy of the Times and Seasons, “which I now have . . . drew more particular attention, with his own indelible pencil, to this part of the Prophet’s King Follett sermon than to any other reference in all the six volumes.”8

As the King Follett Discourse unfolds, it becomes clear that the Prophet Joseph Smith expected his followers to treat what he was saying there with utmost seriousness. Earlier, he had identified as the object of the sermon “to find out the character of the only wise and true God, and what kind of a being he is.” “But if I fail to do it,” he went on to say, “it becomes my duty to renounce all further pretensions to revelations and inspirations, or to be a prophet; and I should be like the rest of the world—a false teacher.”9 Yet after this he goes on to sound a note of confidence, even applying language used of Jesus to himself: “I will prove that the world is wrong, by showing what God is . . . for I speak as one having authority” (see Matt 7:29).10

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7 Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith (comp. Joseph Fielding Smith; Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret, 1976) 345–47.
8 The reference to “this part” refers to the context in which the first of the above three quotations appeared.
9 Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith 344.
10 Ibid. 345.

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11 Millennial Star 24:108.
12 Some editions of the sermon punctuate in such a way as to avoid Joseph’s having meant that God the Father had a Father by placing a comma after above so that it has Joseph saying instead: “…there being a God above[,] the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (e.g. JS-H 6:474). There is no indication in the original manuscript of the sermon suggesting the inclusion of a comma (see The Words of Joseph Smith [2d rev. ed./1st computer ed.; comp. and ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook; Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret, 1996] 379 [GospelLink CD-Rom]), nor is the sense it gives borne out in the rest of the sermon. Quite the contrary, the idea that God the Father had a father is explicitly endorsed at other places in the sermon:

If Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and John discovered that God, the Father of Jesus Christ, had a Father, you may suppose that he had a Father also. Where was there ever a son without a father? And where was there ever a father without first being a son? Whenever did a tree or anything spring into existence without a progenitor? . . . Hence if Jesus had a Father, can we not also believe that he had a Father also? (Millennial Star 24:109–10)
IV. THE ONGOING SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COUPLET IN SNOW’S CAREER

Throughout his life Snow continued to stress the centrality of the teaching of the couplet. In a discourse published in 1894 he described it “as a star continually before me.”13 There was never any question for Snow of it having arisen from the realm of speculation on his part. It came to him as a “vision, which was just as clear as the sun ever shone.”14 In 1892 he included it in a poem, part of which reads as follows:

This royal path has long been trod
By righteous men, each now a God:
As Abra’m, Isaac, Jacob, too,
First babes, then men—to gods they grew.
As man now is, our God once was;
As now God is, so man may be,—
Which doth unfold man’s destiny.15

Nor did the couplet cease to represent a central element in Snow’s teaching after he was set apart as the fifth president of the LDS Church on September 13, 1898. Indeed, he re-emphasized it in the strongest possible terms in a sermon preached only five days later, when, speaking on “the highest glory to which it is possible for man to attain,” Snow said:

That exalted position was made manifest to me at a very early day. I had a direct revelation of this. It was most perfect and complete. If there ever was a thing revealed to man perfectly, clearly, so that there could be no doubt or dubiety, this was revealed to me, and it came in these words: “As man now is, God once was; as God now is, man may be.”16

About three months before his death, which occurred on 10 October 1901, Snow again affirmed the truth of the couplet in the following words:

That fulfilled Father Smith’s declaration. Nothing was ever revealed more distinctly than that was to me. Of course, now that it is so well known it may not appear such a wonderful manifestation, but when I received it, the knowledge was marvelous to me.17

V. THE COUPLET IN RECENT TIMES

Mouw’s assertion concerning the teaching of Lorenzo’s Snow’s couplet is remarkable given the fact that (for most of this writer’s lifetime, at least) it has fallen into the category of things Mormons know even if they know nothing else about their faith. The Osmond Brothers even included a song that alluded to this teaching called Before the Beginning on their 1973 album The Plan.18

If by “no functioning place” Mouw means that the couplet is no longer taught or mentioned in official and semi-official Mormon publications, then he is again incorrect. On that level all one needs to do is flip through the pages of the LDS Church’s official weekly newspaper, the LDS Church News, in order to find examples of the couplet being taught. The September 13, 1997 issue, for example, included this quotation from Eldred G. Smith: “Temple Marriage is not just another form of church wedding; it is a divine covenant with the Lord that if we are faithful to the end, we may become as God now is.”19 This passage not only quotes the couplet, it also clearly explains its continuing functioning place as a lynch-pin doctrine of the LDS Church relating to Temple Marriage.

That LDS children continue to be taught the couplet can be seen in the nifty “President Lorenzo Snow Crossword,” included in the March 2002 “Funstuf” section of the LDS Church’s official Children’s magazine Friend, where we read as the clue for 10 across:

He wrote as a couplet (two lines of verse) a revelation that he had and that the Prophet Joseph Smith said was true: As man ______ is, God once was: As God now is, man may be.20

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14 Ibid. 772, and Collected Discourses 4.162.
15 LeRoi C. Snow, “Devotion to Divine Inspiration” 660.
16 “Unchangeable Love of God” (Sept. 18, 1898) in Collected Discourses 5.453.
18 In the beginning/We’d be living as we would be/He once was/To look at him, to look at me/And think someday like him I’ll be/What more?Ever since we came to be/With the plan, we learned to see/We control infinity/What more?What more?
19 “Quote from the Past,” in the “This Week in Church History,” section of Church News (Sept. 13, 1997) 2. The quote comes from a 1948 general conference address. For other examples from the 1990s see Church News (May 22, 1993) 9 and Church News (April 23, 1994) 16. [Errata Note: Deseret News incorrectly attributed quote to Albert E. Bowen. We’ve corrected the reference to Eldred G. Smith. See The Improvement Era, Nov. 1948 p. 752.]
The correct answer filling in the blank is “now.” Notice in this case that the couplet is presented to Mormon children not merely as a “revelation” from God, but also as one that Joseph Smith himself had declared to be true. So again, how can Mouw be correct when he accuses Christians of bearing false witness when they say Mormons teach the couplet?

In defense of his remark Mouw appeals to a number of specific sources, including BYU professors Robert L. Millet and Stephen E. Robinson, as well as the 1997 book *Mormon America* by Richard N. and Joan K. Ostling. Mouw further states that “a number of LDS writers have been formulating the ‘becoming God’ theme in terms that are common in Eastern Orthodoxy.” We must now examine these sources.

1. Robert L. Millet. Robert L. Millet is a popular LDS writer and scholar toward whom many evangelicals in Utah and elsewhere look as the voice of a new Mormonism. This voice stands at the front of a concerted effort to drag the LDS Church, kicking and screaming if necessary, to a place much closer to traditional Christianity, though Millet himself firmly denies having any such intentions. Millet, Nov. 30, 2004. Millet responded that “I don’t know that we teach it . . . I haven’t heard it discussed for a long time in public discourse.”

Again in an interview with Don Lattin appearing in the *San Francisco Chronicle* in April 1997, Lattin asked Hinckley: “[D]on’t Mormons believe that God was once a man?” Hinckley replied: “I wouldn’t say that. There was a little couplet coined, ‘As man is, God once was. As God is, man may become.’ Now that’s more of a couplet than anything else. That gets into some pretty deep theology that we don’t know very much about.”

Richard and Joan Ostling noted how shortly after his public remarks, before an “in-house, all-Mormon audience . . . at General Conference, Hinckley talked about media depictions of the church and, in an apparently pointed reference to those interviews, assured his listeners, ‘None of you need worry because you read something that was incompletely reported. You need not worry that I do not understand some matters of doctrine.’ He added, ‘I think I understand them thoroughly.’”

Millet seems to speak of these public statements as if they were official statements of current LDS thinking on the subject. There are three reasons we should not go along with him on this. First, when Luke Wilson, director of the Institute for Religious Research, questioned the First Presidency about the accuracy of the quotation of Hinckley in *TIME* Magazine, F. Michael Watson, Secretary to the First Presidency, responded: “The quotation you reference was taken out of context.”

Millet does not go as far as Mouw, who asserts that Mormons do not teach the couplet. Millet says that Mormons regard the teaching of the couplet as true but not central. He does so on the basis of a general reference to public statements by current LDS President Gordon B. Hinckley.

2. Gordon B. Hinckley’s public expressions of agnosticism concerning Snow’s Couplet. The statements Millet alludes to both took place in 1997 and have since become well known to critics of the LDS Church. Richard Ostling in his *TIME* Magazine, PBS *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* interview, asked President Hinckley whether “God the Father was once a man as we are.” Hinckley’s answer was: “I don’t know that we teach it . . . I haven’t heard it discussed for a long time in public discourse.”

Following up on Mouw’s remarks I wrote to Millet asking him whether he really said the things Mouw credited him with saying. His answer was as follows:

What I explained to Richard Mouw is that the related doctrines of “God was once a man,” and “Man may become as God,” though a part of our doctrinal literature and certainly accepted as truth by Latter-day Saints, are not a part of what might be called central, saving doctrine. President Hinckley, more than once, stated that he did not know much about the doctrine and didn’t know anyone that did. They are not discussed liberally at general conference, nor do we know much beyond the fact that Joseph Smith and Lorenzo Snow taught them.

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21 As he did, for example, in response to a question of mine. I wrote: “I often hear from Evangelicals who look upon you as the voice of a new kind of Mormonism that is in the process of turning its back on the old teachings and aiming to become more mainstream traditional Christian” (e-mail to Millet, Nov. 25, 2004). Millet responded that: “Notwithstanding the repeated suggestion that Latter-day Saints are seeking to move into the mainstream of traditional Christianity, we are not” (e-mail from Bob Millet, Nov. 30, 2004).

22 “Bob Millet has made the same point to many of us.”

23 E-mail from Bob Millet, Nov. 30, 2004.


28 Ibid., 421.
public remarks in the TIME Magazine, PBS NewsHour with Jim Lehrer interview, at least, should not be taken as representative of Hinckley’s true position, much less the official teaching of the LDS Church on the matter.29

Second, there is evidence that Hinckley, who is regularly referred to as the PR Prophet, was being intentionally vague before non-Mormon audiences, perhaps hoping to make Mormonism appear more mainstream Christian. Thus in an interview on Australian television with David Ransom that was aired on 9 November 1997, Hinckley similarly hedged on another foundational Mormon teaching, only to back down when challenged:

RB: And God has a wife?

GBH: I don’t know, but I suppose so. As we have a Father I assume we have a mother.

RB: I understood your teachings said that God has a wife?

GBH: Yes. Well we . . . Yes we have a mother in heaven. We believe so. We’re sons and daughters of God.30

The doctrine that God has a wife is very frequently and openly taught in official LDS Church publications. It is declared in the widely publicized “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” issued by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of the LDS Church in September 1995, that:

ALL HUMAN BEINGS—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual pre-mortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.31

We see this teaching fleshed out in the model dialogue between a father and his ten-year-old son Dean, in the Parent’s Guide published and currently used by the LDS Church:

“Who made our bodies first of all?”

“Heavenly Father” was the prompt answer.

“That’s right, son. Heavenly Father made Adam and Eve. Who do they look like?”

“Heavenly Father and Jesus, and I guess our heavenly mother too,” said the now attentive boy.

“Well, we really don’t know much about our heavenly mother, but we can expect that Eve looked like her and Adam looked like Heavenly Father.”32

Hymn number 292 in the current LDS hymnal, O My Father, emphasizes this doctrine in the words: “When I lay this mortal body by, Father, Mother may I meet you in your royal courts on high?” In the context the author, Eliza R. Snow, was not speaking of her earthly parents, but of the heavenly Father and Mother. This same hymn is included in the selection of hymns in the standard LDS Church published introductory book on Mormonism, Gospel Principles.33 Gordon B. Hinckley knows it and refers to it in a discussion on whether the practice of some Mormons of praying to the Mother in heaven is acceptable: “It has been said that the Prophet Joseph Smith made no correction to what Sister Snow had written. Therefore, we have a Mother in heaven.”34 So when Hinckley began his answer to the question about the wife of God with, “I don’t know, but I assume . . . ” he was interjecting a note of doubt that we do not find when he speaks of the doctrine before believing Mormons.

Third, we should not look to the context of interviews with outsiders to find Hinckley’s most authoritative explanations of Mormon doctrine. Such settings are not always entirely friendly, so we should not be surprised to find Hinckley somewhat more guarded than when he is before more accepting audiences.

Hinckley himself has remarked that interviews with the public media are “always a worrisome undertaking because one never knows what will be asked.”35 They seem, he goes on to say, to “know how to ask questions that come at you like a javelin. It is not exactly an enjoyable experience.”

Does Hinckley know very much about the teaching of the couplet? The best answer seems to be the one he gave the faithful at the October 1997 general conference: he understands it “thoroughly.” But for some reason he wanted to play down its significance before non-Mormon audiences. Consistent with such a conclusion is the fact that Hinckley is familiar with the King Follett Discourse and refers to it as “an important doctrinal document in

29 This despite the fact that the Ostlings have since proven that Hinckley’s remarks were not in fact taken out of context, that Watson’s accusation was in fact false (see Ostling and Ostling, Mormon America 421–22).


32 The Parent’s Guide (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985) 31. It is common in LDS publications to find “Heavenly Father” (caps) but “heavenly mother” (no caps).

33 Gospel Principles (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997) 350–51.


35 Gordon B. Hinckley, “This Thing was Not Done in a Corner,” Ensign (Nov. 1996) 48.
the theology of the Church.” In addition, the Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley, published in the same year as the public statements we have been discussing, contains explicit teaching on the couplet:

The whole design of the gospel is to lead us, onward and upward to greater achievement, even, eventually, to godhood. This great possibility was enunciated by the Prophet Joseph Smith in the King Follett sermon . . . and emphasized by President Lorenzo Snow. It is this grand and incomparable concept: As God now is, man may become!

It should be noted, however, that even though Hinckley is discussing Snow’s couplet, he is not focusing on the first part, the part about God having once been a man. This is consistent with what Hinckley said in the San Francisco Chronicle interview. After Hinckley had said that the couplet contained “some pretty deep theology that we don’t know very much about,” Don Lattin came back with: “So you’re saying the church is still struggling to understand this?” Hinckley replied: “Well, as God is, man may become. We believe in eternal progression. Very strongly. We believe that the glory of God is intelligence and whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the Resurrection. Knowledge, learning, is an eternal thing.”

This raises an interesting question: Is it possible that Hinckley and the present LDS Church are trying to play down the first half of Snow’s couplet while continuing to emphasize the second? Is there a trend toward avoiding discussion of God’s history as a man, while at the same time continuing to affirm our future as Gods? If such a trend is underway, it should not be hard to detect, because the content of official church publications is strictly monitored by the so-called Correlation Committee, which oversees the content of LDS Church publications.

And, indeed, as we look at materials published by the LDS Church itself, as opposed to less official Mormon publishers, which regularly publish much less guarded statements, we discover that this does appear to be a trend.

3. Our becoming Gods. There are regular and repeated references to our becoming Gods, even retaining the capital “G,” but increasingly few explicit statements about how God moved from being as we are now to his current exalted state. So, for example, in the 2001 John Taylor volume of the Teachings of the Presidents of The Church series, used in the regular weekly meetings at the Ward, each human is called “a God in embryo” [capital “G”] who possesses “in an embryonic state, all the faculties and powers of a God. And when he shall be perfected, and have progressed to maturity, he will be like his Father—a God . . . As the horse, the ox, the sheep, and every living creature, including man, propagates its own species and perpetuates its own kind, so does God perpetuate his.

The February 2002 issue of the LDS Church magazine Ensign reprinted a 1909 First Presidency statement declaring that “the undeveloped offspring of celestial parentage [i.e. the human being] is capable, by experience through ages and aeons, of evolving into a God [capital ‘G’].” And lest there be any doubt about the continuing authority of this First Presidency statement, we find in the “Making the Most of This Issue” section at the end of the same issue a teaser for it that

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37 Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley 179. This remark was derived from Gordon B. Hinckley, “Don’t Drop the Ball,” Ensign (Nov. 1994) 48.


40 The plan of salvation is older than the earth and has not been added to or changed since that early time . . . Elder Orson Pratt expressed his understanding of the antiquity and unchangeableness of the plan as follows:

The dealing of God toward his children . . . is a pattern after which all other worlds are dealt with. The creation, fall and redemption of all future worlds with their inhabitants, will be upon the same general plan. The Father of our spirits has only been doing what his progenitors did before him . . . The same plan of redemption is carried out by which more ancient worlds have been redeemed. The reason Elder Pratt’s statement makes doctrinal sense is because the plan of God is perfect, and perfection is unchanging. If the plan of redemption varied from time to time, from world to world, or person to person, men would be saved by different means, and salvation would have its bargain days. The “sameness” of the plan of salvation does not mean that every world is an exact monotonous and unimaginative copy of every other, or that there are the same number of inhabitants on each. It means that the same eternal principles, the same kind of mortality and the same kind of salvation are in effect wherever there are gods and devils and men.

41 Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: John Taylor (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001) 2–3.

asks: “Ever wonder about the Church’s official teaching on the creation of mankind and evolution?”

The present edition of the widely used introductory manual Gospel Principles declares of those who “receive exaltation in the celestial kingdom” that “[t]hey will become gods” and “will have everything that our Heavenly Father and Jesus have—all power, glory, dominion, and knowledge.”

4. God’s history as a man who worshipped a more ancient deity. Early editions of Gospel Principles (1978–88) said that “[o]ur spirits resemble our heavenly parents although they have resurrected bodies. We have inherited the potential to develop their divine qualities. If we choose to do so, we can become perfect as they are.”

Beginning with the 1992 edition, however, the phrase “although they have resurrected bodies” was dropped.

Among the few explicit discussions of the history of God in recent times in official church publications were (1) the 1985 Search These Commandments: Melchizedek Priesthood Personal Study Guide; and (2) the LDS Institute (college-level) manual Achieving a Celestial Marriage (1992). In the former, we read under the heading “Our Father Advanced and Progressed Until He Became God”:

- President Joseph Fielding Smith said: “Our Father in heaven, according to the Prophet, had a Father; and since there has been a condition of this kind through all eternity, each Father had a Father” (Doctrines of Salvation 2:42).
- President Joseph F. Smith taught: “I know that God is a being with body, parts and passions. . . . Man was born of woman; Christ, the Savior, was born of woman; and God, the Father was born of woman” (Church News [Sept. 19, 1936] 2).

And the first paragraph of the introduction of the latter:

In the relationships of husband and wife and parent and child we begin to approach the divine calling of godhood. Our Heavenly Father and mother live in an exalted state because they achieved a celestial marriage.

As we achieve a like marriage we shall become as they are and begin the creation of worlds for our own spirit children.

For a long time the writer expected Achieving a Celestial Marriage, which continued to be used as an institute text for some years after Hinckley’s 1997 interviews, would be revised or replaced, because it stood nearly alone among LDS Church published materials in the blatant link it makes between our heavenly parents’ exaltation and our own. This finally happened in 2001 when it was replaced by a new manual that avoids such explicit descriptions of the mechanism underlying the first half of Snow’s couplet.

All of this is not to say, however, that the teaching of the first half of Snow’s couplet has been abandoned or rejected. One needs only to read the reaffirmation of it in the new institute manual Presidents of the Church (2003) to know that the LDS Church still embraces both halves.

It would further seem an overstatement to say that the LDS Church is de-emphasizing the teaching of the first half of the couplet. What really appears to be happening is that the language used to express the teaching is being intentionally toned down: same teaching, different words used to describe it.

5. Stephen E. Robinson, Mouw, and the “official” question. Mouw also had said that “Stephen Robinson insisted, in the book he co-authored with Craig Blomberg, that this [i.e. the teaching of the couplet] is not an official Mormon teaching.” Robinson’s actual words in relation to Snow’s Couplet and the King Follett Discourse are as follows:

Neither statement is scriptural or canonized in the technical sense, and neither has been explained or elucidated to the church in any official manner, but they are so widely accepted by Latter-day Saints that this technical point has become moot.

Robinson actually admits that the teaching of the couplet is “so widely accepted by Latter-day Saints” that the technical question of its canonicity “has become moot.” This is not the point one would have naturally gathered from Mouw’s depiction of what Robinson had said.

43 “Making the Most of This Issue,” Ensign (Feb. 2002) 80.
44 Gospel Principles (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997) 302. Interestingly, a statement on the same page, which had read, “We can become Gods like our Heavenly Father” in earlier editions, was changed to, “We can become like our Heavenly Father” in the 1997 edition.
45 Gospel Principles (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978) 9.
46 Gospel Principles (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1992) 11.
47 Search These Commandments: Melchizedek Priesthood Personal Study Guide (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1984) 152.

48 Achieving a Celestial Marriage: Student Manual (Salt Lake City, UT: Church Educational System, Department of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, 1992) 1.
49 Eternal Marriage Student Manual (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001).
50 Presidents of the Church Student Manual (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003). See especially under the heading “He Received a Revelation about Man’s Divine Potential” in the chapter on Lorenzo Snow (pp. 88–89).
Robinson’s statement that it has not been “explained or elucidated to the church in any official manner,” however, is simply false. The reality is that throughout the history of the LDS Church it has been almost continually “explained or elucidated” in every possible official manner, short of giving it its own page in LDS Scripture. In the February 1982 *Ensign*, the issue was raised in the “I Have a Question” column whether Snow’s couplet was “accepted as official doctrine of the church.” Gerald N. Lund responded by saying that “there has been no ‘official’ pronouncement by the First Presidency declaring that President Snow’s couplet is to be accepted as doctrine”—“[b]ut that is not a valid criteria for determining whether or not it is doctrine.”

The bottom line is that “it is clear that the teaching of President Snow is both acceptable and accepted doctrine in the Church today.” Lund also quotes Joseph Fielding Smith’s 1971 remark that Snow’s couplet expressed a doctrine that “has of course been known to the prophets of all the ages.”

Here as well is an appropriate point for bringing up Mouw’s comment that the couplet is not “an official Mormon teaching.” The problem is that the LDS Church has never clearly defined a process by which its doctrines become “official.” For the rank-and-file Mormon the teaching set forth by the prophetic leadership at the semi-annual general conference is as official as it gets. In a way, everything the LDS Church teaches now is official now, but that may all change later, as it has in the past. Therefore everything the Church teaches is also at least potentially unofficial. The main thing the individual Mormon must do is to find out what is being taught now and believe it as God’s word for them. To the evangelical this process seems both dubious and strange, but the Mormon finds it easy to explain under the umbrella of progressive revelation. In the meantime, Mormon scholars quite appropriately speculate about how teachings become “official.” But at this stage their speculations cannot in any way be said to be official, and therefore it is quite inappropriate for them to try to insist that non-Mormon scholars must prove well-known Mormon doctrines to be official before they are allowed to speak of them. Rather, non-Mormon scholars must evaluate the various theories of “official” in order to see which, if any, correspond to the actual way in which authority functions in the Mormon Church. Unfortunately, Robinson himself has set forth a very inadequate theory. According to him, there are three things that make a Mormon teaching official: (1) it is taught in the “standard works, the Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine & Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price”; (2) it appears in an “official statements of the First Presidency and/or the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles”; and (3) it is “sustained” by being voted on in general conference.

Of the three criteria, only the second carries any real weight. Functionally, the reality approaches a situation in which the voice of the present leadership trumps all three. The LDS canon does not function for Mormons in the same way that the biblical canon functions for Christians. One of the reasons for this is that Joseph Smith’s theology changed rapidly and radically during the course of his career. As a result, the Book of Mormon contains teachings that are radically at odds with both current Mormon doctrine and the doctrine of the other books in the Mormon canon. For example, Book of Mormon Christology falls to the right of traditional trinitarianism in that it does not distinguish clearly between the divine persons, yet the Book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price falls to the left of traditional trinitarianism in that it abandons the unity of the Godhead in favor of a doctrine of plurality of Gods. Because of this tension current Mormonism can only derive things from the Book of Mormon where it agrees with current LDS teaching. Where it does not agree, it must be artificially harmonized, as when new meanings are given to theological words Joseph Smith used in the Book of Mormon where he originally meant something quite different from current LDS understanding. For example, because the Book of Mormon speaks of God as “omnipotent” (Mosiah 3:5) and “knowing all things” (2 Nephi 9:20), Mormons are forced to own these words. Yet in doing so they must also radically redefine them, so that God’s omnipotence and omniscience do not interfere with the same attributes in all the Gods that went before (e.g. God the Father’s father) and that will come after (e.g. all the Gods in embryo that now dwell upon the earth).

So, for example, since the meaning of traditional theological terms has been redefined in Mormonism, Robert L. Millet and Joseph Fielding McConkie can

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52 *Ensign* (Feb. 1982) 40. The reason Lund gives is this: “Generelly, the First Presidency issues official doctrinal declarations when there is a general misunderstanding of the doctrine on the part of many people. Therefore, the Church teaches many principles which are accepted as doctrines but which the First Presidency has seen no need to declare in an official pronouncement.”

53 Ibid.

54 Blomberg and Robinson, How Wide 73–74.

55 Ibid. 208 n. 32.

56 Stephen E. Robinson, *Are Mormons Christians?* (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1991) 17: “No new doctrine is binding as the official doctrine of the Church unless it has been received by the President of the Church and until it has been sustained by the Church in general conference.” This is interesting also in light of Millet’s apparent willingness to accept as somehow authoritative the off-hand comments the President of the LDS Church makes in public interviews.

write things such as the following, which are absurd from a historic Christian perspective:

Our Father’s development and progression over an infinitely long period of time has brought him to a point at which he now presides as God Almighty. He is omnipotent, omniscient, and, by means of his Holy Spirit, omnipresent: he has all power, all knowledge, and is, through the Light of Christ, in and through all things.\(^{58}\)

Does Mouw think that the LDS Church has adopted the traditional meanings of the uses of the “omnis” or other traditional terms in relation to God? If so, he is mistaken.\(^{59}\)

Robinson’s third criterion that a teaching has been “sustained” or voted upon in general conference also fails to describe accurately how teachings become official in the LDS Church. In the first place, votes taken at general conference sessions are invariably unanimous. Since Ensign began tracking this in the early 1970s there has never been a report of a non-unanimous vote at general conference. It is true that the reports for the October 1975 general conference and the general conferences from 1981 to 1983 do not mention whether the vote was unanimous and that therefore it may be that some “troublemaker” had voted against the crowd; all the others (October 1974 and April 1975 and every conference between April 1976 and October 1980 and between April 1984 and the present) have been unanimous.

Robinson’s presentation makes things sound more democratic than they really are. As Clark L. and Kathryn H. Kidd write,

Voting against sustaining is such a rare occurrence that many Church members never see it happen. The reason for this is that most members realize that they are not casting a vote when they raise their hands . . . they are being asked to ratify or sustain a decision that has been made by those in authority.\(^{60}\)

Since the results of the sustaining vote are always the same, they are a mere formality, a rubber stamp. Because this is the case, there is really no reason for the leadership to delay action until general conference once they have set their minds on doing something. A case in point is President Spencer W. Kimball’s revelation granting the priesthood to blacks announced on June 9, 1978, which marked one of the greatest turning points in LDS history. Robinson cites it as an example of how doctrine becomes official:

When Spencer W. Kimball declared in 1978, by revelation from the Lord, that the priesthood was henceforward to be given to all worthy male members, this pronouncement became Official Declaration—2 by the sustaining vote of a general conference on 30 September 1978.\(^{61}\)

Robinson only gives part of the story. The LDS Church leadership did not wait until it had been sustained in general conference to put the new revelation into practice. Rather, it began immediately. Probably the first African American to be ordained to the LDS priesthood in the United States was Joseph Freeman Jr. of Granger, Utah, only two days after the June 9 announcement.\(^{62}\) By the time the next general conference was convened the floodgates had already long since been opened and the ordination of blacks become an irreversible reality. The only thing that remained was for the gathered faithful to cast their obligatory unanimous vote in favor of its inclusion in the Doctrine & Covenants, which they did at the Saturday afternoon session on September 30, 1978.

VI. The Couplet and the Doctrine of Deification

Mouw comments that “[a] number of LDS writers have been formulating the ‘becoming God’ theme in terms that are common in Eastern Orthodoxy: that ‘we shall be like Him’ in the sense of I John, but that we will never be Him.” As far as I know, no Mormon ever taught that we are going to be God the Father. A better way of expressing this from the perspective of the Mormon system is to say that we will never catch up with God. We may well reach a point at which we will be equal in attributes and exaltation to God as he is now. But by the time we do, God will have become more exalted. Indeed, the very fact that we as his children come to be exalted actually adds to his greater exaltation, and by extension, to the greater exaltation of the current God’s God, and

\(^{58}\) Millet and McConkie, The Life Beyond 148–49.

\(^{59}\) Such a mistake is certainly understandable in view of the way Robinson writes on these things, as for example when he says: “Latter-day Saints do not, or at least should not, believe that they will ever be independent in all eternity from their Father in heaven or from their Savior Jesus Christ or from the Holy Spirit. Those who are exalted by his grace, always be ‘gods’ (always with a small g, even in the Doctrine and Covenants) by grace, by an extension of his power, and will always be subordinate to the Godhead” (Blomberg and Robinson, How Wode 86). This statement of Robinson’s is of course not official, nor is it consistent with the Church manuals he reads and discusses at his local Mormon ward, which, as we have already seen, freely use the capital “G” in describing what we shall be, as do First Presidency statements (Ensign [Feb. 2002] 30). Nevertheless, Robinson’s view need not contradict what might be called the continuous teaching of the Mormon Church, as long as he is willing to say that the present God the Father is also eternally dependent on his Father, Savior, and Holy Spirit, and therefore is also ultimately only a god with a small “g” just like we will be). However, much as the LDS Church has become reserved in teaching the traditional Mormon plan of salvation as expressed in the couplet, it has never repudiated it. Therefore Robinson must be asked whether he wants to say that the current God is more ultimate in some sense than the Gods that went before. And then, if the answer is yes, why?


instead of all the Gods above him. Exaltation, in other words, functions as a sort of cosmic pyramid scheme. This is the teaching of the Prophet Joseph Smith in the King Follett Discourse: “God is . . . glorified and exalted in the salvation and exaltation of all his children.”

What Mouv is referring to also has to do with the current interest among Mormon apologists in the Eastern Orthodox doctrine of deification. Although we find occasional earlier references to the alleged similarity between the Mormon and Orthodox teaching on deification,64 the current interest among Mormons in this doctrine arose in the 1970s and 1980s after two Mormon scholars, Philip L. Barlow and Keith E. Norman, became interested in the subject independently while studying at Harvard.65

But it is Stephen E. Robinson who has done most to give the apparent similarity an apologetic slant. In his Encyclopedia of Mormonism subentry “LDS Doctrine Compared With Other Christian Doctrines,”66 Robinson quotes what he says is the second-century writer Irenaeus of Lyons as saying, “If the word became a man, it was so men may become gods.” In reality, it is not Irenaeus he is quoting (Irenaeus never said this)67 but the generalized couplet used by Eastern Orthodox theologians, beginning with Athanasius, to express the doctrine. In the context Robinson claims that the Eastern Orthodox couplet says “essentially the same thing” as Lorenzo Snow’s couplet.68

More recently, even Mormon Apostle Dallin Oaks spoke of the alleged similarly between Eastern Orthodox and LDS teaching at general conference when he said that the Mormon understanding of the future life “should be familiar to all who have studied the ancient Christian doctrine of deification or apotheosis.”69

This development would seem to function very nicely in the LDS/Evangelical apologetic exchange, because by appealing to the ancient doctrine LDS writers can present themselves as closer to the roots of Christianity than Western Christians, who use the language of deification only infrequently.70 But the emphasis must rest on the words “seem to function.”

In reality, there is nothing in the Eastern Orthodox or early Christian doctrine of deification to which any Western Christian should object. Indeed, there is much to be gained by reading the mature Eastern Orthodox reflection on the subject.71 The only problem from an exegetical point of view is that the standard formulation of the doctrine relies on a misinterpretation of a particular passage in the Gospel of John. Early Christians did not have trouble describing their future hope in terms of “becoming gods,” because they took Jesus’ quote of Ps 82:6, “I said you are gods,” in John 10:34 to be a reference to “those . . . who have received the grace of the ‘adoption,’ by which we cry, ‘Abba Father’” (Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.6.1; cf. Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho 124).72 But there is no reason to suppose that that is what the author of John had in mind.

The real appeal of the Eastern Orthodox doctrine to Mormon apologists is that it is regularly stated in a way that sounds similar to Snow’s couplet. But this has to do more with the fact that a couplet is used in both cases than that the two couplets have anything really in common. It is in fact when one lays the two couplets side by side to reflect upon Robinson’s claim that they say “essentially the same thing” that their real differences appear.

70 We still occasionally encounter it, as, for example, in the eighth-century Celtic theologian John Scottus Eriugena (d. c. 877) who declares: “He [Jesus] came down alone but ascends with many. He who made of a human being makes gods of men and women” (Prologue to the Gospel of John 21; ET: Celtic Spirituality [The Classics of Western Spirituality]; trans. and intro. Oliver Davies with the collaboration of Thomas O’Loughlin; New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1999) 430). The great western Father Augustine of Hippo (d. 430) also uses the language of deification: “For God wishes to make thee a god; not by nature, as He is whom He has begotten, but by his gift and adoption” (Sermon 166:4; quoted in Norman, Deification: The Content of Athanasian Soteriology 104). Deification language has even been preserved as part of the Roman Catholic Mass, where it currently appears as part of the Liturgy of the Eucharist: “By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity.” On the evangelical side we find it, for example, in the lyrics of the great Methodist hymnologist Charles Wesley (d. 1788): “He deigns in flesh to appear, Widest extremes to join; To bring our vileness near, And make us all divine” (“Blessed Assurance” [hymn Let Heaven and Earth Combine]). Or again, speaking more broadly of the trinitarians as such, Ralph Waldo Emerson writes in his journal entry for Feb. 14, 1827: “The Trinitarian urges a natural & sublime deduction from his creed when he says of the Saviour that as he became a partaker in our humanity so we also shall become partakers in his divinity” (Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson [ed. William H. Gilman and Alfred R. Ferguson; Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1963] 3.74).


63 Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith 348. See on this concept the discussion on Lorenzo Snow’s couplet in Millet and McConkie, The Life Beyond 143–53. The passage quoted from Joseph Smith appears on p. 150.


68 The same point is made by Robinson in Are Mormons Christians? (p. 60) and probably also in the booklet Latter-day Saints: 10 Basic Issues (Provo, UT: Foundations for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1998) 26. I say “probably,” because although Robinson is one of the contributors to this booklet, it does not explicitly credit him with this section.

First Half:
Snow’s Couplet: “As man now is God once was . . .”
Athanasius’s Couplet: “the Word of God Himself . . . assumed humanity . . .”
(On the Incarnation of the Divine Word 54)\(^{73}\)

Here Snow is talking about the Father’s having become God, even though he was previously a man. Athanasius was talking about the Son’s having become a man, even though he was previously God.\(^{74}\) Who can fail to see that, although similar words are used, the underlying concepts are completely different?

Second Half:
Snow’s Couplet: “As God now is man may be.”
Athanasius’s Couplet: “. . . that we might become God.”

The Orthodox teaching refers to our becoming, as 2 Pet 1:4 says, “partakers of the divine nature,” through union with Jesus Christ. John’s Gospel presents Jesus as praying that believers will be one as he and the Father are one (John 17:21; cf. 10:30), yet it is without in any way losing sight of Jesus’ unique relationship with God as both the pre-existent Word and only begotten of the Father (John 1:1, 18). The Son has divine life in himself (John 5:26). We have it only through the Son (John 3:36; 6:53–54, 68; 10:28), only as we abide in him (John 15:1–7). The same point is made by Athanasius: we partake of Christ’s divine life only because Jesus first partook of our mortal flesh:

But if death was within the body, woven into its very substance . . . the need was for Life to be woven into it instead . . . the Saviour assumed a body for Himself, in order that the body [i.e. our bodies], being interwoven as it were with life, should no longer remain a mortal thing, in thrall to death, but as endued with immortality and risen from death, should therefore remain immortal. For once having put on corruption, it could not rise, unless it put on life instead.” (On the Incarnation of the Divine Word 44)

Mormons, however, cannot really appeal to 2 Pet 1:4 in defense of their doctrine at all, because their notion of exaltation does not involve becoming partakers of the divine nature.\(^{75}\) They believe that they have the divine nature already, as “literally the sons and daughters of Deity . . . undeveloped offspring of celestial parentage,”\(^{76}\) “gods in embryo,”\(^{77}\) and, to use Robinson’s own words, as the “same species of being as God.”\(^{78}\) They only have to grow up into it through a process toward perfection that includes a period of testing during the mortal experience.

VII. Conclusion:
Mouw, the Couplet, and the Future

Richard Mouw has served very faithfully as a kind of evangelical statesman, and I believe he has much to contribute to the evangelical/Mormon dialogue in the future. In relation to the continuing currency of Lorenzo Snow’s Couplet, however, Mouw is simply incorrect when he says that it has “no functioning place in present-day Mormon doctrine.” Mouw’s recent apology also places him in a somewhat ambiguous position given the fact that he contributed an enthusiastic preface to a book published in 2002 containing two articles presenting Snow’s couplet as representative of Mormon teaching.\(^{79}\) In that preface, Mouw offered an apology similar to the one rendered in the Mormon Tabernacle. He stressed how “ashamed” he was “of our record in relating to the Mormon community”\(^{80}\) and spoke of how “we evangelicals” had been “bearing false witness against our LDS neighbors.” Against this he set the essays contained in the book, which he represented as “a laudable attempt to set the record straight.” The question raised by Mouw’s more recent apology in the Tabernacle is whether he has changed his mind in the past two years and come to believe that the book he previously praised is guilty of bearing false witness as well, and that he now wishes to distance himself from it. However that may be, it has been the writer’s purpose in the present article to show that Snow’s couplet is not irrelevant to current Mormon teaching. Unlike relics of old Mormonism such as Brigham Young’s Adam-God doctrine\(^{81}\) or plural marriage,\(^{82}\) Lorenzo Snow’s couplet summarizes a truth that still lives at the heart and logical center of the whole Mormon religious system. Evangelicals are not therefore “bearing false witness” when they regard it as representative of Mormon belief and critically discuss it as such.


\(^{74}\) Craig L. Blomberg has already underscored this important distinction: “Most of Stephen Robinson’s references to early Christian belief in the corporeality of God are talking about the Incarnation—the Son taking upon himself human flesh, not the Father having a body as in the uniquely Mormon claim” (“Is Mormonism Christian,” in The New Mormon Challenge [ed. Francis Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002] 320).

\(^{75}\) That is not to say they do not appeal to it; see Blomberg and Robinson, How Wide 80.


\(^{77}\) Moore E. Kimball, The Miracle of Forgiveness (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1969) 286.


\(^{80}\) Ibid., 11.

\(^{81}\) See Chris A. Vlachos, “Brigham Young’s False Teaching: Adam is God,” Journal of Pastoral Practice 3/2 (1979) 93–119, which has frequently appeared in pamphlet form and remains one of the best materials available on the subject; and Gary James Bergera, Conflict in the Quorum: Orson Pratt, Brigham Young, Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books; A Smith-Pettit Foundation Book, 2002).

Current Status of the Lorenzo Snow Couplet
By Sandra Tanner

During the seven years since the original publication of the previous article by Ron Huggins, Dr. Richard J. Mouw has continued to maintain that the Lorenzo Snow couplet is no longer promoted as LDS theology and refers to it as “folk Mormonism.” However, the official LDS priesthood manuals published in 2011 and 2012 have quoted it. In 2011 the LDS Church issued the manual Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow. In it we read:

Eternal life is to us the sum of pre-existence, present existence, and the continuance of existence, holding out to us the power of endless progression and increase. With that feeling and that assurance, we believe that “As man is, God once was, and as God is, man may become.” . . . we believe that it is not improper, that it is not unrighteous, for us to hope that we may be permitted to partake of the attributes of deity and, if we are faithful, to become like unto God; . . .

This year the study manual for both the LDS Priesthood and Relief Society is Teachings of Presidents of the Church: George Albert Smith. In it we read:

“As man now is, God once was:
“As God now is, man may be.”

Feeling that he had received “a sacred communication” that he should guard carefully, Lorenzo Snow did not teach the doctrine publicly until he knew that the Prophet Joseph Smith had taught it. Once he knew the doctrine was public knowledge, he testified of it frequently. . . . His son LeRoi, said, “This revealed truth impressed Lorenzo Snow more than perhaps all else.”

Further on the manual quotes Lorenzo Snow regarding God’s progression:

Through a continual course of progression our Heavenly Father has received exaltation and glory and he points us out the same path and, inasmuch as he is clothed with power, authority and glory, he says, “walk ye up and come in possession of the same glory and happiness that I possess.”

However, the LDS view of a God who hasn’t always been God, and that man’s goal is to achieve the same level of godhood, would strike Christians as a great blasphemy. When God spoke to Isaiah, one of the great prophets of the Old Testament, He declared:

I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. . . . is there a God beside me; yea, there is no God; I know not any. (Isaiah 44:6, 8)

. . . from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. (Psalm 90:2)

I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee. (Hosea 11:9)

Excerpts from Letters and Emails

Oct. 2012: Hi this is very interesting journey, by the way i just have to send a comment about your site wow it is a wealth of information. thank you for putting the time and effort in creating a website and thanks again for spending the time helping me and other Mormons . . .

Oct. 2012: I wrote to you a few weeks ago when my brother was killed in an accident and his funeral was [conducted by Mormons] . . . thank YOU personally for, unknowingly, giving a stranger great comfort during this awful and deeply painful time. . . . YOUR VIDEOS, your kind face, your words, your comforting voice, when discussing this odd religion helped me stay strong and got me through those awful days . . . PS, your videos also helped another sister . . .

Oct. 2012: Leaving Mormonism is so difficult to do. You get so brainwashed into not thinking for yourself. I thank God every day that I saw the light. I thank him for Sandra’s part in my conversion.

Oct. 2012: It all started to come apart for me when I read Mormonism: Shadow or Reality . . . especially where it talks about Isaiah 29:4 being prophecy of the BoM. The first time I used a Strong’s Concordance, I looked up all bible passages about familiar spirits and realized Isa 29:4 couldn’t be a prophecy.

Oct. 2012: I’m a 20 year old from Buenos Aires, Argentina. I met the mormon church almost 4 years ago . . . Fortunately I discovered many FACTS that made me KNOW that that church (like any other I guess) is a corporation full of secrets and lies and its real “mission” is to concentrate power and money. Missionaries keep coming to my house and I try to be nice to them (it’s not their fault that they don’t even know their own church, because they are brainwashed since they are little), and I try to tell them why I think the way I think, with FACTS.
Oct. 2012: Today is the 1-year anniversary of the removal of my name from church records. I want to thank you for the help your website & resources have given me. I believe you are called by God to help people like me find the true path to Jesus & God....

Nov. 2012: I stumbled across your website while surfing the internet. It seems to me that your little group is based on hate and intolerance to another religion, much like the Christian persecution of the Jews and with all of the hate in the world, why create and operate some offensive and hateful in today's world? I can honestly say that for you bigoted fools to hold onto such hate is pathetic b**s**. Look up the definition of Christian and I guarantee you douche bags fall well outside those parameters and it's time to grow up or shut up or don't and reap what you sew.

Nov. 2012: Years ago I had read that you were thinking of retiring. I sent you an email and told you how important your ministry is, and asked you not to. I am so glad that you reconsidered that thought. You are perhaps more needed now than ever... praise God for your ministry.

Nov. 2012: Thank you for everything that you and Jerry have done to help break me free and clear my head. You and Jerry's hard work brought me to a place to where I can think clearly and rationally. I would not be who I am today without you. Thank you.

Nov. 2012: While I feel empathy for the Tanner family at the loss of Jerald, I would have loved to have seen the look on the face of Jerald when he crossed the veil and saw the Prophet Joseph Smith welcoming him. As a convert to the LDS Church, the efforts of people like the Tanner's has only reinforced my testimony because greater is He that is within me [the Spirit] than he that is in the world.

Nov. 2012: You were very instrumental in my conversion from LDS. I have some people in our church who are interested in trying to reach Mormons. Love you and your work.

Nov. 2012: I'd like to extend my thanks to you for all your work. It's been vital to my search for the truths I was denied for 34 years. I'm sharing my LDS membership resignation with you, as I did with Shawn and Alathea, because of how important you've all been to me and my final decision.

Nov. 2012: If you dear people would put all the money you spend on the Salt Lake Messenger into doing good for others, taking care of your own, we would all be better off. We are all entitled to believe as we want to. Give it up! Joseph Smith was & is a Prophet.

Nov. 2012: Good morning. Thank you for the work you do. We are Christians who moved to Utah last year, unaware of what we were really coming to. It has been an unpleasant shock to learn what a God-less, spirit-less place this really is.

Dec. 2012: I suppose I'm sticking with the Mormons because I find them to be very pleasant and agreeable people. Anyway Madam, you seem very polite and ladylike. I've watched some videos of your speeches and can't help but be impressed by your skill in stating your case. Like I say, though, I still feel the presence of the Lord in Mormonism. These people have been good to me and I want to show them loyalty.

Dec. 2012: I wanted to tell you that UTLM has been such a valuable resource for me. I am an ex-mormon (BIC), and my husband and I left the church together after we married. I am teaching a 6 month series of classes to evangelical teens and adults on how to witness to the LDS. Your website provided me with one-stop shopping for these valuable materials, and I was especially delighted to see all the digital content now available.

Dec. 2012: Loved the latest issue of the SLC Messenger [November 2012]. You all did a wonderful job exposing the wackiness of Mormonism. This issue will for sure go into my library of false beliefs. Thank you for your hard work in bringing the true Jesus to the lost.

Jan. 2013: I know you must receive a wide variety of opinions, I want to encourage you to keep spreading the truth of God's love. Speaking the truth in love can be difficult but you have done it well.

Jan. 2013: I'm writing to you because I have a deep appreciation for the work you and Jerald have done over the years. I'm amazed at the dedication you've shown in trying to help Mormons find truth.

For 36 years now, I've been married to a wonderful, faithful, Mormon... She wasn't active in the church when we met in 1976, and we talked about her faith before getting married, resulting in her assuring me she wouldn't go back to Mormonism. Well, as so often happens, when children come into our lives, we reach for our roots and that is what she did. She insisted our kids be raised in the church as well. This has been the only real problem (as a couple) that we've had in our marriage. The church has been between us since 1980 and we have at times struggled greatly with the division it has caused.

In 2009, I decided to give it my all to try and prove (once and for all) that the church was true so we could unite our family in Faith... What I found in my study of church history, and through daily Bible study, has born out what my gut was telling me all along, that Joseph Smith was a fraud... Sandra, as a member of the body of Christ, I want you to know that I love you. You, your family, and Utah Lighthouse Ministry, are in my prayers always. Please pray for... as well. I'm hopeful, in time, she will come to see truth. I continue to encourage her to read the New Testament, but, she almost seems to be afraid to actually do it. I don't want you to worry, I don't push her hard. I've learned I can drop a seed here and there, and not make her miserable.

Again, my main reason for writing is to say thanks! Ministries like yours are making a difference! Knowing the ONE TRUE GOD, is all that matters!

Jan. 2013: After listening to you on a couple of TV programs, I can see that your understanding of Mormonism is limited. Also, you told Jason Wallace and John Ankerberg that the Bible says that God has always been God. The Bible doesn't say that. It says that "... from eternity to eternity, thou art God." The LDS consider each of us as having existed "... from eternity to eternity." So my son can say of me, "Dad, from eternity to eternity, thou art my father." Note, that I haven't been his father forever; but I HAVE existed from eternity, and will continue to exist for all eternity... I believe your declaration that God is unchanging does not apply to ways He adapts to increased horizons.
Jan. 2013: I’m a brazilian member of the mormon church, my baptism was in 1980. I have various doubts about mormon’s doctrine, principally about Joseph Smith. I want to know documents copies for discuss about mormon history. Here in Brasil the members to know only official church history.

Jan. 2013: The In-law side of my family are largely polygamist mormons and I really love witnessing to them using information I receive from you.

Feb. 2013: God has said that the book of mormon is the most correct book and that by reading and living by it. (being the gospel and an additional witness of Christ) we could become closer to God. Realize that he didn’t say the perfect book, but the most correct. Information can only bring us to the desire to read or not to read to pray or not to pray about it. It is truly our choice. But we see that no evidence or archeology has ever sanctified the heart in knowing the truth and being converted to the Gospel of Christ, but by the Spirit of God.

Feb. 2013: On the previous testimony sunday on the 3rd of this month I bore my testimony saying “I know this church is false and I know Joseph Smith was not a prophet”. . . . the only thing I remember was a SIGH in the public in front of me, but I DID IT! I didn’t expect it to be such a relief after saying loud what I KNOW. After testifying I gave to my bishop the resignation letter . . .

Feb. 2013: I accidentally came across your website. I and my husband left the church, 18 months ago. I joined the church in my twenties. . . . And eventually, went to the Temple. My experience there was very mixed. I was shocked in the endowment session, with the slitting of the throat, etc. . . . [prior to 1990] But each day I went along for a week and I rationalized it to be alright. Then I meet my husband [who] grew up in the church. . . . He loved reading FARMS and he subscribed to Dialogue. . . . But with his learning of hieroglyphics he realized that the book of Abraham was false. . . . So we are now members of the Anglican Church, and my husband now smiles when he goes to church, we attend a bible study group. . . . I can only pray that one day they [the rest of the family] will know The Lord.

Feb. 2013: You guys crack me up. . . . why are you making it your life message to “debunk” Mormonism? . . . God has always led his people through prophets, so by what authority are you disseminating “information” in regards to His will? . . . If you think you know better than divine revelation, well, by all means carry on. Sad, sad little people. So sorry to have chanced upon your website.

Feb. 2013: . . . By the way, your book 41 unique teachings has been a top-notch help to me. . . . I witnessed to a lady this morning. . . . THANK YOU THANK YOU

Mar. 2013: Years ago your website was instrumental in freeing our family from Mormonism. You are doing a good work and helping a lot of people. Thank you so much for helping us.

Mar. 2013: THANK YOU for being a force for Christ in the world. The research that you and your husband provide makes a key difference in lives worldwide. In the limited times that I’ve had to talk and witness to Mormons, I know that information gotten from your newsletters really helped.

Mar. 2013: I am a Fancher descendant. Last weekend I visited the Mountain Meadows Massacre site with my two children. The experience was very moving for me and of course has resulted in many discussions among my family (some of whom are now Mormon). . . . I just wanted to say thank you for your work and commitment to truth.

Mar. 2013: I have to tell you, Sandra, that you have inspired me in many ways. When I was still a devout mormon, I thought what you were doing was just a lot of negative energy and time that would be better spent on something else. But that was because I didn’t want to see the truth of it yet. It would mean having the rug pulled out from under me, and having to make some very difficult decisions. But the time came when I had to acknowledge the truth, and could no longer support the lies of mormonism. . . . I knew Christ wouldn’t have had anything to do with it. And I came to realize the value of the gift of truth. Thank you for that.

Mar. 2013: Tanner(s), I have examined much of your “works” and find your scholarly abilities very much hindered by your personal agenda. I was converted to the Mormon Church and Baptized in 2008 after studying “Mormonism” for over 10 years. Your Anti-Mormon literature is good “tabloid” reading (I did enjoy most of what I read), but that is all it is—”the ‘junk’ of your cognitive fallacies. . . . The simple truth is you cannot prove the Book of Mormon was not brought forth by the gift and power of God. Please stop trying!

Apr. 2013: Your ministry and message has helped me steer into truth much easier after leaving Mormonism on 12/13/12. My wife is still in it and has been since age 9, she is 51 now. You and Shawn McCrane have been very helpful in arming me with knowledge to defend my abrupt decision after 12 years LDS to leave it. The Sunday school teacher from my wife’s ward is trying to rescue me. However it is my hope that his plan will backfire.

Apr. 2013: I am a Christian writing to you from UK. I recently found a second hand copy of your book ‘Mormonism: Shadow or reality’ and bought it. I just wanted to write and say ‘thank you’ for this excellently researched resource. There is a Mormon church not far from where I live and a sizeable Mormon population in the area. Your book has enabled me to answer Mormon questions and better defend my faith. You and Mr. Tanner did an amazing job.

Apr. 2013: Ms Tanner, . . . many years ago when I was preparing to marry in the Oakland temple, a valued co-worker of mine loaned me a book of yours that had the ceremony word for word in it. I found it frightening at 19 and find it even more so now. My parents convinced me that I had nothing to worry about so I stuffed it down and went through with it. I wish I had believed what you wrote. I did not have the courage to completely disavow the church until I was already 5 years married to someone from whom I am (happily) divorced after 23 years.

Apr. 2013: Since moving here [Nevada], I have been making friends with the LDS, having them over for meals and attending events with them, such as General Conference and church services (the whole 3 hours!) God had put it in my heart to get involved in a ministry. . . . Anyway, thank you again, Sandra. Your newsletters, videos and website have been invaluable to me.
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Their 15 Unanswered Questions

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

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

One of the catalysts for some members in Sweden to start investigating LDS claims derived from news stories in 2005 relating to the 200th anniversary of Joseph Smith’s birth in 1805, where historical issues unfamiliar to the Swedes were discussed. A local stake president (administrative overseer of several congregations) even approached Hans Mattsson for answers. 2 This was the first time Mattsson had heard of Joseph Smith translating the Book of Mormon by staring at a stone in his hat, DNA issues, differing accounts of Smith’s first vision, Smith’s polyandry, problems with the Book of Abraham, etc. Hans promised to look into the matter.

Finally a meeting was set up in 2005 for the stake president, Hans Mattsson and a few other Mormons to meet with Mattsson’s superior, and L. Tom Perry, a senior apostle from the LDS Church. 3 The Stake President arrived with a stack of photocopies documenting the various problem areas of Mormon history, which was soon appropriated by the top leaders with a promise that they would get back to him on that. The apostle announced that he “had a manuscript in his briefcase that, once it was published, would prove all the doubters wrong. But Mr. Mattsson said the promised text never appeared, and when he asked the apostle about it, he was told it was impertinent to ask.” 4

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3 LDS Apostle L. Tom Perry was in charge of church affairs in Europe at the time; New York Times, (July 21, 2013); Mormon Stories, audio interview with Hans Mattsson, #433, part 4, http://mormonstories.org/hans-mattsson/
4 New York Times (July 21, 2013); Mormon Stories #430-434.
Was the purported manuscript just a delaying tactic or did the apostle realize the answers in his briefcase were not sufficient for the questions? To date, no such book has been printed by the LDS Church.

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

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

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

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

The LDS Church’s response to the Swedish members’ questions is without precedence, covering seven years (2005–2012), two apostles’ visits, a meeting with a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy and two official church historians. During the summer of 2010 LDS Apostle Russell M. Nelson and Ronald A. Rasband of the Seventy visited Sweden and met with some of the members, but provided few satisfactory answers. They then promised to send the church historians.

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

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

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

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

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

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


7 Transcript of November 2010 meeting in Sweden, online at: http://www.roadkilldelight.com/NOM/SFMJRT.pdf
you haven’t thought about yet.” Jensen went on to observe, “There’s nothing that I know about Mormonism that bothers me. Are there contradictions, are there inconsistencies, are there paradoxes? Yes.” One member called out, “And you’re aware of a lot more things that we might not be aware of yet? But still you stand and you think, ‘I can—I can stand for this’?” To which Jensen replied, “Right. . . . So I’m just saying they’re very good questions, they’re questions that are being asked by others, and there are a lot more questions that could be asked.” The member responded, “Will you have very good answers?” Jensen then commented, “You’ll see in a moment. We’ll have what answers we have.” He then entered into a discussion of how things are “spiritually discerned” and each one must “make your own decisions.” The leaders then took questions from the audience.

15 Questions

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

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

David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon, described the process as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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


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

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

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

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

Here again Turley is avoiding the issue. Yes, it would be nice to have an official list of Smith’s wives but why not refer them to current research on the subject? He could have referred them to LDS scholar Todd Compton’s book, In Sacred Loneliness,12 where he gives biographical sketches of thirty-three of Smith’s plural wives. Even the LDS FamilySearch program shows twenty-four wives for Smith.13

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

One of the problems of polyandry is that it is not covered in Smith’s polygamy revelation. The Doctrine and Covenants, section 132:61-62, allows for plural marriage with virgins, not women with living husbands. The discussion then turned to the current LDS Church beliefs regarding polygamy. Were Smith’s marriages simply spiritual or were they conjugal relationships? One member brought up the question of Smith having children with his plural wives. “One woman said the child that she bore she didn’t know if it was the child of Joseph or the child of, in this case, Orson Hyde, I think, an apostle. So that indicates that it was definitely not a spiritual marriage, it was all the way marriage. So, I have a question, what do you feel about that?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4. Book of Abraham. What about the problems with the Book of Abraham and its supposed translation from the Egyptian papyri Smith purchased in 1835 in Kirtland, Ohio? Egyptologists have now translated the papyri and found that they have nothing to do with Abraham.\(^{17}\) Turley responded: “Book of Abraham. Very quickly, let me just say a few things about it very simply. Number 1, again, it was received by revelation. Number 2, we don’t have all the papyrus . . . Number 3, . . . we’ve seen a lot of studies on the so-called alphabet and grammar book. There’s some excellent research coming out of BYU in the next year that you need to read. That’s all I have time to say about that.”

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

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

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

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15 *Nauvoo Polygamy*, p. 323.
16 *Nauvoo Polygamy*, p. 573.
19 “Fooling the Prophet with the Kinderhook Plates,” online at: www.mrm.org/kinderhook-plates; “The Kinderhook Plates,” online at: www.utlm.org/onlineresources/kinderhookplates.htm
and that he received his kingdom from the ruler of heaven and earth.\textsuperscript{20} Clayton’s diary account then became the basis for the entry about the plates in the official \textit{History of the Church}, vol. 5, page 372.

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

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

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

5. Lying for the Lord. “I have a question that’s really related to polygamy. When I was on my mission in London in the seventies, we were taught a very important principle called \textit{lying for the Lord}. I mean, we were taught that. And it’s supposed to have been coined, this phrase, by I think John Taylor, and I wonder do you think that there are circumstances where it’s OK to withhold or manipulate truths just to defend or uphold the reputation of the Church? Is \textit{lying for the Lord} still alive? That’s my question.”

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

Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy; we declare that we believe, that \textit{one man should have one wife}; and one woman, but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again.\textsuperscript{23}

However, John Taylor failed to mention that he had married at least twelve wives by that point.\textsuperscript{24} Turley responded, “There are these clashes where sometimes one moral imperative or ethical imperative becomes superior to another. . . . When people bring up this topic, what they’re usually talking about is during plural marriage time periods when people were asked about plural marriage and, again, it’s a complicated subject but basically, people were trying to decide, do I say something, or do I not? Do I tell the truth or do I not? Do we teach as a church that you should lie? No, we don’t.”

Again Turley sidesteps the basic issue of the ethics of Joseph Smith and all of the LDS Church leadership lying about their illegal, secret plural marriages prior to 1852.\textsuperscript{25}

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

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Ensign, (August 1981), p. 73.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Salt Lake City Messenger, “Kinderhook Plates,” (October 1981), no. 46; online at www.utlm.org/newsletters/no46.htm
\item \textsuperscript{23} Doctrine and Covenants, 1835, sec. 101, p. 251.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Nauvoo Polygamy, pp. 627-628.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Salt Lake City Messenger (May 2009), no. 112; www.utlm.org/newsletters/no112.htm
\item \textsuperscript{26} Salt Lake City Messenger (October 2010), no. 115; www.utlm.org/newsletters/no115.htm
\end{itemize}
7. Blood Atonement. What about Brigham Young’s teaching that certain sins required personal blood atonement? When pressed on the issue of whether or not this was practiced, Turley responded: “My personal belief is that during Joseph Smith’s time period, based on statements in the Bible, Joseph Smith said that when men shed blood, their blood should be shed. . . . And I think that when you got into the Brigham Young times, that scripture was taken literally for a time.”

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

Now take a person in this congregation who has knowledge with regard to being saved . . . and suppose that he is overtaken in a gross fault, that he has committed a sin that he knows will deprive him of that exaltation which he desires, and that he cannot attain to it without the shedding his blood, and also knows that by having his blood shed he will atone for that sin, and be saved and exalted with the Gods; is there a man or woman in this house but what would say, “shed my blood that I may be saved and exalted with the Gods?”

. . . Will you love your brothers and sisters likewise, when they have committed a sin that cannot be atoned for without the shedding of their blood? Will you love that man or woman well enough to shed their blood? . . . I could refer you to plenty of instances where men have been ritously slain, in order to atone for their sins. I have seen scores and hundreds of people for whom there would have been a chance . . . if their lives had been taken and their blood spilled on the ground as a smoking incense to the Almighty, but who are now angels to the Devil . . . I have known a great many men who have left this Church for whom there is no chance whatever for exaltation, but if their blood had been spilled, it would have been better for them. . . . This is loving our neighbor as ourselves; if he needs help, help him; and if he wants salvation and it is necessary to spill his blood on the earth in order that he may be saved, spill it. . . .”28

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

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

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

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

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

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28 Sermon by President Brigham Young, delivered in the Mormon Tabernacle, February 8, 1857; printed in the Deseret News (February 18, 1857); also reprinted in the Journal of Discourses, vol. 4, pp. 219-220.
9. Censored Church History. “Do the leaders of the church really believe that they are actually inspired by God to act in such a way? Just to tell a selected, nice version of the church—the history of the church—in order to get more converts? Do they believe they are inspired to do this?”

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

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

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

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

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

A member then raised the issue of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, carried out by faithful Mormons against a wagon train of non-Mormons from Arkansas, in southern Utah in 1857, and its cover-up. Turley responded that he is currently “writing a book” on the period after the massacre that will answer that question. He was further questioned as to whether or not the church has decided to write about it. They have certainly not taken the lead in explaining the troubling parts of their past until it becomes critical. Why is it that only now the LDS church is finally making a greater attempt to tell its history “as completely and fully as technology can allow,” when they have had literally decades to do so? If the Swedish situation is any indicator, it must be that the Internet is causing pressure by finally making that history more readily available to the masses.

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Turley’s answer was “Did the Church hide it? At the time—short answer—you need to read the book for the long answer. . . . The short answer is that at the time of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, when Brigham Young found out about it, the US Army was on the door of Salt Lake City getting ready to come in and basically massacre his people, that was Brigham Young’s feeling. Ok? So the Mountain Meadows Massacre was the last thing he wanted to talk about under those circumstances. Ok, let’s move on.”
Thus we see that Brigham Young and the church did cover-up the massacre “at the time.” It has been covering up embarrassing events in its past since the beginning, and they are still restricting access to several documents relating to the massacre. In 2008 Turley and two associates published Massacre at Mountain Meadows. At that time Turley said he was working on a sequel dealing with the aftermath of the massacre, which would be the book he mentioned to the Swedes. As of September 20, 2013, Turley’s book has not appeared in print.

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

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

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

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

11. Priesthood Restoration. The next question related to the lack of early documents reporting the appearance of angels regarding priesthood restoration. “One thing that really bothers me is the lack of contemporary sources for the angelic visitations [of John the Baptist and Peter, James and John relating to the Priesthood]. I understand from both Michael Quinn and Bushman, they say, as I understand, there are sources from 1820–1830—affidavits, letters, minutes—but none of them ever mentions any angelic visitations or a priesthood. . . . So I wonder, why are there not any contemporary testimonies. Or are there?”

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

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

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

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

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33 Helen Whitney, dir., The Mormons, (PBS, 2007); www.pbs.org/mormons/
35 Gregory A. Prince, Power From On High, (Signature Books, 1995), pp. 3-30; Tanner, Changing World of Mormonism, chapter 16; online at www.utlm.org
declaration granting priesthood to those of black African ancestry.” However, Apostle Harold B. Lee opposed the matter, and “persuaded the Quorum of Twelve to rescind its vote,” which delayed giving the priesthood to Blacks for many years. One Swede asked, “Is this true that there were some apostles that went against the question to give the priesthood to the Blacks?” When he was on his mission in the seventies he remembers hearing Mark E. Petersen talk “a lot about the blacks and the pre-existence and they are damned and so on because they were black.” Yet, now those teachings would be considered false doctrine.

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

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

Marlin Jensen responded by telling of his daughter’s first experience at the temple. “I remember sitting with our first daughter, . . . after her first temple endowment which I attended with her [prior to the changes in 1990]. . . . I think my little daughter was quite worthy, but she was so disturbed, I’ll say. So surprised by the nature of what happened there that I’m not sure the Holy Ghost had a chance to really help her that day. I remember sitting with her in the celestial room while she cried and said, dad what’s this all about? And I wish I had done a better job. She has persisted and I said to her if you’ll keep coming and keep learning and keep praying about it, you’ll [words unclear] and loves what she feels there. But it’s taken some time. It [witness of the Holy Spirit] isn’t a tap we can always turn on.” To which the member responded, “I think what you’re saying now is your answer to everything. If we keep doing it, we will feel good about it.”

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

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

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

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


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

38 FAIR is an organization of faithful LDS members, but is not officially connected to the church. FARMS (now the Neal Maxwell Institute) is part of the BYU and thus an official division of the LDS Church.
issue that Native American DNA shows they descended from Asians, not Semitic people.

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

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

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

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

Preaching in 1873 Brigham Young declared, “How much unbelief exists in the minds of the Latter-day Saints in regard to one particular doctrine which I revealed to them, and which God revealed to me—namely that Adam is our father and God. . . . He brought one of his wives with him, and she was called Eve . . . .” Further on he explained that Adam was the father of our spirits. 40

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

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

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

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


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

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

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

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

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

More Questions Than Answers

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

While we don’t have the web list that was handed out it is assumed it was the same one passed out in 2012 as part of the Swedish Rescue letter mentioned later.42

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

Since these historians were already aware of the historical problems bothering the Swedes, one wonders why the historians arrived at the meeting with no prepared answers? These were not new issues. Most of these questions had been troubling various Mormons for decades. In fact, as young Mormons Jerald and I were looking for answers to these issues in 1959 and 1960.43 The LDS Church has had ample time to produce official answers to these questions.

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

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

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

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

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


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

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

46 MormonDiscussions.com, see online http://tinyurl.com/mq4kh7o
Well, it’s either true or false. If it’s false, we’re engaged in a great fraud. If it’s true, it’s the most important thing in the world. Now, that’s the whole picture. It is either right or wrong, true or false, fraudulent or true. And that’s exactly where we stand, with a conviction in our hearts that it is true: that Joseph went into the [Sacred] Grove; that he saw the Father and the Son; that he talked with them; that Moroni came; that the Book of Mormon was translated from the plates; that the priesthood was restored by those who held it anciently. That’s our claim. That’s where we stand, and that’s where we fall, if we fall. But we don’t. We just stand secure in that faith.47

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

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

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

Two Years Later

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

Letter from Church History Department

“The Swedish Rescue”
Salt Lake City, January 21, 2012.

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

(1) The Church does not hide historical facts. In fact, it makes every effort to be open and honest about its past and current actions.

(2) The internet and digital records now make information about the Church available to many who because of language and other limitations have not previously known of this information. This does not mean that such information was hidden by the Church; it was simply not generally available.

(3) Joseph Smith and the prophets who succeeded him were not wicked or deceiving men. Joseph did not become a “fallen prophet.” He and all other prophets of this dispensation have human weaknesses. They have often admitted this and the scriptures sometimes confirm that God is not pleased with them. However, they worthily exercised their priesthood keys and led the Church in their time as directed by God through revelation. This is true of President Thomas S. Monson today.

(4) Obtaining or regaining a testimony of Joseph Smith as a prophet of God and of the restoration of the gospel through him is always essentially a spiritual quest. Nephi’s reminder to his older brother of the Lord’s words provides a good description of the path each must walk: “If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you”, (1 Nephi 15:11).

(5) In working with individual members who are expressing doubts, priesthood leaders should (a) provide the best possible answers to the questions the members are asking, (b) teach the spiritual path each must walk to gain or regain a testimony, helping the members to remember past spiritual witnesses and to avoid contact with evil influences, and (c) emphasize that faith is a conscious choice that each must make.

(6) As guided by the Spirit, the scriptures, and Handbook 1 (section 6.7.3 material on Apostasy), priesthood leaders may need to take disciplinary action with those members who persist in publicly opposing the Church and its leaders after they have been lovingly worked with and corrected by their bishop or higher authority. Alma’s counsel is important in this regard: “Now repentance could not come unto men except there were a punishment . . . ” (Alma 42:16).

The three-point approach [1. Prevent, 2. Regain and 3. Facts & Answers] . . . formulated after our meeting may be a very good framework to share with priesthood leaders along with the principles set out above. I think this sums up the things we agreed to during our meeting. We join our faith and prayers with yours that we can make difference in the lives of those Swedish Saints whose faith is being tested. May the Lord bless you and your associates there, is our prayer.

Sincerely your brother

Elder Marlin K. Jensen50

47 The Mormons, (PBS, July 2007); online at: www.pbs.org/mormons/
49 http://www.mormonthink.com/swedish-rescue.htm
50 http://www.mormonthink.com/swedish-rescue.htm
Notice that point number 5 encourages the local priesthood leaders to “provide the best possible answers to the questions the members are asking.” Yet the 2012 material sent to the Swedish leaders did not contain official answers to any of the questions raised in the 2010 meeting.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The second Encyclopedia of Mormonism Online http://ecom.byu.edu/

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Front Page News

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

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

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

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51 www.mormonthink.com/swedish-rescue.htm
52 www.mormonthink.com/swedish-rescue.htm
53 Lance M., Mormon Stories, (July 25, 2013): http://mormonstories.org/hans-mattsson/comment-page-1/#comments
and sometimes they are simply faithful members who are looking for clarity and understanding to add to their faith.”

However, judging by reports of the seminars, Givens is not giving any clearer answers than those offered by the historians to the Swedes in 2010. 54

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

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

The article continues:

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

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

Mattsson’s Interview with John Dehlin

Another amazing event was John Dehlin’s interview with Hans Mattsson, which aired on Dehlin’s podcast series Mormon Stories on July 22, 2013. 55 Although Dehlin’s interview with Mattsson was posted after the 2013 Times article, it was evidently recorded prior to the article. Mattsson explained that he had listened to earlier podcasts of Mormon Stories and felt it was time to share his experiences.

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

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

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

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

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

2011 Survey of Doubting Mormons

Beginning in the Fall of 2011 John Dehlin, a graduate student of clinical and counseling psychology at Utah State University, conducted an online survey of 3000
Mormons “who at one time believed their Church was true, but no longer believe,” titled *Understanding Mormon Disbelief*. Almost half of the participants reported their current status as agnostic/atheist/humanist, while only 11% identified themselves as Christian (non-Mormon).

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

The seven top historical problems leading to disbelief were:

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

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

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

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

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

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

The article continues:

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

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

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

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

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

**Why some Mormons leave**

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

The survey, which was posted on various LDS-related blogs and websites as well as Facebook, attracted more than 3,000 self-selected, nonrepresentative responses. It found that the two historical issues that most negatively affected belief in the faith were “the Book of Abraham” — a Mormon text that Smith said was based on Egyptian papyri he obtained — and polygamy, which the church abandoned in 1890.

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

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


61 *Salt Lake Tribune*, (February 3, 2012), online comments following Peggy Stack’s article.
April 2013 LDS Conference

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

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

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

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

Official, Safe Content

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

64 George D. Smith, Nauvoo Polygamy, p. 440.
more open and accessible to questioners, the LDS church seems just as selective and silent as ever on the topics that matter most.

**Other Instances of Apostasy**

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

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

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

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

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

Then, in 1996, a member of the [Bremen] ward encountered a couple of disturbing articles about the early history of the church from the Utah Lighthouse Ministry, a conservative Protestant organization with an anti-Mormon mission. Attempting to come to terms with these, he asked friends in the ward for help and, in so doing, unintentionally started a wave of apostasy. Another brother translated parts of these articles into German and distributed them to members. In the fall discussion circles formed and letters were written to local and regional church authorities, questioning the official version of church history. The issues at stake were, first, the different versions of the First Vision as evidence of a developing concept of God rather than an initially clear and complete picture through revelation; second, differences between the Book of Commandments and the Doctrine and Covenants as evidence of changed (or possibly forged) revelations; and, finally, controversy over whether the Book of Mormon was a fiction or a genuinely ancient record. The members were especially upset because these papers had been written twenty years earlier (when most of them had just begun their membership in the church), but evidently no church response or explanation had ever been made available.

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

**Conclusion**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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1 Grant Palmer, Insider’s View of Mormon Origins. Available at utlm.org
Excerpts from Letters and Emails

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

July 2013: My wife and I recently resigned from LDS church after 40 years of life-long service and TONS of money donated. It all started on February 10, 2013, when we were sitting in Gospel Doctrine class and I read D&C 49:16 about having one wife. For some reason the question pricked me . . . If God commanded Joseph in a modern day revelation that we should only have one wife, then why did we ever practice polygamy?? I had recently gotten an iPad with my scriptures on it so I decided to do a quick internet search and see how the church justified that. I’ve never gone outside the scriptures and basic LDS resources to read and study so I was blown away when I pulled up fairmormon.org. I had never heard of that site before, nor had I ever realized there were SO MANY problems the church was dealing with! Within a week of all-consuming research, I lost my testimony of the church. My wife immediately followed and we officially resigned a few months ago.

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

July 2013: hey i was wondering why you spend these countless hours trying to disprove the church when you could go on living your life. you guys have serious issues you are dealing with here.
July 2013: First off, I want to say thank you so much for your web site. Thank you so much for putting the facts there. I'm 29 years old, born and raised in the LDS Church and very active in it all those years for the most part.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

July 2013: This article [www.utlm.org] helped me a lot...the way we have explained and have put Jesus’s saying before any other person...I love it...I’m thinking of joining the Ids church and when researched a little about Ids and joseph smith i found out about his wives...and this ruined everything...but this article helped me see that no matter what people teach we can always chose whether to accept it or not...God has given us free will...thank u for reminding me...actually recently my boyfriend became a member of the Ids church and just went for serving a mission. The thing is I found out all this after so long I mean I’ve to wait till he comes back. For me to explain to him.
July 2013: I have a meeting w/ my Bishop coming up . . . I prepared in part for this meeting thru the books from UTM [www. utm.org]. . . . I resigned from my Sunday school president position in January. The genesis was that I saw the church manuals for what they are managed and at the “George Washington chopped down the cherry tree level.” I started my own research and WOW! I was mislead, lied to and have been rebuked for stating the truth.

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

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

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

I was shocked by these things but I remained in a place of faith. I had believed my whole life that this was the only true church, so I was going to continue to cling to it. Over the next couple years our marriage struggled in a major way. My husband left the Mormon Church completely and told me he wouldn’t be going back. I had family members (who are Mormon) telling me my sweet 2 year old . . . I couldn’t bear the thought of splitting up his parents.

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

During this time of questioning we were introduced to a non-denominational church. We began going occasionally. It was there that I was introduced to a new concept. It was that: Jesus died for us on the cross and there is nothing we can do on our own to go to heaven, all we can do is accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior and His sacrifice for us and we will be saved (Romans 10:9-10, Acts 4: 10-12). I was amazed that I felt the Holy Spirit so strong when they were saying these things. It was stronger than I had ever felt it in my life. One Sunday during the church service, it hit me. I realized I never knew this Jesus they were talking about. Yes I was taught of a Jesus in the Mormon Church, but it wasn’t this Jesus they were telling me about.

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

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

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

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

August 2013: I love your ministry. I was going to convert to Baptist Church and everything seems like a foreign language to me. . . and was surprised to hear that someone else is a Christ follower and being related to you know who. It is real awesome . . . and to know that I am not alone in the fight to bring home those who believe in Mormonism.

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

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

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

Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? (PDF) $16.00
(Printed version - $24.00)

Mormonism, Magic and Masonry
(PDF) $4.00
(Printed version - $5.00)

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New Titles

Unveiling Grace:
The Story of How We Found Our Way out of the Mormon Church
by Lynn K. Wilder
$14.50

Banishing the Cross:
The Emergence of a Mormon Taboo
by Michael G. Reed
$18.00

The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri: A Complete Edition
(paperback)
by Robert K. Ritner
$30.00

A note from Lynn Wilder—Someone we have been working with was threatened by her bishop and stake president for posting that the book “Unveiling Grace” was out. They visited her within 2 days and gave her 2 days to decide to resign or she would be excommunicated. She and hubby sent letters by registered mail and both the bishop and stake president refused the letters and had them returned to sender...
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Brigham's Destroying Angel. Photo-reprint of the 1904 edition. This is the confessions of Bill Hickman, who claimed that he committed murder by the orders of Brigham Young and Apostle Orson Hyde. Price: $5.00

Can the Browns Save Joseph Smith? by J. & S. Tanner. A rebuttal to They Lie in Wait to Deceive, Vol. 1. Price: $3.00

Capt. William Morgan’s Exposition of Freemasonry—Illustrations of Masonry by one of the Fraternity who has devoted Thirty Years to the Subject by William Morgan. Photo-reprint of the 1827 edition. Price: $5.00

Case Against Mormonism (The) Vol. 1, 1968, by J. & S. Tanner. Deals with Joseph’s First Vision, changes in Mormon revelations and documents, the Law of Adoption, the Mormon Battalion and more. Price: $6.00

Case Against Mormonism (The) Vol. 2, 1968, by J. & S. Tanner. Deals with the Book of Mormon witnesses, the gold plates, parallels between the Book of Mormon and other documents, the influence of the Bible and the Apocrypha upon the Book of Mormon, and proof that the Book of Abraham is a spurious work. Price: $6.00

Case Against Mormonism (The) Vol. 3, 1971, by J. & S. Tanner. Deals with the meaning and changes in the facsimiles in the Book of Abraham, books Joseph Smith may have had in writing the Book of Mormon and the Book of Abraham, the plurality of gods doctrine, the Adam-God doctrine, the Virgin Birth, false prophecies of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, the Word of Wisdom, the Priesthood, etc. Price: $6.00

Changes in Joseph Smith’s History, by J. & S. Tanner. A study of the changes that have been made in the six-volume History of the Church since its first printing. Price: $5.00

Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered. Extracts from the diaries of Joseph Smith’s secretary, William Clayton. Price: $4.00

Confessions of John D. Lee. Photo-reprint of the 1877 edition, printed under the title, Mormonism Unveiled. Contains important information on the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Price: $8.00

Critical Look (A) - A Study of the Overstreet “Confession” and the Cowdery “Defense,” by J. & S. Tanner. Shows that these two documents are forgeries. Price: $2.00

Curse of Cain? Racism in the Mormon Church, by J. & S. Tanner. Historical overview of the development of the LDS doctrine of race and their priesthood ban on blacks; the 1978 revelation and its aftermath. Price: $6.00 (also in digital PDF format)


Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony, 1842-1990, (Updated in 2005) by J. & S. Tanner. Contains the actual text of the 1990 revision of the highly secret endowment ritual and other accounts of the ceremony dating back to 1846. Shows that Joseph Smith borrowed from Masonry in creating the ritual and that it has evolved over the years. Price: $6.00 (available soon in digital PDF format)

Examination of B. H. Roberts’ Secret Manuscript (An), by Wesley P. Walters. An article analyzing Roberts’ compilation of evidence showing that Joseph Smith could have written the Book of Mormon. Price: $3.00

Falsification of Joseph Smith’s History, by J. & S. Tanner. Proves that many serious changes were made in Joseph Smith’s history after his death. Although the Mormon leaders claim that Joseph Smith wrote this history, research reveals that less than 40% of it was compiled before his death. Price: $3.00

Ferguson’s Manuscript Unveiled. A study relating to Book of Mormon archaeology and geography. Thomas Stuart Ferguson, one of the most noted defenders of the Book of Mormon, was finally forced to conclude it was “fictional.” Price: $4.00

Flaws in the Pearl of Great Price, by J. & S. Tanner. Details many serious problems including Joseph Smith’s extensive plagiarism from both the Old and New Testaments of the King James Bible. Also includes a photo reprint of the first edition of the Pearl of Great Price showing the changes made in the text. Price: $6.00

Following the Brethren. Introduction by J. & S. Tanner. Contains Apostle Ezra Taft Benson’s speech, “Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophets.” Also contains Apostle Bruce R. McConkie’s speech, “All Are Alike Unto God.” Price: $3.00


Index to Mormonism - Shadow or Reality? (An), by Michael Briggs. Price: $2.00

Inside of Mormonism (The): A Judicial Examination of the Endowment Oaths Administered in All the Mormon Temples (1903), by Henry G. McMillan: The United States District Court. Price $7.00

Jerald Tanner’s Testimony. Typescript of set of tapes concerning Jerald’s life and Utah Lighthouse Ministry. Price: $2.00

John Whitmer’s History. Joseph Smith gave a revelation in 1831 commanding John Whitmer to keep this history of the Church. Very revealing. Price: $3.00

Joseph Smith and Money Digging, by J. & S. Tanner. Deals with Joseph Smith’s connection with money-digging, the use of the “seer stone” to find the Book of Mormon plates and its use to translate the book itself. Price: $4.00

Joseph Smith and Polygamy, by J. & S. Tanner. Contains a detailed study of the Mormon doctrine of plural marriage, the spiritual wife doctrine, the John C. Bennett book, the Nancy Rigdon affair, the Sarah Pratt affair, and also the Martha H. Brotherton affair. Includes a list of 84 women who may have been married to Joseph Smith. Price: $6.00

Joseph Smith Egyptian Papers - includes Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar, compiled by H. Michael Marquardt with Foreword by Sandra Tanner. Price: $16.00

Joseph Smith’s Bainbridge, N.Y., Court Trials, by Wesley P. Walters. Important discoveries concerned Joseph Smith’s 1826 and 1830 trials. Price: $2.00

Joseph Smith’s History By His Mother - Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet. Photo-reprint of the original 1853 edition. Contains a 15 page introduction by J. & S. Tanner. Price: $8.00


LDS Apostle Confesses Brigham Young Taught Adam-God Doctrine. Contains a photo reproduction of a ten-page letter written by Bruce R. McConkie. Price: $3.00
Look at Christianity (A), by J. & S. Tanner. Deals with the Flood, Noah’s Ark, Egypt and the Bible, evidence from Palestine, Moabite Stone, Assyrian records, Dead Sea Scrolls, the historicity of Jesus, manuscripts of the New Testament, early writings concerning Christianity, and more. Price: $3.00

Major Problems of Mormonism, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Thirty years of research on Mormonism distilled into a 256-page book. Covers the most important areas. Price: $8.00


Mormon Kingdom (The) Vol. 1, 1969, by J. & S. Tanner. Contains an account of the 1969 temple ceremony. Also discusses earlier changes in the ceremony and garments, the relationship to Masonry, the “oath of vengeance,” the doctrine of Blood Atonement, baptism for the dead, the Danites, the Council of 50, the failure of the Kirtland Bank, the war in Missouri, Joseph Smith’s secret ordination as King and his candidacy for President of the United States. Price: $6.00

Mormon Kingdom (The) Vol. 2, 1971, by J. & S. Tanner. Deals with such subjects as: the Council of 50 and how it controlled early Utah, the ordination of Mormon kings, Mormonism and money, politics in Utah, the Mountain Meadows Massacre, the Utah War, the practice of Blood Atonement in Utah, and Brigham Young’s indictment for murder and counterfeiting. Price: $6.00

Mormon Purge (The), by J. & S. Tanner. The Mormon Church’s attempt to silence its historians and other dissidents with threats of excommunication and other reprisals. Includes information on the suppressed 16-volume sesquicentennial history. Price: $4.00

Mormon Scriptures and the Bible, by J. & S. Tanner. A 53-page book dealing with such subjects as: a comparison of the manuscript evidence for the Bible and Mormon scriptures, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Joseph Smith’s Inspired Revision of the Bible. Price: $4.00

Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? Newly formatted in 2008. The ‘Tanners’ most comprehensive and revealing work on Mormonism. Deals with Book of Mormon, the Godhead, Book of Abraham, First Vision, polygamy, Mountain Meadows Massacre, individual blood atonement, Adam-God Doctrine, changes in scriptures, the Danites, temple ceremony, anti-black doctrine, false prophecy and more. Price: $24.00 (also available in digital PDF format)

Mormonism Exposed, Being a Journal of a Residence in Missouri from the 28th of May to the 20th of August, 1838, by William Swartzell. Photo-reprint of 1840 edition. Price: $3.00

Mormonism Like Watergate? by J. & S. Tanner. Contains an answer to Dr. Nibley’s 1973 article in the Salt Lake Tribune, the 1831 revelation on polygamy which commands Mormons to marry Indians to make them a “white” and “delightsome” people, suppressed material on the anti-black doctrine. Price: $3.00

Mormonism, Magic and Masonry, by J. & S. Tanner. A study of the influence of magic and Masonry on Joseph Smith and his family. Price: $4.00 (also available in digital PDF format)


Mountain Meadows Massacre (The), by Josiah F. Gibbs. Photo reprint of the original 1910 edition. Price: $4.00

Nauvoo Expositor (The) - June 7, 1844. Photomechanical reprint of the newspaper Joseph Smith sought to destroy in order to suppress the truth about polygamy and other practices. Price: $2.00

Our Relationship With the Lord, by Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie. An attack on the concept of a personal relationship with Christ. Price: $3.00

Pearl of Great Price. Photo-reprint of the original 1851 edition. Price: $3.00

Point by Point: A Critique of Which Church is True? A Process of Elimination Using the Bible, by Steven Lee. An 80-page booklet examining the claims of Mormonism. Price: $5.00 (also digital)

Reed Peck Manuscript. This manuscript was written in 1839 by Reed Peck, who had been a Mormon. Contains important firsthand information concerning the Mormon war in Missouri and the Danite band. Price: $3.00

Reminiscences of Early Utah, by R. N. Baskin. Photo-reprint of the original 1914 edition. Mr. Baskin was the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Utah. He explains how the Mormon leaders tried to evade the laws of the United States, discusses marked ballots and the absurd election laws, the Mountain Meadows Massacre, the Endowment house rites, blood atonement, the Danites, the revelation on polygamy. Price: $7.00


Senate Document 189. Photo-reprint of the “testimony given before the judge of the fifth judicial circuit of the State of Missouri, on the trial of Joseph Smith, Jr., and others, for high treason, and other crimes against the state” in 1841. Gives very interesting testimony on the Danite band. Price: $3.00

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Grappling with the Past
LDS Church’s New Statements on Gospel Topics

Since its founding in 1830 by Joseph Smith, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (originally titled the Church of Christ) has struggled with its public image. Charges of fraud related to Smith’s money-digging and magic practices were a stumbling block to many from the very beginning. In subsequent years his visions, new and changing scriptures, secret polygamy, racism, the political kingdom of God and temple rituals added to the flow of criticism towards Joseph Smith and the Mormons.

After Smith’s death, Brigham Young, the second prophet of the LDS Church, proved to be just as controversial. His sermons on Adam-god, racism, blood atonement, the political kingdom of God and plural marriage led to extensive criticism in the eastern newspapers and various books. Also, the 1857 Mountain Meadows Massacre and the U.S. government’s legal battles to end polygamy kept Mormonism in the press for years. However, after LDS Apostle Reed Smoot was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1903 his right to be seated was challenged because of the Mormons defiance of the United States’ laws, especially regarding polygamy in Utah, which led to a four-year investigation of the LDS Church by the Senate. Subsequently, the LDS Church embarked on a new course of currying favor with the outside world. As the sermons of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young faded into the past the LDS Church entered a new period of public relations to reshape its image into one of patriotism, family values and clean living.

When Fawn Brodie published her landmark biography of Joseph Smith, _No Man Knows My History_, in 1945 she reopened the old wounds of the LDS Church’s troubled past. Her biography was followed by dozens of books challenging Mormonism. But it would take the invention of the Internet for those issues to become known worldwide. In our Fall 2013 newsletter, _Apostasy in Sweden_, we related the experience of a number of LDS members who, through the Internet, became aware of the challenges to LDS truth claims. This led to visits to Sweden by LDS apostles and historians, between 2005 and 2010, to calm the troubled members.

The major questions raised in these meetings centered around the following issues: Why are there varying First Vision accounts? Did Smith use a magic stone to translate the Book of Mormon? Why did Joseph Smith lie about polygamy and polyandry? Why doesn’t the Book of Abraham translation match the papyri? Why censor church history? Should members know all the truth? When was the priesthood restored? Why were blacks denied priesthood until 1978? What about bad

1 E. D. Howe, _Mormonism Unvailed_, (Painesville, Ohio, 1834).
3 Michael Harold Paulos, _The Mormon Church on Trial: Transcripts of the Reed Smoot Hearings_, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2007); Helen Whitney, dir., _The Mormons_, (PBS, 2007), online at www.pbs.org
5 “Apostasy in Sweden,” _Salt Lake City Messenger_, (October 2013), no. 121; online at www.utlm.org
temple experiences? Why did Brigham Young preach on personal Blood Atonement? Did Brigham Young teach false doctrine when he preached that Adam is our God?

Without compelling answers to the members’ questions the discontent grew. Today Mormons around the world seem to be stumbling across the same issues and are troubled by the lack of candid answers from the LDS Church.6

Evidently, in response to this growing body of questioning members, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, of the LDS First Presidency, gave the following comments at the October 2013 LDS General Conference:

Some struggle with unanswered questions about things that have been done or said in the past. We **openly acknowledge** that in nearly 200 years of Church history—along with an uninterrupted line of inspired, honorable, and divine events—there have been some things said and done that could cause people to question. . . .

And, to be perfectly frank, there have been times when members or leaders in the Church have simply made mistakes. There may have been things said or done that were not in harmony with our values, principles, or doctrine. . . .

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters—my dear friends—please, **first doubt your doubts** before you doubt your faith.7

What Uchtdorf seems to miss is that the problems of Mormonism’s past are so troubling and clearly documented, that one’s testimony must be re-evaluated. Internet search engines like Google provide instant access to the original sources, causing many to lose faith in Mormonism.

**Gospel Topics**

It appears that the LDS Church is now embarking on a project to provide answers to these issues on its official web page, under the heading “Gospel Topics.”8 On January 17, 2014, the Provo Daily Herald reported:

Over the past few months, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has released more complete and detailed information on **doctrinal beliefs, practices and historical events** of the church than at any other time in its history. **Blacks and the priesthood, polygamy and the translation of The Book of Mormon** are topics discussed in recent months. It is all part of a special [Gospel] Topics Project by the church to help members, media and others have a more defined and **complete understanding** of the church and its beliefs. . . . “Some of our members are surprised by our history,” [Church historian Elder Steven E.] Snow said. “We want them to go to a place with **accuracy.**”9

While Mr. Snow indicates that these new articles will provide the members with accurate information, we found them to be somewhat superficial, admitting a few problems but generally skimming over the more troubling aspects.

**Book of Mormon**

Two new articles have been posted on Gospel Topics relating to the Book of Mormon. The first article, “Book of Mormon Translation,” deals with the translation process. Joseph Smith explained that special instruments resembling large spectacles, called either “interpreters” or the “Urim and Thummim,” were preserved with the ancient plates to aid the future translator in his task.10

The other instrument, which Joseph Smith discovered in the ground years before he retrieved the gold plates, was a **small oval stone, or “seer stone.”** As a young man during the 1820s, Joseph Smith, like others in his day, used a seer stone to look for lost objects and **buried treasure.** As Joseph grew to understand his prophetic calling, he learned that he could use this stone for the higher purpose of translating scripture.11

Missing from the article is a description of how the “seer stone” was used. Those who witnessed the process described how Smith would put the stone in his hat, pulling it close to his face, and then as the words appeared on the stone he would read them to his scribe, while the plates were either covered by a cloth or hidden in the woods.12 Evidently, Smith didn’t even look at the ancient plates to accomplish his translation.

**Why would God carefully preserve the plates and the divine “interpreters,” mentioned in the Book of Mormon, as a translation tool, when a magic stone found in a neighbors well, and then placed in a hat, worked just as well?**13

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8 “Gospel Topics,” www.lds.org
10 Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History 1:35.
11 “Book of Mormon Translation,” www.lds.org
12 Salt Lake City Messenger (November 2011), no. 117.
13 Salt Lake City Messenger (October 2013), no. 121.
The other article, “Book of Mormon and DNA Studies,” was equally misleading. DNA studies show that the Native Americans descend from tribes in Siberia, and are not Semitic. Yet, since the days of Joseph Smith the leaders of the LDS Church have repeatedly stated that the Native Americans are the descendents of the Book of Mormon people, Hebrews who migrated to the Americas at approximately 600 BC.

**Race and the Priesthood**

The article “Race and the Priesthood” attempts to define the age-old ban on blacks from the LDS priesthood as merely a misdirected “practice” without addressing the fundamental teachings in LDS scripture that gave rise to it. In tracing the history of this ban the article points the finger at Brigham Young (the second president of the LDS Church) while exonerating Joseph Smith, implying that Smith must not have had any such racist intentions since he ordained a few black men to the priesthood. However, the article conveniently fails to explain just how limited their priesthood ordinations were since those same black men were not allowed to participate in the temple endowment ceremony in Nauvoo, Illinois. Without those rituals these men would not be eternally sealed to their mates and could not follow the same path as the other LDS men on their eternal progression to godhood.

But whether the ban is said to originate with Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, or any other church leaders, the fundamental basis for it is still rooted in LDS scripture, which is why the church’s stance for decades was to say that it was simply God’s will, as typified by their First Presidency’s 1969 statement:

> Our living prophet, President David O. McKay, has said, “The seeming discrimination by the Church toward the Negro is not something which originated with man; but goes back into the beginning with God . . .”

If the priesthood ban did not come from God but was merely a misguided practice of Brigham Young and his successors, why was a revelation from God needed to officially end the ban in 1978?

**Plural Marriage and Families in Early Utah**

The LDS article “Plural Marriage and Families in Early Utah” deals with the 1890 Manifesto, in which the church promised the U.S. government that it would no longer condone the practice of plural marriage among its members. The article concedes that there were still some plural marriages performed after the Manifesto but from this brief acknowledgment readers can hardly appreciate just how complex and prevalent the practice continued to be.

Historian B. Carmon Hardy lists the names of 220 LDS men, including apostles, stake presidents and bishops, who took plural wives after the Manifesto. For example, Hardy noted that some of these marriages were performed by LDS apostles: “Apostles John Henry Smith and John W. Taylor sealed several couples in polygamy during a trip through Arizona in the late 1890’s.” All of which shows a willful disobedience on the part of the LDS Church toward the United States government.

Another one of their recent posts, “Becoming Like God,” will be discussed in a later issue of our *Messenger*. While each of these topics deserves a fuller treatment, due to space, we will focus on their article relating to Joseph Smith’s 1820 vision.

**First Vision Accounts**

Joseph Smith’s First Vision was emphasized as the foundation of the LDS Church by President Gordon B. Hinckley at the October 1998 Conference of the LDS Church:

> “Our entire case as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints rests on the validity of this glorious First Vision. . . . Nothing on which we base our doctrine, nothing we teach, nothing we live by is of greater importance than this initial declaration. I submit that if Joseph Smith talked with God the Father and His Beloved Son, then all else of which he spoke is true. This is the hinge on which turns the gate that leads to the path of salvation and eternal life.” (*The Ensign*, November 1998, pp. 70-71)

Given the importance the LDS Church places on Smith’s First Vision, the new LDS article, “Joseph Smith’s First Vision Accounts,” is certainly a welcome step toward full disclosure. The article provides links to the major documents relating to Smith’s vision.

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14 “Book of Mormon and DNA Studies,” www.lds.org
15 Simon Southerton, *Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA, and the Mormon Church*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004); *Salt Lake City Messenger* (November 2004), no. 103, online at utlm.org
16 “Racial Statements,” online at utlm.org
17 “First Presidency Statement,” www.blacklds.org
18 For a more detailed response to this topic, see the article “Blacks and the Priesthood” produced by the Institute for Religious Research online at www.mit.irr.org; also *Salt Lake City Messenger* (April 2012), no. 118.
20 *Solemn Covenant: Appendix II*; also *Salt Lake City Messenger* (January 1988), no. 66, online at utlm.org
21 “First Vision Accounts,” www.lds.org
However, upon reading the various accounts one is faced with a number of inconsistencies.

The LDS article states, “Joseph Smith testified repeatedly that he experienced a remarkable vision of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.” Granted, he repeatedly spoke of visions, but not necessarily of the Father and Son. As we will show in this article, the story evolved over the years.

Part of the LDS canon is the “Joseph Smith—History,” located at the back of the Pearl of Great Price. This section includes Joseph Smith’s first published account of a vision he claimed to have had in 1820. This account was composed in 1838, then printed in the Times and Seasons, a Mormon newspaper, in 1842, and finally canonized in 1880 as part of the Pearl of Great Price.

In it Smith related that when he was fourteen there was a revival in his neighborhood causing “an unusual excitement on the subject of religion. It commenced with the Methodists, but soon became general among all the sects in that region . . . and great multitudes united themselves to the different religious parties.” Smith went on to relate that due to this revival his mother, sister and two brothers joined the Presbyterians, while he favored the Methodists. “My mind at times was greatly excited, the cry and tumult were so great and incessant. The Presbyterians were most decided against the Baptists and Methodists . . .”

Consequently, in the spring of 1820 he went into the woods to seek God’s direction on which church to join. When he knelt to pray, “I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me,” his tongue was bound, he was overcome by “thick darkness” and feared for his life. Then “a pillar of light” appeared over his head, expelling the darkness, and two beings, “whose brightness and glory defy all description,” appeared above his head. “One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—This is My Beloved Son, Hear Him!” After composing himself, Smith asked the personages which of all the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong)—and which I should join. I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.22

When young Smith returned home he said to his mother, “I have learned for myself that Presbyterianism is not true.” A few days later he related his experience to the local Methodist minister, who berated him for making such a claim. Smith claimed that he shared his experience with others, which “excited a great deal of prejudice against me among professors of religion, and was the cause of great persecution, which continued to increase; . . . all united to persecute me. . . . However, it was nevertheless a fact that I had beheld a vision . . .”23

Yet history does not seem to support Smith’s story.

### Challenging the First Vision

Fawn Brodie, writing in 1945, pointed out that there were no contemporary accounts of Smith’s 1820 vision until Orson Pratt published his pamphlet “Remarkable Visions” in 1840.24 LDS historian James B. Allen frankly admitted that the story of the First Vision “was not given general circulation in the 1830’s.” Dr. Allen also admitted that “none of the available contemporary writings about Joseph Smith in the 1830’s, none of the publications of the Church in that decade, . . . mentions the story of the first vision. . . .” Dr. Allen went on to state that in the 1830’s “the general membership of the Church knew little, if anything, about it.”25

While there were a few mentions of the First Vision in literature during Brigham Young’s lifetime, they seem to have had little impact on how the Mormons presented their message. Other than one article by Orson Pratt in 1849, they did not appeal to this 1820 experience to establish the LDS doctrine of God and Jesus being totally separate deities with physical bodies until after 1880.

Research regarding Smith’s visions entered a new era in 1965 when Paul Cheesman finished his BYU Master’s thesis, An Analysis of the Accounts Relating Joseph Smith’s Early Visions, which contained the long suppressed 1832 account of Smith’s First Vision, wherein only Christ appears. We then published this account in our booklet, Joseph Smith’s Strange Account

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22 Joseph Smith—History 1, Pearl of Great Price, LDS Church 2013.

23 Joseph Smith—History 1:20-25


of the First Vision. Another important challenge to the First Vision story came in 1967 when Rev. Wesley P. Walters published his booklet “New Light on Mormon Origins From the Palmyra, N.Y. Revival” in which he challenged Smith’s story regarding a revival in Smith’s neighborhood in 1820.26 Beginning in the 1960’s the church has occasionally published articles trying to correlate the various First Vision accounts, however, the average Mormon seems to have remained uninformed on the issue.

While the new Gospel Topics article “First Vision Accounts”27 does reference Joseph Smith’s various narratives of the event, it glosses over the contradictions. The article states, “Joseph shared and documented the First Vision, as it came to be known, on multiple occasions.” However, this might leave the reader with the impression that it was an oft told story. Actually, while Joseph Smith had mentioned the vision on a few occasions, the first published account was not until 1840, twenty years after the event, by LDS Apostle Orson Pratt, in a pamphlet published in Scotland.28 The next published account was one written by Joseph Smith and printed in the LDS newspaper Times and Seasons in 1842. This account would later be canonized in the Pearl of Great Price. With only two published accounts by 1842, most Mormons would not have been familiar with the story.

Contradictions

A few basic contradictions among the accounts include the following: According to the 1832 account Smith had already concluded that all churches were wrong before entering the grove to pray, but the official account claims it is the heavenly visitors who first inform him of that. Also it does not mention a demonic presence at the start of the experience, yet later accounts do. In the 1832 account only Jesus was said to have appeared, but in later versions it was either angels or the Father and Son. The early accounts mention Smith was seeking forgiveness for his sins, whereas later accounts stress his desire to know which Christian denomination was accepted by God. According to various accounts Smith had his First Vision in 1820, 1821, or 1823. Additionally, in the official account Smith claimed that the neighborhood revival occurred in 1820, while historical records indicate a revival date between 1824-1825.

Most of the accounts of the First Vision prior to 1875 described the appearance of either one or more angels, but rarely God and Jesus.29

President Gordon B. Hinckley declared that the First Vision was the greatest revelation of God that man has ever experienced:

I hope with all my heart that each member of this Church will read the story of the Prophet Joseph Smith, read the story of the First Vision . . . cultivate within your hearts a testimony of the truth of that marvelous experience, when the Father and the Son appeared to the boy Joseph. There’s no other event in all recorded history that compares with it, not even at the baptism of the Savior. . . . He had an understanding of the Father and the Son that no other man had really ever experienced.30

However, if this vision really was so fundamental to Joseph Smith’s understanding of the nature and identity of God as a physical being one wonders why he did not use it as the basis for promoting such a revolutionary theology, a theology that flew in the face of the Bible and centuries of established Christian doctrine.

Indeed, when Smith gave his clearest teaching on the nature of God in his famous 1844 sermon (known as the King Follett Discourse), in which he refuted the orthodox belief of God as a spirit, and emphatically taught that God has a physical body of flesh and bone, he did not appeal to his First Vision as the source of this knowledge.31

Evolving First Vision Story

Below is a timeline analyzing the evolving LDS concept of God and the First Vision.

1820 — While Smith gave this date to his First Vision story years after the event, there is no contemporary documentation that Joseph Smith told anyone of a vision that year. Also, there is no record of a revival involving the Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians, as described

26 This research was later expanded in Inventing Mormonism: Tradition and the Historical Record, by H. Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters, (Salt Lake City: Smith Research Associates, 1994), chapter two. H. Michael Marquardt has now expanded this research under the title The Rise of Mormonism: 1816-1844.
27 “First Vision Accounts,” www.lds.org
28 Orson Pratt, An Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions, (Scotland, 1840); online at www.signaturebookslibrary.org
29 “First Vision,” www.utlm.org
31 The King Follett sermon is reproduced on the official LDS web site, www.lds.org; also in The Ensign, (April and May 1971), online at www.lds.org

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in Smith’s 1842 account published in the *Pearl of Great Price*. According to the records of those churches, each of them showed either losses or only modest gains of a handful of people, not the massive numbers expected from a revival.32

1822 — Joseph Smith found a magical stone while digging a well, which he later used in both money-digging and translating the Book of Mormon.

1823 — Allegedly, an angel appeared in Joseph’s bedroom on September 21, 1823, to tell him of an ancient record engraved on metal plates and buried in a nearby hill, recounting God’s dealings with the forefathers of the Native Americans. He was not yet allowed to retrieve the plates, but was to meet the angel each year on September 22nd until God saw fit to deliver the plates into Smith’s hands for translation. There are no contemporary accounts of Smith telling people of this vision. It would be several years before anyone mentions this event.

Two months later Joseph’s brother Alvin died a tragic death. The date of Alvin’s death becomes important in establishing the date of the revival that Smith said led to his prayer in the woods close to his home.

1824-25 — A large revival took place in the Palmyra area involving the Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists. This revival, rather than one Smith claimed to have occurred in 1820, seems to fit the description given by Smith in his 1842 account. One of the participants at the revival was Mr. Lane of the Methodist Church, who came to the area in 1824 but was not there in 1820.33 Records show that approximately 300 people joined the three churches as a result of the revival. Joseph’s mother, two brothers and sister joined the Presbyterians at this time.34 Joseph’s mother, Lucy Smith, later wrote that the large revival happened after Alvin’s death. Smith’s father would not attend the revival because one of the ministers had earlier spoken at Alvin’s funeral and had inferred that Alvin was in hell since he had never been baptized.

Writing in 1851, Orsamus Turner, a former resident of Palmyra, New York, recollected that Joseph had caught “a spark of Methodism in the camp meeting, away down in the woods, on the Vienna road, he was a very passable exhorter in evening meetings.”35 An exhorter would have addressed the people at the meeting after the preacher had finished his message, giving further encouragement to follow the minister’s instruction.

Supposedly Smith would have met the angel again in September of 1825, but was still not able to recover the plates.

Shortly after the annual visit from the angel, Joseph and his father left Manchester, New York, and traveled across the state to Harmony, Pennsylvania, to work for Josiah Stowell, as he searched for a lost silver mine.36 Joseph is often portrayed as merely being a laborer, hired to help dig for the treasure. However, Martin Harris, one of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, stated that Smith was hired due to his special powers:

Joseph had had this stone for some time. There was a company there in that neighborhood, who were digging for money supposed to have been hidden by the ancients. Of this company were old Mr. Stowell—I think his name was Josiah—also old Mr. Beman, also Samuel Lawrence, George Proper, Joseph Smith, jr., and his father, and his brother Hiram [Hyrum] Smith. They dug for money in Palmyra, Manchester, also in Pennsylvania, and other places. When Joseph found this stone, there was a company digging in Harmony, Pa., and they took Joseph to look in the stone for them, and he did so for a while, and then he told them the enchantment was so strong that he could not see, and they gave it up. There he became acquainted with his future wife, the daughter of old Mr. Isaac Hale, where he boarded. He afterwards returned to Pennsylvania again, and married his wife, taking her off to old Mr. Stowel’s, because her people would not consent to the marriage. She was of age, Joseph was not.37

Lucy Smith, Joseph Smith’s mother, also wrote that Stowell sought out Joseph specifically “on account of having heard that he possessed certain keys, by which he could discern things invisible to the natural eye.”38 Thus we see that Stowell was actually hiring Smith for his magical powers. In anticipation of finding a treasure, the Smiths signed an agreement with several other men to divide the spoils, each to receive a percentage of the treasure. While boarding with Isaac Hale, one of the men named in the treasure agreement, Smith met his future wife, Emma Hale, Isaac’s daughter.39

1826 — In March Joseph Smith, the “glass looker,” was arrested in Bainbridge, New York, and charged with

being “a disorderly person and an impostor.” Wesley Walters and Michael Marquardt observed:

While Joseph Smith was working for Josiah Stowell, he was brought before a court on charges sworn against him by a nephew of Josiah Stowell, Peter G. Bridgman (or Bridgeman). Apparently Bridgman became concerned that his uncle’s money was being spent in the pursuit of elusive treasure.

Smith’s defense was that he was not an impostor, but truly had a gift to look at his stone in his hat and discern the location of buried treasure, “but of late had pretty much given it up on account its injuring his health, especially his eyes—made them sore.” After spending two nights in custody and appearing before the judge, he was evidently allowed to escape.

Smith may have had his money-digging adventures in mind when he later wrote in his history about his youth:

I was left to all kinds of temptations, and mingling with all kinds of society, I frequently fell into many foolish errors and displayed the weakness of youth and the corruption of human nature, which I am sorry to say led me into divers temptations, to the gratification of many appetites offensive in the sight of God.

1827 — In January Joseph eloped with Emma Hale. Isaac Hale, Emma’s father, had objected to Joseph courting his daughter due to his lack of a respectable job and his treasure seeking. Even though Mr. Hale had earlier been involved in money-digging, he had become disillusioned with the project. After Smith married his daughter, Mr. Hale stated that Joseph promised him “that he had given up what he called ‘glass looking’ and that he expected to work hard for a living.” It was only after Joseph and Emma moved to Hale’s property that he “was informed that at such a place in a certain hill, in an iron box, were some gold plates with curious engravings, which he must get and translate, and write a book... In all this narrative, there was not one word about “visions of God,” or of angels, or heavenly revelations. All his [Joseph Smith’s] information was by that dream, and that bleeding ghost. The heavenly visions and messages of angels, etc., contained in Mormon books, were after-thoughts, revised to order.

In September Joseph was finally able to take the ancient plates home and began his translation.

1830 — The Book of Mormon was published in March of 1830, having been financed by Martin Harris, one of the three witnesses to the book. Smith’s new scripture does not contain any teaching that God the Father has a physical body, only the Son.

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40 Wesley P. Walters, Joseph Smith’s Bainbridge, N.Y. Court Trials & From the Occult to Cult With Joseph Smith, Jr. (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1977).
41 Marquardt and Walters, Inventing Mormonism, p. 70.
42 Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Joseph Smith and Money-Digging, (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1970), p. 21
46 Wesley P. Walters, “The Mormon Prophet Attempts to Join the Methodist,” online at www.utlm.org
47 The Amboy Journal, (April 30, 1879); also Early Mormon Documents, vol. 4, pp. 303-305.
Shortly after the publication of the Book of Mormon, Smith formed the Church of Christ, then in 1834 it was renamed the Church of the Latter-day Saints, and in 1838 it was given its current name, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Evidence that the early Mormon teachings on the godhead were fairly typical of the day can be seen in the testimony of the three witnesses, at the front of the Book of Mormon: “And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God.”

This same concept is repeated in the text of the Book of Mormon:

2 Nephi 31:21—And now, behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end.

Mormon 7:7 speaks of those in heaven singing endless praise “unto the Father, and unto the Son, and unto the Holy Ghost, which are one God.”

In 3 Nephi 11:27 the resurrected Jesus instructs the Nephites “verily I say unto you, that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one; and I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one.”

Contrary to current LDS teachings on the Godhead, the Father and Son are described as the same person. The title page of the Book of Mormon reads: “to the Father and Son are described as the same person. The title page of the Book of Mormon reads: “to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS IS THE CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD, manifesting himself unto all nations.”

In Ether 3:14 we read: “Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son.”

In Mosiah 15:1-3 we read that

God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people. And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son—The Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son. And they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth.

The Book of Mormon also teaches that God is a spirit and never mentions that the Father has a physical body. In Alma 18:28 Ammon instructs the king that the “Great Spirit” is “God.” Later in the story a man named Aaron informs another king of the “Great Spirit” who is “God” (Alma 22:8-11).

Thus we see that the doctrine of God in the Book of Mormon contradicts Joseph Smith’s teaching that the Father has a body of flesh and bone and is totally separate from the Son.

Towards the end of 1830 Joseph Smith began working on his Inspired Revision of the Bible and changed verses to make the Father and Son one. For instance, Luke 10:22 of the King James version states “no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.” However, Smith changed this to read:

... no man knoweth that the Son is the Father, and the Father is the Son, but him to whom the Son will reveal it. (Luke 10:23)

This hardly seems like a change one would make if ten years earlier the Father and Son had appeared to Smith as two separate individuals.

1831 — Lucy Smith, Joseph’s mother, wrote to her brother Solomon Mack, Jr., about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the establishing of the true church, but made no mention of God appearing to her son in 1820. Instead, she began Joseph’s story with the angel telling of the hidden record:

He [God] has now commenced this work. he hath sent forth a revelation in these last days, & this revelation is called the book of Mormon, . . . Perhaps you will enquire how this revelation come forth. it has been hid up in the earth four=teen hundred years, & was placed there by Moro[ni] one of the Nephites; it was engraven upon plates which have the appearance of gold . . . Joseph after repenting of his sins and humbling himself before God was visited by an holy Angel whose countenance was as lightning and whose garments were white above all whiteness and gave unto him commandments which inspired him from on high. and gave unto him by the means of which was before prepared that he should translate his book . . .

That same year Alexander Campbell, the famous preacher of the Restoration Movement, printed a criticism of Joseph Smith and his Book of Mormon, but made no mention of Smith claiming an appearance of God to start his work.

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51 “An analysis of the book of Mormon with an examination of its internal and external evidences, and a refutation of its pretenses to divine authority,” by Alexander Campbell, the Millennial Harbinger: Bethany, Virginia February 7th, 1831: “Numerous have been the imposters among christians since the great apostacy began; . . . Since the Millennium and the evils of sectarianism have been the
1832 — Smith started working on the first draft of his history in 1832.\textsuperscript{52} In his handwritten account he related that he was fifteen (in his “sixteenth year”) when he had his first vision and that he had already concluded that all the churches were wrong:

\begin{quote}
... which led me to searching the scriptures... thus from the age of twelve years to fifteen I pondered many things in my heart... my mind become exceedingly distressed for I become convict of my sins and by searching the scriptures I found that mand <mankind> did not come unto the Lord but that they had apostatised from the true and living faith and there was no society or denomination that built upon the gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the new testament... 
\end{quote}

Yet this contradicts his 1842 account, where he said that prior to his vision “it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong.”\textsuperscript{53}

Also absent from the 1832 account is any admonition to not join any existing church. He then discussed the appearance of Christ, but nothing was said about God the Father:

\begin{quote}
... while in <the> attitude of calling upon the Lord <in the 16th year of my age> a pillar of fire light above the brightness of the sun at noon day come down from above and rested upon me and I was filled with the spirit of god and the <Lord> opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord and he spake unto me saying Joseph <my son> thy sins are forgiven thee. go thy <way> walk in my statutes and keep my commandments behold I am the Lord of glory I was crucified for the world that all those who believe on my name may have Eternal life... 
\end{quote}

If this vision happened when Smith was 15 it would place the vision in the Spring of 1821, not a year earlier, since he wouldn’t have turned 15 until December of 1820.

This account is silent about the presence of a demonic force just prior to the vision. The sinister element doesn’t enter the story until 1835 and is expanded in the official 1842 account:

I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God. I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction.

But, exerting all my powers to call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me, and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction... I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound.\textsuperscript{55}

Another problem with his 1842 version, is that he claimed he experienced great persecution for telling people of his first vision:

I soon found, however, that my telling the story had excited a great deal of prejudice against me among professors of religion, and was the cause of great persecution, men of high standing would take notice sufficient to excite the public mind against me, and create a bitter persecution; and this was common among all the sects— all united to persecute me.\textsuperscript{56}

Yet there is no evidence that anyone had heard of this experience until after he started his church in 1830. Since others had related similar heavenly visits it is doubtful that Smith’s vision described in this 1832 account would have caused much of a stir.

For instance, in 1816 a minister by the name of Elias Smith (no relation to Joseph Smith) recounted his conversion to Christianity. Notice how similar it is to Joseph Smith’s first account:

\begin{quote}
... I went into the woods... a light appeared from heaven... My mind seemed to rise in that light to the throne of God and the Lamb... The Lamb once slain appeared to my understanding, and while viewing him, I felt such love to him as I never felt to any thing earthly... It is not possible for me to tell how long I remained in that situation... 
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{55} Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History 1:15-17.
\textsuperscript{56} Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History 1:22.
Alexander Campbell wrote the following on March 1, 1824, concerning a “revival in the state of New York”:

Enthusiasm flourishes. . . . This man was regenerated when asleep, by a vision of the night. That man heard a voice in the woods, saying, “Thy sins be forgiven thee.” A third saw his Savior descending to the tops of the trees at noon day.58

Asa Wild claimed to have a revelation which is very similar to the story Joseph Smith published in 1842. It was printed in the Wayne Sentinel (the paper to which Joseph Smith’s family apparently subscribed) on October 22, 1823:

It seemed as if my mind . . . was struck motionless, as well as into nothing, before the awful and glorious majesty of the Great Jehovah. He then spake . . . He also told me, that every denomination of professing christians had become extremely corrupt. . . .59

Joseph Smith’s 1832 revelation, Doctrine and Covenants 84:20-22, stated that “without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood” no one can “see the face of God.” According to this revelation Smith could not have seen God in 1820 since he made no claim to priesthood at that time.

1833 — In an 1833 interview, Willard Chase, the man who hired the Smith’s to dig a well in 1822, said he had known the Smiths since 1820. “At that time, they were engaged in the money digging business, which they followed until the latter part of season of 1827.” Mr. Chase went on to state that in 1827 Joseph Smith, Sen. told him about the angel appearing to young Joseph several years earlier to tell him of the plates. Yet Chase makes no mention of Smith claiming a vision of God and Jesus in 1820.60

Joseph Smith’s revelations were printed in A Book of Commandments for the Government of the Church of Christ. However, there is no material dealing with Smith’s claim of an 1820 vision.

1834 — E. D. Howe’s exposé, Mormonism Unvailed, was published toward the end of 1834, which contained statements by various neighbors and acquaintances of the Smiths, yet it is silent about Joseph claiming a vision in 1820. Mr. Howe did not attack Smith on a claim of seeing God and Jesus in 1820, but on Smith’s money-digging and his new scripture, the Book of Mormon.

That same year Oliver Cowdery, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, with the help of Joseph Smith, published the first history of Mormonism in the LDS paper Messenger and Advocate, starting in 1834 and continuing into 1835.61

However, Cowdery did not mention any vision in 1820, but began Smith’s story with an account of a revival in the Palmyra area when Smith was in his 15th year (age 14).62 But further on Cowdery corrected Smith’s age, stating Smith would have been in his 17th year (16) not his 15th year (14) and placed both the revival and the angel vision in 1823.63

According to Cowdery’s account, following the 1823 religious excitement Smith prayed to know “if a Supreme being did exist, to have an assurance that he was accepted of him.” Smith’s prayer was answered on September 21, 1823, when a “messenger” appeared to him in his bedroom “to deliver a special message, and to witness to him that his sins were forgiven, and that his prayers were heard.”64

If Smith had already seen God and Jesus in 1820 why would he later pray in 1823 to know if God existed? And why wouldn’t Oliver Cowdery start with Smith’s earlier 1820 vision if Smith often shared the story?

It should also be remembered that the records during this period of Mormonism show a fairly standard Trinitarian view of the godhead. Their baptismal prayer ended with the phrase “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Ghost.” Their sacrament prayer starts, “O God the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this wine to the souls of all those who drink of it.”65

1835 — A larger compilation of Smith’s revelations was published under the title Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints. The preface states “We deem it to be unnecessary to entertain you with a lengthy preface to the following volume, but merely to say, that it contains in short, the leading items of the religion which we have professed to believe.” Again, there is no mention of an 1820 vision or God having a body of flesh and bone. In fact, it taught just the opposite.

The first part of the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants was the “Lectures on Faith,” which were a series of seven lectures delivered to the elders of the LDS Church in Kirtland, Ohio, to establish them in correct doctrine. Yet these lessons fail to present the view of God currently held by the LDS Church. These lectures were printed in every edition of the Doctrine and Covenants until 1921.

59 Wayne Sentinel, Palmyra, New York, (October 22, 1823).
61 Messenger and Advocate, vol. 1, (Kirtland, OH, 1834-1835).
62 Messenger and Advocate, vol. 1, (December 1834), p. 42
63 Ibid., p. 78.
64 Messenger and Advocate, vol. 1, p. 78.
65 Book of Commandments, (1833), pp. 53-54.
Lecture five made the distinction that the Father is “a personage of spirit” while the Son is “a personage of tabernacle.” This would contradict the current LDS teaching that God the Father has a physical “tabernacle” as well as Jesus. The lecture goes on to explain that there are two personages in the godhead, with the Holy Ghost being the mind of the two.

In light of these lessons it is obvious that Joseph Smith was not teaching people that he saw God the Father in 1820 as a distinct being of flesh and bone.

According to Joseph Smith’s journal, on November 9, 1835, he was visited by “Joshua the Jewish minister,” later identified as Robert Matthias, to whom Smith recounted some of his early life:

being wrought up in my mind, respecting the subject of religion and looking at the different systems taught the children of men . . . I retired to the silent grove and bowed down before the Lord, . . . I made a fruitless attempt to pray, but could not, the noise of walking seemed to draw nearer, I sprang up on my feet, . . . I kneeled again my mouth was opened . . . and I called on the Lord in mighty prayer . . . a personage appeared in the midst of the pillar of flame which was spread all around, and yet nothing consumed, another personage soon appeared like unto the first, he said unto me thy sins are forgiven thee, he testified unto me that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; <and I saw many angels in this vision> I was about 14 years old when I received this first communication; When I was about 17 years old I saw another vision of angels in the night . . .

If the being had actually been Jesus one would not expect him to give testimony of himself. And since this was followed by the claim of seeing “many angels” it appears that Smith was not identifying the being as Jesus, but as an angel.

Several days later, on November 14, 1835, Smith gave another account of his early life to Erastus Holmes:

I commenced and gave him a brief relation of my experience while in my juvenile years, say from 6 years old up to the time I received the first visitation of Angels which was when I was about 14 years old and also the visitations that I received afterward, concerning the book of Mormon, . . .

This November 14th account of angels reinforces the assessment of the November 9th account as being angels as well, not God and Christ.

1837 — At this point Joseph Smith seems to be making a greater distinction between the Father and Son. Thus in the second edition of the Book of Mormon the phrase “the son of” was added to several verses to distinguish between the Father and Son. One of the most significant changes was made in 1 Nephi 13:40 where it originally stated that the purpose of the Nephite record was to make known that “the Lamb of God is the Eternal Father and the Savior” (Book of Mormon, 1830 edition, page 32). But in 1837 it was changed to read “the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior” (Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 13:40).

Another important change was made in 1 Nephi 11:18. In the 1830 edition, page 25, it read “Behold, the virgin which thou seest, is the mother of God, after the manner of the flesh.” In modern editions it has been changed to read, “Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh.”

1838 — Joseph Smith commenced dictating a new account of his history, which would be printed in the 1842 LDS newspaper, the Times and Seasons, and would later become the official account printed in the Pearl of Great Price.

In this account we see the purpose of the vision shift from seeking forgiveness of sins to determining which church to join. Smith mentions “an unusual excitement on the subject of religion” which soon spread to “all the sects in the region of country.” After hearing the competing arguments Joseph concluded that since each group understood the Bible differently his only recourse was to seek a direct answer from God. When the two heavenly beings appeared Smith inquired “which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join.” However, this account mentions nothing about seeking a forgiveness of sins, as stated in earlier versions.

While this First Vision account is similar to the one given in 1835 to Robert Matthias, Smith now claims that the first personage introduced the second personage with the words “This is My Beloved Son, Hear Him!” This seems to mark the point at which Smith switched from claiming the visit of angels to an appearance of the Father and Son. But even in this account he is not making the point that they have physical bodies.

66 Doctrine and Covenants, (1835), Lectures on Faith, Section V, p. 53.
67 Ibid., pp. 53, 55.
68 Dean C. Jessee, ed. Personal Writings of Joseph Smith, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), pp. 104-105. Words in brackets indicate the words were written above the line.
69 Jessee, Personal Writings, pp. 112-113.

Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History 1:12-19.

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1840 — LDS apostle Orson Pratt published *An Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions* in Scotland. He related that when Smith was “about fourteen or fifteen years old” he was praying in the woods when “immediately his mind was caught away, from the natural objects with which he was surrounded; and he was enwrapped in a heavenly vision, and saw two glorious personages who exactly resembled each other.” Smith was then given the assurance that his sins were forgiven and instructed to not join any of the existing churches.

It is very similar to Smith’s 1842 account. While the vision implies that the heavenly messengers were the Father and Son, they were not specifically named. Also, seeing them in a “vision” does not demand a literal understanding that they were two physical beings standing before him.

1841 — When Joseph’s younger brother, William, was interviewed about the beginnings of Mormonism by James Murdock in 1841, he started with the angel appearing in 1823. Murdock gave this summary:

> In the year 1816 or 1817, the whole [Smith] family removed to the State of New York . . . They were in rather low circumstances, and followed farming. About the year 1823, there was a revival of religion in that region, and Joseph was one of several hopeful converts . . . Joseph hesitated between the different denominations. While his mind was perplexed with this subject, he prayed for divine direction; and afterwards was awaked one night by an extraordinary vision. The glory of the Lord filled the chamber with a dazzling light, and a glorious angel appeared to him, conversed with him, and told him that he was a chosen vessel unto the Lord to make known true religion.

1842 — In the March 1, 1842, issue of the *Times and Seasons* Joseph Smith printed his letter to John Wentworth, editor of the *Chicago Democrat*, in which he recounted his vision of “two glorious personages.”

A similar letter (with some revisions) was published by Daniel Rupp in 1844 in a book called *An Original History of the Religious Denominations at Present Existing in the United States*.

In the next issue of the *Times and Seasons* Joseph Smith published his official account of his early life, which would eventually be canonized in LDS scriptures.

According to this account, when he was in his 15th year (age 14) his mother, sister, and two brothers joined the Presbyterian Church due to a revival in the neighborhood. The revival started with the Methodists and soon spread to the Presbyterians and Baptists.

Joseph went into the grove to ask God which church to join “for at this time it had never entered my heart that all were wrong.” Two beings appeared. One spoke, pointed to the other being and said “This is my beloved Son, hear him.”

He was told to join none of the churches “for they were all wrong . . . all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; . . .”

This is also the first that we read of him being persecuted for telling people of his first vision. Yet the early critics of Joseph Smith, such as E. D. Howe and Alexander Campbell, fail to mention his claim of an 1820 vision.

While this account mentions the appearance of God and Jesus, there is no evidence that people understood this in a literal sense. Without any instruction to the contrary, people would not have understood this account to mean that God had a physical body. In light of the previous twelve years of Smith teaching God is a spirit, they would have presumably understood this account as a vision, not an actual physical appearance of God and Jesus.

Interestingly, that same issue of the paper contained part of the Book of Abraham, where Smith introduced a plurality of gods into the Genesis creation account:

> And then the Lord said, let us go down; and they went down at the beginning, and they organized and formed, (that is, the Gods,) the heavens and the earth. . . And they said, the Gods, let there be light, and there was light.

Six months later, in the September 15, 1842, issue of the *Times and Seasons*, Joseph Smith wrote about his view of the godhead:

> We believe in three Gods . . . no odds whether there be two, three, or “Gods many.” *The Father, and the Son are persons of Tabernacle;* and the Holy Ghost a spirit.

This view is in conflict with the earlier 1835 teaching in the *Lectures on Faith* where the Father is described as a personage of spirit, while the Son is a personage of tabernacle. From this point on Smith paints a much clearer picture of the Father being a totally separate god from Jesus.

1843 — On April 2nd Smith instructed the Mormons in Ramus, Illinois: “The *Father has a body of flesh*”
and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit" [D&C sec. 130:22].

If Joseph Smith had been teaching from the founding of the LDS Church that God had a physical body, why was there a need for this revelation?

An example of how Mormons understood the vision is seen in Levi Richards’ journal for June 11, 1843. Richards recorded hearing Smith tell of his first vision, but gives no year for the vision and says nothing about God and Christ appearing:

Pres. J. Smith bore testimony to the same— saying that when he was a youth he began to think about these things but could not find out which of all the sects were right— he went into the grove & enquired of the Lord which of all the sects were right— re received for answer that none of them were right, that they were all wrong, & that the Everlasting covenan[n] it was broken= he said he understoo ood the fulness of the Gospel from beginning to end — & could Teach it & also the order of the priesthood in all its ram ifications= Earth & hell had opposed him & tried to destroy him— but they had not done it= & they <never would>.

1844 — Joseph Smith’s most famous sermon on the nature of God, often referred to as the King Follett Discourse, was delivered at the April 7 LDS General Conference:

God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world in its orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by His power, was to make himself visible,—I say, if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form—like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man; ... it is necessary we should understand the character and being of God and how He came to be so; for I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see. ... He was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ Himself did; ... .

This would have been a logical place to make reference to his own experience of seeing the Father and Son as two separate Gods in 1820, but Smith makes no appeal to his First Vision.

On May 24th, Alexander Neibaur, a German convert to Mormonism, recorded in his journal the following account given by Joseph Smith:

Br Joseph told us the first call he had ... went into the Wood to pray kneelt himself down his tongue was closet cleavet to his roof— could utter not a word, felt easier after a while= saw a fire towards heaven came near & nearer saw a personage in the fire light complexion blue eyes a piece of white cloth drawn over his shoulders his right arm bear after a w[h]ile a other person came to the side of the first Mr Smith then asked must I join the Methodist Church= No= they are not my People, th all have gone astray there is none that doeth good no not one, but this is my Beloved son harken ye him, the fire drew nigher Rested upon the tree enveloped him.

While this account does not give a date for the vision, it does make it clear that the two personages were God and Christ. However, in this account it is the Father who delivers the message, not Jesus.

Two months later, on June 7, the one and only issue of the Nauvoo Expositor was printed by former leaders in the LDS movement. After pleading privately with Smith to give up plural marriage, they now went public with their charges of Smith being a fallen prophet. Besides their objections to plural marriage and political issues, they charged Smith with teaching false doctrine:

Among the many items of false doctrine that are taught the Church, is the doctrine of many Gods, one of the most direful in its effects that has characterized the world for many centuries. We know not what to call it other than blasphemy, for it is most unquestionably, speaking of God in an impious and irreverent manner. It is contended that there are innumerable gods as much above the God that presides over this universe, as he is above us; ... and now, O Lord! shall we set still and be silent, while thy name is thus blasphemed, and thine Honor, power and glory, brought into disrepute? See Isaiah c 43, v 10; 44, 6-8; 45, 5, 6, 21, 22; ... .

Obviously throughout the history of the movement Smith had not been teaching that there was a plurality of gods. Otherwise, his top leaders would have had no reason to raise the issue in the Nauvoo Expositor in 1844.

In response to the Nauvoo Expositor, on June 16, Smith delivered another sermon on the nature of God:

Now, you know that of late some malicious and corrupt men have sprung up and apostatized from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and they...

76 Journal of Levi Richards, (June 11, 1843), online at http://josephsmithpapers.org
78 Journal of Alexander Neibaur, (May 24, 1844), online at http://josephsmithpapers.org
79 Nauvoo Expositor, Nauvoo Illinois, (June 7, 1844); excerpts online at www.utlm.org
declared that the Prophet believes in a **plurality of Gods**, and, lo and behold! we have discovered a very great secret, they cry—"The Prophet says there are many Gods, and this proves that he has fallen." . . I will preach on the plurality of Gods. . . . I **have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage** from God the Father, and the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit: and these three constitute three distinct personages and **three gods**.80

Again, he did not appeal to his experience in the grove to establish this doctrine. In fact, Smith’s teachings through the years do not show that he had always taught God to be a distinct being from Jesus. This seems to be a new teaching in the 1840’s, and not preached in the 1830’s.

Despite Smith’s claims of consistency in the above statement, there is clearly an evolution to his teaching on the nature of the Godhead, which even Mormon scholars recognize. LDS scholar Charles R. Harrell observed:

> In March 1839, Joseph first hinted that there may be more than “one God” (D&C 121:28); however, it wasn’t until 1842 that he specifically referred to the godhead as consisting of three separate beings who were also “three Gods.” He seems to now consider them to be one only in the sense that they “agree as one.” In his last public discourse, given June 16, 1844, Joseph repudiated the trinitarian notion of a three-in-one God. “Men say there is one God—the Fa[the]r, Son & the H.G. are only 1 God—It is a strange God anyhow 3 in one & 1 in 3.” . . 81

Joseph Smith made another interesting point in his June 16, 1844, sermon in which he appealed to Revelation 1:6, which says “And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father” to prove there was a God above our Heavenly Father. Smith separated “God” from the clause “and His Father”:

> the apost[les] have disc[overed]d. that there were Gods above—God was the Fa[the]r of our Ld. J.C.—my object was to preach the Scrip—& preach the doctrine **there being a God above the Fa[the]r** of our Ld. J.C.82

Yet this is in direct contradiction to his change in his Inspired Version of the Bible, written in the early 1830’s, when he still believed in one God. At that time he changed the verse to read “and hath made us kings and priests unto God, his Father.”83 By dropping the “and” and inserting a comma he made the verse clearly state that it is only referring to Heavenly Father. Thus Smith contradicted his own revision of the Bible to prove there is a God above our Heavenly Father.

Harrell also observed:

> Joseph’s teachings regarding the members of the godhead appear to have progressed from essentially a trinitarian three-in-one God with a modalistic flavor, to a godhead consisting of “two personages” united by the indwelling Holy Spirit, to a godhead consisting of “three personages,” and finally to a godhead consisting of “three Gods.”84

One of the troubling aspects of Smith’s evolving First Vision story is the lack of importance given to it in the historical record. As we have already shown, the LDS Church’s current claims of the importance of the First Vision to their understanding of God and Jesus are questionable given how little Smith himself referred to it during his lifetime. LDS scholar James B. Allen observed:

> It is worth noting that Joseph Smith himself never used the First Vision to illustrate his own expanded teachings about God. It appears, in fact, that he seldom referred to it at all, except in private conversation, even after it was published.85

But a further indication of its lack of importance is how much variation occurs between the details of the different accounts, not just the details of Joseph’s age and the revivals of the time but most crucially the identity of the being who was speaking to him in the vision. One would not expect a person to forget whether it was a mere angel or God Almighty when gripped with such a riveting and life-changing experience.

**First Vision References After Smith’s Death**

After Joseph Smith’s death the early church leaders continued to teach a plurality of gods. However, they did not appeal to Joseph Smith’s First Vision to prove the doctrine. When Smith’s earliest vision was mentioned, it was usually associated with an angel, not the Father and Son.

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84 Harrell, “This is My Doctrine,” p. 114.
1845 — The *Latter-Day Saints Millenial Star*, in England, printed an article titled “The Book of Mormon” which included an account of Smith’s First Vision. However, the article places the beginning of Smith’s call to 1823, not 1820:

The late martyred servant of the Lord, Joseph Smith, being much exercised in his mind on the subject of religion, when about the age of seventeen, and religious revivals, as they are termed, being the order of the day; . . . he was induced to retire in secret, and making his supplications unto the Lord, ask him for that wisdom which he had promised to give liberally without upbraiding.

The result of his pleadings before the Lord, was the ministration of an angel of the Lord, communicating unto him what was necessary for him to know, . . .

Even Lucy Smith, Joseph’s mother, did not mention Joseph’s 1820 vision in her manuscript of the family history. The only revival she mentions is the one following Alvin’s death. Evidently, the publisher of her book, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet*, in 1853 inserted the section of Joseph’s 1820 story from the *Times and Seasons*, thus making it appear that Lucy mentions the First Vision. It also makes it appear that there were two revivals, one in 1820 and one following Alvin’s death.

Even though William Smith, Joseph’s younger brother, had earlier told people that Joseph’s First Vision was of an angel in his bedroom, in 1883 he revised his story, noting that Joseph’s vision happened in the woods. However, in both accounts he maintained the event happened in 1823.

In 1822 and 1823, the people in our neighborhood were very much stirred up with regard to religious matters by the preaching of a Mr. Lane, an Elder of the Methodist Church, . . . Joseph, then about seventeen years of age, had become seriously inclined, . . . At length he [Joseph Smith] determined to call upon the Lord until he should get a manifestation from him. He accordingly went out into the woods and falling upon his knees called for a long time upon the Lord for wisdom . . . an angel then appeared to him and conversed with him upon many things. He told him that none of the sects were right; but that if he was faithful in keeping the commandments he should receive, the true way should be made known to him; that his sins were forgiven, etc.

Significantly, the two Smith relatives who would have been in the home during Joseph’s teen years did not show any knowledge of an 1820 vision.

1849 — Writing in the *Millennial Star*, an LDS newspaper published in England, Apostle Orson Pratt seems to be the first to appeal specifically to Smith’s vision to demonstrate that the Father and the Son were two distinct persons:

In the first vision which Joseph Smith received in the spring of the year 1820, he being between fourteen and fifteen years of age,) both the Father and the Son, while he was praying, appeared unto him. . . . Thus we find that the visions both of the ancient and modern prophets agree, and clearly demonstrate the existence of two distinct persons—the Father and the Son.

In spite of Pratt’s statement, most of the leaders continued to refer to the First Vision as one of angels.

1854 — Speaking at LDS General Conference, in Utah, April 6, 1854, Apostle Orson Hyde stated:

Some one may say, “If this work of the last days be true, why did not the Saviour come himself to communicate this intelligence to the world?” Because to the angels was committed the power of reaping the earth, and it was committed to none else. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 6, p. 335)

1855 — LDS President Brigham Young taught on February 18, 1855:

. . . so it was in the advent of this new dispensation. . . . The messenger did not come to an eminent divine. . . . The Lord did not come with the armies of heaven, . . . But He did send His angel to this same obscure person, Joseph Smith jun., who afterwards became a Prophet, Seer, and Revelator, and informed him that he should not join any of the religious sects of the day, . . . (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 2, p. 171)

A few days later Apostle Wilford Woodruff preached:

That same organization and Gospel that Christ died for, and the Apostles spilled their blood to vindicate, is again established in this generation. How did it come? By the ministering of an holy angel from God, . . . The angel taught Joseph Smith those principles which are necessary for the salvation of the world; . . . He told him the Gospel was not among men, and that there was not a true organization of His kingdom in the world, . . . This man to whom the angel appeared obeyed the Gospel; . . . (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 2, pp. 196-197)

86 *Latter-Day Saints Millenial Star*, (August 15, 1845), vol. 6, p. 69.
87 *Early Mormon Documents*, vol. 1, p. 288, note 87.
1857 — LDS Apostle Heber C. Kimball, speaking November 8th, 1857, seemed to be oblivious to any vision where Smith saw God and Christ:

Do you suppose that God in person called upon Joseph Smith, our Prophet? God called upon him; but God did not come himself and call, but he sent Peter to do it. Do you not see? He sent Peter and sent Moroni to Joseph, and told him that he had got the plates. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 6, p. 29)

1860 — John Hyde, a former Mormon, is a good example of the confusion regarding who appeared to Smith. In his book, Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs, page 199, he related: “1820 . . . April . . . He [Joseph] asserts that God the Father and Jesus Christ came to him from the heavens.”

However, on page 240 of his book, he stated “Joseph Smith, born in 1805, sees an angel in 1820, who tells him his sins are forgiven.”

1863 — Apostle John Taylor explained in a sermon March 1, 1863:

How did this state of things called Mormonism originate? We read that an angel came down and revealed himself to Joseph Smith and manifested unto him in vision the true position of the world in a religious point of view. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 10, p. 127)

LDS Apostle George A. Smith, November 15, 1863, preached:

When Joseph Smith was about fourteen or fifteen years old, . . . he went humbly before the Lord and inquired of Him, and the Lord answered his prayer, and revealed to Joseph, by the ministration of angels, the true condition of the religious world. When the holy angel appeared, Joseph inquired which of all these denominations was right and which he should join, and was told they were all wrong. . . . (Journal of Discourses, vol. 12, pp. 333-334)

1864 — One year later, November 15, 1864, Apostle George A. Smith seemed to be describing the vision in a more traditional way:

When the Lord appeared to Joseph Smith and manifested unto him a knowledge pertaining to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the work of the last days, Satan came also with his power . . . He [Joseph] thus describes the incident: “In the spring of 1820, . . . I saw a pillar of light . . . I saw two personages . . . “This is my beloved son, hear him.” . . . just at the time that God was revealing unto his servant Joseph to raise up men to bear testimony of the principles of the Gospel . . . Satan was at work stirring up the hearts of the children of men . . . (Journal of Discourses, vol. 11, pp. 1-2)

1869 — Five years later Apostle Smith again referred to Smith’s First Vision:

He sought the Lord by day and by night, and was enlightened by the vision of an holy angel. When this personage appeared to him, of his first inquiries was, “Which of the denominations of Christians in the vicinity was right?” (Journal of Discourses, June 20, 1869), vol. 13, pp. 77-78

Speaking on December 19, 1869, Orson Pratt taught:

By and by an obscure individual, a young man, rose up, and, in the midst of all Christendom, proclaimed the startling news that God had sent an angel to him; . . . This young man, some four years afterwards, was visited again by a holy angel. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 13, pp. 65-66)

1871 — On March 19 Orson Pratt preached:

He [Joseph] went out to pray, being then a little over fourteen years of age, . . . He saw in this light two glorious personages, one of whom spoke to him, pointing to the other, saying, “This is my beloved Son, hear ye him.” . . . When these persons interrogated him to know what he desired, he answered and said, “Lord show me which is the true church.” He was then informed by one of these personages that there was no true church upon the face of the whole earth; . . . The vision withdrew; the personages attending and the light withdrew. . . . he knew that God had manifested himself to him; . . . (Journal of Discourses, vol. 14, pp. 140-141)

Although Orson Pratt’s sermon on March 19, 1871, could be interpreted as an appearance of God and Jesus, his sermon on December 10 of that year clearly identified the messengers as angels:

Here was Joseph Smith, a boy, . . . he was only between fourteen and fifteen years of age. . . . Would he stand forth and bear testimony that he had seen with his own eyes a messenger of light and glory, and that he heard the words of his mouth as they dropped from his lips and had received a message from the Most High, at that early age? And then . . . to have the finger of scorn pointed at him, . . . “No visions in our day, no angels come in our day, . . .” and still continue to testify, . . . that God had sent his angel from heaven. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 14, p. 262)

Yet in all of these sermons no one appealed to the First Vision to establish that God the Father has a body of flesh and bones.
1880 — Joseph Smith’s 1842 First Vision account was canonized as part of the Pearl of Great Price, thus giving it doctrinal standing in the church. James B. Allen notes that the First Vision gained new importance after 1880 in part because the church needed a new focus after years of legal battles regarding polygamy.

The time was ready — made for the outpouring of a new identity with the founding prophet — new reminders to the Saints of what their heritage really was, and of what Joseph Smith’s testimony really meant to them personally. The First Vision was a natural tool for such a purpose, and a new generation of writers could hardly fail to use it.

Further on in the same article, James Allen commented on the growing importance of the vision in LDS literature:

The vision and its attendant uses quickly began to appear in lesson manuals, augmenting the Mormon awareness of its transcendent importance. In 1899 the Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association used it to demonstrate that it had ushered in the “Dispensation of the Fulness of Times.” The vision was thus replacing the angel in Mormon thought as the implementing factor in the restoration.

At the beginning of the twentieth century the First Vision also took a permanent place in the missionary literature of the church. The Sacred Grove [in New York] was acquired by the church in this period, and pilgrimages to the grove became sacred experiences for many Mormons. By the beginning of the twentieth century, belief in the First Vision was fundamental to the faith of the Latter-day Saints.

**Conclusion**

For the past 100 years the LDS Church has placed paramount importance on the appearance of God and Christ to Joseph Smith in 1820. Speaking in the October 2002 General Conference, President Hinckley declared:

Our whole strength rests on the validity of that [First] vision. It either occurred or it did not occur. If it did not, then this work is a fraud. If it did, then it is the most important and wonderful work under the heavens. I knew a so-called intellectual who said the Church was trapped by its own history. My response was that without that history we have nothing. The truth of that unique, singular, and remarkable event [The First Vision] is the pivotal substance of our faith.

Yet Joseph Smith’s 1820 vision was not the center of the LDS teaching during his lifetime or Brigham Young’s. It is now established that the documents and published records of the 1820’s–1830’s show no knowledge of Smith claiming an appearance of the Father and Son in 1820. While Smith did print one account in 1842, he did not appeal to his vision as proof that God has a body of flesh and bone, an important tenet of LDS theology. It was not until 1880 that the vision took on a major role in the church’s literature.

In recent years LDS scholars have tried to minimize the many inconsistencies among the differing First Vision accounts by emphasizing the core element of Joseph’s having seen SOMETHING in the grove that day. But this misses the important point that if he only saw something then he did not receive specific information on the nature of God.

Gordon B. Hinckley, while serving as an apostle, declared: “Either Joseph talked with the Father and the Son, or he did not. If he did not, we are engaged in blasphemy.”

Yes, if Mormonism is not true its doctrine of God would be a great blasphemy.

Smith not only taught that the Father and Son were two separate deities, he also taught that God at one time was a mortal on another earth, overseen by yet a higher deity. When God was a human he went through the same type of life that we are going through, he suffered death, was resurrected, and after eons arrived at the position of a god himself. Preaching in 1844, Joseph Smith declared:

I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity I will refute that idea, and take away the veil. . . . he was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did. . . . The Scriptures inform us that Jesus said, As the Father hath power in Himself, even so hath the Son power—to do what? Why, what the Father did. The answer is obvious — in a manner to lay down His body and take it up again. Jesus what are you going to do? To lay down my life as my Father did, and take it up again. . . . Here, then, is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God,
the same as all Gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another . . . 94

Joseph Smith’s 1820 vision is obviously a later invention and then back-dated to give a more dramatic start for his prophetic career and to introduce a heretical view of God.

Yet when we turn to the Bible for instruction, we find a very different doctrine of God than the one Smith proclaimed the last year of his life. Bill McKeever, of Mormonism Research Ministry, summed it up this way:

The Mormon doctrine of God is not the same as the historic Christian view. It holds that God and man are essentially of the same species, and that God the Father has a body of flesh and bones. He is not uniquely self-existent, transcendent, or eternal. Neither is he truly the creator of all things, for he is one among potentially billions of Gods, and does not even have the ability to create matter. . . .

To the contrary, God says in Isaiah 43:10, “Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me.” Psalm 90:2 says of him, “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.” This is the God Christians worship. Of him we can say, “Who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen” (Romans 11:34-36).95

The God of the Bible is not the god of Joseph Smith.

94 Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, (Deseret Book, 1977), pp. 345-346. This sermon was also published in the Ensign, April and May 1971; online at www.lds.org

95 Bill McKeever, “God the Father According to Mormonism,” Mormonism Research Ministry, online at www.mrm.org

Gospel Topic Essays: Fixing History?

By Eric Johnson

www.mrm.org

In what appears to be an attempt to deal with several vital historical issues propogated by the LDS Church throughout the years, the Mormon Church has been producing essays since late 2013 under its “Gospel Topics” section of its lds.org website, attempting to reconcile the facts with what had been taught by earlier leaders and church manuals.

The Reaction of Ganesh Cherian

On February 12, 2014, Ganesh Cherian—who is currently serving as a stake high counselor in Wellington, New Zealand—wrote a very honest blog titled “A Former Bishop’s Doctrinal Dilemmas” that expresses his deep concern about the church’s attempt at honesty. We encourage you to read in its entirety: http://www.patheos.com/blogs/kiwimormon/2014/02/a-former-bishops-doctrinal-dilemmas/

In his blog, Cherian—who was a bishop for five and a half years—referred to an October 2013 general conference talk given by Dieter Uchtdorf, a member of the First Presidency. Cherian wrote:

President Uchtdorf gave an impassioned plea to those who have left the church, admitting mistakes in leadership, and promising a place for those who doubt. Since then it feels like the church has changed. While Uchtdorf’s talk seemed extraordinary at the time, in retrospect it feels like it was a preface for that change. Change that is not without its challenges.

Cherian continued:

During this particular lesson one of my fellow high-priests informed us that two friends (a former Bishop, and a Stake President) in England had recently left the church over the ‘Race and the Priesthood’ essay. As dutiful leaders they had instructed their congregations, referring to the ‘the seed of Cain’ explanation for withholding the priesthood from Black members of the church until 1978. This recent ‘clarification’ had apparently undermined their understanding of both revelation and doctrine. Though I haven’t left the church, this shift to more transparency is a challenge for me as well. Not because I don’t welcome these revisions. They seem very fair and thoroughly researched. But like my fellow high priests, I too used these now discarded explanations and doctrines throughout my leadership to teach – and now I’m left to wonder.

He then referred to the four essays mentioned above (and listed with their links below), explaining:

Each is a challenge to the seemingly authoritative version of our history – and the intention is to release more revisions/explanations by April 2014. Drawing on historical evidence and scholarship these essays go further than any previous official publications issued by the church in contradicting those narratives that good members have long repeated as justifications for our more curious doctrines and practices. And naturally, many are baffled.
Pointing out that during the second week of January, Mormons all over the world studied chapter 1 of *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Fielding Smith* that discussed the “First Vision,” Cherian continued:

But after a careful reading of the new source material it would appear that the First Vision account as we have come to know it, was virtually unheard of for the first decade of the Church’s existence. What we now regard as pivotal to our claim to divine mandate was absent for the first members. Leaving many questions over what those founding Mormons actually believed about the nature of the Godhead, and what caused them to join the church?

The changing of history caused this former bishop to be “perplexed.” He writes,

I have repeated stories to my ward to justify particular church practices. I have given the hard line on church policies and doctrines and have held people accountable. As recently as June I reasoned with a friend that polygamy was needed because there were so many more women than men at the time, an argument that the polygamy essay seems now to repudiate.

Imagine the position this man and so many others in the Mormon Church are in. For years, he followed party lines and repeated the history as he was instructed. Now, because the church is trying to “come clean,” so to speak, by admitting historical problems of its past, there is a problem. Everything that the Mormons were taught before these essays were printed was apparently based on lies or half-truths. This was the crux of the complaint made in 2010 by a group of Swedish Saints.

Let’s allow Cherian by providing the core section of his blog:

All of this has caused me to grapple with my own questions. Is it possible that I have hurt people with doctrines and dogmas that in the light of these essays seem to sit on shaky ground? I understand how essential it is to ‘sustain’ the Brethren but these days I live with a caution that those ideals that I believe today could be dismissed by future First Presidencies. As a Bishop I once performed a wedding for a friend of a friend. The grooms [sic] ex-wife and her girlfriend were guests and as I was seated at their table during the reception we chatted. It became apparent that they had really enjoyed the way I had conducted the ceremony and they asked if I would be willing to be their forthcoming ‘Civil Union’ celebrant. I turned them down explaining that as an officer of the LDS church I wasn’t permitted. I tried to be as sensitive and compassionate as possible and one of the women seemed genuinely understanding of my position but her partner was visibly upset. At the time I felt reassured that I was ‘right,’ and that any distress I had caused them was totally justified. I even congratulated myself on some level that I was sharing the gospel with them. I look back at that experience with regret. I now wish that I had just reached out and given them both a big hug.

I also question myself regarding how blameless I am in my representation of these doctrines as definitive? Was I complicit in telling stories I suspected were problematic? Could I have made an effort to be more informed? Could I have asked more questions, been more thoughtful, mindful? How did I get to this place where I have cause to wonder about my own, and the church’s integrity?

Today I am reeling from the translation of the ‘Book of Mormon’ essay. Exactly how was I to know that Joseph Smith got the words to the Book of Mormon by burying his head in a hat. How was I to know that a stone he found in a well was instrumental in this process of translation? Every picture, or video I have ever seen has him sitting at a table with the gold plates before him pouring over these ‘curious characters’ by the light of a candle! Was I naive to have faith in this story? Was I wrong to retell this story as a teacher, as a missionary, or as a priesthood leader? What am I now to make of the ‘truth of the matter’ when it speaks neither to my heart nor my soul. What am I to make of a story I find confounding and frankly bizarre?

Again, feel free to read the whole blog in detail, but before we close, we must consider his final words:

But as for me I am left to wonder where I go from here. I am torn. I love my church and credit where I am in my life to years of church service – but I cannot ignore the dishonesty. I feel aggrieved that in attempting to sustain and perpetuate stories of faith, the church has accredited doctrines to God that are simply fictions. Can such a chasm be bridged as President Uchtdorf suggests?

As we file out of class, a fellow high councillor remarks, ‘Isn’t it interesting that today’s challenge to our faith is coming directly from the church?’

Amazing words! Notice that last line again; “Today’s challenge to (the LDS) faith is coming directly from the church”! By attempting to correct the decades of fully documented teaching—shall we call it “indoctrination” that begins in primary and goes all the way through general conference, the LDS Church is now causing more angst by trying to reconcile its history. As Cherian infers, how can a Latter-day Saint know that what is being taught today won’t be changed tomorrow? This is a bag of worms with a hole on the bottom.

While we’re happy that the leadership is at least attempting to deal with the historical mess, could meddling with past teachings cause an even greater migration from the Mormon Church?■
September 2013: would like to thank you for your UTLM web site, it is a great source of information. I am hoping to convince my Mother of the fraudulent and deceptive nature of the Mormon Religion, she has been a member for 40 years. I too was a member, missionary, branch president but came to realise that I was fooling myself, and believing in malicious fairy tales. I have only recently come across your site but it is great.

October 2013: WHY.....why.....do you waste your time, and energy, writing garbage and untruths about Mormons, and the LDS church? This is America . . . everyone is FREE to worship how and who they want. Why are you so consumed by the message of your particular interpretation of “Jesus” that you have to show how wrong someone else’s faith is to justify your own position of belief? It is a smug thing to say, “we have the truth and you don’t!!”

I have been and experienced all types of ‘religions’, and have left because what they offered did not work for me. I just left, I didn’t create a newspaper listing ALLLLLLLL what was wrong with that particular church.

October 2013: Just lately I found some of your lectures on the internet, so I thought I would send an email. 40 years ago, I was struggling with Mormonism. Your pamphlets, and Fawn Brodies’ book helped me leave. I was raised in the church, and I always knew there was something wrong with Mormonism. Lots of thing really bothered me. But . . . the things I learned from you, Gerald, and Fawn Brodie . . . well I knew absolutely nothing about that stuff at all.

October 2013: I have read your website with interest over the last several years and have also wanted to have a chat with the editors. It seems that there are a lot of strong opinions on this website and I often wonder how much research is actually undertaken in order to compose the results that are currently displayed.

I find it very interesting to note the animosity towards the mormon religion when we certainly do not go out of our way to belit[tle] any of our fellow believers of any religion. There obviously has to be an emotional connection attached to the vicious attack and this would certainly be clouding ones ability to research and portray beliefs accurately.

October 2013: I got to know the LDS Church in the late 70s. But I was baptized in it [in] May of 1980. I took an active part in it since then. I stayed in it for 30 long years. I only left in March 2010, after having read (from cover to cover!) Jerald and Sandra Tanner’s book “The Changing World of Mormonism.” I also read . . . many other books published by former mormons. I have also had access to numberless testimonies by many ex-mormons like us. I have officially resigned the LDS Church this year. I feel happier since I left it. I admit that I felt an emptiness deep inside me, since mormonism occupied many hours of my life, like my wife’s and children’s. But, the best thing of all is that I eventually learned by myself (with God’s help, I believe) that mormonism isn’t true as they claim.

October 2013: OMG I can’t believe I found you on FB. Fifteen years ago . . . when I was on a LDS mission in California I thought you were the devil! (LOL). You are a saint! God Bless.

November 2013: Just this past year my wife and i have had a troubled heart about the mormon church and some of their beliefs. I have always had questions my whole life, but was taught to have faith in the church and not believe some of the rubbish i hear. Well i happened to stumble across a few websites like . . . yours and others and i listened to them and i was shocked at some of the things i found out about Joseph Smith and the mormon church. I felt betrayed, and confused. I thought to myself how can i have been deceived for 42 years, let alone my parents, siblings. wife. grandparents ect . . . have been deceived also. Then i realized i was under mind control. I was born into it, so i didn’t know any better as did the rest of my family. I am a truth seeker as is my wife. I love the lord Jesus christ. I cannot dispute any of the evidence i have learned about joseph smith and mormonism. It makes too much sense to me. I can never go back to mormonism after what i have learned. It poses a problem though. I don’t know what to do about my parents and other siblings. They are devout mormons.

November 2013: Cindy Prince, author of It’s Time: A Family’s Journey of Discovering Truth and God’s Amazing Grace, wrote:

I just wanted to share with you that the part in our story when our arrogant Bishop decided to bring up Adam-onid-alman to John, trying to show how smart he was and assumed my husband was too inferior to know anything about it, the reason John was armed for that moment was because of reading your material about it. We had “heard” of it when we were members but didn’t know anything really. . . . But the reason John was able to hold his own, stun the bishop, and tell him the “real” story behind the ‘revelation’ was because of the information he had read in your work. . . . I know I’m a broken record here but thank you for all you sacrificed to get that information in all of our hands when there’s no way we could have done that ourselves!

November 2013: I have enjoyed watching and listening to your video clips on you tube. i want to thank you for opening my eyes to the truth about the LDS religion.

November 2013: I’m so glad that your website is available like a brazen serpent raised on a staff to heal any if they will only look. The truth of mormonism is so easy to find thanks to your ministry. The LDS church has taken great efforts to erase the evidence of its checkered past, and tried to whitewash their image and proclaim a perfect church. The LDS have succeeded in placing millions under mind control and for almost 30 years of my life, I was one of them. . . .
I have found that you can leave the church, but the church won’t leave you alone. We have regularly had the pressures of ward missionaries sent to “work” with us. . . . I feel sorry for them, and I do pray for them, but I am no longer like them, and I owe that to your website. . . . And there I found that the truth of Mormonism is not to be found inside the manuals of the LDS church.

**November 2013:** You truly need to stop fighting against the Lord’s true church Sandra. I testify that if you continue, the Lord will not hold you innocent at the last day. You will be held accountable for all souls you teach false doctrine to and lead astray. They too will be held accountable, but YOU will be held more accountable for actively teaching them lies.

**November 2013:** People like YOU spread rumors and lies in hatred against the church. That is YOUR issue. The church is still true and always will be REGARDLESS of what YOU believe or teach. Do you get that? Learn to wise up and realize you left the church, because YOU chose to believe lies. That’s a fact. I KNOW that you misrepresent the LDS church and you lie. You spread lies in attempt to justify what YOU chose to believe. You won’t accept that YOU strayed from the truth and accepted lies of the devil. You now actively fight against the truth. You and your husband apostatized. That’s a fact.

**November 2013:** I’m going through a transition which is very scary for me. I don’t think the mormon church is true anymore. It scares me. I was born and raised LDS. I married outside of the temple to my wife who I baptized but we quickly became weary and fell away. . . . Are what people saying truly fact about danites and what all the church has lied or hid from us. They give no answer except have faith carry on.

**November 2013:** I testify Sandra that what you and your husband have done in fighting against the LDS church is 100% wrong. You will not stand blameless at the last day Sandra. I hope you will repent and come back to the church. Don’t judge the church by individual people Sandra. People make mistakes, but that doesn’t make the LDS church false. Lies about Joseph Smith don’t become true based on how many times the lie is told to others Sandra. I know Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. I KNOW IT!

**December 2013:** [This is from one of the people involved in the Swedish meetings in 2010.]

We are reading in the new testament and learning about the Christian Jesus. We have a pastor and she is helping us on the way.

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**December 2013:** i left the church back in Sep 2011 after 36 years, i found the [LDS apostle] Delbert Stapley letter [to Governor George Romney regarding racial issues. http://tinyurl.com/ydlat82], then it all came crashing down.

Since then my life has been great and i have such inner peace and joy . . . i feel free, thank you so much for all you have done. When i was a missionary back in 1977 we knew about you and your husband to stay clear, who would ever think i would be here saying thank you.

**December 2013:** God knows Joseph Smith was called to be a prophet. Did you ignore the fact that God warned Joseph his name would be had for both good and evil among men?. . . You need to stop teaching lies against the LDS church . . . Your progression and salvation are dependent upon whether you continue to persecute the saints and fight against Christ’s church. . . . I testify of this. My witness of the truth of the LDS church WILL stand against you if you refuse to stop teaching lies.

**December 2013:** I just wanted to thank you again for visiting with me and my sister this past November at your store. What a thrill it was to meet you in person and have you sign my copy of *Mormonism Shadow or Reality*. Thank you for taking time to share and pray with us. I was impacted by you and your husband’s book back in 1973 while a freshman student at Eastern New Mexico University.

**December 2013:** Thank you and your Dear Gerald for your work, your research and faith in Jesus Christ and for putting it all online. I studied your website until to learn the truth and now i have a wonderful personal Relationship with the real God and Savior and a trust in God’s precious and cherished Word the Holy Bible. thank you with endless gratitude for doing the Lord’s work.

**February 2014:** As a person who became intrigued with Mormons and Mormonism over year ago, I want to thank you for saving from me from joining what I now realize is a cult. I’d been reading and listening to everything I could find concerning LDS doctrine and theology. More than anyone or anything else, the many interviews and speeches of yours I’ve watched on YouTube have helped me see that the claims of Joseph Smith and the religion he founded cannot be true. . . . I just wanted you to know that you are making a difference in the lives of people you haven’t even met!

**February 2014:** I converted to the church in my early 20’s. I was told horrific things about you and your husband. I was counseled to stay as far away from your writings. In other words, looking into your story meant getting together with Satan. Needless to say I lived the TBM [true believing Mormon] life to a T. I had my whole being invested in the church. My five children were also raised to be tbm. . . . Fast forward 26 years from my conversion. I resigned last May. Seeing your videos and reading your story helped me tremendously in my search for real truth.
February 2014: A lot of this information you have could be false. A lot of documents and records were from people who were enemies of Joseph Smith. . . . So a lot of records could be things Joseph Smith’s enemies could have written. . . . Joseph smith knew the bible he lived by his good morals and wanted other people to follow his good morals . . . And I love how people say how bad the church is and that Joseph wasn’t a prophet when clearly they have never felt the gift of the holy spirit. Have you experienced yourself the holy spirit? It’s an overwhelming type of feeling that’s gives me peace and happiness.

February 2014: I come from a Mormon family, was half in and half out for 48 years, polygamy never did sit well with me, but my parents are true believers, so I went with it. My truth finding mission started with reading a book on Mark Hofmann and wondering why the church leaders paid thousands to hide his work. Then I got the real truth from Fawn Brodie. Information from your web site and your personal experience with the church took away any doubts I may have had. Thank you for your courage and dedication to God’s truth!

February 2014: God has used your little bookstore to shake that whole state, and abroad. Our family prays for your ministry often. You spent about a hour and a half ministering to my mom in your bookstore and explained lds problems to her with clarity and compassion. I will always remember that. Your a blessing! Thank you for serving Him!

March 2014: I’m from Brasil and i’m reading the digital book “The Changing World of Mormonism.” I’ve served a mission, maried at the temple, served in others positions on the local church . . . I alwais had some doubts about the church history and doctrine. This book is helping me so much . . . Thank you.

March 2014: I want to personally thank you and Jerold, for all that you have personally done for my family. . . . Both I and my husband . . . were born and raised in the LDS church . . . If it wasn’t for you, I don’t know if we ever would of heard the truth. I can’t stop the tears from flowing this morning . . . . We love you Sandra and [in our] heart are forever grateful. Your sister in Christ,

April 2014: Saw your last post and it reminded me of how much you and your knowledge has helped me. From trying to lift your display of golden plates to the books you have that shed light on the Gospel. I found Jesus two years ago and with the help of people like you, so has my oldest daughter, son-in-law and granddaughter.

April 2014: I was an investigator considering joining the LDS church until I started seeing how many things I was taught in the lessons don’t match up to archaeology findings and also the many changes that happened to their Book of Mormon.

* * * * * * *

LDS Growth Stats

In 2012 the LDS Church announced that it was lowering the age of its male missionaries from 19 to 18 years old. The age of women missionaries was dropped from 21 to 19 years old. This resulted in a significant increase in the number of missionaries for 2013. Below are the statistics for both 2012 and 2013, taken from the LDS conference reports.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>LDS Church Membership</th>
<th>New Children of Record</th>
<th>Convert Baptisms</th>
<th>Missionaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>14,782,473</td>
<td>115,486</td>
<td>272,330</td>
<td>58,990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>15,082,028</td>
<td>122,273</td>
<td>282,945</td>
<td>83,035</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The new report is of particular interest as it gives us an idea of the effectiveness of increasing the number of LDS missionaries last year. The results are less than impressive. The Salt Lake Tribune reported:

In the year and a half since the LDS Church lowered the minimum age for full-time missionary service, the Utah-based faith has seen its proselytizing force swell from 58,500 to more than 83,000. That’s a 42 percent leap.

The number of convert baptisms last year grew to 282,945, up from 272,330 in 2012. That’s an increase of—less than 4 percent.

How can that be? Why would a surge of 25,000 additional eager and earnest suit-and-dress-wearing, scripture-packing, pamphlet-peddling young “elders” and “sisters” not translate into a similarly dramatic jump in the number of Mormons on membership rolls? (“Mormon conversions lag behind huge missionary growth,” Salt Lake Tribune, May 2, 2014)

Matt Martinich, an independent researcher, saw it as market saturation. The extra missionaries were sent into areas where the LDS Church had already done significant proselytizing. The article continues:

As it stands, the ratio of converts to Mormon missionaries has slipped from 5-to-1 in 2010 to less than 3.5-to-1 last year.

The article concludes: “Ultimately, though, the goal of Mormon missionary work may be as much about converting the proselytizer as converting the proselyte” (Salt Lake Tribune, May 2, 2014).
Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? (PDF) $16.00
(Printed version - $24.00)

Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony
(PDF) $5.00

Joseph Smith and the Plagiarism of the Bible
(PDF) $8.00

Mormonism, Magic and Masonry
(PDF) $4.00

41 Unique Teachings of the LDS Church
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- (New) An Address to All Believers in Christ (and An Address to Believers in the Book of Mormon) (Transcripts and photos of original pages) $2.00

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By William Shepard and H. Michael Marquardt
$32.00

Cold-Case Christianity:
A Homicide Detective Investigates the Claims of the Gospels.
By J. Warner Wallace
$15.00

Starting at the Finish Line:
The Gospel of Grace for Mormons
By John B. Wallace
$13.50

It’s Time: A Family’s Journey of Discovering Truth and God’s Amazing Grace
By Cindy Prince
$18.00

Scattering of the Saints: Schism within Mormonism
Edited by Newell Bringhurst and John C. Hamer
$22.50

Mormonism, The Matrix & Me:
My Journey from Kolob to Calvary
By Tracy Tennant
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When Marlin K. Jensen, retired General Authority and historian of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was asked in November of 2011 if the LDS leaders were aware that people are leaving the Mormon Church in droves after learning of troubling aspects of church history, he responded:

The fifteen men [First Presidency and Quorum of Twelve] really do know, and they really care. And they realize that maybe since Kirtland, we never have had a period of, I’ll call it apostasy, like we’re having right now; largely over these issues.1

Evidently in response to the growing number of Mormons disturbed by researching sensitive topics on the Internet, on September 9, 2014, the LDS Church issued a directive to all “General Authorities; Area Seventies; Stake, Mission, and District Presidents; Bishops and Branch Presidents” informing them of the new Gospel Topics section of the LDS Church’s website (lds.org/topics):

The purpose of the Gospel Topics section is to provide accurate and transparent information on Church history and doctrine within the framework of faith. . . . When Church members have questions regarding Church history and doctrine, possibly arising when detractors spread misinformation and doubt, you may want to direct their attention to these resources.2

According to the Salt Lake Tribune, “For about a year, the LDS Church has been posting on its website carefully worded, scholarly essays about touchy topics from the faith’s history and theology.”3 A few of these essays are:

“First Vision Accounts”
“Are Mormons Christian?”
“Book of Mormon Translation”
“Race and the Priesthood”
“Plural Marriage and Families in Early Utah”
“Book of Mormon and DNA studies”
“Becoming like God”
“Peace and Violence among 19th-Century Latter-day Saints”
“Translation and Historicity of the Book of Abraham”

The Book of Abraham

In 1835 Michael Chandler brought his traveling exhibit of Egyptian artifacts to the Mormon town of Kirtland, Ohio. Upon examination, Joseph Smith offered to buy the collection as he had discerned that two of the Egyptian papyri contained the writings of the Old Testament patriarchs Abraham and Joseph. After purchasing the mummies and scrolls for $2,400 (approximately $65,500 in today’s dollars), Smith embarked on his new translation project, starting with the Book of Abraham scroll. If these were truly the writings of Abraham it would be the oldest known biblical text. Even the Dead Sea Scrolls would dim in comparison. Smith’s new scripture was officially canonized by the LDS Church in 1880.

1 Marlin K. Jensen, “Q&A”, John A. Widtsoe Association for Mormon Studies, Utah State University (November 11, 2011); online at http://mormon-chronicles.blogspot.com/2012/01/rescue-plan-to-address-difficulties-of.html
3 Ibid.
Like the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith professed to be translating an ancient record, preserved by God to come forth in these last days. However, Egyptologists find no connection between the Egyptian text on the papyri and Smith’s Book of Abraham. Smith’s supposed translation has been challenged for over one hundred and fifty years, starting with Theodule Deveria in 1861, concluding with Dr. Ritner’s 2014 article, “A Response to ‘Translation and Historicity of the Book of Abraham.’”

In July of this year the LDS Church added “Translation and Historicity of the Book of Abraham” to Gospel Topics in an effort to downplay the fact that the papyri Joseph Smith purchased in 1835 have nothing to do with Abraham. The church-owned Deseret News reported:

A new essay published Tuesday by the LDS Church on its website says scholarly or critical efforts to determine Joseph Smith’s ability to translate papyri are “likely futile.”

The new Gospel Topics essay acknowledges that the papyri have no relationship to the text of the Book of Abraham:

Mormon and non-Mormon Egyptologists agree that the characters on the fragments do not match the translation given in the book of Abraham . . .

The essay concludes:

The veracity and value of the book of Abraham cannot be settled by scholarly debate concerning the book’s translation and historicity. The book’s status as scripture lies in the eternal truths it teaches and the powerful spirit it conveys. . . . The truth of the book of Abraham is ultimately found through careful study of its teachings, sincere prayer and the confirmation of the Spirit.

Notice how they concede that the papyri contain nothing about Abraham yet maintain the Book of Abraham is scripture on the basis of a spiritual experience. However, when Joseph Smith examined the papyri he specifically claimed to be translating the ancient documents. On July 5, 1835, Smith commented:

I commenced the translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt, etc.

In fact, the declaration that it is a literal translation is still reflected in the heading of the book itself:

The Book of Abraham; Translated from the papyrus, by Joseph Smith A Translation of some ancient Records that have fallen into our hands from the catacombs of Egypt. The writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt, called the Book of Abraham, written by his own hand, upon papyrus.

That Smith was purporting to literally translate the Egyptian material is seen in an entry in the History of the Church:

The remainder of this month [July 1835], I was continually engaged in translating an alphabet to the Book of Abraham, and arranging a grammar of the Egyptian language as practiced by the ancients.

Identifying the Scroll for the Book of Abraham

While the LDS Church states that it is not known which piece of the papyri Smith used for his new scripture, it is clear that he was claiming to translate the scroll called “Breathing Permit of Hor.” The first illustration on this papyrus, with added details, became Facsimile 1 in the Book of Abraham. It is stated very specifically in Abraham 1:12 “that you may have a knowledge of this altar, I will refer you to the representation at the commencement of this record.” But herein lies the problem: Scholars agree that Facsimile 1 has nothing to do with Abraham. In the LDS article we read:

None of the characters on the papyri fragments mentioned Abraham’s name or any of the events recorded in the book of Abraham. Mormon and non-Mormon Egyptologists agree that the characters on the fragments do not match the translation given in the book of Abraham, though there is not unanimity, even among non-Mormon scholars, about the proper interpretation of the vignettes on these fragments. Scholars have identified the papyri fragments as parts of standard funerary texts that were deposited with mummified bodies. These fragments date to between the third century B.C.E. and the first century C.E., long after Abraham lived.

7 Ibid.
8 History of the Church, vol. 2, pp. 235-236.
Now that the original papyrus used for Facsimile 1 has been identified it is clear that it was damaged in certain areas before it came into the Mormons’ possession. Evidently Smith or one of his associates penciled in what they thought would have been the missing parts.

Dr. Robert Ritner, Professor of Egyptology at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, explains:

The published text of the Book of Abraham is accompanied by three woodcut “Facsimiles” with explanations authored by Joseph Smith himself. The facsimiles are all based on ancient Egyptian documents, and the Egyptian texts of all three can now be deciphered. In addition, the representations of all three conform to well-known Egyptian models. Facsimiles 1 and 3 represent sections of one papyrus: the “Breathing Permit of Hor” (P.J 1). . . . Comparison of the surviving initial vignette of the Hor papyrus with Facsimile 1 proved beyond doubt, as the LDS web post agrees, that it was “the vignette that became facsimile 1.” However, neither Facsimile 1 nor 2 is a true copy, and both contain added forgeries, including the human-head and knife of the supposed “idolatrous priest of Elkenah” (Fig. 3 on Facsimile 1) as can be seen in the crude pencil additions to the original papyrus sheet as mounted and “improved” for publication by the LDS church in 1842.12

Dr. Ritner further commented:

All of Smith’s published “explanations” are incorrect, including the lone example defended by the new [LDS] web posting: the water in which a crocodile is swimming (Fig. 12 of Facsimile 1), supposedly a representation of “the firmament over our heads . . .” Although Egyptians might place heavenly boats in the sky, that is not relevant “in this case” where the water is placed below the figures and represents the Nile, not the sky. The selective defense of these explanations by the church is telling, and all other explanations are simply indefensible except by distorting Egyptian evidence.

Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar

Shortly after the Mormons purchased the papyri, Joseph Smith started working on an alphabet and grammar of the Egyptian language to aid in his translation work.13

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12 Ritner, “A Response to ‘Translation . . . of the Book of Abraham.’”
13 H. Michael Marquardt, The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papers, (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 2009); Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1987), pp. 311-326.
The LDS Gospel Topics article continues with its emphasis on Smith’s study of the characters and his translation:

Some evidence suggests that Joseph studied the characters on the Egyptian papyri and attempted to learn the Egyptian language. His history reports that, in July 1835, he was “continually engaged in translating an alphabet to the Book of Abraham, and arranging a grammar of the Egyptian language as practiced by the ancients.” This grammar, as it was called, consisted of columns of hieroglyphic characters followed by English translation recorded in a large notebook by Joseph’s scribe, William W. Phelps. Another manuscript, written by Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, has Egyptian characters followed by explanations.

The relationship of these documents to the book of Abraham is not fully understood. Neither the rules nor the translations in the grammar book correspond to those recognized by Egyptologists today. Whatever the role of the grammar book, it appears that Joseph Smith began translating portions of the book of Abraham almost immediately after the purchase of the papyri. 14

The lack of correlation between Smith’s Alphabet and Grammar and the papyri demonstrate Smith’s total lack of knowledge of anything Egyptian. Included in Smith’s Egyptian working papers are parts of the text of the Book of Abraham lined up with Egyptian characters taken from the Breathing Permit document which were attached to the original drawing of Facsimile 1. Researcher Christopher C. Smith observed:

Consistent with this conclusion, three handwritten Book of Abraham manuscripts from the Kirtland period contain, in their margins, sequential Egyptian characters from the first column of the Hor Document of Breathing (pJS XI). These characters are matched up with discrete units of English text. They appear to be aligned this way in order to show which portions of the English text were translated from which Egyptian characters. 15

In the next column is a photo of a manuscript page for the Book of Abraham, with the Egyptian characters copied from the papyrus in the left hand column. 16

Smith’s representation of whole paragraphs being translated from one or two Egyptian symbols is consistent with his earlier claim that the Nephites wrote in “reformed Egyptian” because it took less space than Hebrew (Book of Mormon, Mormon 9:32-33). This is not actually the case, but it gave Smith an excuse for being able to translate whole paragraphs from simple characters.

On the following page is another example of Smith purporting to translate the “Breathing Permit” in the manuscript pages for the Book of Abraham contained in his Alphabet and Grammar. 17

Notice the dozens of words supposedly translated from a character resembling a backward E. Dr. Ritner comments:

It is now evident that over half of the text of the Book of Abraham was invented by Smith from only two incomplete lines in the “Breathing Permit of Hôr” (P. JS 1, col. 2 [=Fragment XI], lines 1-2). The few Egyptian words “great lake of Khonsu, [and the Osiris Hôr, the justified] born of Taikhibit, the justified, likewise” were spun into the full Book of Abraham 1:4-2:2.

It is not surprising that Smith’s translation of just a few Egyptian words could become a lengthy narrative.

16 Tanner, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? p. 312.
Before the 1822 decipherment of hieroglyphs by Jean-François Champollion in France, it had been wrongly assumed that the Egyptian writing system was purely symbolic, not phonetic.  

Further evidence that the Book of Abraham could not have been translated from the Egyptian papyri can be seen in Dr. Ritner’s book, The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri.

**Facsimile Two**

Beneath each of the three facsimiles in the Book of Abraham is Smith’s explanation of the drawings. Unfortunately, none of Joseph Smith’s material matches the descriptions given by the Egyptologists. One problem area is Smith’s attempt to restore the missing portions of the round disc known as a hypocephalus, which was placed under the head of the mummy. In LDS scriptures it is referred to as Facsimile 2. Dr. Ritner writes:

Facsimile 2 derives from a separate burial, for an individual named Sheshonq. Large portions of this published “facsimile” were improperly inserted from unrelated papyri.  

In the next column is a photo of the earliest drawing of Facsimile 2, taken from Joseph Smith’s Kirtland Egyptian papers. Notice in the second drawing the blank areas were filled in when it was printed in the *Times and Seasons* in 1842.

18 Ritner, “A Response to ‘Translation … of the Book of Abraham.’”  
19 Ibid.  
We now know that the Egyptian characters used to fill in the blank spots on Facsimile 2 were actually copied from the Breathing Permit scroll and haphazardly placed on the hypocephalus, rendering the text at that point unintelligible.21

Mormon scholar Michael D. Rhodes observed:

A careful examination of Facsimile 2 shows that there is a difference between most of the hieroglyphic signs and the signs on the right third of the figure on the outer edge as well as the outer portions of the sections numbered 12-15. These signs are hieratic, not hieroglyphic, and are inverted, or upside down, to the rest of the text. In fact, they are a fairly accurate copy of lines 2, 3, and 4 of the Joseph Smith Papyrus XI, which contains a portion of the Book of Breathings. Especially clear is the word sns, in section 14, and part of the name of the mother of the owner of the papyrus, (tay-)uby.t, repeated twice on the outer edge. An ink drawing of the hypocephalus in the Church Historian’s office shows these same areas as being blank. It is likely that these portions were destroyed on the original hypocephalus and someone (the engraver, one of Joseph Smith’s associates, or Joseph himself) copied the lines from the Book of Breathings papyrus for aesthetic purposes.22

This would be equivalent to finding that your Bible was missing a page so you tore a page from a history book and inserted it in the Bible, upside down, so that the book would have the right number of pages. But the added text would make no sense next to the other pages. Obviously Joseph Smith totally lacked any understanding of the Egyptian material.

Is Min God?

When the hypocephalus was prepared for publication in 1842 Smith had the engraver add numbers to certain figures that would correspond to the explanations underneath the drawing. He identified number 7, the seated figure (lower right area, upside-down) as God:

Represents God sitting upon his throne, revealing, through the heavens the grand Key-words of the Priesthood; as, also, the sign of the Holy Ghost unto Abraham, in the form of a dove.23

However, this is actually a representation of Min, the Egyptian god of fertility, shown with an erection. LDS scholars have defended Smith’s use of Min to represent God in his regenerative powers. For instance, LDS Egyptologist Michael Rhodes explains:

7. A seated ithyphallic god with a hawk’s tail, holding aloft the divine flail. . . . Before him is what appears to be a bird of some sort, presenting him with an Udjat-eye. . . .

The seated god is clearly a form of Min, the god of the regenerative, procreative forces of nature, perhaps combined with Horus as the hawk’s tail would seem to indicate.

Joseph Smith mentions here the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove and God “revealing through the heavens the grand key-words of the priesthood.” The procreative forces, receiving unusual accentuation throughout the representation, may stand for many divine generative powers, not least of which might be conjoined with the blessings of the Priesthood in one’s posterity eternally.24

This would fit with the LDS theology of God being a resurrected being from another world who achieved godhood and has a tangible body. Brigham Young, the second prophet of the LDS Church, explained:

The birth of the Saviour was as natural as are the births of our children; it was the result of natural action. He partook of flesh and blood—was begotten of his Father, as we were of our fathers.25

While a sexually active god may fit in with LDS theology, it does not represent the God of the Bible. In the book of Numbers we read:

21 Tanner, Mormonism—Shadow or Reality, pp. 338-344.
23 Pearl of Great Price, Facsimile 2 from the Book of Abraham.
God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent. (Numbers 23:19)

In the book of Romans Paul declared:

Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. . . They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. (Romans 1:22-25 NIV)

The Joseph Smith hypocephalus, with its multiple drawings of Egyptian deities, is similar to numerous ones preserved in various museums. Below is a drawing of a hypocephalus in the Leiden Museum in Germany that is very close to the one in the Book of Abraham. Notice that it also has the god Min in the same location on the disc.26

The LDS article claims that “the book of Abraham largely follows the biblical narrative but adds important information regarding Abraham’s life and teachings.”27 The fact that it changes the nature of God is one of the doctrinal problems in the Book of Abraham. The Old Testament is very emphatic that there is only one God—i.e. Isaiah 43:10-11; Isaiah 44:6 and 8. Yet the Book of Abraham introduces a plurality of gods. Below is a comparison between Smith’s translation and Genesis:

Pearl of Great Price: Abraham 4:1 – And then the Lord said: Let us go down. And they, that is the Gods organized and formed the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:1 – In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

Why should anyone accept the new concepts in the Book of Abraham (plural gods, pre-mortal existence, racial cursing) when there is no historical validity to the book, and its teachings run counter to those of the Bible?28

Facsimile Three

Joseph Smith also totally misidentified all the figures in Facsimile 3. Below is a side by side comparison of the identification of the figures. 29

Dr. Ritner explains:

In Facsimile 3, Smith confuses human and animal heads and males with females. No amount of special pleading can change the female “Isis the great, the god’s mother” (Facsimile 3, Fig. 2) into the male “King Pharaoh, whose name is given in the characters above his hand,” as even the LDS author Michael D. Rhodes accepts. Here Smith also misunderstands “Pharaoh” as a personal name rather than a title meaning “king,” so he reads “king king” for a goddess’s name that he claims to have understood on the papyrus!30

Joseph Smith’s explanations of the facsimiles in the Book of Abraham were refuted over one hundred years ago, in 1912, when the major Egyptologists of the day gave their evaluation of the drawings.

27 Gospel Topics, lds.org
30 Ritner, “A Response to ‘Translation . . . of the Book of Abraham.’”
Dr. Arthur Mace, Assistant Curator for the Department of Egyptian Art of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York:

The Book of Abraham, it is hardly necessary to say, is a pure fabrication. Cuts 1 and 3 are inaccurate copies of well-known scenes on funeral papyri, and cut 2 is a copy of one of the magical discs which in the late Egyptian period were placed under the heads of mummies. There were about forty of these latter known in museums and they are all very similar in character. Joseph Smith’s interpretation of these cuts is a farce of nonsense from beginning to end. Egyptian characters can now be read almost as easily as Greek, and five minutes’ study in an Egyptian gallery of any museum should be enough to convince any educated man of the clumsiness of the imposture.

Dr. A. H. Sayce from Oxford, England:

It is difficult to deal seriously with Joseph Smith’s impudent fraud. The fac-simile from the Book of Abraham No. 2 is an ordinary hypocephalus, but the hieroglyphics upon it have been copied so ignorantly that hardly one of them is correct. I need scarce say that Kolob, etc., are unknown to the Egyptian language. . . . Smith has turned the Goddess into a king and Osiris into Abraham.

Dr. Flinders Petrie of London University:

In the first place, they are copies (very badly done) of well known Egyptian subjects of which I have dozens of examples. Secondly, they are all many centuries later than Abraham. . . . The attempts to guess a meaning for them, in the professed explanations, are too absurd to be noticed. It may be safely said that there is not one single word that is true in these explanations.

Dr. James H. Breasted of the Haskell Oriental Museum, University of Chicago:

It will be seen, then, that if Joseph Smith could read ancient Egyptian writing, his ability to do so had no connection with the decipherment of hieroglyphics by European scholars . . . . The three fac-similes in question represent equipment which will be and has been found in unnumbered thousands of Egyptian graves . . . . The point, then, is that in publishing these fac-similes of Egyptian documents as part of an unique revelation to Abraham, Joseph Smith was attributing to Abraham not three unique documents of which no other copies exist, but was attributing to Abraham a series of documents which were the common property of a whole nation of people who employed them in every human burial, which they prepared.

The full statements of these renowned Egyptologists can be read in our publication, Why Egyptologists Reject the Book of Abraham. 31

Possible Answers

In an attempt to obscure the problem of purporting the Book of Abraham to be an actual translation the church is now proposing two alternate answers—

1. We may not have the right piece. Since the surviving pieces of papyri have no relationship to Abraham, his writings may have been on one of the missing artifacts. The article states:

It is likely futile to assess Joseph’s ability to translate papyri when we now have only a fraction of the papyri he had in his possession. . . . The loss of a significant portion of the papyri means the relationship of the papyri to the published text cannot be settled conclusively by reference to the papyri. 32

2. Smith’s use of the word “translate” does not require a typical definition. The papyri may have served as a catalyst for revelation. Following this line of reasoning, Smith didn’t need the missing pieces. He could have just as easily used a book on geography for his inspiration. The LDS article explains:

According to this view, Joseph’s translation was not a literal rendering of the papyri as a conventional translation would be. Rather, the physical artifacts provided an occasion for meditation, reflection, and revelation. They catalyzed a process whereby God gave to Joseph Smith a revelation about the life of Abraham, even if that revelation did not directly correlate to the characters on the papyri. 33

Either way, the church is now admitting that there is absolutely nothing on any of the papyri in its possession that has anything to do with Abraham, that all the pieces of papyri only relate to the Egyptian religion. This would include the three illustrations in the Book of Abraham. Egyptologists can translate most of the material on these drawings and find them to be standard Egyptian burial documents, depicting their numerous deities.

While the LDS article suggests the Book of Abraham material may have been attached to the end of the Breathing Permit papyrus, scholars Andrew W. Cook and Christopher C. Smith have challenged that assumption:

The question then becomes whether the undamaged scroll of Hôr was ever long enough to accommodate a hieratic Book of Abraham source text. The Book of Abraham translation contains 5,506 English words. The hieratic text in the instructions column of the Document of Breathing translates to ~97 English words. This


33 Ibid.
column is ~9 cm wide. Hence, if the Book of Abraham were written on the scroll in the same hieratic font as this portion of the Document of Breathing, it would have taken up ~9(5,506/97)=~511 cm of papyrus. Since the Book of Abraham translation is incomplete, the actual space required for a hieratic original would presumably have been even longer.34

The authors then use mathematical calculations to demonstrate that the papyri could not have been long enough to contain the text of the Book of Abraham.

The LDS Church feels the issues can be resolved through prayer, however, non-Mormon scholars remain unconvinced. After spending considerable time examining the papyri owned by the LDS Church, Dr. Ritner stated:

Such a declaration [that the veracity of the Book of Abraham is to be found in prayer] may seem reasonable to those already predisposed to accept it, but on closer reading, the LDS church posting suggests discomfort with its own conclusions and reasoning. Not a single opposing scholar is mentioned by name, nor are their reasons for rejecting the Book of Abraham. Yet the LDS paper attempts to engage in scholarly debate from a one-sided position, repeatedly citing in the footnotes the same limited set of apologists who are primarily church employees at BYU in Provo.35

While conceding that the truthfulness of the Book of Abraham is a “matter of faith” the Pearl of Great Price Student Manual promotes Joseph Smith’s translation as a great accomplishment since Egyptian could not be deciphered at that time:

The book of Abraham is an evidence of the inspired calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith. It came forth at a time when the study of the ancient Egyptian language and culture was just beginning. The scholars of the 1800s had scarcely begun to explore the field of Egyptology, and yet, with no formal training in ancient languages and no knowledge of ancient Egypt (except his work with the Book of Mormon), Joseph Smith began his translation of the ancient manuscripts. His knowledge and ability came through the power and gift of God, together with his own determination and faith.36

With such emphasis on Smith having “no formal training in ancient languages” and that “study of the ancient Egyptian language” was just beginning, this statement would lead one to conclude that Smith’s translation would have corresponded to an Egyptologists translation. Yet no connection has been found.

Conclusion

Non-LDS Egyptologists have long argued that Smith’s work has no relationship to the ancient Egyptian papyri purchased in 1835. Dr. Ritner, in his article responding to the Gospel Topics essay, observed:

Scholarly rejection of the authenticity of the Book of Abraham is now not new and has continued unabated since the study by Jules Remy and Theodule Deverial in 1861, with multiple scholars (including A. H. Sayce, Arthur Mace, Flinders Petrie, and James H. Breasted) dismissing the book’s validity in 1912. With the rediscovery of the papyri at the Metropolitan Museum in New York in 1967, analysis by John Wilson, Richard Parker and Klaus Baer (all 1968) and even the LDS apologist Hugh Nibley (in 1975) disproved any possibility that the Book of Abraham could be an acceptable translation of the surviving Egyptian papyri. My own works on the papyri (in 2002, 2003, 2011 and 2013) showed the same result, as did the LDS-sponsored translations by Michael Rhodes (2002) and the 2005 revision of Nibley’s volume. Thus has arisen a host of alternative defenses for the Book of Abraham, questioning the meaning of the word “translation,” the length of the original papyri, the possibility of a now lost section with the Abraham text, etc.37

Even if one were to concede (which critics do not) that the text for the Book of Abraham was actually contained on one of the missing pieces of papyri, it is clear from the extant papyri that Smith was indeed using them for his supposed “translation.” He believed that the three illustrations taken from the papyri (which were copied and printed with the Book of Abraham) conveyed the same story of Abraham that he was supposedly “translating” from the text, whether that text is on the extant papyri or on the lost pieces. To simply say that “we don’t have all the papyri” does not dismiss the fact that the parts that we do have were clearly used by Smith in creating the Book of Abraham, to one extent or another, and their contents clearly depict not a story of Abraham but rather a common Egyptian funerary scene, as has been concluded by Egyptologists for decades.

In 2011 John Dehlin, a fifth generation Mormon and creator of Mormon Stories podcast, conducted a survey of 3,000 former Mormons, examining the reasons for their loss of faith. One of the top reasons given was loss of faith in Joseph Smith’s supposed translation of

35 Ritner, “A Response to ‘Translation . . . of the Book of Abraham.’”
36 The Pearl of Great Price Student Manual, Religion 327, LDS Church, 2000, p. 29.
37 Ritner, “A Response to ‘Translation . . . of the Book of Abraham.’”
the Book of Abraham.38 The LDS Church’s latest article on the Book of Abraham does not provide the answers necessary to stem the tide of defection. Dr. Robert Ritner has responded to their article and demonstrates that their arguments are spurious.39

The LDS article concedes that there is no connection between the papyri and the text of the Book of Abraham. Yet that is exactly how it has been presented to the world for over 170 years. It is time for the LDS Church to decanonize the Book of Abraham and admit that it is a product of Joseph Smith’s imagination.

38 John Dehlin, “Understanding Mormon Disbelief,” 2012; online at www.whymormonsquestion.orgsurvey-results

Excerpts from Letters and Emails

April 2014: Thank you does not even come close to expressing my deep gratitude for the service you are rendering, God bless you!

I have been on what seems like a life long quest for the truth in all areas, but most importantly, [em]pathizes with those that know the truth.

I am in such a precarious place, all of my family and closest friends are strong Mormons. I have three brothers, one of which is a bishop, one in the bishopric, and the oldest a student of the "scriptures." They have alienated me and think me lost for all eternity.

April 2014: I have seen you as a guest on “Polygamy What Love Is This.” I am very impressed with your vast knowledge of the LDS doctrine and history. I was LDS my entire life, until a few years ago. It is because of what I have learned from you, Doris Hanson and Shawn Mc Craney, that it has been proven to me that the LDS doctrine contradicts the bible, and it’s based on the lies of a false Prophet.

April 2014: I really enjoy hearing you speak. It has helped me coming out of Mormonism. Since I was 16 I’ve always wondered about Joseph Smith and the gold plates. Now I’m 84 and know the truth for the past 6 yrs.

April 2014: As a 73 year old woman, I cannot thank you enough or express my gratitude enough for you and your website. I came out of Mormonism 27 years ago . . . I was not raised Mormon but converted when going thru a difficult time.

I found them to be wonderful people, but I could never believe the Joseph Smith story.

May 2014: Now that my husband and I have studied church history I can’t believe that we ever believed it at all. What a shame that the LDS church has hidden the true history of the church. The terrible part is that we taught our children the lies. I doubt we will ever be able to get thru to one of our sons.

May 2014: I cannot believe that you delude yourself so much you can actually believe this stuff. I can only assume you say and do these things to appease your new followers because they hang on your every vengeful and derogatory post. I hope you have a change of heart in your tactics whether or not you have a change of heart about the church.

May 2014: My wife and I . . . were both very active LDS, up until last summer. I will be 38 years old this year and still can’t believe how firm I thought my “testimony of Mormonism” was, up until last year. Both sides of my family go back to the 1830s in Mormonism. On my Mom’s side, my “multiple great” grandfather is William Clayton. I was on track to becoming a lifelong LDS leader and then really found out who Jesus Christ is and now enjoy attending an incredible Bible Fellowship about 10 minutes from our home, here in Texas. . . . Easter Sunday . . . we attended two different Bible Fellowship Services. Both of them were, hands down, the most powerful and uplifting Easter Services we had ever experienced! Easter Sunday, in Mormonism, was such a let down every year. . . .

During my many years as a novice LDS historian and a professional LDS Religious Educator, you and your husband’s names were infamous as THE anti-Mormons of our day. Even as a TBM, I never felt comfortable with such a label . . . I want to apologize for the unfair and unjust treatment you and your late husband have endured for decades, just for following Christ and having the courage to tell the truth! . . . We devastated our family and friends by leaving it all. But, we have discovered a vast group of wonderful, like-minded people, with the help of the internet, and a truck load of supporting evidence for our decision. . . . Finally, I have to tell you of the absolute peace and clarity my sweet wife and I feel as we have come to know the pure Love of Jesus Christ in our lives. HE IS ENOUGH and that is such a relief, after decades of trying to be “worthy” in the legalism of Mormon orthodoxy.

May 2014: So very grateful for your television ministry, many years ago God used you on The John Ankerberg show [www. jashow.org/television-shows/] to help my husband become free from Mormonism and he has been walking with God ever since. Thank you! Bless you!!! BLESS YOU!!!!

May 2014: Thankful for how God has used you and your husband. I still remember looking at your plagiarism page in 1997 when you compared 1 Corinthians to [Mosiah]. God used that in getting me to doubt the BOM as the authority.

[Book of Mormon, about 121 B.C.] Mosiah 5:15: “Therefore, I would that ye should be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works, that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal you his, . . .”

[Bible, about 51-60 A.D.] 1 Corinthians 15:58: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovedable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”
May 2014: I was aware of your publications early on, but approached them from the perspective of a true believer; seeds can take a long time to germinate! It took me many years to overcome the mind control used by the Mormon Church, after my converted brother brought into about half of our family.

I was such a true believer that I took Brigham Young’s words seriously, about “God’s law of polygamy” being eternal. Thus I was brought under the spell of [a polygamist sect] for a brief time. . . . Anyway, I thought it would be a good time to thank you for your work, and encourage you to keep freeing people from this horrible, horrible “religion.” . . . What helped me most was Ann Eliza Young’s Wife Number 19. [www.utlm.org/onlineresources/brighamyoungswives.htm]

May 2014: I just viewed your 4 part interview with John Dehlin. What an amazing story. . . . Watching and reading your material has helped me find the grace in Jesus Christ after being a Mormon for over 30 years. I am the first in my family of 10 siblings to leave Mormonism. Today I’m 57 and I’ve been a Christian for 3 years. . . . My 4th great grandmother was Patty Sessions and 3rd great grandmother was Silvia Lyon Sessions. When I was a child my mother proudly told us that we’re to keep the polygamous relationship a secret because it was sacred, as they were sealed to Joseph Smith. When I attended Rick’s College a church history professor told me I was of “royal blood.” Mother always told us children that Joseph had several wives but he never ever had sexual relations with any of them except Emma. And of course I was never informed that 11 were already married to living husbands, and that our great grandmothers were mother-daughter wives. Even as I write this it is tasteless!

May 2014: I listened to your recent interview with John Dehlin [www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLXq5qj6Gq0DZPewyQyXZ WLoD_fD1MtZiM] and loved it. I am a recent convert FROM mormonism and appreciate your work and your insights into these difficult topics. My wife and I aren’t sure exactly where our spiritual journeys will lead us; but right now we are quite happy attending a local Methodist church and are very active there. My wife and I both came precariously close to leaving mormonism in favor of Atheism. It’s a common transition for ex-mormons as you know. That is why your work is so vital, I believe. I am not against the Mormon church. I feel that it has done and currently does good in the lives of many. I have felt God speak to me when I was an active member and I cannot deny it. But I feel Him continuing to speak to me outside of “the Church” and I am grateful.

June 2014: your interview with John Dehlin [MormonStories podcast] was absolutely incredible. I’ve shared it with many people. I was an LDS convert, but left two years ago. I too believe in the historical Christ. I have hope, and faith, but still, some questions about God. Your story gave me such hope.

June 2014: First off I want to apologize for any negative thoughts I ever sent your way. I don’t live in Utah and was never an orthodox Mormon but I did believe that you were fighting a lost cause for no reason. Second I need to thank you for that fight. How you managed to do this without the internet is mind-boggling but you have and did.

I recently left the church after questioning for years. My “shelf” finally fell but my husband is a Mormon blue blood who believes with every fiber of his being and it breaks my heart.

June 2014: I’m from Brazil. I’m a third generation mormon. . . . I was raised an ultra-believing mormon. I’ve been a missionary myself and have served five years as a bishop. I was serving for two years as a High Councilor when my eyes were finally opened and I saw the Church as it really is.

It was a terrible experience to realize everything I was based on lies by a handful of 19th Century crazy villains. For weeks I stood alone in my realization, fearful of the consequences of telling my wife, parents, siblings and extended family. I think I will bear the scars of the psychological damage forever. Eventually, I told my wife (a fourth generation mormon), who believed me, and my parents, who respected my decision even if they would rather not research themselves.

I immediately asked to be released from the Stake High Council and sent my resignation letter, along with my wife and children. As I was a very visible figure in the Stake, of course it sent shockwaves throughout the membership. Half a dozen have already left the Church after I did and others are still reeling from it.

The final trigger to the process that led me out of the Church were the “essays” [Gospel Topics on www.lds.org], but I know they were a mere consequence of the work you two pioneered many decades ago. I’m so thankful to the courage you had to invest your life to help people that had nothing but hate for you. I’ve watched Sandra’s interview on MormonStories [podcast], and I can only imagine the huge personal cost you had to pay as individuals and as a family . . . I don’t know if there’s a god, but if there is, I hope he will reward you for standing for what is right. My family and descendents for many generations will be free because of your sincere work.

June 2014: Hey just wanted to let you know that I loved your interview with John Dehlin. I was not planning on listening when he said he was interviewing you but I found you so sincere, and interesting. I appreciate the work you do.) . . . It gave me good advice on how to proceed with my wife and children. I feel like god can get our family through this. Although it will be very tough . . .

My wife has a strong testimony. I feel bad bc we married as strong members and I feel that it’s letting her down, and not giving her what she planned when we married in the temple. She is troubled w[ith] the idea of having to live polygamy in the next life tho.

July 2014: I am always amazed at people like you....if you want to try to discredit the L.D.S Church........what do you have that I would want in my life... nothing....after you have gone to University why would you want to return to grade one........It must be easy to tell people the L.D.S Church is wrong. Didn’t you act in or present “The God Makers”? I watched that movie and I could disprove everything that was said....my comment to the people like you or that showed it .......was this........why don’t you do something good with your life instead of running down something that is so good and true....Is your Church man made.....it sounds like it is.....I have 17 points that prove that the L.D.S Church is true........do you know that Satan shows a few truths and the rest are lies........

[Nothing was deleted from the message. The man inserted all the periods.]
July 2014: First, let me say that Mrs. Tanner . . . has given me "new light" on Mormonism and the many fallacies therein. I thank her and I want her and all of you associated with UTLM to know that I, as a black man, am sincerely grateful for your candid, open, honest exposure . . . This for me started, obviously, with the "mark of Cain" issue. As an intelligent, information seeking hound it became a personal crusade of mine to just understand the strange beliefs of Mormonism. And thanks to UTLM and other resources, I am much more equipped to help in the plight of misguided Mormons. Thanks.

July 2014: Just wanted to say: if two years ago someone would have told me I would 'like' something "Sandra Tanner" said on Facebook, I would have called them crazy! . . . I listened to one or two of Dehlin’s podcasts before but somehow recently had the time to listen to all of yours with him. It really opened my eyes as to how 'The Church' — both formally and informally — manages its image. Your (and your husband's) story was — totally believable! I’m so glad to be now seeking out information on my own rather than taking only what gets endorsed by the church. Cheers to you, and thank you for sharing your story!

July 2014: I know the church is true and Book of Mormon and the bible and Doctrine Covenants Pearl of Great Price are the fullness of the gospel. . . . You need to come back to the church Sandra. Your salvation depends on it.

August 2014: I have just watched a few of your youtube videos. I bought your book Mormonism Shadow or Reality back in 1978 and ate it up. I was in my last year of Bible College at the time. I commend you on your stedfastness through all these years. God Bless you!

August 2014: I just watched ALL of your fascinating interviews with John Dehlin of Mormon Stories. Thanks . . . They opened to me an even clearer picture of the outrageous treachery of Joseph and most of the leaders who followed him. I was struck by your simple honesty in reporting your and Jerald's courageous journey over many years and sharing your vast knowledge about the machinations of the Mormon hierarchy. Though I have not been a member of the Mormon church for many years, I still find it necessary to explore writings which reveal truths more recently uncovered. It broke my heart to leave the Mormon church, but I knew it was necessary to prevent the slow strangling of my soul.

August 2014: You, my friend, are sunshine. I’m early on in my journey, still going to church most Sundays but it is becoming harder to separate myself and just go to my mental happy place when I hear things that aren’t quite true. I’ve begun to broach tough subjects with my cute hubby, but the last thing I want to do is have people think I’m filled with darkness when this new awareness in me of true Christianity is making me feel filled with light. Not sure where to go from here but I’m trying to learn all I can and be honest about things without being antagonistic and picking a fight. Tricky balance when I’ve always just tried to make people happy and not stressed. Thank you for your courage and research and candor. I really hope to get to meet you someday!!!

August 2014: I previously ordered UTLM’s first seven digital (PDF) book offerings and am delighted with the quality and portability of those books most of which I also own in their original print editions.
Kurt Van Gorden is an ordained minister and directs two missions to the cults, Jude 3 Missions and the Utah Gospel Mission. He is a researcher, contributor, and editor for 16 apologetic books. (www.utahgospelmission.com)

In 2007, while co-writing The Kingdom of the Occult (Nelson, 2008), I was investigating whether astrology or horoscopes carried any sway among Mormon leaders.1 That was when I discovered thirteen issues of the Deseret Almanac series, published from 1851-1865, which I had never seen before. They were compiled by a respected Latter-day Saint and educator, William Wines (W. W.) Phelps,2 and printed by a member of the LDS First Presidency, Willard Richards, the Second Counselor to Brigham Young. Not to be confused with the modern LDS publication under a similar name, Deseret News Church Almanac (1974 to the present), the nineteenth-century publication followed the motif of New England and European almanacs, with calendric coordination of planetary movement and weather forecasting, although the Deseret Almanac rejected astrological (occult) forecasting.

These early publications yield a trove of new quotations, offering fresh insights of nineteenth-century Mormon doctrine, its propagation, and in some cases, its changes.3

This cache of documents, which seems like an odd place for doctrine, provides us with multiple references about the uniquely Mormon concepts that God the Father is a resurrected mortal man who was born on another planet, that the Father has a father god who is Jesus' grandfather god, that the Father is married to the Queen of Heaven, also known as Mother God, that the Father was married to Mary to prevent Jesus from being an illegitimate child, that many gods exist, that Satan is also a spirit son of God, that the sun, moon, and stars are inhabited by humans, that dark-skinned people (particularly Lamanites and Blacks) are under a curse, and that the Bible contains a great many blunders. Numerous curiosities are mentioned in passing, such as Adam came to Earth from the planet Kolob and brought seeds to plant the Garden of Eden and that he lived in the Americas (Missouri, in particular) for 997 years.

Various repositories yielded clear copies of each edition of the Deseret Almanac and I was amazed at the doctrinal items crammed into the calendar pages. Eventually, I collected enough scans and photographs to make a feasible set.4 In a search of hundreds of Mormon books, only a few acknowledged the almanac’s existence. Stranger yet, none of these references gave any indication that they contain a wealth of LDS doctrinal matters, including the only scholarly analysis of them, by David J. Whittaker, in his BYU Studies essay.5

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2 W. W. Phelps, was appointed a regent for the Deseret University, which later became the University of Utah. Cf., Deseret Almanac, 1852, 48. See also David J. Whittaker, who wrote that one purpose of almanacs was to educate, “Almanacs in the New England Heritage of Mormonism,” BYU Studies, 29:4, (Fall 1989), 100, 104.
3 This is the first full publication and categorization of these quotations, although this article is based upon my former lecture “New Discoveries in Old Documents” at the 2014 Capstone Conference in Salt Lake City, April 12, 2014.
4 The LDS Church just recently put a set of the almanacs online, but their copies are copyrighted by the Intellectual Reserve, Inc. (the copyright arm of the church). All images used herein are from my digitized scans, photographs, and collections in the public domain and do not infringe in any way upon the copyright of IRI.
5 Whittaker, 89-113. Another scholarly assessment that focused on the occult genre, but avoided all of the religious statements, is D. Michael Quinn, Early Mormonism and the Magic World View (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1987), 215-216.
Background of the Deseret Almanac

Whittaker creates an exciting atmosphere as he threads together how the earliest Mormons, from Joseph Smith’s family to other New England Mormons, used and relied upon almanacs. Indeed, almanacs, in general, held a rich heritage in early America. Phelps considered his almanacs indispensable to Latter-day Saints, stating in an 1860 advertisement that “A person without an almanac is somewhat like a ship without a compass; he never knows what to do, nor when to do it.” Like any good salesman, he added, “Buy Almanacs, and pay the maker” (Almanac, 1860, 32). Whittaker adds these almanacs to other historical works that “constitute a large body of source material for those who wish to probe the intellectual and cultural history of early Mormonism.”

“Almanacs,” he said, “were mirrors of, as much as they were windows to, early Mormons.”

William W. Phelps was the original periodical publisher for the Mormon Church. He was one of Joseph Smith’s scribes and was, uniquely, Smith’s ghostwriter for certain works. It is not a stretch to say that he knew the prophet’s mind and was trusted by Smith to convey his thoughts. During these early years, as one Mormon historian observes, Phelps was a “Prominent Church leader 1831-38.” Still, he ran afoul of Smith in 1839, causing a brief excommunication, but Smith restored him through rebaptism the following year.

Phelps supported Brigham Young’s prophetic succession, though he was again briefly excommunicated and rebaptized in 1847, he still followed Young and the Mormons to Salt Lake City in 1849, residing there until his death in 1872. When he began publishing the almanacs, it was conducted with the counsel and approval of Brigham Young. The two were so closely associated on the almanac project that Brigham Young’s surviving copy of the 1854 Deseret Almanac is a special, leather-bound edition with the title and his name embossed in gold.

There were thirteen almanacs published by Phelps between 1851 and 1865. The title changed three times; initially it was the Deseret Almanac, covering 1851 through 1858. It changed to the Almanac in 1859 through 1864 and then back again to the Deseret Almanac in 1865. Collectively I will refer to them as the Deseret Almanac.

The 1851 almanacs were originally distributed and sold through the Post Office. Willard Richards, who was the editor of the Deseret News, provided editorial space for Phelps to explain why the almanacs are important and why they lack astrological information. Richards had a personal stake in promoting the almanac, so he published an announcement in the Deseret News, stating that it is “desirable, useful, and acceptable to the Saints of Deseret.” The LDS Church also profited by distributing the almanacs. Beginning in 1852, they were sold through the Church’s Tithing Office. There, the almanacs could be purchased by “cash, butter, eggs, cheese, lard, tallow, and such other chicken fixins [sic] as may be convenient and valuable.”

11 Cook, 87-88. Phelps served on the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Utah (1841-1857), was the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and was appointed the Superintendent of Meteorological Observations (1857). Interestingly, his associate for the almanacs, Richards, was President of the Legislature Assembly while Phelps served his position.

12 Whittaker references a number of personal letters between Phelps and Young, where he sought Young’s counsel and input prior to publishing them. See Whittaker, 112, n. 40, 42, 45, 46, 48, and 113, n. 50.


15 Deseret News, (8 February 1851): 2. This is not surprising, since Richards, the printer, was also the Postmaster for the Post Office at the time.

16 Ibid. Also in Deseret News, (8 March 1851): 3.


Phelps published a renouncement of astrology in the first three almanacs, 1851-1853. His article for the Deseret News was rationally sound and contained reasons why astrology is untrustworthy. Later, though, in 1857, Brigham Young persuaded him that astrology was true and belonged to the holy Priesthood, so Phelps changed his mind accordingly. Both Young and Phelps rejected astrology again in 1861.19

The Contents

The first few almanacs (1851-1854) contain most of the theological statements of interest to students of Mormonism. The Improvement Era commented on them in 1948, “Of course the Deseret Almanacs were published for the benefit of the Church and contained Church historical material, including the birthdates of the General Authorities.”20 Still, there will be Mormons who will object to these quotations but the implications cannot be ignored.

First, we have theological statements that are exclusively LDS. The Mormon cosmology of gods and goddesses, interplanetary kingdoms, and spirit-children, are examples of these exclusive doctrines. These speak of a restoration to a Mormon, but unusual or heretical concepts to a Christian.

Second, Mormons may attempt to brush them aside as merely Phelps’s opinion. This, however, magnifies the problem rather than solving it, since Phelps relied upon input from Brigham Young and Willard Richards, both members of the First Presidency. Nobody is claiming scriptural status for the almanacs, but only succinct doctrinal statements from one who was entrusted by Smith as his ghostwriter.

Third, there were no retractions or corrections of the Mormon doctrinal statements in subsequent editions, like what there was for astrology. Astrology was renounced in 1851, then reevaluated and codified by Young in 1857, and once again renounced in 1861.21 Yet all of the Mormon doctrinal statements remain intact without alteration by Phelps, Young, Richards, or any other LDS leader.

Fourth, the dissemination of the almanacs primarily came through the Church Tithing Office. This speaks volumes about the acceptance of the Mormon doctrinal statements contained in them. It was not shocking or surprising to Latter-day Saints when they read the doctrinal statements in the almanacs, because that is what was already being taught.

Fifth, there are three newer arguments that are offered by Mormon intellectuals that we may encounter. One of these is the “obscure source” argument. The thinking is that if the quotation can be marginalized as either an obscure source or a thoughtless, random one-time statement, then they no longer need to deal with it. This argument fails to recognize the fifteen-year historical weight of Phelps’s almanacs and its distribution by the LDS Church. Their historical significance belies any attempt to marginalize them.

Another tactic is to diminish the importance of a quotation from an older LDS source based upon what some Mormon defenders call “Mormon Reformation” thinking. They believe that by assigning undesirable quotations to the reformation time frame, then they do not have to account for its subject or its existence. Former BYU professor Robert Millet has popularized this and he attempts to draw a parallel between the Mormon Reformation and the fiery sermons preached by Jonathan Edwards and Protestant revivalists.

The fallacy of a false analogy arises in Millet’s position. Jonathan Edwards and Protestant revivalists did not preach false doctrine in order to bring people to the truth. Essentially, Millet and others argue for using false doctrine, like Brigham Young’s “blood atonement” sermons (their best example), to bring wayward Mormons back to restoration truth. This objection does not diminish Phelps’s doctrinal statements, which were written for the purpose of dissemination under the authority and counsel of the First Presidency. The almanacs, mainly from 1851-1854, do not fit the time period of the Mormon Reformation, which is restricted by two Mormon scholars from late 1855 to mid-1857 or more narrowly between early 1856 and mid-1857.22

Another popular objection that we encounter is the “yawn” effect. That is, the Maxwell Institute (formerly the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon

19 This is one of Whittaker’s most interesting footnotes. He wrote, “Phelps, of course, was not a farmer, and by 1857 changed his mind about astrology after a discussion with Brigham Young. After President Young told him that he believed astrology was true, Phelps wrote to Young, ‘I believe I did wrong in saying I did not know what astrology was . . . so I will now say that astrology is one of the sciences belonging to the holy Priesthood perverted by vain man.’” Whittaker, 112-113, n. 50.

20 Improvement Era, (1948).

21 See n. 16 on previous page. In January 1857, the Utah Territorial Legislature created an office of Superintendent of Meteorological Observations and appointed Phelps as its first superintendent. Whittaker, 103. This may have fostered renewed discussion about the place of astrology in Mormon thinking, which Young then favored.

Studies—FARMS) fosters the idea that Evangelical Christians rehash the same old worn-out statements and quotations that have been published for decades.\textsuperscript{23} Apparently, the reasoning is that if a quotation can be labeled as boring, with a yawn for emphasis, then it no longer needs to be answered or even acknowledged.

However, merely closing one’s eyes to it does not make it go away. One reason why Evangelical Christians often repeat the same theme is simply because each time they have a new audience. By analogy, one would be remiss to condemn a school teacher as boring because he or she teaches the same lessons without considering that each year it is also a new audience. The same is true among Evangelicals who compare Christianity with competing religious truth claims.

God the Father is a resurrected mortal man who was born on another planet.

The Mormon view that God progressed from a man to an exalted Being is different from anything found in the history of Christianity. In proper theology, the nature and attributes of God are perfect and absolute. We call God immutable for good reason, since he himself declared, “I am the LORD, I change not” (Malachi 3:6).\textsuperscript{24} God does not change with time, he does not grow older (Psalm 102:26) or learn new things (Psalm 139:1-6) or become more powerful (Matthew 19:26). He is immutable. This prevents him from becoming a lying, evil, or unholy being, which is impossible, according to (Hebrews 6:17-18).

Mormonism supersedes biblical teachings with new revelation about God. In the Doctrine and Covenants, Joseph Smith wrote, “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s . . .” (130:22). His revelatory powers were on full display when he preached one of his most famous sermons, the King Follett Discourse. In it, he told Latter-day Saints that their God began with a human body like theirs. Smith said, “I will go back to the beginning before the world was, to show what kind of a being God is . . . God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did.”\textsuperscript{25} In this April 7, 1844, funeral sermon, Joseph Smith revealed that God the Father was a man from another earthlike planet.

The planet where God the Father was born and grew up, where he “dwell on an earth,” is not Kolob. Kolob is the planet mentioned in the Book of Abraham as “nigh unto the throne of God” (Abraham 3:9). The planet where the Father was born remained a mystery to many Mormons. If we look back to the mid-1850s, we will find that the name of the Father’s birth planet was known by quite a number of Latter-day Saints. In fact, all subscribers and readers of the Deseret Almanac knew about it. Phelps made the following statements on the daily calendar about Teman being the planet where God the Father was born, reared, and worshiped a god who preceded him. In poetic form, he wrote,

God, like man, has a spirit,  
God was a man and came from Teman.  
(Deseret Almanac, 1852, 7).

The following two statements are in the same edition where Teman is mentioned:

\begin{quote}
OUR FATHER IN THE HEAVENS.  
. . . Then our Father in his youth,  
Came from Teman full of truth . . .  
(Deseret Almanac, 1852, 8)
\end{quote}

PHILOSOPHY OF THE HEAVENS.  
. . . Every world “rolls on its wings,” and is controlled by a God . . .  
—and, as quick as sight or thought, a look, a sign, or a hint to God in Kolob, Teman, or any glorified kingdom, brings assistance, that earth and hell cannot demonstrate.  
(Deseret Almanac, 1852, 37)

Phelps wrote that preexistent spirit babies lived on Kolob. Teman, though, is where God keeps records.


24 The immutability (changelessness) of God is itself a divine attribute. It is based upon both observations of his nature in Scripture and his self-declaration. The word “immutable” is used twice in Hebrews 6:17-18, to declare God’s absoluteness in his decrees and nature. God, in Malachi 3:6 states it strongly, “I change not,” and Hebrews 1:10-12 tells us that He remains the same.

Call, O call me back to Kolob,  
When the resurrection’s pass’d!  
For I love my Father’s garden—  
Where the first will be the last:—  
(Deseret Almanac, 1854, 6)

In his mansion with my mother  
As I sat upon her knee—  
Sacred records kept in “Teman,”  
Till the flesh has conquered sin,—  
By the Priesthood, faith and virtue.  
Then I’ll know them all again!  
(Deseret Almanac, 1854, 8)

Brigham Young also taught that the Father came from Teman. In a sermon, found in the Journal of Discourses, Young used a verse from Habakkuk as his proof that God is a man:

Our former religious traditions has taught us that our Father in heaven has no tabernacle, that his center is everywhere and his circumference nowhere. Yet we read that “God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran.” . . . The idea that the Lord our God is not a personage of tabernacle is entirely a mistaken notion. He was once a man. (9:286)

A search of Mormon books on DVD databases produces little information about the Father’s birth planet, but it seemed popular in the nineteenth century. The verse that Young uses from Habakkuk has nothing to do with a star or planet. The verse speaks of Teman as a place to the south of Israel. Biblical commentaries have identified Teman as Africa. It began as an individual’s name in the Old Testament (Genesis 36:11). His posterity built dwelling places to the south of Israel, which was later called Teman. It has nothing to do with a fixed star and certainly nothing to do with a planet where the Father was born.

God the Father had a Father God before him, who is Jesus’ grandfather god.

In the article below, Phelps synthesized the Book of Abraham with Smith’s teaching about the Father’s god, who is Jesus’ grandfather god. This is based upon a false reading of Habakkuk 3:3.

BIBLE ASTRONOMY.

The nearest “fixed star” must be Mount Paran, mentioned by Habakkuk, the fruitful world of glory where the “Holy One” came from; or rather Kolob, where our Father in the Heavens resides in the midst of his glory and kingdoms.

The next nearest “fixed star,” also mentioned by Habakkuk, must be Teman, the world of perfection where God came from to do the works of his Father, spoken of by John the Revelator, (Rev. 1:6,) which Father of God, and grand father of Jesus Christ, must now be living in one of the eternity of eternities—which closes the Lord’s prayer in the Greek version, and is mentioned by John, (Rev. 19—3, &c.) (Deseret Almanac, 1852, page 5. Jesus’ grandfather god.)

Joseph Smith claimed that God the Father had a Father when he was on his earthlike planet. Smith used Revelation 1:6 (And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father:) to support his idea, which Phelps repeated. However, Smith misread the King James Version in Revelation 1:6 and did not check his rendering of it against the Greek New Testament. Smith and Phelps are reading it as two persons, “God and his Father,” whereas the Greek New Testament text has one definite article, indicating one person, which is properly translated as “His God and Father.”

Joseph Smith contradicts his earlier rendering with his “Joseph Smith Translation” on Revelation 1:6. When he had the opportunity to call attention to the two gods that he preached in 1844, from Rev. 1:6, he instead translated it as one God: “And hath made us kings and priest unto God, his Father: to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” Smith removed the word “and,” making both “God” and “Father” descriptions of one person.

God the Father is married to a celestial goddess wife, the Queen of Heaven, also known as Mother God in Mormonism.

The Mother God doctrine in Mormonism is an elusive one. Only in recent years have we seen more sincere, open and frank discussions about the Father’s heavenly wife among Mormons. Most quotations about her, though few, were indirect and were implied with vague terms, like “heavenly parents.” The most popular and perhaps boldest quotation is the third stanza of the 160-year-old hymn, “O My Father,” penned by Eliza Snow in October 1845, and it remains in the Mormon hymnal today:

In the heavens are parents single?
No; the thought makes reason stare!
Truth is reason, truth eternal
Tells me I’ve a mother there.²⁷

Phelps, whose doctrinal input is the core of our study, wrote a hymn about Mother God a year ahead of Snow, he indirectly wrote of her in the Times and Seasons, but by the end of 1844, he was calling her the Father’s partner, “Mother, the Queen,” in a hymn sung during the dedication of the Nauvoo Seventies Hall, in December 1844:²⁸

Come to me; here’s the myst’ry that man hath not seen:
Here’s our Father in heaven, and Mother, the Queen,
Here are worlds that have been, and the worlds yet to be:
Here’s eternity,—endless; amen: Come to me.²⁹

Still, aside from Snow’s popular hymn, there are two often-quoted General Authorities who published books that included Mother God up to the mid-1900s, Apostle James E. Talmage, in 1901, and Milton Hunter, a member of the First Council of Seventy, in 1945.

³⁰ Talmage, in his exposition of the LDS Articles of Faith, wrote, “Neither of the sexes is complete in itself as a counterpart of Deity. We are expressly told that God is the Father of spirits, and to apprehend the literalness of this solemn truth we must know that a mother of spirits is an existent personality.”³¹

³² Hunter wrote, “The stupendous truth of the existence of a Heavenly Mother, as well as a Heavenly Father, became established facts in Mormon theology.”³³ In later years, he added, “Thus males were created in the image and likeness of God the Eternal Father while the females were formed in the image and likeness of God their Eternal Mother.”³⁴ Other than that, the discussions were privileged and infrequent, intended for the faithful Saints at LDS Conferences or faithful readers of Improvement Era and Ensign.

It was not until the more open years in the last half of the twentieth century that we find candid references to Mother God, especially in topical references, like the Encyclopedia of Mormonism (1992) and Bruce R. McConkie’s Mormon Doctrine (1966), where each devoted an entry to her. By the twenty-first century, we find Mormon publications venturing into the discussion along with books by Mormon women of a feminist flair.³⁵ None are quite as authoritative as the official website of the LDS Church, where an essay directly referenced her in 2014.³⁶ Earlier published references have been scant to say the best of them. The exception is the Deseret Almanac of the mid-1850s, which provide six published and circulated direct quotations about her.

There are three views of “the Queen of Heaven” among Mormon writers. One is in the doctrinal sense, where the Queen of Heaven is Mother God. The other two are condemned as pagan by Mormons, both in Jeremiah’s day, where the people worshiped the Queen of Heaven, and in the Christian era, where Catholics venerate Mary as the Queen of Heaven. Returning to the former, the sense in which Mormons believe that it describes Mother God, this originated in Nauvoo, in 1844, with Phelps’ Times and Seasons hymn and the following article.

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²⁷ Originally under the title “My Father in Heaven,” it was published in the Mormon periodical, Times and Seasons 6 (15 November 1845): 1039; and it entered the Mormon hymnal in 1851. So beloved is her hymn that it has been quoted in a few LDS Conference speeches by General Authorities as a reference. Other General Authorities have quoted her in their books when discussing Mother God in a more genteel manner, as “heavenly parents.”


³⁰ James E. Talmage, Articles of Faith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1901), 401.

³¹ Milton R. Hunter, Gospel Through the Ages (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1945), 104.

³² Milton R. Hunter, Pearl of Great Price Commentary, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1951), 114.


A letter by William Smith, one of Joseph Smith's brothers, dated November 10, 1844, was published in the *Times and Seasons* by the editor, John Taylor, an Apostle at the time. W. W. Phelps was assigned to answer it, which he did on December 25, 1844. In his answer, we find Mother God referred to twice as the Queen of Heaven in an official LDS periodical. These two periodicals precede the *Deseret Almanac* by ten years.

Phelps expanded on this idea in an 1852 Deseret Almanac article entitled, “The Eternal Mother.” Below is the first article solely devoted to Mother God in Mormonism.

**THE ETERNAL MOTHER.**

The 11th chapter and 7th verse of Job, rightly rendered from the original Hebrew, reads:—“Who has searched out God? Canst thou find out the Eternal Mother? Canst thou find out the perfection of the Almighty?”

All right; spiritually or temporally, there cannot be a father without a mother, in truth, to continue the ad infinitum of lives,—except the sectarian god, who has neither body, parts, or passions; he has no wife, and, of course, he had no mother. “Oh gracious!” inquires the philosophising [sic] granny, “where did he come from?” “Why,” replies the King’s Jester, “maybe he is one of the Misses Lucifer’s come-by-chances.” Now hush, you,—slanderizing the Prince of this world’s family. Hush! (*Deseret Almanac*, 1852, 32)

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Notice here that Phelps found it irresistible to take shots at the biblical God because we, as Christians, do not teach that the Father has a body, a wife, and a mother. He then ridiculed Christianity as an entity by calling us Lucifer’s family, “the Prince of this world’s family.” In this article, he agrees with Joseph Smith that the Father had a Father, but he goes further by opening up a succession of Mother Gods; the Father had a Mother too.

Prior to this, in the 1851 issue, he asked “Who is the Queen of Heaven?” His answer followed, “The King’s wife” (*Deseret Almanac*, 1851, 9). Then in the calendar “fillers” for the following year, he added, “there are Kings, there are Queens . . . The Queen of heaven hath a husband” (*Deseret Almanac*, 1852, 10, 13). We further find a blessing by the Heavenly Parents upon their Son, “the blessing of the King and Queen of heaven, upon their Son, before he came down, upon his mission . . .” (*Deseret Almanac*, 1854, 24). Phelps, who adapted well to prose and poetry, wrote a short blurb about “The Epitome of Truth.” In it, he includes, among other things, “The Virtues of the Queens of Heaven” (*Deseret Almanac*, 1855, 20).

No current Mormon writer credits Phelps with the origin of his 1852 statement, “There cannot be a father without a mother,” yet it has been often quoted in Mormon speeches and was included in Bruce R. McConkie’s *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:159.

**Polytheism—the belief that many gods exist and man can become a god.**

One does not have to worship multiple gods in order to be a polytheist. All one has to do is recognize the existence of more than one god and, by definition, one is a poly-theist. Everything we have seen so far, the Father’s Father, the Father’s Mother, the Father’s wife, and the heavenly Kings and Queens, speak of polytheism, which doctrine is rejected by the Bible. Jews, and therefore Christians, are strictly monotheists. Both the Old and New Testaments attest to this. If one God exists without compromising the terms, then everything discussed so far in Mormonism falls woefully short of the truth. Consider these verses:

> Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else. (Deuteronomy 4:39)

> Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD. (Deuteronomy 6:4)

> Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. (Isaiah 43:10)

> Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? Ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any. (Isaiah 44:8)
And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord. (Mark 12:29)

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. (James 2:19)

Whether one calls it polytheism or plural gods, it is the same. We begin with another short article by Phelps in which he not only promotes polytheism, but he claims that Virgil was a Mormon!

**Virgil a Mormon.**

Virgil, the poet, who was born 70 years before Christ, and flourished and died before the birth of Jesus, represents the Great Apollo, speaking from the heavens, and addressing a youth thus:

“Macie nova virtute puer, sic itur ad astra;
“Dis genite, et geniture Deos.”

Imitated in English thus:

Go on in virtue, boy;
so is the way to the stars;
You were begotten by the gods,
and gods by you must be begot.

*(Deseret Almanac, 1852, 32)*

Salvation belongs to saved beings—but exaltation belongs to the Gods. *(Deseret Almanac, 1853, 7)*

Light is as the great ocean of the Gods, for the commerce of the heavens, without attraction or gravity. *(Deseret Almanac, 1853, 13)*

Economy in labor, economy in land, economy in living, economy in salvation, economy in heaven, and economy with God, constitute one portion of glory, that is as infinite and eternal and perpetually progressive, as the perfections of the Gods, which increase with the ceaseless rounds of existences. *(Deseret Almanac, 1854, 12)*

The Book of Abraham as translated by Joseph Smith, gives seven thousand years for the creation by the Gods. *(Almanac, 1860, 22)*

Zion Is the house of the Gods, said Obadiah. *(Almanac, 1864, 26)*

**Preexistent spirit-children and Mary’s other husband, God.**

In Mormonism, the Father was once a mortal and evidently retains procreative powers in his resurrected, exalted state. He procreates children in heaven with his wife, among whom Jesus was the firstborn and Lucifer was the second (cf. Book of Moses 1:13), and everyone else followed. The term “sired” is used frequently in Mormonism to describe the sexual procreative act of the Father begetting spirit children in heaven and siring the body of Jesus on earth. Of Jesus’ preexistence, Phelps wrote, “...he had a Father and Mother in heaven” *(Deseret Almanac, 1854, 22)*.

In a search of the word *sired*, as used in a database of Mormon books, it is used seven times to represent God the Father begetting us through his goddess wife, as preexistent spirit children and twice of him siring the preexistent Jesus. *(LDS Collectors Library, 2005)*

The word *sired* is used nineteen times to describe the Father siring the body of Jesus on earth through Mary, which is why two early Mormons, Brigham Young and Orson Pratt, legitimized it by claiming that the Father was married to Mary, as her other husband. Now we have another source stating the same thing, from the *Deseret Almanac*. This was not a hidden doctrine in the 1850s. It was published widely through The Seer, by Pratt, Young’s sermons *(Journal of Discourses)*, and the *Deseret Almanac*, by Phelps.

Phelps stated, “God was married, or how could he beget his Son Jesus Christ lawfully, and do the works of his father?” *(Deseret Almanac, 1853, 7)*. In other words, had the Father not been married to Mary, then their child Jesus would have been illegitimate. This accords

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perfectly with what Young and Pratt said on the same subject, but Phelps and the Deseret Almanac would have been first to publish it, which makes Apostle Pratt and Prophet Young following his lead.37

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Adam and the Garden of Eden in Missouri.

In the preexistence, according to some Mormon writers, Adam (some say all of us) helped to make the earth. It is taught among the Mormons that the earth is a copy of another planet. Everything was brought here in seed form and planted, often referred to as first spiritual then temporal. The Deseret Almanac clarifies it, “Who is the ‘oldest inhabitant?’ Adam, according to the Bible. Where did Adam get his seed for the garden of Eden? Brought it from his father’s garden. Earthly things are pattern’d after heavenly” (1853, 8).

Adam planted seeds in the earth, particularly in the Garden of Eden that was located in today’s Missouri, and he lived there for nearly 1,000 years. The council of Gods sent Adam to the earth, “English bids fair, to become the great, last, and best, till the Lord restores a ‘pure language,’ even the one that Adam brought from Kolob, or the celestial garden, when he came to this globe and gave names to all,—according to the council of the Gods in the ‘elder world’” (Deseret Almanac, 1853, 14). Phelps also stated, “Adam, in Adam-ondi-Ahman [Missouri], held a blessing meeting, and blessed his children—aged 997 years, three years previous to his death” (Deseret Almanac, 1852, 38).

In this article, Phelps is praising the strengths of the United States in relationship to the Bible. He states that Adam lived in what is now the United States, as did Enoch, and Noah, where he also built his ark. He wrote:

The land where the “United States” once flourished as a free government for the good of mankind, was a “choice land” beyond the common knowledge of the world. Upon that land was planted the Garden of Eden, before Satan brought sin along to try virtue. Upon that land, Adam offered sacrifice, repented, was baptized, received the gift of the Holy Ghost, raised a large family by Eve. Upon that land, Enoch built up Zion, which was translated to heaven. Upon that land, Noah built the Ark, which saved some of all flesh for the present world. (Almanac, 1862, 30)

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Condemnation of the Bible.

The eighth Article of Faith in the LDS Church states, “We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.” Notice that doubt is cast only upon the Bible, but not upon the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon fostered skepticism about the Bible in several places, so it is no wonder that Mormons question the Bible.38 The Almanac states it with these words:

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37 Orson Pratt wrote, “The Father and Mother of Jesus, according to the flesh, must have been associated together in the capacity of Husband and Wife; hence the Virgin Mary must have been, for the time being, the lawful wife of God the Father…Inasmuch as God was the first husband to her, it may be that He only gave her to be the wife of Joseph while in this mortal state,” (“Celestial Marriage,” in The Seer, vol. 1, no. 10 (October 1853), 158. Young made his declaration August 19, 1866, “The man Joseph, the husband of Mary, did not, that we know of, have more than one wife, but Mary the wife of Joseph had another husband. On this account infidels have called the Savior a bastard.” (Journal of Discourses, 11:268). Young and Pratt use both arguments that Phelps used, the Father was Mary’s husband to prevent Jesus from being illegitimate.

38 Cf., 1 Nephi 29:3-6; 29:10.
TRANSLATORS’ BLUNDERS.
The Bible contains a great many blunders which causes the unlearned to doubt the divine authority of revelation. The Book of Mormon, the Saints true interpreter, says, all the most plain and precious parts of Scripture were taken away—by the translators. *(Almanac, 1861, 22)*

**People on the sun, moon, and stars.**

There have been statements made from the time of Joseph Smith to Brigham Young, claiming that there were inhabitants of the moon and the sun. Young said, “Who can tell us of the inhabitants of this little planet that shines of an evening, called the moon? . . . when you inquire about the inhabitants of that sphere you find that the most learned are as ignorant in regard to them as the ignorant of their fellows. So it is in regard to the inhabitants of the sun. Do you think it is inhabited? I rather think it is. Do you think there is any life there? No question of it; it was not made in vain.”

This was not an uncommon thought in the nineteenth century. As a church publication, though, we would not expect such speculation. The *Deseret Almanac* references people on the sun, “Now who lives in the sun? Now Sects! Wonder! Philosophers stare!” (1852, 13). The almanac had even more to say about the inhabitants of the moon, who view the earth through their telescopes and read by the light of the earth:

**THE MOON.**

Every one, perhaps, is not aware how the earth appears to the inhabitants of the Moon. As more than three fifths of the earth is covered with water, and being nearly 13 times larger than the moon, a full earth must be a grand sight! The earth light there must be sufficient to read and work by. Again, as the moon always keeps the same side to the earth, those who live on the back side, must naturally enjoy themselves in taking pleasure rides to the Frontiers, to view through their telescopes, and Urim and Thumims, the earth’s grandeur, and glory, and some of the curiosities of their next worldly neighbors.

Aside from our neighboring planets in this solar system, the distant stars are also inhabited, “The stars are worlds of people” (*Deseret Almanac*, 1853, 5). Phelps also taught the “Priesthood” presides “over the planets and stars, and their beings, forever . . . to the millions of worlds and their people, forever” (*Deseret Almanac*, 1851, 3).

**Racist statements about Indians and Blacks.**

The Book of Mormon presents the world with the idea that sinfulness directly influences skin tone. The Book of Mormon divides people into two classes, white and dark. It classifies one group of people as “white, exceedingly fair, and delightful,” the Nephites (2 Nephi 5:21). The other group, “a dark, and loathsome, and a filthy people, full of idleness and all manner of abominations,” who are the Lamanites (1 Nephi 12:23). These people were cursed by God with dark skin, “the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them” (2 Nephi 5:21).

Joseph Smith added the same concept to the Book of Moses, with a racist curse upon Blacks, “and there was a blackness came upon all the children of Canaan, that they were despised among all people . . . the seed of Cain were black, and had not place among them” (Book of Moses 7:8, 22).

The almanacs also carried the racist idea that Lamanites and Blacks are cursed with dark skin, “What Makes the difference in color among men? Transgressions of crime” (*Deseret Almanac*, 1851, 9). And, Phelps published this poem at the brink of the Civil War, in 1860:

> And then, alas! Ham’s Canaan,  
> So dark—must dig (ah me !)  
> The “’servants’ servant,” be  
> The under stock of ages  
> —Still cursed, and black.  
> *(Almanac, 1860, 28)*

**Conclusion:**

There was a wealth of information to mine from these almanacs that have rarely been cited in any works. The usefulness of these quotations is not so much a question of their authority to speak for the LDS Church, though they were distributed through the Tithing Office, but they show us that some of the teachings that circulated in the mid-1800s were not isolated statements or random thoughts. They were teachings that were left in a record that sheds light upon the Mormon thinking and culture of the day.
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Problems in the LDS Essays on Plural Marriage

The startling headline in the New York Times read “It’s Official: Mormon Founder Had Up to 40 Wives.” The article explained:

Mormon leaders have acknowledged for the first time that the church’s founder and prophet, Joseph Smith, portrayed in church materials as a loyal partner to his loving spouse Emma, took as many as 40 wives, some already married and one only 14 years old.

The church’s disclosures, in a series of essays online, are part of an effort to be transparent about its history at a time when church members are increasingly encountering disturbing claims about the faith on the Internet.

Further on in the Times article we read:

Most of Smith’s wives were between the ages of 20 and 40, the essay says, but he married Helen Mar Kimball, a daughter of two close friends, “several months before her 15th birthday.” A footnote says that according to “careful estimates,” Smith had 30-40 wives.

The biggest bombshell for some in the essays is that Smith married women who were already married, some to men who were Smith’s friends and followers.

Prior to the New York Times article, many Latter-day Saints had not heard of the new Gospel Topics essays posted on the official LDS web site. One Mormon man, who recently came to our ministry to visit, told how this was the first he knew about the number of Joseph Smith’s wives, their ages and that some were already married to other men. This launched him on a journey of discovery to learn what else the LDS Church had failed to mention during his lifetime, and now he is contemplating leaving the church. This is not an isolated event.

The unwelcomed attention drawn to Joseph Smith’s life, along with a number of other media articles about Smith’s many wives, may explain the sudden drop in the references to Joseph Smith in the recent April 2015 LDS Conference.

Gospel Topics Essays

Starting in 2013 the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has issued a number of essays dealing with controversial aspects of their history on their web site, www.lds.org, under the heading of Gospel Topics. At the October 2013 LDS Conference, Dieter Uchtdorf, second Counselor to LDS President Thomas S. Monson, acknowledged:

Some struggle with unanswered questions about things that have been done or said in the past. We openly acknowledge that in nearly 200 years of Church history—along with an uninterrupted line of inspired, honorable and divine events—there have been some things said and done that could cause people to question. . . . And, to be perfectly frank there have been times when members or leaders in the Church have simply made mistakes. There may have been things said or done that were not in harmony with our values, principles, or doctrine.

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2 Imgur, “Number of times speakers said “Joseph Smith” in General Conference; online at https://imgur.com/eLcBqT7

3 A list of the LDS essays, including links, can be found at http://www.nearingkolob.com/lds-org-essays/

Unfortunately, Mr. Uchtdorf failed to inform us as to the nature of these “mistakes.” However, one may speculate that he was referring to the problems covered in the recent LDS essays. One of these topics is polygamy.

From the 1830s to the present there have been charges of immorality leveled against Mormonism’s founder, Joseph Smith. While Smith repeatedly denied having relationships with any women other than his legal wife, the LDS Church is now being more open about his multiple marriages.

Over the last two years the LDS Church has posted four essays on the topic of polygamy:
1. Plural Marriage in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
2. Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo
3. Plural Marriage and Families in Early Utah
4. The Manifesto and the End of Plural Marriage

While it is encouraging to see LDS leaders be more forthright about their troubled past, the essays still maintain a fog over the more troubling aspects.

In this article we will address a few of the major problems in the four LDS essays. While we do not intend to go through the essays line by line, a closer look at the opening article demonstrates the careful massaging of the story.

**Essay: Plural Marriage in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints**

The first sentence states: “Latter-day Saints believe that the marriage of one man and one woman is the Lord’s standing law of marriage.”

The misleading nature of this statement can be seen in the simple fact that the revelation commanding plural marriage, section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants, is still a part of their scriptures, making it a part of their doctrine.

Also, men today are allowed to be sealed [married] to multiple women by marrying again in the temple after the death of a wife or after a divorce. At least two of the current LDS apostles have married in the temple after the death of their first wife: Dallin Oaks and Russell M. Nelson.

According to Mormon doctrine, these men will have both of their wives as eternal mates in the Celestial Kingdom. Since it is currently possible for a living LDS man to be sealed to multiple women, thus guaranteeing the practice of polygamy in heaven, it appears that the church is not committed to “one man, one woman.” Why don’t they just admit they still believe in the doctrine of plural marriage?

The next sentence is equally misleading: “In biblical times, the Lord commanded some to practice plural marriage—the marriage of one man and more than one woman.” However, the Bible does not record a single instance of God commanding a man to take additional wives. Yes, there are polygamists in the Old Testament, but not because of a religious doctrine or command from God, but because of the culture of the day. The LDS article gives a footnote to Genesis 16, where Sarah, who had been barren, tells Abraham to take her maid in order to have a child. However, the Bible says nothing about God commanding this but rather that “Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai” (Genesis 16:2).

Genesis 16:5 makes it clear that Sarah had initiated the union: “And Sarai said unto Abram, my wrong be upon thee . . . ” On the other hand, Doctrine and Covenants 132:65 states: “. . . I, the Lord his God . . . commanded Abraham to take Hagar to wife.”

Although some of the kings mentioned in the Old Testament had many wives, Deuteronomy 17:17 condemned this practice: “Neither shall he [the king] multiply wives to himself that his heart turn not away . . . ” There is no mention in the New Testament of any of the apostles practicing polygamy. In fact, in 1 Timothy the bishops and deacons were instructed to be “the husband of one wife” (1 Timothy 3:2, 12). In Titus we find that elders are to be “the husband of one wife” (Titus 1:5, 6). Even the Book of Mormon says that polygamy is an abomination in Jacob 2:24 and 27:

> Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord. . . .

> Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none.

Another Old Testament statute that Joseph Smith broke was the prohibition against sexual relations with a mother and daughter or sisters. Smith married Patty Sessions and her daughter Sylvia, plus four sets of sisters, Zina and Presendia Huntington, Delcena and Almera Johnson, Sarah and Maria Lawrence and Emily and Eliza Partridge.

While polygamy, like slavery, was practiced by people in the Old Testament, there is nothing to indicate that it was a doctrine instituted by God.

**1831 Polygamy Revelation**

The LDS essay then states: “By revelation, the Lord commanded Joseph Smith to institute the practice of plural marriage among Church members in the early 1840s.”

While on the surface the statement is correct, it obscures the origins of Smith’s polygamy. In the essay *Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo,* it is admitted that Joseph Smith had already received a revelation on polygamy as early as 1831, just a year after the founding of the LDS Church. However, the only 1831 revelation on the subject seems to be the one regarding married missionaries taking Native American wives. Historian Richard Van Wagoner observed:

> It is difficult to determine exactly when Joseph Smith first felt compelled to practice polygamy. W.W. Phelps recollected three decades after the fact in an 1861 letter to

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5 George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy: ...but we called it celestial marriage.* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2008), pp. 29-35.

6 Sandra Tanner, “LDS Leaders Still Believe There Will Be Polygamy in Heaven,” online at www.utlm.org/onlineresources/ldsleadersbelievepolygamyinheaven.htm

7 See Leviticus 18:9, 11, 18.
Brigham Young that on 17 July 1831, when he and five others had gathered in Jackson County, Missouri, Smith stated: “It is my will, that in time, ye should take unto you wives of the Lamanites and Nephites [Native Americans], that their posterity may become white, delightsome and just.” Phelps added in a postscript that “about three years after this was given, I asked brother Joseph, privately, how ‘we,’ that were mentioned in the revelation could take wives of the ‘natives’ as we were all married men?” He claimed that Smith replied, “In the same manner that Abraham took Hagar and Keturah; and Jacob took Rachel, Bilhah and Zilpha, by Revelation.”

As far as we know, there were no marriages at that time between the LDS missionaries and the Native Americans. But it does show that Smith was open to polygamy even at this early date. Another factor that may have raised the question of polygamy in Smith’s mind was his recent work on his new version of the Bible, where he would have read about polygamy in Genesis.

1835 Doctrine and Covenants

Overlooked in the essays is an explanation of the denial of plural marriage in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, section 101:

In as much as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy: we declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife; and one woman, but one husband, except in the case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again.

This denial may have been precipitated by rumors of Joseph Smith’s union with Fanny Alger, a teenager living in the Smith home between 1833 and 1836 in Ohio. While the LDS essay Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo lists Fanny as Joseph’s first plural wife, there is no contemporary evidence that an actual marriage ceremony took place and Smith had not yet claimed the restoration of the keys supposedly necessary for sealings. Oliver Cowdery, one of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon and early church leader, was not aware of any religious meaning to the union, referring to Joseph’s coupling with Fanny as “a dirty, nasty, filthy affair.”

The essay on Kirtland states: “Little is known about this marriage, and nothing is known about the conversations between Joseph and Emma regarding Alger. After the marriage with Alger ended in separation, Joseph seems to have set the subject of plural marriage aside until after the Church moved to Nauvoo, Illinois.”

While there is no contemporary account of Joseph and Emma’s conversation, it seems clear that there was an argument which led to Emma expelling Fanny from the home. Fanny then went to stay with Chauncey Webb and his wife until further arrangements could be made. Mr. Webb later recounted “He [Joseph Smith] was sealed there [in Kirtland] secretly to Fanny Alger. Emma was furious and drove the girl, who was unable to conceal the consequences of her celestial relation with the prophet, out of her house.”

Public Denial

The 1835 section denouncing plural marriage was in every edition of the Doctrine and Covenants until 1876, when it was replaced by section 132, commanding polygamy. For forty-one years, during the main period of LDS polygamy, the official scriptures of the church contained a section condemning the practice. Yet Apostle John Taylor, speaking in France in 1850, denounced the charges that the Mormons practiced polygamy in Utah on the basis of the 1835 section on marriage. Europeans made decisions to join the Mormons and immigrate based on this 1835 denunciation of polygamy, only to arrive in Salt Lake and find polygamy preached from the pulpit and all the main LDS leaders married to multiple wives. Historian Richard Van Wagoner commented:

Though the Mormons were living in isolation [in Utah Territory], hundreds of miles from other settlements, their polygamous behavior became increasingly apparent to the outside world. Apostle John Taylor, for example husband to fifteen wives, defensively argued in July 1850 during a public discussion in Boulogne-sur-Mer, France, that “we are accused of polygamy, and actions the most indecent, obscene and disgusting, such that none but a corrupt and depraved heart could have contrived. These things are too outrageous to admit of belief. . . . I shall content myself by reading our views of chastity and marriage, from a work published by us, containing some of the articles of our faith.”

At that point, LDS Apostle John Taylor read from section 101 of the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants denouncing plural marriage. With a dozen wives and eight children back in Utah Territory, Taylor was fully aware that he was lying to the people in France. Taylor seems to have been following Joseph Smith’s lead in lying about polygamy. In 1844, just weeks before his death, Joseph Smith publicly denied plural marriage:

What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one. I am the same man, and as innocent as I was fourteen years ago; and I can prove them all perjurers.”

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9 Doctrine and Covenants, 1835, sec. 101. Over the years the section numbering in the D&C has changed. Section 101 in a current D&C is not the one under discussion.
11 Van Wagoner, Mormon Polygamy, p. 10.
12 Compton, In Sacred Loneliness, p. 28.
13 Compton, In Sacred Loneliness, pp. 34-35.
14 Van Wagoner, Mormon Polygamy, p. 83.
16 History of the Church, vol. 6, p. 411.
Keep in mind, even the LDS essay *Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo* concedes Smith had 30-40 wives at this time, most of whom were probably sitting in the audience that day. The essay on Nauvoo goes on to state: “The rumors prompted members and leaders to issue carefully worded denials that denounced spiritual wifery and polygamy but were silent about what Joseph and others saw as divinely mandated ‘celestial’ plural marriage.” This demonstrates the double-speak of the early leaders. By carefully defining what Joseph and his leaders were doing as “celestial” marriage they could then publicly deny “polygamy” as though they were two totally different things. If a member entered plural marriage without Joseph’s approval he could be denounced for practicing “polygamy.” Yet it was not just a case of being “silent” about the doctrine of plural marriage, Joseph was specifically denying he had multiple wives.

**Smith’s Children?**

The first essay then turns to the Book of Mormon, Jacob 2:30, for a justification of plural marriage, to “raise up seed” unto the Lord. In the essay on plural marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo it states:

> Marriage performed by priesthood authority meant that the procreation of children and perpetuation of families would continue into the eternities. Joseph Smith’s revelation on marriage declared that the “continuation of the seeds forever and ever” helped to fulfill God’s purposes for His children.

Yet, this doesn’t seem to have been Smith’s goal as he evidently only fathered a few children by his plural wives. Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, one of Smith’s wives, stated:

> I know he had six wives and I have known some of them from childhood up. I know he had three children. They told me. I think two are living today but they are not known as his children as they go by other names.17

Lucy Walker Kimball, one of Smith’s teenage brides, also gave a statement years after moving to Utah Territory:

> . . . I consented to become the Prophet’s wife, and was married to him May 1, 1843, Elder William Clayton officiating. I am also able to testify that Emma Smith, the prophet’s first wife, gave her consent to the marriage of at least four other girls to her husband, and that she was well aware that he associated with them as wives within the meaning of all that word implies. This is proven by the fact that she herself, on several occasions, kept guard at the door to prevent disinterested persons from intruding, when these ladies were in the house.18

Notice, Lucy did not say Emma consented to her marriage to Smith. The four girls she refers to would have been the Partridge and Lawrence sisters. Joseph convinced 17-year-old Lucy to marry him while her father was away on a mission and Emma was on a trip to St. Louis.19 Historian Todd Compton gave this background on their marriage: “Lucy was another young wife of Smith—he proposed to her when she was fifteen or sixteen. In her story we find the familiar pattern of the teenage girl living in the Mormon leader’s house, whom Joseph then approaches and marries.”20

Further on in his book, Compton explains that Smith’s proposal was presented to Lucy as something that would bring her “damnation” if she refused. It was a “command of God” to her. Lucy later recalled:

> I felt at this moment that I was called to place myself upon the altar a living Sacrifice, perhaps to brook the world in disgrace and incur the displeasure and contempt of my youthful companions; all my dreams of happiness blown to the four winds, this was too much, the thought was unbearable.21

Compton observed: “Like Helen Mar at the age of fourteen, Lucy thought of her peer group and of the disaster that polygamy would bring to her teenage dreams.”22

In their recent book, LDS historians Brian and Laura Hales discuss possible children born to Smith’s plural wives:

> An account from Lucy Meserve Smith, wife of Apostle George A. Smith, recalls that her husband, “related to me the circumstance of calling on the Prophet one evening about 11 o’clock, and he was out on the porch with a basin of water washing his hands, I said to him what is up, said Joseph one of my wives has just been confined and Emma was midwife and I have been assisting her. He said she had granted a no. [number] of women for him.”

> A daughter [of Joseph Smith], Josephine Lyon, was born to plural wife Sylvia Sessions in 1844. Josephine is likely the only offspring to live to adulthood. . . . There is evidence that a child was born to Olive Frost who did not live long or may have miscarried. In addition, at least eighteen other children have been promoted as the Prophet’s progeny. DNA testing has been performed for six of the eighteen who were most likely to be Joseph’s children. The results have all been negative. The other claims suffer from multiple weaknesses and appear to be based primarily upon unverifiable rumors.23

It should also be noted that Sylvia Sessions, Josephine’s mother, was already married to a Mormon at the time she secretly married Joseph Smith in polygamy.

In footnote 29 of the *Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo* essay it is estimated that the number of married women Joseph Smith took as wives “range from 12 to 14.”

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21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
Mormons try to defend this by claiming that he did not cohabitate with the married wives. However, since Smith consummated his marriage with Sylvia Sessions, there is no reason to think he didn’t consummate his other sealings to married women.

The Nauvoo essay gives this defense of Smith taking married women as wives:

Joseph Smith’s sealings to women already married may have been an early version of linking one family to another. In Nauvoo, most if not all of the first husbands seem to have continued living in the same household with their wives during Joseph’s lifetime, and complaints about these sealings with Joseph Smith are virtually absent from the documentary record.

First, his sealing to the women would mean the legal husband would be cut out of the eternal “linking” and only the men’s wives would be a part of Smith’s family. Second, the fact that we don’t have any complaints about this from the husbands during Joseph’s lifetime is no reason to accept the arrangement as from God. The essay continues:

These sealings may also be explained by Joseph’s reluctance to enter plural marriage because of the sorrow it would be to his wife Emma. He may have believed that sealings to married women would comply with the Lord’s command without requiring him to have normal marriage relationships. This could explain why, according to Lorenzo Snow, the angel reprimanded Joseph for having “demurred” on plural marriage even after he had entered into the practice. After this rebuke, according to this interpretation, Joseph returned primarily to sealings with single women.

This rationale overlooks the fact that Smith had already broken Emma’s heart with his first affair/marriage with Fanny Alger in the 1830s. Also, Smith’s marriages to teenagers was traumatic for Emma, caused numerous arguments, and the husbands during Joseph’s lifetime are no reason to accept the arrangement as from God. The essay continues:

When the family organization was revealed from heaven—the patriarchal order of God, and Joseph began on the right and on the left, to add to his family, what a quaking there was in Israel. Says one brother to another, “Joseph says all covenants are done away, and none are binding but the new covenants; now suppose Joseph should come and say he wanted your wife, what would you say to that!” “I would tell him to go to hell.” This was the spirit of many in the early days of this Church.

What would a man of God say, who felt aright, when Joseph asked him . . . “I want your wife?” “O yes,” he would say, “here she is, there are plenty more.” . . . Did the prophet Joseph want every man’s wife he asked for? He did not.24

The reason there were so few children born to Smith’s plural wives remains a debate. Often a Mormon will insist that Joseph Smith did not have intercourse with his wives, maintaining that these marriages were only for the hereafter. Yet, several women and relatives left statements that these marriages were consummated. Benjamin F. Johnson, a personal friend of Joseph Smith, told of Smith’s 1843 marriage to his sister Almera and confirmed that the marriage included physical relations. Compton provides this information:

Benjamin gave some of the details of the actual marriage ceremony: “Meanwhile the Prophet with Louisa Beeman [Joseph’s plural wife] and my Sister Delcena [another plural wife] had it agreeably arranged with sister Almara and after a little instruction, She Stood by the Prophets Side & was Sealed to him as a wife by Brother Clayton. After which the Prophet asked me to take my Sister to occupy Room No 10 in his Mansion Home during her Stay in the City. . . .

Almera and Benjamin returned to Macedonia on about April 23. Smith visited Ramus again on May 16. “The Prophet again Came and at my house occupied the Same Room & Bed with my Sister that the month previous he had occupied with the Daughter of the Late Bishop Partridge as his wife,” Benjamin wrote.25

Brian and Laura Hales admit that Joseph “may have consummated at least twelve of his plural marriages.”26 Given the reticence of most people to speak of sexual encounters in the 1800s, it is amazing that there are statements confirming that Smith consummated at least a third of his marriages. With such admissions, why shouldn’t we assume he consummated most, if not all, of the marriages?

Given the fact that all the marriages were clandestine and any time spent together would likely have been emotionally charged with fear of detection, would this hinder conception? With almost 40 secret wives, how often could Smith have intercourse with them? Were all of Smith’s teenage wives mature enough to conceive? Did Smith’s wives use some sort of birth control or have abortions? Were some children raised in other homes? Due to the limited number of historical records, these questions may never be fully answered. But the question remains, if the justification for polygamy is to “raise up seed” why didn’t Joseph have more children?

14-YEAR-OLD GIRLS

The essay on Nauvoo polygamy concedes Smith’s marriage to 14-year-old Helen Mar Kimball, but refers to it as happening “several months before her 15th birthday.” Why the evasive wording? Are they embarrassed to simply say 14? But she wasn’t the only one. Joseph married another 14-year-old girl, Nancy Maria Winchester. There is some question if the marriage to Nancy happened before or after her 15th birthday in 1843. George Smith observes: “Whatever the exact date, Nancy holds the distinction, with Helen [Kimball] Whitney, of being one of the two youngest brides in Smith’s

26 Hales, Joseph Smith’s Polygamy, p. 68.
repertoire."27 Besides these two, Smith married approximately seventeen other women in 1843, when he was 37.28

Joseph Smith first approached Helen’s father, Heber C. Kimball, in 1842 about polygamy, before seeking Helen as a wife. Todd Compton explains:

The first chapter in the story of Smith, the Kimballs, and polygamy is that of Vilate’s offering, which Orson Whitney, Helen’s own son, recounted in his biography of Heber. In early 1842, apparently, Joseph approached Heber and made a stunning demand: “It was no less than a requirement for him to surrender his wife, his beloved Vilate, and give her to Joseph in Marriage!”29

After agonizing over this request for three days, Heber finally “led his darling wife to the Prophet’s house and presented her to Joseph.”30 Joseph then embraced Heber, telling him it was only a test of his faith. Nothing is known of Vilate’s response to Joseph’s request, but their reward for such obedience was the uniting of the couple in eternal marriage. Heber’s next test was Joseph’s demand that he take a plural wife and keep the information from Vilate. He was informed that if he refused to do this he would “lose his apostleship and be damned.”31

Months later Helen’s father, Heber, took her aside and told her about plural marriage, which incensed Helen: “The first impulse was anger . . . My sensibilities were painfully touched. I felt such a sense of personal injury and displeasure.” To soften Helen’s rebellion, Heber brought Sarah Ann, one of her girlfriends, to see her and introduced her as one of Joseph’s wives. Helen later wrote:

Having a great desire to be connected with the Prophet, Joseph, he [Helen’s father] offered me to him [Joseph], this I afterwards learned from the Prophet’s own mouth. My father had but one Ewe Lamb, but willingly laid her upon the alter: how cruel this seemed to the mother whose heartstrings were already stretched until they were ready to snap asunder, for he [Helen’s father] had taken Sarah Noon to wife & she thought she had made sufficient sacrifice but the Lord required more.32

**LARGE FAMILIES?**

The essay continues:

*Plural marriage did result in the birth of large numbers of children within faithful Latter-day Saint homes. It also shaped 19th-century Mormon society in many ways: marriage became available to virtually all who desired it; . . .*

First, Joseph Smith had as many as 40 wives yet this did not result in “large numbers of children.” Second, one must keep in mind that since there was not an imbalance of women to men these women would have been able to marry and produce the same number of children, if not more, in monogamous marriages. Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe admitted that there was no surplus of women:

Plural marriage has been a subject of wide and frequent comment. Members of the Church unfamiliar with its history, and many nonmembers, have set up fallacious reasons for the origin of this system of marriage among the Latter-day Saints. The most common of these conjectures is that the Church, through plural marriage sought to provide husbands for its large surplus of female members. The implied assumption in this theory, that there have been more female than male members in the Church, is not supported by existing evidence. On the contrary, there seems always to have been more males than females in the Church. . . .

The United States census records from 1850 to 1940, and all available Church records, uniformly show a preponderance of males in Utah, and in the Church. Indeed, the excess in Utah has usually been larger than for the whole United States, . . . Orson Pratt, writing in 1853 from direct knowledge of Utah conditions, when the excess of females was supposedly the highest, declares against the opinion that females outnumbered the males in Utah. . . .

Another conjecture is that the people were few in numbers and that the Church, desiring greater numbers, permitted the practice so that a phenomenal increase in population could be attained. This is not defensible, since there was **no surplus of women**.33

In a system with equal numbers of men and women, polygamy would not make marriage “available to virtually all who desired it.” Plural marriage would deny some men the ability to find even one wife. George D. Smith observed:

...Smith not only persuaded women to marry him, he convinced his closest male followers to expand their own families, adding more wives to their homes. This occurred within the last three years of Smith’s life... Over the next year and a half, under the direction of Brigham Young, plural marriages multiplied in Nauvoo so that by the time the Saints abandoned the city in 1846 there were about 200 male polygamists in the church with 700 plural wives added to their families.34

This imbalance would later cause one apostle to admonish the missionaries going to Europe to not select wives from the converts until they had arrived in Utah, to give all the men an equal chance to select a wife. Speaking to a group of departing missionaries in 1860, Apostle Heber C. Kimball declared:

Brethren, I want you to understand that it is not to be as it has been heretofore. The brother missionaries have been in

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28 Ibid., pp. 622-623.
29 Compton, In Sacred Loneliness, p. 495.
30 Ibid., p. 495.
31 Ibid., p. 496.
32 Ibid., p. 498.
34 Smith, Nauvoo Polygamy, p. xii.
the habit of picking out the prettiest women for themselves before they get here, and bringing on the ugly ones for us; hereafter you have to bring them all here before taking any of them, and let us have a fair shake.35

While Brigham Young married at least 55 wives, he fathered 57 children by only 16 women.36 Since the justification for plural marriages has always been to “raise up seed” one wonders why children weren’t born to some of the other women? One answer may lie in Brigham’s attitude towards his wives. Apostle Wilford Woodruff, who would later issue the famous Manifesto to end polygamy, gave the following account of Brigham Young’s sermon on March 23, 1857:

“their is many women that care more about their wives Husband sleeping with them than they do about God or his kingdom & if a man was to submit to such women he would not be worth shucks in building up the kingdom of God.[.] I have got some such women & I visit them on[c]e a year or once in 3 years as I please & they may go to heaven or Hell just as they please[.] I shall not turn away from the work of God for any woman.”37

Brigham Young’s attitude may explain why only 16 of his 55 wives had children. Obviously, raising up seed was not the first consideration in LDS polygamy. Brigham’s legal wife, Mary Ann Angel once remarked: “God will be very cruel if he does not give us poor women adequate compensation for the trials we have endured in polygamy.”38

POLYGAMY ILLegal

Further in the essay it states that “In Joseph Smith’s time, monogamy was the only legal form of marriage in the United States.” This raises the problem of Smith not only living in secret polygamy, denying it publicly and lying to his wife about it, but also breaking the laws of the land. Bigamy was specifically illegal in Illinois, where Smith had been sealed to approximately 35-40 women. In 1833 the state of Illinois passed a law making bigamy illegal:

[Typescript] Sec. 121. Bigamy consists in the having of two wives or two husbands at one and the same time, knowing that the former husband or wife is still alive. If any person or persons within this State, being married, or who shall hereafter marry, do at any time marry any person or persons, the former husband or wife being alive, the person so offending shall, on conviction thereof, be punished by a fine, not exceeding one thousand dollars, and imprisoned in the penitentiary, not exceeding two years. It shall not be necessary to prove either of the said marriages by the register or certificate thereof, or other record evidence; but the same may be proved by such evidence as is admissible to prove a marriage in other cases, and when such second marriage shall have taken place without this state, cohabitation in this state after such second marriage shall be deemed the commission of the crime of bigamy, and the trial in such case may take place in the county where such cohabitation shall have occurred. (Revised Laws of Illinois, 1833, pp. 198-199)

Richard Van Wagoner provides the following information:

Polygamy, a criminal act under the 1833 Illinois Anti-bigamy Laws, was so unacceptable to monogamous nineteenth-century American society that Smith could introduce it only in absolute secrecy. Despite Smith’s explicit denials of plural marriage, stories of “spiritual wifery” had continued to spread.39

Smith’s polygamy would also have been at odds with his own 1831 revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants. Section 58:21 states: “Let no man break the laws of the land, for he that keepeth the laws of God hath no need to break the laws of the land.” Also, the LDS twelfth Article of Faith reads: “We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.” Plural marriage was never legal in the United States or Utah Territory. The laws passed in the 1860s and 1870s regarding polygamy merely confirmed the already established position of monogamy in the United States.40

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38 Van Wagoner, Mormon Polygamy, p. 100.
39 Van Wagoner, Mormon Polygamy, p. 18.
40 “Polygamy was illegal,” MormonThink, online at http://mormonthink.com/joseph-smith-polygamy.htm#illegal.
**RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS**

Joseph Smith’s polygamy is usually defended on the basis of restoring ancient principles. In the first essay we read:

Latter-day Saints understood that they were living in the latter days, in what the revelations called the “dispensation of the fulness of times.” Ancient principles—such as prophets, priesthood, and temples—would be restored to the earth. Plural marriage, practiced by ancient patriarchs like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, was one of those ancient principles.

As we have seen earlier, there is no mention in the Bible of God commanding polygamy so there would hardly be any reason for it to be “restored.” If plural marriage was an “ancient principle” of God which needed to be restored, along with priesthood and temples, one wonders why its practice would be cancelled? The other elements mentioned are considered essential rites for today’s Latter-day Saints and necessary to achieve eternal life. Why wouldn’t polygamy fall under the same necessity?

**CONCUBINES**

Another curious part of Section 132 is the mention of concubines in verses 1 and 39. While Joseph Smith didn’t seem to have any concubines, the issue emerged in 1894 when Apostle George Q. Cannon appealed to the concept in order to raise up seed for his deceased son. Scholar D. Carmon Hardy explained:

Some months before the October 1894 discussion with Abraham [Cannon], during a meeting with the Quorum of Twelve Apostles and First Presidency, George Q. Cannon said he felt something needed to be done to remedy circumstances created by the [1890] Manifesto: “My son David died without seed,” he said, “and his brothers cannot do a work for him in rearing children to bear his name because of the Manifesto. I believe in concubinage, or some plan whereby men and women can live together under sacred ordinances and vows until they can be married.”

Two years later Abraham Cannon, along with his dead brother’s fiancée Lillian Hamlin and President Joseph F. Smith, traveled to Catalina Island, off the coast of California, where he and Lillian were presumably married. Historian D. Michael Quinn suggests the marriage happened earlier in the Salt Lake Temple in June of 1896, prior to their trip to California.

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** MOTIVATION FOR RECORDING THE REVELATION**

The next paragraph in the opening essay reads:

The same revelation that taught of plural marriage was **embedded** within a revelation about eternal marriage—the teaching that marriage could last beyond death.

However, this statement is totally opposite of the facts. The revelation is specifically about polygamy, and eternal marriage is only a part of it. One simply needs to read the opening verse of *Doctrine and Covenants* 132:

Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that **inasmuch as you have inquired** of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, justified my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the **principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines**...

Section 132 was dictated in July of 1843 to enable Joseph’s brother Hyrum to use it to persuade Emma to finally accept polygamy and his plural wives, not to convert her to the idea of being eternally married to Joseph. While Smith had already been sealed to dozens of women by the time he dictated the revelation, Emma was probably only aware of a few of the single girls he had married, and had evidently given her consent to his marriage to Emily and Eliza Partridge on May 11, 1843. Emma evidently gave her consent to secure her own eternal sealing to Joseph on May 28th. But months later Emma changed her mind and demanded that the girls leave the home, which led to Hyrum suggesting to Joseph to write down the revelation so he could take it to Emma. William Clayton, Joseph’s personal secretary, explained how the revelation came to be recorded:

On the morning of the 12th of July, 1843, Joseph and Hyrum Smith came into the office in the upper story of the “brick store,” on the bank of the Mississippi River. They were talking on the subject of plural marriage. Hyrum said to Joseph, “If you will write the revelation on celestial marriage, I will take and **read it to Emma**, and I believe I can convince her of its truth, and you will hereafter have peace.” Joseph smiled and remarked, “You do not know Emma as well as I do.” Hyrum repeated his opinion and further remarked, “The doctrine is so plain, I can convince any reasonable man or woman of its truth, purity or heavenly origin,” or words to their effect. Joseph then said, “Well, I will write the revelation and we will see.”

When Hyrum returned he reported “he had never received a more severe talking to in his life, that Emma was very bitter and full of resentment and anger. Joseph quietly remarked, ‘I told you you did not know Emma as well as I did’ . . .”

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44 Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, pp. 4-6.
Next the essay states that the revelation “did not explain how to implement plural marriage in all its particulars.” This is a diversion. None of Smith’s revelations explain anything in ALL its particulars. However, the revelation does give specific instructions about marrying “virgins”:

And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood—
if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then is he justified; he cannot commit adultery for they are given unto him . . . (Doctrine and Covenants 132:61)

Yet by July of 1843, when section 132 was dictated, Smith had already been sealed to eleven married women and three widows (besides the many single women) which would seem to violate the revelation. It is assumed that Emma was unaware of Smith’s union with married women. Also in the revelation is a portion addressed to Emma, with instruction that she is to accept all those who had already married Smith, unless the woman was not “virtuous.” This statement implies that some of the women Joseph married were not virtuous.

And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith, receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph, and who are virtuous and pure before me; and those who are not pure, and have said they were pure, shall be destroyed, saith the Lord God. (Doctrine and Covenants 132:52)

In verse 54 Emma was threatened that if she did not accept this revelation she would be destroyed.

And I command mine handmaid, Emma Smith, to abide and cleave unto my servant Joseph, and to none else. But if she will not abide this commandment she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord for I am the Lord thy God, and will destroy her if she abide not in my law.

This threat was continued in verse 64:

I say unto you, if any man have a wife, who holds the keys of this power, and he teaches unto her the law of my priesthood, as pertaining to these things, then shall she believe and administer unto him, or she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord your God; for I will destroy her.

It should be noted that Joseph Smith was murdered the next year, as a result of ordering the destruction of the Nauvoo Expositor which exposed his secret polygamy, while Emma, who opposed plural marriage, lived until 1879.

THREATENED BY AN ANGEL

Women were not the only ones threatened with destruction if they didn’t obey the revelation. In the essay Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo we read that an angel threatened Smith’s life if he did not pursue more plural wives:

Joseph told associates that an angel appeared to him three times between 1834 and 1842 and commanded him to proceed with plural marriage when he hesitated to move forward. During the third and final appearance, the angel came with a drawn sword, threatening Joseph with destruction unless he went forward and obeyed the commandment fully.

Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, one of Smith’s wives who had a living husband, gave a detailed account of the angel:

the Angel came to him three times the last time with a drawn Sword and threatened his life. I did not believe[,] if God told him So, why did he not come and tell me [?] the angel told him I should have a witness, and an Angel came to me, it went through me like lightning, I was afraid, . . . Brigham Young Sealed me to him [Joseph], for time & all Eternity[,] Feb 1842. 48

Another young married woman, Zina Diantha Huntington Jacobs, entered into a polyandrous marriage with Joseph Smith after Joseph told her of the angel. Todd Compton explained:

. . . an angel with a drawn sword had stood over Smith and told him that if he did not establish polygamy, he would lose “his position and his life.” Zina, faced with the responsibility for his position as prophet, and even perhaps his life, finally acquiesced. 49

Notice that both of these young women were already married. Why would the angel demand that Joseph marry them? Why not offer them eternal sealings to their current husbands? How does this benefit the “restoration” of all things? It looks more like spiritual black-mail, putting on husbands? How does this benefit the “restoration” of all things? It looks more like spiritual black-mail, putting on

Lorenzo Snow, brother of Eliza R. Snow (one of Smith’s wives) reported:

He [Joseph Smith] said that the Lord had revealed it [the doctrine of the plurality of wives] unto him and commanded him to have women sealed to him as wives, that he foresaw the trouble that would follow and sought to turn away from the commandment, that an angel from heaven appeared before him with a drawn sword, threatening him with destruction unless he went forward and obeyed the commandment. 50

Given the LDS doctrine of free agency one wonders why God would threatened Smith with “destruction” if he did not obey when by 1842 Smith would have already married approximately five plural wives?

47 Compton, In Sacred Loneliness, pp. 4-6.
48 Smith, Nauvoo Polygamy, p. 94.
49 Compton, In Sacred Loneliness, pp. 80-81.
50 Hales, Joseph Smith’s Polygamy, p. 18.
**Secrecy**

The main essay then addresses the issue of secrecy:

> The practice [of polygamy in Nauvoo] was introduced carefully and incrementally, and participants vowed to keep their participation confidential, anticipating a time when husbands and wives could acknowledge one another publicly.

This secrecy included hiding it from Emma Smith. One of the strangest of marriages was Smith’s marriage to 17-year-old Sarah Ann Whitney in 1842. First Joseph approached the parents about the new doctrine of polygamy and after extensive prayer they believed they had spiritual confirmation that it was true.

Elizabeth Whitney wrote “our hearts were comforted and our faith made so perfect that we were willing to give our eldest daughter, then only seventeen years of age, to Joseph, in the holy order of plural marriage . . . laying aside all our traditions and former notions in regard to marriage, we gave her with our mutual consent.” Joseph then issued a personal revelation to the parents that their reward would be “honor and immortality and eternal life to all your house, both old and young because of the lineage of my Priesthood, saith the Lord . . . .”

However, this marriage was made behind Emma’s back. A month after the marriage Smith sent a letter to the Whitneys asking them to secretly meet him “in my lonely retreat” at another member’s home. In the letter he wrote:

> all three of you come a little a head, and nock at the south East corner of the house at the window; it is next to the cornfield; I have a room inti=rely by myself, the whole matter can be attended to with most perfect safty, I know it is the will of God that you should confort me now in this time of affliction, . . . the only thing to be careful of; is to find out when Emma comes then you cannot be safe, but when she is not here, there is the most perfect safty.

Eight months later, on April 29, 1843, Joseph instructed Sarah Ann to enter into a pretend marriage with widower Joseph C. Kingsbury, Joseph himself performing the ceremony. This was to cloak Smith’s marriage to Sarah Ann. Kingsbury evidently agreed to this in order to receive his eternal sealing to his deceased wife.

Another problem arose when Emma realized that Joseph had married 16-year-old Flora Woodworth, it caused such an argument that Joseph had to use “harsh measures” to put an end to it. William Clayton, Smith’s private secretary, wrote in his journal on August 23, 1843:

> President Joseph told me that he had difficulty with E[mma] yesterday. She rode up to Woodworths with him and called while he came to the Temple. When he returned she was demanding the gold watch of F[lora]. He reproved her for her evil treatment. On their return home she abused him much and also when he got home. He had to use harsh measures to put a stop to her abuse but finally succeeded.

Several of Joseph Smith’s young wives boarded at the Smith home, but for the most part they lived elsewhere and none of them were publicly acknowledged as wives. Remember, these were not marriages by any normal standard, they were not legal, and for the most part, the women did not even know who the other wives were.

**The Nauvoo Expositor**

One situation not discussed in the Nauvoo essay was the destruction of the *Nauvoo Expositor* and its relationship to Smith’s polygamy and to the events leading to his murder.

In the later part of May, 1844, William Law, who had been a member in the First Presidency, brought charges against Joseph Smith for adultery in relation to his polygamist union with Maria Lawrence, a nineteen-year-old. She and her sister Sarah were Joseph’s wards and lived in the Smith home. According to researcher George D. Smith:

> On Thursday, May 23, Law filed a complaint in the Hancock County Circuit Court in Carthage alleging that Smith had lived with Maria Lawrence “in an open state of adultery” from October 12, 1843, to May 23, 1844, while serving as her guardian and co-executor of her estate.

Joseph responded by preaching on May 26, 1844:

> When facts are proved, truth and innocence will prevail at last. . . . In all these affidavits, indictments, it is all of the devil—all corruption. . . . I have more to boast of than ever any man had. I am the only man that has ever been able to keep a whole church together since the days of Adam. . . . Another indictment has been got up against me. It appears a holy prophet has arisen up, and he has testified against me: the reason is, he is so holy. . . . I had not been married scarcely five minutes, and made one proclamation of the Gospel, before it was reported that I had seven wives. . . .

> This new holy prophet [William Law] has gone to Carthage and swore that I had told him that I was guilty of adultery. This spiritual wifeism! Why, a man dares not speak or wink, for fear of being accused of this. . . . What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one.

William Law and his brother pleaded with Smith to put a stop to this new practice but were only rebuffed. Seeing

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52 Ibid., p. 348.
53 Ibid., p. 350.
54 Ibid., p. 351.
that there would be no repentance, the Laws, along with several other dissidents, announced plans to print a newspaper detailing the various secret teachings of Joseph Smith. The one and only issue of the Nauvoo Expositor was printed on June 7, 1844, enumerating various false teachings of Smith, such as polygamy, multiple gods, secret societies and financial misdeeds.58

The Nauvoo City Council, along with Joseph Smith, mayor of Nauvoo, met on June 10th and declared the Expositor a “libelous and slanderous” nuisance and requested the mayor to “abate the said nuisance.” Smith ordered the city marshal to destroy the press “without delay.”59

Author Hal Schindler gave an overview of the destruction of the press and its aftermath:

Smith’s City Council passed a libel law and then charged the Expositor with being a public nuisance. In the next breath, Smith ordered the city marshal to abate the nuisance—“destroy the press and pi the type.” But even Smith was unprepared for the uproar that followed. Freedom of the press once more had been trammeled in Illinois, and the residents would have none of it.

The Expositor editors swore out complaints and found enthusiastic backing from another enemy of the Smiths—Thomas Sharp, editor of the Warsaw Signal, who editorialized in blind fury: Citizens arise, one and all!! Can you stand by, and suffer such infernal devils! To rob men of their property rights, without avenging them. We have no time for comment! Everyman will make his own. Let it be with powder and ball.

Joseph and Hyrum thought of leaving Nauvoo and making tracks for the Rocky Mountains, but halfway across the Mississippi, Joseph was persuaded to return to surrender at Carthage and face trial. Governor Thomas Ford interceded to calm the Smiths’ apprehension regarding their safety and promised protection while they were in Carthage Jail. There were strong questions concerning Ford’s role in what was to transpire, with some Mormons suggesting that the chief executive was connected with the assassination plot, for he left Carthage for Nauvoo after promising he would stay.

In any case, the Carthage Greys, a militia company, was assigned to guard the jail, but with an armed mob painted and howling, as one writer put it, “like demons vomited from hell,” the militia detachment commanded by Lt. Frank Worrell offered only token resistance and stepped aside, allowing the attackers to gain the second floor where the Smiths, John Taylor and Willard Richards were sequestered.

After a brief struggle—during which Joseph Smith, who had armed himself with a smuggled pepperbox revolver, reached around the doorjamb and fired all six chambers—Hyrum fired through the door and was struck in the left ear lobe, had been forgotten by the mob almost at the instant he thought himself a dead man.

Once Joseph Smith had fallen from the second-story window, the mob began to disperse. Someone shouted, “The Mormons are coming!” and the milling crowd fled in panic. But no Mormons came. Richards went for help for the wounded Taylor. (They survived to make the trek West.)60

Thus Joseph’s secret polygamy and the destruction of the Nauvoo Expositor became the catalyst for his murder.

**Plural Marriage in Utah**

The essay then switches to the Utah practice of polygamy.

> Women and men who lived within plural marriage attested to challenges and difficulties but also to the love and joy they found within their families.

Whatever “love and joy” that was experienced in a polygamist home probably centered more around the children than the relationship between various wives and their husband. We know that Joseph and Emma fought over polygamy, and two wives were driven from the home.61

After Smith’s death, Brigham Young, Heber Kimball, and seven others of the hierarchy married twenty-four of Smith’s widows.62 Todd Compton explains:

Most of [Smith’s wives], because of their marriages to the Mormon prophet, became “proxy wives” to Mormon apostles and other leading Mormons, especially to Brigham Young and Heber Kimball—sealed to Smith for eternity, with the apostle standing in as Smith’s proxy in the flesh, to “raise seed” to Smith in this life—and thus the proxy husband was married to the woman only for time. This arrangement had significant advantages for the women (high status and visibility in Mormon society) and certain drawbacks. As Young and Kimball were among the most married of Mormons, many of Joseph Smith’s widows experienced the difficult trial of living in very large polygamous families.63

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58 Nauvoo Expositor, (June 4, 1844), see online at www.utlm.org/onlineresources/nauvooexpositor.htm

59 Smith, Nauvoo Polygamy, p. 432.


61 Smith, Nauvoo Polygamy, pp. 179-184.

62 Ibid., p. 354.

63 Compton, In Sacred Loneliness, Introduction, p. x.
Another example of the misery in these households is seen in a sermon by Jedediah M. Grant, second counselor to Brigham Young, on September 21, 1856:

And we have women here who like any thing but the celestial law of God; and if they could break asunder the cable of the Church of Christ, there is scarcely a mother in Israel but would do it this day. And they talk it to their husbands, to their daughters, and to their neighbors, and say they have not seen a week’s happiness since their husbands took a second wife.  

Following Grant’s sermon, Brigham Young expanded on the problem of disgruntled polygamist wives, threatening to expel all the women who were complaining:

Now for my proposition; it is more particularly for my sisters, as it is frequently happening that women say they are unhappy. Men will say, “My wife, though a most excellent woman, has not seen a happy day since I took my second wife.” “No, not a happy day for a year;” says one; and another has not seen a happy day for five years . . . that many of them are wading through a perfect flood of tears, . . .

I wish my own women to understand that what I am going to say is for them as well as others, and I want those who are here to tell their sisters, yes, all the women of this community, and then write it back to the States, and do as you please with it. I am going to give you from this time to the 6th day of October next, for reflection, that you may determine whether you wish to stay with your husbands or not, and then I am going to set every woman at liberty and say to them, Now go your way, my women with the rest, go your way. And my wives have got to do one of two things; either round up their shoulders to endure the afflictions of this world, and live their religion, or they may leave, for I will not have them about me. I will go into heaven alone, rather than have scratching and fighting around me. I will set all at liberty. “What, first wife too?” Yes, I will liberate you all . . .

Sisters, I am not joking. I do not throw out my proposition to banter your feelings, to see whether you will leave your husbands, all or any of you. but I know that there is no cessation to the everlasting whining of many of the women in this territory; I am satisfied that this is the case. . . .

Prepare yourselves for two weeks from to-morrow; and I will tell you now, that if you will tarry with your husbands, after I have set you free, you must bow down to it, and submit yourselves to the celestial law. You may go where you please, after two weeks from to-morrow; but, remember, that I will not hear any more of this whining.  

Compton gives further insight into the lives of those living celestial marriage: “Polygamist wives often experienced what was essentially acute neglect. Despite the husband’s sincere efforts, he could only give a specific wife a fraction of his time and means.”

**Percent of Men and Women**

The essay continues: “Although some leaders had large polygamous families, two-thirds of polygamist men had only two wives at a time.” In a society that has approximately equal numbers of men and women, one would hardly expect to see the practice of polygamy wide spread. Given the fact that the leaders had taken the lion’s share of young women it is a wonder that the average Mormon man could find even one wife. The following list illustrates that most of the top LDS leadership in Nauvoo followed Smith’s lead and entered into polygamy.

**Prominent LDS Men and their Wives**

This list covers those who entered polygamy in Nauvoo and eventually had at least six wives.

- Brigham Young - 55 wives
- Heber C. Kimball - 44 wives
- Joseph Smith - 38 wives
- John D. Lee - 19 wives
- John Taylor - 18 wives
- William Smith - 15 wives
- Erastus Snow - 14 wives
- Aaron Johnson - 12 wives
- Franklin D. Richards - 12 wives
- Joseph N. Bates - 11 wives
- James Brown Jr. - 11 wives
- Parley P. Pratt - 11 wives
- Willard Richards - 11 wives
- George A. Smith - 11 wives
- Daniel Wood - 11 wives
- Samuel Bent - 10 wives
- William Clayton - 10 wives
- William A. Hickman - 10 wives
- Isaac Morley - 10 wives
- Orson Pratt - 10 wives
- W. H. H. Sagers - 10 wives
- Wilford Woodruff - 10 wives
- Phineas H. Young - 10 wives
- Dominicus Carter - 9 wives
- Orson Hyde - 9 wives
- Amasa M. Lyman - 9 wives
- Lorenzo Snow - 9 wives
- Phineas H. Young - 9 wives

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Ezra Taft Benson - 8 wives
John L. Butler - 8 wives
Charles R. Dana - 8 wives
Hiram Dayton - 8 wives
Stephen Markham - 8 wives
John Pack - 8 wives
Peregrine Sessions - 8 wives
John Smith - 8 wives
Daniel Spencer - 8 wives
Newel K. Whitney - 8 wives
Lorenzo D. Young - 8 wives
James Allred - 7 wives
Ormus E. Bates - 7 wives
John M. Bernhisel - 7 wives
Alpheus Cutler - 7 wives
William Draper - 7 wives
Elijah Fordham - 7 wives
George D. Grant - 7 wives
John Smith - 8 wives
Peregrine Sessions - 8 wives
John Smith - 8 wives
Daniel Spencer - 8 wives
Newel K. Whitney - 8 wives
Lorenzo D. Young - 8 wives

James Allred - 7 wives
Ormus E. Bates - 7 wives
John M. Bernhisel - 7 wives
Alpheus Cutler - 7 wives
William Draper - 7 wives
Elijah Fordham - 7 wives
George D. Grant - 7 wives
Thomas Grover - 6 wives
Levi Stewart - 6 wives
Chauncey G. Webb - 6 wives
Edwin D. Woolley - 6 wives
Thomas Woolsey - 6 wives
Joseph Young - 6 wives

The essay goes on to say, “At its peak in 1857, perhaps one half of all Utah Latter-day Saints experienced plural marriage as a husband, wife, or child. The percentage of those involved in plural marriage steadily declined over the next three decades.” This decline is no doubt due to the shortage of single females and the beginning of government legal action in 1862 against polygamists.

ETHNIC INTERMARRIAGES?

One advantage of plural marriage proposed in the essay was “ethnic intermarriages were increased, which helped to unite a diverse immigrant population.” This might suggest to some that there were many racial minorities involved in polygamy. The few blacks in Utah Territory did not marry in polygamy, and only a few Native Americans were Mormon. The “ethnic” immigrants can only mean the many English and European converts. Granted, there were different languages and nationalities in Utah Territory, such as German and Danish, but they would have been almost exclusively Caucasians. Again, since there was not a shortage of women, the “intermarriages” between various American and European peoples would have resulted in the same uniting of the population with or without polygamy.

DEMANDED OF EVERYONE?

Next we read that “during the years that plural marriage was publicly taught, not all Latter-day Saints were expected to live the principle, though all were expected to accept it as a revelation from God. Indeed, this system of marriage could not have been universal due to the ratio of men to women.” Since there were not enough women to allow every man to have at least two wives, they argue that all were not expected to live it. But this is opposite the instructions given by their leaders. In 1862 Brigham Young preached:

Monogamy, or restrictions by law to one wife, is no part of the economy of heaven among men . . . this monogamic order of marriage, so esteemed by modern Christians . . . is nothing but a system established by a set of robbers, . . . Why do we believe in and practice polygamy? Because the Lord introduced it . . . and the Lord’s servants have always practiced it. “And is that religion popular in heaven?” It is the only popular religion there. 68

During Brigham Young’s presidency if one aspired to the highest level of heaven one would have needed both polygamy and an eternal sealing. Brigham Young declared: “The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy.” 69

Such zealous preaching no doubt contributed to men going to extreme measures to obtain a plural wife. In 1857, just months before the infamous Mountain Meadows Massacre, Bishop Warren Snow, of Manti, Utah, set his eye on a young woman who was betrothed to a young man in the area. When he couldn’t persuade the young man to relinquish the woman to be Snow’s plural wife, the bishop had the young man castrated. John D. Lee gave this account:

It was then decided to call a meeting of the people who lived true to counsel, which was held in the school-house in Manti . . . The young man was there, and was again

68 Deseret News, (August 6, 1862).
requested, ordered and threatened, to get him to surrender the young woman to Snow, but true to his pledged troth, he refused to consent to give up the girl. The lights were then put out. An attack was made on the young man. He was severely beaten, and then tied with his back down on a bench, when Bishop Snow took a bowie-knife, and performed the operation in a most brutal manner, and then took the portion severed from his victim and hung it up in the school-house on a nail, so that it could be seen by all who visited the house afterwards.

The party then left the young man wailing in his blood, and in a lifeless condition. During the night he succeeded in releasing himself from his confinement, and dragged himself to some hay-stacks, where he lay until the next day, when he was discovered by his friends. The young man regained his health, but has been an idiot or quite lunatic ever since. . . .

Brigham Young evidently approved of the action. D. Michael Quinn gave this background on the castration:

In May 1857 Bishop Warren S. Snow’s counselor wrote that twenty-four-year-old Thomas Lewis “has now gone crazy” after being castrated by Bishop Snow for an undisguised sex crime. When informed of Snow’s action, [Brigham] Young said: “I feel to sustain him,” even though Young’s brother Joseph, a general authority, disapproved of this punishment. In July Brigham Young wrote a reassuring letter to the bishop about this castration: “Just let the matter drop, and say no more about it,” the LDS president advised, “and it will soon die away among the people.”

In 1878 Apostle Joseph F. Smith, who later became the sixth president of the LDS Church, preached on the necessity of living plural marriage:

Some people have supposed that the doctrine of plural marriage was a sort of superfluity, or non-essential to the salvation of mankind. In other words, some of the Saints have said, and believed that a man with one wife, sealed to him by the authority of the Priesthood for time and eternity, will receive an exaltation as great and glorious, if he is faithful, as he possibly could with more than one. I want here to enter my protest against this idea, for I know it is false. . . . Therefore, whoever has imagined that he could obtain the fullness of the blessings pertaining to this celestial law, by complying with only a portion of its conditions, has deceived himself. He cannot do it. When the principle was revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, he very naturally shrank, in his feelings, from the responsibilities thereby imposed upon him . . . But he did not falter, although it was not until an angel of God, with a drawn sword, stood before him and commanded that he should enter into the practice of that principle, or he should be utterly destroyed, or rejected. . . .

If then, this principle was of such great importance that the Prophet himself was threatened with destruction, . . . It is useless to tell me that there is no blessing attached to obedience to the law, or that a man with only one wife can obtain as great a reward, glory or kingdom as he can with more than one, . . .

I understand the law of celestial marriage to mean that every man in this Church, who has the ability to obey and practice it in righteousness and will not, shall be damned, I say I understand it to mean this and nothing less, and I testify in the name of Jesus that it does mean that.

God and Jesus Polygamists

While the LDS essays do not mention it, Brigham Young and several apostles went so far as to proclaim that both the Father and the Son were polygamists. When the non-Mormons argued that polygamy was one of the “relics of barbarism,” Brigham Young replied: “Yes, one of the relics of Adam, of Enoch, of Noah, of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Moses, David, Solomon, the Prophets, of Jesus, and his apostles.” On another occasion Brigham Young stated: “The Scripture says that He, the Lord, came walking in the Temple, with his train; I do not know who they were, unless his wives and children; . . .” In 1855 Apostle Orson Hyde declared:

I discover that some of the Eastern papers represent me as a great blasphemer, because I said, in my lecture on Marriage, at our last Conference, that Jesus Christ was married at Cana of Galilee, that Mary, Martha, and others were his wives, and that he begat children. All that I have to say in reply to that charge is this—they worship a Savior that is too pure and holy to fulfil the commands of his Father. I worship one that is just pure and holy enough “to fulfil all righteousness;” not only the righteous law of baptism, but the still more righteous and important law “to multiply and replenish the earth.”

Legal Battles

The LDS essay then begins a discussion of the laws enacted by the U.S. government against polygamy:

Beginning in 1862, the U.S. government passed laws against the practice of plural marriage. After the U.S. Supreme Court found the anti-polygamy laws to be constitutional in 1879, federal officials began prosecuting polygamous husbands and wives during the 1880s. Believing these laws to be unjust, Latter-day Saints engaged in civil disobedience by continuing to practice plural marriage and by attempting to avoid arrest by moving to the homes of friends or family or by hiding under assumed names. When convicted, they paid fines and submitted to jail time.
It seems ironic that the LDS Church wants to defend itself by arguing for “civil disobedience” because the laws were unjust, yet stood against “civil disobedience” during the civil rights debate of the 1950-1960s. Interestingly, the church has now changed its position on both polygamy and blacks in the priesthood.

Monogamy was always the only legal form of marriage in the United States and bigamy was specifically illegal in Illinois, where Smith secretly presented plural marriage to his top leaders. But the Mormon practice spurred the U.S. government into passing laws in 1862 prohibiting it. D. Michael Quinn commented: “Brigham Young demonstrated his resistance to the Morrill Act by fathering five more polygamous children and marrying six more wives after 1862.”76 In 1879 the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the 1862 Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act and “all new polygamous marriages in Utah and surrounding territories were in violation of both congressional and Constitutional law. . . . But new polygamous marriage ceremonies continued to be performed under the direction of the First Presidency.”77

When these laws did not prove effective in stopping polygamy, “Congress passed the Edwards Law which provided up to five years’ imprisonment and a $500 fine for entering into polygamy, six months’ imprisonment and a $300 fine for the resulting unlawful cohabitation, and which disfranchised polygamists.”78

For several years President John Taylor and other top leaders stayed in hiding for fear of being arrested on bigamy charges. In 1887, the U.S. Congress passed the Edmunds-Tucker Act, which allowed the government to seize church property in excess of $50,000. Faced with this financial crisis, Wilford Woodruff, who had succeeded Taylor in 1889, issued the 1890 Manifesto advising church members to cease the practice of polygamy.

THE MANIFESTO

To explain the reasons for issuing the 1890 Manifesto, the essay states:

The work of salvation for both the living and the dead was now in jeopardy. In September 1890, Church President Wilford Woodruff felt inspired to issue the Manifesto. “Inasmuch as laws have been enacted by Congress forbidding plural marriages,” President Woodruff explained, “I hereby declare my intention to submit to those laws, and to use my influence with the members of the Church over which I preside to have them do likewise.”

Notice, there is no mention of a revelation, only Woodruff’s “intention to submit to those laws.” There was no specific declaration that God had instructed the Mormons to give up the practice. And Woodruff himself did not “submit.” Woodruff was one of thirteen of the First Presidency and Apostles who took plural wives after the Manifesto.79 Besides that, various apostles conducted 67 plural marriages after the Manifesto. Scholar B. Carmon Hardy concluded that there were 262 post-Manifesto plural marriages between October 1890 and December 1910, involving 220 different men.80

As the LDS essay mentions, in 1904, after a number of plural marriages were exposed during the Senator Reed Smoot hearings,81 President Joseph F. Smith issued a second manifesto, threatening excommunication for those who continued to take more wives. While the numbers certainly dropped after that conference, we know that two apostles took plural wives after 1904.82 As mentioned in the LDS essay on the Manifesto, “Some couples who entered into plural marriage between 1890 and 1904 separated after the Second Manifesto, but many others quietly cohabited into the 1930s and beyond.”

Paul Reeve, who teaches at the University of Utah, was quoted in the Deseret News as follows:

These bookends of polygamy—the introduction and the end—are wrenching for Mormonism. And those two bookends are the two periods we know the least about. The church went from secrecy about polygamy in Kirtland to openness in Utah back to secrecy after the Manifesto, and from monogamy to polygamy and back to monogamy in this 60-year period.83

77 Ibid., p. 16.
78 Ibid., p. 27.
79 Hardy, Solemn Covenant, p. 231.
80 Ibid., comment at end of list on p. 394.
81 LDS Apostle Reed Smoot was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1903. Many Protestants, who feared the Mormons were trying to gain undue political power, challenged his right to the office. There was also concern that the Mormons were still practicing polygamy. This led to a Senate hearing that lasted for several years, but Smoot was finally allowed to serve. See Michael Harold Paulos, ed., The Mormon Church on Trial: Transcripts of the Reed Smoot Hearings, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2007). Excerpt online at http://signaturebooks.com/2010/10/except-the-mormon-church-on-trial/82 Hardy, Solemn Covenant, p. 231.
CONCLUSION

Mormons often defend Joseph Smith on the basis of the good done by the current LDS Church, sighting Matthew 7:16-17: “Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.” However, Mormons tend to gloss over the negative fruits of Joseph Smith’s doctrines; such as his lying to Emma, to the church, and to the public, the heartache foisted on Emma, the misery and disruption of families and wives, the numerous polygamist groups, with tens of thousands of people, currently practicing polygamy.84 All of these people look to Joseph Smith as a prophet and feel compelled to obey his revelation in section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants. This isn’t a case of just saying he got that one wrong. Either God ordered polygamy or Joseph Smith was a false prophet.

84 Doris Hanson, “Understanding Polygamy & Fundamentalism,” A Shield and Refuge Ministry, online at http://www.shieldandrefuge.org/fund_overview.htm

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Excerpts from Emails and Letters

August 2014: You are truly a “pioneer” for truth. I’m a native Floridian and saw your interview with John [Dehlin – Mormon Stories]. I left the church a year ago and have felt lots of persecution and lost many friends. But have gained truth and found a new church and new friends. And don’t think I could have been strong like you. I hope before you pass on you can see the fruits of your labor. The LDS church will fall one day. Truth reigns. Love you Sandra. You are a strong woman. Worthy of the title, hero.

September 2014: While I am currently Agnostic, I highly respect you and what you do. I stopped by your shop a few days ago but you were sadly not in. Thank you for doing what you do. . . . I have a true passion in educating those on the truth of the LDS church. I became suicidal after doing my own research years ago. It hurt so much knowing that the religion I loved was a fraud and was very un-ethical in its religious and business workings. Again thank you very much for what you have done and what you are doing.

September 2014: Thank you so much your time and God’s blessings to you and to your ministry.

Really quick, I have been a Christian since 2007 after living a life inside Mormonism. I even served a mission in SLC 91-93. During my mission I called [ed] ultm and told the person on the phone off (the person I know now as Sandra Tanner). Though I did call a year or so ago and apologize to Sandra and she graciously forgave me.

I have loved hearing about the story of Jerald and Sandra and the amazing work The Lord accomplished in and through them. Praise Jesus.

As for myself I have been attending Bible college . . . . I’m still not sure what The Lord has for me. . . . There are Many who are in my extended family who refuse to speak to me about Jesus because they claim that I’ve forsaken the true gospel.

September 2014: So you insist that hatred for others is your true religion. How sad to build your foundation upon hate.

I bet Christ doesn’t agree with this philosophy. You never seem to form your opinions on anything productive. How depressing. Did you run out of Happy pills? If you waller in the depths of negativism you will never climb out.

September 2014: I imagine that you probably get a lot of nasty mail, so hopefully this is a welcome message. To make a long story short, I have been a baptized LDS member for all of my 37 years, though inactive for the past 21 years, inactive. Even so, until this last year I would have said I had a strong testimony. As I study more and more about the vast falsehoods and cover-ups of the church—I cannot anymore say that Joseph Smith was a prophet—in fact quite the opposite. As I now understand things, I would even go as far to say that that he was a scoundrel, a liar, and even used his position and trust to take advantage of women, even using God’s name to ruin reputations, threaten and coerce people into fulfilling his desires. I am currently composing my exit letter, and I am not sure I can be even that short and sweet. And if it means anything to you, I have never had such a faith in Jesus Christ’s gospel and am already attending another non-denominational Christian church.

Sandra, I can’t thank you enough for the decades of level headed and very well researched material and dedication to help
bring people out of this polytheistic fraud called mormonism. Looking back I can't believe I believed it so long—and I am already having troubles with my parents, who are both converts but still are very active, even doing very frequent work in the temple. It really, really bothers me because my mother especially is a very smart and perceptive person—and I am in my mind, I think, forming some kind of life mission to bring them out. But I know my mother thinks that I am saying she wasted her whole life in the church—so please pray for me to help her understand that the parts about loving the Lord, building a family etc were not in vain. I just am worried about their salvation especially and to show them that Christ is sufficient and to get them away from these blasphemous aspects within Mormonism, no matter how well organized the community or how nice the people and families are.

September 2014: I just want to say thank you! The amount of love and gratitude I have for you is tremendous! . . . I live in Ogden, UT. I am currently in the process of transitioning out of the LDS church. My story is not special. But because of people like you that work so hard to bring people like me the truth, I am in the process of learning how special I am to the Lord. And I am learning who the Lord is.

September 2014: Food for thought. Why do you think it's okay to preach what you do and yet after reading some of your material I see the very thing that you preach is slander and mockery of some kind. What do you get in life by the unkind words you use towards God's Church? Followers? Is that what your after? I don't understand why these so called Christian folks try to belittle others beliefs. I am a member of the Church of Jesus Christ LDS and it does not sit well with me to hear people belittle the church and basically make fun of my beliefs. How would you like it if someone made fun of you. I could make fun of you all day long and tell you how wrong your beliefs are, but I choose not to because that would be ignorant. Anyway enjoy your following.

October 2014: I just wanted to let you know that it was a visit to your store, when I was starting to seriously question Mormonism, and a purchase of several of your books, that finally led me out of the LDS Church and into a more peaceful place in my life. Thank you.

October 2014: I just wanted to write to you to thank you for the interview that you did that is now on Youtube regarding Joseph Smith and the LDS Church

I was only baptised in 2010. I started looking into the history of the Church and the Bishop said I had not to do that. I took my Endowments and, as soon as I saw the Endowment film in the Temple, I knew that there was something wrong.

None of the issues you discussed are ever mentioned in the LDS Church at all, not ever. Questions are still not encouraged on those subjects.

I investigated the notions put forth in the Endowment film, then watched everything I could find on youtube.

I have now requested my membership be rescinded. Fortunately there is only myself to consider in this, so only myself to get out of this mess.

Am now attending a true Christian evangelical church in England near to where I live, which is where I should have been in the first place.

October 2014: A few months ago I came across Sandra’s interviews on the Mormon Stories podcast as well as the now infamous CES Letter. After 23 years of being a converted member (I'm 35 now) I feel compelled to acknowledge that the LDS Church is not true.

What truly hurts is that this whole ordeal has put a strain on my marriage. We got married in the ____ Temple six months ago. As early as June my wife and I started having numerous arguments and discussions about the validity of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith’s claims. The church means a lot to her because it’s the only place she can worship God and feel warm fuzzies.

A short while ago we both decided to try attending other Christian services. Two Sundays ago it was a Presbyterian church and yesterday it was a non-denominational service. I thought both had great things to offer. She didn’t seem to like either one.

Last night we got a visit from a faithful couple in our LDS ward wanting to discuss our concerns. Towards the end the husband gave us both blessings, the one to my wife telling her the Lord chooses imperfect men to do his work and the one to me telling me the Lord is not pleased with my search for information. Both blessings suggested we expel Satan from our home.

After having meetings with our bishop, our stake president, and these two ward members she’s now committed to devoting the rest of her life to Mormonism. She justifies the warm fuzzies as a sign of truth by turning to Luke 24:32, “They said to one another, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he was speaking to us on the road, while he was explaining the scriptures to us?’” . . . May the blessings of the Lord be with you.

Follow-up email in January 2015.

I have some good news. My wife and I both decided to stop going to the LDS Church a month ago. It was a real struggle for us. After reviewing the evidence we were left with no other choice. The UTLM book order I placed on October 15th really sealed the deal for me. . . . I got about halfway through “View of the Hebrews” and had enough of a witness that The Book of Mormon was not a translation of ancient records. My wife, on the other hand, really had a hard time letting go of her spiritual testimony as noted in my e-mail from October 13th . . . Since June we had had heated arguments about LDS history and doctrine. I had defended the church for years, but once I came across the Letter to a CES Director I could no longer believe. At one point we even considered divorce. It would have been tragic had we gone that route especially considering we got married last April after eight years of friendship.

Ironically, the nail in the coffin for my wife was the church essay Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo. Finally we could turn to a source from the church that confirmed many of the horrible details regarding how polygamy was practiced. She immediately saw all the frustration on the part of members posting on John Dehlin's Facebook fan page. In her mind she could no longer believe that this was a church established by God.

Since making the decision to stop going we have attended a non-denominational Christian church where an old friend from high school goes. It really has been liberating to finally be able to agree as a couple that the LDS church does not tell the truth about its history and its origin cannot be attributed to the work of God.
While we have stopped attending we aren’t in the clear. We are now getting visits, phone calls, and texts from members in our Spanish-speaking congregation. Many of them are close friends of ours. My wife has already made it clear to our Relief Society presidency that she will no longer teach any classes and thus should be released as Relief Society teacher. I will write to our stake president over the coming week asking to be released as Stake Young Men’s second counselor. Many thanks for all that you do. I will be looking for more of your videos on YouTube.

October 2014: I left the LDS church back in the 80’s but have only RECENTLY begun studying LDS history because it only just now occurred to me that real historical information might be available online. It has been very interesting and a bit shocking as well.

At any rate, I recently came across your interview on Mormon Stories and just wanted to say how much I enjoyed your thoughtful and honest research. I had sort of a Tanner marathon that day and thought how exhausting that must have been, but you were undaunted! You’re a great story teller too! Truth teller? I’ve just purchased [Mormonism—] Shadow/Reality and look forward to reading it. Thanks so much for BEING THERE for all of us who are on this quest for the truth.

October 2014: I would sincerely appreciate being added to your mailing list for the Salt Lake City Messenger. I admit that I feel somewhat at odds with my request as I am currently a member of the LDS Church but I have been going through a real spiritual battle for the past year. My husband and I have been suffering with many unusual health problems which have been finally diagnosed as environmental which has meant I haven’t been able to attend church meetings regularly. During this time issues relating to the problem has caused me to look at the church with a great deal of questions and loss of faith or testimony. I am a convert (1996) and never have really had a testimony of Joseph Smith, but the faith in Jesus and family has kept me drawn to the church. . . . I feel like I am dying of thirst waiting for a word from the pulpit or teachers about my Savior. . . . I don’t believe in the book of Mormon. I’m tired of hearing about the prophets and leaders of the church when the Lord Jesus Christ seems secondary.

October 2014: I’m feeling sort of out of it right now. After 57 years in the church and having been in five bishoprics, a branch president, seminary teacher and most recently a temple society presidency that she will no longer teach any classes and thus should be released as Relief Society teacher. I will write to our stake president over the coming week asking to be released as Stake Young Men’s second counselor. Many thanks for all that you do. I will be looking for more of your videos on YouTube.

October 2014: I’m 52, born under the covenant, active LDS member; with all the LDS heritage, and recently discovered the deception. . . . As I do my own research and try to put my thoughts on paper, I find it healing and damaging as well; because of this internal confusion. With everything I have now learned, my mind still wont let the church go and it really plays with my emotions. I hope with my writings that some day my wife & family will understand why I would consider leaving the church.

November 2014: Paraphrased version of the last few years of my life. . . . Take vacation to meet with old army buddy haven’t seen in 10 plus years. Meet his best friends girl at bonfire party. She breaks up with guy. . . . We fall in love and I find out she is LDS. After a few years of her attending the Baptist church I go to she gets urges to return to LDS and proselytize me. This is where I will slow down. Until about 6 months ago I thought/assumed Mormons were some weird Christian denomination. Then the missionaries started coming and things just didn’t seem right. Her returned missionary brother came for a visit and we went to see the Kirkland Temple (about an hour from where I live). . . . I was a terrible Christian. So when I am confronted with this LDS stuff and their historic site I can admit I was a little swayed. But my thanks to God for his never failing love that I so undeserved.

I have heard many testimonies of God speaking directly to people. Never once had I ever experienced it. Yes, I have been blessed by numerous answered prayers; mostly undeserved answers at that. But one day when I decided to pray the Mormon prayer “Heavenly Father please reveal to me the truth of the book of Mormon”, I received a direct answer from God. No not an audible voice. But I heard “Just read your Bible.” . . . I down loaded a Bible app on my phone and spent six months or so reading everything I could while at work. Also, I began researching what the LDS church believes and focusing my biblical research to refuting the lies and twistings of LDS doctrine. What I came to realize is that Joseph Smith’s teachings are actually the exact opposite of what the Bible says is true. . . .

One of the hardest moments in my life was to tell my LDS fiancé that we would have to postpone our wedding till we worked out our difference of religion. My every desire was to pursue our wedding plans and assume that religion would work itself out. I am so glad I didn’t follow my desires. God has blessed me with the privilege of leading my fiancé to the truth of salvation. She has left behind the lies of the LDS church. She is so passionate now about learning the truth and passing it on to her family. She has been doing lots of investigation into what the Mormon doctrines really are. What finally broke through her Mormon barrier of anything not LDS approved? Not logic. Not my arguing. It was J. Smiths “King Follett Sermon”. It was J.S. explaining that we could all become gods and that God had a body of flesh and lived just like men on a different planet. . . . Terrible Christian I have been, I am pleased to say God has used the LDS to get my life back on track.

After reading about the LDS Gospel Topics essays, one man wrote:

November 2014: Finally—finally—the Mormon church acknowledges what you and Jerald have been saying for a long time! There are more issues, but it must be wonderful for you to live and know your work was not in vain!

November 2014: You have nothing to hope for. Because whatever you believe is as phony and fantasy as every bit of Mormonism. Yes, I found out (long time ago) the truth about Mormonism thanks to your efforts, but apparently I had more courage than you because I went a step further and investigated the truth about Jesus. Jesus was as phony as Joseph ever was. As we trusted you to show us the true colors of Mormonism, why can’t you check the reality about Jesus yourself?
November 2014: I am quite impressed on your work on the changes to the book of Mormon and I plan to spread the word to my other fellow Mormons of your findings. I have read other documents on what the church does not want their members to know such as “why I left the Mormon church” and it is enough for me to get back to my bishop on confirming that I seriously want to be excommunicated from the church.

December 2014: Where is this infinite knowledge you possess to give you the right to tell others they are wrong? . . . The sheer fact you espouse to know more than others, is telling of your M.O. This is not done in a loving, caring, manner. I challenge you to debate your perspectives outside of common “I’m not going to discuss” & “I’m not listening”. “Oh, here is a specific scripture my interpretation says otherwise.”

How could you expect the Holy Spirit to do its job of witnessing and confirming Truth, if you are dead set on an agenda of retaliation? . . . Thank you for helping confirm my faith, I want nothing to do with an org/church that benefits from love gifts and the error of evangelicism.

December 2014: Instead of slamming the Prophet Joseph, just don’t. You’re speaking of things you don’t even understand. Try doing something better with your life than to ATTEMPT to destroy others faith. The LDS church is and will always be true.

January 2015: I have been through a lot of changes this last week. I have discovered that Joseph Smith is a con man, and I have stopped attending meetings and paying Tithing. One of the things that affected me was a video you were in that stated that Emma Smith found Joseph Smith & Fanny Alger together in a barn. . . . Even assuming the best of intentions on the part of Joseph Smith, I still came away feeling disappointed in him. . . .

When he brought Fanny Alger into his home as a servant, he should have considered her as one of his own children and taken a vow of strict hands-off policy. . . . The girls probably idolized him for being the Prophet of the Restoration. It just doesn’t feel right. It was unfair to Oliver Cowdery for Joseph to put him in a situation where he had to say this was a filthy, dirty, nasty little affair. So I looked closer at other things. . . .

I agree wholehearted about what you said in the video about the marriages Joseph had with women who were already married. Some of [the husbands] were non-members, and they didn’t care about it. But Joseph was taking away the love of their life for the member husbands?

Worse, Joseph was taking away their exaltation, unless they decided to be sealed to another woman by the new and everlasting covenant. It was like Joseph was forcing these men to have plural wives in order for them to become Gods.

For me, the point of no return was the seer stone that Joseph found digging a well.

The description of the translation process meant that Joseph was not really involved in the process at all. All he did was read an English phrase out loud, and somebody wrote it down.

Anyone could do that! Oh, that’s right, Joseph had a gift. Not everyone can see using a seer stone . . . I am really disappointed in myself for not having seen this and so many other things more clearly.

January 2015: I writing to you today in search of the truth, im recently converted member of the LDS church at the time i felt everything was true. but things in my mind change when some of the elders and bishops said dont go onto things like youtube and search on google about anything to do with Lds, as you will find many things which are false. For me, something that suppose to come from our lord, they shouldnt need to say that, and me being me im always looking for the truth no matter what it is, as im doing my research on Josepsh smith and the book of Mormon. i finding alot of things out and its not looking good to what i signed up for. . . . I thought by joining the lds church i would be closer to Jesus now im even more confused any help would be greatly appreciated, i live in the UK and prior to being a member of Lds i was a christian.

A few days later he wrote again.

I was only told about the great things of the church and what it could do for me like a sales man would do and not the small print so to speak. to be honest im finding more information about the church in the last few days then i have done in the last 6 months, There are great people and i cant fault them in any way. its just the church in how it is run and the faults of its origins. Literally in the last few days i have made my self inactive from the truth as i cant attend to the things im finding out and i have only scratch the surface.

Thank you for the information and contact you have given me this will help a great deal in my studies. I always struggled to understand the words of wisdom and also tithing to be honest as i didnt feel it was right. Thank once again, God bless

January 2015: Thank you so much for your time and kindness. It helped to talk to someone I felt I could trust. The good news is that I haven’t cried for 3 days! I think the shock and grief is ebbing enough that I can function a bit better. And not attending church or temple every week has greatly reduced my normal lifelong anxiety.

I’ve watched a few episodes with Earl [Erskine], and even discovered someone I knew from a previous ward on one of his episodes! I’m halfway through the book you gave me and love what I’m learning. If I didn’t have a 12 hr a day job, I could spend more time reading and studying . . . Thanks again for holding me together last week.

January 2015: I was raised in Salt Lake LDS. I wasn’t super active growing up and was always troubled with a few of the beliefs. I didn’t agree with “one true church” having 3, and 4 yr Olds stand and bear their testimony while mom told them what to say in ear, along with a few other things. Due to these things I never became “temple worthy” but due to my heritage, never considered leaving the church either. I moved to Az and married a non-member who was born and raised Catholic. We have been attending a non-denominational Christian church for about 6 yrs. I am confused. There are so many things I love about the people and the religion, but at the same time, I also feel organized religion may not be for me. It’s nice to just follow the teachings of the bible . . . I’m really struggling. It’s something non-members would not understand. Or active members so I feel I have no one to talk to. Thanks for your time.

January 2015: I was born and raised in the church. We were the perfect “mormon family” until my parents divorced when I was 14. I left the church around that time. I am now 50. My father remarried another mormon and they are very active in the church. My mother fell away from the church when my parents
divorced. She recently returned . . . to my shock. I thought her and I were on the same page.

Several months ago the missionaries came knocking on my door. I let them in and my hubby and I started taking the lessons. I returned to church for 2 weeks and was loving it. My husband dug in much deeper and read the BOM as well as the D&C. He began telling me all these terrible things. I was very upset. I said to myself, I am going to prove him wrong. As I did my research, I realized I could not prove him wrong as he was right!

I called the missionaries and told them I was done with the church and I told them what happened. It didn't go over so well. They were really mad. The only thing they could say or do was to bare their testimony to me and tell me that they knew Joseph Smith was a prophet. They just kept baring their testimony over and over. Now I have been trying to open my parent's eyes and I am getting a lot of resistance. I show them something that I think is really big and I think this will convince them but it doesn't.

January 2015: Thanks for your courage and work. I like your intellect and “sounding of the whistle”. Many like you have helped me in the darkest of times. I am a 40 year old Mormon. Well maybe not a Mormon but that's what I have known and on Sunday's that's where I go. I have a wife and three children who believe.

Surprisingly . . . I have read and studied much as of late and like many have realized Joseph was maybe not inspired from God. . . anachronism, polyandry, polygamy, 1830 vs 1837 BM, Kinderhook Plates, Greek Salter, Hoffman, 3 First Visions, hazy priesthood restoration, antitrust bank, Joseph killing 2, Danites, Rigdon, mt. meadow, Sidney's writings in Missouri, BYU quotes, John Taylor quotes, blacks in relation to Can, Adam God, Blood Atonement, Book of Abraham papyri, Visions, hazy priesthood restoration, antitrust bank, Joseph killing 2, Danites, Rigdon, mt. meadow, Sidney's writings in Missouri, BYU quotes, John Taylor quotes, blacks in relation to Can, Adam God, Blood Atonement, Book of Abraham papyri, lying for the Lord and the suppression on Church History have racked my mind. . . . And of course I can go on and on. The disloyalty to Emma, Law, Hyde and to all three first witness . . . Frustrates me.

Cognitive dissonance . . . For sure! Men on moon . . . The people of the sun. The prophecies of Joseph not coming to past mainly the 2nd coming? Dead Sea scrolls . . . Great Isaiah scroll.

The Sun receiving energy from another sun? Holland and Hinkley lying on national tv? Temple endowments changed?

I do also fear polygamy will return with liberal marriage control! My side of the family and my wife's side are all believers. I really have no one to share with. I told my wife about what I see . . . of the inconsistency and errors of the LDS church about 6 Months ago. We almost lost our marriage over it.

I am so scared that it might one day lead to our separation. I live in ___ Florida. I have served an honorable mission, was AP, was EQP, was a YM president and my last call Stake Young Pres.

How did I get here? Lol

When I started to realize more about secular history it lead to a complete division with my wife and family members (once again . . . about 6 months ago). Since then I have asked to be released from calling and stopped wearing garments . . . And yes drink a little . . . and yes almost lost my marriage and have lost much “face” among close friends, leaders and family.

My wife has come a long way since then and is reading Bushman (better than nothing) she tells me she loves me regardless however seems to not want to even really look at the problems. She says her feelings tell her it's true. also . . . Her father is a “seventy” and she looks at him like a true hero . . . . I don't want to lose my family however I don't want to offend God. I believe—as you—in the Bible.

I still feel the Savior's love. I have listen and read from Palmer, Brodie, Vogul and you and your husband . . . Many more too. I find your views very similar to mine.

January 2015: I just finished your interview (most of my weekend free time) on Mormon Stories. Wanted to write you and thank you.

Part 4 was moving. Through a flurry of devil's advocate questions (read: challenges) I saw you bear your faith in God and Jesus. Minus husband plus army escort of angels. I love you, Sandra. I'm sure I'm not alone in this.

January 2015: You will probably not remember me, but I met with you at your bookstore just about one year ago. At the time I felt so lonely in my search for the truth about mormonism. You took the time to talk with me for a few hours, and you were so kind and gentle in answering my questions. I just wanted to thank you for your kindness, and the time you took to talk with me that day. My husband and I finally resigned from the LDS church in December, and we are happier than ever. We live in Boston now. but if we lived in Salt Lake still I would come give you a big hug! You will never know the impact you had on our lives. Thank you!

January 2015: I'm still on this extreme emotional roller coaster which is very frustrating and, at times, nearly debilitating. Sometimes I'm surprised by the calmness that settles in my heart and I feel “all is well”—at least for the moment. Other times, I'm so completely undone by feelings of betrayal, anger and grief that I pray for “my life to be taken.” Every thought, action, goal, decision, and feeling I've ever had has been under the all encompassing umbrella of Mormonism. Nearly every happy moment, good friendship, service and college opportunity, as well as every depressive episode, suicidal act, abusive situation, and family relationship is couched in Mormonism. Sometimes the grief is so overwhelming I can't breathe and have no desire to do so. At this point in time, I experience the latter far more frequently that the former.

I know these feelings are probably normal for the situation, but I'm feeling crushed by them. If something that has consumed my life for 54 years be a farce, how can I ever trust myself to recognize truth? And is there really any “truth” to be found outside of the fact that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world? And even though I know THAT to be true, I don't really understand the true NATURE of God! I'm still drinking from the fire hydrant of information, though I've been forced to slow the flow a tiny bit in order to survive. I still feel like I'm drowning most every day. Everything hurts: heart, head, stomach.

One thing that I think has lessened the blow a bit is that I've been separating my relationship with God from my relationship the church for many years. When bishops would throw condemnation and their “authority” in my face, or members would say and do things in the name of the church, I knew that those were not in keeping with God's nature and His relationship with ME. I'm still trying to navigate my way through the crashing rapsids of knowledge. It feels as if I've gone over a raging waterfall and am being pounded against the cliff and boulders as I frantically try to claw my way to the water's surface for much needed air before it's too late.
I don’t expect that there are any easy answers to calm the raging emotions (and menopause isn’t helping.) I don’t expect you to do or say anything to make things better. But it helps to know that you, Lynn [Wilder], Earl & Karla [Erskine] are aware of my struggles and are willing to listen as I try to sort it all out and rebuild a new life . . . yet again! Thank you for your time and prayers on my behalf.

January 2015: I just came across part 4 of the interview video titled Mormon Stories Anti Mormonism. I am going to listen to this again and look up parts 1-3. and all I find on internet regarding you, you and your husbands courageous work! I left the Mormon church when I was 15 ____ huge family on both sides who have never been happy with me . . . showing so in multiple ways! An ever non-ending moral superior attitude. The thing is, I believe I understand quite well, not to take offense, and if so only just a little to let go off with Gods help. It is the teachings so deeply ingrained with the programming. I went through it myself as a child. What they say to me, show me I know is because they believe what they were taught and want me to do what they have been taught is right.

I have done aloot of my own homework and always even in primary felt the bible speak to my heart and spirit. . . . The Bible has been my source, personal relationship with the Lord in my adult life.

I was so moved hearing you in the video and I love you! I wanted to reach into the video and hug you so tight. I am so thankful to have you close to me in my home although it be video . . . and as sisters in Christ connected through the holy spirit.

Thank you so much for your sharing of faith, your hard work, deep commitment, and for pure Christlike motive so clear to hear and see. I am not anti- mormon either, but concerned about the teachings and the organization. I know you love the people. It is a gift from God to be able to be a critical thinker, test everything, God bless you for having the courage to speak up on matters so important.

January 2015: Hello, . . . I am a Native American, Seneca tribe, wolf clan and I live on the Cattaraugus reservation. We have what I believe to be the only Ids church located on a reservation in the U.S. Maybe you could let me know if I am right. . . . I would like to thank Sandra and Jerold Tanner for opening my eyes to the suspect doctrine and beliefs of the Ids church. Although I am still a mormon on paper I have found my way back out and am beginning a new life with Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour. I must have been taken in by the connection that mormonism is said to have with Native Americans. Even being told that during my missionary talks before I joined the church. I do plan on submitting my resignation from the church membership rolls.

March 2015: I just wanted to send you a message and say I listened to your podcasts with John Dehlin. I found them extremely interesting and thought-provoking. I’m a member of the LDS church with very serious doubts about its truth claims. You can only imagine, and I’m sure are fully aware, the stress these doubts have placed on my family and community life.

March 2015: I owe you, and your late husband, a sincere apology for my misguided judgment. I’m sorry. I love you two. I was born and reared Mormon in Ogden, Ut; descended directly from Parley P. Pratt’s 7th wife. My immediate and extended family has held, and still holds, substantial positions within the hierarchy of the Mormon Church. Shortly after I received my mission call, in October of 1983, I receive a pamphlet in the mail from the Utah Lighthouse Ministry. I don’t know who sent it, don’t care. I read it; had my doubts, and discussed it with my bishop. He dismissed it as anti-mormon lies with no basis in fact. I believed him—as any wide-eyed young man would do. I went on to serve my mission (in Brazil). Here I am, now, 32 years later, living on the East Coast. I faithfully served in every call I was given. In 2000 (at age 35) I was called to serve, and served, as Bishop of a newly created ward. When I was released, in 2005, I was called to a position of authority in the Washington DC Temple (in Kensington). I served there until early 2008, when I asked to be released. Very long story short: I have always been an avid student of Christianity. The more I studied, the more I wanted to know. Of course, as I studied, one thing led to another thing and eventually I lost my “testimony” in the church. That loss came at great expense; my family (now divorced); my friends (I had 345 friends [members of my former ward], I now have 342 enemies); my reputation; and, sadly, my faith. I was hurt, angry, sad, betrayed, humiliated, betrayed, embarrassed, etc. I spend my life in a long hallway with two walls on either side and a path forward. When I lost my faith in the church, those walls fell . . . and for the first time ever, I looked left, right, all around. I found a world around me, not walls. That was 2010.

Since then I’ve spent tireless hours tracking down wonderful people I “disciplined” as sinners when I was bishop. My sweetest moment ever came in 2013 in downtown Baltimore when I met with a young man I had excommunicated because he had had same sex relations while being a member. I met him in a small corner café, after dozens of messages begging him to meet with me. We met; we talked for an hour. I begged his forgiveness for my un-Christ-like behavior—I begged for his forgiveness. He forgave me. When we left the café, we hugged and he broke down crying—his tears soaked through my shirt on my shoulder. I was forgiven, I was forgiven. I am sorry for judging you and your husband. I ask your forgiveness. . . . Thank you and Jerald for all you have done.

March 2015: My name is C_____, I'm from [European country] we’ve been sealed as a family in the Switzerland Temple, I graduated in both Seminary and Institute and served a full time mission. I’ve . . . served in most of the available callings where I live. My wife and I left the LDS Church about 9 moths ago after discovering the painful truth. I have two sisters living in Salt Lake City area and one of them left the LDS Church about four moths before I did. The curious thing about this is that we haven’t talked each other about this but a couple months after I left the Church. The path now is being really hard, I was about to became atheist after reading a lot of stuff in the Internet and a lot of contradictory information.

Fortunately I came to the conclusion that there is a God that created us and created this wonderful world where we live in. This is all I have for now. I’ve read a lot of LDS Church controversial material such as Journal of Discourses, Church History by Joseph Smith, [Address] To all believers in Christ by M. Harris [actually by David Whitmer] and my sister sent me a copy of the 1830 traslation of the Book of Mormon. I’ve watched a lot of your interviews in Youtube, specially those with both Shawn Mc Craney and John Delhin. Those interviews helped me a lot to see everything more clearly and I’m really
thankful for those. I’ll keep on following you because I still have a
long way to go and a lot to learn. Thanks again for all what
are you doing, you are doing such a great work. God bless you.

March 2015: I love being LDS! Thank you lord for showing me
that the [LDS] GosPe is true.

March 2015: First off, I want to say thank you so much for your
time. Your truly a wonderful lady with so much knowledge and
truth to share with others in doubt of Mormonism.

My husband and I mailed out our letters to the bishop the
other day and he received a text today from the bishop saying
that he received our letters regretfully and that we would need
to mail him our current temple recommends if we didn’t want
to see him in person. At first I was extremely upset that he
even took the step to text us since in our letter we said the only
contacted we wanted from the church was proof of our names
being taken off the membership. However, we decided we are
just going to mail our recommends (once we even find them, we
have no clue where they even are), and have a short talk with
him over the phone explaining why we are leaving. I really
learned something from you in not to be anti mormon. I posted
a note on facebook about why we are leaving the church but
still love the people in the church but why I personally couldn’t
agree with their doctrine. I have gotten an extremely positive
letter from someone in the church telling me that they hoped I
would remain friends with them despite leaving the church and
not believing in their doctrine anymore. They also stated that
they loved me and would miss seeing out family but that they
respected our decisions. I think if I would have approached
it in a extremely negative way and treated people mean that a
lot of nice people would have been hurt by me and how sad
that would have made Christ. I know that I have a job to be an
example to people in Mormonism and to reflect the light of
christ and how could I possibly do that if I’m being hateful?

March 2015: I had a bit of a freeing experience yesterday. We
had to go to Salt Lake City yesterday (my husband had business
he needed to take care of and so me and my daughter went
along and made a family day of it.) As we were driving I saw the
Salt Lake City Temple in the distance. All of a sudden I started
silently crying tears of joy and relief; I would no longer have to
worry about doing my ancestors work or having to worry about
getting the temple endowment. All my fears and burdens lifted
off my shoulders. The tears that I cried were extremely healing
to me. And I’m even crying writing this letter.

I can finally say I’m free from Mormonism; now that I have
seen the light and learned the truth I can never go back. It makes
me sick to my stomach that I held Joseph smith in such a high
place over Christ. I truly hurt for the ones who are still in the
church; it’s truly bondage. Not freedom. . . . We will be attending
a baptist church down the street tomorrow; [my husband] has
agreed to come with me. Please be praying that we make good
progress. And I’m even crying writing this letter.

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church; it’s truly bondage. Not freedom. . . . We will be attending
a baptist church down the street tomorrow; [my husband] has
agreed to come with me. Please be praying that we make good
Christian friends and have a good support system.

March 2015: I just wanted to Thank you for all the work
you have done. Your research has helped my husband and
I immensely as we have studied and learned the truth about
mormonism. We both grew up in the LDS church and come
from active families. After meeting at ______ college we were
married in the Temple.

About ten years ago my husband was studying up at USU
and realized he had sat down by some church history books. He
started reading them and was totally blown away. After that he
completely stopped believing in the mormon church and also
lost his faith in God and wasn’t really sure if God even existed.
I didn’t want to listen to anything that he would try and tell me.

Last summer I finally decided to look into things. It only
took me about a week and I just knew the LDS church wasn’t
what it claimed to be. Luckily we were really good friends with
a pastor at Alpine Church. He spent a lot of time answering
questions for us and encouraged us to do our own studying.
We accepted Jesus and since we have had him in our hearts our
eyes have been opened to the truth of the Bible. We now have a
personal relationship with Jesus that we never knew could exist.
We also have an overwhelming peace and the happiness that
comes from that. We were set free in Christ. It has been a hard
journey and will continue to be so. All of our family is still LDS
and our neighbors have turned their backs on us. We pray that
in time all will be able to learn and find the truth as we have.

April 2015: You will never know just how much the work you
and Gerald have done showing the truth of Mormonism and
how it helped me in my deepest fear, saddest and loneliest time
of my life. I knew no other teaching except LDS teachings.
The programming was deep and I feared leaving the church,
my temple marriage, because of their teaching that all other
churches are wrong. After I left, I saw God in all He created
around me yet felt there was no church to go to. Thank you for
all the books you published. I bought many off of Ebay out
deception to sort through things. I remember going to the
Concerned Christians conference when you were there and
bought more of your books. I pray that God will bless you to
continue to help others when they feel lost and wondering what
now. You were my lighthouse and for many others of us as we
were sinking in the depths of fear and made it to solid ground.
I’m sure there are many others out in the world that are silently
thanking you and your husband to find the real Jesus. God bless
you Sandra! With much love in Christ . . .

April 2015: Thank you for your brave and fair information
in [Mormonism] Shadow or Reality. I took that bold leap of
faith about 8 years ago. My eyes have been opened and I have
been set free. I once said that the greatest threat to my family
and marriage were my duties in the church. I can now see how
foolish I was, and I have spiritually lost three of my six children
to drugs. I read your book *(with the bathroom door tightly
locked ha ha!)* and then read the book of Abraham book. The
truth truly set me free. My spirituality still has a creator, I revere
the idea of mother nature, although I think she is a force. I love
physics and metaphysics. My mind has been opened to all that
is good and true. I am listening to your you tube discussions
with John [Dehlin].

April 2015: I met you today in the bookstore. Thanks again for
taking the time to talk to me about leaving Mormonism, and
encouraging me to talk to my grandpa [who left the LDS Church
years ago]. He was so sweet and it was so very comforting to talk
to him. This process is definitely overwhelming, but it’s people
like you that make it easier to go through it. Your Mormon
Stories interview was immensely helpful, and I’m looking
forward to reading my new books. I am hopeful that the end
of this road is more peaceful and happy than the start of it.
Although I believe a life based on truth is worth all the work
anyways. Thanks for your advice and all you do to help others.
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Joseph Smith’s Seer Stone
By: Robert M. Bowman Jr.
(Director of Institute for Religious Research - IRR.org)

On August 4, 2015, the LDS Church issued a press release that was picked up and reported on National Public Radio and Fox News, by the Associated Press, and by many other news outlets. The focus of the story was the publication that day of high-resolution photographs and a printed transcript of the Printer’s Manuscript of the Book of Mormon. Judging from the press release and the news stories, one would never know that the text of the Printer’s Manuscript had already been published in 2001. There wasn’t much newsworthy there, although scholars will appreciate being able to examine photographs of the manuscript.

The real story is that the LDS Church also has published color photographs of the seer stone (including the photo shown here⁠¹) that Joseph Smith used to dictate his translation of the Book of Mormon. Until the end of 2013, the Church had generally represented Joseph as having translated the Book of Mormon by reading the gold plates through transparent stone spectacles that he had found along with the plates in a stone box buried near his home. Prior to that time the LDS Church had only occasionally mentioned Joseph’s seer stone, sometimes admitting he used it in translating and sometimes questioning if he did so, and never with any explanation as to what it was.

The explosion of easily accessible information online about Joseph’s treasure hunting using seer stones and about his using one of those seer stones when he dictated the Book of Mormon finally caught up with the LDS Church in 2013. At the very end of that year, they quietly published an article under Gospel Topics Essays on their official website (LDS.org) admitting that Joseph had used a seer stone for treasure hunting and later used the same stone for translating at least part of the Book of Mormon. As the article acknowledged, Joseph’s method was the same for both activities: he would place the stone inside a hat, bury his face in the hat to block outside light, and call out what he claimed to be able to see through or on the stone—either the location of hidden treasure or the translation of the supposed gold plates.2

Unless you were an avid Mormon-watcher, however, you could easily miss that article, which the LDS Church posted with no press release and no effort to make even its own rank and file membership aware of it. By contrast, on August 4, 2015, the LDS Church made sure as many people as possible would hear about the seer stone photos by presenting them in a larger story about the Printer’s Manuscript being published by the Church Historian’s Office in its “Joseph Smith Papers” project. (The Joseph Smith Papers is a years-long undertaking to publish online and in print all of the writings of Joseph Smith, including diaries, letters, and the manuscripts for his histories and revelations.) The message the Church hopes people will hear is that they are serious about being “transparent” in addressing “sensitive” or “controversial” matters. In addition to the press release, the LDS Church posted on its website advance copies of articles discussing Joseph’s seer stones scheduled for the September and October 2015 issues of Ensign, its official monthly magazine.3

The fact that Joseph Smith used a seer stone in dictating the text of the Book of Mormon is something that has been known by Mormon and non-Mormon researchers and scholars for decades. It’s nice that the Church Historian’s office has published a picture of it, but we already knew about it and even knew what it looked like (a small, smooth, chocolate-colored stone). Our organization, the Institute for Religious Research, has had an article about Joseph using the seer stone to dictate the Book of Mormon on its website since 1999.4

Although the LDS Church is now at least talking about the seer stone, it is still far from addressing the issues adequately.

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Joseph Smith’s Seer Stones

Historians agree now that Joseph had at least two seer stones and probably more. The first seer stone Joseph used, though, belonged to a neighbor girl named Sally Chase.5 According to a later story, Joseph looked at her stone and saw the location of a stone far away under the roots of a tree a mile from Lake Erie; he later went there, dug, and found his first stone. It is well established that he found one of his seer stones on Sally’s farm in 1822 when he was supposedly helping her older brother Willard to dig a well.6 Most likely, Joseph and Willard were digging for treasure, perhaps with Joseph using his other stone if he already had it, or perhaps using the stone that belonged to Sally. The stone found on the Chase farm is usually said to have been the brown stone, though one LDS scholar has argued it was the whitish stone.7 What is certain is that Willard considered the stone found on his family farm to be his property. Ironically, it may be that Joseph dictated his “translation” of the Book of Mormon using a seer stone stolen from someone else.

Mormons seem somewhat conflicted with regards to how to view Joseph’s exploits with the seer stone. On one hand, LDS writers have pointed out that using seer stones to look for lost property or buried treasure was a feature of common folklore in Joseph’s culture, even if viewed with disdain by most of the educated or elites.8 The point here seems to be that believing today in Joseph’s calling as a prophet does not entail believing in the use of seer stones or similar divining objects. On this way of looking at the issue, the stone was not important; God simply chose to work through Joseph’s belief in the power of the stone.

On the other hand, Mormons sometimes try to validate Joseph’s use of seer stones in ways that imply that the stone was important. Two examples supposedly proving that Joseph could really see something in the stone are usually given. Both of these examples come from one of Joseph Smith’s scribes, Martin Harris, who may fairly be said to have been the least credible witness among Joseph’s associates.9 In one story, Harris claimed that he hid a pin in a haystack and that Joseph found it immediately without even looking in the hay by gazing at his seer stone in his hat while reaching his hand into

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6 “Book of Mormon Translation,” LDS.org; Snow, “Joseph in Harmony.”
7 Ibid., 198-283. Ashurst-McGee went on to become an editor with the Joseph Smith Papers project of the LDS Church Historian’s Office.
8 E.g., Turley, Jensen, and Ashurst-McGee, “Joseph the Seer.”
the hay to extract the pin.10 Since “a needle in a haystack” was a familiar idiom in Harris’s day, some skepticism about this story seems appropriate. Whether one accepts this story as factual or not, it shows that Harris, at least, believed that the stone itself had a special power.

Harris’s other story was that he once secretly substituted a lookalike stone in Joseph’s hat when they were translating the gold plates, and that when Joseph looked in the hat he expressed surprise that he could not see anything.11 This story implies not only that Joseph needed a stone to function as a “seer” but that it had to be a genuine seer stone. The story conflicts with the idea that God was merely working through Joseph’s belief in seer stones inherited from his culture. It implies instead that the power really was in some sense in the stone. If the stone was necessary only because Joseph thought it was, then Joseph’s mistaken belief that the stone in his hat was the seer stone should have been sufficient for him to continue receiving revelation. A Mormon can accept this story at face value as testifying to Joseph’s ability to see things in the stone only if he also accepts the notion that the ability depended on having the right stone. Unless we accept the belief that certain stones were specially invested in magical or supernatural power, we will need to view Harris’s story with some skepticism.

Mormons sometimes also argue that as Joseph matured as a prophet, he became less dependent on such instruments, to the point of not needing them to produce his later translations and revelations.12 Again, the implication is that the instrument was not crucial to Joseph’s “gift.” The problem is that Joseph claimed that the instruments were essential. For example, he stated with regard to the “Urim and Thummim” that “the possession and use of these stones were what constituted ‘seers’ in ancient or former times” (Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith–History 1:35). This is the fact that Joseph actually dug up the stone he used to translate the gold plates five years or so before he obtained the “Urim and Thummim”—perhaps when supposedly digging a well on his neighbor’s farm—has come as shocking news to some Mormons.


12 E.g., Neal A. Maxwell, “‘By the Gift and Power of God,’” Ensign, (Jan. 1997); Turley, Jensen, and Ashurst-McGee, “Joseph the Seer.” This was the larger thesis of Ashurst-McGee’s “Pathway to Prophethood.”

### Joseph’s Treasure Hunting with a Seer Stone

Until recently, the LDS Church avoided acknowledging that Joseph was engaged in hunting for buried treasure using a seer stone prior to his claiming to have found and translated the Book of Mormon. When the issue did come up, their spokesmen generally questioned that he did so or commented on the issue in such a way as to imply that Joseph’s reputation in this regard was undeserved.13 In skirting this issue, the LDS Church was simply following Joseph’s lead. In Joseph Smith–History, printed in the Pearl of Great Price, he claimed that his reputation as a treasure-hunter was a misunderstanding. In October 1825 Joseph had, he said, gone to live in the home of Josiah Stowell as a hired hand. Stowell had learned about a lost silver mine supposedly located in Harmony (PA). Joseph reported, “After I went to live with him, he took me, with the rest of his hands, to dig for the silver mine, at which I continued to work for nearly a month, without success in our undertaking, and finally I prevailed with the old gentleman to cease digging after it. Hence arose the very prevalent story of my having been a money-digger” (Pearl of Great Price, JS–H 1:56).

Now that Joseph’s treasure-hunting is well known, Mormons are claiming that his reference to the Stowell expedition shows that he did not try to hide his involvement in such activities.14 However, Joseph did try to hide the nature and extent of his involvement. He was actually the defendant in a court case in 1826 in regards to the expedition with Stowell in late 1825. In the records of that case, Joseph admitted that he had a stone that he had used “occasionally” for three years to locate lost items and buried treasures. This would be three years prior to the Stowell expedition in late 1825, taking us back to 1822, the year Joseph found his seer stone on the Chase farm. Joseph suspended the use of his seer stone in money-digging for most or all of 1826 due to the trial, but resumed the practice for

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14 E.g., “Book of Mormon Translation.” Royal Skousen makes the same argument, though he also concedes that Joseph exercised “caution” in referring to his treasure-hunting activities: Printer’s Manuscript, ed. Skousen and Jensen, xv–xvi.
part of 1827.15 Years later, Martin Harris claimed that Joseph had told him that an angel commanded him to quit money-digging.16 In reality, Joseph quit because it was a condition for financial help from his father-in-law Isaac Hale, as both Hale and another witness, Peter Ingersoll, attested. It is also worth noting that according to Ingersoll, Joseph admitted to Hale that “he could not see in a stone now, nor ever could; and that his former pretensions in that respect, were all false.”17 This testimony fits the facts since, in Joseph’s five years of treasure hunting, he never actually acquired anything of value, unless one counts the gold plates.

The fact that Joseph was engaged in “money-digging” for years prior to working for Stowell is not mentioned in any of the recent LDS Church articles for general readers. However, it has been acknowledged in a couple of Mormon books published in 2015 on the subject of Joseph’s translation of the Book of Mormon.18 Since Joseph had been using his seer stone to find buried treasure for three years when Stowell hired him to search for the silver mine, Joseph’s claim that his reputation as a money-digger arose from that one short-lived effort at the end of 1825 is false.

Worse still, Joseph’s account omits the most controversial and relevant aspect of his “money-digging”: his claim to be able to locate buried treasure using a seer stone. Stowell hired Joseph for his silver mine quest, not to perform the manual labor of digging as Joseph Smith—History would lead readers to believe, but to use his reputed gift with the seer stone to locate the mine. We know this both from the 1826 trial and from the later account of Joseph’s mother Lucy, who said that Stowell hired Joseph because he had heard that Joseph “possessed certain keys, by which he could discern things invisible to the natural eye.”19 Mormon scholars have acknowledged that these “keys” were Joseph’s seer stones.20 In an article in the September 2015 Ensign, the LDS Church admitted for the first time that Stowell had hired Joseph because of his reputation for finding treasure using a seer stone.21

The reason why Joseph tried to cover up his years of treasure-hunting is not hard to discern: this was the original context in which Joseph’s supposed discovery of the gold plates took place. In the folklore of Joseph’s early American culture, buried treasure was commonly guarded by spirits—typically either demons or the ghosts of the departed—and thus divination instruments such as divining rods or seer stones were required to locate the treasure. According to Joseph, the gold plates were buried in the ground and guarded by a supernatural being, later identified as the angel Moroni, who refused to allow Joseph to take the plates until various conditions were met. Thus, the story of the finding of the Book of Mormon is a story of buried treasure, one that some LDS scholars have admitted fit comfortably into the folklore beliefs accepted by the Smiths and their associates.22 One recent LDS article explains that Joseph’s account merely “emphasized his visions and other spiritual experiences,”23 but this understatement ignores Joseph’s attempt to explain away his notoriety as someone who for several years had claimed the ability to find lost treasures by looking in a stone.

Joseph also says in this same account that he was visited annually by the angel Moroni, shown the gold plates, and instructed at length about his mission, from 1823 to 1827. As we have seen, this was the very period during which he was often engaged in searching for buried treasures supposedly guarded by spirits. The coincidence raises the reasonable suspicion that the five annual visits of Moroni are a later fiction to replace Joseph’s youthful career as a treasure hunter with a more religiously edifying story about a heavenly angel.

### Joseph’s Seer Stone and the Book of Mormon

Mormon scholars and leaders now concede that Joseph used his seer stone to dictate at least a large part of the Book of Mormon. They have not always agreed this

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18 MacKay and Dirkmaat, From Darkness unto Light, 3, 10 (although they are unclear on the chronology); Printer’s Manuscript, ed. Skousen and Jensen, xv-xvi.


21 Snow, “Joseph in Harmony.”

22 Bushman, Joseph Smith, 50; Ashurst-McGee, “Moroni as Angel and as Treasure Guardian,” 39; Printer’s Manuscript, ed. Skousen and Jensen, xv-xvi. Ashurst-McGee tries to argue (unsuccessfully, in my view) that Joseph’s story of the angel and the gold plates was always primarily a story of revelation and faith, but even he admits that it would sound like a tale of a spirit and buried treasure.

23 Turley, Jensen, and Ashurst-McGee, “Joseph the Seer.”
was the case. For example, Joseph Fielding Smith, the tenth President of the LDS Church, dismissed all of the accounts of Joseph using his seer stone: “The information is all hearsay, and personally, I do not believe that this stone was used for this purpose.” Smith admitted that the accounts might be true but suggested that the witnesses were confused due to the fact that Joseph did have a seer stone but used it for other purposes.24 A few LDS Church publications after the time of Joseph Fielding Smith mentioned without explanation Joseph using a seer stone to translate,25 while others made reference to the seer stone but implied some doubt as to whether he actually had used it to translate.26 (None of these earlier publications, it should be noted, explained what the seer stone was.) As recently as 2013, an official LDS Church publication hedged on the issue by saying that “Joseph may have used a seer stone he found in his youth to translate a portion of the Book of Mormon.”27 Such uncertainty is now officially gone, as the LDS Church now states explicitly that Joseph did use his seer stone for that purpose.28

Joseph’s wife Emma and the men who were supporting and working with Joseph when he produced the Book of Mormon gave numerous statements years later that all agree as to how Joseph did it. LDS historian Richard Bushman summarized the method as follows: “Joseph put the seer stone in a hat to exclude the light and read off the translated text by looking in the stone. All the while, the plates lay wrapped in a cloth on the table. Apparently Joseph did not look at the plates through most of the translation.” As Bushman conceded, “The actual process by which the Book of Mormon was translated, according to the witnesses of the event and the earliest sources, is generally unknown to members of the Church.”29

That the gold plates were not in view as Joseph dictated his “translation” bears emphasizing. While at times the plates lay covered on a table, at other times they were apparently not even in the room. David Whitmer, for example, stated frankly that Joseph “did not use the plates in the translation.” According to Whitmer, “The plates were not before Joseph while he translated, but seem to have been removed by the custodian angel.”30 Isaac Hale commented that Joseph dictated his translation “with a stone in his hat, and his hat over his face, while the Book of Plates were at the same time hid in the woods!”31

The LDS Church for many years fostered the belief that Joseph Smith actively studied the plates as part of his work of translating them. For example, Joseph Fielding Smith described Joseph’s translation work in this way: “He was busy studying the characters and making himself familiar with them and the use of the Urim and Thummim. He had a great deal more to do than merely to sit down and with the use of the instrument prepared for that purpose translate the characters on the plates.”32 According to a 1988 *Ensign* article, “The scriptures indicate that translation involved sight, power, transcription of the characters, the Urim and Thummim or a seerstone, study, and prayer.”33 A curriculum manual for upper elementary students currently on the LDS website states: “At first Joseph spent a lot of time becoming familiar with the plates and the language in which they were written. As he studied and prayed, the Urim and Thummim helped him understand the characters on the plates.”34 This understanding was reinforced in LDS artwork depicting Joseph closely

26 E.g., Richard Lloyd Anderson, “‘By the Gift and Power of God,’” Ensign, (Sept. 1977); Oaks, “Recent Events Involving Church History and Forged Documents.”
27 “Lesson 34: Doctrine and Covenants 28,” in *Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Seminary Teacher Manual* (LDS Church, 2013), emphasis added.
31 In Early Mormon Documents, ed. Vogel, 4:287.
33 Godfrey, “A New Prophet and a New Scripture.”
examining the plates, often with his finger touching a plate as if he were examining a specific word or character. (Below is an example by Del Parson.)

Once again, the misunderstanding goes back to Joseph Smith, who never mentioned the seer stone or the hat in connection with the translation of the Book of Mormon. Rather, he consistently claimed that he translated the gold plates using spectacles made of transparent stones that he found with the plates at the location revealed by the angel Moroni. According to his official history, Moroni told him that "there were two stones in silver bows—and these stones, fastened to a breastplate, constituted what is called the Urim and Thummim—deposited with the plates; and the possession and use of these stones were what constituted 'seers' in ancient or former times; and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book" (JS–H 1:35). In another statement issued in 1838 he said, "I obtained them [the plates], and the Urim and Thummim with them; by the means of which, I translated the plates; and thus came the book of Mormon."35 In his 1842 Wentworth Letter, Joseph said, "With the records was found a curious instrument which the ancients called 'Urim and Thummim,' which consisted of two transparent stones set in the rims of a bow fastened to a breastplate. Through the medium of the Urim and Thummim I translated the record by the gift and power of God."36 Naturally, Mormons have assumed that these miraculous spectacles with transparent stones were used to read the gold plates but, as scholars have known for many years, Joseph did no such thing.

Mormons have offered two explanations to harmonize Joseph’s repeated, unqualified statement that he translated the Book of Mormon using the stone spectacles he found with the gold plates and the multiple testimonies from witnesses who observed Joseph dictating the Book of Mormon with a seer stone in his hat. The first is that Joseph and his associates began using the term “Urim and Thummim” to refer to both the stone spectacles and the individual seer stone, resulting in some confusion as to which instrument was meant.37 While this might be a possible explanation for other statements using the term, it cannot explain away Joseph’s explicit statements, quoted above, describing the Urim and Thummim as transparent stone spectacles found in the stone box with the gold plates.

The other harmonization goes back to statements made by Joseph’s associates in the decades following his death. According to Joseph’s widow Emma, David Whitmer, and former LDS apostle William McLellin, Joseph used the stone spectacles when he dictated the 116 pages of manuscript that Martin Harris lost in 1828, but used his seer stone when he dictated in 1829 the text of the published Book of Mormon.38 If one assumes that the stone spectacles existed, this would seem to be the only satisfactory explanation.

On the other hand, no one ever saw Joseph using the stone spectacles to translate the gold plates. Harris, who served as Joseph’s scribe for the lost 116 pages, never saw Joseph during the process, as a curtain or blanket was hung that shielded him (and the reported plates and stone spectacles) from view. Harris told at least two different individuals, John A. Clark and Charles Anthon, about the curtain or blanket.39 Harris’s own understanding was that Joseph began with the stone spectacles but soon switched during their translation work to the seer stone “for convenience.”40 Thus, the claim made by Emma and others that Joseph used the stone spectacles for the lost 116 pages is at least largely negated by Harris’s story.

In short, according to the testimonies of his associates (other than Oliver Cowdery), Joseph used the seer stone for much if not most of the lost 116 pages dictated in 1828 and for all of the pages they witnessed him dictating in 1829 that became the published Book of Mormon. This makes his unqualified claim to have

36 In Early Mormon Documents, ed. Vogel, 1:171; see his similar account in 1843, 1:185.
39 See Early Mormon Documents, ed. Vogel, 2:268; 4:379, 384; accepted as fact by Bushman, Joseph Smith, 66.
translated the Book of Mormon with the stone spectacles at least misleading if not an outright lie.

**Translating with the Seer Stone: Was It a Miracle?**

Granting that Joseph dictating of the Book of Mormon with his face in his hat is contrary to his own account of what happened, many Mormons have argued that the method confirms that the translation was a divine miracle. After all, they ask, how could Joseph have dictated the Book of Mormon using his own natural knowledge or resources with his face buried in his hat? No doubt his dictating pages of manuscript without looking up from his hat impressed Joseph’s original circle of supporters who watched him do so. Richard Bushman has commented, “Although the witnesses’ explanations of the translation process differ from what is generally understood by Church members, the testimonies of these witnesses affirm that the use of the seer stones—placed as they were in a hat to block out the light so the words of God could be read—was the greatest evidence to them of the miraculous nature of the translation process.” As impressed as Joseph’s associates may have been, there are reasons to conclude that Joseph’s dictation was not a divine miracle.

First, the method of “translation” was the same divination method Joseph and others in his society used in trying to find the location of buried treasure. Divination, which is a form of magic, and miracle are two distinct concepts even though both of them involve unseen forces. Mormon scholar John Welch’s comment that religion seeks “a deity’s actions” and “makes petitions to God” while “magic typically tries to command, control, or manipulate the supernatural” helpfully points in the right direction. Divination was and is an art performed by individuals especially adept or skilled at utilizing certain objects as instruments for tapping into unseen sources of knowledge. The knowledge is accessed by using the right kind of objects or paraphernalia and performing the right actions according to very specific instructions and under the right conditions. Whereas in the Bible God has the freedom to deny or to approve a request for a miracle however well or poorly presented, in magic the desired result comes automatically as long as the proper procedure is carried out to the letter; failure is always due to some mistake or imperfection in the process used by the practitioner. Thus, the fact that Joseph’s translation was produced using a form of divination common in the folkloric magical practice of his culture is evidence against it having been a genuine miracle.

Second, Joseph’s method of dictating with his face in the hat meant that no one could actually observe the instrument of the seer stone working. His associates were given to understand that when Joseph looked into his hat with all outside light blocked, he could see words in light emanating from or in the stone. But the same method that kept outside natural light from coming into the hat kept any supposed supernatural light from coming out of the hat. Joseph’s associates could only take his word for it that he saw anything in the hat at all.

Third, assuming that the witnesses truthfully reported watching Joseph dictate with his face in his hat, this does not mean that all of the Book of Mormon original manuscript was dictated or written in that fashion. There is no journal recording what pages or text of the Book of Mormon were dictated from day to day. We also do not have detailed records telling us on which days the various witnesses actually sat and watched Joseph dictating the text to Oliver Cowdery, the main scribe for the Book of Mormon. About three-quarters of the original manuscript is no longer extant (having apparently suffered irreparable water damage), complicating any study to determine if it had all been produced in the same way. Thus, it is possible that some of the manuscript was dictated with Joseph not looking in his hat. This possibility leads us to the next point.

Fourth, there is good evidence that Joseph used a Bible when he dictated the Book of Mormon material that parallels chapters of the Bible. There are well over 600 verses of the Bible that are duplicated in the Book of Mormon (representing 27 chapters of the Bible), and this material is at least 96 per cent verbally identical to the King James Version. Hypothetically, one can imagine three explanations for this fact: Joseph supernaturally had the words of the KJV revealed to him, he memorized the chapters before sitting for his dictation, or he had a Bible in hand when he dictated those chapters.

The supernatural explanation is the easiest to disprove, because if true one would expect that the text would match the KJV exactly except where the KJV wording was somehow wrong. That is, if God had supernaturally revealed the words of the Book of Mormon translation to Joseph, and if God had chosen...
to use the KJV as the basis for biblical quotations, one would expect variations from the KJV only where there was some problem with the KJV wording. However, the four per cent of verbal variations from the KJV in biblical quotations in the Book of Mormon are generally not corrections of problems in the KJV. For example, in duplicating the Beatitudes more or less as they appear in Matthew 5, the Book of Mormon has the trivial word “and” inserted at the beginning of all but the first of the Beatitudes (3 Nephi 12:4-11). The only point to such a trivial deviation from the KJV text is to make it seem as if the “translation” is not simply copied from the KJV.

The hypothesis that Joseph memorized chapters or sections of the Bible before dictating them is not as implausible as today’s Google-dependent readers might imagine. In Joseph’s day it was not at all uncommon for young men to have memorized whole chapters and even books of the Bible.45

The third hypothesis, that Joseph dictated the biblical chapters into the Book of Mormon with Bible in hand, is however the most likely explanation. This follows from the fact that Joseph introduced minor as well as major variations into the biblical material, something that might be difficult to do while reciting from memory.

Many of the insignificant variations from the KJV in biblical quotations are placed either at the beginning of a verse or are associated with the italicized words in the KJV. The KJV used italics to indicate that an English word did not correspond to a specific word in the original Hebrew or Greek text. So, for example, Matthew 5:11 in the KJV reads, “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.” The Book of Mormon parallel reads exactly the same except for two changes: it adds “And” to the beginning of the verse (as mentioned earlier), and it omits the italicized word “you” after the word “persecute” (3 Nephi 12:11). These minor variations (and there are many of them throughout the Book of Mormon) are strong evidence that these passages were composed by someone who had a KJV in hand, reading along and making mostly minor verbal changes at what seemed to be opportune places.

Some respected Mormons have agreed that Joseph used a KJV when dictating passages from the Bible. Historian B. H. Roberts, President Joseph F. Smith, Apostle Bruce McConkie, and BYU professor Kent Jackson are just some of the LDS scholars and leaders who have put forward this conclusion.46 Evidently, Joseph dictated most of the Book of Mormon with his face in his hat, but not all of it, as is shown by his use of the KJV.

Thus, far from showing that the translation of the Book of Mormon was a miracle, Joseph’s use of the divination practice of gazing at his seer stone in a hat raises a number of difficulties for the belief that Joseph was divinely inspired in his translation.

The Seer Stone: What Difference Does It Make?

What is the significance of the fact that Joseph dictated his translation of the Book of Mormon using a seer stone in his hat rather than a pair of stone spectacles? Michael Ash, a popular Mormon apologist, puts the question this way: Does it really matter whether Joseph dictated the Book of Mormon using one stone or two stones?47

1. The difference is not merely a matter of one stone versus two stones, but of two very different instruments and two very different methods. Whereas Joseph claimed to have translated the Book of Mormon using transparent stone spectacles that were in the box where the gold plates were found, in fact he dictated his translation by looking at a non-transparent, chocolate-colored stone in his hat. Not only are the instruments very different, the method is very different: Joseph did not “read” the gold plates with the stone spectacles or even look at the plates while dictating his translation, but instead had his face buried in his hat.

2. It makes a difference that Joseph used a seer stone because it means that Joseph Smith did not tell the truth when he claimed that he used the stone spectacles found with the gold plates. This falsehood is part of the official account contained in Mormon scripture (Joseph Smith—History), making it a very serious problem. Moreover, this is not the only such instance, which leads to the third point.

3. Joseph’s use of the seer stone in the hat reveals that the Book of Mormon originated in the context of Joseph’s disreputable magical “money-digging” enterprises. We showed earlier that Joseph falsified his official history by claiming that his involvement in treasure hunting was limited to a month-long expedition in which he was buried in his hat, but not all of it, as is shown by his use of the KJV.

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44 I discuss this example and many more in “The Sermon at the Temple in the Book of Mormon: A Critical Examination of Its Authenticity through a Comparison with the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew” (Ph.D. diss., South African Theological Seminary, 2014), chapter 7.

45 See further Robert M. Bowman Jr., “Did the Young Joseph Smith Study the Bible?” (IRR, 2010).


just one of several manual laborers who dug for Josiah Stowell. In fact Joseph engaged in treasure-hunting operations with his family and others over a five-year period, and his main implement was not a shovel but a seer stone. This makes two deliberate falsehoods in Joseph's scriptural account. Now we have seen that treasure-hunting was the context not only of Joseph's claim to have found the gold plates but also of his claim to translate them by divine power. It thus becomes clear that the motivation for Joseph's falsifying his history with regard to the instrument used to translate the plates was the same as the motivation for his falsifying his history with regard to his involvement in money-digging.

Joseph wished to persuade people that he was a prophet of God who found and translated the Book of Mormon by divine revelation. He recognized that this claim would not be credible if the Book of Mormon was viewed as originating in his years-long career of using a magical stone to lead people to buried treasure.

4. The preceding two points establish that Joseph Smith's account of the origins of the Book of Mormon cannot be considered reliable. That Joseph was not forthright about the origins of the Book of Mormon is hard to deny. When his brother Hyrum in 1831 directly asked him at a general conference of the LDS Church to explain how he translated the Book of Mormon—a question Hyrum asked in full faith that the translation was inspired—Joseph “said that it was not intended to tell the world all the particulars of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon; and also said that it was not expedient for him to relate these things.”

The most he would ever say was that he did so using the Urim and Thummim that he had found with the gold plates—which we know was not true—and that he did so “by the gift and power of God.” Mormon apostle Neal A. Maxwell admitted, “The Prophet Joseph alone knew the full process, and he was deliberately reluctant to describe details.” Maxwell, however, dismissed the question as unimportant: “Our primary focus in studying the Book of Mormon should be on the principles of the gospel anyway, not on the process by which the book came forth.” In view of the evidence that Joseph deliberately misled people as to “the full process,” anyone who honestly wants to know the truth should be concerned.

5. The fact that Joseph Smith did not use the stone spectacles to translate the Book of Mormon stands in conflict with the teaching of the Book of Mormon itself. Joseph’s statement that “the possession and use of these stones [of the spectacles called the Urim and Thummim] were what constituted ‘seers’ in ancient or former times” (JS–H 1:35) clearly implies that if Joseph did not use those stones (but instead a seer stone he found years earlier) then he was not genuinely functioning as a “seer” in his translation. This implication is supported by the Book of Mormon.

In one passage, a figure named Ammon is quoted as saying that he knows of a man that can translate records in an unknown language, “for he has wherewith that he can look, and translate all records that are of ancient date; and it is a gift from God.” These “things are called interpreters,” and whomever God commands “to look in them, the same is called seer” (Mosiah 8:13). After hearing more about the powers of a seer, the king agreed that “these interpreters were doubtless prepared for the purpose of unfolding all such mysteries to the children of men” (8:19). The interpreters were “two stones which were fastened into the two rims of a bow” and that were “prepared from the beginning, and were handed down from generation to generation, for the purpose of interpreting languages” (28:13-14).

These are the same “interpreters” that Joseph claimed he used to translate the Book of Mormon. Yet it turns out that he did not do so. If the use of these specific stones as spectacles were what enabled certain men to function as “seers,” it follows that anyone falsely claiming to have used those stone spectacles would not be a genuine seer. Thus the problem goes beyond the fact that Joseph falsified his testimony about how he translated the plates, as bad as that is. According to his own claim and the very text he claimed to have translated supernaturally, the fact that he did not use the ancient stone spectacles and yet claimed to do so disqualifies him as a genuine seer.

6. The fact that Joseph did not look at the gold plates when dictating his “translation” means that the Book of Mormon need have no relation to the supposed gold plates at all. Joseph’s method of producing the text of the Book of Mormon in effect renders the gold plates irrelevant. There was no need for Moroni (whom the Book of Mormon identifies as its last ancient author) to carry the gold plates (weighing forty pounds or more according to Joseph’s associates, though if they really were gold they should have weighed closer to two hundred pounds) thousands of miles from Central America to upstate New York (a tall order, to put it mildly) in order to bury them for Joseph to discover fourteen centuries later. (The people of ancient Mesoamerica had no pack horses or other beasts of burden, so Moroni would have had to carry the plates, and I [Jesus] say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18 KJV)
along with the stone spectacles and the breastplate, on his own.) Yet Joseph did not need the plates, the stone spectacles, the breastplate, or anything other than what he already had, his small treasure-hunting seer stone and his hat, along with the divine revelation Mormons claim he received.

The best Mormon apologists have been able to say in response to this point is that Joseph needed to have contact with the gold plates as physical assurance that the Book of Mormon was based on something real. There are two objections to this explanation. The first is that if the point of having the plates was to be assured that the Book of Mormon was an ancient text, then Joseph should have used the transparent stone spectacles he claimed had been provided. Doing so would have produced a much more direct, tangible demonstration to Joseph—and anyone else permitted to watch—that the Book of Mormon was really translated from ancient scriptures. Second, the explanation is out of sync with the constant refrain of Mormon leaders, scholars, and apologists that knowledge of the truth of the Book of Mormon must be gained by a witness of the Holy Ghost and not by physical evidence (cf. Moroni 10:4-5).

Joseph Smith’s use of a seer stone when dictating the Book of Mormon is extremely consequential with regard to the truth claims of Mormonism. It discredits the honesty and credibility of his account of the origins of the Book of Mormon, establishes the folkloric, superstitious context of Mormon beginnings, contradicts the teaching of the Book of Mormon itself, undermines the reliability of the LDS Church’s teaching about its history, and disconnects the Book of Mormon from its supposed ancient physical basis. No wonder that many erstwhile faithful Mormons have been shocked by this news, as was a Mormon leader in New Zealand last year:

Today I am reeling from the translation of the “Book of Mormon” essay. Exactly how was I to know that Joseph Smith got the words to the Book of Mormon by burying his head in a hat. How was I to know that a stone he found in a well was instrumental in this process of translation? . . . What am I to make of a story I find confounding and frankly bizarre?51

What indeed.

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50  E.g., Neal Rappleye, “Why Did Joseph Smith Need the Gold Plates?” Studio et Quoque Fide (blog), (June 21, 2010). Rappleye cites BYU scholar Daniel C. Peterson as having offered the same explanation.


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Give Brother Joseph a break?
By Sandra Tanner

Over the last two years the LDS Church has issued a number of essays in an attempt to answer some of the troubling aspects of Joseph Smith’s life and teachings, such as Smith’s stone in the hat, lack of evidence for the Book of Mormon, marrying married women and girls as young as 14, failed translation of the Book of Abraham, etc. However, many Mormons have found these essays troubling, not just because of new information but also due to the minimizing of the depth of the problems.

At the October 2015 semi-annual conference of the LDS Church there were several talks admonishing the faithful to follow the brethren, set aside their doubts and seek faith. Speaking at the Saturday evening Priesthood session, Apostle Neil L. Andersen admonished:

The questions concerning the prophet Joseph Smith are not new. They have been hurled by his critics since this work began. To those of faith who, looking through the colored glasses of the 21st century, honestly question events or statements of the prophet Joseph from nearly 200 years ago, may I share some friendly advice? For now, give Brother Joseph a break! In a future day you will have 100 times more information than from all of today’s [Internet] search engines combined. And it will come from our all-knowing Father in Heaven.1

But must we wait until we stand before God for such answers? Andersen pleads “Give Brother Joseph a break,” but there are already enough facts for the average rational person to conclude that Joseph doesn’t measure up as a prophet of God. We are regularly receiving visits and phone calls from troubled LDS members who are struggling with their faith in Mormonism. Many of them say it all started after just reading the various Gospel Topics essays. The problem isn’t that we lack sufficient information, the problem is that the information counters a lifetime of indoctrination.

How much of a break are Mormons willing to extend to some of the prophets of the breakoff polygamist groups? Couldn’t the FLDS just as rightly call for giving Warren Jeffs a break, even though he is serving a lifetime sentence in Texas for relations with twelve to fourteen-year-old girls? How is this any different than Joseph Smith taking fourteen-year-olds as secret polygamist wives?2 Both Jeffs and Smith claimed revelation for their acts.

When Paul preached to the Jews in Berea that Jesus was the Messiah, they were not told to just have faith in what Paul told them, they were commended because they “searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). In today’s world of competing truth claims we would do well to examine the evidence, not just rely on our feelings. ■
Many readers were surprised when they opened their copy of the Salt Lake Tribune, August 5, 2015, to see a photo of Joseph Smith’s long concealed “seer stone,” which is kept in the LDS First Presidency’s vault.  

This stone had been unearthed while Joseph Smith was digging a well for a neighbor in the early 1820s and used to discover hidden objects and later to decipher the text of the Book of Mormon.  

During the four-year time period that an angel was supposedly grooming Smith for the role of “Seer” (before allowing him to retrieve the plates) Joseph and his father were consulting the stone while engaged in treasure digging. While Smith’s use of a divining rock has been known since the early days of Mormonism, this is the first time the LDS Church has released photographs of the stone.  

In the recent LDS article “Book of Mormon Translation” it is conceded that he used both the interpreters (spectacles) stored with the plates and the seer stone. However, the article still minimizes the use of the stone:  

Apparently for convenience, Joseph often translated with the single seer stone rather than the two stones bound together to form the interpreters. These two instruments—the interpreters and the seer stone—were apparently interchangeable and worked in much the same way such that, in the course of time, Joseph Smith and his associates often used the term “Urim and Thummim” to refer to the single stone as well as the interpreters.

However, the eye-witnesses to the translation only described Joseph Smith staring at his stone in a hat, not of him looking at the plates through large spectacles. David Whitmer explained the process:  

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

Curiously, after examining a number of LDS manuals no illustrations were found depicting Smith using his stone. Instead, he is almost always shown sitting at a desk and simply looking at the plates, as though he were doing a regular translation. The cover for the February, 2001, Ensign is an example of this.

An article in the October 2015 Ensign, “Joseph the Seer,” concedes the Smith’s magic involvement:  

The young Joseph Smith accepted such familiar folk ways of his day, including the idea of using seer stones to view lost or hidden objects. Since the biblical narrative showed God using physical objects to focus people’s faith or communicate spiritually in ancient times, Joseph and others assumed the same for their day. Joseph’s parents, Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith, affirmed the family’s immersion in this culture and their use of physical objects in this way, and the villagers of Palmyra and Manchester, New York, where the Smiths lived, sought out Joseph to find lost objects before he moved to Pennsylvania in late 1827.

However, the Smiths’ involvement with the occult was more extensive than the LDS article describes.

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2 “Book of Mormon Translation,” online at lds.org/topics/book-of-mormon-translation  
3 David Whitmer, An Address To All Believers in Christ, (Richmond, Mo., 1887), p. 12.  
4 “Joseph the Seer,” Ensign (October 2015); online at lds.org/ensign
Smith’s 1826 Arrest

In the early 1820s the Smiths were known to be searching for hidden treasures. In fact, a man named Josiah Stowell hired Joseph Smith to use his stone to help find a long lost silver mine. Researchers H. Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters provide background on this event:

When Joseph Smith recalled his money-digging activities for his official history, he wrote only about searching for a lost mine in 1825 for Josiah Stowell. But contemporary records suggest that this had been one of the Smith family occupations in the Palmyra/Manchester area since the early 1820s. For example, Joshua Stafford of Manchester recalled that he “became acquainted with the family of Joseph Smith, Sen. about the year 1819 or 20. They then were laboring people, in low circumstances. A short time after this, they commenced digging for hidden treasures, . . . and told marvellous stories about ghosts, hob-goblins, caverns, and various other mysterious matters.” Willard Chase, another friend of the family, similarly recalled, “I became acquainted with the Smith family . . . in the year 1820. At that time they were engaged in the money digging business.”

While Mormons often defend Smith’s employment as a money-digger as simply a matter of being a hired hand, Smith’s mother states that Mr. Stowell traveled across the state to hire Joseph Smith specifically due to his reputation of special powers. Lucy Smith wrote:

A short time before the house was completed [1825], a man by the name of Josiah Stoal came from Chenango county, New York, with the view of getting Joseph to assist him in digging for a silver mine. He came for Joseph on account of having heard that he possessed certain keys by which he could discern things invisible to the natural eye.

In November of 1825 Mr. Stowell and a group of men, including the Smiths, signed an agreement to share any gold or silver recovered from their dig. LDS Apostle Russell M. Nelson recently mentioned this money-digging agreement, but didn’t explain that Joseph was specifically hired to serve as the medium to locate the treasure.

When no treasure was found, a relative of Josiah Stowell, fearing that his uncle was being swindled, brought charges against Joseph Smith for fraudulently claiming powers he did not have. According to court records, in 1826 Joseph Smith, the “glass looker,” was arrested and brought before Judge Albert Neely on charges of being a “disorderly person” due to his professed power to use his seer stone to find buried treasure. Smith’s defense was that he truly had such powers, “but of late had pretty much given it up on account its injuring his health, especially his eyes.” The court record was published in the New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge in 1883:

People of State of New York vs. Joseph Smith. Warrant issued upon oath of Peter G. Bridgman, who informed that one Joseph Smith of Bainbridge was a disorderly person and an imposter. Prisoner brought into court [March 20, 1826]. Prisoner examined. Says that he came from town of Palmyra, and had been at the house of Josiah Stowell in Bainbridge most of time since; had small part of time been employed in looking for mines, but the major part had been employed by said Stowell on his farm, and going to school; that he had a certain stone, which he had occasionally looked at to determine where hidden treasures in the earth were; that he professed to tell in this manner where gold-mines were a distance under ground, and had looked for Mr. Stowell several times, and informed him where he could find those treasures, and Mr. Stowell had been engaged in digging for them; that at Palmyra he pretended to tell, by looking at this stone, where coined money was buried in Pennsylvania, and while at Palmyra he had frequently ascertained in that way where lost property was, of various kinds; that he has occasionally been in the habit of looking through this stone to find lost property for three years, but of late had pretty much given it up on account its injuring his health, especially his eyes—made them sore; that he did not solicit business of this kind, and had always rather declined having anything to do with this business. . . . And thereupon the Court finds the defendant guilty.

In 1971 Wesley P. Walters located the Chenango county documents relating to Smith’s 1826 arrest and hearing in the damp, musty basement of the jail in Norwich, New York. In these bundles of papers were two documents that related to Smith’s 1826 hearing. Mr. Walters explained:

The discovery among the 1826 Chenango County bills of two bills from the officials who participated in

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5 H. Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters, Inventing Mormonism (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), p. 64.
the arrest and trial of Joseph Smith at South Bainbridge in 1826 now confirms this story beyond question. The bill of Justice Albert Neely carries this entry:

same vs Misdemeanor
Joseph Smith
The Glass looker
March 20, 1826
To my fees in examination
of the above cause 2.68

The phrase “Glass looker” appearing on Mr. Neely’s bill is the precise terminology preferred by Joseph Smith himself to describe his crystal gazing occupation. The bill of Constable Philip De Zeng gives further historical evidence and details concerning this trial, by listing:8

The documents suggest that Joseph Smith appeared before Justice Neely for what was known as an “examination.”9 This seems to be like a preliminary hearing we have today where the accused is bound over for trial at a later date. It would appear from page 109 of A New Conductor Generalis that since Justice Neely found Joseph Smith “guilty” of being a “disorderly person” he could have immediately sentenced him to “sixty days” in the “bridewell or house of correction, at hard labor,” but instead he bound him over to be tried by three justices at a later date. These justices could have ordered “him to be detained at hard labor, for any future time not exceeding six months, and during his confinement to be corrected by whipping, according to the nature of the offense, as they shall think fit.”

Since we do not have the rest of Justice Neely’s docket book or any other extant record concerning the matter, it is difficult to determine what finally happened in this case. It is possible that Joseph Smith could have admitted his guilt and struck an agreement with the county. Often officials who wanted to cut expenses would be willing to let prisoners go if they would agree to leave the county where the crime took place. The main point is that his arrest as a “glass looker” confirms Joseph Smith’s role as village magician.

Smith’s father-in-law, Isaac Hale, claimed that after Joseph married Emma in 1827 he promised to give up money-digging and seek regular employment. However, he seems to have simply moved from claiming to find lost treasures through his stone to translating hidden scriptures through the same means. Mr. Hale stated:

Smith stated to me, that he had given up what he called “glass-looking,” and that he expected to work hard for a living, and was willing to do so . . . Soon after this, I was informed they had brought a wonderful book of Plates down with them . . . The manner in which he pretended to read and interpret, was the same as when he looked for the money-diggers, with the stone in his hat, and his hat over his face, while the Book of Plates were at the same time hid in the woods!10

Faculty of Abrac

Another example of the Smith’s involvement with magic is found in mother Smith’s preliminary draft of her biography. She acknowledged the family’s “sooth saying” but assured her readers that this never interfered with their regular efforts to earn a living:

Let not the reader suppose that because I shall pursue another topic for a season that we stopt our labor and went at trying to win the faculty of Abrac [,] drawing Magic circles or sooth saying [sic] to the neglect of all kinds of business[.] [W]e never during our lives suffered one important interest to swallow up every other obligation but whilst we worked with our hands we endeavored to remmember [sic] the service of & the welfare of our souls.11

8 Wesley P. Walters, Joseph Smith’s Bainbridge, N.Y., Court Trials, (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm Co. [Utah Lighthouse Ministry], 1977), pp. 129-130.
9 See A New Conductor Generalis: Being a Summary of the Law Relative to the Duty and Office of Justices of the Peace, Sheriffs, Coroners, Constables, Jurymen, Overseers of the Poor; &c, &c, (Albany, New York, 1819), pages 141-143.

10 The Susquehanna Register, (May 1, 1834).
The “faculty of Abrac” relates to the belief that by possessing an amulet with Abracadabra written in a special way the owner would be assured of good health. Below is an example of this:12

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A B R A C A D A B R A
A B R A C A D A B R
A B R A C A D A B
A B R A C A D A
A B R A C A
A B R A
A B R
A B
A
```

Researcher Robert N. Hullinger tied Abrac with Masonic practices:

Abrac, from Abracadabra and Abraxis, is a magic word or formula used on amulets to work magic charms. Eighteenth century Masons were said to know how to conceal “the way of obtaining the faculty of Abrac,” which implied that they knew how to get it.13

In regards to Lucy Smith’s statement about magic circles, William Safford, a friend of the Smiths, testified:

I, William Stafford, having been called upon to give a true statement . . . do say, that I first became acquainted with Joseph, Sen., and his family in the year 1820. . . . A great part of their time was devoted to digging for money: especially in the night time. . . . I have heard them tell marvellous tales, respecting the discoveries they had made in their peculiar occupation of money digging. They would say, for instance, that in such a place, in such a hill, on a certain man’s farm, there were deposited keys, barrels and hogsheds of coined silver and gold—bars of gold, golden images, brass kettles filled with gold and silver—gold candlesticks, swords, &c. &c. They would say, also, that nearly all the hills in this part of New York, were thrown up by human hands, and in them were large caves, which Joseph, Jr., could see, by placing a stone of singular appearance in his hat, in such a manner as to exclude all light; at which time they pretended he could see all things within and under the earth,—that he could see within the above mentioned caves, large gold bars and silver plates—that he could also discover the spirits in whose charge these treasures were, clothed in ancient dress. . . . These tales I regarded as visionary. However, being prompted by curiosity, I at length accepted of their invitations, to join them in their nocturnal excursions. I will now relate a few incidents attending these excursions.

Joseph Smith, Sen., came to me one night, and told me, that Joseph Jr. had been looking in his glass, and had seen, not many rods from his house, two or three kegs of gold and silver, some feet under the surface of the earth; and that none others but the elder Joseph and myself could get them. I accordingly consented to go, and early in the evening repaired to the place of deposit. Joseph, Sen. first made a circle, twelve or fourteen feet in diameter. This circle, said he, contains the treasure. He then stuck in the ground a row of witch hazel sticks, around the said circle, for the purpose of keeping off the evil spirits. Within this circle he made another, of about eight or ten feet in diameter. He walked around three times on the periphery of this last circle, muttering to himself something which I could not understand. He next stuck a steel rod in the centre of the circles, and then enjoined profound silence upon us, lest we should arouse the evil spirit who had the charge of these treasures. After we had dug a trench about five feet in depth around the rod, the old man by signs and motions, asked leave of absence, and went to the house to inquire of young Joseph the cause of our disappointment. He soon returned and said, that Joseph had remained all this time in the house, looking in his stone and watching the motion of the evil spirit—that he saw the spirit come up to the ring and as soon as it beheld the cone which we had formed around the rod, it caused the money to sink.14

Sinking Treasures

The common belief that treasures could sink is also present in the Book of Mormon. In Mormon 1:18-19 we read that the people “began to hide up their treasures in the earth; and they became slippery, because the Lord had cursed the land, that they could not hold them, nor retain them again. . . . there were sorceries, and witchcrafts, and magics; and the power of the evil one was wrought upon the face of the land, . . .”

The Book of Mormon also makes these statements concerning hidden treasures:

And behold, if a man hide up a treasure in the earth, and the Lord shall say—Let it be accursed, because of the iniquity of him who hath hid it up—behold, it shall be accursed.

And if the Lord shall say—Be thou accursed, that no man shall find thee from this time henceforth and

13 Robert N. Hullinger, Joseph Smith’s Response to Skepticism, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), p. 105; online at signaturebookslibrary.org
14 E. D. Howe, Mormonism Unvailed, (Painesville, Ohio, 1834), pp. 237-239.
forever—behold, no man getteth it henceforth and forever. (Book of Mormon, Helaman 12:18-19)

. . . whoso shall hide up treasures in the earth shall find them no more, because of the great curse of the land, save he be a righteous man and shall hide it up unto the Lord.

For I will, saith the Lord, that they shall hide up their treasures unto me; and cursed be they who hide not up their treasures unto me; for none hideth up their treasures unto me save it be the righteous; and he that hideth not up his treasures unto me, cursed is he, and also the treasure, and none shall redeem it because of the curse of the land. (Ibid., Helaman 13:18-19)

Behold, we lay a tool here and on the morrow it is gone; and behold, our swords are taken from us in the day we have sought them for battle.

Yea, we have hid up our treasures and they have slipped away from us, because of the curse of the land.

O that we had repented in the day that the word of the Lord came unto us; for behold the land is cursed, and all things are become slippery, and we cannot hold them.

Behold, we are surrounded by demons, yea, we are encircled about by the angels of him who hath sought to destroy our souls. . . . (Ibid., Helaman 13:34-37)

Even Oliver Cowdery, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, said that when Joseph Smith went to the hill to get the gold plates he was concerned about not being able to obtain them because “he had heard of the power of enchantment, and a thousand like stories, which held the hidden treasures of the earth.” 15

Seer Stone or Interpreters?

The LDS Church has traditionally written about the translation of the Book of Mormon in terms of Smith’s use of the “Urim and Thummim” without explaining that the term was applied to two different items. Smith first used the “interpreters” (large spectacles) preserved with the plates but soon switched to using the seer stone found in a well. When questioned in 1870 as to the process of translation, Emma Smith wrote:

“Now the first that my husband translated, was translated by the use of the Urim and Thummim [interpreters], and that was the part that Martin Harris lost, after that he used a small stone, not exactly black, but was rather a dark color.” 16

While David Whitmer was not a scribe during the dictating of the first 116 pages of text, he did state that he never saw Smith use the spectacles. In 1879 J. L. Traughber reported his earlier conversation with Whitmer:

“With the sanction of David Whitmer, and by his authority, I now state he does not say that Joseph Smith ever translated in his presence by aid of Urim and Thummim [the spectacles], but by means of one dark colored, opaque stone called a ‘Seer Stone,’ which was placed in the crown of a hat, into which Joseph put his face, so as to exclude the external light. Then, a spiritual light would appear before Joseph, upon which was a line of characters from the plates, and under it, the translation in English; at least, so Joseph said.” 17

Many years ago M. T. Lamb made some important observations regarding Joseph Smith’s strange habit of using his seer stone instead of the instruments preserved with the plates:

Finally, according to the testimony of Martin Harris, Mr. Smith often used the “seer stone” in place of the Urim and Thummim, even while the latter remained in his possession—using it as a mere matter of convenience.

It seems almost too bad that he should thus inadvertently give the whole thing away. You must understand that the Urim and Thummim spoken of, and called throughout the Book of Mormon “the Interpreters,” had been provided with great care over 2500 years ago by God himself, for the express purpose of translating these plates. They are often mentioned in the Book of Mormon as exceedingly important. They were preserved with the greatest care, handed down from one generation to another with the plates, and buried with them in the hill Cumorah over 1400 years ago; as sacred as the plates themselves. So sacred that only one man was allowed to handle or use them, the highly favored prophet, Joseph Smith himself. But now, alas! After all this trouble and pains and care on the part of God, and on the part of so many holy men of old, this “Urim and Thummim” is found at last to be altogether superfluous; not needed at all. This “peep stone” found in a neighbor’s well will do the work just as well—and is even more convenient, “for convenience he used the seer stone.” So we are left to infer that when he used the Urim and Thummim at all, it was at some inconvenience. And probably he only did it out of regard to the feelings of his God, who had spent so much time and anxiety in preparing it so long ago, and preserving it to the present day for his special use! 18

17 Ibid., p. 54.
Joseph’s Jupiter Talisman

Contrary to the Bible’s strong denunciation of magic and necromancy, such as in Deuteronomy 18:9-14 and elsewhere, Joseph Smith and many, if not all, of the witnesses had been involved in the magic practices of the area, believing in ghosts who guarded buried treasures, using magic spells and paraphernalia.

Besides Joseph Smith’s seer stone, he also owned a magic Jupiter talisman (a silver medallion worn on a string around the neck).19 LDS historian Reed C. Durham made these observations about Smith’s talisman in his presidential address to the Mormon History Association on April 20, 1974:

All available evidence suggest that Joseph Smith the Prophet possessed a magical Masonic medallion, or talisman, which he worked during his lifetime and which was evidently on his person when he was martyred. His talisman is in the shape of a silver dollar and is probably made of silver or tin... [it] can now be identified as a Jupiter talisman. It carries the sign and image of Jupiter and should more appropriately be referred to as the Table of Jupiter. ... In astrology, Jupiter is always associated with high positions, getting one’s own way, and all forms of status.20

According to Emma Smith’s stepson, the talisman passed from Joseph to Emma after his death. The stepson later sold the object to Wilford C. Wood, a Mormon collector in Woods Cross, Utah. Charles E. Bidamon stated: “I certify that I have many times heard her [Emma Smith Bidamon] say, when being interviewed, and showing the piece. That it was in the Prophets pocket when he was martyred at Carthage Ill.” Mr. Bidamon also claimed that Emma “prized this piece very highly on account of its being one of the prophet’s intimate possessions.”21

Hyrum Smith’s Magic Papers

Hyrum Smith, Joseph’s older brother, also owned magic paraphernalia. Among his possessions were several magic parchments, a pouch for storage, and a magic dagger.22

These artifacts are currently in the possession of the Eldred G. Smith family. Eldred, who died in 2013, was Patriarch emeritus of the LDS Church and great, great-grandson of Hyrum Smith. Mormon writer Pearson H. Corbett described these relics of Hyrum Smith in his book, Hyrum Smith—Patriarch:

Dagger, Masonic ten inch, stainless steel—wooden handle—Masonic symbols on blade.

Emblematic parchments—Masonic—three, original hand painted on heavy bodied paper—on border appears initials “I.H.S.” ... Pouch, Masonic cotton fabric 4” x 4” with draw string attached.23

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19 Tanner, Mormonism, Magic and Masonry, pp. 2-5.
20 Ibid., p. 2. See also D. Michael Quinn, Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), chapter 3.
Historian D. Michael Quinn made the following observation about the Smith family’s magic artifacts:

The three magic parchments possessed by the Smith family have three different purposes, all interrelated. The “Holiness to the Lord” parchment is a lamen of ceremonial magic to receive visitation from “good angels.” The “Saint Peter bind them” parchment is a talisman for personal protection. The faded “Jehovah, Jehovah, Jehovah” parchment is a house-amulet.24

These artifacts certainly demonstrate a deeper level of involvement with magic than simply using a “seer stone” to translate the Book of Mormon.

Unlike the early converts to Christianity in Acts 19:19 who burned their magic artifacts, Joseph and Hyrum Smith preserved theirs.

**Smith and the Methodists**

It is interesting to note that as early as 1828 members of the Methodist Church were forced to evaluate Joseph Smith’s involvement with magic. He had taken steps to join their church, but they felt his dealings in magic made him unfit to be a member.

In the book *Inventing Mormonism* we read:

In 1879 Joseph and Hiel Lewis, cousins to Joseph’s first wife, Emma Hale, stated that Joseph joined the Methodist Episcopal church or class in Harmony, Pennsylvania, in the summer of 1828. There was disagreement about how long Joseph’s name remained on class rolls. See the articles in the *Amboy [Illinois] Journal*. . . . It is possible that Joseph attended class with his wife Emma because of the death of their first son on 15 June 1828. That Joseph was a member of the class was not questioned, only the length of time his name remained on the class record.25

Joseph and Hiel Lewis recounted that Smith had “presented himself in a very serious and humble manner, and the minister, not suspecting evil, put his name on the class book, in the absence of some of the official members.”26 When Joseph Lewis learned of this act, he felt that Smith was not truly repentant of his magic involvement and felt him to be unfit for membership. Mr. Lewis further details the incident:

I with Joshua McKune . . . thought it was a disgrace to the church to have a practicing necromancer, a dealer in enchantments

and bleeding ghosts in it. So on Sunday we went . . . and talked to him some time . . . Told him that his occupation, habits and moral character were at variance with the discipline . . . that there should have been recantation, confession and at least promised reformation—That he could that day publicly ask that his name be stricken from the class book, or stand investigation. He chose the former, and did that very day make request that his name be taken off the class book.27

It is certainly strange that Joseph Smith would try to join the Methodist Church if, in fact, he had been instructed by God in 1820 not to join any church. According to Smith’s history:

I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong)—and which I should join.

I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight . . . . (Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History 1:18-19)

**Animal Sacrifices**

Animal sacrifices were often a part of the magic rituals that accompanied money-digging. In the first edition of his book, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, page 144, Dr. D. Michael Quinn gives this information: “A cousin of Smith’s wife Emma reported that Smith ‘translated the book of Mormon by means of the same peep stone, and under the same inspiration that directed his enchantments and dog sacrifices; it was all by the same spirit’ (H. Lewis 1879).”

In a magic book known as *The Greater Key of Solomon*, page 122, we read that “In many operations it is necessary to make some sort of sacrifice unto the demons, and in various ways . . . Such sacrifices consist of the blood and sometimes of the flesh.”

The evidence seems to show that Joseph Smith did make sacrifices to the demons. In an affidavit published in 1834, William Stafford, one of the neighbors of the Smith family, reported the following:

Joseph Smith, Sen., came to me one night, and told me that Joseph Smith Jr. had been looking in his glass, and had seen, not many rods from his house, two or three kegs of gold and silver . . . Joseph, Sen. first made a circle, twelve or fourteen feet in diameter. This circle, said he, contains the treasure. He then stuck in the ground a row of witch hazel sticks, around the said

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25 Marquardt and Walters, *Inventing Mormonism*, p. 61, n. 49.
circle, for the purpose of keeping off the evil spirits. . . . another time, they devised a scheme, by which they might satiate their hunger, with the mutton of one of my sheep. They had seen in my flock a sheep, a large, fat, black weather. Old Joseph and one of the boys came to me one day, and said that Joseph Jr. had discovered some very remarkable and valuable treasures, which could be procured only in one way. That way, was as follows:—That a black sheep should be taken to the ground where the treasures were concealed—that after cutting its throat, it should be led around in a circle while bleeding. This being done, the wrath of the evil spirit would be appeased: the treasures could then be obtained, and my share of them was to be four fold. To gratify my curiosity, I let them have a large fat sheep. They afterwards informed me, that the sheep was killed pursuant to commandment; but as there was some mistake in the process, it did not have the desired effect. This, I believe, is the only time they ever made money-digging a profitable business. (Mormonism Unvailed, 1834, pp. 238-239; also reproduced in Early Mormon Documents, vol. 2, pp. 59-61)

The reader will notice that it was a “black” sheep that was supposed to have been sacrificed. This is interesting because The Greater Key of Solomon, page 122, says that, “Sometimes white animals are sacrificed to the good Spirits and black to the evil.”

In any case, BYU professor Richard L. Anderson said that, “If there was such an event of a borrowed sheep, it had nothing to do with dishonesty.”28 Anderson also quotes the following from BYU Professor M. Wilford Poulson’s notes of a conversation with Wallace Miner: “I once asked Stafford if Smith did steal a sheep from him. He said no, not exactly. He said, he did miss a black sheep, but soon Joseph came and admitted he took it for sacrifice but he was willing to work for it. He made wooden sap buckets to fully pay for it.”29

C. R. Stafford testified concerning the same incident:

Jo Smith, the prophet, told my uncle, William Stafford, he wanted a fat, black sheep. He said he wanted to cut its throat and make it walk in a circle three times around and it would prevent a pot of money from leaving.30

The current leaders of the Mormon Church have turned away from the early occultic practices, which played such an important role in the church Joseph Smith founded. In fact, the church hierarchy has publicly condemned magic. In the LDS manual Gospel Principles we read:

Mediums, astrologers, fortune tellers, and sorcerers are inspired by Satan even if they claim to follow God. Their works are abominable to the Lord (see Isaiah 47:12-14; Deuteronomy 18:9-10). We should avoid all associations with the powers of Satan.31

Most Mormons are not aware of Joseph Smith’s involvement in the occult because their leaders have systematically covered up the more embarrassing parts of Smith’s history.

A Book of Mormon Witness with a Stone

Hiram Page, one of the eight witnesses to the Book of Mormon, also had a seer stone which he used to obtain revelations. Joseph Smith charged that Page gave false revelations through his stone and believed that the other witnesses to the Book of Mormon were being influenced by his revelations:

To our great grief, however, we soon found that Satan had been lying in wait to deceive, . . . Brother Hiram Page had in his possession a certain stone, by which he obtained certain “revelations” . . . all of which were entirely at variance with the order of God’s house, . . . the Whitmer family and Oliver Cowdery, were believing much in the things set forth by this stone, we thought best to inquire of the Lord concerning so important a matter . . . .32

Seeing a threat to his leadership, Joseph Smith countered with a revelation stating that “no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., for he receiveth them even as Moses” (Doctrine and Covenants 28:2). Then in verse eleven, Oliver Cowdery was instructed to tell Hiram Page that “those things which he hath written from that stone are not of me, and that Satan deceiveth him.”

Cowdery’s Divining Rod

Oliver Cowdery and his family, along with the Smiths, were involved in the folk magic of the New England states. When Cowdery met Smith he evidently brought with him a reputation of working with a divining rod, a forked witch hazel stick used to locate water or minerals.

The money-diggers used divining rods to find buried treasure. They were also used as a “medium of

29 Ibid., p. 294.
31 Gospel Principles, (Salt Lake City: LDS Church, 2009), p. 131.
revelation.” Those who used divining rods were at times referred to as “rodsmen.” Richard P. Howard, RLDS church historian, observed:

Several writers have established that both in Vermont and in western New York in the early 1800’s, one of the many forms which enthusiastic religion took was the adaptation of the witch hazel stick . . . For example, the “divining rod” was used effectively by one Nathaniel Wood in Rutland County, Vermont, in 1801. Wood, Winchell, William Cowdery, Jr., and his son, Oliver Cowdery, all had some knowledge of and associations with the various uses, both secular and sacred, of the forked witch hazel rod. Winchell and others used such a rod in seeking buried treasure; . . . when Joseph Smith met Oliver Cowdery in April, 1829, he found a man peculiarly adept in the use of the forked rod . . . and against the background of his own experiments with and uses of oracular media, Joseph Smith’s April, 1829, affirmations about Cowdery’s unnatural powers related to working with the rod are quite understandable . . . 33

Smith gave a revelation to Cowdery in 1829 commending him for his “gift of working with the rod: behold it has told you things; behold there is no other power, save the power of God, that can cause this rod of nature, to work in your hands” (Book of Commandments, section 7:3, 1833).

However a couple of years later Smith revised this revelation to hide its magical overtones. It now reads: “Now this is not all thy gift, for you have another gift, which is the gift of Aaron; behold, it has told you many things; Behold, there is no other power, save the power of God, that can cause this gift of Aaron to be with you” (Doctrine and Covenants 8:6-7). Richard P. Howard explained:

By the time that Joseph Smith approached the reinterpretation and wording of this document for the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, he had had time and experience necessary to place his 1829 assessment of the meaning of Cowdery’s gift of working with the rod in a somewhat more accurate perspective. Both he and Cowdery had developed away from an emphasis on the religious or mystical meanings in such mechanical objects as the water witching rod. Joseph’s 1835 wording of this document . . . left behind the apparent 1829 reliance upon external media, which by 1835 had assumed in Joseph’s mind overtones of superstition and speculative experimentation.34

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34 Ibid., p. 214.
37 Deuteronomy 18:9-14; Leviticus 19:26, 31; Galatians 5:19-21; Revelation 21:8.

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6 NIV)
Excerpts from Emails and Letters

May 2015: What a whirlwind these last few days have been! . . .

Yesterday (Saturday) my son, __ and his wife, ___ unexpectedly showed up . . . [My son], a real estate agent, asked why I didn’t tell [the neighbor] to list her home with him. Without thinking, I blurted out, “I haven’t been to church in 4 months. I don’t [know] anything that’s going on in the ward.” To which [my son] immediately replied, “What?! Did [a friend] convert you to her church?” . . .

To make a long story less long, [my daughter-in-law] scrubbed [my] walls and cupboards, [my son] kept the two toddlers out of mischief, and I rocked the baby while telling them the story of my journey over the last few months. Every once in awhile I’d stop talking to let them absorb it. After a few moments, [my son] would say, “Keep talking.” So I did. I prayed God would give me the words to speak, and that they would have ears to hear.

I told them about the day my world came crashing down unexpectedly as I hadn’t been questioning or doubting . . . at least not on a conscience level. I told them about calling my Christian friend, ___ who gave me a copy of “Unveiling Grace.” Then about calling Lynn [Wilders], and how each person I met led me to another wonderful Christian woman who knew and loved Christ . . . After a few hours, [my daughter-in-law] asked if she could talk to [my Christian friend]. I made the phone call, and within 20 minutes, she and her husband [a local pastor] were in my home to answer their questions and stayed for 2 1/2 hours!

My darling [daugher-in-law] sobbed! She said as soon as I started talking she knew she had lost [her husband]. (This was a surprise to me as I’d thought [my son] was solid in his testimony and loyalty to the church.) She also cried because she knows that if she leaves the church, she will lose the newly found relationship of love and acceptance she has finally cultivated with her mother. Poor girl. I felt exactly the same way about my relationship with them! By the time they left last night, [my dauther-in-law] was pretty shell-shocked, but [my son] seemed calm and curious.

As we talked last night, [my son and wife] were both surprised at some of the church doctrine regarding the LDS teachings of the origin of God and other theology, and I was surprised they didn’t know it. [My son] commented, “I guess I’m not a very good Mormon since I didn’t know this stuff.” My thought was, “I wasn’t a very good Mormon Mom as I hadn’t taught him this in Family Home Evening.” But who am I kidding! I had 5 rowdy little boys! He was short and to the point and was usually about character development: kindness, tolerance, love, sharing, honesty, etc.

Then [the pastor] pointed out something I hadn’t realized. The doctrine this generation is learning is different than what my generation had learned. But as we talked and I told them about changes in the temple ceremony and other church-related teachings, we were all pleasantly surprised to discover they held more Christian beliefs than any of us realized.

When they asked why I’d kept it a secret all these months, I told them I didn’t want the stress of this revelation to interfere with [my daughter-in-law’s] health or the health of the unborn baby . . . and I was fearful they would turn their backs on me and take away my grandchildren. [My son’s] reply was: “Mom! Really?!” [His wife] commented, “I could tell you weren’t wearing your garments anymore, and that you didn’t get upset if someone bought something on Sunday. . . .

So now it’s Sunday. When I opened the front door this morning, [my son] announced, “We brought your grandchildren back!” And I was so happy to see them! I had offered to watch the boys if they wanted to go to CenterPoint church [in Orem] . . . and they took me up on it! I’d really love to be at church with them, but I wanted them to enjoy their first Christian service and meet new people without the worry of 3-year-old [son having] autistic meltdowns that are triggered by crowds and loud noises. We’ll figure out a way to worship as a family if they choose to return.

Before they left this morning, they shared with me that they had both been contemplating what life would be like if they weren’t Mormons, but hadn’t shared that thought with each other. . . .

I asked [my friend] to bring a copy of “Unveiling Grace” for them and I had bought an extra copy of an NIV Bible that I gave them as well. I pray their journey to Christ will be as healing and rapid as mine . . . if not more so!

And that, my friends, is the beauty of this weekend! One son knows I’m not a “true believing Mormon” anymore, and it hasn’t harmed our relationship! We are now on this journey together.

May 2015: Thank you for your wonderful work. Very enlightening and life changing for me. I have watched and listened to Sandra Tanner on MormonStories [mormonestories.org — #472-475] with John Dehlin and have been consumed with studying the history of my mormon faith over the past few months. I cannot seem to stop.

I am a 6th generation Utah Mormon who has been shocked by what I have learned The Church has intentionally hid/tied about all of my life. I am 34 and am seriously considering leaving the church but have all the reservations anyone in my shoes would have. All of my family, extended family and those in my community are staunchly active LDS and if I leave I fear I will send my family/friends into shock and be ostracized.

The hardest thing for me to accept is that as an LDS missionary in South Africa I taught and baptized many by using the teachings I had been taught to regurgitate in the MTC and now these converts could easily look to Google and see that I (unintentionally) had lied to them. That hurts immensely. I taught what I had been taught, and what I had been told was true from a young age. Now my son is turning 8 . . . and will want to be baptized. This is a dilemma for me to overcome. Your work, websites, and books have helped me so much. With all sincerity and gratitude, thank you!

May 2015: Thank you SO much. Just a quick praise report after three LONG years after I busted free (praise be to God) my mom has seen the light! She is RS president and everyone she knows is Mormon. She just decided this week to leave for good so we were doing research to arm her with ammo and I told her you have already done all the grunt work but I couldn’t find this specific thing. So thanks so so much for the link. Thanks for all you do, God bless! Please add her to your prayer list, she needs strength for sure.

May 2015: It is against my wishes but I must ask to be removed from your messenger mailing list . . . my husband is getting way too mad about it. I guess I have been getting them but my husband just throws them in the trash . . . I’m exmormon and my husband is jack Mormon . . . it’s so difficult on our marriage . . . I get so frustrated. I appreciate what you do. Keep on telling The truth!!!
May 2015: Thank you, Mrs. Tanner for your devotion to the true gospel. God saved me out Mormonism, granted me repentance and taught me saving faith in Christ alone. I have found many of your materials and research very helpful and encouraging and I want to express my deep gratitude for the work that you are doing. Blessings.

May 2015: Sandra is an Anti Christ . . . keep following her.

May 2015: God has led me to your youtube videos and website, they were crucial to keeping me from joining the lds church. I have learned so much that my church is having me teach a class on Mormonism in the fall.

May 2015: I saw your website. I am the member of the church of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Europe (Hungary) I have been a member for my whole life basically. I was 3 years old when the missionaries found my family. I have served a mission and served in many callings just as a branch president as well. I [now have] a lot more time to read and get to know more about the history of the church the doctrine of the church and have a lot of questions about everything and started to feel that maybe what I believe in is false.

I read a couple of things online what is against the church and make sense, but still I am so confused. The only thing what I want just to know the truth but now as I learn a lot about my church I feel that if it is not a reliable source of truth then where is it? What can I trust? If my church is not true, then where is the real one. If my God is not the real God then where is he and how can I know. I also question if the Bible is true. I think you probably know what I am going through.

June 2015: Just wanted to write you a quick note and thank you for all of the hard work that you and Gerald have put in to Lighthouse Ministries. I was really touched by your interview with John Dehlin, particularly the way you talked about your relationship with Gerald. It’s interesting how in spite of all of the evidence I have found that would lead me to walk away from Mormonism, it was the sincerity and love I felt from people like you that ultimately gave me the courage to stand apart. Your example has changed my life’s course. Thank you.

June 2015: Due to God’s grace and love, and the material you’ve blessed me with, a fellow inmate has now left his Mormon faith and accepted Jesus Christ into his heart as personal Lord and Saviour. He is scheduled to be baptized in a few weeks.

July 2015: I turned in my church resignation the 13th of June, and had my named removed and letter back by the 22nd of June. So all is good. I’ve been over a year at this, And it was hard to do after 76 years with the church. It was Quite devastating at first, And in some ways still is. I love the members and Know they are good people that have been mislead by the leaders of the church as I was. I would like to help them, but I know they will not listen to me now. I live about 2hrs from the Hill Cumorah.

July 2015: Please put me on your mailing list of the messenger. Also, any other info that would be pertinent to a 56 year old “member” that is beginning to have serious questions on what I have been taught my whole life.

July 2015: Truly. I especially appreciate you sharing feedback and letters from other fellow travelers who have come or are in the process of coming to realize the tremendous mis-truths the Mormon church continues to delve out. When I read their stories and experiences . . . I feel so much less alone. There is such peace in knowing I’m not the only one gullible enough to have believed for so long . . . nor am I alone in my decision to walk away. Thank you for the tremendous contribution you have made and continue to make in countless lives. “I throw my past behind me like a robe worn threadbare at the seams.”

July 2015: Thank you for your timely response. I really appreciate all you have done over the years.

I married a return missionary when I was 18 (1997). I was baptized and went through the temple on our one year anniversary. I never could gain a testimony of Joseph Smith or the church. I was made to feel unworthy no matter how hard I tried to fit in. I actually felt physically ill as I went through the temple ceremonies. Jesus was rarely mentioned at church. We spent an entire year learning about the prophets (the white-washed version of course).

I began to research history and doctrine and was horrified by what I found. I would show it to my husband and he would become very angry about me reading “anti-mormon literature”. We divorced in 2005 and he has now become a born again christian with the help of his new wife.

I recently finished reading a book purchased from your store. It was written by Carma Naylor. I have given it to my father and he has agreed to read it with an open mind. I told him that if he would do that, I would never bug him about the church again.

It breaks my heart that Mormons refuse to believe anything that goes against what they have been told. I have found that they refuse to look into things even when provided with well documented proof. I pray that more mormons will be bothered by the information that is out there and will come to discover the Real Jesus. I have found a new love for the Bible and have never been so content with my life. I am truly grateful for you and others like you.

Thanks again for all of your hard work and dedication to finding the truth and for sharing it with others.

August 2015: Having a personal testimony founded on personal revelations, . . . [I know] that the LDS Church is the only living and true church in the whole world, increased, and greatly. Through your different publications, I can easily see how much you hurt inside, and find yourselves in so much misery of the pain from jealousy . . . revenge . . . hate . . . feelings which are clearly seen and perceived through the many enraged and despiseful words you use . . . Truth will always find oposition, like in the time of Enoch, Noah, Jeremiah, Jesus, . . . I beg you to come back.

September 2015: I just wanted to thank you for all the research and documents you and Jerald have put out! I wouldn’t have come out of the church if it wasn’t for, Mormonism: Shadow or Reality, and 3,913 Changes . . . These have led me and some of my friends at BYU out and now to knowing the true Jesus! My brother and his family just came to know the true God also! I am seeing this happen more frequently and cannot begin to explain my gratefulness to you and your ministry!
Three New LDS Apostles: All From Utah
By Sandra Tanner

Following the death of three of the fifteen top leaders of the LDS Church, new apostles were appointed on October 3, 2015, at the semiannual conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. While many members were hoping for a foreign-born appointment, those chosen were all white men from Utah.1

Prior to conference, Brady McCombs, of the Associated Press, reported that “scholars predict that for the first time ever, at least one could be from outside North America and Europe.”2 Those hoping for a sign of diversity were certainly disappointed. The New York Times reported:

“The Mormon church didn’t go far to select three new members for a top governing body that sets policy and runs the worldwide faith’s business operations—choosing two former business executives and a cardiologist from Utah who had already been serving in lower church leadership positions.

Ronald A. Rasband, 64, is a former CEO of the Huntsman Chemical Corporation. Gary E. Stevenson, 60, was the co-founder of an exercise equipment manufacturing company. Dale G. Renlund, 62, was a cardiologist and directed a cardiac transplant program.

Their appointments—announced Saturday at church conference in Salt Lake City—surprised many outside religious scholars who speculated that the Utah-based faith would choose at least one new member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles from a country outside the U.S., perhaps from Latin America or Africa.

That would have been a symbol and recognition of the expanding global reach of a religion that has more than half of its 15 million members outside of the United States.

Instead, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints made safe, solid and comfortable decisions that fit the template for choosing modern apostles in the church, said Patrick Mason, associate professor of religion at Claremont Graduate University in California . . .

The article then quoted Ignacio Garcia, a BYU professor:

Saints of color always have to respond to: “Why do [we] belong to that white church?” . . . It becomes harder and harder as we go further into the 21st Century: We still can’t point to a more diversified leadership.

Garcia was also quoted in a Salt Lake Tribune article:

The real challenge is “is not whether we get a person of color—people of color are ready to serve,” says BYU history professor Ignacio Garcia. “The question is whether the church is ready for the changes a person of color might make necessary.”

Right now, the church is perceived as a white institution, he says, and so it needs to prepare itself for the evolving demographics that will come both in the church and outside.

“It isn’t just picking a brown or black face as an apostle, says Garcia, author of Chicano While Mormon: Activism, War and Keeping the Faith. “It’s about what that says about us and about our faith.”

One event that might have raised hopes for the appointment of an apostle outside of the usual pioneer descended members was the Fall 2014 short-lived experiment of allowing foreign-born speakers at General Conference to deliver their talks in their native language. At that time four men elected to speak in their mother tongue. Writing for the BYU Digital Universe, Annmarie Moore reported that students expected “that the Church’s decision to allow general conference talks in foreign languages would help its international image.”4 That it was not repeated in 2015 may be a matter of logistics. When those talks were broadcast, instead of someone hearing the leader speak in Spanish or Portuguese, the voice of someone speaking in English was dubbed over the sound of the original language, thus losing the whole point. One person commented “I was really excited to hear some general authorities speak their native language but was disappointed when I heard a translator speak for them.”

LDS apostles are appointed for life and are ranked in order of ordination to the office. Thus the next president of the church is not chosen by a vote, but is the apostle with the most seniority. Although during the early days of the LDS Church the apostles ranged in age from 24 to 36, with the most seniority. Although during the early days of the LDS Church the apostles ranged in age from 24 to 36, with a system of lifetime appointments, the age of succeeding apostles and presidents continually advanced. By the time of Brigham Young’s death, his replacement was 69-year-old John Taylor. Current president Thomas S. Monson was 81 when he became president. Next in line for the presidency is 91-year-old Russell M. Nelson. Thus we see that the system of lifetime appointments guarantees that the top leaders of the LDS Church will always be older men. And with no diversity in the apostleship, the future presidents will continue to be white.

5 Peggy Fletcher Stack, “Mormon church has a chance to diversify its top leadership—will it?” Salt Lake Tribune, (August 7, 2015).
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Mormonism, Magic and Masonry
By Jerald and Sandra Tanner

Joseph Smith & Money-Digging
By Jerald and Sandra Tanner
Is There a Mother God?

In the fall of 2015 the LDS Church reaffirmed its doctrine of a Heavenly Mother, the wife of Heavenly Father, in its latest essay, *Mother in Heaven*. This article is said to complete the thirteen Gospel Topics essays dealing with controversial areas of Mormon doctrine and history.\(^1\) While some of the Mormon teaching manuals refer to “Heavenly Parents” this is the clearest official statement about the doctrine of God’s wife.

The essay affirms that “all human beings, male and female, are beloved spirit children of heavenly parents, a Heavenly Father and a Heavenly Mother.” Unlike the traditional Christian belief that the term “Heavenly Father” is a metaphor, LDS prophets not only teach that the designation is literal but that God has a wife (at least one). This was explained in the October 2015 *Ensign*:

*The Family in Premortal Life*

In our premortal life, each of us was born as “a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents.” As such, we were all brothers and sisters and lived as members of God’s family. Although all of us were part of this eternal family of God, the only ones who enjoyed the blessings of eternal marriage were our *heavenly parents*. Only they could have children and be called father and mother.\(^2\)

This premortal family group would have included everyone who has or will be born on this earth, as well as our elder brothers Jesus and Lucifer, and one third of the spirits who chose to rebel and were cast out with Lucifer.

This relationship is discussed in the 1997 LDS Sunday School manual for children ages 8-11:

1. In the premortal life we were spirit children and lived with our *heavenly parents* (Hebrews 12:9).
2. Jesus was the firstborn spirit child of Heavenly Father (*D&C* 93:21) and is the older brother of our spirits.
3. Lucifer, who became Satan, was also a spirit child of Heavenly Father.\(^3\)

This is all part of the LDS concept of eternal progression, and is often referred to as Heavenly Father’s Plan of Happiness. Not only are we on a journey to attain future godhood, Mormonism teaches that our Heavenly Father and Mother once traversed the same path. They were once mortals on another world, overseen by yet another eternal couple, where they experienced mortality, death and resurrection. The doctrine that God has a resurrected body was explained in *The Presidents of the Church: Teachers Manual*:

> It is wonderful to know the truth—that God the Eternal Father and Jesus Christ are exalted, tangible beings, with resurrection bodies in whose image we are made, and that Jesus Christ is literally the Father’s Only Begotten Son in the flesh.\(^4\)

Brigham Young, second president of the LDS Church, taught that God had once been a mortal. In the 1997 manual *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young*, he is quoted as saying:

> The great architect, manager and superintendent, controller and dictator [absolute ruler] who guides this work is out of sight to our natural eyes. He [God] lives on another world; he is in another state of existence; he has passed the ordeals we are now passing

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\(^1\) “New Essays Address Topics on Women, Priesthood, Mother in Heaven,” Mormon Newsroom, online at http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/new-church-essays-women-priesthood-mother-in-heaven. The number of essays has since been shortened to eleven, as the three dealing with polygamy have been grouped together.


through: he has received an experience, has suffered and enjoyed, and knows all that we know regarding the toils, sufferings, life and death of this mortality, for he has passed through the whole of it, and has received his crown and exaltation and holds the keys and the power of this Kingdom; . . .

On page 34 of the same manual we read:

The doctrine that God was once a man and has progressed to become a God is unique to this Church. How do you feel, knowing that God, through His own experience, “knows all that we know regarding the toils [and] sufferings” of mortality?

The LDS Church continues to teach that God has not always been God, but achieved this status in the distant past. In their 2002 teaching manual, Gospel Fundamentals, we read:

It will help us to remember that our Father in Heaven was once a man who lived on an earth, the same as we do. He became our Father in Heaven by overcoming problems, just as we have to do on this earth.

Notice that for our heavenly father to have once been a mortal it would require a god before him to oversee his mortality. Joseph Smith expounded on this idea in one of his last sermons in June of 1844. John G. Turner explained:

only eleven days before his murder, Smith said he would “preach the doctrine [of] there being a God above the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Fleshy ideals introduced in the Book of Abraham, the prophet suggested that “there are gods many and Lords many . . . but to us there is but one God pertaining to us.” Smith reiterated his point: “if Jesus Christ was the Son of God and . . . God the Father of Jesus Christ had a father you may suppose that he had a Father also.” . . . Smith’s words hinted at a chain of divine beings who had “laid down” their lives and taken them up again: a possible infinite regression of gods and saviors. Drawing on an array of Old and New Testament passages, Smith also spoke of a single “head of the gods” presiding over a divine council of heavenly beings, one of whom became earth’s god. The universe contained a plurality, perhaps an infinitude of gods.

Contrary to the Mormon view of a god among many, the Bible teaches that God is not only eternal but that there are no other deities.

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Contrary to the Mormon view of a god among many, the Bible teaches that God is not only eternal but that there are no other deities.

Thus saith the Lord, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself. (Isaiah 44:24)

Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. (Psalm 90:2)

To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like? . . . for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me. (Isaiah 46:5, 9)

These verses, along with other biblical passages, would also preclude a Heavenly Mother.

Once Joseph Smith developed the idea that God was literally our father it wasn’t long before the idea of a mother goddess was added. Linda Wilcox explained:

The Mother in Heaven concept was a logical and natural extension of a theology which posited both an anthropomorphic god, who had once been a man, and the possibility of eternal procreation of spirit children.

According to LDS teachings, after the mortal death and resurrection of the couple who would eventually become our Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother they advanced to the position of Gods and, after eons of procreation, sent their literal spirit born children to this earth to receive mortal bodies and for a time of testing to determine who would follow in their steps and progress to godhood. In a 1909 statement by the LDS Church First Presidency we read:

Man is the child of God, formed in the divine image and endowed with divine attributes, and even as the infant son of an earthly father and mother is capable in due time of becoming a man, so the undeveloped offspring of celestial parentage is capable, by experience through ages and aeons, of evolving into a God.

Mormonism teaches that gods and men are all the same species. Sterling W. Sill, of the First Quorum of the Seventy, explained:

It is helpful for us to remember that God, angels, spirits, and men are all of the same species in different stages of development and in various degrees of righteousness.

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5 Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young, (LDS Church, 1997), p. 30.
6 Ibid., p. 34.
The essay on Heavenly Mother explains that while there is limited knowledge about “a Mother in Heaven” members need to “appreciate the sacredness of this doctrine and to comprehend the divine pattern established for us as children of heavenly parents. As Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said, ‘Our theology begins with heavenly parents. Our highest aspiration is to be like them.’”

Joseph Fielding Smith, tenth president of the LDS Church, explained that the concept of being like God includes eternal procreation:

The Father has promised us that through our faithfulness we shall be blessed with the fulness of his kingdom. In other words we will have the privilege of becoming like him. To become like him we must have all the powers of godhood; thus a man and his wife when glorified will have spirit children who eventually will go on an earth like this one we are on and pass through the same kind of experiences, being subject to mortal conditions, and if faithful, then they also will receive the fulness of exaltation and partake of the same blessings. There is no end to this development; it will go on forever. We will become gods and have jurisdiction over worlds, and these worlds will be peopled by our own offspring. We will have an endless eternity for this.

This pattern of couples advancing from spirit children to godhood is often referred to as the Plan of Salvation. In the LDS manual Doctrines of the Gospel we read:

God the Father provided the plan of salvation by which His spirit children could eventually become like Him.

Because of the carefully worded promise of becoming “like Him” many do not realize how literally this is meant. For example the leadership obscures the doctrine of godhood in the different versions of the manual Gospel Principles.

1988—We can become Gods like our Heavenly Father. This is exaltation.

1997—We can become like our Heavenly Father. This is exaltation.

Even though the teaching is still the same, by dropping “Gods” from the 1997 manual, it might not be as obvious to non-Mormons how literally the LDS Church teaches that they hope to become Gods.

Traditionally Christianity has seen God as our creator, not our literal parent. We are not the same species as God, but His creation. The Bible proclaims, I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God (Isaiah 45:5). In Psalm 95:6 we read: Come, let us worship and bow down, Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.

From One God to Many

Mormon theology did not start with the concept of “heavenly parents” but with the belief in one God. The LDS doctrine of God has undergone major revisions since Joseph Smith published his Book of Mormon in 1830. Time after time the book proclaims that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost “is one God.” Even the testimony of the three witnesses at the front of the Book of Mormon affirms that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost “is one God.” Christians of the day did not criticize the Mormon view of God but the idea of modern day revelation and Smith’s claim of unearthing an additional book of scripture.

Kurt Widmer, of the University of Lethbridge, observed:

It was not that the Book of Mormon taught new truths about God which drew the early converts. Rather, the Book of Mormon presented a God who was active in the world. The God revealed through early Mormonism was a God who was more concerned with practicing what was believed, than with theorizing about what is to be believed.

Early LDS literature contains no mention of Heavenly Father having a resurrected body. Mormons today assume that Joseph Smith’s 1820 vision, showing that the Father and Son are two distinct beings, was known by the early church. Yet that story has gone through radical changes. The first time Joseph committed his first vision to paper in 1832, he only mentioned “the Lord” as appearing, informing him that his sins were forgiven. In 1835 Joseph was telling a slightly expanded version of this vision, recounting that many angels appeared, but nothing is specifically said about God or Jesus being there as well. It wasn’t until 1842, twenty-two years after the purported event, that Smith officially printed the story known to most LDS today.

12 “Mother in Heaven,” Gospel Topics, LDS Church, online at https://www.lds.org/topics/mother-in-heaven

17 Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 31:21; Mormon 7:7; Alma 11:27-39, 44; 3 Nephi 11:27; Testimony of the Three Witnesses.
19 “Grappling with the Past,” Salt Lake Messenger, no. 122 (May 2014); online at http://www.utlm.org/newsletters/no122.htm
In 1835, as part of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, a series of lectures were published as the Lectures on Faith. In Lecture 5 the Father and Son are discussed and differentiated—the father is described as a personage of “spirit” while the son is a personage of “tabernacle.”

This would be a strange description if Smith had been teaching for years that he had seen the Father and He had a physical body. Thus Mormonism moved from the one God of the Book of Mormon to two separate gods, where the father is a spirit and only the son has a physical body.

By the 1840s Smith was proclaiming that Heavenly Father had a beginning, that the Father and Son are two totally different people with resurrected bodies and that there is a plurality of gods. Preaching in 1844, Joseph Smith declared “I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea.” Part of this sermon is also quoted in the 2004 LDS manual *Presidents of the Church Student Manual*:

> God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! . . . It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God, . . . and that he was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did; and I will show it from the Bible.22

Contrary to Joseph Smith’s claim, the Bible explains that God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent (Numbers 23:19). Also God instructed Isaiah I am the first and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. . . . Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any (Isaiah 44:6, 8).

Since Mormonism teaches that we were literally born to Heavenly Parents in a pre-mortal existence they interpret Bible verses referring to us as children of God in a very literal way. Joseph Smith taught that “the inhabitants [of the world] are begotten sons and daughters unto God” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 76:24). Thus the LDS believe we were literally born to our Heavenly Parents as spirit beings in a prior existence, making us “begotten” children of God. Beyond this, according to the LDS teachings, Jesus is not only a begotten son from the pre-mortal life, he is the only literally begotten son in the flesh. Dr. Ron Rhodes observed:

> Another verse Mormons appeal to in support of the idea that Jesus is “begotten” of the Father is John 3:16, which in the King James Version reads: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (emphasis added). The New International Version translates “only begotten” as “one and only,” and indeed, this is what the original Greek communicates. The Greek word monogenes means “unique” or “one of a kind.” It does not communicate procreation or derivation. Jesus is the unique or one and only “Son of God” in the sense that He has the same name as the Father—a divine nature . . . Hence, when Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, His Jewish contemporaries fully understood that He was making a claim to be God in an unqualified sense (John 5:18). This is why, when Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, the Jews insisted: “We have a law, and according to that law he [Christ] must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God (John 19:7). Recognizing that Jesus was identifying Himself as God, the Jews wanted to put Him to death for committing blasphemy.23

The Bible speaks of God as our father in a figurative sense. In the New Testament we are told that we become children of God through faith, not a literal birth in a prior life. It is a spiritual adoption.

> Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:12)

> So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. (Galatians 3:26)

### Evolving Doctrine of God

Mormon scholar Melodie Moench Charles acknowledges that the LDS view of God has evolved from one God to many. She argues, in fact, that at least some of the teachings of the Book of Mormon regarding God go even beyond the orthodox Trinitarian doctrine in emphasizing the oneness of God:

> Recently when I was teaching the Book of Mormon in an adult Sunday school class we discussed Mosiah 15. . . . I said that I saw no good way to reconcile Abinadi’s words with the current Mormon belief that God and his son Jesus Christ are separate and distinct beings. I suggested that perhaps Abinadi’s understanding was incomplete. . . .

> When we explore what the Book of Mormon says, its christology or doctrines concerning Christ differ

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from the christology of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since at least the 1840s. . . .

Book of Mormon people asserted that the Father and Christ (and the Holy Ghost) were one God. When Zeezrom asks Amulek, “Is there more than one God?” Amulek, who learned his information from an angel, answers, “No” (Alma 11:28-29). At least five times in 3 Nephi, Jesus says that he and the Father are one. Emphasizing that oneness with a singular verb, Nephi, Amulek, and Mormon refer to “the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, which is one God” (2 Ne. 31:21; Alma 11:44; Morm. 7:7, emphasis added). . . .

In isolation the Book of Mormon’s “which is one God” statements sound like orthodox trinitarianism, but in context they resemble a theology rejected by orthodox Christianity since at least 215 C.E., the heresy of modalism (also known as Sabellianism). Modalists believed that for God to have three separate identities or personalities compromised the oneness of God. Therefore, as Sabellius taught, “there is only one undivided Spirit; the Father is not one thing and the Son another, but . . . both are one and the same” (Lonergan 1976, 38). Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three labels for the different functions which the one God performed. . . . The Book of Mormon often makes no distinction between Christ and God the Father. For example, Jesus in 3 Nephi talked about covenants which his father made with the Israelites, and yet beyond anything he claimed in the New Testament he also claimed that he was the God of Israel who gave them the law and covenanted with them . . .

The Book of Mormon melds together the identity and function of Christ and God. Because Book of Mormon authors saw Christ and his Father as one God who manifested himself in different ways, it made no difference whether they called the God the Father or the Son. They taught that Jesus Christ was not only the one who atoned for their sins but was also the god they were to worship. He was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the God of Israel and the Book of Mormon people. . . .

Like the Book of Mormon, Mormonism before 1835 was largely modalistic, making no explicit distinction between the identities of the Father and the Son. Yet Mormonism gradually began to distinguish among different beings in the Godhead. This means the christology of the Book of Mormon differs significantly from the christology of the Mormon church after the 1840s. . . .

The current theology that most Mormons read back into the Book of Mormon is tritheism: belief in three Gods. Joseph Smith and the church only gradually came to understand the Godhead in this way. When he translated the Book of Mormon, Smith apparently envisioned God as modalists did; he accepted Christ and Christ’s father as one God. In his first written account of his “first vision” in 1832 Smith told of seeing “the Lord”—one being. . . .

Later, in 1844, Smith said, “I have always declared God to be a distinct personage—Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and or Spirit, and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods”. . . Mormon history does not support Smith’s claim about what he taught earlier. Documents from early Mormonism reflect that Smith went from belief in one god to belief in two and later three gods forming one godhead.24

LDS scholar Charles R. Harrell observed:

Joseph’s teachings regarding the members of the godhead appear to have progressed from essentially a trinitarian three-in-one God with a modalistic flavor, to a godhead consisting of “two personages” united by the indwelling Holy Spirit, to a godhead consisting of “three personages,” and finally to a godhead consisting of “three Gods.”25

However, the Mormon description of the godhead, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, fails to explain the role of Heavenly Mother. Some Mormons have tried to rectify this by speculating that when they speak of “God” it includes “Heavenly Mother.” But this would seem to relegate Heavenly Mother to a silent partner. Yet this is supposedly the role that all LDS women are to strive for.

Earliest Accounts of Heavenly Mother

While Joseph Smith’s sermons and revelations are silent about God having a wife, the idea would seem to be a logical extension of his teaching that the term “Heavenly Father” is to be understood literally, which would seem to require a mother as well. The new essay cites, in footnote number four, the earliest printed reference to a mother god from a poem written by early LDS leader W. W. Phelps, and published in the church newspaper in January of 1845, six months after Smith’s death. The sixth stanza reads:

Come to me; here’s the myst’ry that man hath not seen; Here’s our Father in heaven, and Mother, the Queen; Here are worlds that have been, and the worlds yet to be; Here’s eternity,—endless; amen: Come to me.26

The essay concedes that “while there is no record of a formal revelation to Joseph Smith on this doctrine, some early Latter-day Saint women recalled that he personally taught them about a Mother in Heaven.” For example, Eliza R. Snow, one of Smith’s secret plural wives, published her poem “My Father in Heaven” in the Times and Seasons on November 15, 1845.27 The poem was later set to music and today is a well-known hymn in Mormonism. Verse three refers to both Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother:

I had learned to call thee Father,
Thru thy Spirit from on high,
But, until the key of knowledge
Was restored, I knew not why.
In the heav’ns are parents single?
No, the thought makes reason stare!
Truth is reason; truth eternal
Tells me I’ve a mother there.28

The essay continues “Subsequent Church leaders have affirmed the existence of a Mother in Heaven. In 1909, the First Presidency taught that ‘all men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity.’”29

Keep in mind that when the LDS leaders speak of humans as “literally” being the children of Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother, they are referring to our spirit birth in a prior existence, where God and his wife, each having a physical resurrected body, literally copulated to produce each spirit child.

After these spirit children reached maturity in this heavenly realm, according to Mormonism, they were sent to earth to be born as mortals to another set of parents, who would actually be their spirit brother and sister from this prior life.

Praying to Heavenly Mother?

If one believes that there is a heavenly mother as well as a heavenly father, it would seem logical that one would or could pray to her. Yet this is not condoned in Mormonism. In the 2002 LDS manual Gospel Fundamentals we read:

Father in Heaven: A perfect being who looks like a mortal man but has a resurrected body of flesh and bones. He is the Father of our spirits, to whom we pray.29

Notice, there is no mention of a mother, only a father of our spirits. While the concept of a heavenly mother may seem to offer equality to both men and women in their quest for godhood, it appears that the woman would still be in a silent partnership, not part of the godhead and not prayed to. In the LDS essay on Heavenly Mother we read:

Latter-day Saints direct their worship to Heavenly Father, in the name of Christ, and do not pray to Heavenly Mother. In this, they follow the pattern set by Jesus Christ, who taught His disciples to “always pray unto the Father in my name.” Latter-day Saints are taught to pray to Heavenly Father, but as President Gordon B. Hinckley said, “The fact that we do not pray to our Mother in Heaven in no way belittles or denigrates her.” Indeed, as Elder Rudger Clawson wrote, “We honor woman when we acknowledge Godhood in her eternal Prototype.”30

But is this “prototype” simply demonstrating that a woman’s role is eternal motherhood, giving birth to billions of spirit children, but then dropping from the scene? This issue was addressed by Peggy Stack, in the Salt Lake Tribune:

For her part, BYU-Idaho historian Andrea Radke-Moss raises questions about Heavenly Mother’s role. “Is she truly a goddess and a priestess who enjoys priesthood power through the creation of worlds and spirits?” Radke-Moss asks. “Or is she like what women are expected to be on Earth—a submissive helpmeet to God the Father . . . —[or] a spiritual birthing/nurturing machine?”

Part of the problem, the historian says, is that “both gender roles are currently embodied only in God the Father—he is both priesthood leader and loving nurturer. She is absent from this gendered division of labor in families.”31

The tension of a Heavenly Mother who stands apart from the godhead was addressed by LDS scholars David L. Paulsen and Martin Pulido, in their 2011 article in BYU Studies:

The doctrine of a Heavenly Mother appears to be in tension with Mormonism’s trinitarian heritage. Overemphasizing the Trinity, or the Godhead, while underemphasizing a Heavenly Mother raises questions concerning the equality of deified males and females and the nature and importance of marriage. On the other hand, overemphasizing Heavenly Mother breaks with traditional Christian, and even Mormon, understandings.

27 “Mother in Heaven,” Gospel Topics, Footnote 5, LDS.org, online at https://www.lds.org/topics/mother-in-heaven
28 “O My Father,” LDS Hymnal, online at https://www.lds.org/music/library/hymns/o-my-father
30 “Mother in Heaven,” https://www.lds.org/topics/mother-in-heaven
More than One Heavenly Mother?

Some have speculated that one reason we are told not to pray to Heavenly Mother is that since God has multiple wives we wouldn’t know who to pray to since each of us could have a different mother. Mormon blogger Joanna Brookes wrote:

One sometimes also hears in Mormon circles the hushed speculation that we don’t talk about Heavenly Mother because there are in fact plural Heavenly Mothers. This is a bit of theological speculation we can trace to the nineteenth-century LDS theologian Orson Pratt’s The Seer, which was in its own day disclaimed by LDS authorities as a speculative rather than a doctrinal text. I have also met contemporary polygamous Mormon fundamentalist women who do believe that Heavenly Father has many exalted wives—many Heavenly Mothers for the whole human family.33

One is left to wonder if this is why Apostle Jeffrey R. Holland recently referred to “a” Mother in Heaven rather than to “the” or “our” Mother in Heaven?:

To all of our mothers everywhere, past, present, or future, I say, “Thank you. Thank you for giving birth, for shaping souls, for forming character, and for demonstrating the pure love of Christ.” To Mother Eve, . . . to Mary of Nazareth, and to a Mother in Heaven,

Historian Linda Wilcox raised a similar question:

A question to which there is no definitive answer—but much speculation—is whether there is more than one Mother in Heaven. The Mormon church’s doctrinal commitment to celestial (plural) marriage as well as the exigencies of producing billions of spirit children suggests a probability of more than one mother in heaven. This problem is illustrated by an anecdote where a wife asks her husband, “What do you think Heavenly Mother’s attitudes are about polygamy, Frank?” to which the husband responds, “Which Heavenly Mother?”

Apostle John Taylor, writing in answer to a question reportedly raised by a woman in the church, said in 1857 in a newspaper he was publishing in New York City: “Knowest thou not that eternities ago thy spirit, pure and holy, dwelt in the Heavenly Father’s bosom, and in his presence, and with thy mother, one of the Queens of heaven, surrounded by the brother and sister spirits in the spirit world, among the Gods?” He implied one Heavenly Father with many “Queens.”

An LDS Seminaries and Institutes student manual also hints at the possibility of multiple heavenly mothers. In a diagram entitled “Becoming a Spirit Child of Heavenly Parents,” an individual (male) is depicted with upward lines to his heavenly parents, the one parent labeled “Heavenly Father” (caps), the other labeled, “a heavenly mother” (lower case).35

Is Mary One of God’s Wives?

While the average Mormon would probably say that Mary was a virgin when she conceived Jesus, LDS theology would lead to a different conclusion. Since Mormonism teaches that God has a physical resurrected body, it follows that if Jesus is literally his only begotten son in the flesh that Mary conceived through intercourse with God.36

The 2010 manual Doctrines of the Gospel quotes LDS Apostle James E. Talmage to establish that Jesus is literally the son of God the Father:

That Child to be born of Mary was begotten of Elohim, the Eternal Father, not in violation of natural law but in accordance with a higher manifestation thereof; and the offspring from that association of supreme sanctity, celestial Sireship, and pure though mortal maternity, was of right to be called the “Son of the Highest.”37

The manual goes on to quote President Heber J. Grant to emphasize the literalness of Jesus’ paternity:

“We believe absolutely that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, begotten of God, the first-born in the spirit and the only begotten in the flesh; that He is the Son of God just as much as you and I are the sons of our fathers.”

Ezra Taft Benson, the thirteenth president of the LDS Church, wrote that Jesus’ mortal body was literally “sired” by God:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints proclaims that Jesus Christ is the Son of God in the most literal sense. The body in which He performed His mission in the flesh was sired by that same Holy Being we worship as God, our Eternal Father.

Brigham Young believed that God, as a physical resurrected being, had relations with Mary, thus making Jesus the literal son of the father:

The birth of the Saviour was as natural as are the births of our children; it was the result of natural action. He partook of flesh and blood—was begotten of his Father, as we were of our fathers.

Because of this Apostle Orson Pratt concluded that God and Mary must have been husband and wife:

The fleshly body of Jesus required a Mother as well as a Father. Therefore, the Father and Mother of Jesus, according to the flesh, must have been associated together in the capacity of Husband and Wife; hence the Virgin Mary must have been, for the time being, the lawful wife of God the Father: we use the term lawful Wife, because it would be blasphemous in the highest degree to say that He overshadowed her or begat the Savior unlawfully.

Orson Pratt also taught that God was a polygamist:

We have now clearly shown that God the Father had a plurality of wives, one or more being in eternity, by whom He begat our spirits as well as the spirit of Jesus His First Born, and another being upon the earth [Mary] by whom He begat the tabernacle of Jesus, as his only begotten in this world. We have also proved most clearly that the Son followed the example of his Father, and became the great Bridegroom to whom kings’ daughters and many honorable wives were to be married. We have also proved that both God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ inherit their wives in eternity as well as in time; . . . it would be so shocking to the modesty of the very pious ladies of Christendom to see Abraham and his wives, Jacob and his wives, Jesus and his honorable wives, all eating occasionally at the same table, . . . If you do not want your morals corrupted, and your delicate ears shocked and your pious modesty put to the blush by the society of polygamists and their wives, do not venture near the New Earth; for polygamists will be honored there, and will be among the chief rulers in that Kingdom.

However, the Bible paints no such picture. First, God is the creator of everything, there are no other deities.

This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb; I am the Lord, the Maker of all things, who stretches out the heavens, who spreads out the earth by myself. (Isaiah 44:24)

Second, the Bible does not promote the necessity of marriage, eternal or otherwise. When Jesus was asked about marriage he replied:

You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. (Matthew 22:29-30)

Third, Mary’s conception of Jesus is described as a miracle, not the act of a physical union.

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 1:18)

Achieving Godhood

Joseph Smith explained that before Heavenly Father became a god he was a savior on another world. After achieving exaltation He then sent his oldest spirit born son, Jesus, to this earth to complete his journey to godhood, as many gods had done before him:

There is much said about God and the Godhead. . . . If I were to testify that the Christian world were wrong on this point, my testimony would be true. . . . The Son doeth what He hath seen the Father do: then the Father hath some day laid down His life and taken it again; so He has a body of His own; . . .

This is reminiscent of part of the LDS temple ceremony, where God and Lucifer exchange words in the garden of Eden after the fall. Heavenly Father asks Lucifer “what hast thou been doing here?” To which Lucifer replies, “I have been doing that which has been done in other worlds.” God curses Lucifer, who angrily responds

38 Heber J. Grant, as quoted in Doctrines of the Gospel, p. 9.
41 Orson Pratt, The Seer, p. 158.
“If thou cursest me for doing the same thing **which has been done in other worlds**, I will take the spirits that follow me, and they shall possess the bodies thou createst for Adam and Eve!”44

It should be noted that there is no Heavenly Mother in the LDS temple endowment ceremony where the creation story is reenacted. The play only portrays Heavenly Father, Jesus, and Michael (who will become Adam) as working together in the creation.

The concept of additional worlds beyond our own is also taught in the Book of Moses, part of the *Pearl of Great Price*, where God declares that our earth is not the first world he created:

> And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose. . . . But only an account of this earth, and the inhabitants thereof, give I unto you. For behold, there are many worlds that have passed away by the word of my power. And there are many that now stand, and innumerable are they unto man, but all things are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them. 45

Thus the goal of the Mormon priesthood holder is to eventually create worlds without number for his posterity, as his Heavenly Father has done.

Mormonism is not saying that men will become gods independent of Heavenly Father, but it is like an escalator, as each man/god ascends the stairway of exaltation he is always behind his Father, and the man’s offspring are behind him. Thus Mormons believe they will always be subject to the god above them and their children who achieve godhood will follow behind them, making an unending chain of countless gods, each subordinate to the one ahead of him. Joseph Smith explained that Jesus followed the same path as his father in order to “inherit the same power, the same glory and the same exaltation” as God:

> Here, then, is eternal life . . . you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done before you, . . . What did Jesus do? . . . My Father worked out his kingdom with fear and trembling, and I must do the same; and when I get my kingdom, I shall present it to my Father, so that he may obtain kingdom upon kingdom, and it will exalt him in glory. **He will then take a higher exaltation, and I will take his place, and thereby become exalted myself.** So that Jesus treads in the tracks of his Father, and inherits what God did before; and God is thus glorified and exalted in the salvation and exaltation of all his children. . . . When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel—you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation.”

Brigham Young, Joseph Smith’s successor, preached that our heavenly father “was once a man in mortal flesh as we are, and is now an exalted Being.” Young went on to explain “How many Gods there are, I do not know. But there never was a time when there were not Gods and worlds, and when men were not passing through the same ordeals that we are now passing through.”47

### Eternal Procreation

The LDS leaders continue to teach that the highest goal of an LDS couple is to achieve godhood, just as Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother did before them. Lorenzo Snow, fifth president of the LDS Church, taught:

**Women can become like our mother in heaven.** You sisters, I suppose, have read that poem which my sister [Eliza R. Snow] composed years ago, and which is sung quite frequently now in our meetings. It tells us that we not only have a Father in “that high and glorious place,” but that we have a **Mother too; and you will become as great as your Mother, if you are faithful.**48

Joseph Smith’s revelation regarding eternal life and polygamy includes the promise of godhood and eternal progeny to those who obey the tenants of Mormonism:

And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and **by the new and everlasting covenant**, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, . . . Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and . . . inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions. . . . and they shall pass by the angels, and the **gods**, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a **continuation of the seeds forever and ever.**

**Then shall they be gods**, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting. . . . Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them. (**Doctrines and Covenants** 132:19-20)

Notice, the promise of godhood for the couple includes the “continuation of the seeds forever.” The

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48 *Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1984), pp. 7-8.
concept of exalted couples governing their endless posterity is discussed in the 2000 LDS booklet, *The Latter-day Saint Woman: Basic Manual for Women:*

**The Blessings of Eternal Marriage**

President Lorenzo Snow taught: “When two Latter-day Saints are united together in marriage, promises are made to them concerning their offspring that reach from eternity to eternity. They are promised that they shall have the power and the right to govern and control and administer salvation and exaltation and glory to their offspring, worlds without end. And what offspring they do not have here, undoubtedly there will be opportunities to have them hereafter. What else could man wish? A man and a woman, in the other life, having celestial bodies, free from sickness and disease, glorified and beautified beyond description, standing in the midst of their posterity, governing and controlling them, administering life, exaltation and glory worlds without end.”

When LDS leaders speak of a couple producing “offspring, worlds without end” and the “continuation of the seeds forever” they are referring to eternal sex. In his book, *Rational Theology*, Apostle John A. Widtsoe explained that intercourse will continue among couples who inherit the celestial kingdom:

**Sex Among the Gods.** Sex, which is indispensable on this earth for the perpetuation of the human race, is an eternal quality which has its equivalent everywhere. It is indestructible. The relationship between men and women is eternal and must continue eternally. In accordance with Gospel philosophy there are males and females in heaven. Since we have a Father, who is our God, we must also have a mother, who possesses the attributes of Godhood. [p. 69]

**Eternity of Sex.** It has already been said that sex is an eternal principle. . . . Since sex, then, represents an eternal condition, the begetting of children is coincidentally an eternal necessity. [p. 155]

**Celestial Marriage.** If sex is eternal, it follows of necessity that the marriage covenant may also be eternal. . . . one of the chief duties of men and women will be to beget spiritual children. These spirits, in turn, in the process of time, will come down upon an “earth,” . . . It is a reward of intelligent development, that we may become to other spiritual beings, what our God has been to us. [p. 157]

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Eternal life in Mormonism is equated with exaltation, or godhood. Most of God’s children will only receive immortality in a lower part of heaven, but the faithful temple married couple hope for godhood in the highest level of heaven. Milton R. Hunter, of the First Council of Seventy, wrote:

The principal purpose of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the ultimate goal of eternal progression is to receive eternal life, i.e., to become as God is. It is thoroughly understood, however, that a vast majority of the human family will never become gods, because to do so they must accept the true [LDS] gospel, receive all the ordinances—including celestial marriage—and obey all of God’s commandments faithfully to the end.

Here again we see LDS doctrine redefining standard Christian terms. Eternal life in the Bible is equated with individual salvation through Christ while Mormonism equates it with a couple’s eternal marriage. A single Mormon cannot achieve eternal life, it is offered only to those married in an LDS temple. On the other hand, the New Testament offers the gift of eternal life to each believer, not selectively to obedient couples (see John 3:16; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9).

John G. Turner explained Mormonism’s shift from preaching individual salvation to a couple’s quest for exaltation:

In the early 1840s, Smith expanded on what mortal men and women needed to do to progress from mortality to divinity. Exaltation hinged on the fulfillment of divine ordinances, and several of the ordinances Smith introduced in the early 1840s were for couples rather than individuals. Church members

needed an eternal companion to attain exaltation, and the exaltation of eternally sealed (i.e., bound together for eternity) families rather than the salvation of individuals became the primary end of Mormon doctrine and ritual. As families, the Saints would return to the presence of their heavenly Father and savior, and they would participate in the creative work of the gods. Marriage and procreation were the heart of exaltation. . . To be exalted meant the eternal increase of progeny. Smith confirmed this meaning of exaltation when he dictated his revelation on eternal and plural marriage.52

While faithful Mormon women are promised godhood it seems to be tied to eternal motherhood and confined to giving birth to billions of spirit children. Her husband will be in charge of sending these spirit children to another earth to experience mortality, where they will only have contact with their Father, not the Mother. Melodie Moench Charles observed:

Our theology currently gives women no hope that their participation in priesthood will ever be great enough to allow them to create anything but children. Some women might be excited by the possibility of providing the womb through which a never-ending stream of children would be born but I am not.53

The Brigham Young Era

Joseph Smith’s successors continued to develop the idea of multiple gods and wives. In 1852, after the move to Utah territory, the LDS Church publicly admitted to the practice of plural marriage. This doctrine seemed to mesh well with their concept of multiple gods who form additional worlds. If a man is to produce enough spirits to populate a world it would seem logical that he would need more than one wife. Preaching in 1866, Brigham Young declared “The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy.”54

LDS apostle Orson Pratt reasoned “If none but Gods will be permitted to multiply immortal children, it follows that each God must have one or more wives.”55 In another article, Orson Pratt explained:

It must be remembered, that seventy thousand million, however great the number may appear to us, are but two-thirds of the vast family of spirits who were begotten before the foundation of the world: . . . Add to seventy thousand million, the third part [of God’s spirit children] which fell, namely, thirty-five thousand million, and the sum amounts to one hundred and five thousand million which was the approximate number of the sons and daughters of God in Heaven . . . If we admit that one personage was the father of all this great family, and that they were all born of the same mother, the period of time intervening between the birth of the oldest and the youngest spirit must have been immense. If we suppose, as an average, that only one year intervened between each birth, then it would have required over one hundred thousand million of years for the same mother to have given birth to this vast family . . . If the father of these spirits, prior to his redemption, had secured to himself, through the everlasting covenant of marriage, many wives, . . . the period required to people a world would be shorter, . . . with a hundred wives, this period would be reduced to only one thousand million of years. . . . While the Patriarch with his hundred wives, would multiply worlds on worlds, . . . the other, who had only secured to himself one wife, would in the same period, just barely have peopled one world.56

Brigham Young even taught that Adam was a polygamist: “When our father Adam came into the garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial body, and brought Eve, one of his wives with him.”57

Is Jesus Married?

If God is married and mortal couples must also have eternal mates to achieve godhood it follows that Jesus would also be required to marry. During the early years in Utah territory the leading authorities of the church not only taught that Jesus was married, but that he was also a polygamist. Jedediah M. Grant, second counselor to Brigham Young, made these comments:

The grand reason of the burst of public sentiment in anathemas upon Christ and his disciples, causing his crucifixion, was evidently based on polygamy. . . . A belief in the doctrine of a plurality of wives caused the persecution of Jesus, and his followers. We might almost think they were “Mormons.”58

On another occasion Brigham Young said: “The Scripture says that He, the LORD, came walking in the Temple, with His train; I do not know who they were, unless His wives and children . . . ”59

Apostle Orson Hyde asserted:

It will be borne in mind that once on a time, there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee: ... no less a person than Jesus Christ was married on that occasion. If he was never married, his intimacy with Mary and Martha, and the other Mary also whom Jesus loved, must have been highly unbecoming and improper to say the least of it. ... At this doctrine the long-faced hypocrite and the sanctimonious bigot will probably cry, blasphemy! ... Object not, therefore, too strongly against the marriage of Christ ... 60

When the non-Mormons decried polygamy, claiming it was one of the "relics of barbarism," Brigham Young replied: "Yes, one of the relics of Adam, of Enoch, of Noah, of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Moses, David, Solomon, the Prophets, of Jesus, and his Apostles."61

While the LDS Church today does not talk about Jesus being married, it would seem to be a necessity since God is married and they believe all of his children must do the same in order to progress to godhood.

Ending Polygamy?

President Brigham Young was very emphatic in proclaiming that the church could never give up polygamy:

I heard the revelation on polygamy [from Joseph Smith], and I believed it with all my heart, and I know it is from God. ... “Do you think that we shall ever be admitted as a State into the Union without denying the principle of polygamy?” If we are not admitted until then, we shall never be admitted.62

However, as the United States government continued to press the church to give up the practice, new laws were enacted to force compliance. In 1887 the Edmunds-Tucker Bill was passed which, among other things, "declared that marriages not publicly recorded were felonies ... The most serious stipulation of the bill, however, was the threat to dissolve the legal entity of the LDS church corporation and to confiscate all church property in excess of $50,000."63

According to historian B. Carmon Hardy, "Then, on September 24, 1890, President Woodruff produced his famous Manifesto, advising church members to obey the laws of the land as they related to polygamy."64 Part of the 1890 Manifesto reads:

62 Deseret News (October 10, 1866).

Without further clarification, many Mormons were left to wonder if this statement was to be considered a revelation or just an admonition. Did it mean all Mormons were to discontinue living with their plural families, refrain from having more children born to these unions, or just that they were not to take any additional wives? There seemed to be one policy for the public and another in private. In the appendix to his book, Professor Hardy lists the names of 220 LDS men, including apostles, stake presidents and bishops, who continued to take plural wives after the Manifesto.66

Polygamy in Heaven?

Some may dismiss plural marriage as a thing of the past. Yet LDS men have continued to be sealed in the temple to additional women when the man has outlived his first wife. This would necessitate polygamy in heaven. Writing in 1897 LDS Apostle Charles W. Penrose stated:

In the case of a man marrying a wife in the everlasting covenant who dies while he continues in the flesh and marries another by the same divine law, each wife will come forth in her order and enter with him into his glory.67

This doctrine was reaffirmed in October of 2007 at the funeral for the second wife of President Howard W. Hunter, the fourteenth President of the LDS Church. The Deseret News reported:

President Hinckley affirmed the eternal nature of the marriage between Sister [Inis] Hunter and the former church president, whose first wife, Claire Jeffs, died after a long battle with Alzheimer’s disease and is now buried beside him in the Salt Lake Cemetery. Inis Hunter “will now be laid to rest on the other side,” he said. “They were sealed under the authority of the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood for time and for all eternity,” he said, recalling the marriage ceremony he performed for them in the Salt Lake Temple in April 1990.68

65 Doctrine and Covenants, Official Proclamation 1. https://www.lds.org/scriptures/dc-testament/od/1
66 Hardy, Solemn Covenant, Appendix II.
67 Charles W. Penrose, “Mormon” Doctrine Plain and Simple, or Leaves from the Tree of Life, (Salt Lake City, Utah, 1897), p. 66.
68 “Sister Hunter’s humor and cheerfulness remembered as she is laid to rest,” Deseret News (October 22, 2007).
Another example of plural sealings is Apostle Russell M. Nelson’s marriage in 2006 to a BYU professor. The BYU NewsNet for April 7, 2006, announced the temple marriage of Apostle Nelson, age 81, to Wendy Watson. His first wife died in February of 2005 and this was the first marriage for his new wife. This would mean, according to LDS beliefs, that Nelson has two wives sealed to him for eternity.

Joseph Fielding Smith, tenth president of the LDS Church, remarried twice after the death of his first wife, and in his book, Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 2, page 67, he remarked: “. . . my wives will be mine in eternity.”

Harold B. Lee, the eleventh president of the church, also was sealed to another woman after his wife’s death and was looking forward to a polygamous relationship in heaven. He, in fact, wrote a poem in which he reflected that his second wife, Joan, would join his first wife, Fern, as his eternal wives:

My lovely Joan was sent to me: So Joan joins Fern That three might be, more fitted for eternity. “O Heavenly Father, my thanks to thee.”

After being widowed, Apostle Dallin Oaks remarried in the temple and, according to Mormonism, will be married eternally to both women. In 2002 he commented on his second sealing:

When I was 66, my wife June died of cancer. Two years later—a year and a half ago—I married [in the LDS temple] Kristen McMain, the eternal companion who now stands at my side.

Given these plural sealings, many women are left today with the uneasy knowledge that if they precede their husbands in death they may have to accept plural wives in the afterlife. They may be sealed to only one Heavenly Father but will they end up being one of several Heavenly Mothers?

Since the LDS Church maintains that all the women sealed in marriage to a man will be his in eternity, then obviously most of the LDS past prophets will live polygamy. Joseph Smith and Brigham Young alone were sealed in marriage to dozens of women during their lifetime and many more women were sealed to them after their deaths.

Conclusion

Some LDS women may find comfort in the idea of a Heavenly Mother but have they fully realized the implications of such a doctrine? The Mormon heaven is filled with multiple gods, with dozens of wives giving birth to billions of spirit children as each god creates another world.

In 1988 LDS scholar, Melodie Moench Charles, urged the LDS Church leaders to “rethink our theology of heaven. The nineteenth-century Mormon men who fleshed out the theological skeleton provided by scriptures and revelation fleshed it out according to their own cultural prejudices . . . It is time to reject those aspects of Mormon heaven that are uninspired, unreasonable, unfair, damaging, and serve no virtuous end.” Sadly, the LDS leaders have now more firmly established the heretical doctrine of a Heavenly Mother, as well as the goal for Mormons to aspire to godhood.

Rob Bowman of the Institute for Religious Research concluded:

One lesson to be learned from the development of the Mormon doctrine of Heavenly Mother is that false doctrine tends to grow and to get worse over time. At first Joseph Smith taught that God had a spirit body that looked like ours but was not flesh and bones. He affirmed that there was only one God and that all things were created by God alone. But Joseph’s theology changed. Human beings went from created physical beings to created spiritual beings and then to uncreated spiritual intelligences. The Father went from a personage of spirit to a personage of flesh and bones to an exalted Man. God the Father went from being God from all eternity to being a mortal man who attained Godhood by his exaltation. The number of Gods went from one to two, from two to three, and at the end of Joseph’s life to an uncountable number of Gods, including Gods before Heavenly Father.

The Mormon doctrine of a Heavenly Mother is simply one result of that doctrinal development. Once God the Father had been conceptualized as a male human being with a flesh-and-bone body like ours with his own divine Father, and humans had been conceptualized as the Father’s children in heaven, it was a natural next step to conclude that our spirits had a Mother in heaven. Joseph Smith’s logic by which a father who has a son must also himself have a father led to the conclusion that where there is a father there must also be a mother. The doctrine of a Heavenly Mother is false, but the real problem lies in the Mormon
doctrine of God. Having made the Gods in man’s image as literally beings of the same kind, Mormonism was bound to make the Gods male and female.73

In recent years a few Christian leaders have been encouraged through dialogue with various LDS scholars that the LDS Church is moving, however slowly, toward Christian orthodoxy. They point to the increased emphasis on Jesus and the decreasing emphasis on God once being a mortal. Others see this as more a matter of simplifying the message for the public without actually changing their doctrine.74

With the issuing of the LDS essay on Heavenly Mother the LDS Church has reaffirmed its doctrine of a progressive God and his wife who are “the divine pattern established for us as children of heavenly parents.” The 2012 LDS manual Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow declares that “As man now is, God once was; As God now is, man may be.”75

Thus we see that the LDS Church still teaches the following:

1. God has not always been God, but achieved this position after years of self-effort.
2. Heavenly Father and his wife, Heavenly Mother, were once mortals on another world, ruled by yet a different “god.”
3. Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother are resurrected mortals who have achieved godhood.
4. The goal of the LDS couple is to achieve godhood and become a Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother to their posterity.
5. God, men and angels are the same species, just in different levels of achievement.

In other words, Mormonism is still a heretical offshoot of Christianity. ■

75 Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow, LDS Church (2012), p. 83.

Excerpts from Letters and Emails

September 2015: I have watched your interviews and I am shocked that more Mormons haven’t figured this out already. I know that now there are more leaving than ever before . . . . I am LDS but not active . . . One day I want to tell my husband of my finding and feelings but I am going to have to have solid facts and understanding to do that.

Searching for truth . . .

October 2015: Being raised LDS I was taught not to just be skeptical of any non-LDS material but to flat out reject it because anything that would make “the church” look bad was an obvious lie. It has been through your hard work and dedication that I was able to find so much damaging information through LDS sources. I left the LDS church last year and have been running after Christ ever since. Thank you for all you do! God bless.

October 2015: Thank you Miss Sandra for speaking with me today. It is my birthday. You answering the phone was one of the best gifts ever.

I have been obsessively watching anything on YouTube with you in it for the past few months. Thank you for your gracious forgiveness for me thinking evil of you and your ministry for all these years.

I actually tempted the LORD when I dialed the number posted on your site and bet I could never get to talk to The Sandra Tanner. Your accessibility must be exhausting but it meant much . . . .

I have been going off and on to a very small non-denominational church for a while. The strange thing is my former stake president and another former bishopric member . . . are attending on the sly sporadically . . . . These guys are prominent, dept heads in the university of the city’s ward. This church is about 25 miles out.

It was surreal to see them in attendance. This would be HUGE if discovered, but I have assured them it won’t happen because of me . . . . There seems to be serendipitous moments going in and exiting out of Mormonism. It is so difficult to remove the scales off the eyes and unstop the ears. So easy a task, but hard . . . . God bless you.

October 2015: I wanted to first thank you for what you are doing. I am a recent convert and have since been questioning my decision.

October 2015: I’m not sure if this letter will get to Sandra Tanner, but I wanted to send it to thank you.

You see, I wasn’t born into mormonism; but it affected my life because it influenced me at a vulnerable young age. I was born a Lutheran, as a kid I was more interested in the Baptist beliefs, but at 18 I converted to mormonism when 2 sister missionaries knocked on my door when I was in a very vulnerable time. I joined in innocent ignorance. I have been a seeker all my life. As a result, I’ve been swept up by the many deceptions that are out there . . . .

Gospel Principles 2009 as a Significant Perpetuation of Traditional Mormon Theology

By Aaron Shafovaloff

Salt Lake City Messenger No. 115
http://utlm.org/newsletters/no115.htm#gp
Well, I went on a mission, which was disastrous and the beginning of my long exit out. I got married in a temple. But the whole time there was something inside me that told me to flee mormonism. It took me awhile.

In 1992 I finally left Mormonism, but I didn’t know any of the ‘truths’ and deceptions.

Then in 2003 I was looking for ex-eastern websites, because I was being lured into eastern beliefs. . . . I was concerned because mormonism was already one strange system that I had released from, and I didn’t want another. So when I looked for ex-eastern forums I noticed an exmormon forum: the recovery for mormonism forum. . . .

Well, I was in shock as I read information. I had no idea that I had been lied to and that it was a complete fraud. I had to go back and re-sort the information that I now knew was deception. . . . I learned of your website and that it was greatly respected for the pioneering work you and your husband had done. . . . Now I was suspicious of beliefs again. . . . I never like to use the word God, but I thought there was an energy that created. . . . I thought there was an energy that had been split in two and showed up as good/bad, light/dark. Beyond that I was rather lost. I also had no idea how to stay in the ‘good’ side of this. Everything appeared so deceptive to me. . . .

In fall of 2013 my marriage was at an all-time low. I won’t go into detail, but Satan planned to destroy us through a marriage crisis but God used that to get us back to him. Because we had been so involved in so many beliefs, from new age research, to channelling to you name it, we had become an open receptor and had no way of discerning God’s ways from imposters (except for mormonism, that we knew was a fraud.) Still, leaving mormonism was based on God’s truths. . . .

I still could not connect to God and Jesus in a way I did as a baptism kid, nor as a mormon for that matter. I couldn’t read the bible because I still experienced it with repulsion and distrust. I still had trouble with the name God and really couldn’t use the name Jesus. I couldn’t accept the bible either.

But in april of 2015 everything changed for us. My husband and I, who both work for the same company, got in a work crisis. This crisis involved a serious litigation, as we had been deceived by a co-worker to help her. . . .

We have a history of being entangled with liars (mormonism being the first one) to the point that I became suicidal and didn’t want to live in this world anymore, as I am too innocent and get manipulated. I decided that I didn’t like this world and could no longer live on it. That it wasn’t for me.

But God had other plans. God used this to bring us to our knees and lead us out of the valley. He used it to bring us back to an understanding of God, . . . I also wanted to let you know how much you’ve helped me, as I think that God has pronounced you as a blessing in the exmormon community . . . May I ask you to pray for my husband and I . . . We are newly rescued as of a few months and are getting stronger and stronger with every day, through God’s mercy and guidance.

And that’s where I get a little fear show up, because I’ve been deceived so many times by religious beliefs, I’m concerned to get deceived again so I haven’t found a church to go to. . . . This new found feeling in God and Jesus is so much different than what I experienced in Mormonism. It seems simplified and cleaned up. . . . Let us thank and praise God’s Holy name.

November 2015: You are more than a ministry. You are more than a bookstore. You are a light to the world. You provide not only perspective, but also hard facts. What has impressed me since I learned of your ministry, is that you have had a focus on showing first hand documents. People, if they want to see the truth, can open their eyes, and see the facts for themselves.

You cannot change someone’s mind, but you can show them the difference between a shadow and reality.

Thank you for everything that you do. Keep up the ministry of truth.

November 2015: I read the Gospel Topics essays on plural marriage with interest, and believe that they are intended to deceive the faithful who cling to their family legacy and what they’ve been taught since birth (in most cases). With the availability of information on the Internet, Mormon leaders probably felt pushed into a corner to respond in some way. Sure there are admissions in these essays, but they are couched in carefully crafted rhetoric. Presenting Helen Mar Kimball’s age as “several months before her 15th birthday” (rather than the 14-year-old that she was) was an obvious example of these manipulative disclosures (which are not easily accessed on the church website). Dieter Uchtdorf’s acknowledgement that some Mormon leaders may have “said or done things that were not in harmony with our values, principles, or doctrine” is somewhat ridiculous given that it was Joseph Smith, their founder, who was a chief perpetrator of these “mistakes.” As a history major at BYU in the early 1970’s, I studied and had access to many primary sources containing Mormon History. If the Mormon leaders truly want to honor the truth and respect the integrity of their members, these primary sources should be fully disclosed. Let the people decide for themselves.

December 2015: I was sucked into the LDS life when my world was upside down. Been out since Nov 19, 2013.

January 2016: I’ve watched so many of your videos and many that others have posted with you in them. I have just become so fascinated with Joseph Smith and Mormonism. I am a born again Christian that attends a Baptist church. I watch a family on YouTube that it turns out are Mormon and I began to wonder what they believe. . . . I just love your videos and the way you explain things makes so much sense to me. I just wanted to tell you how smart and brave I think you are to break away from Mormonism and try to tell people the truth. I really think the head people of the Mormon church use mind games to keep their people in a protected bubble.

January 2016: Sandra Tanner, I owe you an apology. Years ago, I fancied myself an amateur Mormon apologist. I found a cool thing on the Internet newsgroups. . . . I spent hours each day there and thought I was smart enough to defend Mormonism.
During that time, you were often the foil for our apologetics. We lumped you into a derogatory group known as “The Tanners”—you know, those apostate anti-mormons who twist and turn everything. . . .

But my naïve focus back then was focusing on arguing miniscule doctrine and things like: does Jesus being born “at Jerusalem” (BOM) really mean “in Bethlehem?” Does “My house has many mansions” refer to the three Mormon kingdoms? There were never any real answers to those questions.

I don’t remember exactly what I knew about you back then—other than that I knew you must be evil and in Satan’s power. I never really read any of your stuff because I knew it would just be rubbish. If I had painted a picture of you, it would have been dark—you as an evil demon sucking peoples souls.

Last year, I heard your interview with John Dehlin on Mormon Stories. To my surprise, you were nothing like my caricature. You were kind, articulate and caring. You were intelligent. You were thoughtful. . . . And you were right.

My journey out of Mormonism has allowed me to open my eyes and my heart to many new things. And I want to thank you for being a pioneer in post-mormonism.

I humbly admit that I am a child among men when it comes to Mormon history. I knew nothing about the real history of the church and its foundations. All I knew was the Pabulum I had been taught. The more I learn now, the more I realize how little I knew then.

So, I want to apologize for what I thought of you. I want to apologize because I would have shunned and avoided you at all costs if I had been in the same room. I would have told others that you were full of lies and deceit. I’m sorry that you have had to live with people like me thinking bad things about you.

I was wrong.

Thank you for being true to yourself. I hope that someday I can meet you and thank you in person. I would like to hug you and, tell you that you are a beautiful child of God.

Someday, I’d like to call you my friend.

January 2016: Dear Sir, allow me the presumptuous assertion of your lack of understanding about the subject of “prophecy.” Also, allow me a few moments of your time to try and educate you, if only merely superficially regarding prophecy. I shall be as brief as possible.

I propose the spirit of prophecy is subject to the true prophets. Implying, generally it takes the spirit of prophecy and being a prophet (i.e. the actual/factual testimony of Jesus) to gain understanding from any prophecy. That there is really no personal interpretation of prophecy, but only truth as it is given by the spirit of God. The spirit of God giving knowledge of things past, present, and future in the correct context for the individual(s). . . .

Don’t be too quick to judge the concept of prophecy in light of your own limited understanding. It takes deep philosophy to truly understand it, only imparted by the Spirit of God to His Latter Day Saints. In your chapter you utilized argumentative constructs to “prove” the Great Seer Joseph Smith was a false prophet. However, by your same reasoning Jesus Christ must have been a false prophet (See Mark 9:1). Now, you may utilize some fancy argument that “explains” away why that verse is being misunderstood by me. But then again I can utilize even more intelligent argument to show why you misunderstand the prophecies of Joseph Smith.

But in the end, the only way to KNOW the truth is by doing the works laid out by Jesus. Hence, you should repent in humility, call for those young unlearned Mormon missionaries to teach and baptize you, then have hands laid upon your head, and the Holy Ghost will teach you about old Joe Smith and his prophecies. If not, you will spend up your time and energy wasted on that which will never satisfy. The Mormon religion is here to stay! It is the Kingdom of God on earth. Intelligent and educated people (like myself) will always flock toward it. It is the most intelligent religion on the planet.

January 2016: Sister Tanner, over a year ago I made an anonymous account and I was incredibly rude and disrespectful towards you. I wish I could convey how sorry I am. I am sorry. I was doubting and afraid.

January 2016: You don’t know me but you have blessed my life so much!!!!! I once believed all of the things I was told about you and a great blessing to me has been to realize I was a brainless, fed, Stepford, shallow, judgmental woman.

I now understand what grace means so I am not saying this in a condemning way over myself but a freeing way of thank God I now know more, better, understand the pain those who faced rejection and being lied about so that people like me can be freed and live in this BEAUTIFUL life after the church (which I was taught by the church, would be torment. I receive spiritual experiences though I was taught the Holy Spirit (Ghost) would be sucked out of me and I understand how to really love people without judging them (which I see now as a form of loathing people) and I have learned to be compassionate with myself and others and to meet myself and others where we are in this journey and just love. Work in progress and working a lifetime of false-teaching (which I believed whole-heartedly until I was 40) and I am sure it will take a long time to get it all out but I am finally through the grief stages and it is coming out beautifully.

Thank you for being you, for being strong, for facing control I don’t think I would have had the guts to face, for being such a great example of meeting people and loving them where they are at on this journey. So much love and gratitude to you! I am SO thankful you were born!!!

January 2016: Sandra. It was yours and Jerald’s writings that kept me from returning to the Mormon Church after I first came out. So many times I was “this” close to going back. Your devotion and dedication will never be forgotten.

January 2016: I recently finished “Mormonism, Magic, and Masonry,” and . . . it . . . was . . . AWESOME. Those kooky Mormon Glass Lookers. I’m an ex-Mo and I can’t believe I went on a mission to preach about this bat-sh** crazy dude.
Looking back on my mission I laugh now at the memories of those people I ran into that called Joseph Smith, Joe Smith, or John Smith. At any rate . . . I loved M, M, and M by the Tanners, very good. I loved all of it but Abrac was hilarious. Thank you for your hard work in telling the truth about ole’ Joe Smith.

**February 2016:** Dear Sandra—I have recently been listening to your lectures and interviews on YouTube and want to thank you for what you and your late husband, Jerald, have done in exposing the deceit, corruption and evil of the Mormon religion. I am so impressed by your courage, scholarship and integrity in investigating and how you have stood for the truth of the Biblical gospel.

I’ve always known Mormonism to be fraudulent, but recently have been doing a more thorough investigation because our oldest granddaughter began dating a Mormon and has in fact been baptized into the M. church a few months ago. She was raised in a Bible-believing church and family and yet Satan has been able (thus far) to blind her eyes. We are all heart broken and praying for her salvation and for the young man as well. We have shared loads of Scripture with her and all kinds of links to ministries that are revealing the false teachings of the Mormons. If she were seeking truth, it is everywhere for her to see, but at this point I think she’s so into the guy that she just wants Mormonism to be true. We pray for the Lord to open her eyes, snatch her from the fire.

I especially appreciated your explanation of all the temple rituals. I would think that if [our granddaughter] knew some of this creepy stuff it would give her pause. Maybe the Lord will give me an opportunity to let her in on some of this. I think she’s only hearing the “palatable” stuff at their weekly meetings. Also, from your interviews, I realized how central polygamy is to the teaching of the church. I doubt if [our granddaughter] has any idea of that and probably only thinks that polygamy is part of the history (not current doctrine) and/or connected with the fundamentalist strains of Mormonism—when in fact, it’s part of the teaching of the mainstream church.

Your teaching also helped me reconcile how intelligent, educated people (Mitt Romney, my husband’s dermatologist, etc.) can hold to Mormonism. I’m seeing now that they may even know it’s false and still cling to it because of the culture, the family ties, etc. So sad that people are willing to value these things before truth!

I’m so happy to learn that many Mormons are coming to Christ! . . . And thank you so much for being one who values and stands for truth. I’m amazed how well you are able to articulate all that you have learned and thank the Lord for your scholarship and clear mind! To me, you and the record of your work are a real treasure.

**February 2016:** I just finished watching the documentary . . . [The Mormons: Who They are, What They Believe] and wanted to reach out and thank you for the brutal honesty by all of the past members who appeared in the documentary (Sandra especially!!).

**February 2016:** Sandra,

I have watched and read anything and everything that has your name on it. I have learned so much from your videos, Conference talks, your fireside talks, research on Joseph Smith and your interview with Bishop Earl on the ex Mormon files (and many more) . . . .

I am 38 years old and came out of Mormonism around the age of 30. I know more about Mormonism now than I did when I was in it. I also realized that I was in a cult all the years I was in Mormonism. I had my Mormon goggles on and pressure from my Bishop dad keeping me in when I knew it was not right. My Mormon temple ceremony was horrible. By the time we were in the second room and chanting everything in me was screaming “this is a cult!!!” The Holy Spirit was telling me that it was not right.

I left the celestial room as fast as I could and ran to the bathroom and cried. When I turned to my Mormon escort through the temple and told her that I felt horrible about what just happened and that it felt cultish she brushed me off with no words of encouragement or explanation. My husband at the time was only a member for one year before we went to the temple. The only part that did not feel like a cult was when we were sealed to our three beautiful children. But my poor husband had to watch me, a member of this church my whole life, cry all the way home from [one state] back to our home in [another state]. I can only imagine what was going through his head. Two months after going to the temple he had an affair and we shortly thereafter divorced.

Since then I have finally opened my eyes and started thinking for myself and reading everything about Mormonism that I can get my hands and eyes and ears on. I am now a Christian who believes that Jesus Christ is my savior and gave me the gift of grace. Grace is not a word to hear in Mormonism. I just felt like I needed to reach out to you and tell you how much you have helped me in my journey to better understand that Mormonism is not Christian. And the things about Joseph Smith that are so true that the church hides from the members. What a horrible horrible man he was. Again I thank you for all the research and information that you give people and I’ll pass it on to everyone that I now witness to. You and your husband truly have done the work that God will be proud of.

**March 2016:** I am a member of the Church of Latter Day Saints. I am so sorry that I had never heard of the Tanner’s before now. Unbelievable I know.

Anyway, I have been contemplating leaving the church ever since the announcement came about the children of Gay couples . . .

So I began doing research on the church. I came across a nice young man called Jeremy Runnels. It is through him that I heard of Sandra Tanner.

I have found all of the information about the church history fascinating. But what I really found so awesome was the information about Jesus being all we really need for our salvation.
As I am sure you know, Mormons have a very different view of being “saved.” We are taught to suspect anyone who uses that term. lol.

I bought a bunch of Bibles because I wanted to “start fresh” as it were and not have all of the commentary and footnotes that I have in my quad.

I bought a KJV Bible, a NIV Bible and a big nice fancy leather bound one for my front room so that when the visiting teachers come over we can read from the Bible instead of from the Ensign.

I have not “officially” left yet. My husband is totally done with the Church at this point and he is being incredibly supportive and patient as I go at my own pace.

I thing after this Easter Sunday I will try to find a non-denominational church around where I live.

I watched your “fireside” just recently. I can’t believe I never heard of you. :)

March 2016: Thank you Sandra. So much information you’ve shared here. I really appreciate your time. I’ve studied probably 20 hours and learned probably more than most Mormons know about their religion at this point. The problem is, my [19 year old] son [with a Mormon girlfriend] will not listen to any of it, will not look at anything on the internet, does not want to talk to anyone about it. He says it’s between him and God and he will pray whether or not it’s true. (I’m sure you know where that idea came from). I’ve encouraged him to talk to his pastor about it as he had just been baptized the week before he was given the BOM by a non-denominational pastor. He hasn’t done that either. He’s afraid he will be influenced by outside resources and he believes this needs to come from the Holy Spirit.

I never in my wildest dreams thought about this type of thing happening to him. He’s been raised in a Christian home his whole life and all of our extended family are Christians, all grandparents, etc.

March 2016: [From granddaughter of longtime friend] Thank you for praying for my salvation before I was born. Thank you for loving me and my family. I will be forever grateful for you. Would appreciate your continued prayers for the Lord to save the rest of them. Blessed Resurrection Sunday! I thank the Lord for you and your ministry.

April 2016: Oh yeah of little faith…… convert to Islam please.

April 2016: I am a fairly young college student, . . . I did not know anything about Mormonism until about 2 and a half years ago when many of my LDS friends left for their missions. A few of them shared their beliefs with me before they left. Ever since, missionaries have been showing up at my door constantly. I was later introduced to some friends from church that use their home in Utah to evangelize during the Manti Pageant. This has become an annual mission trip for me, and this past year I had the pleasure of visiting the Utah Lighthouse Ministry and meeting Sandra Tanner. I learned so much just from visiting, and from the books I have purchased since. I’d like to make sure that those involved with this ministry know that people are thankful for them and their work.

Additionally, I want those involved in this ministry to know that it is making a difference. One of my closest friends, who is LDS, revealed to me, and me alone so far, his questioning of the Book of Mormon, particularly why it seems to support the Trinity. I know that the past two and a half years of us discussing Mormonism and Christianity have influenced his doubts. I have this ministry, and others like Mormonism Research Ministry to thank for equipping me for this kind of ministry, and God of course.

April 2016: Hi, over there!

I’m just a little curious. I am (was) a mormon until a couple of weeks ago. I am a convert who joined the church here in Norway when I was in my teens. All the candy flossed information that is surrounding an every day mormon is fine to live with until you get to know what is really going on.

I really felt, when I was looking into the internet on other information about the church, that I was doing something terribly wrong. Everybody within the church is saying that we must stay away from all that kind of info since it is anti-mormon. NOBODY has ever told me about the church essay’s. Feel like I have been played for a fool by those who have red them. Is there a lot who knows but don’t have the courage to speak out about it or are they just really well flossed with all the easy going things?

It is incredible how this organization is able to endure with all this evidence that the church is way of track. And they have been that way ever since Joseph Smith found out he could write a book and make money on it. He should have continued with his moneydigging and we would have been spared for all this trouble.

There is a lot that could have been said but I am wondering if there is other norwegians that have made contact and are curious on what’s going on? There is about 2000 active members in Norway. But I think more and more will be informed with the dreadful things of what they have believed in.

I want to thank you, Sandra, for your steadfastness in the truth. You and Jerald are giants. You have made it possible for us to go deeper into the material. When I first found out, I wanted to know everything, and sat up late at night to watch your interview with John Dehlin. It was great. And I also listened to Lee Baker. I have now bought Shadow or reality on PDF and look forward to increase my knowledge. . . .

Though it must be said it is probably easier to leave church here in Norway then it would be in the LDS capitol. Luckily, but the feeling of betrayal is ever present.

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*The New Mormon History* - Excerpt from Chapter 11

“Divorce among Mormon Polygamists: Extent and Explanations”

Eugene E. Campbell and Bruce L. Campbell

Studies of Mormon polygamy have tended to emphasize the origin and motivation for the practice, courtship techniques, inter-family relationships, economic adjustments, housing arrangements, and legal difficulties, but very little has been written concerning divorce. . . . Nevertheless recent studies have revealed that 1,645 divorces were granted by Brigham Young during the period of his presidency and that many of these were obtained by prominent pioneer leaders involved in the practice of plural marriage. . . . First, many prominent men known to be polygamists are listed on these records of divorce. The names of many general authorities of the LDS church as well as stake and ward leaders are included. Second, several cases reveal that two or more wives were divorced from one man on the same day. The most unusual case is that of George D. Grant who was divorced from three wives on the same day and from a fourth wife within five weeks. More conclusive evidence is the fact that Brigham Young did not have authority to grant civil divorces terminating monogamous marriages, but as president of the church he alone had the right to sever polygamous relationships. Polygamous marriages were always extralegal, and in the Mormon system only the president had the right to authorize marriages and divorces. The incoming and outgoing correspondence of the pioneer leader is replete with requests for permission to take extra wives as well as to be divorced from them. . . .

Evidence from D. Michael Quinn’s prosopographical study of early LDS church leaders tends to bear out these assumptions. He discovered that of the seventy-two general authorities who entered plural marriage, thirty-nine were involved in broken marriages, including fifty-four divorces, twenty-six separations, and one annulment. (*The New Mormon History*, pp. 181-182)
Both the Bible and the Book of Mormon present themselves to their readers as many separate works written by different authors over many centuries, eventually collected together into one book. Now the Bible clearly is just that. But what about the Book of Mormon? Is it really the same sort of book the Bible is? Or, as C. S. Lewis suggested, is it rather a book written in imitation of the Bible? The introduction of the current edition of the Book of Mormon asserts it is the former:

The Book of Mormon is a volume of holy scripture comparable to the Bible. It is a record of God’s dealings with ancient inhabitants of the Americas and contains the fulness of the everlasting gospel. The book was written by many ancient prophets by the spirit of prophecy and revelation. Their words, written on gold plates, were quoted and abridged by a prophet-historian named Mormon.

These words merely reiterate the view of the Book of Mormon officially held by the Mormon Church from the time Egbert B. Grandin of Palmyra, New York, published it on March 26, 1830, right down to the present day. This was also the view put forward by Joseph Smith himself, as indicated in the title he chose for the original edition: The Book of Mormon: An Account Written by the Hand of Mormon upon Plates Taken from the Plates of Nephi. In providing this title, Joseph Smith is giving us to understand that Nephi (7th/6th cent. BC) and Mormon (4th/5th cent. AD) were real historical people and that the Book of Mormon was translated into English from an abridgment of the plates of Nephi by Mormon. From the beginning as well the Book of Mormon has included two additional documents under its covers called “testimonies,” one of three and the other of eight witnesses, all of whom say they actually saw the plates from which Joseph translated the Book of Mormon and the characters on the plates. Both “testimonies” begin with the remarkably comprehensive line identifying the intended audience of the book: “BE it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come. . . .” The plain intention of these testimonies is to assure readers everywhere that the Book of Mormon


2 The Book of Mormon: An Account Written by the Hand of Mormon upon Plates Taken from the Plates of Nephi (Palmyra, NY: E. B. Grandin, 1830), [589] and [590].
was not a mere imitation of the Bible but actually what it
purports to be: another Bible, and that it was translated,
according to the oft-used expression, “by the gift and
power of God.” But what exactly does that phrase mean?

“By the Gift and Power of God”

Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris
are the names of the men who signed the Book of Mormon
“testimony of the three witnesses” declaring that: “We
also know that they [the plates] have been translated by
the gift and power of God” (italics added). One of the
three, David Whitmer, left the following description
of what he understood by that phrase, “by the gift and
power of God”:

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

Another of the three, Martin Harris, corroborated
Whitmer’s story of the miraculous process of translation:

He [Martin Harris] said that the Prophet possessed a seer
stone, by which he was enabled to translate as well as
from the Urim and Thummim, and for convenience he
then used the seer stone. Martin explained the translating
as follows: By aid of the seer stone, sentences would
appear and were read by the Prophet and written by
Martin, and when finished he would say, “Written,” and
if correctly written, that sentence would disappear and
another appear in its place, but if not written correctly
it remained until corrected, so that the translation was
just as it was engraved on the plates, precisely in the
language then used.

Even the Prophet Joseph Smith’s own wife, Emma
Hale Smith, added her testimony to the above described
manner of translation:

When my husband was translating the Book of Mormon,
I wrote a part of it, as he dictated each sentence, word for
word, and when he came to proper names he could not
pronounce, or long words, he spelled them out, and while
I was writing them, if I made any mistake in spelling, he
would stop me and correct my spelling, although it was
impossible for him to see how I was writing them down at
the time. Even the word Sarah he could not pronounce at
first, but had to spell it, and I would pronounce it for him.

If what David Whitmer, Martin Harris, and Emma
Smith say is true, if this really was the way the Book of
Mormon came forth, then it’s really not surprising that
Joseph Smith would describe it as “the most correct of
any book on earth.” Imagine what is being claimed by
these witnesses, namely, that the Book of Mormon, at
least in the original dictated manuscript or manuscripts,
represents, very literally, God’s own English translation
of the Reformed Egyptian characters inscribed on the
ancient Nephite plates. Not only do all the words come
directly by divine dictation, but all the grammar and
spelling as well.

Obviously this story of miraculous origins was
intended to underscore the claim that the Book of Mormon
is a divine book in its own right and no mere imitation
of the Bible. But what if the witnesses’ stories turned
out not to be true? What if the story was made up and
the Book of Mormon turned out to be just another book
written in imitation of the Bible? If that were so, the
situation would become more complicated than our merely
being able to assign the book, as C. S. Lewis did in his
non-confrontational way, to the morally-neutral category
of an imitation of the Bible. If the claims turned out not
to be true, the Book of Mormon becomes not merely a

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3 E.g., “Through the medium of the Urim and Thummim I
translated the record by the gift, and power of God” (Times and
Seasons [March 1, 1842]: 707); “Joseph Smith, the prophet and
seer of the Lord, has done more, (save Jesus only,) for the salvation
of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it . . .
he has brought forth the Book of Mormon, which he translated by
the gift and power of God.” (The Doctrine and Covenants of
the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (2nd ed.; Nauvoo,
IL: John Taylor, 1844), 444 (Sec. CXI)).

4 “The Testimony of Three Witnesses,” Book of Mormon (1830),
589.

5 David Whitmer, Address to All Believers in Christ (Richmond,
MO: David Whitmer, 1887), 12.

6 “One of the Three Witnesses: Incidents in the Life of Martin
Harris,” Letter to the editor by Edward Stevenson, written Nov. 30,

7 Edmund C. Briggs, “A Visit to Nauvoo in 1856,” Journal of
History 9.2 (Jan 1916): 454.

8 History of the Church, 4:461.

9 Strictly speaking only portions of the original dictated manuscript
exist, but the entire copy that was produced from it, called the Printer’s
Manuscript, exists in its entirety and represents for many parts the
closest we can get to what the Original Manuscript looked like. These
two manuscripts are what I have in mind when I refer to manuscripts
(plural) throughout this study.
Bible imitation, but a full-blown Bible forgery. As Eric Hebborn (d. 1996), one of the most accomplished art forgers of the twentieth century, wrote: “The making of a new Old Master is not itself a crime... A crime has only been committed when the fake is offered for sale as genuinely old.” And so in this case, making an imitation of the Bible is one thing, but falsely putting it forward as ancient or divine in origin quite another.

Given the point he makes above, when Hebborn would paint a forgery he would never actually claim it was authentic. Instead he devised a series of strategies to gently nudge others into making their own affirmative judgments concerning authenticity. In contrast, Joseph and his early followers did not hesitate to venture authenticity claims of the most remarkable nature for the Book of Mormon.

The task of examining the Book of Mormon as a Bible forgery, rather than a Bible imitation, is forced upon us once we face how great an effort on the part of those who produced it to convince people that it was indeed a divine book, as when Joseph Smith declared the Book of Mormon, “the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.” If Joseph Smith said this, knowing he’d made the whole thing up, then he was, very simply, a very bad man, a man who defrauded people spiritually by producing a fake Bible, in the same way counterfeiters and art forgers defraud people materially or aesthetically by making fake money and fake Picassos.

There will be those, of course, who will resist making such a pointed conclusion about Joseph in this case by suggesting some mitigating factor in his case, as, for example, did Major Lewis C. Bidamon, Emma Smith’s second husband, when he told Edmund C. Briggs, “I believe Joseph Smith was an honest man, but think he might have been deceived.”

The Consistency Test:
Does the suspected forgery match its maker’s description?
Does its maker act as though he himself believes his description?

Inner motivations and their attendant virtues or culpabilities can be hidden. It’s hard to tell when somebody’s lying. But happily when trying to detect a forgery we don’t always have to. What we do have to do is carefully examine whether what the suspected forger does matches what (s)he says. To begin with one example, if there’s reason to suspect that a forgery has been perpetrated, the thing to do is to determine whether the statements of the forger both before and after producing the suspected work are consistent with the process (s)he claimed to have used in creating the suspected forgery. An example of what I mean can be found in the story of the flamboyant British art forger Tom Keating (d. 1984). Keating claimed that the spirits of the old masters actually possessed him and painted new paintings of their own through him and that sometimes this even happened when he was sleeping. Was Keating lying? Did he actually believe his claim that: “I woke up one morning and found it [a self-portrait of the French painter, Edgar Degas (1834-1917)] on the easel, in place of the scratchy, silly daub that I’d been working on the day before?”

Notice now that I am not asking if we believed the story, but if he, Tom Keating, believed it. We might believe Keating believed that dead artists possessed living ones, even if we didn’t believe ourselves that such things ever actually happened. On those grounds we might perhaps be willing even to excuse him for signing their names rather than his own while under the influence.

One way to test whether Keating believed his own story or not would be to ask whether his actual procedures in producing the paintings matched this stated belief? Perpetrators of art forgery very often go to great lengths to produce canvas, ground paint and so on, that exactly match the precise period of the painters they are trying to reproduce. If it could be shown in Keating’s case that he employed this kind of measures in producing his forged canvases, then of course, his claim of being simply possessed by the artists he was replicating would come under suspicion, due to his efforts to deceive those who might examine the painting closely. If, on the other hand, he simply took up the materials immediately at hand on his painting table and dashed off pictures in the precise manner and style of the painters that had allegedly taken hold of him, then, true or not, his excuse would at least be consistent with his claim about being possessed by the spirits of dead artists. And as it happens in Keating’s case, his excuse did turn out to be more or less consistent with the kind of process we might expect him to have adopted

11 History of the Church, 4:461.
12 Briggs, “Visit to Nauvoo,” 446.
under the alleged circumstances. Keating had already confessed when he gave this excuse, and surely knew that if scientific tests were done on his forgeries his materials would not have matched those used in the times of the artists he was imitating. In other words his excuse was well invented, if not to persuade people that the forgeries were real, at least to provide himself a justification that might keep him out of jail. But what of Joseph?

If the accounts of David Whitmer, Martin Harris, and Emma Smith accurately reflect what happened then we would expect to find evidence of that fact in both the products of the allegedly miraculous translation process and how Joseph Smith himself treated those products afterward. We must ask on the one hand whether what we see in the manuscripts is consistent with their having been produced by the sort of direct, divine oversight described in three accounts. And then on the other hand, whether Joseph treated the original inadvertent transcriptions as absolutely sacrosanct and authoritative in the production of the various editions of the Book of Mormon produced during his lifetime. In each case the answer is no. Neither the internal evidence of the original manuscripts themselves nor the way Joseph treated them afterward are consistent with the story.

The Manuscripts as Witnesses to the Translation Process

In the first place the original manuscripts, and indeed the original published Book of Mormon as well, represent an odd mix of English. On the one hand there appears to have been an attempt to make the English sound Bible-like by mimicking the familiar cadences of the King James Bible throughout. As Mark Twain famously pointed out, the author labored to give his words and phrases the quaint, old-fashioned sound and structure of our King James' translation of the Scriptures; and the result is a mongrel—half modern gibberish, and half ancient simplicity and gravity. The latter is awkward and constrained; the former natural, but grotesque by the contrast. Whenever he found his speech growing too modern—which was about every sentence or two—he ladled in a few such scriptural phrases as “exceeding sore,” “and it came to pass,” etc., and made things satisfactory again. “And it came to pass” was his pet. If he had left that out, his Bible would have been only a pamphlet.

Overuse of “And it came to pass” in both the Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price: Moses raises suspicion of Bible forgery.

Certainly Mark Twain was correct about the Book of Mormon’s overuse of “It came to pass.” The phrase does occur quite often in the King James Bible (453 times), but it occurs more than three times as often in the Book of Mormon (1447 times). The mere frequency of the phrase, in and of itself, raises suspicion concerning the authenticity of the text. Suspicion is increased when it is discovered that a similar thing occurs in Joseph’s other revelational projects.

The overuse of “it came to pass,” is very evident in the Pearl of Great Price: Moses, which represents the LDS Church’s canonized Old Testament selection of the so-called Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible (JST). In preparing the JST, Joseph used the King James Version (KJV) as his base text, this time in the form of a pulpit-style Bible published in 1828 by H. & E. Phinney, Cooperstown, New York, which he and Oliver Cowdery purchased from Palmyra printer and bookseller Egbert B. Grandin on October 8, 1829.

The eight chapters of the Book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price represent Joseph’s reworking of Genesis 1:1–6:13. Behind the use of the King James Bible’s phrase “And it came to pass,” is the familiar Hebrew form wayêhî. Most modern translations of the Bible simply
leave wayēhî untranslated because it is a redundancy, it merely moves the narrative forward, without substantially affecting the meaning.\textsuperscript{19} In the course of the King James version of the 50 chapters of the book of Genesis, “And it came to pass” occurs 63 times, a little more than once per chapter. In Genesis 1:1–6:3 in the King James, the passage covered by the Book of Moses, the phrases appears 3 times (Genesis 4:3, 4:8, 6:1).\textsuperscript{20}

In reworking those chapters in the Book of Moses, however, Joseph increased the number of occurrences of “And it came to pass,” from 3 times to 44 times, making Joseph’s restoration of the first 5 chapters of Genesis plus the first 13 verses of the 6th chapter contain more than two thirds the number of occurrences of “And it came to pass” as in the entire 50 chapters of KJV Genesis.

Given the great frequency of the phrase “And it came to pass” in both the Book of Mormon and in the Book of Moses, one has to at least consider the possibility that it derives from Joseph’s prophetic style, rather than from anything present in the texts Joseph claimed he was translating on the one hand and restoring on the other.

When Mark Twain noted the odd mix of what he described as “a mongrel—half modern gibbiness, and half ancient simplicity and gravity,” he was pointing out another issue that needs considering when trying to determine whether the Book of Mormon is another Bible or another Bible forgery.

If the story is true about Joseph seeing the translation of each word and phrase on the stone (or through the Urim and Thummim), then reciting it to his scribe, who in turn had to get it right before the stone would move on to the next word or phrase, then we have to come to terms with the idea that during the translation process, God for some reason elected to throw a little backwoods grammar, as for example, a little mismatching of singular and plural subjects with the appropriate singular and plural verbs, into the King James mix. This means we must accept the idea that when Joseph looked at the stone while translating 3 Nephi 17:6-7, what he saw written there in shining letters had Jesus telling the ancient Nephites: “Behold, my bowels is filled with compassion towards you . . . my bowels is filled with mercy.”

Further in view of the descriptions of the translation process the remark on the title page of the 1830 first edition of the Book of Mormon stating that “if there be fault, it be the mistake of men”—which is also present in the current edition—it can only refer to (1) errors made by the ancient authors of the Book of Mormon, in which case we would be dealing with an inerrant translation of a potentially errant text, or (2) typographical errors that occurred in the process of turning the contents of the divinely dictated manuscripts into a book. In the case of the bowels passage, the printed text of the original Book of Mormon does, in fact, reflect the reading of the Printer’s Manuscript, a copy of the original dictated manuscript produced by Oliver Cowdery.\textsuperscript{21}

If the story of the divine origin of the English translation of the Book of Mormon is true, we may well ask why God chose to employ the odd mix of only partially successful attempted Elizabethan English and crude American back-woods slang. From the perspective of a non-committed person trying to discern whether we are dealing with a Bible or Bible forgery, this mixed style, especially in light of the Book’s failure to sustain a truly plausible imitation of early 17th century English throughout the course of the narrative,\textsuperscript{22} naturally points toward considering the work a forgery produced by someone trying to make it sound like the King James Bible without having the linguistic capacity to actually pull it off. The point is illustrated well in a short story by the late Nobel Prize-winning author Isaac Bashevis Singer entitled “The Séance.” In the story the down-on-his-luck scholar Dr. Zorach Kalisher is befriended by a poorly educated psychic named Mrs. Lotte Kopitzky. When Mrs. Kopitzky goes into her trances she supposedly channels a spirit who lived in the 4th century A.D. named Bhaghavar Krishna:

Everything was exactly as it had been yesterday and the day before. Bhaghavar Krishna began to speak in English with his foreign voice that was half male and half female, duplicating Mrs. Kopitzky’s errors in pronunciation and grammar. Lotte Kopitzky came from a village in the Carpathian Mountains. Dr. Kalisher could never discover her nationality—Hungarian, Romanian, Galician? She knew no Polish or German, and little English; even her Yiddish had been corrupted through her long years in America. Actually she had been left

\textsuperscript{19} So for example, where the KJV reads at Genesis 6:1: “And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth,” the NRSV, NAB, NIV, ESV, HCSB, JB, NJB, pass over the wayēhî and start the passage with “When (man, men, mankind, human beings, people) began to multiply . . .” The NASB, as an example of one of the few Bibles English translations that does translate wayēhî here, reads “Now it came about, when men . . .”

\textsuperscript{20} All three passages translating wayēhî, but the first two inserting additional words between “and” and “it came to pass.”


\textsuperscript{22} Apart from those places where the Book of Mormon extensively copies directly from the King James text itself.
languageless and Bhaghavar Krishna spoke the various jargons. At first Dr. Kalisher had asked Bhaghavar Krishna the details of his earthly existence but had been told by Bhaghavar Krishna that he had forgotten everything in the heavenly mansions in which he dwelt. All he could recall was that he had lived in the suburbs of Madras. Bhaghavar Krishna did not even know that in that part of India Tamil was spoken. When Dr. Kalisher tried to converse with him about Sanskrit, the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, the Sakuntala, Bhaghavar Krishna replied that he was no longer interested in terrestrial literature. Bhaghavar Krishna knew nothing but a few theosophic and spiritualistic brochures and magazines which Mrs. Kopitzky subscribed to.23

To be sure we expect to encounter different styles in a work containing different authors representing a number of different genres. It is quite another matter when the whole of the work appears to be dominated by an overarching and clumsy attempt on the part of the author to make the work appear to be what it is not. When John Ballou Newbrough rolled out his massive Oahspe, a New Bible in the Words of Jehovih [sic] and his Angel Ambassadors in 1882,24 we can scarcely think the New York Times reporter who covered the event meant to endorse the work’s authenticity when (s)he remarked that “The style is in one place modern, and in another ancient, and the English of the King James version of the Christian Bible is mixed with the English of to-day’s.”25

And yet ingenuity driven by necessity seldom fails at inventing alternative explanations. LDS researcher Mark Thomas, for example, argued that the peculiarities of the language of the Book of Mormon resulted from its being high art, something on the level of William Blake or other great poets and authors. At the 2016 Sunstone Symposium he sought to demonstrate this dramatically by reading passages from the Book of Mormon in what he imagined the early 19th century accent of Joseph Smith must have sounded like.26 Thomas’s view rests on an aesthetic judgment that relatively few (including this author) would share.27 But does Thomas’s suggestion really succeed in providing a plausible way of explaining why God chose to translate the Book of Mormon using the strange mixture of rough hewn and faux elevated Englishes, or is there a simpler explanation?

The Evidence of Joseph’s Treatment of the Manuscripts

Even if we accept the story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon told by the witnesses despite its odd mix of Englishes, did Joseph himself act as though he believed the story? Did he treat the dictated transcriptions created in the course of the translation process as absolutely sacrosanct and authoritative when overseeing the production of the various editions of the Book of Mormon published during his lifetime? When the stone presented the words “Behold, my bowels is filled with compassion towards you . . . my bowels is filled with mercy,” when the stone would not move on to the next word or phrase until Joseph’s scribe had carefully copied those words down, bad grammar and all, just as they appeared on the stone, did Joseph, did anyone involved in the printing process, proceed to the next step as if that were what happened? The answer is, they did not. What they did do was treat the Book of Mormon manuscripts like pretty much anyone would have treated any other humanly produced manuscript. They cleaned it up, corrected spellings, fixed grammar, changed words, expressions, here and there, without any warrant in the manuscript and on their own volition, even sometimes where it affected the book’s basic doctrine. So, for example, the bowels phrase, which was faithfully reproduced from the Printer’s Manuscript in the original 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon, was corrected in the 1837 second edition to read instead: “Behold, my bowels are filled with compassion towards you . . . my bowels are filled with mercy.”28


25 “Dr. Newbrough’s ‘Oahspe.’ An ‘Inspired’ Volume Giving the History of 24,000 Years,” The New York Times (Oct. 21, 1882): 5. The article explains that the text was produced through automatic writing.


A large number of such corrections were entered into the Printer’s Manuscript in preparation for the second edition, many of them, including this one apparently, by Joseph himself. As LDS scholar Royal Skousen comments, “The text has undergone considerable editing in order to remove cases of subject-verb disagreement. This is especially the case in Joseph Smith’s editing of the 1837 edition.” In an earlier work assessing this situation, RLDS Church Historian Richard Howard counted 137 places where Joseph corrected the grammar by replacing “was” with “were,” “were” with “was,” “is” with “are,” “are” with “is.” Howard counted more than two thousand refinements that had been entered into the Printer’s Manuscript, mostly by Joseph Smith himself, more than a thousand of which ended up in the 1837 second edition of the Book of Mormon. Most, but not all, of Joseph’s corrections, as Skousen tells us, “are grammatical in nature,” a fact that caused Howard to remark: “The improvement of the text for the 1837 edition makes it clear that Joseph Smith’s grammatical abilities matured greatly from the year 1829.”

While only the Printer’s Manuscript of the Book of Mormon is extant for the bowels passage, we can be sure from other passages that the various changes Joseph made in the Printer’s Manuscript were not motivated by trying to bring it into more perfect agreement with the Original Manuscript.

This is so, as we said, even where important doctrinal issues were at stake. For example, as Joseph’s prophetic career progressed so did his doctrine of God. This can be seen clearly in the way Joseph tweaked language that equated Jesus and God the Father in the 1830 first edition of the Book of Mormon in order to distinguish between the two divine figures in the 1837 second edition. In what is now 1 Nephi 11:18, the 1830 Book of Mormon referred to Mary as “the mother of God” (p. 25). A few lines later (now 1 Nephi 11:21), Jesus was equated with the Father in the statement: “behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Eternal Father” (p. 25). In each case the 1830 Book of Mormon reproduced the wording that appeared in both the Original Manuscript and the Printer’s Manuscript, and in each case significant words were added to the 1837 second edition. “Mother of God” at 1 Nephi 11:18 became “mother of the Son of God,” (p. 27) and “even the Eternal Father” at 1 Nephi 11:21, to “even the Son of the Eternal Father!” (p. 28). In the former case, Joseph himself introduced “the son of” above the line. In the latter case the correction was introduced into the second edition without having been entered into the the Book of Mormon manuscripts beforehand.

Sometimes it’s not as immediately clear why Joseph departs from the Book of Mormon manuscripts when talking about Jesus and the Father. In the 1830 Book of Mormon at what is now 1 Nephi 12:18 we read of the “justice of the Eternal God, and Jesus Christ, which is the Lamb of God” (p. 28). This was the reading of both the Original Manuscript and the Printer’s Manuscript. But again Joseph takes the liberty to change it by entering

31 Ibid.
33 Howard, Restoration Scriptures, 27.
35 For the forms of 1 Nephi 11:18, 21, and 12:18 in the Original Manuscript see Skousen, Original Manuscript, 104.
36 For the forms of 1 Nephi 11:18, 21 and 12:18 in the Printer’s Manuscript see The Joseph Smith Papers: Printer’s Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, Alma 36–Moroni 10, 50-53: “Mother of God” (50-51) and “Lamb of God yea even the eternal God Father” (52-53).
37 Ibid., 50-51.
38 See Skousen, Original Manuscript, 111, and Joseph Smith Papers: Printer’s Manuscript 1, 56-57.
a correction into the Printer’s Manuscript in preparation for the 1837 printed edition. He marked out the words “Jesus Christ which” and replaced them with “Mosiah who,” indicating that the passage should now read: “justice of the Eternal God & Mosiah, who is the Lamb of God.” “Mosiah” is apparently a misspelling of Messiah, and in the 1837 second edition the passage reads: “the justice of the eternal God, and the Messiah, who is the Lamb of God” (p. 30). 39

So why the departure from the divinely dictated text in this case? Why the change? Perhaps the reason is that the name “Christ” wasn’t supposed to be revealed until later in the Book of Mormon narrative, as is suggested by 2 Nephi 10:3, where the Book of Mormon character Jacob says, “it must needs be expedient that Christ—for in the last night the angel spake unto me that this should be his name—should come.” The first time “Jesus Christ” was introduced into the narrative was in 2 Nephi 25:19: “the Messiah cometh in six hundred years from the time my father [Lehi] left Jerusalem; and according to the words of the prophets, and also of the angel of God, his name shall be called Jesus Christ.” In changing “Jesus Christ,” to “Mosiah” (“the Messiah”) at 1 Nephi 12:18 in the second edition, Joseph was apparently clearing up an anachronism in the text, 40 and in the process preferring to use a word other than the one he had supposedly read from the stone earlier. 41

Many similar examples of substantive changes in later editions of the Book of Mormon, years after the allegedly divinely guided dictation from the stone took place, are plentiful. The ones presented here were chosen because they come from points where the original dictated manuscript is still extant. It’s clear that at least by the time Joseph was preparing the second edition of the Book

39 Richard P. Howard credited “Mosiah,” here to a scribe who misheard Joseph’s dictated word “Messiah” (Howard, Restoration Scriptures, 45), but Royal Skousen and Scott Robin Jensen identify the word as being introduced by Joseph’s own hand (Joseph Smith Papers: Printer’s Manuscript 1, 57).

40 The change also causes one to wonder whether Joseph realized at that point that “Christ” simply translated the Greek translation of the Hebrew word “Messiah,” which already appears in the very first chapter of the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi 1:19). Against the idea that Joseph was simply taking Christ as Jesus’s last name is the appearance of the phrase “Jesus is the Christ,” in, e.g., 2 Nephi 26:12, Moroni 7:44.

41 I am indebted to Sandra Tanner for explaining this puzzling change, and for pointing me to her and Jerald’s discussion of it in their Covering up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City, UT: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1990), 64-65. An expanded edition of this work now appears as the second part of Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Joseph Smith’s Plagiarism of the Bible in the Book of Mormon (rev. ed.; Salt Lake City, UT: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 2010), 216-17.

of Mormon for the press he was clearly not treating the original dictated manuscripts of the Book of Mormon in such a way as to indicate that he himself believed the claim of his followers about the word for word dictation from the stone. Had he believed it, we’ve no cause to suppose he’d have taken the liberties he did with the text.

Anachronism as Key to Detection

In rectifying the anachronism of having Jesus Christ named by a Nephite in the story line of the Book of Mormon before that name had supposedly been initially revealed to the Nephites, if indeed that’s what he did, Joseph was tacitly recognizing an important reality, namely that the presence of anachronisms in a text is one of the first things one must look to when trying to discern whether a text or picture or similar production is a forgery or not. The Merriam Webster’s 3rd International Dictionary gives as part of its definition for the word anachronism “a chronological misplacing of persons, events, objects, or customs with regard to each other.”

In other words, an anachronism is something out of its proper place or time, and so in the case of detecting literary forgeries, a chronological synchronicity of two things that would have been unlikely or impossible. Something is there in the story that would not/could not have been there at the time the events being described in the story allegedly took place.

Francisco Candido Xavier, Two Thousand Years Ago

One very amusing example of the presence of anachronisms in a book pretending to give a first-hand account of a person living in first century Palestine is the channeled Two Thousand Years Ago, supposedly related to the Spiritist Francisco Candido Xavier back in 1939 by a spirit named Emmanuel, who, back in the first century, was a Roman Senator named Publius Lentulus. 42 On the whole Emmanuel gets the lay of the land as it would have been right, although he does occasionally get snagged on his geography, as, for example, when he describes traveling to Galilee from Jerusalem on the road through Samaria, but says it “often skirted the light, limpid waters

42 Conveniently, the same name as that given to the alleged author of a forged letter by a supposed contemporary of Jesus that shaped depictions of Jesus in the West. See Joseph Leo Koerner, The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 103-104. See the critical edition of the letter prepared by Ernst von Dobschütz, Christusbilder: Untersuchungen zur christlichen Legende (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs’sche Buchhandlung, 1899), 293-330, esp. 319.
of the Jordan River.” Yet like the Hollywood movies of the thirties, Emmanuel seems to have no sense of creating historically plausible dialogue. We can’t help but smile, for example, when we read of Publius stopping by Pontius Pilate’s “office,” or when we encounter a Roman slave giving deference to his mistress by calling her “ma’am”. The feel of the language is neither ancient nor modern. It is 1930s-ish. It’s anachronistic. And if we had occasion to want to take a cue from that fact we might even be able to rummage around popular sources available to the scribe/author Xavier in those days and see where he really got his information for writing the book. Still such verbal anachronisms as we find in Two Thousand Years Ago might be legitimately explained away as part of providing a fully “modern” translation. But there are anachronisms that cannot be explained away because their presence create alleged historical situations that could not have happened, that were, in fact, impossible.

The Donation of Constantine

One of the most famous of all religious forgeries was a medieval document known as the Donation of Constantine, which pretended to be a decree of the fourth century Emperor Constantine telling the story of how he had been healed of leprosy through the ministrations of Pope Sylvester and of how in gratitude he deeded the Pope and his successors his palace, Rome itself, and the Western Roman Empire. The document, purporting to date from the fourth century, seems to have actually emerged in the ninth. For centuries it served the Papacy essentially as a deed of ownership of Western Europe. Its character as a literary forgery was finally demonstrated in the fifteenth century by the Italian humanist scholar Lorenzo Valla in a work entitled De falso credita et ementita Constantini donatione declamatio (1440). Key to Valla’s demonstration were two undeniable anachronisms in the Donation’s text. The first was reference on the part of Constantine to “satraps” in his government. Valla pointed out that satraps did not exist as an office in the Roman government. The other was Constantine’s declaration in the text that the Pope of Rome should exercise dominion over the other chief seats of Christendom, including Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, and Jerusalem. At the time Constantine supposedly issued the decree, however, Constantinople had not been founded yet, much less arisen to an ecclesiastical status rivaling the other four major seats of Christendom. Later in the document Constantine actually reports his intention after gifting Rome to the Pope to depart and build a new capital for himself in Byzantium in the East. The capital he spoke of was not named in the document, but it was, of course, Constantinople, a city he had already named in the document as if it was already a prominent city.

Levi Dowling’s Aquarian Gospel

Over the centuries many books, like the Book of Mormon, have been put forward claiming to be other Bibles or Bible portions (e.g., alleged lost Gospels) that are clearly identifiable as forgeries due to the presence of anachronisms. A very clear example is the Aquarian Gospel of Jesus Christ by one Levi H. Dowling of Bellville, Ohio (1844-1911). Dowling claimed to have, as it were, downloaded the text of the Aquarian Gospel psychically from the mystical source known as the Akashic Records, something akin to the storehouse of all human consciousness. The document, however, is bristling with anachronisms, proving if nothing else, that the Akashic Records are no credible source of Gospel history. During the course of telling the story of Jesus’s travels, Levi has him visit Persepolis in Persia (AG 38:6), Abraham’s city, Ur of the Chaldees (AG 42:7), and the Dalai-Lama’s city of Lhasa in Tibet (AG 37). However, the sites of both Persepolis and Ur had long been destroyed and/or abandoned centuries before Jesus (both c. 4th cent. BC) and Lhasa wasn’t to be built until centuries after Jesus (7th cent. AD). Levi also has Jesus encounter a Hindu healer who draws a comparison between the human body and a harpsichord, a musical instrument that did not exist until centuries after Jesus (AG 53:5).

43 Francisco Candido Xavier, Two Thousand Years Ago: Historic Episodes of Christianity in the First Century: A Novel Dictated by the Spirit Emmanuel (trans. Amy Duncan, Darrel W. Kimble, and Ily Reis; Brasilia, DF [Brazil]: International Spiritist Council, 2011 [orig. ed. 1939]), 72. Despite the description of the book as a “novel” in the title, that is not the way the material is represented in the introductory material nor in the text itself.

44 Ibid., 71.
45 Ibid., 77.

Mentoring Former Mormons

Pastor Ross Anderson, former LDS, shares his insights on life after Mormonism.

www.youtube.com/channel/UCMYevugwlyzK7KjrzKzyKfzw

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The Archko Volume

Quite often in such cases the anachronisms point not only to the fact that a forgery was committed but also when it was committed. We may think, for example, of the 19th century Presbyterian W. D. Mahan, who produced the work that now travels under the title The Archko Volume, which, he claimed, represented records from the Jewish and Roman courts relating to the trials of Jesus. Mahan claimed he’d discovered the material in the library of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople (Istanbul). But he really plagiarized at least some of it out of Lew Wallace’s novel Ben Hur, causing the original publishing date of Ben Hur to represent the real terminus a quo, that is to say, the time before which Mahan’s book could not have been written. In an ironic twist of poetic justice, the unfortunate Mahan did not realize that the very man whose novel he had plagiarized was then living in Constantinople serving as American minister to Turkey and who, seeing how his novel was being plagiarized, took the trouble to make a personal visit to Hagia Sophia accompanied by another person who afterward provided a letter declaring that “No book answering to the description given by Mr. Mahan was found . . . Zia Bey, the librarian, assured General Wallace that he had been in charge of the library for thirty years, and it contained no such manuscripts as Mr. Mahan professed to have seen.” This was in 1885, within two years of Mahan’s supposed visit to Constantinople. In consequence Mahan was disciplined by his denomination, and, as so often happens, his bogus volume has been selling pretty well ever since.

The Gospel of Barnabas

To provide yet another example, Muslim apologists often appeal to a work called the Gospel of Barnabas, which pretends to have been written by the famous first century missionary associate of St. Paul’s (see Acts 4:36), who is erroneously portrayed in the book as one of the twelve apostles, and which represents Muhammad as the true Messiah. The anachronisms contained in the book identify it rather as a late medieval Gospel forgery probably originally written in Italian.

One of the giveaways for dating the work was the Gospel of Barnabas’s descriptions of a seven-level hell based on the traditional list of the Christians’ Seven-Deadly Sins, a list that was first enumerated by Pope Gregory the Great (540-604) in his magisterial Morals in Job, which was completed in 596 AD or after. The reason the Gospel of Barnabas is generally understood to have been written in the 14th century rather than merely sometime after the 6th (i.e., after Gregory the Great’s time) is the fact that its seven-level hell (135) appears to be modeled after the seven-level island mountain of Purgatory in the Divine Comedy by Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), using the same standardized Western names of the true Messiah.

48 Mahan’s Bible forgery has, during its long history, traveled under various titles. The edition I am working with here has the lengthy title: Historical Records Concerning Jesus the “Christ” Messiah: Records Copied from the Official Manuscripts and Scrolls made by the Senatorial Courts of Tiberius Caesar, and by the Sanhedrim,—in the days of Jesus, entitled “Christ,” found in the Libraries at Rome and Constantinople (comp. by Rev. W. D. Mahan between the Years 1858-1883; trans. by Drs. McIntosh and Twynans of the Antiquarian Lodge, Genoa, Italy; Monrovia, CA: Author E. Overbary, 1942), 34.

49 Reproduced in Edgar J. Goodspeed’s, Famous Biblical Hoaxes, or, Modern Apocrypha (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker 1956 [1931]), 39.
50 For the whole story see Goodspeed’s chapter “The Report of Pilate,” in Famous Biblical Hoaxes, 28-44.
51 E.g., Muhammad ‘Ata ur-Rahim and Ahmad Thomson, Jesus: Prophet of Islam (rev. ed.; New York: Tahrirke Tarsile Qur’an, 2003), 105. To his credit, one Muslim apologist, Jerald F. Dirks, cautions his compatriots that “intellectual honesty compels the admission that the Gospel of Barnabas, as currently received, cannot be traced in unbroken provenance prior to around the start of the 18th century” (The Cross and the Crescent [Beltsville, MD: Amana, 2001], 83).
for all the sins as Dante. The author of the Gospel of Barnabas is even suspected of echoing Dante’s language at times, most strikingly in its repetition of the line dei falsi e bugiardi, “false and lying Gods” (Inferno 1:72 = Gospel of Barnabas 23, 78, 217). But the forger provided a more decisive anachronistic clue that enables us to date the work even more precisely to between the years 1300 and 1329. We see this in the author’s reference to “the year of jubilee, which now comes every hundred years” (sec. 82). The hundred year Jubilee was first instituted by Pope Boniface VIII in 1300. How could the author, writing not too long after that, have known that the practice would be abandoned in favor of fifty year Jubilees by 1350?

James Strang’s The Book of the Law of the Lord

Another Bible forgery, closely related to Mormon origins, is James Strang’s Book of the Law of the Lord. When Joseph Smith died Strang was one of the men who put himself forward as his chosen successor. All the surviving original witnesses who had signed the

“testimonies” in the Book of Mormon (except Oliver Cowdery) followed Strang. In the fulness of time Strang produced his own miraculous translation of his own ostensibly newly discovered ancient plates, which was also accompanied by a testimony signed by several witnesses addressed, like the Book of Mormon, with the nearly identical phrase “Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, to whom this Book of the Law of the Lord shall come.” The book (except for a small portion of it) presented itself as having been given to Moses by God, but “kept in the ark of the covenant, and . . . held too sacred to go into the hands of strangers.”

Again, however, the presence of anachronisms in the text prove that was not its origin.

One very prominent anachronism is the frequent use of the word synagogue, an institution that first came into existence long after Moses. The generally accepted theory of its origin is that it arose during the exile to Babylon, which began in 586 BC, or shortly after as a compensatory response to the destruction of Solomon’s temple. But actual evidence for its existence even that early is entirely lacking. It was, in fact, only on the eve of the New Testament period that the synagogue began to come into its own as an established institution within Judaism. Even the word itself is Greek not Hebrew, related to the word synagō (“gather together”). Strang treats what goes on in synagogues throughout as basically the same as temples, which was never the case. Furthermore, the same misunderstanding of what synagogues were all about appears both in those sections of the Book of the Law of the Lord supposedly translated from the ancient plates, and those supposedly given to Strang by direct revelation from the Lord.

At many points Strang begins his various sections with a phrase or passage from the King James Bible and then proceeds to freely expand on it. The anachronistic character of these is most obvious where he is quoting books from the King James New Testament, books which

54 Even those who have not read Dante may well remember Domenico di Michelino’s small but famous image of the island of Mount Purgatory rising up behind the full-figure standing portrait of the great 13th/14th century poet on the North Wall was of Florence’s Duomo. Here are the Italian words used in the Gospel of Barnabas followed by their standard Latin counterparts. From lowest to highest level: (1.) The proud (superbo / L. Superbia), (2.) The envious (inuidiosso / L. Invidia), (3.) The covetous (hauaro / L. Avaritia), (4.) The lustful (lusuriosso / L. Luxuria = Lust), (5.) The slothful (accidiosso / L. Acedia), (6.) The glutinous (gollosso / L. Gula), and (7.) the wrathful (irachondo / L. ira).


56 The Book of the Law of the Lord: Consisting of an Inspired Translation of Some of the Most Important Parts of the Law given to Moses, and a very few Additional Commandments, with Brief Notes and References (St. James, A. R. I: At the Royal Press, n.d.), 7.


59 Compare what appeared on the ancient plates (15.1; 19.1; 26.2; 27. 1, 2 [2 times], 3 [2 times], 4 [2 times]; 32.1, 2, 5; 33.2) to those that came to Strang by way of direct revelation (35.11; 40.2, 4, 15).
did not exist until more than a thousand years after the time of Moses. So, for example, Strang takes the phrase that appears in the King James version of the Gospel of John 3:5—“Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God”—and uses it as the basis for the opening lines of sections on Baptism and Confirmation in The Book of the Law of the Lord (BLL):

**BLL 11.1:** “Except a man be born of the water, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.”

**BLL 13.1:** “Except a man be born of the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.”

Never mind that attributing the institution of Baptism and Confirmation to Moses was also anachronistic! Another clear example of anachronistic quotation, this time following Revelation 7:14, is found in Strang’s section, “Healing”:

**Rev 7:14:** “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” (Rev. 7:14)

**BLL 16.2:** thou shalt come to the assembly of those who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

In connection with the dating of the previously examined Gospel of Barnabas, Oddbjørn Leirvik, has written: “If historical research is to have any value at all, it must be possible to conclude that a certain manuscript is not of ancient, but—in this case—of late medieval or early modern origin.”60 The same standard, of course, must also apply in the case of the literary products of the prophetic ministry of Joseph Smith. Our main focus here is trying to decide whether the Book of Mormon is another Bible or another Bible forgery. It is a question, however, that cannot be fully pursued unless we are willing to look at evidence pertinent to the question provided by his other prophetic productions. If an artist, for example, is once caught creating and passing off a demonstrable fake, it cannot help but cast a shadow on the authenticity of all his work produced both before and after. And nowhere, in my view at least, does Joseph more conspicuously show his hand in this regard, than in the example we shall discuss next.


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**Book of Abraham 4**

The prophetic production of Joseph Smith that most readily invites being considered a literary forgery, or in our case a Bible (portion) forgery, is the inadequately scrutinized fourth chapter of the Book of Abraham, now canonized as part of Mormon Scripture in the *Pearl of Great Price*. The clear signs of literary forgery there have been largely overlooked due, no doubt, to the many more pressing issues relating to the authenticity of the Book of Abraham, including such conspicuous problems as the historically implausible setting of the narrative as a whole, which represents Abraham’s city of Ur, usually understood as being located in southern Mesopotamia (modern southern Iraq) as practicing Egyptian religion under the dominion of the Egyptian Pharaoh. As Christopher Woods of the University of Chicago’s Oriental Institute, Department of Near Eastern Studies writes:

If we are correct in identifying Abraham’s Ur with Babylonian Ur, this poses grave difficulties for the account given in the Book of Abraham, as there is no evidence whatsoever for the cults of the purported Egyptian gods described in the narrative or for established Egyptian religious practices more generally in the city. Of this we can be sure based on the thousands of cuneiform records that concern Ur and excavations of the city conducted by Sir Leonard Woolley between 1922-34, and, moreover, on everything we know of the history, culture, and religions of the ancient Near East.61

[This problem sent LDS Church scholars scrambling in search of another Ur further to the North which might fit the story better, yet all probably in vain since, as Woods goes on to explain, “there is no evidence for the regular worship of Egyptian gods in Haran or, for that matter, at any other location in northern Mesopotamia.”62]

Also more pressing in discussions of the Book of Abraham is the fact that Joseph clearly but falsely presented the work as, to quote the 1851 first edition of the *Pearl of Great Price*:

A TRANSLATION OF SOME ANCIENT RECORDS, THAT HAVE FALLEN INTO OUR HANDS FROM THE CATECOMBS OF EGYPT, PURPORTING TO BE THE WRITINGS OF ABRAHAM WHILE HE WAS IN EGYPT, CALLED THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM, WRITTEN BY HIS OWN HAND, UPON PAPYRUS.


62 Ibid., 74.
This same heading accompanied the first installment of the Book of Abraham in the March 1, 1842, issue of the early Mormon periodical *Times and Seasons* (3:704), and it is still used today in the LDS Church published *Pearl of Great Price*. In Book of Abraham 1:12 Joseph even has Abraham referring his reader back to Facsimile 1 at the beginning of the book, implying that Abraham himself had included the picture to illustrate what happened to him in the story. Yet, as people have been pointing out for a very long time, and the LDS Church has only recently admitted, the real contents of the papyri Joseph obtained in 1835 from antiquities dealer Michael Chandler and put forward as the basis for his translation of the Book of Abraham, had nothing whatever to do with the story told in the Book of Abraham. To quote the recent Gospel Topic essay on the official LDS Church website:

None of the characters on the papyrus fragments mentioned Abraham’s name or any of the events recorded in the book of Abraham. Mormon and non-Mormon Egyptologists agree that the characters on the fragments do not match the translation given in the book of Abraham . . . Scholars have identified the papyrus fragments as parts of standard funerary texts that were deposited with mummified bodies. These fragments date to between the third century B.C.E. and the first century C.E., long after Abraham lived.63

So, too, in Book of Abraham 4 there is no connection between that chapter and the papyri Joseph purchased from Michael Chandler. But there is a conspicuous connection with that portion of the Book of Abraham and two other known documents. What we have there, in fact, is the King James Bible’s version of the first chapter of Genesis modified in light of Joshua Seixas’s *Manual Hebrew Grammar for the Use of Beginners* (1834). What the chapter purports to be is a vision of the creation received by the patriarch Abraham. The portion that became chapter 4 was first published in the March 15, 1842, issue of *Times and Seasons* (pp. 720-22). We first begin to suspect literary forgery from the conspicuous fact that much of the KJV creation story is carried over unchanged into the Abraham creation story. So, for example, 647 of the 864 words in KJV Genesis 1:1–2:3 are retained in the Abraham account, with almost all of the original KJV word order retained as well. In addition to the 647 words retained, many other KJV words have simply had their tenses or persons adjusted into the plural in order to make them conform to Joseph’s new doctrine of creation by a plurality of Gods, which, as we shall see in a moment, is one of the principal concepts governing his reworking of the chapter.

But it is not the mere fact that KJV singular verbs have been retained in plural form that is alone significant as proof that Abraham is dependent on the KJV. Also very important are places where in copying the story out of the KJV Joseph Smith or one of his scribes accidentally forgot to change the tense or person from the singular to the plural when he should have. This occurs twice in the section as it originally appeared in the *Times and Seasons*, once in connection with the plurality of gods idea and once in relation to a simple tense change.

KJV Genesis 1:16 reads: “And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.” The parallel verse in the original *Times and Seasons* passage (cf. Abraham 4:16) reads: “And the Gods organized the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; with the lesser light he set the stars, also.” The KJV he should have been changed in Abraham to they. That this was an error is shown by the fact that it had already been corrected to read “they set the stars also” in the 1851 first edition of the *Pearl of Great Price* (p. 26).

The second example is KJV Genesis 1:20, which contains God’s command that the waters “bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life.” The parallel passage in Abraham (4:20) reads instead: “moving creatures that hath life.” Since Abraham replaced the KJV’s singular creature with the plural creatures it should also have replaced the third person singular form hath with the third person plural form have. Perhaps Smith was not familiar enough with older English usage to have noticed that in retaining hath he was making the same mistake a modern person would if he said: “the moving creatures that has life.” But again we find the error was later set right in the first edition of the *Pearl of Great Price*.

Most of the places where Joseph departs from the King James text are easily accounted for by his reliance on Seixas’s *Manual Hebrew Grammar*, which he used while studying a little Hebrew with Seixas himself during the winter of 1835-1836. Perhaps one of the reasons Joseph

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But Joseph was jumping the gun there, and his claim that the “learned Jew . . . acknowledged I was right” was probably wishful thinking, since he wasn’t correct.68 But whether Joseph knew Hebrew or not is not our concern here, only whether he was creating a literary forgery in which he represented the products of his efforts as one thing (a translation of some of Abraham’s ancient writings, “written by his own hand, upon papyrus”)69, when really it was something else (a reworking of the first chapter of the King James Bible by an overconfident beginning student of Biblical Hebrew).

The fact that Joseph apparently felt no qualms about incorporating a whole chapter of the King James Bible (which he modified here and there) into what he presented to his followers and the world as a translation of ancient Egyptian Papyri, must be kept in view when considering the significance of his dropping large chunks of the King James Version of Isaiah70 and Matthew71 into what was supposed to be a translation of ancient Nephite plates written in Reformed Egyptian.

## Changing the Revelations

And this brings us again to a crucial question associated with the detection of a forgery: Were the actions of the suspected forger consistent with the claims he made about the suspected forgery? To this point we have seen very little evidence of Joseph’s acting in a way that was consistent with the claims he and others close to him put forward about his various prophetic projects. But the inconsistency grows as we consider further statements by Joseph concerning what he claimed he was doing. It is by now common knowledge that the revelations printed in the 1833 Book of Commandments were freely expanded and modified in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants without any basis in the supporting manuscript material. David Whitmer came to consider this issue as proof that Joseph Smith, whom he believed really had been acting as God’s prophet when he produced the Book of Mormon, later fell away. A key piece of evidence for this in Whitmer’s mind was a revelation dated March 1829 (now D&C 5).

As it was recorded in the 1833 Book of Commandments.

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65 Ibid., p. 78. These are the only definitions given for the two words in the word list.
66 Ibid., p. 12.
69 Times and Seasons (March 1, 1842): 702.
71 The Sermon on the Mount: 3 Nephi 12-14 = Matthew 5-7.
(the precursor to the *Doctrine and Covenants*), God made it clear to Joseph Smith that his prophetic calling was to end once the Book of Mormon was finished: “he [Joseph] has a gift to translate the book, and I have commanded him that he shall pretend to no other gift, for I will grant him no other gift” (*Book of Commandments* 4:2 [p. 10]). Sometime after, however, Joseph appears to have come to feel that God’s language here was a little too restrictive, and so he created a little wiggle room for himself by doctoring the passage, pretending that what God had actually commanded was to “pretend to no other gift until my purpose is fulfilled in this; for I will grant unto you no other gift until it is finished” (*D&C* 32:1 [1835] = current LDS *D&C* 5:4). Whitmer came to claim that God told him to separate from Joseph and the Latter-day Saints and he linked the veracity of his original testimony of the Book of Mormon to the veracity of God’s later command to separate from Joseph and the Latter-day Saints:

If you believe my testimony to the Book of Mormon, if you believe that God spake to us three witnesses by his own voice, then I tell you that in June, 1838, God spake to me again by his own voice from the heavens, and told me to “separate myself from among the Latter Day Saints, for as they sought to do unto me, should it be done unto them.” In the spring of 1838, the heads of the church and many of the members had gone deep into error and blindness. I had been striving with them for a long time to show them the errors into which they were drifting, and for my labors I received only persecutions.

A common attempt to minimize the significance of the changes in the revelations has been that “God had the same right to authorize his appointed Seer to add to or diminish any of the revelations certain words and facts, that he has to give him any revelations at all.” It was a nice thought. But it was not one that Joseph himself endorsed. Or so we gather from a response from him to a request made by Oliver Cowdery to modify *D&C* 20:37, in order that, Cowdery said, “no priestcraft be amongst us.” Joseph reports the request causing “both sorrow and uneasiness,” and his immediately writing back and asking “by what authority he took upon him to command me to alter, or erase, to add or diminish to or from a revelation or commandment from Almighty God.” And yet he evidenced no such reservations when it came to his own extensive modifications of the text. Joseph said he believed the revelations couldn’t be tampered with because they came from God. His actions, however, were not consistent with such a belief. He can be shown to have freely tampered with them.

**Mark Hofmann’s Anthon Transcript and the Kinderhook Plates**

When, in the Spring of 1980, Mark Hofmann made public his forgery of the transcription of characters Joseph Smith had supposedly copied from the Gold Plates and sent along with Martin Harris to Professor Charles Anthon in New York City to see if he could decipher them, it became the occasion of testing not only for Hofmann’s character and credibility, but for other people’s as well. Hugh Nibley, one of the most vigorous and learned Mormon apologists at the time, had gotten his first look at the document on Friday, April 25, 1980, and was ready to declare it authentic to the author of an article published in a Provo, Utah, paper before the following Thursday (May 1). “Nobody could have faked those characters,” Nibley told the reporter. “It would take 10 minutes to see that this is fake.” Not only was it authentic, it was translatable, Nibley said, claiming that he had already “counted at least two dozen out of 47 characters of the Demotic alphabet that could be given a phonetic value, and that the document was meant to be read “from right to left.”

Contrast this with Klaus Baer of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago: “What is it?” wrote Baer on May 10, “Probably not Egyptian, even if here and there signs appear that could be interpreted as more or less awkwardly copied hieroglyphs of hieratic signs . . . I suspect one could have the same batting average in

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72 A Book of Commandments, For the Government of the Church of Christ, Organized according to Law; on the 6th of April, 1830 (Zion, W. W. Phelps, 1833), 10.

73 That the added words were not part of the original revelation can now be seen in *The Joseph Smith Papers: Documents, Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831* (eds. Michael Hubbard MacKay, et al.; The Church Historian’s Press, 2013), [20], where an image of the original revelation, identified as being in the hand of Oliver Cowdery, is presented. The original reading was “he hath A gift to translate the Book & I have commanded him that he should pretend to no other gift.” The same image is available online at josephsmithpapers.org.

74 David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, MO: David Whitmer, 1887), 27.


77 One can, of course, suggestively parse out the passage to make the matter appear less problematic by insisting that Joseph only meant to explode Oliver’s prophetic presumptions by saying something along the lines of “Silly Oliver! Aren’t you getting above your station? I’m the only one with the right to ‘alter, or erase, to add or diminish to or from a revelation or commandment from Almighty God.’”

78 *Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith—History 64-5.

comparing this with Chinese or Japanese.” The same as it turns out could be said when comparing the characters with the English alphabet.

Going even beyond Nibley, was Barry Fell, author of *America B.C.: Ancient Settlers in the New World* (1976). In a letter dated May 5, 1980, Fell declared the document “immediately decipherable and comprehensible.” It employed, Fell said, “four ancient North African alphabets,” all of which apparently Fell was able to read. Most exciting, though, was Fell’s description of what the document actually said: “The text states,” wrote Fell, “that it is the witness of Nefi, who says he is the son born to sagacious parents. Zedekiya of Judah, was reigning over the people. The account is written as a record of piety, and in secret code on account of the persecutions[.]” N[efi], goes on to report that a shining light of fire appeared to his father, whose name was Lehiya.

After gazing steadfastly at it, he went by foot to Salem the Holy city and . . . end of page.” Fell even went so far as to offer to provide *BYU Studies* with a complete translation of the document.

Scarcely anyone would dispute that the claims Nibley and Fell made before it was known that Hofmann’s Anthon transcript was a forgery, represented a rather serious blow to their more general scholarly credibility. Yet, a very similar testing happened to Joseph Smith in May of 1843 when he was presented with six bell-shaped metal plates covered with what appeared to be ancient characters. They had supposedly been dug out of an ancient mound near Kinderhook, Illinois, but had actually been forged by the men who presented them to him. And sadly, Joseph responded in the same way as Hugh Nibley and Barry Fell did. In a May 2, 1843, letter, Charlotte Haven tells how Joshua Moore told her he’d shown the plates to Joseph Smith, who’d told him that “the figures or writing on them was similar to that in which the Book of Mormon was written, and if Mr. Moore could leave them, he thought that by the help of revelation he would be able to translate them. So a sequel

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80 Klaus Bear to Dr. Fitzgerald (May 10, 1980), 1-2.
81 See “Reformed Egyptian or Deformed English?” *Salt Lake City Messenger* (July 1980): 4.
83 Barry Fell to Herm Olson (May 5, 1980).
to that holy book may soon be expected.”85 Already the day before (May 1) Joseph’s secretary William Clayton recorded that “President Joseph has translated a portion [of the plates] and says they contain the history of the person with whom they were found and he was a descendant of Ham through the loins of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and that he received the kingdom from the ruler of heaven and earth.”86 The LDS Church would finally admit the Kinderhook plates were a forgery in 1981.86

The Book of Abraham 4, the changing of the revelations, the Kinderhook Plates incident, all cast a shadow of doubt over the credibility of Joseph Smith as an authentic restorer and recoverer of ancient texts, as a producer, that is, of another Bible. So how do things look when we turn to examine more closely the text of the Book of Mormon itself? We begin by discussing the large scale anachronistic dependence of the Book of Mormon on the King James Version of the Bible, which was first published in 1611.

The Book of Mormon's Direct Reliance on the King James Bible

Historically Mormons haven’t been particularly troubled by the idea of large chunks being taken over from the King James Bible’s books of Isaiah and Matthew and plunked into the Book of Mormon. It seemed easy enough to just assume that when Joseph came upon parallel texts in the Book of Mormon, he translated them as they appeared in the King James, since that was the English version of the Bible everyone was familiar with, especially where such suppositions were supported by reassurances of the sort Hugh Nibley gave when he wrote that “the Book of Mormon follows the language of the King James Bible only as far as the latter conveys the correct meaning of the original.”87 In reality Stan Larson’s claim is closer to the truth when, after examining the textual history of Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount, he concluded that “the Book of Mormon blindly follows the KJV at the precise point where the KJV falls into error due to mistranslating the Greek or translating late and derivative Greek texts which are demonstrably secondary developments in the textual tradition.”88 But for most Mormons the kinds of issues he raises might be a bit too arcane to grasp. One issue that does occasionally arise is the recognition that the standard explanation, which has Joseph, for example, coming to the Sermon on the Mount in the Gold Plates and turning to his King James Bible to copy out that part, doesn’t match early descriptions of the original Book of Mormon translation process. Roger Terry recently included as part of the “Book of Mormon Translation Puzzle,” the fact that “whole chapters of text repeated almost verbatim from the King James Version of the Bible, despite the fact that witnesses, including Emma, insisted that Joseph never referred to outside sources.”89

85 An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton (ed. George C. Smith; Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, with Smith Research Associates, 1995), 100. The Manuscript History of the Church, based on Clayton’s diary, recast this statement into the first person so as to read: “I have translated a portion of them, and find they contain the history of the person with whom they were found. He was a descendant of Ham, through the loins of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, and that he received his kingdom from the ruler of Heaven and Earth” (May 1, 1843), 1542. (See History of the Church 5:372). For a further early account see Parley P. Pratt to John Van Cott (May 7, 1843), (LDS Church Archives MS. 5238).
And indeed Joseph Smith’s wife, Emma, when she was interviewed by her son, Joseph Smith III, in 1879, did very definitively reject the idea that Joseph employed any book or manuscript during the translation process:

Q. Had he not a book or manuscript from which he read, or dictated to you?
A. He had neither manuscript nor book to read from.

Q. Could he not have had, and you not know it?
A. If he had had anything of the kind he could not have concealed it from me. . . .

Q. Could not father have dictated the Book of Mormon to you, Oliver Cowdery and the others who wrote for him, after having first written it, or having read it out of some book?
A. Joseph Smith [and for the first time she used his name direct, having usually used the words, “your father,” or “my husband”) could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter, let alone dictating a book like the Book of Mormon.90

In fact, we know now that Emma’s claim that Joseph could not have read from a manuscript or book because he “could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter,” was, like certain other things Emma said in that interview, quite untrue. Already back in 1948, for example, Dale Morgan countered the claim in a letter he wrote to Francis W. Kirkham in response to the latter’s reproducing the above quotation in the second edition of the first volume of his A New Witness in America to the Book of Mormon (1947). In the letter Morgan suggested Kirkham “should submit Emma Smith’s statements about Joseph’s illiteracy to the actual test of his writing,” because, in Morgan’s view, letters then available at the Chicago Historical Society and the Reorganized Church Libraries dating to 1832 “evidence a flair for words and a measure of eloquence.”91 In the context Morgan was commenting upon, Kirkham had made mention of a personal diary in Joseph’s own hand that would verify what Emma had said. Morgan, who had not seen the diary, suggested to the contrary “that it too would invalidate Emma’s memory.” At the time the LDS Church was suppressing more than one personal diary of Joseph Smith’s as well as an important 1832 account of the First Vision, again in his own hand. Kirkham was referring to the 1832-1834 diary, which Joseph had purchased on November 27, 1832, and amounts, in the portions written by Joseph himself, to the recording of brief notations of daily happenings.92 What we do see there, however, is that, contrary to what Kirkham said, Joseph was able to write quite well enough to keep up a daybook. But much more important toward proving Morgan’s point, was another document, written earlier in 1832, that neither Morgan nor Kirkham probably ever saw: the earliest extant account of the First Vision, again written by Joseph in his own hand. In it we indeed see in evidence the “flair for words” and “measure of eloquence” Morgan spoke of:

I looked upon the Sun the glorious luminary of the earth and also the moon rolling in their majesty through the heavens and also the stars shining in their courses and the earth also upon which I stood and the beast of the field and the fowls of heaven and the fish of the waters and also man walking forth upon the face of the earth in majesty and in the strength of beauty whose power and intelligence in governing the things which are so exceeding great and marvelous even in the likeness of him who created them and when I considered upon these things my heart exclaimed well hath the wise man said the it is a fool that saith in his heart there is no God my heart exclaimed all all these bear testimony and bespeak an omnipotent and omnipresent power a being who maketh Laws and decreeth and bindeth all things in their bounds who filleth Eternity who was and is and will be from all Eternity to Eternity.93

91 Dale Morgan on Early Mormonism: Correspondence & A New History (ed. with biographical intro., John Phillip Walker; pref., William Mulder; Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1986), 186. The letter’s date was January 3, 1948.
93 History 1832, Joseph Smith Letterbook 1, 1-2.
Although admittedly this document makes it clear that Joseph was not the best speller, it does show that he definitely had a rhetorical flare of the sort Morgan had detected elsewhere. Also, his penmanship is quite competent and good as well.94

Joseph himself tells us in this same document that even though his education was limited, he had been “instructed in reading and writing and the ground rules of Arithmatic.”95 And then finally, another proof of Joseph’s literacy is seen at one point in the Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon itself (Alma 45:22) there is a sample of Joseph’s own handwriting that runs 28 words. According to Royal Skousen, “These twenty-eight words in Joseph Smith’s hand are written very carefully. And except for one spelling variant (citty), all the extant words are spelled according to standard orthography.”96

The reason Emma had stressed Joseph’s alleged illiteracy was in support of the idea that he could not have read from another book or manuscript during dictation. But the undeniable evidence of many chapters copied verbatim from the King James into the Book of Mormon text suggest otherwise, unless we wished to posit Joseph’s having a photographic memory.

Still it’s not only the large chunks of King James text but the ubiquitous presence of shorter quotations and allusion to the King James text that even more firmly counters Emma’s claims. It is to these that we shall turn in part 2 of this article.

94 Jessee, Personal Writings, provides photographs from the pages of both the 1832-1834 diary (39-57) and of the 1832 First Vision account (9-14). Jessee provides photographs of pages from this journal on 39-57. Much better photographs can now be viewed at the Joseph Smith Papers website, the former, http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1832–1834/1, and the latter at http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-circa-summer-1832.

95 History 1832, Joseph Smith Letterbook 1, 1.


Excerpts From Letters and Emails

May 2016: Blessings! Just writing to say I just handed an LDS friend your newsletter (Heavenly Mother). He said he would read it! Praying God will open his eyes.

May 2016: Sandra Tanner is a hateful lady. Freedom of speech or rumors . . . Why the hate towards the Mormons? What a sad why to live. Hurting others. We don’t hate Christians . . .

May 2016: Your Issue 126 [Is There a Mother God?] is outstanding. Well organized and expertly researched and referenced.

May 2016: I wanted to say thank you for the free Newsletters and free stuff you sent out to me. I just left the Lds church 6 weeks ago. Thank you for your kindness. Your ministry is a blessing.

May 2016: Hi again, . . . [in Doctrines of Salvation by Joseph Fielding Smith] CH-12 page 182. 1954 Spanish. It says on the head of the paragraph that there is no salvation if we don’t accept Joseph Smith. It also says that no one can reject his testimony without carrying terrible consequences. My family is all Mormon. I am the only one that the Lord has helped to see the light so far. I was just talking to my sister who is very active in the church. I was showing her a copy of D&C changed that I got from your source. She is still firm in her faith. I told her my faith is in The Lord and nothing else. The bible is the word of God and period. I am so thankful for all the work you do to bring the truth out. My wife is active Mormon too. I don’t have any confrontations with her right now because she is in France. I don’t know how we are going to handle having different beliefs when she comes back. Well, thanks again for helping many Mormons see behind the curtain. I can’t believe Sandra Tanner wrote to me. God Bless you.

June 2016: As I referenced a page on the utlm website today, I found myself needing to give thanks to you and Gerald for your work. Until now, you haven’t known me, and I only know you through this work — The Changing World of Mormonism, the utlm website and several youtube videos.

Thanks for your persistence in getting information out of the LDS Church, and publishing what they were unwilling to share with their adherents. I was one of them for 41 years, and have now resigned. It is difficult to remove oneself from such an organization — thank you for helping me see elements of the truth that were hidden,
and escape from a life dedicated to an organization that requires so much, but provides only a narrow, misleading interpretation of the truth.

**June 2016:** Call to Repentance.

From what I’ve read on the website, I gather y’all were once LDS. Why y’all left, idk. (If it’s explained on the site, perhaps I should have looked for it, to get a better understanding of y’all. & if its not, perhaps you’ll explain such).

& now, you’ve made it your life’s work to destroy the faith of others. You claim to be providing “truth”, but what you’re actually doing, is playing “wolf in sheep’s clothing”, providing either irrelevant material (irrelevant of salvation, & being a deciple of Christ) or, half-truths meant to mislead/cause doubt.

I feel bad for my lost brothers & sisters. However, I feel more sad for the state of your souls at Judgment Day, when y’all are called upon to take responsibility for the waywardness you’ve caused. & I sincerely hope y’all turn back from this destructive path, & seek to make restitution for the dmg’s you’ve caused, b4 the day of Reckoning is here.

PS: I like how y’all show comments from both friend/foe, but I think it’d be more helpful, if ya showed the sender’s name (unless asked for anonymity). Esp in case of multiple parts. I also find it amusing, you deceptively state “we have the right to twist your words, by omitting parts of a msg” in the legality statement. [Sent by “saberthedragon” anonymously.]

**August 2016:** On July 25th, I was in town for a family member’s funeral and I stopped by Lighthouse Ministry and we chatted for 30 minutes or so. I want to thank you for taking the time to talk with me and for freely sharing your experience and conclusion regarding tough doctrinal issues as well as challenging LDS themes. I very much enjoyed the conversation and hope you and your ministry continue to thrive despite the incredible odds against you in the heart of Utah.

**August 2016:** I have been a Christ-follower (I like that term better than “Christian” these days) for over forty years now, since I entered His kingdom as a junior in high school in South Bend, Indiana.

I was a growing Christian (OK, I used it that time) at Purdue University in the ‘70s when I helped lead a friend named Jim to Christ (as far as I could tell, at least), and then he promptly fell under the influence of local LDS missionaries and was baptized into their heresy. He then started to bring missionaries to the dorm, and a couple of other brothers and I made sure we crashed the “party” whenever the “elders” showed up.

Although we didn’t know a lot about LDS at that time, we at least knew Jesus and the Bible enough to break up their presentation and turn things toward Jesus instead. Overall, hopefully, we helped several guys look at true Christianity as opposed to a counterfeit. My first exposure to countering LDS doctrine was the section in Walter Martin’s Kingdom of the Cults, but I didn’t really study much beyond that then.

I haven’t really been involved in ministry to cultists in recent years, but the dedication of the new Indianapolis LDS temple last summer helped get my juices flowing again. I made sure I toured it so I could know what a temple looks like on the inside and have the opportunity to share Christ with someone (a beautiful building, but oh, what a waste of money on a pack of lies!).

I started off by asking (innocently enough :-) ) why there was a gold angel with a trumpet on the roof instead of a cross, and that got a conversation started with a guy about my age and his adult son. By the time we were back at the parking lot after the tour, I had at least shared enough scripture that I could summarize it by saying, “So you worship a different God and a different Jesus, and you have a different gospel than the Bible.” Hopefully, I left them with something to think about.

Anyway, that has kind of gotten me to the point where I have been studying online resources to be more effective in sharing the Truth and confronting their lies. So we’ll see if God opens more doors to ministering to LDS folks here in the Indy area. I certainly pray for God’s intervention every time I pass the temple building itself.

All that to say, thank you so much again for your walk with Christ and your ministry!

**August 2016:** I need to thank you for your’s and Jerald’s work.

I know you wouldn’t even remember my visit to your store, but it was a life changing day for me and I have been meaning to thank you for your love toward me and my daughter that day.

I am . . . a lifetime member of the LDS church even though I’ve never had a testimony or really believed it. I went because my family and neighbors went and it was expected. I married in the temple and raised my five children as LDS. In 2006 my husband died and left me on my own, so I no longer had to follow him to church or be “bishopric guy’s” dutiful wife, which was a relief. Then several years ago, the last of my kids left home, my parents passed away, I was an empty nester, no longer responsible for being that smiling mormon
mom and *finally free* to totally quit the church. It was like a weight lifted from my soul. One by one, four of my children also left the LDS church and moved on to other churches. I was able to aid each one of them as they transitioned to their new, happier paths.

The big problem was my daughter who was attending BYU. She was still a believer and still faithful and was guilt riding me over my inactivity and angry over the fact I had not fought harder to keep her siblings in the church. I realized I needed to tell her my entire truth and just accept whatever the consequences would be, even if it ruined our relationship.

I prayed over how to accomplish this and the answer was you. We drove two hours down from Wyoming . . . Along the way, I was able to tell her my story and my struggles with the church. When we got to SLC I told her I would like to buy her a book on Emma Smith and this certain bookstore had the book I wanted to give her . . . so we made our way to your store. You were there and told me that we were fortunate that you were there that day because you had been traveling and had only come in for a few hours that day because you were getting ready to leave again. I felt like it was indeed, an answer to my prayers.

I told you that I had just that day come out of the “apostate closet” to my daughter who was a BYU student. You walked over to her and hugged her and expressed to her how difficult that probably was for her. Then you took her for a walk around your store, and showed her some books and testified to her, and ever so gently talked to her about facts and problems with the church. You spoke to her intelligently and without any judgement toward her beliefs. We walked out with several other books she chose on your recommendation beside the Emma Smith book. She took them all back to her dorm and read them all. She started asking questions and finding answers herself.

A year later, I am overjoyed to tell you that my daughter has resigned from the LDS church and actually escaped BYU without a husband. She is now attending a grad school in Texas and is so happy with her new life. She still speaks fondly of that day in your bookstore where she felt so loved and accepted and taught . . . So thank you. I know these words are not even enough to express gratitude for the gift you and your husband have given the world with your work.

September 2016: I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and I feel sorry for the Tanners. They have cut themselves off from eternal blessings and have tried in vain to hinder the work of the Lord. Being related to Brigham Young or any other famous person in LDS history does not carry any weight with the Lord. It is individual faith in Jesus Christ and His atonement that is the foundation of our salvation. The Tanners cannot damage the Lord or His Church. Who can contend with the Lord of Host, or violate sacred covenants and not lose it all eventually?

October 2016: I am a young LDS, and I have a few questions to ask Sandra.

1. Why did you fall away from the church?
2. Do you not realise that this only strengthens the truth of the gospel?
3. The only thing that you can’t realise is that faith is the step to know that Joseph Smith did see the Lord our God and, his son Jesus Christ?
4. Why do you seek to destroy the church?

You do not have to answer these questions, only ponder them.

Many thanks,
E

(Sandra Tanner’s Response)

Dear E,

I am happy to explain why I left the LDS Church. After graduating from LDS Seminary, and attending various LDS Institute classes, I met Jerald (whom I would later marry). We are both from 5th generation LDS homes.

When the bishop started hinting that Jerald should go on a mission he decided to make a more careful study of LDS history and doctrine. When I met him he started showing me the problems he was finding. Joseph Smith’s revelations in the D&C have been changed since their first printing. Smith told differing versions of the 1st vision, he was involved in magic and money digging, the Book of Mormon doesn’t teach the same as the D&C, Brigham Young taught that you must live polygamy to have exaltation, Young also said the Blacks were not to receive the priesthood until the millennium, the Book of Abraham is not a genuine translation of the papyri the church purchased in Kirtland, the Bible says eternal life is gained through faith in Christ and his atonement, it is by grace, not works. The Bible never mentions Christians
If Joseph Smith did NOT see God and Jesus in 1820, if there never were any Nephites, if the Book of Mormon is a work of fiction, if the temple ritual is NOT from God, then Mormonism SHOULD be exposed as a deception so that people will be free to seek salvation through Christ as offered in the Bible.

Sandra Tanner

New Digital Books (PDF)

Joseph Smith and Polygamy
By Jerald and Sandra Tanner
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4. THE PROBLEMS WITH PIES: You’ve probably heard about some of the awkward issues with Mormonism—its odd mythology, multiple wives, and mystical temple rituals, stuff like that. Those things spark the curiosity of outsiders, but they’re not usually the best place to go in your conversations. Instead, we’ll take a look at just a few “slices” of the more relevant issues in Mormonism . . . and more importantly, how to raise them gently and respectfully. These aren’t bullets for a gun; they are just some ideas to encourage your new friends to think more deeply.
5. STEPPING UP TO THE PLATE: Now it’s your turn at bat . . . you’re the missionary now! Learn how to share your own faith story with the missionaries in an authentic and natural way that will “connect” with them . . . and learn how to invite them to put their hope and trust not in a religion or a church, but in the Jesus of the Bible.

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A Mormon’s Unexpected Journey: Finding the Grace I Never Knew Vol. 1 & Vol. 2
By Carma Naylor
In our concluding remarks in Part 1 of this article, which appeared in the previous issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger, we noted that,

The reason Emma had stressed Joseph’s alleged illiteracy was in support of the idea that he could not have read from another book or manuscript during dictation. But the undeniable evidence of many chapters copied verbatim from the King James [e.g., from Matthew and Isaiah] into the Book of Mormon text suggest otherwise, unless we wished to posit Joseph’s having a photographic memory. Still it’s not only the large chunks of King James text but the ubiquitous presence of shorter quotations from and allusions to the King James text that even more firmly counters Emma’s claims.

Let us begin then by looking at the influence of these shorter quotations and allusions to the text of the King James Bible upon the Book of Mormon, an influence that is less direct in that it does not involve actual copying of large passages from the King James Version (=KJV) but rather Joseph’s drawing upon his memory of favorite King James passages, which in turn provide him with a stock prophetic vocabulary that he resorted to using whenever he was in any sense presenting himself as speaking for God. This practice resulted in a myriad of anachronisms being introduced throughout the Book of Mormon text. Michael Hubbard MacKay and Nicholas J. Frederick in their recent faith-promoting book about Joseph Smith’s use of seer stones, states the matter in a way that provides a convenient entry point into the sort of King James influence I mean to explore. They write:

[H]ow can a text written centuries prior to the King James Bible, and supposedly translated through a seer stone, contain so much of it? Hundreds, if not thousands, of unique phrases from the King James Bible can be found in the Book of Mormon . . . how can Lehi, a prophet living in 600 BC, have a discussion with his son in which he quotes from the Gospel of John, a text that is still 700 years in the future (2 Nephi 2:6 cf. John 1:14)? Such a literal translation of the Egyptian from the gold plates would not produce such obvious parallels with the King James Bible.1

Okay, so what are MacKay and Frederick talking about exactly when they say that Lehi in 600 B.C. quoted a passage from the first century A.D. Gospel of John? Here is what Lehi says in the passage they are referring to:

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1 Michael Hubbard MacKay and Nicholas J. Frederick, Joseph Smith’s Seer Stones (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University/Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2016), 113.
Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah: for he is full of grace and truth. (p. 63)

The page number following the above passage (and those that follow) indicates where it appears in the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon. In each case I will quote the form of the passage from that edition, but with the chapter and verse references of the current Book of Mormon.

I have bolded the phrase MacKay and Frederick were referring to in the passage, “full of grace and truth.” John 1:14 reads in the KJV:

and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

In referring to this MacKay and Frederick have opened the door just a little on something that, as we said, is very prominent in the prophetic productions of Joseph Smith, namely that whether he presents himself as translating an ancient Nephite text (the Book of Mormon), or restoring the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek text of the Bible (the Joseph Smith Translation), or simply delivering direct communications from God (the Doctrine and Covenants), Joseph tended in each case to mix in variations of a number of his favorite Bible passages from the KJV. In this he especially favors passages taken from the New Testament books traditionally attributed to the Apostle John son of Zebedee, namely the Gospel of John, the first, second and third epistle of John, and the book of Revelation. Most scholars agree, both liberal and conservative, that all of these books (indeed all the books of the New Testament) were written in the first century A.D., which is to say within living memory of the life of Jesus. Following MacKay and Frederick’s lead then we shall focus in this section of our article on favored passages of Joseph’s drawn from the New Testament writings attributed to the Apostle John.

It wasn’t only the little phrase “full of grace and truth” that Joseph liked repeating from John 1:14 but the rest of the passage as well, including the very important theological expression only begotten, which we will discuss further after first displaying other examples of Joseph’s use of the passage:

John 1:14: And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.) full of grace and truth.

The following are dependent on John 1:14

Alma 5:48 . . . the Son of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace, and mercy, and truth. (p. 236; about 83 B.C.)

Alma 9:26: . . . the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace, equity, and truth, full of patience, mercy, and long-suffering . . . (p. 247; about 82 B.C.)

Alma 13:9: . . . the Son of the only begotten of the Father, who is without beginning of days or end of years [==echo of Hebrews 7:3], who is full of grace, equity, and truth. (p. 259, about 82 B.C.)

In the Book of Mormon Jesus is called the Only Begotten nine times. As a Christological title this designation, which translates the Greek word monogenes, appears only in the writings of John (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). As such it becomes an easily recognizable marker indicating dependence on John. It also serves as the basis for Christ’s being described as “begotten not made,” in the fourth-century Nicene Creed. The most obvious points of contact (3 of 9) between the Book of Mormon and John are with John 1:14.

Given the above evidence from the Book of Mormon suggesting that Joseph liked spinning off variations of John 1:14, we are not surprised to find him doing the same thing as well in the Pearl of Great Price.

The Pearl of Great Price included a selection from the Joseph Smith Translation, an alleged revelatory restoration of the Bible to its original uncorrupted condition, which Joseph began on March 26, 1830, and finished July 3, 1833. This portion covers several chapters of Joseph’s

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“restored” version of the Book of Genesis and presents itself as having been written by Moses (usually dated to the latter half of the second millennium B.C.). It includes an extensive first person account allegedly given by the pre-flood figure Enoch, the seventh generation from Adam and Eve. This section of the *Pearl of Great Price* is called the Book of Moses.

Here again, Joseph presents us with God allegedly quoting John 1:14 to Adam, Moses, and Enoch. The number of cribbed Johannine *only begotten* appears more than twice as many times in a few chapters in this section of the *Pearl of Great Price* than in the whole of the Book of Mormon. Four of these are conspicuously derived from John 1:14.

In order to remain close to the form of the text as originally dictated, I rely in my quotations here on the transcript of the original dictation manuscript of the Book of Moses (including corrections) prepared by Kent P. Jackson. Again I begin by reproducing John 1:14 as it appears in the KJV:

**KJV John 1:14:** And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

The following are dependent on John 1:14:

**Moses 1:6:** . . . mine Only Begotten is and shall be the Savior, for he is full of grace and truth. . . . (God speaking to Moses)

**Moses 1:32:** mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth. (God speaking to Moses)

**Moses 5:7:** the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth. (God telling Moses what the Angel of the Lord said to Adam)

**Moses 6:52:** . . . mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is Jesus Christ . . . (Enoch quoting what God said to Adam)

Finally there is a revelation in the *Doctrine and Covenants* in which Jesus quotes variations of several other passages from the Gospel of John along with the promise that “the fulness of John’s record is hereafter to be revealed.” The prophesy is dated May 1833, only a couple of months before his “restored” version of the Bible was completed (July 3, 1833) and so presumably was intended as a sort of direct divine infomercial for the soon-to-be-released Joseph Smith Translation. As it would happen, Jesus’s prediction in this prophesy did not come true during Joseph’s lifetime, nor has it ever come true for the LDS Church, which never accepted the Joseph Smith Translation as scripture. In any case here again we give John 1:14 followed by Jesus’s quotation of a variation on the passage in a revelation given to Joseph. I give the text as it appeared in the original 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants* (*D&C*):

**John 1:14:** And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

**D&C 93:11:** And I John’s bare record that I beheld his glory, as the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, even the Spirit of truth [see John 14:17], which came and dwelt in the flesh, and dwelt among us. (sec. LXXXII, p. 211)

### Jesus as the Lamb of God

The Apostle Paul speaks of “Christ our Passover” being “sacrificed for us” (1 Cor 5:7), and Peter, of how we are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as “a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19). But it is in the Gospel of John that we are introduced to the designation *Lamb of God*, and in the Revelation of John where Christ is called *the lamb* 26 times (in the KJV). And it is these two sources that influenced Joseph Smith’s use of the term in the Book of Mormon. Indeed the Book of Mormon calls John “the Apostle of the Lamb of God” (1 Nephi 14:27, p. 34).

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7 Kent P. Jackson, *The Book of Moses and the Joseph Smith Translation Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2005), 143-71. This transcription standardizes spelling.

8 Except the small selections appearing in the *Pearl of Great Price*.

9 Here we should pause a moment to discuss the words “I John” in the above passage. “The formula I + NAME is quite rare in the Bible. There is no I David, I Solomon, I Abraham, I Moses, or I Isaiah in the Bible. There is, of course, I Paul six times (1 Thess. 2:18; 2 Cor. 10:1; Phm. 1:19; Gal. 5:2; Eph. 3:1; Col. 1:23) in the New Testament, but it is from the book of the Revelation with its I Jesus and three occurrences of I John (1:9; 21:2; 22:8) that Joseph probably derived the formula. Smith uses I John several times in *D&C* 93 (11, 12, 15, 16). We also find I Jesus in *D&C* 17:9 and 18:23, 47. The I+ NAME formula is a constant of Joseph Smith’s favored prophetic vocabulary. It occurs very frequently in the Book of Mormon. I Nephi, for example, occurs 87 times, I Jacob 16 times, I Enos 5 times, I Mormon 15 times, I Moroni 17 times. And then we find I Abraham 11 times in the Book of Abraham. The I God formula that appears upwards of 30 times in the *Pearl of Great Price* Book of Moses does not occur at all in the KJV.

10 There have been those from very early times who doubted that the Book of Revelation was written by the author of the Gospel of John. And there are those today who would no doubt hesitate to include it among the writings of the author of the Gospel of John. I do so here partly for convenience and partly because Joseph Smith takes for granted, both in the Book of Mormon and elsewhere, that the Apostle John was the author of both (e.g., 1 Nephi 10:4; *D&C* 93).
The designation *Lamb of God* occurs no less than 25 times in the Book of Mormon. The very first occurrence plainly reveals Joseph Smith’s dependence on the Gospel of John in the King James Bible. Nephri records how his father Lehi prophesied in great detail how the Messiah was going to appear “six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem” (1 Nephi 10:4). And, as is typical of *vaticinia ex eventu*, that is, *prophesy after the fact*, Lehi’s description is too obvious in revealing its literary dependence on the King James translation of the Gospel of John to easily pass as an authentic before-the-fact prediction. And so we read there concerning the coming Messiah:

**1 Nephi 10:9-10:** And my father saith that he [the Baptist] should baptise in Bethabara, beyond Jordan; and he also spake, that he should baptise with water; yea, even that he should baptise the Messiah with water. And after that he had baptised the Messiah with water, he should behold and bear record, that he had baptised the Lamb of God, which should take away the sins of the world. (1 Nephi 10:9-10)

The claim that this text originated centuries before Christ again runs into trouble by its clear derivation from John 1:28-32:

**John 1:28-32:** These things were done in Bethabara, beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. (29) The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world . . . (31) And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. (32) And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

Of particular note is the phrase in 1 Nephi, “the Lamb of God, which should take away the sins of the world,” which closely echoes John’s “the Lamb of God, which should take away the sins of the world,” in *John 1:28-32.* Consequently virtually all current English translations, read “Bethany,” there (not to be confused with the other Bethany near Jerusalem mentioned, for example, in John 12:1).

The replacement of “Bethany” with “Bethabara” in a few manuscripts is usually credited to the promotion of the latter reading by the third-century writer Origen of Alexandria. Origen himself admitted that in his day “Bethany” appeared in “almost all the copies,” but

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11 Since Cumorah: The Book of Mormon in the Modern World (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1967), 129. Sidney B. Sperry noted how “interesting” it is that “the Book of Mormon verifies the reading of the Received Text of John 1:28 instead of the one accepted by scholars which is based on textual criticism and which reads ‘Bethany.’” (Sidney B. Sperry, *Book of Mormon Compendium* [Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1968], 115). Sperry even went so far as to affirm that “the inspired Book of Mormon . . . says that ‘Bethabara’ is the correct reading and that our modern scholars are wrong in choosing the reading ‘Bethany’” (“Special Issue: The Book of Mormon Writings of Sidney B. Sperry,” *FARMS Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4.1 [Spring 1995]: 183). But, as a number of studies have shown, the mere fact that Joseph Smith follows the KJV where it contradicts the critical Greek text is no safe basis for determining where the latter is wrong. See, e.g., Kevin L. Barney, “The Joseph Smith ‘Translation and the Ancient Texts of the Bible,’” in *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture* (ed., Dan Vogel; Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 143-60 and Ronald V. Huggins, “Joseph Smith’s ‘Inspired Translation’ of Romans 7,” in *FARMS Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4.1 [Spring 1995]: 183). But, as a number of studies have shown, the mere fact that Joseph Smith follows the KJV where it contradicts the critical Greek text is no safe basis for determining where the latter is wrong. See, e.g., Kevin L. Barney, “The Joseph Smith ‘Translation and the Ancient Texts of the Bible,’” in *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture* (ed., Dan Vogel; Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 259-87. Nor even does Mormon apologist/scholar John W. Welch try to insist that whenever Joseph Smith departs from the KJV text it should be assumed that he is adopting instead the correct ancient reading. Rather Welch argues, for example, that when Joseph Smith reworked the Sermon on the Mount in the Book of Mormon and the Joseph Smith Translation, he only departs from the KJV text where it really matters (*Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple & Sermon on the Mount* [Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1999], 208).

12 Origen of Alexandria, *Commentary on John* 4.24. The lion’s share of the surviving fragments from Heracleon’s commentary are found in Origen’s third-century commentary on the same book.

was convinced “that we should not read ‘Bethany,’ but ‘Bethabara.’”

But his reasons for thinking so fall short of being persuasive. Origen had actually visited the area himself but couldn’t find any Bethany in Transjordan. Instead he reports that “they say that Bethabara is pointed out on the banks of the Jordan, and that John is said to have baptized there.”14 As likely as not the location of the original Bethany beyond Jordan was lost in the wake of the Romans’ devastating military sweep down the east side of the Jordan in the Spring of 68 A.D., making it necessary for a new location to be arrived at later on due to the increasing number of pilgrims visiting the Holy Land and wanting to see where Jesus had been baptized.

But to return to our point about the connection of John 1 to 1 Nephi 10. In both passages the title Lamb of God is followed with a reference to the fact that he “taketh away the sin of the world.” The same is true of Alma 7:14, which, with its “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world” is virtually identical to what John’s gospel has.

Both occurrences of this expression in the Gospel of John are also preceded with the word behold: “Behold the Lamb of God” (John 1:29 and 35). This too impressed itself in the Book of Mormon, where “Behold, the Lamb of God” occurs twice (1 Nephi 11:21 and Mormon 9:3) and “beheld the Lamb of God,” once (1 Nephi 11:31-32).

Even more conspicuous is the reliance of the Book of Mormon on the lamb language of the book of Revelation. Two passages from that book (Rev. 7:14 and 21:14) are quoted especially often in the Book of Mormon:

These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Rev. 7:14)

From this passage Joseph Smith derived:

1 Nephi 12:11: These are made white in the blood of the Lamb. (p. 27, 600-592 B.C.)

Alma 13:11: their garments were washed white, through the blood of the Lamb. (p. 259, about 82 B.C.)

Alma 34:36: their garments should be made white, through the blood of the Lamb. (p. 321, c. 82 B.C.)

Mormon 9:6: found spotless, pure, fair, and white, having been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. (p. 535, 401-421 A.D.)

Ether 13:10: whose garment are white through the blood of the Lamb. (p. 567, from Jaredite record of Ether from the 24 plates found by the people of Limhi in about 121 B.C.)

Ether 13:11: for they have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. (p. 567, from Jaredite record of Ether from the 24 plates found by the people of Limhi in about 121 B.C.)

The second passage is Rev. 21:14: “the twelve apostles of the Lamb,” which is taken over by the Book of Mormon at 1 Nephi 11:35, 36; 12:9; 13:26, 39, 40, 41; and 14:20. For the sake of space I leave my readers to look up these parallels themselves.

Jesus the Good Shepherd

In John 10:16 we find the famous phrase: “. . . and there shall be one fold and one shepherd” (first century A.D.). This is taken over by the Book of Mormon at 1 Nephi 22:25: “. . . and there shall be one fold and one shepherd” (sixth century B.C.). The words come from Jesus’s Good Shepherd sermon in the Gospel of John:

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. (John 10:16)

Mormons have traditionally interpreted the above passage as a veiled prophetic reference to Christ’s post-resurrection labors among the ancient Nephites. They are not, however, the only newer religion to appeal to this verse as evidence that Jesus traveled far beyond the boundaries of his native homeland. The Ahmadiyya movement in Islam, for example, uses the same verse to argue that Jesus traveled to India and Kashmir in search of the lost tribes of Israel, whom, they say, settled in Kashmir and Afghanistan. It is to them Jesus is referring when he speaks of the “other sheep” of John 10:16. They say that Jesus traveled east to preach to the lost sheep and then, in the course of time, he died and was buried.

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there in the city of Srinagar where his tomb is pointed out to this day.15

The supposed link between the tomb in Srinagar and Jesus is not ancient, rather it was “discovered” around the turn of the last century by the founder of the Ahmadiyya movement, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who needed a dead Jesus to make way for his claim to represent in his own person both the promised Messiah and the Second Coming of Christ. The idea was that just as the promise of the coming of Elijah was fulfilled not in the return of Elijah in person, but in the coming of John the Baptist, so too the promised return of Jesus was fulfilled not in the return of the person of Jesus but in the coming of . . . himself, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad!16 In 1890 it had been told in a revelation that “Jesus son of Mary is dead and that you are sent, as was promised, in his power and spirit.” Then in 1895 he conveniently “discovered” the tomb of Jesus.17

The Mormon interpretation of the passage goes back to the Book of Mormon itself, which presents Jesus as quoting verbatim the King James rendering of this verse from the Gospel of John. The Mormon Jesus tells us that the Father had not commanded him to inform his old-world disciples about the Jewish migration to the Americas, but that he could inform his twelve new-world disciples about it:

This much did the Father command me, That I should tell unto them, that other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. (3 Nephi 15:16-17)

Given that Jesus had already made that statement about the other sheep in other folds in the Old World, one might not object to simply viewing this Book of Mormon quotation as a case where Joseph encountered the saying on the plates, and then simply chose to recast it in the familiar form in which it appeared in the King James Gospel of John. Given the brevity of the text it would not even be necessary to bring the suggestion into conflict with Emma’s claim that he consulted no books or manuscripts during the course of translation. He may have known the text well enough to recite it to the scribe without taking his eyes off the stone. But the problem, again, is that John 10:16 is part of a larger passage from John anachronistically quoted and commented on in other parts of the Book of Mormon.

At the beginning of this section we have already given an example of Nephi quoting the closing phrase of John 10:16 in what was being presented as a document composed in the sixth century B.C. Similarly, Alma gave a sermon to the Church at Zarahemla around 83 B.C.,18 which it is hard to view as anything other than an expanded homily on John 10:16 in its larger context:

Behold, I say unto you, that the good shepherd doth call you; yea, and in his own name he doth call you, which is the name of Christ; and if ye will not hearken unto the voice of the good shepherd, to the name by which ye are called, behold, ye are not the sheep of the good shepherd. And now if ye are not the sheep of the good shepherd, of what fold are ye? Behold, I say unto you, that the Devil is your shepherd, and ye are of his fold; and now who can deny this? Behold, I say unto you, whomsoever denieth this, is a liar and a child of the Devil; for I say unto you, that whomsoever is good, cometh from God, and whatsoever is evil, cometh from the Devil; therefore, if a man bringeth forth good works, he hearkeneth unto the voice of the good shepherd, and he doeth follow him; but whomsoever bringeth forth evil works, the same becometh a child of the Devil: for he hearkeneth unto his voice, and doth follow him. . . . For what shepherd is there among you having many sheep, doth not watch over them, that the wolves enter not and devour his flock? And behold, if a wolf enter his flock, doth he not drive him out? Yea, and

15 Aziz A. Chaudhary, “The Israelite Origin of People of Afghanistan and Kashmir,” Review of Religions (April 2002): 45: “This was the reason that Jesus undertook the long and arduous journey to Afghanistan and later to India and Kashmir, where he settled, in search of those lost tribes whom he referred to as ‘lost sheep’ and ‘other sheep’. He did this migration in his post crucifixion period of his life when he had despaired of the Jews in Palestine.” Naturally the literature on the alleged tomb of Jesus in Kashmir is quite extensive. For the Hazrat’s own original presentation see, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Jesus in India: An Account of Jesus’ Escape from Death on the Cross and His Journey to India (Amsterdam: Fredonia Books, 2004 [orig. 1899]). For a recent overview of the Ahmadiyya case as it is generally articulated today, see Abubakr Ben Ishmael Salahuddin, “Evidence of Jesus in India,” Review of Religions 97.4 (April 2002): 48-68. For a (well deserved) critical response see Paul C. Pappas, Jesus Tomb in India: Debate on His Resurrection (Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 1991).

16 Bashir Ahmad Orchard “Lord of the Universe,” Review of Religions 80.9 [Sept. 1985]: 11: “The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam claims that the expected Promised Messiah has appeared in the person of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, India, who proclaimed his mission in 1889. Contrary to the general Christian belief that Jesus is to return from the sky in an miraculous manner as they believe he ascended into the sky, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad claimed that he had appeared in the power and spirit of Jesus. He proved from the Quran, Bible and historical sources that Jesus never did die on the cross in the first place but died a natural death in Kashmir where he had travelled in search of the Lost Sheep of Israel after the event of the crucifixion from which he survived.”


18 According to the chronology given in the current LDS edition of the Book of Mormon.
Nephi also refers to the “voice of the Good Shepherd,” in a sermon he preached in around 23-20 B.C., one of four occurrences of that phrase in the Book of Mormon (see Alma 5:38, 41, 57). The language of John 10:16 is also echoed in God’s words to Alma in Mosiah 26:21: “And he that will hear my voice shall be my sheep.”

**In Spirit and in Truth**

In John 4:23-24, in the famous story of the woman at the well, Jesus tells the woman:

> But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

We find the same expression used in pre-Christian times in the Book of Mormon:

- Alma 34:38: worship God, in whatsoever place ye may be in, in spirit and in truth. (p. 321, c. 74 B.C.)
- Alma 43:10: whosoever should worship God, in spirit and in truth. (p. 341, c. 74 B.C.)

**You Must Be Born Again!**

There is scarcely any passage in the New Testament more familiar than Jesus’s words to Nicodemus when he came to speak to Jesus at night:

> John 3:3-5: Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . . Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God . . . Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

From this passage Joseph Smith derived:

- Mosiah 27:25: Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God. (p. 214, 100-92 B.C.)
- Alma 5:49: I say unto you, the aged, and also the middle aged, and the rising generation; yea, to cry unto them that they must repent and be born again. (p. 236, about 83 B.C.)

Alma 7:14: Now I say unto you, that ye must repent, and be born again; for the spirit saith if ye are not born again ye cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. (p. 240, about 83 B.C.)

So, too, in the Pearl of Great Price Book of Moses, where Joseph was supposedly restoring the text of Genesis to its original uncorrupted form, we find God paraphrasing John 3 to Adam:

> Moses 6:59: even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit.

The extensive dependence of both the Book of Mormon and the Joseph Smith Translation book of Genesis (Pearl of Great Price Book of Moses) on the Gospel of John in the language of the King James Bible all but proves that Joseph was not, in either case, miraculously translating or restoring ancient texts, and even more to the point, was not engaging in the process described by those who observed him translating the Book of Mormon. The simplest answer to Michael Hubbard MacKay and Nicholas J. Frederick’s question “how can a text written centuries prior to the King James Bible, and supposedly translated through a seer stone, contain so much of it?” is “it can’t.” The simplest explanation in the case of the above quotations and allusions is that in contrast to the larger chunks of the King James, they probably could not have found their way into the Book of Mormon at all unless Joseph had copied them directly. Here we see revelatory texts of various kinds being produced out of the storehouse of Joseph’s own familiarity with the King James text. Joseph regularly bulked up whatever he happened to be working on with stock phrases from the King James Bible.

Many more examples from the Gospel of John and other New Testament books could be noted, but I will limit myself to a single example where Jesus repeatedly speaks of himself in words taken from the author of the Gospel of John in its King James dress when giving revelations to Joseph. The example I have in mind represents a pastiche of John 1:5 and 11-12, and the examples are going to be drawn from the Doctrine and Covenants (and its precursor, the Book of Commandments). Again in order to get close to the form given by Joseph himself I present the passages as they appeared in the 1833 Book of Commandments or in the 1835 first edition of the Doctrine & Covenants, in cases where no parallel version appeared in the Book of

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Commandments (BC). In each case I give the references where the passages can now be found in the current edition of the Doctrine & Covenants:

KJV John 1:5, 11-12: And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not . . . He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

From this passage Joseph Smith derived:


D&C 11:11 / BC 10:5 (1835 D&C 37:5): I am the light which shineth in darkness, and by my power I give these words unto thee.

D&C 34:2 / BC 36:2-3 (1835 D&C 56:1): the light and the life of the world: A light which shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not: Who so loved the world that he gave his own life [= added echo of John 3:16], that as many as would believe might become the sons of God.19

D&C 39:2-3 / BC 41:1 (1835 D&C 59:1): . . . the light and the life of the world; a light which shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not: The same which came in the meridian of time unto my own, and my own received me not; but to as many as received me, gave I power to become my sons.

D&C 11:28-29 / BC 10:12 (1835 D&C 37:12): Behold I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God: I am the life and the light of the world: I am the same who came unto my own, and my own received me not: but verily, verily I say unto you, that as many as receiveth me, them will I give power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on my name: Amen.

D&C 45:7-8 / BC 48:8-10 (1835 D&C 15:2): . . . the light and the life of the world, a light that shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not: I came unto mine own and mine own received me not: But unto as many as received me, gave I power to do many miracles, and to become the sons of God.

D&C 88:48-49 (1835 D&C 7:12): he who came unto his own was not comprehended. The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not.20

The phrase “I am the light and the life of the world,” which is in evidence in two of the passages just looked at, appears to be a hybrid of John 8:12 “I am the light of the world,” with John 1:4: “In him was life; and the life was the light of men.” Interestingly this hybrid begins to appear on the lips of God/Jesus in Joseph Smith’s early revelations (D&C 10:70, 11:28, 12:9, 34:2, 39:2, 45:7) and in the Book of Mormon (Mosiah 16:9, Alma 38:9, 3 Nephi 11:11, Ether 4:12) at roughly the same time, i.e., when Joseph was working on both. This in turn raises the question of whether we should view it in both cases as a contemporaneous invention of Joseph Smith.

Anachronistic Quotations of the King James Point to Bible Forgery

After Wesley P. Walters described the Book of Mormon as being “generously sprinkled with passages lifted from the King James Version” back in 1960,21 Hugh Nibley attempted to brushed the whole thing off by saying “people are preached to from their own Bible. To the world to which the English translation of the Book of Mormon was addressed there was the only one acceptable Bible, the King James translation.”22 In the recent book by Michael Hubbard MacKay and Nicholas J. Frederick we find a similar attempt at minimizing the significance of the Book of Mormon’s reliance on the King James Bible: “Many nineteenth-century readers, particularly those involved in the Restorationist movement, would have expected any word from God to sound like the words from God they already had (in other words, the KJV).”23

In both cases the authors appear to have been speaking beyond their ken, since, in fact, for many nineteenth-century Christians, the King James Bible was not “the only one acceptable Bible.” The Methodists were encouraged to prefer Wesley’s New Testament translation along with its Explanatory Notes (1755) and those involved in the Restorationist movement, far from preferring the King James more than what was usual among other Christians, had the Alexander Campbell New Testament produced in


20 The Book of Commandments does not have a parallel to this passage.


22 Hugh Nibley, Since Cumorah: The Bible in the Modern World (Salt Lake City, Deseret Book, 1967), 129.

23 Michael Hubbard MacKay and Nicholas J. Frederick, Joseph Smith’s Seer Stones (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University/Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2016), 115.
the 1820s. Although both Wesley’s and Campbell’s New Testaments were based on earlier translations, neither of them built off the King James.24

Yet, however that may be, if the Book of Mormon was presented in King James dress as a way of appealing to how people in those days would have expected words from God to sound like, as the authors just cited claimed, that does nothing to give us confidence regarding its potential authenticity, rather it should be regarded as a mark against it. It is good to remember that after Joseph died, most of the surviving signers of the testimonies to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon became followers of James Strang. After claiming to be Smith’s divinely appointed successor, he miraculously translated his own new scriptures from his own set of newly discovered ancient plates, this time called the Book of the Law of the Lord, which had supposedly been “kept in the ark of the covenant, and was held too sacred to go into the hands of strangers.”25 This volume again began with the identical proclamatory statement that we find in the Book of Mormon testimonies—“BE it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come . . .”—and it included a page giving a statement of testimony signed by a number of witnesses who testified to having seen and handled the ostensibly ancient plates. But most importantly for what we are saying here, it too was “generously sprinkled with passages lifted from the King James Version,” and it too mimicked the King James style throughout.

Likewise the book that Shaker Philemon Stewart, claimed he received by Revelation, A Holy, Sacred and Divine Roll and Book; from The Lord of Heaven, to the

Inhabitants of Earth, also adopted the King James style.26 It was Stewart’s book that Martin Harris is reported to have “declared repeatedly that he had as much evidence for a Shaker book he had as for the Book of Mormon.”27 In each case the use of the King James style may have enhanced the works believability, but it did nothing toward establishing its divine authenticity.

The presence of the stock phrases from the King James Version’s Gospel of John as filler in the Book of Mormon and Joseph’s prophetically restored Book of Genesis shows that in both cases we are dealing with more than his simply preferring to use the King James text when encountering parallel texts in the Book of Mormon. Even if we were willing to grant that Nephi might have quoted numerous passages from Isaiah or that Jesus might have repeated his Sermon on the Mount over again in the New World, the regular appearance of stock phrases from the King James padding the Book of Mormon from end to end still points in the direction of the very extensive anachronistic literary dependence of the Book of Mormon on the King James throughout. And that in turn points in the direction of the Book of Mormon being another Bible forgery rather than another Bible.

**Contradicting the Grand Narrative**

So far in our attempt to discover whether the Book of Mormon is another Bible or another Bible forgery we have focused on whether or not Joseph’s actions were consistent with a belief in the story of divine dictation told by his close associates. And the answer is that those actions were not. Yet there is another side to the question that is equally important to our investigation, namely—Were the descriptions of Joseph’s close associates as to what they saw Joseph doing consistent with the story he himself put before the public? And here again the answer is no.

The story Joseph put before the public only spoke of one supernatural instrument used in the process of translating the Book of Mormon: the Urim and Thummim. The discovery of this unique instrument along with the golden plates is an essential feature of the foundation story of Mormonism that is not only enshrined in Mormon scripture, but has also been a persistent part of standard


26 Philemon Stewart, A Holy, Sacred and Divine Roll and Book; from The Lord of Heaven, to the Inhabitants of Earth: Revealed to the United Society at New Lebanon. . . . (2 Parts; Canterbury, NH: United Society, 1843).

27 Public Discussion of the Issues Between the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and the Church of Christ (Disciples) Held in Kirtland, Ohio, Beginning February 12, and Closing March 8, 1884 Between E. L. Kelley, of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and Clark Braden, of the Church of Christ (St. Louis, MO: Clark Braden, 1884), 173.
LDS missionary presentations. According to the story the angel Moroni, one of the Book of Mormon’s ancient authors, appeared to Joseph on the evening of September 21, 1823, and informed him of the existence of “a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent,” which contained “the fulness of the everlasting Gospel . . . as delivered by the Saviour to the ancient inhabitants,” and that along with it, “there were two stones in silver bows—and these stones, fastened to a breastplate, constituted what is called the Urim and Thummim—deposited with the plates, and the possession and use of these stones was what constituted ‘seers’ in ancient or former times, and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book” (Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History 34-35).

The story goes on to say that on September 22, 1827, Joseph finally manages to recover the gold plates along with the Urim and Thummim from their ancient hiding place in the Hill Cumorah. As Joseph reported the story in the 1838 Elders' Journal, “I obtained them, and the Urim and Thummim with them; by means of which, I translated the plates; and thus came the Book of Mormon.” Joseph makes the same claim in a letter he wrote in 1842 to John Wentworth, editor of the Chicago Democrat:

With the records was found a curious instrument which the ancients called “Urim and Thummim,” which consisted of two transparent stones set in the rim of a bow fastened to a breastplate.

Through the medium of the Urim and Thummim I translated the record by the gift, and power of God.

The unique significance of this supernaturally appointed and preserved instrument, however, was not only an integral part of the story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon as Joseph told it, but of the grand narrative of the Book of Mormon itself. Indeed the story of the instrument, according to the Book of Mormon, dated back to the time of the confusion of languages in the generation of the Tower of Babel. At that time, says the Book of Mormon, Jesus Christ gave a number of great revelations, including a revelation of himself (even his name), to the pious brother of Jared and instructed him to write a record of it and to seal it up. At the same time he provided the brother of Jared with the two stones of the Urim and Thummim because “the language which ye shall write I have confounded; wherefore I will cause in my own due time that these stones shall magnify the eyes of men these things which ye shall write” (Ether 3:24). (The two stones are called “the interpreters” in the Book of Mormon not “Urim and Thummim”).

After this the brother of Jared along with other members of his extended family, came to be called Jaredites, and they were eventually destroyed. A record of their history was written by the Jaredite Ether on twenty-four gold plates, which he, in turn, hid away along with the Urim and Thummim (Ether 4:5, 15:33). Both were rediscovered in the second century B.C. by some people from king Limhi (Mosiah 8:9), who in turn brought them to Ammon asking whether he might be able to translate them. Ammon suggests Mosiah, who he says, can translate the records: for he hath wherewith that he can look, and translate all records that are of ancient date; and it is a gift from God. The things are called interpreters; and no man can look in them, except he be commanded, lest he should look for that he ought not, and he should perish. And whosoever is commanded to look in them, the same is called seer. (Mosiah 8:13)

The plates were duly brought to king Mosiah (Mosiah 21:27, Ether 1:2), who eventually translated them “by the means of those two stones which was fastened into the two rims of a bow.” In any case, Mosiah then passes all the records along with the “interpreters,” and commands they be preserved (Mosiah 28:20). Then finally Moroni, at the end of the Book of Mormon period, is commanded to seal up the records along with the interpreters by hiding them “again

29 See for example, the long-used pamphlet “The Prophet Joseph Smith’s Testimony.”
28 Times and Seasons 3.12 (April 15, 1842): 753.
31 Elder’s Journal 1.3 (July 1838): 43.
32 Times and Seasons 3.9 (March 1, 1842): 707.
33 The implication is that the interpreters came into Mosiah’s hands prior to the discovery of Ether’s Jaredite record, which raises the question whether the record of the brother of Jared and the Jaredite record were separate or the Jaredite record including the record of the brother of Jared somehow got separated from the brother of Jared’s interpreters.
34 Times and Seasons 3.9 (March 1, 1842): 707.
in the fifth century A.D. (Ether 4:3-5). It is this same Moroni then, who afterward appears, more than a thousand years later, to Joseph in his bedroom on the evening of September 21, 1823, to tell him about the existence of the ancient record hidden away with the brother of Jared’s/Mosiah’s interpreters and to explain how he has been chosen to become the new seer and custodian of the ongoing grand narrative. But there’s only one problem. Where is the ongoing central role of the Interpreters (the Urim and Thummim) in the ongoing grand narrative? The answer apparently is nowhere at all! According to both Emma Smith and David Whitmer none of the current Book of Mormon was produced using the Urim and Thummim. Here’s what happened.

Martin Harris’s service as scribe to Joseph Smith, which began on April 12, 1828, came to a sudden end on June 14, 1828, after he’d borrowed and irretrievably lost the manuscript of the first 116 pages translated to that point. Joseph, who apparently feared that if he were to try to replicate what he had already written (which shouldn’t have been a problem if he had really simply read it off the stone as reported) was ostensibly told by God that he should not retranslate the portion he’d already done, which was called the Book of Lehi. Instead he was to translate another account also available among the plates which covered the same basic material. As a result none of the text included in the 116 pages was ever retranslated into what eventually became the Book of Mormon.

Joseph reports further that as a result of God’s anger at him for entrusting the 116 pages “into the hands of a wicked man,” (D&C 10:1) “both the plates and the Urim and Thummim were taken from me again; but,” he continues, “in a few days they were returned to me.”

But the claim that the Urim and Thummim were returned is inconsistent with the accounts of the same incident by Emma Smith and David Whitmer, both of whom claimed Joseph didn’t use the Urim and Thummim in translating after having them taken away. In an 1870 letter the Prophet’s wife wrote: “Now the first that my husband translated, [the book] was translated by the use of the Urim, and Thummim, and that was the part that Martin Harris lost, after that he used a small stone, not exactly, black, but was rather a dark color.” David Whitmer similarly recounts how the loss of the 116 pages, evoked the stormiest kind of chastisement from the Lord, who took from the prophet the Urim and Thummim and otherwise expressed his condemnation. By fervent prayer and by otherwise humbling himself, the prophet, however, again found favor, and was presented with a strange, oval-shaped, chocolate-colored stone, about the size of an egg, only more flat, which, it was promised, should serve the same purpose as the missing Urim and Thummim . . . With this stone all of the present Book of Mormon was translated.\(^{37}\)

Whitmer told John Traughber in 1879 that he actually never saw Joseph use the Urim and Thummim at all.\(^{38}\)

Further, the testimony of Martin Harris, who only served as scribe during the production of the lost 116 pages, suggests that Joseph used a seer stone rather than the Urim and Thummim at least some of the time even before the pages were lost: “He [Martin Harris] said that the Prophet possessed a seer stone, by which he was enabled to translate as well as from the Urim and Thummim, and for convenience he then used the seer stone.”\(^{39}\) The very fact that Harris presents a picture of Joseph being able to use the Urim and Thummim or not according to his “convenience,” greatly reduces the significance of the instrument to the story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. And if the Urim and Thummim were not used at all during the process of translating the current Book of Mormon, as Emma and David Whitmer reported, then the claim by Joseph in the Elders’ Journal and Wentworth letter, are simply misrepresentations in which Joseph was saying the Book of Mormon came forth in one manner, when really it came forth in another. And in fact even if Joseph did not use seer stones in a hat to translate the entire text of the present Book of Mormon there can now be no doubt that he used them in translating a good portion of it. This is something even the LDS Church itself has recently formally admitted, even publishing, for example, a photograph of the brown seer stone Joseph used in translating the Book of Mormon in the October 2015 issue of its official Ensign magazine.\(^{40}\) This was

35 Times and Seasons 3.15 (June 1, 1842): 801.
36 Letter to Mrs. Pilgrim, March 27, 1870; Early Mormon Documents 1:532. Brackets indicate a conjectural emendation by Dan Vogel, the editor of Early Mormon Documents. I have left some of Vogel’s less important critical markings out.
38 “With the sanction of David Whitmer, and by his authority, I now state that he does not say that Joseph Smith ever translated in his presence by aid of Urim and Thummim; but by means of one dark colored, opaque stone, called a ‘Seer Stone,’ which was placed in the crown of a hat, into which Joseph put his face, so as to exclude the external light.” (“Testimony of David Whitmer,” Saints’ Herald 26 [Nov. 15, 1879]: 341.)
followed up by a faith-promoting book, *Joseph Smith’s Seer Stones*, by two BYU professors, bolstered up with an introduction by Mark Ashurst-McGee, Senior Historian at the Church History Library, and published jointly by the BYU’s Religious Studies Center and the Church-owned Deseret Book.\(^{41}\) The purpose of the book, quite clearly, is to ease faithful LDS Church members into the idea that Joseph translated using seer stones along with/instead of the Urim and Thummim without such a fact leading to a crisis of faith. Finding out about their use, as it stressed near the beginning of the book, is not supposed to be something to be alarmed about, but rather it is “deep doctrine,” that resulted in a “deep theological tradition” representing a part of the LDS Church’s “rich history . . . ripe for exploration.”\(^{42}\)

The LDS Church’s recent attempts at normalizing Joseph Smith’s uses of seers stones even extends to materials produced for children. We see this in the February 2017 *Friend*, the LDS Church’s children’s magazine, which shows a cartoon picture of Joseph Smith holding a seer stone in his hand, and the explanation:

Joseph used a special rock called a seer stone to translate the plates. He also used a tool called the Urim and Thummim, two clear rocks bound together with metal that looked like a pair of glasses.\(^{43}\)

It is, of course, perfectly legitimate for faithful Mormons to both admit that Joseph used seer stones and to do all they can to integrate that fact into a faithful understanding of what it means. In our quest to discover whether the Book of Mormon was another Bible or another Bible forgery, the issue of Joseph’s use of the seer stones plays a much simpler role, namely showing that although he told one story publicly about how the Book of Mormon came about, those who saw it in the process of happening, contradict him. Joseph said one thing, and did another. And because of this the issue of the seer stones versus the Urim and Thummim once again points in the direction of considering the Book of Mormon a forgery.

### The Gold Plates

The other half of the formula in Joseph’s public descriptions of the process of translation, was the gold plates, that is to say the claim that he *used* the Urim and Thummim to *translate* the gold plates. Yet according to the testimonies quoted earlier from those who observed the process, it is not clear that the plates played any direct role in the process at all. As he translated Joseph wasn’t looking at the plates, he was looking in his hat. Consequently it would be more correct to say that the Book of Mormon came not from the plates but from the seer stone. And this contradicts not only the basic story Joseph presented to the public about what he was supposedly doing in translating the plates, but also the representation of what he was doing in LDS Church materials ever since. We see this perhaps most strikingly in the Church’s artistic depictions of the translation process, which, until very recently, have invariably shown Joseph with the plates before him as he translated.\(^{44}\) So what is the significance of this?

Presenting the Book of Mormon’s coming forth *from* the gold plates *through* the Urim and Thummim provided the project with an aura of respectability that it would not have had if Joseph’s actual translation process had been known, a process, moreover, which would likely have been generally disapproved of due to its occult associations. And if it were known that Joseph had earlier used the same seer stones while working as a conjurer for money-diggers, that would have only made things much worse. And so the real story was concealed, even from many of his earliest followers, some of whom had knowledge of the stone but, given their reactions to other people who were doing precisely what Joseph had done, had somehow failed to put two and two together. We see this very strikingly in two cases where Mormons were disciplined while Joseph was still living for doing the same thing Joseph did. The first involved a young

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\(^{42}\) Ibid., xvi, 2, 3.


man who both pretended to recover an ancient text and used a stone to find treasure. The story was told in the December 1, 1842, issue of the LDS Church’s *Times and Seasons* newspaper:

We have lately seen a pamphlet, written, and published by James C. Brewster; purporting to be one of the lost books of Esdras; and to be written by the gift and power of God. We consider it a perfect humbug, and should not have noticed it, had it not been assiduously circulated, in several branches of the church. This said Brewster is a minor; but has professed for several years to have the gift of seeing and looking through or into a [sic] stone; and has thought that he has discovered money hid in the ground in Kirtland, Ohio.45

The boy and his father were suspended and only escaped being actually cut off from the Church by promising “to desist from their ridiculous and pernicious ways.”

The author of the piece further writes: “We . . . should not have noticed it [the incident],” had it not been for the fact that “His father and some of our weak brethren, who perhaps have some confidence in the ridiculous stories that are propagated concerning Joseph Smith, about money digging.”

A second incident, which occurred among the Latter-day Saints in England, involved a certain Brother Monford (Mumford? Mountford?), who was “disfellowshiped by the council of officers, for using magic, and telling fortunes &c.”46

Among those participating in deciding Monford’s fate were Mormon leaders Alfred Cordon and Wilford Woodruff, both of whom left an account of the event in their diaries. According to Cordon:

bro Mountford had in his possession several Glasses or Chrystals as he called them. they are about the size of a Gooses Egg made flat at each end. he also had a long list of prayers wrote down which he used. The prayer was unto certain Spirits which he said was in the Air which says he when I pray to them in the name of the Father, Son, Holy Ghost, any thing that I want will come into the Glass. for instance if A Young woman had a desire to know who she would have for an Husband, she came to him and made the case known, and he brought out his Chrystals and prayed unto a certain Spirit then she must peep into the Chrystal and in it she would see the Young man that would become her husband. Elder Woodruff made some observations on the subject. when it was moved and Unanimously carried that no such Magic work be allowed in the Church.47

Woodruff, for his part, reported:

Brother Mumford who was ingaged in the Magic or Blackart fortune telling &c which prevails to a great extent in this Country. But as he persisted in his course after being laboured with the Council withdrew fellowship from him. He was holding the office of a Priest & one thing is worthy of notice that while the Priesthood was upon him, he could not see his magic glasses as before until after he ceased to fill the Priest office & rejected our council.49

These Mormons in both cases were condemned for doing the very thing Joseph had done and yet were treated as though they were engaging in things that were obviously unacceptable for anyone wanting to remain in the LDS Church. The reference to the “ridiculous stories” of Joseph’s career as a money-digger, in the account of the first case, implies that the LDS Church at the time either did not generally know or was denying the truth about Joseph’s earlier years. In their recent book on Joseph’s seer stones cited earlier, Michael Hubbard MacKay and Nicholas J. Frederick both admit this aspect of Joseph’s earlier career, and attempt to justify it by blurring the distinction between occult magic and orthodox Christianity by pretending people didn’t draw clear distinctions between the two in Joseph’s day: “Early believers did not necessarily struggle with the fusion of Joseph the treasure seeker and Joseph the translator.”50 Yet how could they “struggle,” given that Joseph hid it from them? And why did he hide it if such distinctions really didn’t matter? In the same question and answer article in the *Elders’ Journal* quoted above, where the claim is made that Joseph translated the gold plates with the Urim and Thummim, there also appeared the following question and answer about the Prophet’s previous career as a money-digger:

**Question 10. Was not Jo Smith a money digger?**

**Answer.** Yes. But it was never a very profitable job for him, as he only got fourteen dollars a month for it.51

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45 “Notice,” *Times and Seasons* 4.2 (December 1, 1842): 32.
46 “To The Saints Abroad,” *Times and Seasons* 2.15 (June 1841): 434.
The answer, however, evades the extent of Joseph’s real involvement by presenting Joseph as a simple workman who was just trying to make a few dollars digging holes.

One of the most significant remarks in the two accounts cited above is Wilford Woodruff’s description of what Monford was doing as “Blackart,” indicating that the early Mormon leader Woodruff viewed the practice as more akin to witchcraft than to Christianity. A similar attitude to Woodruff’s toward the connection between seer stones and money digging and the black arts is also well illustrated in John G. C. Brainard’s 1827 poem, The Money Diggers:

THUS saith The Book—“Permit no witch to live;”
Hence, Massachusetts hath expelled the race,—
Connecticut, where swap and dicker thrive,
Admits not to their foot a resting-place.
With more of hardihood and less of grace,
Vermont receives the sisters gray and lean,
Allows each witch her airy broomstick race,
O’er mighty rocks and mountains dark with green,
Where tempests wake their voice, and torrents roar between.

And one there was among that wicked crew,
To whom the enemy a pebble gave,
Through which, at long-off distance, she might view
All treasures of the fathomable wave;
And where the Thames’ bright billows gently lave,
The grass-grown piles that flank the ruined wharf,
She sent them forth, those two adventurers brave... 52

By using the story of the gold plates translated through the ancient Urim and Thummim as a cover for the actual manner in which he’d produced the Book of Mormon, Joseph shielded it from immediately being recognized as what would more recently come to be called a “channeled” text, a kind of text produced sometimes with, sometimes without, the aid of occult mantic devices, which was already a familiar genre of literature in Joseph’s time, and would become increasingly so after. Joseph claimed to be able to recover ancient texts with or without plates, and to be able to translate them with or without his seer stones. With the seer stone, for example, he claimed to recover and translate the “record made on parchment by John [the Apostle] and hidden up by himself” that now appears as part of D&C 7. Then without his seer stone he also claimed to produce his Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible, restoring lost sections that had allegedly been taken out by the Great and Abominable Church (1 Nephi 13) or otherwise lost.

In either case Joseph’s claiming to have obtained texts in such a manner was hardly a novel activity. The occult art of obtaining books by scrying, which is what Joseph was doing with his stone, was well known. We may think, for example, of the legendary occultist John Dee (1527-1608), who’d received a number of books in the 1580s, including the Liber Logaeth and De heptarchia mystica, with the help of his scryer, Edward Kelly.53

Or again, we might think of Emanuel Swedenborg with his many interactions with the other side reported in books like Concerning Heaven and its Wonders and Concerning Hell from Things Heard and Seen (1768).

Then there was the 1852 book Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations, and a Voice to Mankind described on its title pages as being “by and through” the Poughkeepsie Seer, Andrew Jackson Davies.

Or to mention once more John Ballou Newbrough’s—
“I... beheld the line of light that rested on my hands extending heavenward like a telegraph wire toward the sky”—book the Oahspe Bible.54 We spoke of this work in the first part of our article, where we mentioned also the Aquarian Gospel, a work psychically downloaded from the Akashic Records by Levi Dowling.

To this list we could add as well the famed Mahatma letters, allegedly written by the two prolific ascended masters named Morya and Koot Hoomi. These were claimed to have miraculously appeared in a shrine cabinet at the headquarters of the Theosophical Society in Adyar, India, but upon more careful examination they turned out to have been penned by the hand of Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, the ever colorful, chain-smoking, theosophical prophetess from Yekaterinoslav, who afterward slipped them into the cabinet through a hidden sliding panel in the back.55

Then there was C. G. Jung’s Septem Sermones ad Mortuos, attributed to the second-century Gnostic teacher Basilides of Alexandria, which was dictated to (and through) Jung one Sunday afternoon in 1916 just after

54 “J. B. Newbrough to the Editor of the Banner of Light, Boston, MA (Jan 21, 1883),” in Oahspe: Epoch-Making Revelations of Grave Importance to Everyone: Booklet Number 1 (Los Angeles, CA: repr. Walter Wiers, n.d.), [iv].
the front doorbell had begun ringing frantically at the instigation of an invisible hand. The house, Jung recalled, was “crammed full of spirits . . . and the air was so thick it was scarcely possible to breathe.” Jung himself was “all a-quer” and asked, “For God sakes, what in the world is this?” Then they [the spirits] cried out in chorus, “We have come back from Jerusalem where we found not what we sought.” After which, Jung reports, the rest of the Septem Sermones “began to flow out of me.”

Nor is there any lack of more recent examples of such texts, including for example, the Urantia Book, communicated by masters from other spheres with outlandish names like “a Secondary Lanonandek Son,” “the Chief of the Archangels of Nebadon,” and “a Mighty Messenger temporarily sojourning on Urantia” (i.e., Earth), and A Course in Miracles, dictated to Helen Schucman by “the Voice.”

If you want something with a more Mormon feel, try The Book of Azrael, consisting of a retake on the history of the world from Adam and Eve to Abraham, set out with chapters and verses like the Bible. And who is Azrael? He’s Archie Dean Wood of Pocatello, Idaho, “Teacher of Righteousness in the School of the Prophets,” whose ministry is announced in the first chapter of his book, where God says:

And I shall set over them a new shepherd [i.e., Archie], who will watch over them, who will lead them in the words of the Lord, for I shall stretch forth my hand into a desert place [i.e., Pocatello, Idaho] to bring forth my servant. Him shall I prepare from youth that he may teach my people; a teacher of righteousness shall he be unto me, for I shall hide up in his inward parts the power of my word. (Book of Azrael, 1.1.11-12)

Like the Book of Mormon and James Strang’s book, Archie’s book also adopts the King James style and includes a “testimony” statement signed by 13 witnesses, this time affirming having seen a vision of Christ on a mountain outside of Pocatello.

In each case the production of the Book of Mormon has more in common with these books than it does with the Bible, and people who find the comparison between the Book of Mormon and these other texts offensive or absurd need to address the question for themselves that if the Book of Mormon is somehow different from all the rest, how does it stand out from the group, and why is it different? Very often Mormons insinuate that Christians reject the Book of Mormon simply because they believe in a closed canon and are therefore “not open to new revelation.” Yet to a Mormon bringing such an accusation I can only ask, “So then, are you open to the ‘new revelations’ I have just been describing? And if not, why not? How can you accuse me of being closed to new revelation when your ‘new revelation’ looks to me pretty much how I imagine the ‘new revelations’ I have just been describing looks to you? And how is it that your book, produced in much the same way as these other books, is somehow legitimate while they are not?”

Conclusion

Is the Book of Mormon another Bible or another Bible forgery? Think, if you will, of each of the issues raised in this article as possible red flags against the Book of Mormon’s claim to be another Bible. Very often when people lose faith in the Book of Mormon they not only reject it but they reject the Bible also, on the grounds, they say, that the Bible “has the same kind of problems,” as the Book of Mormon. But that is exactly what is not the case. The Bible actually is what it presents itself to be, i.e., many separate works written by many different authors over many centuries, eventually collected together into one book. The Book of Mormon only pretends to be that. And it is precisely here that the Bible and the Book of Mormon are most definitely not alike, and do not have the “same kind of problems.” Please understand, I am not saying that the Bible has no “problems,” only that they are very different problems from what we face with the Book of Mormon. Many questions arise from the very fact that the Bible really was written by many authors over a large period of time with later authors interpreting earlier ones and different authors giving different accounts of the same events, influenced perhaps by somewhat differing purposes and theology. Are we always sure, for example, that the New Testament authors get it right when quoting the Psalms or Isaiah? Is it more appropriate to try to harmonize the cosmological descriptions in the Bible with ancient cosmology, with modern science, or with both? Did Jesus’s followers accurately represent his teachings? Which Greek manuscript families represent the earliest form of the New Testament text? Are the Roman Catholics, the Greek Orthodox, or the Protestants right when it comes to their understanding of the boundaries of the Biblical canon (i.e., which books should be included

57 The Urantia Book (Chicago, IL: Urantia Foundation, 1955), 588, 373, 1277.
60 Ibid., [180].
in the Bible)? Should we prefer the Hebrew or the Greek text of the Old Testament as more authoritative? Can we really know what this or that ancient Hebrew/Greek word really meant in its ancient context? Were particular books included in the Bible written by the authors traditionally attached to them? Did the Apostle Paul write Hebrews, for example, or did the same John write both the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation, or were there perhaps two different Johns, as certain early Church writers suspected?61 Careful students of the Bible regularly face questions like these from time to time as they try to better understand their Bibles.

But these are not the kind of questions the Book of Mormon poses. There we are faced with an entirely different set of questions. Given that the book is written with perfect hindsight, there is no need to wonder whether Alma understood Nephi correctly. Since the entire Book of Mormon is written from the perspective of one who is totally familiar with the King James Bible, there is no question of earlier authors being misrepresented by later. As we have seen the name Jesus Christ is already revealed by the time of the building of the Tower of Babel and all the details of his life, death, and resurrection, fully revealed long before he arrives on the scene. As a result serious efforts to place the separate books within the Book of Mormon into their alleged ancient contexts lead to little and dubious results. Efforts at placing the whole against its nineteenth-century background, however, has proven much more fruitful for the simple reason that that is its true background. Similarly, its heavy reliance on the King James Bible makes it more productive to investigate the relationship of that text to the Book of Mormon, rather than, say, to the Dead Sea Scrolls, with which, as an early nineteenth-century production, the Book of Mormon has no relation.

Two different kinds of problems arising from dealing with two different kinds of books. The problems attending the Bible arise from the Bible’s being what it is. The problems attending the Book of Mormon arise from its pretending to be what it's not. The Book of Mormon is not another Bible; it is another Bible forgery, and therefore rejecting the Bible along with the Book of Mormon because they “have the same kind of problems” is simply absurd. Mark Hofmann, the famous forger of Mormon documents, also branched out on at least one occasion to try his hand at composing an Emily Dickinson poem, which he then used to produce a forgery in the poet’s own handwriting. The forgery eventually came up for auction at Sotheby’s and was sold to the library in Dickinson’s hometown of Amherst, Massachusetts for $24,150.62 Naturally much consternation followed the eventual discovery that the poem was a fake. How could an auction house of Sotheby’s reputation have been so careless as to present a faked Dickinson as real? Selby Kiffer, of Sotheby’s, could only say, that it had been “an extraordinarily good forgery,” even to the point that it used the “correct paper for the period and, the correct writing instrument for the period, the literary tone was quite good—and the imitation of the writing.”63 Still, even granting it was a good forgery didn’t put it in anybody’s mind on the same level of an original Emily Dickinson. Nor was anybody foolish enough to propose discarding real original Emily Dickinson poems as an appropriate response to somebody’s forging an Emily Dickinson poem. How is it less absurd, then, to jettison the Bible after losing faith in the Book of Mormon?

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61 Eusebius of Caesarea, for example, in his fourth century Ecclesiastical History 3.39.3 suggests that two different Johns wrote the two books.
November 2016: LDS lady in Utah:
I am almost done reading this book, "Starting at the Finish Line." Sooooo, perfect!!! Sooo good!!! Thank you for your recommendation to read it! 😊

I feel like God is revealing himself to me a bit at a time...probably all I can handle at once...already my mind is blown!! Wow!!! He really did ALL!!! My heart is overflowing with gratitude! Thank you, thank you, thank you again—for the role you played in bringing me to real truth!!! Hallelujah!! Praise God!!! I am free in Jesus!! I am free from the tyranny and bondage of man made “shoulds”!!!!

December 2016: Thank you to Sandra and all those at utlm. I am not LDS however my long time fiancé of 6 years was raised LDS and quit attending. . . . Being around his family of whom I greatly care about, I was very confused of things they spoke of so several months ago I began researching the history of modern day mormons and the history. I told my fiancé one day I’ll know more than you and last week I stunned him (he is well versed in literature and books). Big thank you to Sandra for her and Jerald’s teachings. Now I must learn to watch my tongue around them because they will be greatly offended and label me anti mormon. Listening to recordings and other materials I have also learned of more biblical teachings. . . again thank you.

October 2016: I, myself, left the church after graduating BYU-I[daho] just about a year ago. I have absolutely no doubt of its falsehood but I find myself wanting to help others open their eyes. It is difficult, as I can only imagine you know better than I, but I feel like truth and reason will eventually manifest through all of the cognitive dissonance. I feel like the average LDS member is simply oblivious, naive, and ignorant of the church’s history. I have experienced this by asking questions such as “Why was Joseph incarcerated in Carthage?” The following answers are always amusing and seldom even close to accurate. Thank you so much for all you have done to help people, such as myself.

October 2016: I had an easy time leaving the church, I said to myself, “I will never let my children go thru the guilt that I have felt.”

My entire [family] is totally LDS, I mean 200% . . . I admire your work, I know you receive much hatred, I believe that you touch many lives that you will never even know of.

I send you blessings and Praise to Him who saved us.

December 2016: Sandra this is T__ J____ (I am a Ukrainian who came by to buy a book on polygamy last Friday). It was so nice to visit with you! I feel so lucky that I found your ministry. It will help me in my transition out of Mormonism. Thank you.

January 2017: I discovered this website in my research of how to help my Mormon friends see the Light of Jesus. All I can really say is thank you. Thank you for making this website. Thank you for providing everyone with this knowledge.

February 2017: I am disturbed. The leaders are intelligent men. Most are leaders in their field. One was Vice President of Bank of America. One was a pilot for Lufthansa and a pilot instructor. They have to know what they are doing. I am a high school graduate but I uncovered so much on my little iPad. How can they continue to lie to millions? Don’t they fear God?

February 2017: Ms. Tanner, I grew up in the Netherlands in a strict LDS family. We sometimes heard about you, being portrayed as the evil anti-LDS machine. Well, I just wanted to thank you for all your work. It has helped me greatly! With admiration and respect.

February 2017: I appreciate all the work you have done exposing the errors of Mormonism, and envy the time and resources you have to do so living in Salt Lake City. I actually grew up in Salt Lake City and spent the first 20 years of my life in the Mormon faith. I am now 44, so it has been a long while since I studied my own way out of it. . . . [I] never removed my name from the records. My reason has always been that since they have my info and are able to track me down, it is a good opportunity to tell them I am no longer a part of it. Most are curious which is why I try to use it as a stepping stone. Some have called me all kinds of names, which I’m sure you have heard as well. However, I am at a point where I am considering removing my name. . . . If I were to write a letter, I have no idea who the Bishop may be or even where my records are at this point. . . . I appreciate any insight you can offer pertaining to this. Thanks again for your effort and material you make available.

[For help resigning from the LDS Church, go to www.utlm.org/onlineresources/nameremovalletter.htm]

February 2017: Hello Sandra,
You helped me when I wrote to you about 1991. I want to express my gratitude for a changed, very happy and content life.

Back then I was studying for an MBA in Canada. As I studied Organizational Behaviour I immediately identified how the church controls and manipulates its members. The page with a descriptive list of such organizations jumped out at me.
I was a Temple Recommend holder, married to an active LDS High Priest with four active children. For years I had concerns with the temple ordinances and temple garments. Whenever I mentioned my concerns at Bishop interviews I was told to attend the Temple more regularly, fast and pray.

As I studied this university course I became more uneasy about the church especially since I already had doubts about church history during the four years I taught the Gospel Doctrine class. I explained my concerns to a Religion professor and asked if he knew how I could find objective, well researched information regarding LDS history that wasn’t just hateful anti-Mormon literature. He recommended I contact you, which I did. You wrote a supportive letter and over the following months I read a few of your books.

Fortunately when I told my husband I couldn’t sit through another church meeting he said he had already come to the same conclusion but for different reasons. Much to my surprise three of our children were happy to leave the church. We sent an exit letter and totally cut our ties with the church.

It wasn’t easy dealing with our LDS family and friends. Like you we received hate letters.

After moving to Australia I attended a Stake conference with family. I could hardly sit and listen as young people were being taught how to behave in a guilt promoting talk. It’s the only time I’ve attended the LDS church since I left except for a wedding and funeral.

In those pre Internet days you and Gerald were a blessed resource for people like me. I still enjoy listening to you on YouTube. I’m happy that so much of the truth is now on-line, people are writing books, there are blogs, podcasts, ex-Mormon groups and lots of people are leaving the church. I wish my extensive Mormon family would leave.

I’m so grateful to you. If I hadn’t left the church it’s possible my children would have gone on missions and/or married in the church. When I left I felt an urgency as I didn’t want the church carried into another generation. My fourth child officially left the church when he dated (later married) the daughter of an Anglican Church minister.

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

February 2017: I owe to you and your late husband Jerald Tanner much of what I’ve learned about the “untruth” of the LDS church. Your book “The Changing World of Mormonism” was INDEED a terrific eye-opener to me. I shed tears, I suffered a great deal! But I am thankful to both of you for the freedom my immediate family and I enjoy nowadays. It’s been seven years I’ve officially renounced my membership in the church. It’s been indeed the VERY BEST decision I’ve ever taken in my life, after 30 long years! Thank you for your book!

[The Changing World of Mormonism, is posted on our web site: utlm.org/onlinebooks/changecontents.htm]

March 2017: Great talking with you the other day. I’ve downloaded M.T. Lamb’s book [The Golden Bible] and am going through that—very interesting.

I did some math [on the weight of the Book of Mormon plates, see www.utlm.org/newsletters/no105.htm ] and I thought I’d share it with you.

If the plates were tumbaga as some have claimed, and realizing that the ratios for tumbaga varied widely, at a ratio of 77% copper and 23% gold, they’d still weigh as much as your 100% lead plates that you have. Further, the lifting of your plates while certainly difficult, is made somewhat easier by the wood base under which one can place their hands and get a good grip. By themselves, the plates would be much harder to manage—finger strength becomes an issue in holding them.

Anyway, just thought I’d share that math with you. :)

Thanks again for your time the other day.

March 2017: In my self-righteous zeal, and fear instilled in me by the church to not seek out “anti-Mormon” materials, all my life, I used to avoid your site like the plague, believing it was anti-Mormon of the worst degree. How wrong I was! I find myself watching Youtube videos of interviews with you, as well as visiting your site often.

I can’t imagine the courage it has taken for you and your husband to have stepped up to the plate to make materials available to Mormons who are seeking truth. It makes me mad that I have been lied to by my church, all my life, in some degree or other. Where was the honesty, the integrity, the holding to God’s word?

It makes me mad that I brought up my nine children to believe in the Book of Mormon, sent two on foreign missions, and served in many capacities in the church and often nearly killing myself off in fulfilling callings.

Service opportunities and such, in the church, made me who I am today, and it wasn’t all trial and tribulation. But I see that even such good things we do, do not buy our way into heaven. So many years of constantly wondering if this or that “good” thing I did would get God’s notice and earn me points. How vain I have been.

I’m grateful for the thorough documentation you and other historians have done on Mormonism. There is no doubt in my mind that I have been, as it says in the South Pacific movie, “carefully taught”—another gospel Paul warned against doing if an angel should come and deliver other than what Christ taught and gave us. It is obvious that an angel did come that delivered another gospel, with another way to heaven by our own efforts of our own fleshly works instead of softened hearts with Christ’s law of love written on them.
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This October the LDS Church celebrated its 187th Semiannual Conference without 90-year-old president Thomas S. Monson in attendance. Monson, who was appointed to the council of Twelve Apostles in 1963, became the sixteenth president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 2008. After a couple of years of deteriorating health, it was announced on May 23, 2017, that “Because of limitations incident to his age, President Monson is no longer attending meetings at the Church offices on a regular basis. He communicates and confers with his counselors on matters as needed.”

Many people are surprised to learn that upon Monson’s death the office of prophet/president will pass to 93-year-old Russell M. Nelson, the senior apostle. But why not appoint a younger man? The answer to this requires a bit of digging into LDS church history.

During Joseph Smith’s lifetime there were a number of possible successors to the office of president. Historian D. Michael Quinn observed “by the summer of 1844 [following the death of Joseph Smith] there was no explicit outline of presidential succession in print.”

Part of the problem was that through the 1830s and early 1840s Joseph Smith had rearranged his leadership offices and designated various leaders as his successor. With no clear instructions as to a successor to Smith, many laid claim to the title due to either importance of their particular office or special ordination.

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3 Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith-History 1:19 (Intellectual Reserve Inc. [LDS Church], Salt Lake City: 2013).
4 David Whitmer, An Address to All Believers in Christ (Richmond, Missouri: 1887), p. 12.
6 Book of Commandments, ch. XXII, 1833, p. 45; Doctrine and Covenants, sec. 21.
While today’s Mormonism has a well-developed hierarchal system, with a president/prophet and two counselors who oversee twelve apostles and dozens of Seventies, such was not the case at the beginning. In the Articles and Covenants, dated June of 1830, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, a former rod worker and one of the Book of Mormon witnesses, were appointed apostles and elders, sharing jointly in directing the fledgling church. The church minutes for June 9, 1830, show that the church offices were elders, priests and teachers, following the pattern laid out in the Book of Mormon.

Soon Hiram Page, a former money-digger and one of the eight witnesses to the Book of Mormon, started claiming revelations through his own seer stone, thus presenting a rival to Smith’s authority. This led to Smith issuing a revelation in September of 1830 that only Joseph Smith was to receive revelations for the church “for he receiveth them even as Moses.” The revelation goes on to instruct Oliver Cowdery to inform Hiram Page “that those things which he [Hiram] hath written from that stone are not of me, and that satan deceiveth him.”

In 1830 there was no concept of a First Presidency with two counselors, or the Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthood. These ideas developed over the next few years. D. Michael Quinn explains:

A closer look at contemporary records indicates that men were first ordained to the higher priesthood over a year after the church’s founding. No mention of angelic ordinations can be found in original documents until 1834-35. Thereafter accounts of the visit of Peter, James, and John by Cowdery and Smith remained vague and contradictory.

The distance between traditional accounts of LDS priesthood beginnings and the differing story of early documents points to retrospective changes made in the public record to create a story of logical and progressive development. For example, as now published in Doctrine and Covenant 68:15 a revelation of November 1831 referred to “the Melchizedek Priesthood.” However, the original text of the 1831 revelation did not contain that priesthood phrase which was a retroactive addition in 1835.

Quinn further explains “The traditional account of church origins, which assumes that Smith encountered Peter, James, and John sometime in 1829, also claims that at the church’s organization in April 1830 those ordained ‘elders’ were ordained on that date and received the Melchizedek priesthood. A closer look at the evidence demonstrates that they were in fact re-ordained [later] and that no concept of higher priesthood existed. The office of elder was at first associated with what would come to be known as the lesser (or Aaronic) priesthood.”

The ordination of the original LDS apostles occurred in 1835, five years after the founding of Smith’s church. Although their ranking was done by age, the current seniority system, based on when they were ordained an apostle, developed after Joseph Smith’s death. However, in the early church simply being an apostle was not considered the path to become president of the church.

The changing claims of priesthood, apostleship, High Councils and First Presidency over the fourteen years Joseph Smith led the church left the Mormons with a number of competing claims of authority after Smith’s death on June 27, 1844.

**Possible Successors to Smith**

### 1. Oliver Cowdery

At the founding of Joseph Smith’s church in 1830 Oliver Cowdery, Smith’s main scribe in the production of the Book of Mormon, was called to be Second Elder and Smith was to be First Elder, as recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 20:2-3. This placed Cowdery next to Smith in authority.

As others were given various callings in the coming years, Cowdery’s position became less clear. But on December 5, 1834, Smith reaffirmed Cowdery as standing next to him in authority. D. Michael Quinn explained “Smith conferred on him [Cowdery] an office which further complicated the lines of authority. On 5 December 1834 Smith ordained Cowdery to the office of assistant president of the high priesthood to assist in presiding over the Church, and bearing the keys

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8 Book of Commandments, 1833, ch. XXIV, p. 48; revised Doctrine and Covenants, sec. 20.
11 E. D. Howe, Mormonism Unveiled, (1834), Statement by Ezra Booth, pp. 215-216.
14 Quinn, Mormon Hierarchy: Origins, p. 27; also see Gregory A. Prince, Power From On High: The Development of Mormon Priesthood, (Signature Books, Salt Lake City: 1995), chapter 1.
of this kingdom.’ Cowdery’s understanding was that he would not be subordinate to the current first and second counselors.”16 However, with Cowdery’s apostasy in 1838, his claim to succession was no longer considered valid.

2. SIDNEY RIGDON

The concept of a First Presidency gradually developed with the 1832 appointment of Sidney Rigdon, former preacher, and Jesse Gause, former Shaker, as counselors to Joseph Smith. After Gause left the church, Smith reorganized the presidency in 1833 and appointed Frederick G. Williams to replace Gause. This also required changing the name of Gause to Williams in the D&C sec. 81 revelation. Sidney Rigdon was appointed to be “equal with thee [Joseph Smith] in holding the keys of this last kingdom.”17

Rigdon was not always in agreement with Smith, but by 1841 his standing seemed to improve. In June of 1841 the Times and Seasons reported that “Sidney Rigdon has been ordained a Prophet, Seer and Revelator,” reinforcing his position as first counselor to Smith.18 However, the next year Rigdon and Smith were once again in conflict due to Smith’s overtures to Rigdon’s daughter, Nancy, to marry him in polygamy.19 His standing improved when Smith decided to run for President of the United States in the next election and Rigdon was chosen as his running mate. In fact, the reason Rigdon was not in Illinois when Smith was killed was because of Rigdon’s need to establish residency in Pennsylvania in order to qualify as Smith’s running mate.20

When Rigdon arrived in Nauvoo, over a month after Smith’s murder, the church leaders were still in a quandary as to who should lead the church. Rigdon, as assistant president, felt he was the rightful successor. There followed a number of meetings with Rigdon and Brigham Young presenting their claims to the leadership. However, Smith’s inner circle feared Rigdon’s opposition to their secret polygamist activities.

Richard Van Wagoner observed “On the public record, Smith and the Quorum of the Twelve denied polygamy.

At the time of Smith’s death, he and at least twenty-nine other known polygamous males in Nauvoo, including the Twelve, had married a total of 114 women. Many more would contract polygamous marriages before the main body of Saints trekked west. . . . Rigdon viewed spiritual wifery and the smokescreen that concealed it as reprehensible, less to do with God’s work than the affairs of men.”21

3. DAVID WHITMER

In July of 1834 David Whitmer, one of the three Book of Mormon witnesses, was appointed by Smith to be President of the High Council in Missouri. Four years later Joseph Smith gave “a history of the ordination of David Whitmer, which took place in July 1834, to be a leader or a prophet to this Church, which (ordination) was on conditions that he (J. Smith jr) did not live to God himself.”22

D. Michael Quinn observed:

Whitmer’s ordination as successor was known to only a few in Missouri, and news of this most important appointment was not published in the Church periodical at the headquarters in Kirtland, Ohio. The fact that Whitmer was excommunicated from the Church in 1838 for apostasy removed his name as a possible successor, but did not alter an important development in the succession question. Joseph Smith had established precedent for ordaining men to the highest offices of the Church without prior common consent and without immediate public knowledge.23

After Smith’s death in 1844, William E. McLellin, former member of the twelve apostles, appealed to David Whitmer to embrace his right to succeed Joseph Smith based on the 1834 calling. Quinn tells that on September 6, 1847, “William E. McLellin and Book of Mormon witnesses John Whitmer, Jacob Whitmer, and Hiram Page ordain David Whitmer as ‘Prophet, Seer, and Revelator, and Translator’ for the church organized at Kirtland in February.”24 This splinter group, named after the original 1830 Church of Christ, only lasted a few years.

17 Doctrine and Covenants, 1835, sec. LXXIX, p. 208; D&C sec. 81. See heading to sec. 81 for information on the name change from Jesse Gause to Frederick G. Williams. Also LXXXIV, pp. 214-215, dated March, 1833; D&C, sec. 90:6.
18 Times and Seasons, vol. 2, p. 431, (June 1, 1841), Nauvoo, Ill.
19 Quinn, Mormon Hierarchy: Origins, p. 162.
21 Van Wagoner, Sidney Rigdon, p. 369.
23 Quinn, BYU Studies, p. 194.
Then in the 1870s Whitmer tried to restart the Church of Christ. While David Whitmer maintained his testimony of the Book of Mormon throughout his life, he never rejoined the LDS Church. And until his death in 1888 he believed Smith had gone astray shortly after the publishing of the Book of Mormon:

If you believe my testimony to the Book of Mormon, if you believe that God spake to us three witnesses by his own voice, then I tell you that in June, 1838, God spake to me again by his own voice from the heavens and told me to “separate myself from among the Latter Day Saints, for as they sought to do unto me, so it should be done unto them.”

Since David Whitmer had left the main body of Mormons in 1838 and never returned, his earlier ordination was considered null and void.

4. Joseph Smith III

Joseph Smith III was only eleven years old at the time of his father’s death. While some believed he was the heir apparent, his age kept people from pressing the succession claim until he came of age. Historian Roger Launius explained:

From the perspective of the Reorganized Church, there can be little doubt that Joseph Smith Jr. believed in the right of lineage, as “Old Testament” an idea as ever there was, and numerous statements abound about this particular aspect of his belief system. An 1835 revelation to Joseph Smith Jr. proclaimed lineal priesthood: “The order of this priesthood was confirmed to be handed down from father to son, and rightly belongs to the literal descendants of the chosen seed, to whom the promises were made.” In 1841 he announced another revelation making a direct statement about the favored position of his own descendants: “In thee and in thy seed shall the kindred of the earth be blessed.”

Launius continued on his blog:

Perhaps no issue has been more controversial than presidential succession in the Latter-day Saint movement. Joseph Smith III, son of the Mormon founder, buttressed his ascension to the presidency of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in 1860 through several methodologies. One of those, and a powerful one for many Mormons of the nineteenth century, was Smith’s legitimacy based on lineal priesthood succession.

5. David Smith-youngest son of Joseph

According to D. Michael Quinn:

Smith’s intentions for his unborn son David rivaled his succession ordinances for Joseph III. Brigham Young said that in the spring of 1844 Smith told him: “I shall have a son born to me, and his name shall be called David; and on him, in some future time, will rest the responsibility that now rests upon me.” Young added that Smith made this statement to Young and several others.

Quinn also explained that in “April 1844 Smith prophesied that his son would succeed him and would become ‘president and king of Israel.’ The child was named David. Needless to say, he never became ‘president and king of Israel.’ Nor did he succeed his father. He died in 1904 at the age of 60, after spending the last 27 years of his life in an insane asylum.”

Joseph’s widow, Emma Smith, raised her sons with the firm assertion that their father never taught or practiced polygamy, thus making them unacceptable to the Utah Mormons.

6. Hyrum Smith, Joseph’s brother

Due to Oliver Cowdery’s apostasy in 1838 he lost his calling as Assistant President. The position was not filled until January of 1841 when Joseph appointed Hyrum Smith, his older brother to be Assistant President:

And from this time forth I appoint unto him [Hyrum] that he may be a prophet, and a seer, and a revelator unto my church, as well as my servant Joseph; That he may act in concert also with my servant Joseph; and that he shall receive counsel from my servant Joseph, who shall show unto him the keys whereby he may ask and receive, and be

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25 Whitmer, An Address to All Believers in Christ, p. 27.
27 Launius Blog.
crowned with the same blessing, and glory, and honor, and priesthood, and gifts of the priesthood, that once were put upon him that was my servant Oliver Cowdery.31

Joseph Smith’s revelation also announced Hyrum’s calling as “Patriarch” to fill the vacancy left by the death of Joseph Smith’s father. However, Hyrum’s death at Carthage changed everything. Quinn observed:

On 15 June 1844, less than two weeks before his death, Hyrum Smith signed an announcement as “HYRUM SMITH, President of the Church.” A few months later, Brigham Young remarked “Did Joseph ordain any man to take his place? He did. Who was it? It was Hyrum, but Hyrum fell a martyr before Joseph did. If Hyrum had lived he would have acted for Joseph.”32

7. SAMUEL H. SMITH, JOSEPH’S BROTHER

Samuel Smith was one of the eight witnesses to the Book of Mormon, a founding member of the LDS Church and early missionary. William Clayton, Joseph Smith’s trusted secretary, recorded in his 1844 journal the various meetings by the top leadership as they tried to resolve the succession question after Joseph and Hyrum’s murder. Then on July 12, 1844, Clayton wrote “Joseph has said that if he and Hyrum were taken away Samuel H. Smith would be his successor.”33 However, there was opposition to appointing a successor until all of the apostles were convened in Nauvoo. Samuel’s efforts to press his claim ended on July 30, 1844, a month after Joseph and Hyrum’s death, when he became violently ill and died.

Some in the Smith family felt he had been poisoned to stop his appointment as president of the church. Quinn explains: “William [Smith] eventually concluded that Apostle Willard Richards asked [Hosea] Stout to murder Samuel H. Smith. The motive was to prevent Samuel from becoming church president before the full Quorum of Twelve arrived.34 Quinn went on to speculate that “Samuel was dead, possibly a murder victim of the succession crisis.”35

8. WILLIAM MARKS

While William Marks, president of the Nauvoo High Council, did not make a claim to be Smith’s successor, Joseph’s widow Emma pushed for him to be appointed trustee in trust for the church. With her husband dead she found herself in dire financial straits. Historian John S. Dinger explains:

When Joseph died, his financial situation was not sound. It was difficult to determine what property and debts were Joseph’s and what were the church’s . . . .

Just as Emma feared, the church owned the assets, while she was liable for the debts. Because she was left with a young family and was pregnant, it is no surprise she pushed for leadership whom she could trust and who could help her out of her financial mess.

Because Emma was also an ardent opponent of polygamy, any trustee she pushed for must be the same. In this view she had many allies. One was William Marks, who rejected the doctrine after hearing it officially taught on August 12, 1843, in a high council meeting.36

Dinger explains why Marks could have made a claim for leadership.

While Marks is not usually brought up today when discussing the succession “crisis,” he was initially one of the most likely options. First, he was one of the highest-ranking church leaders alive at the time. Joseph Smith revealed in 1835 that the high council of Zion (which was the Nauvoo High Council) was equal in authority to both the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles. However equal, the high council was the “cornerstone of Zion,” while the Twelve Apostles were a “traveling high council.” Thus, it could be argued that Marks should have presided in Nauvoo and the twelve in the periphery. Second, it could be argued that Marks’s standing in the Quorum of the Anointed was greater than that of other claimants. Marks was one of the first to be anointed (as was Brigham Young), but he was also the first non-Smith to receive his second anointing. Finally, Marks outranked all other claimants in the Council of Fifty, which used a seniority system according to William Clayton. Marks was the tenth most senior member of the council, outranking both Brigham Young and Sidney Rigdon.37

Those favoring the Twelve’s leadership gradually moved Marks out of authority, and raised questions about his loyalty. Then in December of 1844 the high council

31 D&C 124:91, pp. 94-95.
32 Quinn, Mormon Hierarchy: Origins, p. 213.
35 Quinn, Mormon Hierarchy: Origins, p. 213.
37 Dinger, JWHA Journal, pp. 15-16.
demanded he sign a document in support of the Twelve and opposing Rigdon’s claims to leadership. Even after this capitulation Marks continued to experience harassment and theft of property as rumors spread that he was trying to undermine the Twelve. He and his family fled Nauvoo in March of 1845 and eventually joined the Strangites, later affiliating with the RLDS Church in 1859.

9. JAMES J. STRANG

Thirty-year-old James J. Strang first encountered the Mormons in Wisconsin Territory during the summer of 1843. Then in February of 1844 he journeyed to Nauvoo, Illinois, to meet Joseph Smith. Historian William D. Russell observed:

Apparently Strang liked what he saw in Nauvoo, as he was baptized by the prophet on 25 February and was ordained an elder by Hyrum a week later . . . In the course of their discussions with Joseph Smith, James Strang and Aaron Smith suggested that a stake of Zion be established in the area of the White River in Wisconsin. Smith suggested that Strang investigate the situation and send him a report.

In May Strang sent his favorable report to Smith. Strang claimed that in response to his letter, Joseph Smith sent a letter appointing Strang as his successor. William D. Russell wrote:

According to Strang, Smith answered the letter on 18 June, ten days before his murder. Called by Strangites “the letter of appointment,” its postmark is of 19 June. Strang claimed to have received it at Burlington, Wisconsin, on 9 July, some twelve days after Smith’s death, but before word of his death had reached the Saints in Wisconsin. Considerable controversy ensued over this claim. . . . Brigham Young labeled the letter “a lie—a forgery—a snare.”

While Brigham Young had been a top leader in the LDS movement since the early 1830s and was head of the Twelve Apostles, he lacked the charisma of Strang and made no claim to special revelation. William D. Russell explains:

Baptized into the Mormon church by Smith himself only four months before the prophet’s death in June 1844, Strang was nonetheless able to make a believable claim that he was Joseph’s legitimate successor by producing a letter purported to be from Smith, by claiming a vision in which Smith ordained him, by publishing revelations which he had received, and by unearthing plates and translating them, reminiscent of Smith’s Book of Mormon. These were claims which Brigham Young could not make to buttress his assertion that he was Joseph’s legitimate successor.

The fact that Strang initially denounced polygamy helped to win over a number of prominent Mormons, including several from the Smith family, who did not accept Brigham Young’s claim. According to Russell, “His [Strang] biggest catches were William Smith, apostle and younger brother of the martyred leader; the prophet’s mother, Lucy Mack Smith; Apostle John E. Page; George Miller, who had been the presiding bishop at Nauvoo; and William Marks, president of the Nauvoo Stake.”

According to Robin Jensen:

Mormons did not join Strang simply because they rejected plural marriage, Brigham Young and the Twelve, or the way west, although part or all of the above were likely factors in their decision. In other words, Mormons were not simply looking for a negative reason to reject the leadership of the Twelve; they also were legitimately attracted to Strang’s version and interpretation of Mormonism.

While thousands joined Strang’s movement, there were many who left after he openly embraced the doctrine of polygamy in 1850. Russell explains, “Included in those who defected are some key leaders in the development of the Reorganized Church, including Jason W. Briggs, Zenas H. Gurley Sr., and Henry H. Deam.”

Strang died in 1856 without appointing a successor. His dying admonition was “for every man to take care of his family and do the best he could, till he found out what to do.” According to Vickie Cleverley Speek, “Strang’s death set up a succession void that would eventually cause most of his scattered flock to join Joseph Smith III’s Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (now known as the Community of Christ).”

38 Dinger, JWHA Journal, pp. 31-34.
39 Dinger, JWHA Journal, pp. 36-37.
41 Russell, Mormon Mavericks, p. 136.
42 Russell, Mormon Mavericks, p. 131.
43 Russell, Mormon Mavericks, p. 139.
45 Russell, Mormon Mavericks, p. 145.
47 Speek, Scattering of the Saints, p. 141.
10. Brigham Young

The two main contenders in Nauvoo for leadership after Smith’s death were Sidney Rigdon, the last surviving member of the First Presidency but who opposed plural marriage, and Brigham Young, president of the Twelve Apostles and husband to several secret plural wives. The struggle was much more than determining authority claims. Also at issue was whether or not one accepted Joseph Smith’s recent secret teachings on polygamy, Second Anointing, Council of Fifty, and the political Kingdom of God.48

Brigham Young, as president of the Council of Twelve, wisely sidestepped the issue of appointing a new prophet and directed attention to the authority of the Twelve to preside over the church after Smith’s murder. Mormons today assume the right of the Twelve to appoint the president, yet this was not the understanding at the time of Smith’s death. Under Joseph the Twelve had jurisdiction in the branches, which were outside the established areas of the church, and the Presidency and High Council had oversight of the stakes.49

According to Quinn:

If written revelation alone governed the post-martyrdom situation, then the Quorum of Twelve had authority only over scattered branches of the church . . . Young rightly told Mormons in August 1844 that the Quorum of Twelve “stand next to Joseph,” but he did not remind them that the Nauvoo Stake high council also stood “next to Joseph.” At church headquarters before June 1844, no quorum or echelon of authority separated the First Presidency from the high council’s jurisdiction over Mormons.50

A First Presidency

Most Mormons today probably assume that the First Presidency, with a president and two counselors, overseeing the Twelve Apostles, was always the pattern. However, history shows that this hierarchal order was not established until Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards were voted in as the LDS First Presidency.53 This also helped set the precedence of appointing the next president of the church by apostolic seniority.

According to Quinn:

In reality since 1844 the organized First Presidency has always been an apostolic presidency. Since 1844 the senior apostle in rank within the Quorum of the Twelve, based first on age and later on length of service in the

For those attuned to this manifestation, it was a compelling sign that the apostles should lead the church. However, not everyone present at the August 1844 conference experienced this manifestation. About twenty people voted against the apostles. Most accepted the calm logic of the apostles without seeing a miraculous transfiguration of Young. Some voted for the apostles but had second thoughts later . . .

In August 1844 Latter-day Saints actually voted to sidestep the succession question. There were too many unresolved succession claims for various men to be the sole successor to Smith. The church membership simply voted to defer that question by turning to the Quorum of Twelve Apostles to “act in their place.”51

During the months following Smith’s death Sidney Rigdon, William Marks and James J. Strang were excommunicated, thus limiting their influence in the church.

Then on December 5, 1847, Brigham Young called a meeting of the apostles at Orson Hyde’s cabin in Iowa to formalize his position as President of the church. According to Gary James Bergera:

He [Brigham Young] wanted to resolve the thorny issue once and for all. In what proved to be a marathon meeting, any who had questioned the wisdom and necessity of forming a new First Presidency changed their minds. By meeting’s end the Twelve voted unanimously to sustain Young as president of the church and to allow him to organize a First Presidency and select his two counselors.52

The Vote

On August 8, 1844, a meeting was called in Nauvoo to hear the arguments for leadership. Rigdon and Young both addressed the members, each presenting their particular claim for oversight of the church. Rigdon put forward his right to govern based on personal revelation and his standing as the only survivor of the First Presidency. Young argued that the Twelve were the rightful leaders by rank and by steadfast service. As he spoke, some felt that he was transfigured and took on the appearance and sound of Smith, thus showing God’s approval of him.

52 Gary James Bergera, Conflict in the Quorum: Orson Pratt, Brigham Young, Joseph Smith (Signature Books, Salt Lake City: 2002), p. 64.
53 Quinn, Mormon Hierarchy: Origins, pp. 248-249.
quorum, has been president of the church. As Wilford Woodruff stated in a letter of 28 March 1887: “The President of the Twelve is really the President of the Church by virtue of his office as much while presiding over the Twelve Apostles as while presiding over his two counselors.” The church has experienced an unbroken apostolic interregnum since 1844.54

**Brigham Young’s Sons**

A seldom mentioned event in early Mormon history is Brigham Young’s ordination of three of his sons to be apostles. With the move to apostolic seniority according to date of ordination Brigham Young may have hoped that by ordaining his sons at an early age it would give them seniority among the apostles and hopefully set the stage for one of them to advance to church president.

According to Todd Compton, “On November 22, 1855, eleven-year-old John Willard Young, son of Brigham Young received his endowments, undoubtedly accompanied by his father. . . . following the endowment—President Young placed his hands on the head of his son and ordained him an apostle. . . . About eight years later, Brigham Young ordained two more of his sons [Joseph Angell Young and Brigham Young Jr.] apostles in a private ceremony.”55 In 1864 they were set apart “as assistant counselors to the First Presidency.” However, they were not placed into the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles at the time of their ordination or calling as assistants to the First Presidency. This later raised the question of Brigham Young Jr’s seniority in the Twelve—should he be ranked by the date of his ordination as an apostle or by the later date of his entrance into the actual Quorum? In 1900 this was resolved by ranking him according to his entrance into the Quorum, which put Joseph F. Smith, Joseph Smith’s nephew, ahead of him. Thus when Pres. Lorenzo Snow died in 1901 Joseph F. Smith became the next president instead of Brigham Young Jr., who died two years later.56

**Orson Pratt’s Problems with Seniority**

Two of the original apostles ordained in 1835, Orson Hyde and Orson Pratt, had problems with church leadership and were removed from their positions. During the late 1830s Hyde had a number of disagreements with the leaders and was put out of the Twelve for several months, but was reinstated in 1839.57

Orson Pratt’s problems centered around Joseph’s new teaching on polygamy. Sometime after Pratt’s return from his mission to England in 1841 his wife informed him that Joseph Smith had requested her to become his plural wife. This so outraged Pratt that he left the church. While some question the reliability of Sarah Pratt, it is clear that Joseph Smith did approach other apostles about marrying their wives. Pratt was dropped from the Quorum in 1842 and Amasa Lyman was ordained to take his place. Then in 1843 Pratt was reconciled with Smith, accepted plural marriage, and was reinstated to his former position as an apostle.58

Hyde and Pratt’s standing became an issue in 1875 when the leaders were trying to resolve issues of seniority. Should Hyde and Pratt be listed apostles by their date of original ordination or by the dates of their reinstatement? Many years before, Joseph Smith had stated that they were to be admitted back into the Quorum and given their original place in seniority. But now the apostles questioned this position. It was resolved by placing them in seniority according to the dates of their reinstatement.59 This meant that John Taylor would become president following Brigham Young’s death, rather than Orson Pratt.

**Seniority or Retirement**

Another challenge to senior apostolic succession came in 1970. According to Quinn:

In the last years of his presidency David O. McKay was so impaired by injury, stroke, and medication that five counselors were needed in the First Presidency. McKay’s biographer, a secretary to the First Presidency, notes that when the second-ranked apostle Joseph Fielding Smith became one of the extra counselors in October 1965, “he was then in his ninetieth year, [which] made it impossible for Elder Smith to carry much of the administrative load of the First Presidency.”60

By going to a pattern of apostolic seniority the church has gone from being led by relatively young men to senior citizens. Brigham Young was ordained as an apostle in 1835 at the age of 34, then at the age of 46 he became president of the church and was 76 when he died. There

57 Mecham, USU thesis, pp. 30-32
58 Mecham, pp. 33-35
59 Mecham, pp. 35-38
followed a three year gap in the office before John Taylor, at age 72, was formally appointed president. Since 1887, when Wilford Woodruff became the LDS president at age 82, most of the presidents of the LDS Church have been in their 80s or 90s.

At present the senior apostle, Russell M. Nelson, is 93 and appears to be in good health. Upon the death of President Monson, if the usual protocol is followed, Nelson will be the next president of the LDS Church. Apostle Nelson is evidently a firm believer in celestial plural marriage. Having outlived his first wife, his second marriage was solemnized in the temple. Thus, according to LDS doctrine he will be a polygamist in heaven.

If Nelson were to die before Monson then Dallin H. Oaks, age 85, would become the next president. He, like Nelson, outlived his first wife and remarried in the LDS temple, thus putting him in the same category as Nelson of looking forward to living polygamy in the hereafter.

Some have questioned the wisdom of continuing the current system. One way to keep apostolic seniority and yet allow for younger men to advance would be to offer aged apostles the option of retirement. However, there doesn’t seem to be any movement in this direction. In 1978 the church instituted a policy that gave emeritus status to the First Quorum of Seventy at the age of 70, but not to the apostles.

Upon the death of a church president his two counselors revert back to their seniority positions among the apostles and the next president will usually pick his two counselors from that list. With the death of LDS Apostle Robert D. Hales in October of 2017 and not counting President Monson, the ranks of the apostles have been reduced to thirteen. A new apostle, to replace Robert D. Hales, will be announced at the April 2018 LDS annual conference. Below is a listing of the current apostles according to seniority.

Russell M. Nelson, 93
Dallin H. Oaks, 85
M. Russell Ballard, 89
Jeffrey R. Holland, 76
Henry B. Eyring, 84
Dieter F. Uchtdorf, 77
David A. Bednar, 65
Quentin L. Cook, 77
D. Todd Christofferson, 72
Neil L. Andersen, 66
Ronald A. Rasband, 66
Gary E. Stevenson, 62
Dale G. Renlund, 65

Historian Todd Compton gave this summary of the development of apostolic succession:

It was not delivered to the church in final form, neatly packaged and immediately recognized. It developed through a system that might be called creative trial and error. It moved through four distinct stages, from (1) age within group in the original Twelve, to (2) age combined with group date of ordination/entrance in the Quorum, to (3) date of ordination (the standard throughout most of the nineteenth century), to, finally, at the dawn of the twentieth century, (4) date of entrance into the Quorum and public sustaining.

TRUSTEE IN TRUST

The LDS Church is registered as a corporation sole with the state of Utah. Under the name of Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, all of the LDS Church assets are under the control of the president of the church as Trustee in Trust. Unlike other churches, there are no voting members and no disclosure of its finances. While the appointment of a new president may not happen immediately on the death of the previous one, the transfer of Trustee in Trust of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will pass to the senior apostle. If someone besides the senior apostle were to be appointed president, the senior apostle would then transfer the office of Trustee in Trust to him.

Is It Biblical?

Traditionally, Mormon literature has emphasized that the true church would have twelve apostles and a first presidency patterned after the Gospels. However, we have seen that when Mormonism was founded in 1830 it did

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61 For a discussion of the controversies surrounding John Taylor’s appointment as president, see Conflict in the Quorum, Bergera, chapter thirteen.
65 Todd Compton, Dialogue, p. 131.
66 See photo of Utah State document on next page.
not have a First Presidency or twelve apostles. Instead, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were First and Second Elders over the church. The concept of a First Presidency presiding over the Twelve Apostles was a later addition. As for the Bible, Peter, James and John were part of the twelve, not in addition to them. Also, the original twelve were witnesses to the entire ministry of Jesus and his resurrection (Acts 1:20-26). When the apostles met after Jesus’ death they chose a replacement for Judas from two men who met this criteria. As the years passed there would no longer be someone who could qualify as a witness to all of Christ’s ministry. Although there were people other than the twelve who were referred to as apostles in the book of Acts, there is no indication that they were ever accepted as replacements for the original twelve. Indeed, there is no expectation recorded in the New Testament that a body of twelve apostles needed to be perpetuated after the original twelve had passed on.67

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**March 2017:** Thank you for your thoughtful answers to my questions. I am still struggling, I suppose to let go of my fleshy nature and trust in God. It’s so hard to have my mind renewed to get rid of the “self” control one I have basically had over my life and let go and let God reign. I basically need a mind transplant, after 60 years of seeing through the lens of Mormonism. Christian beliefs are ever so much more simple than the complicated ins and outs of Mormonism. Christian truths are so clear and simple, that it is hard for the indoctrinated Mormon mind to grasp that all we need is Christ, and let go all the pride and self righteous works that elevate which one has held to for so many years. Thank you for taking time to steer me in the right direction. God bless.

**March 2017:** I just finished reading “The Changing World of Mormonism” which I found in a used book store. Well done. It is amazing to me—the honesty and sincerity evident in the Tanners’ work.

I was raised in the Mormon religion. Parents, grandparents and three great grandparents were all LDS. My great-grandfather migrated to Utah from England in 1863 as a Mormon convert from England.

In 1981 I was excommunicated from the LDS church while serving in the US Army in Germany. I wasn’t attending church and the local elders came by, also military men, and questioned me. They wanted to know if I supported the then President Kimball as a “prophet.” “What has he prophesied?” I responded. “Tell me one thing and I’ll say he’s a prophet.” They got angry, had their bishop’s court and excommunicated me in absentia as my military duties did not allow me to attend.

So, all those generations—over a 100 years of Mormonism—down the drain because I had the audacity to ask, “What has he prophesied?” It was an honest question as my reading of the Bible told me a true prophet can be determined from a false one by what he has prophesied. But even to be a false prophet, one has to prophesy something. (Just like to be considered a composer he has composed music, one has to compose something.)

I just bring this to your attention because I admire the chutzpah the Tanners have shown in asking similar questions and going full steam ahead with this.

I went on to convert to Judaism while in the Army and became very active in synagogue life, studying Hebrew in order to pray and read the Torah in Hebrew. I am especially glad that the Tanners were able to find a new way of faith as well.

[Editor: Our book, *The Changing World of Mormonism*, can be read on our web site.]

**April 2017:** I have also enjoyed listening to you via podcast. I started the process of leaving the church two months ago. It has been a rough road, including a peace bond against a member who was trying to forcibly convince me to stay. I am still going through the process of having my name removed from the Church records and believe even though it seems like a long process it will be worth it. . . . I really just wanted to thank you, Sandra, you are a gift from God. It does not go unnoticed.

**April 2017:** As you know, I sent in my resignation from the church Saturday. I did it through Quitmormon.com, which makes it easier. I filled out the form, and had to really go through the facts once again before pushing the submit button. Once I did, I was at peace.

After that, I accepted Jesus as my Savior. I am so grateful for His bringing me out of the LDS church, to truth. However, there is a lot of deprogramming to be done.

I attended two services yesterday. I am visiting the different churches . . . Still have a few more to visit. . . . I have been working through 8-10 books at once, to get me out of mormonism. Interestingly, it was not the Bible that I used to pull me out, but the LDS teachings, through their scriptures, prophets, doctrine, foundation, with some Bible verses. Now I need to focus on learning God’s word.

**April 2017:** It is too late for Jerald and it may be too late for you. You have led thousands astray many people astray and you have been led astray by Lucifer/The Devil/Satan, your MASTER!

RETURN into the Faith of your ancestors. There was a prophet of God in your ancestry and rather than continue your “ministry,” cease to persecute The Church led by Jesus and escape from apostate Christianity, both the children (Protestants, most of them) and the mother of Harlots The Great and Abominable Church aka The Catholic Church, who keep their members from the truth or be led to serve Satan by you, the daughter of lies, who leads you away from the True Church by your MASTER THE DEVIL!; AFTER A FALSE CHRIST, and another gospel far from the original Christian church, restored by God and angels thru Joseph the prophet and others. As Jesus said, your creeds are an abomination to Him. What will you do when you learn the truth and are sent to join Jerald in Spirit Prison, along with Ed Decker and Walter Martin? While Joseph The Seer and Brigham The American Moses are in Paradise sending missionaries unto others such as those you blinded and not unto such as you and Jerald, who have willfully rebelled and might even be A Son and A Daughter of Perdition! Repent, repent and don’t procrastinate the day of your repentance until it is everlastingly too late. The 2nd Coming of Jesus and the so-called cults, LDS, 7th Day Adventists and Jehovah’s Witness will be caught up into the Clouds while you are LEFT BEHIND and the real cults such as the Tanners, the Deckers and the Martin’s are revealed from the house-tops!!!!!!!

RESPECTFULLY . . . The Prophet Joseph Smith’s cousin, Who unlike you, is TRUE to Jesus’ Church

**April 2017:** I’m 32, and I’m still an active member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. A few years ago, I started having questions because there were some aspects of our history that didn’t seem to add up for me. I found your interviews with John Dehlin (Mormon Stories) which I found tremendously fascinating. I was in Salt Lake in December 2015. I purchased a copy of “Mormonism: Shadow or Reality.”

**April 2017:** Thanks so much for this Website [www.UTLM.org]. Ever since the Mormon Church purchased a major shopping mall in Utah I have become a little disillusioned with the direction of the Church. I have been inactive for a while now while I try and figure things out.
Three main questions persist with me. Why now nearly 200 years later were we told about Joseph Smith's 40 wives? Also, Has the Latter Day Saints Church now become a Tycoon Money making Empire which is totally against Gods Principles? Finally, the Prophet Paul says we Man has never seen God nor Is It possible to see Him. But Joseph Smith claims he did see God.

May 2017: I live in _____ England, joined the LDS Church in 1978 because of nothing more than an impulsive reaction. The message of the restored church of Jesus Christ sounded great at the time. I never had a 'spiritual' witness as to the truth of The Book of Mormon. In fact, every time I read The Book of Mormon I was aware that it was a nonsense book. I will say that the essays you have written and put on your website have opened up a whole new critical analysis on many points arising from the "Black Hole" in The Book of Mormon. You will have worked out that I no longer have any allegiance to the LDS Church and its doctrines. Thank you for your superb website and thank you for your dedication and perseverance to the truth in the heartland of Mormonism.

May 2017: In 1962, my late wife and I lived in “Zion,” Independence, Missouri. We were active second generation members of RLDS.

We were visited by two LDS missionaries, who were skilled to work in Independence, where RLDS members were already believers in many Mormon basics.

Basically, they dwelt on Joseph Smith’s origin of certain doctrines, that are not used and are denied by RLDS. We went to the RLDS history library in Independence and asked for some early publications of the Nauvoo period, but we were denied the use of these and others. So we ordered Publications from the Huntington Library and from your early sources. We bought a microfilm reader and ordered a lot of film from yours and other locations.

In short, we did not accept LDS membership, and we promptly exited the RLDS, because of the cover-up and their denial of the obvious.

We were shunned by most our friends. But our trauma was not as acute as some LDS member exits. RLDS was Mormonism-lite, and shortly after our exit, we were transferred out of the area.

Thank you for your services and continue your good work.

May 2017: I think that your ancestors might be sad and disappointed that their sacrifices for you to have been in vain. The pioneers who died on the way were valiant to the end. You are wasting away the days of your probation. Repent before it is too late!!! . . .

You are clever like Korihor, the Anti-Christ of Book of Mormon fame. I hope you don’t end up like him. I wish you all the best, after all, you are my sister. Repent ye, repent ye, for the day of reckoning is nigh and it may very well be in my lifetime or maybe even yours as well. Surely you do not want to be left behind, like those who will not heed the revelations about the Second Coming of our Savior, even Jesus Christ given in The Bible, The Book of Mormon and the teachings of each of the prophets of Jesus’ Latter Day Saints, in this, The Church of Jesus Christ.

May 2017: I didn’t see your stated compilation [on our web site]. But whatever doctrinal point of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints that you find contrary to your personal biblical interpretation, that is your prerogative, but you should move on with your life!

We only repeat what we believe The Savior stated to Joseph Smith, specifically as to which church to join when teenager Joseph was searching to join one of the existing Christian churches of his day, namely:

“I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: “they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.” [LDS Pearl of Great Price]

So, one asks sincerely if The Lord spoke these words to Joseph. The answer comes depending on the profound sincerity and intention to learn of the petitioner. This message itself reveals that The Savior of the world is not happy with false creeds (not its members) that misrepresent Him and His doctrine.

May 2017: Thank you for your dedication to biblically attack every aspect of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints has embedded in it the mentality of “I’m right you’re wrong,” which is the message and ultimate goal of your website.

What you should espouse is personal sincere scripture study and sincere prayer and let the Spirit guide! This Spirit never leads the children of men to attacks and condemnation of others. I believe you already knew this!

May 2017: I have greatly admired the work you have selflessly done to bring the truth and the light of Christ to so many. You have been instrumental in helping me find the courage to altogether leave the LDS church. . . . My parents joined the church in Ireland and like many emigrated from Belfast to Canada . . . I grew up in the church, was married in the Salt Lake Temple, raised my five children in the church and held numerous callings, including gospel doctrine teacher and member of the high priest’s presidency. The usual. . . . I became acquainted with the work of Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Fawn Brodie, Richard Bushman, Michael Quinn, Dan Vogel, and Grant Palmer to mention a few.

Sandra, one might think that my faith crises would cause me a great deal of sadness and a feeling of loss. However, because the example of people like you, those who have left the church and discovered the true Christ; it has been a positive thing. . . . May God continue to bless you and keep you.

June 2017: After spending 2012-2013 investigating the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I found my faith in Christ. I stepped away from the church knowing Jesus was more than a brother and so much more satisfying than all the romanticized
proclamations, doctrine, or prophecies of the LDS church. . . .
Your ministry is one of the first resources I found as I questioned
my faith. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

**June 2017:** You probably don’t remember me but we met at your
book store back in Dec. . . . My wife and I have been lifelong
temple going Mormons. We raised our four kids to be faithful
Latter Day Saints. Our oldest daughter just returned from her
mission earlier this year and she is still strong in her faith with
the lds church.

Anyway to my story. Today we attended two services one
Christian and the other lds. The only reason we went to the lds
church was because our daughter asked us to attend her friends
mission homecoming talk. What I found interesting was the
Christian service was about Christ’s final words and Him paying
our sin debt in full. There is nothing we can add to what He did
for us. We learned that we can’t earn our way or contribute to
what He did for us. In the lds service this elder gave his talk
and shared a story about how we must do our part and endure
to the end. Basically saved after all we can do. He went on to
say that whatever we don’t get done Jesus will do the rest. But
we must do our best.

I’m so thankful to have found God’s grace. It was an interesting
comparison today. We are still learning every day and it is
remarkable to us that the differences are so clear. I thank you
and others in this movement for your knowledge and resources
that are provided. I don’t think I could have made this transition
without them. When I first started to question Mormonism I was
well on my way to becoming agnostic. I praise God for showing
me the way.

**June 2017:** I’m new to biblical Christianity but I am so grateful
to learn about the true God. In January I was a very faithful and
active super-mom. Then I confronted my husband when I saw he
was collecting very old books on Mormon history and doctrine.
I had always thought our relationship was pretty close to perfect
and completely honest. As it turned out, he had learned years
ago about the truth of Mormonism but was too afraid to confront
me because I was so incredibly invested and genuinely thought
I would leave him over it. I was floored and upset, both that he
“lost his testimony” and that he would hide something so big
from me. Of course I’d never leave him. So out of respect I
heard him out.

It was so painful and confusing to hear what he was saying.
Hours and hours per night after the kids went to bed, for at least a
week. My brain at first would not let anything sink in. I rationalized
it all away because that’s what I was trained to do, until one
night I just broke and had an embarrassing core meltdown. For
months the issues paralyzed and consumed me. I was less of the
wife and mom than I should have been. My mind was always
elsewhere. I cried and prayed and read . . . During this ordeal
my sweet husband would ask me, “would you rather not have
known?” And though I was never bitter toward him my answer
was consistently “yes.” I was happy and familiar with life as a
Mormon. And now it’s all gone. I didn’t mean to hurt him with
my answer but being honest is a big deal to me, so there it was.

But today is a very big day for me. This is the text I sent
to my wonderful husband. “When I thought I was happy as a
Mormon, now I am both happy and free. Being healed by my
savior through his love as I really come to know him and his
teachings. I can’t get enough of the bible. I feel so clear. There is
no longer a shelf that I put contradictory teachings of the gospel
on. Now I follow the pure gospel of Jesus.”

**June 2017:** Thank you so much for teaching truth in regards to the
Mormon Church. And, I thank God you know Jesus Christ. After
five months of requesting my name be taken off the membership
rolls it is finally completed! I celebrate this! More importantly
I celebrate the true Jesus and His love for me. Now I attend a
Bible and Christ believing and teaching church. Thank you for
your help and being a blessing to me.

**June 2017:** I met you in July of 2016. I drove from ______
to your bookstore. When I arrived you were in a meeting with
two gentlemen. You asked me how you could help me and I
told you in front of them I had just finished listening to your
Mormon Stories podcast. I was unsure why I was there in your
bookstore other than I knew I had to meet you for myself and
I had found for myself the history of the church wasn’t what I
thought it was. The two gentlemen smiled almost knowingly as
if they understood very well what was happening to me.

You spent the next hour or so answering all questions I had
about the Mormon church. You answered until I said I was
done. I believe you would have sat with me till the evening had
I asked for it.

Since our visit much has occurred. Much of it has to do with
the impression upon meeting you. You were the first ex-mormon
I met. You are more genuine than all the local and the few general
leaders I have met all put together.

Since this time I began a sacrament-only attendance in
September of 2016, I stopped attending church all together in
November, and I resigned my membership in March of this year.
I sent in my paperwork to quitmormon.com on my birthday,
______. Best present ever. I simply want to thank you for the
part you played in freeing me from a real estate corporation.
Thank you for your time that day.

**July 2017:** I remember very clearly the first time I saw your book,
[Mormonism] Shadow or Reality, Sandra. I was in the library
of the Presbyterian church downtown. I was with a friend and I
started reading and I kept saying, “Is this true?” It’s the first time
all of my bad feelings about Mormonism were vindicated. I was
raised Mormon but hated it. Until I saw your book I always felt
guilty—like there was something wrong with me.

**July 2017:** I would like to inform you that the Church of Jesus
Christ of Latter-day Saints has actively renounced polygamy
and does not practice it and hasn’t for more than a hundred
years. Though it does say it in what we call the Doctrines and
Covenants, we do not believe it to be as correct as the Book of
Mormon. Even though there are still sects of the church that
still practice it, the church has said many times that they are not
part of the church.

I would also ask you politely to please take down the section
you play in your site that describes temple ordinances in detail. We believe
them to be very sacred. Out of respect, we do not talk about
them publicly.

Thank you for reading my feedback and (hopefully) making
changes to show your unbiased view on the church.

**September 2017:** We were out at the prison last evening . . . and
an older inmate said that he became a believer (about 10 years
ago . . .) after seeing literature from Utah Lighthouse ministries!
(he had been LDS for many years . . .)
October 2017: I’m an Englishman who was brought up LDS but left Mormonism and became Christian in the late 90s, in the early days of internet outreach to Mormons. Your website and other materials, along with the support of Luke Wilson at Mormons in Transition (irr.org/mit) went a long way to guide me out of Mormonism and into faith in Jesus. For this, I thank you and praise God! It led to some difficult times, being the first of my family to confront these issues openly with my believing parents and it still can be uncomfortable twenty years later! But I know that I made the right choice, thanks to the work of you and others with the same heart to share real Christianity with Mormons (as well as the truth about LDS history).

At the age of 20, in 1998, having stopped believing in Mormonism and becoming a Christian a year earlier, I made my one and only trip to the USA and visited Utah and Wyoming. Obviously, I took the time to visit your bookstore and I bought a copy of *No Man Knows My History* (which I had to sneakily pass on to my brother because he had wanted a copy!) I’m sure you were in the store but I didn’t know for sure that it was you at that time. Now, having a better understanding of how your life of bringing truth to Mormons has gone, I wish I had stopped to talk to you properly, rather than just to pay for the book!! E-mailing you today is the next best thing I can do, nearly 20 years later!

So thank you for the work you and Jerald have done all these years. Who knows, I may have lived a life tied to the demands of the “God of Mormonism” otherwise! I admire your passion for getting the truth out to Mormons and for the life of service you have offered.

October 2017: I will put your name on the prayer role [of the LDS temple].

October 2017: Some years back, my life was changed after reading a Master Outline of the New Testament AND one of your books [I was married to a Mormon at the time], *The Changing World of Mormonism*. It is the most underlined book in my collection.

October 2017: I want to thank you, the more you bash the lds church the more I know it’s true. You are funny.

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**APOSTLES AND SEVENTIES DISCIPLINED SINCE 1900**

**John W. Taylor:** Ordained apostle, age 25, 1884, resigned 1905, excommunicated 1911, died 1916, blessings restored posthumously 1965. Taylor was the son of LDS President John Taylor, third president of the LDS Church.

Both Taylor and Matthias F. Cowley were forced to resign in 1905 due to their continued practice and support of polygamy. “From 1900 until the disposition of the Smoot case in 1907, the Mormon question was again before the nation’s eyes. This burst of renewed inquiry was to reveal that not only had polygamous cohabitation continued but, more disturbing, the performance of new polygamous marriages, including some by apostles, had taken place as well.”

**Matthias F. Cowley:** Ordained apostle, age 39, 1897, resigned 1905, priesthood suspended 1911, restored 1936, died 1940. His son, Matthew Cowley, became an apostle in 1945.

(See John W. Taylor entry.)

**Richard R. Lyman:** Ordained apostle, age 47, 1918, excommunicated 1943, rebaptized 1954, died 1963.

Lyman evidently entered into a secret plural marriage. “This is first plural marriage of current general authority since 1905.” Son of Apostle Frances M. Lyman and his polygamist wife, Clara C. Callister.

**George P. Lee:** Sustained First Quorum of Seventy, age 32, 1975, excommunicated 1989, died 2010.

He was the first Native American to be made a Seventy. Lee charged the LDS authorities with being “vain men bent on dislodging Indians from their rightful place in Mormon theology.” He was later charged with sexual abuse of a minor. He also taught the doctrine of polygamy.

**Paul H. Dunn:** Sustained in Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy, age 52, 1976-1980, named emeritus General Authority in 1989 after being censured for telling false/exaggerated stories in his sermons. (See free book offer on back page.)

According to the *Deseret News* Dunn wrote, “They have censured me and placed a heavy penalty upon me. I accept their censure and the imposed penalty, and pledge to conduct my life in such a way as to merit their confidence and full fellowship.” Church spokesman Don LeE’vye said Saturday that the nature of the penalty is “an internal matter, and we don’t discuss such matters” publicly.

**James J. Hamula:** Sustained First Quorum of Seventy, age 51, 2008, excommunicated 2017.

While the LDS Church does not generally discuss the reasons for excommunication, according to the *Deseret News* it was made clear that “Tuesday’s action was not due to disillusionment or apostasy on the part of Hamula.” This would mean that it was for some form of moral lapse. In time, after sufficient repentance, Hamula would be able to rejoin the church.

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1 2009 *Church Almanac*, Deseret News, p. 92
2 2009 *Church Almanac*, Deseret News, p. 93
8 *Salt Lake City Messenger*, no. 91, http://www.utlm.org/newsletters/no91.htm/THE FALL OF GEORGE P. LEE.
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BLACKS AND PRIESTHOOD:  
40 YEARS LATER

“for the seed of Cain were black and had not place among them.”  
*Pearl of Great Price, Moses 7:22*

“We have pleaded long and earnestly in behalf of these, our faithful brethren,” wrote Spencer W. Kimball in the announcement of June 8, 1978, when the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints lifted the ban on blacks holding their priesthood, now published as Official Declaration 2 in the *Doctrine and Covenants*.  

According to KSL.com, on Friday, June 1, 2018, the LDS Church will hold a celebration of the 40th anniversary of granting priesthood to blacks. Along with a message from the First Presidency of the LDS Church, two famous black singers, Gladys Knight and Alex Boyé will be included in the event. Ms. Knight joined Mormonism in 1997 and Mr. Boyé has sung with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.  

Even though two or three blacks had been baptized and ordained to the priesthood during the lifetime of Joseph Smith this did not grant them access to the secret LDS temple rituals, thus barring them from the Mormon goal of eternal marriage and advancement to godhood.  

**ELIJAHABEL**

The most well-known black to hold the priesthood during Smith’s lifetime was Elijah Abel, a Seventy, who moved to Utah territory with the pioneers. LDS historian Andrew Jenson made note of Abel’s ordination:  

Abel, Elijah, the only colored man who is known to have been ordained to the priesthood . . . was ordained an elder March 3, 1836, and a seventy April 4, 1841, an exception having been made in his case with regard to the general rule of the church in relation to colored people.  

Even though Elijah Abel was allowed to retain his priesthood and go on a mission after the Mormons came to Utah, he was not allowed to participate in the temple endowments. Historian Armand Mauss commented on the priesthood ban:  

It was periodically reconsidered after Brigham Young’s death in 1877, usually in response to a petition

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1 “LDS Church to welcome Gladys Knight, Alex Boye for celebration of blacks and the priesthood,” KSL.com, May 2, 2018.  
from a black member or sympathizer. The first of these reconsiderations occurred as early as 1879, when Young’s successor, John Taylor, responded to a petition from Elijah Abel (the sole surviving black member to have received the priesthood) that he be admitted to the sacred temple rites of the church. Taylor’s consultations turned up a claim by two prominent local church leaders that in the mid-1830s they had heard Joseph Smith declare that Negroes could not be given the priesthood and that Abel was supposed to have been stripped of it before Smith died.

Taylor himself, though a contemporary of these witnesses and a close associate of Smith, could recall no such instruction. . . .

After that, each hearing and reconsideration by the church leadership simply brought another confirmation of the policy, so that by about 1920 there was an accumulation of precedents from previous leaders, as well as a rapidly receding institutional memory about the historical origins of the policy.4

Abel’s requests for temple ordinances were repeatedly denied. He died in 1884 and was buried in the Salt Lake City Cemetery. In 2002 a new headstone was placed on Elijah Abel’s grave.

When it was finally ready, Apostle M. Russell Ballard was asked to “dedicate the new headstone.” The Salt Lake Tribune reported on the event:

> Abel was born a slave in Maryland in 1808. At 23, he fled to Canada and obtained free papers. A year later, he moved to Ohio and met Joseph Smith . . . Abel joined in 1832, and Smith ordained him into the priesthood four years later. . . .

> Abel and his family joined the Mormon odyssey to Salt Lake City in 1852, among fewer than 100 black pioneers, and he helped construct the Salt Lake Temple.

> That same year, however, new church leader Young prohibited blacks from joining the faith’s all-male lay priesthood, a rule that would stand until Church President Spencer Kimball’s 1978 revelation. . . . The reason Young and other church leaders cited (and continued to cite for 126 years) was the Bible-based belief that blacks were descendants of the wicked Cain. . . . Young also sent Abel on several missions in his later years. When Abel petitioned Young’s successor, John Taylor, for his temple endowment, it was denied.5

Curiously, Abel’s son Enoch and grandson Elijah were also ordained to the priesthood in Logan, Utah, in the early 1900s.6

While Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith was aware that Elijah Abel had been ordained to the LDS priesthood he maintained that it was invalid. In a letter dated April 10, 1963, he wrote:

> According to the doctrine of the church, the Negro, because of some condition of unfaithfulness in the spirit—or pre-existence, was not valiant and hence was not denied the mortal probation, but was denied the blessing of the Priesthood. . . . It is true that elders of the church laid hands on a Negro and blessed him “apparently” with the Priesthood, but they could not give that which the Lord had denied. It is true that Elijah Abel was so “ordained.” This was however before the matter had been submitted to the Prophet Joseph Smith.7

### Scriptural Racism

While Joseph Smith did not officially deny priesthood to blacks, his new scriptures laid the groundwork for the later racial position of the church. His Book of Mormon and *Pearl of Great Price* reflected the common view of race in America at that time: White people were the enlightened ones, bringing the message of salvation to the dark heathens of the land. The main storyline of the Book of Mormon covers approximately 600 BC to 421 AD, with the righteous, white Nephites continually battling the wicked, dark Lamanites. Historian Newell G. Bringhamhurst observed:

> Smith’s account of these ancient Americans incorporated racist concepts of nonwhite racial inferiority as contrasted with white racial superiority. Mormon racism was particularly evident in those Book of Mormon passages outlining the conflicts and divisions plaguing the Nephite nation.8

Bringhamhurst continues,

> Moreover, Laman, Lemuel, and their followers were cursed with a “skin of blackness” by “the Lord God” (2 Ne. 5:21-24). Thereafter they were known as Lamanites, “a dark, and loathsome, and filthy people full of idleness and all manner of abomination” (1 Ne. 12:23).

Yet the Book of Mormon held out the promise that when those Lamanites embraced the gospel “their curse was taken from them, and their skin became white like unto the Nephites” (3 Nephi 2:15).

Apostle Harold B. Lee explained:

> Their dark skin was a curse put upon them because of their transgression, which in a day to come in their descendants

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7 Letter from Joseph Fielding Smith to Joseph H. Henderson, April 10, 1963; photo of letter in *Curse of Cain?* Appendix C.

Joseph Smith’s racial views also appear in the Book of Moses and Book of Abraham, part of the Pearl of Great Price. The Book of Moses relates that “the seed of Cain were black and had not place among them” (Moses 7:22), and the Book of Abraham refers to “Pharaoh being of that lineage by which he could not have the right of Priesthood” (Abraham 1:27).

This teaching was soon embraced by the leaders of the LDS Church. Apostle John Taylor, who went on to become the third president of the church, wrote in 1845:

> The descendants of Ham, besides a black skin which has ever been a curse that has followed an apostate of the holy priesthood, as well as a black heart, have been servants to both Shem and Japheth, and the abolitionists are trying to make void the curse of God, but it will require more power than man possesses to counteract the decrees of eternal wisdom.

After the Mormons migrated to what became Utah territory, on February 5, 1852, Brigham Young made denial of priesthood to blacks a rule of the church:

> If there never was a prophet or apostle of Jesus Christ spoke it before, I tell you, this people that are commonly called Negroes are the children of old Cain. I know they are. I know that they cannot bear rule in the priesthood, for the curse on them was to remain upon them, until the residue of the posterity of Michael and his wife receive the blessings, . . .

This same teaching was repeated by Brigham Young in 1859:

> Cain slew his brother . . . and the Lord put a mark upon him, which is the flat nose and black skin . . . . How long is that race [blacks] to endure the dreadful curse that is upon them? That curse will remain upon them, and they never can hold the Priesthood or share in it until all the other descendants of Adam have received the promises and enjoyed the blessings of the Priesthood and the keys thereof. Until the last ones of the residue of Adam’s children are brought up to that favourable position, the children of Cain cannot receive the first ordinances of the Priesthood. They were the first that were cursed, and they will be the last from whom the curse will be removed.

Sealed as a Servant to Joseph Smith

Jane Manning James, a black convert, is an example of how firm the church leaders were about denying temple ordinances to blacks. She claimed that while living with the Joseph Smith family in the 1843 time frame the Smiths had offered to have her sealed to them as part of their family, but not understanding what that meant, she declined. Years later, living in Utah as a faithful LDS member, she longed for an eternal family and repeatedly requested to be sealed to her husband and children but the leaders refused.

Jane then approached the leaders about being sealed to Joseph Smith, as Emma had suggested. The leaders finally offered to seal her “as a Servitor for eternity to the Prophet Joseph Smith.” According to the journal of Joseph Christenson, recorder in the Salt Lake temple, the ceremony was done on May 18, 1894:

> “Aunt Jane,” a negress, was sealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith as a servitor for all eternity.

However, Jane was not allowed to attend the ceremony. Historian Max Mueller noted:

> The Salt Lake Temple records indicate that James herself was not permitted to participate in her own circumscribed sealing. Instead, famed suffragist and Relief Society leader Bathsheba W. Smith served as James’s proxy during the ceremony, an unusual occurrence because proxies were employed almost exclusively for dead participants. President Joseph F. Smith stood in for his uncle. He also officiated the ceremony, declaring the “Negro Woman” Jane Elizabeth Manning James would be a “Servitor to Joseph Smith . . . and to his household for all eternity.”

Scholar Jessie L. Embry explained that a special ceremony was created for the occasion:

10 For a fuller list of LDS scriptures relating to race, see http://www.utlm.org/onlineresources/racialstatements.htm.
16 Journal of Joseph Christenson, microfilm in LDS Church Historical Library.
The ban on blacks continued into the next century.


Writing in 1935 Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith, who later became the tenth president of the LDS Church, gave this explanation of the curse on Cain:

Not only was Cain called upon to suffer [for killing Abel], but because of his wickedness he became the father of an inferior race. A curse was placed upon him and that curse has been continued through his lineage and must do so while time endures. Millions of souls have come into this world cursed with a black skin and have been denied the privilege of Priesthood and the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel. These are the descendants of Cain. Moreover, they have been made to feel their inferiority and have been separated from the rest of mankind from the beginning. Enoch saw the people of Canaan, descendants of Cain, and he says, “and there was a blackness came upon all the children of Canaan, that they were despised among all people.” [Moses 7:8][21]

The LDS First Presidency issued an official statement on the issue of race on August 17, 1949:

The attitude of the Church with reference to Negroes remains as it has always stood. It is not a matter of the declaration of a policy but of direct commandment from the Lord, on which is founded the doctrine of the Church from the days of its organization, to the effect that Negroes may become members of the Church but that they are not entitled to the priesthood at the present time . . . . The position of the Church regarding the Negro may be understood when another doctrine of the Church is kept in mind, namely, that the conduct of spirits in the premortal existence has some determining effect upon the conditions and circumstances under which these spirits take on mortality . . . . Under this principle there is no injustice whatsoever involved in this deprivation as to the holding of the priesthood by the Negroes.—The First Presidency[22]

In the wake of the civil rights movement political pressure was mounting for the LDS Church to change its racial restrictions. In 1967 N. Eldon Tanner, a member of the First Presidency of the LDS Church, was very emphatic that blacks could not receive the priesthood. In an interview he stated:

“The church has no intention of changing its doctrine on the Negro,” N. Eldon Tanner, counselor to the First Presidency told SEATTLE during his recent visit here. “Throughout the history of the original Christian church, the Negro never held the priesthood. There’s really nothing we can do to change this. It’s a law of God.”[23]
Such statements identifying blacks with the curse of Cain, or denying blacks the priesthood because it was the law of God, were typical in Mormonism prior to 1978.24

**NO MISSIONARIES TO BLENDS**

While there was no restriction on blacks joining the LDS Church, there was no direct effort to evangelize them either. Apostle Bruce McConkie, writing in 1958, declared:

Negroes in this life are denied the priesthood; under no circumstances can they hold this delegation of authority from the Almighty. The gospel message of salvation is not carried affirmatively to them . . . Negroes are not equal with other races where the receipt of certain spiritual blessings are concerned . . .25

Just prior to the change on ordaining blacks, William E. Berrett, Vice Administrator of the Brigham Young University, wrote: “. . . no direct efforts have been made to proselyte among them.”26

However, the Bible tells Christians to offer salvation and baptism to all mankind, regardless of race. Jesus said “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19). In the book of Acts, Philip was commanded to preach the gospel to an Ethiopian (a black) who was then baptized (Acts 8:26-39). Nothing is said about the Ethiopian being restricted in his service to God.

**NO INTERMARRIAGE**

Since the Mormons viewed black skin as evidence of God’s curse, they were opposed to racial intermarriage. In 1845 Joseph Smith declared, “Had I anything to do with the negro, I would confine them by strict law to their own species, and put them on a national equalization.”27

In 1863 Brigham Young declared that those who engaged in intermarriage were worthy of death:

Shall I tell you the law of God in regard to the African race? If the white man who belongs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the penalty, under the law of God, is death on the spot. This will always be so.28

Interrace marriage with a black person was seen as bringing the priesthood curse on their posterity. In 1954 Apostle Mark E. Peterson instructed:

The reason that one would lose his blessings by marrying a Negro is due to the restriction placed upon them. “No person having the least particle of Negro blood can hold the Priesthood” (Brigham Young). It does not matter if they are one-sixth Negro or one-hundred and sixth, the curse of no Priesthood is the same. If an individual who is entitled to the Priesthood marries a Negro, the Lord has decreed that only spirits who are not eligible for the Priesthood will come to that marriage as children. To intermarry with a Negro is to forfeit a “Nation of Priesthood holders”.29


However, in a broad general sense, caste systems have their root and origin in the gospel itself, and when they operate according to the divine decree, the resultant restrictions and segregation are right and proper and have the approval of the Lord. To illustrate: Cain, Ham, and the whole negro race have been cursed with a black skin, the mark of Cain, so they can be identified as a caste apart, a people with whom the other descendants of Adam should not intermarry.30

**SEGREGATED BLOOD?**

The LDS fear of having even one drop of black blood led to the policy of segregating blood in Utah hospitals under the control of the LDS Church. Lester Bush, an LDS historian, quoted an early statement of the LDS First Presidency regarding the problem of “negro blood”:

By 1907 the First Presidency and Quorum had . . . ruled that “no one known to have in his veins negro blood, (it matters not how remote a degree) can either have the priesthood in any degree or the blessings of the Temple of God; no matter how otherwise worthy he may be.”31

Given the statements of past LDS leaders against having “one drop” of black blood in their veins, it is no surprise that Mormons extended this to segregating the blood supply in their hospitals. While this practice was common in the past, the U.S. military ended its policy


29 Mark E. Peterson, “Race Problems—As They Affect the Church,” Address given at the Convention of Teachers of Religion on the College Level, delivered at BYU, August 27, 1954.


of segregating blood on the basis of race in 1949. The American Red Cross continued to segregate blood until the 1960s. The hospitals under LDS control segregated blood on the basis of race until the 1970s. Writing in 1978, reporters David Briscoe and George Buck explained:

For all too many Mormons, the figurative role that “blood” plays in Mormon doctrine in denoting ancestry, has been all too literal. Less than two weeks after the Priesthood announcement, Consolidated Blood Services for the intermountain region announced its first agreement ever to handle blood bank services for a group of hospitals with previous LDS connections, including LDS Hospital, Primary Children’s and Cottonwood Hospitals in Salt Lake City; McKay-Dee Hospital in Ogden and Utah Valley Hospital in Provo. At one time in the past, hospitals administered by the LDS Church kept separate the blood donated by blacks and whites. Although this has not been the case for several years, some patients who have expressed concern about receiving blood from black donors have been reassured it would not happen—as if the policy were still in effect.32

**PRE-EARTH LIFE AND RACE**

To better understand the Mormon attitude concerning blacks, a person must first be aware of their doctrine of pre-mortal life. While standard Christianity views man’s origin in the womb, such as Psalm 139:13, Mormonism teaches that we have eternal existence as “intelligences” and were born to Heavenly Father and Mother in a pre-mortal existence. Joseph Smith taught that man is the same species as God and is his direct offspring, raised to maturity prior to being sent to earth as an infant. Preaching at the funeral of an early Mormon, Joseph Smith stated:

First, God himself, who sits enthroned in yonder heavens, is a man like unto one of yourselves, that is the great secret . . . I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined that God was God from all eternity . . . God himself; the Father of us all dwelt on an earth the same as Jesus Christ himself did . . . The mind of man is as immortal as God himself. I know that my testimony is true, . . . their spirits existed co-equal with God . . . God never did have power to create the spirit of man at all.33

The LDS Church teaches that God was once a mortal on some other world. He and his wife were faithful on that earth, died, were resurrected and eventually advanced to godhood. Their spirit children, who were literally born to them in that heavenly realm, were later sent to an earth to obtain a mortal body and possibly advance as their heavenly parents did before them. However, some of God’s progeny were less faithful during their “first estate” and thus did not merit as favorable a birth into mortality as others.

Alvin R. Dyer, assistant to the Twelve Apostles and later ordained an apostle, spoke on racial issues and man’s pre-earth life to the Norwegian Mission gathering in Oslo, Norway, on March 18, 1961. In this talk he said:

I want to talk to you a little bit now about something that is not missionary work, and what I say is not to be given to your investigators by any matter of means. . . . Why is it that you are white and not colored: Have you ever asked yourself that question? Who had anything to do with your being born into the Church and not born a Chinese or a Hindu, or a Negro? Is God such an unjust person that He would make you white and free and make a Negro cursed under the cursing of Cain that he could not hold the Priesthood of God? . . . Those who have been cursed in the pre-existence were born through this lineage of Ham. . . . Why is a Negro a Negro? . . . The reason that spirits are born into Negro bodies is because those spirits rejected the Priesthood of God in the pre-existence. This is the reason why you have Negroes upon the earth.

You will observe that when Cain was influenced by the power of Lucifer to follow him and to fall down and worship him in the beginning, it was then that . . . Cain rejected the counsel of God. He rejected again the Priesthood as his forebears had done in the pre-existence. Therefore, the curse of the pre-existence was made institute through the loins of Cain. Consequently, you have the beginning of the race of men and women into which would be born those in the pre-existence who had rejected the Priesthood of God. . . . Ham reinstated the curse of the pre-existence when he rejected the Priesthood of Noah, and in consequence of that he preserved the curse on the earth. Therefore, the Negroes to be born thereafter, or those who were to become Negroes, were to be born through the loins of Ham.34

In a letter dated April 10, 1963, Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith explained that one is born black due to his “unfaithfulness” in the spirit world:

According to the doctrine of the church, the Negro, because of some condition of unfaithfulness in the spirit-or pre-existence, was not valiant and hence was not denied the mortal probation, but was denied the blessings of the Priesthood.35

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33 *Times and Seasons,* vol. 5, pp. 613-615; also in *History of the Church,* vol. 6, pp. 302-312.
To counter the many past statements of LDS leaders relating to premortal performance determining race, the church posted a *Gospel Topics* essay online, “Race and Priesthood,” which states:

Today, the Church disavows the theories advanced in the past that black skin is a sign of divine disfavor or curse, or that it reflects unrighteous actions in a premortal life; . . .

Yet their leaders continue to speak of those who have been blessed according to their pre-mortal life. As recently as 2008 Terry Ball, then the Dean of Religious Education at BYU, taught that our place on earth was assigned according to our performance in the spirit world:

Have you ever wondered why you were born where and when you were born? Why were you not born 500 years ago in some primitive aboriginal culture in some isolated corner of the world? Is the timing and placing of our birth capricious? For Latter-day Saints, the answer is no. Fundamental to our faith is the understanding that before we came to this earth we lived in a premortal existence with a loving Heavenly Father. We further understand that in that premortal state we had agency and that we grew and developed as we used that agency. Some, as Abraham learned, became noble and great ones (see Abraham 3:22–23). We believe that when it came time for us to experience mortality, a loving Heavenly Father, who knows each of us well, sent us to earth at the time and in the place and in circumstances that would best help us reach our divine potential . . .

While Terry Ball appealed to Abraham 3:22-23 to support the LDS idea of the “noble and great ones” being chosen for future places of honor on earth, he failed to mention the earlier passages that speak of Pharaoh, being from “the loins of Ham,” which “preserved the curse in the land” and that because of that lineage “he could not have the right of Priesthood” (Abraham 1:21-27). It isn’t enough for the LDS leaders to simply say they reject all forms of racism and yet retain racist doctrines in their scriptures.

**Patriarchal Blessings Declare Lineage**

The LDS *Gospel Topics* essay suggests two common explanations as to why blacks were denied priesthood:

The curse of Cain was often put forward as justification for the priesthood and temple restrictions. Around the turn of the century, another explanation gained currency: blacks were said to have been less than fully valiant in the premortal battle against Lucifer and, as a consequence, were restricted from priesthood and temple blessings.

While the current *Gospel Topics* statement rejects this concept, it has been the common view in LDS circles for decades. Valiant spirits were born white, non-valiant spirits were born black. Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith wrote in 1954:

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

In his book, *The Way to Perfection*, Joseph Fielding Smith equated race with pre-earth merit:

Is it not a reasonable belief that the Lord would select the choice spirits to come through the better grades of nations? Moreover, is it not reasonable to believe that less worthy spirits would come through less favored lineage? Does this not account in very large part for the various grades of color and degree of intelligence we find in the earth?

Since the days of Joseph Smith, Mormons have received “Patriarchal Blessings,” a sort of guide for your life and declaration of your lineage. Blessings usually make mention, among other things, of your pre-mortal life, your faithfulness and being valiant, all of which determine your lineage. In my February 10, 1955, blessing I [Sandra Tanner] was told:

You have royal blood in your veins for you are a descendant of Father Abraham. You come from the house of Joseph the favorite son of Jacob who was sold into Egypt and from the loins of Ephraim. . . . You were valiant in your first estate [pre-mortal life] and the Lord has rewarded you for it. You struggled valiantly that we might have our free agency and the Lord held you in reserve to come forth at this late time to the home of goodly parents.

Mormons today are still being told they were valiant in the spirit world. In a 2005 Patriarchal blessing a white woman in Utah was told:

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41 “LDS Patriarchal Blessings” by Sandra Tanner, http://www.utlm.org/onlineresources/patriarchalblessing.htm
You are one of his faithful, devoted, and noble spirits, and He is pleased with the way you are conducting your life. . . . You lived with Him in the pre-mort world and there you became a faithful and valiant spirit.42

If one teaches that some are granted a favorable birth due to pre-mort performance then it stands to reason that some are given unfavorable births due to lack of performance. Mormonism will never be completely free of racism as long as it continues to teach that your pre-earth conduct determines your lineage and quality of your birth.

FOLKLORE OR DOCTRINE

Today the LDS Church seems to be categorizing the teachings of past prophets on racial issues as “folklore.” In an article commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of lifting the ban on blacks, Sheldon F. Child, of the Council of Seventies, explained to a reporter:

“We have to keep in mind that it’s folklore and not doctrine,” Elder Child said. “It’s never been recorded as such. Many opinions, personal opinions, were spoken. I’m just so grateful for this [1978] revelation,” he said, adding he can recall exactly where he was and what he was doing when he heard the news 30 years ago.43

If the leaders’ sermons on race were merely “folklore,” why did it require a revelation to change the practice? Why did President Spencer W. Kimball need to plead “long and earnestly” for God to give priesthood to blacks? This certainly makes it look like the brethren believed God was the one withholding priesthood.

Despite the lifting of the priesthood ban in 1978, the LDS church was still left with years of sermons denigrating blacks. LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie counseled:  

There are statements in our literature by the early Brethren which we have interpreted to mean that the Negroes would not receive the priesthood in mortality. I have said the same things, and people write me letters and say, “You said such and such, and how is it now that we do such and such?” And all I can say to that is that it is time disbelieving people repented and got in line and believed in a living, modern prophet. Forget everything that I have said, or what President Brigham Young or President George Q. Cannon or whomever has said in days past that is contrary to the present revelation. We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world.44

But if the leaders’ earlier sermons relating to the “curse of Cain” and the ban on blacks holding the priesthood were simply due to “limited understanding” how are the LDS faithful to have confidence in their leaders’ sermons today? The leaders were certainly claiming their sermons on race were doctrine and the will of God at the time.

Peggy Stack, reporter for the Salt Lake Tribune, observed:

Latter-day Saints everywhere recognized the move [in 1978] as a game-changing milestone. It opened the door for wider proselytizing in Africa and other continents with black populations, and allowed Mormonism to woo potential believers in far-flung regions previously off-limits because of the priesthood prohibition.

Yet dropping the ban did not—indeed could not—eliminate all racism in the church.

LDS leaders offered no apology nor, at the time, any in-depth analysis of the reasons for the exclusionary policy. Justifications, including the notion that blacks were descendants of a biblical bad guy, Cain, or that they were less valiant in a premortal existence, continued to be taught and touted by members. Statements dismissing or denigrating blacks offered by previous Mormon authorities remained in print and often were embraced by believers long after the ban’s demise.

Racial strife—including slurs and denigrating remarks—still “lifts its ugly head . . . even right here among us,” President Gordon B. Hinckley preached in a 2006 LDS General Conference address. “. . . I remind you that no man who makes disparaging remarks concerning those of another race can consider himself a true disciple of Christ.”45

Lifting the ban, as Peggy Stack pointed out, has opened the door for LDS missionaries in areas of darker-skinned people. There are now 578, 310 members of the LDS Church in Africa and 1,155,764 in Asia.

Matthew Bowman, professor at Henderson State University, reported:

Today about one in 10 converts to Mormonism are black, but surveys report that only about 1 to 3 percent of Mormons in the United States are African-American.46

In 2013 the LDS Church attempted to provide answers for the lifting of the priesthood ban with an essay in their Gospel Topics series entitled “Race and Priesthood.” But instead of giving a clear explanation of their doctrine on race or a denunciation of Brigham Young and other past prophets’ statements on race, they tried to rationalize

42 Patriarchal Blessing, H. M. Palmer, February 27, 2005.
44 All are Alike Unto God,” Bruce R. McConkie, Aug. 18, 1978, https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/bruce-r-mcconkie_alike-unto-god-2/
45 Peggy Stack, “39 years later, priesthood ban is history, but racism within Mormon ranks isn’t, black members say,” Salt Lake Tribune, (June 9, 2017).
their earlier racism as no worse than that of others in the nation. The essay states:

The Church was established in 1830, during an era of great racial division in the United States. At the time, many people of African descent lived in slavery, and racial distinctions and prejudice were not just common but customary among white Americans. Those realities, though unfamiliar and disturbing today, influenced all aspects of people’s lives, including their religion. Many Christian churches of that era, for instance, were segregated along racial lines.47

While the above statement is true it fails to explain why Mormonism lagged so far behind the rest of the United States in granting equal status to blacks. Despite the wide-spread acceptance of racism during that time, many Christians were actually preaching against it in the 1800s. By the time the LDS Church opened its priesthood to blacks in 1978 they were embarrassingly behind the times.

If the LDS Church is truly led by prophetic wisdom why wasn’t the policy changed before the civil rights movement of the mid-1900s instead of years after? In contrast to this, Joseph Smith’s son, as president of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, now known as the Community of Christ, opened the door to black ordination during Brigham Young’s lifetime. Christian scholar Robert Bowman observed:

It is ironic that during Brigham Young’s tenure as president of the LDS Church, his main rival as the true prophetic successor to Joseph Smith went in a completely different direction on the issue of blacks and the priesthood. In 1865 Joseph Smith III (the son of Joseph Smith Jr.), the first president of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, issued a revelation calling for the ordination of men “of every race” to the priesthood. Yet according to the Utah-based LDS Church, Joseph Smith III was not a prophet at all. How is it that an uninspired or false prophet could see the wisdom in 1865 of inviting people of all races to share fully in the ministries of the restored Church, but Brigham Young, supposedly the true prophet, could not? Indeed, how is it that it took the Mormon Church 113 years after Joseph Smith III to come around to the same conclusion?48

Author John G. Turner, writing in the New York Times, observed:

White Christians of many denominational stripes used repugnant language to justify slavery and the inferiority of black people. . . . Most Protestant denominations, however, gradually apologized for their past racism.

In contrast, while Mormon leaders generically criticize past and present racism, they carefully avoid any specific criticism of past presidents and apostles, careful not to disrupt traditional reverence for the church’s prophets.49

Joel Groat, of the Institute of Religious Research, compiled the following after comparing the past LDS statements on race with the current Gospel Topics essay:

- For about 125 years the Mormon prophets and apostles taught these ideas not as “theories” but as doctrines originating in divine revelation, given in Scripture and reaffirmed by the living prophets from Brigham Young to David O. McKay as commandments from God. All Latter-day Saints were expected to view them as such.
- During that time they simultaneously affirmed: “Neither the President of the Church, nor the First Presidency, nor the united voice of the First Presidency and the Twelve will ever lead the Saints astray or send forth counsel to the world that is contrary to the mind and will of the Lord.” This reinforced the fact that their racist policies came directly from God.
- However when faced with the embarrassing and damaging racist implications of views still being taught in the LDS Church over 30 years after the ban was lifted, current LDS leaders provided the following explanation on the official church website in 2013.
  1. None of the prior teachings related to race and the priesthood were doctrines of the church; they were simply theories.
  2. These ideas originated not with God but with Brigham Young, who was influenced by the social and cultural ideas of his time.
  3. They as a church were officially disavowing these theories as racist and wrong.50

It seems the Mormons want it both ways, past prophets and apostles were true representatives of God, but at the same time many of their sermons were racist and “folklore.”

While we applaud the LDS Church’s efforts to remove racism from its teachings, one wonders if it can truly succeed as long as the Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price, with their racist teachings, are embraced as the word of God? We are reminded of Paul’s instructions to the Galatians:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)

One of the major claims of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that it is the only true church, with the only authority to act in God’s name. Mormonism has a lay priesthood, its leaders are not trained in theology or biblical languages, but are usually businessmen advanced due to faithful church service. In the fifth and sixth Articles of Faith of the LDS Church we read:

5. We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.

6. We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.

The LDS Church believes that God removed His priesthood authority from earth shortly after the death of Christ’s apostles. In the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* we read:

LDS rejection of much post biblical Christianity is based on belief in an ancient apostasy . . . Apostolic authority ceased just after the New Testament period, and without apostolic leadership and authority the Church was soon overwhelmed by alien intellectual and cultural pressures.

But one wonders how the early church could go astray so quickly and priesthood be lost? Jesus promised in Matthew 16:18 that “the gates of hell” would not prevail against his church. Also, according to Joseph Smith, four of Christ’s disciples did not die but have been left on earth to do missionary work. These include the Apostle John and three Book of Mormon disciples.

According to the *Doctrine and Covenants*, John, the apostle, was transformed and Jesus left him on earth to do evangelism. Joseph Smith claimed to receive by revelation the following information about John:

And the Lord said unto me: John my beloved, what desirest thou? . . . And I said unto him: Lord, give unto me power over death, that I may live and bring souls unto thee. And the Lord said unto me: Verily, verily, I say unto thee, because thou desirest this thou shalt tarry until I come in my glory, and shalt prophesy before nations, kindreds, tongues and people.

Evidently Joseph Smith misinterpreted John 21:20-23. Jesus did not say that John would remain alive, but merely pointed out to Peter that John’s future mission was not Peter’s concern. The Book of Mormon also teaches that three Nephites, Jesus’ disciples in the New World, did not taste of death but were transformed and would remain on earth to do evangelism. (See 3 Nephi, chapter 28.) LDS Apostle Jeffrey Holland explained the role of the three Nephites in our day:

These three Nephites continue in their translated state today, just as when they went throughout the lands of Nephi . . . they are yet ministering to Jew, Gentile, and the scattered tribes of Israel, even all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people.

How could there have been a total apostasy, as asserted by the LDS Church, if there have been four apostles on the earth since the time of Christ? Why wouldn’t they have been able to ordain future apostles and keep the church from falling into a total apostasy?

**NECESSITY OF PRIESTHOOD**

In the February 2004 issue of the *Ensign* LDS President Gordon B. Hinckley laid out the four cornerstones of Mormonism. The first is Jesus Christ and his plan of salvation, second is Joseph Smith’s first vision, third is the Book of Mormon and fourth is priesthood authority. The LDS Church claims that those holding its priesthood are the only ones recognized by God to perform baptisms, eternal marriages and ordinances of the gospel. Mormonism rejects baptisms done by any other church. The LDS manual *Doctrines of the Gospel* explains:

What is the [LDS] Priesthood? It is nothing more nor less than the power of God delegated to man by

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which man can . . . act legitimately; not assuming that authority, nor borrowing it from generations that are dead and gone, . . .

Marvin Cowan explained how the Mormons misuse John 15:16 in their effort to prove their priesthood “ordination” claims:

In support of their priesthood doctrine, LDS often quote part of John 15:16, where Jesus said, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you.” LDS claim that Jesus was speaking about the priesthood, but priesthood is not mentioned in this context or anywhere in any of the four gospels! This verse says “ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit . . .”

Neither John 15:16 nor any other New Testament verse says that Jesus laid His hands on the disciples and ordained them to the priesthood, but LDS claim that is what the word “ordain” means. However, D. & C. 89:14 says, “all grain is ordained for the use of man and of beast.” Did someone lay hands on the grain and give it the Priesthood? Obviously that is not the meaning of “ordain.” While it is possible for someone to be ordained by “laying on of hands,” that word really means to “appoint” or “point out.” D. & C. 89 also mentions that herbs and flesh of beasts and fowls are “ordained for the use of man.” Thus, even LDS scripture shows that “ordained” means “appointed,” not lay hands on to give some priesthood office.

The LDS also use Heb. 5:4 to support their doctrine of an ordained priesthood. It says, “No man taketh this honor unto himself but he that is called of God as was Aaron.” Then they claim that Aaron was called by Moses in Ex. 28:1. But, neither Heb. 5:4 nor Ex. 28:1 say anything about “laying on of hands or “ordaining” anything. Heb. 5:4 says, “called of God,” not “called by Moses” or “called by laying on of hands” as LDS interpret it. Ex. 4:27 declares, “The Lord said unto Aaron . . .” which shows that Aaron was called by the Lord, not Moses. In Num. 18:7 the Lord said to Aaron, “I have given your priest’s office unto you . . .” Even in D. & C. 132:59, the Lord says, “Verily if a man be called of my Father as was Aaron, by my own voice and by the voice of Him that sent me and I have endowed him with the keys of the power of this priesthood . . .”

Notice that LDS scripture says Aaron and those with LDS priesthood were called by the “voice” of God, not by laying on of hands! Neither Aaron nor anyone else was ever ordained to the Aaronic priest’s office in the Old Testament. The only “priests” who were ordained in the Old Testament were idolatrous priests (II Kings 23:5; II Chron. 11:15)! Aaron was “anointed” (Ex. 40:13), but so was the tabernacle and everything in it (Ex. 40:9-15). Therefore, this “anointing” was not the “laying on of hands” to give the priesthood, unless the tabernacle and everything in it were also ordained to the priesthood! A good concordance will show that many other things in the Old Testament were “ordained,” but the priests who served God were not!

**“The Proper Order”**

The LDS Church teaches that priesthood authority must be acquired by the proper means. In *Doctrines of the Gospel* we read that every priesthood act must be done “in the proper way, and after the proper order.”

This raises the question as whether or not Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were baptized and ordained by proper “priesthood authority” in the “proper way”? Joseph Smith’s account of the event is published at the back of the *Pearl of Great Price*. In it Smith relates that while working on the translation of the Book of Mormon in May of 1829, he and Oliver Cowdery became concerned about baptism and went out into the woods to pray:

While we were thus employed, praying and calling upon the Lord, a messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us, saying:

> Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; . . .

He said this Aaronic Priesthood had not the power of laying on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, but that this should be conferred on us hereafter; and he commanded us to go and be baptized, and gave us directions that I should baptize Oliver Cowdery, and that afterwards he should baptize me.

Accordingly we went and were baptized. I baptized him first, and afterwards he baptized me—after which I laid my hands upon his head and ordained him to the Aaronic Priesthood, and afterwards he laid his hands on me and ordained me to the same Priesthood—for so we were commanded. . . . It was on the fifteenth day of May, 1829, that we were ordained under the hand of this messenger, and baptized.

How could the angel, elsewhere identified as John the Baptist, ordain them to the priesthood before they were baptized? According to LDS doctrine today, a man must be baptized by someone holding the LDS priesthood authority before he can be ordained to the priesthood.

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7 *Doctrines of the Gospel*, p. 68.

If John the Baptist’s ordination was valid, why did Joseph and Oliver need to baptize each other and then re-ordain each other to the same priesthood? Why wouldn’t the angel baptize them first and then ordain them?

Merrill J. Bateman, one of the top leaders in the LDS Church, emphasized the necessity of restoring proper priesthood authority to Joseph Smith:

One of the remarkable evidences of the Restoration is the testimony of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery regarding the manner in which the priesthood and its directing powers were returned to earth... John the Baptist brought back the Aaronic Priesthood with the keys of repentance and baptism. Peter, James, and John restored not only the Melchizedek Priesthood but also “the keys of [the] kingdom.”...

In contrast, 19th-century ministers in the Palmyra environs, not understanding the great Apostasy that had taken place, believed in an entirely different process for priesthood reception. They believed that the power to preach came through an inner calling to a priesthood of believers.9

If such keys were needed why didn’t Peter, James and John restore both the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods? Since Mormonism claims that these men held the authority for both, why would John the Baptist need to come at all?

WHEN DID IT HAPPEN?

If Peter, James and John conferred the priesthood on Joseph and Oliver, when did it happen? In his story printed at the back of the Pearl of Great Price Joseph Smith stated that on May 15, 1829, the Aaronic Priesthood was conferred on him and Oliver Cowdery. While Smith is confident on the date for the Aaronic Priesthood, there is no date given for his ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood. The History of the Church, by Joseph Smith, shows that there is real confusion as to when Peter, James and John supposedly appeared.

... before the 6th of April, 1830, and probably before that very month of June, 1829, had expired Peter, James and John had come and conferred upon Joseph and Oliver the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood, ...10

Today the LDS church maintains that after the spring of 1829 both priesthoods were functioning in the church. However, the earliest LDS historical documents show that the concept of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods were not taught prior to 1831 but were products of Joseph Smith’s evolving theology. Historian D. Michael Quinn explained:

A closer look at contemporary records indicates that men were first ordained to the higher priesthood over a year after the church’s founding. No mention of angelic ordinations can be found in original documents until 1834-35. Thereafter accounts of the visit of Peter, James, and John by Cowdery and Smith remained vague and contradictory.11

Mormonism maintains that when John the Baptist appeared to Smith and Cowdery in 1829 they received the Aaronic Priesthood, which included the offices of deacon, teacher, and priest. When Peter, James and John supposedly appeared a short while later, they conferred on Smith and Cowdery the Melchizedek Priesthood, which included the offices of elder, seventy, high priest, bishop, patriarch, Apostle and Prophet.

While one can find mention of such offices as elder or teacher in early LDS documents, these were not considered part of a larger priesthood system such as Melchizedek or Aaronic. Smith seems to have initially used the designations of elders and teachers in the same way that other churches of the day would have used such terms.

TWO PRIESTHOODS ADDED

People reading the current edition of the Doctrine and Covenants assume that the revelations read the same as they were originally printed. However, there have been important revisions relating to priesthood.

The first printing of Smith’s revelations in book form was in 1833, in a work titled Book of Commandments. Later, in 1835, a new edition was prepared, changing many of the original revelations and adding new ones. The title was also changed to Doctrine and Covenants. Researcher John Farkas observed:

There are seven revelations in the Doctrine & Covenants... on these priesthoods. Although five of them were allegedly received before October 1832, one as early as 1823, and one as late as September 1832, none of these five were included in the 1833 Book of Commandments. Two of them did not show up in the D&C until the 1876 edition, three were first included the 1835 edition.12

10 Joseph Smith, Jr., History of the Church, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976) vol. 1, p. 61, note.
12 John Farkas, “Fabricating the Mormon Priesthood: By God or By Man?” https://beggarsbread.org/2012/10/06/fabricating-the-mormon-priesthood-by-god-or-by-man/)
Chapter 24 of the 1833 Book of Commandments gave instructions about elders, priests, teachers and deacons but made no mention of two priesthoods. When this revelation was reprinted in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants (which is section 20 in a current edition) dozens of words were added to the text to include such offices as high counselors, high priests and high priesthood. Below is a photo of part of chapter 24 of the 1833 Book of Commandments (now section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants) with the revisions noted in the margins.
Another example of changing Smith’s revelations to support his later priesthood ideas is seen in a comparison of Chapter 28 in the 1833 Book of Commandments and the current Doctrine and Covenants, section 27. Joseph Smith made these additions in 1835 to support his new claim of receiving priesthood from Peter, James and John. The original 1833 printing of the revelation did not contain any mention of priesthood restoration.

BOOK OF COMMANDMENTS - Chapter 28
COMPARE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS - Sec. 27

CHAPTER XXVIII.

1 A Commandment to the church of Christ, given in Harmony, Pennsylvania, September 6, 1830.

AND TAKE UPON YOU MY UNCLE ARMOR, THAT YE MAY BE ABLE TO WITNESS THE EVIL DAY, HAVING DONE ALL, THAT YE MAY BE ABLE TO STAND. STAND THEREFORE, HAVING YOUR LOINS GIRD ABOUT WITH TRUTH, HAVING ON THE BREAST-PLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND YOUR FEET SHOD WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE, WHICH I HAVE SENT MINE ANGELS TO COMMIT UNTO YOU; TAKING THE SHIELD OF FAITH WHEREWITH YE SHALL BE ABLE TO QUENCH ALL THE FIERY DARTS OF THE WICKED; AND TAKE THE HELMET OF SALVATION, AND THE SWORD OF MY SPIRIT, WHICH I WILL POUR OUT UPON YOU, AND MY WORD WHICH I REVEAL UNTO YOU, AND BE AGREED AS TOUCHING ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER YE ASK OF ME, — W. A.

2 For behold I say unto you, that it matter saith not what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, when ye partake of the sacrament, if so be that ye do it with an eye single to my glory:

3 Remembering unto the Father my body which was laid down for you, and my blood which was shed for the remission of your sins:

4 Wherefore a commandment I give unto you, that ye shall not purchase wine, neither strong drink of your enemies:

5 Wherefore you shall partake of none, except it is made new among you, yea, in this my Father’s kingdom which shall be built up on the earth.

6 Behold this is wisdom in me, wherefore marvel not, for the hour cometh that I will drink of the fruit of the vine with you, on the earth, and with all those whom my Father hath given me out of the world:

7 Wherefore lift up your hearts and rejoice, and gird up your minds, and be faithful until I come; Amen.

8 AND YE SHALL BE CARRIED UP THAT WHERE I AM YE SHALL BE ALSO. — W. A.

W.A. = Words Added
W.D. = Words Deleted
T.C. = Textual Change

MORMON, WHOM I HAVE SENT UNTO YOU TO REVEAL THE BOOK OF MORMON, CONTAINING THE FULLNESS OF MY EVERLASTING GOSPEL, TO WHOM I HAVE COMMITTED THE KEYS OF THE RECORD OF THE STICK OF EPHRAIM; AND ALSO WITH ELIAS, TO WHOM I HAVE COMMITTED THE KEYS OF BRINGING TO PASS THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL THE HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN, CONCERNING THE LAST DAYS; AND ALSO JOHN THE SON OF ZACHARIAS, WHICH ZACHARIAS HE (ELIAS) VISITED AND GAVE PROMISE THAT HE SHOULD HAVE A SON, AND HIS NAME SHOULD BE JOHN, AND HE SHOULD BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT OF ELIAS; WHICH JOHN I HAVE SENT UNTO YOU, MY SERVANTS, JOSEPH SMITH, JUN., AND OLIVER COWDERY, TO ORDAIN YOU UNTO THE FIRST PRIESTHOOD WHICH YOU HAVE RECEIVED, THAT YOU MIGHT BE CALLED AND ORDAINED EVEN AS AARON; AND ALSO ELISHA—unto whom I have committed the keys of the power of turning the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers, that the whole earth may not be smitten with a curse; and also with Joseph and Jacob, and Isaac, and Abraham, your fathers, by whom the promises remain; and also with Michael, or Adam, the father of all, the prince of all, the ancient of days; and also with Peter, and James, and John, whom I have sent unto you, by whom I have ordained you and confirmed you to be apostles, and especial witnesses of my name, and bear the keys of your ministry and of the same things which I revealed unto them; unto whom I have committed the keys of my kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last times; and for the fulness of times, in which I will gather together in one all things, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; and also with — W. A.
LDS historian Gregory A. Prince wrote:

Although in the Mormon church today the term “priesthood” refers to this bestowed authority, such a relationship did not develop until years after the founding of the church. Initially authority was understood to be inherent in what are now termed “offices.” Three offices—elder, priest, and teacher—were present by August 1829, as were the ordinances of baptism, confirmation, and ordination, but the word “priesthood” was not used in reference to these for another three years.13

Prince goes on to explain that while the Book of Mormon contains references to “higher authority” they were not understood in terms of “priesthood.” He concluded:

It was not until several months after the June 1831 general conference, when the “high priesthood” was conferred, that the term “priesthood” entered Mormon usage at all.14

Thus we see that at the time of the founding of Mormonism in 1830 there was no teaching or awareness of Joseph Smith claiming to have received either the Aaronic Priesthood or the Melchizedek Priesthood in 1829.

Another example of changing revelations to include Melchizedek and Aaronic priesthood information is seen by comparing Smith’s 1831 revelation, which was printed in 1832 in the church newspaper, The Evening and Morning Star, with the current version in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 68. (See photo on next page.)

Also, sections 2 and 13 of the current Doctrine and Covenants, which mention priesthood, were not printed in the 1833 Book of Commandments. They were extracted from Joseph Smith’s history, which wasn’t started until 1838, and were not added to the Doctrine and Covenants until 1876.

As Joseph Smith’s church began to grow so did the need for clearer delineation of authority, thus the backdating and insertion of priesthood claims into the revelations. David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, related the following concerning the addition of priesthood concepts:

Authority is the word we used for the first two years in the church . . . This matter of two orders of priesthood in the Church of Christ, and lineal priesthood of the old law being in the church, all originated in the mind of Sydney Rigdon. . . . This is the way the High Priests and the “priesthood” as you have it, was introduced into the Church of Christ almost two years after its beginning—and after we had baptized and confirmed about two thousand souls into the church.15

Whitmer also condemned the LDS leaders for endorsing the rewriting of Smith’s revelations between their first printing in the Book of Commandments in 1833 and the second printing in the Doctrine and Covenants in 1835. Whitmer wrote:

You have changed the revelations from the way they were first given and as they are to-day . . . to support the error of Brother Joseph in taking upon himself the office of Seer to the church. You have changed the revelations to support the error of high priests. You have changed the revelations to support the error of a President of the high priesthood, high counselors, etc.16

In recent years the LDS church has been more open about the textual revisions in Smith’s revelations. Yet they continue to insist that the priesthood was restored in 1829. If the Melchizedek and Aaronic priesthoods were a part of the church prior to the printing of the 1833 Book of Commandments it certainly seems strange that it contains no such teaching.

Researcher LaMar Petersen concluded:

There seems to be no support for the historicity of the restoration of the priesthood in journals, diaries, letters, nor printed matter prior to October 1834.17

14 Power From on High, p. 12.
15 David Whitmer, An Address To All Believers in Christ (Richmond, Missouri: 1887), p. 64.
16 An Address To All Believers in Christ, p. 49.
A REVELATION, GIVEN NOVEMBER, 1831.

My servant, Orson, was called, by his ordination, to proclaim the everlasting gospel, by the spirit of the living God, from people to people, and from God to the world, in the congregations of the wicked, in their synagogues, reasoning with and exhorting all scriptures unto them: And behold and lo, this is an example unto all those who were ordained unto this priesthood, whose mission is appointed unto them to go forth: And this is the example unto them, that they shall speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and whatsoever they shall speak, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost, shall be scripture; shall be the will of the Lord; shall be the mind of the Lord; shall be the word of the Lord; shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation: Behold this is the promise of the Lord unto you, O ye my servants: wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you; and ye shall bear record of me even Jesus Christ, that I am the Son of the living God; that I am; and that I am to come. This is the word of the Lord unto my servant, Orson, and also unto my servant, Luke, upon unto my servant, Lyman, and unto my servant Will, upon unto all the faithful elders of my church: Go ye unto all the world, preach the gospel to every creature; acting in the authority which I have given you: baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and that he believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned; and he that believeth shall be blessed with signs following, even as it is written: And whosoever it shall be given to know the signs of the times, and the signs of the coming of the Son of man; and of these things; and of the Father shall bear record, to you it shall be given power and skill to open up eternal life: Amen.

And now, concerning the things in addition to the laws and commandments, they are thus: There shall be hereafter in the due time of the Lord, other blessings to be set apart unto the church, to minister even according to the first; therefore it shall be in high priestly worth, and it shall be anointed by the confirmation of high priest. And again, no bishop or judge, which shall be set apart for this ministry, shall be tried or condemned for any crime, save it be before a conference of high priest; and in as much as he is found guilty before a conference of high priest, his testimony that cannot be impugned, shall be condemned; and he shall bear record of it in the conference of high priest. And again, he shall bear record of the commandments shall be confirmed by the church, by the laying on of the hands, when they are old; the sin be upon the head of the priest, for this shall be laid unto the inhabitants of Zion and their children shall be sprinkled with the blood of the lamb, when they are old, and receive the laying on of the hands; and they shall bear record of their children's age, and they shall be sprinkled with the blood of the lamb, and shall be sprinkled with the blood of the lamb, and the priests shall bear record of it in the conference of high priest. And the inhabitants of Zion shall observe the sabbath day to keep it holy. And the inhabitants of Zion, also, shall remember their labor, in as much as they are appointed to labor, in all faithfulness, for the latter shall be laid in consequence and unto the Lord. And now, I the Lord am not only well pleased with the inhabitants of Zion, but with the children among them, and their children are also growing up in wickedness: They also seek not sabbath days or holy days. These things I have ordained that ye should not do; but they shall be kept holy, and are called sabbath days unto the Lord. And a commandment I give unto you, that he that observeth not his precepts before the Lord in the season thereof, let him be had in remembrance before the judge of my people. These sayings are true and faithful: whereas transgress them not, neither take therefrom. Behold I am Alpha and Omega, and I come quickly: Amen.
The LDS Church priesthood is divided into two groups, Aaronic and Melchizedek. Below is a list of the various offices:

**Melchizedek Priesthood**
- Prophet [senior apostle]
- Apostle [12 apostles, plus those in First Presidency]
- Seventy [General Authorities]
- Patriarch [one in each stake]
- High Priest [usually ordained to this when called to such offices as bishop, stake president or to the stake high council]
- Elder [18 yr old or older]

**Aaronic Priesthood**
- Bishop [presiding high priest in ward]
- Priest [16 yr old]
- Teacher [14 yr old]
- Deacon [12 yr old]

Since the LDS Church makes the specific claim that their priesthood is the same as in the Bible we need to compare their offices with those mentioned in scripture. First we will look at the Old Testament priesthood and then authority in the New Testament.

**Aaronic Priesthood**

Prior to the law of Moses, men such as Abraham offered sacrifices to God, but not as part of any priesthood. When God set up the priesthood in the days of Moses, he restricted it to Aaron and his adult descendants, who were of the tribe of Levi (Numbers 3:1-10, 8:5-22; Exodus 38:21). This would disqualify most Mormons as they do not claim to be descended from Aaron. Many LDS believe they are from the tribe of Ephraim but this would not make them eligible for the Aaronic priesthood.

Even Jesus could not function in the Aaronic priesthood because he descended from the tribe of Judah. Hebrews 7:14 explains: “For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.”

There were only two offices in the Aaronic priesthood, priests and one high priest. The priests prepared and offered the daily sacrifices. The high priest was the only one allowed into the most sacred part of the temple, the Holy of Holies, which he did once a year to offer sacrifices for the sins of the people of Israel.

The priesthood of the Old Testament was brought to an end with the death of Christ. According to Hebrews, chapter seven, the Aaronic (“Levitical”) priesthood, with its endless system of animal sacrifices to cover sin, never could bring about perfection because even the priests themselves were imperfect people whose sins needed atoning by the same sacrificial system.

If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? (Hebrews 7:11)

Thus, there was a need for Christ (“who knew no sin,” 2 Corinthians 5:21) to come “after the order of Melchisidec,” offering himself as the perfect, one-time sacrifice for all sin and ending the imperfect Aaronic priesthood.

Also, in Matthew 27 we read that the veil of the temple, which closed off the Holy of Holies, was split in two at the time of Christ’s death, thus showing that the way into the presence of God no longer required the Jewish priesthood system, with its animal sacrifices, since Christ himself was the lamb of God offered for our sins and he is now our only High Priest. Accordingly, there is no mention in the Bible of Christ’s followers ever needing to hold an Aaronic priesthood, let alone a Melchizedek priesthood, because the former was ended in Christ and the latter could be fulfilled only by him.

**Deacons**

In Numbers 8:23-25, God set the minimum age of the Aaronic priesthood at twenty-five, and there were only priests and one high priest. The Old Testament has no mention of deacons. The LDS Church ordains young men deacons, their first office in the Aaronic priesthood, at the age of twelve. However, Paul instructed Timothy that deacons are to be mature men and faithful husbands (1 Timothy 3:8-12).

**Teachers**

As part of the Aaronic Priesthood in the LDS Church a young man is ordained a teacher at the age of fourteen. (This office is separate from the assignment of teaching a class such as Sunday School.) The New Testament passages about teachers do not make them part of a special priesthood. Teachers should be mature Christians “able to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2), not teenagers.
Priests

In the LDS Church a young man is ordained a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood at the age of sixteen and does not need to be a descendant of Aaron. This was never done in the Old Testament. There are Jewish priests mentioned in the New Testament, but an office of priest is never mentioned in the Christian church.

Melchizedek Priesthood

Melchizedek is mentioned in Genesis 14:17-20 as the King of Salem (Jerusalem) and priest of God who blessed Abraham. In Psalm 110:4, a promise was given that his priesthood would be forever. That promise was fulfilled in Jesus Christ as indicated in chapters five through seven of Hebrews, where Melchizedek is identified as a type of Christ.

Hebrews 5:10 tells us that Christ is the only High Priest “after the order of Melchisedec.” Then in Hebrews 7 we read that there were many high priests due to death, but Jesus had a superior priesthood because he continues as High Priest due to his endless life:

For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. (Hebrews 7:26-27)

The only Christian priesthood mentioned in the New Testament is the spiritual priesthood of every believer. Peter wrote:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Peter 2:9)

Notice that men are not singled out as the only ones holding this priesthood. It is for every Christian.

Elders and Bishops

In Mormonism, a man is ordained an elder upon entering the Melchizedek Priesthood. While the New Testament mentions elders (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5-6; 1 Peter 5:1-3), they are never referred to as part of a priesthood system.

In 1 Timothy 3:1 and Titus 1:7 the word bishop appears in the King James Version of the Bible. But the word bishop simply means overseer or steward and is rendered that way in newer translations. Bishop is not a separate office in the books of Timothy and Titus, but a continuation of Paul’s instructions about elders.

When Paul gave instructions to Timothy about leadership he did not mention anything about ordaining men to either the Aaronic or Melchizedek priesthoods. Instead, the emphasis was on choosing mature Christians. In 2 Timothy 2:2 Paul wrote:

... and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. (2 Timothy 2:2)

Seventy

In the LDS Church a seventy is a specific office in their Melchizedek Priesthood. He is a type of missionary and overseer of a given area of the church (D&C 107:25). Joseph Smith evidently read about Christ sending out seventy men in Luke 10:1 (some Bibles say seventy-two) and turned this event into an ordination of men into a specific office of the priesthood. The LDS church has now expanded this to different quorums of Seventy.

However, there is no mention in the New Testament of anyone ever being appointed to be a replacement of any of these seventy men. Surely if such an office was to be part of the church it would have been mentioned in Acts or the other letters in the New Testament.

High Priest

While there are thousands of high priests in the LDS Church, there was only one Jewish high priest at a time. The high priest was part of the Aaronic Priesthood. Hebrews 5:1 explains that the duties of the Jewish high priest were to “offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.” Mormon high priests do not offer any sacrifices so they are not following the Old Testament pattern. The Jewish high priest served as an “example and shadow of heavenly things” (Hebrews 8:5).

Christ fulfilled this “when he offered up himself” (Hebrews 7:22-27). He is the only High Priest in the Christian church. Because Christ lives forever his priesthood can never pass to another. There are no references in the New Testament to any Christian holding the office of high priest.

Pastors

Mormons will often use Ephesians 4:11 when trying to prove their system of priesthood. This verse reads:

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.
The LDS Church, however, does not have any pastors. One of their apostles, Joseph Fielding Smith explained:

The term pastor does not refer to an order in the priesthood, like deacon, priest, elder . . . a bishop is a pastor; so is an elder who has charge of a branch . . . 18

Oddly, the Mormons insist that apostles and teachers are specific offices of the priesthood, but do not believe that pastor or evangelist are priesthood offices.

**Evangelist or Patriarch?**

Ephesians 4:11 mentions evangelists yet there is no such office in the Mormon Church. Instead, they claim that the original meaning has been lost and that an evangelist is supposed to be a patriarch. However, the simple meaning of evangel is “good news.” Thus an evangelist is one who spreads the “good news,” such as a missionary.

However, LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie claimed:

Having lost the true knowledge of the priesthood and its offices, . . . the false traditions of the sectarian world have applied the designation evangelist to traveling preachers, missionaries, and revivalists.19

Joseph Fielding Smith explained: “An evangelist is a patriarch . . . The Patriarch to the Church holds the keys of blessing for the members of the Church.”20

There is no evidence that the Greek word evangelist ever carried the meaning of patriarch. The Greek word translated evangelist has always carried the meaning of someone who proclaims the good news, not one who gives prayer blessings to church members. In the LDS Church a patriarch gives a blessing to a member as a sort of spiritual blueprint for his/her life (D&C 107:39-56).

**Apostles and Prophets**

After Judas betrayed Christ there was one man chosen to replace him as part of the twelve apostles (Acts 1:21-23).To qualify for this position the person had to be an eyewitness to the full ministry of Jesus, including his resurrection. There is no evidence in the New Testament that anyone else was chosen to replace one of the original twelve.

In Mormonism the president of the church is considered a prophet and apostle. LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie stated:

Apostles and prophets are the foundation upon which the organization of the true Church rests.21

In trying to establish the need for apostles and prophets in the church Mormons appeal to 1 Corinthians 12:28:

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.

However, if one reads the entire section from verse 27 to verse 31 it is obvious that Paul is discussing various ministries or gifts in the early church, not listing specific offices of priesthood.

Notice also that Paul lists apostles first and prophets second. In Mormonism the highest calling is the prophet of the church with the apostles serving under him. Also in Mormonism the office of teacher is bestowed on fourteen-year-old boys, not a man third in rank to the prophet and apostles.

Another problem for the LDS position is the concept of having three apostles in its First Presidency that oversee the Twelve Apostles. This adds up to fifteen apostles and is not the same as Jesus’ twelve apostles.

They also maintain that Peter, James and John were the First Presidency of the early church. But they were part of the twelve, not in addition to the twelve.

If Mormonism is going to insist that the church today must be set up exactly as it was under Christ then they have too many apostles. The Mormons cannot have it both ways. Either they are a “restoration” that is exactly like the New Testament church or they are setting up something different from the early Christian church.

Thus we see that besides the problem that Mormon priesthood concepts are not in accord with the New Testament, the lack of historical references in early LDS documents to priesthood restoration leaves us with no reason to accept the Mormon claim of priesthood authority.

**False Prophets?**

While Mormons insist that there needs to be a prophet at the head of the church they seem to ignore the New Testament warnings of false prophets.

Matthew 24:24, warns “For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”

We should test those who claim to be prophets. In 1 John 4:1, we are counselled: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”21

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CONCLUSION

If the LDS people want to truly follow the New Testament model they will need to renounce their claims to Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods and embrace the priesthood of all believers. In 1 Peter 2:4-5 we read:

As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Christians everywhere look to Jesus’ death and resurrection for the atonement for our sins, trusting Christ alone for Eternal Life, thus becoming part of His holy priesthood.

For further discussion of LDS priesthood authority, see:

- https://beggarsbread.org/2012/10/06/fabricating-the-mormon-priesthood-by-god-or-by-man/
- http://www.4mormon.org/who-has-the-proper-authority-to-administer-gospel-ordinances/
- https://mit.irr.org/mormon-priesthood-do-mormons-alone-have-power

EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS AND EMAILS

October 2017: I just finished listening to your podcast on the Mormon podcast community. I found it so fascinating and couldn’t stop listening to your story. I immediately recognized you because I worked at ____ bank and used to see your Utah lighthouse checks come in all the time. . . . I remember being curious what it was and looked it up online and was so offended that you were “anti Mormon” that I am afraid I was very judgmental and not as friendly as I should have been. I didn’t understand at that time why someone would “attack” the church. It is amazing how much I have evolved since then and the wool has been lifted from my eyes. It’s been a long and difficult journey but I now think of you as a heroine and admire the courage it took to expose the Mormon church against so much opposition. Thank you for devoting your life to such a worthy cause. I am sorry for the judgmental person that I was. I no longer work at that bank but I wish I did so that next time I saw you I could get the chance to be a friendlier person to you and get to know you a little better. . . . anyway, God Bless.

October 2017: I love being LDS

November 2017: You inspired me to find Christ. I have been a Christian for several years. I was living in Florida when The Wilders Son found Christ and brought the rest of his family in. You are a True pioneer . . . thank You for your courage. It gave me courage to make the choice to become a Christian. I love Jesus and I love Sandra and Gerald Tanner.

P.S. I called you 10 years ago at my darkest hour in my faith Crisis. You talked through to a place where I could choose and be happy . . . you have made such a difference.

November 2017: Yesterday, I finally came full circle in a story that began over 40 years ago while serving my mission as a young zone leader in the western suburbs of Sydney, Australia. A family that my companion and I were teaching expressed interest in the church but said that they had come across some questions that gave them pause and they hoped that we would be able to resolve these questions for them during our discussions appointments. Being young, fully converted and never doubting that the church was everything that it claimed to be and also unknowingly being very naïve . . . we assured this family that there was not a question that could not be answered to their full and complete satisfaction. The father then handed me a book, Mormonism: Shadow or Reality by Gerald and Sandra Tanner. We promised to read the book and return with answers.

Despite being raised in an active LDS family, being completely devout and graduating from 4 years of seminary and a missionary preparation class at the local Institute of Religion, nothing had prepared me for this book.

Upon returning to our flat, aka apartment, I began to browse through the book. It didn’t take me long to realize that nothing in my previous 20 years of life had prepared me for what I was reading. Joseph’s compete disregard for living the word of wisdom such as riding his horse down the streets of Nauvoo while smoking his cigar, multiple changes and additions to the Doctrine and Covenants, Nephi being the name of the angel that appeared to Joseph instead of Moroni were just a few of the earth shattering revelations that rocked what I had thought was a firm unshakable testimony.

Needless to say I didn’t get very far in the book before I realized that were I to continue to read further, what testimony I had left would be torn to shreds, so devastating were the seemingly credible claims I was reading.

It’s hard to describe the depth of the spiritual pain I fell in, . . . I approached God as a broken, devastated missionary and pleaded with Him to give me answers. I remember pouring out my heart and with tears flowing down my face, sharing my fears in what the consequences of these new revelations would mean. . . . [after an unusual event that he took to mean the church was true, he put our book aside] I went on with my mission becoming even more committed and dedicated than I had been before. I believed that God had personally intervened in my life and answered my prayer in a very real and direct manner.

Following my mission my life followed a very traditional Mormon path, dedication to the church, temple wedding, leadership positions etc. But somewhere buried deep within me, lying dormant, were those seeds of doubt that had been planted from reading the Tanner book. . . . In the many years since my mission, other doubts creped in, with a emergence of DNA, questions on why a people that are claimed to have filled the whole of America could [be] real and yet leave no trace of their existence. Of learning of the anachronisms in the Book of Mormon, discovering that Joseph would make things up and pass his stories off as factual truth . . . such as the Book of Abraham and the story of Zelph and many, many more which I won’t go into.

As my many doubts accumulated and as I tried to cling to belief, I would always hold to the experience of my miracle while on my mission to keep me going. But eventually my shelf became too heavy and one day I realized that all of these issues simply disappeared if I accepted the conclusion that the church simply wasn’t what it claimed to be.
Yes making this conclusion caused me to have to reinterpret this and other seeming miracles in my life as just random circumstances instead of a God taking a personal interest in me and interceding in my life.

For years I have known that the Tanner’s Lighthouse ministry bookstore is located on West Temple across from the Salt Lake Bee’s Baseball Field. I have driven past the building many times over the years, thinking someday I need to go in there and share my missionary experience with the Tanner’s but never have. Early on it would have been to go and testify to the lies that they were spewing but in recent years it would have been to share the story of how their book was instrumental in planting the seeds that would eventually lead me out of Mormonism.

Yesterday, as I was driving along West Temple, I passed the store and I thought today is the day. . . I’m going to go in there. Upon entering, I asked if Sandra was available and was quickly introduced to a kind, gentle grandmotherly woman. After introducing myself, I proceeded to share my story.

For years I have thought about what this day might be like and I must admit that the years of my Mormon indoctrination did kick in which had taught me to fear this woman and what she represented, but those fears quickly vanish as I shared my story. We had a nice friendly conversation, one not unlike the many she must have on a weekly bases from others who have also discovered that the church is not what it claims to be. After sharing my story of how her book had been a real miracle in my life, I thanked her and left. The seed that she had help[ed] plant over 40 years ago had finally grown into a full tree and born fruit, the fruit of truth and knowledge.

November 2017: I have experienced many emotions as I have come to the realization that Joseph was not only a false prophet but also an Antichrist, in my opinion. I feel angry and betrayed. I live here in Utah. My family genealogy goes back to the beginning of the formation of the LDS church and on both sides of my family. I was raised in a polygamist family to later become LDS. It scares me to know how deeply this religion is embedded into our very fibers of our body. Once the greatest truth and now I just see another cult. My heart does break and yet I rejoice to come to this knowledge. I am so thankful for you and others like you who made the sacrifice to embrace the truth and then labor continually for people like me. I cry tears of relief and thankfulness to God and to you who serve him, thank you, thank you and may God bless you forever for your work.

December 2017: I am a family law attorney (married 29 years) and father of four. . . I am a returned missionary and have been an active tithe paying member throughout my life.

My doubts about LDS truth claims began when watching the PBS special “The Mormons” in about 2008. For the first time, I learned that Joseph Smith “translated” the Book of Mormon using a seer stone.

Since that time, I have undertaken a deep study of LDS history. About six months ago, my proverbial “shelf” collapsed. I have heard and clearly understand that Joseph Smith was deceptive and that he engaged in a pattern of making repeated grandiose and untrue claims.

The good news is that my faith in Christ is stronger than ever. I am excited that I can now follow Christ free from the clutter and distraction of Joseph Smith’s incorrect ideas. (Though, I have also taken many good things with me.) I have started to attend a non-denominational Christian Church. . .

All of that said, I must now socially operate within a strong LDS family, neighborhood, and social network.

December 2017: Thank you for helping people like me out of Mormonism. Your documents have been enlightening and I treasure this new, free relationship I have come to know with Christ. Continue the good work!

January 2018: Sandra tanner is a joke

January 2018: I am so shocked to find that the one true church isn’t as true as it claims. After 56 years of devotion and donating I’m angry. My husband seems to think that only Mormons tell the truth while everyone else makes up lies. I feel so lost and alone.

February 2018: Your Darkhouse will soon join Jerald in his darkhouse. I think he is with the evil spirits and you soon will join him in Outer Darkness. I think you both are son/daughter of perdition. You have accepted the antichrist as your savior, Satan/


Sandra Tanner? Good candidate for the Missionary Alliance Church, whatever man-made group of teachings that may be. Sandra would crucify the Saviour all over again if He tried to teach her the truth. Very strange.

Trinity? Oh yeah. That’s a word found in the Bible. Right, Sandra. Oh. Maybe not. But we should believe this Catholic innovation. Because . . . Always fun to read your ramblings.

March 2018: I recently came to the Lighthouse Bookstore with my missions team Evangelical Mormon Interactions from Biola University. I was able to listen to Sandra tell some of her story and tell of her ministry. I just wanted to say that I found out after my trip to Utah that it was because of Sandra and Jerald Tanner’s book, The Changing World of Mormonism, that my mom decided to finally leave the Mormon church when she was 20 years old. From there she raised me and my brother to be evangelical Christians. It certainly is wonderful to see how God works in families’ lives.

March 2018: Sandra, when was the last time that you prayed and asked the Lord to forgive your sins?

Acts 3:19 “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.”

If you are not repenting of your sins then Satan has deceived you into a false sense of complacency, and as a result of this deception and the accumulation of sin in your life, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven . . . worlds without end.

March 18: [My family and] I drove out to the Mountain Meadows Massacre site. They were vaguely aware of the atrocity but knew nothing about it. Now they do know about it, not only as a historical curiosity in the distant past, but also as an evil event in the history of the Mormon Church. Good enough.

I have begun reading Mormon Enigma and am hoping I will be able to recommend it to my wife. From what I have read so far, I think I will be able to without causing any stress or hurt feelings. My goal is to avoid rude bashing of the faith, but instead to make available or gently reveal historical facts that are not known . . .

As for myself . . . it is by reason that I am a firm believer in an intelligent creator. It is by faith that I believe he is good
invited her to read the book, but she complained about the lack of time to do so, which is actually true. Interestingly, a lady at work knows who you are and is fairly well informed about Mormon history. She has even ordered books from your store.

When she saw that I was reading *Mormon Enigma* she asked if she could read it when I was finished. It now sits on her desk. My next book I have just started is Grant Palmer’s *An Insider’s View* . . . Following that will be Charles Larson’s book on the papyri. I will save . . . your [Mormonism—] *Shadow or Reality* for last as I think that one is going to take some time to get through.

**April 2018:** One of the best moments of my transition from Mormonism was the chance to sit down and talk to Sandra for a couple of hours. She kindly asked about “my story,” we talked doctrine, and most importantly grace in Jesus Christ. Oh, and I got to apologize for harboring the bad feelings I held for she and Jerald because they had indirectly made my life as a Mormon missionary a refiners fire! You two are pioneers in your own right, and have my admiration and gratitude.

**April 2018:** Sandra Tanner has a large resource of published works and YouTube videos that allowed me to start to examine why the Mormon church is false and what is the truth.

I began my exploration when I woke up and asked what happened to the gold plates and found out they had conveniently been taken into heaven. Mormonism is burdensome to women, not just lacking power and equality, but in wanting to maintain family ties. There are so many broken family lines and those who do not believe, that the church cannot be true. When the absurd facts about Joseph Smith fall into place, it is a great relief to know that through Sandra Tanner I was able to see it for what it was and let it go. Polygamy is dreaded by church women and they fear being subject to it in the “next life.”

Thank you Sandra Tanner. Access to your works continue to keep me mindful of the truth.

**May 2018:** I was born into the Mormon Church and my family dates back to 1848 when my ancestors were “sealed” in the temple. I always felt guilty because I could never keep all the laws and commandments they required so I would try, fail, give up and rebel. It was a vicious cycle. . . . [years later] I started to perform my own research. I noticed the Bible taught a completely different Gospel and I trusted the Bible over the Church due to the overwhelming evidence. . . . I was still living in the world and was selfish. . . . I fell on my knees and worshiped Jesus as my personal savior, I surrendered my life to Him and was Changed at that moment. My whole view of Grace was completely WRONG. I was baptized shortly after and I have been sharing the good news with everyone I run into. There was a major change due to faith, fear of the Lord, and gratitude for Grace. I was mormon for 25 years and have been born again (praise God) for 1 year.

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Inside of Mormonism (The): A Judicial Examination of the Endowment Oaths Administered in All the Mormon Temples (1903), by Henry G. McMillan: The United States District Court. Price $7.00

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"A Major Victory for Satan"
Nicknames Pronounced Blasphemous by President Nelson

A revelation from God? Refraining from using “LDS,” “Mormon” demanded by Nelson
By Eric Johnson of Mormonism Research Ministry

Russell M. Nelson, the 17th president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, made a claim that God personally revealed to him how “LDS,” “Mormon,” “Mormonism,” and other nicknames referring to the church, the religion and its adherents are offensive to God. Nelson first explained this revelation on August 16, 2018, where he said that “the Lord impressed upon my mind the importance of the name He decreed for His Church, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”

As he toured central and eastern Canada a few days later, he seemed surprised by the hubbub caused by his announcement. He told one crowd, “We released that announcement to the media on Thursday, and oh, they’re pretty excited about it—‘it can’t be done.’ I know it can’t—but it’s going to be, because the Lord wants it that way.”

Speaking at the October 2018 general conference, Nelson argued that the new policy was not a “name change,” “rebranding,” “cosmetic,” “a whim,” or “inconsequential.” He started his main talk by saying,

Some weeks ago, I released a statement regarding a course correction for the name of the Church. . . . Instead, it is a correction. It is the command of the Lord. Joseph Smith did not name the Church restored through him; neither did Mormon. It was the Savior Himself who said, “For thus shall my church be called in the last days, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” . . . Thus, the name of the Church is not negotiable. When the Savior clearly states what the name of His Church should be and even precedes His declaration with, “Thus shall my church be called,” He is serious. And if we allow nicknames to be used or adopt or even sponsor those nicknames ourselves, He is offended.

To say that God is offended when people use nicknames of this church is a pretty serious charge, seemingly on the same level as the breaking of the First Commandment. Such a claim has no biblical origins, as no biblical apostle or prophet ever argued about what the early church and its people ought to be called. According to Acts 11:26, “the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.” Referenced only three times in the New Testament, the word “Christian” appears to have been a derogatory reference used by the enemies of the early church—notice, the name was “given” to them and not something they apparently appointed for themselves.

1 Also see another article by Eric Johnson, “Russell M. Nelson draws a line in the sand over LDS and Mormon describing his church and people,” http://www.mrm.org/nelsons-mandate

It certainly was not used positively by King Agrippa in Acts 17:28 when he asked Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?” Nelson continued in his conference talk,

What’s in a name or, in this case, a nickname? When it comes to nicknames of the Church, such as the “LDS Church,” the “Mormon Church,” or the “Church of the Latter-day Saints,” the most important thing in those names is the absence of the Savior’s name. To remove the Lord’s name from the Lord’s Church is a major victory for Satan. When we discard the Savior’s name, we are subtly disregarding all that Jesus Christ did for us—even His Atonement. . . . When we omit His name from His Church, we are inadvertently removing Him as the central focus of our lives.  

If Nelson’s church is supposed to be a restoration of Christianity, where do we find anything in the Bible to say that the early church was called after the name of Jesus? In the quotes given by Nelson above (including the name of his conference talk), notice how Nelson continually uses “the Church” (capitalized, of course, as he is referencing “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints”). Shouldn’t God be offended by Nelson’s lack of reference to Jesus in reference to the “Church” in the same way that He is said to be “offended” when someone uses “LDS” or “Mormon”? After all, both examples fail to use “Jesus” in the name God supposedly gave to Joseph Smith.

Another question. Was God “offended” when Nelson’s church did not have the name of Jesus Christ in its early years? MRM founder Bill McKeever writes,

If Mormons wish to use this argument, they must answer as to why their own church was called merely “The Church of the Latter-day Saints” from 1834-1838. By their reasoning their own church must have been in apostasy for at least four years. Those who belonged to the early Christian church were known more by their geographic location rather than an “organizational” name. In I Thessalonians 1:1 Paul addresses “The church of the Thessalonians.” Are we to assume that Paul was addressing a false church?

Nelson decided to give two pragmatic reasons for why the change was needed:

For much of the world, the Lord’s Church is presently disguised as the “Mormon Church.” But we as members of the Lord’s Church know who stands at its head: Jesus Christ Himself. Unfortunately, many who hear the term Mormon may think that we worship Mormon. Not so! We honor and respect that great ancient American prophet. But we are not Mormon’s disciples. We are the Lord’s disciples.  

The idea that “Mormon” in “Mormon Church” is a reference to the fictional character by the same name found in the Book of “Mormon” is something I certainly have never thought of, nor do I think the average person thinks this is the case. It sure seems to be a stretch to even make this point.

For his second reason, Nelson said,

In the early days of the restored Church, terms such as Mormon Church and Mormons were often used as epithets—as cruel terms, abusive terms—designed to obliterate God’s hand in restoring the Church of Jesus Christ in these latter days.

As mentioned above, the term “Christian” was not self-appointed by the biblical apostles. Rather, it was given and apparently used by outsiders in a deriding manner. Yet the days of “Mormon” being a “cruel” or “abusive” term are long over. Nobody watching the Broadway play The Book of Mormon will walk away thinking such a thing. Neither do the Latter-day Saints themselves who have used these terms in an affectionate manner in reference to themselves. This is why, until October 2018, there was a “Mormon Tabernacle Choir.” And what about the “I am a Mormon” campaign, the Meet the Mormons movie that began playing at Temple Square in 2014, or the website “Mormon.org”? Over the years the word Mormon has been a common descriptor used by the church leaders and its members as well as outsiders such as the media and MRM. With so many other issues that God could communicate to Nelson about, why this one? And why now?

WHAT SHOULD THE CHURCH BE CALLED?

At the end of Nelson’s talk, he said,

Our revised style guide is helpful. It states: “In the first reference, the full name of the Church is preferred: ‘The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.’ When a shortened [second] reference is needed, the terms ‘the Church’ or the ‘Church of Jesus Christ’ are encouraged. The ‘restored Church of Jesus Christ’ is also accurate and encouraged.”

There are problems with the command given by Nelson. For instance,

3 Nelson, General Conference (October 2018).
4 Bill McKeever, “Examining the ‘17 Points of the True Church,’” http://www.mrm.org/17-points

5 Nelson, General Conference (October 2018).
• The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints takes 47 keystrokes to write. It is unwieldy and would be laborious to write (and read) over and over again.
• It is redundant. When we talk about a person, we can use personal pronouns (he, him, etc) that help minimize the redundancy. The same is needed for the proper name of this church.
• Imagine how many Latter-day Saints might think the Christian is mocking them by repeating the church’s whole name over and over again.
• There is a theological problem with Christians referring to this religious organization as “the Church” (capitalized), the “Church of Jesus Christ,” or “the restored Church of Jesus Christ.” These names are truth claims. Christians don’t hold that this is God’s “Church,” nor do they believe it is Jesus’s church or that Christ’s church even needed to be “restored.” (Calling it the “restored church” would mean that we agree with the “great apostasy,” something Christians completely reject.)

Nelson references Doctrine and Covenants 115:4 (from the Standard Works) to support his case. It says, “For thus shall my church be called in the last days, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” If this is the church’s name, then why does Nelson encourage his followers to use names that are different from this command? After all, if “Mormon Church” or “LDS Church” are offensive to God because they are not the “real” names of the church, then how is it any better to call it the “Church of Jesus Christ” or even “the Church,” a name that completely omits the name of Jesus? His reasoning seems inconsistent.

The church-owned Deseret News printed a story regarding the name change that explained how difficult it is to come up with suitable alternative references. On August 25, 2018, reporter Doug Wilks wrote,

Fundamentally, there is no Mormon church nor Latter-day Saint (LDS) church. Yet over the decades those terms have been accepted, perhaps as a way to draw distinction from other Christian denominations, or in an effort to reclaim a term (Mormon) that was once used as a slur against church members.

Wilks went on to say that the church has every right to self-name itself and therefore journalists should consider the wishes of this organization. It is true that the church leadership can ask to be called by any name it wants. But when its leaders demand that truth claim names ought to be used in replacement, the line is drawn and we won’t cross it. This revelation is going to cause many problems with headlines in newspapers—imagine having to use the full name of the church in headlines and take up all the space. What is most frustrating for both the secular media as well as apologetic ministries such as Mormonism Research Ministry is that Nelson does not provide suitable alternatives while merely offering faith-promoting choices that are not appropriate for outside organizations to use.

Despite Nelson’s edict, Salt Lake Tribune’s Peggy Fletcher Stack—Nelson said at a press conference that he knows this religion reporter’s family personally—continues to use “LDS,” “Mormon” and “Mormonism” throughout her writing. Typically, she uses the church’s complete name at the beginning of her story before referencing it with these other abbreviations and names.

The headline writers at this paper are also not catering to this church’s whim. Here are some recent article headlines from the past month that were used in the online edition of the Salt Lake Tribune:

• “A dozen new LDS temples announced”—Oct. 8, 2018
• “Put serving God and his children before chores, urge Mormon’s women leaders”—Oct. 7, 2018
• “About the new Mormon Sunday meeting schedule”—Oct. 7, 2018
• “Mormons rejoice at news of shorter Sunday services”—Oct. 7, 2018
• “With the church’s blessing, Mormon girls are passing the sacrament”—Oct. 3, 2018
• “USU names finalists to head up Mormon studies program”—Oct. 2, 2018
• “Nelson and the ‘R’ word: Why this Mormon prophet speaks more openly about revelations from God than his predecessors did”—Oct. 2, 2018
• “More millennial Mormons are choosing a middle way”—Sept. 29, 2018
• “No Scouting doesn’t mean an end to church-sponsored camping for Mormon youths”—Sept. 21, 2018
• “Mormon church takes another step in its anti-Prop 2 push”—September 20, 2018

When Latter-day Saints are questioned by outsiders about their religious affiliation, Nelson gave a way to respond:

If someone should ask, “Are you a Mormon?” you could reply, “If you are asking if I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, yes, I am!” If someone asks, “Are you a Latter-day Saint?” you might respond, “Yes, I am. I believe in Jesus Christ and am a member of His restored Church.”

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The first response sounds prideful. The questioner wasn’t asking if the person was a “member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” but whether the person is a “Mormon.” Instead of simply stating it as is (i.e., responding with “our prophet has asked us to refer to Latter-day Saints and not ‘Mormons’”), a correction is given in the answer that is the question that ought to have been asked and is nothing more than an end-around. If it were me, I’d rather the Latter-day Saint be upfront than play the game that Nelson is encouraging.


**Changes of Names in Church Organizations**

Before the October 2018 general conference began, the church announced that the name of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir was changed to “The Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square.” The old website “mormontabernaclechoir.org” has been rerouted to “thetabernaclechoir.org,” even though the first sentence on the site still reads “Visitors to Salt Lake City may attend a live broadcast of Music and the Spoken Word featuring the Mormon Tabernacle Choir on Sunday mornings.” (Imagine the impossible job given to the webmaster in charge of the church’s websites to change all of the thousands of articles using the wrong names!)

At the time of this article, the website Mormon.org has not been rerouted anywhere else. However, its main page has been changed and begins this way: “Welcome. This is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a community where we’re all trying to be a little bit better, a little bit kinder, a little more helpful—because that’s what Jesus taught. Welcome.”

Many other websites or names have not been changed, including “Lds.org” and “Ldschurchnews.com.” Hundreds of videos that came from the “I’m a Mormon” campaign that took place between 2010-2015 are still listed on a church-owned website. Unless the church decides to take these videos down, this series seems to be at great risk, especially if God is truly offended at the nickname “Mormon.”

**A Revelation from God? Or an Old General Authority’s Prejudice?**

Nelson is claiming that he has received nothing less than a “revelation” from God, making it clear that God “impressed” this into his mind. We must wonder if this policy change will need to be added into the *Doctrine and Covenants*, the place where other modern revelations of God—mostly given to Joseph Smith—have been placed. In her October 2, 2018, article *Salt Lake Tribune* writer Peggy Fletcher Stack wrote,

By his own account, Russell M. Nelson speaks often to God, or, rather, God speaks often to him. Nelson, the 94-year-old president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, said recently that he was awakened at 2 a.m. with a distinct impression that he should go to the Dominican Republic. Within days, the Church News reported, the energetic nonagenarian was on a plane to that Caribbean nation. . . . Indeed, in his first nearly nine months as the Utah-based faith’s top “prophet, seer and revelator,” Nelson has used the term “revelation” again and again to describe his motivation for initiatives and changes.

Noting that few of Nelson’s predecessors have used the “revelation” card when it came to receiving communication from God, Stack writes that Nelson has never shied away from the word, saying,

In January, the month Nelson took the faith’s reins, his wife, Wendy Watson Nelson, reported that one night she was prompted to leave her husband alone in their bedroom. “Two hours later, he emerged from the room,” Wendy Nelson told apostle Neil L. Andersen, who reported it on Facebook. “Wendy, you won’t believe what’s been happening,” the church president told his wife, according to Andersen’s account. “The Lord has given me detailed instructions on what I am to do.”

When Nelson wanted “to strengthen [his] proposal to his second wife Wendy (his first wife, Dantzel, had died), he told his prospective wife, “I know about revelation and how to receive it.” (Wouldn’t every single guy like to have such an advantage?) When he was the president of the apostles in January 2016, Nelson used the word “revelation” to describe a church policy on homosexuals mandating that married same-sex couples be considered “apostates” and their children be excluded from church rituals until they are 18.

According to Wendy, her husband “thrives on change.” In a five minute video interview that aired the last week of October 2018, she said,

I have seen him changing in the last 10 months. It is as though he’s been unleashed. He’s free to finally do what he came to earth to do. . . . He’s free to follow through with things he’s been concerned about but could never do. Now that he’s president of [the church], he can do those things. He’s not afraid to do something different. If we’re really preparing the church and the world for the Second Coming of the Savior, he is sincere about that. He doesn’t want us spending money, time, energy on anything that isn’t really focused on that. . . . I’ve seen him become younger. I’ve seen him become happier because he’s doing what he came to earth to do.

6 Peggy Fletcher Stack, “Nelson and the ‘R’ word, Why this Mormon prophet speaks more openly about revelations from God than his predecessors did,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, (October 2, 2018).

7 Ibid.

In that same video, Nelson said to buckle up because we haven’t seen anything yet. He enthusiastically stated,

If you think the church has been fully restored, you’re just seeing the beginning. There is much more to come. . . Wait till next year. And then the next year. Eat your vitamin pills. Get your rest. It’s going to be exciting.9

Latter-day Saints who may have enjoyed the “status quo” may be a bit concerned. After all, is this a man who has taken his personal views—including the idea that “Mormon” and “LDS” are offensive to God—and manipulated his people to think that it is God who is directing him to act. What incredible power there is to be the top dog in this religious organization!

**HAS THE CHURCH BEEN DOING IT “WRONG” ALL ALONG?**

To me, the most amazing comment in his general conference address is where he references Jesus:

After all He had endured—and after all He had done for humankind—I realize with profound regret that we have unwittingly acquiesced in the Lord’s restored Church being called by other names, each of which expunges the sacred name of Jesus Christ!10

Notice carefully what Nelson is saying when he says “we have unwittingly acquiesced in the Lord’s restored Church being called by other names.” Whether it was done intentionally or not, he is saying that it has been wrong by leaders to have left the name of Jesus out of any reference to the church.

To understand the power of the statement, it needs to be made clear that Latter-day Saint leaders do not “apologize.” The words used by Nelson (“profound regret”) is the closest an LDS leader gets to admitting something was not right. As an example, consider the words of Henry B. Eyring who, at the time the first counselor in the First Presidency. Speaking at a special conference titled “150th Anniversary of Mountain Meadows,” he said:

What was done here long ago by members of our Church represents a terrible and inexcusable departure from Christian teaching and conduct. We cannot change what happened, but we can remember and honor those who were killed here. We express profound regret for the massacre carried out in this valley 150 years ago today and for the undue and untold suffering experienced by the victims then and by their relatives to the present time. A separate expression of regret is owed to the Paiute people who have unjustly borne for too long the principal blame for what occurred during the massacre. Although the extent of their involvement is disputed, it is believed they would not have participated without the direction and stimulus provided by local Church leaders and members.11

Although several media outlets (including the church-owned Deseret News) announced that Eyring had “apologized,” although this was not accurate. In fact, church spokesman Mark Tuttle felt the need to clarify the media’s mistake soon afterward when he told the media, “We don’t use the word ‘apology.’ We used ‘profound regret.’” The phrase “profound regret” is purposely meant to be a rung below “apology,” but it is still mightily strong.

By using the word “we” in the above quote, we should understand that this is a reference to previous LDS leaders. As an apostle speaking at the April 1990 general conference, Nelson firmly laid out his thinking in a message titled “Thus Shall My Church Be Called.” He cited Doctrine and Covenants 115:4 (“Thus shall my church be called in the last days, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints”) and said,

Note carefully the language of the Lord. He did not say, “Thus shall my church be named.” He said, “Thus shall my church be called.” Years ago, its members were cautioned by the Brethren who wrote: “We feel that some may be misled by the too frequent use of the term ‘Mormon Church’” (Member-Missionary Class—Instructor’s Guide, Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982, p. 2). Before any other name is considered to be a legitimate substitute, the thoughtful person might reverently consider the feelings of the Heavenly Parent who bestowed that name.12

I am unclear about the difference between the words “named” and “called.” Wasn’t the church “named” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? And isn’t that what it is supposed to be called? If so, I fail to see how these are different.

Then, at the end of the talk, Nelson cited from Doctrine and Covenants 63 and said that

10 Nelson, General Conference (October 2018).
just as we revere His holy name, we likewise revere the name that He decreed for His church. As members of His church, we are privileged to participate in its divine destiny. May we so honor Him who declared, “Thus shall my church be called . . . The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” I pray in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.13

Six months later, future 15th President Gordon B. Hinckley—who was Nelson’s superior and served at that time as the first counselor in the First Presidency—gave additional insight. In his October 1990 talk “Mormon Should Mean ‘More Good,’” Hinckley made a direct reference to Nelson’s message. He cited the following poem:

Father calls me William,
Sister calls me Will,
Mother calls me Willie,
But the fellers call me Bill.

After citing this, he said,

I suppose that regardless of our efforts, we may never convert the world to general use of the full and correct name of the Church. Because of the shortness of the word Mormon and the ease with which it is spoken and written, they will continue to call us the Mormons, the Mormon church, and so forth. They could do worse.

When he asked a friend how Latter-day Saints could get people to use the proper name of the church, his friend replied, “You can’t. The word Mormon is too deeply ingrained and too easy to say.” He went on, “I’ve quit trying. While I’m thankful for the privilege of being a follower of Jesus Christ and a member of the Church which bears His name, I am not ashamed of the nickname Mormon.”

“Look,” he went on to say, “if there is any name that is totally honorable in its derivation, it is the name Mormon. And so, when someone asks me about it and what it means, I quietly say—‘Mormon means more good.’” (The Prophet Joseph Smith first said this in 1843; see Times and Seasons, 4:194; Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pp. 299–300.)

Later, Hinckley said, “We may not be able to change the nickname, but we can make it shine with added luster.” Referring to the name Mormon, he said,

After all, it is the name of a man who was a great prophet who struggled to save his nation, and also the name of a book which is a mighty testament of eternal truth, a veritable witness of the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. May I remind you for a moment of the greatness and of the goodness of this man Mormon.

In a quote that must have chafed the current president’s hide and clearly contradicts the Lord’s feelings as supposedly revealed by Nelson in 2018, Hinckley went on to say,

And so, while I sometimes regret that people do not call this church by its proper name, I am happy that the nickname they use is one of great honor made so by a remarkable man and a book which gives an unmatched testimony concerning the Redeemer of the world. Anyone who comes to know the man Mormon, through the reading and pondering of his words, anyone who reads this precious trove of history which was assembled and preserved in large measure by him, will come to know that Mormon is not a word of disrepute, but that it represents the greatest good—that good which is of God.

Hinckley concluded by saying how “in a very real sense Mormonism must mean that greater good which the Lord Jesus Christ exemplified.”

I must ask what Nelson meant when he expressed “profound regret” for those who “unwittingly acquiesced” by not using the name of Jesus in conjunction with the church’s name. Could he have been referencing someone like Hinckley more than a quarter century before seemingly upstaged Nelson’s earlier talk?

It’s not as if other leaders haven’t talked about the issue in apparent agreement with Nelson. For instance, Marion G. Romney, a member of the First Presidency, believed with Nelson that the correct name of the church is its full name, though he wasn’t fazed by the use of “Mormons” or the “Mormon church.” He said,

Members of the Church do not resent being referred to as Mormons, nor does the Church resent being referred to as the Mormon church. As we have said, however, it is not the correct name of the Church. Its correct name is, as we have already explained, “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (D&C 115:4).14

At the April 2011 general conference, senior apostle Boyd K. Packer explained,

Obedient to revelation, we call ourselves The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints rather than the Mormon Church. It is one thing for others to refer to the Church as the Mormon Church or to us as Mormons; it is quite another for us to do so.15


At the October 2014 conference, Ballard said he had been given a “clear impression” to tell his people how “we should not” reference the church as Mormon Church or LDS Church.” A divine commandment, it wasn’t. But, then contradicting Nelson’s latest edict, he also said,

The term Mormon can be appropriately used in some contexts to refer to members of the Church, such as Mormon pioneers, or to institutions, such as the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Church members are widely known as Mormons, and in interactions with those not of our faith, we may fittingly refer to ourselves as Mormons, provided we couple this with the full name of the Church.16

Let’s consider some of the other leaders who have used these synonyms when referring to their own church or people, as referenced from Bill McKeever’s wonderful resource book In their Own Words:

John Taylor:

“CHRISTIANITY WILL BEAR HONEST INVESTIGATION.—We call ourselves Christians, that is, we Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Episcopalians and Mormons, we call all ourselves Christians. Well, perhaps we are, and then, perhaps we are not” (John Taylor, The Gospel Kingdom, p. 75).

“Now I come to us, Mormons. We are the only true Church, so we say. We have the only true faith, so we say and believe. I believe we have many great and true principles revealed from the heavens. I will tell you how I feel about it, and what I have said many times when I have been abroad among the priests, people, and philosophers. If any man under the heavens can show me one principle of error that I have entertained, I will lay it aside forthwith, and be thankful for the information” (John Taylor, The Gospel Kingdom, p. 50).

Joseph Fielding Smith:

“The Latter-day Saints, so commonly called ‘Mormons,’” have no animosity towards the Negro. Neither have they described him as belonging to an ‘inferior race’” (Joseph Fielding Smith, Answers to Gospel Questions 4:170).

B. H. Roberts. In a book titled—ironically—“Mormon Doctrine of Deity:”

“Some of the sectarian ministers are saying that we Mormons are ashamed of the doctrine announced by President Brigham Young, to the effect that Adam will thus be the God of this world. No, friends, it is not that we are ashamed of that doctrine. If you see any change coming over our countenance when this doctrine is named, it is surprise, astonishment, that any one at all capable of grasping the largeness and extent of the universe, the grandeur of existence and the possibilities in man for growth, for progress, should be so lean of intellect, should have such a paucity of understanding as to call it in question at all. That is what our change in countenance means—not shame for the doctrine Brigham Young taught” (B. H. Roberts, Mormon Doctrine of Deity, pp. 42-43).

John A. Widtsoe:

“Enemies of the Church, or stupid people, reading also that Adam is ‘our father and our God’ have heralded far and wide that the Mormons believe that Jesus Christ was begotten of Adam” (John A. Widtsoe, Evidences and Reconciliations, p. 56).

Hugh B. Brown:

“All men, regardless of the degree of their guilt or innocence, will be resurrected from the dead, and this belief also becomes a foundation stone in the structure of the Mormon Church. But in addition to this general salvation through the atonement, every soul that lives in mortality to the age of responsibility may place himself within the reach of divine mercy and may obtain a remission of sin” (Hugh B. Brown, Conference Reports, April 1965, p. 43).

Bruce R. McConkie:

“Mormons are true Christians; their worship is the pure, unadulterated Christianity authored by Christ and accepted by Peter, James, and John and all the ancient saints” (Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, 1966, p. 513).

Bernard P. Brockbank:

“It is true that many of the Christian churches worship a different Jesus Christ than is worshiped by the Mormons or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (Bernard P. Brockbank, “The Living Christ,” Ensign (Conference Edition), May 1977, p. 26).

Many other examples from church leaders could be given. (In fact, go to my earlier article here for similar citations.) Were these the type of citations for which Nelson expressed “profound regret”? Did these men wrongly use these nicknames “unwittingly”? Or did these leaders know better and were not in step with God’s will? (If they are general authorities of the church, shouldn’t they have known better?)

Another question: If Nelson understood that it was wrong to use LDS and Mormon in 1990—and he clearly did—then why did it take him (and the church) so long to reveal God’s will for this religion? More than

a quarter of a century has passed by and yet the leaders sat back, doing nothing officially, while approving the “I am a Mormon” campaign and hosting websites such as Mormon.org and LDS.org?

Facebook commentator Steve McKnight makes a great point when he commented,

It has been my experience that when a new boss is put in charge, the first thing they want to do is renovate their office, give it a new look. This has to be a personal preference as this issue with the names hadn’t been a problem in the past and was even promoted at one point. Had this been an issue with the Mormon god as LDS President Nelson has suggested, why has their god(s) not impressed this upon past LDS prophets?

We must state the obvious: By his statement, Nelson has now placed any misuse of the name of the church into the sin category. If this is the case, then what about those leaders who used these inappropriate nicknames and abbreviations who are now passed away? If they offended the Lord by using these terms, wasn’t repentance required? In fact, how many living Latter-day Saints who commonly used “Mormon,” “LDS,” and “Mormonism”—all the while offending God—have repented this upon the person as sin? It seems Nelson has placed his people, both dead and living, in quite the precarious position.

Meanwhile, a number of LDS authors writing about their own religion have referenced a banned term such as “Mormon” in the titles of their books. Consider just four:

- What should we now call Bruce R. McConkie’s classic work Mormon Doctrine (“The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saint Doctrine”)?
- Popular young writer Al Carraway’s book More than the Tattooed Mormon needs to be changed to More than the Tattooed Latter-day Saint.
- Charles R. Harrell needs to reinvent his book’s title, “This is My Doctrine”: The Development of Mormon Theology.
- And BYU professor Stephen E. Robinson needs to adjust his title of Are Mormons Christian?

I’m just touching the tip of the iceberg.

**Misuse of the Church’s Name on Websites**

Current church website www.mormon.org (when will that site’s name be changed?) references the religious organization and its people in the old ways. For instance, consider just one page on the site https://www.mormon.org/beliefs/church-community:

- “What’s the Mormon community like? Generally speaking, Mormon Church communities are where we learn about our relationship with God and His plan for us and are founded on the teachings of Jesus Christ.”
- “Because they follow Jesus, Mormons actively care for and help each other. One way Mormons do this is by participating in a monthly fast where they don’t eat or drink for two consecutive meals. They then donate the money they would have spent on the two meals—or more money if they choose—to help people in need.”

On the “mormonnewsroom.org” website (again, when will that site’s name get changed?), an article titled “What to expect at Mormon Church services” has been changed to eliminate the word “Mormon.”17 Another article on that site, “Church Leaders Break Ground on Two South American Temples,” used the word “Mormon” in front of “church leaders” from March 4, 2017 until just after Nelson’s announcement.18

**Will MRM Change its Name?**

Some have asked if we at MRM will be changing our ministry name. The answer is, simply, no. While Nelson did not mention “Mormonism” as a banned word in a Latter-day Saint’s vocabulary, it is talked about on the church’s oxymoronic website www.mormonnewsroom.org. It says,

The term “Mormonism” is inaccurate and should not be used. When describing the combination of doctrine, culture and lifestyle unique to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the term “the restored gospel of Jesus Christ” is accurate and preferred.

This is in complete disagreement with another page on this website titled “Mormonism 101: What is Mormonism?” An article here (current at the time I wrote this piece) reads

Mormonism is a term defining the religious beliefs and practices of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, also known as Mormons. Mormonism describes the doctrines of the Church that were restored to the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith. When asked what Mormonism is, members of the Church will often speak of their love of the Savior Jesus Christ. To them, the Savior is central to Mormonism.19

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17 “What to Expect at Church Services,” https://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/what-to-expect-at-church-services
We agree with this statement, even if the top leader of today’s LDS Church has changed his mind.

The next question people ask is if we will change our current use of “LDS” and “Mormon” when referencing this church and its people. While we will not, on purpose, use the name “Mormon Church,” we will continue to utilize these nicknames and abbreviations instead of continually using the full name of the church. This was commonly done by many different leaders and Latter-day Saints over the years, as described above. While Russell M. Nelson is the leader of his followers, he is not a recognized Christian leader. Therefore, he does not have authority to instruct us. Because we don’t believe God has spoken to him, we feel perfectly in line to use these same terms in a respectful way, just as many others in the media are doing so.

The reader must understand that our intentions are good. After all, we don’t want to purposely anger the Latter-day Saints. To show that what I am saying is genuine, consider the new book Sharing the Good News with Mormons (Harvest House, 2018) that I co-edited with my friend Sean McDowell. On the first page of the introduction, I explained how I and the book’s contributors would reference the church and its members. I cited LDS apologist Gary C. Lawrence who once wrote, “Our members are properly referred to as Mormons or as Latter-day Saints. Our church may be referred to by its full name or as the LDS Church. We prefer not to be called the Mormon Church.” Based on that citation and other directives given by other leaders, I explained,

Thus, to be respectful and prevent any unnecessary arguments, we will refer to those who belong to this religion as “Latter-day Saints,” “LDS,” or “Mormon.” While we will leave direct quotes using the term “Mormon Church” intact, we will not use this designation in our writing; instead, we will refer to the church using its full name or as “LDS Church.”

Now Nelson demands for us to stop using these other synonyms for the church and its people by claiming God instructed him to ban these words and abbreviations. Please, Mr. Nelson, give us viable alternatives where we, as non-Mormons, can reference your people and church without a) offending you or, gasp, God; b) making a truth claim that supports the veracity of this church.

**Conclusion: Will this be the end of the derogatory term “anti-Mormon”**?

I want to be a “the-glass-is-half-full” kind of guy and say that perhaps some good can come from Nelson’s edict. The term “anti-Mormon” has been used on me many hundreds of times by well-meaning Latter-day Saints who want to ignore my public evangelistic ways. I have always disliked this term because “Mormon” has traditionally been a nickname for a person who belongs to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Certainly I am in disagreement with the theology of this organization, but I take the risk to share my faith with Latter-day Saints because I honestly love them and care about them. Yet so often LDS leaders have attacked our approaches and motives. Consider Apostle Bruce R. McConkie:

Ignore, if you can, the endless array of anti-Mormon literature and avoid cults like a plague . . . There are, of course, answers to all of the false claims of those who array themselves against us—I do not believe the devil has had a new idea for a hundred years—but conversion is not found in the dens of debate. It comes rather to those who read the Book of Mormon in the way Moroni counseled. Most members of the Church would be better off if they simply ignored the specious claims of the professional anti-Mormons.20

And check out this amazing quote found on an apologetic website:

“The term anti-Mormon is herein used to describe any person or organization that is directly and actively opposed to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, its doctrines, policies and programs. It is not, as critics sometimes mischievously try to claim, a catchall term for anyone who does not accept or believe in the Church, but is applied only to those who actively campaign against it. As an adjective, it applies to those specific activities that may with reasonable accuracy be described as attacks upon the Church . . . So we return to the question with which we began this survey: are anti-Mormons Christian? The answer: of course not. They were never even in the hunt. Their clerical collars and pious platitudes are simply a smokescreen to hide the ugly reality that anti-Mormonism is one of the clear manifestations of the darkest side of human nature; the side that made possible the death camps and burning crosses, the massacre of the Hutus and the wholesale slaughter of the Native Americans. Just as vicious and repressive dictatorships like to give themselves grandiose and liberal-sounding titles like ‘The People’s Democratic Socialist Republic of Such-and-such,’ so these nasty religious haters appropriate the label of ‘Christian’ in order to claim for themselves a specious respectability that their deeds and attitudes do not merit.”21

For those Christian believers like me who choose to share their faith with Latter-day Saints, I think Nelson’s edict may be good news! After all, if there are no more “Mormons” in existence, then there can be no more “anti-Mormons.” I can’t wait to respond with this comeback the next time someone accuses me of being “anti-Mormon”!

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IN THE NEWS

CHANGING A WEB ADDRESS.

While President Nelson, speaking at the October LDS General Conference, declared that nicknames are “a major victory for Satan,” he failed to offer a good alternative. In the religion section of the Salt Lake Tribune for September 27, 2018, David Noyce wrote about the dilemma facing the LDS Church web developers.

Click on Become.org or Worshipwithus.org and what do you get? Well, it turns out, Mormon.org. What’s with that? Not surprisingly, it has to do with the faith’s efforts to steer away from use of the “Mormon” nickname.

Will they be able to come up with a good alternative to “LDS” or “Mormon” in their various web addresses? “Become.org” and “Worshipwithus.org” are easily confused with other faith-based web sites. Adding to the problem, the LDS Church has already invested millions of dollars in their 2011 “I’m A Mormon” campaign.

Utilizing the web name Mormon.org as a gateway for outsiders to learn about their faith, the LDS Church heavily promoted the new site. In 2014 they even set up “New Mormon Kids” app on www.mormonchannel.org

It remains to be seen if the LDS Church can come up with a new short way of referring to itself that will also work on public media.

NO MORE “MORMON TABERNACLE CHOIR”

In accordance with President Nelson’s edict to stop using the terms “Mormon” and “LDS,” their famous choir has now been renamed “The Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square.” [Associated Press, October 5, 2018]

Since Nelson’s concern with using nicknames was that it left out the name of Christ, one wonders why they didn’t rename the choir the “Church of Jesus Christ Tabernacle Choir?” Isn’t “Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square” just as lacking as “Mormon Tabernacle Choir?”

TWO-HOUR SUNDAY MEETING BLOCK UNVEILED

At the Saturday session of the October 2018 General Conference, President Nelson announced that the LDS Church was changing the Sunday services from a 3-hour block to a 2-hour block. Apostle Quentin Cook explained that the traditional three-hour block will be shortened as of January 2019, to

60-minute sacrament service, down from 70 minutes, will be followed by a 50-minute class period after a 10-minute transition period.

Classes will alternate by week, with traditional Sunday school meetings on the first and third weeks of each month, and the faith’s all-male priesthood, female Relief Society and youth classes held on the second and fourth weeks. [11:20 a.m. – Sunday church schedule wasn’t just “shortened,” apostle says, it was “strengthened.” https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2018/10/06/mormon-general-conference/]

NO MORE HIGH PRIEST GROUP IN THE WARD

Another change announced at the LDS General Conference was the disbanding of the local ward High Priests meeting.

During the general priesthood session on Saturday, March 31, President Russell M. Nelson announced a “significant” restructuring of ward and stake Melchizedek Priesthood quorums that will help Melchizedek Priesthood holders “accomplish the work of the Lord more effectively. In each ward, the high priests group and the elders quorum will now be combined into one elders quorum,” he said. There will continue to be a stake high priests quorum, but it will [be] based on “current” priesthood callings.


One is left to wonder if this was, in part at least, a necessity due to lower attendance.

DOWN WITH HOME TEACHERS, UP WITH MINISTERING

The LDS Church newsroom reported:

During the Sunday afternoon session of April general conference, President Russell M. Nelson announced a significant change to the way members serve and care for each other.

The separate programs of home teaching and visiting teaching will be “retired,” he said, becoming a coordinated effort called “ministering,” a “new and holier approach” to Christlike caring for others and helping meet their spiritual and temporal needs.

Further on in the same article we read:

Elders quorum presidencies will assign ministering brothers to every household, and Relief Society presidencies will assign ministering sisters to each
adult sister. Sister Bingham suggested elders quorum and Relief Society leaders counsel together prayerfully. Then, she said, “rather than leaders just handing out slips of paper,” they make assignments in person in a conversation about the strengths, needs, and challenges of those to whom brothers and sisters minister.


However, some have observed that it just looks like reshuffling titles. How is “ministering” different from assigning visiting teachers?

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**LDS Women to take 10-Day Fast from Social Media**

On October 6, 2018, Fox 13 reported:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints President Russell M. Nelson invited women church members to participate in a 10-day fast from social media Saturday during the General Women's Session. Nelson stated the following during his speech at the session:

First, I invite you to participate in a 10-day fast from social media and from any other media that bring negative and impure thoughts to your mind. Pray to know which influences to remove during your fast. The effect of your 10-day fast may surprise you. What do you notice after taking a break from perspectives of the world that have been wounding your spirit? Is there a change in where you now want to spend your time and energy? Have any of your priorities shifted—even just a little? I urge you to record and follow through with each impression.

[https://fox13now.com/2018/10/06/lds-church-president-invites-women-to-make-10-day-fast-from-social-media/]

While the LDS women may have benefitted from a 10-day fast from social media, one is left to wonder why the same advice wasn’t given to the men of the church?

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**LDS Girls Passing the Sacrament?**

This year saw a few LDS wards allowing girls to help with passing the sacrament. While it doesn’t seem to be a concession to women wanting LDS priesthood, it does signal a lessening of restrictions on women participating in areas that were previously male-dominated. One bishop justified the change in practice by saying it is “no different than deacons handing trays to members in the pews, who then hand them from person to person, regardless of gender.”

[https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2018/10/03/whats-this-mormon-girls/]

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**Two-Transfer Missionaries?**

In recent years the LDS Church has sought ways to  insure a successful missionary experience, especially for special needs people. In 2017 one blogger observed:

What are two-transfer missions? A two-transfer mission is a temporary, three-month mission where a missionary facing unique challenges (e.g. social anxiety disorder, autism spectrum, post-traumatic stress disorder, etc.) stays in their home area and serves with local missionaries. In effect, it’s a “trial run” for a missionary who may not be confident in their ability to serve a full-length mission and needs a chance to experiment. Two-transfer is different from a “mini-mission,” where a prospective missionary goes out with local missionaries for a week or two. The two-transfer option is suggested by church headquarters, not requested by the missionary.

Two-transfer missionaries don’t go to the MTC when the mission begins. Instead, they get dropped off directly at the mission home and get to work in the community immediately. If their performance doesn’t go as hoped for, they are honorably released from their mission call after three months. If they find success and maintain their desire to serve, they can be called to a church-service mission or full-time mission. They might stay in their home area or be called to another part of the United States. A trip to the MTC occurs in-between their two-transfer and full-time missions. [https://theprogressivemormons.com/two-transfer-missions-yes-these-missionaries-have-every-right/]

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**12 New LDS Temples Announced**

Russell M. Nelson, 94-year-old president of the LDS Church, announced at the October general conference plans to build 12 new temples. One will be in southern Utah, bringing the state’s total to 20 temples. Also planned is the renovation of the historic Salt Lake City temple.

President Russell M. Nelson recently spoke of the importance of temple rituals, and future revelation:

“The Book of Mormon teaches over and over again that you need to have the ordinances,” he emphasized. “And of course, that’s why we have temples so that all the potential that God has in store for His children can become a fact, a reality. . . . No one else can offer perpetuation of the family unit beyond the grave. And that, according to our Heavenly Father, is the greatest gift that He can give to His children.”

“We’re witnesses to a process of restoration,” said the prophet. “If you think the Church has been fully restored, you’re just seeing the beginning. There is much more to come. . . . Wait till next year. And then the next year. Eat your vitamin pills. Get your rest. It’s going to be exciting.”

Tithing Ends Poverty Cycle?

President Nelson recently declared tithing can break cycles of poverty in poor nations and families.

“We preach tithing to the poor people of the world because the poor people of the world have had cycles of poverty, generation after generation,” he said. “That same poverty continues from one generation to another, until people pay their tithing.”

The law of the tithe was followed by ancient peoples as taught by Old Testament prophets. LDS faithful believe God restored the law and its blessings for those who follow it by giving one-tenth of their income to the church. [https://www.deseretnews.com/article/900016023/dowry-is-not-the-lords-way-in-kenya-lds-president-nelson-says-tithing-breaks-poverty-cycle.html]

End of Mormon Pageants?

According to the Deseret News, October 27, 2018, the LDS Hill Cumorah Pageant in New York will end after its 2020 season. The other six pageants are also coming under review. If the Mormon Miracle Pageant, held in Manti, Utah, continues it is assumed it will see a name change as well as a paring down of the size of the cast. [https://www.deseretnews.com/article/900039117/mormon-church-statement-says-changes-coming-for-local-celebrations-including-pageants.html]

For some reason, the LDS missionaries were forbidden to attend the Hill Cumorah pageant this past summer. The attendance at the pageant evidently reached its height in 1997, with about 73,000 attending. But this year the number dropped to 25,000, and most were already members of the church. [https://www.sltrib.com/news/nation-world/2018/07/20/first-time-its-year/]

Lawsuit filed against LDS Church relating to Child Abuse

The Salt Lake Tribune, on October 3, 2018, reported:

A lawsuit filed in Salt Lake City’s federal court on Wednesday alleges sexual abuse and a cover up involving family members of the president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

FOX 13 is reporting that the lawsuit lists six unnamed plaintiffs, identified as “Jane Doe” and “John Doe” and two unnamed defendants. Brenda and Richard Miles, who are the daughter and son-in-law of LDS Church President Russell M. Nelson, are those unnamed defendants and they vigorously deny the allegations, according to their attorney. [https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2018/10/04/lawsuit-accuses/]

Former LDS Bishop, Sam Young, Excommunicated for Challenging Bishop Interviews.

Every young Mormon has at one time or another been asked to meet with the local bishop for a “worthiness interview.” Part of the bishop’s interview is to determine if the youth is honest, morally clean, and abstaining from sexual activity. According to CNN, “While all bishops are required to ask whether members ‘obey the law of chastity,’ abstaining from all premarital sexual activity, Young says more than 3,000 people, including four of his daughters, have said their bishops probed for the explicit details of their sexual conduct as children. . . . The church calls the practice of bishops’ interviews a “sacred responsibility” and offers the opportunity for mentorship; critics argue it is traumatizing and creates opportunities for grooming and emotional or sexual abuse.” [https://www.cnn.com/2018/09/24/us/mormon-young-excommunicated/index.html]

After hearing stories of inappropriate questioning by some bishops, Sam Young built up the courage to ask one of his daughters if she had ever been asked sexually explicit questions during an interview for the church.

She admitted that she had, “all the time,” from ages 12 to 17. After her first interview, she told her father that she had to look up “masturbation” online, since she had never heard the term before her bishop brought it up. [https://www.houstonchronicle.com/life/houston-belief/article/Behind-closed-doors-12524563.php]

After enduring a 23-day hunger strike, Sam Young was formally excommunicated from the Mormon Church. [https://www.newsweek.com/mormon-bishop-sam-young-excommunication-sexually-explicit-children-interviews-1096856]

Sam Young reported the following from a Stake Conference in Southern California on November 4, 2018:

Stake President: “Brothers and Sisters, OUR STAKE IS DYING! Tithing and Fast Offerings have DRASTICALLY dropped in the past 6 months. Temple attendance is way down. We have never had fewer endowed members with a current recommend. Few members are accepting callings. We need to start calling the Lord’s church by its revealed name or the curse will get worse.”

Stagnant growth and people streaming out of the church have nothing to do with what we call the Church. It has everything to do with a culture that is toxic to open and honest discussions. Not to mention how Mormons allow children to be treated.

Institute for Religious Research
irr.org/mit
Material available in several languages.

Online support group for those leaving Mormonism.
**Excerpts From Letters and Emails**

**April 2018:** After 48 years of membership in the church, after being converted at the age of 17 from Catholicism and serving an honorable mission in France and Switzerland… after having served in every calling a male can serve in a ward (with the exception of the bishopric…) and after having researched the inconsistencies in the historicity of the church and having watched your exquisite interviews with John Dehlin, in this last week I have made the decision to completely disassociate myself from the Mormon church. On April 6, 2018 I stopped reading the Book of Mormon. The next day I disposed of my temple garments. Now, I’m spreading the word to friends that I am out.

**May 2018:** I just listened to your talk on the Biblical Temple . . . versus the Mormon temple(s). [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Zc2wkPqrs] Thanks so much for the clarification. I already knew the difference, but I so much appreciate you giving the explanation about the differences between them. It is a much need explanation.

**June 2018:** I don’t expect you to remember me but I spoke to you on the phone a few years ago. Asking forgiveness for being unknd to you when I served a LDS missionary in Salt Lake. I am a Christian and love Jesus. I have enjoyed many videos that you are in on the internet.

**June 2018:** Greetings from . . . Canada. After 41 years as a member of the LDS church, my shelf broke (splintered is more like it) and I went from fully active, serving as Ward Clerk to inactive in less than 6 weeks.

One of the things that destroyed my faith was realizing that things I had been told were anti-Mormon lies were now being taught as legitimate Mormon history. An example I’ve used with others is that Joseph Smith was a treasure hunter and used a seer stone to search, unsuccessfully, for treasure prior to receiving the plates.

**June 2018:** I want to let you know how much I appreciate your years of research and care you’ve given to share the truth of the gospel!

God gave me, ______ years ago, a new (and now most precious) friend. I didn’t find out until about four months into our friendship that she was Mormon. I was so unknowledgeable about the LDS at that point. All I knew was that which my parents told me (something like “they’re not real Christians”)

My friend and I started having short conversations about the LDS—she suggested I read “How Wide Is the Divide.” That book left me more confused than ever! But it did do me one service, and that was to validate the fact that even though I would say “grace” or “the trinity” it didn’t mean the same thing to my friend. We were speaking two different languages. I came out of that book knowing I needed help understanding truly “how wide was the divide.”

I got online & found your material right away. What a blessing! I have poured over your material—I’ve learned so much! My friend and I have quietly skirted around our differences—she’s not willing to talk much about theology. But I know God’s working in her life. He’s been so gracious to us by keeping our friendship strong—I feel such peace knowing that when the Holy Spirit lefts the veil, if she wants, she’s got a friend to turn to that can answer questions or at least point her to your research. :-) !

**June 2018:** Sandra Tanner is a very disrespectful, inconsiderate, argumentative DAMNED LITTLE BABY!

**July 2018:** My whole world collapsed recently after the passing of my wife three years ago. I am a Mormon in exile. I was baptised into the LDS faith on ____, 1969. I am/was a High Priest and went through the usual steps of priesthood progression.

However, after having read the bible through from cover to cover for the first time in my life, my eyes began to be opened and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit I came to realize that I have been terribly deceived for so many years and by those I had fully trusted with my eternal soul.

I feel so lost right now and don’t know where to turn for help, as far as this life is concerned. The one thing I never let go of, however, is my faith and hope in my Saviour, Jesus Christ, my master, my Saviour, my King, my atoning one.

I miss going to church each week and participating in and partaking of the sacrament. I miss my friends and family for they have abandoned me for my decision to leave the LDS faith. However, I do cling to my faith and hope in Christ Jesus, the true and living Saviour, the true messiah of the bible. Not the false Christ of Mormonism. I never realized there was a difference until my eyes were opened through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. . . .

I turned to the internet and started my search for true Christian fellowship and stumbled onto your website and felt that I needed to contact you to see if you would want to help a lost brother find his way back into true fellowship with Christ. I don’t think that Jesus wants me to be alone any longer. I believe He led me to your website and the Holy Spirit is guiding me to seek your help and reach out for your help and support. . . . Thank you for any help you might be able to render to a lost brother in Christ. He said He will never leave us or forsake us and I truly believe that with all my heart, and if it turns out that I must live the rest of my life in loneliness and isolation then so be it. But I do think and believe that He is leading me out of that state of mind and back into a community of true Christian fellowship and believers.

**July 2018:** I came across this site by accident and I have been struck by the nasty, inane and vitriolic comments made against the Mormon church. I did not expect to see the comments I did from a supposedly Christian mission.

I am a Mormon and I am not uneducated, as one commentator stated, I speak several languages and am educated past degree level. I have always been respectful to other people’s faiths and have attended many services in many different types of buildings.

All I have seen here is disrespect, mocking of things people hold sacred and a general superiority of mood. I see no evidence of Christian love to the sinner. I feel you would have been the first to throw the stone and it saddens me so much.

Life is too short to be nasty to people. It is perfectly alright to disagree.

**July 2018:** For as long as I live, I will not have enough breath to thank Jerald and Sandra Tanner for the work they’ve done.
They have been one of the primary sources for all of my work, and a huge influence in my exodus from Mormonism.

**July 2018:** [From a Mormon] They believed that to kill the [LDS] church was to cut off the head, they did and it didn’t. Why? Every other cult has died after cutting off the head, why not LDS?

**July 2018:** I’m former LDS. Too long of a story short, I was a Baptist up until 2000 and then I got sucker into the Mormon church by a girl. I was baptized into it and stayed in it for 4 or 5 years. I’m currently getting my name removed from their membership rolls and have a solid foundation in the Bible.

**July 2018:** Thank you so much for your quest for truth and for the materials you have written or made available. Your contributions in terms of sharing, speaking, publishing and encouraging are admirable. Your motivation has been misunderstood by those who vilify you as LDS church haters. Instead your “lighthouse” shines a light. That is so important in assisting people like myself, who are looking for answers—questioning or weighing the evidence for deciding whether to leave or join.

It has become so evident to me over years of reading your material that for whatever reasons the Church in general and the prophets, particularly Joseph, decided that LDS members had to be fed “facts” that hid the truth. How is it a victory to win members when their belief and loyalty can only be held together with numerous distortions and half-truths? I know I felt duped and cheated when I learned the truth regarding so many aspects of Church doctrine and history. This led to my resignation after 50+ years of devout membership. You were supportive of me during that painful process.

Knowing that members including missionary converts all over the world were being fooled as a whole church which was not only our religion/belief system but our entire way of life was and is really heartbreaking. It is still painful and it certainly has split families apart. I wonder what those priesthood holders who orchestrated the fraud and have continued it for over 188 years will say to their Maker at the Judgement bar. Even now with recent supposed “transparency” the Brethren continue to mislead in areas of doctrine and practice.

This has been a long e-mail but I’ve had a lot to be thankful to you for. I am grateful you are in Christianity. I am healing as I have been baptized into Christianity. May your burdens be light as you continue on in your Christian ministry work. God bless you.

**July 2018:** Thank you for this opportunity to write to you. My parents were tricked into the Mormon faith by them telling them what she believed, not what the Bible says. My daughter was at one time given a blessing and within a short period was to meet a Mormon, get married and have children who are now Mormons. They very rarely go to church though. If they would study the Bible they would see the truth as so many are now finding the truth as you did and stand up for the truth.

**August 2018:** I along with my wife and one of my daughters, had the privilege of meeting you earlier this summer. We were there on a day when a young woman, who recently resigned from the Mormon church, was there, and she talked to my daughter for quite a while. I was able to buy a few books that day from you.

I wanted you to know that I have greatly benefitted from books you and Jerald have written, especially Mormonism: Shadow or Reality? and The Changing World of Mormonism. I have also benefitted from Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons, and have been in contact with the author and his ministry at tilm.org.

**August 2018:** I apologize for mocking the death of your husband. It was wrong of me to do that. I’ve since made amends. I’m sorry. I am . . . [a] former member of the church.

**September 2018:** I recently listened to a Mormon Stories podcast where you discussed Joseph Smith’s First Vision. Your knowledge and interpretations frankly out shown everyone else. [https://www.mormonstories.org/podcast/joseph-smiths-first-vision/]

**September 2018:** This is both a thank you and a letter of encouragement… I read The Book of Mormon and realized there was no Mormon doctrine in it. I heard about the Doctrines and Covenants and ordered one from the missionaries but I never got it. Later on I found out the reason. It contains the real teaching which they don’t want you to know. . . .

Then I met a missionary and he told me about your book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? I read it and was astounded. But I said: “There can’t be that much proof that Mormonism is wrong and yet it is growing.” So I wanted to check out this book. I bought quite a number you mentioned so I could read them in context. To my happy surprise everything you wrote was very accurate and you could use it with assurance. . . .

I know you have had a lot of opposition from Mormons but the Lord has used your ministry to explain the truth to Mormons and I am sure many have left and been saved because of your ministry.

**October 2018:** The Book of Mormon is the word of God. Translated by the power of the Lord, it is another Testament of Jesus Christ. If you read and pray you will know if is true by power of the Holy Ghost. People say the Bible is just a book. The Lord said by two or three witnesses shall his word be established. So the Lord gave us the Bible and Book of Mormon to let us know he lived, he taught and he died for our sins and was Resurrected the third day. I know Jesus is our Savior, I also know the Bible and the Book of Mormon is the word of God. Find out for yourself, you can only know if true if you study & pray.

**October 2018:** So sad for you. We [LDS] do study the Bible. 2019 is New Testament time again. Where do you get they are 5 years. I'm currently getting my name removed from their church by a girl. I was baptized into it and stayed in it for 4 years. I'm former LDS. Too long of a story short, I was a Mormon—Shadow or Reality? why not LDS?

[From a Mormon] They believed that to kill the [LDS] church was to cut off the head, they did and it didn’t. Why? Every other cult has died after cutting off the head, why not LDS?

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More LDS Temple Changes– A Nod to Feminism?

Open their morning newspaper on Thursday, January 3, 2019, Utahans were surprised to read “LDS Church changes temple ceremony; faithful feminists will see revisions and additions as a ‘leap forward.’” The article went on to note:

Many women have complained in the past about the “endowment” ritual, which includes a re-enactment of Genesis, noting that Eve has no words during her sojourn with Adam after the couple’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

Now that seminal female figure has a whole monologue, said the attendee, who did not want her name used because of the sacred nature of the ceremony. “She has more lines than Satan.”

And men and women make all the same covenants, or promises, to God, rather than separate ones. Women also no longer covenant to hearken to their husbands.¹

While Eve has been given a larger speaking part in the secret temple drama of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, she merely quotes a passage from the Book of Moses, part of their scriptures known as the Pearl of Great Price. The endowment ceremony, only open to faithful members, depicts the story of Adam and Eve and their journey from the Garden of Eden to entering into God’s presence. The instructions, passwords and handshakes learned in the ritual are considered necessary for eternal life, also called exaltation.

After the Fall is enacted and Lucifer ordered out of the garden, Adam now quotes part of Moses 5:10: “Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God.” To which Eve responds, quoting Moses 5:11, “Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.”

Since Adam and Eve’s added dialogue is simply quoting from one of the LDS scriptures one wonders why it was not publicly acknowledged. The drama was also edited to add more mention of Eve. Previously Elohim addressed Adam alone, now he addresses both Adam and Eve.

Contrary to standard Christianity, the LDS scriptures and temple ceremony present a scenario of Adam and Eve being given two conflicting commandments in the garden. First, they were not to eat of the tree of knowledge and second, they were commanded to have children. But according to Mormonism, as spirit beings, they couldn’t reproduce until they ate of the fruit and became mortal. Thus God set them up to break one of these commandments. This is why Eve is seen as performing a meritorious act by disobeying God and becoming mortal. According to an article in The Ensign posted on the LDS web site, the Fall was necessary:

Most Christian churches teach that the Fall was a tragedy, that if Adam and Eve had not partaken of the forbidden fruit, they and all their posterity could now be living in immortal bliss in the Garden of Eden. But truth revealed to latter-day prophets teaches that the Fall was not a tragedy—without it Adam and Eve would have had no posterity. Thus, the Fall was a necessary step in Heavenly Father’s plan to bring about the eternal happiness of His children.2

LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie explained:

The fall of Adam brought temporal and spiritual death into the world, and the atonement of Christ ransomed men from these two deaths by bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. This makes the fall as essential a part of the plan of salvation as the very atonement itself.3

After Eve quotes the passage from the Book of Moses, the temple patrons, dressed in white, are instructed to put on their green aprons, representing the fig leaf aprons of Adam and Eve. The white outfit and green apron are worn by all those being endowed, whether getting sealed that day or not, or whether the ceremony is for them personally or on behalf of a dead person. Most LDS missionaries have been through the endowment ceremony but have not been “sealed” in marriage—a ceremony that takes place after one is “endowed.”

Faithful LDS, who have been sealed to their partner, are also buried in the white outfit and green apron. Prior to January 2019 the temple veil would be put over the woman’s face just before closing the casket. Now the family has the option of using the veil or not.4

Another change is the elimination of women veiling their faces during the special prayer circle during the endowment ceremony. They still wear the thin, 3-foot square veil, but they are no longer instructed to veil their faces.

Feminists see these changes as a hopeful move toward equality for women and men in the ritual. While these recent changes are significant, they are just the latest in a long list of revisions since the temple endowment ritual was first introduced by Joseph Smith in 1842.

Currently the LDS Church has 209 temples “operating, announced or under construction.” These are special buildings, not open to the general public, where vicarious baptisms are performed on behalf of dead people, and where members go through the endowment ritual, and are either married/sealed for all eternity for themselves or in behalf of the dead. Their regular meeting houses are open to the public.

WASHING AND ANOINTING CHANGES

Originally the temple endowment ceremony began with a washing and anointing ceremony that required the member to totally disrobe and be ceremonially washed in a large tub and oil poured over his/her head. This was administered by someone of the same sex.6 A tub was used until after the turn of the twentieth century.7 Over the years this ceremony has been changed to make it less offensive to people.

In the 1969 version of the Washing and Anointing patrons, in divided areas for men and women, stored their regular clothes in lockers and then covered themselves with a “shield,” like a poncho, which covered the front and back of a person but open on the sides. Then in a small enclosed area attendants would reach under the cloth and ceremonially touch various parts of the attendee’s naked body with water, then with oil, as certain

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blessings were pronounced on the person. After these anointings the attendants would help the person pull on the special one-piece undergarment with Masonic-like markings on both breasts, the navel and the right knee.8 The person then returned to the locker area and donned their white outfit, with the hat/veil, green apron, robe and sash folded in a small parcel.

The original temple undergarment was like a one-piece union suit, full length with long sleeves, and ties. These were modified in 1923, allowing for the garment to end just below the knee and elbow.9 Through the years the garment has continued to evolve, becoming shorter and available in more fabric choices. A photo of the garment is posted on the LDS web site.10 Last year the church discontinued the embroidered markings on the garment in favor of silk-screening them on the back side of the material.11

Evidently in an effort to provide more modesty, in 2005 the clothing ritual was changed again. In the locker room the individual put on the LDS garment, which has been changed to a two-piece, and then the poncho-like “shield,” which was sewn up on the sides.12 The patron then proceeded to the cubical for his/her anointing with water and oil on the forehead. Then the patron returned to the locker area to dress in the white outfit.

But this scenario has been changed. In 2019 the shield was eliminated and the person changes in the locker room into his/her garments and puts on the white temple outfit, and then goes to the anointing booth where only the forehead is anointed.

These changes have given rise to a number of questions about the eternal nature of the ordinances. Brigham Young declared:

> Has the holy Catholic Church got faith in Jesus that we have not got? Not a particle that is true and pure. But as for the ordinances of the House of God, we say, . . . that the mother church and all her daughters have transgressed the laws, every one of them; they have changed almost every ordinance of the House of God; . . . There is but one mode of baptism and that is by being immersed in the water . . .13

Changing from a total bath to simply touching the forehead with water and oil seems to be comparable to some Christians performing baptisms by sprinkling instead of immersion. Why is the LDS change condoned and the non-LDS change condemned?

**Lucifer’s Apron**

In the 1984 version of the temple drama, after Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, Lucifer came on the scene and Adam asked, “What is that apron you have on?” To which Lucifer responded, “It is an emblem of my power and Priesthoods.” The dialogue continues: “Adam: Priesthoods? Lucifer: Yes, Priesthoods.”14 This exchange was shortened in 1990 and then totally deleted in 2019. Lucifer’s apron is visible in the 2013 clandestine video of the live enactment of the ritual.15 Lucifer’s apron appears to be green in the video but has usually been described as black or navy blue. We are not informed as to the visibility of his apron in today’s live sessions. In the recent videos it is hard to see his apron.

But these are just the latest edits to Lucifer’s roll in the ritual. In the 1984 version, after Adam and Eve left the Garden and entered the Lone and Dreary World, Lucifer introduced them to a preacher. “Lucifer: Have you been to college and received training for the ministry? Sectarian Minister: Certainly! A man cannot preach unless he has been trained for the ministry. Lucifer: Do you preach the orthodox religion? Sectarian Minister: Certainly! A man cannot preach unless he has been trained for the ministry. Lucifer: Do you preach the orthodox religion? Sectarian Minister: Yes, that is what I

13 The Essential Brigham Young, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), page 195.
14 Tanner, *Evolution*, page 73.
15 While Lucifer’s apron is not visible in the film version, it was visible in the live sessions. Lucifer is the man dressed in black. See at the 22 minute mark. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8sbYfOnxk
preach. Lucifer: If you will preach your orthodox religion to these people, and convert them, I will pay you well.”

Adam later summarized the minister’s teachings: “They preach of a God who is without body, parts, or passions; who is so large that he fills the universe, and yet is so small that he can dwell in my heart; and of a hell, without a bottom, where the wicked are continually burning but are never consumed. To me, it is a mass of confusion.” This has been completely removed.

Later, the minister, talking to Peter, realized that the devil had deceived him and he said: “This man told me that we should never have any revelation or apostles, but if any should come professing to be apostles, I was to ask them to cut off an arm or some other member of the body and then restore it, so that the people might know that they came with power.” The preacher then wanted out of the Devil’s employ but he refused to pay the minister since he didn’t convert Adam and Eve to his religion. For years people have complained that the LDS ceremony mocked Christian ministers and implied that they were only in it for the money. Researcher David John Buerger observed that several “Christian ministers were added in the 1850s. . . . By 1905 the ceremony had been edited to allow only one minister.”

Finally, in 1990 the part of the minister was removed.

**All Patrons Stand**

Also changed is the number of times patrons need to stand up. In the past, when the ceremony got to the Second Token of the Aaronic Priesthood everyone would stand and don their white robe, sash, with the green apron tied over these items, along with the hat/veil. Now they remain seated and don’t put on the robe and other items until the part about the First Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood. This seems to be a time-saving adjustment, allowing the patrons to remain seated during the earlier part of the ceremony.

**From Movie to Slides**

Originally the endowment ceremony was a live play, but in the 1970s the LDS Church began to incorporate filmed portions. Currently only the Salt Lake and Manti temples perform the story of Adam and Eve live. But these temples are scheduled to close at the end of 2019 for remodeling. However, one wonders if they will continue to present the live drama when the two temples reopen in a few years?

In 2013 and 2014 the LDS Church introduced three new temple films. Each of the films used the same dialogue, but had different actors, thus providing a little variety as the films were rotated in use. Actors are seen playing the parts of Elohim, Jehovah and Michael communicating with Lucifer, Adam and Eve. It also showed Peter, James and John conversing with the various characters in the creation play.

However, this year the films have been eliminated. Now they only use slides depicting various scenes from the play while the audience listens to a recording of the actors’ voices. After going to such expense to create and translate these new films, why revert to slides?

One possible answer would be that it simplifies the task when making adjustments to the ceremony. A new version of the video would not need to be made. Also, it would be easier to adjust the length of the ritual when a translation into a foreign language takes longer than in English. Some have speculated that the removal of the films might have been to distance the church from the producer of the videos, who recently pled guilty to sex crimes.

**The Church’s Defense**

On January 2, 2019, the First Presidency of the LDS Church issued the following statement in defense of the recent changes in the temple ceremony:

Whenever the Lord has had a people on the earth who will obey His word, they have been commanded to build temples. Scriptures document patterns of temple worship from the times of Adam and Eve, Moses, Solomon, Nephi, and others.

With the restoration of the gospel in these latter days, temple worship has also been restored to bless the lives of people across the world and on the other side of the veil as well.

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Over these many centuries, details associated with temple work have been adjusted periodically, including language, methods of construction, communication, and record-keeping. Prophets have taught that there will be no end to such adjustments as directed by the Lord to His servants.

A dedicated temple is the most holy of any place of worship on the earth. Its ordinances are sacred and are not discussed outside a holy temple.23

Several problems come to mind after reading the statement. First, there is no commandment in the Bible for Adam and Eve to build a temple. The forerunner to the temple in Israel was the tabernacle, which was first instituted during the 40 years Israel wandered in the wilderness at the time of Moses. The book of Exodus, chapters 26-30, records the instructions for the tabernacle, all its furnishings, and the rituals. Hundreds of years later, Solomon built the first permanent temple, following the pattern of the tabernacle.24

The whole point of the Old Testament sacrificial system was to show that man’s sins had separated him from God and he could only approach God through bringing his offerings to the temple for the priest to present at the altar. And then once a year on the Day of Atonement the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies to present an offering for both himself and all Israel.

All of this served as a forerunner to the ultimate offering for sin, when Jesus himself, as our great High Priest, would enter the true Holy of Holies on our behalf, and offer himself as the lamb slain for the sins of the world.25

The Jewish priests never performed any rituals like the LDS endowment ceremony and marriages were never done in their temple. Jewish marriages were attended by family and friends, not a secret affair, as shown in the story of Jesus attending a marriage in Cana.26

Second, there is no command in the New Testament for the Christians to build temples and they did not have access to the Jewish temple in Jerusalem to perform any rituals. Some of the early Jewish Christians met at times in the courtyard of the temple, but not being Jewish priests they were not allowed into the temple itself.27

On the LDS website we read: “Temples serve as the only place where ceremonies such as baptism and eternal marriage can be performed in behalf of those who have died—a practice that Latter-day Saints believe was followed in New Testament times but that later was lost.”28

Yet no evidence of such rituals is cited. Christians met in homes, not church buildings. For instance, early Christian leaders Priscilla and Aquila had a church meeting at their home (Romans 16:3, 5). Paul also mentions a church meeting in the home of Nympha in Colossians 4:15. Christians did not have their own temple or buildings.

Third, both Jesus and Paul taught that marriage was for this life only. Why would Paul advise the unmarried to remain single if he believed in the Mormon doctrine that a temple sealing is necessary for exaltation?29 Also see Matthew 22:29-30 and 1 Corinthians 7:39. If the Mormons are going to insist that their temple ritual is a “restoration” of a Christian ritual they will need to document when, where and how such a ritual was practiced.

Their statement that changes have occurred over “many centuries” is without merit as there is no evidence that any Christians had a ritual with the same meaning and purpose as the LDS endowment ritual. However, there are similarities to the Masonic ritual,30 which has gone through various changes, but these have nothing to do with a Christian ritual designed by God for eternal marriage.

Fourth, their statement, “Prophets have taught that there will be no end to such adjustments as directed by the Lord to His servants” leaves one wondering what they are referring to? People have searched for such statements in LDS literature and failed to find anything where their prophets publicly taught there would be “no end to such adjustments” in relation to the temple ritual. In fact, we find just the opposite. On the LDS website Joseph Smith is quoted as saying:

27 Acts 2:46—This would have been in the courtyard; Acts 5:12—Apostles at Solomon’s porch, outside of the actual temple. Acts 3:1-11.
29 1 Corinthians 7:8-9.
30 Michael W. Homer, Joseph’s Temples: The Dynamic Relationship between Freemasonry and Mormonism, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2014).
Ordinances instituted in the heavens before the foundation of
the world, in the priesthood, for the salvation of men, are not to be altered or changed. All must be saved on
the same principles.31

Obviously, the temple ritual has gone through periodic editing since Joseph Smith’s day, but if it was originally a “revelation,” why would it need altering? The alterations seem to be removing troubling parts, not giving more doctrine. The temple changes in 1990 followed a church survey of several thousand members, which questioned them about their experience in the
temple.33 Does revelation come from surveys?

Since the Mormons are so concerned that baptisms and the prayer over the sacrament must be done exactly as instructed, one wonders why they think the temple ritual can be altered? Which version of the LDS temple ritual is the one the early Christians were supposed to have practiced? If the temple ritual is always open to change, how could it ever be considered “lost” in the first place? Wouldn’t they just be earlier versions?

2019 Version

The 2019 version of the ritual has been clandestinely recorded and a typescript noting the changes can be read online as one listens to the ritual.34 This also includes the new LDS introductory comments given at the start of the ritual. The narrator reads a statement by the First Presidency explaining that the new changes have been approved by their prophet and apostles:

Brothers and sisters, since the temple endowment was first administered in this dispensation occasional adjustments have been made by the First Presidency and the quorum of the Twelve Apostles, acting unitedly in their capacity as prophets, seers, and revelators.

Upon seeking the will of the Lord and after solemn prayer in the upper room of the Salt Lake Temple, the Lord has again revealed inspired adjustments to the temple ceremonies.

These adjustments, which you will notice during your worship experience in the temple today, will bring harmony to the way men and women make covenants with God. They deepen our understanding of His will and His relationship with his daughters and sons.

These modifications do not affect the sacred and eternal covenants associated with the saving and exalting ordinances of the temple. As a reminder, due to the sacred nature of all temple ordinances, the fact and content of these changes should not be discussed outside the temple.35

Even though patrons take an oath of silence regarding any changes, there have been numerous exposés by those leaving the LDS church over the past 175 years, thus allowing comparisons to be made.36

IN THE BEGINNING

Joseph Smith first founded the Church of Christ, now known as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in New York in 1830, with the claim that it was the restoration of the original New Testament church, with all the same doctrines and rituals.37 However, there was no teaching relating to eternal marriage, secret endowment rituals or the need for temples until years later. In fact, the only temple mentioned in the Book of Mormon was one built in the Americas and was evidently open to the public.38

A year and a half later (November 1831) Smith revealed that the church was to build a temple in Independence, Missouri, to be the center point of Zion in preparation for the return of Christ. But this edifice was intended for public meetings, not secret rituals as are done in current LDS temples.39 However, the Mormons were soon forced out of the city and have never built that temple to this day. On the LDS web site we read:

Missouri has been and will be the site of many key events in Church history. It was the location of the Garden of Eden and Adam-ondi-Ahman, where Adam gathered his posterity for a final blessing (see D&C 107:53–57). It was the place the Saints in Joseph Smith’s day started

34 “Mormon Temple Endowment Ceremony” (January 2019) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7VOb0XNjdXE
35 “Mormon Temple Endowment Ceremony” (January 2019) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7VOb0XNjdXE
36 Tanner, Evolution; also “Temple Ritual Changed...Again,” Salt Lake City Messenger (June 2005), http://www.utlm.org/newsletters/pdfnewsletters/104saltlakecitymessenger.pdf
38 Book of Mormon, Jacob 2:1-11; Mosiah 2:5-7

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to build Zion but were violently driven out before their
dreams could be realized. It is the place where the Lord
Jesus Christ will return again to a New Jerusalem (see
D&C 57:2–3; A of F 1:10).  

Then in 1836 Smith introduced a new ritual among
the men in their temple in Kirtland, Ohio. Historian
David John Buerger explained:

The Kirtland temple ritual was a simple, staged ceremony
consisting of washing and anointing the body, blessing
and sealing the individual, and washing the feet.  

While Smith claimed that the sealing keys had been
restored at that time, it seems to have been related to
sealing various blessings pronounced on each man in
attendance, not to sealing a man and a woman in eternal
marriage.  

SECRET POLYGAMY

Starting in 1841, in Nauvoo, Illinois, Joseph began
to secretly take plural wives in some sort of marriage/
sealing ceremony, but this was not the endowment/temple
ceremony known today. These were not legal marriages as
the state of Illinois had laws against bigamy. These were
usually done without his wife’s knowledge or consent.
Only the top leaders in the church were aware of Smith’s
new doctrine and practice. Smith’s need for secrecy grew
after former church leader John C. Bennett published an
exposé of Joseph Smith and polygamy in 1842. A way
to secure his leaders’ silence became apparent after Joseph
Smith embraced Freemasonry with its oath of secrecy.

FREEMASONS

In March of 1842 Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon
were initiated into the Masonic Lodge in Nauvoo,
Illinois, and became Master Masons. Researcher Michael
W. Homer explained:

During these [Masonic] rituals Smith and Rigdon
were given signs, due-grips, due-guards, pass-grips,
words, passwords, and obligations of secrecy of those
degrees. The Master Mason degree contained references
that would become familiar to Mormons, including the
“all-seeing eye, whom the sun, moon and stars obey,”
the bee-hive as “an emblem of industry,” the five points
of fellowship, and the grand hailing sign of distress.

Within six weeks of Smith becoming a Master
Mason, he initiated several men into a new “endowment”
ceremony, which included washing and anointing,
signs, tokens, and penalties along with the potential to
be kings and priests unto God. Smith clearly appropriated
some of the same words and symbols of Masonry for
his new temple ritual. However, women were not a part
of the endowment ritual until a year later. David John
Buerger explained:

As in Kirtland, Smith elected to administer new
rituals, an expanded “endowment,” to selected leaders
before the [Nauvoo] temple was finished. In 1842 the
new endowment was performed only for men, but in
1843 wives were included.

Two additional ceremonies were introduced in 1843
about a year following the initial conferral of the new
endowment: celestial marriage for time and eternity and
the fullness of the priesthood or the second anointing.
Celestial marriage was applied to and equated with plural
marriage until the late nineteenth century.

While the LDS Church maintains that the temple
endowment ceremony came by way of revelation to
Joseph Smith, no copy of such a revelation has been
found. Since his revelations on baptism and the
sacrament have been recorded and published, one
wonders why something so critical to a Latter-day Saint’s
eternal exaltation would not be recorded as well?

Only a limited number of Smith’s closest followers
had gone through the Nauvoo temple ceremony prior to
his death. The next year, 1845, Brigham Young and the
other top leaders recreated the ritual for those who still
needed their endowments. William Clayton recorded the
events at the temple on November 30, 1845:

At about 12 o’clock we clothed [in the temple robes] and
. . . then offered up the signs of the Holy Priesthood and
repeated them to get them more perfect. I was requested
to keep minutes. President [Young] offered up prayers
and dedicated the Attic story [of the unfinished Nauvoo
temple], the male room and ourselves to God, and prayed
that God would sustain and deliver from the hands of our
enemies, his servants until they have accomplished his
will in this house.

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40 “Independence: Living in Zion,” https://www.lds.org/study/
new-era/2005/05/independence-living-in-zion?lang=eng
41 Buerger, Mysteries, pages 11-12.
42 Buerger, Mysteries, page 36.
43 “Problems in the LDS Essays on Plural Marriage,” Salt
Lake City Messenger (May 2015), https://www.lds.org/study/new-
era/2005/05/independence-living-in-zion?lang=eng
44 John C. Bennett, History of the Saints, 1842.
45 Homer, Joseph’s Temples, page 150.
46 Buerger, Mysteries, pages 50-56.
47 Buerger, Mysteries, page 36.
48 Buerger, Mysteries, pages 58-59.
49 Buerger, Mysteries, pages 40-41, 73.
50 As quoted in Mysteries of Godliness, pages 73-74.
For the next two weeks Brigham Young and various leaders worked to arrange the attic with the necessary fittings, veils, etc. for the ritual, and also on getting the wording of the ritual more accurate. On December 13, 1845, William Clayton recorded:

Last evening an arrangement was made establishing better order in conducting the endowment. Under this order it is the province of Eloheem, Jehovah and Michael to create the world, plant the Garden and create the man and give his help meet. Eloheem gives the charge to Adam in the Garden and thrusts them into the telestial kingdom or the world. Then Peter assisted by James and John conducts them through the Telestial and Terrestrial kingdom administering the charges and tokens in each and conducts them to the vail where they are received by the Eloheem and after talking with him by words and tokens are admitted by him into the Celestial kingdom . . .

Not only were the Mormons busy getting their temple endowments, they were also active in joining Freemasonry. According to David John Buerger, “in 1840 only 147 men in Illinois and 2,072 in the United States were Masons. By the time of the exodus to Utah in 1846-47, approximately 1,366 Mormon males in Nauvoo had been initiated into the Masonic order.”

**Blood Oaths**

Prior to 1990 those going through the Endowment Ceremony swore an oath of secrecy on pain of death. This was patterned after the Masonic oath. In the 1827 booklet *Free-Masonry Exposed* we read:

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

The initiate is instructed to draw “your right hand across your throat, the thumb next to your throat, your arm as high as the elbow in a horizontal position.”

The early LDS ceremony had very similar wording. In the 1931 exposé of the LDS ritual we read:

> The left arm is here placed at the square, palm to the front the right hand and arm raised to the neck, holding the palm downwards and thumb under the right ear.

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

Sign—In executing the sign of the penalty, the right hand palm down, is drawn sharply across the throat, then dropped from the square to the side. . . .

This oath was later modified. In the 1985 version the words were changed to “Rather than do so, I would suffer my life to be taken.” In 1990 the oath of secrecy no longer included the penalty of having one’s throat slit.

**Five Points of Fellowship**

Another element Joseph Smith borrowed from the Freemasons was the embrace on the five points of fellowship. This was part of the culmination of the temple ceremony, where the patron would come to the veil at the front of the room, put his/her left hand through a hole in the veil to the person’s shoulder, take the person by the right hand and embrace the person, with the veil in-between, on the “five points of fellowship.” Thus there would be five points at which their bodies would touch during the embrace. At that time the patron would give the man, representing God, the proper handshake and password which would make it possible to enter the next room, labeled the “Celestial room,” which represents entering the top kingdom of heaven.

Since the revision of the ceremony in 1990, the embrace has been eliminated. Now they simply place their “left arms . . . upon right shoulders.” They do not put their feet and knees together and all the wording concerning the Five Points of Fellowship has been completely deleted. On the next page is a comparison of a portion of the 1984 version with the 1990 version:

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56 Tanner, *Evolution*, page 78.

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In the 1990 revised version all references to the Five Points of Fellowship have been deleted.

Regardless of the reason for the change, it raises serious questions concerning the inspiration of church officials. If a person was previously compelled to receive the secret information necessary to enter heaven on the Five Points of Fellowship, how can the church leaders now by-pass God’s revealed way which was supposed to have been given to the prophet Joseph Smith? Wouldn’t this be equivalent to changing baptism by immersion to sprinkling?

As the patron gives the man at the veil the hand grip, he says the “name” of the Second Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood. It is: “Health in the navel, marrow in the bones, strength in the loins and in the sinews, power in the Priesthood be upon me, and upon my posterity through all generations of time, and throughout all eternity.”

Notice that these code words contain no mention of God, Jesus, the atonement, no calling upon the grace of God. It is totally centered on gaining personal exaltation.

The person is then drawn through the veil into the last room of the endowment ceremony, representing the Celestial Kingdom, or God’s presence.

### Lecture at the Veil

Sometimes at the end of an endowment session there would be a lecture given to the patrons. David John Buerger explained:

The St. George endowment included a revised thirty-minute “lecture at the veil” first delivered by [Brigham Young].

Young. This summarized important theological concepts taught in the endowment and contained references to Young’s Adam-God doctrine. In 1892, L. John Nuttall, one of those who transcribed Young’s lecture, recalled how it came about:

In January 1877, shortly after the lower portion of the St. George [Utah] Temple was dedicated, President Young, in following up in the Endowments, became convinced that it was necessary to have the formula of the Endowments written, and he gave directions to have the same put in writing.

Shortly afterwards he explained what the Lecture at the veil should portray, and for this purpose appointed a day when he would personally deliver the Lecture at the Veil. Elders J.D.T. McAllister and L. John Nuttall prepared writing materials, and as the President spoke they took down his words. Elder Nuttall put the same into form and the writing was submitted to President Young on the same evening at his office in residence at St. George. He there made such changes as he deemed proper, and when he finally passed upon it [he] said: This is the Lecture at the Veil to be observed in the Temple.

A copy of the Lecture is kept at the St. George Temple, in which President Young refers to Adam in his creation and etc.60

While Brigham Young’s lecture at the veil, including his Adam-God doctrine, is no longer used, one is left to wonder why a theological lecture by a prophet has been abandoned. Was Brigham Young wrong to preach it, or is the church wrong to reject it?61

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1984 Temple Ceremony</th>
<th>1990 Temple Ceremony</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lord</strong>: You shall receive it <strong>upon the Five Points of Fellowship</strong> through the veil.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(The Officiator demonstrates the Five Points of Fellowship through the Veil with the temple worker who represents the Lord, as each point is mentioned.)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Peter</strong>: The Five Points of Fellowship are “inside of right foot by the side of right foot, knee to knee, breast to breast, hand to back, and mouth to ear.”</td>
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<td>The Lord then gives the name of this token, and asks:</td>
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<td><strong>Lord</strong>: What is that?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Peter</strong>: The Second Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood, the Patriarchal Grip or Sure Sign of the Nail.</td>
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<td>(Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony, page 96)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lord</strong>: You shall receive it through the Veil.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Peter</strong>: It is received as <strong>left arms are placed upon right shoulders</strong> through the Veil.</td>
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<td>(The Officiator places his left arm through the mark of the compass and rests his hand on the right shoulder of the Lord, as the Lord places His left arm through the mark of the square and rests his hand on the right shoulder of the Officiator. The right hands remain clapsed in the Patriarchal Grip.)</td>
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61 For more information on Young’s Adam-God theory, see Changing World of Mormonism, chapter 8, [http://www.utlm.org/onlinebooks/changech8.htm](http://www.utlm.org/onlinebooks/changech8.htm)
**Eternal Marriage**

Those who have received their endowments still need to be sealed to someone. To be “sealed” means you have entered into an eternal marriage. Many people, such as young missionaries, have been through the endowment ceremony yet still need to have a temple sealing. Mormons believe one cannot enter the highest level of the LDS Celestial Kingdom without this ceremony.

For years the LDS policy has been that a couple must do their wedding vows at the same time as they have their sealing ceremony in a temple, otherwise they must wait a year after a civil marriage to have a temple sealing. There was an exception for those living in a country that demanded a civil wedding prior to the temple ceremony, such as England. In those cases a couple did not need to wait a year after their public wedding to be sealed in the temple.

Traditionally, the LDS Church has put very strong emphasis on the value of a temple wedding, thus causing problems between families. The ruling meant that if a couple wanted to combine their wedding with their sealing the only ones who could witness the marriage were those who qualified to enter the temple. Thus non-LDS family and inactive Mormons were not allowed to see their loved ones get married. This has caused serious rifts in families.

The *Salt Lake Tribune* reported one woman’s experience of a temple marriage without her family:

Next month, Boise resident Kristen Talmage Lindsay and her husband will celebrate the 15th anniversary of their wedding in the Oakland Temple.

“I was the only member in my family, so my parents, my sister, grandparents and all the important people in my life had to wait outside,” she wrote on Facebook. “It was cruel and so painful for me. At the time, I told myself I was being obedient, and it’s just how it is. I so, so wish I had just had a civil ceremony.”

Lindsay had “sad tears on my wedding day,” she said. “I wanted to throw up because of how alone I felt without my family.”

However, couples will no longer be faced with this heartache. On May 6, 2019, the LDS leaders announced a new policy. Couples will no longer be penalized for having a civil marriage prior to the temple sealing. The statement reads:

> The policy requiring couples who have been married civilly to wait one year before being sealed is now discontinued. Couples who have been married civilly may be sealed in the temple when they receive their temple recommends.

> Where possible, leaders should encourage couples to be both married and sealed in the temple. Where a licensed marriage is not permitted in the temple, or when a temple marriage would cause parents or immediate family members to feel excluded, a civil ceremony followed by a temple sealing is authorized.

Mormon author Jana Riess commented on the change:

> In practice, the old policy created heartbreaking situations for many Mormons, especially converts who were sometimes the only people in their families to join the faith. Many have commented before that a religion that makes so much of uniting families forever in temples has caused unnecessary divisions in families here on earth.

> In my own life as a Mormon, I’ve known many stories of exclusions from temple weddings. Protestant parents whose son converted to Mormonism were left in the cold when he married a Mormon woman in an LDS temple. His mother had a very hard time getting over the disappointment. And a woman I know who has experienced a “faith transition” and could not get her temple recommend renewed missed being part of her brother’s wedding with the rest of her family.

> Now, hopefully, stories of exclusion from what should be a joyous event will be a thing of the past. Couples will be able to choose to have both a civil ceremony and a temple ceremony, though the First Presidency today encouraged local leaders to stress that it’s ideal to have both the wedding and the sealing in the temple.

**Conclusion**

The LDS Church teaches that only members who receive their endowments and have been sealed in the temple will obtain the highest exaltation in the hereafter, meaning eternal life. For instance, President Spencer W. Kimball, the twelfth prophet of the LDS Church, emphasized: “Only through celestial marriage can one find the strait way, the narrow path. Eternal life cannot be had in any other way. The Lord was very specific and very definite in the matter of marriage” (*Deseret News*, Church Section, November 12, 1977).

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President Kimball bluntly stated that “the ordinance of sealing is an absolute, and that without it there can be no salvation in the eternal world, no eternal life.”

Mormon theology teaches that those who have been married in the temple can become Gods. Apostle Hugh B. Brown taught:

Through the divine institution of celestial marriage, . . . men and women, joined together by the Holy Priesthood, may through their faithfulness attain immortality, eternal life and eternal increase; . . . When we speak of eternal increase, we speak not only of increase of posterity, we speak of increase of knowledge, and the power that comes with knowledge; . . . increase of intelligence, which is the glory of God; increase of all that goes to make up Godhood.

There is nothing in the Bible about a need for “celestial marriage” or an endowment ceremony. The Bible clearly proclaims that there is only one God (Isa. 43:10-11; 44:6, 8) and that “whosoever believeth in him [Jesus] should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:15).

The fact that so many changes have been made in the temple ceremony over the years provides powerful evidence against the claim that it came to Joseph Smith by divine revelation. While it is true that these changes have made the endowment more palatable to the LDS people, they do not bring the ceremony into conformity with Christian beliefs.

In Mark 2:21, Jesus said that “No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse.” The endowment ritual not only has many patches in it, but it also has patches on top of patches. Even though there have been improvements in the temple ceremony, it is still filled with material taken from the Masonic ritual and concepts that are not biblical. Sewing new patches on the many rents in this old garment will not solve the problem. The entire ceremony and the idea of men becoming Gods needs to be abandoned.

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66 Hugh B. Brown, “Continuing the Quest,” as cited in Achieving a Celestial Marriage, (1976), page 204

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### Similarities Between the Freemasonry of the 1830s and the Mormon Endowment (Pre-1940)

**By Richard Packham**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Freemasonry (1820s)</th>
<th>Mormon Endowment (pre-1940)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Candidate is taken to a preparation room, where all his clothes are removed except his shirt. He is given a pair of underdrawers.</td>
<td>Patron removes all clothing, goes to a booth where he is clothed in a white undergarment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate is conducted to the door, where he is caused to give, or the conductor gives three distinct knocks, which are answered by three from within; the conductor gives one more, which is also answered by one from within. The door is then partly opened, and the Junior Deacon generally asks, “who comes there? who comes there? who comes there?”</td>
<td>Patron is led to the veil of the temple, where a worker gives three distinct taps with a mallet. Another worker asks from behind the veil, “What is wanted?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior Deacon presses the point of a compass against the candidate’s naked left breast.</td>
<td>Symbol of the compass is in the patron’s garment over the left breast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning of the compass: “to keep us in due bounds with all mankind, but more especially with the brethren”</td>
<td>Meaning of compass: “an undeviating course leading to Eternal Life, a constant reminder that the desires, appetites and passions are to be kept within the bounds the Lord has set, and that all truth may be circumscribed into one great whole.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Point of the mason’s square is pressed against the candidate’s naked right breast.</td>
<td>Garment has symbol of square over right breast.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meaning of the square: “to square our actions”</td>
<td>Meaning of the square: “exactness and honor in keeping the covenants entered into this day”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I also present you with a new name; it is CAUTION”</td>
<td>“With these garments I give you a new name which is never to be divulged to anyone ... The name I give you is [a name selected from the Bible or the Book of Mormon].”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grip of Entered Apprentice:”The right hands are joined together as in shaking hands and each sticks his thumb nail into the third joint or upper end of the forefinger.”</td>
<td>Grip or First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood: clasping the right hands and placing the joint of the thumb directly over the first knuckle of the other person’s hand.</td>
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<td>Freemasonry (1820s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Due-guard (or Sign) of Entered Apprentice: bring hands to front, palms one inch apart, the Master then draws his right hand across his throat, the hand open, the thumb next to the throat, and drops it down by his side.</td>
<td>Sign and penalty of First Token of Aaronic Priesthood: Sign: Raise right arm to the square, palm forward, thumb extended Penalty: place thumb under left ear, draw thumb quickly across the throat, drop hand to the side (done while reciting the penalty oath).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oath: “I do hereby...solemnly swear...that I will ...never reveal... what I am about to receive... binding myself under no less penalty than to have my throat cut across, [and] my tongue torn out by the roots,...”</td>
<td>Oath: “We ... covenant and promise that we will not reveal any secrets of this, the first token of the Aaronic Priesthood... Should we do so, we agree that our throats be cut from ear to ear and our tongues torn out by their roots.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Master and candidate holding each other by the grip of the Entered Apprentice, the Master says: ‘What is this?’ Ans: ‘A grip.’ M: ‘A grip of what?’ Ans: ‘The grip of an Entered Apprentice Mason.’ M: ‘Has it a name?’ Ans: ‘It has.’ M: ‘Will you give it to me?’ Ans: ‘I did not so receive it, neither can I so impart it.’ (A similar dialog is repeated at each degree)</td>
<td>Peter gives Adam the first token of the Aaronic Priesthood Peter: ‘What is that?’ Adam: ‘The first token of the Aaronic Priesthood.’ Peter: ‘Has it a name?’ Adam: ‘It has.’ Peter: ‘Will you give it to me?’ Adam: ‘I cannot, for it is the new name,...’ (A similar dialog is repeated at the veil for each of the four tokens)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The name of the grip is BOAZ</td>
<td>The name of the grip is the patron’s “new name”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entered Apprentice is given an apron of white lambskin, “an emblem of innocence”</td>
<td>Patron puts on a green apron “to cover your nakedness”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Due-guard of Fellow Craft Mason is given by raising the left arm until that part of it between the elbow and shoulder is perfectly horizontal, and raising the rest of the arm in a vertical position, so that that part of the arm below the elbow, and that part above it, forms a square.</td>
<td>Sign of the Second Token of the Aaronic Priesthood is given by raising the left arm to the square, palm forward, right hand extended forward at the waist, with hand in cupping shape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penalty (called the “sign”) is given by drawing your right hand flat with the palm of it next to your breast, across your breast, from the left to the right side, with some quickness, and dropping it down by your side</td>
<td>Penalty: placing the right hand across the chest with the thumb extended and then drawing it rapidly from left to right and dropping it to the side (done while reciting the penalty oath)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wording of oath: “binding myself under no less penalty than to have my left breast torn open, and my heart and vitals taken from thence and thrown over my left shoulder... to become a prey to the wild beasts of the field and vultures of the air...”</td>
<td>“Should we [reveal the secrets of the Second Token of the Aaronic Priesthood], we agree to have our breasts cut open and our hearts and vitals torn from our bodies and given to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass-Grip (also called the “token”) of Fellow Craft Mason is given by taking each other by the right hand as though going to shake hands, and each putting his thumb between the first and second fingers where they join the hand, and pressing the thumb between the joints. Real Grip is given by putting the thumb on the joint of the second finger where it joins the hand, and crooking your thumb so that each can stick the nail of his thumb into the joint of the other</td>
<td>The Grip is given by clasping the hand and pressing the thumb in the hollow between the first and second knuckles of the hand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Fellow Craft pass-grip: Shibboleth name of real grip: Jachin</td>
<td>Name of Second Token of Aaronic Priesthood: patron’s own given name</td>
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<td>Sign of Master Mason is given by <strong>raising both hands and arms</strong> to the elbows perpendicularly, one on either side of the head, the elbows forming a square. The words accompanying this sign in case of distress are, “O! <strong>Lord, my God</strong>, is there no help for the widow’s son?” As the last words drop from your lips, you let your hands fall in that manner best calculated to indicate solemnity.</td>
<td>Sign of First Token of Melchizedek Priesthood (pre-1930): The sign is made by <strong>bringing both hands to the square</strong>, palms to the front. After 1930s: extending right hand, palm down, thumb extended; left hand extended, hand in cupping shape. Sign of Second Token of Melchizedek Priesthood: elevating both arms above the head to represent the crucifixion. The word “Pale” is spoken, the arms dropped to the square, “Hale,” and then to the sides. “Hale”--thus--“Pale, Hale, Hale.” (Since 1990 the words are “O God, hear the words of my mouth!” repeated three times.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due-guard (penalty) of Master Mason is given by putting the <strong>right hand to the left side of the bowels, the hand open with the thumb next to the belly, and drawing it across the belly, and let it fall</strong>; this is done tolerably quick.</td>
<td>Penalty of First Token of Melchizedek Priesthood: <strong>right thumb is placed over left hip, drawn quickly across the belly, hands drop to the side</strong> (done while reciting the penalty oath).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wording of oath: “...binding myself under no less penalty than to have <strong>my body severed in two in the midst</strong>, and divided to the north and south, my bowels burnt to ashes in the centre, and the ashes scattered before the four winds of heaven...”</td>
<td>Wording of penalty (First Token of Melchizedek Priesthood): “Should we [reveal these secrets], we agree that <strong>our bodies be cut asunder in the midst</strong> and all our bowels gush out.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The pass-grip of the Master Mason is given by pressing the <strong>thumb between the joints of the second and third fingers, where they join the hand</strong></td>
<td>Grip of the First Token of Melchizedek Priesthood is given by placing the thumb on back of hand and the tip of forefinger in the center of palm, representing the piercing of the hand by a nail. It is called “The Sign of the Nail.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of the pass-grip of the Master Mason: Tubal Cain</td>
<td>Name of the First Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood: “The Son,” meaning the Son of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s grip is given by taking hold of each other’s right hand as though you were going to shake hands, and sticking the nails of each of your fingers into the <strong>joint of the other's wrist</strong>, where it unites with the hand. Sometimes called “the lion’s paw.”</td>
<td>Grip of Second Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood is given by clasping the right hands, interlocking the little fingers, and placing the tip of the forefinger upon the <strong>center of the wrist</strong>. Called the “patriarchal grip” or “sure sign of the nail.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate is “raised” on the <strong>Five Points Of Fellowship</strong> by the Master: 1) inside of right foot to inside of right foot; 2) right knee to right knee; 3) breast to breast; 4) left hand to back; 5) mouth to ear. In this position he receives the secret word whispered, while hands are clasped in the <strong>Master’s grip</strong>.</td>
<td>Patron converses with “God” through the veil, on the <strong>Five Points Of Fellowship</strong>: 1) inside of right foot to inside of right foot; 2) right knee to right knee; 3) breast to breast; 4) left hand to back; 5) mouth to ear. In this position he receives the secret name of the Second Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood while hands are clasped in the <strong>Patriarchal grip</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secret Master’s word, whispered to candidate on the Five Points of Fellowship: “Mah-hah-bone”, which he is told means <strong>“marrow in the bone.”</strong></td>
<td>Name of the Second Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood, given by God through the veil on the Five Points of Fellowship: “Health in the navel, <strong>marrow in the bones</strong>, strength in the loins and in the sinews, power in the Priesthood be upon me, and upon my posterity through all generations of time, and throughout all eternity.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many writers who are familiar with both the Masonic rituals and the Mormon temple rituals (the “endowment”) have remarked on their similarities as well as their differences. Many early Mormons were also Masons, and acknowledged the similarities, usually asserting that the endowment was the purer, uncorrupted form, restored to its original purity, sometimes referring to the endowment as “celestial Masonry.” . . .

**Conclusion**

Even Masonic scholars and historians admit that the Masonic rituals did not originate in Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem (as the Masonic legend relates), but were an outgrowth of the European builders’ guilds of the late Middle Ages. This weakens the Mormon belief that the endowment ritual was given to Adam in the Garden of Eden. It seems much more obvious that Joseph Smith used basic elements from the 19th century Masonic ritual, and the Mormon endowment ritual is not ancient at all. The fact that the endowment has changed so much since its introduction in Nauvoo in 1842 also belies the Mormon claim that Joseph Smith was restoring the purity of the original (Adamic) ceremony.

(See Richard Packham’s page at http://packham.n4m.org/mason-endow.htm)
**MASONRY AND THE MORMON TEMPLE ENDOWMENT CEREMONY (EXCERPT)**

By Sharon Lindbloom

mrm.org 18 February 2019

Earlier this month The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints posted a new essay to the Church History Topics section of its website. In the church’s continuing effort to be more “transparent” about its past, the new essay, titled “Masonry,”1 examines the relationship between the LDS temple endowment ceremony and Masonic ritual. . . .

The essay gives very little detail regarding the “similarities” between the LDS endowment ceremony and Masonic ritual, providing but one sentence in the introduction: “. . . Masons advance by degrees, using handgrips, key words, and special clothing,” and another near the conclusion: “Masonic rituals deliver stage-by-stage instruction using dramatization and symbolic gestures and clothing . . . .” Endowed Latter-day Saints recognize that similar elements are included in their temple endowment ceremony, but they have no way of knowing how closely the original ceremony imitated (and continues to imitate) the Masonic ritual. For example, it’s not just that Masons use handgrips in their ritual; they appear to use virtually the same handgrips that Mormons are taught in the temple. BYU professor Charles Harrell notes,

> Though different in certain respects, many similarities can be seen between this new temple endowment and Freemasonry. For example, the endowment incorporated the same five points of fellowship (since 1990 it has no longer been used in the Mormon endowment), the same kinds of gruesome penalties (also discontinued in 1990), and the same compass and square symbols. The Masonic ritual included a rehearsal of the “periods of creation” as initates representing Adam progressed through stages according to their “sincere desire to make advances in knowledge and virtue.” Initiates for Freemasonry also wore ceremonial regalia (aprons, robes, etc.) with instructions that they were “never to be forgotten or laid aside.” BYU humanities professor George S. Tate notes that prayer circles were also conducted by “Freemasons of the period [who] arranged themselves in circular formation around an altar, repeating in unison the received Masonic signs.”2

Regarding Masonry, the church essay claims “stark differences in...content and intent,” yet the LDS temple endowment ceremony has much more in common with Masonic rituals – rituals that, according to the LDS church’s essay, “originated in early modern Europe” – than it does with anything that God ever prescribed for His biblical temple. There are such fundamental differences between the biblical temple and LDS temples that, whether conceding the endowment ceremony’s origin in Freemasonry or not, Mormon temples and the ceremonies performed therein are, in fact, unbiblical.

(See full article at: http://www.mrm.org/masonry-and-the-mormon-temple-endowment-ceremony)

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1 https://www.lds.org/study/history/topics/masonry?lang=eng
In researching Brigham Young’s wives, I came across utlm.org and it mentioned Wife No. 19, Ann Eliza Young’s book. I stayed up reading that book one night until it was light, and that morning, I felt the horror of that thing on my “shelf”—polygamy—that thing that always ate at me no matter how I tried to avoid it and trust it would be explained later, leave. I knew Christ could not be the author of such horror. I felt immense peace, love, and gratitude.

In the past month, I enjoyed your Mormon Stories interview and discovered that utlm.org is your website! Ha! There is a lot I do not yet know and I feel like I have been studying constantly for 6 months! But, I feel closer to Christ than ever.

**November 2018:** Sandra Tanner is not a very nice person she is the devil . . . Old nag lol.

**November 2018:** You saw me through my darkest hour and you don’t even know it. One day, I will stop in at your bookstore and personally praise Jesus with you. Thanks sweet sister. You are doing God’s work.

**November 2018:** Sandra, may you have a special Thanksgiving spent with family and those you love. Thank you so much for all the hard work you and Jerald did for so many years. God bless you for helping me to realize the falsehoods of Mormonism and how it lead me to the true Jesus Christ.

**November 2018:** Starting just a few months ago my eyes have been opened to the world outside of Utah and the Lds church. I haven’t been able to put down you tube and podcasts. Thank you most to the Tanners and Mormon stories for helping me through my journey.

**November 2018:** Still is nasty as ever. I hope it’s worth it, sucks to be you after this life.

**December 2018:** Years ago, I was a teenage convert to Mormonism. Needless to say, the missionaries did not tell me the whole story. When I started college, I met people with other worldviews and somehow I ended up receiving material from the Tanners. This was nearly 40 years ago and in my memory, I believe Sandra herself may have sent the tracts and a copy of the Book of Mormon with 3,000 errors which I requested. So, when I decided to look the Tanners up on the internet I found your site. I don’t know the status of Mrs. Tanner but if possible I would like to say thank you and wish her well.

**December 2018:** Mrs. Tanner, thank you so much for all of your hard work over these many years. I’m a Baptist Pastor in ____ Fl, but my family has a long history of LDS roots in England and Ireland. Thankfully, my grandmother realized the church wasn’t true and the Book of Mormon was a clever attempt to deceive the massive by Joseph Smith. I can’t tell you how helpful your books, articles, and interviews have been to me as I’ve witnessed and cared for Mormon people. Thank you so much! In Christ, Rev. M. H.

**December 2018:** I discovered this website in my research of how to help my Mormon friends see the Light of Jesus. All I can really say is thank you. Thank you for making this website. Thank you for providing everyone with this knowledge.

**December 2018:** Thanks so much for your lifelong effort to reveal the falsehood of Mormonism. I resigned my membership Oct. 6, 2018 — 42 yrs after my baptism in Ogden, UT.

I have so enjoyed the interviews you have done — John Dehlin, Ancient Paths, etc. I had never heard of you before this year.

God bless you and keep you in His tender care. You are a lovely lady. Wish I had met you a long time ago.

**December 2018:** Sandra, my Bride and I are so very thankful that God used you to influence our Daughter from joining the LDS and being unequally yoked. Jesus is everything, the cross is enough, Jesus plus nothing!

**January 2019:** I want to thank you for your years and years of work. I found my faith in the lds church failing in 1992 after attending the temple ceremony. I read everything I could to help me get to a better understanding. You and your husbands work was paramount to me! THANK YOU!

**January 2019:** I have watched many of Sandra’s interviews and read many of her articles. It is hard to believe that intelligent people could be so misled. I have been impressed by her and her late husband’s research to help people like myself (an uninformed Christian) become informed that I might better share with my Mormon friends. Also, I would like to subscribe to your newsletter.

**January 2019:** IT IS TOO LATE FOR JERALD. BUT THERE IS STILL A CHANCE FOR YOU! REPENT! Do not PROCRASTINATE the day of your repentance (Alma 34:33-35). You and your spouse have been leading thousands to Sprit Prison. Some of them are with him and many of them are in Paradise. Their eyes have been opened and they no longer believe your lies. He seems to be on the way to OUTER DARKNESS. YOU WILL JOIN HIM UNLESS YOU REPENT.

You are following the steps of KORIHOR. He preached and had success like You and Jerald.

You follow another False Jesus (Jesus’ brother, Satan) and fight against The True Jesus and His True Church, the LDS Church or Mormons as most Gentiles call them.

You call your anti-Christ teachings the Utah Lighthouse Ministry. Well, I went to your store and it was a DARKHOUSE!!! I do not want to go back there again.

There is an evil spirit in that house. One day, all your half-truths and lies will all be exposed. I can debunk most of them even now. After this, I don’t want to waste my time reading your trash; and the satan’s alive for the FALSE JESUS THE DEVIL . . .

I WISH YOU WELL. Even though you have been LED ASTRAY, IT IS NOT TO LATE FOR YOU. COME BACK TO THE TRUE CHURCH. TAKE DOWN YOUR WEBSITE, CLOSE YOUR STORE AND RECYCLE ALL YOUR WRITINGS, TO START WITH. MARRY A FAITHFUL LATTER-DAY SAINT IN THE TEMPLE TO REPLACE JERALD.

OTHERWISE, I’m sorry for you, very, very sorry. Jerald wasted the days of his probation. Do not be another Korihor. Leave Jerald to his fate. Do not follow his bad example.

With Love,… Joseph Smith’s Close Cousin
January 2019: Around 40 years ago your name was circulated around the area where I was growing up, as some kind of evil apostate. As you and I have the same first name, it caught my attention. Yet the “information age” had not quite dawned yet, so I was not able to get more information until about 15 years ago when a never-Mormon lent me “anti” books. Of course your “Shadow or Reality” book came as quite an enlightening read to me!

Well of course now your lectures and talks are easily available to watch and I have seen them all I suppose. Anyway, before the option is unavailable, I wanted to thank you. As a Mormon member for 40+ years and a direct descendant of Joe Smith and Brigham Young, etc. I was very conflicted about what I could clearly see as problems with the truth claims and fickle doctrines of the church and yet under blood oaths never to discuss my misgivings. The conflicts in my heart and mind drove me to seriously think of ending my own life.

I thought I was going crazy! My search for truths and the ideas by leaders that doing so was evil drove into my mind that I was completely full of darkness and unredeemable as a person. This ruined my marriage as well as poisoned my family relationships with siblings, parents, and my own children. Eventually I lost all my family, my home, and my birthright relationships with siblings, parents, and my own children. I left the LDS church and found our faith in Christ in 2004. . . . Through a series of amazingly unlikely events, I was saved on my knees alone at a city park in May 2004, later sealed in 1998. . . . My wife _____ and I were married in 1997, and I was saved on my knees alone at a city park in May 2004, later sealed in 1998. . . . Through a series of amazingly unlikely events, I was saved on my knees alone at a city park in May 2004, later sealed in 1998. . . .

Thank you, again and again.

January 2019: My wife _____ and I were married in 1997, later sealed in 1998. . . . Through a series of amazingly unlikely and absolutely God directed circumstances, [my wife] and I left the LDS church and found our faith in Christ in 2004 prior to ever stepping inside a Christian church. During an intense and very uncomfortable period of self-examination and questioning, pieces of your work found its way to me.

Thank you. I’ll never forget praying to God and telling Him that I wanted to know the truth. I didn’t care WHAT the truth was, but I just could not stand the possibility of being deceived concerning my relationship to Him. It was an older paper on the book of Abraham as I recall, which then lead me to some of your work on Church history and on and on to more of your work and the work of others.

In any case, God revealed His love and His grace to me and I was saved on my knees alone at a city park in May 2004. April 2019: I stumbled upon your site after I encountered several Mormons . . . and I wanted to figure what Mormonism was all about, and why it was considered a cult (I had no idea). Long story short, as I’ve begun to look into what they believe, I’ve been shocked and saddened for the ways that they have been deceived, and just want to be more knowledgeable so that I know how to talk to them both about my faith, but also plant seeds of doubt about theirs.

I, too, was a Mormon member for 40+ years and a direct descendant of Joe Smith and Brigham Young, etc. I was very conflicted about what I could clearly see as problems with the truth claims and fickle doctrines of the church and yet under blood oaths never to discuss my misgivings. The conflicts in my heart and mind drove me to seriously think of ending my own life.

I thought I was going crazy! My search for truths and the ideas by leaders that doing so was evil drove into my mind that I was completely full of darkness and unredeemable as a person. This ruined my marriage as well as poisoned my family relationships with siblings, parents, and my own children. Eventually I lost all my family, my home, and my birthright relationships with siblings, parents, and my own children. I left the LDS church and found our faith in Christ in 2004. . . . Through a series of amazingly unlikely events, I was saved on my knees alone at a city park in May 2004, later sealed in 1998. . . .

Thank you, again and again.

March 2019: You cannot destroy the LDS church sweetheart it’s gods church and it’s here to stay good luck.

March 2019: I’m so grateful for all of research you and Jerald have done to outline the many changes to the church scriptures and the white-washed history of the Mormon church. I was able to mentally break from the church in 2014 and have never looked back. I will always be in your debt.

April 2019: God help you after this life, you’re one hateful lady. And I’m so glad that the LDS church is driving you guys nuts, yeah baby.

April 2019: God help you after this life, you’re one hateful lady. And I’m so glad that the LDS church is driving you guys nuts, yeah baby.

May 2019: You seem like a person who needs attention, I love you do you need a hug? Is there something missing out your life that you have to bash the LDS church. You live a very sad life and I feel so sorry for you why do you care what the church does? Do we kill you, did we talk mean about you or what? you seem like a woman who is searching and I feel so sorry for you.

May 2019: Why don’t you go attack the Muslims who rape their kids or the Priest that molests little kids. By the way I am reporting you guys for slandering a religion.

May 2019: It was in the year of 2016, that I for the first time had the privilege of raising our family in a Christian home, been taught well in healthy churches, enjoyed a God centered marriage, and been instrumental in helping many others as they struggle with Mormonism and the very real fears associated with leaving. We’ve been able to work with our own Pastor, and several others as a resource and an advocate to those who are leaving, or whom are still damaged by their time and experience in the LDS faith. It seems like anger is the biggest challenge for many. Standing by them, and allowing them to work through it with someone who understands is not particularly thrilling work, but it’s what God has us doing. I’m certain that you can relate. It’s on that note that I wanted to say a very overdue THANK YOU! You are respected and prayed for in our home.

May 2019: I’m trying to figure out why people hate the Mormons so much.
On the morning of February 8, 1843, Mormonism founder Joseph Smith said that he had met with “a brother and sister from Michigan, who thought that ‘a prophet is always a prophet;’ but I told them that a prophet was a prophet only when he is acting as such” (History of the Church 5:265).

This escape clause is too convenient. Mormons often make reference to this statement in an attempt to dismiss embarrassing comments made by past leaders. A good counter to this excuse is asking how the Mormon knows Smith was “acting as a prophet” when he said this in the first place. After all, it was said in a private conversation in the Smith home and not from behind a pulpit at, let’s say, general conference. But let us assume Smith was offering a correct assessment.

In the March 2012 edition of Ensign magazine, Apostle Dieter F. Uchdorf wrote an article titled “Why We Need Prophets.” On page 5 he said, “Listen to general conference with an ear willing to hear the voice of God through his latter-day prophets.”

This comment is not at all out of harmony with statements from other general authorities. For example, 11th President Harold B. Lee gave a conference message in April 1973 where he said, “If you want to know what the Lord has for this people at the present time, I would admonish you to get and read the discourses that are delivered at general conference; for what the Brethren speak by the power of the Holy Ghost is the mind of the Lord, the will of the Lord, the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation” (Conference Reports, April 1973, 176. See also Lee’s book, Stand Ye In Holy Places, 183).

Of course, comments like the above raise many questions. For example, if a prophet can be counted on to speak the mind and will of the Lord in general conference, was Brigham Young speaking the mind and will of the Lord in his April 9, 1852 conference talk when he said Adam was God and the “only God with whom we have to do”? The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints renounced Young’s teaching after his death, even though Young stated that this pronouncement was “doctrine” so important, that to treat it “lightly or with indifference,” it “will prove their salvation or damnation” (Journal of Discourses 1:51).

Since its inception in 1830, LDS Church leaders have claimed that what separates their religion from all others are prophets who provide “latter-day” or “modern” revelation. They use this concept to maintain the trust of its members. While Doctrine and Covenants 3:2 says God does not “vary from that which he hath said,” the problem is that church history is replete with course corrections.

**Doctrine or Policy?**


Consider that for much of its history, those of African heritage were denied the priesthood. In 1978 this was reversed, and today all worthy male members of the LDS Church are allowed to hold this important office. Was this not a doctrine? Prior to 1978 members were certainly led to believe this was so. In his book The Way to Perfection, 10th President Joseph Fielding Smith apparently thought it was when he said,

This doctrine did not originate with President Brigham Young but was taught by the Prophet Joseph Smith. At a meeting of the general authorities of the Church, held August 22, 1895, the question of the status of the negro in relation to the Priesthood was asked and the minutes of that meeting say: “President George Q. Cannon remarked that the Prophet taught this doctrine: That the seed of Cain could not receive the Priesthood nor act in any of the offices of the Priesthood until the seed of Abel should come forward and take precedence over Cain’s offspring” (The Way to Perfection, 110. Emphasis mine).

On August 17, 1949, the First Presidency, led by President George Albert Smith, sent an official statement to Brigham Young University President Ernest L. Wilkinson. It said,

The attitude of the Church with reference to the Negroes remains as it has always stood. It is not a matter of the declaration of a policy but of direct commandment from the Lord, on which is founded the doctrine of the Church from the days of its organization, to the effect that Negroes may become members of the Church but that they are not entitled to the Priesthood at the present time. (www.fairmormon.org. “Statements made by Church leaders regarding the priesthood ban”).
Fast-forward to the 21st century. On April 4, 2019, the church released a statement on its MormonNewsroom.org website titled “Presidency Shares Messages from General Conference Leadership Session.” Dallin H. Oaks, President Russell M. Nelson’s first counselor in the First Presidency, said, “While we cannot change the Lord’s doctrine, we want our members and our policies to be considerate of those struggling with the challenges of mortality.” The statement went on to say that

effective immediately, children of parents who identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans-gender may be baptized without First Presidency approval if the custodial parents give permission for the baptism and understand both the doctrine that a baptized child will be taught and the covenants he or she will be expected to make. A nonmember parent or parents (including LGBT parents) can request that their baby be blessed by a worthy Melchizedek Priesthood holder.”

Oaks also said that “same-gender marriage by a church member still is considered a serious transgression. However, it no longer will be treated as apostasy for purposes of church discipline.” This announcement completely reversed an earlier mandate given in November of 2015, raising many questions regarding this “policy vs. doctrine” debate.

In 2015 it was announced that those in same sex marriages were to be considered apostates, and that children with parents involved in same sex marriage could not be baptized unless they disavowed the behavior and practice of their parents. This position was then included in Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops under headings 16.7.2 and 16.7.3.

On January 10, 2016, Russell M. Nelson detailed how the 2015 resolution came about in a talk called, “Becoming True Millennials.” Speaking to LDS young adults at BYU Hawaii, he said,

This prophetic process was followed in 2012 with the change in minimum age for missionaries and again with the recent additions to the Church’s handbook, consequent to the legalization of same-sex marriage in some countries. Filled with compassion for all, and especially for the children, we wrestled at length to understand the Lord’s will in this matter... We met repeatedly in the temple in fasting and prayer and sought further direction and inspiration. And then, when the Lord inspired His prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, to declare the mind of the Lord and the will of the Lord, each of us during that sacred moment felt a spiritual confirmation. It was our privilege as Apostles to sustain what had been revealed to President Monson.

Notice the language Nelson used. He made clear that the conclusion they reached in 2015 was sought by prayer and fasting and that it was revealed to President Thomas S. Monson as “the mind of the Lord and the will of the Lord.” Nelson and his colleagues also “felt” a spiritual confirmation.

How is this any different than how Mormon doctrine comes about? Are we really to believe that God revealed this controversial “policy” in late 2015, but always had in mind that he would rescind it in April of 2019? Does it not show that “feeling” something to be true at the time can one day show that your feelings were misleading?

Consider also Nelson’s mention of lowering the age of male missionaries from 19 to 18 back in 2012. Why was this changed? We know that it hasn’t really affected the convert baptism rate. What we do know is since that was implemented, many young missionaries are coming home early due to homesickness. Compounding this feeling of failure is the shame many young people will experience when they return to their families and local congregations. Could this have been more a “policy” based in perceived pragmatism?

It appears that the leadership is knowingly engaged in a shrewd and confusing game of semantics. If the 2015 announcement was not technically a doctrine, it certainly seems to fit the definition of a “decree” since it was enforced with the full authority of the First Presidency behind it. That being the case, shouldn’t members follow the counsel of Alma 41:8 in the Book of Mormon? It states very clearly that “the decrees of the Lord are unalterable.” It ought to be pointed out that this verse has a footnote directing the reader to the LDS King James Version edition that references Mormon 9:9. It says, “For do we not read that God is the same, today, and forever, and in him there is no variableness neither shadow of changing?”

The next verse says, “And now, if ye have imagined up unto yourselves a god who doth vary, and in whom there is shadow of changing, then have ye imagined up unto yourselves a god who is not a God of miracles.” Since Mormons insist that they believe in a God of miracles, how is this contradiction to be explained?

Again, D&C 3:2 teaches how God does not “vary from that which He hath said.” If God really spoke to Monson and Nelson in 2015, does it make sense that He would reverse Himself in 2019?

Reversing its 2015 decision—whether it is called a “revelation,” “policy,” “doctrine,” or “decree”—appears to have been based on the trends within this secular culture or even the pressure put upon them by some LDS members. This is not the way that the God of the Bible operates. While church leaders tell their members that they are guided by revelation reflecting the mind and will of God, the evidence seems to suggest differently.
Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony: 1842-1990
By Jerald and Sandra Tanner  Price: $6.00
Contains the actual text of the 1990 revision of the highly secret endowment ritual and other accounts of the ceremony dating back to 1846. Shows that Joseph Smith borrowed from Masonry in creating the ritual and that it has evolved over the years. Also shows all of the serious changes made in the ceremony in 1990 and changes made in the washing and anointing ceremony in 2005.

The Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship
By David John Buerger  Price: $20.00
Well-documented study of the development of LDS temple rituals and their relationship to Masonry.

Joseph’s Temples: The Dynamic Relationship between Freemasonry and Mormonism
By Michael W. Homer  Price: $35.00
The parallels between Mormon ritual and doctrine and those of Freemasonry have long been recognized. There are indications that Freemasonry was a pervasive foundational element in Mormonism and that its rituals and origin legends influenced not just the secret ceremonies of the LDS temples but also such important matters as the organization of the Mormon priesthood, the foundation of the women’s Relief Society, the introduction and concealment of polygamy, and the church’s position on African Americans’ full membership. *Joseph’s Temples* provides a comprehensive examination of a dynamic relationship and makes a significant contribution to the history of Mormonism, Freemasonry, and their places in American history.

The Development of LDS Temple Worship: 1846-2000
By Devery S. Anderson  Price: $45.00
Devery S. Anderson has brought together a comprehensive collection of official documents on temple ceremonies, limited only by what would be inappropriate to discuss publicly. The documents include rulings by the First Presidency on changes to the ceremonies, letters to temple and stake presidents and bishops reminding them of temple policies, minutes of Quorum of the Twelve meetings, excerpts from sermons and Church publications, and commentary by apostles and temple presidents in diaries, letters, oral histories, and temple scrapbooks.

The Inside of Mormonism: A Judicial Examination of the Endowment Oaths Administered in All the Mormon Temples (1903)
By The United States District Court  Price: $7.00
An early examination (1903) of the temple oaths and penalties, as well as their political implications.

“The purpose in publishing this evidence at this time is to show that a man who is a member of any one of the three quorums which constitute the government of the Mormon Church and are the fountain of authority in that Church, is not a loyal citizen of the United States, and cannot, by the most liberal construction of his covenants and obligations, consistently qualify as a member of either House of Congress.” (Introduction, p. 4)
SPECIAL OFFERS
(Offers expire August 31, 2019)

Orders that total $25 or more (before shipping charge) will receive FREE:
• The Temple - pamphlet
• The Tabernacle - pamphlet
• The Mormon Temple - tract

Orders that total $50 or more will receive the above offer and the book Journey From Mormonism (Retail Price $23.00) FREE

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SECOND ANOINTING: THE TEMPLE RITUAL THAT ISN’T DISCUSSED

One of the most important tenets of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the necessity of temple ordinances. LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie explained:

From the days of Adam to the present, whenever the Lord has had a people on earth, temples and temple ordinances have been a crowning feature of their worship... The inspired erection and proper use of temples is one of the great evidences of the divinity of the Lord’s work... where these are not, the Church and kingdom and the truth of heaven are not.

The LDS Church teaches that only those with proper priesthood authority can administer these essential rites. Joseph Smith, in May of 1842, initiated a small group of men into the new temple ceremony, called the endowment. It would be some months before women were included.

The endowment ceremony, which is performed in special white clothing and a green apron (representing Adam and Eve’s fig leaf apron), includes a play reenacting the Fall in the Garden of Eden, secret handshakes, passwords and oaths to always obey the edicts of the LDS Church and to always wear the LDS temple undergarments. These rites are never to be discussed outside of the temple.

Young people, age 18 to 22, generally go through the endowment ritual prior to serving their short term mission, or prior to their temple marriage. A person must have a temple marriage/sealing in order to progress to godhood. The 2016 Eternal Family Teaching Manual explains:

Eternal marriage is essential for exaltation in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom, and it is attained only through being sealed by the proper authority in the temple and then living in accordance with the covenants entered into at that time.

After members have experienced these rituals for themselves they may return to the temple to do proxy rituals for their deceased loved ones, thus offering the dead a chance to accept the LDS faith in the spirit world. While LDS teens usually perform baptism for the dead, only adults perform the Endowment ceremony and proxy marriages/sealings for those who have died outside the faith. This is the reason the LDS members are so involved in genealogy—collecting the names of their ancestors so that the living members can perform the necessary rituals for the dead. However, the church does not stop at tracing their own genealogy. According to the LDS Church, it “has created the largest collection of family records in the world, with information on more than 3 billion deceased people.” These records are used to perform proxy rites for thousands of dead people with no connection to the LDS Church.

1 Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), pp. 780-781.


3 https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/topic/genealogy
SECOND ANOINTING

Through the years there have been numerous published exposés of the endowment ritual (see Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony: 1842-1990). However, there is another little known ceremony given by invitation only from church leadership called the second anointing. In fact, teachers are instructed to avoid the topic. In their Doctrines of the Gospel Teacher Manual we read:

Caution: Exercise caution while discussing the doctrine of having our calling and election made sure. Avoid speculation. Use only the sources given here and in the student manual. Do not attempt in any way to discuss or answer questions about the second anointing.

In order to qualify for this ritual one must have proven him/herself worthy with a lifetime of service and already participated in both the endowment and sealing ceremony. LDS researcher David Buerger pointed out:

The higher ordinance was necessary to confirm the revealed promises of “kingly powers” (i.e., godhood) received in the endowment’s initiatory ordinances. Godhood was therefore the meaning of this higher ordinance, or second anointing.

One does not apply for this privilege, but is invited to the temple, under strict secrecy, to meet with a couple of the top leaders for this special honor. The couple receiving their second anointing go to the temple, and then dress in their temple robes. On December 26, 1866, LDS Apostle Wilford Woodruff described the ritual in his journal:

I met with The Presidency and Twelve at President Youngs Office at about 12 oclok. The subject of the Endowments & 2d Anointings was presented when President Young said that the order of the 2d anointing was for the persons to be anointed to be cloathed in their Priestly robes the man upon the right hand and wife or wives upon the left hand. The Administrator may be dressed in his usual Clothing or in his Priestly Robes as he may see fit. The meeting Should be opened by Prayer then the Administrator should Anoint the man A King & Priest unto the Most High God. Then he should Anoint his wife or wives Queens & Priestess unto her husband.

On January 11, 1846, Brigham Young and his legal wife, Mary Ann Angell, received their second anointing. Part of their ceremony reads:

Brother Brigham Young, I pour this holy, consecrated oil upon your head, and anoint thee a King and a Priest of the Most High God . . . for princes shall bow at thy feet and deliver unto thee their treasures; . . . And I seal thee up unto Eternal Life, . . . And thou shalt attain unto [the] Eternal Godhead . . . that thou mayest . . . create worlds and redeem them; so shall thy joy be full . . .

Elder Heber Chase Kimble then anointed Mary Ann Young, a Queen & Priestess unto her husband (Brigham Young) in the Church . . . Sister Mary Ann Young, I pour upon thy head this holy, consecrated oil, and seal upon thee all the blessings of the everlasting priesthood, in conjunction with thy husband: and I anoint thee to be a Queen and Priestess unto thy husband, . . . inasmuch as thou dost obey his counsel; . . . And I seal thee up unto Eternal Life, thou shalt come forth in the morning of the first resurrection and inherit with him all the honors, glories, and power of Eternal Lives, and that thou shalt attain unto the eternal Godhead, so thy exaltation shall be perfect, . . .

Early Mormon Apostle Heber C. Kimball recorded the second anointing ceremony in his diary:

February the first 1844. My self and wife Vilate was annomted Preeast and Preastest unto our God under the Hands of B[ Brigham]. Young and by the voys [voice] of the Holy Order.

April the first 4 day 1844. I Heber C. Kimball receivd the washing of my feet, and was annomted by my wife Vilate fore my burial, that is my feet, head, Stomach. Even as Mary did Jesus, that she might have a claim on Him in the Reserrection. Inform the City of Nauvoo.

In 1845 I receivd the washing of my feet by [which follows is in Vilate’s hand:]

I Vilate Kimball do hereby certify that on the first day of April 1844 I attended to washing and anointed the head, /Stomach/ and feet of my dear companion Heber C. Kimball, that I may have claim upon him in the morning of the first Reserrection. Vilate Kimball.

Kimball’s comparison of his wife’s washing of his feet to Mary washing the feet of Jesus stems from the early LDS teaching that Jesus and Mary were sealed

in marriage. Speaking in 1855, Apostle Orson Hyde declared that “Jesus Christ was married” and that “Mary, Martha and others were his wives.”

The second anointing rite has been slightly modified over the years. Mr. Buerger gave the following outline of the modern second anointing ceremony:

In practice today the second anointing is actually the first of two parts comprising the fullness of the priesthood ceremony. . . . In the Salt Lake temple, second anointings are usually administered on Sunday afternoons. . . . The first part of the ceremony—being anointed and ordained a king and priest or queen and priestess—is administered in a Holy of Holies or special sealing room and is performed by or under the direction of the president of the church. There are usually but not always two witnesses. Only the husband and wife need to dress in temple robes. The husband leads in a prayer circle, offering signs and praying at an altar. He is then anointed with oil on his head, after which he is ordained a king and a priest unto God to rule and reign in the House of Israel forever. . . . He is also blessed with the following (as the officiator determines): the power to bind and loose, curse and bless, the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the Holy Spirit of Promise; to attain godhood; to be sealed to eternal life (if not done previously); to have the power to open the heavens; and other blessings.

Next the wife is anointed . . . to be an heir to all the blessings sealed upon her husband . . . to receive the blessings of godhood; . . . to have the power of eternal lives (of posterity without end); . . .

At the conclusion of this ordinance, the washing of the husband’s feet by his wife is explained to the couple. It is a private ordinance, without witnesses. Its significance is related to the resurrection of the dead, as Heber Kimball noted. The couple is told to attend to the ordinance at a date of their choosing in the privacy of their home. At the determined time the husband dedicates the home and the room in which they perform the ordinance, which then follows the pattern of Mary’s anointing Jesus in Matthew 12. The ordinance symbolically prepares the husband for burial, and in this way the wife lays claim upon him in the resurrection . . . Kimball’s journal entry derives from a speculative belief taught by early Mormons that Jesus married Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus.

The emphasis on the wife’s assertion that “I may have claim upon him in the morning of the first Resurrection” seems to relate to the teaching in the temple that the woman is called from the grave to exaltation by her husband. The first time members go through the endowment ceremony they are given a new name, like Paul or Mary or some other scriptural name, and the wife is instructed to not tell her name to anyone other than her husband. Writing in 1846, one former Mormon woman described receiving her new temple name:

In one place [during the temple ritual] I was presented with a new name, which I was not to reveal to any living creature, save the man to whom I should be sealed for eternity. By this name I am to be called in eternity as after the resurrection.

Preaching in 1857, Apostle Erastus Snow declared:

Do you uphold your husband before God as your lord? . . . Can you get into the celestial kingdom without him? . . . No woman will get into the celestial kingdom, except her husband receives her . . .

Apostle Charles Penrose, writing in 1897, explained:

In the resurrection, they stand side by side and hold dominion together. Every man who overcomes all things and is thereby entitled to inherit all things, receives power to bring up his wife to join him in the possession and enjoyment thereof.

In the case of a man marrying a wife in the everlasting covenant who dies while he continues in the flesh and marries another by the same divine law, each wife will come forth in her order and enter with him into his glory.

Apostle Penrose’s statement about the wives resurrecting in their order demonstrates the LDS belief that they will be living polygamy in the Celestial Kingdom. This would apply to current LDS President Russell M. Nelson and LDS Apostle Dallin Oaks, both of whom have remarried after the death of the first wife. This would also apply to all LDS men who have been sealed in marriage to multiple women.

While the LDS leaders claim that their rituals date to Old Testament times, their temple endowment, second anointing and other rites are very different from those of the Jewish temple. The temple in the Old Testament, with its High Priest and animal sacrifices, was a foreshadowing of Christ’s role as both our final High Priest and last blood offering for sin (Hebrews, chapters 5-9). When Christ died on the cross the veil of the temple was torn in half (Luke 23:45) thus signifying that the Old Testament temple ritual had been replaced by the atonement of Christ. Not only does the Bible say

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12 As quoted in *Mysteries of Godliness*, p. 94.
13 *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 5, p. 291.
14 Charles W. Penrose, “Mormon” Doctrine Plain and Simple, (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1888), p. 66.
marriage ends at death (see Matthew 22:30; Romans 7:2), there is nothing to indicate that the husband will call the wife from the grave (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

**Attaining Godhood**

Originally, the second anointing was to be a guarantee of godhood. Mr. Buerger observed:

Because of the strict confidentiality surrounding second anointings, it is unclear precisely what long-term effect they had on recipients nor, for that matter, the degree to which the conferral of godhood was held to be conditional or unconditional. Most early nineteenth-century statements imply that the ordinance was unconditional.\(^{15}\)

Today, some church leaders seem to be minimizing the importance of the second anointing and refer to it as a “special blessing” but not necessary for exaltation/godhood.\(^{16}\) In 2002 the official LDS magazine *Ensign* emphasized the necessity of the endowment (as opposed to the second anointing) for “eternal exaltation.”\(^{17}\) The article went on to state: “Obedience to the sacred covenants made in temples qualifies us for eternal life . . .” According to Mormonism, a person’s endowment and temple marriage starts one on the road to godhood (*D&C* 132:20—“Then shall they be gods”). In a seeming effort to down-play the literalness of attaining Godhood, some Mormons emphasize that the word “gods” in the revelation is not capitalized, however editions prior to 1900 have it capitalized. Also an official statement of the LDS First Presidency used the capitalized form, and declared that man’s ultimate goal was to evolve “into a God” (*Ensign*, February 2002, p. 30).

In 2002 Tom Phillips, a Stake President, and his wife were invited to the Preston, England, LDS temple to receive their second anointing. He later left the LDS Church and wrote up his experience:

In April 2002 Elder Harold G. Hillam of the First Quorum of Seventy, as President of the Europe West Area, called me into his office. He said he was extending to me and my wife (she was not present), on behalf of President Hinckley, an invitation to receive a “special blessing” in the Preston England Temple. He asked whether I had heard of the “second endowment” to which I replied no. I later told him that I had heard of it, but was so stunned by his invitation my mind went blank regarding the matter.

He told me very few people receive this blessing and it must be kept secret. He said if the general membership knew about it there would be problems. More would want to receive the ordinance than the apostles have time to accommodate and members would wonder why so and so had received it but they had not. I must not even tell my children. He said I should just tell them that their mother and I were going away for the day or weekend. He recommended I read all that Elder Bruce R. McConkie had written on the subject of making your calling and election sure.

Elder Hillam promised me it would be a “life changing” experience. He said the ordinance was performed in Joseph Smith’s time but had been discontinued during President David O. McKay’s time. This resulted in only 2 of the then apostles, Harold B. Lee and Spencer W. Kimball, having had this ordinance on the death of President Joseph Fielding Smith. It was therefore re-introduced and is still practiced today.\(^{18}\)

Among the promises bestowed on him that day were “The Holy Spirit of Promise . . . Blessed to live as long as life is desirable. Blessed to attain unto the Godhood. Power to be a member of a Godhead bestowed. Sealed up to eternal life.”\(^{19}\)

The doctrine that men could eventually achieve Godhood, ruling their own planets, just as our Heavenly Father did, was first introduced by Joseph Smith in the 1840’s. He stated: “you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God the same as all Gods have done before you.”\(^{20}\) The teaching that a man may achieve literal Godhood and rule over his own planet is still taught in current LDS manuals. For instance, their 2010 publication *Doctrines of the Gospel Student Manual* includes this quote from past president Spencer W. Kimball:

> Each one of you has it within the realm of his possibility to develop a kingdom over which you will preside as its king and god. You will need to develop yourself and grow in ability and power and worthiness, to govern such a world with all of its people. You are sent to this earth not merely to have a good time or to satisfy urges or passions or desires. . . . You are sent to this world with a very serious purpose. You are sent to school, . . . to begin as a human infant and grow to unbelievable proportions in wisdom, judgment, knowledge, and power.\(^{21}\)


\(^{16}\) See *Mysteries of Godliness*, p. 165.


\(^{19}\) Ibid.

\(^{20}\) *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith*, (LDS Church, 2007), pp. 221-222; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith, (Deseret Book), pp. 345-346.

\(^{21}\) *Doctrines of the Gospel Student Manual*, (LDS Church, 2010), p. 29.
Joseph Smith also taught that our God had a father, who had a father, who had a father, etc., thus creating a whole pantheon of Gods:

If Abraham reasoned thus—if Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and John discovered that God the Father of Jesus Christ had a Father, you may suppose that He had a Father also. Where was there ever a son without a father?  

While Mormons say they worship only one God, they believe there are countless Gods in the Universe, ruling other worlds. However, the Bible clearly teaches that there is only one God. Isaiah 44:8 says: “Is there a God beside me? Yea, there is no God; I know not any.”

HANS AND BIRGITTA MATTSSON’S EXPERIENCE RECEIVING THE SECOND ANOINTING

In 2013, Salt Lake City Messenger No. 121, we shared some of Hans and Birgitta Mattsson’s journey out of Mormonism. In the early 2000’s Hans was an Area Authority Seventy in Sweden for the LDS Church. In this new appendix to their book, Truth Seeking: The story of High-Ranking Mormon Leader Hans Mattsson Seeking Sincere Answers . . . , they discuss their experience with the little known LDS temple ceremony called the second anointing. Following is the Appendix to their book.

APPENDIX TO “TRUTH SEEKING”

In his first year as an area seventy, Mattsson was called to the Mormon temple in Frankfurt, Germany. They were not allowed to tell or talk to anyone about this invitation. Hans knew that there were further temple ceremonies. Despite all his years of leadership he had not taken part of this ritual. But he had diffuse expectation of what they meant and no insight into how the ritual was performed. It was only “whispered” about this, and the people involved were expected to deny all knowledge of the secrets. This selected inner circle was very limited and got access only through an invitation.

One Sunday afternoon, Mattssons and three other couples found themselves at the Temple gate. The Apostle, Elder Ballard and a few other church leaders welcomed them.

Elder Ballard briefly explained that the ceremony they were now to participate in is known as the second anointing or to have their calling and election ensured.

“You are now worthy to receive a higher level of knowledge and to obtain a deeper degree of certainty. The experience you are now facing will change your life fundamentally,” he said.

The ceremony contained two separate parts. The first part consisted of elder Ballard washing the men’s feet. The foot-washing made the participants clean and innocent from the sins of the world. The model appears in the New Testament, where Jesus washes the feet of the apostles just before the crucifixion. Elder Ballard also anointed the participants with oil as the ancient kings of the Old Testament were anointed. In connection with this anointing ceremony, a blessing was pronounced with promises to Hans and the other men. These promises included the power to bless or curse, to live as long a life as is desirable, that the window of heaven should be opened, that is to say that nothing would stand in the way of the coveted and also the certainty of becoming a God himself. It was a fact. Now we had a sure promise.

The women were anointed to be queens and priestesses for their husbands. During the second part of the ceremony, each pair was referred to a separate room. There was a bowl with water and a towel. The wife now washed the man’s feet and dried them. She then placed her hands on her husband’s head and pronounced a blessing on him as the spirit dictated.

After this, the participants converged again in the celestial room. Elder Ballard summarized the day and invited questions because the occasion would never return. No one should know that they had received the second anointing. Uninitiated members should not even know that this occurs.

“If anyone asks, deny any knowledge whatsoever!” That message was clear.

The temple ceremony Hans had experienced as so difficult and frightening in his youth was in contrast to what he now experienced. Hans thought it was as though he was in a new dimension. He had been approved before God. The promises and covenants that God has made with Abraham once, had God now concluded with him. He felt humble and selected at the same time. The feeling of inadequacy disappeared. God had after all chosen him, he had not exalted himself.

Birgitta’s heart flowed. Everything was wonderful, and what a spiritual experience. Now when they had the second anointing they and their descendants were guaranteed an eternal life together.

For Birgitta, the first part of the ritual was about Hans.

“The church really puts the women so high! The women are clean without foot-washing” she thought.

22 Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, edited by Joseph Fielding Smith, p. 373
The blessings and promises had been pronounced over his head, but as his wife she was complicit (involved). She is a prerequisite for Hans achieving this.

During the second part of the ceremony Birgitta had been the active. She was intensely present at every moment in solitude with Hans. She was his queen, his priestess, the mother of his descendants now and forever. It was no longer just a picture or a promise of the future. It was for real here and now. She was his escort and great love. They were each other’s life and meaning and eternal destination.

Birgitta was at ease when she washed Hans’ feet in solitude. She realized that this foot-washing must have a completely different meaning than the foot-washing elder Ballard just performed. The Apostle had represented Christ himself.

“Who do I represent?” She recalled how Mary Magdalena anointed the feet of Jesus.

“It must be her I represent. She works in service and love. She is preparing for funeral and resurrection. The physical touch strengthened the proximity and affinity. But Birgitta became more uncomfortable in her next mission, to lay her hands on Hans head and utter a blessing on him. The laying of hands was not what Mormon woman normally exerts.

“What should I say? How should I say? Do I speak by myself or by inspiration?

“She wanted all her soul to lift him as a husband, family man, leader, and priesthood holder. Words came across her lips. Hans was deeply touched by her words and thus disappeared the uncomfortable feelings.

Hans and Birgitta left the temple with an even firmer determination. They now carried a great secret experience together. Their future was secured. Their loyalty would consist of all the tests. They had now achieved all that can be achieved on this earth. All old disappointments and failures were of no importance. They had been sealed and approved for eternal life with the Holy Spirit of Promise.

(epilogue)

Thoughts wander back to Frankfurt. The memories goes to that special Sunday afternoon when we received our calling as a couple and the election ensured. Then, the mind had been filled with wonderment, determination and loyalty.

“Birgitta,” I ask, “What are you thinking these days about the second anointing?”

“Maybe it was good for us when it happened, our life was so stressed and this gave added strength.”

She thinks, silence prevails and I’m waiting.

“Even though I no longer believe, the emotions it created between us remains, customized and enhanced.”

I look at her and I see how she suddenly pinch together the mouth in a grimace.

“But as a person I feel diminished. As women we are so pure and without sin, we need no washing said. Then I thought that it was due to the fact that women held so high. Now I see that it is the other way around. We are not even of legal age explained to stand for our own actions. As a Child.”

I consider her answer, and analyze the experiences and memories. The image of the outer ritual remains unchanged. But the meaning seems different. I marvel that I so fully believed in this. Why did I accept the secrecy? A single secret and selected inner circle (circuit) that others should not know about, especially my fellow believers.23


2018 LDS Church Statistics

The Salt Lake Tribune, April 6, 2019, reported the following 2018 statistics for the LDS Church:

Membership — 16,313,735
Converts in 2018 — 234,332
New children of record — 102,102
Congregations — 30,536
Full-time missionaries — 65,137
Service missionaries — 37,963
Operating temples — 161

According to the article, independent church demographer Matt Martinich concluded this was the “lowest net increase in church membership since 1978.” He also calculated that as many as 140,868 members had resigned in 2018.1

According to Jana Riess, the LDS Church had a 2.03% growth rate in 2013 but this has fallen every year since then. It now stands at 1.21% growth for 2018.2

1 Peggy Fletcher Stack, “LDS Church tops 16.3 million members, but number reflects lowest net increase in 40 years,” Salt Lake Tribune (April 6, 2019), https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2019/04/06/lds-church-tops-million/
There is evidence that some form of baptism of or for the dead was practiced by three early Christian heresies: the Marcionites, the Cerinthians, and the Montanists. But the mishandling of the evidence by Mormon apologists and General Authorities has resulted in a great deal of confusion concerning the matter. In the present article I shall discuss and evaluate both the Patristic evidence (i.e., the evidence of the Early Church) relating to baptism for the dead, and the Mormon mishandling of it.

Apologists are motivated by a desire to defend a point of view. That’s what makes them apologists. They want to, in a sense, weaponize the evidence they are working with in the way that best supports the case they are making. As Austin Farrer wrote of C. S. Lewis:

There are frontiersmen and frontiersmen, of course. There is what one might call the Munich school, who will always sell the pass in the belief that their position can be more happily defended from foothills to the rear. Such people are not commonly seen as apologists . . . They are too busy learning from their enemies to do much in defence [sic] of their friends. The typical apologist is a man whose every dyke is his last ditch. He will carry the war into the enemy’s country; he will yield not an inch of his own.¹

And all that’s fair enough, so far as it goes. But there’s a line between favorably reading evidence and distorting or twisting it to make it say something it doesn’t want to. In my experience the apologetic impulse toward crossing that line is a very ecumenical one: Evangelical, liberal Protestant, Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Hindu, Moslem, Buddhist, even Atheist apologists, are all too often guilty of this particular species of transgression. Really, it gives apologetics a bad name.

For some reason the literature of the early Church has proved a particularly fertile field of harvest for evidence-distorting apologists. Part of the explanation for this, no doubt, lies in a desire to have writers of that early period—writers much closer in time to the founding of Christianity—agree with them, or at least disagree with those they want to refute. The level of distortion increases where apologists, before reading a single line or page of early Church writings, already feel sure their practice of Christianity today mirrors exactly what Jesus intended it to be from the beginning. Many churches hold this perspective to some degree, but none so categorically as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons).

I believe that as a prerequisite for using the writings of the early Church in a credible way apologetically one must first learn how to read them disinterestedly; that is to say, one must be able to read them on their own terms, allowing them to develop their own theological language to express their own thoughts in their own way. Otherwise it becomes too easy for apologists to merely exploit, plunder, or mine the ancient texts for what they want to get out of them. Such persons can never really come to know the ancient writers in this way. And, as a result, they frequently distort and misrepresent them, sometimes without even knowing it.

Even though, as I said, apologists of all stripes have been guilty of this, it is a simple fact that Mormon apologists are more likely to be guilty of it because they actually believe, as part of their “dogma,” if you will, that Mormonism is now precisely what early Christianity was in its original founding. This presupposition provides what they mistakenly believe will be a helpful grid for reading the writings of the early Church. Traditionally

Mormons have imagined that to whatever degree any early text differs from current LDS teaching, to that very same degree it was corrupted in a process of falling away from the truth they call the Great Apostasy. Conversely, they imagined that to whatever degree something agrees with current LDS teaching, to that same degree they imagine it retains a glimmer or remnant of original pre-apostasy Christianity. In other words, if one wants to know if a certain ancient Christian teaching is corrupted or not, all one has to do is see if it lines up with current LDS teaching. If it does not, then it can be safely regarded as corrupt. As incredible as it may sound, this grid of judgement was actually authoritatively proposed in the LDS “First Presidency Statement on the King James Version of the Bible” (1992), where it is applied to evaluating places where modern translations differ from the King James: “The most reliable way to measure the accuracy of any biblical passage is not by comparing different texts [i.e., in different Bible translations], but by comparison with the Book of Mormon and modern-day revelations.” In reality, of course, the Book of Mormon and modern-day LDS revelations are going to agree with the King James Version where it differs from other modern versions, simply because both are cribbed from or based on the King James Bible. The same grid is also glowingly articulated by Mormon scholars and apologists Daniel C. Peterson and Stephen D. Ricks, though somewhat more cautiously:

Latter-day Saints, though, are in an enviable position here. Given our belief in an apostasy, we fully expect there to be differences, even vast differences, between the beliefs of the Fathers and Mormon doctrine. Any similarities that exist, however, are potentially understandable as survivals from before that apostasy. When any similarities, even partial ones, exist between Latter-day Saints beliefs and the teachings of the Fathers but are absent between contemporary mainstream Christendom and the Fathers, they can be viewed as deeply important.2

But what may appear to Mormons as a helpful grid, that allegedly puts them in “an enviable position,” actually fits them with blinders that keep them from being able to see what actually lies before them in the ancient texts.

All this brings us uncomfortably near to a story told by Moslem historians about how Caliph Umar allegedly commanded the burning of the books in the Alexandrian library on the grounds that “[I]f what was in them agrees with the Book of God [the Qur’an], they are not required: if it disagrees, they are not desired.”

At the end of the day, if a methodology produces results that appear too good to be true, it is likely a flawed and dubious one withal. In this case we discover the methodology’s refutation in the fact that it can as easily be turned on its head to be used to prove Mormonism always wrong no matter what (i.e., by saying that wherever the early Church evidence agrees in any way with Mormonism, to that extent it had gone apostate, etc.). And there is also the fact that other groups, Evangelicals, Roman Catholics, Jehovah’s Witnesses, can use, and in fact have used, the same methodology, each with equally satisfactory results in defending their own versions of early Christianity.

**Mishandling of the Evidence Relating to the Baptism of the Dead**

In the present article we will focus our investigation on the Mormon apologetic appeal to patristic evidence in support of its controversial doctrine of baptism for the dead. There are a number of passages Mormons resort to when trying to argue that the practice of baptism for the dead, referred to obliquely by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:29, was actually a divinely instituted practice which the ancient Church had fallen off performing as it slipped into black apostasy, but which God reestablished when he restored the Church to its original primitivity through the prophet Joseph Smith.

**Marcion and Cerinthus among the Mormon Plagiarizers**

We mentioned at the beginning that there was some evidence that the Marcionites, the Cerinthians, and the Montanists might have practiced a baptism of or for the dead. Very often, as we shall see, Mormons get confused between the first two groups, the Marcionites and the Cerinthians, so that they commonly mention one when actually speaking of evidence relating to the other. It is this error in fact that has been perpetuated due to plagiarism. But before getting into that let us first deal briefly with the evidence relating to the Marcionites, which though sparse, is some of the most straightforward. One of the earliest and best attested examples of a practice of baptism for the dead relates, as we said, to

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the followers of the mid-second century heretic Marcion. Their practice is referred to by the late 2nd/early 3rd century North African writer Tertullian,⁴ and actually described by the 4th century Greek theologian John Chrysostom. “[W]hen any [Marcionite] Catechumen departs among them,” Chrysostom writes, “having concealed the living man under the couch of the dead, they approach the corpse and talk with him, and ask him if he wishes to receive baptism; then when he makes no answer, he that is concealed underneath saith in his stead that of course he should wish to be baptized; and so they baptize him instead of the departed.”¹⁵ When challenged about the practice, Chrysostom went on to say, the Marcionites quoted 1 Corinthians 15:29.

In addition to Tertullian and Chrysostom, Mormons also regularly cite a passage from the 4th century writer Epiphanius of Salamis claiming that it too refers to the Marcionite practice of baptism for the dead. But this is an error. In the passage cited below Epiphanius was actually discussing the practices of a group called the Cerinthians not the Marcionites.⁶ In due course we shall evaluate what Epiphanius had actually said about that other group. But for now, we need to pause and trace the source and origin of the Mormons’ mistake. Those making the mistake obviously hadn’t read Epiphanius. They simply copied the mistake out of other Mormon books, but usually without crediting their actual sources, thus becoming guilty of plagiarism. The following paragraph, for example, appears virtually verbatim in the writings of LDS authors George F. Richards,⁷ Mark E. Petersen,⁸ Albert Zobell,⁹ and LeGrand Richards,¹⁰ with only the last mentioned actually crediting any source beyond Epiphanius:

Epiphanius, a writer of the fourth century, in speaking of the Marcionites, a sect of Christians to whom¹¹ he was opposed, says: “In this country—I mean Asia—and even Galatia,¹² their school flourished eminently; and a traditional fact concerning them has reached us, that when any of them had died without baptism, they used to baptize others in their name, lest in the resurrection they should suffer punishment as unbaptized.”

And it should be said that the above passage is only an excerpt of a larger block of text Mormons have copied out of one another’s books for well over a century. Had the above authors read the passage in its original context they would have seen it was a mistake.

Such “research” required no real knowledge of the subject being discussed, no familiarity with Epiphanius or the Marcionites. It only required the ability to mindlessly copy out somebody else’s work. It was only the original author of the frequently plagiarized passage who had to do any real research in non-Mormon sources. But which of the above authors (if any) actually first introduced and perhaps even composed the widely plagiarized passage?

As we said, only LeGrand Richards tells us his source, and he says he got it from an article by Mark E. Petersen in the April 1933 issue of the Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine.¹³ But it was not ultimately Petersen who composed and introduced the passage, nor was he the one who originally confused the Marcionites with the Cerinthians. That honor on both counts most likely goes to Brigham Henry [B. H.] Roberts (1857-1933), who included the oft-copied passage in several of his books.¹⁴

How Roberts likely came to confuse the Cerinthians with the Marcionites can be seen by comparing the passage as he wrote it with his probable source, namely J. Jacobi’s entry on baptism for the dead in Kitto’s Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature.¹⁵

⁴ Tertullian, Against Marcion 5:10.
⁵ Chrysostom, Homily 40.1 (PNPF 12:244).
⁹ Albert L. Zobell, Jr. “If the Dead Rise Not: The Story of 100 Years of Baptism for the Dead,” Improvement Era 43.9 (Sept. 1940): 530.
¹¹ Mark E. Petersen has “which” here rather than “whom”.
¹² Albert L. Zobell, Jr. and LeGrand Richards misspell “Galatia” here as “Galatae”.
¹³ L. Richards, Marvelous Work, 180.
¹⁵ Roberts’s source in this case is strongly suggested in his clear and acknowledged dependence on this entry in the same context. The same passage from Kitto is also found in Moroni Snow “Redemption and Regeneration,” Latter-day Saints Millennial Star 42.24 (June 14, 1880) 370. There the source is noted, although Snow mistakenly has “Meronites” instead of “Marcionites.”
B. H. Roberts

Epiphanius, a writer of the fourth century, in speaking of the Marcionites, a sect of Christians to whom he was opposed, says:

‘In this country—I mean Asia—and even in Galatia, their school flourished eminently…’

The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis

A similar account is given by Epiphanius (Haeres, xxviii. 7) of the Gnostic sect of Cerinthus, who were much opposed to the Marcionites:

‘In this country,—I mean, Asia,—and even in Galatia, their school flourished eminently…’

Where Jacobi had said that Epiphanius had written about the followers of Cerinthus, who in their turn were “much opposed” to the Marcionites, Roberts, by skip of eye or thought, seemed to imagine it was Epiphanius himself who was opposed to the Marcionites. It is a reasonable assumption, since Epiphanius was “much opposed” to the Marcionites, but it is not what the passage was about. The very fact of the confusion suggests Jacobi/Kitto as Roberts’s ultimate source for the quotation, since there is no mention in the original context of the passage in Epiphanius’s work of the Marcionites. In addition this passage from Epiphanius is often referenced as being found not at xxviii 7, as Jacobi and Roberts both have it, but at xxviii 6 which is actually the correct reference.

There is an irony in the fact that it was B. H. Roberts who became the victim of widespread Mormon plagiarism in this instance since it was also he who delivered a very stern warning specifically directed at Mormon leaders engaging in plagiarism in his Seventy’s Course on Theology:

I desire to say one more thing, and to say it as emphatically as it is possible for it to be said. Let every speech, lecture, or discourse by a Seventy be an honest one. Let it be his own, good, bad, or indifferent. A poor speech that is one’s own is more to one’s credit than a good one stolen.


One interesting feature of all the copied versions of the Roberts passage, is the variant numbers included as the alleged reference in Epiphanius where the passage supposedly appears.

One would be hard pressed finding one’s way from the reference given in any one of the plagiarized sources to the actual passage in Epiphanius. This is because the reference numbers given usually make no sense. Once one sees a few of the plagiarized versions together, however, it becomes clear what is going on. Jacobi gave as reference 28:7, which Roberts accurately repeats. Of the four mentioned who copied the Roberts passage, only one, LeGrand Richards, managed to retain the full reference (28:7). Petersen and Zobell inadvertently dropped the 2 from 28, referencing the quote instead to “8.7”. The most mysterious change of reference, however, appears in George F. Richards, who directs the reader to “Heresies, p. 383.” Are we to suppose that G. F. Richards had in mind the page number of some obscure edition of Epiphanius, or was he giving the page number of Jacobi’s article in Kitto? As to the former, since G. F. Richards felt satisfied simply copying his material out of someone else’s book, it seems unlikely he would have then troubled himself hunting down an edition of Epiphanius and finding the page number where the quote occurred. The fact that he repeats Roberts’s mistake also militates against this. As for the Kitto reference, we know what page that was on, and it wasn’t 383. What seems most likely to have happened was that Richards has given us the page number of his true source, namely B. H. Roberts’ *New Witness for God* [Vol. 1], where the passage in question appears on page 383.

Until now we have been dealing with Mormons who copied the Roberts passage verbatim. But there were also those who repeated Roberts’s mistake closely enough to still be committing plagiarism but without copying the whole of it word for word. For example, John A. Tvedtines, a professor at BYU who wrote a number of articles, reviews, and papers on baptism for the dead in early Christianity, repeats Roberts’s mistake about Epiphanius and the Marcionites, but he does so without copying verbatim.

21  Roberts, *New Witness for God I*, 383. In the same context where Richards cites another passage as coming from “Heresies, p. 290” we actually find the words on page 290 of Roberts’s *The Gospel*.
Thus in one of his more recent efforts Tvedtnes declares: “Two of the early church fathers, Epiphanius (AD 315–403) in Panarion 1.28.6 and Tertullian (AD 145–220) in Against Marcion 5.10, note that the Marcionites, an early Christian group, baptized others in the name of the dead.”

Here at last, Tvedtnes gives the correct reference to the passage in Epiphanius, the place where one could actually look it up in, say, Frank Williams’s familiar English edition of the Panarion published by E. J. Brill. In his earlier writings, Tvedtnes did not give the correct reference but simply copied the wrong reference (Panarion 8.7) out of another Mormon’s book, and, typical of those who went before him, did so without properly crediting his source.

In giving this incorrect reference, Tvedtnes inadvertently revealed that he didn’t get the passage from Epiphanius, nor even from B. H. Roberts, but rather from one of Roberts’s many plagiarizers. This detail alone causes us to doubt that Tvedtnes ever read the passage in context in Epiphanius—since there was no way to get from the erroneous reference to the passage itself—but was content to take his place in line as a copiest of the copiest of the copiest of Epiphanius. As we saw, J. Jacobi repeated the passage but gave the reference not as 28.6 but as 28.7 (see discussion above). B. H. Roberts, in his turn, copied Jacobi’s form of the passage, including his 28.7 reference. Then Mark E. Petersen and Albert Zobell copied Roberts, or one another, or some other Roberts plagiarizer, but in the process muddled the reference, inadvertently dropping the 2 from Roberts’s 28.7, reducing it to 8.7.

Finally Tvedtnes, in his earlier works, copied the passage from Petersen or Zobell or some other Roberts plagiarizer, again repeating the muddled 8.7 reference.

**Posthumous Baptism for Marcionite Catechumens**

Even granting that Epiphanius was not speaking of the Marcionites, we still have the statements from Tertullian and Chrysostom saying they practiced a form of baptism for the dead, and in the case of the latter the practice is described as a baptism by proxy. When a catechumen—one already engaged in a course of preparation for baptism—dies, someone gets under the bed to request baptism on behalf of the dead person, and then is afterward baptized in the dead person’s stead.

Chrysostom’s description as likely as not provides the explanation of the practice’s origin. Where baptism is counted essential for salvation, the death of someone in process of preparing for it must have seemed particularly tragic. Could not some way be found to justify baptizing the dead catechumen? Wasn’t he or she faithful and, as it were, almost there! Under such unhappy circumstances we can easily imagine 1 Corinthians 15:29 being seized upon as suggesting a positive way forward.

If this explanation is correct it nullifies the Mormons’ appeal to Marcionite baptism for the dead as a way of justifying their own more elaborate practice. In addition, in order for it to be of any use to Mormon apologists the practice would need to be viewed as a remainder of authentic, original Christian practice, not as a later innovation by Marcionites. Such was the attempt of Tvedtnes when he wrote: “Some dismiss this evidence on the grounds that the Marcionites were heretics, Latter-day Saints, believing that the great apostasy was already well under way by Marcion’s time and that no Christian group then possessed the full truth, see the practice as a remnant of an earlier rite dating from the time of the apostles.”

And yet even laying aside the fact that Marcionites were heretics, where is there any proof to support Tvedtnes’s assertion of the practice’s primitivity? We recall that Chrysostom himself says that when the Marcionites were challenged about the teaching they appealed to 1 Corinthians 15:29. He mentions no claim on their part that they were adhering to a traditional practice, although, to be sure, they may or may not have made such a claim.

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22 John A. Tvedtnes, “Baptism for the Dead in Early Christianity” in The Temple in Time and Eternity (eds. Donald W. Parry & Stephen D. Ricks; Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 1999), 56. See also Questions 26 for SHIELDS 42 Questions List (http://www.shields-research.org/42_Questions/ques26_Tvedtnes.htm. Although his plagiarism was much more direct.


But however that may be the Marcionite practice really does reflect a situation later than the New Testament period. In the New Testament there was no concept of an extended period of preparation prior to baptism. You simply heard, believed, and were baptized. We see this, for example, in the fact that those responding to Peter’s Pentecost sermon were baptized the same day (Acts 2:38-41). The same is true in the case of the Philippian jailer who practiced baptism for the dead (Acts 16:30-33): He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized.

It was only later that baptism came to be delayed to make way for an extended period of preparatory instruction. The Marcionite practice therefore makes more sense as a response to contingencies arising from the later situation.

Yet for the sake of argument let us suppose for a moment that the Marcionites were following some sort of traditional, long-established practice. If they were, whose practice was it? Was it Christ’s practice? The Apostles’? One of the ironies of the Marcionite practice is that Paul’s appeal in 1 Corinthians 15:29 to the practice of baptism for the dead is part of his defense of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead—“If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them?” But the Marcionites not only practiced baptism for the dead, they also denied the resurrection. The question then becomes: did those who practiced baptism for the dead at Corinth also deny the resurrection? In the context of 1 Corinthians we notice that Paul refers to baptism for the dead indirectly rather than as something he himself would want to endorse: “why are they then baptized for the dead?” Who are they? As we read through 1 Corinthians we discover a number of things going on at Corinth that Paul must definitely did not endorse. A man there was having sex with his father’s wife (5:1), and some at Corinth were boasting about it, apparently considering it a healthy exercise in Christian freedom (5:2). At the communion table there was social and economic separatism as well as too much wine, some people getting drunk, others going away hungry (11:20-21). Believers were suing one another in court before the secular authority (6:1). Paul even has to remind the Corinthians that they ought not go to prostitutes (6:14), and that if in the course of prophetic speech someone says “Jesus be cursed” he is not speaking by the Spirit of God (12:3). Finally, in defending the centrality of the resurrection, Paul reveals that there are actually people in the Corinthian church who denied the resurrection: “if it is preached,” he wrote, “that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (15:12).

Something had gone dreadfully wrong at Corinth, and it appears to have featured an unhealthy reading of the saying “everything is permissible” (1 Cor 6:11, 10:23). Many recent translations often place those words in quotation marks, implying that Paul was treating it as coming from some other written or spoken context, as, for example, something he or Apollos or somebody else might have written, or said, but that had been interpreted entirely wrong, or perhaps something that the Corinthians had said in their letter to Paul (see 7:1), or that Paul had heard from Corinthian visitors to Ephesus from Chloé’s household (see 1:11). In either case some of the particulars as to how something had gone morally wrong over the statement are clear enough. But how all that might relate to the rejection of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead by some at Corinth is uncertain. Perhaps they were arguing something along the lines, for example, of later libertine Gnostics, who held that since it is the soul rather than the body that is raised, it doesn’t matter what one does with one’s body, such that all the traditional morals become passé. In view of this possibility it is interesting that when Paul addresses the problem of sexual immorality in the letter the issue of the body stands at the center of his argument:

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? . . . Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body . . . You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body (6:15-20).

Notice that Paul does not simply say, “honor God,” but, “honor God with your body,” making it clear that it is possible to dishonor God by what one does with/to one’s body. He also makes it clear that one can sin against one’s own body. Such argumentation would answer very well a teaching that said it didn’t matter what one did with one’s body because it is the soul rather than the body that survives death.

Was it possible, then, that the Marcionite teaching about baptism for the dead might have had some genetic connection with the practice of baptism for the dead?

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26 See also the baptisms of the Ethiopian Eunuch (8:38), and of Cornelius, along with his relatives and friends (Acts 10:47).

27 See, e.g., Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.27.3; Tertullian, Against Marcion 5.10; Epiphanius, Panarion, 3.42.3.5
It is simply false to say that Marcionites are “invariably referred to as Christians.” Typical of the Early Church’s view of Marcion and his followers is the following story of an encounter between Marcion and Polycarp, the disciple of the Apostle John the Evangelist:

And Polycarp himself, when Marcion once met him and said, “Knowest thou us?” replied, “I know the first born of Satan.” Such caution did the apostles and their disciples exercise that they might not even converse with any of those who perverted the truth.31

In contrast, Mormon writer Alexander B. Morrison readily admits that the Marcionites were regarded as heretics, but he does so in the context of making the outrageous assertion that it was for the practice of baptism for the dead that Marcion was “accused of heresy, and condemned by ‘orthodox’ Christians.”32

But, again, that simply isn’t true either.32 Marcion was condemned for rejecting the God of the Old Testament and much of the New Testament. He was condemned as well for repudiating a number of central Christian teachings including the resurrection of the dead.

Christians might feel comfortable using the term “Christian” to describe Marcion, so long as the term is an adjective modifying the noun “heresy.” Marcion was the founder of a “Christian” heresy in the sense that he cobbled together his system largely from Christian sources in a Christian context. Hence it would be wrong to say he founded, for example, a “Buddhist” heresy. His was a Christian heresy. In the same way most Christians would be happy to speak of Mormonism as Christian in the same sense, i.e., as a Christian, as opposed to say, a Buddhist, or Jewish, or Moslem heresy. To be sure Mormons are perfectly within their rights to call themselves Christians if they want to: ‘Tis a free country. But as soon as they begin insisting that other people call them Christians they run into problems of the sort that always arise where ancient cherished words are co-opted and given new and foreign meanings.


30 Eusebius, Church History 4.14.7 (ET: NPNF2 1.187)
32 See the sections on Marcionites and Montanists in Justo L. Gonzalez and Catherine Gunsalus Gonzalez, Heretics for Armchair Theologians (illust. Ron Hill; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 45-61, 63-76.
Baptism for the Dead among the Cerinthians

A while ago we were discussing a rather widespread Mormon misunderstanding concerning who the 4th century writer Epiphanius had accused of practicing baptism for the dead. As the reader will recall, they were saying it was the Marcionites, when in reality it was another heretical group known as the Cerinthians. Here is what Epiphanius said about them:

For their school reached its height in this country, I mean Asia, and in Galatia as well. And in these countries I also heard of a tradition which said that when some of their people died too soon, without baptism, others would be baptized for them in their names, so that they would not be punished for rising unbaptized at the resurrection and become the subjects of the authority that made the world.33

Cerinthus’s heresy differed at points from that of Marcion. For example, Cerinthus is not thought to have denied the resurrection outright, as Marcion did, but rather is credited with saying that Jesus would not rise until the general resurrection.34 By the fourth century, when Epiphanius was writing, some Cerinthians were denying the resurrection, while others continued in the teachings of their founder.35

When Mormon apologists seek to exploit the teaching of early heretics in support of their own, they often place the words heretic or heretical in quotation marks as a way of casting doubt over the designation. They often further underscore this with some reference to the teacher or the group being condemned by the “orthodox,” again in quotation marks. The idea is to minimize the significance of the negative characterization: How is a church that teachings of their founder.35

We mentioned above that Peterson and Ricks had suggested that the “anti-Mormon claim that those who baptize for the dead cannot be Christian . . . ignores the fact that such groups as the Montanists—whom we have already seen to be universally recognized as Christians—practiced a similar right.”39 The claim that the Montanists were “universally recognized as Christians,” is incorrect, as it was in the case of the Marcionites. What Peterson and Ricks have done is look in a handful of recent dictionaries endorsing it.

Baptism for Dead among the Montanists

We mentioned above that Peterson and Ricks had suggested that the “anti-Mormon claim that those who baptize for the dead cannot be Christian . . . ignores the fact that such groups as the Montanists—whom we have already seen to be universally recognized as Christians—practiced a similar right.”39 The claim that the Montanists were “universally recognized as Christians,” is incorrect, as it was in the case of the Marcionites. What Peterson and Ricks have done is look in a handful of recent dictionaries

33 Epiphanius, Panarion 1.28.6.4-5 (ET: The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis Book 1 [Sects. 1-46] [Nag Hammadi & Manichaean Studies 63; 2nd ed; trans. Frank Williams; Leiden: Brill, 2009], 120).
34 Epiphanius, Panarion, 3.42.6.1.
35 Epiphanius, Panarion, 3.42.6.6.
36 One of the most striking features of Mormon apologetics is how many of its strategies have been crafted to be used in dismissing evidence, as opposed to weighing it.
37 Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.3.4, quoted in Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 4.14.6 (ET: Paul M. Maier, Eusebius: The Church History (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2007), 129.
38 Although one can easily imagine some Mormon apostle interpreting “their people” creatively to mean, not fellow Cerinthians but ancestral kin, as a way of being able to claim the passage as evidence for their own elaborate practice of baptizing their own non-Mormon relatives. So far as I am aware no Mormon apologist has made this claim as yet. However, since trading on ambiguity is a major feature of Mormon apologetics, we would not be surprised to find this interpretation to be adopted somewhere by some Mormon apologist or other in the future, if only because I have mentioned its possibility as an interpretation here.
39 Peterson & Ricks, Offenders for a Word, 109.
and encyclopedias where the adjective Christian was used to describe these two movements. Naturally such a superficial approach to research is inadequate for arriving at a true sense of how both ancient and modern Christians have viewed these two movements. As it happens the teachings of Marcion have almost always been deemed heretical, but there are those in the modern Church who are more willing to entertain the possibility that Montanus and his followers were Christians, and to see a parallel to Montanism in the modern prophetic or charismatic movements, where, although a lot of good things happen, some people have been a bit too quick to declare the time of the end, make prophesies that don’t pan out, or fake miracles, tongues, or other spiritual gifts. Unhealthy? Certainly! Ill advised? Indubitably! But heretical? Well, maybe, maybe not. In addition the fact that the great theologian Tertullian ultimately became a Montanist has also been a mitigating factor in hesitancy to write the whole movement off as heretical. By way of contrast to modern Christian feelings, the ancient Church was largely agreed on the heretical character of Montanism.  

But however that may be, evidence that can be cited for a Montanist baptism for the dead is slender and late, consisting primarily of a single reference from the late 4th century writer Filaster (Filastrius/Philastrius), who claimed without elaboration concerning the Montanists, that “They baptize the dead” (Hi mortuos baptizant). Yet even granting the brevity of Filaster’s statement, notice that we are not talking, apparently, of proxy baptism, i.e., the baptizing a live person in a dead one’s stead, i.e., a baptism for the dead. Rather we are talking about baptism of the dead, i.e., the baptism of a corpse. Hugh Wimber Nibley, that late great Father Patriarch of Mormon apologetics, recognized the lack of direct parallel here, yet still attempted to make the passage relevant for the Mormon cause by representing it as a corrupted form of the earlier, and allegedly more pristine, practice of the Marcionites. Thus for Nibley the Marcionite practice represented “a half-way point between baptism for the dead and the later rite of baptism of the dead . . . in their need to find some official condemnation of baptism for the dead, churchmen have had to resort to citing those instances which deal with condemnation of its opposite, namely baptism of the dead” (my italics). Therefore, whenever the early Church spoke of baptism of the dead, Nibley wants to regard it as “a deliberate confusion.” As to Filaster’s description of the Montanist practice, Nibley deftly dismisses it as one of “a number of false and exaggerated charges against the Cataphrygians [Montanists] in the fourth century.” Nibley was very sure of himself in what he says here (as he was in all things), but there is really no reason to claim that the Montanists were being slandered by Filaster when he said that they baptized the dead. Nor can Nibley establish that things developed in the way he described. The weakness of his argument is rendered conspicuous by his need to resort there to a stock ad hominem attack on the supposedly sinister intents and motives of the early Christian church.

**The Condemnation of Post-Mortem Baptism at the Synod of Hippo (393)**

John A. Tvedtnes is very typical of Mormon scholars and apologists when he remarks:

That baptism for the dead was indeed practiced in some orthodox Christian circles is indicated by the decisions of two late fourth-century councils. The fourth canon (fifth in some lists) of the Synod of Hippo, held in 393, declares, “The Eucharist shall not be given to dead bodies . . . nor baptism conferred upon them.” The ruling was confirmed four years later in the sixth canon of the Third Council of Carthage.

Tvedtnes is mostly right, except for one thing. The canon he quotes reads: “The Eucharist shall not be given to dead bodies, nor baptism conferred upon them.” The error is calling what was condemned baptism for the dead, which he does at the beginning of the passage. As in the case of Filaster’s remark about the Montanists, so here too, we are dealing with a baptism of not for the dead. The point is brought out rather sharply by the fact that apparently the Eucharist was being placed into the mouths of corpses as well.

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40 Ibid., p. 52.

41 As is clear from a perusal of the ancient evidence collected in Ronald E. Heine’s *The Montanist Oracles and Testimonia* (Patristic Monograph Series 14; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1989).


44 Tvedtnes, “Baptism for the Dead in Early Christianity,” 57.

This claim that the Synod of Hippo/Council of Carthage had condemned baptism of the dead is an oft repeated one in Mormon apologetics, again largely because B. H. Roberts said it\(^{46}\) and many others simply copied what he said either verbatim or nearly so.\(^{47}\) In this case as well Roberts was apparently relying on Jacobi’s article in Kitto. And once again he misread his source:

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<th>Jacobi</th>
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<td>In the Concil. Carthagin. A.D. 397, can. 6, and Codex Eccles. Afric. can. 18, it is forbidden to administer baptism and the holy communion to the dead.</td>
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<th>Roberts</th>
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<tr>
<td>The council of Carthage, held A. D., 397, in its sixth canon, forbids the administration of baptism and holy communion for the dead.</td>
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It is curious that Roberts leaves out any reference to what Jacobi says soon after: “Here baptism by proxy is not alluded to, and we must therefore assume that the Councils had no ground for its prohibition, the custom having, as it seems, not then existed in those parts.”\(^{48}\) Interestingly when the Mormon Moroni Snow appealed to this same passage from Kitto in his 1880 sermon, “Redemption and Regeneration,” he managed to notice that the article spoke of baptism of the dead, and so he too remarked upon the fact that “baptism by proxy is not alluded to.”\(^{49}\)

The context in which baptism of the dead as condemned in these late 4th century ecclesiastical gatherings might arise is not hard to imagine. Indeed it dovetails nicely with the fact that some people had been putting off their baptisms until they were about to die. The rationale for that practice being that one was supposed to avoid all sin after baptism. Already more than a half-century earlier the first Christian Emperor, Constantine, had waited to be baptized until he was on his deathbed.\(^{50}\) It doesn’t take a strong imagination to see how a practice of baptism of the dead, could come along to supplement baptism of the dying in cases where the dying had waited just a bit too long.

**An Exercise in Reaching**

Given the paucity of early evidence in which someone, somewhere, was said to have practiced baptism of the dead, it is hardly surprising to find more intrepid Mormon apologists searching further afield for potentially useful evidence for defending their practice of proxy baptism. And in the process they have managed to turn up a few tidbits that are interesting, even though not ultimately very helpful to their case. Here our focus continues on John A. Tvedtnes and the late Hugh Nibley who seem to be the two who have worked hardest at this.

It should be noted before we proceed further that in almost every case we have looked at so far those who are said to practice baptism of the dead were being described by others and not by themselves. Happily, we do have a passage from an early Gnostic teacher named Theodotus who does venture an interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:29 on his own: “And when the Apostle said, ‘Else what shall they do who are baptised for the dead?’ . . . For, he says, the angels of whom we are portions were baptised for us. But we are dead, who are deadened by this existence, but the males are alive who did not participate in this existence.”\(^{51}\) In other words baptism of the dead refers to angels being baptised for us. Such a passage is understandably of limited use to Mormon apologists and they have not featured it. Of some interest however is the passage appealed to by Tvedtnes from the Gnostic Pistis Sophia 3.128 where Mary asks Jesus what to do if a pious relative of an unrepentant, definitely outer-darkness bound person dies, and Jesus responds by recommending that “the one mystery of the ineffable which forgives sins at all times,” should be performed, promising a positive outcome. Tvedtnes adds words and excludes them in order to make the passage sound more Mormon. He does this first of all, by equating what the text called mysteries with ordinances, and one mystery of...

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\(^{47}\) E.g., G. F. Richards, “Genealogy and Temple Work,” 98; L. Richards, Marvelous Work, 180; Zobell, “If the Dead Rise Not,” 530; Peterson, “Your Family Tree,” 511; Matthias F. Cowley, in Cowley and Whitney on Doctrine (comp. Forace Green; Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1963), 127.

\(^{48}\) Jacobi, “Baptism for the Dead,” in Kitto 1:289 (italics original).

\(^{49}\) Moroni Snow “Redemption and Regeneration,” Latter-day Saints Millennial Star 42.24 (June 14, 1880): 370.

\(^{50}\) As historian Michael Grant has written: “Surprise has often been expressed . . . that Constantine, who had displayed his adherence to Christianity so much earlier, postponed his baptism until what was virtually his death-bed. Some members of the Church deplored the lateness of the decision. But in fact late, last minute baptism — like adult baptism in general — was not an infrequent phenomenon, because it was strongly felt that after baptism one ought not to commit a sin, and the only way to ensure this was to become baptized when one was not going to live very much longer” (Constantine the Great: The Man & His Times [New York: Scribner’s, 1994], 212).

\(^{51}\) Excerpts from Theodotus 22 (ET: Robert Pierce Casey).
the ineffable with baptism. While both substitutions may be reasonable surmises, they are by no means obvious from the immediate context, and Tvedtnes made no attempt to provide evidence indicating that his surmise in each case was correct. Then secondly, he uses ellipsis points to pass over mention that the passage appears to involve a process of post mortal progress that involves reincarnation. The latter can be seen plain enough by simply reproducing Mary’s question to Jesus with the words Tvedtnes excludes printed in bold:

“My Lord, if a good man has fulfilled all the mysteries [ordinances], and he has a relative, in a word, he has a man and that man is an impious one who has committed all the sins which are worthy of the outer darkness; and he has not repented; or he has completed his number of cycles in the changes of the body, and that man has done nothing profitable and has come forth from the body; and we have known of him certainly that he has sinned and is worthy of the outer darkness; what should we do to him so that we save him from the punishments of the dragon of the outer darkness, so that he is returned to a righteous body which will find the mysteries of the Kingdom of the Light, and become good and go to the height, and inherit the Kingdom of the Light?”

And yet despite Tvedtnes’s Mormonizing touches, there is no question that the passage is dealing with some sort of liturgical rite aimed at delivering souls from outer darkness.

In addition to the above, Tvedtnes also references in footnotes (but does not describe) several interesting practices by contemporary Middle Eastern Mandaeans, another heretical group, including one in which, when a baby dies during their lengthy baptism ritual, an image of the child is made out of dough and the rest of the ceremony is performed to completion, thus rendering the actual example of the practice of baptism for the dead.

But of course contemporary examples are of limited value when trying to establish the precise character of ancient practice.

At points however both Nibley and Tvedtnes become too creative in their attempts at molding the evidence in the direction they feel it needs to go. Let me demonstrate this with one example from each.

In the case of Tvedtnes, one of the most interesting claims he puts forward is that the Egyptian Coptic Church practiced and continues to practice baptism for the dead. He even dedicated a paper to the topic entitled “Baptism for the Dead: The Coptic Rationale.” One of the interesting things about that paper is that in the course of his argument he gives no actual evidence. He does mention the decision of Hippo and Carthage and then says that “The monophysitic church of Egypt was not represented at these minor councils and hence did not feel bound to discontinue the practice.”

54 The extent to which Tvedtnes’s example departs from the simplicity of the ancient baptismal liturgies is seen in the following excerpt in The Mandaeans of Iraq & Iran by Drower (pages 215-16):

Then, without speaking, the proxy descends into the water, and repeats voicelessly, ‘I, N. son of N. (the name of the dead person) am baptized with the baptism of [216] Bahram the Great, son of the mighty [ones]. My baptism shall protect me and cause me to ascend to the summit.’ He submerges thrice, and on emerging puts on a completely new rasta. As in the case of the dead person, a piece of gold (attro) and a piece of silver (kesva) must be sewn to the right and left side respectively of the stole. The proxy then comes and sits before the toriana facing the North Star (House of Abathur), while the ganzibra, who wears a kila (myrtle wreath) on the little finger of his right hand, goes, together with the priests and shganda, to perform another riglama at the yardna.

They return and stand in a row facing the north, the ganzibra to the extreme right and the shganda at the extreme left, and repeat the ‘Sharwali ‘treš’, &c., touching each part of the rasta.

They then repeat:

‘My Lord be praised! The Right heal ye! In the name of the Great Primal Strange Life, from sublime worlds of light, who is above all works; health and purity (or victory), strength and soundness, speaking and hearing, joy of heart and a forgiver of sins may there be for my soul, mine, N. of N. (the name of the reciter), who have prayed this prayer of rahmia, and a forgiver of sins may there be for N. son of N. (the name of the dead person) of this masiqa (ascension) and dukhrana (mention, remembrance), and a forgiver of sins may there be for our fathers, and teachers, and brothers and sisters, both those who have left the body and those still in the body, and a forgiver of sins may there be for me.’

55 Published in Special Papers of the Society for Early Historic Archaeology 2 (Sept 1989), the online version made available at FAIR’s website: http: www.fairmormon.org/archive/publications/baptism-for-the-dead-the-coptic-rationale. I follow the unpaginated online version.
right in regarding these councils as merely regional rather than ecumenical, but beyond that he speaks of them anachronistically in using the adjective monophysitic to describe the Church in Egypt. That term has no relevance in the present case, it only really comes into play after the mid-fifth century Council of Chalcedon. More deeply problematic is Tvedtnes’s claim that the Egyptian Church continued to practice baptism for the dead due to it not being under the jurisdiction of Hippo and Carthage. The difficulty there is that he provides no evidence that the Egyptian church ever started practicing baptism for the dead in the first place. Nor could he have done so, since there is none. Naturally one cannot continue to baptize for the dead unless one has started doing it in the first place. Despite this Tvedtnes includes a footnote in which he claims that “there is abundant textual evidence for this practice among early Christians in Egypt.” Actually there isn’t.

When it comes time to support his claim of an ongoing practice of baptism for the dead in Egypt, Tvedtnes writes: “I have, to date, found no documentation for its existence in the modern Coptic Church. Nevertheless, some of my Coptic friends have assured me that it is still practiced in the case of family members who die unbaptized.” Tvedtnes goes on to point to one printed source which is supposed to provide evidence of the continuation of the practice in the modern Coptic Church: “the Coptic story of the girl who was baptized after her death,” (Tvedtnes’s words). The story is found in S. H. Leeder’s Modern Sons of the Pharaohs: A Study of the Manners and Customs of the Copts of Egypt (1918).

When we go to that work, however, and turn to the page indicated by Tvedtnes, we discover that it provides evidence neither of baptism for the dead’s continuing existence in the modern Coptic Church, nor of its having ever been practiced. Rather it describes a story attributed to the fourth century that dealt with a miraculous divine action relating to a girl who died without baptism:

There is a Coptic story of the fourth century (which might have come from a village to-day) illustrating not only the importance attached to baptism, but also the infinite hope these Eastern people have in the mercy of God. A certain man living remote from the world had a little daughter, who died before she could be baptized. Her father distributed among the poor the portion that came to her; and he never ceased to make entreaty to God on behalf of his daughter because she had departed without being baptized. As he prayed one day, he heard a voice, which said, “Have no sorrow; I have baptized thy daughter”; but he lacked faith. And the voice spake again, saying, “Uncover her grave, and thou wilt find she is no longer there.” And he did so, and he found her not, for she had departed, and had been laid with the believers.

Not only does this story fail to provide evidence for a practice of baptism for the dead, it indicates the opposite, namely that one was not in place. When his little daughter died without baptism, all the father could do was pray and hope in God. Had such a practice been in place, there would have been no reason for the anxious prayer, nor the miraculous sign in answer to it, nor even for the story itself.

In advance of its appearance, Tvedtnes promised concerning his article “Baptism for the Dead in the Early Church” published in 1999 that it would “put to rest any doubts about the widespread belief in baptism for the dead among early Christians.” This ambitious claim naturally leads the reader familiar with this earlier paper on baptism for the dead in the Coptic Church to wonder whether Tvedtnes would do anything in the new article to improve his case on that point. Given the fact that Tvedtnes’s earlier assertion about the Coptic Church’s ongoing practice of baptism for the dead was based on nothing better than hearsay—“my Coptic friends have assured me”—would he now in his more definitive study firm up his evidential base, or at least delete his unwarranted claim? As it happened he did neither. Indeed he again appealed to hearsay and to the story in Leeder’s book, this time more inaccurately than before: “To date, I have found only one modern story of an Egyptian girl who was baptized by proxy after her death.” The key distorting addition is the word “proxy.”

Ironically, in his “final-word” article, Tvedtnes further raises the possibility that the Syrian Orthodox Church practices baptism for the dead as well, but again on the basis of nothing better than hearsay: “A Syrian Orthodox priest recently told me that his church still recognizes baptism for the dead, but I have not yet received the promised documentation to support that claim.”

Naturally since Tvedtnes’s claims came to be posted on the Internet, it was only a matter of time before someone from the Coptic Church would respond. In the Question and Answer section of the website for the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States, one of the questions takes note of the Mormon claim

56 Ibid., n. 1.


and then asks: “I know our church does not practice baptism for the dead now, but did it ever?” To which an extended answer is given beginning with the statement: “Baptism for the dead is a false practice never observed by the Church.”

We turn then to Hugh Nibley. It is hard to read very far in Nibley before getting the feeling (legitimately or not) that he is trying to make it hard for his readers to check out his claims from his sources. He does this, as I have noted elsewhere, by “featuring obscure editions in other languages instead of the widely available, and often more up-to-date and authoritative, English ones.” This is true in the present case, in addition to which he confounds things further by not referring to his source by its usual name.

In the course of his 1946 sequence of articles on “Baptism for the Dead in Ancient Times,” quoted here from his collected works, Nibley quotes a work he calls “Discourses to the Apostles” in which the Lord tells his disciples that they will be called “Servants [diakonoi] because they [the dead] will receive the baptism of life and the forgiveness of your sins from my hand through you, . . . and so have part in the heavenly kingdom.” By placing the word “the dead” in brackets Nibley is indicating that in the larger context it was the dead that were clearly in the author’s mind. But how do we discover whether or not that is the case? Nibley provides a footnote that directs us to pages 133-35 of a German volume by Carl Schmidt entitled Gespräche Jesu mit seiner Jüngern nach der Auferstehung (1919).

The actual passage quoted is on page 135 and we see that Schmidt, unlike Nibley, uses the familiar title in the top left heading of the pages cited: Epistula apostolorum, known in English as the Epistle of the Apostles. Both the Latin and English forms are the familiar names by which scholars refer to this well-known work. Nibley uses neither, but inappropriately gives as the name of the work a title derived from the title of Schmidt’s book. This makes it unnecessary for him to cite the chapter and verse he is quoting from the Epistle of the Apostles. It would have been nice had Nibley helped his readers evaluate his claim by informing them that at the time he wrote the passage he quotes, could have easily been consulted in section 42 of the English edition of the Epistle of the Apostles in Montague Rhodes James’s popular The Apocryphal New Testament. Had he done that, however, it would have become clear to every English reader who cared to check the reference that his insertion of “the dead” into the phrase “they shall receive the baptism of life and the remission of their sins at my hands through you,” was entirely illegitimate. The occasion of the statement in the larger context is Jesus’s meeting with his disciples after his resurrection and teaching them about their upcoming task of world evangelism. The baptism being referred to, therefore, is the baptism they will be performing on living people as they go out and preach the Gospel. It has nothing to do with baptism for the dead.

Conclusion:

Early orthodox Christianity never had a practice of baptism for the dead, 1 Corinthians 15:29 notwithstanding. Very possibly in that context Paul was alluding to the practice of a faction in the Corinthian Church that had departed substantially from early apostolic teaching in other crucial areas as well (they may have, for example, also been denying the resurrection). Two additional heretical groups, the Marcionites and the Cerinthians, did practice forms of proxy baptism—the former for catechumens who had died during preparation for baptism, and the latter for fellow Cerinthian believers who had died too soon,” whatever that means. In addition to these examples of baptism for the dead, there is also evidence of a practice of baptism of the dead, i.e., a baptism of corpses. The Montanists were accused of this by one 4th century author, although when Tertullian, writing as a Montanist at the beginning of the 3rd century, refers to the practice in Against Marcion 5.10 he does not affirm it, nor does he even seem to know what Paul was speaking about in 1 Corinthians 15:29. In addition, the Synod of Hippo (393) forbid the practice of baptizing dead bodies as well as the placing of the Eucharist in their mouths. This practice, baptism of not for the dead, although frequently appealed to by Mormon apologists, really does not relate to their own practice at all. This leaves them only the Marcionite and Cerinthian practices to appeal to for explicit support, although in each of these cases we are probably dealing with a rite whose inner logic is entirely foreign to the one underpinning the current Mormon practice.

62 It should be “their sins” (Schmidt: “ihrer Sünden”). See also, M. R. James below. Apparently, Nibley simply made a mistake here since the mistranslation does not appear to forward his argument.
63 Nibley, “Baptism for the Dead,” in Mormonism and Early Christianity, 123.
64 Also note that where Nibley has “forgiveness for your sins,” it ought to be, and Nibley probably actually intended, “forgiveness for their sins.”

65 Sec. 33.1 in Schmidt’s translation of the Coptic Version.
67 Quoted here from the edition of James.
Thus the case Mormon apologists put forward for a baptism for the dead endorsed by Jesus and the apostles is not impressive. But then, given the methodology endorsed by the First Presidency and Peterson and Ricks at the beginning of this article, it doesn’t have to be, so long as the only ones they hope to persuade are Mormons. Still, it is interesting that even being given to such dubious methodology, the language of legitimately using evidence and making valid arguments still persists, as in the case of Tvedtnes’s prediction that his 1999 article on the subject would “put to rest any doubts about the widespread belief in baptism for the dead among early Christians.”

And while it is possible that in making that declaration Tvedtnes was only engaging in rhetorical bluster, a more disturbing possibility exists. Did he actually believe what he said, and should we regard his overconfidence as a consequence of following the flawed methodology? And does he not imply this himself when he says: “Latter-day Saints, believing that the great apostasy was already well under way by Marcion’s time and that no Christian group then possessed the full truth, see the practice as a remnant of an earlier rite dating from the time of the apostles”?69

What we would have in that case is a methodology that actually fosters an insensitivity toward the weight of evidence, and which in turn breeds overconfidence, a vicious cycle that calls to mind what Karl Mannheim said in another connection about those who “become so intensely interest-bound to a situation that they are simply no longer able to see certain facts which undermine their domination,” or, in this case, their sense of being “in the right.”70 Such a situation makes it extremely difficult for Mormons to dialogue with and/or be taken seriously by outsiders who expect the early evidence to be handled in a credible and respectful manner. Since this has not been the case, the best outsiders can perhaps do in a sense is to regard such authors as objects of study rather than partners in scholarly interaction.

68 Tvedtnes, “Dead Shall Hear the Voice,” 197, n. 11.

69 Tvedtnes, “Baptism for the Dead In Early Christianity,” 56.

70 Quoted in Lyman Tower Sargent, Utopianism: A Very Short Introduction (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 120.
1 CORINTHIANS 15:29: “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?”

**MORMON POSITION:**

Latter-day Saints (Mormons) believe that water baptism by immersion “is the first saving ordinance of the gospel. . . . All who seek eternal life must follow the example of the Savior by being baptized and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost” (*True to the Faith*, 2004, p. 21).

Baptism, according to Mormonism, is the prerequisite to receiving the “gift of the Holy Ghost” and is a necessary step in the process of being exalted to the highest level of heaven. Believing that non-Mormon dead relatives will have an opportunity to receive the Mormon “restored gospel” in “spirit prison,” Latter-day Saints take it upon themselves to help “save” them by engaging in proxy baptism on behalf of their dead ancestors. Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie explains:

> . . . though held captive in the spirit prison, these prisoners of hope looked forward with desire and expectation to their redemption . . . a redemption that would be complete only after baptism for the dead had been performed for them in this mortal sphere where there is water.—(*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 601)

Appealing to 1 Corinthians 15:29 and Hebrews 11:40 for Biblical support, Joseph Smith claimed that “the greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us [Mormons] is to seek after our dead . . . every spirit in the eternal world can be ferreted out and saved. . . . And so you can see how far you can be a savior . . . This doctrine was the burden of the scriptures. Those Saints who neglect it in behalf of their deceased relatives, do it at the peril of their own salvation” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 1976, by Joseph Fielding Smith, pp. 356-357, 193).

**BIBLICAL RESPONSE:**

Contrary to the claims of Mormonism, physical baptism is not a pre-requisite for salvation. At Luke 23:43, we read that Jesus assured the thief on the cross (who had not been baptized), that he would be “with” Him in paradise that day, simply because he believed. The apostle Paul made a distinction between the “gospel” and “baptism” when he proclaimed to the Corinthian believers: “I thank God that I baptized none of you. . . . For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect” (1 Corinthians 1:14, 17).

Not only does Paul reject the notion that “baptism” was part of the “gospel,” but he repeatedly affirmed salvation by “faith” apart from works (see Romans 4:5, 11:6). Furthermore, we see that baptism is not a requirement to receive the Holy Ghost. At Acts 10:44-47, we read of an incident where believers received the gift of the “Holy Ghost” before they were baptized.

Just as Biblical Scripture presents water baptism as a sign (not seal) of salvation, there is no indication in Scripture that early Christians engaged in the practice of “baptism for the dead.” The only place the practice is mentioned is in 1 Corinthians 15:29. It is important to note that in this passage, Paul excluded himself and the Christian believers he was speaking to by his use of the terms “they” and “them” in reference to the practice. It is likely that Paul had in mind heretical groups such as the Cerinthians and Marcionites who practiced a form of baptism for the dead. It appears that Paul was pointing to groups such as these as examples of those whose practice would be futile if Christ had not indeed raised from the dead. If such practice is indeed essential for salvation, we ask why the lack of emphasis in the Bible and Book of Mormon? With genealogical research being a necessary activity for “baptism for the dead,” we ask why the Bible warns against this practice when it states:

> But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.—Titus 3:9

> Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.—1 Timothy 1:4

Thus we conclude that contrary to the Mormon notion that we all can be “saviors” by “redeeming our dead” ancestors through baptism, the Bible proclaims:

> None of them can by any means redeem his brother; nor give to God a ransom for him:—Psalm 49:7

(https://www.4mormon.org/is-baptism-for-the-dead-a-christian-practice/)

(See Christy Darlington’s new book on previous page.)
EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS AND EMAILS

May 2019: LDS woman: I read your article and was rather impressed by your understanding of your book, but I am concerned that you provided a bit of false information about the Church’s doctrine. Mormons, or Latter-Day Saints, are Christians, and we believe in one God, which is our Heavenly Father. We do not worship Joseph Smith or anything like that. . .

Sandra: After sending her two pages of quotes from Joseph Smith and other LDS prophets where they clearly taught that Heavenly Father is just one of many deities, she responded as follows:

So I like to call this the law of eternal progression. Like it said in the articles [that I sent her], God—by which I mean our Heavenly Father, not Jesus Christ—was once a mortal, among others, who came to earth and had trials and experiences. We can assume—just assume, though, we have no doctrine about this and it does not affect us personally—we can assume that there was another God who was the Heavenly Father of our Heavenly Father—our Heavenly Grandfather. As Latter-Day Saints, we believe that if we accept Christ’s Atonement and obey God’s commandments, we can be exalted and become literal gods and goddesses. Mind, not everyone will receive this level of exaltation, but it is possible.

What you may be confused about—and it’s okay, a lot of people get hung up on this—is that they think that we are saying that we mortals can become equal to our Heavenly Father, Elohim. This is not true. Just like we can progress throughout eternity, so will God. The scriptures say that He is “unchanging.” That can be misleading, because obviously someone who is alive cannot remain exactly the same. It actually means that He does not change direction. He continues to help His children as they progress through life. Part of His plan for helping us includes giving us more revelation and scriptures.

Sandra: I still don’t understand why you originally said the LDS Church believes in one God, since clearly they believe in countless gods. I understand Mormons don’t pray to other gods, but when a Christian says there is only one God they mean there are no others anywhere ever, not even in another universe. You clearly knew when I first asked about Mormons believing in many gods what I was meaning so why play a word game with me. Why not just send me this last statement first? Instead of the denial?

When Isaiah reports God as saying “Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any,”[Isa. 44:8] we take that as an absolute statement. If God doesn’t know of any other Gods, then there are no other gods anywhere in any other universe.

She responded: I’m sorry if I created any confusion. We only know of other gods in theory, but whether or not there are other gods equal to our Heavenly Father, they have no bearing on our salvation or relationship with him.

May 2019: I love how you guys break the 10 Commandments specially they’ll shall not bear false witness against a neighbor.

And I love this that you guys do not believe in the Bible and I know you guys don’t read it, didn’t Jesus say those without sin cast the first stone. If you love me keep my Commandments. Did Jesus say love one another and guess what you guys are not doing what Jesus is teaching so you guys are hypocrites in the eyes of the Lord

And also Jesus said by your fruits I won’t know thee. If you don’t know you talking about the fruits of the spirit. Sweetheart you have no idea what you’re talking about you have no clue who Jesus is, you talk to talk but you don’t walk the walk.

May 2019: My husband and I recently left the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, seven months now. I had been a member my whole life and my husband a convert since he was twelve. We were faithful members. I served as a Relief Society President, a Primary President, Seminary Teacher, Stake Young Women’s President and my husband High Counsel, Bishopric, Young Men’s President etc. I am an LDS writer, with three published novels through Covenant Communications. Basically, our entire world was LDS.

I came across a side note to teachers in my seminary manual that bothered me. It said that Joseph Smith translated a portion of the Book of Mormon with a stone he found. I started doing research, which led to more research. A week and a half later I knew the church wasn’t true! I told my husband and he said he had to do his own research. He came to me a week later and had even more disturbing information.

I’m sure you get many emails like this, so I won’t get any more into our story. Basically, at this point I’m almost three fourths of the way through [Mormonism] Shadow and Reality. One of the worst things, or at least the statement that bothers me the most is in the History of the Church. It’s a quote you have on your website by Joseph Smith. (History of The Church, vol. 6, pp. 408-409) “I have more to boast than ever man had . . .” He then proceeds to compare himself to Christ, saying he
(Joseph) ran a church better than Jesus! Wow! There is no possible way that Joseph Smith “saw” the Savior of the world and thought himself better. If the Primary Account of the First Vision wasn’t convincing enough, this is a blow. My question: Is that quote taken from Joseph’s journals, writings etc.? I realize that The History of the Church, though claimed to be written completely by Joseph Smith, has been finished by historians. I want to know the origin of that particular quote, since it is so telling of Joseph’s character.

Sandra: I sent her the link to the original source, from the Joseph Smith Papers Project:

May 2019: Yeah, Utah Lighthouse Ministry, your cult is false. You guys are not born again and your paid liar pastor is not saving you. Your spirit-god is false. You don’t believe in the resurrection. You believe in a fake doctrine called the rapture. You guys are a fake church and you guys are not saved. The church of God that was restored by a prophet is still the truth and your little web site, U[T]LM.org is ca-ca, just like your paid liar pastors are ca-ca.

May 2019: It’s really sad that you guys cannot leave the Church of Jesus Christ of latter day Saints alone. If Sandra is not God she acts like she’s God, you guys are brainwashed by her. But after just life you have to answer to God why you are trying to dry [destroy?] his church good luck with that. I really feel sorry for you guys, . . . I hope one day you’ll find Jesus and truly know who he is, because you have no clue who he is, very sad . . . Keep up the good work the more you Bash the LDS church the more you will come forth as eunuchs. Matthew 19:12. (Enjoy the Te[l]estial/Terrestrial Kingdom)

May 2019: Your website is such garbage. We know that Jesus instructed the apostles on the temple. You are profane still, and not saved. You shall all perish and come forth in the 2nd resurrection of the unjust as genderless eunuchs. Matthew 19:12.

May 2019: Your cult is false. You will come forth at the second resurrection as eunuchs. You will not have gender, because you do not choose to go to the Celestial Kingdom. You guys are a joke, a sick joke.

July 2019: To Sandra, all my life we were taught to steer clear of the Tanner’s. Nothing but trouble would come from it. 25+ years later as our eyes are opened to the church and we can see that you were right all along. I pray that this vindication sustains you and that more will have their eyes and hearts opened to the truth. . . . Thanks to you and Jerald for all your years of tireless sacrifice and courage to stand for the truth.

July 2019: Your website is such garbage. We know that Jesus instructed the apostles on the temple. You are profane still, and not saved. You shall all perish and come forth in the 2nd resurrection of the unjust as genderless eunuchs. Matthew 19:12.

July 2019: How pleased I was when I saw a documentary on Oxygen today regarding Mark Hoffman that included comments by you. I was very impressed with your comments and demeanor and am proud that I took the time to read such documents compiled by you and Jerald including MORMONISM—SHADOW OR REALITY?, The Case Against Mormonism, and Major Problems of Mormonism. You have had a significant impact on my thinking concerning religion and Mormonism in particular. Thank you immensely.

See https://www.oxygen.com/a-lie-to-die-for/season-1/explosive-lies

August 2019: I just finished Sandra Tanner’s Mormon Stories interview. I think it’s the best one I’ve heard yet! [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W64Ntsea6uw] She’s very logical, knowledgeable, and she has a lot of entertaining stories! My takeaway thoughts: 1. I can’t see how anyone who listens to that interview can stay believing. 2. It shows how hard the church tried AND STILL continues to hide information!! To the extent that they tried to bankrupt the Tanners out of spite for exposing FACTS. It’s immoral and just plain wrong. Here are two other short videos of hers that are great:

https://youtu.be/153jwQIVkB4
https://youtu.be/3OhLHz2aDRk
SPECIAL OFFERS
(Offers expire December 31, 2019)

Orders that total $25 or more
(before shipping charge)
will receive FREE:

- The Inside of Mormonism: A Judicial Examination of the Endowment Oaths Administered in all the Mormon Temples (1903) - 93-page book
- Over 8400 Word Changes in Mormon Scripture - Tract
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- Contradictions in Mormon Scriptures - Tract

Orders that total $50 or more
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Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons
FREE

Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons
By Mark Cares

(FREE shipping on orders over $49)
LDS President Russel M. Nelson started 2020 with a challenge to the church members to “immerse yourself” in the story of Joseph Smith’s First Vision and the restoration of the church in preparation for the next General Conference, which would be the 200th anniversary of Smith’s vision. He promised those who thus prepare themselves that the April 2020 annual conference would be “not only memorable but also unforgettable.”

However, events took an unexpected turn with the outbreak of COVID-19 and the closing of all public meetings. The annual church conference, held in Salt Lake City, Utah, and usually attended by thousands, had to be broadcast from an empty auditorium with pre-recorded music from the Tabernacle Choir.

During the session on Sunday, April 5th, a pre-recorded message from President Nelson was broadcast. He read a new proclamation, “The Restoration of the Fulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: A Bicentennial Proclamation to the World.” In it we read:

Two hundred years ago, on a beautiful spring morning in 1820, young Joseph Smith, seeking to know which church to join, went into the woods to pray near his home in upstate New York, USA. He had questions regarding the salvation of his soul and trusted that God would direct him.

In humility, we declare that in answer to his prayer, God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to Joseph and inaugurated the “restitution of all things” as foretold in the Bible. . . . We declare that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, organized on April 6, 1830, is Christ’s New Testament Church restored.

Joseph Smith’s First Vision was also emphasized as the foundation of the LDS Church by President Gordon B. Hinckley at the October 1998 Conference of the LDS Church:

Our entire case as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints rests on the validity of this glorious First Vision. . . . Nothing on which we base our doctrine, nothing we teach, nothing we live by is of greater importance than this initial declaration. I submit that if Joseph Smith talked with God the Father and His Beloved Son, then all else of which he spoke is true. This is the

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hinge on which turns the gate that leads to the path of salvation and eternal life.4

However, Joseph’s conflicting accounts of this event, along with various historical problems, leaves the LDS Church with a very shaky foundation. In an attempt to reconcile the various versions the LDS Church has posted an article with links to the actual documents. This is certainly a welcome step toward full disclosure, but still leaves many questions unanswered.

GOSPEL TOPICS ESSAY – FIRST VISION ACCOUNTS

As part of an ongoing series of essays on the LDS church website that deal with topics on Mormonism that have traditionally been criticized, the church’s current article on the First Vision states, “Joseph shared and documented the First Vision, as it came to be known, on multiple occasions; he wrote or assigned scribes to write four different accounts of the vision.”5

Granted, he related several accounts of the First Vision, but not necessarily of the Father and Son appearing in each of them. As we will show in this article, the story evolved over the years.

Part of the LDS canon is the “Joseph Smith—History,” located at the back of the Pearl of Great Price. This section includes Joseph Smith’s first published account of a vision he claimed to have had in 1820. This account was composed in 1838 and 1839, then printed in the Times and Seasons, a Mormon newspaper, in 1842, and finally canonized in 1880 as part of the Pearl of Great Price.6

In the official account Smith related that when he was fourteen there was a revival in his neighborhood causing “an unusual excitement on the subject of religion. It commenced with the Methodists, but soon became general among all the sects in that region . . . and great multitudes united themselves to the different religious parties.” Smith went on to state that due to this revival his mother, sister and two brothers joined the Presbyterians, while he favored the Methodists. “My mind at times was greatly excited, the cry and tumult were so great and incessant. The Presbyterians, while he favored the Methodists. “My

Consequently, in the Spring of 1820 he went into the woods to seek God’s direction on which church to join. When he knelt to pray, “I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me,” his tongue was bound, he was overcome by “thick darkness” and feared for his life. Then “a pillar of light” appeared over his head, expelling the darkness, and two beings, “whose brightness and glory defy all description,” appeared above his head. “One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—This is My Beloved Son, Hear Him!” After composing himself, Smith asked the personages which of all the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong)—and which I should join. I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.7

When young Smith returned home he said to his mother, “I have learned for myself that Presbyterianism is not true.” A few days later he related his experience to the local Methodist minister, who berated him for making such a claim. Smith claimed that he shared his experience with others, which “excited a great deal of prejudice against me among professors of religion, and was the cause of great persecution, which continued to increase; . . . all united to persecute me . . . However, it was nevertheless a fact that I had beheld a vision . . .”8

Yet Smith’s story of “great persecution” is absent from contemporary sources. LDS scholar Steven C. Harper conceded: “There is no evidence in the historical record that Joseph Smith told anyone but the minister of his vision for at least a decade.”9

CHALLENGING THE VISION

Fawn Brodie, writing in 1945, pointed out that there were no contemporary accounts of Smith’s 1820 vision until Orson Pratt published his pamphlet “An Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions” in 1840.10 LDS historian James B. Allen frankly admitted that the story of the First Vision “was not given general circulation in the 1830’s.” Dr. Allen also admitted that “none of the available contemporary writings about

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7 Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith–History, 1:19, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/pgp/js-h/1?lang=eng
8 Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith–History, 1:20
Joseph Smith in the 1830’s, none of the publications of the Church in that decade, . . . mentions the story of the first vision. . . .” Dr. Allen went on to state that in the 1830’s “the general membership of the Church knew little, if anything, about it.”\textsuperscript{11} While there were a few mentions of the First Vision in literature during Brigham Young’s lifetime, they seem to have had little impact on how the Mormons presented their message. Other than one article by Orson Pratt in 1849, the leaders did not appeal to this 1820 experience to establish the LDS doctrine of God and Jesus being totally separate deities with physical bodies until after the canonization of the \textit{Pearl of Great Price} in 1880, which contained Smith’s First Vision.

Research regarding Smith’s visions entered a new era in 1965 when Paul Cheesman finished his BYU Master’s thesis, \textit{An Analysis of the Accounts Relating Joseph Smith’s Early Visions}, which contained Joseph Smith’s long suppressed handwritten 1832 account of the First Vision, wherein only Christ appears.

We then published the 1832 account in our booklet, \textit{Joseph Smith’s Strange Account of the First Vision}. Another important challenge to the First Vision story came in 1967 when Rev. Wesley P. Walters published his booklet \textit{New Light on Mormon Origins From the Palmyra, N.Y. Revival} in which he challenged Smith’s story regarding a revival in Smith’s neighborhood in 1820.\textsuperscript{12} Beginning in the 1960’s the LDS church has occasionally published articles trying to correlate the various First Vision accounts, however, the average Mormon seems to have remained uninformed on the issue.

While the Gospel Topics article “First Vision Accounts”\textsuperscript{13} does reference Joseph Smith’s various narratives of the event, it glosses over the contradictions. The article states, “Joseph shared and documented the First Vision, as it came to be known, on multiple occasions.” However, this might leave the reader with the impression that it was an oft told story. Actually, while Joseph Smith had mentioned the vision on a few occasions, the first published account was not until 1840, twenty years after the event, by LDS Apostle Orson Pratt, in a pamphlet published in Scotland.\textsuperscript{14} The next published account was one written by Joseph Smith and printed in the LDS newspaper \textit{Times and Seasons} in 1842. This account would later be canonized in the \textit{Pearl of Great Price}. With only two published accounts by 1842, most Mormons would not have been familiar with the story.

\textbf{Contradictions}

A few basic contradictions among the accounts include the following: According to the 1832 account Smith would have been 15, not 14, and had already concluded that all churches were wrong before entering the grove to pray, but the official account claims it was the heavenly visitors who first inform him of that. Also it does not mention a demonic presence at the start of the experience, yet later accounts do. In the 1832 account only Jesus was said to have appeared, but in later versions it was either angels or the Father and Son. The early accounts mention Smith was seeking forgiveness for his sins, whereas later accounts stress his desire to know which Christian denomination was accepted by God. According to various accounts Smith had his First Vision in 1820, 1821, or 1823.

Additionally, in the official account Smith claimed that the neighborhood revival occurred in 1820, while historical records indicate a revival date between 1824-1825.

Most of the accounts of the First Vision prior to 1875 described the appearance of either one or more angels, but rarely God and Jesus. And even then, there was no emphasis on the Father as a physical being.\textsuperscript{15} President Gordon B. Hinckley declared that the First Vision was the greatest revelation of God that man has ever experienced:

\begin{quote}
I hope with all my heart that each member of this Church will read the story of the Prophet Joseph Smith, read the story of the \textit{First Vision} . . . cultivate within your hearts a testimony of the truth of that marvelous experience, when the Father and the Son appeared to the boy Joseph. \textit{There’s no other event in all recorded history that compares with it, not even at the}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{12} This research was later expanded in \textit{Inventing Mormonism: Tradition and the Historical Record}, by H. Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters, (Salt Lake City: Smith Research Associates, 1994), chapter two. H. Michael Marquardt has now expanded this research under the title \textit{The Rise of Mormonism: 1816-1844}. The original booklet has been renamed \textit{The Palmyra Revival & Mormon Origins}.


\textsuperscript{14} Orson Pratt, \textit{An Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions}, (Scotland, 1840).

\textsuperscript{15} See for instance, \textit{Journal of Discourses}, vol. 12, pp. 333-334; vol. 11, pp. 1-2; vol. 13, pp. 77-78; vol. 18, p. 239.
baptism of the Savior... He had an understanding of the Father and the Son that no other man had really ever experienced.\textsuperscript{16}

However, if this vision really was so fundamental to Joseph Smith’s understanding of the nature and identity of God as a physical being one wonders why he did not use it as the basis for promoting such a revolutionary theology, a theology that flew in the face of the Bible and centuries of established Christian doctrine.\textsuperscript{17}

Indeed, when Smith gave his clearest teaching on the nature of God in his famous 1844 sermon (known as the King Follett Discourse), in which he refuted the orthodox belief of God as a spirit, and emphatically taught that God has a physical body of flesh and bone, he did not appeal to his First Vision as the source of this knowledge.\textsuperscript{18}

\textbf{FROM MAGIC, TO AN ANGEL, TO GOD AND JESUS}

Below is a timeline analyzing Smith’s evolving story, the LDS concept of God and the First Vision accounts.

\textbf{1820} — While Smith gave this date to his First Vision story years after the event, there is no contemporary documentation that Joseph Smith told anyone of a vision that year. Also, there is no record of a revival involving the Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians, as described in Smith’s 1842 account published in the \textit{Pearl of Great Price}. According to the records of those churches, each of them showed either losses or only modest gains of a handful of people, not the massive numbers expected from a revival.\textsuperscript{19}

\textbf{1822} — Joseph Smith found a dark magical stone while digging in a creek and a white stone while digging a well. Both stones were later used in money-digging and translating the Book of Mormon.\textsuperscript{20}

\textbf{1823} — According to the \textit{Pearl of Great Price}, the angel Moroni appeared in Joseph’s bedroom on September 22, 1823, to tell him of an ancient record engraved on metal plates and buried in a nearby hill, recounting God’s dealings with the forefathers of the Native Americans. He was not yet allowed to retrieve the plates, but was to meet the angel each year on September 22nd until God saw fit to deliver the plates into Smith’s hands for translation. There are no contemporary accounts of Smith telling people of this vision. It would be several years before anyone writes about this event.

Two months after the angel first appeared Joseph’s brother Alvin died a tragic death. The date of Alvin’s death becomes important in establishing the date of the revival that Smith said led to his prayer in the woods close to his home.

\textbf{1824-25} — A large revival took place in the Palmyra area involving the Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists. This revival, rather than one Smith claimed to have occurred in 1820, seems to fit the description given by Smith in his 1842 account.\textsuperscript{21} One of the participants at the revival was Mr. Lane of the Methodist Church, who came to the area in 1824 but was not there in 1820.\textsuperscript{22} Records show that approximately 300 people joined the three churches as a result of the revival. Joseph’s mother, two brothers and sister joined the Presbyterians at this time.\textsuperscript{23} Joseph’s brother William later wrote that the large revival happened after Alvin’s death. Smith’s father would not attend the revival because one of the ministers had earlier spoken at Alvin’s funeral and had inferred that Alvin was in hell since he had never been baptized.\textsuperscript{24}

This would make Smith’s chronology hopelessly confused. If the First Vision happened after Alvin’s death (in 1823) what year did the angel first appear and tell Joseph about the plates?

Writing in 1851, Orsamus Turner, a former resident of Palmyra, New York, recollected that Joseph had caught “a spark of Methodism in the camp meeting, away down in the woods, on the Vienna road, he was a very passable exhorter in evening meetings.”\textsuperscript{25} An exhorter would have addressed the people at the meeting after the preacher had finished his message, giving further encouragement to follow the minister’s instruction.

Supposedly Smith would have met the angel again in September of 1825, but was still not able to recover the plates. Shortly after this, Joseph and his father left Manchester, New York, and traveled across the state to Harmony, Pennsylvania, to work for a farmer named Josiah Stowell, as he searched for a lost silver mine.\textsuperscript{26}

\begin{itemize}
  \item[\textsuperscript{17}] Institute for Religious Research, “Mormon Doctrine and the Trinity,” \url{http://mit.irr.org/mormon-doctrine-and-trinity}
  \item[\textsuperscript{18}] The King Follett sermon is reproduced in \textit{The Ensign}, (April and May 1971), online at \url{www.lds.org}
  \item[\textsuperscript{19}] Marquardt and Walters, \textit{Inventing Mormonism}, pp. 17-25.
  \item[\textsuperscript{21}] See \textit{Pearl of Great Price}, Joseph Smith–History, 1:5.
  \item[\textsuperscript{22}] Marquardt and Walters, \textit{Inventing Mormonism}, pp. 19-21.
  \item[\textsuperscript{23}] Marquardt and Walters, \textit{Inventing Mormonism}, chapter 2.
  \item[\textsuperscript{25}] Vogel, \textit{Early Mormon Documents}, vol. 3, p. 50.
  \item[\textsuperscript{26}] Marquardt and Walters, \textit{Inventing Mormonism}, p. xxiii.
\end{itemize}
mentions this event in his history but brushes it aside by describing his involvement as merely being a laborer, hired to help dig for the treasure. However, Martin Harris, one of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, stated that Smith was hired due to his special powers:

Joseph had had this stone for some time. There was a company there in that neighborhood, who were digging for money supposed to have been hidden by the ancients. Of this company was old Mr. Stowel—I think his name was Josiah—also old Mr. Beman, also Samuel Lawrence, George Proper, Joseph Smith, jr., and his father, and his brother Hiram [Hiram] Smith. They dug for money in Palmyra, Manchester, also in Pennsylvania, and other places. When Joseph found this stone, there was a company digging in Harmony, Pa., and they took Joseph to look in the stone for them, and he did so for a while, and then he told them the enchantment was so strong that he could not see, and they gave it up. There he became acquainted with his future wife, the daughter of old Mr. Isaac Hale, where he boarded. He afterwards returned to Pennsylvania again, and married his wife, taking her off to old Mr. Stowel’s, because her people would not consent to the marriage. She was of age, Joseph was not.

Lucy Smith, Joseph Smith’s mother, also wrote that Stowell sought out Joseph specifically “on account of having heard that he possessed certain keys, by which he could discern things invisible to the natural eye.”

Thus we see that Stowell was actually hiring Smith for his magical powers. In anticipation of finding a treasure, the Smiths signed an agreement with several other men earlier been involved in money-digging, he had become disillusioned with the project. After Smith married his daughter, Mr. Hale stated that Joseph promised him “that he had given up what he called ‘glass looking’ and that he expected to work hard for a living.” It was only after Joseph and Emma moved to Hale’s property that he “was informed they had brought a wonderful book of Plates down with them.”

1826 — In March Joseph Smith, the “glass looker,” was arrested in Bainbridge, New York, and charged with being “a disorderly person and an impostor.”

Wesley Walters and Michael Marquardt observed:

30. Marquardt and Walters, Inventing Mormonism, pp. 68-75.
31. Wesley P. Walters, Joseph Smith’s Bainbridge, N.Y. Court Trials & From the Occult to Cult With Joseph Smith, Jr. (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1977).
32. Marquardt and Walters, Inventing Mormonism, p. 70.
36. See Deut. 18:9-12; Rev. 21:8.
I [Joseph Lewis], with Joshua McKune, a local preacher at that time, I think in June, 1828, heard on Saturday, that Joe Smith had joined the church on Wednesday afternoon, (as it was customary in those days to have circuit preaching at my father’s house on week-day). We thought it was a disgrace to the church to have a practicing necromancer, a dealer in enchantments and bleeding ghosts, in it. So on Sunday we went to father’s, the place of meeting that day, and got there in season to see Smith and talked with him some time in father’s shop before the meeting. Told him that his occupation, habits, and moral character were at variance with the discipline, that his name would be a disgrace to the church, that there should have been recantation, confession and at least promised reformation—that he could that day publicly ask that his name be stricken from the class book, or stand an investigation. He chose the former, and did that very day make the request that his name be taken off the class book.37

If God had instructed Smith in 1820 not to join any church, why was he seeking to join the Methodist Church in 1828?38

Mr. Lewis also asserted that Joseph Smith had told him that by a dream he was informed that at such a place in a certain hill, in an iron box, were some gold plates with curious engravings, which he must get and translate, and write a book. . . . In all this narrative, there was not one word about “visions of God,” or of angels, or heavenly revelations.39

In September Joseph was finally able to take the ancient plates home and began his translation. However, rather than using the “interpreters” (Mosiah 8:13; Ether 4:5) preserved with the plates, he used his magic stone to conjure up the translation. Supposedly God had the “interpreters” preserved because the Nephite language would be totally unknown to the future seer (Joseph Smith). Yet a rock Smith inadvertently found on a neighbor’s farm apparently worked just as well.40 Using the same process that he did when scrying for lost treasures, Smith placed the stone in his hat, where it shone in the dark and purportedly gave him the translation of the plates, word-for-word, which he then dictated to a scribe.

In 2016 LDS Apostle Dieter F. Uchtdorf compared Joseph’s use of a seer stone to that of a text message on a mobile phone:

People have asked me, “Do you really believe that Joseph Smith translated with seer stones? How would something like this be possible?” And I answer, “Yes! That is exactly what I believe.” This was done as Joseph said: by the gift and power of God. In reality, most of us use a kind of “seer stone” every day. My mobile phone is like a “seer stone.”42

Thus the “translation” was not accomplished through any regular process used by scholars, but by mystical means. Smith simply read the divinely given message off the stone.

1829 — In need of money to publish the Book of Mormon, Joseph consulted his seer stone about selling the copyright for the Book of Mormon in Canada. God the Father revealed through Smith’s stone that several of his followers were to make the journey, and would be successful. However, they failed to find anyone to buy the copyright. David Whitmer wrote about the debacle:

Joseph looked into the hat in which he placed the stone, and received a revelation that some of the brethren should go to Toronto, Canada, and that they would sell the copyright of the Book of Mormon. Hiram Page and Oliver Cowdery went to Toronto on this mission, but they failed entirely to sell the copyright, returning without any money. Joseph was at my father’s house when they returned. . . .

Well, we were all in great trouble; and we asked Joseph how it was that he had received a revelation from the Lord for some brethren to go to Toronto and sell the copyright, and the brethren had utterly failed in their undertaking. Joseph did not know how it was, so he enquired of the Lord about it, and behold the following revelation came through the stone: “Some revelations are of God: some revelations are of men: and some revelations are of the devil.” So we see that the revelation to go to Toronto and sell the copyright was not of God, but was of the devil or of the heart of man.43

1830 — The Book of Mormon was published in March of 1830, having been financed by Martin Harris.

38 Wesley P. Walters, The Mormon Prophet Attempts to Join the Methodists, online at http://utlm.org/onlineresources/josephsmithmethodist.htm
39 The Amboy Journal, (April 30, 1879); also Early Mormon Documents, vol. 4, pp. 303-305.
41 “Scrying, also known by various names such as ‘seeing’ or ‘peeping,’ is the practice of looking into a suitable medium in the hope of detecting significant messages or visions.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scrying
43 David Whitmer, An Address To Believers in Christ, (Richmond, Missouri, 1887), p. 31; https://www.mrm.org/attempt-to-sell-copyright.
a local farmer and convert to the LDS Church. Smith’s new scripture does not contain any teaching that God the Father has a physical body, only the Son.44 It actually teaches that God is a spirit. In Alma 18:28 Ammon instructs the king that the “Great Spirit” is “God.” Later in the story a man named Aaron informs another king of the “Great Spirit” who is “God” (Alma 22:8-11).

Evidence that the early Mormon teachings on the godhead were fairly typical of the day can be seen in the testimony of the three witnesses, at the front of the Book of Mormon: “And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God.”

This same concept is repeated in the text of the Book of Mormon:

2 Nephi 31:21—And now, behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end.

Mormon 7:7 speaks of those in heaven singing endless praise “unto the Father, and unto the Son, and unto the Holy Ghost, which are one God.”

In 3 Nephi 11:27 the resurrected Jesus instructs the Nephites “verily I say unto you, that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one; and I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one.”

Contrary to current LDS teachings on the Godhead, the Father and Son are described as the same person. The title page of the Book of Mormon reads: “to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS IS the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD, manifesting himself unto all nations.”

In Ether 3:14 we read: “Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son.”

In Mosiah 15:1-3 we read that

God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people. And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son — The Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son. And they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth.

Thus we see that the doctrine of God in the Book of Mormon contradicts Joseph Smith’s teaching that the Father has a body of flesh and bone and is totally separate from the Son.

Shortly after the publication of the Book of Mormon in 1830, Smith formed the Church of Christ. In 1834 the name was changed to the Church of the Latter Day Saints and then renamed The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1838.

Towards the end of 1830 Joseph Smith began working on his Inspired Revision of the Bible and changed verses to make the Father and Son one, which would put it more in line with the Book of Mormon. For instance, Luke 10:22 of the King James Version states “no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.” However, Smith changed this to read:

...no man knoweth that the Son is the Father, and the Father is the Son, but him to whom the Son will reveal it. (Luke 10:23)

This hardly seems like a change one would make if ten years earlier the Father and Son had appeared to Smith as two separate individuals.

1831 — Lucy Smith, Joseph’s mother, wrote to her brother Solomon Mack, Jr., about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the establishing of the true church, but made no mention of God appearing to her son in 1820. Instead, she began Joseph’s story with the angel telling of the hidden record:

He [God] has now commenced this work, he hath sent forth a revelation in these last days, & this revelation is called the book of Mormon, . . . Perhaps you will enquire how this revelation came forth. it has been hid up in the earth four=teen hundred years, & was placed there by Moro[ni] one of the Nephites; it was engraven upon plates which have the appearance of gold . . . Joseph after repenting of his sins and humbling himself before God was visited by an holy Angel whose countenance was as lightning and whose garments were white above all whiteness and gave unto him commandments which inspired him from on high. and gave unto him the means of which was before prepared that he should translate his book . . .46

That same year Alexander Campbell, the famous preacher of the Restoration Movement, printed a criticism of Joseph Smith and his Book of Mormon, but made no mention of Smith’s claim of an 1820 vision or objecting to Smith’s view of God.47

1832 — Smith started working on the first draft of his history in 1832. In his handwritten account he related that he was fifteen (in his “sixteenth year”) when he had

47 Alexander Campbell, “An analysis of the book of Mormon with an examination of its internal and external evidences, and a refutation of its pretenses to divine authority,” Millennial Harbinger, Bethany, Virginia (February 7, 1831).
his First Vision and that he had already concluded that all the churches were wrong:

... which led me to searching the scriptures ... thus from the age of twelve years to fifteen I pondered many things in my heart ... my mind become exceedingly distressed for I become convicted of my sins and by searching the scriptures I found that mankind did not come unto the Lord but that they had apostatised from the true and living faith and there was no society or denomination that built upon the gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the new testament ...  

Yet this contradicts his 1842 account, where he said that prior to his vision “it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong.”  

Also absent from the 1832 account is any admonition to not join any existing church. He then relates the appearance of Christ, but nothing was said about God the Father:

... while in the attitude of calling upon the Lord in the 16th year of my age a pillar of fire light above the brightness of the sun at noon day come down from above and rested upon me and I was filled with the spirit of god and the Lord opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord and he spake unto me saying Joseph thy sins are forgiven thee. go thy way; walk in my statutes and keep my commandments behold I am the Lord of glory I was crucified for the world that all those who believe on my name may have Eternal life ...  

If this vision happened when Smith was 15 it would place the vision in the spring of 1821, not a year earlier, since he wouldn’t have turned 15 until December of 1820. The 1832 account is silent about the presence of a demonic force just prior to the vision. The sinister element doesn’t enter the story until 1835 and is expanded in the 1842 account:

I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God. I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction.

But, exerting all my powers to call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me, and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction ... I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound.  

Another problem with his 1842 version, is that he claimed he experienced great persecution for telling people of his First Vision:

I soon found, however, that my telling the story had excited a great deal of prejudice against me among professors of religion, and was the cause of great persecution, ... men of high standing would take notice sufficient to excite the public mind against me, and create a bitter persecution; and this was common among all the sects—all united to persecute me.  

Yet there is no evidence that anyone had heard of this experience until after he started his church in 1830. Since non-Mormons had related similar heavenly visits it is doubtful that Smith’s vision described in his 1832 account would have caused much of a stir. Even his 1842 account of the Father and the Son is not that different from other visionaries of the day.

For example, in 1815 Norris Stearns published an account his own conversion to Christianity which included an appearance of the Father and the Son:

I saw two spirits, which I knew at the first sight. But if I had the tongue of an angel I could not describe their glory, for they brought the joys of heaven with them. One was God, my Maker, almost in bodily shape like a man. His face was, as it were a flame of fire. ... Below him stood Jesus Christ my Redeemer, in perfect shape like a man—His face was not ablaze, but had the countenance of fire, being bright and shining. His Father’s will appeared to be his! All was condescension, peace, and love.  

Also, in 1816 a minister by the name of Elias Smith (no relation to Joseph Smith) recounted his conversion to Christianity. Notice how similar it is to Joseph Smith’s first account:

... I went into the woods ... a light appeared from heaven. ... My mind seemed to rise in that light to the throne of God and the Lamb. ... The Lamb once

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48 History, circa Summer 1832, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-summer-1832/2
49 Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History 1:18.
50 History, circa Summer 1832, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-summer-1832/3
51 Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History 1:15-17.
52 Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History 1:22.
slain appeared to my understanding, and while viewing him, I felt such love to him as I never felt to any thing earthly. . . . It is not possible for me to tell how long I remained in that situation . . . .

Alexander Campbell, well-known preacher, wrote the following on March 1, 1824, concerning a “revival in the state of New York” where many were claiming miraculous visions:

Enthusiasm flourishes. . . . This man was regenerated when asleep, by a vision of the night. That man heard a voice in the woods, saying, “Thy sins be forgiven thee.” A third saw his Savior descending to the tops of the trees at noon day.

Asa Wild claimed to have a revelation which is very similar to the story Joseph Smith later published. It was printed in the Wayne Sentinel (the paper to which Joseph Smith’s family apparently subscribed) on October 22, 1823:

It seemed as if my mind . . . was struck motionless, as well as into nothing, before the awful and glorious majesty of the Great Jehovah. He then spake . . . He also told me, that every denomination of professing Christians had become extremely corrupt.

Joseph Smith’s 1832 revelation, Doctrine and Covenants 84:20-22, stated that “without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood” no one can “see the face of God.” According to this revelation Smith could not have seen God the Father in 1820 since he made no claim to priesthood at that time.

1833 — In an 1833 interview, Willard Chase, the man who hired the Smiths to dig a well in 1822, said he had known the Smiths since 1820. “At that time, they were engaged in the money digging business, which they followed until the latter part of season of 1827.” Mr. Chase went on to state that in 1827 Joseph Smith, Sen. told him about the angel appearing to young Joseph several years earlier to tell him of the plates. Yet Chase makes no mention of Smith claiming a vision of God and Jesus prior to the angel.

Joseph Smith’s revelations were printed in A Book of Commandments for the Government of the Church of Christ. However, there is no material dealing with Smith’s claim of an 1820 vision. This volume teaches a view of God and Christ that would have been acceptable in the Christian community. For example, chapter 24:18: “believe in the gifts and callings of God, by the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of the Father and of the Son, which Father and Son and Holy Ghost, is one God, infinite and eternal, without end.”

1834 — E. D. Howe’s exposé, Mormonism Unvailed, was published toward the end of 1834, which contained critical statements by various neighbors and acquaintances of the Smiths, yet it is silent about Joseph claiming a vision in 1820. Howe did not attack Smith on a claim of seeing God and Jesus, but on Smith’s money-digging and his new scripture, the Book of Mormon.

Also that year, Peter Bauder wrote of his visit with Joseph Smith at the Whitmer’s home in New York in 1830. Evidently Mr. Bauder asked Smith to recount his conversion experience. Instead, Smith started his story with the angel announcing the Book of Mormon, not with an account of an earlier vision of God and Jesus:

[I] had the privilege of conversing with him [Joseph Smith] alone, several hours, and of investigating his writings, . . . He could give me no Christian experience, but told me that an angel told him he must go to a certain place in the town of Manchester, Ontario County, where was a secret treasure concealed, which he must reveal to the human family.

That same year Oliver Cowdery, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, with the help of Joseph Smith, published the first history of Mormonism in the LDS paper Messenger and Advocate, starting in 1834 and continuing into 1835.

However, Cowdery did not mention any vision in 1820, but began Smith’s story with an account of a revival in the Palmyra area when Smith was in his 15th year (age 14). But further on Cowdery corrected Smith’s age, stating Smith would have been in his 17th year (16) not his 15th year (14) and placed both the revival and the angel vision in 1823.

According to Cowdery’s account, following the 1823 religious excitement Smith prayed to know “if a Supreme being did exist, to have an assurance that he was accepted of him.” Smith’s prayer was answered on September 21, 1823, when a “messenger” appeared to him in his bedroom “to deliver a special message, and to witness to him that his sins were forgiven, and that his prayers were heard.”

56 Wayne Sentinel, Palmyra, New York, (October 22, 1823).
58 Early Mormon Documents, vol. 1, p. 17.
59 Messenger and Advocate, vol. 1, (Kirtland, OH, 1834-1835).
60 Messenger and Advocate, vol. 1, (December 1834), p. 42.
61 Messenger and Advocate, vol. 1, p. 78.
62 Messenger and Advocate, vol. 1, p. 78.
If Smith had already seen God and Jesus in 1820 why would he later pray in 1823 to know if God existed? And why wouldn’t Oliver Cowdery start with Smith’s earlier 1820 vision if Smith often shared the story?

It should also be remembered that the records during this period of Mormonism show a fairly standard Trinitarian view of the godhead. Their baptismal prayer ended with the phrase “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Ghost.” Their sacrament prayer starts, “O God the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this wine to the souls of all those who drink of it.”

1835 — On August 17 a larger compilation of Smith’s revelations was presented to the church, voted on and published under the title Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints. The preface states “We deem it to be unnecessary to entertain you with a lengthy preface to the following volume, but merely to say, that it contains in short, the leading items of the religion which we have professed to believe.” Again, there is no mention of an 1820 vision or God having a body of flesh and bone. In fact, it taught just the opposite.

The first part of the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants was the “Lectures on Faith,” which were a series of seven lectures delivered to the elders of the LDS Church in Kirtland, Ohio, to establish them in correct doctrine. Yet these lessons fail to present the view of God currently held by the LDS Church. These lectures were printed in every edition of the Doctrine and Covenants until 1921.

Lecture five made the distinction that the Father is “a personage of spirit” while the Son is “a personage of tabernacle.” This would contradict the current LDS teaching that God the Father has a physical “tabernacle” as well as Jesus. The lecture goes on to explain that there are two personages in the godhead, with the Holy Ghost being the mind of the two.

In light of these lessons it is obvious that Joseph Smith was not teaching people that he saw God the Father in 1820 as a distinct being of flesh and bone.

According to Joseph Smith’s journal, on November 9, 1835, he was visited by “Joshua the Jewish minister,” later identified as Robert Matthias, to whom Smith recounted some of his early life:

being wrought up in my mind, respecting the subject of religion and looking at the different systems taught the children of men . . . I retired to the silent grove and bowed down before the Lord, . . . I made a fruitless attempt to pray, my tongue seemed to be swolen in my mouth, so that I could not utter, I heard a noise behind me like some person walking towards me, I strove again to pray, but could not, the noise of walking seemed to draw nearer, I sprang up on my feet, . . . I kneveled again my mouth was opened . . . and I called on the Lord in mighty prayer . . . a personage appeared in the midst of the pillar of flame which was spread all around, and yet nothing consumed, another personage soon appeared like unto the first, he said unto me thy sins are forgiven thee, he testified unto me that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; <and I saw many angels in this vision> I was about 14 years old when I received this first communication; When I was about 17 years old I saw another vision of angels in the night . . .

If the being had actually been Jesus one would not expect him to give testimony of himself. And since this was followed by the claim of seeing “many angels” it appears that Smith was not identifying the being as Jesus, but as an angel.

Several days later, on November 14, 1835, Smith gave another account of his early life to Erastus Holmes:

I commenced and gave him a brief relation of my experience while in my juvenile years, say from 6 years old up to the time I received the first visitation of Angels which was when I was about 14 years old and also the visitations that I received afterward, concerning the book of Mormon, . . .

This November 14th account of angels reinforces the assessment of the November 9th account as being angels as well, not God and Christ.

1837 — At this point Joseph Smith seems to be making a greater distinction between the Father and Son. Thus in the second edition of the Book of Mormon the phrase “the son of” was added to several verses to distinguish between the Father and Son. One of the most significant changes was made in 1 Nephi 13:40 where it originally stated that the purpose of the Nephite record was to make known that “the Lamb of God is the Eternal Father and the Savior” (Book of Mormon, 1830 edition, page 32). But in 1837 it was changed to read “the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior” (Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 13:40).

65 Dean C. Jessee, ed. Personal Writings of Joseph Smith, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), pp. 104-105. Words in brackets indicate the words were written above the line.

66 Jessee, Personal Writings, pp. 112-113.
Another important change was made in 1 Nephi 11:18. In the 1830 edition, page 25, it read “Behold, the virgin which thou seest, is the mother of God, after the manner of the flesh.” In modern editions it has been changed to read, “Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh.”

1838 — Joseph Smith commenced dictating a new account of his history, which would be printed in the 1842 LDS newspaper, the Times and Seasons, and would later become the official account printed in the Pearl of Great Price.

In this account we see the purpose of the vision shift from seeking forgiveness of sins to determining which church to join. Smith mentions “an unusual excitement on the subject of religion” which soon spread to “all the sects in that region of country.” After hearing the competing arguments Joseph concluded that since each group understood the Bible differently his only recourse was to seek a direct answer from God. When the two heavenly beings appeared Smith inquired “which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join.” However, this account mentions nothing about seeking a forgiveness of sins, as stated in earlier versions.

While this First Vision account is similar to the one given in 1835 to Robert Matthias, Smith now claims that the first personage introduced the second personage with the words “This is My Beloved Son, Hear Him!” This seems to mark the point at which Smith switched from claiming the visit of angels to an appearance of the Father and Son. But even in this account he is not making the point that they have physical bodies.

1840 — LDS apostle Orson Pratt published A[n] Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions in Scotland. He related that when Smith was “about fourteen or fifteen years old” he was praying in the woods when “immediately his mind was caught away, from the natural objects with which he was surrounded; and he was enwrapped in a heavenly vision, and saw two glorious personages who exactly resembled each other.”

Smith was then given the assurance that his sins were forgiven and instructed to not join any of the existing churches.

It is very similar to Smith’s 1842 account. While the vision implies that the heavenly messengers were the Father and Son, they were not specifically named. Also, seeing them in a “vision” does not demand a literal understanding that they were two physical beings standing before him.

The average Christian of the day would no doubt view this event as a mystical experience, much like Steven in Acts 7:56 exclaiming “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”

1841 — When Joseph’s younger brother, William, was interviewed about the beginnings of Mormonism by James Murdock in 1841, he started with the angel appearing in 1823. Murdock gave this summary:

In the year 1816 or 1817, the whole [Smith] family removed to the State of New York. . . . They were in rather low circumstances, and followed farming. About the year 1823, there was a revival of religion in that region, and Joseph was one of several hopeful converts. . . . Joseph hesitated between the different denominations. While his mind was perplexed with this subject, he prayed for divine direction; and afterwards was awaked one night by an extraordinary vision. The glory of the Lord filled the chamber with a dazzling light, and a glorious angel appeared to him, conversed with him, and told him that he was a chosen vessel unto the Lord to make known true religion.

1842 — In the March 1, 1842, issue of the Times and Seasons Joseph Smith printed his letter to John Wentworth, editor of the Chicago Democrat, in which he recounted his vision of “two glorious personages.”

A similar letter (with some revisions) was published by Daniel Rupp in 1844 in a book called An Original History of the Religious Denominations at Present Existing in the United States.

In the next issue of the Times and Seasons Joseph Smith began publishing his official account of his early life, which would eventually be canonized in LDS scriptures.

According to this account, when he was in his 15th year (age 14) his mother, sister, and two brothers joined the Presbyterian Church due to a revival in the neighborhood. The revival started with the Methodists and soon spread to the Presbyterians and Baptists.

Joseph went into the grove to ask God which church to join “for at this time it had never entered my heart that all were wrong.” Two beings appeared. One spoke, pointed to the other being and said “This is my beloved Son, hear him.”

He was told to join none of the churches “for they were all wrong . . . all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; . . .”

67 Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Introduction to 3913 Changes in the Book of Mormon; http://www.utlm.org/onlinebooks/3913intro.htm
68 Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History 1:12-19.
70 Joseph Smith Papers, Church History, March 1, 1842; https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/church-history-1-march-1842/1
This is also the first that we read of him being persecuted for telling people of his First Vision. Joseph wrote “I soon found however that my telling the story had excited a great deal of prejudice against me among professors of religion and was the cause of great persecution which continued to increase.” Yet the early critics of Joseph Smith, such as E. D. Howe and Alexander Campbell, fail to mention his claim of an 1820 vision.

While this account mentions the appearance of God and Jesus, there is no evidence that people understood this in a literal sense. Without any instruction to the contrary, people would not have understood this account to mean that God had a physical body. In light of the previous twelve years of Smith teaching God is a spirit, they would have presumably understood this account as a vision, not an actual physical appearance of God and Jesus.

Interestingly, the same issue of the paper where Smith started his history contained part of the Book of Abraham, where Smith introduced a plurality of gods into the Genesis creation account:

> And then the Lord said, let us go down; and they went down at the beginning, and they organized and formed, (that is, the Gods,) the heavens and the earth. . . . And they said, the Gods, let there be light, and there was light.73

Six months later, in the September 15, 1842, issue of the *Times and Seasons*, Joseph Smith wrote about his view of the godhead:

> We believe in three Gods. . . . no odds whether there be two, three, or “Gods many.” The Father, and the Son are persons of Tabernacle; and the Holy Ghost a spirit.74

This view is in conflict with the earlier 1835 teaching in the *Lectures on Faith* where the Father is described as a personage of spirit, while the Son is a personage of tabernacle. From this point on Smith paints a much clearer picture of the Father being a totally separate god from Jesus.

1843 — On April 2nd Smith instructed the Mormons in Ramus, Illinois: “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit” [D&C sec. 130:22].

If Joseph Smith had been teaching from the founding of the LDS Church that God had a physical body, why was there a need for this revelation?

An example of how Mormons understood the vision is seen in Levi Richards’ journal for June 11, 1843. Richards recorded hearing Smith tell of his First Vision, but gives no year for the vision and says nothing about God and Christ appearing:

> Pres. J. Smith bore testimony to the same—saying that when he was a youth he began to think about these things but could not find out which of all the sects were right— he went into the grove & enquired of the Lord which of all the sects were right— re received for answer that none of them were right, that they were all wrong, & that the Everlasting covenant[nt] was broken= he said he understo ood the fulness of the Gospel from beginning to end— & could Teach it & also the order of the priesthood in all its ramifications= Earth & hell had opposed him & tryed to destroy him— but they had not done it= & they <never would>75

1844 — Joseph Smith’s most famous sermon on the nature of God, often referred to as the King Follett Discourse, was delivered at the April 7th LDS General Conference:

> God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world in its orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by His power, was to make himself visible,—I say, if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form— like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man; . . . it is necessary we should understand the character and being of God and how He came to be so; for I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see. . . . He was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ Himself did; . . .76

This would have been a logical place to make reference to his own experience of seeing the Father and Son as two separate Gods in 1820, but Smith makes no appeal to his First Vision.

On May 24th, Alexander Neibaur, a German convert to Mormonism, recorded in his journal the following account given by Joseph Smith:

> Br Joseph tol us the first call he had . . . went into the Wood to pray kneelt down his tongue was

72 *Times and Seasons* (April 1, 1842), vol. 3, p. 748.
73 *Times and Seasons* (March 15, 1842), vol. 3, p. 720.
74 *Times and Seasons* (September 15, 1842), vol. 3, p. 926.
closet cleavet to his roof— could utter not a word,  

felt easier after a while= saw a fire towards heaven  
came near & nearer saw a personage in the fire light  

complexion blue eyes a piece of white cloth drawn  
over his shoulders his right arm bear after a wh[ile]  
a other person came to the side of the first Mr Smith  
then asked must I join the Methodist Church= No= they  
are not my People, in all have gone astray there is none  
that doeth good no not one, but this is my Beloved son  
harken ye him, the fire drew higher. Rested upon the tree  
enveloped him  77

While this account does not give a date for the vision, it does make it clear that the two personages  
were God and Christ. However, in this account it is the  
Father who delivers the message, not Jesus.

Two months later, on June 7, the one and only issue  
of the Nauvoo Expositor was printed by former leaders  
in the LDS movement. After pleading privately with  
Smith to give up plural marriage, they now went public  
with their charges of Smith being a fallen prophet.  
Besides their objections to plural marriage and political  
issues, they charged Smith with teaching false doctrine:

Among the many items of false doctrine that are taught  
the Church, is the doctrine of many Gods, one of the  
most direful in its effects that has characterized the  
world for many centuries. We know not what to call  
it other than blasphemy, for it is most unquestionably,  
speaking of God in an impious and irreverent manner.

It is contended that there are innumerable gods as  
much above the God that presides over this universe,  
as he is above us; . . . and now, O Lord! shall we set still  
and be silent, while thy name is thus blasphemed, and  
thine Honor, power and glory, brought into disrepute?  
See Isaiah c 43, v 10; 44, 6-8; 45, 5, 6, 21, 22; . . .  

Obviously throughout the history of the movement  
Smith had not been teaching that there was a plurality  
of gods. Otherwise, his top leaders would have had no  
reason to raise the issue in the Nauvoo Expositor in 1844.

In response to the Nauvoo Expositor, on June 16th,  
Smith delivered another sermon on the nature of God:

Now, you know that of late some malicious and corrupt  
men have sprung up and apostatized from the Church of  
Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and they declare that  
the Prophet believes in a plurality of Gods, and, lo and  
behold! we have discovered a very great secret, they  
cry—"The Prophet says there are many Gods, and this  
proves that he has fallen." . . . I will preach on the plurality  
of Gods. . . . I have always declared God to be a distinct  
personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct  
personage from God the Father, and the Holy Ghost was  
a distinct personage and a Spirit; and these three constitute  
three distinct personages and three gods.  

Again, we see that he did not appeal to his experience  
in the grove to establish the distinction of the Father and  
the Son. In fact, Smith’s teachings through the years  
do not show that he had always taught a plurality of  
Gods or the Father to be a distinct being from Jesus.  
This seems to be a new teaching in the 1840’s, and not  
preached in the 1830’s.

Despite Smith’s claims of consistency in the above  
sermon, there is clearly an evolution to his teaching on  
the nature of the Godhead, which even Mormon scholars  
recognize. LDS scholar Charles R. Harrell observed:

In March 1839, Joseph first hinted that there may be  
more than “one God” (D&C 121:28); however, it wasn’t  
until 1842 that he specifically referred to the godhead as  
consisting of three separate beings who were also “three  
Gods.” He seems to now consider them to be one only  
in the sense that they “agree as one.” In his last public  
dercourse, given June 16, 1844, Joseph repudiated the  
trinitarian notion of a three-in-one God. “Men say there  
is one God—the Fa[the]r, Son & the H[oly] G[host] are  
only 1 God—It is a strange God anyhow 3 in one & 1  
in 3.” . . .

Joseph Smith made another interesting point in  
his June 16, 1844, sermon in which he appealed to  
Revelation 1:6, which says “And hath made us kings  
and priests unto God and His Father” to prove there  
was a God above our Heavenly Father:

the apost[les] have disc[overed] that there were Gods  
above—God was the Fa[the]r of our L[or]d J[esus]  
C[hrist]—my object was to preach the Scrip—& preach  
the doctrine there being a God above the Fa[the]r of  
our Ld. J.C.  

Yet this is in direct contradiction to his change in  
his Inspired Version of the Bible, written in the early  
1830’s, when he still believed in one God. At that time  
he changed the verse to read “and hath made us kings  
and priests unto God, his Father.” By dropping the  
“and” and inserting a comma he made the verse clearly  
state that it is only referring to Heavenly Father.

77 Journal of Alexander Neibaur, (May 24, 1844), online  
at https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/alexander-neibaur-journal-24-may-1844-extract/1
78 Nauvoo Expositor, Nauvoo, Illinois, (June 7, 1844);  
excerpt online at www.utlm.org

79 Smith, History of the Church, vol. 6, pp. 473-474.
80 Charles R. Harrell, “This is My Doctrine: The  
Development of Mormon Theology,” (Greg Kofford Books, 2011),  
p. 114.
81 Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, comp., The Words of  
82 Joseph Smith’s “New Translation” of the Bible, (Herald  
Harrell also observed:

Joseph’s teachings regarding the members of the godhead appear to have progressed from essentially a trinitarian three-in-one God with a modalistic flavor, to a godhead consisting of “two personages” united by the indwelling Holy Spirit, to a godhead consisting of “three personages,” and finally to a godhead consisting of “three Gods.”

One of the troubling aspects of Smith’s evolving First Vision story is the lack of importance given to it in the historical record. As we have already shown, the LDS Church’s current claims of the importance of the First Vision to their understanding of God and Jesus are questionable given how little Smith himself referred to it during his lifetime. LDS scholar James B. Allen observed:

It is worth noting that Joseph Smith himself never used the First Vision to illustrate his own expanded teachings about God. It appears, in fact, that he seldom referred to it at all, except in private conversation, even after it was published.

But a further indication of its lack of importance is how much variation occurs between the details of the different accounts, not just the details of Joseph’s age and the revivals of the time but most crucially the identity of the being who was speaking to him in the vision. One would not expect a person to forget whether it was a mere angel or God Almighty when gripped with such a riveting and life-changing experience.

**First Vision References After Smith’s Death**

After Joseph Smith’s death the early church leaders continued to teach a plurality of gods. However, they did not appeal to Joseph Smith’s First Vision to prove the doctrine. When Smith’s earliest vision was mentioned, it was usually associated with an angel, not the Father and Son.

1845 — The Latter-Day Saints Millennial Star, in England, printed an article titled “The Book of Mormon” which included an account of Smith’s First Vision. However, the article places the beginning of Smith’s call to 1823, not 1820:

The late martyred servant of the Lord, Joseph Smith, being much exercised in his mind on the subject of religion, when about the age of seventeen, and religious revivals, as they are termed, being the order of the day; . . . he was induced to retire in secret, and making his supplications unto the Lord, ask him for that wisdom which he had promised to give liberally without upbraiding.

The result of his pleadings before the Lord, was the ministration of an angel of the Lord, communicating unto him what was necessary for him to know, . . .

Even Lucy Smith, Joseph’s mother, did not mention Joseph’s 1820 vision in her manuscript of the family history. The only revival she mentions is the one following Alvin’s death in 1823. Evidently, the publisher of her book, Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet, in 1853 inserted the section of Joseph’s 1820 story from the Times and Seasons, thus making it appear that Lucy mentions the First Vision. It also makes it appear that there were two revivals, one in 1820 and one following Alvin’s death.

Although William Smith, Joseph’s younger brother, had earlier told people that Joseph’s First Vision was of an angel in his bedroom, in 1883 he revised his story, noting that Joseph’s vision happened in the woods. However, in both accounts he maintained the event happened in 1823:

In 1822 and 1823, the people in our neighborhood were very much stirred up with regard to religious matters by the preaching of a Mr. Lane, an Elder of the Methodist Church, . . . Joseph, then about seventeen years of age, had become seriously inclined, . . . At length he [Joseph Smith] determined to call upon the Lord until he should get a manifestation from him. He accordingly went out into the woods and falling upon his knees called for a long time upon the Lord for wisdom . . . an angel then appeared to him and conversed with him upon many things. He told him that none of the sects were right; but that if he was faithful in keeping the commandments he should receive, the true way should be made known to him; that his sins were forgiven, etc.

Significantly, the two Smith relatives who would have been in the home during Joseph’s teen years did not show any knowledge of an 1820 vision.

Over the next 35 years LDS leaders occasionally referred to the First Vision, but often spoke of it as a vision of angels rather than the Father and Son.

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83 Harrell, *This is My Doctrine*, p. 114.
85 *Latter-Day Saints Millennial Star*, (August 15, 1845), vol. 6, p. 69.
86 *Early Mormon Documents*, vol. 1, p. 288, note 87.
88 See Salt Lake City Messenger, no. 122. http://www.utlm.org/newsletters/no122.htm#EvolvingFirstVisionStory
For example, LDS Apostle George A. Smith, November 15, 1863, preached:

When Joseph Smith was about fourteen or fifteen years old, . . . he went humbly before the Lord and inquired of Him, and the Lord answered his prayer, and revealed to Joseph, by the ministration of angels, the true condition of the religious world. When the holy angel appeared, Joseph inquired which of all these denominations was right and which he should join, and was told they were all wrong. . . . (Journal of Discourses, vol. 12, pp. 333-334)

James B. Allen notes that the First Vision gained new importance after 1880 in part because the church needed a new focus after years of legal battles regarding polygamy.

The time was ready—made for the outpouring of a new identity with the founding prophet—new reminders to the Saints of what their heritage really was, and of what Joseph Smith’s testimony really meant to them personally. The First Vision was a natural tool for such a purpose, and a new generation of writers could hardly fail to use it. 89

Further on in the same article, James Allen commented on the growing importance of the vision in LDS literature:

The vision and its attendant uses quickly began to appear in lesson manuals, augmenting the Mormon awareness of its transcendent importance. In 1899 the Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association used it to demonstrate that it had ushered in the “Dispensation of the Fullness of Times.” The vision was thus replacing the angel in Mormon thought as the implementing factor in the restoration. . . .

At the beginning of the twentieth century the First Vision also took a permanent place in the missionary literature of the Church. . . . The Sacred Grove [in New York] was acquired by the church in this period, and pilgrimages to the grove became sacred experiences for many Mormons. . . . By the beginning of the twentieth century, belief in the First Vision was fundamental to the faith of the Latter-day Saints. 90

CONCLUSION

For over a 100 years the LDS Church has placed paramount importance on the appearance of God and Christ to Joseph Smith in 1820. Speaking in the October 2002 General Conference, President Hinckley declared:

Our whole strength rests on the validity of that [First] vision. It either occurred or it did not occur. If it did not, then this work is a fraud. If it did, then it is the most important and wonderful work under the heavens. I knew a so-called intellectual who said the Church was trapped by its own history. My response was that without that history we have nothing. The truth of that unique, singular, and remarkable event [The First Vision] is the pivotal substance of our faith. 91

Yet Joseph Smith’s 1820 vision was not the center of the LDS teaching during his lifetime or Brigham Young’s. It is now established that the documents and published records of the 1820’s–1830’s show no knowledge of Smith claiming an appearance of the Father and Son in 1820. While Smith did print one account in 1842, he did not appeal to his vision as proof that God has a body of flesh and bone, an important tenet of LDS theology. It was not until 1880, with the canonization of the Pearl of Great Price, that the vision took on a major role in the church’s literature.

In recent years LDS scholars have tried to minimize the many inconsistencies among the differing First Vision accounts by emphasizing the core element of Joseph’s having seen someone in the grove that day. But this misses the important point that if he only saw someone then he did not receive specific information on the nature of God.

Gordon B. Hinckley, while serving as an apostle, declared: “Either Joseph talked with the Father and the Son, or he did not. If he did not, we are engaged in blasphemy.” 92

Yes, if Mormonism is not true its doctrine of God would be a great blasphemy.

Smith not only taught that the Father and Son were two separate deities, he also taught that God at one time was a mortal on another earth, overseen by yet a higher deity. When God was a human he went through the same type of life that we are going through, he married, suffered death, was resurrected, and after eons arrived at the position of a god himself. Preaching in 1844, Joseph Smith declared:

I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity I will refute that idea, and take away the veil. . . . he was once a man like us; yea, that God

90 Ibid., pp. 56-57.
himself, the Father of all, **dwell on an earth**, the same as Jesus Christ himself did, . . . The Scriptures inform us that Jesus said, As the Father hath power in Himself, even so hath the Son power—to do what? Why, what the Father did. The answer is obvious—in a manner to lay down His body and **take it up again**. Jesus what are you going to do? To lay down my life **as my Father did**, and take it up again. . . . Here, then, is eternal life—**to know the only wise and true God**; and **you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves**, and to be kings and priests to God, the **same as all Gods have done before you**, namely, by going from one small degree to another . . .

When Joseph Smith declared that “God was once a man like us,” and we can **learn how to be Gods** ourselves, it would imply that God at one time was a sinner like us. President Lorenzo Snow wrote: “As man now is, God once was; As God now is, man may be.”

Joseph Smith’s 1820 vision is obviously a later invention which was then back-dated to give a more dramatic start for his prophetic career and which also introduced a heretical view of God.

Yet when we turn to the Bible for instruction, we find a very different doctrine of God than the one Smith proclaimed the last year of his life. Bill McKeever, of Mormonism Research Ministry, summed it up this way:

The Mormon doctrine of God is not the same as the historic Christian view. It holds that God and man are essentially of the same species, and that God the Father has a body of flesh and bones. He is not uniquely self-existent, transcendent, or eternal. Neither is he truly the creator of all things, for he is one among potentially billions of Gods, and does not even have the ability to create matter. . . .

To the contrary, God says in Isaiah 43:10, “**Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me.**” Psalm 90:2 says of him, “**Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.**” This is the God Christians worship. Of him we can say, “Who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen” (Romans 11:34-36).

The God of the Bible is not the god of Joseph Smith.

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**LDS Church Growth for 2019**

At the April LDS Conference it was reported that church membership now stood at 16,565,036, up from the 2018 count of 16,313,735. There were 94,266 new children of record listed and convert baptism was listed as 248,835.1

According to the *Salt Lake Tribune* for April 4, 2020:

The latest statistical report, released Saturday, put total membership above 16.5 million at the end of 2019, up by more than 251,000 from the previous year.

That’s a 1.54% increase, according to independent demographer Matt Martinich, and represents the “first year since 2012 in which the rate of membership growth has accelerated instead of decelerated.” The church grew by 1.2% in 2018.

Convert baptisms last year also mushroomed, to 248,835, up more than 6% from 234,332 in 2018.

So 2019 “is the first year since 2014,” Martinich writes on his blog at ldschurch.growth.blogspot.com, “that the annual number of convert baptisms has increased by a sizable amount compared to the prior year.”

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**LDS in Salt Lake County Continues to Slide**

According to the *Salt Lake Tribune* for December 9, 2018, an unrelenting demographic shift has hit a major milestone:

Fewer than half the people living in Salt Lake County are on the rolls of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

They show Salt Lake County’s population is now 48.91 percent Latter-day Saint, the lowest since at least the 1930s, according to the available records. There are 558,607 people on the church membership rolls in the state’s largest county, which has an estimated population of 1,142,077.

The article continues, “In Utah overall, the percentage of Latter-day Saints is 61.55 percent, a figure that has also inched down as the state’s hot job market has attracted new residents who are less likely to be members of the predominant faith than the state’s homegrown population.”

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**The Christus Statue to be New LDS Logo**

Since 1966, an eleven-foot replica of Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen’s statue, The Christus, has been on display at the LDS Church visitor center in Salt Lake City. At the Saturday evening, April 4, 2020 session of LDS Conference President Nelson announced that the new church logo would be a drawing of the statue enclosed in an arch, with the name of the church underneath.

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93 Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith,* (Deseret Book, 1977), pp. 345-346. This sermon was also published in the *Ensign*, (April and May 1971).

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1 “Salt Lake County is now minority Mormon, and the impacts are far reaching.” *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 9, 2018.

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EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS AND EMAILS

August 2019: I am 17 years old from Montana. I’d like to start by thanking you for all of your research and provisions of information. They have been most helpful for me when talking with my mormon friends, and I pray that they will use your information to see the truth!

September 2019: A Call to Repentance. The warning call: Cease & desist your destructive behavior, and repent before it grows too late, lest ye find yourself among these “Lost Souls”:

[Doctrine and Covenants 76]
31 Thus saith the Lord concerning all those who know my power, and have been made partakers thereof, and suffered themselves through the power of the devil to be overcome, and to deny the truth and defy my power—
32 They are they who are the sons of perdition, of whom I say that it had been better for them never to have been born;
33 For they are vessels of wrath, doomed to suffer the wrath of God, with the devil and his angels in eternity;
34 Concerning whom I have said there is no forgiveness in this world nor in the world to come—…

PS: It’s never ‘too late’, whilst you draw breath, to repent & save the rest of your family. (& save your deceased husband, by helping in renewing his vows, via proxy work)

September 2019: I have half a bookshelf, at least, of your excellent works and other books… Thank you, Sandra and Jerald, for your decades of work. You helped me out more than you know. God Bless the late Jerald and everyone there at the UTLM.

September 2019: Though I am an Agnostic/Atheist I just wanted to reach out to UTLM and especially Mrs. Tanner. Obviously we are going to approach Biblical studies from a different perspective - I still learned so much from the talks that you have given that are available on YouTube. It is always easy to spot a labor of love and it is very obvious you are incredibly passionate and well informed on the subject of Mormonism and its conflicts with its inspiration, the Bible.

September 2019: I am 74 years old and have just resigned my membership of 56 years. I was an active temple going member; teacher on both ward and stake level. First the control and manipulation came to my realization. Also I was taught one thing when I joined years ago and found teachings were entirely different years later when I finally gained access to the computer and found web sites such as yours. I LOVE YOUR WEB SITE!

September 2019: I became a Christian at the age of 41 and am now only 43. Studying Mormonism is what brought me into a relationship with Jesus. I attended [a Christian class on Mormonism] and it became a class of evangelism. I went from arguing for the possibility of Mormonism being true to gaining the knowledge and relationship of Jesus. . . . I’ve gained one knowledgeable exmormon friend who loves Jesus and I have studied scripture but it is hard being a Christian and all your neighbors be Mormon.

September 2019: I’m 29 years old, . . . and for several years now, I’ve had a fascination with Mormonism. As such, it was only going to be a question of time before I came across Utah Lighthouse Ministry. I wish to say that your work is marvelous. The intellectual honesty you have consistently shown, not just on celebrated matters such as the Salamander letter, but your general determination to make sure you always get every fact correct, your principled stance against sensationalism, is admirable. Further, you have always shown yourselves to be ever so gentle, diplomatic, and proper in your outreach to Mormons.

October 2019: “YOU are still a HUGE FRAUD.”

October 2019: I cannot thank you [enough] for the years of service and dedication you’ve provided, many times under duress and threats . . . At 18 I joined the [LDS] Church in ___ OR; at 19 I was married in the Oakland Temple and things just went down the tube over a period of 21 yrs in a horrible marriage and financial oppressed lifestyle. There’s not a day that goes by that I don’t praise the Lord for His mercy of removing me from the bondage I had been in for 21 yrs. He IS a Merciful God, Who gave his life a ransom for me. I am blessed beyond expression.

November 2019: [Man from Missouri] I just finished reading an article in issue 133 of The Messenger, . . . You published Ronald Huggins’ article, “Did Early Christians Practice Baptism for the Dead?” I found this article to be the best of its kind that I have read. In a scholarly way, Mr. Huggins presented objective historic information on this practice, and then reflected critically on Mormon scholars’ misuse of this data. I found this article to be very informative, objective and balanced.

November 2019: [Man in Utah] Thanks to you, Sarah Tanner and cohorts, for publishing the Grammar and Alphabet of the Egyptian Language. I have been studying it for over 40 years. The LDS Church is ashamed of it, because nobody is intelligent enough to figure it out. The truth is, nobody on the planet reads Egyptian hieroglyphs correctly, nor hieratic in the least degree. But I have been able to prove that Joseph Smith was in fact the only man on the planet ever to read Egyptian correctly in our dispensation. . . . I have been able to prove that everything Smith translated was done correctly.

December 2019: I would like to thank Sandra for the years she and her husband Jerald spent uncovering the true history of the Mormon church. The MormonStories podcast she did was amazing. It solidified my view that my mormon life was a farce and needed to end. The story of Jerald driving to Missouri to find the truth about Mormon history was inspiring. Thanks for all you do.
December 2019: I give thanks to God for your ministry & faithful tenacity to the truth of the Word. Through your writings I have been able to converse with LDS family & have seen some come to faith in Christ Jesus. May God continue to encourage you with fruit as you move forward in integrity & love.

January 2020: I want to say how much I admire Sandra and her stamina all these years in informing Mormons of the truth of Mormonism! She has been an inspiration to me for truly decades!

I first learned of Jerald and Sandra’s ministry in 2001, at a dinner. . . . A woman at the table recommended [Mormonism] Shadow or Reality to me. . . . Over the years, I was heavily involved with outreach as I seemed to be surrounded by Mormonism . . . Those experiences and conversations were some of the richest of my life!

January 2020: THANK YOU and Doris Hanson. I sent in formal papers yesterday to be removed officially from LDS Church membership. Have been member since 1975. I live in [Utah] and health is not good. I prayed God would keep me alive until I could have my name removed. AND HE DID.....Praise God.

January 2020: I’m just learning about all of this. I was raised in the church, went inactive at 15 & went back to church at 50. I’m 56 now. So glad to be finding this out now. I have watched several of your videos including mormonstories. Thank you for the work you do!

January 2020: I just read the 2019 newsletter you sent. WOW! . . . As a former member of the church . . . I do want to say that I have the greatest respect & love for you, as you & Gerald spent your lives bringing truth & reason to a world who didn’t & still doesn’t want it—the inconvenient truth.

February 2020: You and your ministry were such a great help and resource when my father and I left the Mormon Church. I can never thank you enough for all you have done and still do. My father passed away a year ago and it was such a blessing to know he is with our Lord and Savior.

February 2020: I wanted to say thank you to you and your late husband, for all of the work that you have done. I have read many of the publications that you have released, and am especially grateful for people like you who have paved the way for people like me to live free of the ever-growing shadow of the church. I continue on my quest for my own scholarly education on early LDS history, and your work has helped me tremendously.

February 2020: My wife and I just watched an interview of Sandra on MormonStories.org. We want to let you know how much we enjoyed and were impressed by her articulate knowledge. Well done!

We moved into this area [Idaho] three years ago and it has been the work of vanguards like Jerald and Sandra who have helped us learn more about the faith of our neighbors.

February 2020: Hello Sandra It just listened to your interview with John Dehlin. I was very impressed with what you and your husband have accomplished. I can tell you are a very intelligent person. You represented yourself well. Thank you so much for all you have done. I’ve been out of the church for a little over a year.

February 2020: Dear Sandra, you sent me some of your free newsletters. To which I am responding because today, being the 9th day of February I am saved and a born again Christian. I owe you a deep debt of gratitude.

March 2020: I have heard just about every anti argument you can think of, and it does not bother me. I just don’t understand what your purpose is. If it is only to destroy/tear down, it really isn’t doing any good.

March 2020: Hello, Mrs. Tanner. On Tuesday my beloved mother in law passed. She was mormon and my husband’s entire family is including his brother who is a bishop of the church . . . My husband was very upset during the [funeral] service but he was curious when the sta[k]e president was invited to speak and basically did the mormon sunday morning church speech for 30 minutes. . . . Its becoming more and more clear to him that [what] he was raised to believe was a cult. He likes listening to you alot. When I started on my education of Mormonism he said he wasn’t supposed to listen to you lol. We are in Tennessee so as you know you are known all over but even here in our dumpy town. Thank you for reading and doing all you do.

April 2020: I never knew of you as a active member and it’s been many years since I attended regularly. I am a man but couldn’t receive the priesthood and always felt shame during blessings as everyone worthy made their way up front. I couldn’t bless any of my kids and had to ask others in my place. Nothing seemed to go right.

I found out a couple years ago that Smith practiced polygamy and polyandry, I was devastated and for the first time directed an Earnest prayer to Jesus for answers. Within a week I started noticing crosses everywhere and my entire worldview started to crumble, things I believed my whole life somehow I knew they were wrong.

I started devouring the Bible and learning about historical Christianity and textual criticism. I’m an ironworker but I get up a couple hours early to study where I’m led and Jesus came to life for me. I am so happy I’m not alone and I know you understand, your courage means so much to me.

Looking back I have been so blessed, for some reason I was protected from the blasphemy of claiming the priesthood for myself and am aware of many other issues. I’m alone in my faith in my family but am quickly being equipped to defend my faith with reality and scripture.
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On April 6, 1830, the day Joseph Smith founded the Church of Christ, later renamed The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, he received a revelation designating himself as “a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle.” The terms prophet and apostle are generally understood in LDS circles. But what is meant by seer and translator? Does divine translation result in the same message that scholars, taking a specific text from one language and rendering it in another, would arrive at? If not, how are we to understand “translate” in Smith’s writings?

Traditionally the LDS Church has taught that the Book of Mormon is a literal translation of an actual record, inscribed on gold plates, recounting God’s dealings with the people occupying America hundreds of years before the arrival of the Europeans. However, extensive research shows the presence of nineteenth-century ideas and sources, such as the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible, in the book.1 This is causing some LDS scholars to redefine the word translation to mean revealed text. For example, Richard Bushman, author of Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling, responded in an interview:

The Book of Mormon is a problem right now. It’s so baffling to so many that Joseph was not even looking at the gold plates [to translate them]. And there’s so much in the Book of Mormon that comes out of the 19th century that there’s a question of whether or not the text is an exact transcription of Nephí’s and Mormon’s words, or if it has been reshaped by inspiration to be more suitable for us, a kind of an expansion or elucidation of the Nephite record for our times. I have no idea how that might have worked or whether that’s true. But there are just too many scholars now, faithful church scholars, who find 19th-century material in that text. That remains a little bit of a mystery, just how it came to be.2

Years of research have led to several theories of how Joseph Smith produced his scriptures. These can be broadly put into four categories: (1) the literal translation, or “tight control,” theory, where Smith dictated the English text he read on his seer stone, which in turn was the Lord’s translation of what was recorded on the ancient plates;3 (2) the expanded text theory, where Smith expanded the message of the ancient record with current concepts and Bible quotes;4 (3) the revelatory theory, where the dictated text is more the result of inspiration, meditation and influences of the day...
than actually translating an ancient record into English, sometimes referred to as the catalyst theory; 5 (4) and the naturalistic (fiction) theory where no ancient text is needed, only the creative mind of the storyteller coupled with religious issues of the day and current events. 6 These theories would help explain why Smith never looked at the ancient plates during his dictation. However, only the first theory fits the earliest accounts of Smith’s translation efforts, with Smith simply reading the God-given English translation off his seer stone to scribes. In recent speeches and articles the top leadership of the LDS Church seem to be holding to the literal method while many of its scholars seem to be looking more to an expanded text or the revelatory theory. 7

**BOOK OF MORMON TRANSLATION ESSAY**

In 2013 the LDS Church released several essays addressing difficult issues in their history. 8 One of these articles, “The Book of Mormon Translation,” discusses the method used by Joseph Smith to render the Book of Mormon into English. 9 In this article we read “The angel charged Joseph Smith to translate the book from the ancient language in which it was written.” Thus Smith is declared to be in possession of an actual record that is translatable. The article then proceeds to build a case of Smith as an uneducated man incapable of inventing such a complicated story, thereby implying that it must be what it claims to be, a God-given translation from an ancient text. The article asserts that Smith was untrained in languages thus the translation was accomplished through the use of divinely prepared instruments called “interpreters” (large spectacles with crystal lenses preserved with the plates) and “seer stones” (magic rocks found in the ground by Joseph Smith).

We read further that “by looking through these, he was able to read in English, the reformed Egyptian characters, which were engraved on the plates.” This claim of dictating the English text as it appeared on the interpreters or stone would certainly demand a God-given translation from one language to another, which would preclude Smith expanding the text.

To emphasize the book’s historicity and underscore Smith’s limited education and inability to compose such a book the essay quotes Emma Smith, Joseph’s wife, saying that he “could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter, let alone dictate a book like the Book of Mormon.” However, the inaccuracy of this statement is seen when we examine one of Smith’s letters written in 1829:

Respected sir I would in form you that I arrived at home on Sunday morning the 4th. after having a prosperous journd, and found all well the people are all friendly to <us> except a few who are in opposition to evry thing unless it is something that is axactly like themselves and two of our most formidable persacutors are now under censure and are cited to a trial in the church for crimes which if true are worse than all the Gold Book business. we do not rejoice in the affliction of our enimies but we shall be glad to have truth prevail[.]

there begins to be a great call for our books in this country the minds of the people are very much excited when they find that there is a copy right obtained and that there is really books about to be printed. 10

While there are several misspelled words the document demonstrates that Joseph Smith could write a “coherent and well-worded letter,” thus showing that Emma was simply trying to bolster the idea that Joseph was too uneducated to have composed the Book of Mormon. Also, Joseph himself wrote in 1832 that he studied the Bible from the age of 12 11 and his mother said he entertained the family in the evenings with stories of the Native Americans. 12 Young Joseph, according to Orsamus Turner, attended the local Methodist camp meetings, becoming a “very passible exhorter at evening meetings.” Turner also recalled that Joseph was involved in the “juvenile debating club.” 13 These activities show

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8 Gospel Topics Essays, online at https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics-essays?lang=eng


he had an active mind, was a reader, and could compose his thoughts. In addition, one only needs to look at his revelations during and after writing the Book of Mormon to see his ability to dictate his thoughts to a scribe.14

**In the Beginning**

Joseph Smith spent his teen years in western New York, in an area often referred to as the burnt-over district, well-known for numerous religious revivals and spiritual excitement. While his parents were religious, they were not members of any particular church. However, during an 1824–25 revival in Palmyra, New York, Joseph’s mother, sister and two brothers joined the Presbyterian Church. His father, Joseph Smith Sr., refused to affiliate with any denomination and only attended one or two of the local revival meetings. Joseph Jr. studied the Bible from the age of twelve, attended the revivals often and evidently favored the Methodists.15

In the 1820’s many people, including the Smiths, believed in magical stones, like crystal balls, and divining rods that allowed the owner to discover the location of buried treasures, metal or water. For instance, the *Wayne Sentinel,* published in Joseph Smith’s neighborhood, reprinted the following from the *Windsor (Vermont) Journal:*

Money digging.—We are sorry to observe even in this enlightened age, so prevalent a disposition to credit the accounts of the Marvellous. Even the frightful stories of *money being hid under the surface of the earth,* and *enchanted by the Devil or Robert Kidd,* are received by many of our respectable fellow citizens as truths. . . . A respectable gentleman in Tunbridge, was informed by means of a dream, that a *chest of money was buried* on a small island. . . . After having been directed by the *mineral rod* where to search for the money . . . he and his laborers came . . . upon a chest of gold . . . *the chest moved off through the mud,* and has not been seen or heard of since.16

Oliver Cowdery, who acted as scribe for Smith during most of the Book of Mormon dictation, evidently claimed the gift of working with a divining rod. In the 1833 *Book of Commandments,* section seven, his gift is called “the gift of working with the rod” and “rod of nature” which works “in your hands, for it is the work of God.” But this section was rewritten for the 1835 edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants,* now section eight, changing Cowdery’s rod of nature to “gift of Aaron,” which you hold “in your hands.” These changes obscure the original meaning of Cowdery’s practice of dowsing, using a magical divining rod.

Another story in the 1825 *Wayne Sentinel* told of people using a “mineral stone” placed in a hat to locate buried treasures, similar to Joseph Smith’s efforts:

Wonderful Discovery.—A few days since was discovered in this town, by the help of a *mineral stone,* (which becomes transparent when placed in a hat and the light excluded by the face of him who looks into it, provided he is fortune’s favorite,) a *monstrous potash kettle in the bowels of old mother Earth,* filled with the purest bullion. . . . *His Satanic Majesty,* or some other invisible agent, appears to keep it [the treasure] under marching orders; for no sooner is it dug on to in one place, than it moves off like “false delusive hope,” to another still more remote.17

Interestingly, a similar story of burying riches only to find that the treasure has slipped away is found in the Book of Mormon. There Samuel the Lamanite speaks of “slippery” treasure:

“And behold,” he said, “the time cometh that he curseth your riches, that they become slippery, that ye cannot hold them; and in the days of your poverty ye cannot retain them.

“... And then shall ye lament, and say: . . . O that we had remembered the Lord our God in the day that he gave us our riches, and then they would not have become slippery that we should lose them; for behold, our riches are gone from us.

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“...Yea, we have hid our treasures and they have slipped away from us, because of the curse of the land.” (Helaman 13:31-33, 35)

These are just a few of the instances where the Book of Mormon story mirrors events in Smith’s environment. Joseph Smith and most of the early converts to Mormonism believed in such magical instruments as seer stones and mineral rods.18

In 1822 Joseph Smith found a magic rock, like the one mentioned in the Wayne Sentinel, while digging a well for his neighbor, Willard Chase. In 1833 Mr. Chase gave his account of the event:

“I became acquainted with the Smith family, known as the authors of the Mormon Bible, in the year 1820. At that time, they were engaged in the money digging business, which they followed until the latter part of the season of 1827. In the year 1822, I was engaged in digging a well. I employed Alvin and Joseph Smith to assist me; the latter of whom is now known as the Mormon prophet. After digging about twenty feet below the surface of the earth, we discovered a singularly appearing stone, which excited my curiosity. I brought it to the top of the well, and as we were examining it, Joseph put it into his hat, and then his face into the top of his hat. . . . After obtaining the stone, he began to publish abroad what wonders he could discover by looking in it, . . . ”19

The LDS essay acknowledges that Joseph Smith used his stone for money-digging. It also acknowledges that the rock was used for translating the Book of Mormon because it proved to be more convenient than the sacred interpreters preserved with the plates. According to the essay:

As a young man during the 1820’s, Joseph Smith, like others in his day, used a seer stone to look for lost objects and buried treasure. As Joseph grew to understand his prophetic calling, he learned that he could use this stone for the higher purpose of translating scripture. Apparently for convenience, Joseph often translated with the single seer stone rather than the two stones bound together to form the interpreters.

While the LDS essay concedes Smith’s use of his magic rock in looking for buried treasures, the brief mention hardly covers the situation. The Smith family was very involved in folk magic in the early 1800’s. Joseph’s stone found in 1822 reportedly possessed special powers and he had used it for years to inform people where to look for hidden or lost items. In an interview Martin Harris discussed some of the Smiths’ involvement in searching for buried riches, naming Joseph Smith, jr., and his father, and his brother Hiram Smith. They dug for money in Palmyra, Manchester, also in Pennsylvania, and other places. When Joseph found this stone, there was a company digging in Harmony, Pa., and they took Joseph to look in the stone for them.20

Joseph’s mentor for using a seer stone seems to have been Luman Walters, a well-known magician and con man. Richard Van Wagoner observed: “In the 1820s, these credulous souls believed in the posturings of Luman Walters and other tricksters like him.”21

Besides this, Smith also carried on his person a small magic medallion called a Jupiter Talisman22 and the Smith family also owned several magic parchments and a magic dagger.23

Then in 1826 Joseph Smith was arrested and charged with a misdemeanor for his claim of being able to locate buried treasures by use of his seer stone. In the court document he was referred to as a “glass-looker.”24 The issue centered on whether or not Joseph was defrauding people by claiming that his seer stone had special powers. Josiah Stowell, who had hired him, testified that Smith did have such powers. Another man, Jonathan Thompson, testified of Smith’s ability and that when they had dug for the buried trunk they hit something hard, like a plank, “the board which he struck his spade upon was probably the chest, but on account of an enchantment the trunk kept settling away from under them when digging; that notwithstanding they continued constantly removing the dirt, yet the trunk kept about the same distance from them.”25

19 Willard Chase Affidavit, in E. D. Howe, Mormonism Unvailed, (Painesville, Ohio, 1834), pp. 240-41.
20 Dan Vogel, Early Mormon Documents (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), vol. 2, pp. 303-304.
22 Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Mormonism, Magic and Masonry, (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1988), pp. 2-5.
23 Quinn, Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, pp. 98-135.
24 Wesley P. Walters, Joseph Smith’s Bainbridge, N.Y., Court Trials, (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1977), pp. 128-142; Marquardt, Rise of Mormonism, pp. 42-45.
25 Marquardt, Rise of Mormonism, p. 43.

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Joseph’s defense at the 1826 hearing was that he had a genuine gift of using his seer stone and had done so for at least three years, but “of late had pretty much given it up on account of its injuring his health, especially his eyes, made them sore.”

Regardless of the outcome of the hearing the issue still remains, did the rock have magical properties that only a “seer” could use? If one accepts Smith’s claim of seeing in his stone the translation of the Book of Mormon then it follows that his claim to see the location of treasures with the same stone would be valid as well. Yet no treasures were ever located.

**Called to Translate**

According to Smith’s story at the back of the *Pearl of Great Price* in 1823 a heavenly being appeared in his bedroom to announce that God had called him to translate the long lost record of the former inhabitants of the American continent, recorded in an unknown language called Reformed Egyptian and engraved on gold plates. These plates, according to Smith’s story, had been buried in 421 AD by Moroni, the last man to make an entry on the plates.

However, Joseph was not able to retrieve the record from the local hill where they were buried until 1827. When Joseph was about to receive the plates an angel told him “he must quit the company of the money-diggers. That there were wicked men among them. He must have no more to do with them.” Thus we see that during the time Joseph was supposedly being groomed for his calling as “seer” (1823-1827) he was heavily involved in magic, glass looking and searching for buried treasures.

The essay tries to normalize the Smith family’s involvement with magic by pointing out that Joseph’s use of a seer stone was a common practice in the 1820s. However, this is overstating the situation. Yes, others believed in magic stones, but it was not accepted by many of the Christians in the community. In fact, it was the major reason that Joseph was denied membership in the Methodist Church in 1828. When Joseph Lewis, Emma Smith’s cousin, discovered that Joseph’s name had been added to the membership class he “thought it was a disgrace to the church to have a practicing necromancer” as a member. Joseph was told to either repent of his magic activities or withdraw his name. The end result was that his name was dropped from the rolls of the local Methodist church. Christians today are also troubled by the Smiths’ involvement with magic in light of such verses as Deuteronomy 18:10-12:

> There shall not be found among you . . . anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord.

According to Smith, in 1827 he was finally able to remove the ancient record from the hill and commence his work. The necessity of waiting four years to procure the plates suggests he literally needed them to produce his translation. The manuscript was completed and published in 1830 under the title *The Book of Mormon*.

**Lost 116 Pages**

In Joseph Smith’s history he relates that he began translating the plates in 1828 with Martin Harris acting as one of his scribes. Martin’s wife had been badgering him for some time that Smith’s claims were not valid. Harris left home in northwest New York, travelling to Harmony, Pennsylvania, in April to aid Smith in his translation work. At last Martin was able to convince Joseph to let him take a few pages of the manuscript home to Manchester, New York, to show his wife that he was aiding Smith in a genuine work of God. Joseph had been reluctant to oblige, but finally agreed.

When Harris did not return the pages in a timely manner Smith made the trip to Harris’ home. Smith’s worst fears had been realized—the pages were lost, stolen or destroyed. Joseph’s mother, Lucy Mack Smith, described the meeting when Harris came to the Smith family home and told Joseph he had lost the pages. “Oh! My God My God My God said Joseph clenching his

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hands together all is lost is lost what shall I do I have sinned.”30 Soon after this Joseph received a revelation chastising him for allowing Harris to take the pages home and the Lord temporarily removed his gift of translating.31

Joseph evidently feared that Martin Harris, referred to as a “wicked man” in Doctrine and Covenants, section 10, was doubting his prophetic claim and planned to put him to the test by altering the words of the manuscript.

In the preface to the 1830 Book of Mormon Joseph Smith explained that even though God could give him the power to translate the same words again he was to switch to a different set of plates:

As many false reports have been circulated . . . and also many unlawful measures taken by evil designing persons to destroy me, and also the work, I would inform you that I translated, by the gift and power of God, and caused to be written, one hundred and sixteen pages, the which I took from the Book of Lehi, . . . which said account, some person or persons have stolen and kept from me, . . .—and being commanded of the Lord that I should not translate the same over again, for Satan had put it into their hearts to tempt the Lord their God, by altering the words, that they did read contrary from that which I translated and caused to be written; and if I should bring forth the same words again, or, in other words, if I should translate the same over again, they would publish that which they had stolen, and Satan would stir up the hearts of this generation, that they might not receive this work: . . . therefore thou shalt translate from the plates of Nephi, until ye come to that which ye have translated, . . . and thus I will confound those who have altered my words. . . .32

First, we wonder why Joseph couldn’t just look in his stone and find the lost pages or see what happened to them? He had done so at an earlier time. According to Joseph Smith’s mother, when he first took the plates out of the ground he temporarily hid them in the trunk of a tree. While he was away from home his wife, Emma, went to him to warn him that people were using local mediums to try to locate the hiding place of the plates. But Smith “looked in the Urim and Thummim, and saw that the Record was as yet safe.”33 Second, how could a scoundrel change the words in the manuscript without it showing signs of alteration? Third, it seems obvious that Smith couldn’t retranslate the same words again so he had to come up with an excuse that would still support his claims of translating. Thus Joseph announced that the Lord had prepared for this event over two thousand years before by telling Nephi to make a second set of records that covered that same time period but to include more religious material. Therefore, Smith is told not to translate the same material again, but to switch to this other more religious set of plates.34 This leaves one wondering why God had Joseph start with Nephi’s larger set of plates in the first place? Joseph’s story of two sets of plates sounds more like a way to cover up the fact that he couldn’t dictate the same material again.35

BECOMING A SEER

The Book of Mormon presents the idea of a prophetic calling to be a seer, which includes the ability to translate ancient records. In Mosiah 8:9-13 we are told of an ancient record of the Jaredites, a group who migrated to America at the time of the tower of Babel, preserved on twenty-four gold plates, which were written in an unknown script. The king is told of “a man that can translate the records; for he has wherewith that he can look, and translate all records that are of ancient date” (Mosiah 8:13). This gift operates by staring into an apparatus called “interpreters.” Only a seer may look in these sacred objects and receive instruction from God. Several chapters later we are told that the Jaredite record was translated “by the means of those two stones which were fastened into the two rims of a bow . . . And they have been kept and preserved by the hand of the Lord . . . And whosoever has these things is called seer” (Mosiah 28:13-16). Notice that the label seer does not stand alone but is given to one who has these special eyeglasses. Smith claimed that these were buried with the Nephite record to aid the future seer who would translate the Book of Mormon plates.36 Joseph Smith described the interpreters as

two stones in silver bows—and these stones, fastened to a breastplate, constituted what is called the Urim and Thummim—deposited with the plates; and the possession and use of these stones what constitutes seers in ancient or former times; and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book [Book of Mormon].37

30 Anderson, Lucy’s Book, p. 418.
31 Doctrine and Covenants, Sec. 10.
34 For a good discussion of the event, see M.T. Lamb, The Golden Bible, (1887), pp. 118-126. Also, see Doctrine and Covenants, sec. 10.
35 For a discussion of the small and large plates, see Tanner, Joseph Smith’s Plagiarism of the Bible, pp. 55, 169-174.
37 Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History 1:35.
While the interpreters, later referred to as Urim and Thummim, were specifically preserved for use in translating the plates, Joseph Smith evidently only used them, if at all, in producing the first 116 pages of the manuscript. After Martin Harris lost those pages Smith was only seen using his own stone, found several years earlier, to produce the manuscript used in the printing. Emma Smith, and two of the Book of Mormon witnesses, Martin Harris and David Whitmer, all described Joseph using his stone in his hat while dictating the Book of Mormon, but none of them describe him using the ancient glasses/interpreters buried with the plates. This raises the question, why were the Book of Mormon interpreters preserved for centuries if Joseph Smith could simply use a rock he found buried on his neighbor’s property?

In 1939 LDS scholar Dr. Francis W. Kirkham denounced the claim that Smith used a seer stone to translate. He wrote in the LDS Church magazine, *The Improvement Era*:

> A neighbor, Willard Chase, asserted Joseph stole a “singularly appearing stone” which he had found in 1822 when Joseph and his brother Alvin were employed by him in digging a well. “Joseph put it into his hat and then his face into the top of his hat . . . alleging that he could see in it.”—*Mormonism Unveiled*, Eber D. Howe, 1834.

This is an attempt to explain the alleged power of Joseph Smith to translate the plates by a person who denounced him as a fraud and an ignorant deceiver.

In the opinion of the writer, the Prophet used no seer stone in translating the Book of Mormon, neither did he translate in the manner described by David Whitmer and Martin Harris.

However, research has proven Dr. Kirkham wrong. Russell M. Nelson, the current President of the LDS Church, has endorsed the accounts of Smith using a stone in his hat to translate, and even provided a demonstration of it in a recent video.

Many years ago M. T. Lamb made some important observations regarding Joseph Smith’s use of his stone instead of the Urim and Thummim:

> Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to Brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear, and another character with the interpretation would appear.

This process did not involve any use of the original plates. Emma Smith related that the plates were off to

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the side, “wrapped in a small linen table cloth.” The English translation miraculously appeared on the stone and did not require any linguistic ability. Even though the plates were not consulted, Smith always presented his work as an actual translation from an ancient text:

[T]he fact is, that by the power of God I translated the Book of Mormon from hieroglyphics, the knowledge of which was lost to the world, in which wonderful event I stood alone, an unlearned youth, to combat the worldly wisdom and multiplied ignorance of eighteen centuries, with a new revelation, . . .

Such statements certainly present the project as Smith dictating the English translation of what was literally written on the plates in Reformed Egyptian. Otherwise, why preserve the plates for centuries? God could have revealed the Nephite history to Smith without the record, as he later claimed with the Book of Moses. From this, one would expect that anyone knowledgeable in Reformed Egyptian could have produced a translation essentially the same as Smith’s version.

For example, when LDS scholars produce a new translation of the Book of Mormon, or any other text, from English to another language the same essential message is preserved. The LDS Church has a whole department to translate their material into other languages. The modern process used by the LDS Church does not allow for additional sermonizing or expanding the text by the translator. In the same way, one would expect that the message Smith dictated would be the same as the one on the plates. The literalness of the translation was underscored by LDS Apostle Uchtdorf in 2016:

In reality, most of us use a kind of “seer stone” every day. My mobile phone is like a “seer stone.” I can get the collected knowledge of the world through a few little inputs. I can take a photo or a video with my phone and share it with family on the other side of our planet. I can even translate anything into or from many different languages!

If I can do this with my phone, if human beings can do this with their phones or other devices, who are we to say that God could not help Joseph Smith, the Prophet of the Restoration, with his translation work?

Uchtdorf’s statement would certainly imply that Smith’s translation of sacred records through his stone was literally the same message as was engraved on the plates, not a loose rendering with additional inspirational thoughts supplied by Smith. Since it is claimed that the Book of Mormon text itself appeared on the stone, similar to a cell phone displaying a text message, there should be no outside information added by the person reading the text. It would also mean that the text did not result from Joseph Smith putting the message in his own words. Then why does the Book of Mormon contain hundreds of phrases and verses copied verbatim from the King James Bible? (See example on next page.)

One oddity of the Book of Mormon is its mimicking of the King James Bible verbiage such as the use of “thee” and “thou.” These archaic forms had dropped out of common use by 1830. One only has to look at transcripts of Joseph Smith’s letters or read one of the local newspapers to see this. Besides the Bible, one book that could have suggested this approach would have been Gilbert J. Hunt’s The Late War between the United States and Great Britain . . . in the Scriptural Style, a historical account of the War of 1812 published in New York in 1816, for use in schools. The author acknowledged he had deliberately modeled his style after the Bible to encourage his young readers in their study of scripture. In like manner, Smith may have mimicked Elizabethan English to make his scriptures sound more biblical.

Rev. Wesley P. Walters, in his 1981 Master’s Thesis, discussed the problems associated with writing the Book of Mormon in archaic English:

In addition to borrowing biblical names and events, the Elizabethan style of the English King James Bible was adopted. Furthermore, even the material not derived from the Bible was cast into the King James style. Consequently there is a continual use of “thee”, “thou” and “ye”, as well as the archaic verb endings “est” (second person singular) and “eth” (third person singular). Since the Elizabethan style was not Joseph’s natural idiom, he continually slipped out of this King James pattern and repeatedly confused the forms as well. Thus he lapsed from “ye” (subject) to “you” (object) as

46 Gospel Topics, “Book of Mormon Translation” see n. 35.
47 History of the Church, 6:74.
50 See Tanner, Joseph Smith’s Plagiarism of the Bible in the Book of Mormon.
52 Gilbert J. Hunt, The Late War Between the United States and Great Britain . . . in the Scriptural Style, (1816), http://wordtree.org/thewarbetween/
A comparison of verses from chapters 7 and 10 of Moroni in the Book of Mormon (to the left) with chapters 13 and 12 of 1 Corinthians in the Bible (to the right). According to Moroni 7:1, in that chapter Moroni is quoting “the words of my father Mormon, which he spake concerning faith, hope, and charity: . . .” In reality the words are plagiarized from Apostle Paul’s letter to the Corinthians (chapter 13). Chapter 10 of Moroni purports to be Moroni’s own words, but it is obvious that they are taken from chapter 12 of Paul’s letter to the Corinthians. That both Mormon and Moroni would independently come up with almost the same words as Paul, while isolated on another continent, seems totally beyond belief. The evidence clearly shows that the author of the Book of Mormon plagiarized the Bible. (Joseph Smith’s Plagiarism of the Bible in the Book of Mormon, p. 24)
the subject of sentences (e.g. Mos. 2:19; 2:34; 4:24), jumped from plural ("ye") to singular ("thou") in the same sentence (Mos. 4:22) and moved from verbs without endings to ones with endings (e.g. "yields . . . putteth," 3:19).53

One assumes that Smith continued to use the Elizabethan style in all of his scriptures to give them the air of authority. However, if one accepts the statements of those witnessing the dictation of the Book of Mormon, Smith was not putting the translation into his own words, but dictating a divinely supplied text directly revealed on the seer stone. Thus the grammatical misuse of the Elizabethan style would have originated from the Lord.

A CHALLENGE TO SMITH’S STONE

Early LDS leader Edward Stevenson recorded a statement by Martin Harris regarding a time he put Smith to the test to see if his stone actually had special powers:

After continued translation they [Joseph Smith and Martin Harris] would become weary, and would go down to the river and exercise by throwing stones out on the river, etc. While so doing on one occasion, Martin found a stone very much resembling the one used for translating, and on resuming their labor of translation, Martin put in [its] place the stone that he had found. He said that the Prophet remained silent, unusually and intently gazing in darkness, no traces of the usual sentences appearing. Much surprised, Joseph exclaimed, “Martin! What is the matter? All is as dark as Egypt!” Martin’s countenance betrayed him, and the Prophet asked Martin why he had done so. Martin said, to stop the mouths of fools, who had told him that the Prophet had learned those sentences and was merely repeating them, etc.54

Thus Martin concluded that this was no ordinary stone, and its power only worked for a seer. As the Book of Mormon essay states, others also owned seer stones: “As a young man during the 1820’s, Joseph Smith, like others in his day, used a seer stone to look for lost objects and buried treasure.”55 LDS scholars Michael H. Mackay and Nicholas J. Frederick observed:

Even closer to Joseph Smith, several local teenagers also possessed seer stones that Joseph may have had access to during his teenage years. Three families were known to have seer stones (Chase, Stafford, and Lawrence) and their teenaged sons likely searched for buried treasure with Joseph Smith.56

Joseph’s place as God’s revelator was challenged in 1830 by Hiram Page, one of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, who also claimed to receive revelations through a stone. To resolve this challenge to his authority, Joseph Smith received a revelation stating that he alone was God’s voice to the church and that messages through Hiram’s stone were not from God.57

. . . thou [Oliver Cowdery] shalt take thy brother, Hiram Page, between him and thee alone, and tell him that those things which he hath written from that stone are not of me and that Satan deceiveth him; For, behold, these things have not been appointed unto him, neither shall anything be appointed unto any of this church contrary to the church covenants.

David Whitmer and several other early Mormons also claimed to own magical seer stones.58 This leaves us wondering how one determined which seer stone was empowered by God and which ones were empowered by evil forces?

The Book of Mormon Translation essay tries to normalize Smith’s use of a seer stone by pointing out that God, in the Bible, used various instruments to communicate His will. But the question remains, is there sufficient evidence that Smith’s stone was a divine instrument for both treasure seeking and translation? If Smith’s stone is such a God-given instrument, why was it hidden in the church vault for over a hundred years and never used by other LDS prophets?

HEBREW OR REFORMED EGYPTIAN?

One curious aspect of the Book of Mormon story is the claim that the plates were written in Reformed Egyptian rather than Hebrew, which would have been the language of the Israelites in 600 BC. President Russell M. Nelson, writing in 1993 as an LDS apostle, stated: “The inscriptions on the plates were written in a Semitic language, using a modified Egyptian type of script.”59

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56 Mackay and Frederick, *Joseph Smith’s Seer Stones*, p. 141.
57 *Doctrine and Covenants* 28:2,11-12.
At the start of the story Nephi and his brothers journey to Jerusalem to obtain their family genealogy and all of the prophetic writings on the brass plates, which presumably would have been recorded in Hebrew. Nephi explains that “it is wisdom in God that we should obtain these records, that we may preserve unto our children the language of our fathers.”

While the story seems to begin with the Nephites speaking and writing in Hebrew later statements in the book seem to point to the Nephites writing in some form of Egyptian. This results in a very convoluted story of the language used on the plates. The Encyclopedia of Mormonism tries to sort it all out as follows:

Statements in the Book of Mormon have spawned differing views about the language in which the book was originally written. In approximately 600 B.C., Nephi—one of the first Book of Mormon author and one who had spent his youth in Jerusalem—wrote, “I make a record [the small plates of Nephi] in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians” (1 Ne. 1:2). One thousand years later, Moroni, the last Nephite prophet, noted concerning the plates of Mormon that “we have written this record . . . in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech. And if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also . . . But the Lord knoweth . . . that none other people knoweth our language” (Morm. 9:32-34). In light of these two passages, it is evident that Nephite record keepers knew Hebrew and something of Egyptian. It is unknown whether Nephi, Mormon, or Moroni wrote Hebrew in modified Egyptian characters or inscribed their plates in both the Egyptian language and Egyptian characters or whether Nephi wrote in one language and Mormon and Moroni, who lived some nine hundred years later, in another. The mention of “characters” called “reformed Egyptian” tends to support the hypothesis of Hebrew in Egyptian script. Although Nephi’s observation (1 Ne. 1:2) is troublesome for that view, the statement is ambiguous and inconclusive for both views.

The article goes on to explain:

Nephite authors seem to have patterned their writing after the plates of brass, a record containing biblical texts composed before 600 B.C. that was in the possession of descendants of Joseph of Egypt (1 Ne. 5:11-16). At least portions of this record were written in Egyptian, since knowledge of “the language of the Egyptians” enabled Lehi, father of Nephi, to “read these engravings” (Mosiah 1:2-4). But whether it was the Egyptian language or Hebrew written in Egyptian script is again not clear. Egyptian was widely used in Lehi’s day, but because poetic writing are skewed in translation, because prophetic writings were generally esteemed as sacred, and because Hebrew was the language of the Israelites in the seventh century B.C., it would have been unusual for the writings of Isaiah and Jeremiah—substantially preserved on the brass plates (1 Ne. 5:13;19:23)—to have been translated from Hebrew into a foreign tongue at this early date. Thus, Hebrew portions written in Hebrew script, Egyptian portions in Egyptian script, and Hebrew portions in Egyptian script are all possibilities. If the brass plates came into being while the Israelites were still in Egypt, then earlier portions (e.g., words of Jeremiah) in Hebrew.

If we look at the Book of Mormon as a nineteenth century production, why would Joseph Smith make up such a confusing story of the language on the plates? Obviously, he couldn’t claim the text was written in Hebrew as it was well known in the 1800s, and translators had been working with Hebrew for centuries. By having the engravings on the plates in an unknown script Smith builds into his story the need for a future seer/translator to use the divinely prepared “interpreters.” It also makes the script beyond testing by an independent translator.

## The Anthon Transcript

In 1827 Martin Harris embarked on another effort to test Smith’s claims. He and Smith decided he would go to New York with a sample of the text to seek the opinion of scholars. He met with three different men, Luther Bradish, Samuel L. Mitchill and Charles Anthon. His meeting with Charles Anthon is the best known and most controversial. Harris maintained that Anthon confirmed the legitimacy of the transcript while Anthon later refuted Harris’ account.

![Anthon Transcript - Temple Archives - Community of Christ](Image)

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Joseph Smith’s account of Martin Harris’ visit with Professor Anthon is given in the *Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith 2:62-65:

... I [Joseph Smith] commenced **copying the characters off the plates**. I copied a considerable number of them, and by means of the Urim and Thummim I translated some of them, ... Mr. Martin Harris came to our place, **got the characters which I had drawn off the plates**, and started with them to the city of New York. For what took place relative to him and the characters, I refer to his own account. ...

I [Martin Harris] went to the city of New York, and presented the characters which had been translated, with the translation thereof, to Professor Charles Anthon, ... **Professor Anthon stated that the translation was correct, more so than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian.** I then showed him those which were not yet translated, and he said that they were **Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyriac, and Arabic**; and he said they were **true characters**. He gave me a certificate, certifying to the people of Palmyra that they were true characters, and that the translation of such of them as had been translated was also correct. ... 

In continuing to print the story of Martin’s visit with Professor Anthon in their scriptures the LDS Church is perpetuating the claim that Anthon verified the characters and translation. Notice that Martin claims that Anthon verified that there were “Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyriac, and Arabic” on the sample of Book of Mormon characters. One wonders why there would be these various scripts on the plates when supposedly Mormon abridged the Nephite records in about 385 AD in “reformed Egyptian”?

Another question that comes to mind is how could Anthon verify the translation if only a seer could decipher the message in the unknown language? While several years later Professor Anthon acknowledged Harris’ visit he insisted that he had not said the “translation was correct”:

New York, Feb. 17, 1834.  
Dear Sir—. ... The whole story about having pronounced the Mormonite inscription to be “reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics” is perfectly false. Some years ago, a plain, and apparently simple-hearted farmer, called upon me with a note from Dr. Mitchell of our city, now deceased, requesting me to decipher, if possible, a paper, which the farmer would hand me, ... Upon examining the paper in question, I soon came to the conclusion that it was all a trick, perhaps a hoax. ... This paper was in fact a singular scrawl. It consisted of all kinds of crooked characters disposed in columns, and had evidently been prepared by some person who had before him at the time a book containing various alphabets. Greek and Hebrew letters, crosses and flourishes, Roman letters inverted or placed sideways, were arranged in perpendicular columns, and the whole ended in a rude delineation of a circle divided into various compartments, decked with various strange marks, ... [I] well remember that the paper contained anything else but “Egyptian Hieroglyphics.” ... 

Linguists today side with Anthon’s assessment that the document does not represent a real language. Obviously Martin Harris either misrepresented or misunderstood his conversation with Anthon. Yet Joseph Smith presented this sample as a literal copy of the characters on an ancient record—that he, Smith, had successfully translated. For nearly 200 years the LDS Church has pointed to this event as proof of the legitimacy of Smith’s translation, in spite of the fact that the Anthon transcript doesn’t match any known script. It actually contains quite a few English characters and numbers. To illustrate this we have taken various characters from the Anthon transcript and arranged them in a sentence.

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63 Book of Mormon, Words of Mormon 1:3

64 Letter written by Charles Anthon, as published in *Mormonism Unveiled*, 1834, pp. 270-272.

65 “Joseph Smith’s ‘Caractors’ Found,” *Salt Lake City Messenger*, No. 43, July 1980), http://www.utlm.org/newsletters/no43.htm
Importance of Book of Mormon Plates

While some today try to minimize the importance of the Nephite plates being an actual ancient record, the Book of Mormon itself presents a story of numerous ancient prophets writing on physical plates. According to the story, these records were condensed and protected by Mormon, who in turn, passed the records on to his son Moroni. At the end of the book, Moroni is left to wander the continent and finally to transport these records to the Hill Cumorah in New York. To aid students in their study of the Book of Mormon the LDS Church released a new video this year featuring a re-enactment of Moroni, at approximately 421 AD, burying the plates in the hill where, hundreds of years later, he will appear to Joseph Smith as an angel and lead him to the long lost record.

The enormity of the job of condensing the Nephite and Jaredite records done by Mormon and Moroni is illustrated by LDS scholar John Tvedtnes in his overview of the many plates mentioned in the Book of Mormon:

The Nephites kept a large number of records for the benefit of future generations (Hel. 3:13, 15–16.) The importance of record-keeping is stressed in the story of Nephi, who, before leaving the Old World, obtained the BRASS PLATES from Laban in Jerusalem. (1 Ne. 3; 1 Ne. 4) These plates were apparently handed down in the Nephite royal line, for King Mosiah I had them. (Omni 1:14.)

Arriving in the New World, Nephi prepared two sets of plates. (1 Ne. 19:1–6) The LARGE PLATES OF NEPHI were passed down by the kings to Benjamin, son of Mosiah I. (Omni 1:11; W of M 1:10.)

The SMALL PLATES OF NEPHI came down in a different line. The first part of our present Book of Mormon (1 Nephi through the Words of Mormon) comes from the small plates. The men who wrote on them referred to them as “these plates,” while referring to the large plates held by the kings as the “other plates.”

Amaleki, noting that the plates were almost filled, turned them over to King Benjamin (Omni 1:25), who added them to the “other plates” (W of M 1:10). Thus King Benjamin possessed the plates of brass, as well as all of the plates of Nephi. (Mosiah 1:3–4, 6.) These he passed on to his son, Mosiah II. (Mosiah 1:16; Mosiah 28:11.)

King Mosiah II added to the large plates of Nephi the records of Zeniff and Alma. (Mosiah 25:5–6.) He also came into possession of 24 GOLD PLATES containing the Jaredite history. (Mosiah 28:11–13, 17–20.) He gave all of the plates to Alma II (Mosiah 28:20), and from him they were passed on . . .

Ammaron hid the plates in the hill Shim. (4 Ne. 1:48.) He then chose young Mormon as his successor and instructed him to remove the plates of Nephi from the hill in his 24th year. (Morm. 1:1–4.) At the appropriate time Mormon took the plates. He updated the history on the large plates, then began an abridgement of these on a separate set of plates. (Morm. 2:17–18.)

Later, because of the Lamanite danger, Mormon removed the rest of the plates from the hill Shim. (Morm. 4:23.) He completed his abridgement of the large plates and hid most of the Nephite records in the Hill Cumorah, except for his own abridgement and the small plates of Nephi, which he gave to his son Moroni. (Morm. 6:6; W of M 1:1–7.)

Moroni finished the record of his father on the abridgement. (Morm. 8:1, 13.) Then he wrote a preface to his father’s work, which is the first paragraph of the present-day preface to the Book of Mormon.

Later Moroni found sufficient time to add an abridgement of the 24 gold plates, or Book of Ether (Ether 1:1–5), and even to write some of his own thoughts (Moro. 1:1–4). He then wrote the second paragraph of the preface and hid the plates.

A little over 1,400 years later Moroni turned over the abridged Nephite records to Joseph Smith. Yet, after that monumental effort to gather the records, make an abridgement, transport, and hide the plates, they were not even needed since Smith merely read off the English translation by looking at a rock in his hat. So why preserve the plates for over two thousand years?

For those who suggest that the plates did not need to be literally in Smith’s possession, that he could have viewed them in a vision, one must remember that all of his story demands the presence of literal metal plates. According to Smith the angel showed him the plates in 1823 but made him wait four years before he could physically retrieve the plates from the hill. Joseph’s mother, Lucy, recounted that when he finally brought them home he had to run through the woods carrying the plates in his coat in order to prevent thugs from stealing them. She also told of hiding the plates under the hearth. When Joseph moved away from Manchester, New York, the plates were supposedly hid in a barrel of beans.


68 Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith—History 1:59.

69 Anderson, Lucy’s Book, pp. 385-386.


71 Anderson, Lucy’s Book, p. 401.
Joseph Smith gave a detailed description of the plates as measuring “six inches wide and eight inches long, and not quite so thick as common tin. They were filled with engravings, in Egyptian characters, and bound together in a volume as the leaves of a book, with three rings running through the whole. The volume was something near six inches in thickness, a part of which was sealed.”

Martin Harris estimated the weight of the plates at “forty or fifty pounds.” Emma Smith told her son that she “moved them [the covered plates] from place to place on the table, as it was necessary in doing my work.”

When Smith finished his translation he returned the plates to the angel:

But by the wisdom of god, they [the plates] remained safe in my hands, until I had accomplished by them what was required at my hand. When, according to arrangements, the messenger called for them, I delivered them up to him, and he has them in his charge until this day, being the second day of May, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-eight.

All of the early accounts of Smith being shown the plates by an angel, retrieving them from the hill, showing them to witnesses, hiding them in the woods, storing them on the table, returning them to the angel, etc. would make no sense if there was no physical object, whether real or invented. If the ancient plates did not literally exist Smith’s story is a fabrication.

**Mormon’s Abridgment**

The title page of the Book of Mormon reads:

An account written by the hand of Mormon upon plates taken from the plates of Nephi . . . Wherefore, it is an abridgment of the record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites.

Considering the effort needed to make the original gold plates of the Book of Mormon, to engrave them, and then abridge them, one would expect a scribe to be as concise as possible, not wordy. For example, Nephi’s brother, Jacob complained: “I cannot write but a little of my words, because of the difficulty of engraving our words upon plates” (Book of Mormon, Jacob 4:1).

However, lengthy sentences abound in the Book of Mormon. Here is just one example:

And now it came to pass that according to our record, and we know our record to be true, for behold, it was a just man who did keep the record—for he truly did many miracles in the name of Jesus; and there was not any man who could do a miracle in the name of Jesus save he were cleansed every whit from his iniquity—And now it came to pass, if there was no mistake made by this man in the reckoning of our time, the thirty and third year had passed away; And the people began to look with great earnestness for the sign which had been given by the prophet Samuel, the Lamanite, yea, for the time that there should be darkness for the space of three days over the face of the land. (3 Nephi 8:1-3)

One could more easily imagine such long, rambling descriptions coming from someone spontaneously dictating to a scribe (as Joseph evidently did) than from someone painstakingly engraving each word of a long historical record. Since Smith was supposedly translating Mormon’s abridgment of the extensive history of his people, such wordy sentences become problematic.

One of the clues that Joseph Smith was not translating an ancient record but orally telling a story is his oft used phrase “in other words.” For example, Mosiah 7:27 reads: “he should take upon him the image of man, and it should be the image after which man was created in the beginning; or in other words, he said that man was created after the image of God. . . .” The combination “in other words” is used once by Smith in the 1830 Preface to the Book of Mormon, twelve times in the text, three times in the Doctrine and Covenants, and three times in his new Bible translation. Yet the phrase does not appear in the KJV Bible. It appears to be a staple in Smith’s storytelling, but hardly something one would expect in an abridged historical record.

**DID THE WITNESSES SEE PHYSICAL PLATES?**

In the official statement at the front of the Book of Mormon, Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer declared:

And we also testify that we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates; and they have been shewn unto us by the power of God, and not of man. . . . an Angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true.

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72 Smith, *History of the Church*, vol. 4, p. 537
74 Saints Herald, (October 1, 1879).
The testimony of the three witnesses leaves a person with the impression that they all saw the angel and the gold plates at the same time; however, such was not the case. In his *History of the Church*, Joseph Smith admitted that Martin Harris was not with David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery when they saw the plates. Joseph started by having the three witnesses pray in an effort to obtain a view of the plates, but to no avail. Finally:

Upon this, our second failure, Martin Harris proposed that he should withdraw himself from us, believing, as he expressed himself, that his presence was the cause of our not obtaining what we wished for. He accordingly withdrew from us, and we knelt down again, . . . presently we beheld a light above us in the air, of exceeding brightness; and behold, an angel stood before us. In his hands he held the plates . . .

I [Joseph Smith] now left David and Oliver, and went in pursuit of Martin Harris, . . . We accordingly joined in prayer, and ultimately obtained our desires, for before we had yet finished, the same vision was opened to our view, at least it was again opened to me, whilst at the same moment, Martin Harris cried out, apparently in an ecstasy of joy, "'Tis enough; 'tis enough; mine eyes have beheld; mine eyes have beheld;" . . .

Notice that the emphasis is on a miraculous event, not a normal, physical examination of the object. If the covered plates had been physically laying on the table for a couple of months during the translation, why weren’t they simply uncovered? Why would the witnesses need to go out into the woods to pray? Why would an angel need to appear in a vision to show them the plates? Some of the statements by the witnesses suggest a physical viewing of the plates. But these accounts need to be compared with their other statements that clearly tell of a vision experience.

John H. Gilbert, the printer who set the type for the Book of Mormon, recounted a conversation he had with Martin Harris:

> I said to him, —“Martin, did you see those plates with your naked eyes?” Martin looked down for an instant, raised his eyes up, and said, “No, I saw them with a spiritual eye.”

Early Mormon convert Stephen Burnett became disillusioned with Joseph’s claims when in 1838 he heard Martin Harris say he had not physically seen the plates:

I have reflected long and deliberately upon the history of this church & weighed the evidence for & against it—loth to give it up—but when I came to hear Martin Harris state in a public congregation that he never saw the plates with his natural eyes only in vision or imagination, neither Oliver [Cowdery] nor David [Whitmer] & also that the eight witnesses never saw them & hesitated to sign that instrument for that reason, but were persuaded to do it, the last pedestal gave way, in my view our foundations was sapped & the entire superstructure fell a heap of ruins, I therefore three week since in the Stone Chapel gave a full history of the church since I became acquainted with it, the false preaching & prophecying etc. of Joseph together with the reasons why I took the course which I was resolved to do, and renounced the Book of Mormon with the whole scene of lying and deception practiced by J. S [Joseph Smith] & S. R [Sidney Rigdon] in this church . . .

I was followed by W. Parish Luke Johnson & John Boynton all of who concurred with me, after we were done speaking M Harris arose & said he was sorry for any man who rejected the Book of Mormon for he knew it was true, he said he had hefted the plates repeatedly in a box with only a tablecloth or a handkerchief over them, but he never saw them only as he saw a city through a mountain. And said that he never should have told that the testimony of the eight witnesses was false, if it had not been picked out of [h]im but should have let it passed as it was . . .

If it doesn’t require faith to see the table in the room, why would it take faith to see metal plates laying on the table? Joseph could have simply removed the cloth and displayed the artifact.

**The Parchment of John**

Towards the end of the gospel of John in the New Testament is a discussion between the resurrected Christ and Peter regarding John’s future duties. Jesus asked Peter: “If I will that he [John] tarry till I come, what is that to thee?” (John 21:21-23). This resulted in confusion among the early Christians whether or not John was promised to remain on earth until Christ’s return.

However, for Mormons this was settled in the Book of Mormon when the ancient disciples in America were visited by the resurrected Christ and were given a similar...
promised. Jesus instructed three of the Nephite disciples, “Behold, I know your thoughts, and ye have desired the thing which John, my beloved, who was with me in my ministry, before that I was lifted up by the Jews, desired of me. . . . for ye shall never taste of death; but ye shall live to behold all the doings of the Father . . . And ye shall never endure the pains of death” (3 Nephi 28:6-8). The narrative goes on to tell that these three men, along with John, “will be among the Gentiles, and the Gentiles shall know them not” (3 Nephi 28:27).

Possibly working on this section of the Book of Mormon brought the subject to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery’s attention. At any rate, in 1829 they had a discussion on the possibility that Jesus, in John 21:21-23, promised John he would live until Christ returned. As a result, Joseph Smith claimed to receive a revelation of a “parchment” written and hidden by John, disciple of Jesus.82

This parchment, presumably written in Greek, promised John that he would live until Christ’s return. This record was hidden somewhere and later revealed to Smith. Smith’s 1829 translation of the text was published in the Book of Commandments (1833) but later expanded in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. If Joseph’s 1833 printed translation was actually from an ancient record written by John, why would he later expand it, adding words throughout the text? Below is the 1835 version of the revelation.

1835 Doctrine and Covenants, Section 33
(Section 7 in current editions).

[With words added in 1835 in bold type.]

1 And the Lord said unto me, John, my beloved, what desirest thou? For ye shall ask, what you will, it shall be granted unto you. And I said unto him, Lord, give unto me power over death, that I may live and bring souls unto thee. And the Lord said unto me, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, because thou desiredst this thou shalt tarry until I come in my glory, and shalt prophesy before nations, kindreds, tongues and people.

2 And for this cause the Lord said unto Peter, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? For he desiredst of me that he might bring souls unto me; but thou desiredst that thou might speedily come unto me in my kingdom. I say unto thee, Peter, this was a good desire, but my beloved has desired that he might do more, or a greater work, yet among men than what he has before done; yea, he has undertaken a greater work; therefore, I will make him as flaming fire and a ministering angel: he shall minister for those who

shall be heirs of salvation who dwell on the earth; and I will make thee to minister for him and for thy brother James: and unto you three I will give this power and the keys of this ministry until I come.

3 Verily I say unto you, ye shall both have according to your desires, for ye both joy in that which ye have desired.

It seems that Smith felt free to revise his translations to fit his current ideas. Notice that verse 2 is expanded to include the concept of Peter, James and John holding the keys of power, bolstering his concept of priesthood that was brought into the church sometime after its founding in 1830.83 How are we to take Smith’s claim of “translating” ancient documents seriously if he is able to go back and add to and revise them as his theology expands?

JOSEPH’S BIBLE REVISION

In the LDS Articles of Faith Joseph Smith wrote “We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.”84 Thus the Book of Mormon is accepted as reliable while the Bible is approached with skepticism. In fact, Joseph’s new book of scripture specifically undermines the Bible by claiming that “many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants” have been removed.85

Soon after finishing the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith set out to remedy the problem of a corrupted Bible by producing his own version, known as the Joseph Smith Translation (JST) and the Inspired Version. Not knowing any biblical languages or having access to any ancient manuscripts, Smith would produce his Bible through revelation.

Between the years 1830 and 1833 Smith and his scribes went through the Bible noting places to be changed, plus adding new verses to the text. The importance of the work can be seen by the many revelations regarding the revision in the Doctrine and Covenants.86 It wasn’t published until 1867, long after Smith’s death, by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, now known as the Community of Christ.87


84 “The Articles of Faith” number 8, Joseph Smith, Pearl of Great Price.


Some of the changes were Smith’s attempt to make a more logical reading, some were simply insertions by Smith, other changes were issues discussed in Bible commentaries. Joseph Smith’s extensive use of Adam Clarke’s Bible Commentary has recently been discussed in the new book, Producing Ancient Scripture. Thomas A. Wayment and Haley Wilson Lemmon observed:

The direct parallels between Adam Clarke’s commentary on the Bible and Joseph Smith’s revision of the Bible are simply too numerous and too close to explain as mere coincidence or happenstance. Parallels between the two texts number into the hundreds . . .

As with the Book of Mormon, Smith imported aspects of New Testament Christianity into his revision of the Old Testament. For instance, in his revision of Genesis, as printed by the Community of Christ, he indicates that Adam was baptized in the name of Jesus Christ and received the Holy Ghost:

And he called upon our father Adam, by his own voice, saying, I am God; . . . If thou wilt, turn unto me and hearken unto my voice, and believe, and repent of all thy transgressions, and be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is Jesus Christ, the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, asking all things in his name, and whatsoever ye shall ask it shall be given you . . .

This same passage is printed in the LDS Pearl of Great Price, Book of Moses 6:51-52. While Enoch receives only passing mention in the Bible, Smith added pages to Genesis, chapters 6 and 7, about Enoch and his city. He also added over 800 words to Genesis, chapter 50, including a prophecy about himself. In 1979 the LDS Church printed their own Bible, using the KJV, and added their own cross-references and extracts from the Joseph Smith Translation. For example, at the back of their Bible, Genesis 50:33 of Joseph Smith’s revision reads:

And that seer will I bless, and they that seek to destroy him shall be confounded; for this promise I give unto you; for I will remember you from generation to generation; and his name shall be called Joseph, and it shall be after the name of his father.

This was obviously intended to be a reference to Joseph Smith, whose father was also named Joseph. Furthermore, Genesis 14 was expanded to enlarge the role of Melchizedek and his priesthood.

Likewise, Isaiah received numerous corrections, with chapter 29 being greatly expanded. This was done so that the passage about a sealed book could be reinterpreted as a prophecy about the Book of Mormon. Interestingly, his revision of Isaiah still retains the verses declaring that there is only one God, such as Isaiah 43:10-11, which contrasts with Smith’s later teachings on a multitude of Gods.

The Book of Mormon states that the Old Testament went “from the Jews in purity unto the Gentiles,” but was then changed after the time of the apostles by “that great and abominable church.” With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls it is now clear that Smith’s additions to the Old Testament are not supported by ancient manuscripts. Also Christianity was not taught in the Old Testament.

Smith also added many words to the New Testament, even rewriting the well-known opening of the gospel of John. John 1:1 states:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

However, Joseph Smith changed it to read:

In the beginning was the gospel preached through the Son. And the gospel was the word, and the word was with the Son, and the Son was with God, and the Son was God. (JST, John 1:1)

Needless to say, there is no manuscript evidence for Smith’s additions.


91 “Joseph Smith Translation,” Holy Bible, (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979), p. 799.


93 Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 13:24-29.

94 Walters, Use of the Old Testament.

In examining the Sermon on the Mount we find the Book of Mormon version follows Matthew’s account in the KJV. But the Joseph Smith Bible revision is longer, which leads to the question: Which is the accurate version?

**Matthew 7:6 (KJV Bible)**

6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

**3 Nephi 14:6**

6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

**JST Matthew 7:10-11**

10 And the mysteries of the kingdom ye shall keep within yourselves; for it is not meet to give that which is holy unto the dogs; neither cast ye your pearls unto swine, lest they trample them under their feet.

11 For the world cannot receive that which ye, yourselves, are not able to bear; wherefore ye shall not give your pearls unto them, lest they turn again and rend you.

One change he made in Revelation 1:6 was to reinforce the doctrine of one God. In the KJV it says that we are made “kings and priests unto God and his Father.” To eliminate any confusion that two gods are meant, Smith dropped the word “and,” so that it read “God, his Father.” However, preaching in 1844, Smith completely ignored his own revision, and used the KJV reading “God and his father” to bolster his new doctrine that there was a God above our Heavenly Father.96 This is just one of many instances of Smith’s evolving view of the godhead.

Curiously, Smith seemed to ignore his revision once it was finished, choosing instead to quote from the KJV or give a new rendering in his sermons. Writing in 1963, LDS writer Merrill Y. Van Wagoner explained:

> Whenever the prophet quoted from the Bible he either retained the words of the King James version or else flatly declared it to be wrong and then gave a rendering of the passage which differed from it. He seems to take no account of his changes in the Inspired Revision, which of course was not printed.97

One example of this is seen in his various renditions of Malachi 4:1-6. Recounting the visitation by the angel Moroni during his teenage years Joseph told how Moroni quoted from these verses:

> . . . he [Moroni] quoted also the fourth or last chapter of [Malachi] the same prophecy, though with a little variation from the way it reads in our Bibles. Instead of quoting the first verse as it reads in our books, he quoted it thus: For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall burn as stubble, for they that come shall burn them, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

And again, he quoted the fifth verse thus: Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

He also quoted the next verse differently: And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.98

Curiously, when Christ appears in the New World and quotes Malachi it is slightly different from Moroni’s quote to Smith:

> Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse. (3 Nephi 25: 5-6)

However, when Smith was working on his Inspired Revision, he marked the book of Malachi as “correct.” But this is not the end of the confusion. Joseph Smith, preaching on January 24, 1844, gave yet another rendering of Malachi 4:5-6. Although he followed the wording of the King James Version, he claimed that the word “turn” should be translated “bind” or “seal”—a rendering which he did not use in either the Book of Mormon or the Inspired Version.99

Mormons often object to the form of our current biblical canon, maintaining that early Christian councils decided which books were to be canonized and thus voted out many books that should have been included in the Bible. Interestingly, Smith did not restore any of these “lost” writings.100 In fact, he even eliminated the Song of Solomon from his Bible.

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99 *History of the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 183-184. For more on Smith’s Bible revisions, see Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Mormon Scriptures and the Bible* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1970).

When the LDS Church printed its own edition of the King James Bible the leaders certainly could have made their own compilation of books to be included in the canon. But they left it the same. While they did not make any alterations to the actual text, they did introduce new chapter headings and footnotes which cross-referenced their other books of scripture.

Included at the back of the official LDS Bible (KJV) are numerous quotes from the Joseph Smith Bible revision. The Pearl of Great Price includes Smith’s revision of Genesis and extracts from Matthew 23-24. If these portions of his revision are considered divinely given, then why not use all that Smith had produced, even if the project wasn’t complete? Also, why not simply include his revisions in the biblical text, where they supposedly belong? If the KJV really was corrupt, wouldn’t this be the time to present it in its corrected state?

According to Joseph, the Lord wanted him to finish and publish the revised Bible during his lifetime.101 Since that never happened, one wonders why subsequent LDS prophets have never completed the task? It is claimed that they hold the same gifts and callings that Joseph Smith did. Yet their priorities still don’t seem to include restoring the Bible to its original form.

**Conclusion**

When Christians refer to various Bible translations they are generally referring to such items as the King James Version (KJV), the New American Standard Bible (NASB); the New International Version (NIV); or the English Standard Version (ESV), among others. These all contain the same books, translated from the best ancient manuscripts available at the time. Anyone who takes the time to learn the biblical languages (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek) would be able to do their own translation of these manuscripts. However, no such undertaking is possible with Joseph Smith’s work. There are no ancient manuscripts for the Book of Mormon or the Joseph Smith Translation (JST) that could be translated by an independent linguist. Scholars now admit that Smith did not translate anything in the normal sense of the word. It appears that Joseph’s own imagination, coupled with Bible commentaries and literature of the day provided the inspiration for his scriptures.

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**Extracts from Letters and Emails**

**June 2020:** I have been a student of yours since the 1970’s when I was in college. I was given a copy of Mormonism: Shadow or Reality. I rejoiced as my best friend growing up was LDS as was my aunt … I became a born again Christian 8/23/71. I knew Mormonism was false but now I had a tool that helped decipher the truth!!! I have been a student of Mormonism, sharing the true good news with Mormons, friends and relatives of LDS and educating Christians about Mormonism. (I have relatives in SLC!) Thank You for all the incredible work you have done and continue to do until Jesus returns!

**July 2020:** Thanks for your extensive research over the years which has opened my mind to the truth of the LDS church. I joined the LDS church at the age of 22, here in [the UK], and served in many positions, even as a bishop for seven years; I am now 69. If I had known then what I know now, through your books and articles, I would never have given my money, service and years of time, to the LDS religion. I feel betrayed, for I had believed everything taught by the church and it’s leaders; now I know better and am struggling to settle my mind to seeking truth through the Holy Bible, and that only. I am not sure where I go from here, but I am sure I will never again advance the cause of the Joseph Smith deceit.

**July 2020:** My wife and I just finished “Mormonism shadow or reality” and loved the work you guys did and are doing.

**July 2020:** Issue #134 [Salt Lake City Messenger], June 2020 was excellent, on first vision. I have read and re-read it. I am constantly amazed at Mormonism. Keep up the good work.

**July 2020:** Just a note to express how much I appreciated your excellent interview with James Walker. I just finished Part I [https://www.watchman.org/PodcastSandraTanner.htm] and am looking forward to Part II.

I also want to thank you for the last “Messenger” It was outstanding. I couldn’t believe how many issues you have produced. Wow! I still remember when I first visited you and Gerald.

You had your little printing press in your garage. I’ll never forget how nice Gerald was to me.

**July 2020:** Although my final destination after leaving my parent’s religion appears to be atheism, I have great respect for the Tanners and what they have done. They have altered society a small way, and that is more than the majority of us will ever do. Thanks for your work.

**September 2020:** Words can’t express how fundamental you are to Mormonism. I have been wrong about you and your husband my entire life. Like many that come to you for answers I have been in my own faith crisis since last April. My eyes have been opened. I can honestly admit I know more about mormonism in the last year and a half than my 40 years in the church. Thank you for all that you and your husband have done. My wife and children as well. Your efforts to show the spotlight of truth are forever appreciated.
**September 2020:** I called a few weeks ago and talked with Sandra about some research I was doing … She suggested a few items, but when the package arrived, there were all kinds of additional materials related specifically to my area of research with my order. She took the time to dig through news letters from years ago. I was overwhelmed. Thank you so much. I can’t tell you how much that means to me.

**October 2020:** I had a coworker tell me there was a South Park cartoon about Mormons where JS was shown translating the gold plates by sticking his head in a hat with “the” rock in it. I said they have the cartoon wrong, Joe didn’t do it that way. I told him I would prove him wrong. Holy smokes, a little delving into the internet and my world shattered. What else was kept from us good little followers?

I found videos made by Sandra Tanner, and she told me the truth and opened my teary eyes even wider. I had home teachers come by a few times to dissuade my journey. They couldn’t answer my questions or told me to go to the temple and pray about these things while sitting in the C room. All I needed to do was reread the B of M and all my questions would be answered. I am here to say that I finally left the foggy world of LDS and was born again 2 years ago. The greatest part of this adventure is the man that I married after divorcing my eternal partner was basically agnostic most his life, found Jesus and was baptized. I thank Sandra and Gerald for all their research and perseverance…. What a glorious ending to this frightful journey!

**February 2021:** I’m sad to say this is a letter of apology. I used to be a Mormon. I went on a mission in ‘99. Was out for a year and got sick. Heart problems, runs in the family. While I was out there we as missionaries talked about “The Tanners” quite a bit. I’m sad to say none of it was truth. There was a time that I even thought that somehow, even though it’s not doctrine, that you were part of the 1/3 of the host of heaven. I’m sorry I helped in spreading lies about you and I thought you were such an evil person. I have heard so many interviews and her husband have done to share the truthful information about the LDS Church history is very much appreciate it. I truly enjoyed listening to Sandra’s recent interview on the Mormon Stories and the Netflix show “Murder among the Mormons.”

**March 2021:** Please let Sandra Tanner know that the work she and her husband have done to share the truthful information about the LDS church history is very much appreciate it. I truly enjoyed listening to Sandra’s recent interview on the Mormon Stories and the Netflix show “Murder among the Mormons.”

**March 21:** Thanks for all your work Sandra. Left Mormonism in 2017 at age 39. My family of 6 is so much healthier. Sometimes I admire or even envy your hope in God that you mention on Mormon Stories. I live in the most non religious place in the US …

**March 2021:** Thank you for the excellent YouTube interviews and work you do! You’ve played a key role in converting a loved one and helping her to understand that Jesus already paid the price for our sins and to follow his teachings. My wife was a 5th generation LDS and now she’s a born again Christian, a follower of Jesus and we worship the one and only God. We are now active members of [a church in New Mexico].

**March 2021:** Loved your Mormon stories podcasts. I am not a Christian or a Mormon, but your story was so fascinating and inspiring!

**March 2021:** Yes, I have to thank you for all your work exposing Mormonism. Your website was a great resource when I was having my Mormon faith crisis in the mid-2000’s. I just watched your interview with John Dehlin and I wanted to support you. Thank you.

**March 2021:** I would like to commend you for your work refuting the lies of Mormonism. I found out about your organization after watching “Murder Among the Mormons.” Thank you or contributing to that mini-series, and thank you for sharing Christ’s truth where you currently are located…. Thank you, God bless, and I will look forward to reading more in the future.

**April 2021:** Thank you for everything! I just listened to the John Dehlin episode [on Mark Hofmann—https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=42X-OD6Aprc&t=9223s] ... my first Mormon Stories listening ever…..Wonderful information from your insight on the Netflix documentary [Murder Among the Mormons]! Thank you for everything, truly…..God Bless you and your late husband.

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**Utah Lighthouse Ministry**

is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization and donations are tax-deductible.

Your donations make this newsletter possible!
April 2021: Thank you Sandra, God has used you in unmeasurable ways. One of those ways occurred a few years ago when you visited personally with our daughter and her then Mormon boyfriend. Your conversation and speaking God’s truth changed our daughter’s direction. Shortly after your visit, they separated and we have God to thank for using you to help our daughter see the Mormonism deception. God bless your God honoring ministry.

April 2021: I served a mission 20 years ago in Southern California. I received my first copy of this book [Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?] in Orange California at the Ex mormons for Jesus shop. I donated 20 dollars in an act of hubris. They gifted me this book. My father destroyed the book before I could read it after I returned home. Now my own family of 5 have removed our names from the church. I am excited to finally read this book.

April 2021: Thank you so much for your research and your ministry. I have been meeting regularly with the missionaries to share the Christian gospel with them for more than five years now, and I always feel well prepared because of all the hard work you have done. God bless you!

April 2021: Thank you so much for your decades of research and the promotion thereof. …My brother and I left Mormonism years ago—and wallowed in the confusion for years. We, however complicated the journey was, could not shake the conviction that Jesus was the Savior. However, what does that mean? What does that even look like, esp. after such betrayal and trauma in basically the only religious experience we had.

Studying that out in our minds (and our hearts) took time—but thanks, in part, to your consistent criticism of Mormon history *without* the embrace of the so-called “higher criticism” …we were able to (responsibly) see how, contrary to the impressions of many voices out there, the BOM and the Bible are *qualitatively* different! Essentially distinct! …You have been a consistent voice distinguishing these things. Thank you so much for that.

My brother and I are finally, years later, looking forward to joining *real* Christianity for the first time. We are scheduled to be baptized … on May 16th.

It was a long and painful transition. But receiving Peace with God through the person of Jesus Christ, the One True God, the real historical first-century Rabbi—and *HIS* life, His teachings, His work, His death on the Cross, His Resurrection—and His Kingdom; THAT is what is the source and end of our hope going forward. With that in my mind and heart—all the pain and confusion of Mormonism seems very small, indeed.

April 2021: I have spent the last two years of deconstructing my beliefs in the LDS church. Although I can finally identify this as liberating, I am left with some confusion. Most of my Post LDS friends have come to a place of atheism that I just can’t embrace. I hope it isn’t wishful thinking, but I still feel a connection to something beyond myself especially during meditation. I’ve heard you talk on several podcasts and I sense you still have a deep connection to Christ. I am now reading the New Testament but I have to admit, without using my LDS tools, I have trouble understanding it.

May 2021: Thank you, Sandra Tanner, for your and Jerald’s life’s work in bringing the truth, the real truth about the Mormon Church to the world. You are the “Davids” against the Goliath.

That was my son who came to your store today, Monday (or yesterday if your are reading this on Tuesday). He called me to tell me about it. He was genuine in his praise and appreciation expressed to you. You probably weren’t sure what to think but he was so thrilled to meet you in person and express his admiration to you for all you have done in the face of great opposition and, at times, disrespect and threats. Please know that there are so many of us former Mormons who so cherish your information and fortitude. You and Jerald are our real life heroes!

A friend of mine, ______, left the church over 35 years ago and your invaluable information (many mimeographed pamphlets and booklets) helped keep her solid when active family members put her through the wringer. She still has all the information stacked 3 feet in her office.

I was a convert of 44 years and when I came to my senses in 2016 and had my name taken off the records of the church, it was a real free-fall. Watching you on Mormon Stories was so helpful in keeping my senses together since I still live in the ward and neighborhood of 23 years—where I taught Gospel Doctrine, RS Pres; and all that stuff—it was a real shock to those around me and I became a pariah for a while. But I made non-mormon friends and a whole new world opened up to me. My son, who had his name taken off the records of the church over 10 years ago never dreamed his mother would ever “wake-up” and come out of the Mormon stupor. I told him about you and the interview on Mormon Stories and he watched it and also watched the one following up on The Mormon Murders. Just know there are many of us out there who truly admire you and are encouraged by your bravery, that many are out doing what they can, as John Dehlin reports. …You have erected the Standard of Truth. Our prayers and blessings to you always~

May 2021: I found UTLM online way back in 1997 and am so grateful that you had the will to go online at such an early time in internet history, and also that UTLM provided free mailed newsletters. The newsletters and my purchase of the huge book “Mormonism—Shadow or Reality” were instrumental in my leaving the church. It has taken all these years for me to come to Christianity, and now I am an influencer for Christ in the lives of my friends and family. Thank you, Tanners, for playing such a huge role in my life. God bless you and your continued work.
How Many LDS Converts Are Children?

By Eric Johnson
Mormonism Research Ministry Update
April 2021

We reported in the March 2021 Mormonism Research about how the LDS Church baptismal convert numbers have continued to decline during the past three decades. Whereas the church was growing by more than 4% in the late 1980s, the rate has gone down to less than 1.5% during each of the past five years.

Church leaders announce the numbers every April at general conference, with the main emphasis given to the baptismal convert number. While the 2020 numbers won’t be announced until Saturday, April 4, 2021, we are speculating that the number of converts in 2020 will be fewer than 200,000, which would be the lowest number in many decades. Of course, the restrictions on missionaries being able to proselytize most of the year due to COVID-19 is the reason there will be a decline from the previous year.

In a website article titled “A Closer look at the Declining Growth of the LDS Church since 1990” (mrm.org/declining-growth), we explained the following:

Although the church does not provide the exact number, those children who are baptized at the age of 9 or older are counted as “convert baptisms” for that year. Most people wrongly assume that “converts” refer to those who came into the church as adults, mainly through missionary activity, yet these children are mostly belonging to parents who are church members. Does it make sense that a pre-teen or teen from an LDS family should be considered a “convert”? Just how many “converts” each year come from these baptisms ages 9-17? And is this a convenient way to pad the “convert” numbers?

A returned missionary friend read this article and provided me with additional first-hand information:

I was on my mission in Utah during 1991-93. The Salt Lake City mission baptized around 300 converts a month. However, about half were 9 to 17-year olds. Many of us missionaries would get a list from the ward clerk called the bishops’ action list. It provided the names of those in the ward boundaries who had been blessed but were not baptized. We wouldn’t touch them while they were eight but when they turned nine we knocked on their families’ doors. We were able to baptize many of these 9, 10, and 11 year olds. I’m sure to this day that missionaries in heavily populated LDS areas baptize children over eight, fluffing the convert baptisms for the church (Personal email to me, 2/17/2021).

According to this account, half of the converts in the Salt Lake City mission in the early 1990s were ages 9 to 17. To get preteens/teens into an LDS baptismal font would not be difficult. Multiplied by many different missions throughout highly LDS states such as Utah, Idaho, Arizona, and California, how many tens of thousands of Mormon converts must come from this age group? By increasing the numbers by 20, 30, or even 40 percent by employing such a practice (and having to use children to do so) dulls the luster of the church’s once impressive convert numbers.

We must ask why there was not a concerted effort to baptize the 8-year-olds in the church. Might there be an ulterior motive in letting these children go unbaptized until at least the age of 9? As my friend had speculated, it would not be surprising if the church leaders continue to follow this questionable practice today to boost the convert numbers, which is the church’s major PR landmark!

My friend also explained:

Though my mother was LDS and I was blessed in the church—I wasn’t baptized until I was 10. It wasn’t until my mission in the early 90s that I learned that I was identified as a convert. Unfortunately, there were times that my fellow missionaries or pioneer heritage members would make me feel that my family was less than theirs because they were baptized as children of record and I was a convert.

In essence, then, these church leaders were willing to allow those children to remain unbaptized until at least the age of 9 while opening them up to ridicule by their LDS peers once they were baptized as “converts.” And what if the child had been hit by a car at, say, the age of 8 and a half? Where would this soul have been destined? Certainly not the celestial kingdom. In the words of Seventy Royden G. Derrick, “Baptism is the gateway to the celestial kingdom” (Temples in the Last Days, x).

If this is the case, could we not conclude that if the age of eight is the “age of accountability” (as it is in the LDS Church), that the child’s eternal destiny is put at risk for the sake of upping the church’s convert numbers? Does this seem like a loving policy? Is this what Jesus would do?

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FREE

(FREE shipping on orders over $49)
2023 is shaping up to be a monumental year for Utah Lighthouse Ministry. First, after much prayer, I am announcing my retirement effective March 1, 2023. While my health is good, at 82 I realize my body is getting older and slower. Second, we have sold the property and will be closing the bookstore and selling all of our inventory in February. As we sell the various titles we will not be restocking them, but we will post our research on our web site, utlm.org. Thus we will no longer have a physical office or bookstore as of March 1st. We will be donating all of the Tanner research files to the University of Utah Library, Special Collections Department. The bulk of the ministry’s remaining assets and finances will be divided up among several non-profits, with a portion set aside to maintain the UTLM website.

We send our deepest thanks and appreciation to all our friends who have supported our research over the decades. We couldn’t have done it without you.

Dr. Huggins wrote: I am grateful to the publisher, Signature Books, for granting permission to include an
excerpt from the book in this issue of the newsletter. The one we have chosen tells the story of the absurdly comical, cloak-and-dagger attempt on the part of the LDS Church Historian’s Department to refute the Tanners in an anonymously written and clandestinely distributed booklet entitled *Jerald and Sandra Tanner’s Distorted View of Mormonism: A Response to Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?* [1977] The Church ended up with egg on its face after the Tanners figured out in only a few weeks not only who had written it (the late Mormon historian D. Michael Quinn, 1944-2021) but also where it came from, i.e., the LDS Church Historian’s Department. With that introduction, I hope you will enjoy the story of “Dr. Clandestine.”

**Lighthouse — Chapter 12: Dr. Clandestine.**

Wilfrid Clark, an employee of Salt Lake City’s venerable Sam Weller’s Zion Bookstore, was driving down Redwood Road, a north–south street lined with dilapidated industrial buildings running the length of the city. Locals knew it as something of a rough dividing line between the city’s blue-collar westside and the vast salty wastes to the west. It was December 1977 and there was little hope for a white Christmas. The weather was overcast and dreary, with temperatures stuck in the low 40s. As he drove, Clark kept his eye out for an address given to him by his boss, Sam Weller. Clark spotted the building, turned off the road in front of a non-descript self-storage company, and began searching. He was hunting for a numbered door that matched the key he held—the key that had mysteriously arrived with instructions in an anonymous letter sent to Weller.

Clark found the door, turned the key, and stepped inside. The light outside revealed the room’s contents: a pile of boxes. The bookseller dutifully loaded them into his vehicle and drove back to Zion Bookstore. They opened the boxes and found 1,800 copies of a booklet, *Jerald and Sandra Tanner’s Distorted View of Mormonism: A Response to Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?* The booklet listed Salt Lake City as its printing location and its author as “a Latter-day Saint Historian.” A note on the inside cover stressed that the booklet “has not been copyrighted, so that it can be reproduced and distributed freely by others, if they feel that the contents have value.”

Five days before Christmas, the sky cleared and the temperature plummeted to near zero, and Weller put the anonymous booklets on display. It was the same day that, according to one student who witnessed it, LDS Church Historian Leonard J. Arrington was seen distributing copies of the booklet at BYU.1

Before the New Year, the tract had made its way to other places as well, such as Bloomington, Minnesota, where the mission president gave a copy to Jack Hallman, who read it and then wrote to the Tanners asking if they knew about it.2 The mission president would say only that a friend had sent it to him, but refused to identify the friend. Hallman said that, “from what he told me, that ‘friend’ was probably the Church Historian’s Office in Salt Lake.”³

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1 Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Answering Dr. Clandestine*, enlarged ed. (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm, 1978), 5. Arrington was the first academically credentialed person to be set apart as official LDS Church Historian. Prior to Arrington, the post was filled by LDS general authorities, as it is today.

2 Jack Hallman to Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Jan. 7, 1978, 1, in Tanner and Tanner, Papers. In his letter Hallman says that he had been given the booklet “a little over a week ago.”

3 Jack Hallman to Jerald Tanner, Jan. 24, 1977, 1, Tanner and Tanner, Papers.
The Tanners were naturally curious to discover who wrote the pamphlet. To find out, they first asked Weller where he sent the payment for the booklets. Weller told them that instead of paying, he was asked to reprint the pamphlet with any profits. When the Tanners asked to see the original anonymous letter, Weller declined.

No one in the burgeoning Mormon historian community admitted to knowing anything about *Jerald and Sandra Tanner’s Distorted View of Mormonism*. Arrington claimed he was in the dark until it mysteriously appeared. However, there had been rumors of a forthcoming response to their work for more than a year. The 1970s were a unique era in Mormon historiography. The once-closed LDS Church archives had become more accessible—not to everyone, and certainly not to Jerald and Sandra Tanner. But certain professional historians and favored graduate students could call at the archives in the east wing of the new Church Office Building on North Temple Street and ask to see documents long inaccessible. It was not a free for all; some collections remained restricted, and historians employed by the church had more access than outsiders. But it seemed to represent a positive shift in how the LDS Church approached and handled its history, and more people, especially students, were getting involved. But it was all still very fragile and tenuous.

A senior project by Richard Steven Marshall, a student at the University of Utah, submitted the previous May, inadvertently shed some light on the booklet. Marshall’s paper, “The New Mormon History,” included several interviews with Mormon historians and others (including the Tanners) as part of the project. Marshall interviewed Reed C. Durham Jr., a historian and former director of the University of Utah Institute of Religion:

> [Durham] said that due to the large number of letters the Church Historian’s Office is receiving asking for answers to the things the Tanners have published, a certain scholar (name deliberately withheld) was appointed to write a general answer to the Tanners including advice on how to read anti-Mormon literature. This unnamed person solicited the help of Reed Durham on the project. The work is finished but its publication is delayed, according to what Leonard Arrington told Durham, because they can not decide how or where to publish it. Because the article is an open and honest approach to the problem, although it by no means answers all of the questions raised by the Tanners, it will be published anonymously, to avoid any difficulties which could result were such an article connected with an official Church agency.

Jerald found the possibility of a committee of Mormon scholars shooting at him from the shadows of anonymity under the pretense of a letter written by a single person disconcerting because of the level of deception involved. “Inasmuch as we are being attacked from ambush,” Jerald wrote, “we would like to know if we are up against one individual or a team of well-trained marksmen.” Jerald used the word ambush to intentionally mirror the words of Mormon historian B. H. Roberts, who had once insisted that engagement in debate “would certainly require that the acceptance of the challenge should be otherwise than from ambush . . . I am entitled to know the name of my opponent that I may judge somewhat of his character and standing.”

Jerald vaguely recalled a conversation he had had a year prior during which he learned about a potential response. He could not remember all the details, including whom he had spoken to, but the name Michael Quinn stood out. Leafing through Quinn’s published works did not prove helpful, but when the Tanners studied his 1973 University of Utah master’s thesis and his 1976 Yale doctoral dissertation, they detected similarities to *Jerald and Sandra Tanner’s Distorted View of Mormonism*.

The author of the booklet included Latin fallacy phrases such as *post hoc ergo propter hoc* (after this, therefore because of this). Who but Quinn, Jerald reasoned, would employ a phrase like that in a document purporting to be written to a layperson with questions? Quinn, Jerald noticed, had previously used *post hoc ergo propter hoc* in both his thesis and his dissertation. There were other similarities, such as footnotes containing the same references to the same sources in the same order in the booklet as in the thesis and the dissertation. Quinn’s work and the booklet quoted from a rare anti-Mormon manuscript in the Oliver H. Olney Papers in Yale University’s Beinecke Library where Quinn had worked on his doctorate.

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4 Tanner and Tanner, *Answering Dr. Clandestine*, 2.
5 Tanner and Tanner, 2, and “Ambushing the Tanners,” *Salt Lake City Messenger* 39 (July 1978): 8.
6 Tanner and Tanner, *Answering Dr. Clandestine*, 4.
By the time Jerald had finished working through Quinn’s master’s thesis, he felt sure he had enough evidence to get an admission from Quinn that he was the anonymous “Latter-day Saint Historian.” When he called and presented his evidence, Quinn emphatically denied that he had anything to do with the matter. It was this that had caused Jerald to work his way through Quinn’s doctoral dissertation as well, which only further solidified what he suspected.

Jerald finally confirmed the authorship when, digging through a drawer, he found his handwritten notes of the previous year’s conversation when he had first heard that a response was in the works. Quinn’s name had been mentioned. The conversation, according to the notes, had taken place almost a year to the day before the booklet was put on sale at Sam Weller’s Zion Bookstore. The notes, consisting of only a few words and phrases in Jerald’s scrawl, “confirmed that the author was ‘Michael Quinn[n],’ that the work was written ‘For [the] Historians Office,’” that “it was a ‘50 page paper,’” and that the Church ‘may not publish it.’” But it also included the name “David Mayfield” written in a box along with the line “had been done.” (see drawing below)

So Jerald picked up the phone and gave Mayfield a call, but apparently did not identify himself, or, if he did, Mayfield missed it. One of the first things he asked was if Mayfield had seen Quinn’s paper before it came out in the form of a booklet. Mayfield, apparently assuming he was speaking with someone at the LDS Church History Department, admitted that he had. But when he discovered it was Jerald he was talking to, he quickly backed away from his earlier statements. After hanging up, Jerald called Arrington and confronted him with Mayfield’s admission. Arrington recalls his response:

I vehemently denied that this was true, and had a considerable argument with him, completely denying everything. We got into a little bit of a shouting match. I then telephoned Dave, who said that Jerald had telephoned him and asked if he had seen a paper by Mike Quinn which was a response to the Tanners. He said he was “caught off guard,” and did admit he had seen such a paper. Pretty soon, Jerald Tanner telephoned me again and apologized for becoming angry with me for my denial. I re-denied the whole business again. Tanner said he was going to publish the complete story, and no doubt he will publish what he believes to be the true story. But he said he would publish that I denied it. I telephoned Mike Quinn to tell him this.13

After a conversation with Mayfield, Arrington told Jerald that Mayfield had said he had made a mistake and had been thinking about a different paper. When subsequently asked about this, Mayfield refused to say one way or the other. When Jerald confronted Quinn with what he now knew, Quinn no longer denied he had been the author, but adopted a neutral position that he would neither affirm nor deny being its author.

In the meantime Jerald had found the historical scholarship in Quinn’s dissertation to be excellent: “Although Dr. Quinn has almost nothing good to say about us,” Jerald wrote, “we feel that he is probably one of the best historians in the Mormon Church. His dissertation written for Yale University is a masterpiece.”14 But the quality of scholarship in the booklet was mixed, suggesting to Jerald that other scholars besides Quinn

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12 Mayfield was an LDS Church employee who was later director of the Family History Department. The note, still in the Tanners’ papers, says that “someone phoned on Dec. 12, 1976.”


14 Tanner and Tanner, *Answering Dr. Clandestine*, 5.
might be involved.15 “Since we do not think it fair to give Michael Quinn all the blame for this pamphlet,” Jerald wrote, “we have decided to christen the ‘author or authors’ as ‘DR. CLANDESTINE.’”16

The Tanners spent nearly half of their *Answering Dr. Clandestine* unmasking the author. The thing that made *Distorted View of Mormonism* interesting, after all, was not what it said, but its anonymity and the absurd carnivalesque series of events that accompanied its birth.

The two dueling publications, Clandestine’s on the one side and the Tanners’ on the other, provoked different responses. Chad Flake, director of Special Collections at BYU’s Harold B. Lee Library, understood the Tanners’ frustration. “Here’s a man who’s writing to evaluate the Tanners, yet he doesn’t have enough gumption to put his name on it. The credibility of the pamphlet, as far as I am concerned, is nil.”17 Non-Mormon historian Lawrence Foster, on the other hand, saw the Tanners’ preoccupation with the anonymous author as thin-skinned: “How could anyone who had unleashed the volume of invective that the Tanners have on the Mormons react with such outrage and seeming surprise to a generally fair, if critical, analysis of their own efforts?”18

But Foster got it wrong. Far from being motivated primarily by anger, Jerald was also energized by it, excited to engage it. If anything angered Jerald, it wasn’t the response. It was the subterfuge, the anonymity, the cloak and dagger. As Sandra recalls, “He would have been glad to see someone give a serious review of the issues, but why such a cowardly process? We were always in the phone book, put our name and address on everything. If the church was going to put out a rebuttal why not own their defense? It was like the anonymous phone calls we would receive telling us off.”19

Although convinced that Quinn had written at least a substantial portion of the booklet, the Tanners were in doubt over the extent of Arrington’s involvement. As it would turn out Arrington had to have known about the booklet before its release because he had sent a copy of an earlier draft to a friend along with a cover letter dated September 6, 1977, which eventually came into the Tanners’ hands.20

The Tanners probably didn’t need to write an entire book in response to *Distorted View of Mormonism*. A newsletter establishing its connection with the Church History Department would have probably sufficed, after which they could have watched the booklet sink under the burden of the problems it had created for itself: It was too honest. “We certainly do not believe that Apostle [Ezra Taft] Benson would approve of the rebuttal,” Jerald and Sandra wrote. “[I]t makes far too many admissions concerning historical problems in the Church.”21 Some LDS apostles were in fact at that moment taking steps to rein in Arrington and his department, which they felt had been too secular in their historical writing.22

In the process of making his case, the anonymous author admitted that Joseph Smith had a violent temper, drank alcohol after revealing the Word of Wisdom, took plural wives before the polygamy revelation, retroactively changed revelations, quoted from the King James Bible in the Book of Mormon, and was tried as a glass looker in 1826. The pamphlet argued that church leaders had the “limitations of all men” and might err in their teaching due to misunderstandings of scripture and history. It acknowledged that the LDS temple endowment may have borrowed from Freemasonry. It chided “many of our writers (including nearly all of our apologist-defenders)” on the ground that they “ignore or even deny the weaknesses, fallibility, and humanity of our prophets and apostles.” The author frankly acknowledged the issues surrounding the First Vision and embarked on a lengthy but idiosyncratic argument in support of its historicity.23

An anonymous historian refuting the Tanners by not only admitting that many of their criticisms against Smith and the church were true, but also challenging the veracity of the First Vision as recounted in the LDS canon, was not a strategy that was likely to warm the hearts of a majority of LDS Church leaders. Then to have the booklet traced directly to the LDS Church Historical Department within a month of its publication represented

15 But it also may reflect Quinn’s being stronger in some research areas than others.


a particularly bad bit of luck for Arrington, who was already sensing that his position as church historian was becoming increasingly untenable. On the same day Jerald called him to confront him over the booklet, Arrington recorded in his diary

my job as Church Historian is an impossible assignment. Consider the following.
1. The anti-Mormons (Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Michael Marquardt, Wesley Walters, John W. Fitzgerald) seek to use every advantage to get information. If one is truthful and “open,” they destroy me by citing you, by declaring I permitted them access, by tripping me up on inconsistencies. They’re out to injure the Church by injuring me.
2. The highly orthodox, cautious people, such as Elders [Ezra Taft] Benson, [Mark E.] Petersen, and [Boyd K.] Packer, are alert for every misstep; they want to discredit me.
3. [Church employee] Tom Truitt (and also Lauritz Petersen at an earlier stage) is a spy for Elders Benson and Petersen. He reads everything I do or say that he can get his hands on, underlines statements which, out of context, will be objectionable to Elders Benson and Petersen, and sends these on to them.

I feel very despondent today, pessimistic about my future, feel that I do not have the support of the brethren, and also that I do not have the support of the fellow historians I have a right to expect support from. The Tanners published their twenty-two-page edition of Answering Dr. Clandestine in February 1978, less than two months after the booklet appeared. On February 24 Arrington was called into the office of his supervisor, G. Homer Durham, and informed that the First Presidency had decided to bring the Historical Department under its direct control, with Apostles Gordon B. Hinckley and Boyd K. Packer reporting to the presidency on the department’s actions. Arrington was also informed that he was no longer the official Church Historian, but would now be called Director of the History Division. Arrington was not to publicize this change in title.

26 Anonymous, Jerald and Sandra Tanner’s Distorted View, 13.
27 Prince, Leonard Arrington, 205.
28 Tanner and Tanner, Answering Dr. Clandestine, 43.
31 Arrington, Confessions of a Mormon Historian, 2:474–81.
LETTERS AND EMAILS

March 2022: I sent an email in the early 2000’s telling you how despicable I thought you were. I AM SORRY. You were always telling the truth. The church is so harmful. I can’t believe how brainwashed I was until recently. Keep up the GREAT work.

April 2022: Excerpt from a letter sent by an LDS customer who actually ordered a book:

“You people in your cult ministries, you’re really arrogant and haughty!! Why is it that you’re always right and every one else is wrong? You dismiss a God-Given testimony, giving it no credit or importance at all; then condemn the group or church the convert has just joined!! . . . You think you’re so right and you push your beliefs upon others. I, for one, cannot be pushed around like that. . . .”

BTW--she contacted us, we did not initiate contact with her.

June 2022: I am sure that Sandra isn’t reading this, but just in case, thanks for being the exact opposite of who I was taught you are Jerald were. You have heard it thousands of times, but I will forever be in your debt, thank you for everything. You guys kick ass.

June 2022: This was my second order from utlm as I have been more than grateful for Sandra and Gerald’s examples of truth, honesty, and integrity.

I saw Sandra on one of the episodes of Mormon Stories back in 2015 when I was having my “faith crisis” with the church and have loved and admired her since. Please give her the biggest hug from me and let her know that there are people in this world who love and value her more than she will ever know! I have appreciated her sacrifices to bring this truth to the world. My life has been incredibly blessed because of it.

June 2022: Thank you Sandra and your late husband Gerald for your years of hard work and perseverance to provide reliable materials and support to those who are investigating the Mormon church, usually from within the ranks. I, like many others, saw this book [Mormonism-Shadow or Reality?] on the series [Under the Banner of Heaven?] and I’m eager to read this publication too. I’ve read other books and work your ministry has done. I’m really excited to read this one too! Bless your whole ministry for what you are doing: working on distributing the truth!

July 2022: I recently got your book in the mail, ‘3,913 Changes in the Book of Mormon’. It’s been really eye opening! I am also a former Mormon. I was baptized into the LDS faith in June 2015, and left in September of 2016. I accepted Jesus as my Savior on September 9, 2016, and he is the only one I need. I’ve seen many of your interviews, on John Ankerberg, Mormon stories podcasts, and also a couple of documentaries on Mormonism. Your ministry has really helped me study the true history of the Mormon faith. Thanks for all you do Ms. Tanner!!

July 2022: We are still so appreciative and amazed that you came out and visited with us 4 years ago, just days after Christmas! What a wonderful and special honor it was to meet you. Thank you so for your 2 hours of time, for sharing your great knowledge, and for devoting your life to truth and to the gospel of our Savior. I sat across a table from you, where you lovingly explained so much that I never knew. Barbie and I praise God for your part in helping me come to a glorious place in my life; to be free and worshipping in a non-denominational church. We have found community and can rest in His Grace. Praise God for blessing you with His care, protection, and love. We certainly love you and pray for you always.

August 2022: I received my copy [of your biography] yesterday and have [read] the first 100 pages. So far I am loving this book. Some cool pictures too. Sandra is right, Jerald was a handsome young man. He looks like he’s fresh out of high school in that wedding picture. I want to say thanks for the extras you sent with it. Especially that copy of the Nauvoo Expositor. That was awesome and I appreciate it.

August 2022: Dear Sandra

I live in the UK … and about 2 months ago 2 LDS missionaries turned up at my doorstep. I did initially try to avoid them and kept avoiding them but did end of talking to them in the end and met 3 times and talked for about 10 hours in total.

Initially I was positively surprised (especially by one of them) and was impressed with their commitment and dedication to their mission. What they told me did not seem to deviate from standard Christianity all that much and for the first time I felt that God and Jesus became a bit more accessible to me through them and the Book of Mormon than before (I was raised by Roman Catholic and Serbian Orthodox grandparents).

However, I did also do my own research on the side as I am a naturally curious and skeptical character. It was when I went beyond the Book of Mormon and I came across Joseph Smith’s King Follett Sermon [http://mldb.byu.edu/follett.htm] I realized that Mormonism fundamentally differs from Christianity. Joseph Smith’s claims about the nature of God (and the Council of Gods) contradicts all descriptions of God in both Old and New Testaments of the Bible. In particular the claim that God created the world out of ‘chaotic matter, which is element, and in which dwells all the glory.’ God summoned the council of Gods and then came up with the plan to create the universe out of this chaotic [matter] that already existed. However, this raises the question: did its
existence pre-date the existence of God? If so it raises the question who or what in turn created this matter and where does it come from? Joseph Smith also mentions that God was once a man like we are now in this mortal ‘Fall of Man’ world and then became God and this is something we all can achieve and aspire to. But this would mean that there must have been meta-Gods (or something like that) that existed before God and these created the world for him to prove himself in and then became God.

None of this is spelled out in the Sermon and these logical gaps remain. I wanted to ask you as you are much more familiar with LDS ideology than I am: is it just me and my lack of complete understanding or does this simply not make sense? (to anyone who actually tries to think it through).

When I asked the missionaries they shrugged shoulders and said they did not know. (As it’s not in the Book of Mormon and they generally don’t want to talk about anything that is not in this book.

I also cannot really buy into their claim that there has been a Great Apostasy and that priesthood authority was given to Joseph Smith by the Ghosts of John the Baptist, and Peter, James, and John and that the LDS Church is the only church on this earth that now has the authority to give the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands.

Their Celestial Kingdom also seems to have a very ‘manmade flavour’, it’s a re-combination of things that already exist on this earth, just like most of the things in the Book of Mormon that make sense are pinched from the Bible and are a pastiche of it.

They say that these things are true and that if I don’t believe them I need to pray more and read more of the Book of Mormon and eventually it will happen.

I assume you have heard stories like mine many times by now. But what is interesting is that these missionaries seem to have unlocked and revived my belief in God and Jesus and I have started to pray and read the Bible and the Holy Spirit is giving me wonderful insights and experiences that are bringing me closer to God (I was effectively an atheist before they turned up).

August 2022: Sandra, you were very instrumental in getting me out of the cult. Born again, God bless.

August 2022: Thank you so much for your ministry. I have been able to touch dozens and dozens of people’s lives with relative ease because of Gerald and Sandra’s decades’ long hard work. I am grateful for you and your team. Many blessings.

August 2022: I never thought I’d say this, but thank you so much for all of the hard work you & Jerald did researching the LDS church history.

I grew up thinking your “Anti-Mormon” literature was of the devil, but when I could no longer get answers from church sources & I needed to know the truth I realized your research told the truth. I’ve been out of the church for 1 1/2 yrs. & your ministry/bookstore was an important part of my journey. Thanks for spending time with my mom & me when we came to visit. You are a God-send to so many.

September 2022: I’ve told you before, but we will forever be grateful for what you did for us. The day after Thanksgiving or Christmas—the day after that holiday, about 7 years ago—I was through w/LDS religion, but my TBM husband was unsettled by the things I had told him. We dropped in to your bookstore, and you were THERE! The Lord provided the space, the time, and a bookstore free of other patrons, and you sat across your desk and with the gentle brilliance you possess, shared so much with him – for 2 hours! You planted a beautiful seed, and although it took several more years, [my husband] and I now rejoice in our new life in Christ and worship actively in a non-denominational church. I cannot imagine being happier in our new life. Thank you.

September 2022: If there ever was “A Marvelous Work and Wonder” it would have to be the Utah Lighthouse Ministry and all the work that Brother and Sister Tanner have done in bringing Light to a Darken Religion. With much love

October 2022: I’m sure you will be getting many of these ‘thank you cards’ over the next few months, but I wanted to be included with those saying thank you.

In 1975 I found myself in love with a boy from an LDS family who having completed a mission to France was now questioning Mormonism. We had many discussions and I even came to SLC to meet with you. I gave him [Mormonism] ‘Shadow or Reality’ to read.

It was that book that convinced him that Mormonism was an evil cult . . . He became a Christian & . . . he deeply loves & trusts the Lord now. We have [grown] children and grandchildren who all love & serve Jesus. . . . Thank you for being faithful, humble, honest & persevering through what I’m sure were hard times . . .

October 2022: I became a believer in 1974 but I was not strong in my doctrine when in 1977 (at age 25) I was being proselytized by a Mormon young lady at Columbus Air Force Base where I worked. Not having the answers to her allegations about 3 levels of heaven, a mother god, God once being a man, etc., I turned to a friend who put me onto the works of Dr. Walter Martin and he also provided me some of the resources he had obtained from you and Jerald. . . .

Your resources (along with Walter Martin’s books) provided me what I needed. Your research allowed me to respond to her accurately. This interaction with her actually began a life-long study of Mormonism (and the cults in general) that has strengthened my faith over the years and allowed me to address many, many other Mormons through the years . . . in confidence and truth.
While some may view Jerald and Sandra Tanner only as despised critics of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, it is impossible to trace the course of Mormon history over the past sixty years without acknowledging their contribution. Many both inside and outside of Mormonism respect them for their unflinching quest for truth no matter the cost, as when Jerald declared Mark Hofmann’s notorious Salamander Letter a forgery months before some experts declared it authentic. Their Utah Lighthouse Ministry has operated for decades only blocks from church headquarters, where their many works on Mormonism are still printed and sold. Jerald died in 2006 but Sandra continues to oversee the ministry.

The Tanners consistently challenged the church’s position on many historical issues. Utah Lighthouse was long the only source for Mormon scholars to obtain crucial historical reprints, which they still happily or begrudgingly purchase; for others, the Tanners’ writings have been the source of disillusionment with the church. Despised or beloved, the influence of Jerald and Sandra Tanner cannot be underestimated or ignored.

Hard cover - $36.00 Soft cover - $22.50
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Reviews of *Lighthouse: Jerald & Sandra Tanner*

**Lady in Utah:** I just finished reading the biography. I read it in about 12 hours in a span of 24 hours. I have not read a book so quickly in years. It was a most excellent and captivating account of 2 people just being faithful to God’s leading. The detail was incredible. I was touched by your recount of dreaming of and talking to Jerald…. I am so blessed to know you.

**Local pastor:** I am writing both of you to say “thank you” for the sacrifices you have made for the cause of Christ. I have just finished the biography … I have recommended it to several. It is an excellent book, well written with stories beyond the pale of believability. Thank you for enduring the nonsense described and still love Jesus. “Great ships rarely see their own wake.” At least with this book you have, hopefully, been able to see enough of the wake of your lives to know a difference has been made, and a difference for the better. Thank you.

Gosh, I just finished the biographical account of Sandra and Jerald written by Huggins, and I never wanted it to end. It has to be one of the best books I’ve ever read, and trust me, I’m a very avid reader.

I “learned apologetics” from the Tanners, and I also believe that documentation is paramount.

I am the Administrator of [a Facebook page] designed to teach Christians about Mormonism. I’m not as kind and patient as the Tanners. My first concern has always been to protect the Body of Christ from Mormonism. But one thing I do try to accentuate is the need for documentation and references . . . to the point where I’m sure some of the posters get frustrated. But, hey, we can’t make claims that are unsubstantiated.

God bless Sandra. . . . I’m trying to prepare others to take over when I finally retire (and that could be sooner than later), and I hope they stress the need for documentation in everything.

Jerald was a model for us all - he attended to detail. He made no false accusations. I will let everybody on my site know about this wonderful book.

**Reviews of Lighthouse from Amazon.com**

**What a Wonderful Book!**

I have run into Sandra Tanner when she was interviewed by John Dehlin. I am not a member of the LDS church but had a faith crisis that led me to change churches. I found listening to Sandra talk about her journey in faith to be reassuring and helpful.

I bought the book already having heard some of her and her husband’s stories. The book does not disappoint and provided me with more information about their ministry. As a writer myself, I love footnotes which were numerous and accurate. The narrative of Gerald’s decline was very touching.

Congrats on a book well written about lives well lived.

**Fascinating Stories**

This book will interest anyone who has been on a spiritual journey or gotten pushback when they have asked honest questions about the viewpoints of their family or regional culture. Jerald and Sandra Tanner questioned what they had been taught by their Mormon religion. This book documents their quest for truth and so much more. It is also an intriguing history of what it was like to live in a Mormon culture a few decades ago. The book also addresses other issues such as racism during this era. This story demonstrates that one couple’s courage can have a great impact that is still felt years later. It is inspiring. It establishes the Tanners deep roots in the culture that they questioned. The Mormon institution is more open about its teachings now days in part because of this couple. Also, the Kindle format is great. The footnotes are easy to read with a touch.

**Reviews of Lighthouse**

**Warm and in-depth retelling of the Tanner’s story**

I have long admired the Tanners for their writing about the significant problems in Mormon history and theology, and enjoyed this book that gave me more about their story and their personal lives. They are people with real integrity, something rare these days!
A Tanner Bibliography 1959–2022

By H. Michael Marquardt

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A Tanner Bibliography 1959–2022 contains a list of publications written by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. It is compiled, as far as possible, in chronological order. The listing with title and short comment is based upon the format prepared by Robert R. Black in 1970. Jerald and Sandra first started publishing their works in a mimeograph format. They later used offset printing. The following publications are considered both of their writings and exceptions will have each name after the title. For a very short period they wrote papers while living in North Hollywood, California. All other publications were done in Salt Lake City, Utah. Sandra Tanner is listed as editor of the Salt Lake City Messenger commencing October 2003. Jerald Tanner died on October 1, 2006.

Not included in this bibliography are cassette tapes, videos, postings on web site, newspaper advertisements, introductions to reprinted publications, short handouts on various topics, and reprints of church periodicals. A few exceptions are listed. [Digital books are not included in this list. See http://www.utlm.org/booklist/digitalbooks.htm] “Ad” at the end of an entry means advertisement for the book by the Tanners and is included without quotation marks. All other notations are my own.

(A Tanner Bibliography 1959-2022 is posted on our web site at http://utlm.org/onlineresources/pdf/tannerbibliography.pdf)
## Items from Other Publishers

**Utah Lighthouse Ministry**  
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Salt Lake City, UT 84110  
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- Recently added titles

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### Approaching Mormons in Love: How to Witness Effectively Without Arguing
- Wilbur Lingle - CLC Publications
- $13.00

### Banishing the Cross: The Emergence of a Mormon Taboo
- Michael G. Reed - John Whitmer Books
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- Lee Strobel - Zondervan Publishing House
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### Christian Companion to the Triple Combination: Guide to Using the Mormon Scriptures for Witnessing to Latter-day Saints
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- John Gary Maxwell - University of Oklahoma Press
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**Lighthouse: Jerald and Sandra Tanner**

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**By Ronald V. Huggins**

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